

# The Influence of Anxiety: A Study of the Postcolonial Memory and its Influence on the Indian Postcolonial Research

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Volume 36, numéro 2, hiver 2019

Histoire d'émotions : saisir les perceptions, penser les subjectivités

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1066843ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1066843ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Cahiers d'histoire

ISSN

0712-2330 (imprimé)

1929-610X (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Das, R. (2019). The Influence of Anxiety: A Study of the Postcolonial Memory and its Influence on the Indian Postcolonial Research. *Cahiers d'histoire*, 36(2), 17-35. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1066843ar>

Résumé de l'article

*My paper, is the compilation of the research findings obtained from interviews taken of various Postcolonial scholars. It spans the three generations of Postcolonial scholars including myself. It involves the study of two kinds of memory: firstly, the acquired memory or the memories that these scholars have, either from their own first hand experiences or from the information they had received from their forefathers who had the direct experience of this colonial past; secondly the collective formative memory or the memories they formed as a postcolonial nation from their school books, popular culture, film, theatre and literature. My paper aims to trace as to what extent, if at all, the effect of such colonial hangover has an impact on their research works. My paper would primarily be addressing the issue of the influence of colonial memory from three perspectives: the impact and result on the first generation Postcolonial scholars who grew up just at the brink of Indian independence; the impact and result on the second generation Postcolonial scholars who grew up during 1980's and 90's and who had access to the colonial memories from the oral narratives of their forefathers; the impact and result on today's Postcolonial scholars who hardly have any colonial memories except what they had obtained from the text books and popular media. The result has some autobiographical elements as being a Postcolonial scholar myself, I have not been beyond the studies.*

## The Influence of Anxiety: A Study of the Postcolonial Memory and its Influence on the Indian Postcolonial Research

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**ABSTRACT** *My paper, is the compilation of the research findings obtained from interviews taken of various Postcolonial scholars. It spans the three generations of Postcolonial scholars including myself. It involves the study of two kinds of memory: firstly, the acquired memory or the memories that these scholars have, either from their own first hand experiences or from the information they had received from their forefathers who had the direct experience of this colonial past; secondly the collective formative memory or the memories they formed as a postcolonial nation from their school books, popular culture, film, theatre and literature. My paper aims to trace as to what extent, if at all, the effect of such colonial hangover has an impact on their research works. My paper would primarily be addressing the issue of the influence of colonial memory from three perspectives: the impact and result on the first generation Postcolonial scholars who grew up just at the brink of Indian independence; the impact and result on the second generation Postcolonial scholars who grew up during 1980's and 90's and who had access to the colonial memories from the oral*

*narratives of their forefathers; the impact and result on today's Postcolonial scholars who hardly have any colonial memories except what they had obtained from the text books and popular media. The result has some autobiographical elements as being a Postcolonial scholar myself, I have not been beyond the studies.*

**I am eternally indebted for your support,  
my Grandmother, Sabita Das**

PREAMBLE

As scientists would say:

The memory formation and retrieval depend critically on attention to features of information during encoding and the relevant cues during retrieval. Furthermore, cultural preferences for object versus context, individual versus group-based information, or different emotional States will certainly influence the aspects of experiences that are incorporated into memories<sup>1</sup>.

In other words, whether culture forms memory or memory forms culture, might be a chicken or egg paradox. Rather, my paper, that is a result of the empirical study, involving memory studies and oral narratives (namely the interviews) would argue that it is a simultaneous, dynamic and evolving process that has a unique impact on each individual who had undergone the anxiety of the influence of his or her acquired colonial memory. To refer back to one's own memory, simultaneously, as the foundation of one's social beliefs and as the baseline for his or her future

1. Joshua O. Goh and Denise C Park, "Culture Sculpts the Perceptual Brain", in Juan Y Chiao, ed., *Cultural Neuroscience: Cultural Influences on Brain Function*, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 2009, p.147.

scholarly endeavors, involves the complex process of organizing one's postcolonial memory in certain order: for example, locating the exact moment of the acquired knowledge of the colonial past; the formation of the composite memory as the result of various such acquired knowledge; the change in the perceived memory, following the current memory of the postcolonial truth and so on. Nevertheless, my article, that deals with the influence of the anxiety, sprouted up from one's memory (be it first hand or acquired), delves deeper into the memories of the Indian postcolonial scholars, including my own; and it aims to dig out the array of influences that might be visible, unique in each of the cases, among the postcolonial scholars of the different generations.

