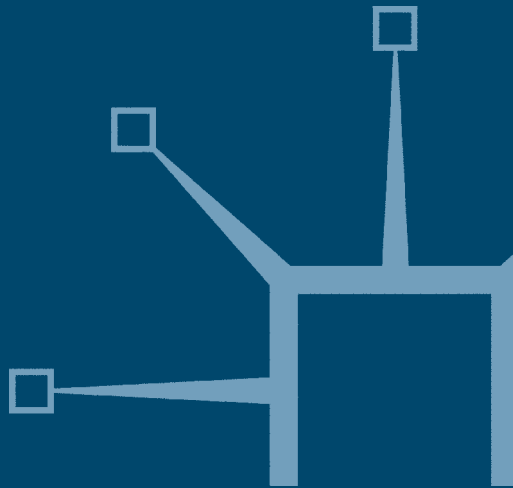


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Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity

Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal

Javed Majeed



'Javed Majeed has produced an exceptional and important book which will affect our way of thinking about nationalism today. Through the most scrupulous and sensitive readings of the autobiographical writings of Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal, he demonstrates how each of them is engaged in a complex negotiation of the innermost depths of selfhood as a means of political self-empowerment. They do this against the oppressive clichés of colonial discourse, but also in such a way as to forge a new, subtly rendered, version of political subjectivity which could serve as a model for post-colonial identity in modern times. Majeed opens up these key figures of Indian nationalism to the widest political significance. In the process, notably in his discussion of Iqbal, he also despatches a number of dangerously oversimplified readings of modern Islamic thought. *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity* is an impressive achievement which will stand as a major rebuttal of those who would separate the vagaries of the internal world from the drama of political liberation.'

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Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity

Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal

Javed Majeed

Queen Mary, University of London



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Introduction

The pre-eminence of Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948) and Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) as public intellectuals who defined dominant strands of modern South Asian nationalism cannot be in doubt. As key figures who represented and articulated South Asian cultural processes and nationalisms, their legacy remains important today, evidenced in influential studies of their thought and work, and a range of biographies.

My aim here, however, is to focus on their autobiographies as texts in which they articulate their notions of individual selfhood. Although I take account of biographical details where necessary, I am not on the whole concerned with adding to their existing biographies.¹ Instead, I will focus on how Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal use the genre of autobiography, as a first-person narrative in which there is a formal identity between the author, narrator and the main protagonist in the text,² to express visions of individual selfhood. Autobiography has generally been interpreted as a formalisation of self-awareness, an exercise in self-understanding and an enactment of an 'I' which is given coherence and substance through a written narrative.³ It is seen as a mode of writing in which the narrator's self is simultaneously discovered, created and asserted.⁴ For Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal, given the colonial context in which they lived, autobiography had an obvious appeal as a written articulation of self-discovery and self-assertion. But more importantly, for them autobiography became a way of enacting self-choice. In their autobiographies, they choose their own existence from a moral and political point of view, and thereby taking responsibility for their own biographies as authors. In their first-person narratives, selfhood becomes an achievement rather than a sign ascribed by others.⁵ Matustik reminds us that at the basic level, the term 'I' simply signifies singularity; it denotes a grammatical self-reference through which a speaker identifies himself or herself as an object. This numerical identity has to be distinguished from identity in the qualitative sense of the word, in which a person goes beyond mere singularity to become an individual with a competence for autonomous action, with an inner space and a complex subjectivity.⁶ For Gandhi, Nehru

and Iqbal, autobiography is that realm of writing in which the 'I' wins for itself an identity in a qualitative sense, as opposed to a numerical sense alone.

In this study, then, I focus on Nehru's *An Autobiography* (1936) and *The Discovery of India* (1946). In a letter of December 17, 1940, to Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, Nehru speculated on the possibility of continuing 'the story' of his earlier *Autobiography*, but added 'If I make the attempt, it is likely to lead to another book for so much has happened during these five years in the world, in India and to me personally.'⁷ Clearly, Nehru conceived of *The Discovery of India* as a continuation of *An Autobiography*, and for this reason I treat the two together, using the singular 'autobiography' to refer to both. When I wish to distinguish between the two texts, I refer to their separate titles. For Gandhi, I approach both *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927–1929) and *Satyagraha in South Africa* (1924–1925) as autobiographies. Gandhi makes it clear in his chapter on 'The birth of Satyagraha' in *An Autobiography* that the reader who 'wishes to consider these experiments in their strict chronological order will now do well to keep the history of Satyagraha in South Africa before him', before reading about the experiments conducted on Gandhi's return to India. He also refers the reader to *Satyagraha in South Africa* for a fuller description of the 'conditions of Indians in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State'.⁸ For Gandhi, then, *Satyagraha in South Africa* had to be read alongside *An Autobiography* as an autobiographical text. Thus, as with the case of Nehru, I refer to both together under the term 'autobiography', unless I expressly wish to distinguish between the two.

In the case of Iqbal, my focus will be on his Persian poem, the *Jāvīd Nāma* (1932), which is generally reckoned by literary critics to be his magnum opus. It has also been called 'his most intriguing literary work'.⁹ My choice of this epic poem is based on its status as a poetic masterpiece which is a defining instance of Iqbal's aesthetic and intellectual concerns. More importantly, though, the poem bears the defining feature of an autobiographical narrative because it signals an identity between the poet and the main protagonist in the poem, so that the poet appears as a figure in the poem by using the first-person singular pronoun. The poet is also expressly concerned with the main task of autobiographical narrative, namely self-definition. However, the poem is unlike other autobiographical texts in that it unfolds on an explicitly symbolic plane as the poet journeys through the cosmos. But, as we shall see, this reflects the distinctive nature of Iqbal's autobiographical task.

In focussing on autobiographies, I shall argue that there are important connections as well as tensions between concepts of nationality and autobiographical concepts of selfhood. This study will try to show how nationalism can be grounded in notions of individual personhood, how the idea of collective life is drawn from a vision of the individual self, and how the writing of autobiography can play a key role in formulating that complex

tie between nation and subject which allows nationalism to work as a key defining identity of peoples in the world today. I will argue that Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal deploy autobiography to generate and project a vision of individual selfhood on which their nationalist aspirations try to rely. I treat their autobiographies less as their retrospective accounts of their lives, and more as projects¹⁰ of selfhood, through which they explored the intricate relationships between interiority and the public realm of politics.

My argument, then, is that there are crucial connections between the autobiographies of Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal, and their political concepts of nationality. The latter were *decisively* articulated through their autobiographies. The relationship between autobiography and political thinking in their texts is not an accidental one, in which autobiography is only a transparent medium of their political thought, which could be replaced by another literary form. Their political thought is not detachable from their autobiographies. Rather, their appropriation of the autobiographical form as a first-person narrative is central to their notion of the political and is crucial to their very articulation of it. It is through processes of self-authorship that they define the senses of selfhood which ground their politics.

