



CHAPTER FIVE:
BACKGROUND OF THE UTOPIA

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AUTHOR'S NOTE, 2015:

In the monsoon months of 1984, after submitting my doctoral thesis to the University of Burdwan where I was a lecturer at the time, I went to the Chotanagpur area of what was known as Bihar in those days – a single mother, travelling with her little son in rural parts of eastern India. It was unusual for a woman to travel alone those days, more so if there were no specific 'plan'. The forest-clad undulating land dotted with tribal villages and barren hillocks kept me enchanted for weeks, and I stayed on in a place only if I liked its name. And what beautiful names they were: Patratu, Palamau, Mahua Milan! Having spent all my life in a small town and the cramped metropolis of West Bengal, with only occasional forays into touristic sites such as Darjeeling or Puri frequented by the Bengalis, the whole landscape seemed extraordinary, full of novelty. One sultry afternoon, a crowded passenger train brought us to McCluskiegunge, a place like something I have never seen before. The name itself was strange, to say the least. The railway signboard said in small letters 'Lapra' – indicating its native past. The current name, 'McCluskiegunge' ('gunge' being a term for 'settlement') is a curious mixture of the indigenous and the exotic. I was fascinated at once. The place aroused images of a broken dream that still lingers on in the mind when one is in a half-awake, half-asleep state. In the evening of my first day there, someone remarked: "this place used to be called the Chota Bilet" ('small England'). And true enough, the colonial style bungalows, tiled cottages and now-unkept orchards had a charismatic appearance as if they had been brought from somewhere else, and superimposed directly on an idyllic rural

surrounding. The place still carried the ambience of its Anglo origin in an era that no longer existed in India. At the same time, it was a beautiful place gone to seed. There was no water distribution or sewage clearance system, the power went off frequently, and lonely and dark roads were difficult to traverse at night. The path leading to the little hillock housing, a bungalow where I stayed, crossed a hill-torrent which often brought down rusty red waters from nowhere all of a sudden – ‘*harka ban*’ (flash floods) that made you wait until the water level came down to let you jump on the rocks to get across. With my son, I occupied one of the few rooms in the barrack-style building that was located on a bit of raised ground in front of the creek and ostensibly called the ‘Highland Guest House’, the property of Mr Cameron as I came to know later. A red brick-coloured exterior with a long and covered verandah running in front of the few rooms, of which the one at the end served as the kitchen-cum-dining. At the back, in one corner of the untidy and unkempt garden, was a fountain named after the same person who gave his name to this little place: McCluskie. Scattered around me, often covered in thick foliage, were little colonial-type houses that are commonly known in India as bungalows.

Inhabitants of those beautiful little bungalow-homes seemed initially different to me, even somewhat strange, but as I began to approach them, they were most friendly and eager to share their stories. The more I got to know the residents, the more humane did they appear. Mr Stanley Potter, the septuagenarian President of the tiny Anglo-Indian Association of McCuskiegunge, was a goldmine of information on how the place came into existence. It was not long before I started reading, mesmerized by those piles of old journals that he scooped up from the dusty cellar of his home. The pages of the *Colonisation Observer* were beginning to turn brown and brittle, but they still conveyed the hopes and aspirations of a group of people of whom I never had any conscious idea or had been exposed to before except through popular media which often presented nothing but prejudice. This was the first time, when with a jolt, I became aware of the personal stories of people who felt deeply betrayed by the British *Raj*. Every decaying page of those old journals made me so curious that I began to copy them by hand – those were days before the photocopier technology had arrived in McCluskiegunge – pouring over them for weeks at a time. This was the beginning of my cherished relationship with the Anglo-Indian community, a bond

that still finds expression in my retaining close links with the members of the Anglo-Indian community in Canberra.

Perhaps I too felt to a certain degree marginal to the mainstream Indian society in a subjective way: after all, I was a single mother, quite an uncommon animal in those days particularly in small town West Bengal, and a geographer who wanted to step aside from the dominant positivist approach to geographical studies to understand how people with their histories and cultures are uniquely enmeshed with places in thinking about 'settlements'. The interest also led to me to try and find out more although the process was anything but easy. Personally speaking, being a Bengali-speaking, middle-class woman from a small town, access to most of the key individuals, who lived in Calcutta, was far from easy; access to international journals was all but impossible, and access to books was also problematic. At that time, the National Library of India had started a photocopying service, but one could only order the copy of thirty pages of any book held there, and come back to Calcutta a month later to pick up that bunch and order one more lot. Sometimes I came back from Calcutta empty-handed because the photocopier had broken down. Eventually, all the efforts did result in a book that was manually typed first, then published in Calcutta.

