Conclusion

In last three decades, travel has become a major site of theorization in the academia. 'Travel' came to be looked at from different perspectives. This is not to argue that before 1980s, travel was not an important category of investigation in social sciences; but there was certain innocence about looking at travel and travel writing. By innocence, I mean that there were certain facile assumptions about the genre. There was certain credulity about the accounts of 'travel' written by the writers. The accounts were considered to be the representations of what the writer has seen and perceived of the place s/he had visited. Of course questions about the veracity of travel accounts were raised, but rarely was a question asked about the location of the writer or the relationship between the writer and the place about which s/he writes. There was a certain blindness to the power relations between the 'observer' and the 'observed'. This blindness was not peculiar only to the question of looking at travel accounts but was the case with several disciplines. For instance, before 1980s, the discipline of history also suffered from the same kind of 'innocence' as I have used for 'travel accounts'. It was believed that the task of the historian was to look for evidence and put together a coherent narrative about the past on the basis of those evidences which took the shape of history—an authoritative claim to truth about the past. Different schools of historians did contest the claims to truth made by historians but there was a general 'innocence' about the relationship between the historian and the material s/he is using as evidence. This 'innocence' came to be questioned in late 1970s and 1980s with the rise of various schools of theories, most importantly poststructuralism and postcolonialism. With poststructuralism, there came a 'turn' in theory which was named as the 'linguistic turn' or later on the 'critical turn'. The 'critical turn' in theory placed the relationship of the writer with the text as the central

object of investigation. It questioned the aura of objectivity which blinded a writer/theorist. The 'critical turn' forced the writer/theorist to be 'self-reflexive'. It meant that the writer has to be more aware of the location or position s/he occupies and this awareness of one's own location was to constantly problematize and question while dealing with the material of the text one is producing. As I have argued in the "Introduction" and Chapter I of this thesis, using Clifford's understanding of the importance of 'location' of the theorist in the production of theory, the 'critical turn' made the claim to truth a more tenuous affair. The writers in the post-critical turn were more critical of their own position and they underlined their positions while arguing their case.

The 'critical turn' also brought an enormous change in the way we looked at texts. Texts which were considered to be the carrier of meaning as intended by the author came to be situated more in the power-relation of the spatio-temporal location of their production and consumption. Postcolonialism rejected the very idea that texts were the carriers of universal truths. It showed how the texts were an exercise in power of one society over the other. This was shown most prominently in Edward Said's *Orientalism* published in 1978 and *Culture and Imperialism* published in 1994. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said showed how the 'great' and canonical texts and authors of the western civilization did not produced a mere 'cultural' product aimed at pleasure and aesthetics; rather these texts and authors were deeply implicated in the production and expansion of the empire. The western canon and its writers constituted the knowledge about the non-western regions of the world for the home audience and by their production of this knowledge they were co-conspirators in the European expansion of colonialism to most parts of the world in the last four centuries. This location of these texts within the power-knowledge nexus and by extension in the process of colonialism was possible only after

the ‘critical turn’ where the site of production of the text came under close scrutiny. Said’s reading paved the way for similar kinds of reading in most of the disciplines, including travel writing, in the last three decades. Travel writing came to be seen as an exercise in producing and perpetuating a power-relationship, especially when the text deals with asymmetrical power relations.

This thesis looks at the travel of three major figures of Indian national life—Syed Ahmad Khan, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar—to the colonial/imperial metropole in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their travel was more or less related to the same motif: education. The travel in each of the cases was fraught with tensions and anxieties. But these tensions and anxieties are not so much related to the actual act of travel itself. They were more social, economic and cultural in nature. Money was certainly a problem in each case but Gandhi and Syed Ahmad were able to raise enough money to fund their journey. This was, to a large degree, facilitated by their position of privilege in the society: in the case of Gandhi it was his high caste position and in the case of Syed Ahmad it was his employment in the colonial British judiciary as well as his position in the Muslim nobility. Ambedkar had no such cushion of caste or class. It was sheer chance that he was awarded a scholarship by the Maharaja of Baroda to travel to New York. Even later on, when Ambedkar had to go back to England to finish his studies, he had to depend on a large scholarship extended by the Maharaja of Kolhapur.

