The Interstitial Representation of Militaristic Masculinity in Amitav Ghosh's *Flood of Fire*

Gaana Jayagopalan

Abstract

This critical reading of Amitav Ghosh's *Flood of Fire* (2015), the final instalment of the *Ibis* trilogy that fictionalises India's role in the Opium Wars, evaluates the representation of imperial masculinities through the interpretive lens of cosmopolitan openness. Discourses of masculinity and soldierhood during nineteenth-century colonial India are closely analysed to explicate Ghosh's representation of masculinity. Reading the militarized masculinity of the Indian sepoy Kesri Singh in the novel, configured by prevailing notions of hegemonic masculinity as a British soldier and a *Rajput* warrior, I argue here that positions of hegemonic masculinities are characterized by various anxieties, problematising cosmopolitan feelings and creating an ambivalent sense of openness to the Other.

Introduction

Narratives of war and the representation of law in literature are notable in works by Dostoevsky, Kafka, Tolstoy, among others. The two intersecting domains of literary narratives, and war and law, potentially generate fascinating readings around inflections of war, legality and their narrativization. Drawing on a representation from the Global South, this paper analyses Indian anglophone author Amitav Ghosh's *Flood of Fire* (2015) and critically evaluates the representation of imperial masculinities[1] of martiality through the lens of 'cosmopolitan openness' (Skrbis and Woodward). By locating these masculinities in discourses of war, the paper highlights the "material and historical specificity" (Sinha 7) of the performative militaristic masculinity and soldierhood of the *sepoy*[2] during nineteenth-century colonial India. Reading the cultural significance of a sepoy at war, the paper foregrounds Ghosh's critical evaluation of masculinity and soldierhood, conditioned by economic cosmopolitanism, in the first Opium war that was, at its heart, a political conflict with far-reaching legal and economic policies for China, colonial India and the British Empire.

Free Trade and economic cosmopolitanism created a legitimizing discourse for the English East India Company's opium trade with China, leading to the Opium War. While the moral strand of cosmopolitanism urges one to consider an openness to the Other, invoking a universal human plane, a cosmopolitan openness to markets in its economic dimension of Free Trade was a violent mode of profit-making, as was evidenced in the Opium Wars (Erikson). In *Flood of Fire*, Kesri Singh, the masculine Rajput sepoy, exemplifies this contradictory cosmopolitan position as a sepoy fighting for the British forces: Kesri Singh's fierce Rajput masculinity is affirmed through his role as a sepoy in the British forces, fighting in a war that is legitimized by the economic cosmopolitanism of Free Trade (Cain and Hopkins). However, being

[1] By imperial masculinities, I mean those discourses of masculinity that were prevalent during the nineteenth-century Victorian era in England as well as imperial India, which fall under the purview of hegemonic masculinities, highlighted through embodied material practices like the military, trade, literature and culture of the time. The term also iterates masculinities in the imperial context as being "discursively produced, fragile, and aspirational". (Gopinath)

[2] Anglicized form of the Persian 'sipahi' meaning 'soldier.'

a sepoy at war locates him in an ambivalent subject position of a Rajput sepoy whose masculinity is sustained in the elimination of the Other, while also simultaneously (although fleetingly, but movingly) recognising the death of the Other as futile. This latter affective recognition is central to the argument here: although Kesri recognises the futility of fighting, his identity as a valorous masculine Rajput sepoy is conserved only when he sets aside his moral cosmopolitan feelings to fight in a war built on economic cosmopolitanism.

Overview of *Flood of Fire*

In the novel, militarism and soldierhood are worlds exclusive to men and male experiences at war. Ghosh positions his engagement with militaristic masculinity in the interstitial node of a sepoy at war. The novel charts the negotiation of masculinity culminating in the First Opium War fought on the shores of Canton and how the discourse of Free Trade, conserved by the philosophy of moral cosmopolitanism, led to the justification of the Opium war, which changed the political, legal and economic landscape of China.

In *Flood of Fire*, Ghosh imaginatively redraws the fierce British expeditionary forces dismantling the insular Chinese foreign trade laws, supported by Indian sepoy regiments. The novel chronicles, among other plotlines, the journey of Kesri Singh, a *Havildar*[3] in the twenty-fifth regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry, from Calcutta to the shores of Hong Kong and Canton to fight for the Empire overseas. Kesri's account provides a picture of the war from the position of sepoys in British troop regiments fighting overseas, and their role in the transformation of the Chinese laws of the land.

