

**ENVISIONING INDIA:
SOUTH ASIANS, EXHIBITIONS AND
THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATION
IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND
EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the envisioning of India through two different but related exhibitionary forms: it examines the record of South Asian experiences of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 and the organisation of exhibitions hosted by the Indian National Congress in the subcontinent between 1901 and 1905. Through a detailed analysis of a range of related primary sources, including contemporary South Asian travel narratives, Indian National Congress proceedings, and local publications such as the *Times of India* and *Indian Textile Journal*, this thesis investigates the ways in which South Asians, specifically those who could be considered urban elites, constructed the modern Indian nation in relation to their visiting and organising of these exhibitions. Deploying the critical frameworks of the study of the history and theory of Great Exhibitions, which, in turn, are informed by postcolonial theories, the thesis reveals the ways in which South Asians disseminated the idea of modernity but also, importantly, the ways in which they negotiated, complicated and, in part, made these imperially inflected ideals their own.

This study offers a re-reading of Sydenham and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 through the specific lens of South Asian visitors who published travel narratives in the 1880s and 1890s. At the Congress exhibitions of 1901-1905, South Asians appropriated, reworked, and subverted exhibitionary forms originally found at Sydenham and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition to suit their developing local agendas. Through their experiences of exhibitions, South Asians, especially the urban elites, moved from being visitors to material makers, and from being recipients to active participants. With the exception of analyses offered by Peter Hoffenberg and Arindam Dutta, the Indian National Congress exhibitions, the first of their kind to be primarily organised and managed by South Asians, have been little discussed to date. Building upon existing scholarship relating to the exhibition of India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this thesis widens received understandings of Indian nationalism by addressing the emerging movement through the critical lens of display. Exhibitions served as catalysts for the public in the Indian subcontinent to debate issues that shaped Indian nationalism, such as the representation of the Indian subject, design, education and entertainment, sanitation and public health, and the relationship between swadeshi and industrial development.

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I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

4 April 2015

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Exhibition and Nation

On the 26th of December, 1901, the first annual exhibition associated with the Indian National Congress opened in Beadon Square, Calcutta. The exhibition pavilion was decorated with electric lamps, flags, bunting, hanging curtains, palm trees and other brightly coloured foliage; groups of musicians were stationed throughout the platforms and pavilion, “discoursing sweet music.”¹ Opening day commenced with a choir of fifty-eight men and boys from various regional and religious backgrounds, led by Miss Sarola Devi Ghosal, singing “Hail Hindustan!” Hundreds of people crowded around the exhibition pavilion in order to witness the regal procession of the Congress Chairman of the Reception Committee, the President elect, and past presidents, introduced by warders dressed in gold embroidered red silk sashes and long staffs in hand with flags flying at their tops.

After this rousing ode, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Moharaja Jagadindra Nath Roy Bahadoor, took to the podium to officially open the exhibition:

We have opened an Industrial Exhibition in connection with the Congress, which, I hope, will in future be a permanent feature of our annual meeting. We cannot live in ignorance of the supreme importance which industry has assumed in modern civilization. In these days every political question is at bottom an economic one. It seems that hence forward markets are to be the battle-fields where destinies of nations will be decided. With the average European, it is a fixed idea that in the pre-established harmony of the Universe, Europe is to sell and Asia to buy. But we cannot help feeling that our thoughts and energies cannot be better employed than in the work of effecting a revival and development of our industries. The Exhibition that we have got up cannot fail to be useful in that it will keep the industrial problem

¹ *Detailed Report of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Indian National Congress, held at Calcutta, on the 26th, 27th, & 28th December, 1901* (Calcutta: Wellington Printing Works, 1902).

before our eyes; and the poverty of the show will impress us with the “little done and vast undone”.²

This scene sets the stage for the central focus of this thesis, which examines the role of exhibitions in relation to modernity and nationhood for South Asians in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Exhibitions in Britain and India offered opportunities for South Asians to consider the relationship between the economic and the political, to envision an India based on her own economic development, and to make conscious efforts to bring modernity to the subcontinent. This thesis examines the construction of the modern Indian nation in relation to its exhibition. Bahadoor’s speech reveals the ways in which exhibitions monitor industrial progress. I examine how exhibition forms negotiate meanings of nation and modernity through the ways in which the modernising project of the Indian National Congress was rearticulated through display.

This study traces the interests of the Indian National Congress through the exploration of visitor experiences as well as the forms of exhibition themselves, back to the Crystal Palace at Sydenham and Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 and through to the hosting of exhibitions attached to meetings of the Indian National Congress between 1901 and 1905 in the Indian subcontinent. South Asian urban elites moved from being visitors at exhibitions in the metropole to becoming their material makers with the Congress exhibitions. I have chosen to use the term “South Asians” rather than “Indians”; during the period covered in this study, the term “Indian” referred to peoples across the Indian subcontinent, including modern-day Pakistan and Bangladesh. I use the term ‘South Asian’ because it is a more inclusive

² *Detailed Report of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Indian National Congress held at Calcutta, on the 26th, 27th, & 28th December, 1901.*

term, which reflects how the term ‘Indian’ was used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This study has a dual focus: it offers a re-reading of Sydenham and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 through the specific lens of South Asian visitors who published narratives of their travels in the 1880s and 1890s. The historical period covered in this thesis is between 1870, when South Asian travel writers began to visit exhibitions in the metropole, and 1905, which marked the high point of the swadeshi movement and the Congress exhibitions. The focus of this thesis, however, is the period after 1885, when most South Asian travellers visited Sydenham and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, and in the 1890s, when several of the South Asian travel accounts were published and circulated on the subcontinent. These visitors navigated imperial discourses of civilisation and progress and circulated exhibitionary ‘forms’ through their narratives.³ The second half of this thesis examines the ways in which ideas of modernity and nation discussed by these travel writers were appropriated, complicated, and adapted at the Congress exhibitions to suit local agendas, and, in part, how these exhibitionary forms were integrated with local traditions.

South Asians visited exhibitions and published their accounts during the latter part of the nineteenth century when British rule was well established, especially after Queen Victoria was made Empress of India in 1877. The British government instituted changes in infrastructure in India, especially in communications and transport, with the laying of telegraph cables, roads, and railways in order to facilitate the export and import of goods. With these new changes, however, also came sweeping famines. The Great Famine of 1876-78 in

³ The concept of exhibitionary forms are based on what Tony Bennett calls the “disciplines and techniques of display.” Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” *New Formations* 4 (Spring 1988): 74.

Southern India had a particularly devastating impact on the subcontinent.⁴ High levels of taxation led to agricultural indebtedness, economic stagnation, “investment paralysis and social tension.”⁵ By the end of the nineteenth century, exports of raw materials from India to Britain had risen dramatically, while goods and raw materials were imported into India at inflated prices, further increasing poverty throughout rural villages and towns. Epidemics of the bubonic plague and cholera spread across Bombay and into western and northern India from 1896 until 1914.⁶ Meanwhile, India was continually featured in exhibitions both in the metropole and in the subcontinent, including the 1851 Great Exhibition, 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, and the 1883 Calcutta Exhibition, as Britain’s crown jewel of empire. Displays of raw materials represented the financial possibilities of production for Britain’s benefit, while handicraft manufactures, ethnographic models, and jewels further exoticised the representation of India.⁷

In the 1870s and 1880s, several local nationalist organisations and associations were founded in the subcontinent. The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, was one of these organisations, and its members included prominent South Asian lawyers, journalists, teachers, and merchants often described as urban elites.⁸ Their major vision of the Congress was the idea of subsuming family, caste, and regional interests in the service of an overarching nationalist identity with shared economic and political interests. It is these South Asians, for the most part urban elites, who travelled in the late nineteenth century and their travel

⁴ Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997) 304.

⁵ James, *Raj*, 194.

⁶ James, *Raj*, 357.

⁷ Lara Kriegel, “Narrating the subcontinent in 1851: India at the Crystal Palace,” *The Great Exhibition of 1851: new interdisciplinary essays*, ed. Louise Purbrick (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) 150.

⁸ Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 179.

narratives, written and published in English, are explored in this thesis. Those that organised and hosted the Congress exhibitions in the first decade of the twentieth century came from the same culture and background as those who were also at the forefront of the nationalist movement. Most were high-caste Hindus, but there were also Parsi, Christian, and Muslim travel writers, and this thesis considers them as a group. Some of the travellers, including Awatsing Mahtabsing, Lala Baijnath, Jhinda Ram, Ghanasham Nilkanth Nadkarni, and Romesh Chunder Dutt, were also Congress representatives.

During the 1900 Congress session, in which Bahadur indicated the future role exhibitions would play in the Indian National Congress, officials decided that an industrial exhibition would be attached to the annual meetings starting in the following year. From 1901, the exhibitions opened with the Congress meetings at the beginning of December, and remained open until the middle or end of January. The Congress exhibitions, which were the first to be organised and staged by South Asians, featured industrial machinery, handicrafts such as leather goods and metalwork, raw materials, and agricultural machinery and products of India, as well as exhibits of fine art and other objects from Britain.

Between the 1880s and 1905, the Indian nationalist movement was characterised by what historians have termed ‘moderate’ nationalism.⁹ Moderate nationalists, like those who travelled and wrote about Britain and exhibitions in the metropole, fell within a spectrum of political inclination, as some held more explicitly anti-colonial views than others but most believed in ideas of British civilisation, education, and progress. Moderates argued for administrative and

⁹ Moderate nationalism was often framed against more ‘extreme’ nationalist measures, including the boycott of British goods, and the small proportion of those who used violence. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 98-9.

constitutional reform, and as Sumit Sarkar notes, they aimed to attain “colonial self government.”¹⁰ These South Asians used the colonial language of industrial and material progress to envision another way forward for India.

Thus, this study focuses on the period of moderate nationalism between the late nineteenth century and 1905. After the partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon, the tenor of the Congress proceedings moves from misgivings about British imperial rule to a vision of an independent India, and the establishment of independence movements after 1907. The development of Indian nationalism in the post-World War I era, and the anti-colonial and nationalist movements associated with Gandhi, have been the subject of much critical debate.¹¹ This thesis widens received understandings of Indian nationalism through an exploration of the historical period immediately prior to the partition of Bengal, via an examination of the essential roles that exhibitions played in the development of this emerging movement. The majority of scholarship on the Indian National Congress itself focuses on the political, economic, and social histories, developments, and legacies of the Congress. There is little information on the role of exhibitions in the Congress meetings and their cultural impact is rarely studied in terms of political history. Objects are not necessarily seen as important as other types of documents. This study has, therefore, placed a neglected resource into debates on the making of the Congress and their vision of nation. Furthermore, exhibitions served as catalysts for

¹⁰ Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* (New Delhi: People's Publishing Press, 1973) 37.

¹¹ There is a wealth of scholarship on the history, development, and impact of the Indian National Congress, including its complex relationship with the British. See C.A. Bayly, *The Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929-1942* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Harish P. Kaushik, *Indian National Congress in England* (Delhi: Friends Publications, 1991); John R. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1977); and Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

the public in the Indian subcontinent to debate issues that shaped Indian nationalism, in particular those of modernity, material progress, and industrialisation.

1.2 Literary World of the Urban Elites, c1890-1905

This thesis explores a series of sources through which the world view of a South Asian urban elite was constructed in the 1890s until 1905. These include the travel narratives and South Asian newspapers written in English and published in major urban centres. It is important to note that some South Asian travel narratives were compiled from collections of articles submitted to local newspapers that were published shortly after their visits to Britain, Europe, and America; therefore there was considerable overlap between newspapers and South Asian travel writing, especially in their readership. Newspapers proliferated in the subcontinent after the 1860s, and many achieved high circulation because of an efficient postal and railway system.¹² Benedict Anderson underscores the importance of newspapers in the development of the nation, or the “imagined political community.”¹³ As Anderson suggests, readers were “connected through print, [and] formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community.”¹⁴ Print culture, including, as this thesis suggests, South Asian travel narratives, was important in the rise of Indian nationalism.

The periodicals examined in this thesis include *The Times of India*, a Bombay-based and politically conservative newspaper that circulated British and

¹² James, *Raj*, 355.

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006) 6.

¹⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 46. The development of nationalism and its creation of the ‘nation-state’ was expounded upon by scholars such as Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), all of whom consider the widespread growth of nationalism and the mechanisms that foster national identity.

Indian news widely and into the “remotest regions” of India¹⁵; *The Hindu*, the politically moderate newspaper from Madras; the leftist and more radical Bengali newspaper, the *Indian Mirror*; the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, edited by prominent Muslim social reformer Syed Ahmed Khan and a proponent of Western education in the subcontinent; and the *Indian Engineer* based in Calcutta, which was also politically moderate and centre-leaning. Bengal-based and politically left-leaning *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, alongside the rather more anti-colonial *The Mahratta* (Poona), posed problems for the Indian government who were “concerned” with their political influence.¹⁶ The vernacular newspapers examined in this thesis, such as the *Pratikiár* and *Bangabási*, were, by and large, often anti-colonial. By 1905, English language newspapers had a readership of approximately two million and the vernacular press collectively over 800,000.¹⁷ Many of the English language newspapers employed “Special Correspondents”: South Asians were tasked with visiting the exhibitions and writing lengthy reports for the benefit of the readership. These periodicals typically published articles on South Asian, British, and worldwide news on a range of subjects including politics, religion, philosophy, arts, and education. Articles appeared alongside advertisements for a range of products and services, from concrete tiles and watch-makers to the newest and latest products from chemists, such as cures for diabetes, syphilis, and cholera. This study also references the *Indian Textile Journal*, which closely followed the developments of the Indian National Congress exhibitions. Established in 1890, the journal declared itself to be

¹⁵ Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India, c. 1880-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) 103.

¹⁶ Kaul, *Reporting the Raj*, 129. Native newspapers in India had to contend with a number of issues, especially after the introduction of Lord Canning’s Gagging Act in 1857 and especially Lord Lytton’s Vernacular Press Act of 1878. This act, which was later repealed in 1881, curtailed the ability of vernacular newspapers to voice criticism of British rule. See also J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel, eds. *Periodicals of Queen Victoria’s Empire: An Exploration* (London: Mansell, 1996).

¹⁷ Kaul, *Reporting the Raj*, 101.

the “representative publication for the textile and engineering industries. The first and only Journal of its kind in the East.”¹⁸ The *Indian Textile Journal*, which was widely circulated, was published monthly in English and vernacular languages in Bombay; it was jointly edited by John Wallace and S. M. Rutnagur. The publication was available for subscription in India and Britain.

The other major source for my analysis are “Euroimperial”¹⁹ travel narratives, written by South Asians, which provide key insights into the formation of Indian modernity and early forms of nationalism at Sydenham and the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. While there is an extensive critical literature on colonial travel writing, South Asian travelogues have increasingly been of importance to those interested in exploring the perspectives of colonial subjects themselves.²⁰ The travel narratives are also part of what Mary Louise Pratt’s terms “contact zones,” which are “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.”²¹ These travelogues focus on the experiences of South Asians within the metropole, where the travellers interacted with imperial constructs of civilisation and progress. Some scholars have suggested that the travelogues “foreshadowed an ‘India’ that soon would openly resist the Raj, led by those who had traveled to and studied in

¹⁸ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Indian Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, 1906,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Sept. 1906: 357.

¹⁹ Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996) 3.

²⁰ For an analysis of travel writing by colonial subjects, see “Travellers’ Tales: Alternative Traditions,” *Wasafiri* 34 (Autumn 2001). There is much scholarship on travel writing and empire, including *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992); *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, ed. Steve Clark (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993); and *Travel Writing and the Empire*, ed. Sachidananda Mohanty (New Delhi: Katha, 2003).

²¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992) 4.

Britain.”²² Others, like Inderpal Grewal, have considered the many different types of travel for South Asian men and women and the ways in which travellers appropriated European colonial discourse in order to remake ideas of gender and identity.²³ Antoinette Burton considers the resistance, response, and accommodation of South Asian colonial travellers in the metropole as they challenged the imperial gaze in the “heart of the empire.”²⁴ She suggests that “their narratives provide historical evidence of how imperial power was staged at home, and how it could be interrogated by ‘natives.’”²⁵ Burton’s consideration of colonial resistance provides the point of departure for this thesis.

Chapters Two and Three use examples from a range of travelogues but focus primarily on the narratives of seven travellers. These travellers, who visited Britain in the 1880s and published in the 1890s, provide a unique insight into the complex ways in which South Asians appropriated and complicated exhibitionary forms for their own purposes at Sydenham and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. The experiences of Lala Baijnath and Jhinda Ram at Sydenham are the particular focus of Chapter Two. Baijnath, author of *England and India: Being Impressions of Persons and Things, English and Indian, and Brief Notes of Visits to France, Switzerland, Italy, and Ceylon* (1893), was a member of the North-West Provinces Judicial Service and author of books on legal issues and social reform in Hindu society.²⁶

²² Julie Codell, “Reversing the Grand Tour: Guest Discourse in Indian Travel Narratives,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70.1 (March 2007): 188.

²³ Grewal, *Home and Harem*.

²⁴ Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); 127-146; Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles. Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travellers in Fin-de-Siècle London,” *History Workshop Journal* 42 (1996): 127-146; and Burton, “A ‘Pilgrim Reformer’ at the Heart of the Empire: Behramji Malabari in Late-Victorian London,” *Gender and History* 8.2 (August 1996): 175-196.

²⁵ Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles,” 128.

²⁶ Lala Baijnath, *England and India: Being Impressions of Persons and Things, English and Indian, and Brief Notes of Visits to France, Switzerland, Italy, and Ceylon* (Bombay: Jehangir B. Karani, 1893).

Notes on his travels were originally published in local newspaper *Indian Spectator*. Ram, author of *My Trip to Europe*, was a Pleader in the Chief Court of the Punjab.²⁷ His travelogue was also composed of a series of letters previously contributed to the *Lahore Tribune*. Ram argues in his Preface that his travelogue, unlike others written by his “countrymen,” does not “pretend to be a guide to the traveller, nor even what an Indian might for or in his trip to Europe.”²⁸ Rather, he writes, “it may beguile a few idle hours of the idlers of India.”²⁹ Nandalala Dasa also published his narrative, *Reminiscences, English and Australasian. Being an account of a Visit to England, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, Ceylon*, in 1893.³⁰ Originally from Calcutta, Dasa was a member of the London Missionary Society and had also travelled to Britain in the early 1880s; he dedicated his narrative to William Blomfield, the Director of the London Missionary Society. Prominent social reformer Behramji Malabari was a Parsi who published *The Indian Eye on English life: or, Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer* in the same year as Baijnath, Ram, and Dasa.³¹ Malabari wrote tracts on social issues, which introduced matters of class, and worked closely with early nationalist leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji and Dinshaw Wacha.³² He proclaims in his travelogue that he was a follower of Romantic writers Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.³³

The texts of Ghanasham Nilkanth Nadkarni and Trailokya Nath Mukharji are considered in conjunction with each other in order to illustrate the ambiguities of colonial discourse when used by colonial subjects. Nadkarni was a University Fellow

²⁷ Jhinda Ram, *My Trip to Europe* (Lahore: Mufid-i-am Press, 1893).

²⁸ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, Preface.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Nandalala Dasa, *Reminiscences, English and Australasian. Being an account of a Visit to England, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, Ceylon* (Calcutta: Herald Press, 1893).

³¹ Behramji M. Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life: or, Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer* (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1893).

³² Burton, “A ‘Pilgrim Reformer’ at the Heart of the Empire,” 182.

³³ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, Preface.

and Pleader in the High Court of Bombay; he stated that his work, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896* (1903), was a copy of his diary written during a six month tour of England and Europe.³⁴ Mukharji, who has been the subject of much scholarship, was a member of the Department of Revenue and Agriculture in Bengal.³⁵ Unlike many of the other travel writers, he was specifically sent to England by the Government of India to assist with the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 as an “Indian expert.”³⁶ His travelogue, *A Visit to Europe* (1886), was compiled from weekly accounts in the newspaper *Indian Nation*, which he wrote largely from memory with the help of “cards of invitation, catalogues and guide-books.”³⁷

Finally, the famous nationalist Romesh Chunder Dutt published his travelogue, *Three Years in Europe*, in 1896.³⁸ Dutt wrote his travelogue while a student at University College London between 1868 and 1871. He later published it as a “guide-book for Indian youths intending to visit Europe.”³⁹ Dutt was one of the first South Asians to earn a position in the Indian Civil Service, and was well known for his literary and historical writings in the subcontinent, including the seminal two-volume work, *The Economic History of India*.⁴⁰ Dutt was an anti-colonial nationalist leader and prominent member of the Congress, and his writings illuminate the complexities of moderate nationalism at the Congress exhibitions. Some of these figures, including Lala Baijnath, Jhinda Ram, Ghanasham Nilkanth Nadkarni, and

³⁴ Ghanasham Nilkanth Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896* (Bombay: D.B. Taraporevala, 1903).

³⁵ For more on Mukharji, see Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian. Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (London: University of California Press, 2007); Joseph Childers, “Outside Looking In: Colonials, Immigrants, and the Pleasure of the Archive,” *Victorian Studies* 46.2 (Winter 2004): 297-307; and Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

³⁶ T.N. Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe* (London: Edward Stanford, 1889).

³⁷ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, Preface.

³⁸ Romesh Chunder Dutt, *Three Years in Europe* (Calcutta: S.K. Lahiri, 1896).

³⁹ Dutt, *Three Years in Europe*, Preface.

⁴⁰ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 181.

Romesh Chunder Dutt, were involved in the Congress during the period of their exhibitions in the early twentieth century. Dutt oversaw the exhibitions held in 1905 in Benares and served as President of the 1899 Lucknow Congress session. Both Baijnath and Ram were delegates for the Indian National Congress as representatives for the North-West Provinces. Baijnath was present at the 1893 session, and Ram was present at the Twenty-First Session of the Indian National Congress, held in 1905 in Benares.⁴¹ These figures play a central role in this thesis. Their discussions of exhibitions in the metropole, disseminated through their narratives, helped lay a foundation for the development of the modern Indian nation. Their writings also influenced the staging of the Congress exhibitions in the early twentieth century.

1.3 Sources on Exhibitions

This thesis, as other studies of nineteenth-century international exhibitions, deploys Foucauldian concepts of discourse to analyse South Asian accommodations and resistance at the Crystal Palace, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, and the Indian National Congress exhibitions.⁴² Exhibitions are often understood as sites of knowledge and therefore as sites of power.⁴³ This thesis examines how South Asians worked within this framework as they travelled through exhibitions in Britain,

⁴¹ Shaheda Gufran Zaidi and A. Moin Zaidi, eds., *Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress, Volume Four: 1901-1905: On Road to Self-Government* (New Delhi: Chand, 1978).

⁴² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972) 219-228. See also Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997) 44.

⁴³ For scholarship on nineteenth century displays read as sites of power and knowledge, see Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex,"; Timothy Mitchell, "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order," *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992, 289-318); Sylvi Johansen, "The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Precipice in Time?" *Victorian Review* 22.1 (Summer 1996): 59-64; and Louise Purbrick, ed., *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

circulated their travelogues to readers in the subcontinent, and as they hosted their own exhibitions as a means of creating and disseminating knowledge.

Studies of nineteenth and twentieth century international exhibitions, including this thesis, have also drawn on the work of Edward Said.⁴⁴ Exhibitions, with their emphasis on the collecting, organising, classifying, and explaining of objects, are representative of Said's notion of an imperial archive. Said's formations, particularly the binary constructions of "East" and "West," are important in this study even when they are not sustained, for they help understand colonial subjectivities as these subjects navigated complex relations between colonising powers and the colonised peoples in the metropole.

Leon Litvack's reformulation of Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry⁴⁵ is useful for identifying colonial mimicry at the Congress exhibitions, which I read as subversive. Litvack, who works with histories of Great Exhibitions, suggests that colonial mimicry is a "process of replication" whereby a work adopts a colonial form, but "what is produced is not a perfect copy of the original, but rather a hybrid, imbued with the potential for subversion."⁴⁶ Litvack is one of many scholars to take up Bhabha's formulation for its subversive potential in colonial resistance movements, and to examine its role in "intersecting axes of difference, such as

⁴⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Much has been written in response to *Orientalism*, including by Said himself in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993). A number of critics have criticised Said's formulation of the development of a 'West' and an 'East,' which they argue fails to recognize the complexity of the cultures involved, as well as the range of responses and practices between the 'coloniser' and the 'colonised.' See Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism* (London: Pearson, 2006); Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and Unsaid* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); David Atwell et al., eds., *Debating Orientalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Mary Roberts and Jill Beaulieu, eds., *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (London: Duke University Press, 2002).

⁴⁵ Homi Bhabha's definition of mimicry suggests that colonial subjects constructed identities to 'mimic' the language, dress, beliefs systems, and attitudes of the colonial power. Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (1984): 125-133.

⁴⁶ Leon Litvack, "Exhibiting Ireland, 1851-3: Colonial Mimicry in London, Cork and Dublin," *Ireland in the Nineteenth Century: Regional Identity*, eds. Leon Litvack and Glenn Hooper, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000) 32.

sexuality, gender, and ethnicity.”⁴⁷ For South Asians, the knowledge and power associated with a visitor to an exhibition were no longer out of their reach. The simple binaries of subject/object and East/West played out in a more ambiguous way as they were altered and subverted by the urban elites in order to present themselves as progressive. Ideas of mimicry work best when South Asians were ‘at home’ in the staging of their Congress exhibitions.

Histories of the Great Exhibitions are wide-ranging, and many are dedicated to exploring their form as imperial.⁴⁸ While the Great Exhibition of 1851 has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly literature, the moment at Sydenham is less well known. This thesis aims to develop the frameworks of exhibition outlined by Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter Hoffenberg.⁴⁹ Jeffrey A. Auerbach’s *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation in Display* examines the process of giving meaning to the exhibition and also the multiplicity of meanings that circulated between Henry Cole, other organisers, manufacturers, the press, and the visitors. Auerbach also suggests that the exhibition “was a battleground in which different groups within Victorian society fought to present their vision of what sort of nation Britain should be.”⁵⁰ This complexity of meaning was also the case for South Asians visiting exhibitions in the metropole, and in the staging of their own displays in the subcontinent, as they debated ideas of Indian progress, industrialisation, and

⁴⁷ Parama Roy, *Indian Traffic: Identities in Question in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 12. Elleke Boehmer complicates notions of mimicry in order to focus on “colonial self-expression through networks of resistance which is consciously decentering.” Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Shefali Chandra analyses the role of mimicry and gender and the expansion of the use of the English language in the subcontinent in “Mimicry, Masculinity, and the Mystique of Indian English: Western India, 1870-1900,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68.1 (Feb 2009): 199-226.

⁴⁸ See Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*; and Curtis M. Hinsley, “The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893,” *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Stephen D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1991).

⁴⁹ Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); and Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*.

⁵⁰ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 3.

modernity. Congress officials also appropriated and adapted some forms from the Great Exhibition—filtered through the Crystal Palace at Sydenham—including systems of classification and ideas of display leading to education and progress. This thesis focuses precisely on identifying and analysing these processes.

Peter Hoffenberg’s study of South Asian and Australian experiences of exhibitions offers an extensive survey of Great Exhibitions between 1851 and the Festival of Empire in 1911. He focuses on the social and cultural forces that shaped exhibitions in Britain, India, and Australia; in particular, he analyses their relationship to a “new” imperialism, the advent of machinery, and the development of new systems of classification of people and things. While his work is a general study of the exhibitionary machine during the second half of the nineteenth century, I focus specifically on South Asians at exhibitions. In his text, Hoffenberg poses a series of questions:

What happens when the subaltern in these and other cases becomes not only the consumer of knowledge but also its producer and organizer; that is, a cultural professional, or expert, a museum curator, or exhibition commissioner? Might this not only be disruptive, but potentially destructive of the colonizer’s political enterprise in India? How might South Asians have turned discussions and agendas about exhibiting history, art, science, relics, and material culture itself to their own political advantages by the final years of the nineteenth century?⁵¹

This thesis attempts to address these questions as South Asians moved from visiting exhibitions to organising and hosting them in the subcontinent.

1.3.1 Modernity

A central theme of this thesis concerns the ways in which South Asian travellers and exhibition organisers used display in order to construct a form of colonial modernity.

⁵¹ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 59.

Modernity is certainly not a fixed or monolithic term. It is a fluid concept with versatile definitions for many scholars.⁵² Many of these definitions are as multifaceted as they are contradictory. Colonialism, as some have noted, shaped ideas about modernity, especially as people who were modern were considered to be ‘civilised.’⁵³ Some scholars have suggested that “the rhetoric of colonial modernity animated such ideas as reason, science, and secularism through narratives of progress and expansion.”⁵⁴ Some have analysed colonial modernity in terms of mobility, from movements of people, “knowledge, materials, commodities, practices, and cultural productions,” to the railroad.⁵⁵ The ability to travel was often contrasted to the perceived “immobile features of the ‘East.’”⁵⁶ Others have criticised the perception of a homogenous ‘European’ modernity.⁵⁷ This study focuses on the mobility of the South Asian travel writers and the conceptualisations of ‘progress’ on display at exhibitions.

The definition of modernity that underpins this thesis is taken from Marshall Berman’s text, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*.⁵⁸

⁵² Scholars from all backgrounds have put forward their conceptualisations of ‘modernity’ besides Marshall Berman. For some examples, see Perry Anderson, “Modernity and Revolution,” *New Left Review* 144 (1984) 96-113; Kathleen Wilson’s literary approach in “Citizenship, empire and modernity in the English provinces, c. 1720-90,” *Cultures of Empire: A Reader*, ed. Catherine Hall (Routledge: New York, 2000); and Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).

⁵³ Paul Gillen and Derleena Ghosh, *Colonialism and Modernity* (Sydney: University of South Wales Press, 2007) 53.

⁵⁴ Marian Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity: India’s Railway and the Culture of Mobility* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) 9.

⁵⁵ Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity*, 9-10. See also Paul Young, “Rambles Beyond Railways: Gothicised Place and Globalised Space in Victorian Cornwall,” *Gothic Studies* 13.1 (2011): 55-74.

⁵⁶ Veleska Huber, *Channeling Mobilities: Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 17.

⁵⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁵⁸ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Penguin, 1988). The use of Berman’s definition of modernity in this thesis arose from my readings of the South Asian travel writers. I was struck by the links between Nikolai Chernyshevsky’s *What Is To Be Done?* (originally published in 1863 and published in English in 1886) and the experiences of South Asian travellers at the Crystal Palace. My concept of modernity is developed from the sets of concerns of the travel writers themselves, including their visions of modernity inside the Crystal Palace—which is also how Berman begins his text.

Berman defines modernity as “any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it.”⁵⁹ These attempts were informed by a “maelstrom” of sources, including:

great discoveries in the physical sciences, changing our images of the universe and our place in it; the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new human environments and destroys old ones, speeds up the whole tempo of life, generates new forms of corporate power and class struggle; immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them halfway across the world into new lives; rapid and often cataclysmic urban growth; systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies; increasingly powerful national states, bureaucratically structured and operated, constantly striving to expand their powers; mass social movements of people, and peoples, challenging their political and economic rulers, striving to gain some control over their lives; finally, bearing and driving all these people and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market.⁶⁰

Berman’s concept of modernity was firmly linked to industrialisation, as was South Asian urban elites’ vision of modernity examined in this thesis. Exhibitions held the potential for the experience of modernity, for both the visitor and the organiser to experience its associated energy and its developments, especially new advancements in technology, art, science, and industry. Exhibitions gave modernity a tangible aspect and allowed the visitor to participate in its spectacular forms. Furthermore, as exhibitions were temporary, their dynamic nature displayed an ever-changing rota of new developments of the modern world. The experience of modernity was utilised, negotiated and complicated by South Asians when visiting and organising exhibitions in both the metropole and in the subcontinent. As Berman notes, in

⁵⁹ Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 5.

⁶⁰ Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 16. His focus was primarily on the western world, and specifically on the development of modernity in Europe. This thesis broadens Berman’s work by analysing the development of modernity through exhibition practice in the Indian subcontinent.

countries outside the West, the “meaning of modernity would have to be more complex, elusive and paradoxical.”⁶¹

1.4 Summary of Chapters

Chapter Two focuses on the experiences of South Asian travel writers at the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. This chapter attempts to analyse the literary conventions used by travellers in order to establish their narrative authority. It examines the means by which these travellers were able to disseminate ideas of progress and civilisation on display at Sydenham. I discuss the ways in which South Asians negotiated their place in what may be considered fixed hierarchies. The travellers engaged with the idea of the Crystal Palace as representative of the modern environment that, I would like to suggest, is encompassed by Berman. It also reveals how these travellers visited a memory of the 1851 Great Exhibition rather than what was actually on display. The chapter considers the idea of the Crystal Palace as representing a world in microcosm and examines the use of ‘wonder’ by these writers. It reveals the complex ways in which South Asians negotiated, appropriated, and circulated ideas of modernity, class, and progress to their readers. Furthermore, it explores the gaps of these narratives—the writers’ lack of reference to the ethnographic displays and issues of ‘race’—and suggests that these absences were just as important as the issues that were addressed directly by the travel writers.

Chapter Three focuses on the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition, this chapter suggests, helped establish exhibitionary models that were later appropriated at (and complicated by) the Indian National Congress exhibitions. These included: considerations of art and design and their

⁶¹ Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 174.

relationship to ideas of ‘Indianness,’ the juxtaposition of leisure and the educational aspects of display, electricity and progress, and the relationship between display and the development of the ‘national.’ Furthermore, ethnographic representations of colonised peoples increasingly became part of exhibitions in the late nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries and were especially prominent at the 1886 Exhibition.⁶² This chapter investigates the complex intersection of colonial hierarchies, class, and ‘race’ for South Asian travellers. Some South Asians, like T.N. Mukharji, an exhibition commissioner for Bengal, appropriated the new discipline of ethnography to map, visually, their nation and peoples at the exhibition itself. This ‘imaginative geography’⁶³ helped the readership of the travelogues to visualise India as a distinct political and national body.

Chapters Four and Five move from exhibitions in the metropole to the organisation and staging of the Indian National Congress displays in the Indian subcontinent. Chapter Four takes the 1904 Bombay exhibition, the largest of all the Congress displays, as its case study. This chapter examines the ways in which the Congress used exhibitions in order to legitimate itself as a representative nationalist body. It also considers the ways in which exhibitionary forms, such as the juxtaposition of education and entertainment found at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, as at other international exhibitions, were adapted as hybrid, national and colonial. Western forms of leisure were also integrated with local traditions such as *tamasha*, a travelling entertainment with a long history in the subcontinent and widely performed for those of all classes and castes. These exhibitions can be read as aspirational: Congress officials worked with the notion that display leads to progress, and the chapter considers the ways in which they made this typically imperial idea

⁶² Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁶³ Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

their own. The chapter also focuses on the significance and particularity of the Bombay “Healtheries” exhibit, where modern sanitation and public health concerns took centre stage.

Chapter Five focuses on the debates regarding industrial development and the swadeshi movement at the Congress exhibitions between the 1901 Calcutta and 1905 Benares sessions. Swadeshi was a movement to support Indian industries and goods and supporters encouraged locals to purchase indigenous goods even if they were more expensive than, and inferior in quality to, their imported substitutes. Most scholars focus on the political and social shifts in swadeshi ideologies, especially Gandhi’s use of swadeshi and *swaraj*.⁶⁴ This chapter examines the ways in which the Congress exhibitions helped to support, and benefitted from, swadeshi products and ideology. Most importantly, swadeshi was interchangeable with the hand-made but its ideals were also linked to Indian industrial development. This chapter also examines the myriad of debates on industrialisation by Congress elites and the nationalist press. These discussions included the role of agriculture and the role of large-scale technocratic industrialisation that Arindam Dutta suggests characterised moderate nationalist discourse during this period.⁶⁵ Congress officials also linked ideas of industry on display at Congress exhibitions to the alleviation of poverty and famine. Finally, this chapter considers the well-publicised “Ladies’ Section” at the 1904 Bombay exhibition in order to highlight local women’s involvement in swadeshi.

⁶⁴ See B.S.R. Anjaneyulu, “Gandhi’s ‘Hind Swaraj’ — Swaraj, The Swadeshi Way,” *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 64.1/2 (Jan.-June 2003): 33-44; Manu Goswami, “From Swadeshi to Swaraj: Nation, Economy, Territory in Colonial South Asia, 1870 to 1907,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40.4 (Oct. 1998): 609-636; and Dennis Dalton, “Gandhi: Ideology and Authority,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 3.4 (1969): 377-393.

⁶⁵ Arindam Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (London: Routledge, 2007) 255.

Congress officials used these exhibitions to stake out their vision of India as a modernising, industrialising competitor on the world stage. While these Congress exhibitions and the era immediately before the Indian independence movement are not well-known, I argue that they are a defining moment in the making and performing of twentieth century Indian nation building within the vision of an increasingly modernised society.

Chapter 2

South Asian Travel Narratives and the Crystal Palace at Sydenham:

Aligning with Progress and Modernity

2.1 Introduction

The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations held in Hyde Park in 1851 displayed raw materials, machinery, manufactured articles, and fine arts from across the world between May and October of 1851. It celebrated industry of all types and was housed in the Crystal Palace, a glass and iron structure designed by Joseph Paxton. In 1854, the Crystal Palace re-opened in Sydenham, south London, where it remained open until it was destroyed by fire in 1936. The story of the Great Exhibition of 1851 has been the subject of much literature. While the Crystal Palace's incarnation at Hyde Park is well documented, the moment at Sydenham is less known.¹ From its opening and through the second half of the nineteenth century, the Crystal Palace at Sydenham became a symbol of civilisation, progress, modernity, and even the British nation itself to the millions of visitors who passed through its grounds.

This chapter investigates the experiences of South Asians travellers at Sydenham through the lens of their "Euroimperial"² travel narratives. The travel accounts were published at a time when the Indian nationalist movement was developing in the subcontinent, including the founding of the Indian National

¹ Scholarly literature on the Crystal Palace at Sydenham include: J.R. Piggott, *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham, 1854-1936* (London: Hurst, 2004); Ian Leith, *Delamotte's Crystal Palace: A Victorian Pleasure Dome Revealed* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2005); Patrick Beaver, *The Crystal Palace, 1851-1936: A Portrait of Victorian Enterprise* (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1970); Peter Gurney, "'A Palace for the People'? The Crystal Palace and Consumer Culture in Victorian England," *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace*, ed. James Buzard et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); and Stephanie Moser, *Designing Antiquity: Owen Jones, Ancient Egypt and the Crystal Palace* (London: Yale University Press, 2012).

² Grewal, *Home and Harem*, 14.

Congress in 1885. In these narratives and in visits to the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, South Asians complicated and disseminated ideas of modernity, as well as imperial notions of progress. South Asian writers used their travel writing in order to establish themselves as figures of authority. These travelogues are important in analysing the ways in which nation was constituted in relation to Empire. This chapter has a dual purpose: to examine how the writers constituted ideas of authorial power through their experiences at the Crystal Palace, and also how representations of Sydenham in the narratives were used by South Asians to establish certain ‘forms’ of exhibition. Stephen Greenblatt’s concept of ‘wonder’ and Susan Stewart’s idea of ‘microcosm’ are analysed in the context of these travellers at Sydenham. Furthermore, an examination of what these travellers left out of their narratives is also revealing.

South Asian travellers typically visited Sydenham in the 1870s and 1880s, and published their accounts in the 1890s and in the early 1900s. The travel accounts examined in this include Lala Baijnath, *England and India: Being Impressions of Persons and Things, English and Indian, and Brief Notes of Visits to France, Switzerland, Italy, and Ceylon* (1893); Ghanasham Nilkanth Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896* (1903); Behramji Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life: or, Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer* (1893); Nandalala Dasa, *Reminiscences, English and Australasian. Being an account of a Visit to England, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, Ceylon* (1893); and Jhinda Ram, *My Trip to Europe* (1893), which was originally published in the *Lahore Tribune* in 1887.³ I situate these travel narratives in the context of other South Asians who travelled and wrote narratives, such as Pothum Janakummah Ragaviah.⁴

³ Baijnath, *England and India*; Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896*; Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*; Ram, *My Trip to Europe*.

⁴ Pothum Janakummah Ragaviah, *Pictures of England: Translated from the Telugu* (Madras: Gantz Brothers, 1876); Dasa, *Reminiscences, English and Australasian*.

Antoinette Burton analyses these travel narratives in the context of other cultural sites such as the British Museum, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, and the Crystal Palace. She argues that these were important cultural landmarks for South Asian travellers as a means of “containment” of the city.⁵ She analyses how these travellers “interrogated” the staging of imperial power in the metropole and “consumed” Britain, and she suggests that these travel narratives helped illustrate how “readily available [Britain’s] disciplinary regimes were for contest and reconfiguration.”⁶ While Burton discusses these travellers’ experiences more broadly, I use her framework and focus specifically on traveller experiences at Sydenham where certain cultural forms were appropriated by South Asians as they navigated ideas of modernity. A focus on the experiences of the travel writers reveals complex relationships that South Asians had with British imperialism, and demonstrates the compromises these visitors made with imperial ideas of progress.

This chapter comprises of four sections: the first of which I introduce the general categories and contents of Sydenham; the second focuses on the conventions of travel writing; the third discusses modernity in traveller representations of Sydenham; and the last addresses the narrative silences in the Natural History Courts.

2.2 The Crystal Palace at Sydenham: Contents and Displays

The Crystal Palace at Sydenham was officially opened by Queen Victoria on 10 June 1854 to 40,000 spectators. The rights to the building and contents had been acquired by the Crystal Palace Company shortly after the 1851 Great Exhibition closed. The

⁵ Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles,” 128.

⁶ *Ibid.*

building in Sydenham was over 1,850 feet long. In the re-build, the central transept was elevated, north and south wings were added, and two large towers were constructed (Fig 2.1).⁷ The building itself was constructed on a larger scale than Hyde Park, with three added storeys. The site comprised of one hundred acres and



Figure 2.1: English photographer. View of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. 1912. Black and white photograph. Private collection. *Bridgeman Education Library*. JPEG File.

there were numerous fountains, lakes and gardens in and around the building. Three railways serviced Sydenham; events and activities were advertised daily on the front page of the *Times*; and the Palace even had its own publication: the *Illustrated Crystal Palace Gazette*.⁸ The Crystal Palace closed in 1936 following a devastating fire.

⁷ Nicky Levell, *Oriental Visions: Exhibitions, Travel and Collecting in the Victorian Age* (London: Horniman Museum, 2000) 29.

⁸ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 200.

To understand the division of space in the 1854 Crystal Palace, it is worth considering the taxonomy in place at the 1851 Great Exhibition. Exhibits at 1851 were categorised into four classifications developed by Lyon Playfair: Raw Materials, Machinery, Manufactures, and Fine Arts. These sections were further divided into thirty classes.⁹ The classification system emphasised the manufacturing process, contributing to an “industrial discourse” that circulated at Sydenham—the narrative of “simple” to “complex.”¹⁰ The taxonomic structure was only available in the exhibits of Britain and India in the catalogues, while at the exhibition itself, countries were grouped according to geographical area. Therefore, at international exhibitions from 1851 and throughout the nineteenth century, there were two narratives going on simultaneously: the exoticism of visiting a country, and a more text-based narrative of industrial progress.

Great Exhibitions in the nineteenth century established the idea that forms of display would lead to, or were evidence of, industrial and technological progress.¹¹ Political and economic progress was linked to new materials and new methods of manufacture.¹² Paul Young notes that the Great Exhibition, the memory of which was filtered through Sydenham, was categorised by an “international division of labour,” where all nations and people worked together in “comparative advantage and competitive exchange” that promised a universal future of “peace, progress and

⁹ Hermione Hobhouse, *The Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition: Art, Science, and Productive Industry: A History of the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851* (London: Athlone 2002) 40.

¹⁰ Louise Purbrick, “Defining Nation: Ireland at the Great Exhibition of 1851,” *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851*, ed. Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter Hoffenberg (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 55-6.

¹¹ For a further analysis of the politics and competing narratives of the Great Exhibition of 1851, see Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg, eds., *Britain, the Empire, and the world at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Aldershot : Ashgate, 2008); Beaver, *The Crystal Palace, 1851-1936: A Portrait of Victorian Enterprise*; and Paul Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: the Victorian New World Order* (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

¹² Louise Purbrick, “Introduction,” *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Louise Purbrick (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) 2.

prosperity.”¹³ For colonies, however, their only recourse to this global modernity was as a land of raw materials for the benefit of the metropole.¹⁴ The notion that display equalled progress was linked to the architecture of display, and the size and classification of objects. Ideas about progress at Sydenham were linked to certain ideas prevalent during the nineteenth century—the notion of civilisations developing from simple to complex, where Britain civilisation emerged as “pre-eminent.”¹⁵

Sydenham’s courts focused on natural history and the historical development of civilisations. As it had the same glass and iron structure as 1851, even though there was no machinery on display, visitors assumed it stood for modern industrial progress. The shape of the structure became fixed as modern. The building was divided into a variety of courts, bringing together humans, animals, and flora to create separate geographical environments for the visitor.¹⁶ Sections included Augustus Pugin’s popular Mediaeval Court, the Alhambra Court, and Waterhouse Hawkins’s models of extinct animals and dinosaurs. Architectural Courts illustrating historical styles included Assyrian, Roman, Medieval, Greek, Chinese, and Byzantine displays. There was a Sculpture Gallery and Fine Art Courts with copies of important Greek and Roman sculptures and statues. There was also space for commercial enterprises in the nave, but this proved to be unpopular.¹⁷ Some goods like furniture and culinary utensils were ticketed and available for purchase.¹⁸

Sydenham’s collection of courts, especially its “restorations of buried empires” like Greek and Byzantine, created a “three-dimensional encyclopaedia of

¹³ Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition*, 5.

¹⁴ Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition*, 10.

¹⁵ Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition*, 111.

¹⁶ Andrew Hassam, “Portable iron structures and uncertain colonial spaces at the Sydenham Crystal Palace,” *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) 183.

¹⁷ Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 59.

¹⁸ Peter Gurney, “An Appropriated Space: The Great Exhibition, the Crystal Palace and the Working Class,” *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Louise Purbrick (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) 123.

both nature and art,” with a wider scope than at 1851.¹⁹ The layout of the courts allowed visitors to “understand evolution and civilisation in relation to their own times.”²⁰ The extensive galleries of casts and sculptures from various eras “intended to teach the historical development of cultures and styles.”²¹

Sydenham offered a combination of education and entertainment that characterised international exhibitions in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century. From the outset, the Crystal Palace was intended to surpass both its prior incarnation at Hyde Park and its competitor in the South Kensington Museum.²² After 1859, lectures and classes were held in the Crystal Palace’s “School of Art, Music, Science, and Literature.”²³ The site also featured a wide array of Victorian recreational activities. These activities were included because organisers and commentators were concerned that visitors would “altogether fail to respond to the educational stimulus on offer.”²⁴ Furthermore, the Crystal Palace aimed to cater to tastes across class lines to become the “People’s Palace.”²⁵ Sydenham established the model of display as intended to both educate and entertain, an idea later found at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition as well as the Indian National Congress exhibitions.

2.3 Conventions of South Asian Travel Narratives

Before analysing South Asians engagement with ideas of modernity at Sydenham, it is essential to examine the literary forms of South Asian travel narratives. This

¹⁹ Piggott, *Palace of the People*, v.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 24.

²² Piggott, *Palace of the People*, v.

²³ Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 56.

²⁴ Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 57.

²⁵ Gurney, “An Appropriated Space,” 128-29.

section investigates the structure of the travel accounts, the sites visited, how these places were described, and the ways in which writers established their authorial control through their representations of the Crystal Palace. These writers worked with ideas of civilisation and progress on display at Sydenham.

2.3.1 Literary Conventions of the Travelogues

South Asian travelogues were published within a wider context of travel writing.²⁶

The nineteenth century witnessed masses of Victorians travelling to Eastern countries and publishing tourist guides.²⁷ Edward Said argues that in the imperial context, European texts on other cultures were instruments of power used to dominate and exploit those in non-Western societies.²⁸ Europeans wrote about their travel experiences with certain assumptions, namely that “with technological superiority came presumed intellectual superiority.”²⁹ With this notion, “Europeans could claim to be able to understand and interpret not only the terrain they entered but the inhabitants as well.”³⁰ These beliefs contributed to British imperial discourse.

