

Review

Looking at 'Modern India' IN Mark Tully's *NO FULL STOPS IN INDIA and NON- STOP INDIA*

Sikhamoni Gogoi

Distance Education, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh – 786004, Assam, India.

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Mark Tully's books, *No Full Stops in India* (1992) and *Non Stop India* (2011) are telling commentaries on the situation of post-independent India. Central to both books is the question of Indian 'modernity' or 'development' after independence, and in this regard they explore various aspects of Indian society, economy, politics and religion. The aim of this paper is to analyse how India has been pictured in these stories. This picture should be important for two reasons – firstly, that these stories come from the pen of an author who is not an Indian but British by birth; and secondly, because the author claims that in these stories, 'Indians do as much of the speaking as possible'. Moreover, *Non Stop India*, written twenty years after *No Full Stops*, allows one to contemplate on the issues raised in the first book. The methodology used in this paper is mainly analytical, and combines tools of postcolonial theory and ideological criticism. The paper is constrained in that it tries to evaluate only two books by one author – Mark Tully. However, the researcher believes that this paper should contribute to define India's present reality in a new light, which can be further researched into.

Key words: India, Mark Tully, colonial legacy, postcolonial, modernity.

INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial studies refer to an effort by scholars in such diverse disciplines as literature, cultural studies, history and anthropology to come to terms, from a global perspective, with the legacy of European colonialism. The scope of postcolonial theory includes experiences of various kinds, such as: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being.

Postcolonial writers and critics have played a very crucial role in nation-building of the once colonized nations. They have analysed the 'nation' as a construct. A new nation is created so as to liberate the native culture from the oppressive structures imposed by the colonizers. Exploring and investigating various contours of the nation—geographical, economic, political, and cultural – has been major themes of postcolonial writing. The postcolonial writers, who may or may not be a citizen of the colonized nation, situate themselves within communities and their spaces. The writer as such has to

E-mail: sikhamoni86@gmail.com.

Abbreviations: NS, No Full Stops in India; NSI, Non Stop India.

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be a part of the people's life, their relationships, emotions, histories, and memories. Their writing delves into the modes of constructing, imagining, and representing the nation. Many post-colonial critics are however critical of this concept of 'nation'. Benedict Anderson, in his *Imagined Communities*, has expressed the nation's ambivalent emergence thus:

The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness. . . . [Few] things were (are) suited to this end better than the idea of nation. If nation states are widely considered to be 'new' and 'historical', the nation states to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past and ... glide into a limitless future. What I am proposing is that Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which - it came into being (Anderson, 1991).

Impressed by Anderson's views, Homi K. Bhabha also talks of nations in his edited volume, *Nation and Narration*. In this work he pushes the discourse to the borderline of history, to the limits of race and gender, not in order to formulate a general theory, but to consider the productive tension of the perplexity of language in various locations of living. He offers an exhilarated sense of alternate possibilities in which a culture is in permanent transition and incompleteness. Bhabha tries to emphasize the connection between nation and narration: "Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye" (Bhabha, 1990). Here Bhabha argues that our sense of nationhood is discursively constructed: it is narrativized. He also points out that the colonial authority, the power of the national narrative seems entirely confident of its consistency and coherence, but is all the while undermined by its inability to really fix the identity of the people, which would be to limit their identity to a single overpowering nationality. He adds further that the narrative of nationality is continually displaced by other identities, like sexuality, class, religion or race, and there can be no end to this displacement. Bhabha also sees the nation as the most important symptom in an ethnographic study of modernity in which the observer must simultaneously be the part of the observed. He popularized postcolonial theory by giving new terms such as, Hybridity, Mimicry, the other, etc. to it. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha 1994, uses concepts such as mimicry, interstice, hybridity, and liminality to argue that cultural production is always most productive where it is most ambivalent.