The First Opium War (1839) was a conflict between the Chinese (who recognized that the illegal circulation of opium in China had led to its large-scale depravation), and the East India Company that represented the interests of several selfish individual traders. The British expeditionary forces, including Indian sepoys, fought the war on behalf of the Company. In this confluence of the Company and the

[3] A low-ranking sepoy in the British forces.

army fighting the Chinese law against aggressive foreign trade, Ghosh illustrates the changing fortunes of the East India Company that significantly transformed the political economy of South Asia. At the end of the war, aided by relentless British pressure, China was forced to cede Hong Kong through the Treaty of Nanking, along with two other islands as ports of trade to carry forward the Free Trade of the English East India Company from 1842 onwards. Hong Kong also became a British enclave.

Locating Cosmopolitanism, the Opium Trade, and the First Opium War

British traders began to persuade the Chinese *Hong*[4] merchants to open their restricted trade system in the spirit of Free Trade cosmopolitanism, which envisaged a global market with minimal interventions. Opium was produced and transported from India to Canton by the English East India Company and sold illegally in China to fulfil Britain's demand for tea (Chung; Trocki).[5] The stand-off between the upright Commissioner, Lin Zexu, and the traders of the East India Company began to grow acrimonious with the Canton trading-system placing restrictions on foreign trade in general, and opium trade in particular. Foreign traders in the *Hong* were not provided with food and water as per the directions of the Commissioner. Chinese officials imprisoned notorious traders, Chinese smugglers and lascars of the British vessels for their continued illegal activity, while some were executed in full public view. The situation reached its peak with the seizure and destruction of several chests of contraband opium worth nearly two million pounds (Melancon). All this is also fictionalised in Ghosh's trilogy.

In Ghosh's trilogy, this line of economic cosmopolitanism which justifies the Opium Wars through the notion that the Chinese were

[4] *Hong* is used to refer both to the building in Canton where foreign trade was allowed, as well as the Chinese merchant intermediaries who enabled trade between European traders and inland China.

[5] India's forests were cleared to enable large scale opium production and this opium was processed and packed in factories in India. Chests of opium were then moved to Canton from where it was smuggled inland into China (Trocki; Chung).

not 'open' to Free Trade is also undergirded by cosmopolitanism as a feeling, a lived experience, that curtails openness in the hegemonic masculine position of a sepoy. Therefore, the cosmopolitanism that came to define Free Trade's principles of openness to markets was violent in forcibly enabling Free Trade with China through war. This was characterised by the presence of masculine forces whose own position as soldiers was to sustain the violence of this cosmopolitanism's profiteering vector. The hegemonic masculine position disables a feeling of openness to the Other, a feeling that cannot be exercised so long as the masculine position of a soldier is held. It is this double bind that is of interest to me here.

The fundamental premise of cosmopolitanism is that one must extend the sense of self to also include others rather than merely associate with one's own affiliations (Appiah). Kwame Anthony Appiah elucidates:

> There are two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism. One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kin, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives. Which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our differences. (xiii)

In a similar vein, Fuyuki Kurasawa's critical cosmopolitanism and its three analytical components

> an outward turn characterized by a willingness to encounter different ways of doing and thinking that prompt a radical decentering of familiar or proximate cultural and ethical horizons; a moment of in-betweenness, whereby one negotiates and attempts to make different socio-cultural world-

> views intelligible to oneself; and an outward turn marked by an expanded viewpoint through which to denaturalize and radically put into question the doxa of one's own socio-cultural worldviews and practices. (282)

However, this cosmopolitan openness, when appropriated in the economic rationalism of Free-Trade, bears a different inflection of economic cosmopolitanism altogether. Political economy during this period was largely governed by Adam Smith's moral take on free markets. Critiquing conventional mercantilism that served to protect markets by increasing exports and reducing imports, Smith believed that free markets led to good trade and this, in turn, led to better social actions between the trading countries. Smith characterizes this with the idea of an 'invisible hand' of rational self-interest which governs a mutually beneficial system of trade, establishing that the Other stands to benefit from this arrangement too. In its 'altruistic spirit,' economic action is reconfigured into a social and moral one (Smith). It is interesting to note how the moral strand of cosmopolitanism is invoked to scaffold the economic, rationalist, 'cosmopolitan' Free Trade, thereby conserving both for profit. With time, quite ironically, however, Free Trade then became the value-system that rationalized capitalist market systems.[6] Benjamin Burnham, one of the principal Opium traders in the novel, sums up the entire opium war rather succinctly as:

