



CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

After World War I, one of the loudest voices the world heard was the claim of the peoples of Asia and Africa to be independent from their colonial masters. One nation gained its freedom after another. Democracy became a political fashion. And with time, the disbanding of the colonial ties took a clearer form. To avoid creating wars, wasting money and risking loss of reputation, the mother countries gave their peoples freedom.

But independence is not easy to achieve. Many new nations, not as ready to govern themselves as they had thought, learned this the hard way. Many African states are having troubles in administering themselves. The political situation of most of the emerging nations is unbalanced and of course affects the economy of their nations. Many have become police states. What should be blessed is uncertain, but certainly the reason can be found in history.

Of all the countries to emerge since World War II, India is probably the most important. A new nation with an ancient culture and civilization, it is the second most populous nation in the world and the largest democracy. The British had ruled India for years and when they left,

the impact they had made remained. Wars between India and Pakistan are one of the fruits of the British Raj, because the British divided the whole sub-continent into two nations. There continues to be a flourishing English literature in India, and even in the smallest village, the wanderer will be able to find someone to speak to him in English. For better or for worse, the British Raj is a permanent feature of Indian history. English left her mark in India. The British established effective local government, irrigation, such famine relief, railways, bridges, communication, and above all peace. The British, although they believed that it would be for the better if they stayed a while longer in India, could not overlook the essential rightness of the Indian Independence movement. The bitterness and hostility that the British aroused through their tenacity made separation inevitable.

The relative merits of the writing of history and of literature have been weighed since the time of Aristotle. It is my feeling that one of the most valid approaches to any historical problem is by making use of both disciplines. History deals in fact, literature in feeling and imagination. The combination of the two — and their necessary interaction — throws any historical problem into sharp relief.

This is what I propose to do with the problem of the presence of the British Raj in India during the first fifty years of the twentieth century. By studying the main works

of English literature relating to British involvement in India in these fifty years, I hope to illuminate the problem in a way it could not be illuminated by a strictly historical approach. I shall hope to trace the development of English opinion about their position in India and I shall try to detect common patterns of literary formula which were used by writers of fiction to express their attitudes. In discussing the most interesting works relating to the problem, I shall also be discussing the relevant ideas and relative artistic merits of the authors involved. The discussion of these writers will be prefaced by an introductory sketch surveying the wide range of opinion about the Raj that always existed and made itself heard.

The problem of the future of the new nations is one of the most crucial facing the world today, and the future of India, its position in Asia so pivotal to the fate of that continent, is the most vital of all. In studying the creative literature about the last half-century of English rule in India, I hope to be able to see the present a little more clearly.