Most of the predominantly male South Asian travel writers visited Britain, Europe, and occasionally America during the 1880s, and many travelled to visit the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition. While most of the travellers were men, women also made the journey and published accounts; for instance, Pothum Janakumamah

²⁶ There is evidence that South Asian travel narratives were linked to Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky’s 1863 novel *What is to be Done?* Chernyshevsky’s ideas of industrial modernity at the Crystal Palace at Sydenham shared similarities with South Asians’ representations in their travelogues. Jhinda Ram’s narrative, for instance, includes several passages that closely mirror Chernyshevsky’s protagonist Vera Pavlovna’s dreams of ‘crystal palaces.’

²⁷ Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994) 15.

²⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 20.

²⁹ Roy Bridges, “Exploration and travel outside Europe (1720-1914),” *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 53.

³⁰ Bridges, “Exploration and travel outside Europe,” 53.

Ragaviah, a “Hindu lady from Madras,” travelled with her husband to England and Europe in 1873. The narratives were written in English and aimed at an English-speaking community of “armchair travellers” in the subcontinent.³¹

Readers were transported to foreign places, but also told how to read and interpret the scenes the narrator found there.³² Jhinda Ram, a Pleader in the Chief Court of Punjab, wrote a narrative used here as an example of a typical travel account. Ram published *My Trip to Europe* in 1893. He described in his Preface how his book was formed of letters he had contributed to the *Lahore Tribune* in 1887. He noted that the reason for publication was to “beguile a few idle hours of the idlers of India” and to “rouse some curiosity in some breasts to visit Europe and see what can be seen in this world of God’s creation.”³³ He described his journey from Karachi through Port Said and the Suez Canal. South Asians embarked on their own version of a Grand Tour and some of the sites visited were the same.³⁴ Upon his arrival in Britain, he detailed several sites for his readers: his hotel, London streets, the British Museum, Zoological Gardens, and the Crystal Palace, among others.

There was a sense in the narratives that the path from India through Europe and Britain had been travelled before. Each traveller followed roughly the same voyage from the subcontinent to the metropole. The travel narratives were structured similarly, and their descriptions of particular sights and discussions of issues were often alike.³⁵ The majority of the travelogues, including Ram’s, used the “home-away-home” as the “beginning-middle-end” structure so prevalent in European

³¹ Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, 47.

³² Codell, “Reversing the Grand Tour,” 174.

³³ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, Preface.

³⁴ In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries’ Grand Tour, upper-class European men and some women would travel the Continent to view famous landmarks, art, architecture, opera, and music and to be exposed to the “ennobling society of the Continent.” James Buzard, “The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840),” *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 37-8.

³⁵ Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles,” 127-8.

travel narratives of the nineteenth century.³⁶ The intertextuality of these narratives reveals the ways in which South Asian travel writers spoke to, and constructed, a political community of their peers in India, which was coincident with the same class as those involved in the Indian nationalist movement.

Travel writers framed their texts so that the audience could identify with the writer. In one instance, Ragaviah described how she escaped sea-sickness in route to Britain:

The readers of this book will doubtless be anxious to know how I stood the rough sea, whether I suffered from sickness, and to satisfy them, I am proud indeed to state that I was quite as free as I would be on shore, which I thought really was a blessing. My singular appearance on the deck, while others of my sex were absent, was a rare and exceptional phenomenon to my fellow-passengers.³⁷

The audience of the travelogue identified with the hero—in this case, the identity of the author as constructed in the narrative—and the hero's values. In this situation, Ragaviah identified herself as being unique, especially with regards to her status as a woman.³⁸ By doing so, she exercised her authorial control.

The importance of “seeing” and the privileging of the visual within these narratives was evident from their titles: Behramji Malabari's *The Indian Eye on English life: or, Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer* (1893); Pothum Janakummah Ragaviah's *Pictures of England: Translated from the Telugu* (1876); and T.B. Pandian's *England to an Indian Eye: or, English Pictures from an Indian Camera* (1897) are a few examples. The writers were also constantly looking at the street scenes, at the displays in museums and exhibitions, and at people: South Asian travel writer Rakhil Das Haldar, for instance, visited an exhibition in 1862, writing, “a

³⁶ For more on the composition of travel narratives, see Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 37.

³⁷ Ragaviah, *Pictures of England*, 25.

³⁸ For more on colonial women's travel writing, see Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991).

better conducted crowd I had never before seen.”³⁹ The travel narratives emphasised ‘seeing’ of people, places, and things.

2.3.2 Progress and Civilisation

Michael Adas argues that during the industrial age, science, technology, and the dedication to progress was believed to determine “human worth and potential.”⁴⁰ European and North American writers and observers came to view their technological achievements, especially with regard to the steam and coal revolution, as “unassailable measures” of their civilisation’s worth. It was this notion of progress that was promulgated at nineteenth century international exhibitions.⁴¹ Industrialised nations were seen as separate from all other largely non-Western cultures.

Imperial rhetoric placed Europe at the pinnacle of world civilisations, past and present, and further constructed a ‘hierarchy’ of civilisation. At the bottom was African culture(s), which were dismissed as having primitive technologies, no capacity for scientific thinking, and for being superstitious.⁴² These were the “savage races,” incapable of being educated or civilised.⁴³ Views on India were largely shaped by the publication of James Mill’s *History of British India* in 1817. Mill believed that India had achieved some level of development, but had stagnated. Other commentators conceded that India had produced prosperous civilisations in the past, but had fallen into decadence during the period of British colonisation.⁴⁴ As Young notes, display promoted the notion of global differences amongst races and a

³⁹ Rakhil Das Haldar, *The English Diary of an Indian Student* (Dacca: The Asutosh Library, 1903) 88.

⁴⁰ Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) 3.

⁴¹ Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 134-6.

⁴² Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 153-64.

⁴³ Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 303.

⁴⁴ Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 167-73.

hierarchical grouping of peoples, which included an “antithesis between savagery and civilization.”⁴⁵ The theory of a “ladder of progress” was a key element in the “Othering” of non-Western peoples, and informed displays at exhibitions like the Crystal Palace.⁴⁶ Sydenham further cemented these distinctions by emphasising the role of science and technology in Britain’s ‘progressive’ civilisation.

Travellers often described locations believed to be representative of British civilisation and progress, including the British Museum, South Kensington Museum, Zoological Gardens, and Oxford and Cambridge. All of England, particularly London as the “most spectacular emblem of English civilization in the late nineteenth century,”⁴⁷ was laid open for the colonial traveller, and all these travellers had the potential to learn the lessons of progress. Lala Baijnath, of the North-West Provinces Judicial Service, informed his reader that “my accounts of Industrial England and of a few places I visited on the Continent will show the vast resources of modern Europe and how it keeps itself abreast in the race for progress.”⁴⁸ Ram, who viewed Britain as the ultimate height of civilisation and knowledge, noted that Sydenham provided “a living museum of refinement and civilization.”⁴⁹ He also wrote that “one goes to the country to seek enlightenment.”⁵⁰ Travel writing, in general, “organises the world through a number of prevailing discourses, and sediments that world into a seemingly incontrovertible reality.”⁵¹ The South Asian travel narratives worked within this context, and played in an important role in disseminating the value of progress to South Asians at ‘home.’ Constructing this

⁴⁵ Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition*, 31.

⁴⁶ Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition*, 136.

⁴⁷ Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles,” 129.

⁴⁸ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, Preface.

⁴⁹ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 11.

⁵⁰ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 8.

⁵¹ Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, 13.

reality, however, was complex. The writers consciously constructed the nation: as the nation was industrial, it offered modern progress.

Several travellers called attention to the role of travel as an established means of acquiring knowledge. Foreign travel was closely tied to gaining a well-rounded English education and dispelling stereotypes about the nature of travel, British culture, and British people. Prominent social reformer and South Asian newspaper writer Behramji Malabari believed in a strong link between India and Britain. He noted that the goal in writing his narrative was to engage in “friendly conversation, in open council, with Englishmen on the one hand and Indians on the other.”⁵² Malabari was a Parsi, and as Antoinette Burton notes, Bombay Parsis viewed themselves as “cultural mediators” between the British and Hindu populations in the subcontinent.⁵³

The ban on sea travel by Hindu leaders, which was eventually lifted in 1890, was a frequent topic of discussion. G. N. Nadkarni, a “Pleader” in the High Court of Bombay, noted that his purpose for writing was to “remove the bar of prejudice against foreign travel,” and from his “desire that many popular misapprehensions as to the difficulties and disagreeableness to be met with in the West may be corrected.”⁵⁴ Ragaviah, a Hindu woman traveller, alluded to this belief in the opening of her narrative: “I think it is plain that in the present time it only results in endless evils. It is owing to such restrictions as these that up to this time our people have not attained to a higher state of civilization.”⁵⁵ The ban was considered by the literate urban professional class to be a hindrance to India’s cultural progress, and ultimately symptomatic of its failure to reach the pinnacle of civilisation.

⁵² Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, Preface.

⁵³ Burton, “A ‘Pilgrim Reformer’ at the Heart of the Empire,” 180-1.

⁵⁴ Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896*, Preface.

⁵⁵ Ragaviah, *Pictures of England*, 1.

Part of the impetus for South Asians to write travel narratives was to encourage other South Asians, particularly urban professionals, to travel to Britain and Europe.⁵⁶ This intention was often addressed directly. For example, Samuel Sathianadhan, a university professor in Madras, wrote in the Preface to his travel narrative *Holiday Trip to Europe and America*:

My object in giving publicity to this work is to encourage my countrymen to take to travelling—especially in countries that have come under the influence of a higher civilization—as a means of education. Nothing would prove so effective a corrective to the one-sided nature of the education imparted to us in our schools and colleges as travel.⁵⁷

Similarly, Baijnath argued that “It is now-a-days the ambition—the dream of every educated Indian, to pay a visit to the home of his rules, to those lands of civilization and liberty of which he has read so much, or which he wishes his own country to come up to.”⁵⁸ Ragaviah, Sathianadhan, and Baijnath all had shared notions of Britain and India: Britain as the home to enlightenment and liberty, and that India was somehow lacking. This dominant narrative was also found on display at the Crystal Palace. All three writers expressed dissatisfaction with the state of India. There was also the unspoken assumption that these educated men and women would be ideally placed to bring India into the future with their knowledge and authority about civilisation.

South Asians travelled to Sydenham and published their narratives during a period of moderate nationalism. Multiple nationalist organisations were founded during the 1870s and 1880s, including the Indian National Congress in 1885.⁵⁹ These writers were aware of the nationalist movement, and some even took great interest in

⁵⁶ Shompa Lahiri, *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880-1930* (London: Frank Cass, 2000) 36.

⁵⁷ Samuel Sathianadhan, *Holiday Trip to Europe and America* (Madras: Srinivasa, Varadachari, 1897) Preface.

⁵⁸ Baijnath, *England and India*, 1.

⁵⁹ James, *Raj*, 352.

the Indian National Congress. Malabari mentioned a meeting of a branch of the Congress while he was in Britain, stating: “we lack solidarity of interests. Our only organization worth naming is the National Congress. It is of utmost importance that the Congress should go on working with a select body of educated men.”⁶⁰ At this early stage, Malabari had already embraced the Congress as a representative body for South Asians in the subcontinent. It is clear that travel narratives like Malabari’s contributed to the legitimization of the Congress as a prominent nationalist organisation. Furthermore, Malabari had a great deal of political influence: he was active in several reform movements on child marriage and widow remarriage, and he was the editor of the prominent South Asian newspaper, the *Indian Spectator*. His travels to England, written about in his travel narrative, were done in service of his campaign for reform.⁶¹ Malabari’s public support of the Congress may have gone a long way towards legitimising the organisation.

These narratives offer an example of Benedict Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities” in operation. Anderson argues that the nation, as it was conceived in the nineteenth century, was defined as an “imagined political community”: imagined because the majority of people within the community would never meet, but they assumed links to others within the community.⁶² A nationalist discourse was produced through South Asian travel narratives as the writers helped their readers “imagine” their community, and formed connections between South Asians across the subcontinent. They helped create a sense of solidarity across difference: a narrative across difference that constituted a nation, which Malabari suggested was lacking. The travelogues helped disparate South Asians across the

⁶⁰ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, 118.

⁶¹ Burton, "A 'Pilgrim Reformer' at the Heart of the Empire," 180-1.

⁶² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6-7.

subcontinent to imagine themselves as part of India. They also helped this community identify and associate itself with the ideas of civilisation and progress.

2.3.3 Authorial Negotiations with Power

South Asian travellers navigated through the complexities of imperial power. Within them, South Asians were investigating and describing the country which ruled them. This act of investigation, and their ability to publish, positioned the writers as having agency within the colonial structure. The travel writers, through their detailed descriptions in print, legitimated their authority to describe and to know British culture.

In travel writing, the narrators often masked their subjective status and offered “their observations as neutral documentations of a stable, single and ordered reality.”⁶³ For instance, Ram’s guidebook style of recording sights around London in an unemotional tone gave the impression of an objective account of a general ‘Indian’ experience in the metropole. Establishing the narrator of travel writing as an authority was a common trope: “the narrator is shown to be in control, and also to be in a position of knowledge, superior to that of the inhabitants of the country.”⁶⁴ The South Asian travellers took stock of Britain, America and France. Ram related his experience of his arrival in England:

You will be astonished to hear the welcome I received when I stepped on the shore of the great country which governs the destinies of India. A young woman accosted me in the following words: ‘Why don’t you take me with you.’ Horrible! horrible! indeed, to get such a welcome when one goes to a country to seek enlightenment! I heeded her not, and proceeded on my way.⁶⁵

Baijnath also described the streets of London for the benefits of his readers:

⁶³ Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, 13.

⁶⁴ Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, 80.

⁶⁵ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 8.

The street-rough is also much more common and more dangerous in London than his Indian prototype. It is he who swells the ranks of the unemployed. His shabby and loosely hanging dress, his ruffianly look and his crouching gait cannot fail to excite notice. He is quite ready to oblige you by carrying your parcel, and, if you don't look out, to disappear with it at the next corner.⁶⁶

While describing these scenes gave the authors the authority to survey the countries and their contents, they still did so from a particular classed and colonial position.

They placed themselves as observers of the working classes, revealing the issues that came into play as they navigated the metropole. These depictions of street scenes, such as where Ram was accosted by a young woman, were examples of the engagement in a discourse of class, where the South Asian urban elites were well above the throng of 'street-rough.'

The travel writers used specific strategies to assert themselves as figures of authority able to translate the cultural practices, customs, and traditions of Britain, such as their eating and drinking habits, for their readers. Appropriating European styles of travel writing was linked to their close affiliation with British governmental and cultural frameworks in the Indian subcontinent. Participation in British culture was one narrative strategy in which the writers established their authorial personhood, such as when Sathianadhan described his experiences in London: "you see the thoroughfares crowded with people, full of life and motion. You feel the stir and hear the roar of the great Babel on all sides."⁶⁷ Sathianadhan placed himself and his reader directly into the crowd, experiencing the sights and sounds surrounding them. Ram also described his encounter as one of the crowd: "on several occasions, I saw an Anglo-Indian coming out of a crowd and rushing towards me so

⁶⁶ Baijnath, *England and India*, 34.

⁶⁷ Sathianadhan, *Holiday Trip to Europe and America*, 60.

enthusiastically as if I was his long departed friend or relation.”⁶⁸ In this instance, Ram was acknowledged as an equal by the Anglo-Indian population of London.

Presenting the narrative as neutral gave the narrator an opportunity to comment on other cultures. Awatsing Mahtabsing, a Pleader from the Sindh province, suggested that his narrative was a “careful and accurate account of such information as I have been able to collect by personal observation.”⁶⁹ G.N. Nadkarni also noted that his was an “unembellished record of my passing impressions.”⁷⁰ Generalising the ‘other’ culture was a technique employed by Orientalism. Said suggests that the frameworks of Orientalism were so authoritative and all-encompassing that when Western writers commented on Eastern cultures, there was no room to counter their observations.⁷¹ In these narratives, South Asians rearticulated this idea as they assumed a kind of authority in order to write what they saw on their travels. While observing the crowds at the Crystal Palace, for instance, prominent economic nationalist Romesh Chunder Dutt mused: “Frugal, abstemious, almost stingy in their habits, the Germans work hard and spend little,--while even the London shop boy has not yet learnt to save, but must needs enjoy his holiday and spend his little savings with his chums or his sweetheart in the Crystal Palace.”⁷² As Dutt was a colonial subject, his narrative voice allowed him to claim a form of power as a knowledgeable observer who could make sense of difference.

The intertextuality of these narratives allowed them to associate their writings with those of other South Asians, as noted by Mahtabsing in his Preface: “I add this little volume to the ever growing library of the literature of travels.”⁷³ The same

⁶⁸ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 79.

⁶⁹ Awatsing Mahtabsing, *Something about my Trip to Europe* (Sukkur: Victoria Press, 1905) Preface.

⁷⁰ Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896*, Preface.

⁷¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

⁷² Dutt, *Three years in Europe*, 128.

⁷³ Mahtabsing, *Something about my Trip to Europe*, Preface.

cities were visited, and sights were discussed in similar ways. Nandalala Dasa, who came from Calcutta and was a member of the London Missionary Society, described Manchester as the “great centre of the cotton goods trade.”⁷⁴ Ragaivah, Baijnath, and Sathianadhan also visited Manchester; Sathianadhan, like Dasa, emphasised the city’s importance in the cotton trade: “I need hardly add that Manchester has an intimate commercial connexion with India. All the cotton grown in this country is shipped to Manchester where it is manufactured into different kinds of cotton goods.”⁷⁵ London was the location of knowledge and culture, and the writers interpreted important sites. As Burton explores, the British Museum had a particularly potent hold on the imagination of these travellers.⁷⁶ T.B. Pandian, a Reverend from Madras, wrote:

No less important as a national institution, and no less potent and far-reaching in its influence as a popular education is the British Museum, where all that history has recorded, all that Science has taught, and all that Art has accomplished, is effectively illustrated in concrete forms by all manner of exhibits brought together and set forth like so many silent “object lessons” taken from the Book of Nature and the archives of universal literature.⁷⁷

In Ram’s account of South Kensington, he described the museum as “filled with collections of arts, manufactures, and scientific instruments, &c., &c.”⁷⁸ Similarly, Baijnath wrote: “the South Kensington Museum, a result of the Great Exhibition, is also very interesting. It contains models of the most famous works of art in sculpture and carving of ancient and modern Europe, a fine collection of ivory carvings and Persian pottery, and other treasures too numerous to mention.”⁷⁹ South Kensington, which was a site with historical associations of the Great Exhibition of 1851, was

⁷⁴ Dasa, *Reminiscences, English and Australasian*, 117.

⁷⁵ Sathianadhan, *Holiday Trip to Europe and America*, 39.

⁷⁶ Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, 46.

⁷⁷ T.B. Pandian, *England to an Indian Eye: or, English Pictures from an Indian Camera* (London: Elliot Stock, 1897) 30.

⁷⁸ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 40.

⁷⁹ Baijnath, *England and India*, 26.

therefore an important place in which these colonial subjects could gain knowledge and make links between exhibitions and progress.

Colonial subjects, as they represented these sites of knowledge to a colonial audience, complicated the ideas between text and power. As Behdad notes, the “tourist guide can be viewed as an ultimate instrument of knowledge (and therefore power) that mediates the relation of the traveler to the sight.”⁸⁰ The writers were at great pains to establish their expertise on the sights and the topics they discussed. Viewing sights allowed the writers first-hand knowledge and gave the travellers some narrative authority. From this expert knowledge, the writers were positioned to ‘translate’ what they saw for their readers.

The relationship with power was complicated as the writers were colonial subjects writing in an imperial context. Said has argued that the “West” represented the “East” to itself. These South Asian travel narratives, however, undercut the binary. Burton suggests that these travellers, as they freely wandered the sites, opened up Britain as a site for “colonization.”⁸¹ In Manchester, Nandalala Dasa visited the city’s International Exhibition:

The first thing I noticed was a number of life-size clay figures of up country Indian women, dressed up in print *Sarees* and bedecked with jewellery, as they are accustomed to wear at home. This was intended to illustrate the use made in India of some of the cotton stuffs exhibited there. India is the great market for those cotton goods. One other Indian thing attracted my notice. It was a lot of Indian raw silk, exhibited by a well known Bengal silk company.⁸²

South Asians like Dasa represented Britain to India, and, through their experiences at museums and exhibitions, they also represented the “East” to itself. These South Asian travellers also tried to associate their narratives with those of Western travellers. For instance, they participated in a traditionally ‘Western’ form of leisure:

⁸⁰ Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, 51.

⁸¹ Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles,” 128.

⁸² Dasa, *Reminiscences, English and Australasian*, 117.

travel as a form of leisure. The rise of Western tourism in the nineteenth century was seen as the “ability and power of a great many men and women to move around various countries in groups” as a “display of English power.”⁸³ South Asians, who travelled to Europe and America in much the same fashion that British tourists travelled to places like Egypt, India, and Africa, used their travelogues as a means of associating with this type of power. Those who wrote were those who had the funds to travel and the means to publish.

Taken collectively, the texts worked to signify to their audiences what was important. The travel writers, in describing the scenes, were attempting to define the significant sites of enlightenment. This act enabled them to manipulate these scenes for their audience. Furthermore, travel writing informed and developed the idea of community at ‘home.’ These travelogues had an audience that were receptive to the messages of progress before the structures were in existence later at the Indian National Congress exhibitions. The travel narratives, like exhibitions and the Crystal Palace themselves, worked to circulate and disseminate notions of education and civilisation as the authors began to lay the foundation for the formation of the modern Indian nation. As Burton points out, these writers were starting to lay claim to the “disciplinary regimes” that were part of imperialism as South Asians “appropriated and reconfigured” the imperial discourse.⁸⁴ These colonial subjects began to lay claim to imperial power through their writing of their narratives.

⁸³ Grewal, *Home and Harem*, 92-3.

⁸⁴ Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles,” 128.

2.4 Modernity and the Crystal Palace

The Crystal Palace at Sydenham was often considered as representative of modernity.⁸⁵ Marshall Berman argues that from the opening of Sydenham in 1854, “the world adopted the building immediately as a symbol of England’s world vision and leadership.”⁸⁶ In this section, I focus specifically on how South Asians defined the Crystal Palace for their audience. I address the ways in which some travel writers used Sydenham to define concepts of modernity. My focus is on how we can begin to ‘read’ the exhibitions differently as viewed through the lens of these travellers. Furthermore, they also began to establish the ‘forms’ of exhibition, which would be a key element in the organisation and hosting of the Indian National Congress exhibitions.

The previous chapter outlined Berman’s ideas on the sources of modernity, including the creation of new environments, products developed from new industrial processes of mass production, and new technological advances. This section attempts to address how the Crystal Palace provided the experience of these sources of modernity, as new and dynamic technologies and industrial products, like steam engines, factory products, and railways were on display. South Asians negotiated the parameters of modernity, and the dominant narratives that defined perceptions of both India and Britain, at Sydenham in order to define the parameters of India’s progress and nationhood.

⁸⁵ Purbrick, “Introduction,” 2.

⁸⁶ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, 238.

2.4.1 Wonder

Perhaps the most common reaction to the Crystal Palace described in the travel accounts was the sense of wonder at the building and the displays. This section analyses the form of wonder as a literary strategy used by South Asians to illustrate ideas of progress, to disseminate the notion of the wonder of modernity and new forms of technology.

The architecture of Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace was a marker of a modern environment.⁸⁷ The building was made of glass and iron, materials that were considered to be 'of the age' in Victorian Britain—products of the new era of mass production. Cast iron was used in prefabricated units. Glass was laid using new, modern techniques, and was an inexpensive and commonly used commodity in building work.⁸⁸ The building's design and use of prefabricated glass and iron units became the model for other structures in Paris's 1853 Exposition Universelle, 1862 International Exhibition in South Kensington, Owen Jones's Alexandra Palace in North London, and was also considered a fitting model for railway stations and public buildings.⁸⁹ As Young points out, 1851's Official Guide pointed to the architecture as "an embodiment of modern industrial order."⁹⁰ Dasa referenced the use of iron and glass in his account:

It is situated in one of the extreme southern suburbs of London, and the Palace, as it is called, made only of iron and glass, justly deserves to be reckoned as one of the modern wonders of the world. This unparalleled structure, made of such a fragile substance as glass, fitted in iron frames, occupies a large plot of ground, rears its walls and arched roof to the height

⁸⁷ Much literature has been written on the meaning of industrial spaces, and the relationship between the building, modernity, and progress. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (London: Belknap Press, 1999); and Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁸⁸ Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 7.

⁸⁹ Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 9-10.

⁹⁰ Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition*, 41.

of about two hundred feet, and divides itself into several stories and apartments.⁹¹

Dasa specifically connected modernity to the use of iron and glass. The instability of glass was contrasted with the height and enormity of the building and the solidity of iron. The description of the Crystal Palace also evoked a sense of wonder in the reader.

Many South Asian visitors also described the building as wondrous.

Mahtabsing wrote that “the palace is one of the great wonders of London as the best specimens of art are here with the best specimen of natural scenery.”⁹² Ragaviah

titled the section about her visit to the Sydenham as “The Wonderful Crystal Palace.”⁹³ Ram used wonder to describe his first encounter with the Crystal Palace:

“entering I was actually astonished at the beauty of the place. It filled me with wonder. It is impossible for me to define the singular charm cast over me and the influence produced on my mind.”⁹⁴ Baijnath suggested: “Johnson called it a huge glass cage, but I consider it to be one of the wonders of London.”⁹⁵ Baijnath also added to the mystique of the building as he described his approach the Crystal Palace from the railway: “the first impression, on emerging from the Low-level railway, is as if one were being carried into dream-land.”⁹⁶

Stephen Greenblatt’s concept of “wonder” is important here in analysing the frequent use of the word by South Asians to describe Sydenham. Greenblatt describes wonder as “the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted

⁹¹ Dasa, *Reminiscences, English and Australasian*, 60.

⁹² Mahtabsing, *Something about my Trip to Europe*, 41.

⁹³ Ragaviah, *Pictures of England*, 64.

⁹⁴ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 53.

⁹⁵ Baijnath, *England and India*, 185.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

attention.”⁹⁷ Greenblatt analyses “wonder” in the context of sixteenth-century “cabinets of curiosities.” Feelings of wonder arose from the viewer’s sense that everything in the cabinets belonged to the collector—especially the exciting, unseen wonders.⁹⁸

The use of wonder to describe the cabinets of curiosities has some parallels with South Asian travellers’ descriptions of Sydenham in the late nineteenth century. Sathianadhan described the Crystal Palace as “another sort of museum of curiosities.”⁹⁹ Malabari’s depiction of the contents of the Crystal Palace also evoked an image of the *wunderkammer*: “I make the most of this palace of crystal and endless curiosities.”¹⁰⁰ Greenblatt also suggests that circulating textual reports of the cabinets became more important than actually seeing the curiosities.¹⁰¹ Dasa, Ram, Baijnath, and Malabari spread the image of the Crystal Palace as wondrous through their travel accounts. Readers in the subcontinent were inevitably influenced by the authors’ reports of the “wonders” of the Crystal Palace. As with the cabinets of curiosities, South Asians travel writers wondered at the variety of exhibits on display and also marvelled at the sense that everything belonged to its owner: Britain, the ‘host’ of progress.

Greenblatt argues that the display of wonder cabinets increasingly illustrated the power and “magnificence” of the owner.¹⁰² The relationship between power and the display of objects was also an important one at Sydenham. Some of the travellers marvelled at the wide-ranging collections. After Dasa evoked a sense of wonder in

⁹⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991) 42.

⁹⁸ Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” 50-3.

⁹⁹ Sathianadhan, *Holiday Trip to Europe and America*, 81.

¹⁰⁰ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English Life*, 180.

¹⁰¹ Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” 50.

¹⁰² Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” 51.

his reader by marvelling at the use of iron and glass for the building, he described the contents: “the whole of the interior is a vast museum, having in its several divisions large collections of specimens of the sculpture and architecture of different ages and countries, of the industry of the nations in the shape of pottery, porcelain and paper, and of paper, and of pictures, photos and other works of art.”¹⁰³ He included accounts of the sculpture and picture galleries, the large orchestra, and the tropical plants: “on the ground floor in the centre part of the building is a botanical collection, with a number of exotic plants like the plantain and others, which are preserved at a high temperature artificially produced all the year round.”¹⁰⁴ He juxtaposed his wonder at the technology that was able to create a building out of iron and glass alongside descriptions of its comprehensive displays. By doing so, like the viewers of the *wunderkammer*, he invited his readers to join in his wonder at the building and to marvel at the power of its owner (i.e. Britain) to bring together such vast and disparate objects into one building. The botanical collections in particular were included to illustrate Britain’s imperial supremacy: these plants came from far corners of the empire, and it was with Britain’s superior knowledge and technology that they could be cultivated in a controlled environment. Dasa’s reference to the exotic plants in his narrative reinforced this idea for his audience.

Greenblatt’s framework of wonder also played out in the comparisons made by Ram and Nadkarni between Sydenham and India. Greenblatt writes, “wonder effects the crucial break with another that can only be described, only witnessed, in the language and images of sameness.”¹⁰⁵ Ram adopted a relational structure in describing the Crystal Palace. He wrote about his journey to Sydenham: “One fine

¹⁰³ Dasa, *Reminiscences, English and Australasian*, 60.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991) 135.

morning, I started from the Victoria Station to the Crystal Palace or the ‘Shish-Mahal’ of England which is situated at Sydenham.”¹⁰⁶ There was a literary shift here as Ram linked the Crystal Palace to the Taj Mahal, a sight that was familiar to South Asians as an awe-inspiring and revered place. In making this connection, he established Sydenham as wondrous. By evoking the familiarity of the Taj Mahal, he also domesticated the Crystal Palace by rendering the foreign building, the Crystal Palace, knowable to his audience. Furthermore, his use of humour also demonstrated his authorial control in his ability to describe wonder. This moment reveals the ways in which figures like Ram used wonder to assert themselves as figures of authority and thereby assert agency in imperial discourse.

Nadkarni compared some of the entertainments found at Sydenham to those in India. He wrote that “the Burmese also gave an entertainment on a stage. Their singing and music resembles the singing and music of the Koli Ghodawalas from Guzerath.” He also described how “a little girl sang and danced with gestures after the style of an Indian dancing girl.”¹⁰⁷ Nadkarni, a South Asian, was able to view both Burmese and British entertainers in London, and relay the images to his readers. Both Ram and Nadkarni helped reveal how “imperial power was staged at home,” and also how this power was “interrogated by ‘natives’ in the mother-city of the kingdom and the Empire itself.”¹⁰⁸ The fact that Burmese entertainers were at Sydenham was evidence of Britain’s imperial power. Sydenham, along with places like the British Museum, was the ‘host’ of empire. Nadkarni demonstrated the role of exhibitions in the staging of imperial power.

For Nadkarni and Ram, the language of wonder was the language of authority. Both travellers established themselves as translators: colonial subjects

¹⁰⁶ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 54.

¹⁰⁷ Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896*, 218.

¹⁰⁸ Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles,” 128.

with the power to analyse Western objects. They reaffirmed Britain at the height of civilisation. For these writers, to know civilisation, to understand it, was to be civilised. Through their narratives, they brought the civilising influence home, and established themselves as perfectly positioned to bring progress back to India. South Asian travellers began to establish, and began to circulate, the ways in which display came to represent civilisation and progress: an important exhibitionary 'form.'

Implicitly, the knowledge attained by these visitors could be had by other Indians. Burton argues that these travel writers "offered London as a manageable place to other Indians" so that they could successfully navigate "the various spatial, social and cultural geographies of 'domestic' imperial culture."¹⁰⁹ South Asian travellers positioned themselves as cultural intermediaries, unpacking the messages of the exhibition for the benefit of other colonial subjects. This became a potentially damaging scenario for imperial discourse because the act of writing was to assume agency against imperial grain. Colonial subjects were assumed to be recipients of knowledge, but here it is clear that were operating in a more complicated mode. Ram and Nadkarni were clearly the interpreters and producers of knowledge for the benefit of their colonial readership. Many of the writers suggested that their knowledge could be reproduced by South Asians that were part of this political community, as in those with the means to travel.

In the language of the travelogues, I suggest, wonder was associated with Berman's ideas on the "sources" of modernity. Berman notes that a source of modernity included "the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology."¹¹⁰ Great Exhibitions of this age, including Sydenham, provided an experience of modernity. Exhibition organisers displayed the processes

¹⁰⁹ Burton, "London and Paris through Indian spectacles," 133.

¹¹⁰ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, 16.

of industrialisation and the benefits of “industry, commerce, and mechanization” for its visitors.¹¹¹ If we take Sydenham as a memory of 1851 for these South Asian visitors, then the Crystal Palace represented the new manufacturing processes, materials, and technology that was available to create the architecture of the new, modern Crystal Palace. The writers also marvelled at Sydenham’s contents, filled with the new ‘curiosities’ of the modern age, including displays from across the Empire. That so many of the travel narratives had an awestruck moment indicates that wonder was a practical literary strategy in which they described the act of looking. The mode of looking at wonder was linked to ideas of progress: the moment of wonder preceded the moment of knowledge and discovery of technology and progress.

Through representations of the Crystal Palace, South Asian travel writers began to establish ‘forms’ of exhibition. Some of exhibitionary forms, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, included the juxtaposition of education and entertainment; the use of electricity; the adaptation of classification systems and particularly the ways in which exhibitions were organised and hosted; the display of particular objects and trades as representative of a culture or nation; and the relationship between progress and display. The concept of wonder was an important exhibitionary form. It is clear that the relationship between how objects were displayed, wonder, and modernity were disseminated by these travel narratives. If these ideas were present in the travel narratives, they were also circulated amongst the “armchair travellers”¹¹² in the subcontinent in the new political community “imagined”¹¹³ by the authors.

¹¹¹ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 94.

¹¹² Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, 47.

¹¹³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

2.4.2 Microcosm

In this section, I draw upon Susan Stewart's theoretical framework of microcosm in order to analyse the literary conventions used by South Asian travellers to represent the Crystal Palace. For Stewart, all collections are microcosms, and the microcosm offers a world in miniature: a projection of a perfect society. She describes the microcosmic world as an island, uncontaminated and perfect.¹¹⁴ Within that world, there was a perfect society, and the microcosm appeared to be complete. The microcosm of the Crystal Palace, I suggest, was its vision of the evolutionary development of civilisations. Exhibitions, like the 1851 Great Exhibition and Sydenham, offered a vision of an idealised, modern, and industrialised world. This world on offer at Sydenham, which displayed the progression of civilisation in art and natural history, appeared to illustrate the complete picture of humanity. This section examines the ways in which South Asians represented the idea of the "world itself being ordered up as an endless exhibition."¹¹⁵

Many of the travellers emphasised the progression of Western art and culture exhibited at Sydenham. In nearly all of the travelogues, the authors appeared to discuss the Crystal Palace with a preconceived notion of the building as the epitome of scientific and artistic achievement. From their descriptions, the Crystal Palace displayed the entire world of art and architecture, from past to present, in microcosm. Baijnath commented on the art and design on display at the Crystal Palace:

The best specimens of art are here seen with the best specimens of natural scenery. The various Courts—Moorish, Byzantine, German, Medieval,—furnish you with much instructive information on the various stages through which architecture has passed. Their representation of Moorish houses and palaces is wonderfully exact. Up in the galleries, along with the busts of

¹¹⁴ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (London: Duke University Press, 1993) 70.

¹¹⁵ Mitchell, "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order," 290.

poets and painters, are suggestive paintings of scenes from both Eastern and Western history.¹¹⁶

From Baijnath's description, readers would understand that the entire history of Western architecture was on display at Sydenham. He also mentioned that there were paintings, sculptures, and busts from both Western and Eastern history, again giving the impression that Sydenham brought together a wide variety of art from cultures across the world. Furthermore, he specifically highlighted the authenticity of the Moorish houses. Gathering together displays from across the world and throughout history was a means of illustrating British imperial power. Britain, it was presumed, had the knowledge to amass such distinct and wide-ranging exhibits in one symbolic building under their control.¹¹⁷ As the Crystal Palace was a microcosm, and if the collection equalled the world, then the South Asians were viewing the world as they visited the displays. Baijnath, for example, was able to observe the world in microcosm and situate himself as a viewer, an authoritative position.

Ram closely mirrored Baijnath's descriptions of Sydenham's contents. Ram referred to the "collections, artistic, scientific, for which the palace is so famous."¹¹⁸ Some sections he declared to be of "exceptional interest" included Architecture, the Picture Gallery, the large Industrial Department, and the "Technological Museum, which included Home, Colonial, and Foreign products."¹¹⁹ He also wrote:

Specimens of the various phases and developments through which the arts of Architecture, Sculpture, and Mural Decorations, have passed, are here presented in chronological sequence of style; commencing from the earliest known period down to modern times. Thus, we may gain in practical fashion, an idea of the successive dates of civilization.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Baijnath, *England and India*, 185.

¹¹⁷ Hassam, "Portable iron structures," 180-1.

¹¹⁸ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 55.

¹¹⁹ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 56.

¹²⁰ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 55.

Nadkarni also noted that “arts, architecture, and sculpture are particularly represented here. There are several courts in which grand productions of art and historical events are exhibited. In fact some of the world’s best things, so far as art and science are concerned, can be seen here.”¹²¹ Ram and Nadkarni’s descriptions closely resembled Sydenham’s dominant narrative, which Andrew Hassam observes was the “representation of previous civilisations was integrated into a self-congratulatory narrative that seemed to lead inexorably from the earliest civilisations to Victorian Britain.”¹²² The collection, in microcosm, had a teleology all its own, as seen in Ram’s example. For Stewart, the series in a collection—in this case, a series of specific artistic disciplines such as sculpture—appears to be complete, so that it becomes the definition of the world. Whatever is left out is not worthy of inclusion.¹²³ In using the strategy of listing, as Ram does in his narrative, the series appeared to become complete, and the world became evident to the readers. In this example, Ram noted the entirety of human civilisation’s achievements in art and culture under one roof: an entire world in microcosm.

For some South Asian travellers, the Crystal Palace at Sydenham offered a form of industrial salvation. This idea was found in Lala Baijnath’s travel narrative as he waxed eloquently about the grounds:

Its fountains, comprising more than 10,000 jets, are simply wonderful; while its palaces and tropical birds and tropical trees remind you of the East, its grounds are even more attractive; slopes, lawns and flower beds, which, when lighted with thousands of coloured lamps in the nights, take you to some Arcadia.¹²⁴

Baijnath linked elements of the Crystal Palace to “the East,” assuming that his readers would be familiar with representative images of “the East,” which included

¹²¹ Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe*, 8.

¹²² Hassam, “Portable iron structures,” 180.

¹²³ Stewart, *On Longing*, 157.

¹²⁴ Baijnath, *England and India*, 185.

India. Baijnath noted that the mythical “East” was unmistakably associated with exoticised images of nature—“tropical birds” and “tropical trees,” evoking images of wildness. The image of Britain, on the other hand, was also linked to nature, but a distinctly more tamed growth of clearly demarcated lawns and flower beds. Furthermore, in his reference to the trees and plants—“remind you of the East”—he quite clearly was using an authorial strategy to address an equal, sharing knowledge about the systems of representation of ‘Indianness’ in Britain.

Baijnath also utilised the archetype of the literary “Arcadia,” an idyll that had a long history of representation in Western literary tradition. Arcadia was originally conceived in Greek mythology as a home to shepherds and uncorrupted lands; later in English literature, Arcadia developed into a pastoral ideal, an “idyllic world of leisure,” a refuge from urban life.¹²⁵ It became an image frequently evoked in poetry, including that of Romantic verse: “the poet comes to Arcadia for a clarification of his artistic, intellectual and moral purpose.”¹²⁶

By appropriating this literary archetype, Baijnath evoked the Crystal Palace as a refuge of sorts for South Asians. The image of a pastoral idyll was juxtaposed with the industrial, scientific, and artistic objects and exhibits at the Crystal Palace, as well as the “wondrous” feat of engineering in the building itself. While the image of Arcadia in Western literary tradition signalled a refuge from the detrimental effects of urban civilised life, for South Asians like Baijnath and Ram, Western civilisation itself offered the opportunity for a discovery of artistic, intellectual, and moral purpose. For Ram, London provided a “living museum of refinement and civilization.”¹²⁷ For Baijnath, the industrial society of Britain was the place where

¹²⁵ Peter V. Marinelli, *Pastoral* (London: Methuen, 1971) 37.

¹²⁶ Marinelli, *Pastoral*, 45.

¹²⁷ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 11. The Orientalist framework of finding the ‘Self’ and developing a future in another culture was still in place in these narratives. The model of South Asians taking

educated South Asians could escape. Rather than seeing machinery and urbanisation as a negative influence, as British Romanticists and theorists like George Birdwood did,¹²⁸ many of these South Asian travellers viewed Western society as a place of enlightenment. Baijnath wrote in his narrative that India should “take light from the West” in order to help India “realize the true meaning of life.”¹²⁹ The Crystal Palace, as a microcosm of the world, stood for the ideas of industry and modernity. Baijnath and Ram appropriated the microcosmic world of Sydenham for their own purposes. For them, industrial modernity could revitalise the stagnant civilisation of India. At this stage, the writers have accepted the narrative of progress and civilisation, and they wanted to keep ahead and quickly modernise.¹³⁰

As Peter Gurney argues, Sydenham became a popular space.¹³¹ Berman suggests that Paxton’s Crystal Palace “was meant to enrich the possibilities of urban life: it would be a new kind of social space, an archetypally modern environment that could bring all London’s fragmented and opposed social strata together.”¹³² Foreign visitors were especially taken with the Crystal Palace and it became London’s most “cosmopolitan zone” with people from all classes and races. Berman’s observation on the representations of classes, races, and sexes at Sydenham is best illustrated in Malabari’s description of a Salvation Army fête he attended at the Crystal Palace:

I make up my mind to witness the Salvation Army Fête, celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary at the Crystal Palace. The crowds at the principal

inspiration from Britain was at least partly derived from an Orientalist construct. Some Orientalists believed that Asia could regenerate and revitalise Europe. British travellers such as Richard Burton sought refuge in the “primitive” cultures of the East away from the corruptive influences of modernised industrial society of the West.

¹²⁸ Tim Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labor in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 278-9.

¹²⁹ Baijnath, *England and India*, 234.

¹³⁰ Stewart, *On Longing*, 128. Stewart also notes that the sealed nature of the microcosm makes it difficult to work against. South Asians may have found it difficult to struggle against this complete world, and could be why most generally did not question the narrative of progress on display at Sydenham.

¹³¹ Gurney, “An Appropriated Space,” 117-8.

¹³² Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, 246.

stations are enormous. Besides the soldiers of the Cross—a whole army of officers and men representing all England—there are contingents from abroad, Europe, America, India; supplemented by spectators and sympathizers like myself.¹³³

The whole world was on display, available for consumption by Malabari, a colonial subject. Malabari made sure to reference the myriad of people that he observed at Sydenham, which included people from across the social spectrum in Britain, as well as those from abroad and from India. Malabari's scene illustrated the concept of the wonder of the cosmopolitan crowd. The fête also was also an example of the "People's Palace," where social groups made Sydenham their own.¹³⁴ For Malabari, however, the scene soon turns sour:

Wading through ankle-deep mud below, and a steady downpour from above, we follow the march past. It is all managed in a rigorous military style, a few straggling camp followers bringing up the rear—pale, haggard, half-fainting. We are told of a wild beasts show at the Palace. I cannot resist asking which were the wild beasts—the lions and tigers trained like human beings, or some of the human beings I see there, looking like hunted animals. Indeed, there is too much emotion amongst the rank and file, especially the women, and too little of good sense."¹³⁵

Malabari cast doubt on the promises of Berman's "new social space."¹³⁶ He questioned the benefits of this new space as it led to the "excessive prayer" and "roaring and ranting" he observed.¹³⁷ Malabari engaged with the exhibition in microcosm: he looked at the world at Sydenham in terms of its peopled forms, and he was disappointed. He later informed his reader that "probably the excesses in the Crystal Palace, to which I have alluded, are reserved only for the annual field-day. But taken altogether, the movement seems to me to need uplifting. It needs, perhaps, a better class of men and women to guide it."¹³⁸ Malabari did not dismiss the

¹³³ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English Life*, 128-9.

¹³⁴ Piggott, *Palace of the People*, 183-204.

¹³⁵ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English Life*, 129-30.

¹³⁶ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, 246.

¹³⁷ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English Life*, 132.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

Salvation Army altogether, but instead suggested that it needed “uplifting.” It is also evident that there is space in the discourse for Malabari to criticise certain elements of imperial Britain, including issues of class.

The discourse of class also played a role in Malabari’s reaction to the fête. It is important to note that Malabari lived mostly in Bombay, a major colonial metropolis and hub of imperial politics, and was a member of the urban elite. Urban elites often dissociated themselves from the ‘masses’ and the lower classes. Elites like Malabari clearly situated themselves as superior to some British subjectivities in the hierarchy of class. Malabari, in his ability to describe cultural differences for his reader, was positioned as a different kind of Indian subject within the diversity of Empire.

The travel narratives were far more complex than South Asian travellers merely replicating the dominant narratives for their readers. Malabari, for instance, criticised some notions of progress in his discussions of the poor in London’s East End. He wrote: “poor as India is, I thank God she knows not much of the poverty to which parts of Britain have become accustomed—the East End of London, for instance...[where there are] men and women living in a chronic state of emaciation, till they can hardly be recognised as human.”¹³⁹ The significance of this passage has also been identified by Antoinette Burton, who suggests that in the concept of class superiority there was an “implicit critique of imperial civilization as well, one which revealed poverty and distress as the daily condition of the lower classes at the heart of the world’s largest empire.”¹⁴⁰ Malabari’s critique was an important moment in which a straightforward binary of Britain and India was being dismantled. As Malabari demonstrated to his readers, the promise of progress was not universal. We

¹³⁹ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English Life*, 80.

¹⁴⁰ Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles,” 134.

can see in the travelogues the variety of responses that South Asians had to the ideas of modernity, progress, and civilisation in the metropole and on display at the Crystal Palace. While it is clear that there was space in the discourse for South Asians to criticise certain elements of British culture, as Malabari does, on other topics the visitors remained largely silent.

2.5 Narrative Gaps and Silences: The Natural History Courts

Natural History was one of the most important categories at Sydenham. The building itself was divided into “tropical” and “temperate” zones (Fig. 2.2). Stuffed animals were placed amongst a variety of exotic plants gathered around the building to display “natural” habitats. As Nicky Levell notes, the oriental ‘other’ in a “romantic primitivist trope” was firmly fixed in these courts; “Indian dioramas consisted of an elephant, which was carrying some ‘natives’, being attacked by two tigers; and another tiger and a lion were depicted amongst banana, mango and cotton plants.”¹⁴¹ The Indian Courts were not arranged by any geographical system and mixed exhibits from India, Burma, Japan, Persia, and China.¹⁴²

Sydenham was one of many exhibitions in the late nineteenth century that displayed colonised bodies. The layout of the building directed the visitor from early civilisations that were violently overthrown by “barbarians,” or else had been “sunk into decadence,” and ended at the apex of civilisations—Victorian Britain.¹⁴³ Annie Coombes argues that the purpose of having colonised races on show was to offer

¹⁴¹ Levell, *Oriental Visions*, 48-9.

¹⁴² Levell, *Oriental Visions*, 40.

¹⁴³ Hassam, “Portable iron structures,” 180-1.

“points of differentiation around which to reinforce, whether consciously or through more subtle means, the certainty of European imperial superiority.”¹⁴⁴ As mentioned



Figure 2.2: Hervé Lewandowski. The nave looking north showing Osler's Fountain. c1855-1890. Photographic positive. 26.6 x 24.4 cm. From an album of photographs of the Crystal Palace. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. *ARTstor*. JPEG File.

earlier, during the nineteenth century, British commentators frequently described Indian culture as sunk into decadence.¹⁴⁵ At Sydenham, there was a discourse of

¹⁴⁴ Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Yale University Press, 1994) 64.