> This venture […] was itself an opportunity of unmatched dimensions. Not only would vast profits be created when the markets of China were opened to the world, but the expedition would also establish a new pattern of war-making, in which men of business would be involved in the entirety of the enterprise, from the drafting of strategy to dealing with Parliament, informing the public, and providing logistical support […] Every chest would fetch a fortune. (Ghosh 282)

[6] Walter Mignolo critiques another dimension of Immanuel Kant's cosmopolitanism: "Kant's *cosmopolitanism* is a secular philosophic-political version of *Christianism*, the theological one, and of *consumerism*, the economic one"(93).

In this context, the moral philosophy of cosmopolitanism served to legitimize the economic practices of the time. Elias Rothblatt (2012) delineates the role played by Free Trade in enabling both masculinity as well as the currency of opium. He observes:

> Masculinity is largely reflective of the nature of the all-male world inhabited by the country traders in Canton [...] In such a society, masculinity became the paradigm through which power was expressed, the most powerful members of this society assuming the status of a 'man among men.' Given that it was a merchant society, power accompanied a man's success in business and success in business came from the opium trade. When this success was challenged by the Chinese suppression of the opium trade, then, these merchants found it beneficial to espouse the rhetoric of free trade. (31–32)

In such a scenario, opium traders, in their 'gentlemanly spirit,' purportedly espoused the spirit of moral cosmopolitanism, perpetuating the Free Trade agenda. This dimension of a cosmopolitan worldview of Free Trade also necessitated notions of 'gentlemanly capitalism' to prevail. Drawing from this, Ghosh brings both trade and masculinity into an intersectional axis in the novel that drives the events of the Opium War to generate a triangulated paradigm where trade, war and masculinity are negotiated.[7]

Background of the Sepoy

A reading of this militaristic masculinity is particularly important to understand gender prescriptions and proscriptions that played a role in the construction of the images of the Empire. Arguing for a study of colonial masculinity, Mrinalini Sinha observes:

[7] Trading with the East India Company was considered to be a gentlemanly pursuit that hugely affected the perception of masculinity among English men. Read Rothblatt, Cain and Hopkins for more on this.

> "[m]asculinity, seen thus, traverses multiple axes of race, caste, class, sexuality, religion and ethnicity…. The contribution of the historiography of colonial India, then, is significant precisely as an example of what would be involved in writing a history of masculinity" (446).

Ghosh's *Flood of Fire* is an example of fictional engagement with such nineteenth-century colonial masculinity located at the interstices of war and military discourses. The British Empire essentially built itself from the economic and social capital generated from the rich resources of South Asia. This was possible due to the Empire's military expansionist projects, especially in India. These expansionist projects in trade soon came to be conserved by military intervention. Sepoys were recruited into the imperial army of the British forces that controlled large parts of the Indian subcontinent (Wickremesekera). Ghosh's work amplifies the role of Indian military in the overseas expeditionary forces that played a crucial role in the First Opium War.

Kesri, the central character of the critical reading here, is a masculine, Rajput warrior. He has to accommodate a new kind of soldiering that the Company army expects him to perform in China. One kind is characterised by his Rajput caste's masculinity where it was "the duty of every Rajput to give up his life for the honour of his caste" (Ghosh 306), and another, contrasting, English kind of soldierhood where the uniforms included paraphernalia that Rajput recruits found to be "trussed like a chicken" with laces, collars and waistbands all "bundled up" (97) making it impossible to fight in, implying in effect that their martiality—and by extension their masculinity—may be compromised in this new way of fighting, if they were to be outperformed because of their uniforms.

Militarizing Manliness: Cultural Discourses of the Male Martial Body

The Bengal Native Infantry was a part of many successful campaigns and expeditionary forces undertaken by the British overseas. It was

constituted primarily by men belonging to the warrior community of the Rajputs, the one that Kesri belongs to in the novel. With the British gaining political ground with their military prowess and beginning to enlist sepoys, the function and purpose of many Rajput warriors began to change (Ellinwood).

