

McCluskieganj In the Spatial Turn: Rethinking Anglo-Indian Diaspora and Spatial Marginalization

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Abstract

Nestled in the secluded terrains of Jharkhand, McCluskieganj stands as a poignant testament to the enigmatic confluence of Anglo-Indian memory and space. Its genesis during the pre-independence era marked an epoch when the quest for a 'promised land' became an urgent yearning within the Anglo-Indian community. However, the allure and lustre surrounding this haven have gradually waned with the passage of time and the handover of governance. The plight of the Anglo-Indians, once beset by myriad social and cultural marginalities, metamorphosed into a distinctly spatial odyssey. Amidst this transformative landscape, a dichotomy emerged: the inexorable pull of metropolitan hubs captivated the younger echelons of the community, while the elders remained tethered to the essence of a place they called 'home'. Within this characterization, the geographical context emerges as an indispensable facet in understanding the Anglo-Indian narrative in McCluskieganj. Any discourse on the disposition of the Anglo-Indians within this enclave remains inherently incomplete without an acknowledgment of the inextricable bond between the community's essence and the geographical expanse of McCluskieganj.

This study endeavours to explore the intricate tapestry of McCluskieganj, delving into the symbiotic relationship between the shifting sands of space and the dynamic evolution of Anglo-Indian identity. Through a prism that interlaces academic inquiry with the lyrical essence of human experience, it seeks to illuminate the spatial chapters within the larger narrative of Anglo-Indian existence, embodying a convergence of history, belonging, and the ethereal essence of place.

Keywords: Anglo-Indians, Marginality, Spatial marginality, McCluskieganj

Introduction: The Anglo-Indians and their Marginality

In contemplating the multifaceted landscape of societal inequality, the concept of marginality emerges as an illuminating lens through which to perceive the stratified tiers of our world. Yet, within this construct, a fabric of identities intertwines, enriching the discourse on marginality with myriad objective and subjective perspectives. Within the rich fabric of those occupying marginalized spaces, one particular demographic in India, the Anglo-Indians, stands as a compelling embodiment. The Anglo-Indians, a minority unparalleled globally, trace their lineage to both European and Indian ancestry, their cultural vernacular steeped in English, their faith rooted in Christianity (Moore, 1996).

Forged amidst the sweeping waves of the European colonial dominion in India, this community traversed a complex odyssey, carving a distinct identity—a peculiar blend of ascendancy over the indigenous populace, yet perennially shadowed by an inferior status in comparison to their fair-skinned European progenitors. Terms like 'Half Castes' and 'Indo Britons' underscored their existence, denoting a lineage intertwined with both the conqueror and the conquered.

The very essence of the term 'mixed race' in the Indian context embodies the union of European fathers and native Indian mothers, a union seldom deviating from this prescribed pattern. The lineage of Anglo-Indians, delineated through official classification based on paternal European ancestry, owes its genesis to the resolute resolve of their Indian maternal progenitors. These individuals, guided by courage, departed from their native moorings, birthing new lives alongside their European counterparts. Embracing unfamiliar customs and religious doctrines, they navigated with unwavering tenacity, ensuring not only their own survival but also nurturing the welfare of their progeny, thereby nurturing the burgeoning East Indian community. Consequently, the identity of the Anglo-Indians transcends mere filial ties to John Bull, encompassing equally the rich heritage of Mother India (Charles, 2006). In their existence, they are a living testament to the amalgamation of cultures, embodying a heritage woven from disparate threads, uniting the legacies of East and West in a harmonious tapestry of human experience. In delving into the intricate fabric of marginality, Billson (2005) unveils the essence of cultural marginality—an emergence born of the interplay between diverse cultures, where the intersections of

these cultures are imbued with distinct valuation. Within this realm, a duality of superiority and inferiority unfolds, shaping the perception of cultural marginality. These stratifications, whether greater or lesser, stem from the amalgamation of both objective observations and subjective lived experiences. Gist (1967), too, explores the social marginality of the Anglo-Indians, shedding light on their relationship with other communities. They exist in a space where complete conformity to the dominant Indian reference group remains elusive. Crucially, Gist highlights a reciprocity embedded within the cultural and social dimensions of Anglo-Indian marginality. These aspects often intertwine, reinforcing one another. This intricate dynamic surfaces notably in the historical context: despite being British subjects, the Anglo-Indians were seldom acknowledged as true Indians by the indigenous populace, as emphasized by Frank Anthony, a prominent community leader during 1947 (Moore, 1996). Even during the British rule in India, the Anglo-Indian community dwelled on the periphery of British social life, if not entirely distant from British culture (Gist, 1967: 369). A palpable and enduring sense of identity and belongingness has remained elusive to this community since its inception. The core contention lies in the struggle faced by marginalized individuals, particularly those of hybrid identity, as they grapple with the challenge of fully encapsulating their subjective experiences. Their expression often finds itself hindered, compelling a struggle within conditions marked by either silence or a metaphorical ailment, as articulated by Chopra (2006). Thus, the plight of the Anglo-Indians unfolds as a poetic symphony, where the echoes of their existence reverberate through the corridors of history. Their narrative, woven with the threads of cultural assimilation and societal reciprocity, paints a canvas of resilience and perseverance amid the tumultuous tides of marginality. Even in the vibrant realm of Hindi cinema, the concept of Anglo-Indian-ness assumes a multifaceted guise, encapsulating not just the performance of cultural identity but the legacy of a specific lineage. Cinematic narratives within this sphere not only acknowledge but also intricately elucidate the essence of radical hybridity and the nuances of otherness. These celluloid chronicles unveil a spectrum of cultural identities, weaving a tapestry that transcends mere physical traits, subtly delineating features like lighter hair or skin tone. Beyond the visible, these narratives delve into an array of cultural and behavioural norms, from the indulgence in alcohol to the adoption of Western dance styles and the portrayal of perceived promiscuity. These cinematic portrayals, a marriage of inherent and assumed meanings, have sculpted a landscape laden with social degradation and pervasive stereotyping of the Anglo-Indian community (Sen, 2006). Each frame etches a narrative where the nuances of Anglo-Indian-ness are not merely sketched but etched in the collective consciousness. Yet, within these depictions lies a duality—a captivating reflection of a cultural mosaic, juxtaposed against the stark backdrop of societal misconceptions. This paper through an academic lens tinged with the poignancy of human experience, seeks to unravel the depths of these depictions, exposing the complexities inherent in the portrayal of Anglo-Indian-ness. In this exploration, it aims to shed light on the cultural enigma embedded within the cinematic fabric, challenging the established norms while weaving a narrative that resonates with both academic inquiry and the artistic nuances of human existence.

