Revisiting Representation in South Asian Modernity

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South Asian modernity critiques colonial representation through recreation and rewriting and develops a new way of dealing with the colonial discourses of the past. The colonial rulers employed violence to establish their domination upon narratives to rule the people of India. After its Independence in 1947, historians, literary critics, and academicians began to approach the colonial past from the domains of their expertise to explore the wrongs committed therein. Such intellectuals sift through the established discourses of the empires to examine the methodological validity of their claims by turning the lens upon Eurocentrism itself. This study critically surveys studies by Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyan Prakash, Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, and Partha Chatterjee to examine the issues they have raised about India and its colonial past. Deriving the critical insights from the studies, I interpret two texts by English novelist, short story writer and poet Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)—the short story "The Other Man" (1886) and the poem "Gunga Din" (1890). These texts depict the colonized subject at the service of the colonial master. By analyzing two cases from Kipling, this study concludes that South Asian modernity faces the unique challenge of revisiting representation in the context of its colonial past.

Keywords: Modernity, South Asia, postcoloniality, representation, critique

Introduction

As a major postcolonial society, South Asia is still embedded with the colonial past, its memories, and its coping strategies in uneven times. As a region, it has undergone various historical jolts in which the mainstream authority has claimed to have represented the aspirations of the people for a long time. The colonial bureaucratic structure has presented itself as the most benevolent force serving the people. In this paper, I have discussed the issues that have arisen in the plains of South Asia in the wake of the twentieth century because the people across the Himalayan slopes were away from access to the imperial forces of the empire. This paper examines how South Asian societies read their historical journey of locating themselves in the narratives of the empire in the first half of the twentieth century.

Critique of Representation

In the study, I have revisited 'representation' as one of the major dynamics of South Asian modernity. Colonial administration produced and promoted certain images about the colonized world and circulated them through various social and political discourses. The real was distorted and what they wanted to project was celebrated in such an image: the corresponding reality of the image exits nowhere as twisting and turning heavily change the shape, size, and colors of the picture. Still, the colonial officers interestingly promote the picture as knowledge of the colonized world, treating it as one of the instrumental ways to interpret the world. For instance, Sen (2005) has argued that such images of/about India are extremely affected by colonial rule, and Guha's conceptualization of domination and subordination in India is derived from his analysis of the colonial power structure that promoted the bogus images of India (Sen, 2005, p. 168). The analysis of pre-Independent Indian societies requires considering the colonial context and the functioning of the power network accordingly. In contemporary times, South Asian

modernity approaches 'representation' through the tension brought about by the colonial presence on the one hand and its critique after the Independence on the other.

The colonial masters believed that their presence added meaning to the colonized space, resulting in the representation of the other as a location of lack. It served two purposes: firstly, they could legitimize their presence as an agent of reformation; and secondly, such representation would satiate their ego as the center of the universe. It presents the native land without any possibility of regenerating any reformist agenda and policies. Sen (2005) has further explored that the justifications of such representation are misleading and hyperreal. Critiquing the British representation of India in their discourses, he argues that the colonial approaches were biased and hallowed out (p.180). On the same basis, he points out that such history requires a thorough rereading since it has naturalized and justified the cruelties imposed on the colonized. New historians should pay attention to critiquing the representation of the native people in colonial history and reconstructing the world appropriated in colonial discourses.

Outsider's perceptions distort the Indian image in the historical annals. After the Independence in 1947, the revisionist approach was adopted to reread the historical narratives and reconstruct the image of self. The postcolonial societies devise strategies to critique their colonial past: they require tremendous energy and critical attention to social forms and power structures that emerged during colonial rule. One of the fundamental challenges lies in selecting the mode of self-representation in South Asian modernity. In such circumstances, the social agency plays a vital role in fighting against the depiction of distorted images in foreign discourses and promoting one's own image rooted at the base of society. Regional modernity has to undergo multiple challenges to cope with the questions of self-representation. The European

approach to modernity assumes that the West is the center of the universe: modernity generates there and diffuses to the margin. The critique of such Eurocentric modernity pays attention to the distortion of peripheral societies and their attempts to reconstruct their image. South Asian modernity critiques Western representation and reconstructs their proper image from the distortion through self-representation.