Dewit Ellinwood observes how there was a synonymy established between masculinity, or 'manliness' as was the word often used at the time (247), and the gentlemen and officers:

> When British officials looked at Rajputs and other members of the 'martial races,' they acknowledged their masculinity. Yet they qualified this admiration with the view that such Indians did not possess the manly leadership qualities necessary for serving as army officers. The Rajputs considered British military personnel to be manly, but this did not detract from their own sense of manliness. This mutual acceptance of and admiration for masculinity was another part of the picture of colonial masculinities […] 'Masculinity' and 'martiality' in both these societies emphasized honour or 'izzat', courage, vigour, loyalty, and expressiveness. (248–9)

This dimension of masculinity seen in the Rajput context also makes loyalty as well as *izzat*, or honour, central to their exhibition of masculinity. Kesri represents an inflection of performing hegemonic masculinity characterized by a movement from being 'manly' to one of manhood. This movement occurs through what Herbert Sussman terms a *cultivation* of the idea of manhood. In his work *Victorian Masculinities* (1995), a critical evaluation of the prescriptions and normativity of Victorian masculinity, Sussman argues that much of early Victorian era is characterized by a distinction between manliness and maleness. He observes:

> Maleness is defined in essentialist terms as the possession of innate potency or 'untutored energy' […] Manliness is defined not as this essence but as a hard-won achievement, a continuous process of maintaining perilous psychic balance characterized by regulation of this potentially destructive male energy. (25)

In Ghosh's novel, Kesri's cultivation of manliness occurs through the cultural discourses that inscribe the masculinity of a solider through its public display: a rigorous discipline of the body via drills and exercises of wrestling, as well as through martiality, thus creating different calibrations of masculinity. Kesri's training in the *Akhara*, or the traditional gymnasium, is another public space where his Rajput masculinity is cultivated. The wrestling pit of the battalion, too, serves as an important space to negotiate masculinity and fitness for fighting the battle.

Yet another dimension that added to military masculinity was its sartoriality. Kesri inhabits the worlds of both Rajput aristocratic masculinity as well as the British military world. In fact, on several occasions, both these distinct worlds of masculinity complemented Kesri's sense of self.[8] For instance, his belief that "to put on a good show was a part of soldiering" (1) leads him to climb the ladder of hierarchy in his battalion. He believed that his own physical appearance of his trousers that hugged his thighs "like a second skin, outlining his musculature," or his chest that "was wide enough that the 'wings' on his shoulders looked like weapons rather than ornaments" (1-3) added to his masculinity. This creates a clear impression of the enhanced martiality of his personality, and reinforces his affectation of masculinity as a Rajput sepoy in the British forces, although he looked visually different from a warrior in traditional Rajput armies.

This also furthers the normative behavioural ideals of masculinities: Kesri's masculinity is conserved by notions of being a soldier belonging

[8] Another parallel interesting instance is the autobiographical account of a sepoy, Sitaram, translated by Lieutenant Colonel Norgate in 1873. The work titled *From Sepoy to Subedar: Being the life and Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, a native officer of the Bengal Army written and related by himself* (Pandey) is a fascinating account of the sepoy life in colonial Indian army between 1812 and 1860 in the voice of the sepoy himself.

to the Rajput caste which creates a currency of masculinity conserved in a valorous elimination of the Other. This reinforces that a moral cosmopolitan feeling is difficult to sustain in and through a masculine position predicated on killing 'the enemy,' which Kesri sees differently: "So much death; so much destruction – and that too visited upon a people who had neither attacked nor harmed men who were so intent on engulfing them in this flood of fire" (505). It is this ambivalent position that maps the contours of Kesri's cosmopolitan openness and masculinity as a sepoy at war.

Cosmopolitanism and Discourses of Masculinity

Cosmopolitanism has been used spectrally here to examine the strengths of negotiating positions of masculinity of a soldier at war. Gerard Delanty (2009) envisages cosmopolitan moments as those where there is some kind of a transformation that takes place in the interaction between identities and cultures. He argues that "[w]ithout the transformative moment it is meaningless to speak of cosmopolitanism. But it must also be demonstrated that something has been learnt from the encounter of cultures" (177). The important point to register in Ghosh's representation is the ambivalence of a cosmopolitan feeling in Kesri in the context of socially engineered community expectations with regard to his masculinity.