In a way, the book is my personal homage to an inspired group of people who under the leadership of Mr. E.T. McCluskie tried to establish their own homeland. That undertaking, though apparently quixotic and naïve, was heroic to say the least. In the book, I used the analytical frameworks (put forth by Chicago sociologists Park and Burgess) of marginality and utopia; describing McCluskiegunge as a utopian effort in response to a deepening identity crisis of the Anglo-Indians. The late 1920s and 30s were a period of great uncertainty for the Anglo-Indians – a period of self-questioning and realignment of loyalties, because the community had realized that in spite of its dedication to the ruling colonial power, they were going to be un-ceremonially discarded by the British. The Anglo-Indians, pushed into a deep crisis of belonging, began to feel more insecure than ever and tried to use their collective energies to form a homeland that would reassert their separate identity within the Indian territorial mass. At different stages in their history some Anglo-Indians had formed

detached housing settlements, but McCluskiegunge was not *just another* attempt at establishing such a residential community: this distinctive colony-settlement epitomizes the search for a 'homeland' where the settlers could identify with the land and with each other as members of a community. The attachment to a place, designated as 'Anglo-India', would give the coherence that they lamented as lacking and allow them the autonomy to flourish as persons of their own, neither at the mercy of the ruling group nor were wielding power over others. The book, '*In Search of a Homeland*', much to my delight, was well received by the Anglo-Indians for illuminating an almost forgotten slice of the history of the community, and has been extensively used by scholars and media people.

In search of a homeland holds great personal significance for me; it was written at a time when geographers in India still believed that geography is a 'spatial science', that its main task is to draw maps accurately and measure the characteristics of landscapes by working out the patterns that rivers and mountains formed as lines on the survey maps. The language that was generally spoken in 'settlement geography' did not have place for history, ideas of marginality and utopia, and the book made me something of an outcast, a marginal person. While it stood apart from the rest of the contemporary geographical literature being produced in India under the influence of its designation as a 'spatial science', looking back at it, I can see now that it also bore distinctive traits of the limitations imposed by the disciplinary training that characterised 1980s Indian geography. I was trying primarily to break this scenario and create an internal debate within the geographical terrain, and could have benefitted from more stimulating dialogue with other disciplines such as cultural studies that were beginning to explore complex, hybrid, identities. If I were to write this book again, I would most likely write it differently, and most probably publish it through an international publisher.

Yet, I cannot help but feel amazed at the impact this book had, the high esteem and significance that was attached to it by others. It continues to serve generations of researchers from around the world, wanting to know more about the Anglo-Indians. At the personal level, *In Search of a Homeland* brought home the realities of Anglo-European knowledge production and the gross and blatant exploitation of the

intellectual labour of Southern-based scholars by the Northern researchers, in both print and other media. As just one example, material from the book was used as the basis of a BBC TV production, '*In Search of a Homeland*' but received no acknowledgment, whereas Indian film-makers credited the book (for example, '*Letter to Mom*'). The inequitable knowledge-production leads to complex issues around expertise in the scholarly world because this inequity allows certain groups of scholars based in the Global North to assume a privileged position of authority on research subjects.

I took up my current position in The Australian National University (ANU) in 2002, and decided to move on with the tides of change in my life. Since the publication of the book, my research has gone through several twists and turns, but *In Search of a Homeland* still remains one of my favourite, and my first, work in the English language. When you read the chapter from the book excerpted below, I would encourage you to consider the fact that the following text was written in the late 1980s. It shows that the place was an extraordinary embodiment of a dream of the Anglo-Indian community at a certain time in history. I hope that it will give you at least some insight into the magical place that McCluskiegunge once was, allowing you to sense the grandeur of the dream that led to its creation, and not feel that it is entirely inconsequential or irrelevant.

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CHAPTER FIVE

BACKGROUND OF THE UTOPIA

‘What’s it all about? Don’t worry me so, you blacks and whites. Here I am, stuck in damn India same as you, and you got to fit me in better than this.’

E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, 1924

BACKDROP

THE CONDITIONS between the two World Wars were ripe enough to trigger off utopian imagination among the Anglo-Indians.

Caught between the rulers and the ruled, this marginal group of people were faced with a dilemma. Expectations from the British were high, but seldom fulfilled, although in the initial stages the Community had helped to a large extent to build and maintain the Empire. The sincere attempts to the Community to prove their loyalty generally went unnoticed. Even when taken notice of, they were by and large taken for granted. Often some Englishman, well placed in the administration in India or the United Kingdom, was likely to make a couple of profound statements about the Community but stopped at that. Such stray comments neither aimed at solving nor viewed the problem from another perspective.

For example, in the course of a paper read before a joint meeting of the East India Association and the Overseas league in St. Andrew’s Hall, London, Sir George Anderson said, ‘I would point out that considerable harshness and injustice have been meted out to the Anglo-Indian community in the past; and that in spite of that treatment, Anglo-Indians have been steadfast in their loyalty and service towards building up the British Empire in India’.

Or, for example in the Parliamentary Debates in the House of Commons on Indian Constitutional Reforms, Lieutenant Colonel Applin, on November 22, 1933, is recorded to have said, ‘That community is so small, that it is likely to be lost sight of, but we in the Parliament are actually responsible for its existence. We have a special responsibility to see that, whatever we may be doing, and whatever our plans may

be for the future of India, we safeguard the rights and the livelihood of these people for whose existence we are responsible'. Gidney referred to a speech made by the Prince of Wales when he visited India in 1922. Upon receiving the Anglo-Indian deputation His Majesty said, 'Gentlemen, - You may be confident that Great Britain and the Empire will not forget your community, who are so united in their devotion to the King Emperor and who gave such unmistakable token of their attachment to the Empire by their sacrifices in the war' (quoted by Gidney, 1934, p. 31). Some of them were, however, a bit more sympathetic. A British General wrote in a letter to *The Times*:

'... It is now notorious that their future has not been fairly implemented under the India Act. They have for generations been able to maintain the life of a humbler European, for three quarters of a century the phenomenal safety of the Railways has been due to their services, and the lesser posts of the technical services have also presented openings for their more efficient scions. At too great a rate these openings have largely passed from them. Of all communities in the world perhaps, they alone have few influential heads, for those who come, as many have done, to succeed in the world, pass westward to be reabsorbed in the western side of the their origin. There are few to fight their battle and few to endow their needs.'