¹⁴⁵ Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 167-73.

progress without industry, but which was manifested by the building itself, the building's memory, and the exotic winter gardens.

While British writers and visitors commented on the Natural History sections, most South Asian travel writers remained largely silent on the representations of 'natives' on display. There are gaps in the texts. The lack of comment on this subject reveals as much about the meanings of these travelogues as the topics and sights that were mentioned. Some writers like Baijnath and Nadkarni directly or indirectly referenced the Natural History sections or the ideas of race and civilisation propagated by these courts. An examination of their discussions, and their lack of description, about the natural history courts is useful in sketching out a fuller picture of the ways in which the beginnings of Indian modernity were represented.

Dasa was one of the few writers who mentioned the Natural History courts. He made no reference to the people exhibited, only to some articles on display:

There is a large natural history collection in one part of the building; and in an upper gallery is a museum of raw produce of the different parts of the globe, in the midst of which I was not a little amused to see two Indian *goorgoories* [type of smoking pipe] with *chillums* [type of smoking pipe] complete. Perhaps these were placed to show how tobacco is consumed in the east.¹⁴⁶

The ways in which Dasa described the Natural History courts, and what he left out, were both equally telling. First, he mentioned the raw materials from across the Empire; the representation of India as a land of raw materials was a common trope in nineteenth century international exhibitions. As Lara Kriegel notes, India was typically represented as a provider of raw materials, like jute and rubber, used by British manufacturers.¹⁴⁷ With irony, Dasa then referenced popular Indian smoking

¹⁴⁶ Dasa, *Reminiscences, England and Australasian*, 60.

¹⁴⁷ Kriegel, "Narrating the subcontinent in 1851," 150.

instruments also on display in this gallery. He contrasted the important material exports used in industrial manufacture with smoking as an Indian leisure activity. Both the raw materials and the smoking implements were on display in the same place. This scene, which was clearly an ethnographic display, was interpreted by Dasa as an industrial display, situating India as part of the raw material/manufacturing narrative. He clearly did not want to see the denigration of the Indian subject and wanted to see an industrial category. This moment illustrates the ways in which the discourse of progress was used and mobilised by travel writers, even when it was not evident in the displays they saw.

Tellingly, what Dasa did not mention was the bodies on display, the dioramas of animals and the Indian ‘natives.’ There could be a few reasons for the gap in the narrative. For example, in the travel narratives, it is clear that the South Asian visitors wished to be aligned with the ideals of British civilisation. Nevertheless, they were also beginning to criticise certain elements of British rule. Dasa’s description of the natural history courts, and what was left out, demonstrates the negotiation that South Asians travellers had to make with imperial discourse as they navigated through exhibitions in the metropole. There could be a number of different reasons for these narrative silences: it is impossible to tell, for example, whether the travel writers were denying the existence of the ethnographic displays or excluding them deliberately; if the displays were impossible to contain; the writers may have felt shocked, but did not have the language in which to describe the scenes; or perhaps they may not have wanted to engage as Indian ‘others’ were of no interest to the urban elites. It is difficult to interpret the narrative silences within the frameworks of this thesis. These issues will come up more explicitly in Chapter Three.

Other travel writers commented on negative representations of India indirectly, without specifically referencing the ethnographic exhibits. For instance, Baijnath referenced a dominant narrative of India, one that associated India with despotism. He alluded to descriptions of India as despotic and corrupted, writing that “the Indian mind, which has been debased under the influence of weak and tyrannous despotisms, has vastly expanded under the influence of the present system of education.”¹⁴⁸ He noted that India has been debased in the past, but then argued that this representation is outdated as his elite class has benefited from Western education. In terms of colonial discourse, education was central to gaining knowledge of progress. For Baijnath, to understand civilisation was to be civilised.

Baijnath noted in his preface that the purpose of his travelogue was to foster a greater understanding between South Asians and Europeans: “what I have said of the characteristics of modern Europe will, I think, make the desire of Indians for progress keener, while my remarks on things Indian will make the Europeans know and appreciate us better.”¹⁴⁹ Baijnath assumed that progress was something that South Asians wanted to attain. He also suggested that his travelogue served to educate Europeans on a true India and how Indians really were. Although Baijnath did not directly discuss the Natural History Courts themselves, his eagerness to emphasise India’s progress suggests that he was familiar with the ideas evoked by the Natural History Courts. Baijnath frequently tried to disabuse British people of the notions of India as debased and uncivilised.

Nadkarni also focused on the hierarchy of civilisation on display at Sydenham. Nadkarni, a University Fellow and Pleader at the High Court in Bombay, travelled to London in 1896. Nadkarni was an ardent supporter of colonial rule but

¹⁴⁸ Baijnath, *England and India*, 65.

¹⁴⁹ Baijnath, *England and India*, Preface.

believed that India was a progressing civilization. While in Europe and Britain, Nadkarni became increasingly frustrated with the idea of India as a mysterious land, lamenting:

India is still a land of wonders and mystery to the English people. It is astonishing how little knowledge the people, even leading statesmen, possess of our country. The ignorance is truly remarkable. A very large amount of the population still entertain the belief that Indians are no better than negroes utterly sunk in barbarism.¹⁵⁰

In this passage, Nadkarni used the narrative strategy of highlighting the misinterpretation of India by arguing that “English people” did not understand his country. He also referenced an imperial hierarchy of race, one that placed primitive Africans on the bottom, Indians on a higher rung, and English people at the top. Nadkarni also alluded to and contested the imperial representation of an exoticised, despotic India.¹⁵¹ Though he called into question this Orientalist discourse, he still used a hierarchy of race. He set apart those Indians who were capable of being civilised while still adhering to the dominant view of “negroes” as barbaric.

According to Nadkarni, the future of India lay in the hands of the English: “If we are ever to gain any real political advancement, it is to the English people we must look, and before they can be induced to grant us additional privileges, they must have a correct knowledge as to our intellectual aptitudes, our social conditions and our progress in civilization.”¹⁵² It was the belief of many South Asians that with the help of England, India could develop intellectual, educational, or moral advancement. Therefore, for Nadkarni, it was vital to establish India’s potential for educational and industrial progress.

Nadkarni called for the renegotiation of the hierarchy by arguing for a higher place within it and on *his* terms. Fixed racial categories were the subject of much

¹⁵⁰ Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe*, 381.

¹⁵¹ Kriegel, “Narrating the subcontinent in 1851,” 146.

¹⁵² Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe*, 381.

debate in the late nineteenth century, and the hierarchy of difference was further reinforced by the displays of colonised races. Despite the prevalence of scientific racism, Nadkarni adheres to an Enlightenment narrative of improvability. Nadkarni's views stand in stark contrast to the attitudes of T.N. Mukharji, a Bengali "babu" involved in the collection, organisation, and display of objects for the "Empire of India" court at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886. Mukharji was one of the few travel writers who discussed the ethnographic displays in his narrative *A Visit to Europe*.¹⁵³ In his travelogue, Mukharji included long passages in which he led the reader through the ethnographic displays, giving detailed descriptions of the peoples exhibited. In contrast to Nadkarni, whose ideas are indicative of a liberal colonial moderniser, Mukharji was more closely wedded to nineteenth century ideas of fixed racial categories. Mukharji's attitudes adhere more closely to ideas of "racial and cultural essences" proposed by Victorian scientists like James Cowles Prichard, who applied notions of evolution to human development, and argued for the relationship between "color and culture."¹⁵⁴ Mukharji will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

The narrative silences could also be a result of the writers' frequent mention of Western civilisation and education. The writers worked hard to associate themselves with British, and therefore Western, civilisation. South Asian writers visited locales that illustrated British civilisation, technology, industry, progress, and education, like Sydenham, the British Museum, and the South Kensington Museum. The writers' oft-mentioned purpose of their narratives to illustrate India's potential for civilisation, progress, and modernity. They wrote about the benefits of British progress, as they began to form ideas about India's future and contemplated the role

¹⁵³ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 69-80 .

¹⁵⁴ Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), ix.

of the Raj within it. Mentioning the ethnographic exhibits could have linked these travellers with the exoticised Indian in the forest that was on display. Perhaps, by discussing the colonised bodies on display, they feared an association with images of the romanticised ‘native.’

It is clear from the narrative gaps that these travellers were able to criticise British people on matters of class, and on the British understanding of Indian culture, but not on issues of race. Nadkarni, for example, criticised their “ignorance” of India, and Malabari disapproved of London’s poverty and also the emotional “excesses” of certain visitors to the Crystal Palace. But when it came to race and ethnography, there was silence. Most of the travel writers, including Dasa, did not mention Sydenham’s racial and ethnographic displays. It may have been that criticising the depictions of race was out of bounds for the travel writers, and doing so would be seen as too critical of empire. These narrative gaps are telling, as they show us where there is room in imperial discourse for South Asians to speak and where there is not. These travellers assumed roles as interpreters, and could speak on issues of class as they rearticulate narratives of universal progress, especially with regards to issues of economic and political development. They could not even begin to form a critique of racial hierarchy. We can see the negotiations that these South Asians had to make with colonial discourse in order to make their voices heard.

British educated elites like Nadkarni and Baijnath began to position themselves as having a wide range of colonial subjectivities. By doing so, these South Asians “could claim to represent and act upon the subaltern masses from whom they distinguished themselves.”¹⁵⁵ The “political advancement”¹⁵⁶ that could be achieved by Indians, for instance, was presumably for him and those of his class:

¹⁵⁵ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 35.

¹⁵⁶ Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe*, 381.

those that could read English, were in liberal professions like law, and were consumers of South Asian travelogues. Some of the travel writers began to distinguish themselves and their readers from the subaltern classes. At this early stage in Indian nationalism, however, the dichotomy between the educated Indian and the subaltern masses was not firmly fixed. This contrast between the educated and subaltern classes was important in the staging of the Indian National Congress exhibitions. It also reflected a similar metropolitan dichotomy present at the 1851 Great Exhibition, where the organisers aimed to educate the lower and working classes through display.¹⁵⁷ I will explore this topic further in the following chapters.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the complex ways in which South Asian travellers used the medium of the travelogue and their representations of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham to envision India's future as a modern civilisation, marked by industrial and technological progress. These visitors often focused on the scientific, artistic, and industrial achievements on display at the Crystal Palace. By doing so, they aligned themselves with the principles of civilisation and demonstrated their knowledge of progress. Through South Asian traveller experiences at important cultural sites like Sydenham, these travellers began to construct how industrial and technological progress was the benchmark for an advanced and enlightened society. Through their travelogues, South Asians tried to build a narrative of how exhibitions should be read 'back home,' and also used their narratives in order to establish authorial control. Their narratives, like the exhibitions themselves, played an important role in the development of Indian nationalism.

¹⁵⁷ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 90-1.

Representations of Sydenham allowed the travel writers to establish certain 'forms' of exhibition, which included the role of education and entertainment at exhibitions and the role of display in achieving progress. South Asians also established the parameters of modernity through their experiences of the 'wonder' of the building and through their engagement with the world in microcosm at Sydenham. These forms were also circulated in South Asian writings about the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, and adapted by the Indian National Congress in the staging of their exhibitions between 1901 and 1905.

Chapter 3

Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886:

The ‘Forms’ of Exhibition and the Development of Indian Nationalism

3.1 Introduction

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 was one of a series of exhibitions held in conjunction with the Queen’s Jubilee of 1887. The 1886 Exhibition was the largest of the series, and focused on articles from across India and other colonies. Displays included art wares, agricultural and economic products, and ethnographic exhibits. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition also prompted a flurry of travellers from the Indian subcontinent.¹

This chapter examines the continuing engagement by South Asians with exhibitionary space. It discusses the ways in which the Colonial and Indian Exhibition established the model for ‘forms’ and practices of exhibition, which were used by South Asians as they considered the modern Indian nation. These ‘forms’ include representations of Indian art and design, and education and entertainment. In addition, many of these forms were adapted by the Indian National Congress exhibitions in the first decade of the twentieth century, which will be the subject of the next two chapters. The chapter also considers the growth of nationalist discontent as South Asian newspaper commentators analysed the roles of the exhibition in terms of India’s economic and political situation. Here, as in the previous chapter, I analyse the travel writing of Behramji Malabari, G. N. Nadkarni, Jhinda Ram, N. Dasa, and T.N. Mukharji. I also read across the commentary from South Asian

¹ Burton, “London and Paris through Indian spectacles,” 127-8.

newspapers, including *The Mahratta*, *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, and *The Indian Mirror*.

It is important to understand the 1886 Exhibition in the context of the development of Indian nationalism. After the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the East India Company dissolved and Britain established direct governmental control over India. The 1880s marked an important period in the development of Indian nationalism. In 1885, the Indian National Congress, an organisation which will be discussed extensively in the following chapters, was founded in the subcontinent, instigating a period of “moderate” nationalism that lasted until the 1905 partition of Bengal.

The 1886 Exhibition has received significant scholarly attention. In particular, this chapter builds on the work of Paul Greenhalgh, Antoinette Burton, Saloni Mathur, and Peter Hoffenberg.² Paul Greenhalgh, in an early text that explored the relationships between exhibitions and empire, has established an influential ‘timeline’ of exhibitions that has led to a discussion of the ways in which exhibitions developed chronologically. The narrative begins with the Great Exhibition of the Works of All Nations in 1851, then the 1867 Exposition Universelle held in Paris, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, and so on. In some cases, the timeline does not work: for my purposes, it is problematic because South Asian travel writers visited the Crystal Palace at Sydenham and the 1886 Exhibition at the same time.

² For further reading on the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, see Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain*; Nicky Levell, “Reproducing India: International Exhibitions and Victorian Tourism,” *Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Tourism* (ed. Michael Hitchcock and Ken Teague, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Levell, *Oriental Visions*; Saloni Mathur, “Living Ethnological Exhibits: The Case of 1886,” *Cultural Anthropology* 15. 4 (Nov 2000): 492-524; and Mathur, *India by Design*.

Through a focus on prominent South Asian travellers, like Cornelia Sorabji, in the metropole, Burton interrogates the “imagined geography” of empire. She argues that “imperial England itself was available for consumption, appropriation, and refiguration by its colonial subjects.”³ While Burton concentrates on the boundaries of empire and how Britain was constructed as an imperial nation, I focus specifically on the ways in which the Colonial and Indian Exhibition was made available for re-articulation by South Asian travel writers as they engaged with the spaces of display. I also focus on the role that this exhibition had in the development of Indian nationalism.

Saloni Mathur and Peter Hoffenberg provide valuable insight into the ethnographic displays at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, especially the travel narrative of T. N. Mukharji, travel writer and assistant for exhibitions in the Department of Revenue and Agriculture in Calcutta. Mathur suggests that Mukharji’s account “reflect[s] class anxieties of the elite colonial traveller in London, who felt uncomfortable sharing the category ‘native’ or ‘blackie’ with the indigenous lower classes.”⁴ Hoffenberg analyses Mukharji’s role as intermediary between colony and metropole. I expand on their points through an analysis of the intersection of race and class that characterised Mukharji’s authorial strategies as he distanced himself from the ‘natives’ at the exhibition. Mukharji’s experiences, especially in comparison to G.N. Nadkarni, who was examined in the previous chapter, reveal the complexities of race, class, and colonial modernity.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first provides important context by outlining the organisation and classification of the Indian displays at the exhibition. The second analyses the ways in which South Asians engaged with

³ Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, 8.

⁴ Mathur, *India by Design*, 69.

certain ‘forms’ of exhibition. The third considers the ethnographic sections at the exhibition, exploring the meanings of race in relation to Mukharji’s writings. The final section focuses on debates about British rule that arose from considerations of the exhibition.

3.2 The Colonial and Indian Exhibition: Contents and Displays

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition was conceived in 1884, opened on 4 May 1886 by Queen Victoria, and closed after 164 days. By the time of its closure on 10 November 1886, there had been a total of 5.5 million visitors.⁵ The Exhibition took place in Earl’s Court; the grounds incorporated several pavilions, courtyards, and gardens. It was the last and most important in a series of four thematic exhibitions held in London—Fisheries (1883), Health (1884), and Inventions (1885). It was also held to coincide with the Queen’s Jubilee of 1887.

India’s contributions occupied 103,000 square feet of the area.⁶ While the largest sections belonged to India, there were also displays from Australia, West and South Africa, New Zealand, Canada, Hong Kong, British Guiana, the West Indies, Malta, and Cyprus.⁷ Funding for the exhibition derived solely from governmental sources, either directly or through “officially appointed” commission grants.⁸

The 1886 Exhibition marked a significant change in exhibitionary practice in Britain. It came at the height of the “Scramble for Africa,” a period in which Britain competed with various European countries for control of the continent. Doubts about the security of the Empire also began to surface. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition

⁵ William Clowes, *Report of the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1887) 2.

⁶ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 59.

⁷ William Clowes, *Official Guide to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1886).

⁸ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 60.

was a vehicle for imperial propaganda. As Greenhalgh notes, the 1886 Exhibition was considered by officials as representative of the ways in which colonial manufactures could contribute to Britain.⁹

The event took place in the midst of Thomas Cook's tours for Britons to 'exotic' India. The Prince of Wales appointed Thomas Cook Passenger Agents to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, expressing his desire to enable everyone from "Indian maharajahs to the British public" to visit the exhibition.¹⁰ The agency became the unofficial travel agents for many of the rulers of India's independent states, as South Asians engaged in India-to-Britain tourism. Mathur states that the idea of travel for leisure was considered a "bourgeois, cosmopolitan, and worldly experience,"¹¹ and, I would argue, constituted a particularly modern form of experience. As the previous chapter illustrated, South Asians engaged with travel as a means of becoming modern.

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition was organised predominantly by the Department of Science and Art, located in South Kensington. Sir Philip Cunliffe-Owen, Director of the South Kensington Museum, served as the Secretary to the Royal Commission for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition and his nephew, Edward Cunliffe-Owen, served as the Assistant Secretary.¹² After a series of departmental shifts and reorganisation in the subcontinent during the 1870s and 1880s, the responsibilities of collecting, classifying, cataloguing, shipping and display of India's exhibits were left to the newly formed Museums and Exhibitions Branch of the Revenue and Agriculture Department. Twenty-four executive commissioners were appointed for their respective countries. George Watt, a secretary in this

⁹ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 62.

¹⁰ Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Popular Tourism* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991) 205.

¹¹ Mathur, *India by Design*, 55.

¹² Clowes, *Official Guide*, 5.

department, was selected as the Superintendent of the Economic Court. Two South Asians, T.N. Mukharji and B.A. Gupte, served as Watt's assistants.¹³ Mukharji's particular role in the organisation of the exhibition will be discussed further in the chapter.

Unlike previous exhibitions, the Royal Commission established no central classification system for the exhibits and invited the participating governments to classify their own objects. Although the British government ostensibly had complete control over all collecting, classifying, promotional, and trading aspects of the exhibition, the officials involved at the local level often had their own intentions, motivations, and ideas in exhibiting. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition, with the exception of the Economic Court, was arranged according to region, rather than by categories of objects.

The Economic Court exhibited the "useful products of India."¹⁴ These included economic products and agricultural exhibits. The *Official Guide* indicated that the Economic Court was intended to be a "survey of the resources, the productive powers, and the commerce of India."¹⁵ The exhibits, which were arranged by classes rather than by region, included:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| I. Foods | VII. Dyes and Tans |
| II. Beverages | VIII. Fibres |
| III. Narcotics | IX. Skins and Leathers |
| IV. Oils | X. Canes and Basket Work |
| V. Medicines | XI. Minerals and Ores |
| VI. Guns | XII. Timbers ¹⁶ |

The Economic Court also included ethnographical exhibits, which featured life-size models of various 'natives' from the Indian subcontinent.

¹³ Clowes, *Official Guide*, 3.

¹⁴ Clowes, *Official Guide*, 19.

¹⁵ Clowes, *Official Guide*, 20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* The categorisation here is important to note as it would later influence the classification of objects at the 1904 Indian National Congress exhibition in Bombay, the subject of the next chapter.

As the following section analyses South Asian responses to Indian art and design at the exhibition, a description of India's displays is useful. The first area encountered by the visitor after the principal entrance was the Empire of India section. On the map in the *Official Guide*, this area was represented by the pink shaded parts of the South, Middle, and North Courts, as well as the Indian Palace and gardens (Fig. 3.1). The Indian Palace included the Durbar Hall and military collection. Carved screens, carpets, lamps, and hanging banners overlooked the three courts.¹⁷ The Indian Palace, marked by #23, 24, and 50 on Figure 3.1, was divided into three parts. The first constituted workshops containing jewellers, weavers, and carvers. The second part was the Durbar Hall, designed by Caspar Purdon Clarke. The Durbar Hall contained intricate woodcarving and was intended to be a replica of an Indian palace. The third section was the garden vestibule, marked as #50 on Figure. 3.1. The vestibule contained a mosaic floor and a fountain, over which was draped a marquee tent. It also included a Ceylon Tea House.

Within the section, there were three divisions of space: the Art Ware Courts, the Economic Court, and the Administrative Courts. On display in these courts were shawls, curtains, metal work, jewellery, furniture, teas, and raw materials. Visitors entered the Middle Court through the ornately carved Jeypore Gateway, the “threshold dividing nature from culture,” and “entered into the idealized microcosm of Indian civilisation.”¹⁸ After the Jeypore Gateway, the visitor arrived at the art-ware courts, divided regionally by “stylistically distinctive screens” from locations such as Rajputana, Central India, Bombay and Baroda, and Bengal and Nepal.¹⁹ Officials deemed all original objects of Indian “industrial art” to be unfit for

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Levell, *Oriental Visions*, 71-2.

¹⁹ Levell, *Oriental Visions*, 72-4. These screens were the products of specially commissioned designs that were distributed by colonial officials to Indian artisans in DSA schools and created specifically for the exhibition.

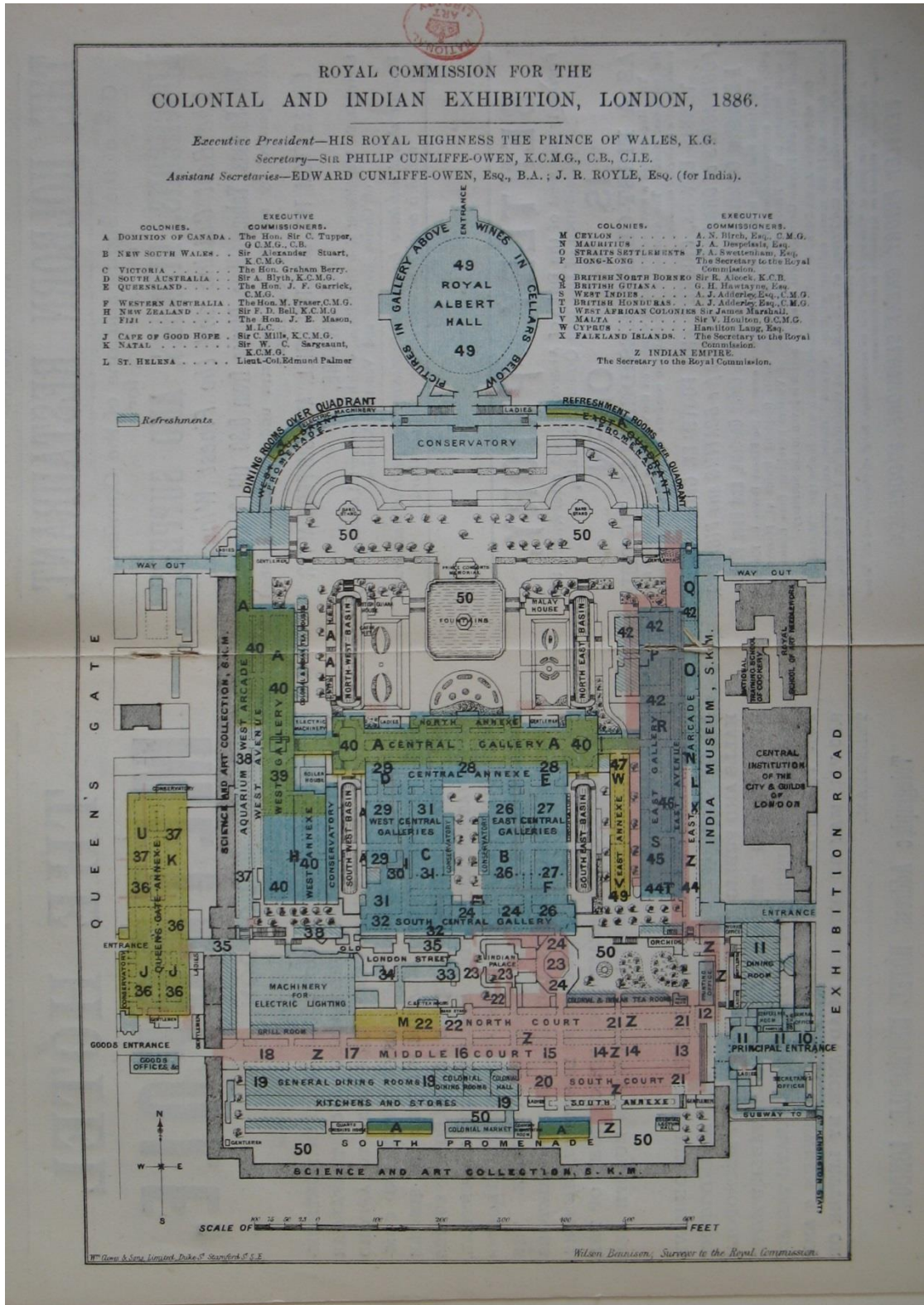


Figure 3.1: William Clowes, Map of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, *Official Guide to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1886) centre page between p. 44 and p. 45. Horniman Museum and Gardens, London.

display.²⁰ The Hyderabad Court, which was located opposite Mysore on the Southern side of the gallery, featured bidriware screens inlaid with copper, silver, and gold. The writer of the *Official Guide* noted that it also included cases of “curious lacquer-work bottles, vases, &c., and the gold embroideries are perfectly dazzling.”²¹ The South Gallery contained carpets and rugs, jewels, pottery, and other art-ware.²² The North Gallery held articles from private exhibitors in India, items from the tea and tobacco growing industries, as well as models of palaces, shrines, and temples.

The Administrative Courts incorporated exhibits that illustrated the “vast machinery required for the administration of the Indian Empire.”²³ An Indian village of native craftsmen, from carpet weavers to coppersmiths, and four examples of native shops, were featured as one of the highlights of the exhibition.²⁴ These models and village displays were some of the most popular sections and provoked a great deal of discussion amongst Western visitors.²⁵

At the same time as South Asians travel writers used exhibitions in the metropole to begin envisioning India’s future as a modern nation, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition framed India as a ‘counter’ to modernity. According to Mathur, the layout of the exhibition was designed to give the visitor a “carefully constructed general *experience* of India,” offering the visitor an “idealized return to a premodern past.”²⁶ While the articles represented a more wide-ranging and complex view of

²⁰ Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*, 159.

²¹ Clowes, *Official Guide*, 18.

²² Clowes, *Official Guide*, 13.

²³ Clowes, *Empire of India. Special Catalogue of Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1886) 1.

²⁴ Levell, *Oriental Visions*, 79. See also Barringer, *Men at Work*.

²⁵ Mathur, *India by Design*, 59. As Mathur points out, these “skilled artisans” were all inmates of the Agra Jail.

²⁶ Mathur, *India by Design*, 57.

India than was on display at Sydenham, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition still emphasised India's timelessness.²⁷

This section illustrated the organisation, layout, and contents of the displays. The general functioning of the exhibition outlined in this section also provide a comparison for the Indian National Congress exhibitions to be analysed in the following chapters. With an understanding of the objects and exhibits on display, it is possible to analyse how the South Asian travellers and newspaper writers received the exhibition and the displays they saw fit to comment on.

3.3 Exhibitionary Forms: Symbols of Modernity

The previous chapter identified the emergence of museums and exhibitions as standard-bearers of modernity in Britain, Europe, and also increasingly in the Indian subcontinent during the nineteenth century. These correspondences reveal South Asians as participants in the world described by Marshall Berman; they were part of the modern experience on offer at exhibitions as they worked with the concepts of modernity. This section outlines South Asians' critical engagement with particular exhibitionary 'forms,' including the discourse of Indian art and design, the juxtaposition of education and entertainment, and the new technologies on display. I selected these three forms as they were the most commonly addressed by commentators, and some of these issues also played an important role at the later Indian National Congress exhibitions. It analyses how South Asian representations of these 'forms', from a variety of critical viewpoints, allow us to view exhibitions through a different lens. Through their newspaper articles and in their travel narratives, we can see some of the complex interactions these visitors had with the

²⁷ Mathur, "Living Ethnological Exhibits," 496.

space of the exhibition. From these experiences, I suggest, South Asians began to envision India's future as a modern nation within a space that emphasised India as 'premodern.'

3.3.1 “As a sight the Indian Court far surpassed the other Courts”²⁸:

Establishing ‘Indian’ Art and Design

As South Asians considered the art and design at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, they formed ideas about which artistic forms were typically ‘Indian,’ and began to establish how Indian art should be displayed for those ‘back home.’ South Asians rearticulated the imperial hierarchy of design by positioning themselves as subjects and arguing for a greater appreciation of Indian design.

Tim Barringer's work on the colonial gothic is a useful précis of the discourse on Indian art and design circulating in the post-1851 period. During the last half of the nineteenth century, art was divided into two categories: ‘fine art,’ managed by the Royal Academy, and ‘applied’ or ‘practical’ arts, which were part of the curriculum at the Department of Science and Art (DSA) in South Kensington. As far as British critics were concerned, Indian design fell under the auspices of ‘applied arts.’ The 1851 exhibition engendered debates on India's handicraft manufactures: on the one hand, Indian artisans were criticised for their crude tools; on the other, their quality of design was praised as superior to the utilitarian appearance of the British manufactured objects.²⁹ Some critics dismissed Indian art as ornamental. Welsh designer Owen Jones noted some uncomfortable conclusions about handicraft versus machine: while the handicraft was expected to signify India's “degenerate”

²⁸ Dutt, *Three Years in Europe*, 114.

²⁹ Barringer, *Men at Work*, 259-60.

culture, in fact the Indian designs “far outstripped” those of the British.³⁰ Barringer suggests that “this revelation was deeply corrosive of widely held mid-Victorian assumptions concerning national and racial superiority, progress, and mechanisation.”³¹ Indian art was part of an imperial hierarchy at nineteenth century international exhibitions. In comparison to Western art, which was deemed to be ‘fine art,’ Indian art was considered ethnographic. At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, European art was not present, so Indian art was permitted to be labelled as ‘fine art.’ In contrast, African art was strictly relegated to that of ‘craft.’³²

South Asians who published accounts of the exhibition capitalised on the apparent contradiction of European and Indian design by marvelling at the variety, beauty, and originality of Indian displays. Many of the newspapers included detailed descriptions of India’s displays, and noted the wide variety of local trades, including glassware, metal ware, “Birdrie silver inlaid work,” “desk requisites” made of ebony inlaid with ivory, and silk, gold, and silver embroidery, pottery and lacquered work.³³ Calcutta-based newspaper *Indian Mirror* marvelled at the “splendid” contributions from Bengal: “in the matter of house decoration, the designs sent from Dacca are very properly appreciated, and competent authorities recommend them as superior to terracotta and other imported English articles.”³⁴ The newspaper noted that “the delicate and beautiful silver filigree work, for which Orissa and Dacca are famous surpass anything which can be produced anywhere in India, and will certainly carry away the palm in the show.”³⁵ The writer also called attention to the

³⁰ Barringer, *Men at Work*, 259-60.

³¹ Barringer, *Men at Work*, 260.

³² Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 209.

³³ *The Indian Mirror*, “The ‘Indian’ and Colonial Exhibition,” *The Indian Mirror*, 18 Dec. 1885: np; and *The Indian Spectator*, 12 July 1885: 548. Incidentally, the *Indian Spectator* was edited by Behramji Malabari.

³⁴ *The Indian Mirror*, “The ‘Indian’ and Colonial Exhibition,” np.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

“neatness of design and elegance of workmanship [of] the specimens of carved ivory from Dacca, Murshidabad, and Dinagepore.”³⁶ The commentator demonstrated an awareness of the dialogue around British and Indian design, echoing the British officials who admired the “superior patterns, the harmony of color, the richness of material, and the ‘subtlety’ of application”³⁷ attributed to Indian handicraft wares. They made note of Indian art as good industrial design: not a straightforward mimic of nature, but rather a stylisation of nature and natural forms into design.³⁸

Others used various strategies to argue for a higher place within the hierarchy for India. Newspapers noted the superiority of Indian design. The *Indian Mirror* wrote, “the chaste and neat designs of these exhibits readily commend themselves to sightseers as specimens of artistic and industrial talent.”³⁹ The Calcutta Correspondent of the *Bombay Gazette* discussed Bengal’s displays in the same vein as the *Indian Mirror*, suggesting, “those who lament the decadence of the indigenous arts and manufactures of this country ... must have been somewhat surprised at the splendid display of Bengal contributions to the forthcoming Indian and Colonial Exhibition.”⁴⁰

The specific language used, including the words “chaste and neat” and “decadence,” in these newspaper articles was important. The *Indian Mirror* and *Bombay Gazette* countered British design reformers’ ideas that Indian artisans were suffering from “an excess of art.”⁴¹ Thomas Babington Macaulay also referred to “the Bengali” as “a figure enervated by a soft climate,” and other critics dismissed

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*, 25.

³⁸ For more information on the curriculum of the DSA schools, especially teachings on the relationship between art and nature, see Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*, 103-113.

³⁹ *The Indian Mirror*, “The ‘Indian’ and Colonial Exhibition,” np.

⁴⁰ The Calcutta Correspondent of *The Bombay Gazette* was quoted by *The Indian Mirror*, “The ‘Indian’ and Colonial Exhibition,” np.

⁴¹ Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 35.

Indian designs as products of a culture of “luxury” and “indolence.”⁴² In contrast, the *Indian Mirror* described Indian design as “chaste and neat” in a pointed critique of these critics. The *Bombay Gazette* in particular noted the lack of “decadence” of Indian art at the exhibition. This reference was possibly a criticism of George Birdwood, advisor to the South Kensington Museum, who derided the “monstrous shapes” of Hindu art.⁴³

Romesh Chunder Dutt’s comments on India’s displays further revealed the complex ways in which South Asian writers began to form the idea of a modern nation through their experiences of exhibitions in the late nineteenth century. Dutt, who wrote a travelogue about his time as a student in London, later became an important early nationalist leader and author of the influential two-volume tome *The Economic History of India*. Dutt referenced the importance of Indian craft in his travelogue: “a sight the Indian Court far surpassed the other Courts; and backward as India is in machinery and practical and useful modern products, her ancient arts, her exquisite workmanship in gold, silver and ivory, and her fabrics of fine texture and unsurpassed beauty, are still the wonder of the modern world.”⁴⁴ Dutt alluded to the fact that craft, India’s “ancient arts,” were a high form of achievement. He called for the recognition of India’s artistic achievements, which Dutt claimed were the “wonder of the modern world.” Dutt’s dissatisfaction with India’s lack of industrial development, however, was typical of the complexity of moderate nationalists. He, like many early nationalists, called for the expansion of India’s industries.

South Asians explicitly positioned themselves as subjects. The writers made it clear that they understood the discourse of Indian design circulating in the post-

⁴² Barringer, *Men at Work*, 262.

⁴³ Partha Mitter, “The Imperial Collections: Indian Art,” *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum*, eds. Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson (London: V&A Publications, 1997) 222. These newspapers were interested in the modulation of design.

⁴⁴ Dutt, *Three Years in Europe*, 114.

1851 period, and even criticised the short-sightedness of British critics for their lack of appreciation of the quality and variety of Indian design. These newspapers openly criticised the imperial hierarchy by suggesting that South Asians be afforded a higher place within it. The *Bombay Gazette* and the *Mirror* staked a claim for the appreciation of Indian, especially Bengali, art. It is important to note that these South Asians did not hold an anti-colonial position. While they were not dismantling the imperial framework of perception, they were demanding further recognition within it. The newspapers also reflected the language of G. N. Nadkarni, discussed in Chapter Two, who also argued for a greater appreciation of Indian civilisation.

These newspapers contributed to the “imagining”⁴⁵ of their nation through a consideration of Indian art and design at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Significantly, the Calcutta Correspondent of the *Bombay Gazette* viewed the Bengali regional contributions as representative of the promising state of “indigenous arts and manufactures” across India. These newspapers also contributed to a developing nationalist discourse, I suggest, by continual reference to the relationship between regional concerns to national matters.

The *Indian Mirror*, which was more radical in its criticisms, noted that Indian products were praised in the West well before the advent of the British Empire. The newspaper asserted that “in the exhibits of muslin *saris* and floss silk embroidery, Dacca is again to the fore and fully sustains her ancient reputation, when the products of her looms were prized by the ladies of Greece and Rome. A piece of muslin worked with gold, intended for a lady’s evening dress is the admiration of visitors, and will be highly appreciated.”⁴⁶ The comment reveals a fracture in the imperial narrative structuring the exhibition, as the *Indian Mirror* pointed out a

⁴⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

⁴⁶ *The Indian Mirror*, “The ‘Indian’ and Colonial Exhibition,” np.

relationship between India and the West that existed outside of the scope of imperialism. The newspaper noted the fact that Indian products had a long history of being valued in the West, especially by classical civilisations renowned for their artistic, philosophical, and historical contributions. The element of national pride based on Indian design provided a common thread in the writings of these South Asians. Dutt, the *Bombay Gazette*, and the *Indian Mirror* all encouraged their readers to join in the celebration of Indian handicraft on display. Their notion of nationhood was founded on craft.

The myriad ways in which South Asians described India's art and design contributions reveals the complex negotiations they made with imperial discourse. South Asian travel writers and newspapers used the exhibition to disseminate positive ideas of 'Indianness' by providing extensive descriptions of India's object contributions to the exhibition, all of which the newspaper suggests are representative of Indian industries. This image was directly contrasted with British criticisms. Through their critique of the hierarchy of design, they began to dismantle the 'self/other' binary that was so central to the discourse of imperialism.⁴⁷

As South Asians reflected on the object displays, ideas about Indian design were also formed, providing an important foundation for later developments in Indian nationalism. Visiting, writing, and circulating information about the displays enabled South Asians to establish what was considered specifically 'Indian,' and how 'Indianness' might be represented. These ideas would influence the displays at the later Indian National Congress exhibitions. Less than two decades after the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, at the Congress exhibitions, art wares,

⁴⁷ Edward Said expands on the binaries that categorised imperialism, specifically the ways in which Europeans constructed 'Orientals' as inferior, and which always placed the 'West' in a position of power. See Said, *Orientalism*, 36-41.

crafts, and other local industries considered by organisers as distinctively ‘Indian’ were displayed.

3.3.2 Entertainment and Education

Education and entertainment at exhibitions had a long-standing history in Britain and France.⁴⁸ The Colonial and Indian Exhibition also included both leisure and educational elements, including new scientific and technological displays, food, music, shows and amusement parks. Multiple bandstands, fountains, and gardens for relaxation were scattered around the site. There was a large conservatory and a few smaller ones, various teahouses and refreshment areas, and a “colonial market” (Fig 3.1). These pleasure facilities were very popular with the wider public, and also with the South Asian visitors.

This section explores the ways in which South Asians engaged with the leisure and educational aspects of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Particular attention is paid here to the moments where South Asians framed the entertainment for their readers, juxtaposed with their analysis of the educational aspects. These moments, I suggest, reflected ideas about the potential of leisure and education to register modernity.

Many of the South Asians visiting the exhibition came having already participated in a Western form of leisure: tourism. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, many of the travel writers embarked on their version of a “Grand Tour” through Britain and Europe, visiting exhibitions, museums, pleasure gardens, and other leisure sites. Many of the same travel writers who visited Sydenham also

⁴⁸ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 19.

travelled to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition and, importantly, often visited during the same time period.

The use of electricity at the exhibition played an important role in the pleasurable aspects of the exhibition. Electricity was one of the new technological advances developed from the “industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology”⁴⁹ characteristic of the era modernity outlined by Marshall Berman. While electricity was progressive and modern, it was also part of the entertainment. “Machinery for Electric Lighting” and “Electric Machinery” were noted on the official map of the exhibition (Fig 3.1). Electricity also allowed the exhibition to remain open in the evenings when shows, concerts, and firework displays were frequently held.

Electricity was often mentioned by South Asian visitors. The “London Correspondent” to the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* wrote, “besides the objects of interest coming from India and the Colonies there are a great many other attractions, the bands which play in the gardens, and the beautiful illuminations in the evening attract a great many fashionable visitors.”⁵⁰ G.N. Nadkarni, author of *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896*, noted, “among other things I noticed the great wheel on which the visitors could have a ride and see the city twenty miles round. The Indian Jungle and Electric Power House were worth seeing. There were daily amusements supplied here.”⁵¹ Monorama Bose, who kept a diary of his visit to Britain, wrote, “when the place was lit up by the electric light we went into some models houses wh. [sic] looks so nice and cosy.”⁵² Jhinda Ram, author of *My Trip to Europe*, suggested, “the band in the illumination after dusk was not less attractive to the

⁴⁹ Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 16.

⁵⁰ *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, “The Indian and Colonial Exhibition. [From Our London Correspondent],” *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, 10 July 1886: np.

⁵¹ Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896*, 31.

⁵² Monorama Bose, “Diary of Monorama Bose, sister of S. M. Datta. 1884-1905,” np.

people who wanted to amuse themselves.”⁵³ Many of the South Asian visitors also noted the technological pleasures at the exhibition—Malabari celebrated the “working of machines” alongside straightforward entertainment like parades and music.⁵⁴ Nadkarni described the Ferris wheel-type attraction, and he encouraged his readers to stop at the “Electric Power House.”⁵⁵

Tony Bennett notes that large mechanical entertainments, such as the Ferris wheel, were considered to be “a manifestation of progress harnessed for pleasure.”⁵⁶ The entertainments at the exhibition were “increasingly brought into line with the values of industrial civilization, a testimony to the virtues of progress.”⁵⁷ Electricity was advertised as a signifier of progress, modernity, and technological and scientific innovation. It offered the potential for dramatic social transformation.⁵⁸ Visitors of all kinds, including South Asians, were welcome to enjoy the progress and pleasure in the sites of leisure at the exhibition. Many of these South Asian writers also involved their readers in the celebration of the progressive entertainments. In describing these technological entertainments, the writers noted that the possibility of technological progress was available for all. Thus the use of electricity offered another avenue for South Asians to align themselves with progress.

While the technology behind electricity and machinery was attractive to these South Asians visitors, some also expressed reservations about these innovations. Nadkarni marvelled at the Ferris wheel, but he also saw the same technology fail:

The accident with this wheel was that the hydraulic-power by which it is moved proved defective, and the persons who were in the forty compartments, which are like large closed tramcars, were kept prisoners for

⁵³ Ram, *My Trip to Europe*, 83.

⁵⁴ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, 178.

⁵⁵ Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896*, 31.

⁵⁶ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995) 231.

⁵⁷ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 74.

⁵⁸ Gerrylynn K. Roberts, “Electrification,” *Science and Technology in Everyday Life*, ed. Colin Chant (London: Routledge, 1989) 102-5.

twenty-two hours. This is the second accident to the wheel and I considered myself very fortunate in escaping the disagreeableness of starvation.⁵⁹

Nadkarni's experience with the giant wheel showed his readers the risks associated with modernity's promise. While he used the imagery of imprisonment and starvation, his tone seemed to be ironic. He represented himself as a survivor of the wheel, enabling him to assume a superior stance. His use of humour cauterised the sublime as he satirised something that was supposed to make him feel awe and fear. Nadkarni's encounter with the Ferris wheel represents another moment of ambivalence: he was less overtly critical than he was ironic. He used irony to mask what might otherwise be read as a direct criticism of the exhibition. If the narrative of progress on display was often totalising, as Greenhalgh suggests,⁶⁰ Nadkarni's moment reveals a moment of subversion within that overwhelming narrative. Thus Nadkarni offers an alternate subject position through which to view the exhibition, and in analysing the complexities of South Asian perceptions of modernity.

At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the press, organisers and visitors almost always highlighted positively the inclusivity of difference. Everyone—British citizens and foreigners, upper, middle, and lower classes—was encouraged to attend and partake of the celebrations of empire. Behramji Malabari, a prominent Parsi travel writer and social reformer, commented on the inclusive nature of the exhibition. In the last chapter, we left Malabari expressing his horror at the Salvation Army fête at Sydenham. At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, however, Malabari marvelled at the peaceful interaction of people from all sectors of society. In fact, he declared that studying the crowds at various events was his only leisure activity:

⁵⁹ Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896*, 33.

⁶⁰ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 94.

“human progress is my only study now; human nature my only interest.”⁶¹ While at the exhibition, Malabari described the exhibition crowds for his readers:

Don't they go to it in crowds?—men and women and children, from prince to peasant, from Dowager Duchess to dancing girl; grandma with H'anna's youngest baby in her arms, grandpa with his little ducky in the perambulator; old and young, rich and poor, healthy and invalid; all gazing, chattering, laughing, drinking, munching cake or fruit before your eyes! Yes, sir, making love to each other, and looking saucily at you if you happen to be a marjoy! Come in, ladies and gentlemen, there is simple accommodation for you all, more than enough attraction. What with the exhibits, parades, drills, music, and working of machines; what with the food and drink available, not one of you need remain uninterested, nor go away disappointed.⁶²

Malabari's observations were a nation-building exercise: everyone was there, everyone was welcome, and everyone had been to the exhibition. He involved his readers back home in the inclusivity of the exhibition. Furthermore, his juxtaposition of the idea of “human progress”⁶³ and his description of crowds at the exhibition suggested a correlation between progress and the exhibition.

Malabari employed a specific discursive strategy in his celebrations of the exhibition's inclusive nature, which allowed him to claim the space as his own. He first distanced himself from the people visiting the exhibition—“don't they go to it in crowds?”—while positioning himself as an impartial observer. Malabari placed himself in the eyes of the omnipotent viewer, directly watching the visitors. The exhibition-goer was described as enjoying the educational value, as well as the pleasures, of the exhibition. The reader also became an observer of the crowds—“before your eyes!” By doing so, the reader was caught up in the excitement surrounding the exhibition and specifically its appeal across age, gender, and class lines. Malabari encouraged his readers to first trust his objective gaze, then invited

⁶¹ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, 175-6.

⁶² Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, 178.

⁶³ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, 175-6.

them to celebrate in the welcoming nature of the exhibition. Malabari positioned himself as omnipotent, which enabled him to claim a form of authority.

Steve Edwards notes an earlier representation of the classes mixing at an exhibition in the *Punch* caricature “The Pound and the Shilling” (1851) which sheds light on Malabari’s complex narrative positioning. The “Pound and the Shilling” caricature is an “allegory of class relations,” featuring various people meeting at the Great Exhibition of 1851, including a Marchioness, children in the centre of the frame, a navy and carpenter, figures from the working community and children.⁶⁴ Edwards observes that the cartoon suggested a “new era of class harmony, and a new coherence to the nation, because the actors are brought together by a middle-class structure of representation.”⁶⁵ The cartoon carried the caption “Whoever thought of meeting you here?” which positioned the viewer as omnipotent and separate to the scene.⁶⁶

Malabari noted a moment in his travelogue similar to the one seen in the *Punch* caricature. He noted that all members of society, from “prince to peasant,” were present at the exhibition. He named specific figures, like the “Dowager Duchess” and dancing girl, calling attention to all ages and classes peacefully wandering, engaging in polite conversation, and gazing upon the pleasures of the displays. His subject position was removed from the action; he acted as a stand-in for the reader, much like the imaginary “you” caption in the *Punch* cartoon. I suggest that the figure of Malabari, unlike the transitory “you,” provided his reader with a fixed “point of coherence from which represented difference [could] be

⁶⁴ Steve Edwards, “The accumulation of knowledge or, William Whewell’s eye,” *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Louise Purbrick (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) 30-1.