Discourses of masculinity that prevailed in the militaristic conceptions of the masculine self, therefore, draw our attention to a dimension of cosmopolitanism that requires critical attention. I here borrow from Zlatko Skrbis and Ian Woodward's ideas of "Cosmopolitan Openness" (2011) and Fuyuki Kurasawa's "Critical Cosmopolitanism" (2011) here. Skrbis and Woodward clarify that normative and moral cosmopolitanism is informed by a characteristic of cosmopolitan openness where "the idea of openness serves as a kind of epistemological principle of cosmopolitanism: it limits and fixates the definitional horizon by reminding us that beyond openness lies a sphere of all things un-cosmopolitan" (53). Using this frame, I explicate how Kesri recognizes his subject position

as a soldier in another land, informed by his realization of an impossibility of responding to the Other with a cosmopolitan openness so long as he remains a sepoy.

Kesri's movement from his own village to being a sepoy in the British army is enmeshed within the hegemonic masculine position he holds as a Rajput. He *cultivates* his masculinity through martiality by means of duels, uniforms, and fighting the battle in China for the British forces and their economic cosmopolitan argument that fuels the war. However, he recognizes the futility of violence in the end. Kesri cannot be merciful to the Other so long as he inheres his subject position as a Rajput sepoy in the British army. This frames how Kesri's masculine positions prevent him from extending a cosmopolitan openness to the Other completely. Despite the recognition that as a human Kesri can extend an openness, as a Rajput sepoy, he cannot afford to display this openness, which would dismantle his masculinity.

This recognition is an illustration of Kurasawa's critical cosmopolitanism: a negative critique of prevalent structures of domination and in its place offer an alternative critique that roots principles of cosmopolitanism in a more material world (280). Kesri Singh's evaluation of his role in the war illuminates this:

> [H]e too had sworn an oath to the British and could not now go back on his word without dishonour. He tried to find some comfort in these thoughts, but without success. The question kept coming back to him: So much death; so much destruction – what was it all for?" (505-506)

Here, Ghosh provides an alternative critique to this profit-based cosmopolitan thought through Kesri, who, in an affective moment, recognises the ambivalence of his masculine position when placed alongside his role in the British Army's actions against China: he can only feel the loss of the Other, but cannot afford to act on this so long as he remains a sepoy. Thus, Kesri's subject position *as a Rajput sepoy at war* disables him from expressing a cosmopolitan openness to the Other.

Negotiating Anxieties in Performing Masculinities: Power and Cosmopolitan Openness

While notions of courage, valour and loyalty are central to realizing the masculinity of Rajput soldierhood, the experience is also characterized by its fair share of anxieties about the successful performance of a prescribed masculinity.

Some of the letters that the sepoys write to their families clarify this. One of them reads: "[t]omorrow our paltan will leave for Maha-Chin to fight for the Honourable Company Bahadur. We do not know when we will return […] if I die do not grieve – I will go wearing a warrior's garb, sword in hand" (306), or another one which mentions: "[i]t saddens me that I have not fulfilled all my obligations to my family […] it is the duty of every Rajput to give up his life for the honour of his caste. I am ready for what may come" (306). Therefore, although fighting valorously is central to the Rajput's masculine performative, the uncertainty of not fulfilling filial obligations also causes anxieties about their masculine position.

However, when it is time to fight, Kesri notices that the anxiety that characterized most of their sentiments prior and during their journey to China are now absent. What Kesri sees is "them moving smoothly, like spokes in a wheel, with their minds not on themselves but on the unit…" (384). Filled with great pride, Kesri's bond with the unit increases, and makes him realize that "he would never know a love as deep as that which bound him to this unit, which was largely his own creation, the culmination of his life's work" (386-7). This is an interesting remark made by the narrator because here is an instance of Kesri's self-worth being reaffirmed by notions of masculinity that are developed through the differential structure of power that governs the hierarchies of such military regiments. Therefore, while the uniform added a visual dimension enhancing Kesri's masculinity, the 'performance' of his unit, his 'life's work,' reinforces his masculinity at a personal and affective level, while also reaffirming his superiority within the rank—a badge of honour and respect for performing his militaristic duty as was deemed to be correct.