Without affecting their government policies in the least, these comments fitted perfectly well with the typically condescending British attitude. To them the Anglo-Indians were just another part of the massive exploitative machine that their empire was. Like all cogs within wheels they too needed to be oiled once in a while, with the offerings of certain not so generous privileges, to keep them in working condition. But they were never to be pampered, in case the 'menace' they sometimes threatened to be, came unleashed.

During this period, the Indian national movement was in full swing. After the Independence of Australia and Canada, there was a distinctly rising possibility of India too gaining her Independence. The leaders of the Anglo-Indian community were naturally aware of this and were uneasy, almost threatened, by the uncertainty of the situation. The Indian elite, with their newly aroused consciousness of the western culture looked upon the Anglo-Indians with scorn and suspicion. Except in very rare cases, like Derozio, the Anglo-Indians too, never bothered to trouble

themselves with the multifarious problems of Indian society in general. But underlying the habitual indifference, there was an accumulating sense of hostility among the Anglo-Indians towards these city-bred, educated Indians. This was possibly due the fact that a major portion of the jobs that were traditionally held by the Anglo-Indians were being taken up by these people. This was an ironical blow to the collective ego of the Community. Curtailment of their opportunity to be employed in the only jobs at which they were good, hurt the economic foundation of the Community immensely.

The pressures and tensions continued to mount between the Anglo-Indians and the British, who made it clear that they were in no way able, or even willing, to allow special safeguards to the Anglo-Indians as a minority community. The British view is best expressed in Sir Ramsay McDonald's speech given at a luncheon by the leaders of the Anglo-Indian community of January 19, 1931:

'When the new constitution comes it is perfectly obvious that the objective facts regarding conditions in India will necessitate adequate safeguards being included in that constitution to protect minorities ... May I just warn you that many minorities and many people, many classes and many interests have tried to get security in formulae. They have managed to get formulae which could be perfectly watertight, which looked workable, with complete precision. They have gone, they have been their undoing. Minorities may be protected, but in the end minorities have to protect themselves ... ultimately the only safeguard that everybody has in this world is that they have made themselves respected and essentially useful. So I hope you will not trust too much of these safeguards, though you will get them...the real effective safeguard is that which you yourselves will be able to build up for your own protection.'

The message of this protracted speech, however, is quite clear. Similarly, in reply to the respective deputations of Mr Stark in 1923 and Colonel Gidney in 1925, both revered members of the Community, the Government of India's despatch clearly stated that: 'the members of the Anglo-Indian community have a permanent stake in India, and in no other country.... their future, as the Government of India see it, lies in achieving for themselves an integral part in the economy and society of the country in which they live ... It is essential for the community's own interest that their legal status be that of the natives of India, nor is acceptance of this position

inconsistent with the maintenance of their individuality as a separate social entity' (Wallace, 1930, p. 134).

Despite repeated memoranda from the Anglo-Indian Association, the Simon Commission report categorically stated (pp. 42–45) that the Anglo-Indians must open out for themselves fresh avenues of employment and depend less on the Government.

The Anglo-Indians were becoming increasingly aware of the impending departure of the British from India. This generated a tremendous sense of betrayal and insecurity. Together, this posed a series of further complex problems involving critical choice-making for the Anglo-Indians at this crucial crossroads of history. Some leaders envisaged a more intimate dialogue and ultimate unity amongst the various peoples of mixed racial origin scattered throughout the colonial south and Southeast Asia (Dover, 1929). Some of its leaders had started to feel that the Anglo-Indian community formed an integral part of the Indian nation and that its future progress and prosperity was bound up with the country. Many started to believe that India was their motherland and it was in this country that they were going to spend the rest of their lives. This view was expressed in the words of Mr E.H.M. Bower, one of the veteran leaders of the Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India:

'We are willing and anxious to help a real national government. It is true that we carry independent views on certain matters and that we particularly cling to our religion and culture. We value freedom and we claim the right to live our communal life. But these claims are in no way incompatible with our allegiance to a democratic India. For we hold that in a true democracy every community should be allowed to live its own life and, to contribute of its best to the life of a nation as a whole.'

Others were in favour of a mass exodus of the Anglo-Indians from India to the United Kingdom (Snell, 1944, pp. 33).