The travel of these three figures and their stay in the imperial metropole is reflective of their caste and class. The cultural tensions and anxieties I have mentioned earlier were related mainly to food. Both Gandhi and Syed Ahmad had to grapple with the cultural aspects of food. Gandhi had to remain hungry for the initial part of his journey and stay in England as he was bound by his vow to his mother that he would follow strict

vegetarianism. This was a caste-based restriction as Gandhi's caste was generally vegetarian and food was implicated in the frame of purity and pollution. In the case of Syed Ahmad, he was permitted to by his religion to eat only *halal* meat which has been prepared in a fashion given in Islamic scriptures. He tried to wriggle out of the difficult position by using rationality. He quoted passages from the scriptures showing that there was no harm in eating the meat prepared by Christians because they were also people of the Book. Still, he was not able to persuade his critics. Ambedkar's case was again different from both Gandhi and Syed Ahmad. He was not bound by any caste or community rules in matters of food. Probably it was the only positive aspect of his being an untouchable that he was free from such cultural bondages on travel and diet. But he too faced the question of food. Again his problem was economic instead of cultural. His poverty forced Ambedkar to forego complete meals for most part of his stay in New York as well as in London and he lived a life of partial starvation. The travel to the metropole brought changes in each of the three figures and this thesis traces what route these changes took in their later life and work.

In Chapter I, "A Definitional Quandary: Travel, Travelogue, Travel Writing, Writing Travel," through the critical reading of texts of Dean Mahomed and Richard Burton, I have argued that the 'travel' accounts are not so transparent and they carry overt and covert expressions of power relationship between the author and his/her field of inquiry. I have argued that 'travel' as a term needs to be de-linked from its dictionary meaning of 'movement from one place over the other'. I have argued that 'travel' is used as a trope or a structuring device in writings which do not fall under the conventional rubric of 'travel writing' or 'travelogue'. To account for such writings where 'travel' occurs as a trope, I have suggested the concept of 'writing travel'. 'Writing travel' allows us, I have argued, to look at how the idea of 'travel' structures different kinds of political,

social and cultural writings. My use of ‘travel’ as a trope is borrowed from Said’s essay “Traveling Theory” and Clifford’s essay “Notes on Travel and Theory.” The chapter outlines my objective in using ‘writing travel’ for discussing the life and works of Syed Ahmad Khan, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar.

In Chapter II, “Nation, Nationalism and the Rise of the National Subject,” I have argued that colonialism brought not only a British rule in India but it also ushered in an entire gamut of epistemic exercises to know India and theorise about its past and present. The dominant frame of this epistemic exercise was European Enlightenment ideals of scientific rationality. This exercise clearly proves that ‘knowledge’ is again implicated in the structure of power and it is used to create hierarchies and inequality in the society. The chapter looks at how the colonialism brought in the concepts of nation, nationalism and nation-state in India beginning in the nineteenth century. I have argued that the native reception of these categories of knowledge was not transparent; rather it was questioned, contested and appropriated by different sections of the Indian society. The chapter also examines the way these responses imagined and created a ‘national subject’. I have argued that although the different ‘national subjectivities’ were imagined in the name of all Indians, it left considerable sections of Indians outside its fold. The chapter illustrated that a person such as Ambedkar does not fit the conventional notion of ‘national subject’ and this should be considered to be the limit of such frames of ‘national subjectivities’. There is a need for the imagination of multiple subjectivities which may stand in critical negotiation with the normative ‘national subjectivities’.

In rest of the three chapters, I have looked at the life and works of the three figures of Indian national life from 1850 to 1956—Syed Ahmad, Gandhi and Ambedkar. The attempt has been to see how their encounter with the colonial/imperial metropole allowed them to develop a trope and use it to fashion a ‘national subject’. I have argued that in his

encounter with London, Syed Ahmad found liberal education to be the 'trope' which he sought to use to fashion a new 'self' or 'subjectivity' for his community in India. This liberal education was not an empty exercise in producing an educated native. Rather, Syed Ahmad's project was more ambitious and political. Although he avowedly kept away from the political life of India in the second half of the nineteenth century, still all his work was geared to one political end—collaboration with the British. The 'trope' of liberal education which he picked up in England materialized as the establishment of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875 at Aligarh. The liberal education this college sought to impart was in order to fashion the Muslim gentry on the lines of British gentlemen. Syed Ahmad believed that the young men coming out of his college will be fit subjects to occupy the high tables of British colonial official as their equals. Thus, his idea of a 'national subject' was the one who was moulded on the lines of British gentleman though distinguished by his religion and who was an equal collaborator of the British.

