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BETWEEN FANTASY AND PHANTASMAGORIA

The Mughal Monument and the Structure of Touristic Desire

CURZON'S CONSERVATION and restoration efforts promised that the Mughal monuments would be read as spaces of enlightened British power. He alone combined the Logos and the Eros, obliterated the distinction between science and art, and produced the Mughal monument as a productive space for the British Empire. In this regard, the subjects of empire, both Indian and British, were to be interpellated by the monument and to identify with the idea of British rule and Indian subjection: "Without India," Curzon insisted, "the British Empire could not exist."¹ To which the monument is fantasized as responding, "without the British, India would not exist." However confident Curzon was in the power of this ideational dialogue to shape the spatial dynamics of his newly reconditioned Mughal monument, he also knew that the process would not always go uninterrupted. The monumental Real would always seep back in. Located in contingent and contestatory spatial practices, this reality refused the symbolic order of imperial power. It was for this reason that Curzon called on British tourists to perform empire by conducting themselves ethically in these moments of doubt and dread and thereby veiling the Real behind the reconstituting mirror of the monument and the Indian other.

Inviting the Tourist to India

By the turn of the century, many more British tourists were able to undertake a trip to India than previously. The technological innovation of the steam engine and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 shortened the trip from Europe to India from around five months to about sixteen days. Once in India, tourists could reach any part of the country by train; rail lines, Curzon proudly announced, had reached 28,150 miles in 1905.² Well-appointed hotels like the Maiden's in Delhi, the guidebooks of Keene and Murray, and comprehensive packages offered by Thomas Cook and Sons also made a trip to India

manageable. Among the British public who could afford such a journey was the growing number of people of some “means and leisure,”³ who might have wintered in Egypt or the Riviera and now saw India as an exciting new alternative. Beckoned by good weather, dramatic landscapes, and historical monuments, the tourists committed on average three to four months to travel to the “show-cities,” stopping along the way to see the ruins.⁴ Eustace Reynolds-Ball, the travel writer, called this new visitor the “fashionable globe-trotter,” differentiating the type from its predecessor, “the intelligent traveler.”⁵

However, the trip to the fulcrum of empire, as Curzon called India, was more than a recreational adventure. British tourists were meant to bring the goodwill of their nation to the Indians. The Prince of Wales, addressing the British public in 1906 after his tour of India, urged his compatriots to go to India for this reason: “I cannot but think that every Briton who treads the soil of India is assisting towards a better understanding with the Mother Country, helping to bring down prejudice, to dispel misapprehension, and to foster sympathy and brotherhood. Thus he will not only strengthen the old ties but create new ones—and so, please God, secure a better understanding and a closer union of hearts between the Mother Country and her Indian Empire.”⁶ A visit to India, the Prince of Wales assured his subjects, would strengthen the nation’s cause of empire through a spirit of mutual understanding. Curzon similarly presented India as a significant facet of his compatriots’ national identity: “To me it is the greatest thing that the English people have, or are doing now; it is the highest touchstone of national duty.”⁷ Seen in this light, a touristic visit to India could be construed as a service to country. India needed the tourist there—and so did Great Britain.

India may have beckoned with the promise of exciting cities and romantic monuments, as well as the possibility of forging lasting relationships with the natives, but in reality, touristic encounters were conditioned by anxiety and social isolation and mediated by fantasy. Tourists to India were meant to stay in a preset and prescribed program of travel. The spaces of tourism—the train, the hotel, the city, the restaurant, and the monument—were guarded and guided sites of social control. Many British tourists later published these sightseeing experiences as encounters with the “real India.” Kipling mocked this practice in his sardonic portrayal of the tourist as “the man who ‘does’ kingdoms in days and writes books upon them in weeks.”⁸ But not everyone

scoffed at these texts the way Kipling did. Publishers like John Murray, Chapman and Hall, George Routledge, and Sampson Low, to name a few, reproduced these travel journals to meet an evident demand for entertaining descriptions of India. Part of these texts' allure derived from their presentation of the ambivalent aspects of empire, revealing that the controlled spaces of India, such as monuments, were in actuality shot through with moments of shock and apprehension enabling tourists to test their traveler's mettle. These texts now provide invaluable information about the monuments' function as spaces to live out the fantasies and contradictions of empire.

Touring the Indian Monuments

Another important aspect of the touristic visit is how power actualized itself at the monument. As Anthony Vidler explains, power is not the result of transparency but emerges from a "pairing of transparency and obscurity."⁹ Monuments, like "all the radiant spaces of modernism . . . should be seen as calculated not on the final triumph of light over dark but precisely on the insistent presence of the one in the other."¹⁰ Viewed in this manner, Curzon's restored Mughal monuments operated on three registers: they affirmed the subject as a subject of imperial power, they subjected the tourist to the desires of India, and they also brought the subject into contact with the Real. Indian monuments were thus not open to unobstructed viewing and walking but were, more precisely, sites that oscillated between light and darkness, between fantasy and phantasmagoria.