In an interesting parallel development, however, one can note that being a part of the company's forces required Kesri to transform into the likes of a European soldier. Both his quick move up the ladder and his close friendship with the British Captain Neville Mee, add to his sense of belongingness in the forces, despite being a Rajput fighting for a cause not his own. This transformation further hardens his sense of masculinity that leads him to punish the sepoys in his own battalion. The executed sepoy begins to appear in his dreams, "calling him a fool for parroting the words of the Angrez officers, taunting him as a *nakli gora* – a white-faker" (407). By framing Kesri in this liminal position as a white-faker—of a self that is neither fully Rajput, nor English—and having to assert his masculinity through both pride and guilt, Kesri's position emphasises the intersections of the sepoy and his masculinity while at war in a foreign land against strangers, in the background of a British battle for legal supremacy over land, trade and global honour (Melancon).

Towards an Affective Recognition of Cosmopolitan Openness

In their militaristic exchange in Cheunpee, Kesri notices that the Chinese begin to lose their soldiers in quick succession. Looking at a scribbled sign over a heap of corpses, Kesri asks one of the marines what the sign says. Grinning, the marine replies: "[o]ne of our sergeants put it up. It says: 'This is the road to glory'" (471). Unable to fathom the gravity of these words, the narrator immediately contrasts this with Kesri urging another gravely-wounded Chinese soldier to surrender. The soldier refuses to surrender, and instead, "came rushing at Kesri, almost as though he were begging to be cut down, as indeed he was" (472). The narrator remarks:

> When he had pulled out his dripping sword, Kesri saw that the man's eyes were still open […] the man fixed his gaze on Kesri. His expression was one that Kesri had seen before […] he knew it to be the look that appears on men's faces

> when they fight for […] everything they hold dear.
> Seeing that expression again now it struck Kesri that in a lifetime of soldiering he had never known what it was to fight in that way […] for something that was your own; something that tied you to your fathers and mothers and those who had gone before them, back into the dimness of time.
> An unnameable grief came upon him then; falling to his knees he reached out to close the dead man's eyes. (472)

This reflection clearly shows how the exercise of martiality and its cultivation of masculinity, made possible through various sites and discourses, can never enable a cosmopolitan openness, but only its affective recognition. Although Kesri sought not to kill the Chinese soldier and urged him to surrender, the Chinese's *izzat* or honour of protecting their land and people eventually leads to the latter's elimination. The position of a soldier entails one to cultivate no sense of mercy, and instead perpetuate the annihilation of the Other. However, Kesri's grief is an important affective moment that makes him recognise the impossibility of a cosmopolitan openness, even if he wished to display the openness, at the danger of dismantling his masculinity.

When it was nearly time for Kesri to fall at the hands of anxious Chinese villagers trying to fortify their village, he begins to wonder:

> he knew that his time had probably come but he felt no panic; *only a kind of sadness that it should happen here, at the hands of men with whom he had no quarrel; men who were not even soldiers, who were trying only to protect their villages, as he himself would have done back home.* (592, emphasis added)

Even in the face of his own possible death, his lament about dying in the hands of unknown men who were not even soldiers brings about grave sadness, a sadness of a Rajput sepoy dying in a foreign land, away from a community that would otherwise glorify his death. It is this conservation of violence and masculinity on the same plane that creates an ambivalence towards a structure of cosmopolitan feeling and prevents

him from acting on it. While Kesri radically recognises the violence, he still does not cease to be a Rajput, nor stop acting on it, and it is such intersectional hegemonic masculinities that make the cosmopolitan openness highly relative, and therefore, here, an impossibility.

Conclusion

In *Flood of Fire*, Ghosh brings our attention to the sociocultural interaction between the Company and private traders, informed by the materialities of Chinese law and an ongoing war, and the role of the British-Indian army and its sepoys. His fictional representation of the political conflicts between the British Empire and China, its layered rendition of martial masculinity through a creative imagination of a sepoy like Kesri, is an important creative negotiation that places masculinity along the vectors of a cosmopolitan openness on the one hand, and legal restrictions leading to a full-blown war on the other. The war in Canton provides an opportunity for Kesri to recognize the double bind of the larger futility of being a sepoy at war in the British army (acting in the apparent interest of larger human good, although with scant respect for Chinese laws), and yet, an inability to exercise a cosmopolitan openness because of his position as a sepoy in the army.