In the democratic framework of post-1947 India, the Constitutional provision of Article 331 provided a political foothold for the representation of the Anglo-Indians, offering a platform through nomination by the President. Yet, the exact count of Anglo-Indians in India remains an elusive enigma, far removed from the figures once articulated by Frank Anthony. The community's populace has borne witness to a rapid decline, a trend underscored by the prevalent 'quitting (leaving) India' ethos that characterized their group in the post-independence era (Andrews, 2007). Though dispersed across various enclaves in the country, pockets in cities like Kolkata and Chennai still resonate with a discernible Anglo-Indian presence. However, the Census of 2011 paints a stark contrast, reporting a diminutive population of merely 296 individuals, with a stark majority—271—residing in urban spheres while a meagre 25 find their abode in rural landscapes. This staggering decline hints at a mass-scale migration within their community, evoking a narrative of vanishing echoes. Yet, amidst this narrative of dwindling numbers, Glen Galstaun, a nominated Anglo-Indian member in the Jharkhand assembly, raises an upsetting dissent against these statistics (Bhattacharya, 2023). His contention resonates with the flawed portrayal of their populace, highlighting the potential discrepancies in the numbers that the census encapsulates. However, the saga takes a more disheartening turn as the Central government, citing these diminishing figures, implemented the 104th Constitutional Amendment in 2019. This decision led to the discontinuation of the nomination of two Anglo-Indian seats in the Indian parliament and various state assemblies, perpetuating a kind of political marginality that further disenfranchises the Anglo-Indian community.

This paper putting McCluskieganj in the middle, embarks on a reflective exploration, juxtaposing the realms of statistical decline with the profound implications on political representation. It seeks to unravel the nuances of a community slipping into the margins, tracing the contours of their vanishing presence in the democratic tapestry of India. In doing so, it sheds light on the profound repercussions of this legislative amendment, underscoring the distressing plight of a community drifting into political obscurity, echoing the fading whispers of a once vibrant and significant cultural presence.

Deprivations of the Anglo-Indian community

In the looming shadow of India's impending independence and the twilight of the British Raj, the socio-economic fabric of the Anglo-Indian community began to unravel, signalling a harrowing descent. Their inherent ties to Britain poised them on a precarious threshold, fraught with the spectre of fears, reprisal, and a palpable insecurity regarding their future

within India's shifting landscape. As the British exodus from Indian soil drew closer, the apprehension within this community swelled, compelling a significant exodus as many sought refuge in distant lands.

The advent of India's independence precipitated a profound dilemma for individuals of mixed racial heritage, their very identities entangled in a web of uncertainty. The question of allegiance loomed large, casting a shadow upon their existence. Despite the exhortations from their leaders to proudly embrace their diverse racial lineage, a notable faction grappled with the weighty decision of concealing their mixed heritage. For many, the path of least resistance lay in presenting themselves as purely English, a heart-breaking guise that obscured the intricate fabric of their mixed identity (Almeida, 2002).

Our paper embarks on a reflective odyssey of McCluskieganj, tracing the bittersweet trajectory of the Anglo-Indian community on the cusp of India's independence. It delves into the profound internal strife that burgeoned within, underscoring the tumultuous choices individuals were compelled to make as they stood at the crossroads of history. It seeks to uncover the complexities that shrouded their identities, their allegiance torn between the heritage of their land and the allure of a distant colonial past. Through an amalgamation of academic discourse and the emotive hues of human experience, it unravels the emotional narrative of a community adrift in the turbulence of shifting allegiances and the struggle to define their place in a world teetering on the edge of transformation. The reference to Keith Butler, an Anglo-Indian fiction writer, through Andrews' narration, likely highlights the prevailing sentiments and struggles of that era. This excerpt delves into the complex social dynamics and historical context of a time when people sought homogeneity and social acceptance, particularly in an environment where they felt culturally marginalized. The passage vividly describes the challenges faced by individuals trying to leave India, highlighting the privileges associated with English passports and the extreme lengths to which some went to escape, such as using forged documents and altering their appearance.

"Dottie's experience at Heathrow, applying white makeup to appear more 'acceptable' to authorities, underscores the lengths people went to in order to navigate through societal norms and bureaucratic barriers.

The use of Pond's Foundation Powder and the need to convince officials not to be quarantined offer a glimpse into the discriminatory and challenging environment faced by those seeking to leave India at that time, illuminating the underlying complexities and biases within the society and the immigration system".

In an emotional allegory capturing the stark realities of the time, Butler's metaphorical narrative vividly portrays a woman and her child amidst the era's adversities.

"In the ensuing weeks, her form did not swell with the expectancy of new life but rather receded, as the child, gripped by fear of entering a world without a national tether, seemed to recoil within her womb. Subsequently, she endured a haunting manifestation: retching forth cartographic projections, an expulsion of geographically shaped fragments, reminiscent of far-off lands – Australia, Canada, England – each ejected as an involuntary manifestation. It was a symbolic regurgitation, underscoring the dire quest for a 'civilised' haven, for it was increasingly evident that India, for the decent Anglo-Indians, had ceased to embody a hospitable abode."