In *Out of India*, Kipling perceptively illustrates this oscillation between light and dark by transporting the reader into the place of a tourist walking through a historical monument in Rajasthan. In chapter 2 of the book, he provides us with a description of Jaipur, the city founded by Jai Singh II (1688–1743), the maharaja of Amber and a vassal of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Kipling frames the city as a conflicted space in which the old exists in dialectic tension with the new. Starting with its origins, the city is said to have been planned "with huge streets straight as an arrow," replete with palaces, gardens, and temples. Jaipur is characterized by the ruler's social reforms ("he did his best to check infanticide") and his investments in science and learning, particularly astronomy. But then a new layer of meaning is superimposed on this illustrious past: "Later on came a successor, educated and

enlightened by all the lamps of British Progress, and converted the city of Jey Singh into a surprise—a big, bewildering, practical joke.”¹¹ Kipling reveals the person responsible for this modern urban planning to be Colonel Swinton Jacob, the superintending engineer of the State of Jaipur. Eager to bring the pink city into the modern era, Jacob advised the raja to put down *trottoirs* (sidewalks) of hewn stone to outline the main street and construct waterways and gas works, as well as a school of art and a museum. The new structures stood in “startling contrast” to the old ordering of the city.

Watching over this “strange medley,” Kipling tells us, were the surrounding fortress-studded hills, one of which contained a large welcome sign set up originally for the Prince of Wales when he visited the city in 1876. Nearly twenty years later, it hailed another visitor, “the average traveler of to-day,” who “may appropriate the message to himself, for Jeypore takes great care of strangers and shows them all courtesy.”¹² In this observation Kipling reveals the capability of the tourist at the turn of the century to fantasize himself or herself into a position once reserved for royalty: British nationality and the space of Jaipur conspired to elevate the tourist from the middle class to the ruling class.

In the next chapter Kipling takes us on a walk with a tourist visiting the desolate palace of the city of Amber, Jai Singh II’s former capital. The narrative reveals the ambivalent realities of a visit to a monument and the taut act of mediating the given truth of the space and the unconscious realization of another more troubling one. The tourist leaves behind Jaipur with its pavements and educational institutions of enlightenment to come on miles of “semi-decayed Hindu temples—brown and weather-beaten—running down to the shores of the great Man Sagar Lake,” where he (or she) encounters “more ruined temples, palaces and fragments of causeways.”¹³ The ruins signal the tourist’s passage into another time, and as he reaches Amber in the dawn’s light, he sees a city “that will never wake.” He ascends the causeway to the palace and finds himself in a great courtyard, where he decides against taking a native guide, as the Oriental “is indiscriminating and sets too great a store on corrugated iron-roofs and glazed drain-pipes.”¹⁴ Walking by himself, the tourist anxiously maintains the illusion of a past separated from the present. Before describing the tourist’s entry into the palace proper, Kipling frames what is to follow by introducing Eugène Viollet-le-Duc’s idea that “a building

reflects the character of its inhabitants.”¹⁵ Accordingly, the dark, narrow, recessed passages “where a man might wait for his enemy unseen,” and the maze of stairs “leading nowhither” along with the screens of marble tracery “that hide or reveal so much” confer on the palace and the people that once inhabited it the character of inscrutability.¹⁶ This uncanny atmosphere would unsettle more susceptible minds, but the rational tourist of Kipling’s account cannot be so confounded. Armed with his guidebook and the certainty that the palace and its inhabitants are long dead, he does not feel fear but only “impertinent curiosity.”¹⁷ He explores the palace, taking note of the reassuring signs of its ruin: “[A] creeper had set its hands upon the lattice there, and there was dust of old nests in one of the niches in the wall.”¹⁸ He does allow himself a moment to imagine the past as it might have been lived by the women in the zenana, or by the kings in the forty-pillared Hall of Audience; but this fantasizing, Kipling points out, is far removed from any understanding of the true causes of the surrounding decay: “The wise man will visit it when time and occasion serve, and will then, in some small measure, understand, what must have been the riotous, sumptuous, murderous life to which our Governors, Lieutenant-Governors, Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners, Colonels and Captains and the Subalterns after their kind, have put an end.”¹⁹ The tourist’s travel guide, however, safely steers his gaze away from such offensive deductions. Only the rare “wise man” would pause to contemplate exactly what path led to the palace’s present decay, and whether the British rulers did not at the very least do their part to hasten it along.