The Anglo-Indians, like the proverbial leopard, could not be expected to change its spots, they said. As the Anglo-Indians had always rallied with the British, the whole community had become suspect in the eyes of the Indian who regarded these people as aliens. This school of thought strongly held that the 'past political activities

of the Community has forfeited, once and for all, the goodwill of even the most sympathetic Indian' (Snell, 1944, p. 32). Snell further goes on:

'How can the Anglo-Indian....whose communal life, from its very inception, has been completely divorced from the tide of Indian national feelings and aspirations form an integral part of the Indian nation? He does not fulfil the least of the obligations demanded by the citizenship of the country, a neighbourly attitude towards the other communities. How can he fit into the matrix of a united and national India? He has always looked upon the Indians and will continue to look upon him, as his social inferior and still stubbornly remains unrepentant. The essential feeling of goodwill and sympathy is lacking exacerbated by the fact that the Anglo-Indian clings tenaciously both to his religion and to his culture. It is quite impossible, in other words, to make a good Indian nationalist of the Anglo-Indian, who is without roots in the soil, and turns to the west for his every spiritual sustenance.'

Snell identified that the Anglo-Indian community occupied a highly anomalous position in this country and advised it to reject the illusion that India could ever be its motherland. But during this period of economic depression the British were hardly willing to accept and integrate them into their social-economic structure. There is no doubt that an 'Eurasian' unity and identity, if successful, would have had immense significance and could possibly have affected, if not altered, the course of political developments in this part of the world. But the proposal neither materialised nor took any desirable concrete shape.

THE VISIONARY

Meanwhile, more practical and revolutionary plans for the Anglo-Indians were being thought of by certain prominent figures of the Community. Motivating them was E.T. McCluskie. A businessman of Calcutta, where he was born in 1872, a sitting member of the Bengal Legislative Council representing the Anglo-Indian community, McCluskie was a courageous and inspiring leader. He was also the President of the Bengal branch of The Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association in Calcutta and had served the Community in various other ways. A visionary with extraordinary foresight and business acumen, he developed the idea of establishing their own homeland, a *mooluk*. This could not be done unless people of the Community came together and realised the need of the hour. So unity, self-help and cooperation were

to be the three props on which 'Anglo-India', an independent nation-state of the Anglo-Indians, would stand.

McCluskie, travelling around Bangalore for the first time in September 1930, found an orchard about 15 miles away worked by a hardy old Scotsman called Maclsaacs. Here, an area of 30 acres under fruit was being irrigated by a single tank, yet was bringing good returns on capital. McCluskie reasoned in the booklet that if one man could make an orchard pay, many men with combined effort and real grit ought to be successful in agricultural pursuits. Returning in the train he dreamt of a beautiful hilly country, a real 'homeland' of his own people all living and working together for the common good towards a common goal – Independence.

Even before his sojourn to Bangalore, McCluskie had, in fact, been toying with the idea of establishing a homeland for the Anglo-Indians. With two others he had worked out a plan to create a settlement, a plan that he described as a 'colonisation scheme' and presented it to the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association in July 1930. This plan was published in the *Anglo-Indian Review* in September 1930, but beyond that no further action was taken and the matter was dropped.

In this scheme entitled *The Dawn of a New Era*, McCluskie says:

'India is fast changing, her sons are asking for more power to manage their own affairs through the Legislatures, and Parliament has held four Conferences in this connection; the final result and the announcement of the decision of Parliament is anxiously awaited by those who want self-government.

In India the Central and Provincial government are making necessary arrangements to inaugurate the New Constitution; while all this is being done the various communities are also uniting and consolidating their positions, so as to be prepared to carry on their own ideas for political advancement and thereby improve their economic position also. THIS IS INDEED THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA FOR INDIA.

The Domiciled Community is the smallest minority Community in the country and the only one which is so widely scattered that they have no part of the country they can call their "Mooluk" or "Home". They are just wanderers and, unfortunately, very disunited. ... the days of preferential treatment have definitely gone for ever and Community are being "squeezed out" (vide Simon Report) ... We must make our own

safeguards or in other words, help ourselves or go under, for there is no other course left. There is only ONE way the Community can save themselves and their future generations, that is by a real cooperative effort for the general good of the entire Community. Let them be determined and their combined effort in Colonization shall bring them success and then only will success be assured ... cooperation is the first essential to Colonization.

If the Dawn of a New Era has come for India, it has obviously come for the Domiciled Community who are part of India, and it is, therefore, high time that they began to wake up and take an interest in what is going on around them. They must unite and cooperate to make suitable provisions for themselves and for the future of their rising generations. This great scheme of self-help is no more in the abstract, but has actually been formed and now is the time and the opportune moment for Anglo-Indians to show the world that they can unite and cooperate as one great organization.'

McCluskie's latent desire for a homeland was aroused by the trip to Bangalore. On November 30 1930, copies of the first circular containing the scheme of colonisation were distributed among the members of the Community. Towards the end of December, he met the then Viceroy, Lord Irwin (later Lord Halifax), to discuss the scheme and showed him a layout of the colony as he visualised it. During February of the following year, McCluskie went to Delhi to talk to senior officials for financial assistance from the Government. He was refused straightway any help, either financial or in the form of free land. It is then that he decided to develop the colony on cooperative lines, by eliminating selfish spirit and uniting the people in one bond of brotherhood which trusted the leadership. He realised that at such a critical, historical point, the least his people could do to find their own identity would be to put up a determined and combined effort to colonise themselves.