The prospect of departing from the Indian subcontinent was not a viable choice for many within the Anglo-Indian community, as their considerations were intricately woven into the fabric of available migration resources and the reception awaiting them in their potential new abode. Thus, a considerable number of Anglo-Indians found themselves navigating the contours of the nascent democratic nation that emerged (Garcha 2020). This circumstance, however, propelled them into a state of liminality, wherein an inherent yearning emerged—a yearning to establish roots and carve out a space that resonates with the profound sentiment of 'home' (James 2010). The disdain directed at those who embrace cosmopolitan identities is far from a novel phenomenon. The historical narrative persistently portrays "rootless" cosmopolitans as individuals bereft of fixed domiciles, devoid of emotional entanglements with the land, and seemingly lacking in a perceived sense of accountability (Jackson 2022).

During these junctures, the Anglo-Indian society dynamically engaged in an earnest quest, endeavouring to identify pockets of land within the Indian landscape where they could fashion their lives in accordance with their distinctive traditions and cultural heritage. Gradually, enclaves tailored to the nuances of the Anglo-Indian ethos materialized, notably in prominent urban centres such as Austin Town in Bangalore, Bow Barracks in Calcutta, Perambur in Madras, and several locales in Kerala and Bombay. This ongoing self-perpetuation of the Anglo-Indian singularity manifested as a gradual divergence from established norms, emblematic of a cohesive and consolidated community. As this process of self-perpetuation unfolds, the conclusive engagement of the singularity in a political struggle with the state is perpetually deferred. This deferment accentuates the persistent struggle and challenges endured by the Anglo-Indian community in delineating a definitive political and social stance or resolution within the broader framework of the Hindu-dominated societal and state dynamics (Chanda 2014). The protracted delay in resolution serves to underscore the enduring narrative of negotiation and resilience characterizing the intricate interplay between the Anglo-Indian identity and its intricate relationship with the prevailing socio-political milieu.

The quest for a haven to call "home" led the Anglo-Indians to hitherto unexplored realms within the Indian landscape, including sparsely inhabited locales such as Clement Town, Kolar Gold Fields, Whitefield, among others. However, the focal point of this inquiry resides in a meticulously crafted habitation expressly designated for the Anglo-Indian community. In the annals of 1933, the Colonisation Society of India embarked upon the realization of a visionary initiative conceived by Earnest Timothy McCluskie (1872 - 1935), a highly accomplished and affluent real estate and insurance luminary. McCluskie's dream materialized in the form of an exclusive homeland for the Anglo-Indians, christened as McCluskieganj. Initiating a joint stock company, Mr. McCluskie allocated a parcel of land to each Anglo-Indian shareholder, having acquired 10,000 acres from the Maharaja of Ratu. This visionary endeavour aimed to crystallize a miniature England on Indian soil. A singular stipulation from the Maharaja stipulated that the adjacent tribal communities would not face eviction in the realization of this dream (Lochan 2021). Presently, McCluskieganj stands as a quaint township, nestled approximately sixty-five kilometres from Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand. In this carefully crafted enclave, the intersection of dreams, land, and community history converges, encapsulating the nuanced narrative of McCluskie's aspiration and its enduring imprint on the cultural fabric of the Anglo-Indian diaspora. The dynamic engagement of Anglo-Indians in this geographical milieu precipitated the infusion of their distinctive hallmarks—culinary preferences, sartorial choices, entrenched customs, and ceremonial practices—that, to a considerable extent, mirrored the cultural ethos of the British (Khan 2016). Originating from diverse corners of India, individuals of Anglo-Indian lineage acquired land and forged domiciles within this enclave. Their magnetism towards this location emanated from the allure of fecund arable land, prospects in animal husbandry, rail and road networks, and the innate anticipation that this haven would crystallize their longstanding aspirations (Bag 2013). Descendants of Anglo-Indian lineage, hailing from diverse corners of India, embarked on the acquisition of land within this locale, laying the foundations of their homes. The promise of abundant fertile farmland, opportunities in animal husbandry, seamlessly integrated railway and road networks, and the innate expectation that this idyllic haven would finally usher in the realization of their long-held aspirations (Bag 2013). Accompanying their migration were architectural nuances that transformed the landscape—sloping roofs, the warmth emanating from fireplaces, and the vibrant allure of flowering gardens collectively crafting a paradisiacal setting. This meticulously constructed environment witnessed the establishment of a church and post office, symbolic pillars of permanence for the Anglo-Indian community. Against this backdrop, the denizens indulged in the refined cadence of ballroom dances, the thrill of hunting pursuits, the libations of wine, and the orchestration of communal merrymaking. In this symphony of cultural transplantation and indigenous aspirations, the enclave emerges as a canvas where the echoes of tradition harmonize with the vibrancy of newfound dreams, portraying a unique intersection of Anglo-Indian heritage and the evolving narrative of the landscape.

Essentially, it was the visionary impetus of Mr. McCluskie that conceptualized the establishment of the Anglo-Indian community with a deliberate emphasis on agrarian pursuits. This conceptual framework was underpinned by the profound insight that disconnection from nature and a dearth of rootedness could engender a pervasive sense of estrangement within one's own community (Lahiri-Dutt 2015). Concurrently, the ethos of that era saw resonance with Gandhian-principles advocating a rural way of life, while Tagore underscored the profound significance of an intimate connection with the natural world. The existential queries surrounding self-identity—our essence—and the contours of belonging, both in terms of manner and location, have perennially preoccupied the collective consciousness of the Anglo-Indian community. These contemplations, whether articulated or silent, conscious or submerged in the subconscious, have woven themselves into the fabric of their lived experiences (Cassity 2014). Against this backdrop, the creation of Mini England, christened McCluskieganj, emerged as a source of immense pride for the Anglo-Indian community. Furthermore, within the Anglo-Indian social milieu, Indian women found themselves socially marginalized by the broader Indian society, compelling them to seek solace either within their own community or in the company of Europeans (James 2010). At the same time, Mills (1996) underscores the existence of numerous economically distressed Anglo-Indian families, grappling with meagre earnings and soaring living expenses, in urban centres such as Calcutta. Castigated by the British as estranged kin and relegated by the Hindus to societal peripheries, over time, they descended further down the societal hierarchy (Chatterjee 2019). Within the intricate construct of Indian societal dynamics, this phenomenon accentuated the significance of the creation of Mini England at McCluskieganj, offering a haven for Anglo-Indian families navigating the complexities of social rejection and economic adversity.