Finally reaching the top of the palace, whose grounds cover two-thirds of the city, Kipling’s tourist “looked into its very heart—the heart that had ceased to beat.” Everything is bared to his view, even the zenana’s rooms, and the noble houses appear as stone heaps. Kipling evokes Lord Byron’s Romantic poetry in the tourist’s thoughts as he wonders, faced with the fading structures of the palace, how one “could have ever believed in the life of her.”²⁰ The grandiose vista and its stillness have impressed and satisfied him in the way grandiose natural scenery is likely to do; the stillness of the desert or the sea have a comparably peaceful effect. However, as the tourist turns from this view to descend the monument and returns to the present day of his time, he is beset by a sense of unease. The modern intrudes aggressively on the tranquil vision he has just experienced: “The Englishman went down through the pal-

ace and the scores of venomous and suggestive little rooms, to the elephant in the courtyard, and was taken back in due time to the Nineteenth Century in the shape of his Highness, the Maharajah's Cotton-Press, returning a profit of twenty-seven percent, and fitted with two engines of fifty horse-power each, an hydraulic press, capable of exerting a pressure of three tons per square inch, and everything else to correspond. It stood under a neat corrugated iron roof close to the Jeypore Railway Station, and was in the most perfect order, but somehow it did not taste well after Amber. There was aggressiveness about the engines and the smell of the raw cotton. The modern side of Jeypore must not be mixed with the ancient."²¹

Why this distaste? Clearly, the sight of the "neat" and efficient machinery does not elicit from the tourist the sense of pride in British industrialization he might otherwise feel; Kipling's seemingly matter-of-fact description of the formidable power and pressure exercised by the machine evokes something menacing, even violent, which, in such proximity to the ruined palace complex, unpleasantly conjures the possibility of a causal connection between the two: behind the rhetorical representations of an ordered and improving British India lies the brutal force of iron and steel, in other words, the kind of power capable of producing not just "a profit of twenty-seven percent" but also death and devastation on a large scale. It represents the barbarity that inevitably underlies the imposition of any kind of civilized order.

What Kipling provides in his description of the palace of Amber is the messiness of a typical tourist visit to a monument and the unease that rests at the core of every touristic experience. Drawn to the monument through the fantasy of desire, British tourists are constituted in its space as both subjects of and as subjected to empire. They do not find a transparent space of knowledge and linear timekeeping at the Indian monument, but rather an opaque space in which time is cyclical and simultaneous, pulsating with the life of the Indian past, present, and future. In order to survive their immersion in this recalcitrant India, the tourists hold fast to their travel guides and repeatedly perform the role of ethical tourists at the monument.

The Guided Tours of the Mughal Monuments

Tourist writings of visits to Mughal monuments in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth reflect the same destabilizing experience of simul-

taneity and opaqueness of Kipling's tourist. These writings also disclose a particular desire for, not opposition to, the contingent, as read in this description of a tourist's visit to the monuments of Delhi: "My record of Friday, December 22, 1899, runs as follows: 'A great day, for it has taken us over ground occupied by various successive dynasties, conflicting religions, and contending races,—a task in sight-seeing which, according to Keene's Handbook for Visitors, ought to occupy one for not less than two days.' But our most interesting and distinctive experience was not in the way of visiting ruined palaces, tombs, and mosques, and—guidebook in hand—laboriously digging out details of history and description, but in the form of what might have been a very serious encounter with a crowd of rascally natives."²² The writer goes on to describe the aggression his party faced after they refused to pay more than a rupee to see two Indian men perform a stunt called well-jumping. Wells were a common feature of Mughal palaces and forts, and they provided an easy form of entertainment for the newly arrived tourists. After diving into the murky depths of a stagnant pool from heights of sixty to seventy feet, young men and boys would ask for remuneration. Most tourists paid for these feats, but those who did not were subject to verbal abuse or threats that left them disoriented. The well-jumping incidents reveal how at the Indian monument natives were free to alter the controlled order of the space through unauthorized performances and thus turn a space of transparency into a space of refusal.

Such local disruptions often came as a shock to tourists due to their spectacular effect, but what made them even more alarming was that they were never mentioned in the tourist guidebooks whose maps, itineraries, descriptions, and practical information were supposed to render the visit to India predictable. The guidebook was an essential tool of touristic travel, something that Kipling's globetrotter described as "a thing you can carry in your trunk y' know—that gives you plain descriptions of things without mixing you up."²³ The book of choice was Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in India, Burma, and Ceylon*. Revised and updated every two or three years, the book made sure the tourist knew everything necessary for safe and informed travel.