The idea was enriched by various other similar concepts. McCluskie had consistently avoided the term 'Utopian' and disliked his project being branded such. He probably had the popular understanding of the term as an impossible dream and did not want his project be viewed as an impractical attempt. Nonetheless his project had the elements of utopia. McCluskie liked to quote from the letter of one Sidney Lloyd Young published in *The Daily Mail* of London. It described how Young with some friends had formed a commune in the western pine-clad highlands of Louisiana, USA

about 90 miles North of Mexico. Established in the first decade of this century, the *Llano Cooperative Society*, as it was called, had 15,000 acres of land of which 1,000 were cultivated and produced almost all their food requirement. They had their own factories, printing press and newspapers, schools, and even a company called *Llanodel Rio Company* for outside financial and business transactions. There was no interchange of cash among the members and there was no constitution or laws but a democratically elected board in charge of the smooth running of the affairs of the community. This and similar other examples of successful communities in building new settlements were often cited by McCluskie. For instance, the *Christian Science Monitor* told the story of thirty jobless men from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Determined to beat the depression, they secured 8,000 acres of virgin land in the hills and formed the *Ozark Mountains Colony* near Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

Moreover, there were similar projects although on a much smaller scale elsewhere by the Anglo-Indians. There were Anglo-Indian colonies at Majra, near Dehra Dun; Colonel J.H. Abbott's settlements in the Jhansi and Bina districts; and three different colonies in South India. A similar land colonisation scheme started in 1937 by the Travancore War Service Men's Association. An area of about 55 acres surrounded by the Palode Reserve Forests was obtained from the Travancore Government; the entire land was cleared, surveyed and demarcated into 12 three-acre plots and the remaining land was set apart to serve as a demonstration farm for the colony and neighbouring villages. Within two years some 10 colonists together occupied a three-acre block assigned to them. Pepper, areca nut, coconut, ginger, turmeric and plantains were among the products cultivated in this model colony. The residents were provided with facilities for conducting subsidiary industries like bee-keeping, poultry-farming and buffalo-rearing.

The success of the project encouraged the Travancore Government to select two young men who had been trained in agriculture to settle in the colony on two plots made available for this purpose. The neighbouring villages had also benefited by the colony and endeavoured to emulate its example. Within a year of its inception there had been marked improvement in the quality of their cultivation and in the standard of living in the colony.

Examples of such successful efforts at colonisation, be it in India or abroad, inspired the Anglo-Indians to settle down on land and take up agriculture as the means of livelihood. Besides providing the Community with an alternative source of employment, it was thought that settling on land would also help the members to identify with a particular unit of space and thus ameliorate their heightened identity problem.

The very idea of a 'homeland' appealed to the sentiments of a number of prominent leaders of the Community and very soon *The Colonization Society of India Limited* was formed with McCluskie as its Founder-Chairman. The Society was registered under the Indian Companies Act of 1913 on May 16, 1933. It had an authorised capital of Rs 5,00,000 divided into 50,000 shares of Rs 10 each. The registered office of The Colonization Society of India Ltd. was at 22 Park Street, Calcutta, which incidentally was McCluskie's residence. His nephew, Percival Damzen was the Secretary of the Society. The monthly journal and mouthpiece of the Society, *The Colonization Observer*,¹ was regularly published from July 1932 onwards. The control of the Society's affairs was vested in a Board of Directors, who were members and held a certain number of shares specified in the Articles and Memorandum of Association of the Society.

The Anglo-Indian community's mentality is summed up in the following words of a lecture, delivered by Percival Damzen, at the Kineally Hall, Simla, in October, 1938.

'... We have two very significant complexes. The first and more easily understood is the inferiority complex to the Englishman, and the second and less easily understood is our reaction to this inferiority complex by a much more heinous complex – that of superiority to the Indian ... it has been with us a long while without our recognising it, when we must overcome both these complexes. The Indian of today is to be our lifelong ally. The European will soon become a migratory creature. Slowly but surely the Indianization which started in the lower ranks has permeated to the upper heights. So to our Indian friends we must look with equality and to our English more than these two unnecessary and controversial complexes.'

It was quite natural for them, then, to look for their own place under the sun.

HOMELAND

While the goal of the Colonization Society of India Ltd. was 'Independence', the more specific objectives were summarised (in *Col. Ob.*, Vol. I, No. 1, September 1933, p. 1) as:

1. To attract members of the Community who have retired or are about to retire with provident fund and to save them from sinking their "ALL" in speculative ventures, as many have done, not knowing anything about the business undertaken.
2. To settle the Community on the land thereby giving them a real stake in their country and thus helping a wandering people to establish a Home therein. Besides enabling the Community to claim full economic and political rights as Indians proper without losing their identity as Anglo-Indians.
3. To train the Community in agriculture.
4. To sell the produce of the colony through a Marketing Board.
5. To encourage education, especially technical and agricultural education.
6. To establish industrial undertakings for the employment of members of the society.
7. To further the economic development of the Community in any other way.'