The West asserts its arrogance to function as the grammar for a specific path to modernity. Furthermore, the colonial expansion beginning in the eighteenth century contributes to its false sense of superiority of comprehensively representing 'all' societies. However, postcolonial critical scholarship has explored multiple instances to question the Western ability to carry the spirit of modernity in the non-Western societies authentically. The Western method of social organization fails to delve into the roots of other societies and capture the true spirit lying therein. Spivak (1999) also argued against Kantian modernity, which only explores the inner tenets of Europe. She says that Kantian morality imposes a certain degree of restriction on the use of reason. As Spivak has presented,

The human being is moral only insofar as he cannot cognize himself. Kant does not give cognitive power to the subject of reason, and indeed, he makes his own text susceptible to the system of determined yet sometimes wholesome illusions he seeks to expose. This may be called a tropological deconstruction of freedom. (1999, pp. 22-23)

In her analysis, Spivak has examined the contradiction embedded in the Kantian version of modernity: Kant argues for both freedom and restriction to check freedom.

When the imperial structures attempt to represent the colonized societies, they fall into methodological traps of Western understanding of modernity. The Western theoretical designs cannot address the distortion that has occurred in the history of colonized societies. Chakrabarty (2002) has stated that European frames of

reference do not suffice to address the challenges of representation in colonial societies, for the colonizer and the colonized have their unique intellectual traditions. As he critically observes, "Capital and power can be treated as analytically separable categories. Traditional European-Marxist political thought that fuses the two is therefore always relevant but inadequate for theorizing power in colonial-modern histories" (2002, p.13). Intertwining capital and power into a single entity, the Western approach to modernity fails to distinguish between them. The methodological inadequacies do not allow colonized spaces to stand in their distinct ways. Reading Indian history, Chakrabarty (1992) has explored that only the hyperreal constructions of the Empire gauge Indian modernity (p. 1). After the Independence, Indian scholarship was focused on rereading the historical representation of India in colonial discourses by sifting through the biases that defined India as the location of 'lack,' 'absence,' and 'inadequacy.' Hence, he proposes that self-representation has to practice the strategies of "provincializing Europe" (1993, p. 26) by bringing their societies to the center of the discourse of representation.

The colonizers employed knowledge as a tool to rationalize the principle of domination in the colonial context. The native people were never treated as the source of knowledge; rather, it was created by the outsiders and imposed upon them. Chatterjee's analysis (1983) centers on Indian peasants who are presented in colonial history as people who have no ability to change their circumstances. Analyzing the mode of domination in colonial bureaucracy, he argues that the ruling people passed statements about the ruled and it served as a form of knowledge for them, serving two purposes: firstly, it justified their domination; and finally, it helped maintain their order. Chatterjee state:

> The process of domination produces its own requirements for knowledge about the dominated… this knowledge about

the social conditions of the dominated locates the fact of their subjugation within a framework of causality where the 'limitations' of subaltern consciousness, its 'archaic' and 'pre-modern' character, its very emptiness - the 'lack' of consciousness becomes the explanation for their subjugation. (1983, p. 62)

Devoid of any volition, the peasantry turns into a force to serve the ruling elites and justify the order. The colonial narratives represent peasants as hollowed-out people who live at the mercy of their colonized masters. In the narratives of the binary between the master and the slave, the negative portrayal of the slaves helps establish a positive image of the masters and dehumanizes the ruled. In the colonial mindset, distortion of the image becomes an absolute necessity as it weakens the ruled and strengthens the image of the rulers. While Chatterjee has analyzed peasantry, Viswanathan (2003) has historically read the issues associated with the construction of Hinduism in India. She identifies that people had heterogeneous practices involved in giving shape to Hinduism during the imperial rule in India (p. 33). By focusing on Sati and caste practices, European scholarship promoted the image of Christianity as a way of redemption in India. Implicitly, the production of such knowledge embedded a political goal to show Indian culture as inferior.

The homogenizing tendency of singular modernity distorts the picture of the colonized people and their society. Firstly, the West assumes that it is the measure of modernity. Secondly, the colonized societies must exhibit their features to attain a modern state. Sen (2005) argues that the singular perspective of Western modernity does not allow one to highlight the heterogeneity of Indian society because Western rationality celebrates oneness and singularity as a rule (p.168). Differences among societies result from time, space, and cultural norms in practice. They have different historical experiences in quest of better social organization; they

encounter various unique experiences; and they experience their own form of modernity. Chatterjee (1997) has stated that different social circumstances produce different types of modernity that vary from one place to the other (p. 8). The colonial representation of the colonized has distorted the inner qualities of the people and their society. Postcolonial readings must revise the picture.