Perhaps it all started with the guinea with which my grandfather saw my face after my birth. (A traditional Indian ritual of seeing the newborn baby's face with something precious). It was my grandfather's prized possession that he had received from his grandfather who apparently received it from some British officer as a token of his loyalty to the queen and the British throne. To look back today, it feels ironical—how silently but unmistakably the long-gone Empire seeps into the system of the postcolonial psyche. Majority of the Indian Postcolonial scholars aged between twenty to seventy, do not have any first hand or primary colonial memories. Before they could come to know even of the names of Franz Fannon, Homi Bhabhha or Edward Said, they have heard the stories of Mrs. Stevenson aunty who gave their great grandmother some *bilaiti* (imported) essence or porcelain home decors; or they have heard the stories of Mr. Francis who got his knees locked while trying to eat meal following the Indian style, sitting on the floor, with their grandfathers.

My paper, which intended on being an empirical research on the impact of the acquired memory of the colonial past on the present-day Postcolonial research, seemingly turned out to be a saga of emotion and sentiment related to the ambivalent memory of the Indian colonial past. The study of memory is,

in itself, a study of paradoxes; as it involves the questions as to who will remember what and how and why they will remember so. Nietzsche says that a person's memory may be the result or suggestion of another memory, which makes itself felt in heredity, development and forms. And he further deals with the question as to how much one needs to remember for one's cultural identity and how much one can afford to forget in order to process the plethora of data that he or she is continuing to store in memory in order to shape that cultural identity<sup>2</sup>. But, I would go further than this, and would argue, that understanding the emotional impact of the colonial memory, we need to delve deep into the very nature of the individual memory and the collective memory. Following Mary Warnock's argument that the memory as a sense of continuity through time is the intrinsic part of one's identity; one can say that without memory, in the full sense of recollection no identity can be formed<sup>3</sup>. But beyond this individual memory, there lies the panorama of the collective memory. Maurice Halbwachs says that, in the due course of time, memories are constructed by social groups and eventually they determine what is memorable and how it is to be remembered<sup>4</sup>. That is why the collective memory is more prevalent than an individual memory and once an individual identifies him/herself with that group, he or she shares the collective memory. In this course, one can remember many things that s/he did not experience directly. And as J. Assman points out that whatever knowledge of the past we store in our memory from the first or second hand experiences and what we resuscitate out of those memories are actually our cultural construct<sup>5</sup>.

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2. Friedrich Nietzsche and Anthony Ludovici, "The will to power: an attempted transvaluation of all values". n°. vol. 2 *Complete works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, New York, Gordon Press, 1974.

3. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

4. Mary Warnock, *Memory*, (1<sup>st</sup> edition) London, Faber & Faber, 1988.

5. Jan Assman, "Memory Culture", *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridgeshire, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp.15-70.

*THE RESEARCH*

To elucidate the emotional reaction to the colonial memory amongst the Postcolonial scholarship, my paper has tried to identify the layers in which such memory operates. For the purpose of my research I have asked three questions to the Postcolonial scholars, professors and thinkers whose ancestry belonged to the region of Bengal in undivided India (today known as West Bengal, India and Bangladesh). They mostly belong to the middle to upper middle class of economic background and none of them is a first-generation literate. My study, instead of aiming towards producing a factual chart sheet with statistical data, became a record of the emotional reactions which, like emotion itself, is raw, random and simultaneous. The questions that were asked were:

- When did you first become aware that there is something called Postcolonial studies?
- What kind of acquired colonial memories do you have?
- How do you think, as a Postcolonial scholar, such colonial memories have affected your scholarship?