Nowhere in this statement of objectives is the intention of establishing a nation-state for the Community — Anglo-India — clearly mentioned, but on reading between the lines one becomes aware of such a possibility. Such ambivalence in stating the objectives of the scheme may have been purposeful and done consciously, as the statement, according to McCluskie, was 'more or legal interest'. Elsewhere (*Col. Ob.*, Vol. II, No. 5, September 1933, p. 3) he had expressed that 'here is our chance to grow and expand and become a real Community and a Nation'. In the same issue, the principal objectives were outlined as:

1. To establish a "Home" for the community and thus have a stake in our own country and be able to be part of India and others.
2. To open up fresh avenues of employment for the rising generation.
3. To acquire land, by lease or purchase anywhere in India and Burma.

4. To let to or settle members on the lands acquired, on such terms as may be decided by the Directors.
5. To purchase and distribute to members on hire or sale agricultural machinery, manure, seed or other equipment and to establish stores to provide the members with any or all of their requirements, and to help members in every way.
6. To lay out the lands in towns, suburbs and other areas, to erect and cause to be erected and maintain houses, warehouses, farms, schools and other public buildings of any kind whatsoever.
7. To do banking business and to grant loans to members on such security and terms as the Directors may decide.
8. To dispose of the produce of the colony through a Marketing Board.
9. To develop and improve the business of the society at all times.'

Some of the points, naturally, are common to both sets of objectives. Point 2 in the first statement and Point 1 in the second, are remarkably consistent. Similarly, the objectives of going into agriculture and creating a marketing board to channelise the produce are also in accordance. But even to a casual reader, the second statement (which, however, was chronologically older than the first) appears to have the perspective more of a business organisation rather than a philanthropic attempt. In fact, as we see later, it is this dilemma between altruism on the one hand and profit-orientation on the other that plagued the colonisers.

In any case, each of the objectives may be justified in view of the specific problem of the Community. In an article titled 'How Provident funds are used' (*Col. Ob.*, Vol. III, No. 8, December 1934, p. 37) McCluskie gave instances of Anglo-Indians who, upon their retirement from service, mismanaged the large sums of money received and eventually faced starvation. He suggested drastic reductions in expenditure, particularly on luxuries like servants and high rent. He went on to say that these were impossible in a large city like Calcutta, and so the scheme of colonisation seemed only too worthy because it not only offered cheap living in healthy surroundings but also offered the vicinage of people of their own community.

McCluskie was faced with the problem of raising capital, a prime cause of failure of most utopian attempts (Morton, 1952, p. 121). As his, and later Col. Henry Gidney's repeated requests for capital were rejected by the government, he naturally concentrated upon the retired, or people about to retire, with a considerable amount of capital at their disposal. They were a better proposition than the active young, or middle-aged group of people who, even if genuinely interested, were less likely to leave their employment and secure life in the cities. However rational the argument may have been, the distressing aspect was that it imparted a 'quiet resort' type of image to the settlement. This definitely was farthest from McCluskie's intentions as he had repeatedly emphasised that the ultimate goal was to build an independent nation-state. To make his project a success McCluskie hardly needed old, complacent people and stressed that successful colonisation would depend on the spirit, sincerity and grit of the pioneer settlers.

Snell (1944, pp. 35–36) in his analysis of why Anglo-Indian colonisation attempts failed was of the same opinion. He said, 'the settlers at ... McCluskieganj were mainly retired old gentlemen who, having shouldered their share of work and responsibilities were not particularly eager to make a success of agriculture or the colony they had cooperated in establishing. Their lives did not depend on it; their next mean was assured. They received their pensions every month and ... McCluskieganj gave them to quiet and beauty of the countryside which they so badly needed in the idleness of superannuation'. In view of the general spirit of his intentions, one may, however consider the inclusion of retirees in the statement of objectives of the colonisation scheme to be more of an aberration on the part of McCluskie. Or it might also be that he had included this consciously in his list of objectives to lure capital necessary to sustain the colony initially and expected strong, able, young people to join willingly as and when the scheme became successful.

Of greater interest is McCluskie's objective of 'training the community in agriculture' or the same view expressed in a slightly different way. It is touching when McCluskie says, 'Indeed we have gone back – back to the land, where if we serve the land half as faithfully and as well, as we have serve our late employers, we will be rewarded a

hundredfold. We have served England well, now let we serve India as well, if not better'. Traces of deep disgust and again, the sense of betrayal come to the surface. Of course, 'India' is taken in its physical sense, as the land on which they had lived so long and on which they now intended to establish their homeland. Never once is it taken in the wider sense of the concept of an emerging nation, upon which to lay their loyalty.

It was not without any forethought that McCluskie decided upon agriculture as the mainstay of the Community's economic base. Separation from nature and rootlessness often render the individual alienated from his fellow beings. Even contemporary Indian thought stressed a 'Back to the Village' type of sentiment. Gandhi was clearly in favour of a rural civilisation; Tagore and others advocated close interaction with nature. It is but natural that the prevailing outlook of contemporary philosophers would leave some imprint on McCluskie's thought process. To solve the identity crisis of his Community, there could hardly be a better way other than to turn its back to the urban environment, attach themselves to the land and make them understand the worth of land and nature. It will be relevant in this context to note that many provincial governments at that time were also considering rural reconstruction. The Bihar and Orissa governments were even contemplating cooperatives to use as a tool in this direction (*Times of India*, 6.1.34).