McCluskieganj swiftly metamorphosed into a utopian enclave, extending its embrace to approximately 400 families of Anglo-Indian lineage who found solace as permanent residents within its bounds (Kohli 2016). Beyond a mere architectural and demographic undertaking, McCluskieganj transcended its physicality, embodying a collective aspiration for a homeland where denizens could establish a profound communion with the earth and with each other, forging an intricate tapestry of shared community belongingness (Lahiri-Dutt 2015). In the eloquent words of Gist (1967), the community served then, as it does now, as a psychological and social sanctum, affording sanctuary to Anglo-Indians within a societal environment that perennially withheld the mantle of acceptance from them.

Amidst our probing exploration of our subject matter, i.e., Anglo-Indian people still residing there, attaining access to the insular realm of the Anglo-Indian community in McCluskieganj proved to be a formidable endeavour. Repeated entreaties for dialogue met with a steadfast reluctance, as the inhabitants exhibited a natural wariness toward unfamiliar interlocutors.

Ultimately, the gateway to interaction was facilitated through a designated intermediary (Principal of Don Bosco School), explicitly articulating the scholarly nature of our inquiry. Once granted permission for interviews, it became apparent that there were some harboured suspicions, perceiving a latent guise of property speculation underpinning our academic pursuits—a testament to the complex dynamics shaping their historical relationship with the land.

The ebb and flow of time have witnessed a diminution in the Anglo-Indian presence, with our contemporary count revealing a modest 51 individuals distributed across 12 familial units who continue to call McCluskieganj, their home. Employing an unstructured interview methodology, we embarked on an immersive exploration of their life world and history, within this enclave. These dialogues, extending from a minimum duration of 1.5 hours to a more expansive 3-hour engagement, served as vessels for capturing the nuanced narrative of their existence in this distinct location. In this delicate dance between inquiry and receptivity, the intricate layers of their experiences and perceptions unfolded, resonating with the cadence of lived histories and aspirations.

McCluskieganj: Regal Origins and interviews of residents

Embedded within the historical tapestry of McCluskieganj, the settlement unfolds as a canvas rich with a distinctive patina, inviting exploration into the intricate culture of belongingness it fosters. Echoing through the narratives of those who have made McCluskieganj their abode, a recurrent motif emerges—an implicit claim to regal, if not noble, lineage.

Mr. Denis Meredith, when queried about the genesis of his family's establishment in McCluskieganj, responds with palpable emotion. Transported to the halcyon days of yore, he recounts the touching tale of his father's migration to McCluskieganj in 1952, an emotional journey commenced when Mr. Denis himself was but a year old, accompanied by his elder sister. In the cadence of his recollections, Denis unveils a familial narrative steeped in sacrifice and aspiration. His father, hitherto a mining engineer in the western Singhbhum region of present-day Jharkhand, succumbed to the irresistible allure of McCluskieganj—a haven promising not only an expanse of kindred spirits sharing their cultural heritage, faith, and lifestyle but also the tangible prospect of land ownership. Abandoning the familiar contours of Chaibasa, his father purchased land in Duli, (a place eight kilometres distant from McCluskieganj), etching the family into the soil of this promising sanctuary. As Denis wistfully reminisces about Duli, he conveys a sense of transience, acknowledging that their stopover there was ephemeral. The necessity to traverse the short distance to McCluskieganj daily for essential provisions became a recurring motif in their familial narrative. In this emotional narrative, McCluskieganj emerges not merely as a geographical entity but as a profound embodiment of yearning, sacrifice, and the eternal quest for a communal sanctuary—a place where narratives intertwine with the landscape, each thread contributing to the intricate fabric of belongingness and nostalgia.

Within the echoes of McCluskieganj's history, Mr. Malcolm Horrigan, another resident, unravels a familial narrative interwoven with the visionary legacy of his grandfather, a pivotal figure whose journey into this idyllic enclave was set into motion following a fortuitous encounter with Mr. McCluskie in Kolkata. Convinced of the merits embedded in McCluskie's plans, Malcolm's grandfather invested in property, etching a familial saga tethered to the colonial corridors of the post and telegraph department of the British. In this historical tableau, Malcolm's father emerges as a luminary amongst the Anglo families, having attained the zenith of affluence within the community. A retired senior official of the British army, his father's opulence manifested in the ownership of eight racing horses, a venture that garnered substantial wealth through their spirited pursuits in the racing circuits of Kolkata. Yet, this familial affluence bore the strains of disparate aspirations. Malcolm candidly shares the paradoxes embedded in his family's dynamics—a father driven by urban ambitions, relentlessly pursuing financial prosperity, and a mother, a local resident, enamoured by the serenity and tranquillity of McCluskieganj. The clash of desires, Malcolm narrates, compelled his father's reluctant residence in McCluskieganj, a consequence of his mother's unwavering attachment to the peace this enclave offered. Reflecting the era's economic landscape, Malcolm elucidates how, owing to the affordability of land, his family possessed separate properties, each member inhabiting independent domains. In the temporal tapestry of McCluskieganj, Malcolm's personal narrative weaves through a career with Central Coalfield Limited, unfolding from 1972 until his retirement in 1993. His account reveals a familial tradition, as his sons and daughters consecrated their matrimonial bonds within the embrace of McCluskieganj, an intimate expression of community ties. Yet, beneath the veneer of familial anecdotes lies the sombre backdrop of challenges faced by the Anglo-Indian community. Malcolm illuminates the paucity of governmental support during the early years of independent India, bemoaning the absence of nearby medical facilities. The arduous journey to Ranchi for medical aid, fraught with peril on dilapidated roads, stands as a testament to the community's resilience. In the face of such adversities, Malcolm's grandfather emerged as a benevolent force, acquiring a Chevrolet bus to facilitate community mobility, a metaphorical vehicle bridging the physical and metaphorical distances within the evolving landscape of McCluskieganj.