While biographers have tended to approach Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal as coherent and unified figures, I assume that they can only be dealt with in parts and fragments, rooted in their own self-conceptions as they express them in their autobiographies. They self-consciously enact changing, mobile and heterogeneous selves as they travel. I focus on the different components of these selves, how they are constructed, and how they are sometimes disavowed. Here their autobiographies are in sharp contrast to a number of other Indian nationalist autobiographies, which seek to construct homogenous selves that can be easily integrated into emerging nationalisms. Within the body of Indian nationalist autobiography, Nehru, Gandhi and Iqbal are distinctive in that their autobiographies bear the signs, to varying degrees, of a postnationalist discourse. By this I mean that there is no attempt to simply subsume their individual autobiographical voice within a group identity, or to conflate one's voice with a pre-existing nationality. This is the route taken in the autobiographies of Lajpat Rai, Surendranath Banerjea and M.R. Jayakar,¹¹ where at key moments in their texts the conflict between self-narration and national narration is overcome through the assumption of a pre-existing unity between the autobiographer's voice and a collective identity.¹² As such, their works bear testimony to the homogenising and levelling character of an oppressive nationalism, in which self and group identity mirror each other. Their autobiographical texts enact a fantasy of a compositional form of individual and group identity, in which a group identity becomes a simple merger of its individual parts,¹³ and there are indications of the strains this puts on the autobiographical form, in so far as it expresses a self-defeating nationalism. The self they enact is subsumed within a totalising nationalism which makes autobiography not so much the performance

of emerging singularity¹⁴ but more the disappearance of self into a totalising nationalism.

Julia Kristeva has pointed out that in a world of 'national fundamentalism' we have to assert belonging as a matter of choice; we have to recognise the strangers within ourselves in order to recognise that there is otherness for all others.¹⁵ Matustik has argued that postnational identity is a form of resistance to the oppressive imperatives of a homogenising nationalism. Postnational questioning and postnational forms of life are needed to counter the elevation of the nation state into an unconditional, ethical totality.¹⁶ My aim here is to show how the autobiographical creations of Nehru, Gandhi and Iqbal elaborate elements and questions of postnationality, not as signalling the disintegration of any sense of collective polity,¹⁷ but more as a means to articulate points of resistance to the oppressive potential of collective nationalist identities. These postnational elements are deployed at various levels and with varying degrees of success and awareness in their autobiographical texts. In doing so, they sometimes unveil the undesirability, even the impossibility, of certain kinds of national selves.

I begin by considering how for Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal, autobiography and travel are intimately connected. This has not been explicitly commented upon in studies of their work and thought. I argue that their self-conception as travellers is fundamental to their sense of themselves. The experiences and motifs of travel are key to understanding their autobiographical narratives. It is for this reason that I define their autobiographies as 'travelling autobiographies', representing particular kinds of travellers.

bell hooks has stressed the need to unpack conventional notions of travel and to 'put alongside it or in its place a theory of the journey that would expose the extent to which holding on to the concept of "travel" as we know it is a way to hold on to imperialism'.¹⁸ In their autobiographies, Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal outline alternative notions to conventional and imperial notions of travel. In the case of Nehru and Iqbal, this includes forms of travel which do not involve physical mobility alone, and sometimes even exclude physical travel altogether. In the *Jāvīd Nāma*, Iqbal's journey is not physical, while Nehru demonstrates how he can be a traveller even when he is physically incarcerated. Both Nehru and Iqbal articulate their interiority in their autobiographies in terms of different forms of travel. Gandhi's concern is with modes of travel, and he opens up alternative notions of travel which are rooted in his rejection of the modern technology of transport. Travel for him becomes a way of engaging with corporeality; as a traveller and through travel he defines some of the key terms in his lexicon, such as 'simplicity', 'cleanliness', *brahmacharya* (roughly, 'celibacy') and 'Truth'. This is the lexicon of an original and distinctive traveller who is a perpetual itinerant in his quest for a certain kind of 'Truth'. For Gandhi, 'Truth' is not something you can arrive at, but is progressively enacted through a particular kind of travel.

It is through their concepts of travel that Nehru, Gandhi and Iqbal define themselves against European ethnographic representations of the 'native', in which Indians were represented as being incapable of individual growth through travel. However, the distinctive nature of their autobiographies as travelogues needs to be read mainly in terms of their differences from an earlier body of travel writing by Indians. I recontextualise their autobiographies in relation to travelogues by Indians written in English, Urdu and Persian, from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries onwards. Ultimately, it is against this tradition of travel writing by Indians that their distinctive voices as nationalist travellers are defined, as they fuse together the travelogue with autobiography.

It is also through their different concepts of travel that Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal reflect upon the consequences of modernity and shape their perspectives on it. Here there are clear differences between themselves and earlier Indian travellers, whose texts express a sense of selves lacking in relation to the power of a stable modernity, exemplified by Britain. For Gandhi, travel enacts a sacred landscape, obscured and undermined by the modern technology of speedy transport. It is only by exposing the fallacy of speed that such a landscape can become part of a self-empowering autobiography. Furthermore, Gandhi's concept of the sacred is rooted in his notion of the translatability of 'Truth'. As he travels in search of 'Truth', it is through processes and motifs of translation that he engages with the *Bhagavad Gita*, which becomes less a stable text whose doctrinal meanings are conveyed by Gandhi to others, and more a repository of 'Truth' precisely because it is entangled with translation as both mode of thinking and process. For Gandhi, then, the sacredness of 'Truth' is enacted and made available (but never fully so) through travel. It is also amplified through translation (although never finally so) rather than undermined by it.

Iqbal also defines notions of the sacred through travel. His aim is complex in that he seeks to appropriate modernity's power for an emerging Islamic community, but in doing so he unveils the unstable nature of modernity's temporality. This instability both grounds and undermines his appropriation of modernity. This tension is reflected in the relationships between the literary form and content of his travelling autobiography, and his reinterpretation of the Qur'an, which becomes a central reference point for revealing the instability of modernity's moment, and yet is embroiled in that instability, rather than transcending it.

In presenting himself as a traveller, Nehru argues that he is recovering a tradition of Indians as travellers, which has been interrupted by British colonialism. In doing so, his travelling autobiography enacts a process of secularisation, in which the recovery of the figure of the travelling Indian extends to that of the Indian scientist, participating in a global narrative of scientific endeavour. The narrative of a progressive modernity is itself cast by Nehru in terms of adventurous travel. Furthermore, for Nehru it is

precisely the heterogeneity of India, represented in colonialist discourse as disabling India from playing a role in a modern world, which qualifies India as a travelling culture, drawing on a long tradition of mobility, for a place in a global narrative of modernity.

In considering their autobiographies as forms of travelogues, I will also outline how Nehru, Gandhi and Iqbal enact imaginary geographies, in which they define alternative maps to the London-centric maps of previous Indian travellers. In their influential studies of Indian travellers, both Lahiri and Burton have stressed the importance of London as a site for the self-definitions of Indian nationalists,¹⁹ but what is striking about my three authors is how they open up alternative spaces, both conceptual and geographical, to London and the 'West'. They do not define themselves against the 'West' alone; indeed, often the 'West' exists mainly as an archive from which they can selectively appropriate authors and texts for their own purposes of self-authorship. In the imaginary geographies opened up through their travelling autobiographies, none conceives of colonialism as unitary totality or monolithic entity. Instead, they decentre that colonialism in relation to concepts of selfhood, and define what might be called 'a geography of subjectivity'²⁰ in which they reconfigure notions of the 'outer' and the 'inner', and enact different conceptions of space.