SITUATING TULLY IN INDIA

Mark Tully belonged to the last generation of British

Empire in India. He was born on October 24, 1935 in India. His father, William Scarth Carlisle Tully, was a stern British who worked for a very old and reputable managing agency, Gillanders Arbuthnot. He did not have a very cordial relationship with his father, who he claims was a 'stern moralist' with a very bad temper. His father was also against mixing up with the natives (Indians). He believed in the supremacy of the British as against the inferiority of the Indians. Throughout his whole life in India, Tully's father kept himself and his family aloof. They continued to eat British dishes and practised their Christian faith.

Tully had an elite British-style education. At the age of four, Tully was sent to a British boarding school in Darjeeling, a hill station in eastern India. Due to World War II, he was unable to return to England right away for his education as was common for most British children in India. At the age of nine, he with his family returned to England. While in England, he attended first Twyford School (Hampshire) from the age of nine to thirteen and then Marlborough College (a public high school). During this time, Tully began what he calls his "long rebellion" against everything his father wanted him to be. Included in this was his zeal for India. He returned to India in 1965, at the age of thirty, as a BBC correspondent. He was BBC's Bureau Chief in Delhi from 1972 to 1993. In 1994, he resigned from the BBC, though he continued living in India.

Tully has also written a number of books on India. Tully's first book on India *Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle* (1985) was co-authored with his colleague in BBC Delhi, Satish Jacob; the book dealt with the events leading up to Operation Blue Star, the Indian army's attack on Sikh extremists in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. His next book *Raj to Rajiv: 40 Years of Indian Independence* was co-authored with Zareer Masani, and was based on a BBC radio series of the same name. In the US, this book was published under the title *India: Forty Years of Independence*. Tully's *No Full Stops in India* (1991), a collection of journalistic essays, was published in the US as *The Defeat of a Congress-man*. Tully's only work of fiction, *The Heart of India*, was published in 1995. In 2002 came *India in Slow Motion* co-authored with Gillian Wright. Tully later wrote *India's Unending Journey* (2008) and *India: The Road Ahead* (2011), published in India under the title *Non-Stop India*. In the area of religion, Tully has authored *An Investigation into The Lives of Jesus* (1996) to accompany the BBC series of the same name, and *Mother* (1992) on Mother Teresa. The anonymously authored *Hindutva Sex and Adventure* is a novel featuring a main character with strong similarities to Tully.

MARK TULLY'S NO FULL STOPS IN INDIA AND NON STOP INDIA

No Full Stops in India (NS) is a collection of true stories

based on real experiences of the author, Mark Tully. He writes about the people and places he visits in India throughout his career as a BBC correspondent here. About these stories he says in the Preface to *Non Stop India* (NSI) that in them he has “let Indians do as much of the speaking as possible”, so as to overcome the probable accusation that being a foreigner he could not comprehend the Indian situations. While Tully writes a lot about politics in this work, he also uses the stories to comment about social issues. His observation and description of the Indian landscape and lifestyle has got an alignment on the colonial past. He finds the construction of the post-independent Indian nation on the theoretical dimensions of the West inappropriate. In the ‘Introduction’ to NSI he writes: “...India is still a land dominated by foreign thinking, and I would suggest that that thinking is just as alien as the brown sahibs’. Colonialism teaches the native elite it creates to admire – all too often to ape – the ways of their foreign rulers.” (NSI, 3) India, according to him, has not yet developed its own ‘ideology’ or ‘attitudes’ or ‘institutions’ of its own; but has adopted those of the West. He continues that: “What are required are politics and a political system which are relevant to India’s past traditions and present circumstances” (NSI, 11) and also that “[India] must adapt [latest] knowledge to its own problems, it must bind on its own traditions and beliefs” (NSI, 12). Tully, in these stories, has tried to depict why and how Indian ground reality has not changed in the positive way for the majority of Indians even after independence – Cultural imperialism has threatened the cultural and spiritual Indian base; agrarian economy has constantly been bullied by the rapidly developing corporate world; education has invariably come to be understood as Western modelled English education; even Indian politics has turned out to be alien to Indian needs. In the short story collection, *Non Stop India*, he tries to illustrate “what has happened in the twenty years since Indian enterprises were freed from the shackles of the Licence-Permit Raj and the entrepreneurship so long tied up in red tape was allowed to flourish” (NSI, ix).