Distortion of the image also occurs through the exercise of biopower. A singular approach to modernity places Europe at the center and treats the colonized societies as its satellites. The methodological apparatus of the West helps the bureaucratic institutions to scribe a particular set of codes in the body and inner conscience to inculcate ideology to support their rule. As Prakash argues, "Indeed, colonial governmentality was founded on the notion that the body in India was a peculiarly complex effect of the environment, habits, beliefs, and knowledges" (2000, p. 206). Besides, he has pointed out that Western colonial discourses claimed the colonized societies to have turned into disabled agents that produce "pale copies of their metropolitan original" (p. 191). The colonial administrators injected negative attributes into the body of the ruled and promoted a weak self-perception, robbing away from the possibility of rising as the agent of change. Denial of agency serves the colonial rule as the exercise of biopower forecloses the colonial subject. In other words, it functions as a way of legitimizing through denial. Spivak (1999) has also treated the colonial subject as a native informant who is trapped in foreclosure of discourses. Such an act meets two purposes: firstly, it creates the colonial subject; and finally, it helps the colonizers to establish themselves (Prakash, p. 4). Though the creation of native informant also refers to representation, it reveals the Western attitude to the colonized societies. The source of data is treated as a nullified subject who passively transmits data to the master.

Colonial encounters have seriously impacted Indian societies. The structural limitations set and the misreading of the

people and their quest have resulted in the depiction of cultural values and social organization in the most negative ways. The colonial discourses also viewed Indian people as anthropological objects that represented the European past: actually, India had become a victim of European nostalgia. Indian people have appeared as the construction of European imagination, losing their agency in the historical narratives from India. Postcolonial reading of the colonial past reveals the biases that South Asian modernity have to sift through in contemporary times. Modern historians and social scientists have approached minor historical events in a new light to examine the agency and quest of people for human liberation. Such design rejects the transcendental analysis of European singular modernity that treats modernity outside Europe as other and assumes that people residing in non-European locations are devoid of any agency. The peasants and lower-class people have contributed to the formation of modern India; however, they are never duly treated in the historical annals of the colonial masters. South Asian modernity require rewriting the colonial history and revisiting representation in the colonial discourse.

Colonial discourses also blur the image of women. As they become a mere native informant, colonial discourses derive data about them and their society from them and treat them as objects. Analyzing the case of Bengal, Chakraborty (1993) has addressed the question of the representation of gender in colonial reform programs that aimed to equip women with autonomy. He works on biased perceptions of the colonial discourses as he finds that Bengali women enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy in the past. As he has claimed, "... there is evidence to suggest the existence of relatively autonomous domains for women which the coming of a print-culture may have significantly eroded" (1993, p. 3). Nonetheless, the colonial system of knowledge employs misrepresentation to politically dominate and justify the acts of colonial masters. In

addition, Prakash (2000) has located the epistemic violence at the kernel of colonial modernity: the empire rewrites the colonial self while producing knowledge about the colonized society. As he has critiqued, "Colonial modernity was never simply a 'tropicalization' of the Western form but its fundamental displacement, its essential violation" (2000, p. 190). The misrepresentation of Indian people emanates from the imperial setup of colonial modernity: it wants to resize the people in the image it desires to see.

The issue of misrepresentation lies in the European demarcation between pre-industrial and industrial order. After the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century in Europe, the people used a different kind of schema to view social development: they began to treat the revolution as a point of departure for a new order. In addition to it, the study of sociology also has been instituted in the same period in Europe. European sociology and the rise of imperialism collide with each other, supporting each other's mission. However, the practice of postmodern reading that values the local began in the 1970s did not pay much attention to the role of grand narrative in approaching modernity. Bhambra (2011) has viewed that the 1970s brought about a break in the approach to Eurocentric modernity. It challenged the grand narrative structure of the West that was produced and propagated right from the nineteenth century. Therefore, Bhambra concludes:

> Since the 1960s and 1970s, knowledge claims in the social sciences and humanities have been under pressure from the rise of subaltern positions and an explicitly recognized politics of knowledge production that has questioned the possibility of objective knowledge. This pressure has been expressed in terms of suspicion toward positivist explanatory paradigms and their presumed associations with power, with a shift from causal explanation to reflexivity, deconstruction, and interpretation and with arguments for the necessary demise

of grand narratives. (2011, pp. 653-4)

Postmodern ways of viewing reality posed a direct challenge to the ethos of colonial discourses because representation was diversified now. People began to explore multiple ways to look at the issues of representations of self and others: the Eurocentric approach of singular modernity just became one of the multifarious ways of dealing with the ways of societies coming to the evolving spirit of the present. South Asian modernity now begins to seek new approaches to analyze history and social development to recreate and rewrite their self.