These geographies of subjectivity are defined against a whole host of figures, of which only a few are 'Western'. Iqbal's notion of a pan-Islamic self was defined mainly against what he called 'Arabian imperialism' rather than British imperialism. If Nehru defined himself against an 'Other' in his autobiography, that 'Other' was Gandhi rather than 'the West'. Nehru also conflates the figure of Gandhi and the category of 'Nature', and it is against both that he secures his own sense of agency and self-authorship. Furthermore, in his handling of the different components of his identity, he was also representing himself against other Indian 'narrow nationalists'. As for Gandhi himself, scholars have observed how *satyagraha* ('truth force' or 'soul force') was defined just as much against the 'terrorist' wing of Indian nationalism as against imperial violence.²¹ *Hind Swaraj* was addressed first to those Indians who espoused violence in political struggle, although the text assumes that it is their infatuation with the 'West' which disposes them to such violence.²² Moreover, in his engagement with the *Bhagavad Gita*, Gandhi defined his notion of 'Truth' both against the tradition of indigenous commentaries by Hindu pandits and translations by Orientalist scholars.²³

In his seminal study of Indian travellers, Michael Fisher has shown how the lives and writings of Indians travelling to Britain have become 'homeless texts' largely absent from British and Indian national histories but vital to our understanding of both.²⁴ My concern here is not to write a 'history', but to open up another space for the consideration of nationalism, by considering how the articulation of subjectivity through the experiences and notions of

travel might have grounded the nationalist politics of Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal. I am mindful of the fact that, as Anne McClintock amongst others has argued, the term 'postcolonial' is haunted by the very figure of linear development it seeks to dismantle, and that it confers on colonialism the prestige of history proper.²⁵ However, as authors of autobiographies, Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal use the unstable temporality of the autobiographical form to release possibilities for the enactment of self and/or group identity. Sturrock has described autobiography as the 'certificate of a unique human passage through time'.²⁶ It would be true to say that in varying degrees their autobiographies are not tales of time, but tales about time, because the very experience of time is at stake in their narratives.²⁷ This is in contrast to other Indian nationalist autobiographies, which, while finding it difficult to maintain a linear chronology because of the very nature of the autobiographical form, do not foreground the experience of time or use it to reflect upon the nature of time.

Notes

1. For Nehru, these include the classic three-volume study by Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru. A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), and Michael Brecher, *Nehru. A Political Biography* (1959; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). For a recent biography which is usefully succinct and thoughtful, see Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004). The standard biography of Gandhi remains Judith Brown, *Gandhi. Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), but see also Antony Copley, *Gandhi. Against the Tide* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987) for an insightful and informative study. There is no full-length biography of Muhammad Iqbal, but for biographical information see Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing. A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963), Ch. 1.
2. For permutations of this definition of the formal feature of autobiography, see Jean Starobinski, 'The style of autobiography', in James Olney (ed.), *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 78, William Howarth, 'Some principles of autobiography', *ibid.*, p. 87, William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography. Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), p. xvi, Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Practice, Criticism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, c. 1994), p. 7, pp. 12–13, p. 149, p. 191 ff.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 137, p. 138 ff., p. 145, p. 151.
4. James Olney, 'Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A thematic, historical and bibliographical introduction', in Olney (ed.), *Autobiography*, pp. 3–27, p. 24.

5. I have taken this notion of self-choice from the important work of Martin J. Matustik, *Postnational Identity. Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel* (New York and London: The Guildford Press, 1993), p. 12, pp. 91–3.
6. Matustik, pp. 87–8.
7. Nehru, 'To Madame Chiang Kai-Shek', in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 11 vols (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972–1978), 11: pp. 516–18, p. 517. Hereafter SW.
8. M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927–1929; London: Penguin, 1982), p. 292, p. 128.
9. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 219.
10. Following Nicholas Thomas, I use the term 'project' to signify both discourse and agency; see Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture. Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 1994), p. 105–6.
11. For an important article on autobiography and Indian nationalism, see Milton Israel, 'Indian nationalist voices: autobiography and the process of return', in George Egerton (ed.), *Political Memoir. Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp. 76–105.
12. An exception to this self-defeating nationalism is Cornelia Sorabji's *India Calling* (1934) which I examine in Chapter 4.
13. This definition of compositional identity is taken from Martin J. Matustik, *Postnational Identity. Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel* (New York and London: The Guildford Press, 1993), p. 10.
14. Sturrock argues that autobiography is the 'story of a singularization, or of how the autobiographer came to acquire the conviction of uniqueness that has impelled him to write'; see John Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography. Studies in the First Person Singular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 14.
15. Julia Kristeva, *Nations without Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), translated Leon S. Roudiez, p. 15, p. 31.
16. Matustik, *Postnational Identity*, pp. viii–ix, p. 38.
17. This sense of postnational seems to be dominant in Frank Davey's *Post-national Arguments. The Politics of the Anglophone-Canadian Novel since 1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), see especially pp. 252–66.
18. bell hooks, 'Representing whiteness in the black imagination', in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (eds), *Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 343.
19. Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of Empire. Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 175, p. 191, Shompa Lahari, *Indians in Britain. Anglo-Indian Encounters, race and Identity, 1880–1930* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. xi–xiii.
20. This was the title of a seminar programme hosted by the London Historical Geographers from October to December 2003.
21. For example, see Bhiku Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition, and Reform. An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989), pp. 151–71.
22. Anthony J. Parel (ed.), *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (1909; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. xxiv–xxix, Ch. 1.
23. See Ch. 7.
24. Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism. Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain 1600–1857* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), p. 431.

25. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 10–11.
26. Sturrock, p. 3.
27. This distinction between tales of time and tales about time is made by Paul Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols (1984–1985; Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1984–1988), translated Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer; 2: p. 101, 3: p. 139, p. 141.

1

Native Travelers

Unselfconscious insiders

Mary Louise Pratt has argued that European travel writing represented the rest of the world for a European readership at particular points in the process of imperial expansion overseas. Travelogues encoded and legitimised aspirations of empire.¹ Tim Fulford and Carol Bolton have also argued that travel writing and exploration narratives were closely tied to imperial expansion, citing the volume and diversity of exploration narratives published in English during the expansion of the British empire. Drawing on the work of other scholars, they stress how many of the significant literary works of the period 1770–1830, which they describe as the ‘age of the exploration narrative’, were inspired by the printed texts of explorers.² The cross-fertilisation between travelogues, exploration narratives and works of literature (especially novels) was exemplified by the popularity of the adventure narrative and romance quest during the period 1880–1920, at the height of British imperial power.³ The popularity of the ‘adventure romance’, as Martin Green has called it,⁴ was partly due to its ‘energising myth’ of empire as space for heroic endeavour.⁵ A number of scholars have focussed on the fiction of Kipling, Haggard and Stevenson in particular as romance quest or adventure narrative, and the way in which they configure elements of adventure, travel and exploration,⁶ showing the close links between the romance quest and imperialism, links significant in formulating a geopolitical imagination of nineteenth-century empire.⁷