Tully, by talking to Indian people at different Indian locale, has tried to access the effects of modernization on Indian society, particularly on villages. Even after independence majority of the Indians are poor. Their life has always been innately built up with religion. But the so called ‘modern India’ is bereft of the religious Indian ethos so essential to Indian life. In “The Rewriting of the Ramayan”, Tully has tried to unveil the secrets to the success of the ‘*Ramayan*’ television series in India. *Ramayan*, according to Moti Sagar, was “about everything that the élite doesn’t like, considers awful – religion, superstition, women obeying their husbands, dynastic rule” (NSI, 129). It was ‘something very Indian’ which was able to relate to and also bind majority of the Indians. Ramanand Sagar even elaborates on the relevance of *Ramayan* to present day politics. Even after

twenty years Moti Sagar believes that “myth has a tremendous power in India” (NSI, 87). But this power has at times been misused to meet political ends. In “Operation Black Thunder”, the traumatised atmosphere resulting out of the Golden Temple issue has been vividly depicted. The unhealthy politics of secularism versus Hindutva has long pervaded the Indian political scene. Glancing through the developments in this regard through two decades, Tully contemplates: “...although much of the steam seems to have gone out of the secular versus communal issue, the Congress Party ... still lose no opportunity to accuse the BJP of communalism... Has India ... reverted to the old culture where religion and politics were naturally separate, or could there be a return to tumultuous times?” (NSI, 104).

Tully is most concerned with the displacement of workers, changes in attitudes towards religion, caste, politics, and social hierarchy, and the role of women. In “The New Colonialism,” Tully describes the small seaside town of Mahabalipuram, about thirty miles south of Madras. The place since antiquity is known for its temples, spiritual art and sculpture. But Tully observes that with modernism has crept in commercialism or what can be called ‘second/modern colonialism’. Business and tourism, the two departments or indices to new imperialism, have taken over the traditional art of Mahabalipuram - the art rooted in the matrix of Indian culture and history. As such it is the non-Indians or the Indian elites rather than the poor Indians, who get engaged in these works. The art and sculpture produced by Indian artisans are brought in cheap rates by the foreigners or they use cheap labour and raw materials to produce art works which are then sold outside at a large profit. Tully ends the story with a very telling episode of a poster exhibited by an American sculptor, Henry Schiowitz:

Schiowitz dominated the poster, dressed in a white lungi. His bare chest was garlanded with marigolds and he held a cobra in his raised hand. At the bottom of the poster were Indian carvers, pygmy-sized compared with the great American, working outside their mean huts – the victims of cultural imperialism. (NSI, 85-86) [Emphasis added]

Tully claims that some changes resulting from modernization are not good. In “Typhoon in Ahmedabad,” he discusses how modernism has crept into the city, how the political dimensions have changed and how technological developments have led to worker displacement. Tully agrees with the American historian, Kenneth Gillion that in the city of Ahmedabad, “there was little British investment; there were never many Englishmen in the city; there was no higher education to speak of; the English language was understood by a few; and there was no English press” (NSI, 239). After independence changes have come about in the political