The Postcolonial thinkers and writers I have interviewed have been chosen as convenient sampling. They are all demographically located in present day Kolkata; however, the PhD scholars I have interviewed belong to different parts of the country. Those scholars who had been born at the dawn of Indian independence and had grown up during 1940's and 50's, are segmented as the first-generation Postcolonial scholars. Among them, there are Professor Krishna Sen, Professor Dipendu Chakraborty, and Professor Indranee Ghosh. Prof. Sen is a retired Professor and Head of English, University of Calcutta. She has been Ex-Leverhulme Professor of English at University of Leeds in 2008; Visiting Professor at University of Vermont and Nippon Fellow at the Salzburg Seminar; and was Fulbright-NEH Fellow at UCLA and George Washington University. Sen has numerous Postcolonial publications with Routledge, Blackwell, Penguin, Thompson

Gale, Cambridge University Press, Amsterdam University Press among others and she has edited several books on the same topic. Presently, she is a Visiting Professor at the University's Women's Studies Research Center and is affiliated to research groups at University of Oslo and International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden, The Netherlands; and is Consulting Editors for Journal of Transnational American Studies published jointly by Stanford and UC Santa Barbara. Professor Dipendu Chakraborty is Eminent thinker and scholar of Postcolonial studies, and he has mentored programs on postcolonial studies and supervised many Postcolonial scholars in their PhD programs. He is Retired Professor of English literature of University of Calcutta, India, and he has been honored with Professor Gurudas Banerjee Chair. He is the author of *Shakespeare er Songe Kichukhon* (Few Moments With Shakespeare), *Kumbhakarnar Deshe o Onnanno probondho* (In the Country of Kumbhakarna and other Essays) *Ora o Era* (They and Us), *Poetry of the Day and Poetry of the Night*, *Zerodio* (novella). Professor Indranee Ghosh is a retired Professor of Indian College Service Commission. She is a postcolonial scholar and thinker and is associated with activities for underprivileged section of society and welfare of women and children. She is the author of *My Homage to All* (Zubaan, Delhi, India, 2013), a book based on the life of an actress from the early days of Indian cinema.

COLONIAL MEMORY AND SCHOLARSHIP ORIGINATING IN 1950'S:  
THE FIRST GENERATION AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE

Professor Krishna Sen, a renowned scholar and author of the Postcolonial studies including that of the book, *Writing India Anew*, has something very interesting to offer on the subject from her memory. Being born at the thresholds of Indian independence, she not only has collected memories of the British Raj from her near relations; but also has some memories with the residue British civilians in India. Born in a middle-class family, (what Sen

calls Macaulay's breed as this section of the society appeared due to Thomas Babington Macaulay's minute on Indian education)<sup>6</sup> in mid 1940's Calcutta India, Sen had an ambivalent response to her colonial memories. Sen's paternal grandfather Raibahadur Shashanka Kumar Ghosh received the Companion of the Indian Empire medal, because of his loyal service to the British empire during the famous court case of Bhawal. The case of Bhawal was, perhaps the most sensational case in the pre-independence India. It was a case that ran for almost twenty years, has a deep implication in the history of the British Indian juridical system<sup>7</sup>. The case involved the prince of the estate of Bhawal, Ramendra Kumar Roy who had apparently been dead and cremated in 1909; but had returned in 1920 claiming his position as the prince of the estate. Therefore, it was a matter of a great pride to deal with such case for an Indian pleader like Raibahadur Shashakha Kumar Ghosh. In fact, the title *Rai Bahadur* used to be conferred upon by the British Government in India as a gesture of appreciation towards the loyalty shown by the Indian colonial subjects. Sen's maternal grandfather was Priyanath Guha, the first and, at that time, the only Indian to work at The Statesman in the post of Assistant editor-the highest position an Indian could ever reach. Sen narrates how the British Government issued arrest warrant

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6. In his infamous Minutes on Education in India, Macaulay favoured Western education over the traditional Indian one and for this, he has been often quoted by the Postcolonial critics: "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.", *Macaulay's Minutes on Education in India: Written in the Years 1835, 1836, and 1837 and Now First Collected from Records in the Department of Public Instruction*, ed. C. B. Lewis, London, Baptist Mission Press, 1862.