⁶⁵ Edwards, “The accumulation of knowledge,” 47.

⁶⁶ Edwards, “The accumulation of knowledge,” 33-4.

remodelled.”⁶⁷ This positioning allowed Malabari to claim authority over what he saw. The reader was able to take his descriptions of scenes and therefore his opinions as statements of an expert.

Antoinette Burton suggests that South Asian travel writers were able to “claim authority over a kind of collective identity” as a result of the “person- or subjecthood” gained by representing Western culture in writing.⁶⁸ Indeed, elsewhere in his narrative, Malabari positioned his views on class as a point from which to shape an idea of ‘India.’ He called for greater unity with the question, “but what can [India] not do with her numbers, if the numbers once acquire cohesion? It is difficult, however, to say whence the cohesion is to come—from politics or from religion.”⁶⁹ He also observed that this solidarity might stem from the English, using the language of industrial progress that was the only model of progress available to him during this period. He wrote, “the ceaseless activity of the English, their public spirit, their commercial enterprise, their philanthropy—all these, if properly watched, would tell our representatives how a country becomes great, and remains so.”⁷⁰ He called for the educated classes of India—his readership—to come together and make India a “great” country. As Malabari had fashioned himself an omnipotent expert observer, his views on India’s future carried weight with the reading public. His ideas reflected the Congress’s period of ‘moderate’ nationalism, where leaders called for co-operation and collaboration with the Raj on Indian policies and issues. Furthermore, bringing together disparate peoples from all classes for the celebration of India

⁶⁷ Edwards, “The accumulation of knowledge,” 34.

⁶⁸ Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, 186.

⁶⁹ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, 118.

⁷⁰ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, 10.

would become a key point for South Asian nationalists during the early Indian National Congress meetings.⁷¹

South Asian commentary on the pleasurable aspects of the exhibition reveals the complexities of the various subject positions held by colonial subjects. Nadkarni, for example, provided an example of fracture in the overwhelmingly propagandistic rhetoric of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Malabari hinted at exhibitions' potential for the social and political transformation of India. Both figures offer other voices through which we can view the exhibition.

Organisers often considered education and entertainments as separate parts of the exhibition.⁷² At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, the DSA held a series of lectures and classes in the separate "Colonial Lecture Hall" by the Empire of India section (Fig 3.1). Education and display were considered by South Asian newspaper commentators and travel writers as a legitimate means of gaining knowledge of progress. Considerations of the educational aspects at the exhibition also stimulated debates amongst the South Asian urban elites about political and social reform, and linked display to industrial education.

Native newspapers urged His Highness Sayajirao, the Gaikwar of the princely state of Baroda, to visit the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in order to gain a better understanding of European politics.⁷³ The *Mahratta* wrote, "the *Times of India* suggested that H.H. the Gaikwar should visit England and have a glance at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition just opened. We think the suggestion is a very

⁷¹ Eric Hobsbawm's analysis of the ways in which mass tradition constitutes nationhood is also useful here. He argues that invented traditions "are highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the 'nation', with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest." Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 13.

⁷² Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 84.

⁷³ Gaikwar: title of the ruler of the princely state of Baroda. Thanks to Megha Rajguru for the translation.

sensible one and would be of the highest benefit to H.H. Sayajirao to go a-travelling to the civilized countries of Europe.”⁷⁴ A visit to England, the newspaper suggested, would enable the Gaikwar to “brush off some of his Princely exclusiveness” and “learn the worth of independence and honour its votaries.” He would also “see the vast strides which Science has enabled Europe to take in civilization, and he will clearly perceive how far behind we still are and must for a long time be. He will learn what constitutes good Government and what part the people must play in it.”⁷⁵ The newspaper’s suggestions for the Gaikwar relied on several assumptions.

Syajirao was a highly cosmopolitan prince who had already instituted a variety of educational, social, and agricultural reforms in his state. He was well-known for his admiration of and affiliation with English rule.⁷⁶ At this point, the *Times of India* suggesting that he liberalise even further was rather ironic on their part.

According to South Asian newspapers, the Gaikwar would benefit from visiting the displays at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Their commentary reflected the educational purpose of the exhibition outlined by Greenhalgh: “everything displayed had to suggest, however obliquely, that the audience would benefit in some way from seeing it, and secondly, it inculcated in the audience the idea that they should attend the exhibition at least in part to study.”⁷⁷ The newspapers were directive: they told the Gaikwar to look at the technology and science. Specifically, he could learn about science and civilisation, both of which were linked to notions of progress and modernity. This progress, the newspapers implied, was obtainable for the Gaikwar, therefore, for other South Asian educated elites.

⁷⁴ *The Mahratta*, “Editorial Notes,” *The Mahratta*, 9 May 1886: 4.

⁷⁵ *The Mahratta*, “Editorial Notes,” 4.

⁷⁶ James, *Raj*, 337.

⁷⁷ Paul Greenhalgh, “Education, Entertainment and Politics: Lessons from the Great International Exhibitions,” *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion, 1989) 87.

The *Mahratta* and *Times of India* also used the educational aspects of the exhibition in order to advocate for political reform in the subcontinent. The newspapers called for increased representative involvement from local South Asians in order to create “good Government.”⁷⁸ While they went so far as to champion “the worth of independence,” the newspaper was not arguing for a separate Indian nation, but rather suggesting increased separation from English rule or greater economic independence. This commentary was subversive insofar as the purposes of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition’s organisers were not to aid in the formation of Indian ideas of modernity and nationalism. These newspapers used the exhibitions for their own purposes, and rearticulated these educational ‘forms’ of exhibition in order to educate their rulers in ideas of progress, social and governmental reform.

Other newspapers noted that the Colonial and Indian Exhibition provided a space for the British to learn about India. As the London Correspondent of the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* observed, “many English and Foreign critics have been busily engaged in studying the various objects of interest, and it is universally acknowledged that never before has any country been able to open an Exhibition, so rich in products of Art and Industry from the resources of its own empire.”⁷⁹ The *Aligarh Institute Gazette* featured an example of the London Correspondent, a South Asian, observing people from other cultures as they were learning about India. While this was another example of the exhibitionary ‘form’ of the educational benefits of display, the newspaper also revealed a moment which South Asians refigured the subject/object binary. The Correspondent offered a moment of re-articulation within the propagandistic narratives of the exhibition, exposing some of the complex dynamics between the subjects and objects on display. Within the narrative of the

⁷⁸ *The Mahratta*, “Editorial Notes,” 4.

⁷⁹ *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, “Indian and Colonial Exhibition. [From Our London Correspondent.]” np.

exhibition, exhibited articles and colonised bodies from India were presumed to be the objects of display for the benefit of British visitors. There were several images of the exhibition depicting Western visitors looking at the Indian exhibits, such as in the Indian palace courtyard (Figure 3.2). In the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, however, South Asians watched the British as they studied Indian objects. This act of looking

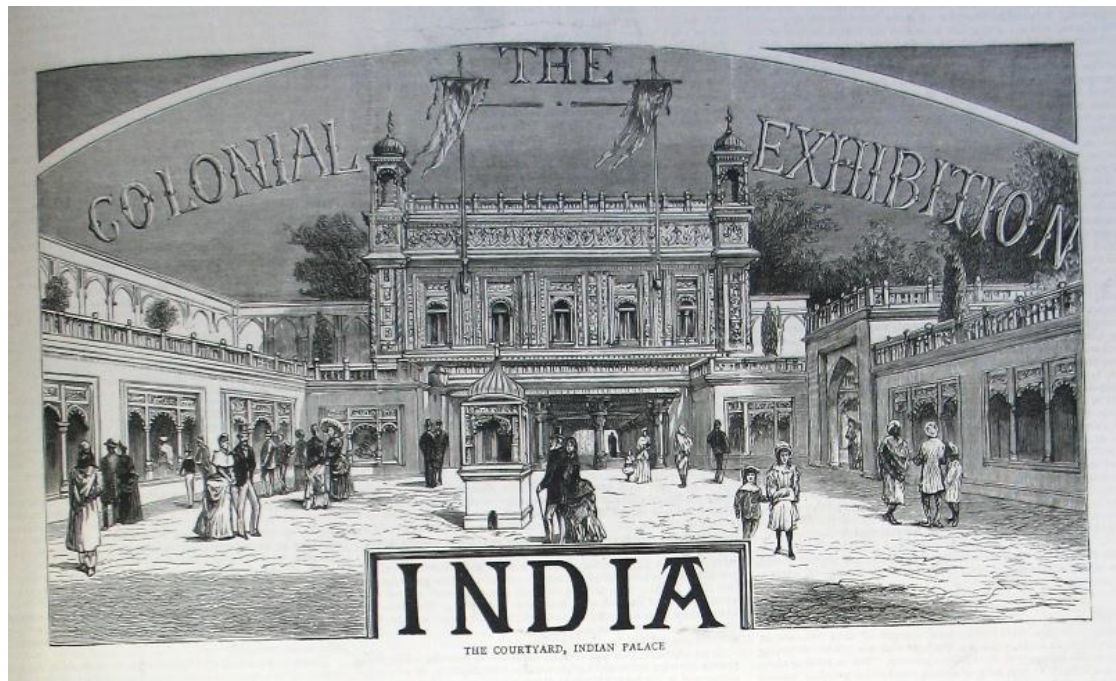


Figure 3.2: Courtyard of the Indian Palace at the 1886 Exhibition, *The Graphic*, 15 May 1886: 533. The British Library, London.

was unique, as narratives concerning the hierarchy of ‘race’ presumed that South Asians were not supposed to be looking at the British at the exhibition. The imperial framework of the exhibition typically did not allow for colonised subjects to study their colonisers. While South Asians could look at exhibited objects, it was rare that they could look at the Western visitors. In the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, however, South Asians watched the Western visitors as they learned about other cultures. While South Asians were often the object of looking, the newspaper revealed an instance where the object could be empowered to become the subject. This moment

also disrupted traditional notions of subaltern/ruler binary, revealing the ways in which colonised subjects remade imperial relations in the space of exhibition.

The *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News* also recognised the exhibition's importance for the British to learn about India. The *Pioneer Mail* suggested:

The industrial products with which the national life of the people whose typical aspects are thus illustrated is associated will be lying all around, and the stupendous geography with which they are concerned will grow intelligible to the visitor as he roams about. One can hardly imagine an Englishman, of any mental capacity worth speaking of, spending a day in the Oriental courts of South Kensington from this date onwards till the autumn closes, without coming away inspired, so to speak, with a *consciousness* of India,--not merely as a name in books and newspapers, but as a vast theatre of human life and activity.⁸⁰

South Asian writers used the exhibition to make links between display, industry, and nationalism. The *Pioneer Mail* noted the industrial products on display. The London Correspondent of the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* also referenced the “products of Art and Industry from the resources of its own empire.”⁸¹ The *Pioneer Mail* went so far as to suggest that the Colonial and Indian Exhibition represented a microcosm of India itself. This microcosm, the newspaper suggested, provided English people with an opportunity to have a fuller understanding of the peoples they ruled and lead to a better government. Harish P. Kaushik notes that this attitude was typical of early nationalists: “it was conceived that if the British nation could be enlightened on the Indian issues and demands, success was to reach the Indian hands.”⁸² The *Pioneer Mail* linked industry directly to nationalism, suggesting that industrial products were representative of the “national life of the people.”⁸³ The *Pioneer Mail*, in suggesting

⁸⁰ *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News*, 5 May 1886: 485.

⁸¹ *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, “Indian and Colonial Exhibition. [From Our London Correspondent.]” np.

⁸² Kaushik, *Indian National Congress in England*, x.

⁸³ *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News*, 485. It is interesting to note that the Colonial and Indian Exhibition did not feature manufactured articles and machinery like the Great Exhibition of 1851, but more the products of the Empire.

that the exhibitionary experience could be used to enlighten Britain on daily life in India, used the exhibition for its own purposes: that is, to support nationalist ideas.

South Asian visitors to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition used both entertainment and education to learn about progress. Their experiences of the pleasurable and educational elements reveal the ways in which South Asians remade the imperialist narratives of the exhibition for their own agendas. Writers like Romesh Chunder Dutt, Behramji Malabari, and newspapers like the *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News* used the exhibition to establish a nationalist rhetoric. They identified the potential for the exhibition to foster meanings of nationalism, and also for establishing what was considered specifically ‘Indian.’

3.4 “The jungle life in India was illustrated in a rather over-drawn vividness”⁸⁴: South Asian Ethnography at the Exhibition

As with the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, most of the South Asian travel writers and newspapers did not mention the ethnographic displays at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. This section focuses on the very few references to the Colonial and India’s Exhibition’s ethnographic courts in South Asian newspapers and travel writing. It examines the ways in which ‘race’ was analysed by these commentators as a ‘form’ of exhibition, thereby establishing a set of meanings through which difference was defined.

Ethnographic displays were increasingly common in exhibiting from 1867 during the later decades of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. Much has

⁸⁴ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 69.

been written on these “living exhibits.”⁸⁵ The Colonial and Indian Exhibition included dioramas representing life-size clay models of craftsmen using tools and implements in Indian villages and ‘native’ shops.⁸⁶ The set of twelve groups of models were located in the Indian Imperial Court and represented the major provinces and native states of India. They were arranged by George Watt of Bengal’s Department of Revenue and the Royal Commission’s Special Officer for the Economic Section.⁸⁷

The ethnological exhibits were included under the auspices of the “Economic Court,” alongside the agricultural products and agricultural machinery. By organising the exhibits in this way, exhibition officials created certain associations between objects. South Asians were connected with elements of agricultural, rather than industrial, production, and were associated with rural, rather than urban, space. Dioramas of Indian life were a popular section. ‘Indian Jungle Life’ included models of ‘natives’ alongside animals such as elephants, monkeys, alligators, buffaloes, leopards, and tropical birds behind glass cases. Nicky Levell notes the “insidious, ideological” messages of the displays which “served to objectify and fix the oriental other in a western classificatory frame of reference as well as publicly expos[ing] them to the occident’s penetrating gaze.”⁸⁸ Placing ‘natives’ alongside animals, trees, and plants naturalised the representations of South Asians at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition as associated with nature.

Several scholars have analysed the problem of placing humans in animal displays. In Donna Haraway’s study of the representations of nature and non-humans

⁸⁵ Mathur, “Living Ethnological Exhibits,” 492. See also Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 85-7, 106-7; and Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, 241-3.

⁸⁶ Claire Wintle, “Model Subjects: Representations of the Andaman Islands at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886,” *History Workshop Journal* 67 (Spring 2009) 196.

⁸⁷ Wintle, “Model Subjects,” 196.

⁸⁸ Levell, *Oriental Visions*, 80.

in natural history, she argues that dioramas were an important part of natural history displays in the early twentieth century.⁸⁹ She states that each diorama was read as a story and “window into knowledge.”⁹⁰ Each group was presented as part of a “community structured by a natural division of function,” all hierarchically ordered, and all had their place in the “harmony of nature.”⁹¹

Claire Wintle has addressed the Colonial and Indian Exhibition clay model representations of the Andaman Islands. She notes that certain physical attributes assumed to typify certain races were “creatively extracted” to create a model that was representative of a racial type. The use of clay models rather than human subjects, Wintle suggests, made it easier to facilitate “idealized socio-cultural evolutionary comparison.”⁹² In the exhibition context, audiences could not distinguish between the exhibition models and real people, and therefore the models were imagined with the properties of living bodies.

Haraway and Wintle are useful in understanding the ethnographic displays at the 1886 Exhibition. South Asian commentators, in engaging with the clay model representations, used these representations in order to call for the further education of Britain about India. The *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News* referenced the diorama and representations of the Indian villages:

High art enthusiasts may not care much, as a feature of an Indian exhibition, for the regiment of life-sized painted figures representing the various races of people inhabiting India, their costumes and provincial characteristics, and the soldiers of all sorts constituting the native army of India, to be distributed about the vestibule of the Exhibition and in the different sections of the industrial department. But these figures will teach the British public, not, perhaps, as we were almost saying, more about India than all the rest of the Exhibition put together, but at all events they will give a life and meaning to

⁸⁹ Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 29.

⁹⁰ Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 29.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Wintle, “Model Subjects,” 198.

the rest of the Exhibition which could not have been infused into it in any other way.⁹³

The newspaper showed a clear understanding of the place of Indian art and design in the category of applied arts, but called for an appreciation of these dioramas in their own right. Wintle notes that the clay models also fell into the category of “scientific representation,” which fell under the auspices of decorative arts.⁹⁴ The newspaper listed some of the models at the exhibition, painting a picture for their readers of the models on display. It was also suggested in this passage that the models should be used to educate the British public about India. Considering the clay models as educational tools was one way that South Asians were able to discuss this part of the exhibition.

The *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News* went so far to say that the ethnographic sections were the most important of all the exhibits. The models were a vital part of the exhibition, the writer suggest, because they gave “life and meaning to the rest of the Exhibition.”⁹⁵ Wintle’s exploration of clay models’ ‘realness’ is useful here. She states that the “artificial and inanimate qualities of the models ... allowed Western audiences to perceive them as particularly ‘real,’” a “reliable, permanent ‘other’, upon whose solid surfaces perceived ‘truths’ concerning the non-Western subject could safely be posited.”⁹⁶ In this context, the models were used to make India more real, and gave meaning to the rest of the displays of India. The models, the newspaper suggested, enabled the British visitors to have a more ‘complete’ understanding of India. Furthermore, the newspaper emphasised the Indian village models as ‘authentic’ and true representations of India’s ‘racial’ types.

⁹³ *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News*, 485.

⁹⁴ Wintle, “Model Subjects,” 199.

⁹⁵ *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News*, 485.

⁹⁶ Wintle, “Model Subjects,” 201.

Their perspective offers another moment where the exhibition's imperial narrative was refigured by South Asians. As Annie Coombes observes, colonised races were included at exhibitions to provide the "points of differentiation around which to reinforce, whether consciously or through more subtle means, the certainty of European imperial superiority."⁹⁷ In this instance, however, the *Pioneer Mail* was not projecting fantasies of the 'other,' but rather was using the ethnographic models to advocate for the education of the British public about Indian ways of life. This example exemplifies the ways in which some colonised subjects were sometimes able "to make creative and strategic use of the colonial encounter."⁹⁸ Better education about India, the newspaper implied, would lead to better and more knowledgeable imperial rule. The writer here also navigated between the real and the imagined. The models themselves were replicas, not real, but their purposes—to educate the British public and result in better government—were real and had tangible effects on the lives of South Asians.

The Indian Spectator also suggested that the ethnographic sections were a key element in the education of the British public.⁹⁹ The *Spectator* suggested the model Indian village was modelled after a popular Japanese village. The commentator wrote,

The present scheme is to be on the same model, but on a larger and more elaborate scale. This is going to be a model Indian village or *Gaum*, including a bazaar with its *dukans* or stalls, selling Indian wares, in many cases by Indian shopkeepers themselves. The project gives an opening for the purpose of interesting the English public in the manners and customs of our people, as also for bringing forward such Indian-made articles as might be improved by purchases in London.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 64.

⁹⁸ Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 6.

⁹⁹ The *Spectator* was edited by Behramji Malabari, who frequently used the newspaper as a sounding board for various social reforms.

¹⁰⁰ *The Indian Spectator*, 548.

Like the *Pioneer Mail*, the *Spectator* declared that the purpose of the section was also to educate the British public “in the manners and customs of our people.”¹⁰¹

This notion echoes the language of G. N. Nadkarni, a travel writer discussed in Chapter Two, who also advocated for the British public’s “correct knowledge as to our intellectual aptitudes, our social conditions and our progress in civilization.”¹⁰²

Nadkarni and the *Spectator* both reflect the ideas of nationalists of this time, who believed that educating the British public about Indian social and economic needs would lead to changes in government policy.¹⁰³

The newspaper then described the Indian village:

The Indian Village is to have its agriculturists, its artisans, its labourers, its shopkeepers, its showmen—the juggler, the snake-charmer, the goat-and-monkey man, and the rest. And to complete the list, from which, in our ignorance, we have omitted the larger number of items, the organisers seem to have resolved that, come what may, there shall be an Indian dancing girl to enliven the tedium of sale and barter. Here is a chance for Natives—each one of them is to have a free passage, to be found in food, lodging and ample warm clothing, and each is to be paid Rs. 50 a month. These terms might tempt even an orthodox Brahmin.¹⁰⁴

The village was visual entertainment for the exhibition visitors. The *Spectator* had a rather tongue-in-cheek attitude in its description of the “Indian dancing girl” and the living experiences of the “artisans” sent to the exhibition. Brahmins were one of the highest varnas, or castes, in Hinduism and were often privileged.¹⁰⁵ It was unclear whether these “dancing girls” received payment for their performances. The newspaper also insinuated that all the trades and peoples on display were representative of India, constructing ideas of whom and what was typically ‘Indian.’

¹⁰¹ *The Indian Spectator*, 548.

¹⁰² Nadkarni, *Journal of a Visit to Europe in 1896*, 381.

¹⁰³ Kaushik, *Indian National Congress in England*, x.

¹⁰⁴ *The Indian Spectator*, 548. Saloni Mathur notes other examples of Indian performances for British audiences in the metropole, notably the ill-fated “living display of Indian village artisans” in London’s Battersea Park in 1885. Mathur, *India by Design*, 36-41.

¹⁰⁵ As Mathur has found, the native artisans display at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition was rather more contested and tragic than this newspaper suggests. For example, one ‘artisan’ from Dr. Tyler’s jail, Tulsi Ram, tried desperately to meet the Queen regarding a land dispute in his local village. Mathur, *India by Design*, 60-1.

The portrayal of these ethnographic sections contributed to the discourse of what exhibitions should have in order to display ‘India.’

There is also the larger issue of fracture here. South Asian travel writers and newspapers were trying to build a narrative of how to ‘read’ exhibitions for their audience in the subcontinent. These South Asians carefully selected and edited which elements of the exhibition they wanted to include in their writings; they manipulated the Colonial and Indian Exhibition for their own purposes, often with nationalist overtones. Through the adaptation of the ethnographic representations, they suppressed the overwhelming imperialist propaganda implicit within them by exercising their discursive editorial control. The avoidance of these issues revealed their agency with authority to present alternative accounts of the imperial exhibition.

These writers thus subverted the ethnographic racialised and stereotypical representations by appropriating them for their own purposes. Furthermore, these writers used the ethnographic models for educational purposes, specifically the enlightening of the British public on the social and cultural climate of India. This understanding relates to the ideas of early nationalist leaders at the time, who believed that a British public with greater knowledge of Indian life would lead to political reforms in the subcontinent.¹⁰⁶ The public discourse of South Asian intellectuals in newspapers and travel narratives should also be considered as an important part in the mediation of imperial knowledge. In these instances, we can see the complexities of South Asian perspectives in the mediation of colonial knowledge.

¹⁰⁶ Kaushik, *Indian National Congress in England*, x.

3.4.1 “A loyal supporter of the empire”¹⁰⁷: T.N. Mukharji and Imagining India

Prominent Bengali T.N. Mukharji travelled to Britain as an assistant to Dr. George Watt in Bengal’s Department of Revenue. Mukharji was intimately involved with collecting, cataloguing, and transferring of objects and exhibits for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. He was a prominent figure in Bengali society and was the highest-ranking South Asian in Bengal during the time. He detailed the trip in his travelogue, *A Visit to Europe*. He was most likely to have been well acquainted with not only the logistical details at exhibitions, but also with the politics of display. Mukharji used the prestige gained from his involvement with the exhibition in order to establish himself as an expert on Indian design.

Saloni Mathur and Peter Hoffenberg have analysed Mukharji’s unique position as a colonial administrator. Mathur observes that Mukharji was uncomfortable with the idea of being compared to the artisans on display, and took great pains to disassociate himself from them.¹⁰⁸ Hoffenberg argues that Mukharji acted as a possible bridge between the worlds of metropole and colony, noting that “Mukharji had fashioned himself and, at times, been fashioned by others as an imperial expert, subaltern, and nationalist. He had become a model for nationalist progress.”¹⁰⁹ Mukharji claimed agency through his travelogue because of his role in organising the exhibition, and his status as an ‘authority’ on India’s ‘races.’¹¹⁰

While both Mathur and Hoffenberg examine Mukharji’s involvement with the Colonial and Indian Exhibition as an official, I focus here specifically on his engagement with the representations of ‘race’ within the space of exhibition.

¹⁰⁷ Mathur, “Living Ethnological Exhibits,” 508.

¹⁰⁸ Mathur, *India by Design*, 67-9.

¹⁰⁹ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 55.

¹¹⁰ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 54-6.

Mukharji was unique in that unlike most of the travel narratives, he dedicated a large part of his travelogue to discussing the ethnographic displays of ‘natives.’ Mukharji was one of the few South Asians travellers to comment extensively on the ethnographic portrayals of peoples from the subcontinent. In one description, Mukharji wrote,

[The] museums in Europe, where ethnographical specimens from all parts of the world have been collected, bring to the mind of an Indian a feeling of humiliation and sorrow. There he finds himself ranked among barbarous tribes with their cannibalism, human-sacrifice, tattooing and all sorts of cruel and curious customs that denote a savage life. The races of Europe, who have long discarded these practices, now look upon such acts with horror.”¹¹¹

By the end of the nineteenth century, there were competing notions of racial difference.¹¹² After the 1867 Exposition Universelle, conceptions and representations of ‘race’ became more Darwinian.¹¹³ Exhibitions between 1856 and 1886 represented this shift from culturally based ideas on ‘race’—an impetus behind the ‘civilising mission,’ for instance—to more biologically and scientifically determined notions of race.¹¹⁴ Mukharji navigated through these highly contested notions of racial difference through this moment of a class encounter, where, from his upper-class Hindu perspective, the “barbarous tribes” appeared to be impolite, uneducated, uncivilised, and in too great a proximity to his person. As Mathur notes, “Mukharji’s account reflects the class anxieties of an elite colonial traveler in London who felt uncomfortable sharing the category ‘native’ or ‘blackie’ with the indigenous lower

¹¹¹ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 324.

¹¹² For scholarship on ‘race’ in the nineteenth century, see Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge, 2007); Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978); and Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).

¹¹³ Zeynep Çelik and Leila Kinney, “Ethnography and Exhibitionism at the Expositions Universelles,” *Assemblage* 13 (Dec. 1990): 38-9.

¹¹⁴ Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 97.

classes.”¹¹⁵ He rejected the generalisation of India and clearly demarcated the differences amongst peoples in the subcontinent.

According to Partha Chatterjee, there was a distinct separation of Bengalis and other higher classes of Indians living in urban centres and the other “primitive” tribes in India.¹¹⁶ Those living in urban centres, the “civilized” Indians, were not marked out for ethnographic study. The separation between who was on display and who was not was important in the context of the developing nationalist movement. Mukharji used display in order to establish difference within Indian communities.

Mukharji dedicated a significant part of his travelogue to ethnographic sketches of various Indian races and cultures. Some of these descriptions closely mirrored those of George Watt, who wrote “A Guide to the Ethnological Models and Exhibitions Shown in the Imperial Court” in the *Empire of India Catalogue*. In one example from Mukharji’s travelogue, he described the Nágá people:

The proud Nágá was there, fully equipped for war, dyed tufts of feather waving over his head, dyed human and goat’s hair adorning his breast, a long richly decorated spear in one hand, while the other grasped a large shield made of tiger skin, the first trophy of his youthful ambition. His necklace of human and goat’s hair proclaimed to the world, that he the proud wearer received this decoration from his nation for the valour he displayed in the field and the stratagem he employed in securing a number of human heads from his tribal enemy. For none but a man successful in obtaining such a trophy is allowed to wear this much coveted mark of honour. After all, the Nágá is a savage. His insignia of honour are therefore so crude and primitive. Had he been civilised he would have prided in stars and ribbons. [...] The praise of a hero who has ruthlessly massacred men, women and children, robbed his weak neighbours of their property and carried death and devastation wherever he has gone, is not sung by the bards; nor are there any historians among the Nágás to record with admiration his wholesale butchery of fellow-beings; nor do they possess any moralists to hold up his deeds before the mind of the younger generation to point out to them.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Mathur, “Living Ethnological Exhibits,” 509.

¹¹⁶ Sanjay Seth, “Rewriting Histories of Nationalism: The Politics of ‘Moderate Nationalism’ in India, 1870-1905,” *The American Historical Review* 104.1 (Feb 1999): 107.

¹¹⁷ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 72.

His travelogue laid out the importance of civilisation and what came with it, including the values of justice, the importance of literature, and Western understandings of history. He suggested that “the irresistible force of western civilisation has somewhat relaxed the stiffness of [the Indian’s] mind, elasticised his character and expanded his ideas of the world, for he has always done his best to shut his eyes against the influence of modern enlightenment.”¹¹⁸ His travelogue frequently espoused the benefits of civilisation on the “Indian mind,” suggesting that South Asians could achieve some enlightenment from the exhibitionary experience.

During the period in which Mukharji wrote his travelogue, commonly-held assumptions of India circulated among British commentators. “Evolutionary physical and cultural scales”¹¹⁹ assessed African races as primitive and uncivilised, whereas Indians were acknowledged to have some level of civilisation.¹²⁰ The immutability of biological meanings of ‘race’ worked with notions of class here as Mukharji used the visual strategy of ‘race’ to complicate these assumptions. He clearly defined the Nágás, an Indian race, as primitive and demarcated his civilised class against the subaltern race of the Nágá. A metropolitan discourse was at work here as Mukharji, a Bengali urban elite, considered the representation of the rural Nágá people from the far north-east of India.

Mukharji also appropriated an imperial framework in other descriptions of ‘natives.’ Some tribes were described as barbaric, such as the “savage” Nágá, and the “tawny Sinpho,” who used the “the everlasting Dáo in his hand, with which he fights, chops off the head of his fallen foe.”¹²¹ The Nicobarese were noted for their

¹¹⁸ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 77-8.

¹¹⁹ Wintle, “Model Subjects,” 196.

¹²⁰ Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 170.

¹²¹ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 72.

“Malay element,” with a “strong mixture of the Mongolian blood in his veins.”¹²²

The tribes from the Himalayas “were represented at the Exhibition by the models of the Garo, Mech, Limbo, Lepcha, Gorkha and Garhwáli, all with flat nose, high cheek bone, and scanty hair on the face to denote their Tartar descent.”¹²³ Mukharji’s descriptions fell in line with the principles of ethnology. From the 1850s, “ethnology was the most general scientific framework for the study of the linguistic, physical, and cultural characteristics of dark-skinned, non-European, ‘uncivilised’ people.”¹²⁴ Mukharji, in using these ideas of blood and physiognomy to essentialise difference, took on on board biological notions of race in order to assert his authority. While separating himself from the representations of the ‘natives’ on display, he also engaged in the process of imaginary mapping of India, providing his urban elite, English-educated readers with a particular vision of India.

Mukharji’s descriptions of the ethnographic displays were closely related to imperial ideas of ‘race,’ which contrast with the modernising messages of G.N. Nadkarni examined in the previous chapter. Mukharji’s ethnographic descriptions were more wedded to notions of race typical of imperial hierarchy. By sketching out distinctly racialised descriptions of the peoples of India on display for his readership, Mukharji seemed to be replacing one message about India with another. Mukharji’s eagerness to distance himself from the “lower rungs of the colonial hierarchy” reflected some anxieties held by the English-educated urban elites who “feared that the end of empire might also mean the end of the social advantages they held from their proximity to the British.”¹²⁵ Mukharji may have turned his attention to descriptions of indigenous races in order to escape the Western gaze.

¹²² Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 71.

¹²³ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 75.

¹²⁴ George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (Oxford: Maxwell Macmillan, 1991) 47.

¹²⁵ Mathur, *India by Design*, 63.

As Mukharji imaginatively mapped out the peoples of his country, the structure of his narrative was such that he conveyed that cognitive map to his readers. At the same time that figures like Mukharji wrote about these disparate peoples, he created “imaginary linkages” between them.¹²⁶ This “imaginary linkage” formed an essential element in the formation of the nation of ‘India,’ which brought together different ‘races’ under the banner of the Indian nation. In deploying the discipline of ethnology in his descriptions, he helped create an “imagined”¹²⁷ nation of peoples. While Mukharji was one of many figures that used the exhibition in order to debate notions of nation and civilisation, the next section considers how the exhibition engendered debates more generally about India’s future and thus reflected the discourse of early nationalists.

3.5 “To bring about a common understanding among Indians of all creeds and nationalities”¹²⁸ Early Indian Nationalism and the Exhibition

The final part of this chapter moves from South Asians considering certain ‘forms’ to being openly critical of the exhibition. It moves from the visitors’ commentary on the actual displays to their analysis of the importance, or irrelevance, of exhibitions for India’s economic future. South Asians, I suggest, used the exhibition as a means of debating their future progress. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition created ample opportunities for South Asians to analyse the British presence in India, and to envision India’s future.¹²⁹ South Asian commentary on the representation of India at

¹²⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 33.

¹²⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

¹²⁸ Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe*, 132.

¹²⁹ Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, 47.

the Colonial and Indian Exhibition revealed complex, and often contradictory, ideas concerning India's place at the exhibition. Here, I examine the writings of South Asian newspaper commentators, many of whom were disillusioned with the purpose of the exhibition, and were concerned with the damage it could do to India's already fragile economy.

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition took place during a period of "growing nationalist discontent."¹³⁰ The Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885, held their second annual meeting at the same time as the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886. Their initial meetings were not characterised by a particular programme of change, but were a forum to discuss the various political and economic concerns of the political elites.¹³¹ It is clear that the period of the exhibition was a formative one in the development of Indian nationalism.

Some South Asians, such as native language newspapers, used the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in order to articulate their dissatisfaction with British rule. Local vernacular periodicals, which had less circulation figures than English language newspapers but which were steadily on the rise by the end of the nineteenth century, were often significantly more anti-colonial in their sentiments.¹³² They often questioned India's involvement with the 1886 Exhibition at all. The *Pratikíár* suggested, "the expenses of sending the exhibits and those of the officers in charge of these have been paid from the Indian treasury. Nothing can be more unjust than this. Indian revenues are being spent in things which will do more harm than good to India. This sort of justice becomes the English Government only."¹³³ Other

¹³⁰ Mathur, *India by Design*, 41.

¹³¹ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 180.

¹³² Kaul, *Reporting the Raj*, 101.

¹³³ *Pratikíár* (30 July 1886), *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers published in the Panjáb, North-Western Provinces, Oudh, Central Provinces, Central India, and Rájputáná, Received up to 5th July, 1886* (Wiltshire: Adam Matthew Publications) 889. It is important to note that these newspaper

newspapers, the *Surabhi* and *Patáka*, expressed similar concerns: “when will such mis-application of Indian money cease? An agitation should be set on foot all over the country for Indians’ obtaining control over their own finances.”¹³⁴ The *Bangabási* stated, “Indian nations do not stand on equal terms with the English, so they have nothing to gain by such exhibitions.”¹³⁵ Local newspapers viewed the exhibition as a harmful and as a drain of resources. Their concern about money indicated a wider loss of faith in the Indian government.

The Colonial and Indian Exhibition engendered debates on Indian’s financial situation and some South Asians used the opportunity to highlight the waste of Indian resources. These newspapers, repeatedly criticising the misappropriation of “Indian money” from the “Indian treasury,”¹³⁶ offer a different perspective in which to view the exhibition. The writers advocated for the separation of Indian economic and financial resources from the British. Economic criticism of Indian rule was a strong criticism of the Indian government generally. This debate was tied to the ‘drain of wealth’ theory, first detailed by Indian National Congress founding member Dadabhai Naoroji in “England’s Debt to India” in 1867 and later expanded on in Romesh Chunder Dutt’s *The Economic History of India*. The theory suggested that continued depletion of resources from India to Britain caused India’s economic stagnation, famine, and poverty. The drain theory also influenced the nationalist movement well into the twentieth century.¹³⁷

selections were translated summaries from vernacular newspapers, interpreted and translated for the benefit of Indian government officials during the late nineteenth century. Therefore, these selections would have been mediated through an interpreter.

¹³⁴ *Surabhi* and *Patáka* (24 June 1886), *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers*, 759.

¹³⁵ *Bangabási* (8 May 1886). *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers published in the Panjáb, North-Western Provinces, Oudh, Central Provinces, Central India, and Rájputána, Received up to 5th July, 1886*, 579.

¹³⁶ *Pratikiár* (30 July 1886).

¹³⁷ Meenakshi Mukherjee, *An Indian for all Seasons: The Many Lives of R. C. Dutt* (Delhi: Penguin, 2009) 153.

Other newspapers used the exhibition to reflect on the development of industry in India's future. The writer from the rather radical South Asian newspaper *The Mahratta* suggested:

All these exhibitions are good in their own way, but the people of India, under the present circumstances, cannot derive that benefit from them which they otherwise would have done. The reason is, that the industries of the country have been totally ruined, and that there is very little scope in it either for an agricultural or industrial enterprise on a large scale. The majority of people are immersed in poverty, the like of which never fell to their lot in the time of even the most grinding native tyrant. The first endeavour of a paternal and benevolent Government, we think, should be to check that poverty. It is only when the people are well-to-do, and their industries flourish, that exhibitions can stimulate them to embark upon great commercial or industrial enterprizes.¹³⁸

While the *Mahratta* believed that exhibitions could improve local economies, he argued that this boost would be only possible if the country was not poverty-stricken like India. The tone of the *Mahratta* was almost radically anti-colonial: the newspaper suggested that Indian government was even worse than their "most grinding native tyrant," and had "totally ruined"¹³⁹ all of the industries of the country. The writer also insinuated that exhibitions were irrelevant to the country in its poverty-stricken state; this critique was common amongst the more radical 'moderate' nationalists, who emphasised the "apparent failures of policy discovered in poverty [and] rural unrest."¹⁴⁰

Much of the disillusionment with regard to the British government's handling of India was couched in the language of industrial progress. *The Mahratta* argued for greater recognition and support for India's industrial development. The *Indian Engineer* highlighted the relationship between exhibitions and industrial development:

¹³⁸ *The Mahratta*, 1 Aug. 1886: 5.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Francis Robinson, ed., "British Imperialism and Indian Nationalism, 1858-1947," *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 116.

One of the most pleasing results of the Colonial Exhibition is the attention which has been drawn to various economic products grown in this country, but hitherto disregarded by European manufacturers. New dying materials, new sources of tannin, and new kinds of fibre have been brought conspicuously under the notice of English capitalists, and the consequence must be a largely increased export trade in these articles of Indian production. It is to be hoped, however, that these exports will consist of the manufactured article and not of the crude produce. India in some respects possesses exceptional facilities for the development of local manufactures. The only real difficulty in the way of working out industrial operations here is the lack of a due supply of native workmen possessing the requisite technical skill. This is the more to be regretted, inasmuch as the natives are thoroughly capable of acquiring this skill, if they were provided with suitable instruction.¹⁴¹

These newspaper writers worked within the framework of industrial progress. The emphasis on certain manufacturing processes and products, such as tannin and new kinds of dying materials and fibre, were classified as uniquely ‘Indian.’ Issues of manufacturing and industry were raised as the newspaper lamented the high rate of export of raw materials over manufactured articles, which led to India’s drain of wealth. The writer also referenced the concept of India as a land of raw materials that existed purely for the benefit of Britain, an assumption that influenced the staging of many international exhibitions in the late nineteenth century, including the 1886 Exhibition.¹⁴² This writer, however, proposed a change to this economic situation by pointing out India’s potential for developing their own manufactured articles.

The issue of technical education is also brought up by *The Indian Engineer*. This writer suggests that industrial development was hindered by the lack of “requisite technical skill,” only received through technical education, for the “native workmen.”¹⁴³ Technical education was a common issue on the Indian National Congress’s agenda from its inception in 1885; a resolution on technical education, for instance, was passed in 1887. Industry’s job creating potential in India would

¹⁴¹ *The Indian Engineer*, 7 Nov. 1886: np.

¹⁴² Kriegel, “Narrating the subcontinent in 1851,” 153.

¹⁴³ *The Indian Engineer*, np.

later become one of the most important messages of the swadeshi movement, the subject of Chapter Five.¹⁴⁴

The frequent reference to industry was linked to Indian nationalism. Hoffenberg notes the connection, noting, “imperial machines and industrialism on display provided the psychological and cultural bases, as well as the languages, for different visions of Indian nationalism.”¹⁴⁵ The messages of the exhibition, such as the importance of industrial development, machinery, and technology were adapted to the local interests of India. Considering India’s industrial potential at the Colonial and Indian Exhibitions gave South Asians a common platform in which to come together, an important development in the rise of Indian nationalism.

Discussions of India’s industrial development, and the consideration of the exhibition for India’s economic and political future, represent a re-articulation of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition away from the idea that the displays were simply a celebration of British imperial power. South Asians used the exhibition in order to reflect on their own nationalistic concerns, especially in their criticisms of the British government. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition offered a crucial forum in which ideas on civilisation, industry, and progress, were debated by South Asians. These ideas contributed to an Indian nationalist discourse. This act of translation, and re-interpretation, of the exhibition is subversive in its effects.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the different messages conveyed by the exhibition and the ways in which South Asians interpreted and re-interpreted them. South Asian

¹⁴⁴ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 99.

¹⁴⁵ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 192.

travellers and newspaper commentators observed, internalised, and debated the forms of exhibition for their own purposes. Considering the displays, leisure, and education allowed South Asians to shape new ideas of 'Indianness.' In particular, reflecting on the displays as a means of defining goods, objects, and trades that were considered particularly 'Indian' was a nationalist exercise. A close analysis of their commentary also reveals the possibility for fracturing the imperial narrative, as colonial subjects touched upon the role of Indian craft in Western cultures outside the history of colonialism and their disruption of the subject/object and subaltern/ruler binaries.

South Asian writers used this exhibition to establish their own meanings and for their own aims. They also appropriated the displays to enlighten the British public about Indian social, political, and economic issues. The exhibition also provided an opportunity for many to articulate their frustration with British rule. In these ways, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition played an important role in development and formation of Indian nationalism generally. In particular, the discourse circulated by South Asian writers at this exhibition and at the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, also laid a foundation for the Indian National Congress exhibitions.

Chapter 4

Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, 1904:

Remaking the Modern World

4.1 Introduction

The second half of this thesis turns to exhibitions staged by the Indian National Congress in the early twentieth century, examining South Asians as they moved from viewers and interpreters of exhibitions in the metropole to their material makers in the subcontinent. The Congress exhibitions were the first to be primarily organised, funded, and managed by South Asians. They included displays from all over India: large Indian-owned swadeshi mills, examples of handcrafted wood and metalwork, and agricultural machinery from Europe and America. By closely analysing the organisation and layout of the exhibitions, and the commentary on them from sources including the *Indian Textile Journal* and *Times of India*, this chapter explores how the Congress used these exhibitions in order to establish their legitimacy as a speaker for the ‘modern’ nation of India. Ideas about civilisation, progress, and modernity offered by South Asian travel writers in the nineteenth century culminated at the Congress exhibitions. Travel writers who were also Congress representatives during this period, including Mahtabsing, Baijnath, Nadkarni, Ram, and Dutt, would have been at the Congress exhibitions. Their ideas would have influenced the organisation, staging, and management of the Congress exhibitions.

The following two chapters move from the period of the travel narratives in the 1870s-1890s to the period between 1901 and 1905 when the Congress first held their agricultural, industrial, and fine art exhibitions. This chapter takes as its case

study the 1904 Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition held in conjunction with the Twentieth Annual Session of the Indian National Congress. Bombay was the largest and most elaborate of the exhibitions hosted by the Congress. In this chapter, I trace the ways in which particular exhibitionary ‘forms,’ such as the juxtaposition of education and leisure, were framed by exhibition officials. While the 1904 Bombay exhibition is the main focus of this chapter, I incorporate examples of speeches and exhibits from Congress exhibitions in 1901 Calcutta, 1902 Ahmedabad, and 1903 Madras in order to establish certain patterns of display.

These exhibitions are not widely discussed in current scholarship. Peter Hoffenberg’s analysis on the production of colonial knowledge provides a starting point for this chapter. He notes that the processes of forming colonial knowledge was “participatory, multilateral, interactive, and mediated,” which could potentially “subvert, or at least destabilize, colonial authority.”¹ He also frames an important question that provides a point of departure for the following chapters: “what happens when the subaltern in these and other cases becomes not only the consumer of knowledge but also its producer and organizer; that is, a cultural professional, or expert, a museum curator, or exhibition commissioner?”²

This chapter comprises of four sections. The first explores the organisation and staging of the 1904 Bombay exhibition. The next examines the ways in which the Congress used their gatherings in order to legitimise its standing as a representative of India. The third section moves to an examination of the ways in which some of the exhibitionary forms established at nineteenth century international exhibitions, including Sydenham and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, were adapted at the Congress exhibitions. The last section is a case study of the Bombay

¹ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 57.

² Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 59.

Healthier exhibits in which organisers established the modern urban city based on principles of Western sanitation and public health.

4.2 Staging the 1904 Bombay Exhibition: Contents, Organisation, Classification

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 as one of several organisations that had developed from associations in major towns and cities in the 1860s and 1870s.³ While the Congress represented a distinctly elite class of South Asians, it is important to note the diversity of the Congress in terms of region, as a conscious effort was made to include members from distant corners of the subcontinent and from different religious groups. Bringing together such diverse, and sometimes opposing, groups into one organisation was an “ambitious undertaking.”⁴

While the Congress began hosting exhibitions in 1901, the Indian Industrial Association, a society founded in 1891, held exhibitions from 1893 until 1901.⁵ The Indian Government had organised and hosted exhibitions in the subcontinent, such as the Calcutta International Exhibition of 1883, for several decades. Congress-led exhibitions were held until 1915 when they were replaced by the Congress-aligned Indian Merchants’ Chamber; in 1920 the Merchants’ Chamber merged with the Indian Industrial Conference to create the Indian Industrial and Commercial Congress.⁶

From the beginning of the Congress exhibitions in 1901, officials set up two committees: one for the work of the Congress itself, and the other to organise the

³ B.N. Pande, ed., *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1985)*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: All India Congress Committee/Vikas, 1985) 2.

⁴ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 180.

⁵ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 112.

⁶ Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*, 236.

corresponding exhibition. The Exhibition Committee's chairman was a prominent member of the Bombay elite, Vithaldas Damodar Thakara. Each year, the exhibitionary committee was responsible for selecting a central location "not far from the town."⁷ Officials painstakingly established a bureaucratic structure to collect, organise, and set up the displays. The exhibition committee sent out notices for submissions to various districts, companies, factories, and also placed advertisements in journals and magazines. For the 1902 Ahmedabad exhibition, the Congress proceedings noted that "the Industrial Exhibition Committee then set about working in right earnest to scour the land of Gujerat and Katyawar for collecting all exhibits of importance. Active agents, well versed in business, were deputed to visit all centres whence an excellent collection could be made."⁸

The 1904 Bombay exhibition, the largest of all the Congress displays, almost failed to take place. The usual rotation of Congress sessions in differing presidencies should have seen the 1904 assembly in the Central Provinces and Berar, the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, the Punjab, or in Bengal. As none of these provinces offered to host, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta volunteered Bombay as the site of the 1904 session.⁹ The 1904 Bombay exhibition was one of the most well-attended sessions: 1010 delegates were present at the 1904 assembly, compared to 896 at 1901 Calcutta, 471 at 1902 Ahmedabad, 538 at 1903 Madras, and 757 at the 1905 Benares.¹⁰

The Congress invited Lord Lamington, the Governor of Bombay, to preside over and open the exhibition: an unusual move, as previous gatherings typically saw

⁷ *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress, Held in Ahmedabad, 1902* (Bombay: Commercial, 1902).