Scholars have also drawn attention to the importance of European travel and exploration narratives in the development of modern scientific disciplines. Pratt has outlined the crucial role of the scientific expedition in European travel literature.⁸ She describes these expeditions as Europe’s ‘proudest and most conspicuous instruments of expansion’, and as the source of some of the most powerful ‘ideational and ideological apparatuses through which European citizenries related themselves to other parts of the world’. She convincingly shows how the language of natural history and the naturalist as traveller were key to the self-understanding of Euroimperialism and its underpinning ideology of science.⁹ For Fulford and

Bolton, the paradigmatic journeys here are those of Sir Joseph Banks and Erasmus Darwin.¹⁰ The study of flora and fauna and the representation of 'native' manners and customs were both articulated in terms of classification of species rather than human character and society,¹¹ reflecting the increasing application of Darwinian ideas to ethnographic interpretation of differences between groups of people.¹² As Nicholas Thomas has argued, post-Enlightenment anthropology predicated that particular peoples have natures, mainly racial, cultural or social, and most importantly distinctive to them. This distinctiveness was naturalised and rendered equivalent to species difference. Human attributes perhaps universal at cognitive or linguistic levels, or differences perhaps arising from age, gender and a plethora of other considerations, were marginalised by this privileging of ethnic or cultural difference.¹³

This slippage between science and ethnography meant that anthropologists acted as if they were the 'natural scientists of society' in their search for universal structural principles.¹⁴ The scientism¹⁵ of ethnography also meant that it could be understood to reinforce an imperial sense of epistemic superiority,¹⁶ reflected in the normalising and generalising voice of canonical texts of ethnography, and objectification of 'native' subjects into standard specimens and homogenised collectivities.¹⁷ At the heart of this objectification lies the immobilisation of the figure of the 'native'. As Arjun Appadurai has argued, in European ethnology 'natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow *incarcerated*, or confined, in those places'. This is in contrast to the anthropologist, explorer and missionary, who are 'quintessentially mobile' observers.¹⁸ The attachment of 'natives' to physical places was often presented in terms of adaptation to constraints of the environment, in striking contrast to the adventurous motion of metropolitan behaviour.¹⁹ For European travel and exploration narratives to work, especially in their production of ethnographic knowledge, the 'native' had to operate as innately incapable of travel. As James Clifford has pointed out, in the dominant discourses of European travel, the 'native' cannot appear as heroic explorer, aesthetic interpreter, or scientific authority; the 'non-white' person cannot achieve the status of traveller.²⁰ To adopt one of Pratt's terms, the 'native' is always a 'travelee', a person who is travelled to or on by a traveller, a receptor of travel rather than an initiator of it.²¹

These assumptions structure a classic work of British ethnography in India, Herbert Risley's *The People of India* (1908). Risley's text is not only an ethnographic account of India, but an attempt to define the expertise of 'the modern science of ethnology'.²² He grounds this science in its combination of cartography with the language of statistics, especially the enumeration of the official census, and the craniometrical and anthropometric measurements of the physical features of the inhabitants of India. Connections between *The People of India* and Census reports are highlighted by Risley

himself, both to legitimise the factual nature of his ethnology and to show how some of his observations had already found their way into previous census reports.²³ Continuities between his text and the census as a project of the colonial state are stressed, so that the constitution of ethnology as a 'modern science' and the infrastructure and epistemological projects of that state are entangled to produce a certain kind of 'anthropogeography'.²⁴ Risley's text shares the founding assumption and defining conclusion of the census that Indians are to be firmly fixed as members of mutually exclusive groups of a particular dimension and substance.²⁵

Clifford has argued that ethnography privileged relations of dwelling over those of travelling.²⁶ The emergence of ethnology as a 'science' in Risley's text enacts just this erasure of travel. In trying to define the expertise of this 'science', he deploys the enabling fiction of the ordinary 'untraveller' European whose 'untrained eye' cannot tell Indians apart,²⁷ in contrast to the ethnographer who perceives heterogeneity in the apparently homogenous mass of Indians. The distinction between the superficiality of the 'observer recently arrived from Europe'²⁸ and the depth of the ethnographer's field-work lies in the latter's competence to detect differences mapped along axes of regional, linguistic, religious, social and ultimately physical differences.²⁹ From the outset, two 'poses' of seeing India are juxtaposed: the ethnographer's panoramic view of India, articulated in carefully calibrated vocabulary, and the view of the recently arrived European. But both figures erase the question of travel which would situate these two kinds of knowledge. The European who has arrived in India is described as 'untraveller', as though coming to India does not involve undertaking a journey, while the ethnographer's third-person view occludes any narrative of travel through India. This denial of travel precisely involves the grounding assumption which distinguishes the native from the anthropologist, explorer and missionary, namely that the latter group are 'quintessentially mobile' while 'natives' are not.³⁰ The assumption that mobility is the norm for Europeans secures the denial of travel as constitutive of ethnological knowledge, rather than risking the questioning of enabling conventions of knowledge which emerge in Risley's text as grounding the 'science' of ethnology. The travelling 'native' would be a contradiction in terms within this discursive framework.

In Risley's *The People of India*, then, ethnological encounters through travel are erased. Partial knowledge produced in encounters in specific locations through an itinerary of travel is supplanted by what Donna Haraway has called the 'god trick of seeing everything from nowhere', or the 'conquering gaze from nowhere'.³¹ In this vision, mapping is no longer situated, embodied and partial,³² but the paradigm of a third-person, omniscient voice.

These grounding assumptions account for the anxiety of British editors and translators when presented with travel accounts by Indians in the nineteenth century. These editors and translators sought to frame travel accounts

by Indians within a language of ethnography. Their travel accounts are presented as ethnographic data of pre-existing 'native' perspectives, within a static framework of a hierarchy of civilisations. In his preface to his translation of the *Shigurf Nāma*, J.E. Alexander writes that it exhibits 'the impressions made on a native of Hindoostan by the manners, customs, and superior civilisation of the inhabitants of Europe'.³³ His translation is useful because it will 'furnish a work to the Hindoostanee tyro . . . [which will] induce him to prosecute his studies in that most useful language, the acquirement of which is so indispensably necessary for those who mean to sojourn in our Eastern possessions'. He later avers the 'benefits to be derived from studying Hindoostanee, the grand popular dialect of India, a knowledge of which is the sine qua non to preferment in our Eastern dominions'.³⁴ Mirza's travel account is not only converted into an ethnographic text containing a native's 'Oriental lore',³⁵ but a work of utility for imperial policy and career advancement. This is further underlined by Alexander's concern with its utility as a Hindustani text, created by himself, since the original manuscript is in Persian. The value of Mirza's language of authorship is elided as the travel account is converted into the languages of the translator's own text, just as Mirza ceases to be an author in his own right, and instead becomes the European ethnographer's 'native' informant. Alexander's translation is also an abridged one, imposing on it his own sense of coherence and linearity. In the preamble to the account of his travels, Mirza explains the political circumstances which led to his travelling to England, as well as his return to India, and the resolution of the political issues which initiated the trip.³⁶ In Alexander's translation, however, Mirza's passage on his return to India and these resolutions are placed at the end of the account.³⁷ Interestingly, one of the passages Alexander does not include in his translation is Mirza's extended description of the many types of ships he encounters,³⁸ presumably because its inclusion would undermine Alexander's sense of Mirza as an unchanging 'native of Hindoostan'. Another omitted passage is an extended account of the discovery of the New World and an ethnography of its inhabitants.³⁹ Here, Mirza struggles to understand how this discovery fits in with the traditional geography of the Arabs and Persians, reflecting upon his own geographical preconceptions and changing planetary consciousness.⁴⁰ The discursive possibilities of a 'native' ethnographer need to be erased by the translator if the category of the unchanging 'native of Hindoostan' is to remain intact.