sphere; where clashes between political parties find social colouring in the form of community riots. Though these riots are seen as rivalry between the Hindus and Muslims, they were actually initiated by political parties to meet their political needs. A member of SEWA says: "These sahibs [elite Indians] are the people in this city who want to divide us, to keep us down, but we will fight back – together" (NS, 267). This city has been known for textiles, he writes about how traditional mills have been undermined by new powerful looms. Ahmedabad, he claims, is dying as a result of the dying textile mills. The families who owned the mills have ignored new markets and new technology. They have taken their success for granted. Over 35,000 Muslims and Harijans, traditional weavers, have lost their jobs. Many turn to bootlegging and other illegal occupations to support their families. Similarly, in Molanpur, cobblers are unemployed because of the invention of cheap plastic. There are, of course, many schemes and strategies taken up by the government or non-government organisations to provide self-employment to the rural poor after independence. Tully has discussed various government schemes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, where the success rate is very low and remains much behind the projected target. In "Framing Futures", Tully talks about the working of public and private sectors in Indian economy and also the various strategic measures adopted. Strategic measures like 'cost-engineering', 'from farm to fork', 'contact farming', etc. have been executed in many Indian states like Punjab. But, while talking to many farmers and NGOs, Tully finds that these strategies are not very successful throughout. Tully feels that the failings are because these strategies, developed in the West, need to be tailored to Indian circumstances before implementation. For example, referring to the crisis caused to the Microfinance industry in 2010, Gurcharan Das, a champion of microfinance cites one instance, "Can you believe it? ... We are being asked to get clearance for every loan, that means getting pre-approval for millions of women for millions of tiny loans" (NSI, 140).

Tully also objects to the impact, the West is having on religion in India. He claims that since religion is not given much importance in the West, Indian elites, influenced by the West are also beginning to ignore their religion. He fears that the elite's secularism will lead to a disrespect for religion and states that "the vast majority of Indians, who do not enjoy the benefits of modernity, still believe that religion is one of the most - if not the most important - factors in their lives" (NS, 5). It dictates food preparation, social hierarchy, family behaviour, and many parts of daily life. The power of religion and spiritual values has been reflected in all the stories by Tully. One such instance is of Swami Ram Dev, a comparatively young Yoga teacher and Hindu saint. This man had got his 'break' with his divine preaching and Yogic practices. His naturopathy and yoga healing practices perhaps adhere to the Indian life and ethos, for he claims so many

followers throughout the country. Tully claims that modern Indians are following the western example of limiting religion to the personal domain. He argues that "the best way to destroy a people's culture and identity is to undermine its religion and language" (NS, 4). Mark Tully reminisces of a harsh judgement directed at him by Maulana Amir Rashadi, "You came here with your East India Company to loot the country and rule over us. Now there are East India Companies on every corner with every politician looting." (NSI, 61) [Emphasis added].

The deterioration of the traditional caste system as a result of modernization also greatly concerns Tully. He defends the caste system and states that it adapts to circumstances and has positive as well as negative aspects. In "Ram Chander's Story", he provides examples of how the caste system helped Ram Chander (Tully's servant) when he left his village and went to Delhi. On his way to Delhi, he met a member of his caste who took him to his home and offered to help him until he found a job. The next day Chander became lost and was helped by a dhobi (washer man). He was given a place to stay, food to eat, and was helped to find a job. Similarly, he tells how Kamal, a relative of Chander's, defends the system. Kamal states that "only biradari people (same sub-caste) help you in times of trouble" (NS, 50). The strong kinship, which provides a wider support group than the family, is the positive aspect of caste system. But, it is negative in that it is a social construct which perpetuates tensions and atrocities. Tully finds that the social barrier between different castes has decreased to a considerable extent. In "Caste Overturned", he reveals the changes in lifestyle of the Dalits, the improvement in education, the changes in the works they do and their social relations with people of other castes. Of course, opinions vary regarding the extent of changes.

Tully writes about women's position in family and society as well. In *No Full Stops*, a woman states that "These men just think we are there to do the work for them . . .". He also condemned traditions like 'Sati' which made a widowed woman kill herself by burning herself in her husband's funeral pyre. He showed concern with empowering women. He tacitly argued that women should become informed and should strive for change. In "Ram Chander's Story", Ram Chander's daughter uses an IUD for birth control but she complains when villagers force her to remove it. They consider its use immortal. In *Non Stop India*, too Tully talks about the success of Indian women. He talks about the success achieved by many Dalit women, including Mayawati; appreciates the works done by women run NGOs; and even goes on to talk about the success of women from the remotest area of North-East India.