7. One of the most talked about and sensational case of the colonial India. The dead Kumar reappeared as a *Naga Sanyasi* (monk) after more than a decade when some of his relatives, especially his wife, refused to identify him as the Kumar and hence appealed to the court against him. This resulted in a series of long court cases involving renowned English judges, thus making it an event of importance in contemporary sociopolitical scenario. It finally ended in the 1946 (a year before Indian independence that would slowly proceed towards the abolition of the princely states in India), in favour of the Kumar, but his wife Bibhabati Devi still refused to take him for Kumar. Ironically, after two days of the verdict, the Kumar died and the forensic report confirmed that he actually was the dead Kumar. See. *The Bhowal Case Judgement: High Court Judgements*, Ed. S. C. Das Gupta, Calcutta, S. C. Sarkar & Sons Limited, 1946.



against Priyanath Guha because of his anti-British book *Jajna Bhanga*. It was, in a way, sensational and quite dangerous for a service holder in the British colonial-mouthpiece newspaper—The Statesman—to write a book like *Jajna Bhanga*. The book gave an elaborate detail about the political anarchy rampant during the Bengal partition of 1905:

The free and unrestricted use of lathis by the Police in broad daylight under the orders of the District and Assistant district superintendents of police on the delegates assembled to welcome Mr. A-Rasul, the President-elect, and the arrest of the arrest of Babu S. N. Banerji, one of the leaders, without any reason have conclusively proved that lawful administration has ceased to exist in the district of Barisal<sup>8</sup>.

This was, in no uncertain terms, an open challenge to the colonial administration—an act that a very few people would dare to commit, risking his or her secure financial career and, most importantly, life. Priyanath Guha exactly did that and as a result he incurred the wrath of the British Government. But, interestingly, he was ultimately saved, not by any of his Indian friends, but by his British colleague friends who worked in the same newspaper company. Sen's memory of her maternal grandfather's brave act, which, by today's standard of nationalist movement, would be deemed as a revolutionary step towards the Indian independence; is, in fact, a memory of an act, committed, not against any race, but against the injustice practiced by the British colonial system. In fact, the issues Guha became vocal about, in his book, were also supported by many other Englishmen in India, who, like Guha, believed in fair ruling and fair governance.

Sen, as a child has fond memories with his father's British colleagues and their families. Thus, her postcolonial memories are not myopic as to perceive itself from the singular perspective of the colonizer-colonized relationship; rather, as reflected

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8. Bengal Provincial Conference, 1906, Barisal Session, ed. Nityapriya Ghosh, Calcutta, Press KLM Private Ltd, 1978.

in her works, her memories are about human emotions, where one person is judged by his or her personal merits—not by his or her colonial background. While the common middle to upper middle-class people were appreciative of the discipline and supposedly better administration of the British Raj; they were aware of the coercive and selfish nature of such system. Yet, they were neither pro nor anti to their imminent colonial experiences. For Sen, colonial memory is a grey area that is fraught with the dialectics of emotions. Because of her ambivalent position as a Postcolonial scholar, she finds herself, and the section of society she represents in the rubrics of the Postcolonial studies, being ousted and condemned in the works of Franz Fanon, or that of G. C. Spivak or in any subaltern studies, for that matter<sup>9</sup>. Yet, through her own works, her colonial memories prompt her to question and, sometimes, even dismiss any of the postcolonial extremist positions that tries to paint the colonial memory as either entirely black or entirely white.

But for Professor Dipendu Chakraborty, another Postcolonial scholar, the postcoloniality is an extended form of the colonial domination. Chakraborty says, that in the purview of the colonial trauma of today's postcolonial sentiment, "it is nothing but a case of match-fixing between the benevolent intelligentsia of the ex-colonizers and the recipients of their accolades namely the Indian writers in English."<sup>10</sup> His memory is more conflicted than merely being that of an emotional trauma felt aftermath the end of the British Raj. As a postcolonial thinker, he finds his emotional reaction to be that of a scholar who is torn between his apparent situational memory of the amicable coexistence of the colonizers and the colonized and his acquired memory of the colonial oppression and injustice. Chakraborty talked about a collective memory of those who, like him, were born during the early 1940's India and had a thorough awareness towards the

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9. From the interview conducted on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2018, India.

10. From the interview conducted on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018, India.

contemporary sociopolitical world view—they could not possibly overlook the monstrosity of the colonial mechanism.