⁸ *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress, Held in Ahmedabad, 1902.*

⁹ *Proceedings of the Twentieth Indian National Congress, 1904.*

¹⁰ Zaidi and Zaidi, *The Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress*, 555.

prominent members of the Congress open the exhibition. The *Times of India* stated that “the educational value and wide scope of the exhibition” was due in part “to the good will of his Excellency Lord Lamington, and the ready assistance of his Government,”¹¹ which perhaps explains why he was elected to open the exhibition. Some of the site’s scope and success depended on the contributions of some Indian government departments, such as the Department of Forestry and Agriculture. The direct involvement of the Indian Government in this exhibition sheds some light on our understanding of moderate nationalism. Some of the “old moderate”¹² Congress leaders aimed to work with the Indian Government to bring economic and political reform to the country. This collaboration at 1904 Bombay was indicative of this period in the nationalist movement, where moderate Congress leaders raised modest demands for reform and economic improvement.¹³

Although the exhibition structures had been in construction for three months, they remained unfinished for the opening day. The Congress organisers wanted Governor Lamington to open the exhibition, and as he was departing for an extended visit to Sind in December, the opening day was held at the beginning of December. The exhibition was then shut to visitors to make “finishing touches” to the site.¹⁴ It officially opened to the public on the fifteenth of December and closed on the sixth of February.¹⁵

The *Indian Textile Journal* noted that many objects arrived late to the site. As a result, the publication of the official catalogue was delayed until the exhibition was nearly finished. The main ground floor plan also had to be rearranged due to the unprecedented number of contributors. The exhibition committee was inexperienced

¹¹ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: A Preliminary View,” *Times of India*, 8 Dec. 1904: 7.

¹² Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 98.

¹³ Seth, “Rewriting Histories of Nationalism,” 101.

¹⁴ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition,” *Times of India*, 12 Dec. 1904: 7.

¹⁵ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition,” 7.

and overburdened with duties. This situation was common at all the Congress exhibitions, as information was not shared amongst the general secretaries and exhibition committees from year to year.¹⁶

Even with the problems encountered, commentators hailed the Bombay Exhibition as the “greatest effort of the kind ever made in India.”¹⁷ One commentator declared that in relation to the previous exhibitions, 1904 Bombay would “outstrip them all in magnitude and excellence, and so far as size is concerned, at any rate, even the International Exhibition at Calcutta in 1884 will be surpassed.”¹⁸ This was quite a claim, as the Congress exhibitions did not have the resources of the Indian or British governments at their disposal.

The Bombay exhibition was open for fifty days, more than twice as long as the previous year. The daily opening hours were from three o’clock in the afternoon until eleven o’clock in the evening, including Sunday. Organisers took advantage of the electricity that lit the pavilions and grounds to stay open later.¹⁹ As at international exhibitions, by keeping the exhibition open in the evenings, those who worked during the day could also attend.²⁰ The Committee held reduced price days.²¹ Offering reduced price days was an attempt by the exhibition delegates to entice a wider section of Bombay’s residents to attend and reap the educational benefits of the exhibition. Before the opening ceremony, the exhibition committee issued a limited number of coupon-books with options for families, women and children (Fig. 4.1). They created a variety of ticket options, indicating that the Congress targeted a

¹⁶ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Indian Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, 1906,” 357.

¹⁷ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition,” 7.

¹⁸ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: A Preliminary View,” 7.

¹⁹ “The Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition,” Advertisement, *Times of India*, 30 Dec. 1904.

²⁰ See Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 144-50.

²¹ Advertisement, *Times of India*, 17 Jan. 1905: 3. One anna was worth one-sixteenth of a rupee, so effectively these were half-price days.

THE IND. AND AGR. EXH. OF THE I. N.
CONGRESS 1904.

EXHIBITORS OVER ONE THOUSAND.

ARTICLES EXHIBITED OVER 50,000.

WILL REMAIN OPEN IN DECEMBER AND
JANUARY.

H. E. THE GOVERNOR has kindly con-
sented TO OPEN the EXHIBITION on the 19th
DECEMBER, at 5 p.m., and the LADIES SECTION
will be opened by HER EXCELLENCY LADY LA-
MINGTON.

The Exhibition will remain from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m.

RATES OF ADMISSION.

Coupon-Holders—Rs. 10 for a book containing 60
Non-transferable Coupons.

Class II Rs. 15, for a book containing 33 Non-trans-
ferable Coupons and 30 Transferable Coupons for
Ladies or Children.

Class III, Rs. 20 for a book containing 33 Non-
transferable and 60 Transferable Coupons for Ladies
or Children.

Coupon-Holders will be entitled to be present at
the opening ceremony.

Only a limited number of these Coupon-Books will
be issued, and the Committee reserve to themselves
the right of issuing any further Coupon-Books, only
those applying early can secure them.

Ordinary Tickets Rs. 2 per ticket for admission on
the Day of the Opening.

Ceremony Rs. 1 per ticket for admission on suc-
ceeding days.

Children under twelve 4 annas.

Coupon-Books will be sold at the Exhibition Office
from Sunday, the 27th instant, between 11 a.m. and
6 p.m.

The Exhibition authorities retain to themselves
the right of reserving the Exhibition for Ladies and
Children only on certain hours on Days which will
be notified in the Public Journals, when no male
visitors will be admitted to the Exhibition.

The Conditions on which the Coupon-Books are
issued will be found on the Coupon-Books.

Figure 4.1: “The Ind. and Agr. Exh. of the I. N. Congress 1904” advertisement, *Times of India*, 1 Dec. 1904: 3. Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

wide range of people. This was, I suggest, a strategy for nation-building: by giving as many options to as many different people as possible, they ensured that everyone could go. Everyone could attend, from families, men, women, and children, and therefore everyone could be a part of the celebration of India on display. Congress leaders actively engaged in forming a nationalist community: a public open to the economic, political, and industrial messages of the exhibition.

The admissions figure for the Bombay exhibition's one-and-a-half month run reached 570,167 visitors.²² The 1903 Madras exhibition attracted sixty thousand people. In comparison, the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, which was presented as an international gathering, attracted 5.5 million visitors during its six month run, averaging about 33,500 visitors a day. The 1904 Bombay exhibition, which was open for less than two months, averaged approximately 10,558 visitors per day. While the Bombay exhibition achieved roughly a third of the visitors that the Colonial and Indian Exhibition had, it was by no means an insignificant showing for a national rather than international affair.

Numerous advertisements for the exhibition were placed in prominent newspapers, including the Bombay-based *Times of India*. One announcement by the Bombay Fine Art Society extended an invitation to all "Indian Princes and Nobles" to visit its Galleries, which were devoted to "Classical, Historical, Battle and Fancy Subjects from the Paintings of the Old Masters, and of Modern Masters."²³ The exhibition also offered an opportunity for businesses to trade on the success and visibility of the Congress displays. The store Marcks & Co., located close to the exhibition grounds, declared that a visit to the exhibition was not complete without a visit to its establishment, which included "Novelties of jewellery. Novelties in clocks and watches. Novelties in silver ware!"²⁴ (Fig. 4.2) While these advertisements clearly targeted the urban elites, those with disposable income, they also served to support the Congress as a legitimate organisation. The ads further associated the exhibition as supporting commerce boosting the development of local industries.

²² *Proceedings of the Twentieth Indian National Congress, Bombay, 1904.*

²³ "The Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition," Advertisement, *Times of India*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

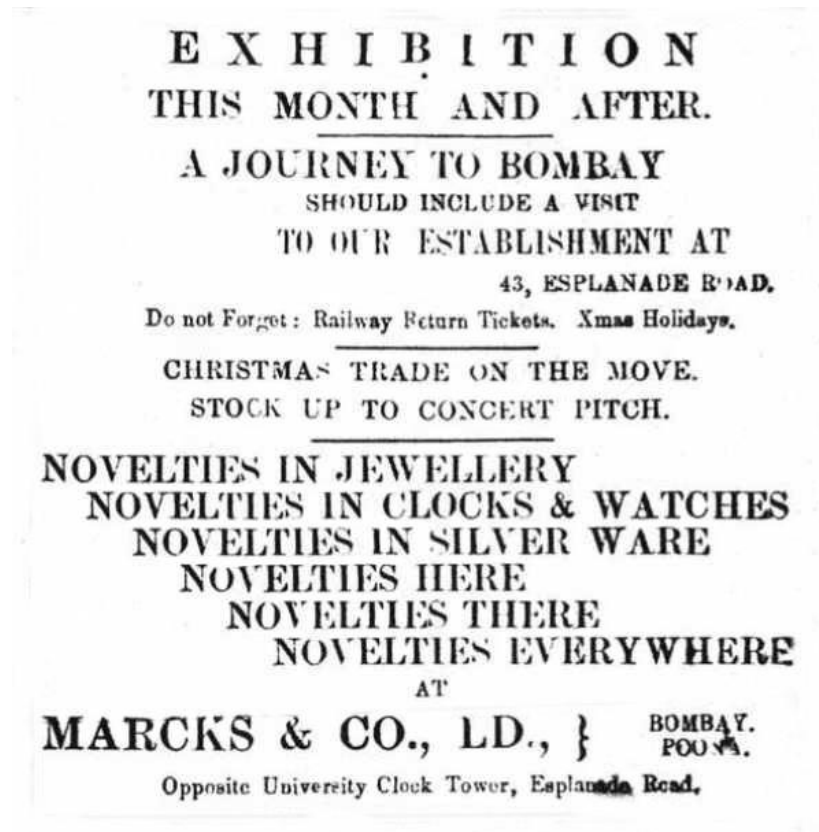


Figure 4.2: Advertisement for a Bombay-based ‘novelty’ business Marcks & Co., *Times of India*, 14 Dec. 1904: 1. Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

4.2.1 At the Exhibition

The location of the 1904 exhibition was strategically selected by Congress officials to ensure that the greatest number of people could attend. The exhibition was located on the Oval Maidan, a large oval-shaped park in south Bombay. Altogether, the grounds were two thousand feet long and six hundred feet wide, or approximately twenty-seven acres.²⁵ The exhibition pavilions stretched across Queen’s Road, a popular promenade site.²⁶ The Oval was located near Churchgate train station, in the Back Bay area, and was easily accessible by several different transportation methods. The grounds ran parallel to a railway running through the city. According to a notice in the *Times of India*, train companies offered reduced rail fares for first

²⁵ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: A Preliminary View,” 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

and second class passengers visiting the exhibition (Fig. 4.3). The exhibition was also accessible by tram. Placing the pavilions in an easily reachable and popular area suggests that the exhibition officials wanted to ensure that a wide variety of people could visit. The rhetoric of inclusion indicates that the Congress aimed to bring as many people to the site to bring them together under the banner of the Indian nation.

The layout was primarily designed and completed by the Secretary of the exhibition, Khan Bahadur M. C. Murzban.²⁷ Murzban was also the President and Chief Executive Engineer of the Corporation of Bombay, which oversaw the

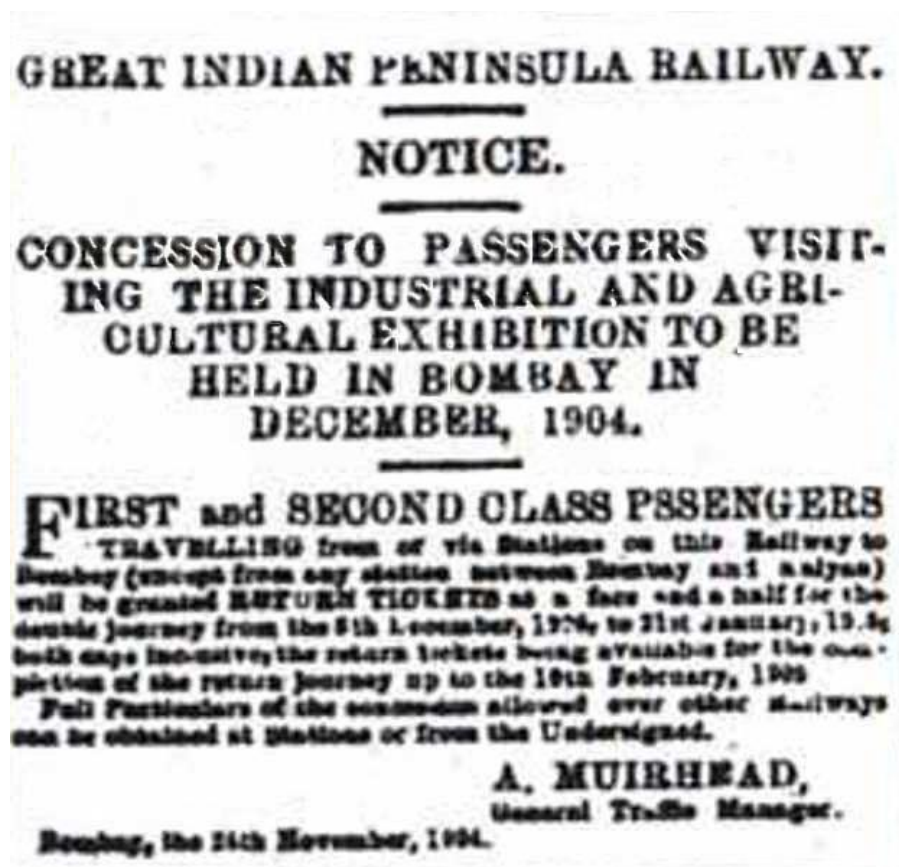


Figure 4.3: “Great Indian Peninsula Railway” notice of reduced rail tickets for passengers visiting the 1904 Bombay exhibition, *Times of India*, 1 Dec. 1904: 3. Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

²⁷ Ibid.

construction of many public buildings in the Presidency.²⁸ Recruiting a prominent engineer like Murzban was another way to legitimise the exhibition as an important event.

While there were numerous entrances to the exhibition, the primary entrance was across from the University Clock Tower of the University of Bombay. Upon entering the exhibition, the visitor first encountered an arcade portico of six arches on both sides and an ornamental tower, “painted a restful shade of green,”²⁹ measuring one hundred feet in height. The arcade portico and tower were designed in the Indo-Saracenic style.³⁰ Indo-Saracenic was an arbitrary label placed on a multitude of historic buildings, a style put together so that the British could “proclaim themselves masters of Indian culture.”³¹ The Indo-Saracenic style was most often found in “buildings meant for Indians, but where the content and meaning of the structure were defined by the colonial ruler and embodied British definitions of appropriate behavior.”³² The adaptation of the Raj’s symbolic style was an example of mimicry: an appropriation of a representation of ‘Indianness’ by the Congress. Like Indo-Saracenic buildings built by the Raj, the Congress exhibitions were also designed for locals, and their use was influenced by the strictures of the Western-educated liberal elites of the Congress. Its contents and the way in which the buildings were used, however, were defined by the Congress rather than a

²⁸ Preeti Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of British Bombay* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) 87-89.

²⁹ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” *Times of India*, 16 Dec. 1904: 6.

³⁰ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: A Preliminary View,” 7.

³¹ Siddhartha Sen, “Between Dominance, Dependence, Negotiation, and Compromise: European Architecture and Urban Planning Practices in Colonial India,” *Journal of Planning History* 9.203 (2010): 212. Bombay itself had very few Indo-Saracenic structures, as the design of the city was primarily Gothic Revival. For more on the ‘colonial gothic’ and empire, see Tim Barringer, *Men at Work*, 243-310.

³² Thomas R. Metcalf, “Architecture and the Representation of Empire: India, 1860-1910,” *Representations* 6 (Spring 1984): 50.

colonial ruler. These exhibitions, I suggest, were fundamentally hybrid as both local and Western forms were adopted and remade at the site.

Images of the 1902 Ahmedabad and 1903 Madras exhibitions shed light on the architecture of the Congress exhibitions. The 1902 Ahmedabad building was a hybrid design and broadly Indo-Saracenic (Figs. 4.4 and 4.5).³³ Both photographic views of the building illustrate the flying bunting and flags on the building and the walkways and the presence of fountains, all of which were common features of Western exhibitions. Figure 4.5 in particular illustrates the multitude of people that were there: largely men, as women would have been mostly restricted to their special “Ladies’ Days,” and all in Indian, rather than Western, dress. The images reveal a fair-like atmosphere of the exhibition: everyone was there as part of the celebration. Officials aimed to present their exhibitions as another location for public gatherings as a means of integrating their displays into daily life.

The 1903 Madras building (Fig. 4.6) was rather different to 1902 Ahmedabad, illustrating the variety of architectural styles and forms available for appropriation by colonial subjects. There was more European influence than Indo-Saracenic in 1903, particularly with the Greco-Roman style columns. Lions were featured in the relief sculpture in the pediment above the columns, a symbol of Britain. This representation also highlighted the influence of British values on the Congress, and the Greco-Roman influence further illustrated the hybrid design.

³³ The 1902 Ahmedabad pavilion was also reminiscent of the Indian Palace at the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition in London. For more on the Indian Pavilion at the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition, see Paul Greenhalgh, *Fair World: A History of World's Fairs and Expositions from London to Shanghai 1851-2010* (Winterborne: Papadakis, 2011) 105.



Figure 4.4: “Entrance to the Congress Pavilion, Ahmedabad, 1902,” *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth Indian National Congress, Held at Ahmedabad, 1902* (Bombay: Commercial, 1902) beginning page. The British Library, London.

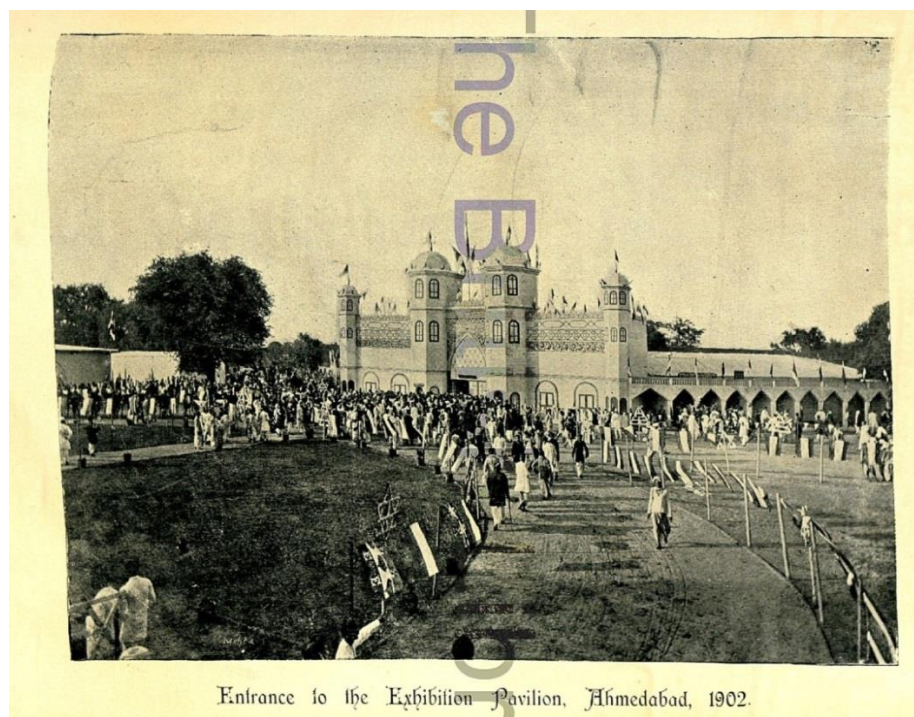


Figure 4.5: Entrance to the Exhibition Pavilion, Ahmedabad, 1902. Alternate view. *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth Indian National Congress, Held at Ahmedabad, 1902* (Bombay: Commercial, 1902) immediately after beginning page. The British Library, London.



Figure 4.6: Nicholas and Co., Pavilion, Madras Industrial Exhibition, 1903, *Report of the Proceedings of the Nineteenth Indian National Congress, held at Madras, 1903* (Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1904). The British Library, London.

4.2.2 Agricultural and Industrial: Routes through the Exhibition

These exhibitions followed broadly the classification systems of international exhibitions, and therefore included what could be argued were Western forms. As I mentioned in previous chapters, during the nineteenth century, India on display was portrayed as a land of raw materials alongside a “splendid array of artisanal manufactures” and sumptuous jewels that represented an exoticised and domesticated India.³⁴ The Colonial and Indian Exhibition also framed India in terms of raw materials juxtaposed with exotic ethnographic displays.³⁵ The Congress exhibitions, on the other hand, aimed to emphasise a broad range of Indian industry

³⁴ Kriegel, “Narrating the subcontinent in 1851,” 150.

³⁵ Levell, *Oriental Visions*, 71-9.

and to illustrate India's manufacturing potential at all levels of production, from raw materials to machinery to products. Significantly, there was an absence of exoticism from these exhibitions.³⁶

The exhibition boasted an elaborate layout, with separate pavilions housing special sections. One visitor noted that his first impression of the exhibition upon entering was "one of light and spaciousness."³⁷ Some of the features of this exhibition, including large crowds, leisure activities, and flying bunting, were similar to other large exhibitions in the metropole, of which the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle is a good example.³⁸ Based on the "Plan of the Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition of the Indian National Congress, Bombay 1904" (Fig 4.7), upon entering the principal entrance, the visitor was immediately faced with the Art Gallery on the left and the Metals section on the right. If visitors chose to turn right towards Metals, they would encounter Vegetable Products in a similarly-sized gallery. Across from Vegetable Products was one of the larger sections, Forestry, which was directly adjacent to the large Agricultural section. Next to Agriculture was one of the biggest displays in the exhibition: Machinery/ Hand Looms, a smaller gallery, were situated next to Machinery. Across from the Agricultural and Machinery areas were smaller sections, including Leather Goods and Potteries. There were also special sections, such the Victoria Technical Institute, which supported handicrafts and artisans in South India. All of these sections were situated to the right of the principal entrance in a circular formation with an "Electric Fountain" in the middle.

³⁶ Some of the categories considered common at exhibitions in the metropole, including the ethnographic display of colonial 'races,' fall away at the Congress exhibitions. It was harder to sustain the category of 'race' when looking at Indian material in an indigenous exhibition.

³⁷ *Times of India*, "The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions," 6.

³⁸ Richard D. Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World's Fair* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967) x.

Across from the principal entrance were the native states' exhibits, including "numerous branches of art and industry" from "Bhownagar, Porbunder, Morri, Cutch, Jamnagar, Kolhapur, and other states."³⁹ If visitors turned left at the principal entrance towards the Art Gallery, they encountered a gallery on Textiles, situated opposite a flower-stall and a maze. In the same area was the Ladies' Court; other sections nearby included displays of jewellery, cotton, sewing, and embroideries. On this side of the exhibition was one of the largest sections: the Bombay Healtheries, which will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. Outside the pavilion, across the "over-bridge," were a number of large-scale apparatuses and industrial operations. The *Times of India* provided a detailed walk-through of the exhibition in an article published prior to the exhibition's opening.⁴⁰

Susan M. Pearce's comments on the organisation of display spaces are useful in examining the Bombay exhibition's layout. She argues that an exhibition with a looser structure served to "show knowledge as a proposition which may stimulate further, or different, answering propositions."⁴¹ As evidenced from Figure 4.7, in the 1904 Bombay exhibition, space was fluid and flexible and the visitor was free to choose a variety of routes through which to experience the displays. Certain areas of the exhibition did aim to educate the visitor: for example, the galleries on forestry, vegetable products, agriculture, and machinery were situated in such a way that the visitor could be educated on the manufacturing process. In general, however, visitors had freedom of movement to determine their own meanings. The Congress, therefore, provided a site in which many differing forms of knowledge could be fostered.

³⁹ *Times of India*, "The Bombay Exhibition: A Preliminary View," 7.

⁴⁰ *Times of India*, "The Bombay Exhibition: A Preliminary View," 7.

⁴¹ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (London: Leicester University Press, 1998) 139.

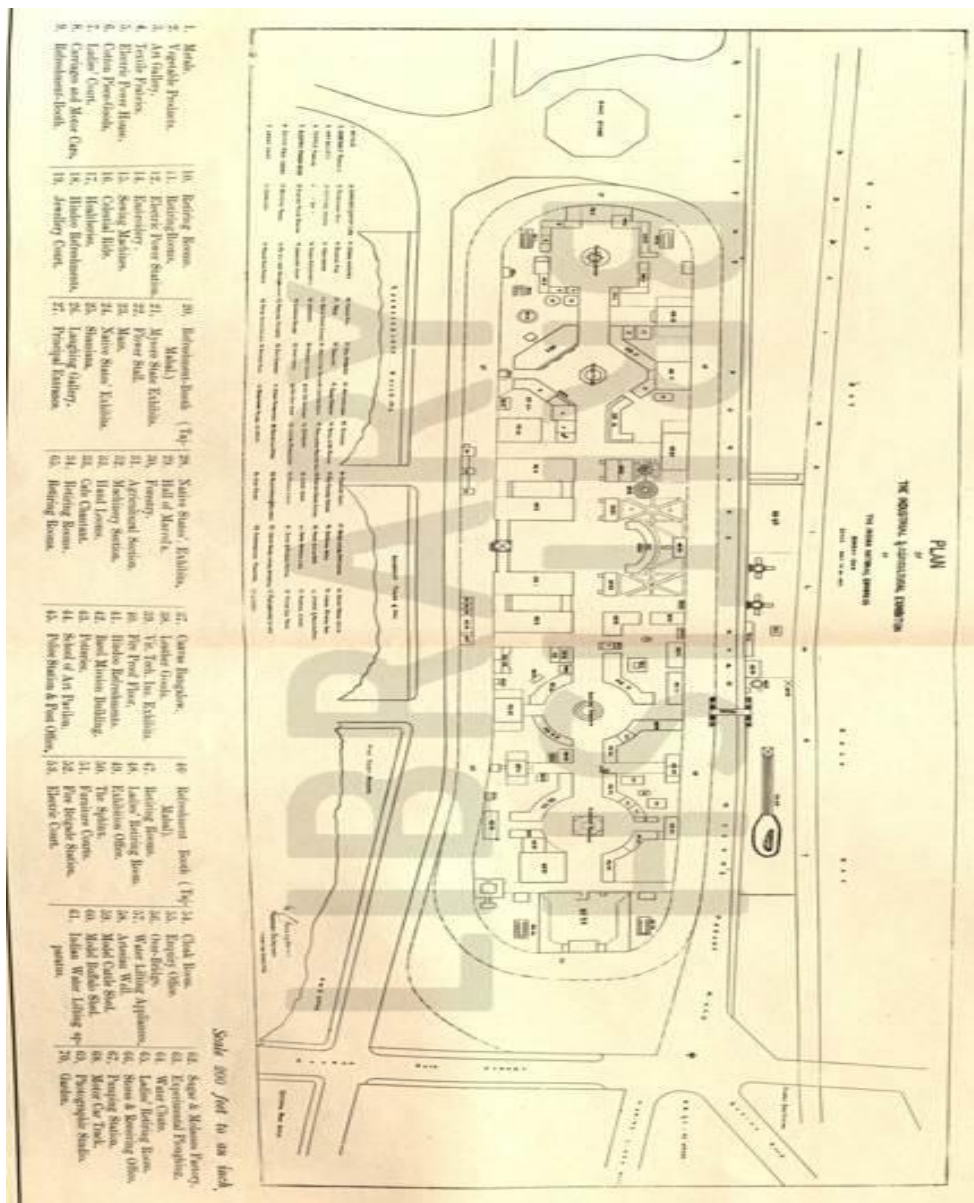


Figure 4.7: Plan of the Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition of the Indian National Congress, held in Bombay, 1904, “The Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Dec. 1904: between p. 80 and p. 81. The British Library, London.

Fifty thousand articles were displayed at the Bombay exhibition and a labelling system was in place for each object. The exhibition committee took great care to precisely classify, arrange, and identify the submissions. An extensive list of rules and regulations for submission was published in journals like the *Indian Textile*

Journal. Each exhibitor was initially allocated a five-foot square area, though more space could be obtained for a price. Each exhibitor was required to “bear a label showing the section, the name or description of the article, its price, the place of its production or manufacture, the names of the manufacturer and the Exhibitor, and also mentioning if it is for sale.”⁴² The Committee was careful to establish, however, that articles for sale were not permitted to be removed while the exhibition was open to the public.⁴³ The Congress encouraged trade and commerce between the public and manufacturers at the exhibition; however, their insistence that all goods remain on site until the exhibition’s closing indicated that they wanted all their visitors to reap the benefits of viewing the displays of India’s industrial and agricultural potential.

Prior to entry, visitors had access to handbooks. A catalogue was also published after the exhibition had closed. The catalogue was 267 pages and incorporated twelve pages of portraits and speeches, fifty-one pages of “catalogue including mere portraits,” and 204 pages of advertisement with an index.⁴⁴ The collection of the 1904 Bombay exhibition also aimed to associate India with commerce and industry. Furthermore, in a colonial context, the publication of an extensive catalogue may also have been used by the Congress in order to illustrate the Congress’ ability to represent India’s economic industries to the Indian government.

Glyn Barlow, Principal of Victoria College in Palghat, published *Industrial India* in 1905. In his text, he included sections written as a guide for the rural visitor to the Congress exhibitions. Barlow complained that the 1903 Madras catalogue

⁴² *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition of the Twentieth Indian National Congress—Rules and Regulations,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Oct. 1903: 347.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Bombay Exhibition,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Feb. 1905: 134.

“read like a draper’s price-list or an auctioneer’s inventory.”⁴⁵ He gave an example of “page 27” of the 1903 Madras catalogue:

Regd. No	Sender’s Name	Description of Article
467	Indian Stores, Ltd., Calcutta	1 Pair of stockings
467	Indian Stores, Ltd., Calcutta	1 sweater (woollen)
467	Indian Stores, Ltd., Calcutta	6 Jerseys (woollen)
467	Indian Stores, Ltd., Calcutta	3 Balaclava caps (woollen)
467	Indian Stores, Ltd., Calcutta	Two pairs woollen gloves ⁴⁶

Barlow noted that “this sort of thing ran on for 3 pages in connection with the exhibits of this particular firm, and it ran on for, literally, dozens of pages in connection with textile fabrics in general.”⁴⁷ The catalogue read like an index of goods available for commercial trade from each individual firm. Barlow’s example, and the complaint that went along with it, gives us some insight into a purpose of the exhibition: commerce, the idea of modern wealth. Even though articles were theoretically not for sale during the exhibition’s opening, the publication of such an extensive directory of goods after it had closed seems to indicate that a major purpose of the exhibition was the promotion of trade and commerce. Here, we can see how the Congress exhibitions developed from the history of Great Exhibitions in the metropole. Furthermore, the Congress intended to use their displays as a means of stimulating economic development in the subcontinent.

With regards to the actual classification of objects, the exhibition committee established two major categories: those of “agriculture,” and those of “industry”:

LIST OF GROUPS AND CLASSES OF EXHIBITS.

Section I. Agriculture

Group I. Agricultural Machinery

Group II. Vegetable and Animal Products

Group III. Prepared Articles

Section II. Industrial.

Group I. Machinery

Group II. Mechanical Contrivances, and Machine Accessories

⁴⁵ Glyn Barlow, *Industrial India* (Madras: G. A. Natesan, 1905) 48.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

- Group III. Electricity
- Group IV. Instruments
- Group V. Materials used in construction and Mineral Products
- Group VI. Textile Fabrics
- Group VII. Leather, Horn and Paper
- Group VIII. Pottery, Porcelain and Glass
- Group IX. Metals and Jewellery
- Group X. Chemical Industries
- Group XI. Furniture and Decorations
- Group XII. Fine Arts
- Group XIII. Conveyances
- Group XIV. Miscellaneous⁴⁸

The “Vegetable and Animal Products” grouping reflected commonly exhibited Indian products in nineteenth-century international exhibitions: that is, ‘raw materials.’ “Prepared Articles” included soaps, butter, ghee, cheese, grains, foods and preserved milk. The Forestry section included timber in both its raw and treated forms and a timber trophy.⁴⁹ Some examples of machinery included a horizontal condensing engine, Johnson’s Rotary Pumps of the Atlas Company, European and Indian ploughs, “40 indicated horse-power double cylinder portable engine,” a turbine and generator imported into India, and an automatic self-shuttling loom.⁵⁰ Various models of dairy farms, milk sterilizers, cattle stables, ships, theatres, candle factories, and even models of the island of Bombay were on display (Figs. 4.8 and 4.9). Hoffenberg argues that “machines were one measure of man for Victorians and Edwardians, a yardstick by which to determine the progress for each exhibiting nation.”⁵¹ The world on display at these exhibitions was defined by the Indian National Congress as an industrial world. The Congress divided this world into categories: for instance, some displays like the ‘novelties’ advertised in the *Times of*

⁴⁸ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition of the Twentieth Indian National Congress,” 347.

⁴⁹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial Exhibition, Bombay,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Oct. 1904: 22. The Agricultural section will be more specifically discussed in Chapter Five.

⁵⁰ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition. Exhibits,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Dec. 1904: 80-1.

⁵¹ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 176.

India were commodities. The divisions of these objects were indicative of commerce and of the industrial endeavours of the country. Some objects, like machinery, were representative of technological progress as the Congress was making the world in that form. The Congress was speaking in the only language available to them: that of industrial progress.

The taxonomic structure used in 1904 Bombay was similar to classification systems used in nineteenth century international exhibitions, such as Lyon Playfair's four-part system for the 1851 Great Exhibition. Playfair's system included Raw Materials, Machinery, Manufactures, and Fine Art, along with thirty subdivisions.⁵² The categories included in Playfair's system were instead subsumed within the "Industrial" section at 1904 Bombay. At international exhibitions, Fine Art was often classified separately.⁵³ At the 1904 Bombay exhibition, the "Industrial" classification not only included machinery and various chemical and mechanical instruments, but also "Fine Arts," metals and jewellery, textile fabrics, and those considered 'applied' or 'decorative' arts—furniture and decorations.

Adapting classification systems at the Bombay exhibition was another means of establishing the legitimacy of the Congress exhibitions, signifying that India was following a similar pattern of progress. It is evident that the Bombay exhibition's classification structure was hybrid and borrowed from the taxonomic structure of the 1851 Great Exhibition and after. The classification system was representative of colonial 'mimicry,' from the appropriation of Roman numerals, to the adaptation of the taxonomic structure of Playfair and subsequent exhibitions, and also the contents of the exhibition like raw materials, crafts, and industrial machinery. The

⁵² Hobhouse, *The Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition*, 40.

⁵³ Hobhouse, *The Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition*, 40.

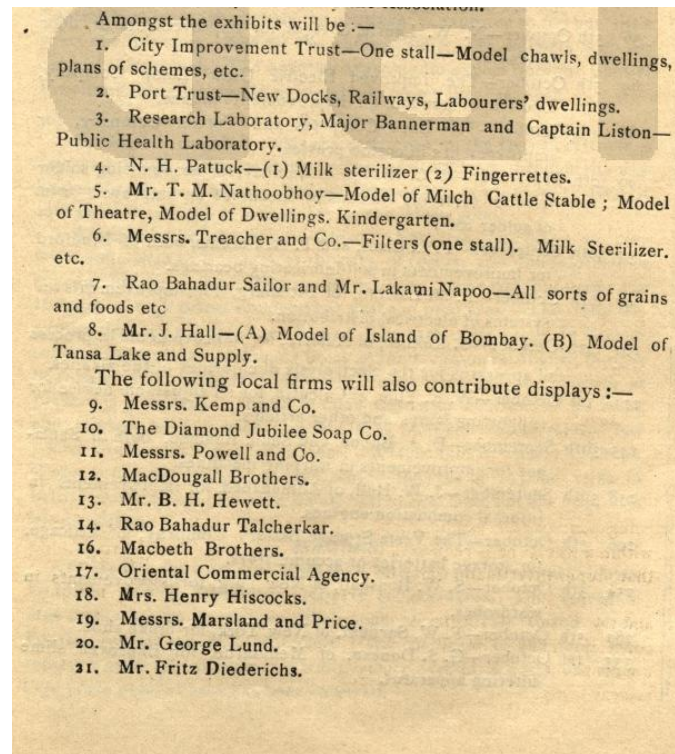


Figure 4.8: List of some exhibitors and exhibits, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Nov. 1904: 56. The British Library, London.

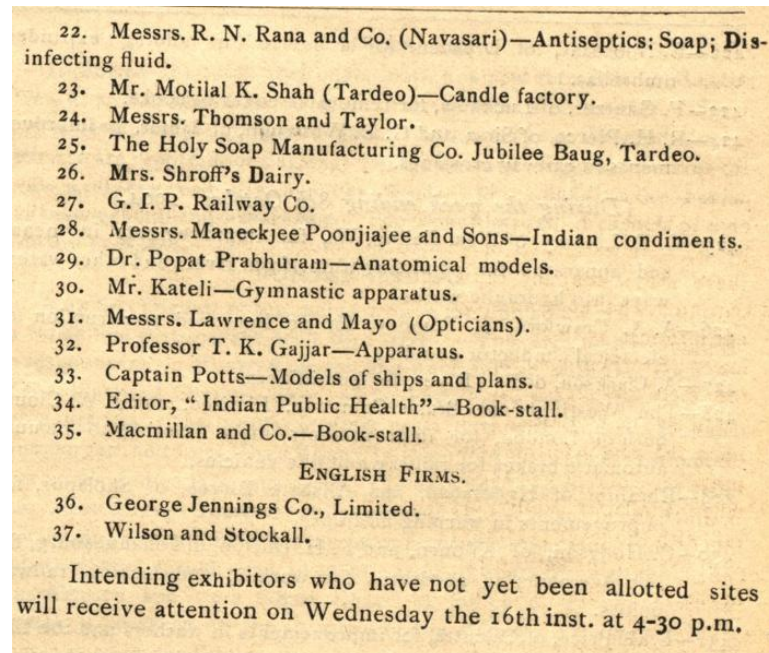


Figure 4.9: List of some exhibitors and exhibits (cont'd), “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Nov. 1904: 56. The British Library, London.

appropriation of the classification system allowed Congress elites to lay claim to this form of knowledge of industry and material progress.

The juxtaposition of the galleries seen in Figure 4.7 had meanings that reflected the Congress's aims. At 1904 Bombay, there was a distinctive grouping of sections that emphasised the manufacturing process and the products of industrialisation. In one route through the exhibition, the visitor passed through sections of raw materials in the "Vegetable Products" gallery; adjacent to raw materials were displays of Machinery, and then came the Leather Goods section, which featured finished products. This route illustrated the idea of taking the visitor through the process of industrialisation, from raw materials to finished product.

Earlier exhibitions held in the metropole often emphasised the products of industrialisation rather than the process. Thomas Richards notes that at the 1851 Crystal Palace, the juxtaposition of the objects' layout, the glass and iron structure, and the sheer number of exhibits made the exhibition as much about spectacle as it was about industry.⁵⁴ At the 1904 Bombay exhibition, there was equal emphasis on industrial products and processes. The organisation of objects and displays in a manner that reflected the manufacturing process, rather than its products, also suggested that the Congress exhibition was less about spectacle.⁵⁵ The 1904 Bombay exhibition was about educating its visitors on commerce and industrialisation and teaching about industry, in all its forms, so that the visiting public came to associate India with industrial development.⁵⁶ Well-known and newly established

⁵⁴ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 91.

⁵⁵ For more on spectacle, see Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) 17-21.

⁵⁶ Congress exhibitions' emphasis on showing the processes of industrialisation was using an industrial form of education, much like the Mechanics' Institute exhibitions in the 1830s. Mechanics' Institutes provided education for the rising classes of engineers and artisans in newly industrialised cities, and hosted exhibitions which featured displays from major manufacturing industries. Including stages of production at the Mechanics' Institutes was considered essential in instructing workers on new forms of technology. Similarly, at the Congress exhibitions, the inclusion of lectures and

manufacturing firms from across the subcontinent contributed exhibits that illustrated the processes of spinning, weaving, bleaching, dyeing, and mercerising.⁵⁷ A major contributor, Tata and Sons, provided products from the “vast concerns managed by them.”⁵⁸ The Agricultural court featured new methods of cotton preparation and production, especially those developed through hybridisation. The inclusion of new technologies was part of the Congress’s aim to create a public well-educated in the processes of production. Therefore the meaning of objects at the Congress exhibitions was generally not as commodified and less spectacular than the international exhibitions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Objects and displays were less decontextualised and placed in the context of industrial lectures and demonstrations, rather than a juxtaposition of goods and peoples designed to emphasise their exoticism.

This section analysed the staging of the Bombay exhibition, from the logistics of the opening day, to examining the order imposed on Indian products in the classification structure, to revealing various meanings through an analysis of the juxtaposition of galleries in the exhibition pavilion. Congress officials appropriated certain forms of exhibition from metropolitan exhibitions. There was a particular vision of India’s future put forward at this exhibition: one that associated India with industrial development and illustrated the country’s readiness for economic improvement. As Seth observes, this was a central argument of moderate nationalists like the Congress officials, who believed that “economic and industrial

practical demonstrations of technology was part of the movement to familiarise workers with new technologies.

⁵⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines mercerization as the “process of treating cotton yarn or fabric (often under tension) with a concentrated solution of sodium hydroxide or other base, in order to impart strength and lustre and to increase affinity for dyes.”

⁵⁸ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibitions. Exhibits,” 81.

modernization” would lead to progress.⁵⁹ The exhibition supported the Congress’s case that India should be industrialised, and therefore modernised.

4.3 Representing India: The Congress as a Nationalist Body

While the 1904 Bombay Congress exhibition is the focus of this chapter, an examination of the displays of 1901 Calcutta, 1902 Ahmedabad, and 1903 Madras reveal the ways the Congress used their exhibitions in order to legitimate the organisation as representative of a modern India. From the group’s inception, the Congress was initially only one of several nationalist organisations that had developed from local societies in urban centres. Early Congress meetings “had no definite political programme, but only some vague nationalist ideas.”⁶⁰ These were contributing factors in the decision to host exhibitions in the subcontinent.

By the early twentieth century, the Congress began to solidify a political programme. Exhibitions were an ideal site in which the organisation’s ideas could be brought to a broad spectrum of people. Gyan Prakash notes that “the Congress claimed to speak for this modern India, insisting that the multitude of local and provincial interests it mobilized shared common political interests as a nation in relation to the state.”⁶¹ The exhibitions, I suggest, played an important role where the Congress brought together national and regional agendas. Furthermore, by hosting these exhibitions, the Congress began to push ahead to become the leading organisation in the nationalist movement.

⁵⁹ Seth, “Rewriting Histories of Nationalism,” 105.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 180.

Exhibitions, as Auerbach argues in relation to the Great Exhibition, provide spaces for people to define themselves as a nation.⁶² This developed in part because “the organisers had to define for the public, and negotiate with the public, the meaning of the exhibition,” which was an ongoing process.⁶³ In the case of the 1904 Bombay exhibition, it is possible to see that Congress officials worked to define India as a nation and the Congress as an ideal representative organisation. Nationalist leaders focused on the Congress as a national and political body. At the 1902 Ahmedabad Congress proceedings, for instance, one speaker declared: “the Congress as a political organisation could immensely work for the greater good of the people and the State.”⁶⁴ Newspapers also hailed the nationalist spirit of the organisation.

The *Times of India* proclaimed:

All join hands and hearts together to promote to the best of their power and ability the common cause. The result indeed is most gratifying. Nay, it augurs a new epoch of fervent faith, high endeavours and higher hope. So far so good. The national party is striving the best to preserve in the path it has chalked out for itself. It proclaimed from the very first that for the moral and material development of the country the people should work out their programme in different directions.”⁶⁵

The Congress was framed by the official at the Ahmedabad exhibition and the newspaper commentator as a speaker for India, and even as an organisation that could benefit the Indian government. The Congress was referred to as political and national, and described as an organisation that could be a benefit to the country. It is important to note that during this period, the Congress was not the State: Britain still was.

Congress organisers, nationalist leaders, and local newspaper writers also used the Congress exhibitions to define India. At the first exhibition in 1901

⁶² Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 5.

⁶³ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 3.

⁶⁴ *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress, Held in Ahmedabad, 1902*.

⁶⁵ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition,” *Times of India*, 21 Dec. 1904: 6.

Calcutta, the proceedings commenced with a song, composed in honour of the Congress exhibitions, titled “Hail Hindustan”:

Which was sung in unison by fifty-eight souls—men and boys hailing from all the different parts of India and professing different religions. Hindus, Mahommedans, Jains, Parsees, Shiks, and Christians all sang as with one voice the ode to the Mother country. Nearly four hundred Volunteers joined in the chorus.

Hail Hindustan!

I.

Sing, O my Muse, recall our ancient glory,
Sing thou, sing Hindustan!
Inspire this throng with soul bestirring story,
Sing now, sing Hindustan!
Let valour bright breathe in the very name,
Instil into thy song past wealth and fame.

Chorus—Orissa, Behar, Bengal, Oudh, Punjab, Nepal,
Madras, Bombay, and Rajputan!
Hindu, Parsee, and Jain, Sikh, Christain, Musselman!
Let every voice in concord sing,
In every tongue the burden sing.
All hail to Hindustan!
Hara, Hara, Hara—hail Hindustan!
Dadar Hormurd—Hindustan!
Elahi Akbar [Trans. “My Great God (Allah)”] —Hindustan!
All hail to Hindustan!

II.

Sing, O my Muse, defeat all party, strife,
Sing thou, sing Hindustan!
Giver of strength and power, giver of life,
Sing now, sing Hindustan!
In joy and sorrow let us not be parted,
In aim and effort make us single-hearted.

Chorus—Orissa, Behar, Bengal, Oudh, Punjab, Nepal,
Madras, Bombay, and Rajputan!
Hindu, Parsee, and Jain, Sikh, Christain, Musselman!
Let every voice in concord sing,
In every tongue the burden sing.
All hail to Hindustan!
Hari, Hari, Hari [“Krishna Krishna Krishna”] —hail Hindustan!
Jay Jihova—Hindustan!
Elahi Akbar—Hindustan!
All hail to Hindustan!

III.

Sing, O my Muse, arouse the people's heart,
 Sing thou, sing Hindustan!
 Maker of mighty nation that thou art
 Sing now, sing Hindustan!
 Uplift the flag of *Energy* on high,
 And let stern *Duty* sound her bugle-cry.

Chorus—Orissa, Behar, Bengal, Oudh, Punjab, Nepal,
 Madras, Bombay, and Rajputan!
 Hindu, Parsee, and Jain, Sikh, Christian, Musselman!
 Let every voice in concord sing,
 In every tongue the burden sing.
 All hail to Hindustan!

Jay Brahman [Translation: Long live Lord Brahman (the creator)] —hail
 Hindustan!

Alakha Niranjana [Trans. "The soul, or could be the Shiva that we cannot
 see"]—Hindustan!

Jay Jihova [Trans. "Long live Jehovah"] —Hindustan!

Dadar Hormurd [the Zoroastrian Prophet] —Hindustan!

All hail to Hindustan!⁶⁶

The song was sung and written in both Hindi and English so that most of the visitors could understand the song's messages. By emphasising the unity of all religions and regions in India, the Congress clearly wished for the subsuming of local and religious identities under the banner of the "mighty nation." This song also implies that they should have the qualities of duty, energy, and unity. Presumably the exhibition, and the Congress, would provide an opportunity for South Asians to come together to achieve these goals. In Chapter Three, I noted Behramji Malabari's narrative on India's future, where he called for a greater "solidarity of interests" and the need for greater "cohesion" amongst South Asians.⁶⁷ This idea was made manifest by "Hail Hindustan." A variety of meanings were promoted in this song; namely, that India needed to be unified into a nation above and beyond all other identities, and the exhibition would provide an opportunity for South Asians to come

⁶⁶ *Detailed Report of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Indian National Congress, held at Calcutta, on the 26th, 27th, & 28th December, 1901*. Thanks to Megha Rajguru for the translations.

⁶⁷ Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English life*, 118.

together to celebrate the spirit of the nation. The moderate Congress, Seth observes, implied that “some time in the future, India would be ready for self-government,” an idea that was also circulating in British political circles at the time.⁶⁸ Presumably, the leader of this unified nation would be the Congress.

There was also possible reference to the imperial hierarchy of civilisation and progress, which placed India as a once-great but stagnant civilisation and Britain at the pinnacle. In the first stanza, there was reference to Hindustan (the Indian subcontinent) instilling “into thy song past wealth and fame,” and calling for the “Muse” to “recall our ancient glory.”⁶⁹ Congress officials, while accepting that Britain had achieved civilisation and without challenging Britain, positioned India as on a journey towards achieving progress. The Congress was also seen as an organisation capable of lifting India out of its current state of stagnation and attaining its former glory.