The attempt to contain and immobilise the accounts of Indian travellers is evident in other texts too. In his translation of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan's *Masīr-e Tālibī*, Charles Stewart argues that it has little literary value. Instead its value is as the production of 'a Native of the East, unacquainted with the sciences of Europe, whose only object was to inform and improve his countrymen, by a candid and simple narrative of what he saw, heard, and thought, during his Travels'.⁴¹ Alongside the ethnographic category of a

'native' as an 'object of liberal curiosity',⁴² Stewart categorises Abu Taleb's journey as progress towards the sciences of Europe for the purposes of collective and self-improvement. Abu Taleb's criticisms of British modes of conduct,⁴³ and his defence of the social and cultural position of Indian Muslim women compared with English women,⁴⁴ challenge this imposed trajectory of uncritical emulation. Stewart's blanket term 'Native of the East' also empties Abu Taleb's cosmopolitan identity of its complex specificities.⁴⁵ The static term 'Native' fails to take into account Abu Taleb's description of the very changes and dislocations in his social and economic position as a member of the Persianate service gentry in late-eighteenth-century India which led him to travel to Europe.⁴⁶ Finally, it also denies his mobile point of view, and especially his retrospective reflections on the provisional and shifting nature of his evaluations of the places he visits. He discusses how these necessarily change in relation to each other place as he journeys. While he begins with a conviction of the magnificence of Calcutta [khūbīhāye shehr va 'azam 'imārat-e kalkata] when he arrives in Cape Town this conception is erased [maḥv shavad], but then he revises his opinion of Cape Town when he sees Cork [chīzī āz kaip beh khātir namānad]. Similarly on his return trip, this is reversed [waqt murāj'at hāl 'aks īn būd], so that when he sees Paris in relation to London, he feels as if he has fallen from Paradise into Hell [āz behisht beh dozakhī uftādam]. Yet, when he arrives in Italy he becomes aware of the extent of Paris's magnificence [qadar khūbī shehr paris ma'lūm shudan]. When he arrives in Istanbul, Rome acquires splendour [jalva] in comparison, and Istanbul seems like heaven in relation to Baghdad, and Baghdad is lovely [maḥbūb, literally beloved] in relation to Basra [tamāshā-ye bašra].⁴⁷

A similar attempt to contain the travel narratives of Indians is evident in the 'Memoir of Mohal Lal Kashmiri' written by C.E. Trevelyan as a preface to Lal's 1834 account of his travels in parts of India and Central Asia. Trevelyan uses various strategies to contain Mohan Lal. Although Lal travels as Sir Alexander Burnes' Persian munshi,⁴⁸ the latter stresses Lal's knowledge of the English language and not of Persian. He emphasises how Lal's knowledge of English, acquired in the first English class at Delhi College between 1829 and 1831, 'is the simple cause of [his] elevation of character'. Lal's status as a traveller is subsumed by Trevelyan as living proof of the superiority of Anglicist educational policy. When Lal travels he becomes an exhibit of Anglicist policy, so that he is seen by the 'natives' of Muslim Central Asia as 'an individual raised at once by the simple influence of European education from the base to the apex of society'. Trevelyan adds, 'In the person of Mohan Lal we proved to the Mahammadan [*sic.*] nations beyond the Indus, our qualification for the great mission with which we have been entrusted of regenerating India'. Trevelyan represents the English class at Delhi College as 'the nucleus of a system which, to all appearances, is destined to change the moral aspect of the whole of Upper India'. It is this which makes Mohan Lal

'a triumph of our nation, which does us more real credit than all our Plasseys and Assayes'.⁴⁹ As in the case of Mirza and Abu Taleb, this imposition of the terms of travel on the travelling Indian contradicts Mohan Lal's enactment of syncretistic identity in his travel account, and also his negotiation of the tensions between his status as munshi and his awareness of himself as product of what Trevelyan called the 'great experiment' of the first English class in Delhi College.⁵⁰ Trevelyan's reference to Mohan Lal as the triumph of 'our nation' and 'the hero of our tale' (rather than of his own)⁵¹ demonstrates how explicitly Lal is appropriated to vindicate one specific colonial policy. Lal cannot exist as a traveller in his own right.⁵² The reviews of Lal's travelogue also see it less as travel document, and more as ethnographic data providing insight into the 'Oriental mind'.⁵³

Another example of a containing strategy is Eardley Norton's 'Introduction' to G. Paramaswaran Pillai's *London and Paris Through Indian Spectacles* (1897). Under the two antithetical categories of East and West, Norton lists 'physical' and 'mental' differences, only made evident because Pillai places himself, both mentally and physically, in the 'East'. Norton argues that the book is a 'tribute to the effect of England's rule in India', even though it is about the author's sojourn in England, because of the 'abundant loyalty it displays from start to end to all things admirable in our English political and domestic systems'.⁵⁴ Norton also claims that even the 'bitterest of Indian critics lives and dies in an invincible belief in the generosity and the sympathy both of the statesmen and the people of Great Britain'.⁵⁵ Pillai cannot but occupy the position of the East, and so loyally holds in place the antithetical and self-evident categories of India and Britain, East and West. Yet this framework subverts those aspects of the text critical of British society, as well as those where the distance between 'East' and 'West' is bridged.⁵⁶ It also fails to take into account the vacillation in the book between two different idioms, reflected in the illustrations, between the documentary realism of portraits of representative figures of the London poor, such as the 'crossing sweeper' and 'the shoe-black', and the witty caricatures of other figures such as the barber and 'mashers'.⁵⁷

Thus, the prefaces to and translations of Indian travelogues by British officials evince an unease at Indians as travellers. These travelogues present their colonial mediators with, to use a phrase of Rey Chow's, the 'discomforting fact that the natives are no longer staying in their frames'.⁵⁸ Anxiety about travelling natives was also reflected in the East India Company's policies of surveillance and control of the travel of Indian servants and Indian seamen to Britain.⁵⁹ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this unease continued to be expressed in official policies towards Indians who travelled to Britain,⁶⁰ initially formulated in the context of evolving and sometimes contradictory British laws about who was a 'native' of India. Fisher stresses two general points here: first, much of the agency in these categorisations lay with the British authorities, and secondly, while definitions of what constituted a 'native' Indian shifted and were inconsistent, the project to define