The cities and monuments of India, in Murray's *Handbook*, were divided into thirty-five routes. Each route was described with the same set of information, such as a destination, which railway to take there, the size of the population, its map coordinates and relative distance from other cities. Hotel infor-

mation, the whereabouts of social clubs, post offices, banks, and the location of the main governmental structures completed the general description. The tourist was also provided with suggestions about how to spend each day sight-seeing. This section often included art historical and archaeological information gleaned from James Fergusson's architectural texts or from ASI reports. James Burgess, the former director of the ASI, also lent his archaeological expertise to the guide by checking the facts and figures of the monuments for accuracy. Maps, diagrams, and floor plans of major structures were added to help the tourists orient themselves. In the 1909 edition of the handbook the Mughal monuments of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri were included in Route 13, and those of Delhi in Route 14.

With Murray's *Handbook* always open to the relevant page, the tourists made their way through the monuments of Mughal India. They quickly discovered, however, that the lived realities of these spaces did not conform to the guidebook's ordered information. An American tourist who visited Fatehpur Sikri described this contrary condition: "A troop of guides lay in wait for us, and luck let us have another of those stupid parrots who, in embroidered caps and winding chuddas, mislead one over all the show-places of India. This one stuttered—may all others know and avoid him by that sign!—and, like all of his gild, reversed the guide-book order of sight-seeing. We had already suffered enough in that way, and we ordered him to right about face and march to the Turkish queen's house, first on the Murray list and first object before the Hall of Records. 'But, ladyship, I wish f-f-first to sh-sh-show you the mosque and my ancestor's grave.' But we wanted none of his ancestors, except in their regular order."²⁴ The tourist is here doubly interpellated by the space of the monument. First, her realization that her racial brethren prepared and ordered this site allows her to symbolically identify with the dominant power. But then the paranoia of losing this power to the native is reflected in her fantasy of the duplicitous native who desires her respect and admiration. The space of Fatehpur Sikri is thus ever oscillating between control and lack of control, through which the subject anxiously constitutes her identity.

The American tourist's experience can be compared to a touristic experience of an earlier period where such an oscillation was not entertained and the subject's principal concern was the demystification of the monument. A tourist calling himself an "old Indian" narrates the story of his visit to the

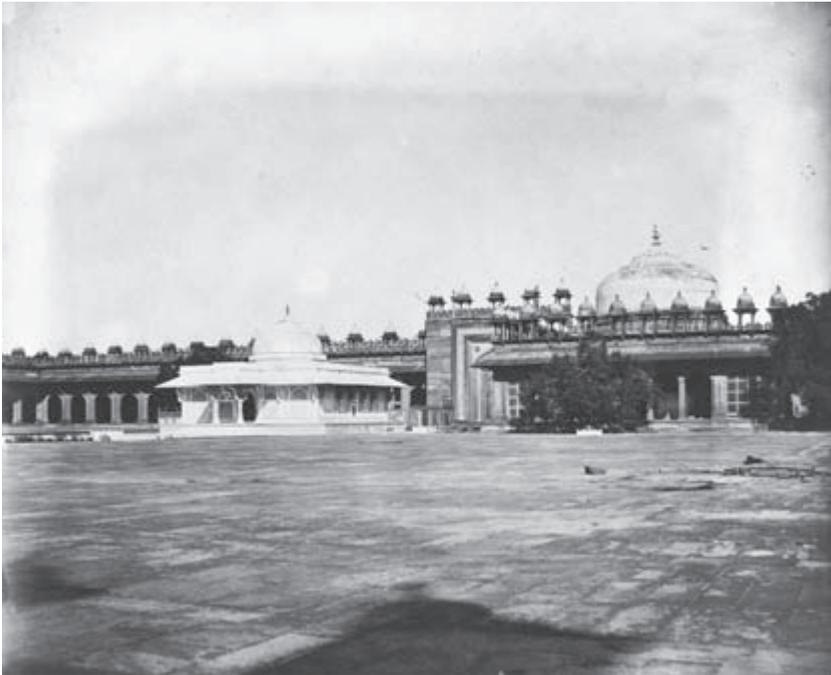


Fig 7: General view of the tombs of Sheikh Salim Chishti and Islam Khan, Fatehpur Sikri, India, 1885. Photograph by W. Caney © British Library Board, Photo 1003/(620)

dargah of Sheikh Salim Chishti at Fatehpur Sikri (figure 7). Having availed himself of a guide who claimed to be a descendent of the sheikh, he entered the tomb, which was located in the courtyard of the congregational mosque: “Our guide, on entering, reverently left his slippers at the entrance, but did not seem (so degenerate is the age) to expect us to follow his example: nor did we. We found a crimson cloth covered over the marble tomb under the inlaid canopy, and being curious to know if there was aught to be seen beneath, begged our guide to upraise it. He, however, protested against this, though unable to assign any reason for his objection; and we therefore insisted on having the cloth removed, seeing that even any outward form of reverence to the place has long since been considered unnecessary. Nothing was visible except the usual form of a marble tomb.”²⁵