According to Chakraborty, the colonial memory of his generation is the memory of a dream of an ideal independent India and that of the endeavor to realize that dream. His father was a staunch supporter of the British Government and he grew up hearing the profuse eulogy for the British Raj. Yet, belonging to a family of avid readers, Chakraborty was exposed to the works of the revolutionary thinkers like Karl Marx or Friedrich Nietzsche. His childhood and early adulthood learning made him question, not only the efficacy of the then-gone British Raj, but also the effectiveness of the system that succeeded the British colonial rule in India. The “dreamers”<sup>11</sup>, as Chakraborty would put it, of his generation, inspired by their acquired memory of the colonial past and the knowledge of the contemporary revolutionary present; wanted to proceed towards building a self-reliant nation of economic equality and justice—a nation, very different from that of their colonial memories. This, as Chandrika Singh points out, was a common sociopolitical consciousness growing among the youth in the post-independence India<sup>12</sup>. Such conviction in a better future of social equality and justice led the youth like Chakraborty towards being the active parts of the communist and socialist movement of India.

For Chakraborty, the reflection of his colonial memory upon his Postcolonial scholarly thoughts is spattered with the scars of disillusionment and unfulfilled expectations. “No matter how much we become progressive in our studies of Postcolonialism,” as Chakraborty puts it, “we still belong to an extended form of colonialism—this time a cultural and a psychological one.”<sup>13</sup>

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11. *Ibid.*

12. Chandrika Singh, “Communism in Post-Independent India Until its Split: A Run from Military Path to Parliamentary Route”, in *Communist and Socialist Movement in India: A Critical Account*, Calcutta, Mitali Publications, 1987, pp. 101–128.

13. From the interview conducted on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2018, India.

The Cultural colonization is an integral part of the post-colonial memories for Professor Indranee Ghosh too. Author and Postcolonial Scholar Ghosh, being brought up in Shillong, India, had a life of mixed culture. Her father, as he was a British Government servant, had ample British friends who frequented Ghosh's household in social occasions. She too grew up, as Chakraborty and Sen did, hearing from her forefathers the same admiration and praise for the then-gone British Raj. Ghosh, as she herself mentions, had never questioned the existence of the British Raj in India till she was in her undergraduate level of education. She became consciously aware of the negative impacts of the Raj only during her Postcolonial studies, when she could see through the sugarcoating of the apparent feel-good factors of the Colonial system. As Ghosh puts it, "the whole picture of the palpable effects of the colonial mechanism was only visible from an eagle-eye view of which the common Indian people were fairly unaware, they could just see the pieces of the jigsaw as they are now seeing in the case of the greater schemata of the cultural colonization."<sup>14</sup> As a scholar, Ghosh, so were many in her generation, was busier with the then-current events like students' movement in Paris, protest against Vietnam war, or with the imminent communist and socialist movement in Bengal and India at large, than with the apparently settled business of the colonial affair. As Ghosh puts it that it was a kind of "intellectual vogue"<sup>15</sup> to think about and fight for those current local and global issues of the time. Now that she looks back, she feels that such intellectual fights had a certain sense of mission of bringing about the "positive change"<sup>16</sup> into the world—a sense quite similar to the feeling that the Indian nationalists felt during their fight for the independence.

The Postcolonialism as a specific branch of study only started flourishing in the late 1970's to 1980's and became popular in

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14. From the interview conducted on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2017, India.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

India only during 1990's—a time when Ghosh was in her late thirties. Revisiting colonial memories in the new light of the Postcolonial theories was a deliberate process for scholars like Ghosh. As she puts it, that much of a “rethinking and reprocessing” was required in order to review the acquired colonial memories at the advent of the Postcolonial theories<sup>17</sup>. The postcolonial emotions, therefore, only surfaced through her writings at a much later stage of her life, where there it mainly focused itself on the characteristics of “the anti-establishment rebellions”<sup>18</sup>: be it the resentment against the ex-colonizers' governing policies and the political stances towards India or the grudge towards the failed ideals and hope for a better self-governed postcolonial India.