'natives' occurred within the context of the efforts by the British state and company to define and control 'natives' throughout the world.⁶¹ It is clear from Fisher's work, though, that the very issue of who constituted a 'native' of India was raised in the context of those 'natives' travelling, and the need to control and regulate their movements. The mobility of the 'natives' of India is not an addendum, but part and parcel of the issue of definition. Moreover, these concerns about travelling 'natives' should be read in conjunction with the general thrust of British revenue and fiscal policy in India from the late eighteenth century onwards, to render Indian society more sedentary and therefore more productive. This meant the expansion of settled agriculture and the increasing policing and surveillance of itinerant groups within Indian society itself.⁶²

The ethnographic incarceration of the 'native' was powerfully experienced by Indian travellers when they encountered the ethnographic gaze. Disempowerment when meeting that gaze is a theme which runs through many, if not most, Indian travelogues. This has been insightfully discussed by Antoinette Burton.⁶³ She shows how the formal and informal display of cultures and artefacts of India in Victorian Britain reinforced the tendency to see Indian travellers themselves as exhibits. The most telling experience here is that of T.N. Mukharji, who came to London in an official capacity for the Indian and Colonial Exhibition in 1886, and was scrutinised and examined as a curious and exotic object within the exhibition hall.⁶⁴ More than a hundred years earlier, Mirza I'tisam uddin had a similar experience. He recounts how when one day he was taken to a dance party, the music and dancing stopped as the assembled ladies and gentlemen crowded around to stare at him. As he puts it succinctly, 'I had gone to see a spectacle but instead became a spectacle myself' [har chand ke betamāshā rafta būdam laikin khud tamāshā shudan].⁶⁵ Similarly, Karim Khan mentions how when he arrived at the Isle of Wight in August 1840, a large group of people gathered to stare at him, and followed him around.⁶⁶ There are a number of other examples of this experience throughout the nineteenth century.⁶⁷

The important studies of Burton, Lahiri and Fisher have in part rested on the assumption that the mobility of Indians travelling to Britain is of significance, in either affording anti-colonial and modernising possibilities, or correcting the historical record by demonstrating the significant presence of Indians in imperial Britain. However, since one can be fixed as a specimen when one travels, physical mobility alone does not constitute a travelling subject.⁶⁸ Rather it is the discursive and conceptual possibilities opened up by travel for identity formation which are key to the formation of the travelling subject. Such possibilities can be constrained by the ethnographic perspectives of powerful others who try to re-convert travelling subjects back to native travelees. This is evident in one of the canonical texts of Anglo-Indian literature, in which the configuration of a scientific ethnography with travel are given full play in the cross-fertilisation between travel

narrative and novel. In Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), the heterogeneity of India is unfolded through travelogue, merged with ethnographic detail as the reader is regaled with descriptions of the different caste groups Kim and the Lama encounter on their travels. The longest description occurs as they walk 'in silence mile upon mile' along the Grand Trunk road.⁶⁹ Aside from these set-piece descriptions, there are frequent references to tableaux of Indian groups, as when the old soldier tells how 'all castes and kinds of men move here . . . Brahmins and chumars, bankers and tinkers, barbers and bunnias, pilgrims and potters'.⁷⁰ In the train journey from Lahore appear a Ludhiana Sikh, a Dogra, a Hindu Jat, a 'fat Hindu money-lender' and a 'burly Sikh artisan'.⁷¹ There is also a kind of festive comedy in these Chaucerian representations of typical figures they meet on the road, in which good humoured repartee between representatives of different caste and religious groups is in part made possible by the benign nature of British India.⁷² As one of the characters explains, 'all who serve the Sirkar with weapons in their hands are, as it were, one brotherhood. There is one brotherhood of the caste, and beyond that again . . . the bond of the *Pulton* – the Regiment'.⁷³ Similarly, in the train 'we sit side by side with all castes and peoples'.⁷⁴ The reassuring words of the Sikh artisan about the train, 'Do not be afraid . . . Enter! This thing is the work of the Government',⁷⁵ might even serve as an epigram for the text as a whole. The comic aspects of the text are also reinforced by the *jouissance* of the Great Game, in which India becomes a playground for boyish adventure; the vulnerability of a child on the streets to adult predators is transmuted by the benign workings of the State into the playful pranks of a mischievous changeling, who is under the protective tutelage of a number of father figures, from Creighton to Mahbub Ali. It is this enabling boyishness which allows the novel union of the Lama and Kim to be enacted on colonial territory.⁷⁶

The 'Great Game' includes the 'game' in which Lurgan is most interested, 'what might be called dressing-up'.⁷⁷ Here, in a display of panoramic ethnography, Kim parades himself before Lurgan's voyeuristic gaze, mimicking various incarnations of the Indian native, with Lurgan effortlessly explaining 'by the half-hour together how such and such a caste talked, or walked, or coughed, or spat, or sneezed'.⁷⁸ What enables this masterful performance is the assumption of the fixed identities of Indian groups. While Kim and the Lama meet Indian travellers as they walk and ride through India, what is continually stressed is the fixity of these travellers' identities. Each individual Indian is read as a representative type of a pre-given identity about which pseudo-ethnological generalisations can be made. Their identities are not travelling identities. In the discursive framework of the text, Indians remain fixed even when they physically travel.

On the other hand, not only does Kim have a facility for disguise which is denied to Indians as a whole,⁷⁹ but Indian characters in the text are continually amazed at his changeling abilities. He is a 'white boy . . . who is not a

white boy', and he is quizzed, 'Once more, what manner of white boy art thou?'⁸⁰ Both he and the Lama are signs which Indians continually struggle to interpret. *Kim* puts into motion a double exoticism, with Kim and the Lama as exotic figures within an already exotic India. Kim's ongoing identity crisis in some ways frames the tableau of fixed Indian identities. As Bart Moore-Gilbert suggests, Kim's self-interrogating question 'Who is Kim?'⁸¹ is not definitively answered. This question also slips into the 'hard knot' of the even larger question, 'What am I?',⁸² as though the very substance of Kim is in question. It is this ongoing crisis which is harnessed to the Great Game. But the self-conscious possibilities of an identity crisis which lend Kim existential depth and open up spaces for a variety of identity formations and subject positions are not available to Indians themselves. Instead, the fixed, collective identities of natives form a contrasting background to the 'hard knot' of the question of identity. The wistfulness of the text⁸³ stems from not just its elegiac boyishness, but also a nostalgia for the supposed plenitude of native fixity, a fixity which is at odds with the depth of existential angst articulated in Kim's self-questioning. It seems that natives are precluded from experiencing identity crises and are unable to ask the question 'Who am I?'

In contrast to Kim, whose 'bright eyes were open wide' as he and the Lama walk on the Grand Trunk Road, the Lama 'never raised his eyes' but instead 'looked steadily at the ground'.⁸⁴ Earlier, in response to Mahbub Ali's questions as to Kim's caste, the Lama replies 'there is neither high nor low in the Middle Way'.⁸⁵ But the Lama's Buddhism which underpins this view of identity as illusory play is also not available to the Indians in the text. As Appadurai points out, the 'metonymic freezing' involved in the category of the native is rooted in assumptions about the 'boundedness of cultural units and the confinement of the varieties of human consciousness within these boundaries'.⁸⁶ The immobilising of the native involves not just physical incarceration but also a freezing of his or her consciousness as a human subject.