I have argued that 'vegetarianism' was a trope which shaped Gandhi's life and politics right from his early childhood to his later life as a major figure of the Indian independence movement. His 'vegetarianism' intimately played with colonialism and by extension his own idea of masculinity. I have tried to show that Gandhi's life as a student in London could be seen as an exercise in fashioning a 'vegetarian national subject'. His reading of Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism* left a deep impression on him. Till that point of time, Gandhi equated vegetarianism with a kind of weakness that crippled Indians. Salt's book gave Gandhi a scientific as well as moral rationale to accept vegetarianism as the credo of his life. The influence of Salt's book can be seen in the articles on Indian vegetarianism which Gandhi wrote for the London Vegetarian Society's journal *The Vegetarian*. I have argued that the close reading of those articles gives us a

clue to Gandhi's use of 'vegetarianism' as trope to construct a national Indian 'self' which was masculine enough to match the strength of the meat-eating British colonial masculinity. I have also argued that the London Vegetarian Society brought Gandhi in contact with the 'other' West (in Ashis Nandy's phrase) with which Gandhi developed a special bond. Later on, this 'other' West became Gandhi's collaborator in his project of fashioning an anti-colonial ideology. I have tried to show that 'vegetarianism' fed directly into Gandhi's persona of a 'Mahatma' and a large fraction of the common populace of India borrowed and followed his 'vegetarianism' as a national duty.

Against Syed Ahmad's and Gandhi's travels and their modes of fashioning the 'national subjectivity', this thesis has looked at Ambedkar's travels, first to the United States of America and then to England. Although as with Syed Ahmad and Gandhi, education was the primary reason for Ambedkar's travel, I have argued that Ambedkar's travel as well as fashioning of a 'national subjectivity' was markedly different from the other two figures. Ambedkar encountered different sets of problems in his travel and his subsequent life and work from those faced by Syed Ahmad and Gandhi. Consequently, Ambedkar's notion of 'national subjectivity' was different from them. I have argued that 'caste' can be used as a trope to examine the major works of Ambedkar. Ambedkar used caste as a trope to investigate the social, political, economic and religious condition of India. I have shown that this trope, which gave Ambedkar an ascriptive identity which put him forever at a disadvantage in India where life was governed by the rules of the caste system, was used as an epistemic tool for the first time in the United States of America to examine the guiding principles of Indian society in order to show why and how it came to evolve as an unequal society. Later on, he used the same trope to find a way for the emancipation of the Untouchables of India through social and political means. In Ambedkar, political means become a tool to enforce a change in the social order of the

caste Hindu society. I have argued that even while Ambedkar argued for the universal enfranchisement or for separate electorates, his arguments were guided by the trope of 'caste'. Even his final route to Dalit emancipation—conversion to Buddhism—was underlined by this trope. Caste, which is the symbol of inequality in Hindu society, was used by Ambedkar to press for special treatment to the Untouchables so that they can aspire for emancipation and claim equality within the society.

This thesis has sought to demonstrate that the idea of travel have structured the narratives of nation and national subjectivities. It was inevitable as travel, from the sixteenth century onwards, was linked to the colonial expansion and exploitation of nearly two-third of the globe by European countries. The postcolonial theory subjected this colonial idea of travel to a critical gaze and demonstrated that there was a strong native response to both the idea of travel as well as the colonial logic of subjugation. This thesis has used this postcolonial understanding to demonstrate how travel occurred as a trope when important figures of Indian national life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sought to fashion a 'national subjectivity' in their anti-colonial enterprise. This thesis has tried to work against the sharp disciplinary boundaries as well as normative categories of national subjectivities. The attempt has been to show that hegemonic national subjectivities fail to account for large portions of the Indian population. Finally, it puts forth the argument that disciplinary boundaries are more porous than are primarily imagined and there is a need to re-configure our epistemic tools and frameworks to account for the epistemic as well as empirical understanding of India and its people.