Curzon would surely have bristled at behavior that showed such lack of rev-

erence for the mystery of the Mughal monument. Moreover, the viceroy was well aware that overt displays of dominance weakened the British subject and the imperial cause: “Depend upon it, you will never rule the East except from the heart, and the moment imagination has gone out of your Asiatic policy your Empire will dwindle and decay.”²⁶ The “Old Indian’s” comportment at the tomb reveals his lack of knowledge, his lack of respect for the mysterious, and an almost poignant inability to reckon with the unknown. Tourists heeding Curzon’s advice were better equipped to meet the unfamiliar—and commune with the Eros—because they had the control offered by imagination and fantasy. They were elevated rather than abased by the humility they exhibited, as is readily apparent in the account provided by a post-Curzon tourist of her entry into the Taj Mahal: “We passed through into an eloquent silence: love and death were thus reigning supreme, and beside the eternal power of both life itself seemed small and incomplete.”²⁷

Incidents like those cited above reveal the spatial dynamics at play at the Mughal monuments. Restored to their former grandeur by Curzon, the materiality of these sites—the repairs, flowing water channels, and freshly laid lawns—was meant to reflect the symbolic ordering of a compassionate and enlightened empire. But tourists were not expected to constitute their imperial identity at the sites by simply identifying with this symbolization. They were also expected to actively engage with the spatial practices, the nondiscursive elements of the site, and to mediate these contingencies through the touristic fantasy, a fantasy whereby the British tourist sees himself or herself as the object of Indian lack: who, after all, would take care of these invaluable sites, this precious country, if not them? The legitimacy of empire, which around the turn of the century had begun to be challenged by rising nationalist movements, was thus reasserted at the Mughal monuments of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. The crucial point to note here is that through the fantasy of the protector and preserver of Indian history and life, British power imagined bridging the gap between the symbolic order and the Real. In an analogous vein, touristic fantasy imagined connecting with the impossible other—Lefebvre’s “diamond at the bottom of the melting-pot.” Through the practice of fantasy the tourist thus affirmed, mediated, and transformed the opaque monuments of India not into scientific objects but into monuments of desire.

The Multiple Narratives of Delhi's Red Fort

Not all Mughal monuments were open to such plays of touristic fantasy as the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri. For example, the British governments before and after Curzon sought a less improvised, more circumscribed approach to the ordering of Delhi's Red Fort, which was still known to many people as the site of the Great Mughal's last stand and the symbolic center of the Uprising of 1857. The Red Fort was after all where Mughal authority was allowed to persist, albeit in impoverished form, into the nineteenth century, and for a few short months it represented the inversion of British Indian power relations. At the Red Fort, the freedom of touristic fantasy that defined the other Mughal monuments was limited. At this particular monument the tourist was at too great a risk of being overtaken by the horror and tragedy of the Uprising. Subsequently, a different strategy of spatial ordering was deployed here: that of the narrative.

The spatial narrative at sites that are defined by multiplicity, as Certeau points out, "makes possible the isolation and interplay of distinct spaces."²⁸ It can create out of an old monument a brand-new field of experience and action. In the case of the Red Fort, the narrative of the "Sepoy Mutiny" of 1857 was expected to displace Mughal authority and render it an entertaining yet powerless spectral entity. In the authorized narratives of the Red Fort, the gardens, courtyards, and palatial buildings were no longer seen as significant spaces of Mughal imperial power, and their function during the great durbars, festivals, ceremonies, and day-to-day lives of the emperors was veiled behind other kinds of stories. The spaces of the Red Fort, the magisterial gateway, the audience halls, the Pearl Mosque, and the like were reordered by the codification of architectural surveys. When the fort was allowed to come alive and appeal to the reader's or visitor's imagination, it was only through the official story of the Sepoy Mutiny. In spatial terms the Red Fort was fitted into what was known as the Mutiny tour, which Manu Goswami describes as "the 'monumentalization' of particular sites and events of the rebellion of 1857."²⁹ The shrines, scenes of battle, and monuments of Lucknow, Kanpur, and Delhi were ordered according to the official symbolization of the traumatic events that surrounded the Uprising. The tourists' visit to these sites, Goswami argues, constituted their identity as British subjects and was imbricated with the

process of imperial consolidation. Through the prism of the Mutiny tour, all pre-British history in Shahjahan's Delhi and palace was suppressed. It was no longer seen as the seat of the Great Mughal but as the spot where the British Empire was inaugurated.