It is the 'wandering viewpoint' of the composite figure of Kim and the Lama which enables the reader to travel through the text,⁸⁷ unfolding a multiplicity of interconnecting perspectives in which the various parts of India are coordinated into an ordered totality. India is spread out for the reader as a surface to explore; spatial extension is converted into a spatial text, into a succession of places and natives whose fixity enables them to be read.⁸⁸ As Kim notes in his 'orisons' on the Great Game, 'it runs like a shuttle throughout all Hind'.⁸⁹ As a 'shuttle', both instrument of weaving and railway train, it weaves together the spatial text of India just as the railway lines cross over the subcontinent, bringing together in train compartments castes and religious groups from far-flung regions. The cartographic discourse of *Kim* can be read in terms of a technology of knowledge and possession, which captures the 'truth' of a place in a single scientific form,⁹⁰

in which a map is 'silent arbiter of power'.⁹¹ It was in this period that the world was increasingly displayed as a globe to be viewed, as part of a 'spectacular geography in which the world appeared as an exhibition'.⁹² Mapping the different parts of India in relation to each other as an ordered totality also fixes India's place in relation to the rest of the world. The configuration of ethnology with a distinctive geography of knowing transforms India into not just an exhibition which we view but also an 'anthropogeography'⁹³ in which India becomes an exhibition which we travel through. Moreover, as a circumscribed space for the pleasurable fieldwork of ethnology, Indians are not just fixed in their identities as they travel, but the very space they travel through has been defined for them and not produced by themselves.

Nationalism's travelling autobiographies

Nationalism's travelling autobiographies question this incarceration of Indians as unselfconscious insiders within a space which is not of their own making. In these autobiographical projects, dwelling in travel is the norm,⁹⁴ and styles of travelling become modes of knowing. These autobiographies counter the freezing of consciousness, which is such an important feature of the category of 'native'. Travel is both a physical activity and an epistemological strategy;⁹⁵ it also represents what Paul Carter has called a 'mental orientation'.⁹⁶ While travel is important as a metaphor for intellectual liberty,⁹⁷ in nationalism's travelling autobiographies, travel enacts the construction of a conceptual space, independent of although related to the everyday machinations of politics, in which to articulate possibilities of identity formation. The relationship between the opening up of a conceptual and mental space, often described in these texts as a form of travel, and actual physical movement remains complex, raising fundamental questions about the relationship between mind and body in travel. Nehru's remark that 'while we are always journeying, trying to approach something that is ever receding', at the same time 'in each one of us are many different human beings with their inconsistencies and contradictions, each pulling in a different direction',⁹⁸ encapsulates the way these travelling autobiographies enact the development of selves.

Gandhi fashions himself through representations of travel in his work. His texts contain accounts of journeys between India and South Africa,⁹⁹ between India and England,¹⁰⁰ and from South Africa to India via England.¹⁰¹ He travels widely within South Africa and India.¹⁰² The experience of being unsettled, of dwelling, in travel is the central motif of Gandhi's autobiographical texts. The refrain in his autobiography is of being on the point of settling down before moving on again.¹⁰³ He is repeatedly setting up house and then moving house. Within one month after furnishing his house in Johannesburg he has to break up his household in order to serve in the Indian ambulance corps during the so-called Zulu 'rebellion'.¹⁰⁴ Even his

stay at the various settlements he establishes at Phoenix and Tolstoy farm are temporary.¹⁰⁵ In fact, his autobiographical texts display the features of what Elaine Savory has called the 'travelling identity', as a 'series of consecutive selves, linking together in the same life and resulting from the renewals of self in different environments'. For Gandhi, it seems that home is a travelling space or series of spaces, a series of interconnected rooms or countries, reached only by passing through all of the others, rather than a fixed place which is the antithesis of travel.¹⁰⁶ The subtitle of *An Autobiography, the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, points to how Gandhi's autobiographical texts are also travels in search of 'Truth', or a quest narrative for 'Truth'. But 'Truth' is not something which is found, but something which is progressively but never finally made through his travels.

Gandhi's autobiography as traveller also bears witness to the attempts to immobilise him. Gandhi refers to various incidents in which the space and time for travelling are carefully controlled and defined by the State and its officials in South Africa. Gandhi outlines how he tackles legislation which is aimed at impeding the mobility of non-white populations in South Africa, as well as the immigration of Indians into South Africa.¹⁰⁷ He is arrested for entering the Transvaal without the required permit, and for inducing indentured labourers to leave the province of Natal, and aiding and abetting 'prohibited persons' to enter the Transvaal.¹⁰⁸ This leads to the subsequent mass deportation of the striking miners from Balfour to Natal.¹⁰⁹ Gandhi also refers to the law passed in the Transvaal in 1885, and amended in 1886, under which Indians were not allowed to walk on public footpaths, and could not move out of doors after 9 p.m. without a permit. This is followed by his own experience of being pushed off the footpath at night.¹¹⁰ He is ejected from the first-class compartment of the train he takes from Durban to Pretoria for being 'coloured' even though he has a first-class ticket.¹¹¹ He also mentions how at Maritzburg Indians could not enter the railway station by the main gate and how difficult it was for them to purchase tickets.¹¹² Gandhi also mentions the 'difficulty in and the practical impossibility of securing accommodation in hotels'.¹¹³ In India, Gandhi is barred from entering the province of Punjab, and on another train journey he is harassed at every station by the CID.¹¹⁴

It is because of these practical disabilities, grounded in assumptions about the dangers of both 'free' and indentured Indians travelling within South Africa, that moments of arrival in Gandhi's itinerary can be fraught with difficulties. In one episode, the hostile reception to Gandhi in particular and to Indians in general when they land at Durban is partly caused by the summaries by Reuter of his speeches on South Africa in India. However, this quickly becomes entangled with perceptions about the 'first step towards flooding Natal with free Indians'.¹¹⁵ This specific fear of 'free' Indians appears to stem from the fact that Indian immigrants who were indentured were in many ways the 'property' of their masters, and so their mobility and

labour was from the outset at the command of Europeans.¹¹⁶ This fear of the uncontrolled mobility of Indians was also evident in the plans of the Natal government in 1894 to impose an annual poll tax on indentured Indians who did not return to India after their indenture expired, or who did not renew their indenture.¹¹⁷ In other words, the plight of the indentured Indian was a graphic illustration of how the Indian as traveller was only acceptable if his or her mobility was in some way or other stringently controlled. Moreover, there was a slippage between the status of the indentured Indian in this regard and that of the 'free' Indian, in so far as the provisions of the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance of 1906, passed as the Asiatic Registration Act in March 1907, in the Transvaal, were in some ways more punitive than the laws to which indentured Indians were subject.¹¹⁸ This was supplemented by the Transvaal Immigrants Restriction Bill of 1907 which indirectly became an instrument for 'preventing the entry of a single Indian newcomer'.¹¹⁹