Postcolonial societies sift through the violence used upon them to create knowledge about them. In this process, the colonial rulers treated them as mere native informants and applied force at two levels. Biologically, the people have become sites to apply force and give a new direction, as Prakash (2000) would call it 'biopolitics.' Epistemologically, they are objectified in the colonial discourses, and narratives are circulated. By applying such kind of coercion, the ruled are (mis)represented in the narratives of the empire. The people lose real social agency and volition to action. Such depiction does not allow them to take up any means to fight back against them. By inculcating a particular type of picture about themselves, the rulers could justify their presence in India and also pacify the native people. As one of the most effective strategies, othering helps the empire to segregate the natives and push them to the margin: it safeguards the imperial interests. The fundamental challenge for South Asian modernity lies in identifying the historical spots where violence has been used to create a prototype image of the locals. South Asian modernity applies the contextual reading of history, society, and literature to rescue misrepresented people through rewriting and recreation. In this paper, I have read two literary works by Rudyard Kipling: "The Other Man" (1886) and "Gunga Din" (1890).

The Colonized in Kipling's Writings

English novelist, short story writer, and poet, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) has written extensively about colonial India. His writings present how the native people were othered in the colonial discourses. The present analysis has taken his short story "The Other Man" (1886), and his poem "Gunga Din" (1890). "The Other Man" tells the story of a native man and woman who cannot marry each other and happily settle for themselves. Ms. Gaurey and the nameless man fall victim to poverty, while British Colonel Schriederling marries the girl who is thirty-five years junior in age. The short story demonizes the colonized subject, while Kipling's "Gunga Din" raises the glory of native people to a great height. Gunga Din helps everybody in the army, and he is not afraid to sacrifice himself to serve the colonial masters. The colonial discourses on the colonized distort the real self and turn them into unearthly ones.

Kipling's "The Other Man" (1886) dehumanizes the colonized subject by presenting him in the most destitute state of life. Set in the 1870s, Kipling weaves the narrative of two native youths falling in love. However, their relationship breaks when the beloved marries a British army officer. As Kipling narrates,

> … her parents made Miss Gaurey marry Colonel Schriederling. He could not have been much more than thirty-five years her senior; and, as he lived on two hundred rupees a month and had money of his own, he was well off. He belonged to good people, and suffered in the cold weather from lung-complaints. (1890, p. 87)

The author names both the mother and the daughter with "Gaurey"; still, he does not provide the background information to understand the context of the marriage. The story indicates that she is from a poor family, and her parents are ready to get her married to Colonel Schriederling for his money. The story tells of a nameless native Indian who loses his beloved. The author discusses Gaurey's

mental state by saying that she was not happy. As the story unfolds,
Still, Mrs. Schreiderling was not happy. They married her when
she was this side of twenty and had given all her poor litter heart to
another man. I have forgotten his name, but we will still call him
the Other Man. He had no money and no prospects. (1886, p. 87)
The first man in Gaurey's life is named the Other Man, while the
second man (Schreidering) occupies the position of the primary
person in her life.

Kipling's poem "Gunga Din" (1890) presents a water-carrier
at the service of the British army. The poem divinizes Gunga Din for
his service to the Crown. Also, Isani (1977) has argued that Kipling's
Gunga Din must have served the Sepoy mutiny of 1857 in India.
As he has written, "The poem appears to have emerged from an
account of the brave conduct of the native 'followers' of European
regiments during the Indian Mutiny of 1857" (1977, p. 83). Isani
indicates the political function of the narrative of the colonizer in
that such narratives inspire other people to equally serve the cause of
the colonial master. Kipling introduces Gunga Din as the finest man
he has ever seen. He writes that while he was working in India's hot
climate, he found Gunga Din serving the Crown in the capacity of
water carrier. As he further describes, "Of all them blackfaced crew/
The finest man I knew/ Was our regimental bhisti, Gunga Din" (1890,
lines 10-12). The inner virtue and the outer form do not match in
the person when the poet begins to portray him as a beggar. Gunga
Din appears in the most piteous way when Kipling states,