Furthermore, as can be seen in the song, many Congress speakers frequently appealed to the authority of Western exhibitions. To reproduce, or to be similar to, particular forms of exhibition provided legitimacy. On the opening day of the 1903 Madras exhibition, the Congress President, C. Sankaran Nair, addressed the Maharajah of Mysore to state that a major purpose of the exhibition stemmed from a wish to “secure the active co-operation of all classes European and Indian alike, interested in the industrial progress. The manufacturers in our midst, of both classes, may then be hoped to hold their own in friendly rivalry with the outsider.”⁷⁰ Nair provides a good example of the idea of India’s path to progress: what had come before, and how India was moving towards it. In his celebration of progress, friendly

⁶⁸ Seth, “Rewriting Histories of Nationalism,” 101.

⁶⁹ *Detailed Report of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Indian National Congress, held at Calcutta, on the 26th, 27th, & 28th December, 1901.*

⁷⁰ *Report and Proceedings of the Nineteenth Indian National Congress, Held at Madras, 1903* (Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1904).

rivalry, and trade, he used the rhetoric of international exhibitions. In another speech during the Opening Ceremonies, he proclaimed:

Those who have organised this Exhibition are well aware of what is being done by our rulers for the benefit of Indian trade. The Government have availed themselves of important exhibitions to advertise Indian goods and these always attracted attention. At Melbourne, Paris, and London Exhibitions India occupied a prominent place. The Calcutta Exhibition of 1884 was mainly to advertise Indian goods. And from the time the Imperial Institute was established in London forward, there were sustained efforts to promote trade in India's commercial products.⁷¹

In juxtaposing the Congress exhibition with those held in Britain, Europe, and even by the Indian Government, Nair linked these prominent, world-renowned displays of imperial power, wealth, and entrepreneurial expertise with his local displays. Here we can see how he thought about India as a colonial entity. He implied that if India was capable of hosting an exhibition, the country, with the Congress as its leader, had achieved a certain level of national development. The ability to host an exhibition was a proclamation to the Indian government that the country had reached a level of national progress.

Other Congress members used the exhibition in order to lay claim to a form of colonial power. In the Maharajah of Mysore's speech on the Opening Day, he discussed the historical importance and promise of exhibitions in the West:

In early days extravagant expectations were formed of their possibilities, and the great London Exhibition of 1851 was, at the time, supposed to have inaugurated the millennium. The fifty years or so that have elapsed since then have not witnessed the realisation of this pleasing vision, nor have the 'World's Fairs' of Europe and the West always fulfilled the expectations of their promoters, in immediate and startling expansions of trade and industries, in general or particular. Our exhibition here, however, is on a more modest scale and our expectations of its results are modest in proportion.⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *Report and Proceedings of the Nineteenth Indian National Congress, Held at Madras, 1903.*

Like Nair, the Maharajah also placed the Congress gatherings as a descendant in a long line of international exhibitionary tradition. In the colonial context, the Indian National Congress utilised long-standing techniques of display to declare that their displays stood in line with those of Europe. The Maharajah mentioned that the displays were “modest in proportion”: in proportion to the nations that have hosted these World’s Fairs, like Britain, France, and America. The Maharajah did not advocate for a completely separate nation equal to those of countries like Britain, France, and America, but rather called for some level of political and economic power for the Congress.

Organisers were anxious to demonstrate the legitimacy of their exhibitions through the adoption of a Western-style bureaucratic system and also by consulting the expertise of Sayajirao III, the Gaikwar of Baroda, who presided over the opening day of the 1902 Ahmedabad exhibition. Sayajirao, a prominent Maharajah from the wealthy Maratha clan in Gujarat, was famous for his travels in Britain and Europe and for his admiration of Western traditions. We can remember him from the previous chapter, where local newspapers *The Mahratta* and the *Times of India* encouraged him to visit exhibitions in Britain to “learn the worth of independence and honour its votaries,” and to see the “vast strides which Science has enabled Europe to take in civilization.”⁷³ On the opening day for the 1902 Ahmedabad Congress, he was introduced by the exhibition President as having “most cheerfully travelled much in Europe and most carefully observed the diverse industrial centres of England and the Continent”:

Having been a keen observer of more than one exhibition in Europe, specially the one held in Paris two years old, ‘which summed up in a striking manner the progress of a century of civilization, industry and commerce, he was seriously impressed by the moral which it conveyed to his Eastern mind,

⁷³ *The Mahratta*, “Editorial Notes,” 4.

refined by the civilizing influences of the West where, more than any other Indian prince, he has frequently travelled and acquired no inconsiderable a lore in the matter of arts, trades and industries. In short the materialism of Europe has had for him an invaluable lesson and he wished to inculcate that lesson among his countrymen. Thus, the Gaikwad stood before all India, on that memorable day, as one of its foremost industrial reformers and preached his great sermon on industrialism in India as the principal panacea for the many economic evils from which she is at present suffering.⁷⁴

He was presumed to have superior knowledge of Western civilisation: he was posited by the writer as a mediator between East and West who reaped the benefits of both cultures. As he had travelled in England, he was considered to have superior knowledge on the “arts, trades and industries”; with this knowledge he could “inculcate” the lessons of “the West” in India.⁷⁵ From this passage we can see that close study of Western culture allowed the Gaikwar to claim a form of legitimacy as an expert on the benefits of industry, which he could then share with the visiting public. The Gaikwar’s knowledge about progress circulated knowledge cast in a British way.

The *Hindi Punch*, in one of its cartoons of the 1902 Ahmedabad Congress exhibition, looked at the relationship between Britain and India as hosts of exhibition. A visual representation of this relationship was seen in “Miss Congress Tree Planting” (Fig. 4.10). The caption read:

Punch—Whatever that is planted by your noble hand, with energy and zeal, with perseverance and persistence, is sure to bear good fruits, my dear, and I have high hopes for the tree you’re just planting! Hind—Amen, Punch dear, Amen! [The work for getting up the Industrial Exhibition in connection with the coming session of the Indian National Congress at Ahmedabad is going on briskly, and is bound to prove beneficial to the country.]⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress, Held in Ahmedabad, 1902.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ “Miss Congress Tree Planting” cartoon from the *Hindi Punch* (2 November 1902), *The Indian National Congress Cartoons from the Hindi Punch*, ed. Barjorjee Nowrosjee (Bombay: Bombay Samachar Press, 1902).

The Congress was represented by the female figure planting the tree, which had the words “Industrial Exhibition” written on the trunk and “Ahmedabad” at its base. The figure of Britannia, carrying the trident, was represented in the background overseeing the scene. The figure of Britannia was commonly associated with British exhibitions and her figure was found on the covers of catalogues for the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Marina Warner’s analysis of the allegorical female figure is applied here in order to analyse the figures in the *Hindi Punch* cartoon. Warner suggests that abstract concepts like “liberty, justice or victory—can be appropriately expressed by a female figure.”⁷⁷ During the nineteenth century, images of the allegorical female form were popular. In this cartoon, both Britannia and the Congress were personified by females. Britannia’s significance, Warner suggests, arose from the “British constitution” and the “pride that grows from the benefits it confers.”⁷⁸ The inclusion of Britannia as overseer of the Congress’ exhibitions made explicit colonial rule. Furthermore, the values that Britannia represented were also celebrated by the Congress, especially the ideas of liberty, justice, and the benefits of the British constitution. Significantly, in Figure 4.10, both Miss Congress and Britannia were in Indian dress. While the cartoon called upon the popular motif of Britannia as representative of the values of the country, the inclusion of Indian dress on both figures suggested that they were hybrid forms. It is implied in the cartoon that India could inhabit Britishness. The *Hindi Punch* used the allegorical meanings of Britannia, especially with regards to the British constitution and its values of liberty, freedom, and equality, but used the form of Indian dress to firmly place these values in India.

⁷⁷ Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Vintage, 1996) 17.

⁷⁸ Warner, *Monuments and Maidens*, 46.



Figure 4.10: "Miss Congress Tree Planting" cartoon from the *Hindi Punch*, *The Indian National Congress Cartoons from the Hindi Punch*, ed. Barjorjee Nowrosjee (Bombay: Bombay Samachar Press, 1902). The British Library, London.

Alternatively, the figure in the background of the *Hindi Punch* cartoon can also be read as the figure of Mother India, or Bharat Mata. Mother India was modelled after the Hindu goddess Durga. Mother India/Durga was often pictured in Indian dress holding the burning torch, or the *Amar jyoti*.⁷⁹ In Figure 4.10, the figure was wearing Indian dress and also may be interpreted as holding the *Amar jyoti*, symbolically marking her as the emblematic figure of Mother India/Durga. Her presence in the cartoon highlighted the importance of Hinduism in the context of the Congress exhibitions.

The ideas of “energy” and “zeal” of the Congress exhibitions mentioned in the “Hail Hindustan” song were repeated in the *Hindi Punch* cartoon. The cartoon, like the song, repeated the idea of the Congress as a leading organisation and also the notion of exhibitions as beneficial to India. As this exhibition took place in India, organised by a nationalist group rather than the Indian Government, many publications seemed to support the exhibition as useful for the Indian economy. The speeches by C. Sankaran Nair, the Maharajah of Mysore, and Sayajirao all point to their shared beliefs about the benefits of exhibitions: industrial progress, expansion of trade and commerce, and the influence of the values of British civilisation.

The constant drive to legitimise industrial displays was partly to establish the Congress’ authority as a political body. Through their exhibitions, the organisation aimed to ‘nation’ India by bringing together disparate peoples under the banner of India. Furthermore, the Congress selected objects for display that were considered to be particularly ‘Indian,’ and also included exhibits like heavy machinery that were considered to be important models for the country’s future industrial and economic development. Each of these displays came with their own version of Indian destiny.

⁷⁹ Patricia Uberoi, “‘Unity in diversity?’ Dilemmas of nationhood in Indian calendar art,” *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*, ed. Sumathi Ramaswamy (London: Sage, 2003) 195.

Bringing together a collection of objects considered representative of Indian art, design, and industry indicates that the Congress used the exhibitions to highlight its authority as an expert on Indian culture. With this knowledge of both Indian civilisation and Western values, the Congress placed itself as an organisation perfectly positioned to bring progress to the subcontinent—and as its potential future leader.

4.4 Education, Entertainment, and Electricity: Forms of Exhibition

Applied

This section analyses the ways in which exhibitionary forms, including education and entertainment, played out at the 1904 Bombay exhibition. Particular forms, including the prominent role of electricity, were used in order to establish Indian modernity. The Indian National Congress incorporated Western forms of entertainment, such as magic lantern shows, into local forms of entertainment like *tamasha*.

At 1904 Bombay and indeed most of the Congress exhibitions, education was promoted as a major part of the exhibition by Congress officials and publications like the *Indian Textile Journal*. Several speeches and newspapers referred to the importance of learning through display. Nair, who gave a number of speeches at the opening of the 1903 and 1904 Bombay Congress exhibitions, commented that “the Committee have widely distributed leaflets explaining the advantages accruing from the Exhibition.”⁸⁰ There were lectures on subjects such as “sanitary, scientific,

⁸⁰ *Report and Proceedings of the Nineteenth Indian National Congress, Held at Madras, 1903.*

industrial, agricultural and commercial subjects.”⁸¹ The Congress adopted the premise that exhibitions had the potential to educate their visitors, an imperative at international exhibitions since 1851 and also seen at these displays. At these exhibitions, it is possible to see that officials developed and adapted a strategy of display that centred on education rather than on commodification and spectacle.

There were also live demonstrations of the large machinery, aimed at educating and familiarising the public with industrial operations. As the *Indian Textile Journal* noted, “to the north of the central pavilions will be a similar circle of sheds allotted to agriculture, machinery, furniture, and to the practical demonstration of the several arts and industries.”⁸² The article referred to the various agricultural operations found across the over-bridge, including the water lifting application, Indian water-lifting apparatus, and the sugar and molasses factory. The publication later noted, “among the most important will be the show of water lifts at work driven by steam, animal and wind power.”⁸³ The demonstration of different stages of production alongside the products of manufacture was a key feature of exhibitions in rapidly industrialising Western nations. Disseminating practical and scientific knowledge aimed to familiarise workers with new technologies, and to create a public well-educated in the processes of production.

Education extended to agriculture as well as industry. Writers like Glyn Barlow, author of *Industrial India*, suggested that the messages of the agricultural section—the mechanics of industrialisation, and learning more efficient means of cultivating land, especially with machinery—be brought to local villages.⁸⁴ He

⁸¹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Nov. 1904: 56.

⁸² *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition,” 56.

⁸³ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial Exhibition, Bombay,” *Indian Textile Journal*, October 1904: 5.

⁸⁴ Barlow, *Industrial India*, 38.

included an example of a villager's probable reaction to the lesson on industrialisation:

‘Industrialism!’ cries the villager; ‘what more in the way of industrialism can you want? What room is there for industrial development?’

If the reader would do his villager a kindness, let him persuade his rustic friend to set out on a visit to the next industrial exhibition. A well-ordered exhibition is the finest object lesson that a villager can have; for at an exhibition—within a compass no bigger than his own village—he is given a concept of well nigh every industry in the land.⁸⁵

In this passage, Barlow suggested that knowledge was disseminated from urban to rural: from the sophisticated Indian elite to the “rustic” villager. Furthermore, the Congress exhibitions viewed as a medium through which visitors could learn about Indian agriculture and industry. The representation of agricultural displays and the relationship to modernity at the Congress exhibitions will be examined further in the next chapter.

4.4.1 Leisure and the Role of *Tamasha*

Large-scale attractions and rides were part of international exhibitions throughout the late nineteenth century and were also featured at the Congress exhibitions.⁸⁶ The entertainments at the Congress exhibitions were modelled on exhibitions held in the metropole and Annie Coombes notes that amusements had the potential to be a “massive crowd-stopper.”⁸⁷ Entertainment at 1904 Bombay included a water-chute, shooting gallery, motor car track, celestial ride, a maze, several refreshment areas, a laughing gallery, a café chantant,⁸⁸ a flower stall, and a garden (Fig. 4.7).⁸⁹ The delights of the exhibition were advertised in local newspapers, especially on special

⁸⁵ Barlow, *Industrial India*, 38.

⁸⁶ Greenhalgh, “Entertainment, Education and Politics,” 82-4.

⁸⁷ Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 85.

⁸⁸ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a café chantant, which literally translates to ‘singing café,’ is a café with live musical entertainment.

⁸⁹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition,” 80-81.

occasions such as New Year's Eve (Fig. 4.11). In an article on the *café chantant*, the *Times of India* approved of the variety of entertainments: "the concerts are managed smartly, the programmes diversified and diverting and good audiences are being attracted. On Saturday there was a crowded 'house,' the occasion being a special night."⁹⁰ Another article was less enthusiastic about the presence of entertainments but noted the relationship between leisure and the financial success of the exhibition: "exhibition managers in every part of the world would tell them that it is the amusements which make for financial success, and the modest programme now put forward needs to be largely supplemented if people are to be induced to visit the exhibition more than once."⁹¹ Various forms of leisure were on offer at the 1904 Bombay exhibition as a means of including everyone and also to integrate the values of the displays into the rhythm of popular life.

An advertisement in the *Times of India* publicised some of the allure of the exhibition for "old and young": a Punch and Judy show, a "Humorist" from the Crystal Palace, a *café chantant*, and some attractions from a Victorian travelling 'freak' show—"Ventriloquial Oddities. The Magnetic Lady. The Lady Sandow. Physiognomania, the man with 100 faces. All the FUN of the FAIR!" (Fig. 4.11). The presence of typically Victorian forms of leisure drew from Western exhibitions. The inclusion of these "human oddities" during this time period ensured the greatest appeal to a general audience.⁹² There were also "Hindoo refreshment" areas throughout the pavilion.

Unlike exhibitions in the metropole, forms of entertainment at the Congress exhibitions typically did not include the display of native bodies. 'Exotic'

⁹⁰ *Times of India*, "Bombay Exhibition. The Café Chantant," *Times of India*, 16 Jan. 1905: 6.

⁹¹ *Times of India*, "The Bombay Exhibition," 7.

⁹² Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 10.

entertainment at the 1904 exhibition was a contradiction. By including the ‘freak show’ and the display of bodies at the exhibition, the Congress appropriated and adapted the typical exhibitionary form of ethnographic display. By placing bodies on display for the consumption of their audience, the organisers and the visitors had the possibility of becoming subjects of power rather than an exhibited object.

TO DAY IS
NEW YEAR'S EVE.
 SPEND IT AT
THE EXHIBITION
 Which will keep open till
AFTER MIDNIGHT.
 SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS:
CAFE CHANTANT.
 Dr. HARLEY, the Humorist, and his
 Funny Folks, from the Crystal
 Palace.
MODERN MAGIC.
 VENTRILOQUIST. ODDITIES
 THE MAGNETIC LADY.
 THE LADY SANDOW
 PHYSIOGNOMANIA, the man
 -with 100 faces.
 ALL the FUN of the FAIR!
 Punch and Judy Show with elaborate fit up
 and Splendid Puppets.
 SHOOTING GALLERY.
 FISH POND.
 AUNT SALLY, &c, &c
 FUN FOR EVERYONE,
 OLD AND YOUNG!
TO-NIGHT
 AND EVERY NIGHT.
 AT THE BOMBAY EXHIBITION.

Figure 4.11: Advertisement for the New Year's Eve celebration at the 1904 Bombay exhibition, *Times of India*, 30 Dec. 1904: 3. Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

**THE BOMBAY INDUSTRIAL AND
AGRICULTURAL EXHIBITION.**

NOTICE.

THE EXHIBITION will be open to **LADIES**
and **PURDAH LADIES** only on **THURS-**
DAY, the 5th January, 1905, from 9 a.m. to
12 noon.
No Male Visitors will be allowed admission
except the persons in charge of Stella and
Oscar.

VITHALDAS DAMODHAR THACKERSEY,
Chairman, Exhibition Committee

CAFE CHANTANT
AT THE EXHIBITION

Under the Management of Mr. **WILL LANS-**
DOWNE.

NEW SONGS AND DANCES.

THE BOMBAY INDUSTRIAL and
AGRICULTURAL EXHIBITION. Open every day
including Sunday, from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. Admission Re. 7
Special Seats of 10 Tickets for Re. 10
The Committee have decided not to sell any more non-
transferable Coupon-Books of Re. 10 Re. 15 and Re. 20
These Coupon-Books will be sold to 8 o'clock, from now
onwards till 11 p.m.

VITHALDAS DAMODAR THACKERSEY
Chairman,
Exhibition Committee

Figure 4.12: Advertisement for the 1904 Bombay exhibition, promoting the “Ladies and Purdah Ladies Day,” the “café chantant,” and admission rates, *Times of India*, 8 Jan. 1905: 3. Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

The water-chute was a big draw, and the Bombay-based newspaper *Times of India* reported:

Every afternoon and evening the bridge leading from the general exhibition to the chute is thronged with passers to and fro and on Monday the chute had a record number of 1,000 passengers. A shooting gallery, which is situated away on the left of the main exhibition entrance, has been added to the list of amusements, and other attractions still are promised.⁹³

Tony Bennett's analysis of the pleasure beach at Blackpool has some bearing here.

Bennett suggests that large mechanical rides were "a manifestation of progress harnessed for pleasure."⁹⁴ The water-chute was a feat of modern mechanical engineering and it represented the intersection of modern progress and entertainment. Throughout the exhibitions, organisers promoted progress in all its various forms whether it was industrial, economic, or agricultural. By doing so, they associated the progress displayed at the exhibition with the Congress itself.

The leisure attractions created a sense of wonderment in the visitors.

According to the *Indian Textile Journal*, the water-chute created a "fearful joy to sensation lovers, while in the exhibition proper, refreshments, the lighter amusements of a café chantant, a maze, and a fortune-teller, help to vary the solidity of the more serious attractions."⁹⁵ The separation between education and entertainment was also made ambiguous by visitors' amazement at some of the machinery. On one occasion, "the Industrial display of the Exhibition furnished an inexhaustible attraction to a continual stream of visitors who thronged the enclosure from the opening to the closing of the gates."⁹⁶ Visitors to the Campbell Oil engine were "struck with the absence of noise in these machines; even the toothed gearing of the pump works silently in spite of the shock that occurs at the end of each pump stroke."⁹⁷ It is clear that at the 1904 Bombay exhibition, as was common in nineteenth-century international exhibitions, the industrial features of the exhibition

⁹³ *Times of India*, "The Bombay Exhibition," 7.

⁹⁴ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 231.

⁹⁵ *Indian Textile Journal*, "The Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition," 81.

⁹⁶ *Indian Textile Journal*, "The Bombay Exhibition," 135.

⁹⁷ *Indian Textile Journal*, "The Bombay Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition," 81.

were also appropriated by the visitors for entertainment. Going to the exhibition for pleasure became a mode of visiting.

Those who wanted to visit the more popular entertainments that were found across the over-bridge were compelled to go through several galleries that had an educational component. The major entertainments, like the water chute, were placed in an area across the Queen's Road, and could only be accessed by passing through the exhibition grounds (Fig. 4.7). Exhibition-goers had to pass through galleries in the pavilion that emphasised industrial and agricultural development, like machinery. Visitors were forced to view or pass by some of the "educational" objects. This layout was likely done consciously, as a correspondent for the *Indian Textile Journal* noted: "a very considerable proportion went for amusement alone, but any careful observer had only to station himself alongside of any interesting piece of industrial work to note the interest it had for many of the visitors."⁹⁸ The Congress used popular entertainments as a means to disseminate the values of the exhibition, such as industry, progress, and modernity, to a public accustomed to fairs. Key moments in international exhibitions where entertainment and education were blurred were in the ethnographic displays. At the Congress exhibitions, however, this blurring occurred largely without exoticism.

4.4.2 Tamasha

Western forms of entertainment were integrated with local forms of entertainment as the Congress brought together forms that were modern and traditional. In order to broaden its appeal and ensure the success of their exhibitions, the Reception Committee of the Congress linked their exhibitions to *tamasha*, a type of travelling

⁹⁸ *Indian Textile Journal*, "The Bombay Exhibition," 135.

performance that was well-known to many South Asians of all castes.⁹⁹ Aligning with *tamasha* was more than just ensuring the success of their exhibitions, however: associating with this type of entertainment illustrated the extent to which the Congress aligned with the people and with popular forms of life.

Tamasha developed in the Maharashtra State of Central India during the sixteenth century as a form of bawdy folk theatre for the Mughal and Maratha armies and chieftains.¹⁰⁰ Typically, *tamasha* artists were nomadic and toured cities, towns and villages, making it a highly visible and influential form of entertainment that would reach a large number of people.¹⁰¹ Some performers concentrated in urban centres, such as Bombay, Poona, and Nagpur, which were also locations of the Congress meetings.

The Congress exhibition pavilions were decorated with bright flags, bunting, and goods designed to evoke the style of a bazaar or rural fair like *tamasha*.¹⁰² The 1901 Calcutta exhibition pavilion, for example, was evocative of the vibrant *tamasha* performances:

The spacious Pavilion was divided into a number of platforms with wide approaches lined with pots of stately palms and many colored foliage plants. The pillars and the ceiling were draped with cloth of various colours and designs. Curtains were hanging all round and with flags, festoons, buntings and other decorations the whole place looked quite picturesque.¹⁰³

The Madras newspaper *The Hindu* noted the exhibition's link to *tamasha*: "there was the *tamasha* aspect connected with the Exhibition but, underlying that there was also the economic aspect. The success of the *tamasha* aspect was represented by the large

⁹⁹ John R. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1977) 98.

¹⁰⁰ Tevia Abrams, "Folk Theatre in Maharashtrian Social Development Programs," *Educational Theatre Journal* 27.3 (October 1975): 395.

¹⁰¹ Tevia Abrams, "Tamasha: People's Theatre of Maharashtra State, India," (Michigan State University, Ph.D. diss., 1974) 18.

¹⁰² McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress*, 98.

¹⁰³ *Detailed Report of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Indian National Congress, held at Calcutta, on the 26th, 27th, & 28th December, 1901.*

crowds which came in to witness the Exhibition.”¹⁰⁴ *Tamasha* influenced the staging of the Congress displays and a part of the exhibitions’ success with the public.

A typical *tamasha* production included traditional song-and-dance forms.¹⁰⁵ The Congress capitalised on these traditions. For instance, music was a constant fixture in the opening ceremonies, including “Nohobat parties stationed in a platform erected over the gates were discoursing sweet music at intervals.”¹⁰⁶ At 1904 Bombay, singing and comedy were part of the evening entertainment. One weekend night, the *Times of India* breathlessly reported the evening’s activities: “In the course of the entertainment hat-trimming and comic singing competitions were included and these caused endless amusement.”¹⁰⁷ Incorporating comedy and music, which were easily recognisable and popular aspects of *tamasha* productions, was integral to the exhibition’s success with the public.

As the British control of India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries increased, the lessons of *tamasha* theatre turned to those of social and political reform, often through the use of propaganda.¹⁰⁸ For instance, some *tamasha* groups condemned the caste system in village communities.¹⁰⁹ The Congress exhibitions followed along similar lines. Through the constant emphasis on creating a “national” identity that subsumed all other local and religious identities, the Congress aimed to bring change at the village level. The 1903 Madras meeting and exhibition, for instance, was proclaimed as a “common platform for all classes and creeds” and the desire to secure the “active co-operation” of all classes in the name of Indian

¹⁰⁴ *The Hindu*, “The Industrial Exhibition,” *The Hindu*, 18 Jan. 1904: 4.

¹⁰⁵ Abrams, “Tamasha,” 240.

¹⁰⁶ *Detailed Report of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Indian National Congress, held at Calcutta, on the 26th, 27th, & 28th December, 1901.*

¹⁰⁷ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” 6.

¹⁰⁸ Abrams, “Folk Theatre in Maharashtrian Social Development Programs,” 396.

¹⁰⁹ Abrams, “Tamasha,” 156.

industrial progress.¹¹⁰ The Congress convenors also proclaimed, “The Exhibition had no doubt attracted all classes of persons from far and near.”¹¹¹ Exhibitions were aimed often specifically at the lower classes, which is made clear by Glyn Barlow’s *Industrial India*, which encouraged those in rural communities to disseminate industrial progress and designs for the improvement of local communities.

By aligning with *tamasha* traditions, the Congress ensured that their displays were both popular and successful by using forms that would be familiar to their visitors. The Congress not only popularised the displays with the masses but also helped confirm the exhibitions’ legitimacy by linking them to *tamasha*’s history of social and political reform. By incorporating a folk tradition, the Congress matched progress and modernity with the formation of local ‘authentic’ cultural identity.

4.4.3 Electricity

The role of electricity at exhibitions was considered to be progressive and modern and was also part of the pleasurable aspect of the exhibition. At 1904 Bombay, the widespread use of electricity was meant to signify the Congress as a modern organisation and also to demonstrate their dedication to ideas of technological progress. Electricity was supplied throughout the pavilion by the English Electric Company, supplemented by Kitson and Washington Lamps.¹¹² There was an “Electric Court” noted on the plan of the exhibition, although there is not much description of its contents (Fig.4.7). Electricity was also part of the Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute’s section, which the *Times of India* describes as “fairly large.”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ *Report and Proceedings of the Nineteenth Indian National Congress, Held at Madras, 1903.*

¹¹¹ *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress, Held in Ahmedabad, 1902.*

¹¹² *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Bombay,” 56.

¹¹³ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: A Preliminary View,” 7.

The *Times of India* also noted that their “specimen electrical work will be well in front” of their other displays, which included weaving and engineering.¹¹⁴

The organisers also conspicuously used electricity to illuminate the grounds, especially to extend the exhibition’s opening hours. A gateway led to an open area for the entertainments, including a “flashing fountain” to the north, lit by electric lighting, and a bandstand in the south.¹¹⁵ The *Indian Textile Journal* described the fountain with its “never-failing entertainment at night with its showers of many-coloured liquid jewels.”¹¹⁶ The central tower, which stood over 100 feet high, was also “illuminated with electric incandescent lamps in various colours” in the evening; visitors marvelled at the tower’s “pleasing sight” when lit up by the “multicoloured stars of electric light that show it up so well after dark.”¹¹⁷ The tower’s surrounding buildings were also illuminated by electric lighting.

The 1900 Paris Exposition demonstrated the potential of electricity to light up entire cities at night.¹¹⁸ This new technology was considered the height of modernity; electricity was advertised as “scientific, progressive, modern and elegant.”¹¹⁹ Its presence in Bombay, a mere four years after Paris stunned the world with its use of electricity, was significant. It demonstrated that Bombay was at the forefront of science. The Indian National Congress wanted to illustrate its power to access this new technology. Furthermore, science was magical and inspired feelings of wonder.¹²⁰ There was great wonderment at the use of electricity at the exhibition by the visitors. The lighting was celebrated by the *Indian Textile Journal* as “excellent and it served the double purpose of illuminating the show ground and

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” 6.

¹¹⁶ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Bombay,” 81.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Mandell, *Paris 1900*, 68.

¹¹⁹ Roberts, “Electrification,” 102.

¹²⁰ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 34.

displaying a great variety of electric and other lamps in which our citizens are at a present time a good deal interested.”¹²¹

The Congress, with the ability to harness an energy source, subverted colonial power in a particular form. Electricity was extraordinarily modern, in the sense that with it, people were able to work an industrial day rather than a seasonal one. In this way, Congress officials used electricity to display their modernity. It is important to note that this use of technology was not in service of the Raj. Modern technology was used by the Congress on their own terms, rather than one prescribed by a colonial power, as they began to define themselves as separate from the Raj.

This section traced the forms of entertainment and electricity through the 1904 Bombay exhibition. Congress officials appropriated these forms of exhibition, using the colonial language of industrial progress that was available to them, and adapted the forms for their own agendas. These included the dissemination of industrial and agricultural education to Indian villages; the incorporation of their exhibitions into the everyday rhythms of popular life, while also connecting their forms of education and entertainment with progress; and finally, the positioning of the Congress as an organisation capable of bringing modernity to India through its widespread use of electricity.

4.5 Bombay “Healtheries”: The Making of an Urban City

The Bombay exhibition saw the introduction of a new pavilion: the Health or ‘Healtheries’ display. This section takes as a case study the “Healtheries” exhibit, which was contributed by an Anglo-Indian organisation, the Bombay Sanitary Association (BSA). The role of public health, sanitation, and science were key issues

¹²¹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Bombay Exhibition,” 134.

in the development of Indian nationalism and were all disciplines displayed in the Healtheries section. The introduction of this exhibit offered an opportunity for the Congress to insert itself into the highly contested areas of medicine, public health, housing, and sanitation. The most important expression of modern India, I suggest, was in the Healtheries displays. Another important point brought forward in the Healtheries display was a contest, along the scientific terrain, between Western and Eastern forms of knowledge, made exemplary by British sanitation systems.¹²²

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Indian government placed a high importance on the importance of sanitary policing and regulation of the Indian population, reflecting the policies of influential British public health reformer Edwin Chadwick.¹²³ The BSA, which was founded in 1904, was part of a wider movement within the Indian government to promote sanitary education. The BSA retained “health visitors,” or advisors to Bombay residents, who provided updates to the organisation’s secretary about the city’s “unsanitary conditions.”¹²⁴ While the “Healtheries” exhibit was set up by an Anglo-Indian organisation, the expertise of the BSA was solicited by the Indian National Congress. While 1904 Bombay was not the first time that medical reform appeared in the Indian National Congress’s agenda, it was the first time a large-scale demonstration dedicated solely to sanitation and public health was put on display in an Indian exhibition.¹²⁵

¹²² I use the term Western, rather than British, here in line with David Arnold’s use of the term in his analysis of Western science in India. David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Diseases in Nineteenth-Century India* (London: University of California Press, 1993) 9.

¹²³ Pratik Chakrabarti, “‘Signs of the Times’: Medicine and Nationhood in British India,” *Osiris* 24 (2009): 189. Chadwick advocated for governmental health reform in order to ensure a healthy and efficient workforce that would allow for political and moral stability. Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830* (New York: Routledge, 2000) 28.

¹²⁴ Mark Harrison, *Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian Preventive Medicine 1859-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 96.

¹²⁵ The 1893 Lahore and 1894 Madras sessions, for instance, passed resolutions separating civil and military medical services. Mridula Ramanna, *Western Medicine and Public Health in Colonial Bombay, 1845-1895* (London: Sangam, 2002) 221.

The Health section at 1904 Bombay was extensive. In comparison with the two-part taxonomic structure that categorised the rest of the objects, the classification system of the health section was highly specialised (Fig. 4.13). The displays themselves covered a variety of topics, from personal hygiene to the spread of infectious diseases to the best type of architecture designed to maximise sanitary living conditions. The section included a variety of items from both Anglo-Indian and Indian sources. The Diamond Jubilee Soap Co. and the Holy Soap Manufacturing Co. contributed various items; the City Improvement Trust submitted model dwellings and plans of public health schemes; a Research Laboratory headed by Major Bannerman and Captain Liston contributed a “Public Health Laboratory”; Messrs. R. N. Rana and Co. submitted antiseptics, soap, and disinfecting fluid; Dr. Popat Prabhuram submitted “anatomical models”; and the Editor of “Indian Public Health” set up a book stall. (Fig. 4.8 and 4.9)

Like some of the other sections, Healtheries employed various mediums through which to spread its message, such as practical displays of new machinery, the introduction of household items, and lectures on various topics. The sanitation exhibition was advertised in the *Indian Textile Journal*: “during the exhibition lectures will be given on appliances and apparatus and the application of science to hygiene, including tropical sanitation and hygiene by the aid of illustrations, lime-light, microscopic and lantern demonstrations.”¹²⁶ By including both written

¹²⁶ *Indian Textile Journal*, no title, *Indian Textile Journal*, Oct. 1904: 32.

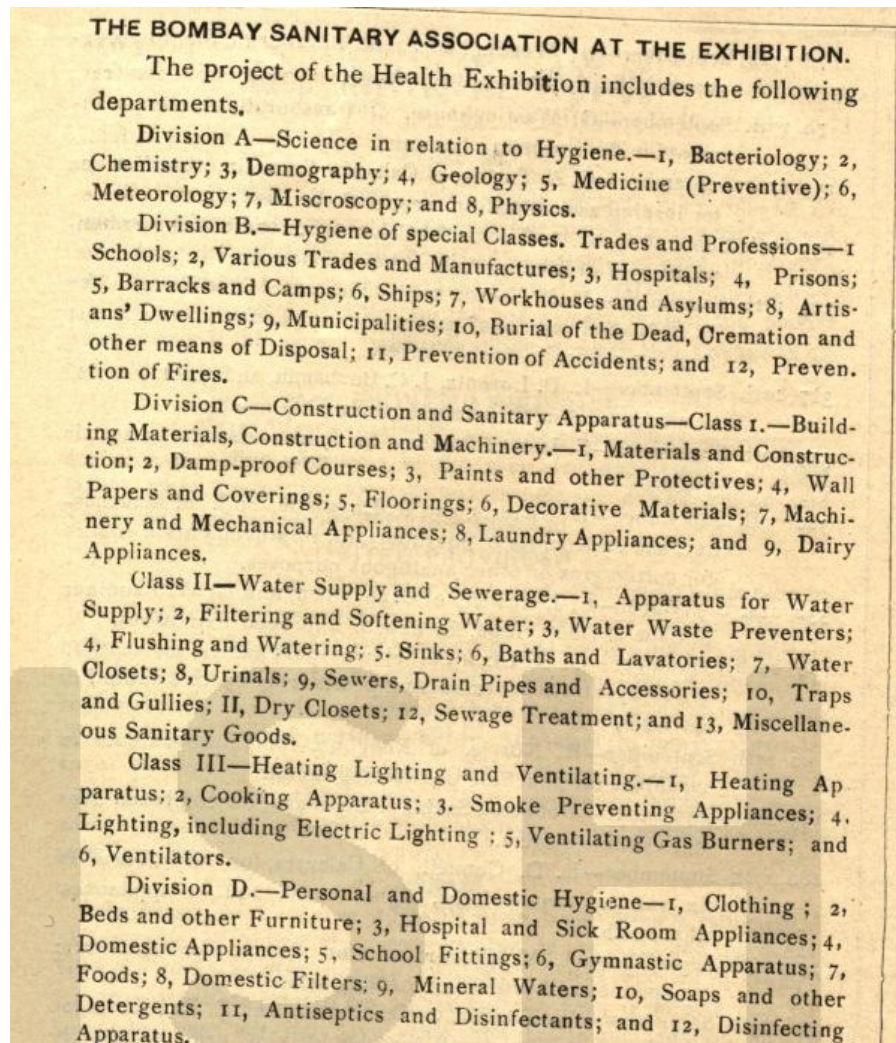


Figure 4.13: "The Bombay Sanitary Association at the Exhibition," *Indian Textile Journal*, Nov. 1904: 57. The British Library, London.

information and practical demonstrations, organisers targeted a wide audience in its educational message on sanitation. Education here was also linked to the social regulation of the population. By addressing such a wide variety of topics, one of the goals could have been to inculcate a sense of personal and communal responsibility for sanitation and the prevention of disease.

One of the means employed to disseminate the messages of the Health Exhibition were magic lantern shows. Magic lantern shows had a long history of providing pictorial education and entertainment since their development in Europe

during the mid-sixteenth century.¹²⁷ During the nineteenth century, the lantern came to be associated with rationalisation and as a means to impart the lessons of science, or “natural magic.”¹²⁸ At the Congress exhibition, the magic lantern was used in a similar fashion as a means to educate the public on science, and in particular, its relationship to hygiene. The *Indian Textile Journal* extolled the benefits of the Healtheries’ “lantern demonstrations.”¹²⁹ In doing so, the displays at the Bombay exhibition were given a historical pedigree.

The magic lantern shows were another example of the Congress blurring the lines between entertainment and education. Furthermore, the magic lanterns offered a new way of ‘seeing’ for the visitors. In a sense, this mirrored the Bombay exhibition itself: by bringing the exhibition to the subcontinent and encouraging villagers to learn by display, the Congress officials attempted to create a new way of seeing for their visitors.

The hosting of the Health section and the Congress’ claim for sanitary knowledge was actually a claim for the ability to run an urban space and to administer to an urban population. During the era of British rule, Anglo-Indian intervention in public health became more than simply colonial medicine. David Arnold argues that standards of public health and medicine were often attempts to control the colonised body.¹³⁰ The Healtheries exhibit offered a redefinition of colonial public health in the subcontinent as the Congress declared their own intentions of speaking for the Indian nation to determine what was in the ‘best interests’ of the people.

¹²⁷ Mervyn Heard, “The Magic Lantern’s Wild Years,” *Cinema: The Beginnings and the Future* (London: University of Westminster Press, 1996) 25.

¹²⁸ Heard, “The Magic Lantern’s Wild Years,” 24.

¹²⁹ *Indian Textile Journal*, 32.

¹³⁰ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 291.

For the urban elites associated with the Indian National Congress, Western medicine became linked to their drive to define a modern image. New developments in science and technology were important elements in the modern landscape.¹³¹ Organisers incorporated new scientific developments in the fields of sanitation, such as displays on bacteriology and antiseptics and disinfectants (Fig. 4.13), as a means of demonstrating their modernity.

Further underpinning the prominent role of sanitation at the exhibition was the extent to which cleanliness was associated with being modern, while dirt and disease were associated with the primitive.¹³² In India, a common concern in the latter half of the nineteenth century was the widespread prevalence of “filthy cities, open drains, decomposing animal carcasses, rotting vegetable matter, irrational beliefs, and unscientific therapeutics.”¹³³ Many urban elites turned to Britain and to the Anglo-Indian “experts” on Western hygiene, where debates raged about the making of the urban landscape. Medical pathology initiated urban reforms to transform the city. The reformers’ vision of London was “ordered, rational, efficient, healthy, and safe, in other words, ‘modern.’”¹³⁴ Dirt was perceived as the ultimate sin, the “grand metaphor for all forms of urban disorder.”¹³⁵

The inclusion of the Healtheries exhibit, I suggest, was part of a self-conscious effort by the Indian National Congress to create the modern urban city based on the principles of Western sanitation and public health. Here, the forms of knowledge and administrative systems of sanitation and public health were Western.

¹³¹ Berman, *All that Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 16.

¹³² Elizabeth Pisani, “Leviticus Be Damned: Dirt in the Community,” *Dirt: The Filthy Reality of Everyday Life*, eds. Virginia Smith et al (London: Profile, 2011) 95.

¹³³ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 130.

¹³⁴ James Winter, *London’s Teeming Streets, 1830-1914* (London: Routledge, 1993) xi.

¹³⁵ Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, 29-31.

The Health section afforded the Congress an opportunity to bring these ideas to India.

Many cities were ravaged by epidemic diseases, especially in Bombay, where the bubonic plague epidemic of the 1890s created a massive crisis in public health.

On the opening day of the 1904 Bombay exhibition, one official declared:

I am very glad to think that attention has been paid to the importance of securing exhibits in connection with a health department, as we know how terribly this Presidency has been afflicted by plague and other diseases. There is nothing I can imagine that could be more fruitful of benefit to the public at large than that they should have an opportunity of seeing by what devices, by what practice of care, they may be able to guard themselves against and diminish the ravages of those illnesses and diseases.¹³⁶

It is clear from the speech that the official hoped that visitors would be educated by display and would take on the principles of public health in order to control dirt and disease. The Congress tried to project a vision from the exhibition into future urban spaces. The bubonic plague epidemic had some bearing on the Health displays.

Bombay had been hardest hit by the outbreaks of plague during the first years of the twentieth century; the year before the 1904 exhibition saw the highest rates of plague mortality.¹³⁷ In eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain, “cleansing” the city was not a straightforward process, but involved a “bewildering range of environmental solutions.”¹³⁸ As a result, the measures adopted to address the high incidence of disease manifested itself in the relationship between concerns with the “water supply, sewage disposal and preferred domestic sanitary technology.”¹³⁹ These

¹³⁶ *Proceedings of Twentieth Indian National Congress, Bombay, 1904* (Bombay: Crown Printing Works, 1905).

¹³⁷ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 202. Mid-nineteenth century theories centered around “miasma,” which refers to “an unpleasant or unhealthy smell or vapour,” or “an oppressive or unpleasant atmosphere which surrounds or emanates from something.” The miasmatic theory of disease held that the spread of epidemic diseases, such as cholera, resulted from miasma. This theory was prevalent before the acceptance of the microorganism theory of disease. See Anthony S. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

¹³⁸ Bill Luckin, “Pollution in the City,” *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, Vol. III, ed. Martin Daunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 213.

¹³⁹ Luckin, “Pollution in the City,” 214.

factors differed depending on the specific conditions of the region, but all three were common features in the development of the urban city.

In assessing the sanitation display at the Bombay Healtheries, it is clear that these three measures—water, sewage removal, and domestic sanitary technology—were influential. Displays in Bombay were devoted to “water supplies and filtration,” which related directly to the concern with water supplies in Britain; “drainage and the modern system of sewage disposal,” as well as “refuse disposal,” an issue that directly corresponded with one of the most abhorrent aspects of the urban landscape to Victorian social elites; and finally lectures on “appliances and apparatus and the application of science to hygiene,” which were tied to the development of new sanitation technologies (Fig. 4.13).¹⁴⁰

Some of the measures taken by officials to halt the spread of plague caused an upsurge of public resistance to Western actions, particularly those associated with sanitation.¹⁴¹ At the 1904 exhibition, one of the goals of the Health section was to educate the public on measures taken to prevent further outbreaks of plague and other diseases. The *Times of India* supported the educational messages of the Health section and suggested that “with the periodical explanations that are to be given this exhibit may be relied upon to remove many misapprehensions regarding inoculation.”¹⁴² The displays were designed specifically so that the visitor could absorb the information and bring it home, spreading these measures across their city. It is evident that the Congress used this special section in order to project forms of urban planning into the future as they anticipated visitors learning from the displays and bringing the messages of the exhibition home.

¹⁴⁰ *Indian Textile Journal*, 32.

¹⁴¹ Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 211.

¹⁴² *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” 6.

Other developments in public health relating to the outbreak of plague in Bombay were also seen at the 1904 Bombay exhibition. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the outbreak resulted in the testing of new ideas on preventing epidemics based on the principles of the bacterial theory of disease.¹⁴³ This is seen in Figure 4.13, where in the section labelled “Science in relation to Hygiene,” the first category is “Bacteriology.” Rapid adoption of new theories of medicine indicates that nationalist leaders were up-to-date in terms of medical practice; these forms of display were comparable to those of the Great Exhibitions. As nationalist leaders were English-speaking and often well-informed of new advancements in Britain, it made sense that the latest medical treatments were also displayed at the Congress exhibitions. The presence of the latest technologies also suggests that India was progressing at the same time with the West.

At the beginning of the plague outbreak, a Plague Research Committee, which later developed into the Indian Plague Commission, was formed in Bombay to further investigate the clinical aspects of plague, its transmission, and to test the plague in different conditions.¹⁴⁴ An important outcome of this Commission was the invention of a preventative inoculation, developed by Waldemar Haffkine. The Plague Committee contributed an “elaborate exhibit” within the Healtheries display, including a presentation of Haffkine’s vaccine. The *Times of India* noted, “a complete and practical demonstration is given of the method of preparing Haffkine’s Prophylactic Vaccine.”¹⁴⁵ The newspaper also noted that the Plague Committee’s contributions were displayed so prominently that “attention is at once arrested” as the visitors entered the section.¹⁴⁶ This category fell under the classification of

¹⁴³ Harrison, *Public Health in British India*, 143.

¹⁴⁴ Harrison, *Public Health in British India*, 152.

¹⁴⁵ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” 6.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

“Medicine (Preventive).” Public health education was a goal of the Health section and it is clear that the Congress supported governmental health initiatives to spread the latest medical technologies.

Outbreaks of the plague during this time provided the first chance to apply scientific research principles to the prevention of disease. The epidemic also offered an opportunity for scientific rhetoric to be shown as a practical display in the Bombay Healtheries exhibit. The use and presentation of Bacteriology at the Bombay exhibition was part of an attempt to educate the public and to further dispel rumours about preventative inoculation. The *Times of India* observed: “so clearly is the whole process illustrated that every person of average intelligence can understand it, and can understand, too, how by check and counter check, and tests at every stage, the possibility of contamination is guarded against.”¹⁴⁷ The emphasis of this section was on educating the masses in order to create a population that accepted the perceived benefits of Western public health and, in essence, modernity. It is clear that the Congress were on the cutting edge of medical technologies and scientific developments. By displaying these new scientific measures, the Congress aimed to suggest that they were modern and up to date with new technologies.

As only about 11 percent of those in the subcontinent resided in the urban sector,¹⁴⁸ it was important that the messages of public health from the exhibition spread across India, both to other cities and to those living in rural areas. The Congress exhibitions themselves strove to use the displays to create a particular vision of India, and the Bombay Healtheries exhibit, in particular, endeavoured to create a modern India. By including such a wide variety of different mediums in order to educate the public, organisers hoped that no one would leave the exhibition

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ P.B. Desai, *Size and Sex Composition of Population in India, 1901-1961* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1969) 21.

without a clear understanding of the importance of public health, vaccinations, and sanitation.

Part of the sanitation debate included housing. Congress elites were particularly concerned with the predominance of chawls, or “multiroom tenement buildings” that were particular to India, common in Bombay, and involved an intricate network of streets.¹⁴⁹ The *Times of India* focused on an exhibit of “the worst type of Bombay chawl, with many of its rooms having no connection whatsoever with the outer air.”¹⁵⁰ Sanitation in these chawls was a concern for urban elites as they believed their lack of ventilation allowed for the spread of plague and other diseases. Displayed next to this ‘dangerous’ chawl in the exhibit was a model of “new model buildings recently erected at Agripada [an area in South Bombay], with its well-lighted, well-ventilated and substantially constructed rooms.”¹⁵¹ There was also a section on the techniques of ventilation for buildings and factories.¹⁵² In the Health section, wide open spaces that allowed for easy air circulation, natural light, and were lit by electric lighting in the evenings were clearly demarcated as the epitome of modern living.