Of more serious and immediate importance seemed the Community's economic problems. J.H. Morgan, Professor of Constitutional Law at London University, is quoted to have said on the 'Illusory nature of safeguards' that 'all the white paper proposals directed to safeguard minority interests do nothing to provide against discrimination by administration. So legislations do little in the way of actual protection and assurance of employments'. In the past, the Anglo-Indians had relied entirely on the government for jobs and had become quite used to the preferential treatment offered. McCluskie observes in his editorial in the *Colonization Observer* of February 1934 (*Col. Ob.*, Vol. II No. 10, February 1934):

'Our problem has been, still is, and always will be an economic one—we want to live, we want bread, and up to now we have faithfully and loyally served and they have helped us and shown preferential treatment until recent years. But the old order is fast changing. India is

advancing very rapidly and the various major communities are taking matters, through the legislatures, into their own hands—naturally they must look after their own kind, it is nothing new nor can we expect it to be otherwise, the weaker must go to the wall or sink into oblivion. The majority communities must obviously take lower places on lower waves and learn to subsist on these lower rates of pay or find some other means of subsistence. What is the remedy and where can we look for those other spheres of labour or occupation? Who will make the openings, and how? When are we to make a start? These are the questions that every healthy man must ask himself; what are my children going to do for a living? We have all depended on Government but retrenchment during the last few years has thrown large numbers of our able bodied men out of work. So what are the chances for our growing youths?’

To solve the economic ills of the Community, McCluskie envisaged ‘Self-Help’ and elaborated:

‘This is the only comprehensive answer to all these questions, unless we begin now, and help ourselves and make new openings and new jobs for our rising generations, they must without doubt become drawers of water and hewers of wood for those who will be in power very shortly. Self help is the only way of growth to a permanently happier state, but alas, there seems to be a helplessness in the Anglo-Indian community beyond belief. They have little confidence in themselves, in their minds their only hope for better things is that these better things be given them or arranged for them by the Government some philanthropy of charity. Their part is to get someone to write or frame the familiar appeal and just do nothing, but those days are gone for ever. The only means are: Educate, Colonize and be Independent. Have confidence in yourself ... and only then can we achieve our goal—“INDEPENDENCE”.’

In raising the economic position of the Community, the crux of the problem was that the Anglo-Indian had to adjust to the changing conditions. One of the chief changes that had to be made was cutting out luxuries and investing money in agriculture. This was probably the most historical move of the Anglo-Indians—putting up a real fight for their very existence in an attempt to solve the basic problem as well as the weakness of the Community. There could be no better viewpoint than that of McCluskie’s. He rightly admitted that success in turning a whole community, too used for generations to the urban life, to that of agricultural pursuits and rural living would earn the respect and admiration of the world, but its lack of materialisation

would bring only contempt and ridicule. He must have also realised that it was indeed a difficult job to accomplish. His sincerity was evident when he inspired the fellow men of his community in the following words:

‘If all the world can find homes and occupation for themselves, are we the only people to go about begging for jobs that are not available? Have some pride of race and push this scheme for all you are worth.’

McCluskie proceeded in what he thought was a very planned way. He went to Louvain in Belgium with a personal letter of introduction from the Belgium Consul-General in Calcutta to the Secretary-General of the *Boerenbond Cooperative Society* to learn about the farming system there, as well as in farms in Yorkshire.

It was not that McCluskie had only the western model in mind. He carefully examined the agricultural situation in India and made some very relevant observations. McCluskie realised that the Indian *ryot* was ailed by ‘ancestral and inherent’ problems such as small plots of land, lack of finance, rent structure and so on, which explained their poverty. To make agriculture pay, these difficulties needed to be removed. If the Anglo-Indian farmer could overcome these handicaps he would be able to reap better returns from his investment in agriculture. In doing this, they had to train personnel in agriculture. Again the British Government refused in no uncertain terms the plea for financial support to professionally trained Anglo-Indian boys in agriculture. Irrespective of government support (which was not forthcoming) some 15 boys were trained at the Allahabad Agricultural Institute at a cost of Rs 500 as tuition fees for each them (*Col. Ob.*, Vol. II No. 5, September 1933, p. 1). Regular features were published on livestock development—breeding and feeding, vegetable production, drying and storage, as well as dry farming methods. Various other steps were also taken to boost agriculture. Since 1938, The Sir Henry Gidney Challenge Trophy was presented to the settler whose farm showed the most progress and development irrespective of its size. At the same time recommendations of the Agricultural Development, Chotanagpur Range, Bihar, on weather and crop, laying out, irrigation and drainage, rotation of crops, cultivation and implements, manures and manuring were suggested to the settlers of the colony.

McCluskie cited all kinds of examples of successful farming to give encouragement to the new and future settlers. The Belgian Mission Settlement in the charge of Rev. Father Dilles was mentioned as profitably producing various fruits, vegetables, groundnuts and cereals in the Chotanagpur area. To provide settlers with the information of similar experiments abroad, a news item printed in the *Times of India* was cited (*Col. Ob.*, Vol. II No. 10, February 1934, p. 5) again. It described how as a result of shared effort with the Government of Canada, the provincial governments and the Canadian railways to relieve unemployment, about 90,000 people, most of them from urban centres, had been placed on farms throughout the country.