*COLONIAL MEMORY AND SCHOLARSHIP ORIGINATING IN 1990'S:  
THE SECOND GENERATION*

Colonial memories in terms of the Postcolonial studies have a whole new meaning for the present-day scholars like Dr. Sudipto Sanyal<sup>19</sup>. Sanyal is the grandnephew of the famous freedom fighter Sachindra Nath Sanyal—the master mind behind Kakori Conspiracy Case (1925) one of the noteworthy episodes of Indian independence movement. It was a train robbery that took place between Kakori, near Lucknow, on 9 August 1925, in order to aid the Nationalist movement. Sachindra Nath Sanyal was the founder of the Hindustan Republican Association that was created to carry out armed resistance against the British Empire in India. He was the mentor for revolutionaries like Chandrashekhar Azad

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17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. Visiting fellow of cultural studies, American studies at Jadavpur University, Postcolonial writer, has several journal and newspaper publications on Jewish and Chinese diaspora, researcher of colonial history and its impact on Bengal.

and Bhagat Sing<sup>20</sup>. He was extensively involved in the plans for the Ghadar Conspiracy, a plan to initiate a pan-Indian mutiny in the British Indian Army in February 1915 to end the British Raj in India.

Being born in a household with so much anti-colonial history, Sanyal grew up with a very strong sentiment against the colonial past of India. Born during 1980's, he retains his colonial memories from whatever he had heard from his grandmother (who was an eyewitness to the freedom struggle that was going on in the Sanyal family). His acquired colonial memories are far less ambivalent than they are of Chakraborty, Sen and Ghosh. Sanyal, a postcolonial scholar as well as a faculty member of the department of cultural studies, a columnist in different Indian newspaper; finds his postcolonial sentiments very much in tune with the anti-colonial theories of the Indian nationalist movements. As Sanyal himself says, he had always been harboring very much of an anti-colonial sentiment, since his very tender age—even before he could read about the British oppression and colonial hegemony in the history textbooks in school. His inherited memories (more than the acquired memories) of the colonial past that shares the glory of fighting for the freedom of one's own country; have a prominent impact on his writings; especially when he is writing about the current sociopolitical and economic state of the country. Unlike the scholars of the previous generation, Sanyal cognitively believes that his memories do affect his Postcolonial scholarship and he thinks that the postcolonial studies have a deeper functional significance in shaping the global psyche—more than that of merely being a theoretical doctrine of the academia. For Sanyal, the memory is less about the injustice and oppression that scarred the collective

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20. Azad and Singh were two eminent names in the Indian freedom movement. Both were martyrs to their cause of freeing the country. Azad (his original surname was Tiwari, he. Amex himself "Azad" or free) died during a shoot-out by the British police to curb the Indian nationalist movement. Singh was sentenced to death by the British Government. He is still considered to be a nationalist hero, a legendary figure in India.

memory of the colonial past; than it is about a memory that involves a certain glory of fighting against those injustice and oppression. His writing, enriched with the acquired colonial memory, presents a systematic and comprehensive criticism of the contemporary sociopolitical scenario of India in regard to the expectations and ideals with which India once had fought against its past colonial existence. For scholars like Sanyal, who shared memory, not only of a mere colonial past, but also of the struggle against it; find their scholarly works as an extended part of their emotional retaliation towards the colonial past—a past filled with injustice and oppression that has spread its tentacles even in today's time when the oppression of colonizers versus colonized has metamorphosed into the sociopolitical oppression between the postcolonial social classes in India—very much like the cycle of violence described by Frantz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*<sup>21</sup>.

The scholars of Sanyal's generation, even if their forefathers were not directly associated with the nationalist movement of Indian independence, share a strong postcolonial memory against the British colonial mechanism. One of the reasons for this is the post-independence cognitive formation. Starting from the Indian school syllabi, to the Indian cinema—all are replete with the strong nationalist sentiments. From a very young age, children are taught about the significance of the Indian Nationalist movement. In schools, national flags are hoisted on the Independence Day, and the republic days are celebrated as a reminder of the good fortune that the present generation enjoys by being born in a free country. The school books recount the stories of the martyrs who have given their lives to make India free; they talk about the torture that British colonizers hurled upon the poor indigo farmers or on the helpless Indian maharajahs. Even the popular culture is replete with such Nationalist sentiments. Indian cinema has produced many films with strong nationalist sentiments including the films on the lives of the freedom fighters