The essential stop on the Mutiny tour was Delhi's Red Fort, where the official narrative of the events of 1857 reaches its climax. For most tourists, the story was imparted through tourist literature such as Murray's *Handbook* of 1909. Following the directions of the *Handbook*, tourists entered the fort through the Lahore Gate, identified as the spot where the commissioner of the division was murdered on 11 May 1857. The rooms above the gate were described as the scene of the murders of the collector and the commandant, as well as of the chaplain and of two British ladies. In the *Handbook's* edition of 1903, these details were given beforehand, in the general history section in the front of the book, remaining separate from the description of the actual monument. In 1909 the story of the Uprising was incorporated directly into the tourist's walk through the Red Fort. This change resulted in the creation of a more direct sympathy with the space of the fort—and with those British killed there during the Uprising—and with the enlightened authority that now controlled it. The other structures of the palace to which the tourist was guided called forth descriptive information gleaned from Fergusson's and other architectural histories, and, where relevant, that information was supplemented with accounts of the events of the Uprising. For example, after passing through the gate and a long covered corridor, the tourists entered a courtyard: "The vaulted arcade ends in the centre of the outer court, which measured 540 ft. by 360 ft., of which the side arcades and central tank have been removed." After this physical description the tourist reads that at the edge of the tank "were murdered, on 16th June 1857, some fifty Christians who had escaped the massacre of the 11th." The tour of the Red Fort is completed with the Delhi Gate, at a structure where, tourists are informed, Bahadur Shah II was held by British authorities in September 1857: the story of the Uprising thus ends at a space of Mughal imprisonment. Murray's *Handbook* devotes three times the space to describing the events of 1857 than it accords to Delhi's other histories.³⁰ Furthermore, when sites that have nothing to do with the Uprising are presented, they are abstracted into mere museographical objects, listed with dates, measurements, and other descriptive information.

The spatial practice of authorized storytelling enabled British power to control the imaginary identification of the Red Fort and transform it into a space of triumph. The narrativized space structured the tourist's experience and rendered the Red Fort a threshold marking the death of the Mughal Empire and the birth of the British Empire. Through the tourist's reading of the Red Fort, Mughal authority was cast into the shadows and rendered nothing more than a fading echo of the distant past, a bygone power that had abandoned its political center. As Goswami writes: "The official discourse on the mutiny had operated to repress contestatory narratives and the Royal Mutiny tour expressed the colonial will to authoritatively stamp and reiterate British constructions of 'India's past.'"³¹ While this is certainly how hegemonic power uses textual practice to suppress other histories, it does not describe the entire spatial process. If power is informed by resistance, then how that resistance manifested itself in the Mutiny tour itself needs to be studied. In the context of the Red Fort, the narrative as a strategy of spatial control as produced in Murray's *Handbook* did not function without impediments. The palace itself resisted the symbolic ordering, as the trauma of the Uprising could not be entirely contained by narrative. This truth of the unthinkable events that occurred at the Red Fort still resonated in the walls and functioned for Indians and some British that experienced the British treatment of the Mughals before and after the Uprising as a stain of resistance. This excess of symbolization that cannot be contained in text rendered the Red Fort a contradictory space and left it open to the possibility of counternarratives, other perspectives, and different modes of spatial ordering of the Mughal monument. In other words, as soon as the dominant power set down its authoritative version of the story of 1857, the Red Fort could do nothing but resist it and become a radical space, a differential space, that enabled others to produce their own modes of symbolization, to make their own meaning out of the meaningless.

The Other Story of the Mughal Monuments

Among the groups that used the space of the Red Fort to contest the dominant narrative of the monument were the Indian nationalists. The space of the Red Fort presented a means for them to tell their own story and to provide an alternative social ordering in which the British were rendered estranged and their knowledge false. To many educated Indians, the Red Fort, as signified

by the Uprising narrative of Murray's *Handbook*, represented the contradictions of British knowledge and power. From their subject position, the Red Fort was not the site of the triumph of good over evil but the site of the social death of Indian society. The Red Fort and its urban surroundings continued to resonate with scenes of indiscriminant killing, evacuation, and pillaging—of Indians. This is what united it with the rest of the city, whose streets, buildings, and neighborhoods were inscribed with the same bloody events. Although material conditions in the city improved after 1857, the memory of the post-Uprising trauma would haunt Delhi's residents for years to come. The Mughal monuments in their restored and preserved state did not announce the dawn of a new liberal rule, but resounded with sounds of loss and death: the loss of British liberal policy, the social death of the city's Muslim community, and, above all, the loss of truth. From the Indian perspective the preserved and restored Mughal structures thus functioned as a space that belied the barbarity coexisting with British civilization.