A majority of our interactions unfolded beneath the sheltering eaves of community porches, where the whispered tales of McCluskieganj's inhabitants found resonance in the ambient air. An exception granted access to the venerable abode of Mrs. Kitty Texeira, a portal to the past, where dilapidation coexisted with lofty ceilings, each telling a silent tale of bygone grandeur. Steeped in nostalgia, Mrs. Texeira exuded pride in the faded echoes of black-and-white photographs adorning her walls, each frame a sepia portal to ancestral narratives. Notably, a photograph captured her maternal grandfather

cradling a banjo, an emotional emblem of an era she wistfully described as "the real days." Her birthplace, the very house we occupied, bore witness to the echoes of her lineage, tracing roots to a Welsh grandfather born in Gunj, whose matrimony linked their narrative to a lady from Tripura. Through her reminiscences, McCluskieganj emerged not merely as a geographical locus, but as a chosen and promised land, steeped in its own unique brand of nostalgia. Mrs. Kitty's narrative transported us to Christmases of yore, a tapestry woven with gatherings, festivities, the thrill of hunting, and the unrestrained joy of a society flourishing with Anglo-Indian families, an abundance of children, and ample financial means. In this halcyon epoch, she marvelled at the affordability that infused comfort into every facet of existence, despite the absence of modern amenities. *"Everything back then was very cheap here, and you could live in comfort with even less money,"* she reflected, embodying the contentment derived from a life embraced by a simplicity that transcended monetary considerations.

Another resident cast his gaze further into the past, recalling a communal tapestry woven with shared games—football, hockey, and cricket—when the landscape teemed with the exuberance of a vibrant populace. Amidst this communal fervour, McCluskieganj stood as a refuge, cocooned from the burgeoning cities of Calcutta and Madras. Here, serenity and tranquillity became coveted virtues, sought after by those who yearned for a respite from the relentless pace of urbanity. In these whispered narratives, McCluskieganj transcended its physicality, becoming a metaphysical realm where the echoes of a bygone era lingered, and the tangible and intangible threads of community, joy, and contentment were interwoven into the very fabric of existence.

In the course of our dialogues with Mr. Munro, the discourse ventured into the thematic realm of "Mini England." To our astonishment, Mr. Munro, with hearty laughter resonating in the air, disclaimed authorship of the term. His candid revelation unfolded,

"We never coined the term Mini England. It was bestowed upon us by external observers who discerned our distinctive way of life, one evoking a discernible resonance with British lifestyle".

Thus, the nomenclature Mini England gained currency within the narrative of McCluskieganj." This candid disavowal unveiled a nuanced perspective on the nomenclature, highlighting the interpretative gaze of outsiders who perceived, in the enclave's cultural nuances, echoes reminiscent of a British milieu, thereby imprinting upon it the evocative epithet of "Mini England."

In the pursuit of demarcating their distinct community amidst the broader diversity, McCluskieganj emerged as a facilitative locus in this endeavour. The landscape itself became a repository of cherished memories and wistful nostalgia. Furthermore, it would not be an undue embellishment to assert that, while residents held a collective identity as Anglo-Indians, McCluskieganj engendered an additional and exclusive identity. This unique identity, intricately woven into the fabric of the enclave, served as a nuanced means of differentiation. It afforded its denizens a distinctive marker, fostering a sense of exclusivity that potentially distinguished them not only from other communities but also from fellow Anglo-Indians residing in disparate corners of the nation.

Changing Life-world in McCluskieganj

As the echoes of British colonialism waned in India, successive generations found their footing in a landscape defined by educational pursuits and burgeoning livelihood opportunities. Noteworthy is the fact that while the surrounding areas, including Ranchi, witnessed the transformative winds of industrialization, McCluskieganj remained secluded from these currents of progress. Presently, it stands wedged between the industrial expanse of Ranchi and the coal mining realms of Khilari and Piparwar, where the aegis of Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) prevails. The promised sanctuary faltered on the grounds of its notable absence of educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and employment prospects, necessitating the community's reliance on Ranchi for these essentials.

The erstwhile haven, envisioned as a bastion for Anglo-Indian community identity, encountered a touching irony. Its geographical isolation from burgeoning opportunities and infrastructural necessities rendered it a conundrum for the younger generations harbouring dreams of a promising future. The community's connection with McCluskieganj, once an emblem of collective identity, now cast a shadow on the aspirations of the progeny. The changing tides of ambition and aspiration over the successive generations delineated McCluskieganj as a realm apart, a sanctuary seemingly detached from the surging currents of progress that characterized the evolving aspirations of Anglo-Indian posterity.

Interactions with the denizens unveiled a stark reality—the conspicuous absence of the younger generations. A diaspora ensued as the younger cohort embarked on migrations driven by the imperatives of career ascension, educational pursuits, or matrimonial unions. This migration, palpably evident during our interviews, encapsulated an emotional lament, echoing the pangs of generational transition and the nuanced disintegration of the once-vibrant tapestry of community life within the precincts of McCluskieganj.

In the intricate tapestry of familial narratives, Mr. Malcolm shares the sad chronicle of his progeny, "I had five children in my life, but fate was unkind. Two of them, at the ages of 32 and 35, died in train accident. It left me as the head of the family, burdened by the pain of their early deaths. My remaining family consists of my son, Shamen, and two daughters, Brenda and Branda. Branda, whom you met this morning, works in education with her husband Clayton, who is also part of the Anglo-Indian heritage. Brenda, my second daughter, moved to Bombay with her husband

for work. As for Shamen, my son, he works with me on our farm, and at 42, he's a testament to the passage of time. Our family experiences joy and sorrow, resilience, and migration, all woven into the ongoing narrative of our shared journey". Mr. Moss, an eloquent narrator of his life's odyssey, unfurls his journey—a mosaic woven through the vibrant landscapes of India, with Bombay and Jabalpur as pivotal waypoints in the pursuit of sustenance. Yet, amidst the kaleidoscopic array of his experiences, the verdant haven of McCluskieganj remained an indelible imprint on the canvases of his memory. To him, this idyllic enclave transcends mere geography; it embodies a realm akin to paradise, a sanctuary where he envisions drawing his final breath.