The status of the indentured Indian, as someone who travelled to South Africa subject to drastic laws of control, reflects the deeper and even ontological assumption about the native as incarcerated within a clearly demarcated space. Indians in South Africa, precisely because they were not 'native' to South Africa, were subject to drastic laws governing their mobility. The asymmetry between their mobility as non-'natives' in South Africa and that of European non-'natives' points to how deep this ontological assumption was. As Gertrude Stein puts it so disarmingly in her mock autobiography, 'native always means people who belonged somewhere. That shows that the white race does not really think they belong anywhere because they think of everybody else as native.'¹²⁰ Hence, too, the attempt to fine indentured labourers if they refused to return to India once their period of indenture had not expired, as though their refusal was a transgression of their status as Indians who as 'natives' belonged somewhere else. Gandhi also notes how as a result of their defiance of the Black Act and the Immigration Act, a large group of Indians were deported to India; he notes that 'many of them were ex-indentured labourers, and had no relations in India. Some were even born in South Africa, and to all India was something like a strange land.'¹²¹ The very logic of deportation to India was an imposition of the notion of the 'native' as belonging to and incarcerated in certain places. Gandhi also notes the argument in circulation among some European circles, both official and unofficial, to the effect that Indians were entitled to less rights than the 'negroes' because the latter were in some way 'native' to South Africa.¹²² That this did not affect the rights of Europeans in South Africa reflected how the non-'native' status of Europeans was normalised as part of their general freedom of mobility throughout the British empire.

Gandhi notes that prior to his hostile reception in Durban he had vociferously attacked the indentured labour system, and the plans of the Natal government to impose a tax on these labourers.¹²³ Given the way in which

the category of the stationary 'native' was almost an ontological one in official and non-official European discourse, this goes some way to explaining the visceral tone of the reaction against Gandhi upon his arrival. Although there were no contagious diseases on board, officials placed the ship in quarantine to prevent the Indian passengers from disembarkation. This is also indicative of how the dangers of travelling natives were partly seen in terms of infection.¹²⁴ It may be useful to consider Gandhi's stress on the importance of hygiene and 'cleanliness' among Indians in this context. He describes European perceptions of Indians as 'very dirty', but insists that 'whatever force there was in the arguments of Europeans was duly acknowledged'. The lectures and debates arranged at Congress meetings on the question of sanitation and hygiene are in part designed to rebut these perceptions.¹²⁵ Gandhi also suggests that these perceptions may be self-reinforcing. The locations selected for Indians were 'dirty places situated far away from the towns where there was no water supply, no lighting arrangement and no sanitary convenience to speak of'.¹²⁶ The spatialising practices of the State in assigning fixed locations to Indians was partly premised on the equation of the term 'Indian' with dirt and disease, which led to what Gandhi called 'coolie locations or ghettos', where the Municipality did 'nothing to provide any sanitary facilities, much less good roads or lights'. The Municipality also used the insanitation caused by its own neglect to dispossess Indian settlers who had acquired their plots in the Johannesburg location on leases of 99 years.¹²⁷ Whenever there was a danger of an epidemic, the executive takes 'excessive measures'. Hence when the Indian community takes sanitary measures voluntarily, it saved itself from this 'oppression'.¹²⁸

Gandhi's stress on self-empowerment through strategies of cleanliness and hygiene not only aimed to rebut stereotypes of Indians as 'dirty', it also challenged the grounds of the spatialising practices of the State, which circumscribed Indians in specific locations.¹²⁹ It is for this reason that Gandhi stresses the efficiency of the sanitary arrangements during the long march of the miners, and also those at Tolstoy farm.¹³⁰ The mobility of the Indian traveller and self-reflexive practices of hygiene in Gandhi's counter-discourse of travel represented an attempt to break from the ethnological and official discourse in which travelling Indians were sometimes equated with the circulation of disease, an equation attracting the unwelcome attentions of the State.

Thus, Gandhi's autobiography enacts a struggle to appropriate travel as the norm for the 'native' against the ethnological framework of the State's ideologies. Travel and displacement constitute location; location is not a bounded site but an itinerary of travel.¹³¹ His focus is on shifting locations and not bounded fields, with a 'native inside' and an ethnographer 'outside', nor the circumscribed space of fieldwork as in Risley's *The People of India*. Moreover, in Gandhi's project, the Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy farm are established as temporary dwellings which emerge from, instead of against,

movement, travelling and circulation. When Gandhi stops at the house of Lazarus in Newcastle during the long march of the Indian coalminers in South Africa, the house is 'converted . . . into a caravanserai. All sorts and conditions of men would come and go and the premises at all times would present the appearance of an ocean of heads'.¹³² Similarly, earlier when he stops at the Reverend Doke's house in the Transvaal, he again describes how the 'house became a sort of caravanserai'.¹³³ The figure of the home as a caravanserai serves to illustrate how for Gandhi dwelling is an itinerary of travel in an ongoing journey, which serves to underpin movement and circulation in what he calls the 'houseless life'.¹³⁴ Dwelling is not a fixed location which is defined against travel, rather it is framed through travel itself. It both sustains and is secured through mobility. This is illustrated by the way in which Gandhi's experimental dwellings, such as Tolstoy farm and Phoenix farm, tend to be framed within the itineraries and arrangements of travel, whether these are long walks as in the case of Tolstoy Farm where Gandhi devotes a section to the travel arrangements for movement to and from Johannesburg,¹³⁵ or difficult train journeys as when he transports his seriously ill wife from Durban to Phoenix by train and foot.¹³⁶

Scholars have rightly noted the complexity of Gandhi's notion of simplicity.¹³⁷ This notion might also be read as a self-mobilising strategy. For Gandhi, simplicity means paring down his possessions and household expenses, and an important aspect of his autobiography is the progressive simplification of his household. This simplification of his household is partly an attempt to put into practice Ruskin's teaching;¹³⁸ but there is also a pragmatic concern here. Divesting himself of possessions is important to ensure his mobility. Possessions become inconvenient burdens for the frequent traveller. He points out how he had to give up the house he had 'carefully furnished' in Johannesburg when he joins the ambulance corps during the Zulu 'rebellion'.¹³⁹ Clifford has pointed to the entire infrastructure which ensured the comfort and safety of the European traveller.¹⁴⁰ Gandhi's simplicity in travel and his reduction of the infrastructure of his dwellings in travel¹⁴¹ are a pointed contrast to the complex and elaborate infrastructure which secures India for Risley's ethnographic fieldwork, and the general safety of British travellers in the Empire. Travelling lightly for Gandhi becomes an important part of his identity as a 'native' itinerant; and like so much else in Gandhi's texts, the benefits of 'simplicity' are at once 'spiritual', pragmatic and political.

Iqbal and the aesthetics of travel

Thus, the field of self-fashioning in Gandhi's autobiographies can be understood in terms of notions of travel. His travelling identity helps us to reconsider important concepts of his thinking such as 'simplicity' and his stress on cleanliness. A narrative of travel is also key to Iqbal's self-conception in