Ghosh's novel delineates how the discourse of Free Trade, as ushering in cosmopolitanism as a universal project setting out to emancipate various structurally-induced points of inequality, fails. Instead, through Kesri, the novel shows us that when principles of moral cosmopolitanism are placed in contexts of martial masculinities in battlefields, their overarching notion of subjective and attitudinal dispositions bring focus on the inability to recognize intelligible cosmopolitan positions. This historiographic fiction that engages with war, history, and literature in complex ways is an important addition to literary representations about war and the Empire from a South Asian context.

Works Cited

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2006.

Cain, Peter J., and Antony Gerald Hopkins. "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas." *Economic History Review*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1986, pp. 501–25, doi:10.2307/2596293.

Chung, Tan. "The Britain-China-India Trade Triangle (1771-1840)." *Indian Economic And Social History Review*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1974, pp. 411–31, doi:10.1177/001946467401100402.

Delanty, Gerard. *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory*. Cambridge UP, 2009.

Ellinwood, DeWitt C. "Two Masculine Worlds Compared: The Army Cantonment and Jaipur Rajput Male Society in Colonial India." *War and Society in Colonial India 1807-1945*, Oxford, 2006, p. 375.

Erikson, Emily. *Between Monopoly and Free Trade: The English East India Company, 1600-1757*. Princeton UP, 2013.

Ghosh, Amitav. *Flood of Fire*. Penguin, 2015.

Gopinath, Praseeda. *Imperial Masculinity*. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190221911/obo-9780190221911-0032.xml.

Kurasawa, Fuyuki. "Critical Cosmopolitanism." *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, edited by Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011, pp. 279–93.

Melancon, Glenn. "Honour in Opium? The British Declaration of War on China, 1839–1840." *International History Review*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1999, pp. 855–74, doi:10.1080/07075332.1999.9640880.

Mignolo, Walter D. "De-Colonial Comsopolitanism and Dialogues among Civilizations." *Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*, edited by Gerard Delanty, First, 2012, pp. 85–100.

Pandey, Sita Ram. *From Sepoy to Subedar: Being the Life and Adventures of Subedar Sitaram, a Native Officer of the Bengal Army, Written and Related by Himself*. Edited by James Lunt, Translated by Lieutanant Colonel Norgate, Vikas Publications, New Delhi, 1970.

Rothblatt, Elias Magic Kahn. *The Gentleman's Speculation: Merchants, Opium, and the Birth of Capitalism in Asia*. Wesleyan University, 2012, http://wesscholar.wesleyan.edu/etd_hon_theses/954.

Sinha, Mrinalini. *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Manchester UP, 1995, doi:10.2307/4051878.

—. "Giving Masculinity a History: Some Contributions from the Historiography of Colonial India." *Gender and History*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1999, pp. 445–60, doi:10.1111/1468-0424.00155.

Skrbis, Zlatko, and Ian Woodward. "Cosmopolitan Openness." *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, edited by Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 53–68.

Smith, Adam. *Adam Smith: The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Edited by Knud Haakonssen, Cambridge UP, 2002, doi:10.1017/CBO9780511800153.

Sussman, Herbert. *Victorian Masculinities*. Cambridge UP, 1995.

Trocki, Carl A. *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade*. Routledge, 1999.

Wickremesekera, Channa. *Best Black Troops in the World: British Perceptions and the Making of the Sepoy 1746-1805*. Manohar, 2002.

Biography

Gaana Jayagopalan teaches a variety of courses to undergraduate and postgraduate students of English Studies at Christ University, Bangalore, India.

Her research areas include Colonial Discourses; Postcolonial Fiction; Indian Writing in English; Pedagogies of Affect, and Higher Education in India.

Her doctoral work has engaged with the fiction of Amitav Ghosh, investigating the representation of the discourses of nineteenth-century political economy, material culture, and mobility, in historical fiction. Her research articles can be found in journals like *South Asian Review*, *Radical Teacher*, *Journal of Dharma*, among others.