In contemplation of the diaspora that marked the departure of fellow denizens from the embrace of McCluskieganj, Mr. Moss reflects with sagacity. He contends that the absence of diversified employment avenues, beyond the agrarian pursuits that define the local landscape, served as the gravitational force propelling many to distant horizons. His discourse resonates with a lament for those who departed, underscored by a conviction that had the alternate vocational opportunities bloomed, the migration might have been forestalled. Mr. Moss further unravels the personal narrative of his sister, once a luminary in the familial orbit of McCluskieganj, who, driven by aspirations for a contemporary livelihood, embarked on a migratory journey to Goa, accompanied by her son. In a moment of sardonic mirth, Mr. Moss dismisses the temporal disjunction that separates the old from the burgeoning epoch of the young, as he jests,

"Now is the time of the young generation, and we, the old ones, are now called Country Pumpkins."

This emotional phrase encapsulates the generational dynamics at play, where the aspirational currents of the youth propel them toward modernity, while the older generation finds solace in the timeless embrace of their ancestral abode, McCluskieganj—a bastion of enduring memories and a haven for the twilight of their earthly sojourn.

Amidst the warmth of Mrs. Kitty's hospitality, as fragrant tea and delectable snacks graced our discourse, she, with a countenance adorned in maternal pride, unfurled the narrative of her progeny. A triumphant glow illuminated her visage as she extolled the familial constellation—three daughters, Sylvia, Evon, and Linda, and a son named Robert, the eldest scion. In the familial abode, a tapestry woven with the laughter of six grandchildren unfolded, resonating within the walls where two daughters, accompanied by their husbands and progeny, currently reside. These young minds, eager to absorb the wisdom of education, find solace and instruction within the hallowed halls of Don Bosco school, in the Gunj. Mrs. Kitty, reflecting on the educational trajectory of her offspring, shared a chronicle laced with the nuances of institutional evolution.

St. Andrews, a beacon of learning, initiated the educational odyssey for her children in 1979, only to close its doors when the custodians of Anglo heritage relocated to Australia. Amidst these transitions, DAV school briefly embraced the academic aspirations of her progeny, only to withdraw under the enigmatic shadows of societal intricacies. A new chapter unfolded with the emergence of Don Bosco, where Mrs. Kitty's daughters and grandchildren now find intellectual refuge. Noteworthy is the altruism embedded in this educational sanctuary, where not a solitary coin exchanges hands, a testament to the benevolence of Mr. Rozario, the school's steward, whom she regards as a paragon of benevolence.

In the annals of familial labour, Mrs. Kitty's daughter, a pedagogue, lent her skills to the scholastic realm, while her son's endeavours in hostel administration, once vibrant, succumbed to the pallor of closure during the tumultuous era of the pandemic. In the aftermath, his professional pursuits remain dormant, overshadowed by the weight of looming debts—a sad tableau echoing the pervasive struggles that weave through the fabric of contemporary existence.

In the oral tapestry woven through a series of interviews, a unanimous consensus emerged, tracing the heyday of McCluskieganj to the era when the illustrious 'Thipthorpes' and 'Mendies' families held sway, their influence pervading the very essence of Anglo-Indian society and culture. Mr. Malcolm, a custodian of familial narratives, shared an insight into the symbiotic role these families played, steering the course of the community's social milieu. These two venerable families, bestowed with the mantle of custodianship, orchestrated the rhythms of the community club and its attendant festivities. However, the echoes of their erstwhile prominence now reverberate in the corridors of memory. The once-magnificent club, a testament to communal camaraderie, has yielded to the custodianship of a local resident named Suri Sau, a transition lamented by Mr. Malcolm. The lamentations deepen as he bemoans the degeneration of celebratory fervour, recounting that the last function held within the hallowed walls of the club dates back to 1960.

The cultural metamorphosis is palpable in the altered tenor of festivities. Birthdays, once marked with exuberance, have now assumed a subdued role in the community's collective consciousness, evoking a sense of temporal indifference. Mr. Malcolm, a repository of familial sagas, weaves into the narrative the diasporic strands connecting his octogenarian sister residing in England and a younger sibling in proximity, the tendrils of kinship sustained through the digital corridors of WhatsApp. Yet, he remains an island of connectivity austerity, devoid of the digital tethers that bind the contemporary world. In the poignant refrain of Mr. Malcolm's reflections, the lingering resonance of bygone celebrations, familial connections, and the architectural relics of communal vibrancy form a dirge, a testament to the inexorable passage of time and the ebb and flow of cultural vitality within the precincts of McCluskieganj.

In the discourse of aspirations, Mr. Denis unfurls the narrative thread of his father's resolute vision—a vision that transcended the immediate constraints of educational infrastructure in the proximity of McCluskieganj. Driven by an unwavering belief in the promise of this enclave, his father orchestrated a familial migration, cognizant of the dearth of schools in the vicinity that could nurture his son's scholastic pursuits. Mr. Denis, an aspirant for higher education, reflects

on the distinctive trajectory of his academic odyssey, marking a pivotal juncture in 1968 when he embarked on a sojourn to Asansol in West Bengal to pursue technological studies. This venture, he posits, was a rare divergence from the prevailing currents within the McCluskieganj society of yore. Within the records of the Anglo-Indian community, such aspirations for elevated and technical education stood as a singular anomaly, with only a sparse cohort venturing beyond conventional pursuits. This deviation, encapsulated in Mr. Denis's pursuit of higher learning, stands as a testament to the exceptional aspirations that occasionally disrupted the prevailing norms within the enclave's societal fabric.