The other storytellers of the Red Fort and of other Mughal monuments were highly educated Indian urban elites, like the historian Jadunath Sarkar. His retelling of the story of the Red Fort takes a decidedly spatial approach and contests the guidebooks' touristic knowledge. It appeared in the Indian nationalist journal *Modern Review* in 1908 and was titled, "The Daily Life of the Mughal Emperors."³² Sarkar begins by questioning the touristic knowledge of the Mughal monuments: "What is it that the common tourist sees in them? He may feast his eyes on their delicate mosaics and reliefs; he may soothe his spirit in the cool recesses of these pure white domes. But what he looks at is after all stone, bare stone. Does he ever think that these halls were once full of life, crowded with all the moving pageants of a Court? Does he try to realize that life of a bygone world, so distant, so unlike his? If so, what is his mental picture of it?"³³ After posing these questions, Sarkar explains to his readers that this sort of limited perspective resulted from the utilitarian point of view practiced by Thomas Macaulay and his followers. These writers made Indian kings look like "heartless brainless despots, full of pride and ignorance, surrounded by pimps and sycophants, squeezing the last farthing from a down-trodden peasantry, and spending their hordes on sensual pleasure or childish show . . . men whose animal existence was never ennobled by intellectual exercise or spiritual musing, aesthetic culture or the discipline of

work.”³⁴ To contest this knowledge, he exhorts the reader to look directly at the materiality of the Red Fort and asks, “Could this work have been done by sleepy voluptuaries?” Appealing to reason, Sarkar then states, “An empire like that of the ‘Great Mughals’ could not have been a dead machine; administration, arts and wealth could not have developed, as they did develop in that period, if we had *faineants* on the throne, in the Council-chamber, and at the head of armies.”³⁵ Having exposed the contradictions of British knowledge, Sarkar attempts to correct this misrepresentation. He consults the *Padshahnama* (1628–38), Shah Jahan’s official record, for alternative information about how the monuments were originally used. The second part of the article outlines an average day in the life of Shah Jahan as he would have spent it in his palace in Agra. Public and private audiences, prayers, councils, and artistic appreciation are the activities that signify and order palace spaces such as the diwan-i khass, diwan-i amm, zenana, and Shah Burj (lofty tower). Sarkar further describes who stood where during such proceedings, where the emperor sat, how he disposed himself before his courtiers, the courtiers’ comportment, and the timing of each activity. This information intended to reinscribe the space of the Mughal fort according to the rhythms, logic, and spatial practices of the seventeenth century.

Sarkar’s article on the Mughal fort is significant in that it reveals the multiplicity of meaning inherent in the space of the Mughal monument in this period of high British imperialism. As touristic discourse produced this space as a triumph of enlightened rule, Indians were simultaneously reappropriating and reordering it through their counternarratives. By telling their own stories of a given space, they challenged both the validity and the function of British knowledge. Sarkar’s article also tries to awaken the Indian tourist to see the Mughal palaces of Agra and Delhi not as recumbent spaces of a dead and distant Mughal but as spaces that still carry the spirit of a time during which India was ruled by an enlightened emperor who gave “peace, prosperity and contentment to his people.”³⁶

Although Sarkar was not a nationalist, his thoughts on British representations of the Mughals did accord with the general mission of the *Modern Review* and its nationalist editor, Ramananda Chatterjee. Founded in 1907, the journal was intended for educated middle-class Indians with an interest in issues ranging from politics to culture. Over the years the publication in-

culcated a nationalist sensibility among its readers and promoted new theories of art and architectural history that refuted British tropes of decline and disorder. Historians like Sarkar, as well as resolute Indian nationalists like Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Arun Sen, and Sister Nivedita contributed essays presenting the spiritual logic, aesthetic criteria, and artistic practice of India's art and architecture. These authors also challenged the British stereotype of the communal antipathy between Hindus and Muslims. For example, Sen countered the dominant representation of communal division with a description of an Indian landscape defined by cultural tolerance: "Buddhists, Jains, Hindus, Moslems in their eternal attempt at mutual synthesis have attained a glorious union. Racial antipathies have been forgotten, religious persecution have ceased, bitterness of feeling and rancour of heart soothed. . . . The Musulman mosque and seraglio are settled facts and they stand in close proximity to the Hindu temple. Jainism has worked beautifully for its own self as well as for the pleasure or the devotion of Islam. . . . The great trinity of Moghul Emperors employed Hindu artists and furthered Hindu tradition as ever did Hindu monarch [*sic*] of old."³⁷ Although highly idealized, the image of Indian sympathy and cooperation could be read as a direct response to Curzon's accounts of fragmentation and enmity provided to the Asiatic Society of Bengal thirteen years earlier.