At this time Sir Daniel Hamilton was seriously considering the economic uplift of rural Bengal. In January, 1934 he read a paper at the Calcutta University (*The Statesman*, 12.1.34) and envisaged a scheme of cash credit which he claimed would revitalise Bengal and India as a whole. It was based upon an experiment conducted in Scotland. Sir Hamilton suggested similarly that the Government of India lend to the Government of Bengal a sum of Rs 10,000 to be loaned to the *ryot* partly as short-term credit, payable after the ensuing harvest, and partly as long term credit to be repaid in annual instalments over about ten years with the standard rate of interest on the loan. That principal and interest were to be returned to the Government of Bengal, and used for educational or medical work as the Calcutta University may decide. The Gosaba Central Bank was to act as Land Mortgage banker for the long-term loan, taking the *ryots'* land as security. Although Sir Hamilton's scheme is again mentioned later (*Col. Ob.*, Vol. VII, No. 4, April 1933, p. 1) McCluskie did not follow this model in his project.

Items such as 'Moon's help to plants—Breathing Earth' propounding 'New Theories for agriculturalist—astounding doctrine of the moon's effect on the land and the things that grow upon it' by anthroposophist Frau Lilly Kolisko, were amateurish to say the least, ridiculous and ill-befitted McCluskie's programmatic plan.

However, that the Society largely failed to train its members in agriculture is exemplified by an advertisement placed in the pages of the journal (*Col. Ob.*, Vol. II, No. 7, November 1933, p. 13). The advertisement for a specialist ran thus:

WANTED: *Anglo-Indian agriculturist with technical experience and qualifications.*

It goes without saying that the society never found an applicant with the qualifications mentioned in the advertisement. It is obvious that a visionary like McCluskie could accurately understand his community's problem of rootlessness, but the effort which he took up to ameliorate it ended up in trouble later on because of those very weaknesses, stemming from the lack of identification with land. As a result, many of the settlers in McCluskiegunge failed miserably when attempting to cultivate the land. Imagine the plight of an urban people who tried to tame the hard, unyielding soils of Chotanagpur under the plough for the first time and failed at the effort.

A UTOPIA

Why am I describing McCluskiegunge as a *Utopia*? What are the elements that constitute utopianism? The hippies believe in 'doing your own thing' or in being 'beautiful people'. They can not be called 'utopian' communities as they do not fulfil certain parameters. To be called utopian, an idea or an effort must have certain characteristics. Is McCluskiegunge a utopia in the true sense of the term?

The most important parameter of utopian communities is that they are '*intentional*'. Hicks (1971, pp. 136–37) quotes one federation of utopian communities to have stated its goal in this way: 'Intentional community is an effort to create a social order which may, in time, become more universally accepted and so help to create the inclusive human community where the normal thing is to practice mutual concern, respect and love and to share cooperatively and democratically in the responsibility, work and use of the values of life.' The hippies are, no doubt, far too hedonistic and self-consciously escapist for the taste of most residents in utopian communities. The utopian is aware of and deliberate about his intentions to produce a new system. McCluskiegunge shows this element of conscious creativity through collective purposefulness.

Another important parameter of utopian thought, according to Mannheim (1949, pp. 173–84) is its situationally *transcendent* character which enables it to have a transforming effect on the existing historical order. The model of the ideal future society not only acts to direct present action but also to transform the orientations, attitudes and the aspirations of the participants of the utopian movement. The transcendent quality denotes the idea of moving from the present into some future state. A utopia, therefore, develops creative energies to make possible what seemed only a short time ago so difficult to attain. Thus, in addition to being *intentional*, utopias have *transforming* and *transcendental* characters. McCluskiegunge is characterised by these qualities.

The fourth aspect of utopian thought is the *eschatological* notion of an end. This element in particular takes a major part in directing large-scale political or social action. This notion may be clearer at some particular point in time but at all times it provides some sense of a goal towards which to direct change. Utopias give a detailed statement of what is to be achieved and mobilise thought in that direction. This is the fundamental element in *planning*. The planner's imaginations of the ideal city are programmes for achievement, utopias meant to stir and direct activity (Gusfield, 1971, p. 77). Thus, a vague notion of the future may be contrasted with a specific and particular one in various utopian traditions. Since McCluskiegunge aimed to be the 'homeland', the 'Anglo-India', instead of just any other resettlement colony of the Anglo-Indians, and that too through a well-designed specific course of action, it has the above mentioned character.

The final parameter of utopianism is the *totalistic* character of such movements. Utopian movements are revolutionary in the sense that they suggest not only fundamental but a complete and pervasive change. By making a typology of social movements it is possible to distinguish between small and large scale, short-term or far-reaching ones. The utopian movement will not seek a specific reform but a thorough change in the institutional systems, major values and environment. McCluskiegunge is a utopia because it fulfils this parameter too. Adoption of a rural, land-based lifestyle was a complete changeover from the traditionally urban culture of the Community.

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Notes

¹ Henceforth referred to as *Col. Ob.* in the text.