In the evocative narrative of yesteryears, Mr. Malcolm unfurls the tableau of his father's bygone era, tinged with an emotional hue. Within the verdant embrace of McCluskieganj, a bastion of erstwhile wilderness, he recounts the ancestral legacy of vigilant safeguards. His father, a custodian of a simpler epoch, adorned his evening strolls with the weighty companionship of a gun—an indispensable artefact in the face of natures untamed denizens. The sylvan twilight bore witness to the stealthy footfalls of leopards, tigers, and bears, traversing the roads in the cloak of dusk. Nocturnal prowling of leopards, rendered a shadowy silhouette in the moonlit hours, often encroached upon the domestic precincts, extracting a toll even as humble as a canine companion. In those days, the firearm stood as a sentinel against the encroaching wilderness, a shield against the capricious whims of the nocturnal hunters. Yet, the resonance of ancestral vigilance echoes with a tinge of melancholy, for in the present epoch, the tangible relics of that era—the guns that once stood as guardians—are no more, having yielded to the currents of time and the pragmatism of progeny. The unassuming demise of these firearms serves as a emotional symbol, symbolizing the transience of heritage and the inexorable march of modernity within the hallowed precincts of McCluskieganj.

In the poignant gaze of Mr. Munro, we discerned the resonance of a bygone era, laden with a wistful sigh as he articulated, *"The young generation have gone hunting for things that we had found by ourselves many years ago, here in McCluskieganj—peace and tranquillity."*

The shifting contours of the Anglo-Indian life world at McCluskieganj unfolded as a narrative shaped by multifaceted forces, both intrinsic and extrinsic to this idyllic enclave. Within its borders, the fabric of resources proved insufficient to accommodate the evolving aspirations of the community. Simultaneously, an irresistible pull from the external milieu, propelled by the allure of a more affluent existence in larger cities and towns, played a pivotal role in reshaping the communal trajectory. While explicit references to these metropolises remained veiled in the interview transcripts, the migratory patterns of younger generations bore witness to this inexorable phenomenon. It marked an epoch when Anglo-Indians from prominent urban centres like Kolkata and Chennai garnered recognition for their contributions in diverse arenas such as sports, politics, embodied in the personas of Adam Sinclair, Roger Binny, Derek O'Brien, and others. These external currents, resonating with the echoes of achievement, beckoned the younger generations away from the tranquillity of McCluskieganj, setting in motion a migration fuelled by both the limitations within and the beckoning promises beyond.

Fate and the associated marginality of the Anglo Indians in McCluskieganj

In the records of Anglo-Indian heritage, an indelible association with the railways has long been etched, their technical prowess leaving an enduring mark on this transport realm. Amidst this storied tradition, Mrs. Kitty, a venerable figure in the tapestry of McCluskieganj, emerges as a heart-breaking embodiment. Renowned as the quintessential face of this enclave, her connection to the railways unfurls in the mundane yet profound act of vending fruits outside the McCluskieganj railway station. The chronicles of Mrs. Kitty's labour, a testament to a bygone era, found an unexpected digital resonance—a portrait captured in the pixels of YouTube, immortalizing her endeavours. With an unassuming smile, she acknowledges this unexpected brush with virtual immortality, reminiscing about the days when she peddled pears, pomegranates, oranges, grapes, and guavas to the transient audience of steam engines. A palpable nostalgia permeates her recollections, as she transports us to an era when McCluskieganj, nestled in the embrace of steam-driven locomotives, served as a watering station. In those languid moments, trains lingered, affording her ample time to ply her trade and extend the bounties of nature to the train's passengers. However, the inexorable march of technological progress, embodied in the advent of diesel engines, wrought a transformation. The leisurely pauses evaporated, replaced by a fleeting five-minute interlude, dealing a severe blow to her commerce. The final refrain unfolded with the intrusion of electric engines, eschewing any stoppage in Gunj, marking the cessation of her erstwhile trade within the station's precincts. In the sober aftermath, Mrs. Kitty, now relegated to the twilight of her labour, traverses nearby villages in pursuit of trade. Her poignant reflection encapsulates the paradox of progress—a disruptor of not just technology but also a way of life. In this elegy for a fading vocation, the lamentation is not merely for a trade extinguished but for the erosion of an era, a lament echoing across the rhythmic hum of contemporary locomotion.

In the symphony of reminiscence, Mr. Denis, when queried about the magnetism that drew numerous Anglo-Indian families from diverse corners of India to converge upon McCluskieganj, weaves a tapestry of utopian allure. Within the enclave's embrace, life resonated as a harmonious utopia, a realm where shared narratives intersected, and a communal ethos flourished. In this idyllic haven, a confluence of affluence and domesticity unfolded—a tapestry woven with the threads of culinary succour, tended gardens by diligent malis (gardeners), and the opulence afforded by financial abundance. Here, the verdant orchards bore the bounty of fourteen fruits annually, a cornucopia ranging from apples to mangoes, guavas to bananas, papayas to mulberries, strawberries to custard apples, and jackfruits. The tableau of

McCluskieganj's halcyon days reveals a socio-economic sanctuary where domestic and agrarian aid flowed effortlessly, and the Anglo-Indian families were held in reverence akin to celestial deities. In this sacred narrative of abundance and esteem, McCluskieganj emerges as the coveted refuge, fulfilling the quintessential desires of the Anglo-Indian families of yore. The echoes of those days, resplendent with abundance and societal veneration, reverberate through Mr. Denis's nostalgic reflection—a paean to a chapter of existence that transcended the confines of commonplace reality.

In the emotional dialogue with Mr. Malcolm, a sombre reflection on the bygone era and the melancholy juxtaposition with the present unfolds—a narrative thread woven with nostalgia and a palpable sense of loss. He grapples with the stark reality that the once vibrant tapestry of McCluskieganj, adorned with clubs, resounding with Christmas gatherings, has metamorphosed into a silent tableau devoid of communal vibrancy. As the conversation meanders through the corridors of his childhood, Mr. Malcolm sketches a vivid portrait of the erstwhile beauty that adorned this sacred enclave. He, a product of Bishop Westcott school, navigated through its corridors with Mr. Munro, two years his senior. Reflecting on his own academic journey truncated at the twelfth standard, he confesses to having witnessed the evolution of McCluskieganj from his tender years, a bustling hub teeming with the effervescent vitality of the Anglo-Indian community. Yet, the contrast between the buoyant past and the desolation of the present haunts his words. The once-populated cemetery, now a repository of Anglo-Indian graves, stands as a testament to the exodus of the youth to far-flung corners, both domestic and foreign. The query about this diaspora prompts Mr. Malcolm to unravel many aspirations and tribulations.