Contemporary artists, too, were keen to link their work to the mythical and legendary stories of the ancient and medieval past and to produce a sense of Indian cultural revival. Abanindranath Tagore accomplished this in 1903 in an art exhibition that coincided with Curzon's Delhi Durbar. Tagore chose to exhibit three evocative watercolors, *The Capture of Bahadur Shah*, *The Construction of the Taj*, and *The Final Moments of Shah Jahan*. Like Sarkar's article, Tagore's exhibition of these romantic watercolors, later published in the *Modern Review*, was a tactical choice meant to help Indians imagine a more affirming process of identification than the one offered by the dominant power. Exhibited in the context of Curzon's Durbar, which sought to revive and embody the pageantry of Mughal public ceremony, Tagore's watercolors were offered in a spirit of resistance to the British appropriation and signification of Mughal culture, symbols and, most important, space.

These nationalist narratives and representations of the Mughal monument, while providing new symbols and tropes, did not, however, renounce the logic

of the modern ordering of the monument. Instead, they inverted the British signification of its light and dark spaces and thus retained the premise that monumental space is constituted by this binary order. Whereas for the Western tourists the Mughal monuments reflected the good of empire and of their race, Indian historians and nationalists increasingly elicited different stories from the same monuments, reshaping the way Indian tourists experienced the sites.

The Indian touristic experience after the acceptance of the nationalist spatial narrative of the Mughals is revealed in the autobiography of the writer Santha Rama Rau. Rama Rau visited Akbar's city as a girl with her mother, Dhanvanthi, in the 1930s, when Indian demands for self-government were at a high pitch. At this point, most educated Indians knew the nationalist story of Mughal India as imparted by the writers and artists of the *Modern Review*. The production of the space of Fatehpur Sikri through this story of the British usurpation of Mughal authority and its lack of legitimacy is illustrated in Rama Rau's description of her visit:

Fatehpur Sikri, the half-finished walled city, capital for Akbar, the greatest of the Moguls, remains as a disintegrating symbol of the old power of the princes. We found it, in contrast to the Taj Mahal, alive and intimate. We walked through the palace rooms, saw the queen's bedroom with its covered bed and unfinished murals, visited the temples of different denominations within the royal city for the courtiers of different religions. Even in those days Indians believed in religious tolerance. It was on that basis, Mother told us, that Akbar had unified India.

"We have," she pointed out, "a far longer history of unity and tolerance than any of the Western countries. More than two hundred years B.C. we had a great emperor Ashoka, who united India and preserved religious freedom for all his subjects. That's why many of us find it a little hard to believe that what we are given to understand about the present religious unrest in India is either entirely true or particularly deep-seated. At the time Akbar ruled, about seventeen hundred years later, we had tolerance, unity and freedom too. Fatehpur Sikri proves some of those things, and our own—records which you never learned about, and which I read only

after I left school—show that Indians have always valued those qualities. Whenever we are given the chance we do act as a nation to institute a unified government.”³⁸

Her mother’s iteration of the nationalist story of Indian rulers and their tolerance has the effect of a decoding stencil structuring Rama Rau’s view of Akbar’s palace and beyond: “The sun burned on the deep red sandstone buildings with their marble decorations, on the great courts, causeways, and half-completed throne-rooms and galleries, the domestic buildings and the more recent, poor little houses clinging to the city walls. We gazed out from the terraces and balconies down the ravine, the sides of which were encrusted with the huts of the peasants, to the immense burnt plains of central India. We saw, but no longer commented on, the flat, shocking contrast between the old decaying splendor and the new shoddiness and poverty.”³⁹ Rama Rau would go on to become a prominent literary figure of postcolonial India. Perhaps her pointed awareness of the fundamental power of monumental space helped her in her greatest project, the adaptation of E. M. Forester’s *Passage to India* into a stage play performed in London and New York between 1960 and 1962.

After decades of neglect and especially after the Uprising of 1857 the Mughal monument began to matter again. It became one of the nodal points of the new racial discourse that legitimated the British Empire. The first attempts to preserve and study the space vacillated between the Logos and Eros of monumentality and turned Mughal monuments into ambivalent spaces of British India. Curzon’s insistence on combining the two aspects of monumentality in his programs of restoration and preservation turned the Mughal sites into fantastical spaces of power that affirmed British imperialism and subjectivity. However, as the twentieth century wore on, power relations began to shift again and the legitimacy of British governance became strongly contested. The freedom—championed by Curzon—to experience the Mughal monument through the senses was displaced by more structured narratives coming from both Indian nationalist and British texts.

While these texts were being written and disseminated, a group largely ignored by both nationalists and imperialists enacted other tactics aimed

at recoding the Mughal monument. These alternative spatial practices were authored by the principal victims of the backlash of the 1857 Uprising—Muslims. In the following chapter I will show how the Mughal monument was also produced as a space of alternative social ordering by Muslims, who informed its space with their desire to forge a discrete and modern identity and with their struggle to survive the shift in power relations during the critical period after the Uprising and before Indian independence.