The principles of Western hygiene, sanitation, and the cleanliness of the city, as a means of creating a “safe” environment were key principles of modernity.¹⁵³ As organisers pushed to shape the metropolitan city and its peoples as modern, they emphasised educating the public and encouraging visitors to assimilate the information. By doing so, the message of sanitation was spread to their visitors. The

¹⁴⁹ Preeti Chopra, “Recovering the Role of Local Inhabitants in the Construction of Colonial Bombay, 1854-1918,” *Buildings and Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 14 (Fall 2007): 116.

¹⁵⁰ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” 6.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Indian Textile Journal*, 32.

¹⁵³ Richard Dennis, “Modern London,” *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 102.

Congress became increasingly involved in the dissemination of information regarding public health. This situation differed from previous decades, when these concerns largely fell under the jurisdiction of the Indian Government. Organisers wished to bring about changes to their society through their displays and to remake their society as they saw fit. The exhibitions offered a very public opportunity for them to present their views of the world, and how they envisioned India's future. Pratik Chakrabarti notes that "the identity of Indian nationhood and its choices of scientific models and infrastructure were intrinsically linked."¹⁵⁴ The Congress circulated Western scientific knowledge, filtered through their vision of India's future as a modern, urbanised country, to their visitors. The exhibition acted as a public declaration to the rest of the world that they were modern, they were capable of change, and the Congress elites were the agents of this change.

Also at these Congress exhibitions was a distinction between Western and Eastern forms of knowledge, particularly in the area of Medicine, between traditional Hindu Ayurvedic treatments and Western principles of sanitation. While Ayurvedic medicine was not a part of the 1904 Bombay exhibition, the 1903 Madras Congress exhibition featured a large section entitled "Pandit D. Gopala Charlu's Ayurvedic Remedies." This section, which was displayed prominently as the visitor walked into the exhibition pavilion, included over three hundred medicines displayed that were "classified into Bhasmams and Sinhooram, acids, assvams, anstams, lenyams syrups, essences, extracts, oils, ghees, poisons, pills, circornams, salts, etc., each class presenting a number of specifics intended for treatment of different complaints and maladies."¹⁵⁵ These types of treatments often targeted individual illnesses, such as gout, malaria, and dyspepsia that were not related to public health policy. Some

¹⁵⁴ Chakrabarti, "Signs of the Times," 205.

¹⁵⁵ *The Hindu*, "The Madras Industrial and Arts Exhibition (Ayurvedic Specimens)," *The Hindu*, 13 Jan. 1904: 3.

remedies targeted more widespread and incurable diseases, including “consumption, diabetes, asthma, paralysis, leprosy, hernia.”¹⁵⁶ The display of Ayurvedic medicine at the Madras exhibition was still highly scientific and presented in a professional manner with rows of classified and labelled “glass-stoppered bottles.”¹⁵⁷ The incorporation of indigenous medicines occupied a different niche than those displayed at the 1904 Healtheries. By including a highly organised and well-presented section on Ayurvedic medicines in 1903 Madras, exhibition organisers refashioned traditional Hindu remedies into modern ones, fitting in with the highly modernised Congress exhibitions. These traditional remedies were by no means forgotten in the wake of Western medicine, and their display at the 1903 Madras exhibition brought them into the modern fold. Ayurvedic medicine offered another option for “educated Indians.”¹⁵⁸

This section also served an educational purpose as the medicines were intended to “attract...the attention of all educated Indians who visit the Exhibition.”¹⁵⁹ Indeed, *The Hindu* argued that the Ayurvedic medicines were superior in “quality to English preparations.”¹⁶⁰ It is clear that traditional medicines had a place in this new India. According to the display, Ayurvedic medicines were ever-changing and adapting to new developments and could match any advancements made by English medical practice.

Hindu medicine did offer an alternative to Western medicine, especially with regards to solutions for the plague outbreak. With the outbreak of the plague came widespread reluctance in the subcontinent to accept the principles of Western science and hygiene, which helped shaped the discourse of the Healtheries section. This

¹⁵⁶ *The Hindu*, “The Madras Industrial and Arts Exhibition (Ayurvedic Specimens),” 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

anxiety was also directly addressed at the 1903 Madras exhibition. On hand in the Ayurvedic medicines section were “several gentlemen” offering their testimonies of the benefits of these medicines in curing incidences of plague.¹⁶¹ A South Asian medical professional writing about his experience of the “Ayurvedic Specimens” proclaimed publicly in an local newspaper that he cured thirty-seven out of forty people using Gopala’s “bottles of Panakem and Ointment,” and asserted that Gopala had “laid humanity under a deep debt of gratitude” for all of those that wanted to “escape death from plague.”¹⁶² This declaration took place during the time when government officials enacted extreme measures to combat plague to an often ambivalent populace who often rejected many of these methods.¹⁶³

There were also political implications to displaying both Western and Eastern medicine: through their displays, the Congress was beginning to provide a multitude of alternatives for the population, rather than the colonial medicine imposed by the Indian government. Forms of knowledge fought for attention and created a highly fraught relationship within the space of the exhibition. Partha Chatterjee’s writings on the development of nationalist thought in India may shed some light on the complex processes that took place in the “Healtheries” displays of the Congress exhibitions. Chatterjee suggests that Indian nationalists believed that “true modernity” would emerge from the combination of adopting the superiority of Western “science, technology, and love of progress” with the “spiritual greatness of the East.”¹⁶⁴ At their exhibitions, Congress elites appropriated many of the modern developments in sanitation and public health but also provided a space for traditional Hindu medicine. Through the display of Western and Eastern medicine, the

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Harrison, *Public Health in British India*, 146-9.

¹⁶⁴ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 50-1.

Congress may have contributed to the development of this form of nationalist thought. By including a case study on this part of the exhibition, I have aimed to demonstrate the ways in which the Congress used the areas of public health and sanitation to envision their idea of a modern India, and also to unpack how the Congress positioned itself as an organisation with the legitimacy to realise their modern vision.

4.6 Conclusion

An examination of the Indian National Congress exhibitions reveals how the Congress appropriated and re-articulated Western forms of exhibition while integrating their displays with local traditions. This adaptation not only legitimised the Congress as a representative body, but also helped assimilate the values of the exhibitions, such as modernity, progress, and nationhood, into the everyday lives of their visitors. Congress officials who organised and managed the exhibitions were in the same class as those who were at the forefront of the nationalist movement. Even while the Congress appropriated Western forms, such as the image of a Western urban environment, these elites articulated the legitimacy of their rule. The Congress appropriated Western forms, this chapter suggests, to strengthen their political mandate. The complex and varied meanings of the displays contributed to the discourse of Indian nationalism; the exhibition, furthermore, provided an important forum in which urban elites could engage in debates that shaped nationalist ideas. The multiplicity of voices on Indian nationalism will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

The Swadeshi Movement and Industrial Development at Indian National Congress Exhibitions, 1901-5

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses more broadly on the role of industrial development and its relationship to Indian nationalism at the Indian National Congress exhibitions in the period between the 1901 Calcutta and the 1905 Benares sessions. Many of the displays emphasised Indian industries, particularly textiles from large mills like the Central India Spinning, Weaving, and Manufacturing Company; various handicrafts such as metalwork, woodwork and cabinet work; and local manufactures like food products, medicines, and tobacco products. These objects were often juxtaposed with larger machinery such as cotton gins and smaller mechanical equipment including churkas and handlooms. This chapter takes as its main focus two categories frequently discussed by Congress officials and the nationalist press: swadeshi and industrial development. Swadeshi, which loosely translates to “of one’s country,” emphasised economic self-sufficiency, including the support and promotion of locally made goods over foreign imports. This chapter broadens the understanding of this formative period of moderate nationalism by linking the aims and purposes of the Congress exhibitions to the development of swadeshi and industrialisation. These displays were viewed from a multitude of perspectives, and different visions of India’s economic and political future were articulated within the space of the exhibition.

Most scholarship on swadeshi has focused on the figure of Gandhi and the rise of the swadeshi movement in the 1910s and 1920s.¹ Sumit Sarkar's *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* examines the political, economic, and social conditions during the early swadeshi movement. Sarkar's discussion provides the basis for my analysis. This chapter expands on Sarkar's analysis by suggesting that the Congress exhibitions played an important role in promoting debates about India's industrial development and swadeshi.

There has been little written about the importance of the Indian National Congress exhibitions in the articulation of Indian nationalism and industrialisation. Hoffenberg suggests that there were two main visions for Indian nationalism: "one embraced large-scale industrial projects to overcome a sense of colonial weakness, providing a Eurocentric shape for the imagined Indian nation. The competing image offered accessible, small-scale, and traditionalist forms of technology and production."² While there were elements of small-scale industry at the Congress exhibition, they led to debates particularly focused on the roles of large-scale industry in India's economic future.

Arindam Dutta offers one of the few analyses of the Congress exhibitions. He notes that the 1901 Calcutta exhibition marked a change in nationalist criticisms of the Indian colonial economy, from a focus on "lamenting the loss of tradition to one of failed parity within the modern," namely the lack of large-scale industrial development in the subcontinent.³ Much of the commentary stemming from the

¹ For information on Gandhi's use of swadeshi and *swaraj*, see M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Lisa Trivedi, "Visually Mapping the "Nation": Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920-1930," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62.1, (Feb 2003): 11-41; Raghavan Narasimhan Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); and Susan Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi: The Fabric of Indian Nationalism," *Cloth in Human Experience*, eds. Annette Weiner and Jane Schneider (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 1989).

² Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 192-3.

³ Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*, 236.

Congress reflected the debate about modern industrialisation. This chapter examines the ways in which the arguments of Sarkar, Hoffenberg, and Dutta play out in the context of the Congress exhibitions, taking up Dutta's point that the discourse of industrialisation around these displays focused on large-scale industry.

Information on these exhibitions is mainly drawn from the many 'voices' of the exhibitions, including the "old moderates"⁴ who believed in constitutional and administrative reform, led by liberal Congress elites Gopal Krishna Gokhale, C. Sankaran Nair, and Pherozeshah Mehta; the politically moderate nationalist press represented by newspapers including *The Hindu*; the *Indian Textile Journal*, which emphasised a process of *atmashakti*, or "self-strengthening";⁵ the views of conservative newspaper *Times of India*; and finally, more radical anti-colonial perspectives from economic nationalist Romesh Chunder Dutt and vernacular newspapers like the *Charu Mihir*.

This chapter is broadly divided into three sections. The first considers the role of swadeshi at the Congress exhibitions—including the display of locally made goods and advertisements for swadeshi businesses—and the development of moderate nationalism. The following section focuses on the multiplicity of perspectives that developed from debates on the relationship between the exhibitions and industrial development, including the impact of poverty and famine. The final section analyses the role of the "Ladies' Section" at the 1904 Bombay exhibition and links to the swadeshi movement.

⁴ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 98.

⁵ *Ibid.*

5.2 “The Swadeshi will be strongly represented at this year’s Exhibition”: The Relationship between Congress Exhibitions and Swadeshi

Swadeshi was a protest movement largely concentrated in Bengal until the 1905 partition of West Bengal by Lord Curzon. Ideas of swadeshi dated back to 1849 in Poona, where Gopalrao Deshmukh promoted the purchase of indigenous goods over imported ones.⁶ Swadeshi ideals later became a central tenet in Gandhi’s political strategy of *swaraj*, or self-rule. According to Sarkar, the movement’s fundamental belief was that Indian resources should be developed by Indians themselves.⁷ Advocates of the swadeshi movement urged locals to support and purchase indigenous goods and pushed those with funds to start industries that promoted Indians goods for the local market. Supporters felt it was the patriotic duty of men with capital to pioneer such industries even though profits initially might be minimal.⁸ Besides the economic arguments, there was also a push for boycott of British goods, industrial revival, national education, and the establishment of trade unions. After the 1905 partition, there was a split in the nationalist movement, as many nationalist leaders shifted from a desire for reform of the British government to the use of more ‘extreme’ measures such as boycott and the use of violence.⁹ This split led to a widespread boycott of the Congress. From 1907, the tenor of the Congress moved from a gradualist approach based on reform to advocating a complete split from Britain. The height of the swadeshi took place during 1905 with

⁶ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 91.

⁷ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 47.

⁸ These goods were often of inferior quality and were more expensive than imported goods, and these industries often struggled with lack of profit. Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 92.

⁹ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 3.

the Bengali boycott of foreign goods. This chapter focuses on the period immediately before the split in the nationalist movement.

An important element of swadeshi was the “fostering and revival of traditional indigenous crafts,” and the Congress exhibitions, through their display of local crafts and industries, played a central role in publicising and supporting the movement.¹⁰ Exhibits at the 1902 Ahmedabad Congress exhibition, for example, included goods from Indian artisans and businesses, including “gold and silver work, jewellery, house decoration, copper and brass work, wood carving, cabinet work, wrought iron work, pottery, embroidery, textiles, and carpets.”¹¹ At the 1904 Bombay exhibition, the *Indian Textile Journal* noted various types of textiles and accessories, such as “sewing threads, bleached shirting and dories, twill,” and “high counts of yarns, fine dhotis and mulls.”¹² One court held Indian textiles, including carpets and tapestry work, silk and lace cloths, silken carpets, kincobs from Surat and Ahmedabad and heavily gold embroidered cloths from Gujarati weavers.¹³ Weaving and hand-loom products were praised for their advancements in quality. The textile section also featured raw materials used in the making of these cloths, as well as the processes by which they were made.¹⁴ The Swadeshi Mills of Coorla exhibited hosiery goods and “examples of the various processes through which the raw cotton has to pass before being spun into yarn and woven into cloth.”¹⁵ Congress

¹⁰ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 111. British critics of design, such as Ruskin and Morris, discussed Indian craft at length. While some South Asians made reference to specific crafts and trades, they were discussed in the general context of all the ‘ancient crafts,’ including weaving. South Asians examined in this thesis were generally not as concerned with the cult of the craftsman or the village India ideal as a salvation from ‘industrial slavery.’

¹¹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “Correspondence. To the Editor of the Indian Textile Journal,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Sept. 1902: 8.

¹² *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Bombay,” 103.

¹³ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “kincobs” are a “rich Indian stuff, embroidered with gold or silver.”

¹⁴ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” 6.

¹⁵ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Bombay,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Oct. 1904: 103.

organisers exhibited local goods that were considered to be representative of ‘Indian’ craft. To these officials, the handicrafts on display represented the potential of Indian industries and were ultimately tied to the promotion of swadeshi.

The Congress exhibitions took place within a larger context of exhibiting swadeshi products. The Indian Industrial Association began holding displays of swadeshi goods from 1893. During the first decade of the twentieth century, there were a myriad of local exhibitions held by a variety of indigenous groups in order to promote swadeshi, such as the “Deshi Dhutie Hat” at Uttarpara and a mobile exhibition of “everyday necessities of indigenous origin” in Scramapore in 1905.¹⁶ Sarkar notes that a major goal of these local exhibitions was the “starting of new industries based on modern techniques.”¹⁷ I suggest that the Congress shared similar goals to these smaller gatherings, though on a larger scale, and Congress exhibitions were the predecessors to these smaller exhibits of local goods.

Various businesses used the exhibitions in order to promote their goods. Advertisements for local stores at the exhibitions were included in prominent English-language newspapers, such as the *Times of India* (Figs. 5.1-3). These establishments included fine art galleries, which marketed themselves directly to “Indian Princes and nobles,” inviting them to visit their “Gallery of High Class pictures, comprising Classical, Historical, Battle and Fancy Subjects,” and also to drop in to their “novelty shops.”¹⁸ These advertisements further consolidated the link between the Congress exhibitions and the promotion of swadeshi. Some swadeshi stores founded in Pune and Bombay contributed articles to the Indian National Congress exhibitions. While these businesses did not necessarily market their

¹⁶ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 111-116.

¹⁷ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 111.

¹⁸ Advertisement, “Gallery of High Class Pictures,” *Times of India*, 30 Dec. 1904: 8.

GRAND

TEA EXHIBITION

The Indian Industrial Exhibition

GOLDEN-TEA	Rs. 100 per lb.
SILVER TEA	Rs. 50 per lb.
WHITE TEA	Rs. 10 per lb.

EXHIBITED BY

M. M. Day & Co.,

TEA MERCHANTS.

100, Bowbazar Street, Calcutta

TEA ITS USE AND ADVANTAGE

IN INDIA

BY

M. M. DAY

Figure 5.1: Advertisement for the tea exhibit at the 1906 Calcutta exhibition, *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 30 Dec. 1906: 6. Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

DON'T FAIL
 TO
VISIT
BENGAL CHEMICAL'S STALL,
 AT THE
EXHIBITION.

*Medicines, Toilet Preparations, Fruit Syrups, Fruit-Flavours,
 Liquid, Heading, etc.*

SCIENTIFIC APPARATUS

all other articles on show are guaranteed to be entirely made in our own factory. Please enquire of our
 officer there, he will gladly give you information regarding our manufactures.

THE BENGAL CHEMICAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL WORKS, LD.
91, Upper Circular Road, Calcutta.

Figure 5.2: Advertisement for the “Bengal Chemical Stall” at the 1906 Calcutta exhibition, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 28 Dec. 1906: 11. Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

**SWADESHI
SCENTS.**

INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITIONS.

*best value from your money.
Use and encourage Home Industry.*

<p>RELA MAT TI SKEALIKA</p>	<p>CHAMPAKA JESSAMINE BOQUET JUI LILY of the Valley (Padma)</p>
--	--

Rs. 1 per bottle.
A box of 3 phials Rs. 2.2

POSPASAR—A highly perfumed
and charming essence,
Rs 1 per bottle.

LAVENDER WATER—Cheapest and
best of its kind.

M L BOSE & CO.

Manufacturing Perfumery.

101, CHINA BAZAR MARKET, CALCUTTA

Figure 5.3: Advertisement for “Swadeshi Scents” perfume, Calcutta at the 1905 Benares exhibition, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 22 Dec. 1905: 3. Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

premises as swadeshi, their status as ‘home industry’ meant that they fell under the umbrella of swadeshi.

Congress exhibitions also promoted the ideals of swadeshi by encouraging local artisans and businesses to participate in competitions hosted by the organisation. These competitions were considered an essential part of the

exhibitions, as the “reputation of an exhibition depends on the work on the judges.”¹⁹

The 1905 Benares Congress exhibition committee advertised the competitions in the

Indian Textile Journal:

One gold medal for the best flour made by roller machine. One silver medal for the best needle work turned out by an Indian lady. The committee is also negotiating for a cash prize of Rs. 500 for a handloom to be invented by an Indian, which, with the aid of one man, can produce in twelve working hours 40 yards of cloth with 64 picks in an inch or 60 yards with 44 picks in an inch. Breadth of cloth to be 44 inches.²⁰

The *Indian Textile Journal* also included other records of categories judged. One category was the handloom best suited for “Indian village industry,” aimed at individuals in rural villages as a means of expanding small-scale industry. This category took as its criteria “cheapness, so that it may not be beyond the means of the village weavers; simplicity, so that it can be easily repaired by the weavers themselves or by the village labour; the quantity and quality of cloth it can produce in a given time in both coarse and fine counts of thread.”²¹ Another grouping of handlooms available for judging was for “hand-factories managed by small capitalists,” which was directed at larger craft industries.²² In this category, the judging panel considered “suitability for Indian labour i.e., it should not be beyond the physical strength of the ordinary weaver; simplicity, so that broken parts can be replaced easily in the country; and the quantity and quality of cloth it can produce in a given time in both fine and coarse counts of thread.”²³ The medals awarded were along the lines of industrial discipline: wages, pieces, rates, and long hours. In

¹⁹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Indian Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, 1906,” 358.

²⁰ *Indian Textile Journal*, no title, *Indian Textile Journal*, Dec. 1905: 95.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Benares Exhibition,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Nov. 1905: 35. These “hand-factories” may have referred to what the 1906 New Zealand Exhibition termed “English Sweated Industries,” which displayed items such as hats, shoes, nails, etc. accompanied by descriptions of workers’ wages, hours, and worth of items produced under “sweated conditions.” See John Stacpoole and Peter Beaven, *New Zealand Art: Architecture 1820-1970* (London: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1972).

²³ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Benares Exhibition,” 35.

general, competitions and medals emphasised industry and production in terms of both hand labour and machinery.²⁴ Organisers aimed to incorporate labour in many different forms by including women's needlework, small industries, individual weavers, and machinery. The forms of industry, as they favoured weaving and production of cloth, were considered distinctly 'Indian.'

The standards for competition called for participants to create a handloom able to produce a specified amount of cloth of a certain quality in a particular time frame. The judging criteria emphasised both large and small scale industry, especially in rural communities, and encouraged everyone to participate. Even artisan industries, like handloom weaving, that are often considered small-scale were considered by exhibitions organisers in terms of industrial development. The competitions focused on disseminating the values of industry to rural areas. Barringer notes that the process of handcrafting was considered by some British design critics as an "alternative, and superior, form of work to that of division of labour."²⁵ The representation of craft in the medal ceremonies, however, calls into question the ways in which Congress officials viewed the dichotomy of industry and craft. The values of handicraft—beauty, the time consuming accomplishments of skilled artisans—were not necessarily emphasised at the Congress exhibitions. Rather, their criteria prized speed and uniformity rather than a complexity of design.

It is worth noting the relationship between exhibition practice, art, and industry in the metropole. The press and organisers at international exhibitions praised the potential of machine-made objects over handmade. At the Congress exhibitions, traditional craft industries like handloom weaving as well as machinery

²⁴ Auerbach has argued that at the 1851 Great Exhibition, "the handicraftsman was just as much a man of industry as the operator of a machine in a textile factory," where "machines and labor coexisted," Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 97. The Congress exhibitions may have been influenced by these ideals.

²⁵ Barringer, *Men at Work*, 261.

were highlighted as important. Congress officials provided an alternate framing of the relationship between craft, industry, and exhibition practice.

The medal system of nineteenth century international exhibitions was adapted by the Congress in order to promote swadeshi. Competitions were an important part of displays in the metropole and the re-articulation of this practice can be seen as a form of colonial mimicry. Leon Litvack argues that a mimicked work adopts the colonial form, but produces hybrid meanings rather than a “perfect copy of the original.”²⁶ The form of the medal ceremony was a mimicked exhibitionary practice, as the competitions were adapted for the local context. The hybrid competitions staged by Congress helped establish the organisation as one with the power to foster and support modern industry in India. The Congress had the authority to judge, and therefore they were in the position to be able to decide what was good and bad design.

The Congress exhibitions, I suggest, fell under what Sarkar terms “constructive swadeshi.”²⁷ Constructive swadeshi was typically favoured by political leaders and members of the community who advocated for the support of home industries but without outwardly denigrating British rule, as was the case with the Congress. Advocates of constructive swadeshi believed that local popular traditions, such as melas and fairs, were the “best methods for drawing the masses into the national movement.”²⁸ The Congress exhibitions, which were popular gatherings on a large scale, also had nationalist aims. The *Indian Textile Journal* even described the 1905 Benares exhibition as “a *mela* on a large and well organised scale.”²⁹

²⁶ Litvack, “Exhibiting Ireland,” 32.

²⁷ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 93.

²⁸ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 47.

²⁹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Benares Exhibition,” 35.

The Congress exhibitions became a sounding board for debates about industrialisation and swadeshi. Officials disseminated a specific vision of swadeshi through display, which was particularly evident at the 1905 Benares exhibition. Prominent moderate nationalist leader and 1905 Bengal Congress President Gopal Krishna Gokhale considered the Congress exhibitions the epitome of the swadeshi movement. At 1905 Benares, he gave a speech hailing swadeshi: “Gentlemen, the true *Swadeshi* movement is both a patriotic and an economic movement. The idea of *Swadeshi* or ‘one’s own country’ is one of the noblest conceptions that have ever stirred the heart of humanity.”³⁰ Gokhale argued that economic support of local industries was bound up in nationalist sentiment and also appealed to the emotions of his listeners as a means of promoting the movement. Other moderate nationalist leaders claimed that “swadeshism... found expression in the Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition held under the auspices of the National Congress.”³¹ The exhibitions were used to promote constructive swadeshi and moderate nationalism. In line with these ideals, one commentator noted that the movement “does not, I repeat, mean hostility to anything and everything that is British, but merely the awakening of an industrial life.”³² Constructive swadeshi and moderate nationalism, under the auspices of industrial production, went hand and hand. Lala Baijnath, a travel writer discussed in Chapter Two, argued that the Congress exhibitions would have been made more effective “by paying special attention to showing better methods of production by practical demonstration of various classes of goods made in different parts of the country.”³³ Baijnath linked regional industries to the idea of a

³⁰ Zaidi and Zaidi, eds., “Indian National Congress (Twenty-First Session),” 696.

³¹ *The Swadeshi Movement: A Symposium. Views of Representative Indians and Anglo-Indians* (Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1917) 33.

³² *The Swadeshi Movement: A Symposium*, 33.

³³ *The Swadeshi Movement: A Symposium*, 87.

unified nation, indicating the importance of incorporating rural concerns at the national level.

An emphasis on the “practical” nature of the exhibitions echoed throughout much of the newspaper commentary. Baijnath noted the “practical demonstration”³⁴ of goods at the exhibition, while the *Indian Textile Journal* suggested:

The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition at Benares will offer an excellent opportunity to the champions of the Swadeshi movement to do something practical for the cause of national industry. Their cause deserves the warmest sympathy, but it can never come to any useful end if only supported by talkers and writers.³⁵

Politically moderate newspaper *The Hindu* also emphasised the practical nature of the 1903 Madras exhibition, noting, “on the whole, the Madras Exhibition may be considered a success. If it leads to the practical results in the popularization of deserving local counterparts of European goods, we may take it as one point gained.”³⁶ In terms of exhibition theory, display had the potential to make ideologies ‘real,’ and move political ideas forward. In the case of swadeshi, the exhibition was able to make the movement look like it was achieving real results. Visitors were able to see, to touch and feel those results. Baijnath, the *Indian Textile Journal*, and the *Hindu* highlighted the importance of industrial production and linked the latter with exhibitions. In contrast to the Indian government, which was perceived as causing a declining Indian production, the Congress was highlighted as achieving practical results for India. Although these exhibitions are not widely discussed in scholarship, I suggest that they were an important part of Indian National Congress ideology and played an important role in the development of swadeshi in particular.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Benares Exhibition,” 35.

³⁶ *The Hindu*, “The Madras Industrial and Arts Exhibition. III. By our Special Commissioner,” *The Hindu*, 21 Jan. 1904: 4.

As the Congress gatherings provided a space in which political and economic issues could be debated amongst nationalist leaders, Gokhale and other moderate nationalists used the exhibitions in order to negotiate issues of free trade and foreign competition. At the 1905 Benares exhibition, Gokhale proclaimed:

Now everyone will admit that with cheap labour and cotton at her own door, India enjoys exceptional advantages for the manufacture of cotton goods; and if the Swadeshi movement helps her to regain her natural position in this respect—a position which she once occupied but out of which she has been driven by an extraordinary combination of circumstances—the movement works not against but in furtherance of true Free Trade.³⁷

The speech was in line with the widespread nationalist condemnation of the Indian government's economic policies.³⁸ Congress exhibitions took place as the influential “drain theory” was gaining increasing traction with the publication of *The Economic History of India* by leading anti-colonial economic nationalist Romesh Chunder Dutt in 1905. The drain theory, popularised by Dutt and Dadabhai Naoroji, “drew attention to the overwhelming, and destructive, bias of exports towards raw materials, and of imports towards manufactured goods and to the consequent degradation of the country being reduced to a mere agrarian appendage of Britain.”³⁹ Nationalist leaders criticised the flood of foreign goods into the Indian market, uneven export of raw materials, and the damage to the Indian textile trade as a result of the widespread use of cheap chemical dyes.⁴⁰ While Gokhale was not explicitly anti-colonial, he expressed dissatisfaction with the colonial policies that allowed India to be flooded with imports. In his speech, he navigated the complexities of colonial discourse and increasing anti-colonial tension regarding India's trade by

³⁷ Zaidi and Zaidi, eds., “Indian National Congress (Twenty-First Session),” 698.

³⁸ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 180.

³⁹ Bipin Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India: Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880-1905* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1966) 146.

⁴⁰ Morris D. Morris, “The Growth of Large-Scale Industry to 1947,” *The Cambridge Economic History of India Volume 2: c. 1757- c. 1970*, ed. Dharma Kumar (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 361-2.

carefully suggesting that at some point in the future if India's economic situation were improved, then the exhibition and the swadeshi movement supported ideals of free trade.

Some international exhibitions in the metropole were promoted as an endorsement of free trade, and the topic was a frequent topic of discussion amongst British critics.⁴¹ The issue of free trade was already a contentious one at international exhibitions, and it was also contested at the Congress exhibitions, which took place during the rise of 'drain theory.' Debates about free trade and commerce revealed a multiplicity of perspectives, even amongst the politically moderate. By referencing free trade, Gokhale argued that exhibition display could reveal "international commercial symmetry," and that free trade allowed "humankind to capitalize upon the tremendous potential of such symmetry."⁴² His narrative assumed that displays would eventually allow India to achieve commercial success and be a participant in international free trade. Others were not so sure. In an article on the 1903 Madras exhibition, moderate newspaper *The Hindu* argued, "yet it is a matter for satisfaction and pride as that notwithstanding the inroads of western manufactures and the havoc played by the so-called free trade, there are still left some remnants of our old great industries, and there is yet some hope for the decaying genius of the artisan classes."⁴³ The newspaper's critique was along the lines of 'drain theory' where free trade was almost unilaterally considered damaging to traditional Indian craft.

The Congress exhibitions, especially the one held in Bengal in 1905, took place during a period of unrest and anti-colonial tension, with widespread boycotts of British textiles and consumer goods, and moderate nationalist leaders like

⁴¹ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 58-9.

⁴² Young articulated this view in *Globalization and the Great Exhibition*, 15.

⁴³ *The Hindu*, "The Industrial Exhibition," 4.

Gokhale were swept up in the furore.⁴⁴ Dissatisfaction with the Indian Government was pronounced at the 1902 Ahmedabad exhibition. The Exhibition Committee Secretaries for the Ahmedabad Congress published a note defending their displays in the *Indian Textile Journal*:

Such exhibitions are necessary in India which is mostly an agricultural country. And when we take this into consideration the fact that many of her industries, for which this country was once so famous, have disappeared, or are dying out owing to foreign competition and the want of proper encouragement, the necessity for such exhibitions becomes greater.⁴⁵

The secretaries captured a sense of anger with the government but also endeavoured to demonstrate that their organisation was stepping up to take control of India's economic future, even while there was not yet a sense of a separate centralised nation-state. Congress leaders were concerned with the encroachment of foreign goods and used the exhibition to push forward a nationalist critique. While moderate Congress officials endorsed forms of industrialisation, their ultimate goal, as Sarkar notes, was "colonial self government."⁴⁶ Gokhale suggested that India's industrial salvation was still at the hands of Britain: "for better, or worse, our destinies are now linked with those of England and the Congress recognizes that whatever advance we seek must be within the Empire itself."⁴⁷ For Gokhale, any form of colonial government could only be achieved through an association with Britain. Through their leadership, moderates implied, India would adopt the British model of industrialisation but on a more equal footing.

The 1905 Bengal partition galvanised the swadeshi movement as it moved out of Bengal and became more widespread, and this had an effect at the 1905

⁴⁴ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 99.

⁴⁵ *Indian Textile Journal*, "An Industrial Exhibition at Ahmedabad," *Indian Textile Journal*, July 1902: 294.

⁴⁶ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 37.

⁴⁷ Zaidi and Zaidi, eds., "Indian National Congress (Twenty-First Session)," 702.

Benares exhibition. Gokhale addressed the Bengal partition in his Presidential

Address:

The tremendous upheaval of popular feeling, which has taken place in Bengal in consequence of the partition, will constitute a landmark in the history of our national progress. For the first time since British rule began, all sections of the Indian Community, without distinction of caste or creed, have been moved by a common impulse and without the stimulus of external pressure to act together in offering resistance to a common wrong. A wave of true national consciousness has swept over the Province, and at its touch old barriers have, for the time at any rate, been thrown down, personal jealousies have vanished, other controversies have been hushed! Bengal's heroic stand against the oppression of a harsh and uncontrolled bureaucracy has astonished and gratified all India, and her sufferings have not been endured in vain, when they have helped to draw closer all parts of the country in sympathy and in aspiration.⁴⁸

Gokhale argued that the swadeshi movement brought India together under the banner of nationalism, regardless of local identities. Moreover, the exhibition also served as a place where the community could come together without "external pressure."

Not all of the nationalist press agreed with the messages of swadeshi on display or with the Congress exhibitions, however. Some took issue with the presence of imported English cloth at an event celebrating home industry. English cloth was used for Western styles of dress, but also for native fashions worn by Congress members. Furthermore, during this period, Lancashire cloth was associated with the educated classes, industrial development, and economic growth.⁴⁹ Textiles played an important role in swadeshi; in the history of the Indian nationalist movement, "cloth was central to the Indian struggle for national self-government."⁵⁰ More radical anti-colonial nationalists took issue with the fact that "the export of cheap cloth from Manchester (sometimes even made from Indian cotton), undercut

⁴⁸ Zaidi and Zaidi, eds., "Indian National Congress (Twenty-First Session)," 694.

⁴⁹ C. A. Bayly, "The origins of swadeshi (home industry): cloth and Indian society, 1700-1930," *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 307.

⁵⁰ Morris, "The Growth of Large-Scale Industry to 1947," 355.

the aesthetically superior products of local craftsmen.”⁵¹ Prominent Bengali nationalist Bholonath Chandra wrote in *Mookerjee's Magazine* that the country's preference for foreign textiles was “denationalising in its tendency.”⁵² He denounced those who wore English cloth as “great abettors” to the downfall of “national manufactures,” castigating them as “people most untrue to their nation.”⁵³ As the swadeshi movement emphasised wearing home-spun over imported cloth, the movement forced individuals to acknowledge publicly their political affiliations through their choice of clothing. Either they were with the “patriot-nationalists” or else they were supporters of “English political domination and economic exploitation.”⁵⁴ This situation presented a problem for the exhibition visitors and for Congress officials. Many Congress members and those of their class wore English clothing, which was part of their effort to show the British that they were “English gentlemen.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, at this time, most members of the Western-educated strata did not want a complete break with the British; they did not see the contradiction in supporting swadeshi and embracing English ways of life.⁵⁶

Radical members of the press, however, considered this situation to be hypocritical. The indigenous newspaper *Charu Mihir*, of Mymensingh in the north of Bengal, published a scathing review of the 1901 Calcutta exhibition, arguing that “it is ridiculous to praise country-made goods and at the same time to dress oneself, from top to toe, in foreign-made articles of clothing.”⁵⁷ The newspaper also argued that those in attendance of the Congress exhibitions “will not speak well for the

⁵¹ Barringer, *Men at Work*, 270.

⁵² Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, 125.

⁵³ Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, 125.

⁵⁴ Morris, “The Growth of Large-Scale Industry to 1947,” 364.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ “The boycott of foreign goods also enabled something of a revival of artisanal crafts and industries, but indigenous mill owners in Bombay and Ahmedabad took the opportunity to hike up prices and make unconscionable profits. Swadeshi soon proved to be an expensive indulgence for the common Bengali peasant.” Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 100.

⁵⁷ *Charu Mihir, Indian Newspaper Reports*, Part 1: Bengal, 1874-1903 (1901) 914.

patriotism of the Congressists if they attend the Congress in dresses made of foreign stuff,” for “patriotism is still a mere empty profession with many—beginning with speech, and ending in speech.”⁵⁸ Radical nationalist newspapers *Mookerjee’s Magazine* and the *Charu Mihir* aligned with the principles of “economic swadeshi,” which Sarkar defines as the sentiment “that indigenous goods should be preferred by consumers even if they were more expensive than and inferior in quality to their imported substitutes, and that it was the patriotic duty of men with capital to pioneer such industries even though profits initially might be minimal or nonexistent.”⁵⁹ These kinds of criticisms were powerful. Congress leaders like Gokhale may have worked so hard to associate their exhibitions with swadeshi in order to overcome this criticism. Along with the Congress’s staunchly moderate stance, amidst growing anti-government sentiment, these critiques contributed to a mass boycott of the 1906 Calcutta Congress exhibition.⁶⁰

The Congress exhibitions provoked fierce debates about various economic and political issues as nationalist leaders and the nationalist press fought for their voices to be heard. The exhibitions also provided a space for debates about swadeshi and for the expression of nationalism through the display of goods and industries considered typically ‘Indian.’ Congress officials publicised their exhibitions as the embodiment of the swadeshi movement. Even while offering conflicting perspectives, both swadeshists and the Congress shared a similar agenda in the promotion of their economic and nationalist movement.

In examining the multitude of perspectives, it is clear that commentators did not necessarily articulate a clear, straightforward, or universal view on swadeshi. Ideas of swadeshi, which were somewhat ambiguous and complex in the ways in

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 92.

⁶⁰ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 115.

which they were understood, fit and did not fit into the Congress' vision of a modern India.⁶¹ Furthermore, in examining the discussions of the exhibitions, we can see some of the tensions in the nationalist movement as divisions between moderate and extremist nationalists became more apparent.

5.3 The Congress Exhibitions and India's Industrial Development

This section analyses the multiple ways in which Congress leaders and the moderate nationalist press debated the role of industry in India. As mentioned earlier, Hoffenberg suggests that Indian nationalism was informed by alternating visions: one focused on small-scale and handmade and the other on large-scale Eurocentric development. Dutta's discussion on the aims and limitations of the early Congress are important in understanding these conflicting discourses about industrial development. He argues that in 1902, Congress leaders railed against the DSA's agenda of minimising the rapidly increasing Indian industry in India. As an alternative, nationalist leaders called for the expansion of large-scale "modern, technocratic industrialization" in India.⁶² This section analyses how Hoffenberg and Dutta's arguments played out in the context of the Congress exhibitions.

Congress officials associated their exhibitions with industry by including the word "industrial" in the titles: 1903 Madras was officially titled the "Madras Industrial and Arts Exhibition"; 1904 Bombay was called the "Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition." During the inaugural 1901 Calcutta exhibition, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Moharaja Jagadindra Nath Roy Bahadur,

⁶¹ Dutta argues this point in relation to macro and microeconomic theory that the Congress exhibitions were also marked by "the discrepancy between material understanding and macroeconomic rhetoric," which was characterised by an "absence of the microeconomic picture within Swadeshi ideology." Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*, 255-6.

⁶² Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*, 255.

pronounced: “we cannot live in ignorance of the supreme importance which industry has assumed in modern civilization.”⁶³ With these opening lines, the Chairman set the stage for a major theme of the Congress exhibitions during the first decade of the twentieth century. Another commentator suggested that the exhibition helped disseminate the importance of industry: “the industrial movement is flowing deep, fraught with national ideals.”⁶⁴

The relationship between display and industry was an important exhibitionary form at nineteenth-century international displays. Auerbach suggests that some exhibitions were a “vehicle through which the industrialization of British society took place . . . it was part of an attempt to transform Britain culturally, to forge a society that was receptive to a certain form of industrialization.”⁶⁵ This exhibitionary form informed the Congress exhibitions as officials attempted to shape the public into one that was open to, and desirous of, industrialisation. A central aim of the Congress, as I discussed in the previous chapter, was to promote industrial and agricultural education through display.

The presence of raw materials at the Congress exhibitions also played an important, and subversive, role. Typically, at nineteenth-century international exhibitions, raw materials signified a lower stage of development and “constituted the base of the pyramid of production and the source of British power.”⁶⁶ India’s contributions to international exhibitions highlighted India as a land of raw materials for the benefit of British industry.⁶⁷ At the Congress exhibitions, however, India was not simply represented by raw materials, but as a land of vast resources and a

⁶³ *Detailed Report of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Indian National Congress, held at Calcutta, on the 26th, 27th, & 28th December, 1901.*

⁶⁴ *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress, Held in Ahmedabad, 1902.*

⁶⁵ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 98.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Kriegel, “Narrating the subcontinent in 1851,” 153.

country worthy and capable of its own industry. Raw materials at the 1904 Bombay exhibition, for example, were prominently displayed in one of the first courts as visitors passed through the principal entrance. At the 1903 Madras exhibition, *The Hindu* reported that the sections of “raw materials and unmanufactured articles consisted of cereals, pulses, vegetables, gums, dye-stuffs, drugs, fibres, minerals, wax, fat, &c. Mysore exhibits were most interesting as the collection represented the material resources of the province.”⁶⁸ These goods were included alongside machinery and agricultural equipment in order to illustrate all stages of industrial production. They were not necessarily displayed in order to illustrate British power, but rather as a means of demonstrating India’s potential for industrial development. India became a wealth of resources but not for the taking of the British. The display of these goods signified a shift in the ways that the narrative of industrialisation was represented. This time it began with the ownership of raw material wealth: raw materials were framed as national wealth rather than imperial and also as wealth that was no longer appropriable by colonial rulers.

All elements of both small scale and large scale industrial activity were on display at the Congress exhibitions, including raw materials, forestry, agriculture, machinery, handlooms, and textiles, as illustrated by the Plan of the 1904 Bombay exhibition (Figure 4.7). The *Indian Textile Journal*, a journal that emphasised a programme of “self-strengthening”⁶⁹ for India, highlighted the variety and vitality of Indian industries exhibited at 1904 Bombay:

The show of foods, drugs, condiments and chemicals must have surprised many a visitor not only by their number and variety but by the neatness of their packing. Tea, tobacco, soap, candles, oil, perfumes, greases, drugs, medicines, paints, milk, butter and pickles, all packed for transport are

⁶⁸ *The Hindu*, “The Madras Industrial and Arts Exhibition. III [By Our Special Commissioner],” 4.

⁶⁹ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 98.

shewn, making a very tempting display and giving an impressive proof of the extent to which Indian industries have recently multiplied.⁷⁰

Smaller industries like soaps, food products, and medicines played as an important role as the large scale machines like rice hullers, cotton gins, and various types of engines. The reference to the “neatness of their packaging” was also significant: they were not goods being sold in piles in a market, but packed for transport, making a tempting display. The 1904 Bombay exhibition’s textile section also featured much contribution from the company Tata and Sons, including their Swadeshi Mills of Coorla and Bangalore Silk Farm. Much of the textile section featured exhibits from the “vast concerns managed by them.”⁷¹ Tata, whose textile mills were the first with overtly nationalist overtones, was the largest and most important of the Indian-owned industrial companies.⁷² Regional differences also played a part as to whether large or small scale industry dominated; mills and power-looms were more popular in some regions, such as Bombay and Ahmedabad, than in others.

A few commentators mentioned the potential for both small and large scale industrial development as a vision of India’s future. Baijnath, who published a paper on swadeshi in local publication *East and West* in 1905, noted that one of the “chief essentials of success” included compiling a “complete list of the principal indigenous hand industries of each town and province and start agencies for the sale of products everywhere by both large and small firms in all parts of the country.”⁷³ The weaving industry was discussed in terms of commercial expansion. At the 1905 Benares Congress exhibition, Gokhale noted that “the question of the immediate revival of

⁷⁰ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Bombay Exhibition,” 135.

⁷¹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Bombay,” 80-81.

⁷² A.M. Misra, “‘Business Culture’ and Entrepreneurship in British India, 1860-1950,” *Modern Asian Studies* 34.2 (May 2000): 343-346.

⁷³ *The Swadeshi Symposium*, 83. The emphasis on small-scale industries would come later in the nationalist movement. See Shanti Swarup Gupta, *Economic Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Ashok Kumar Mittal, 1994).

the handloom weaving industry on a commercial basis demands the most earnest attention of every well-wisher of India.”⁷⁴ The Chairman of the Exhibition Committee for the 1904 Bombay exhibition, Mr. Vithuldas Damodar Thakarakai, observed that weaving was important for India, stating, “in determining to make a collection of the different appliances of the various other industries, the hand-loom industry, so ancient and so valuable, claimed the Committee’s serious consideration.”⁷⁵ These nationalist leaders conflated large and small scale industry in their discussions on Indian craft. While handlooms were often considered to be small scale, larger operations, like the Tata-owned mills, were also discussed.⁷⁶

Moderate nationalists also re-articulated colonial ideas on Indian craft and textiles. The DSA and British design critics like George Birdwood and John Ruskin often placed textiles and handicraft on the opposite spectrum to mechanised industry.⁷⁷ For Congress officials and figures like Baijnath, craft and mechanised industrial development were not seen to be alternatives but as part of the same process. Through the exhibitions, Congress officials aimed to bring them together by modernising the weaving industry through widespread commercialisation and mechanisation.

The nationalist press highlighted some of the benefits and disadvantages of small scale industry. At the 1904 Bombay exhibition, the Swadeshi Mills of Coorla displayed a “churka,” a form of cotton gin formed of two rollers and operated by hand, that represented a small-scale form of production. The *Indian Textile Journal* noted that the churka, “despite its very primitive design still does its work in a manner superior to the most elaborate steam driven machine, that is to say, it does

⁷⁴ Zaidi and Zaidi, eds., “Indian National Congress (Twenty-First Session),” 701.

⁷⁵ *Proceedings of the Twentieth Indian National Congress, Bombay, 1904.*

⁷⁶ The idealised Indian ‘craftsman’ and the romanticised Indian village were often positioned as counterpoints to the ‘horrors’ of industrialisation. Barringer, *Men at Work*, 260-7.

⁷⁷ Barringer, *Men at Work*, 266-9.

the least damage to the cotton fibre. Unfortunately it is so slow.”⁷⁸ The commentator pointed out that while the machine caused the least amount of damage to the cotton, the hand machine’s speed was not conducive to high levels of production and output for a market. To the *Indian Textile Journal*, this type of cotton gin was not the best remedy for India’s economic problems; the churka and its superior output was still an important part of Indian industry, complicating the separation between large and small scale and noting that both forms had their shortcomings.

Others suggested that the machine could improve India’s ‘traditional’ trades and industry for the betterment of the wider Indian society. While many commentators expressed dismay over the widespread takeover of foreign machinery in India, officials believed that machinery was the future for India. While both international and Congress exhibitions helped established the “benefits of machines and mechanised production,”⁷⁹ the Congress went a step further by integrating traditional craft industries with mechanised production. At the 1904 Bombay exhibition, handlooms—traditionally considered small-scale—were classified as “Industrial” under the taxonomic system and placed adjacent to Machinery in the exhibition pavilion. At exhibitions in the metropole, machinery was framed as “the most direct representation of one of the principal sources of the industrial success and prosperity of Great Britain.”⁸⁰ Placing handlooms next to machinery indicated their importance and associated weaving directly with economic prosperity indicated by the machines. Gokhale wanted to bring modernity to these industries that were considered particularly ‘Indian.’ He proclaimed that “the hand-loom is doing good work, and has some future before it. But do not let us be under a delusion. The main

⁷⁸ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Bombay,” 103.

⁷⁹ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 105.

⁸⁰ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 104.

part of the work will have to be done by machinery.”⁸¹ Textiles were considered to be a key part of India’s economic future, even while they were mechanised. Most nationalists firmly advocated the introduction of machinery into their ‘traditional’ industries. The Congress, through their exhibitions, aimed to integrate mechanisation into trades that were considered traditionally ‘Indian.’

The *Indian Textile Journal* concurred with Gokhale and also emphasised the importance of small scale textile industry:

The improvement of the Indian handloom is a matter of great urgency. An enormous number of good looms is required, but a new design of general utility would seem to demand the combined ability of several experienced weavers and inventors, which is by no means easy to arrange, particularly as such combinations are liable at times to *effervesce*.⁸²

They later suggested:

It is generally admitted that the handloom will disappear in India as it has already disappeared, except for very special work, in other countries, but its rate of falling out will certainly be much slower in India than elsewhere. In the meantime, the weaver must live, and any improvement that may be made in his machine will not only allow him to live better, but will add to his mechanical knowledge and to his interest in machines in general.⁸³

Louise Purbrick notes that “engagement in textile production was fairly consistently interpreted as a sign of economic improvement.”⁸⁴ This was one reason why commentators and Congress officials were particularly concerned with India’s textile industries. The *Indian Textile Journal* suggested that ultimately, large-scale mechanised industrialisation was the way forward rather than localised forms of production. There was a sense of urgency for these industries to be modernised and an assumption that Congress exhibitions could bring economic prosperity to India.