In the crucible of McCluskieganj's soil, one had to be either opulently affluent or an agrarian warrior, grappling not only with the toils of tilling the land but also with the machinations of land dealers. The allure of cultivating the earth did not resonate with the aspirations of the younger generation, yearning for stable jobs with fixed incomes. The spectre of India's independence and the departure of the British, casting a long shadow, induced a collective apprehension among the Anglo-Indian community, compelling them to seek solace in foreign lands. The desperation etched in the collective psyche was so profound that abandoned bungalows and fallow lands became silent witnesses to the diaspora's exodus. In a melancholic revelation, Mr. Malcolm bemoans the fate of these vacant abodes, some now claimed by the encroaching tendrils of the locals, while others found salvation in the hands of astute families who discerned the looming tide of change and invested in the remnants of a fading era. The echoes of this exodus, a distressing sonnet to lost homesteads and an uprooted community, linger in the corridors of McCluskieganj's history. Within the mosaic of McCluskieganj's identity, the sanctity of land resonates as a crucial facet, interwoven with the very essence of Anglo-Indian existence. Mrs. Kitty, in a contemplative discourse, unfurls the narrative of the initial settlers' fervent endeavour to mould this haven into a "Mini England." A laborious saga unfolds—meticulous distribution of lands in defined blocks, a meticulous orchestration of registrations—all undertaken with the ardour to fashion this enclave into a semblance of their distant homeland.

Yet, the saga took an unforeseen turn, shrouded in the complexities of land ownership. The once sacrosanct GM lands, emblematic of Anglo-Indian heritage, stood as bulwarks against commodification. However, the shifting tides of governance altered this paradigm, casting a shadow over the community's perceived ownership. The government's delineation, designating half of the lands as GM and the remainder as non-GM, signalled a paradigm shift. The consequence is a sad reality wherein the lands, once repositories of Anglo-Indian legacies, now navigate the currents of commercial transactions at exorbitant rates. In Mrs. Kitty's lament, a refrain echoes—the disquieting sense that the hallowed connection between the Anglo-Indians and their ancestral soil is slipping away. The resonance of this narrative reverberates through the plaintive chord of perceived loss—the diminution of ownership, the encroachment of market forces, and the unsettling notion that the once-sacred lands are slipping from the embrace of those who once deemed themselves its custodians. In this elegy for ancestral grounds, Mrs. Kitty articulates the palpable metamorphosis of identity and belonging within the folds of McCluskieganj. In the elegiac cadence of Mr. Malcolm's recollections, the tapestry of McCluskieganj unravels, bearing the weight of ancestral tales and dwindling legacies. The sepia-toned memories etched upon the landscape tell of familial departures, as his grandfather, grandmother, and elder brother found their final repose in the embrace of this once-hallowed enclave. Yet, amidst the dwindling echoes of an erstwhile Anglo-Indian symphony, a paradox unfolds—a murmuring rumour of reclamation. Mr. Malcolm, a sentinel of this dwindling community, shares whispers of diasporic returns, the allure of resurgent homesteads, and the rekindling flame of erstwhile bonds. The passage of time, once marked by arduous journeys to Ranchi, now heralds a narrative of accessibility—the advent of rebuilt railways, expanded platforms, and a burgeoning land value. The landscape, once perceived through the lens of exodus, now contemplates a potential renaissance.

Yet, as hope flutters, a sobering refrain permeates Mr. Malcolm's musings. The resurgence, he suggests, bears the imprints of pragmatic motivations—retrieving lands not for the rekindling of a communal idyll but for the transactional currents of a burgeoning real estate market. The lands, once fertile soil for community dreams, now stand as commodified tokens in an economic narrative. In this emotional reflection, Mr. Malcolm unveils a layered tableau—where nostalgia collides with pragmatism, and the yearning for a bygone 'Mini England' intertwines with the harsh economic realities of contemporary McCluskieganj. His gaze, directed skyward, transcends the terrestrial, expressing not merely a disquiet with the shifting contours of a cherished enclave but an existential meditation on life's ephemeral pursuits. Within this

melancholic reverie, McCluskieganj emerges as more than a geographical entity; it becomes a crucible of aspirations, memory, and the perennial dance between past and present.

Conclusion

In the tapestry of McCluskieganj's contemporary narrative, the life histories of the resident Anglo-Indian families resonate as melancholic echoes of a bygone grandeur. The once vibrant canvas, painted with the brimming hope that envisioned McCluskieganj as a veritable promised land, now echoes with the whispers of a lost utopia, preserved only in the collective imagination of its inhabitants. This wistful exploration of McCluskieganj as a 'promised land' becomes a central motif, weaving through the fabric of the Anglo-Indian community's life world. Within this unique crucible, a nuanced interplay unfolds—a delicate dance between belongingness and despair, where the aspirations of yesteryears cast long shadows on the contemporary landscape. In contemplating the specified historical marginalities—social, cultural, and to a nuanced extent, political—a realization emerges that these narratives offer but a static glimpse of the situation. McCluskieganj, in this interpretation, transcends its geographical confines; it is not merely a parcel of land nestled in the obscure heart of Jharkhand. Instead, it bears a distinct flavor—a spatial marginality that extends beyond rural seclusion. This is not a marginality defined by remoteness but a poignant sense of loss, as McCluskieganj is perceived as a haven irretrievably slipped from grasp. While Gist (1967) expounds upon the social and cultural marginality of Anglo-Indians during earlier epochs, the contemporary era unveils a metamorphosis of this marginality into novel forms. The Anglo-Indian settlements in bustling cities and towns pale in comparison to the singular narrative of McCluskieganj.

Thus, as the echoes of historical marginality reverberate, a call emerges—a call for a concerted scholarly endeavour to unravel these nascent forms of marginality shaping the Anglo-Indian experience today. The landscapes of marginality, it seems, have evolved, beckoning the scholars to explore, interpret, and chronicle anew.

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