> The uniform 'e wore
> Was nothin' much before,
> An' rather less than 'arf o' that be'ind,
> For a piece o' twisty rag
> An' a goatskin water-bag
> Was all the field-equipment 'e could find.
> When the sweatin' troop-train lay

> In a sidin' through the day,
>
> Where the 'eat would make your bloomin' eyebrows crawl,
>
> We shouted 'Harry By!' (1890, lines 18-27)

Just like "The Other Man," the poem delves into the lack of an Indian subject who does not have property. He lives a poor life. The negative portrayal helps the colonial master establish their domination by rationalizing that they have come to implement reformation programs to rescue the people suffering in the circumstances of their lives.

The short story indicates that both lover and beloved most intensely suffer the tragedy. The sweeping presentation treats as though it was a farce that had happened in their life. Kipling quickly covers the story of the marriage between Colonel Schreiderling and Miss Gaurey when he says:

> The daughter did not take after her mother. She never cried. Not even at the wedding.

> The Other Man bore his loss quietly, and was transferred to as bad a station as he could find. Perhaps the climate consoled him. He suffered from intermittent fever, and that may have distracted him from his other trouble. He was weak about the heart also. Both ways. One of the valves was affected, and the fever made it worse. This showed itself later on. (1886, p. 88)

The story shifts its focus on the perception of the British Colonel rather than on the parting lovers who seem to be unable to live in the absence of each other. The colonial discourses spotlight the masters, thereby ignoring the pains and suffering of the native people. The whole story appears to uphold the narration about Mr. Schreiderling. As Kipling has narrated, "When she ceased being pretty, he left her to her own devices, and went back to the liars of his bachelordom" (1886, p. 88). The Colonel is not happy with the ways of his wife because "Schreiderling said that if he had known that she was going to be a such a scare-crow after her marriage,

he would never have married her" (1886, p. 89). The story fails to explore the most telling aspects of human life by emphasizing the irrelevant Colonel's perceptions of life, for the colonial discourses cherish the master's experience.

"Gunga Din" also presents the perception of honesty and dedication in the native people. The master's perceptions explore the inner being of the colonized in the poem. As Schirato (1994) has claimed,

GUNGA DIN is a classical Orientalist text, then, precisely because the binaries and markers of difference that have been discussed, and the valuations that are tied to them, are never in any way probed or problematized. On the contrary, the basic tenets of Orientalist discourse (the moral, physical and intellectual superiority of the West over the Orient) inform virtually every aspect of signification in the film, which ensures that the main narrative (the suppression of an outbreak of 'Orientalism') is played out without any significant recourse to notions of the politics of colonialism. (p. 49)

Through the innocence of the native people, the superiority of the colonial masters is established to perpetuate domination. When the persona is hit with a bullet, Gunga Din carries him to a place of safety. As the poem shows,

I shan't forgit the night
> When I dropped be'ind the fight
> With a bullet where my belt-plate should 'a' been.
> I was chokin' mad with thirst,
> An' the man that spied me first
> Was our good old grinnin', gruntin' Gunga Din.
> 'E lifted up my 'ead,
> An' he plugged me where I bled,
> An' 'e guv me 'arf-a-pint o' water green. (1890, lines 52-60)
> Though the words seem to depict a savior through Gunga

Din, he has simply appeared through the imagination of the colonial master who celebrates the service of the native people. Rather than praising Gunga Din, the poem attempts to establish a narrative about what makes the master happy.

In "Gunga Din," the water -carrier dies while serving the British Crown. He is portrayed as the most obedient helper in the battle. He serves the British force, sacrificing his life. The persona says that Gunga Din takes him to a place of safety after he is hit with a bullet. As he further writes, "'E put me safe inside, / An' just before 'e died, / 'I 'ope you liked your drink,' sez Gunga Din" (1890, lines 72-74). Mrs. Schreiderling finds the dead body of the Other Man in a tonga. As Kipling narrates, "Sitting in the back seat, very square and firm, with one hand on the awing-stanchion and wet pouring off his hat and moustache, was the Other Man -dead" (1886, p. 89). Mrs. Schreiderling loses her mind in the shock of losing the Other Man. She rides on her horse hoping to see him again. After two years, she also dies (p. 91). In both texts, the native people die, serving the colonial masters. The colonized people are turned into functions in the master narratives of the colonial discourses in which the image of native people is distorted and deformed.