Commerce and business are other areas that Tully feels Indians are learning from the West and that do not apply to their culture. He states that Indians studying business in the U. S. learn how to manage large corporations, while Indian businesses are still largely

small family run operations. Similarly, U. S. trained Indian physicians learn to use the latest technologies, which are neither readily available in India nor affordable by the average Indian (since the majority of Indians do not have health insurance). He argues that basic inexpensive treatments are needed instead. Indians should apply their knowledge and technology to their own problems Tully argues. In "Entrepreneurship Unleashed" he talks about the struggles and progress of the Tata Group, one of the biggest names in Indian business. He tries to figure out its journey from its inception, through the Second World War, through the difficult post-Independence decades of the Licence-Permit Raj, up to the present. At present, Tata is not only an Indian group but a multinational company. But, it has kept in mind the needs of Indians, at the same time nurturing 'ambitions ... [to] go to other soils as well' (NSI, 189), the Tata Nano being a good example of tailoring for the Indian market. Despite the realisation that it is frustrating to do business in India because of so many interferences of ministers and regulators, R. Gopalakrishnan, the executive director of Tata Sons, believes that 'Indian is at a very important turning point' and as in Bhagavad Gita 'God Krishna ... will reappear when everything is in disarray' (NSI, 190).

After reading Tully's stories, it is apparent that he is passionate about his belief in India's traditional values. His writings, which are centred primarily in Indian villages, are a call to preserve India's culture, which he feels, is being destroyed as a result of modernization and negative influences from the West. He shows how the lower castes and women are trying to improve their lives, and how difficult change is especially since the elite are so determined to keep things the same. In addition, Tully shows the rampant corruption among politicians, police, and government officials, making life even more difficult for those who can ill afford the bribes commonly expected. Yet, he perhaps believes with R. Gopalakrishnan that "there is hope in [India's] present crisis" and that one day there would be an India "where there are clear-cut policies, where there are not all those people, those linesmen ... who can stymie you, an India where there are not the flip-flops in policy... an India which could never be said to be in danger of becoming a Banana Republic" (NSI, 189).

CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Tully is a British writing about India. His formative years, 1944-1965, were spent in England and which made him more a British than an Indian. However, his long career, thirty years, in India as a BBC correspondent brought him very close to India. His affinity to Indian people and culture is very evident in his writings. In *No Full Stops in India*, he writes: "On many occasions I still have difficulty in knowing how to be a foreigner in India...". While attending a wedding of his servant's daughter, he wanted

to be more involved with the wedding festivities but was very conscious of being treated differently. People treated him like royalty and maintained a distance because he was not only a foreigner but also Chander's employer, making the differences too great to be bridged. Tully expresses his desire to overcome these boundaries but acknowledges that in reality he must live within the traditional constraints of Indian society.

In an interview when asked if he can be considered Indian, Tully stated "No, I am a Briton who has been deeply influenced by India. But I want my epitaph to read 'A person who really loved India,' and I wish to be reborn an Indian." He does not explain how India has influenced him or why he wishes to be reborn an Indian. In many passages, he clearly identifies himself as a westerner. He writes: "... us in the west. . .", "... it was our (western) civilization which left India a poor and backward country," and "We, the British . . ." (NS). These are only a few examples of his acknowledgement of his British identity.

It appears that Tully is having 'double consciousness' of being British as well as Indian. He talks of his fascination for the Indian life, culture and customs; but at the same time, he also hints at the Britisher's ability to structure politics, economy and life-style appropriate to their society. He acknowledges India's inability to figure out the plan and strategy suited to Indian social and cultural need; also confessing that: "...the West has harmed the poor and continues to harm them..." (NS, 2) In the words of Abdul JanMohamed, he can be called the 'specular border intellectual', one who stands at the border of two cultures, looking critically at both, neither assimilating nor combining either of them. However, Tully seems to override Said's thesis, that throughout Europe's history, "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric."