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21. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Groove Press, 1963.

or on some memorable chapters of the Indian nationalist movement. Between the year 2000 and 2006, there had been no less than seven films based on the India's nationalist movement, were released. Among them, four were based on the life of the freedom fighter Bhagat Singh (three of which were released in the same year, 2002)<sup>22</sup>. Till the 90's the portrayals of the central negative character were often modelled after the supposed image of the ex-colonizers: blonde wig, foreign accent, affinity towards debauchery and cruel treatment of the poor and deprived ones; while the hero was represented as the epitome of the patriotic sentiments and idealism—resonating the characters of the nationalist leaders. Such social narrative, often, forms an incomplete notion of the colonial past, resulting in an acquired colonial memory that fails to comprehend an inclusive picture of India's colonial existence.

Interviews with scholars like Barnali Chanda<sup>23</sup> and Debarati Chakraborty<sup>24</sup> indicates the similar problematics where their colonial memories, gained from the forefathers, were superseded by the memories gained from the school text books, theatre and cinema. Chanda and D. Chakraborty, both are Postcolonial scholars who have been actively taking parts in raising the Postcolonial awareness through their writings, talks, and arranged symposiums.

22. There had been numerous Indian films (including regional and Bollywood) that glorified the freedom movement of India. They either highlight the lives of the freedom fighters who died as a martyr to their cause of making India independent; or the tyranny, oppression and shame that India as a colonized nation had to tolerate. Some such recent films are: Mangal Pandey: The Rising (2005) The Hero: Shaheed (1965) The Hero: The Legend of Bhagat Singh (2002) The Heroes: 23 March 1931: Shaheed (2002) The Heroes: Sardar (1993) The Hero: Chittagong (2012) Khele Hum Jee Jaan Se (2010) Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose (2004) Veer Savarkar (2001) Rang De Basanti (2006).

23. Postcolonial scholar of Sanskrit and Indian studies and Ancient Chinese Studies; author of "Asian Lands: A View from Bengal" (An Annotated Bibliography of a Century of Travel Narratives to Asian Lands in Bangla), Jadavpur University press, (2009) and Tellings and Retellings: Strange tales of Medieval China, Jadavpur University press, (2015).

24. Faculty in the Centre for Studies in African Literatures and Cultures, Postcolonial Studies, Jadavpur University and Joint Secretary of Oral History Association of India (OHA), India correspondent of International Oral History Association (IOHA).



D. Chakraborty, being Joint Secretary of Oral History Association of India (OHAI), and a faculty of Postcolonial studies, finds it absolutely imperative that the colonial memories would influence one's postcolonial thoughts as a scholar. Belonging to a family that was affected by Indian partition of 1947, she finds that scholars like her "cannot view their present, overlooking their memory of pain and trauma of the colonial past that ultimately surfaced as a macabre truth of the partition of India."<sup>25</sup> Yet, for both Chanda and D. Chakraborty, it is difficult to point out the moment of their Postcolonial awareness as to when they started forming their anti-colonial sentiments. It is not possible for them to separate their memory of the acquired knowledge from the textbooks, films, theatre; from the memory of the acquired knowledge from the oral narratives of fear and colonial oppression heard from their forefathers.

*COLONIAL MEMORY AND SCHOLARSHIP AS IT IS EVOLVING TODAY*

Similarly, fifteen candidates who have just joined their PhD programs in Postcolonial studies in different universities of India have been asked the same three above mentioned questions. Most of the participants (thirteen out of fifteen, and other two could vaguely remember their great grand uncle or aunt; but could not remember acquiring any colonial memories from them), being in their mid-twenties reported that they hardly ever had interacted with anyone who had first hand memory of the colonial period. Rather their acquired memory of the colonial past is derived from their parents or grandparents who also acquired their memory secondhand—not as eyewitnesses to the colonial past. In other words, these scholars are two generations away from the direct memory of the colonial past. In spite of some fragments of the acquired memory of the British and Indian unproblematic cohabitation, these scholars have more impressive recollection of the colonial humiliation and atrocities—learnt