As examples of dehumanizing the colonized subject, "The Other Man" and "Gunga Din" showcase the ways of dealing with the native people in literary writings. The colonial masters occupy the center stage in both texts and marginalize the native people. The texts illustrate the principle of domination embedded in the imperial ideology. Since singular modernity has always cherished the marginalization of the natives and distortion of their image, South Asian modernity encounters the major challenge of identifying the wrongs committed upon the native people during the colonial period and fixing them through the recreation of self-image and rewriting the historical narratives. Neither the Other Man nor Gunga Din are depicted with an agency that can enforce change in their society

and their lives: they appear in the texts to serve the master and die completing their assigned duty. The colonized subject has turned into a function in the colonial discourses.

Conclusion

As a web of complex value systems, literature allows the play of divergent values to emerge and interact with each other. Since colonial rule has shaped a large portion of the South Asian value system, a greater complexity is observed in its modernity as well. As Mohanty (2011) has explored, South Asian modernity has faced greater complexities because the social phenomena have been greatly shaped because of the presence of the empire. Hence, he has argued,

Instead of identifying modernity with what colonial rule brought with it—and choosing to either accept it in its entirety or reject it outright—many in the colonized world defined modernity for their times through their complexly mediated critiques of their own social traditions, both the old and the newly invented ones. (2011, p. 3)

Without a complete evaluation of the challenges that emanate from the system and the traditional values playing pivotal roles, South Asian modernity cannot be approached from the right angle. The colonial representation requires critique to examine its methodological limitations and contextual biases since South Asian modernity requires that it overcome both factors to reconstruct a new narrative of self-representation in a new light.

South Asian modernity evolved to fight with the sense of loss from its colonial past. On the other hand, the cultural productions also sought the purity of the past, which was free from any type of cultural contamination from colonial encounters. Implicitly, it indicates that South Asian modernity reapproaches the past through the contemporary lens to critique both methods and resources as

available in the annals of colonial history. The colonial narratives establish that the Other Man and Gunga Din did not have any voice of their own to fight against the masters. However, contemporary reading rejects such claims and questions about the political goal of the texts by giving them contextual reading. Also, such reading helps to reconstruct a new narrative by explaining the reasons for the creation of a particular type of people in the 1880s and 1890s in Kipling's story and poem.

Furthermore, the tradition becomes a resource to celebrate in the postcolonial context, for it allows a review of the colonial narratives to examine the use of violence. Das (2000) has analyzed Satyajit Ray's movies as she stated, "Geeta Kapur has critiqued Ray's position as characteristic of a subjectivity that is suffused with romantic nostalgia in which value is only in the past, while it resides in the present only as private sensibility" (p.186). South Asian modernity revisits the colonial past on the one hand and its own tradition on the other because it seeks to balance its critique of both ends while seeking to establish its own image, immune from the misrepresentation of the colonial past and narcissistic obsession with its own past as the repository of all kinds of knowledge as well. Rewriting history takes into account the people who have been pushed to the margin in the past. As they move to the center with voices, the subaltern challenges the authority of the elite. New approaches adopted by South Asian modernity celebrate the presence of the subaltern people in the analysis and interpretation of texts. Chatterjee (1983) points out that serious critical attention is necessary to locate an autonomous domain for subalterns while rewriting Indian history. As he has claimed,

To deny autonomy in this sense and simply to assert that the subaltern classes are 'deeply subjugated' is to deny that they represent a distinct form of social existence; it is to merge their life into the life-history of the dominant classes. (1983, p. 59)

96

The shift in understanding of historiography enhances South Asian modernity by exploring autonomous categories that can independently challenge prevailing notions about class, history, and social order.

When South Asian modernity is approached through representation, it demands us to revisit how it was practised in the past. The singular modernity enforces Eurocentrism as a rule to view the development of societies that lie outside its geographical boundaries. Such interpretations end up producing invalid explanations. In heterogeneous contexts of South Asia, modernity embraces certain fundamental questions related to methodology as well. The colonial inadequacies demand serious attention for two reasons: firstly, the prevailing understanding has been shaped by the discourses; and finally, acceptable methodological apparatuses have to be employed to generate a new form of knowledge about self and reject hitherto established claims. South Asian modernity revisits representation in colonial discourses of the past to reconstruct a narrative about itself at present through recreation and rewriting.

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