⁸¹ *The Swadeshi Movement: A Symposium*, 22.

⁸² *Indian Textile Journal*, “Handlooms at the Bombay Exhibition,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Jan. 1905: 107.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Purbrick, “Defining Nation,” 62.

Handloom weaving was considered by the nationalist press to be of importance, but only insofar as their technology could be improved.

The newspaper was also concerned with the future of the weaving class and the social changes that could occur if mechanised production were increased in the subcontinent. It advocated for a broader programme of practical education to modernise the weaving class. Some ambivalence regarding the future of the handloom industry in India was noted by the journal, suggesting that it “will disappear in India as it has already disappeared,”⁸⁵ but presumably the hypothetical weaver’s “mechanical knowledge” gained from his exposure to modern machinery would serve them well for future occupations.

The *Times of India*,⁸⁶ a conservative newspaper, also expressed doubt about the introduction of machinery and mass production into India’s handicraft industry. The newspaper presented a complex picture of industrial development and its effects on design in its representation of the textiles court:

Then we turn into a Court which is a perfect blaze of colour. Kincobs⁸⁷ from Surat and Ahmedabad, heavily gold embroidered cloths which are still the glory of the Gujarat weaver, embroideries from Delhi, printed goods from all parts of India, and silken carpets abound. It is a selection to delight the eye of any one enamoured of the beauties of oriental workmanship. In marked contrast to this is the Court devoted to the products of the Indian Spinning and Weaving Mills. It is a case of the spirit of the East represented in these gorgeous colours, daring contrasts and laborious workmanship, jostling the materialistic spirit of the West, embodied in these sad-coloured clothes, ground out at so many yards an hour. But those who lay store by the development of India as a manufacturing country will note with pleasure the great advance in the weaving industry evidenced by the quality of these exhibits.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *Indian Textile Journal*, “Handlooms at the Bombay Exhibition,” 107.

⁸⁶ Although the paper was politically conservative, Chandrika Kaul notes that it was “sympathetic to the growth of Indian political aspirations.” Kaul, *Reporting the Raj*, 102.

⁸⁷ Dutta notes that this unique fabric comes from “its interweaving of metal—gold, silver, copper—wire, known as *kalabattun* or *jari*, in its patterns.” Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*, 208.

⁸⁸ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” 6.

The description of the textiles on display at 1904 Bombay reflects the influence of the DSA's programme. The DSA promoted "Indianised design" by "fostering traditional crafts," including the "acquisition by artisans of useful skills for industrial design and production."⁸⁹ For the DSA, mass production was the cause of the decline of Indian production.⁹⁰ For the DSA, the solution was that "Indian artisans must be prepared to compete with the deluge of industrial commodities from Europe *without* converting to machine-based production."⁹¹ The *Times of India* also praised 'traditional' Indian design and craft from "all parts of India."⁹² While the newspaper had some emphasis on manufacturing, the newspaper cautioned against Western style mass production that produced "sad-coloured clothes."⁹³ Products developed using western methods, the newspaper suggested, resulted in a decrease in the quality and vibrancy of products in comparison to Indian workmanship. This idea was a common observation in international exhibitions after 1851, where Indian products were lauded for their design quality in comparison to the "ingenious but generally vulgar" mass produced goods.⁹⁴ As the *Times of India* included several staff members from England, this point of view may have been along the lines of design critics like William Morris, who criticised mass production and romanticised Indian craft. While the newspaper praised the progress in the weaving industry, here was a call for small handicrafts over machinery. These design critics, and the policies of the DSA, were an important influence on the debates stemming from the exhibitions. It is clear that the Congress exhibitions provided a space where these ideas of workmanship, manufacturing, industry, and commerce could be debated.

⁸⁹ Barringer, *Men at Work*, 268.

⁹⁰ Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*, 136.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Times of India*, "The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions," 6.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Barringer, *Men at Work*, 259-60.

The earlier 1903 Madras exhibition generated much discussion, including rather detailed information on manufacturing, trade, and commerce, on the regeneration of indigenous industries and the best way to preserve them. To many, the best way was through the establishment of a system of commerce. *The Hindu*, the “moderate vernacular press of Madras,”⁹⁵ wanted to see India as a centre of commerce. It suggested that the Congress Committee purchase a garden and building in which they could develop a depot “whereby specimens of the more useful articles displayed at the Exhibition may be made available to those who may desire to purchase them.”⁹⁶ The depot would compile a directory of information regarding all the indigenous arts and industries. Visitor Mr. M. B. Sant, of Sangamner, Ahmednagar District, wrote about the type of information that should be maintained at the depot, suggesting that it should keep “the names and full addresses of the mills and factories and of the manufacturers and natural products (vegetable and mineral) of India.”⁹⁷ He also suggested that it “should contain also statistical information on important arts and industries.”⁹⁸ Sant noted that the directory could be similar to the Peck’s Buyer’s Index to manufactures and products in the USA.

Sant’s vision was not limited to one-off economic transactions, but rather would serve as a jump-start to the beginning of a home market. Sant indicated that he already compiled a list of over one thousand manufacturers but noted the difficulty in creating a home market: “I find, from practical experience, that it is very hard to approach the individual manufacturers who never advertise their wares, nor care to read newspapers, in case appeals are made to them through the Press to communicate

⁹⁵ Kaul, *Reporting the Raj*, 129.

⁹⁶ *The Hindu*, “The Industrial Exhibition,” 4.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

their own names as well as the names of the articles produced.”⁹⁹ Sant suggested that members of the Congress’s Managing Committee contact the wholesale retailers of products displayed at the exhibition and agree to purchase a certain number of articles from the retailers every year, which would help stimulate commerce. *The Hindu* considered the 1903 Madras exhibition as a starting point for the creation of a home market: “we are glad to hear that some of the exhibitors are desirous of opening branches in this Presidency and we think the soaps, scents, biscuits, matches, locks, leather goods can command good market here. Dealers here may also engage with the manufacturers to add these goods to their stock on commission sale.”¹⁰⁰

Artisans working at their handlooms were also exhibited at the 1904 Bombay exhibition. The Congress hosted a special court where they featured “experts in actual working”¹⁰¹ on handlooms and officials “hoped that this section will be highly instructive.”¹⁰² The special court was an appropriation but also a re-articulation of the British exhibitionary form whereby ‘natives’ were put on display. As discussed in an earlier chapter, exhibitions like the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 featured natives plying their wares for the benefit of Western audiences, “rendering their bodies available for European consumption.”¹⁰³ While the bodies on display at the Congress exhibition were available for consumption by visitors, the emphasis here was the expertise and specialised industrial knowledge of the artisans. For the Congress, having artisans on display may have been another way in which to educate the public on the workings of their industries. The display of Indian artisans

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ *The Hindu*, “The Madras Industrial and Arts Exhibition III. [By our Special Commissioner],” 4.

¹⁰¹ *Proceedings of the Twentieth Indian National Congress, Bombay, 1904*.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Mathur, *India by Design*, 78.

represented another shift in ownership, from imperial to national, of the exhibited object, or in this case, the body on display.

The shape of the Congress' nationalist programme centred on progress, modernity, and, especially, industrial development. The *Hindi Punch*, for example, proclaimed that the Congress exhibition "would prove beneficial to the country."¹⁰⁴ I suggest that Congress leaders, through the staging of their exhibitions, were also attempting to shape their visitors into a public receptive to the ideals of Western industrialisation. At the same time, this vision of India's future industrial development was reliant on certain tropes believed to characterise Indian industry, such as traditional textile and craft industries and the importance of local artisans. In this way, the Congress attempted to bring together tradition and modernity.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the Congress was also projecting a vision of an industrialised India beyond the frame of the exhibition into the future.

Visions of large and small scale industrialisation often simultaneously competed and cooperated with each other at these gatherings, each offering the language for debates about different versions of nationalism. The parameters of these debates, however, were not rigidly defined; indeed, they often overlapped, shared ideas, and re-shaped boundaries. Perhaps the most notable development was that most Congress officials and commentators almost unilaterally agreed that machinery and industrialisation should be a part of all levels of industry, from handicraft to large industrial operations. To be pro-machine was to be pro-nation. By emphasising industry at their displays, the Congress situated itself as an organisation capable of bringing this development to India.

¹⁰⁴ "Miss Congress Tree Planting" cartoon from the *Hindi Punch*, *The Indian National Congress Cartoons from the Hindi Punch*, ed. Barjorjee Nowrosjee (Bombay: Bombay Samachar Press, 1902).

¹⁰⁵ For more on the relationship between nationalism, tradition and modernity, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

5.3.1 “We are handicapped by our excessive poverty”¹⁰⁶: Poverty,

Industry, and Display

Congress officials and newspaper commentators often focused on the relationship between the exhibitions, industry, and poverty. Gyan Prakash notes that India’s economy was hit particularly hard in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: multiple famines, the influx of British goods flooded the Indian markets and caused a decline in Indian production, and the overwhelming majority of the population remained poor. To Congress officials, India appeared as an underdeveloped ‘standing-reserve.’¹⁰⁷ The exhibitions, I suggest, became a space for projecting hopes for the future of India, and as a means of buoying India’s industries and relieving the pressures of poverty. At the 1903 Madras exhibition, exhibition organiser C. Sankaran Nair made a speech suggesting that the Congress exhibitions served as a catalyst for industry and even contributed to ending poverty and famine:

How far our hopes and expectations will be realised it is impossible to say. It is, however, our earnest hope that this movement of which the Exhibition is only a small beginning may lead to great industrial progress, find employment for thousands of people, reduce the pressure on land, alleviate if not prevent, the horrors of famine (*Continued cheers.*)¹⁰⁸

To many commentators, these exhibitions would not only benefit industry, but would in fact trigger industrial regeneration. Nair viewed them as the first step towards industrial and artistic restoration and would be key to solving the country’s problems—those of poverty and famine. The rhetoric of poverty was cast in a political economic narrative of development. India’s situation was similar to the representation of Ireland at the 1851 Great Exhibition, which was recovering from a famine that had occurred a few years earlier. Purbrick suggests that Ireland was

¹⁰⁶ *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, “The Indian Industrial Conference,” *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 30 Dec. 1906: 6.

¹⁰⁷ Prakash, *Another Reason*, 181.

¹⁰⁸ *Report and Proceedings of the Nineteenth Indian National Congress, Held at Madras, 1903.*

represented as “developing,” which meant it was “somewhere between an ‘aboriginal’ state and Britain, between the primitive and the civilized, between agricultural and industrial, between ‘famine and despair’ and solid, permanent prosperity.”¹⁰⁹ While the state of “developing” also “offers the possibility of future equality with the already industrialised, it also positions that nation in the present moment as secondary.”¹¹⁰ Ireland, however, was represented in this way so as to justify “continued colonial intervention.”¹¹¹ While India was also framed as “developing,” it was clear that officials like Nair accepted this narrative of progress and wanted to push ahead and quickly modernise, rather than to call for additional British encroachment. The narrative of ‘developing’ was re-interpreted within a nationalist context. The exhibition represented the platform in which India could join in market exchange and achieve a measure of industrial and economic progress.

Economic nationalist Romesh Chunder Dutt strongly encouraged exhibition visitors and the Indian Government to support swadeshi industries as a means of alleviating famine. He argued that support of swadeshi:

Will certainly foster and encourage our industries in which the Indian Government has always professed the greatest interest. It will relieve millions of weavers and other artisans from the state of semi-starvation in which they have lived, will bring them back to their hand-loom and other industries, and will minimise the terrible effects of famines which the Government have always endeavoured to relieve to the best of their power.¹¹²

For Dutt, support of the weaving industry would lead directly to the amelioration of famine, a sentiment echoed in many debates over the role of exhibitions and industry in India. Here was a different solution to famine, not necessarily one of classical political economy: Dutt emphasised the support of homespun industries and Indian artisans, rather than the large-scale industrial development advocated by most

¹⁰⁹ Purbrick, “Defining Nation,” 70.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² *The Swadeshi Movement: A Symposium*, 93.

Congress officials. Government support of local industries, rather than their modernisation, he suggested, would provide a solution for poverty and famine. He was concerned with progress alongside the preservation of ‘traditional’ ways of life, including trades like weaving.

Other Congress delegates were not as optimistic. Moderate nationalist official Pherozeshah Mehta, for instance, argued at the Ahmedabad Congress of 1902: “I will not profess to say that the industrial progress will be a solution of that big question of agricultural indebtedness with which we all face to face in this country, but I do venture to say that the progress of arts and industries of this country will go far, will go considerably towards ameliorating the condition of the people of this country.”¹¹³ Mehta showed more awareness of the complex economic and agricultural problems concerning the issues of agricultural indebtedness than was typical of nationalist leaders. The concept of “agricultural indebtedness,” a developmental problem often found in peasant societies, describes the condition of a poor society where most individuals lacked capital and resources.¹¹⁴ For Mehta, artistic as well as industrial progress was essential to solving the country’s problems. Means of production—large scale and homespun—were expressed through the exhibition: displayed as benefiting all, as a vision of the future and most importantly, as progress. For Congress officials, there was no doubt that industry represented the way forward for India’s future.

Nationalist leaders at the 1902 Ahmedabad exhibition linked poverty to economic and political helplessness. On opening day, a rather anti-colonial Congress official declared:

¹¹³ *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress, Held in Ahmedabad, 1902.*

¹¹⁴ James, *Raj*, 194. For more on the concept of indebtedness, See Neil Charlesworth, *Peasants and Imperial Rule: Agriculture and Agrarian Society in the Bombay Presidency, 1850-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Our industrial helplessness is even more deplorable than our political impotency. And if the Congress can do aught to stimulate the forces which would improve our industrial condition, it would add one more to the many titles which it already possesses to the enduring gratitude of the people of India. Nay more, it would render a great service to the Government. It would relieve the Government, in part at least, of those serious administrative difficulties which have their roots in the deplorably straitened conditions of Indian life.¹¹⁵

Sanjay Seth notes that for moderate nationalist leaders, poverty was not necessarily linked to a concern for improving the lives of the poor, as many leaders had actually voted against legislation that would have benefitted the poor. Rather, the preoccupation with poverty “functioned as a metaphor for backwardness, which under colonial conditions meant powerlessness and humiliation. Thus it was that the solution the moderates advocated for poverty was not direct amelioration of the lot of the poor but rather economic and industrial modernization.”¹¹⁶ Congress officials looked towards patterns of industrialisation along the lines of local agendas and found industrialisation—in varied forms, not just urban mass production—as a salvation from what the Congress perceived to be their political and economic powerlessness. Exhibitions served as an important medium through which nationalists pointed out the failings of India’s economy resulting from the British government’s policies.

5.3.2 Agriculture and Modernity

Agriculture can be read as economically backward—as a cause of poverty, famine, and agricultural indebtedness. Agriculture was also rarely included in a vision of modernity at conventional late nineteenth-century international exhibitions. At the Congress exhibitions, however, agriculture was viewed as the economic foundation

¹¹⁵ *Report and Proceedings of the Eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress, Held in Ahmedabad, 1902.*

¹¹⁶ Seth, “Rewriting Histories of Nationalism,” 105-6.

of India and as a way into modernity. It is important to note, however, that the position of agriculture in discourses of modernity at these exhibitions is complicated and not straightforward.

Agricultural goods featured strongly at many of the Congress exhibitions, from large cotton gins to the display of various types of soil. The 1904 Bombay exhibition displayed a large “collections of seeds, fibres, and other produce.”¹¹⁷ The *Times of India* dedicated an article to the representation of agriculture at the 1904 Bombay exhibition, outlining the development of chemical and natural manures by Indian farmers and noting the rotation of pulses in soil.¹¹⁸ The *Indian Textile Journal* noted that the agricultural sections were popular with the public: “the agricultural implements were a constant source of interest.”¹¹⁹ The newspaper also noted that the plough and handloom ranked equally in “industrial importance.”¹²⁰

Agricultural machinery was a focal point of the Agriculture section at 1904 Bombay. One section featured ploughs from Europe, America, and India, and the Indian plough was shown in “actual operation.”¹²¹ Each country supplied workers to demonstrate the operation of their country’s ploughs; the American models were deemed to be “useful.”¹²² Engelbert Rice Hullers were also shown in action. Other machinery included a winnower and chaff-cutter, “cotton gins, saw, roller and hand (gins),” and a plantain fibre extractor.¹²³ The machinery section also incorporated steam engines of several types, pumps, ice-making machines, and oil engines.¹²⁴ Machines, whether they are agricultural or otherwise, appeared to be complicated

¹¹⁷ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Bombay. The Following Letter from the Director of Land Records and Agriculture,” *Indian Textile Journal*, Sept. 1904: 12.

¹¹⁸ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Agriculture in the Presidency,” *Times of India*, 20 Dec. 1904: 7.

¹¹⁹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Bombay Exhibition,” 135.

¹²⁰ *Indian Textile Journal*, “Handlooms at the Bombay Exhibition,” 141.

¹²¹ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Bombay,” 12.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: A Preliminary View,” 7.

and sophisticated as an image on display. In the narrative of the Congress exhibitions, mechanised agricultural equipment, with their ability to feed a society, became a sign of the modern. Agriculture was not simply an add-on or afterthought at the exhibitions; rather, Congress leaders consciously strived to construct India as an agricultural society but also as one that was becoming modern. Once again, they rearticulated a narrative whereby an agricultural society and an industrial one were not opposed when they have efficient mechanised equipment.

The positioning of agriculture both in the classification system and at the 1904 Bombay exhibition itself was significant. At the Bombay exhibition, agriculture was a main taxonomic category of display. Although the categorisation separated the exhibited objects into “Agricultural” and “Industrial,” there was overlap between the displays. For instance, agricultural machinery was classified under “agriculture,” even though machinery was generally defined at international exhibitions as industrial. At the 1851 Great Exhibition, for example, the group “Agricultural and Horticultural Machines and Implements” were found under the “Machinery” section.¹²⁵ In 1904, “an interesting agricultural display” was placed next to the water chute, a major apparatus, alongside other industrial machines.¹²⁶ Within the exhibition pavilion itself, the large Agriculture gallery was adjacent to the Machinery section, one of the largest parts of the exhibition.

The juxtaposition of agriculture with industry suggested that both were equally important. At the Bombay exhibition, agriculture was not posited as the antithesis of industry. Agriculture was associated with the progress, industrialisation, and technology that characterised modernity. The link between agriculture and industrial progress was important as it represented a potential basis for Indian

¹²⁵ Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851*, 93.

¹²⁶ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial Exhibition, Bombay,” 56.

modernity: a unique feature of the Congress exhibitions and one not generally found at exhibitions in the metropole.

It is clear that agriculture in all its forms played an important, if not the most important, role at the Congress exhibitions. The variety of agriculture on display, from soils and manures to large agricultural operations, indicated that agriculture was changing, developing and becoming modernised. Commentators pointed out new varieties of cotton that were created through hybridization; farmers were developing methods of improving crop output through new methods of fertilization. The Congress exhibitions illustrated the fast pace at which agricultural practice was being modernised and further shaped the idea of India as an agricultural country.

Nationalist leaders put a great deal of effort into bringing farmers from different parts of the country to their exhibitions in order to educate them on these new technologies. The *Times of India* argued that the representation of agriculture at the exhibition was “a microcosm of the industry by which nearly three fourths of the population of Western India earn their daily bread.”¹²⁷ The *Times* suggested that “nitrate of potash, from Northern India, can be used profitably,” and fibres, plantain, and flax have been “grown at the Manjri Experimental Farm with some promise of success.”¹²⁸ The exhibition aimed to educate Indian farmers on the best processes for cultivating their harvest. The main purpose of these agricultural displays, the article argued, was “when the ryots¹²⁹ are brought to visit the exhibition, we shall take an opportunity of reverting to the subject, and describing in greater detail some of the lessons learnt.”¹³⁰ In line with the educational aims of the Congress exhibitions, the Congress paid for five hundred “agriculturists” from all over the Presidency, who

¹²⁷ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Agriculture in the Presidency,” 7.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a ryot was a “peasant, husbandman, cultivating tenant.”

¹³⁰ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Agriculture in the Presidency,” 7.

“saw many things which must have enlarged their views and tempted them to depart from certain of their traditional grooves.”¹³¹ Congress leaders at the 1905 Benares exhibition suggested that “agriculturists” were the “backbone of India.”¹³² The Indian Government also paid for groups from the Bombay Presidency to attend the 1905 Benares exhibition, specifically *patels* (headmen of the village) and *kunbis* (members of the Indian agricultural caste, or cultivators).¹³³ Some workers from farms in Poona were taken to view the sections on “dairy, the exhibition of ploughing, crushing of sugarcane and ginning of cotton.”¹³⁴ Congress leaders aimed to bring modernity to rural villages through education. Widespread education on new agricultural processes meant increased economic growth across the country.

Agriculture was not typically represented as a feature of Western industrial modernity at nineteenth-century international exhibitions. Conceptions of Western modernity at nineteenth-century exhibitions were most often characterised by the rise of the industrial age through advances in technology and mechanisation. I suggest that agriculture played a central role in Indian colonial modernity. Mechanisation and new forms of technology were applied to industry as well as forms of agriculture India. Agriculture was considered as important as manufacturing, as noted by vernacular newspaper *Hitavadi*: “so long the Congress has devoted itself solely to politics and the country should congratulate itself that henceforward it will also direct its attention to the improvement of India’s agriculture and manufacturing industry.”¹³⁵

¹³¹ *Indian Textile Journal*, Dec. 1905: 95.

¹³² Zaidi and Zaidi, eds., “Indian National Congress (Twenty-First Session),” 700.

¹³³ *Indian Textile Journal*, “The Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, Bombay. The Following Letter from the Director of Land Records and Agriculture,” 12.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Indian Newspaper Reports, Part 1: Bengal, 1874-1903 (1901)*, 789.

For Congress leaders, economic and industrial regeneration, particularly the visions of this development on display at the Congress exhibitions, represented their path to progress. While small scale industry was a part of the Congress exhibitions, at this stage of moderate nationalism, more localised forms of industry were mentioned in the context of large-scale mechanised industrial development. Congress officials also aimed to illustrate that they understood the importance of industry, had the power to showcase the accomplishments of Indian machinery, and ultimately to demonstrate that they knew progress, could understand it, and therefore could begin to be responsible for its growth.

5.4 “The Ladies’ Section” and Swadeshi

This section moves to the involvement of women at the Congress gatherings, with a particular focus on the relationship between the swadeshi movement and the exhibitions. Women had been members of the Indian National Congress since at least 1889.¹³⁶ The 1904 Bombay exhibition was the first of the Congress sessions to devote a substantial section to the exhibits of items produced by both local and Western women. The “Ladies’ Section,” organised by women from the subcontinent, included displays of women’s ‘domestic industries’ from South Asian and European women, including contributions from the Royal School of Needlework and German Royal Princesses. Commentary on the Ladies’ Section also revealed the complexity of the Congress exhibitions, as women navigated their roles and relationship to swadeshi through the medium of display.

¹³⁶ Geraldine Forbes, “The Politics of Respectability: Indian Women and the Indian National Congress,” *The Indian National Congress: Centenary Highlights*, ed. D. A. Low (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 55.

C.A. Bayly notes that in Indian village culture between 1905 and 1910, women were often associated with textiles. The relationship between cloth, women, and women's roles in society was often idealised as closely connected to rural village life.¹³⁷ Shahida Lateef suggests that the late nineteenth century saw the expansion of women's roles outside of the home and changing social attitudes towards women's status.¹³⁸ The involvement of local women in the Congress exhibitions was remarkable in itself, as the demands on the 'respectable classes' of India often left little leisure time.¹³⁹ Women during this period were involved in the promotion of swadeshi, either by making goods, attending the Congress meetings and other public association gatherings, or otherwise supporting swadeshi. In October 1906 and March 1908, the Mahila Silpa Samiti, or Ladies' Industrial Society, held "Mahila Swadeshi Melas" in Calcutta, which displayed swadeshi goods.¹⁴⁰ They also, I suggest, played an essential role in the promotion of swadeshi in India, and also at the Congress exhibitions.

Women had played an important role in international exhibitions in Europe and America. Greenhalgh notes that the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition set the precedent for the inclusion of women's sections "as a necessary part of events all over the world up to 1939."¹⁴¹ While women had contributed exhibits to previous Congress exhibitions, the 1904 Bombay exhibition marked the first year in which women's contributions were specifically highlighted in the speeches on opening day and were the subject of widespread newspaper commentary. Special "Ladies and

¹³⁷ Bayly, "The origins of swadeshi," 312.

¹³⁸ Shahida Lateef, "The Indian Women's Movement and National Development: An Overview," *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, ed. Gail Minault (Delhi: Chanakya, 1981) 198.

¹³⁹ Forbes, "The Politics of Respectability," 59.

¹⁴⁰ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement of Bengal*, 116. Participation was generally limited to those of "respectable" women.

¹⁴¹ Greenhalgh, *Fair World*, 84.

Purdah Ladies” days were set aside for the sole use of female visitors, enabling women to become involved in the exhibition.¹⁴² The ‘Ladies’ Section’ at 1904 was primarily organised by prominent Bengali Saraladevi. Saraladevi was responsible for a number of other festivals that honoured Bengali heroes.¹⁴³ The Ladies’ Section was officially opened by Lady Lamington, wife of the governor of Bombay. A local woman and member of the organisational committee for the women’s sections, Miss Seerinbai Maneckjee Cursetjee, gave a speech on opening day in which she noted the participation of local and ‘English’ women: “in several of its principal towns, Indian ladies formed themselves into committees and in some places a few kindly inclined English ladies.”¹⁴⁴ 1904 Bombay joined in the tradition of displaying women’s pavilions at international exhibitions. Women at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia set the precedent for the organisation and management of their pavilions;¹⁴⁵ local women at 1904 Bombay were also in charge of their women’s sections. Some women served as judges, though not for any of the artwork or machinery; rather, they judged categories like “entertainment hat-trimming.”¹⁴⁶ Newspapers such as the *Times of India* praised the court, admiring the “fine section which the enterprising and public spirit of the ladies of Bombay have brought together.”¹⁴⁷

The women’s court also featured women artisans practising their trades, as Cursetjee announced in her opening address: “it gives us pleasure to announce that some fifty Industrial Institutions and Homes have also sent work done by them, and the Mulgamunder Convent in Travancore has sent under the charge of one of their

¹⁴² *Times of India* advertisement, 30 Dec. 1904.

¹⁴³ Forbes, “The Politics of Respectability,” 56.

¹⁴⁴ *Proceedings of the Twentieth Indian National Congress, Bombay, 1904*.

¹⁴⁵ Mary Frances Cordato, “Toward a New Century: Women and the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, 1876,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107.1 (Jan 1983): 114.

¹⁴⁶ *Times of India*, “Bombay Exhibition. The Café Chantant,” 6.

¹⁴⁷ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” 6.

sisters, some six girl lacemakers to actually work at our pavilion, showing the process of their industry.”¹⁴⁸ The women’s work was also praised by the *Times of India*: “in the Ladies’ Section, there is evidence on every hand of feminine taste and skill in arrangement. The fine art embroidery and tapestry work are choice, and an interested group of spectators constantly watched the women at their work.”¹⁴⁹ The skill and hard work of the women’s contributions were appreciated by nationalist leaders as particularly industrious. Furthermore, like the ‘experts’ in the special court in the textile section, the women artisans presented an alternative narrative to the western exhibitionary form of the ‘native’ on display. At the 1904 Bombay exhibition, the display of women lace makers was evidence of the vibrancy and collective momentum of the swadeshi movement across the subcontinent.

This exhibition emphasised ‘domestic industries,’ which included hand-spun textiles, examples of lace, and other embroideries. The Congress exhibitions both reflected the relationship between women and cloth and helped create it. The Ladies’ Section in 1904 was situated at the opposite end from machinery, agriculture, vegetable products, and the products of the Victoria Jubilee Institute. The court was positioned next to the displays of sewing machines, embroidery, jewellery, and cotton piece-goods. The emphasis on ‘domestic industries’ had been a common feature of women’s pavilions in earlier exhibitions in Britain and America; the 1876 Philadelphia Exhibition, for example, also focused on “domestic produce,” lace-making, and embroidery.¹⁵⁰ To the exhibition-goer, this positional dynamic led to the automatic association of women with the so-called ‘domestic industries’ undertaken by respectable women. Women were incorporated into a vision of industry. The swadeshi movement called attention to Indian-made industries and especially

¹⁴⁸ *Proceedings of the Twentieth Indian National Congress, Bombay, 1904*.

¹⁴⁹ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition: Some Impressions,” 6.

¹⁵⁰ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 175.

homespun cloth and local womens' displays fell under that category. The Congress exhibitions further allowed women to participate in the social and political swadeshi movement. The Ladies' Section illustrated the ways in which women participated in local textile and domestic industries, and publicised their contributions to swadeshi.

Some organisers of the women's sections aimed to bring together the role of women as agents of domesticity and the visions of swadeshi promoted by the Congress. Cursetjee, in her opening address at 1904 Bombay, suggested that the ultimate "motive" for the Ladies' Courts was to "initiate a small beginning for showing the variety of arts which exist in various parts of India and to revive old industries and develop new ones for the women of India."¹⁵¹ Cursetjee firmly aligned the contributions of women with the overall goals of modern industrialisation of the Congress exhibitions, linking women's domestic industries to economic and industrial development and ultimately, the prosperity of the country. Furthermore, Purbrick argues that domestic industries like lacemaking were "praised for providing industrial work and teaching industrial behaviour."¹⁵² The display of lacemaking at 1904 Bombay also represented the dedication of women to industrial and economic developments. Cursetjee alluded to the varied definition of industry that was on display at the Congress exhibitions: not only did it mean large machinery and institutions for the means of production, but small-scale goods produced by hands and small tools.

One of the most remarkable features of this exhibition was the involvement of British and European women. Princesses of the Royal Family sent over examples of work with William Wedderburn, a prominent British member of the Indian National Congress. These objects were displayed in the "different classes of western

¹⁵¹ *Proceedings of the Twentieth Indian National Congress, Bombay, 1904.*

¹⁵² Purbrick, "Defining Nation," 62.

handiwork,” which included “beautiful specimens in lace, embroidery, needlework, enamel work, painting and so forth.”¹⁵³ Other items included contributions from the “Prince’s Garden, London” and the Royal School of Needlework. It was not only members of the British public who sent contributions, but also individuals from across Europe. One of the most noted exhibits, for instance, was a painted fan by Princess Visteria of Schleswig-Holstein, which was a gift to Queen Victoria. Princess Henry of Battenberg sent over a “beautifully worked altar cloth, with a handsome border and a central cross and the sacred monogram in white and gold.”¹⁵⁴ The displays of work from the Royal Princesses in the Ladies’ Section were popular with the public; their exhibits were “continually surrounded by a throng of spectators, especially lady visitors eagerly admiring and discussing the different articles.”¹⁵⁵

Local women’s items and those of Western women were often displayed together in the same case. For instance, Mrs. Benwana’s display case was detailed by the *Times of India*:

Mrs. Benwana’s show case has a varied assortment of fancy work. It includes Greek vase, collars and embroidery; silk embroidery done at the Royal College of Athens; old Irani embroidery by a Irani Parsee lady named Manokbai S Irani; old Flemish embroidery work; pieces of old lace point D’Alaneon and point D’Angleterre; Irish lace and crocket collars; specimens of French embroidery; Italian embroidery and needle-work; Gesso work; Indian ‘Kinkhob’ with appliqué flowers; a Greek lace square; and a finely done copy of French fillet lace and linen. Three valuable pieces of old work arrested the attention, one being an old English needlework picture of Queen Anne’s time, depicting ‘The Judgment of Paris,’ while the other two were a couple of pieces of old English tapestry.¹⁵⁶

These largely domestic objects were compiled from women with different cultural, regional, and religious backgrounds. The very involvement of local and Western

¹⁵³ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition. Exhibits of the Royal Princesses,” *Times of India*, 30 Dec. 1904: 8.

¹⁵⁴ *Times of India*, “The Bombay Exhibition. Exhibits of the Royal Princesses,” 8.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

women from so many different areas, albeit women typically from the upper social classes, indicated that the Ladies' Section was at least in part used to universalise the role of women as agents of domesticity. Differences between paid industry and unpaid leisure were collapsed as feminine 'work' or duty. Mary Frances Cordato points out in her analysis of women's involvement with the 1876 Philadelphia Exhibition that women's pavilions helped provide "a sound basis for the union and mutual self-helpfulness of universal sisterhood."¹⁵⁷ Cordato also suggests that the "creation of a separate pavilion helped mobilize the collective consciousness of all women."¹⁵⁸ The national politics of swadeshi, which typically did not include the idea of universal sisterhood, offered an opportunity for women in the subcontinent to come together for their own purposes.

The women involved in the Ladies' Section created a space in which they could participate in swadeshi movement. They reminded visitors that their involvement was tied to overall industrial development of the country, and the country could not afford to ignore their contributions to India's economic health. In this way, the women's courts were a way in which women could gain access to a form of political power through the organisation and display of objects, and through their association with the swadeshi movement.

5.5 Conclusion

The Congress exhibitions, this chapter suggests, represented the epitome of the swadeshi movement, where the political ideas of swadeshi were made material for the Indian public, and provided a space for women to be involved in the nationalist

¹⁵⁷ Cordato, "Toward a New Century," 134.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

movement. During this formative period before the boycott of the Congress in 1906 and the split between “moderates” and “extremists,” the exhibitions provided an important arena in which to analyse the complexity of the swadeshi movement. This chapter revealed a variety of different views on the ways in which Congress elites and the nationalist press envisioned India’s economic and industrial future, allowing for a multitude of debates about industry, trade, and commerce that framed issues of nationalism. While small-scale and traditional industry was present at Congress exhibitions, commentators often advocated for large-scale industrialisation across many of India’s traditional industries. The Congress exhibitions provided an area in which the Congress made a case for the introduction and expansion of modern industrial development in the subcontinent. Through the staging of industry on the subcontinent, this chapter suggests, the Congress also made a case for a move towards colonial self-government, with their organisation at the helm.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

At its core, this thesis has replied to Peter Hoffenberg’s question: “how might South Asians have turned discussions and agendas about exhibiting history, art, science, relics, and material culture itself to their own political advantages by the final years of the nineteenth century?”¹ It is clear that colonial subjects used the forms of display for their own purposes, including building narratives of progress, modernity, and nationalism in order to conceptualise a political community: in short, to construct India as a modern nation.

Using an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together historical research, postcolonial studies, and exhibition studies, by examining exhibited objects and reading across a range of un-researched primary archival sources, this thesis has augmented historical and cultural theoretical debates brought forward by Peter Hoffenberg and Antoinette Burton. It has analysed the context in which colonial knowledge was interrogated in the metropole and the ways in which knowledge was later staged in the subcontinent. While Hoffenberg focuses more broadly on the connections between international exhibitions in the metropole, “sets of ideas, social visions, and cultural practices,” and national and imperial identities,² this study has analysed what happened as these ideas played out for South Asians. In order to map this process, I traced the influence of a set of ideas in nineteenth century travel narratives through to the staging of early twentieth century Indian national exhibitions. This study has built on Burton’s analyses as I considered how South Asians negotiated with imperial power on display in order to establish their authorial

¹ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 59.

² Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, xiv.

agency. Deploying Burton's framework, I examined how available the imperial narratives of display were for refiguration by South Asians for their own purposes.

The thesis has sought to reveal the ways in which colonial subjects articulated the construction of the modern nation through the discursive formations of the exhibition. The re-reading of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 deconstructs exhibitionary practice through the lens of colonial subjects as a way of providing an alternative framing of these exhibitions. I have argued that the appropriation and re-articulation of the forms of exhibition at the Indian National Congress exhibitions between 1901 and 1905 provided a space for the expression of colonial agency. Through an analysis of these displays, I have examined a set of moments that are not usually brought together in the same analytical frame: an account of imperial exhibitions with ones which were national. This analytical conjunction aligns the research with others who have recently explored the emergence of colonial modernity, for example, Livia Rezende's recent work on the representation of Brazil as a modernising nation at international exhibitions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³

Chapter Two considered the ways that South Asian travel narratives represented the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. As this chapter illustrated, the travelogues were intertextual, as the same locations were visited and discussed in similar ways. Representations of the Crystal Palace in the visitors' writing began to establish particular 'forms' of exhibition, especially the notion that display equalled, or led to, progress: an idea that was central to the later Indian National Congress exhibitions. This chapter also re-positioned the theories of 'wonder' and the 'microcosm' in terms of South Asian traveller considerations of modernity at

³ Livia Rezende, "The raw and the manufactured: Brazilian modernity and national identity as projected in international exhibitions (1862-1922)," Royal College of Art Ph.D. diss. (2010).

Sydenham. Connections between display, progress, and modernity were made more ‘concrete’ by the microcosmic aspect of the Crystal Palace. While travel writers identified with British ideas of civilisation, they used their authorial control to offer a class-based critique of British society; furthermore, they negotiated India’s place within narratives of progress. The use of notions of ‘wonder’ at the technological advancements of Sydenham provided a language of authority for writers like Jhinda Ram, who used it as a strategy to shape ideas of industrial development. Taken together, the travelogues were part of print culture in the subcontinent, and contributed to the development of the idea of India as an “imagined community.”⁴

The chapter also raised questions of authorship and the authority of the writer’s national vision. I traced links between their writing in late nineteenth century, formed in relation to the Crystal Palace, and their projection of a particular view in India in the early twentieth century. Some travel writers, like Romesh Chunder Dutt and Lala Baijnath, later became influential nationalist leaders. In the late nineteenth century, Dutt expressed his unhappiness with the lack of Indian industrial development in his travel writing. Later in the twentieth century, as he considered the Congress exhibitions in relation to swadeshi, he expressed similar views and called for the fostering of local industries. Dutt’s example suggests the influence of these writers in terms of their colonial positions and their legacies.

These travellers worked to define their political communities through the medium of exhibition and their commentaries. The narratives also illustrate which issues could and could not be addressed; while class and poverty were freely criticised, the question of racial hierarchies represented in displays was rarely mentioned. Exhibitions in the metropole often produced passionate, and varied,

⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

responses to ideas of difference, but on this issue South Asians were silent. Travel to Britain, and visits to the exhibitions, enabled colonial subjects like Ram and Baijnath to envision India's future and to establish their authority as colonial subjects of their own making through their writing. Their silence on ethnographic displays, however, demonstrates the limits of this agency, as these travellers had to work within "the discursive frameworks provided by colonialism."⁵

Chapter Three, in an analysis of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, offered evidence and a detailed nuanced account of the broad formations in which we are to understand exhibitions that have been provided by Burton and Hoffenberg. This research also complicates the timelines of exhibitions commonly found in the scholarly literature, since South Asian visitors visited Sydenham and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition at the same time. Both exhibitions were used to consider and debate local issues. It is clear from the travel narratives that the memory of the Great Exhibition of 1851, cultivated in the space of the Crystal Palace, affected understandings of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition: the 1886 Exhibition, for example, focused on empire rather than the industry of 1851. The 1886 Exhibition, however, engendered much debate in the Indian press about industry in the subcontinent. I would suggest, therefore, that 1851's emphasis on manufacturing was a filter through which these writers considered all exhibitions. Through a detailed reading of specific sources of South Asian writing, both Chapters Two and Three revise how we read exhibitions in the metropole through the specific lens of the travellers. These exhibitions were rendered open to appropriation by South Asians as they articulated alternate narratives of the exhibition, such as using the exhibition in order to analyse the role of industry in India.

⁵ Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, 191.

Chapter Two's analysis on the formation of Indian colonial modernity was balanced by Chapter Three's focus on the process of nation-building at exhibitions in the metropole. South Asian criticism of the Indian Government's policies is an early example of the arguments used later by economic nationalists at the Congress exhibitions and in other political arenas, a major characteristic of moderate nationalism. This chapter focused specifically on how South Asians used these displays to establish certain exhibitionary 'forms' that were later appropriated and integrated with local practices at the Congress exhibitions, including representations of Indian art and design, education and entertainment, and the meanings of electricity and progress. As South Asians moved through the exhibitionary spaces, they began to make connections between display, industry, and nationalism through their experiences of both the educational and pleasurable aspects. Exhibitions, both in the metropole and at the Congress exhibitions, engendered complex critical debate on what it meant to be Indian, the meanings of progress, and the economic and political future of India.

Travel writers' commentary on India's handicraft and textile contributions to the 1886 Exhibition also exposed fractures in the overwhelmingly propagandistic displays. The travellers negotiated colonial discourse to argue for a higher place for themselves within the imperial hierarchy. Some writers even hinted at a narrative outside the space of British imperial discourse. The special correspondent of the *Indian Mirror*, for instance, discussed ancient Greek and Roman's appreciation of Indian textiles, and Dutt articulated ideas of nationhood based on craft. Furthermore, this chapter examined how ideas of racial difference played out in the discourse of South Asians in the contrast between G. N. Nadkarni and T. N. Mukharji, revealing the multiplicity of perspectives even amongst South Asian urban elites.

Many of these writers also used the site to comment on, and negotiate, relations between India and Britain, which would be an important element in the discourse of “moderate nationalism” so prevalent at meetings of the Indian National Congress. Travel to Sydenham offered an opportunity for South Asians to construct an image of India against an image of the ‘West.’ The travelogues had an audience before the structures in existence at the later Congress exhibitions.

The second half of the study moved to examine the staging of Indian National Congress Exhibitions in the subcontinent in the early twentieth century. While the first half of this thesis analysed South Asians as visitors and examined the different ways in which the travel writers ‘gathered up’ knowledge, this section addresses their role as material makers. Chapters Four and Five examined how nationalists articulated forms of national destiny through different visions of industrialisation. Exhibitions are a borrowed form that travelled all over the world, and these chapters analysed the ways in which this process played out in the colonial Indian context. The research examines how exhibitions contributed to the process of making modern nationhood in a colonial context. The Congress exhibitions, which were the first to be organised and hosted by South Asians in the subcontinent, played an important role as Congress officials aimed to create a modern ‘India’ beyond the exhibition experience and in the space of India itself.

Chapter Four focused specifically on the largest of the Congress’ displays held in Bombay, 1904. These displays were highly organised, bureaucratic, and well-publicised, with exhibitions committees dedicated to the collection of articles from local businesses and manufactures, as well as to the display of the newest and latest technologies from Britain. Many of the displays, which included vegetable products, as well as exhibits from Native States, handloom, leather goods, and textiles, were

considered representative of ‘Indian’ craft. The Congress clearly demarcated what was considered ‘Indian’ and what was not. In this sense, it was an explicitly nationalist exercise. Exhibitions order the world culturally, and in this case, India was represented as an industrial world.

The Congress borrowed from the metropolitan exhibitionary model but made these, imperially inflected, forms their own. Displayed articles, for instance, were subject to a hybrid classification system borrowed from Europe. The equal status given to the categories “Agricultural” and “Industrial” indicated the importance of agriculture for Indian modernity, which was not typically found at nineteenth-century exhibitions in the metropole. Mechanised entertainments were commonly found in British and French exhibitions; at the Congress exhibitions, Western forms of leisure were specifically incorporated into populist local ways of seeing in *tamasha*. Visions of the modern were informed by Western forms and local agendas. The Congress’s emphasis on the processes of industrialisation, especially on machinery, illustrated their commitment to displaying modernity. Officials pushed to illustrate India as having the potential to be modernised: their grasp upon progress illustrated by their ability to organise exhibitions. Hosting the displays allowed the Congress to legitimate its standing as a representative community and to imagine and define India as a political body. The organisation and staging of these exhibitions pushed the Congress to the forefront of the nationalist movement: a position that it held through later independence movements.

The Bombay ‘Healtheries’ exhibit provided an opportunity for the Congress to insert itself into modern discourses of regulated sanitation and public health. While the exhibit was run by an Anglo-Indian organisation, it was incorporated into the Congress exhibition, an example of the complex relationship between the British

in India and the colonised subjects. This complexity is reflected in the organisation of the Congress itself, which had many prominent Anglo-Indian members and presidents, including prominent civil servant, William Wedderburn. The Healtheries exhibit is an example of how colonial subjects used their national exhibition to lay claim to a form of knowledge—that is, public health—and to disseminate their vision of the modern urban city. The Healtheries exhibit perhaps best answers Hoffenberg’s query: “might this not only be disruptive, but potentially destructive of the colonizer’s political enterprise in India?” when the subaltern became the exhibition official.⁶ If colonial subjects like the Congress elites could adapt and circulate ideas of public health as their own, was there any form of knowledge not available to them?

Chapter Five repositioned the role of exhibitions in considerations of Indian moderate nationalism and expands current understanding of swadeshi. This chapter repositioned swadeshi in relation to industry rather than only handicraft. Exhibitions became an important locale in which the ideas of swadeshi, and therefore nationalist development, were debated. Exhibitions provided a space where the political and economic ideals of swadeshi could be realised in a material way—where swadeshi could be actually seen, touched, and tasted. Women were also involved in the swadeshi movement and industrial education at the Congress exhibitions.

This chapter underscored the complexities of Indian nationalist development in relation to industrialisation, specifically the multiple views of moderate nationalism that competed for attention: from those that were politically moderate to those that were more radical and explicitly anti-colonial. The analysis revealed the ways in which various perspectives on agriculture, industry, and famine influenced

⁶ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, 59.

ideas on India's future modernity. While the Congress advocated for large-scale technocratic development, other publications expressed concern with the effects of mass production on traditional 'ancient industries' and artisans. It is clear that the exhibitions were a battleground for debates on India's future progress. As Sarkar has noted, the ultimate goal of moderate nationalists was colonial self-government; for some nationalists, the Congress was well positioned to bring material progress to India.

The Indian National Congress exhibitions in the early twentieth century complicated the received exhibition model. Exhibitions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were traditionally staged at the service of the Western imperial agenda. India was represented by the metropole as a once-great but stagnant civilisation, one now conquered and ruled by Britain. It was exoticised as Britain's 'jewel in the crown,' and it was perceived as a land of raw materials useful for manufacturing and industry in the West. Congress officials challenged this notion by presenting their own version of India, one that was becoming industrial and modern. The hosting of knowledge by the colonial subjects themselves was deeply disruptive to colonial aims. While many international exhibitions used the format as propaganda, the aims of the Congress were not to propagate a colonial enterprise. South Asians, at home and in the subcontinent, re-articulated exhibitions for their own agendas. This thesis has explored what it meant to be a South Asian visiting exhibitions in Britain: how the 'other' became 'not other' in the staging of their own exhibitions.

This thesis has aimed to make more complex the histories and theories of Indian nationalism through historical manoeuvres not done before by tracing the influence of a set of ideas in a nineteenth-century travelogue to the staging of a

nationalist exhibition in the early twentieth century. This research has analysed the ways in which Indian nationalism was represented in exhibitionary form on the subcontinent.

The South Asians discussed in this thesis, as members of urban elite classes on the Indian subcontinent, are not ‘subaltern,’ or without agency or a voice. They occupy a complex space within imperial discourse. Within exhibition studies, the easy opposition between the East as the object of study and the West as its viewer, on closer examination, is not really upheld. The simple binaries fail to recognise the complexity of responses, accommodations, and appropriations that South Asians had to negotiate in the face of imperial discourse. This research has attempted to be a part of “new theoretical models,” as Said notes, “that upset or at the very least radically alter the prevailing paradigmatic norms.”⁷ Although scholars have tried to see these exhibitions as contributing to an imperial archive, there was also within it space for South Asian narratives to adopt and appropriate. It is clear that the Congress exhibitions examined in this thesis did not reflect a straightforward implanting of an imperial idea. This research suggests that these exhibitions might open up the possibility of seeing all exhibitions staged in the colonies in this way.

⁷ Edward Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered,” *Cultural Critique* 1 (Autumn 1985): 104.

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