25. From the interview taken on 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2018, India.

from the textbook and popular entertainments—very much like Chanda and D. Chakraborty. To the question as to the impact of their colonial memory on their Postcolonial scholarship, ten of the fifteen candidates said that they felt a strong motivation to peruse postcolonial studies since their undergraduate level of education, as they felt they could “associate”<sup>26</sup> themselves with the topic of their research. They feel that they are also the carriers of their colonial past, to which they can do justice through their Postcolonial scholarships. One candidate said: “Since we belong to a world where we often are identified with our colonial past and are known as the members of an ex-colony; the need to put our records and history straight in front of the world is absolutely necessary; and that we try to make possible by expressing our postcolonial thoughts through our Postcolonial studies.”<sup>27</sup>

Being a Postcolonial scholar myself, I am not beyond the scope of my own research. Hence, I come back where I began. My experiences. My grandmother’s father being an officer in British Indian railways, was in regular and amicable terms with the so-called colonizers. My grandmother had her childhood spent in Mrs. Stevenson’s house, along with her white children and my grandmother still cherishes her fond memories of those days as well as she proudly displays her collections of the porcelain made figurines of *sahibs* and *memsahibs*<sup>28</sup>—gifts received from Mrs. Guinness or Mrs Eaton. My grandfather was an employee in the Metal Box India Limited (established in colonial India in 1933, was an England based company with its British parent, Carnau Metal Box) and had been a favorite to his white English boss Mr. Francis. Till his last days, my grandfather kept on repeating the funny anecdote as to how, once, Mr. Francis got his knees locked while he tried to eat sitting on the floor—as he was attending an invitation in our ancestral home in Aheritola, North Kolkata. Though, the white skin British

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26. From the survey result: conducted December, 2017, India.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Terms used for the white skin European or American.

*sahibs* were *mleccha*<sup>29</sup> in a Hindu Bengali household, Mr. Francis was an always-welcome guest. The mother of my grandfather, Nanibala Devi, who was a staunchly orthodox Hindu woman (would bathe seven times if, anyone belonging to other caste or religion, accidentally, would cross her way), would cook *payesh* (famous Bengali dessert) for Mr. Francis.

As often is quoted in the history books; like the many other fellow citizens of the colonial India, none of my ancestors was beaten to death for not being able to pay tax to the White *sahib*; none of my forefathers was not allowed in a British household or club where, on the door, the tag, “dogs and Indians are not allowed”, supposedly would have been hanging. Yet, my memory of the colonial past was more than of the guinea that I had received at my birth, rather it was about the history of Jallianwala Bagh (1919)<sup>30</sup> or about the Bengal famine of 1943<sup>31</sup>. Because, like, Chanda, D. Chakraborty or other postcolonial scholars, I had more of acquired colonial memory gathered from the text books or from the popular entertainment than had from the heard stories of the leisurely spent evening, over tea with a British officer’s family. I share, what Halbwachs calls “the collective memory”<sup>32</sup> of my colonial past and it, indeed is reflected in my choices of word, sentiment and even the subject of research and study.

To conclude, it can be said that the Postcolonial memory of the colonial past, with all its trauma and resistances, is too complex a trope to be generalized in an umbrella term. It is an experience unique to each individual with his or her own collected

29. Anyone belonging to any other cast, religion and country was considered as *mleccha* according to the strict religious term. See. Ed. Alon Goshen-Gottstein, *The Religious Other: Hostility, Hospitality, and the Hope of Human Flourishing*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018, p. 108.

30. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre, also known as the Amritsar massacre, took place on 13 April 1919 when troops of the British Indian Army under the command of Colonel Reginald Dyer fired rifles into a crowd of Baishakhi pilgrims, who had gathered in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, Punjab.

31. Engineered by British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in which 1.5 to 4 million people died of starvation.

32. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

memories—as unique as is its effect on his or her individual scholarships. Postcolonial studies, like the human emotions, are living and dynamic thing. It gets affected by the anxiety of the emotional influence. In other words, Postcolonial memory, both in academia and day-to-day life, is all but a cluster of emotions, experienced by those who had the legacy of the colonial past. This memory would continue to evolve, affect and reconstruct the postcoloniality as long as these Postcolonial emotions would be felt, thrived and revived.