Tully's discovery of his own identity can be imaged as a 'spatial location' of his self. He, through his work (as a BBC correspondent) and also as a writer, discovers his identity, selfhood and belonging among the Indians, in the various places he visits. He relates different geographic location of India to its socio-cultural-political locations. As for instance he talks of Uttar Pradesh and many of his writings centre around this space. It is located in the heart of the Gangetic plain and thus in the heart of India, and it is an important religious centre where Buddha gave his first sermon, and Tulsi Das wrote the Ramayan (one of the two great Indian epics). In addition, Tully writes of Uttar Pradesh because Hindi is spoken there, and it is the one Indian language that he can speak fluently. Similarly he talks of Allahabad which relates to the Kumbh Mela – probably the biggest religious festival in the world; which also illustrate the heavy religious base of Indian culture. Thus he uses various locations to identify the post-independent Indian with its struggle for national identity. All these signify the centrality of locations to a postcolonial identity.

Tully is also critical of the neo-colonial state of India, which he calls 'modern colonization'. The language of the colonizers, English, still dominates the elite Indian world of politics and economics. It stands as a barrier to the progress of the Indian multitude that is poor and not immaculate in the colonial tongue. But, at the same time he also highlights those Indians, like Dalits, who consider English as a reason for their liberation and progress from the shackles of caste and creed. Talking to many academics, evaluating common people and analysing the Indian situation, Tully agrees with Sanjaya Baru, "Every educated Indian must be proficient in her mother tongue. A two-language policy – mother tongue and English – must be made compulsory" (NSI, 166). He highlights the continuation of colonialism through other forms, especially by postcolonial elites. He observes that "new things ... must be written on the Indian slate" (NS, 12). What he finds amiss is that "the Indian elite who emulate [the Western world] ignore the genius of the Indian mind. They want to write a full stop in a land where there are no full stops" (NS, 13). In the twenty years of liberation from the Licence-Permit Raj, Tully acknowledges the tremendous changes that have come into India, nonetheless conscious that 'jugaar still flourishes'. India needs to overcome *jugaar* – 'muddling through or making do', 'celebration of expediency, shortcuts and shoddiness, a penchant for taking a winding course where a straight road would survive' (NSI, xii)– so as to reach its true potential. He envisages a 'Non Stop India'.

Conflict of Interests

The author have not declared any conflict of interest.

Conclusion

To sum up, the effects of Indian domicile and traditions are evident in Tully throughout his works. His writings address the Indians and their social issues. He proves a good critic of post-colonial India as he argues that India still looks to the West as a role model. He concludes *No Full Stops in India* thus,

I believe it could be the birth of a new order which is not held up by the crumbling colonial pillars left behind by the raj but is genuinely Indian: a modern order, but not a slavish imitation of other modern orders (NS, 336).

Tully writes about India and for India. The 'modern order' foreseen by him is undoubtedly an order that takes into its embrace India's social and cultural diversity as its strength. He interrogates the dual characteristic of modernity – firstly, as a European project with its unique

Europeanness, and secondly, its translability into Indian life and culture. With his ability to understand India to its roots, Tully highlights the contradictions of modernity in India. As 'an Englishman who lives in India and still has strong links with England', Tully acknowledges the difference between these two countries. In a BBC talk, he mentions how in England every train runs on time as opposed to the Indian situation, where every train runs late and no one is even bothered about it. He says delays are all part of Indian life. But, Indians do believe in a God and God makes things work!; as Tully is told, "...Why are we Indians religious people? Because we know that this country only runs because God runs it. It's all *jugaar*" (NSI, xii). The idea of India as an ancient civilization cannot be done away with in its route to 'modernity', which was of all a 'colonial project' which tried to disregard the social and cultural differences in India for administrative convenience.

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