Indian Trains

There is a scene in a film by Satyajit Ray. Children are running through long grass, going further from their village than they have ever been before. They come to the edge of the grass, hear a noise, and crouch down as the train roars past. Then they walk silently home, wide-eyed, sharing a secret too big to talk about. When they left home that morning their world was their village. They come home heavy with the knowledge that the village is a small place in a huge land. Their world is now less secure, but it is also bigger, more exciting. It has trains in it.

The beginnings were small enough. On November 18, 1850, the first train in India ran from Bombay to a small town a few miles distant. The next year Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General, issued a minute calling for a system of railways throughout the country. The response was sceptical. The tracks would be washed away in the monsoon floods, or, if they survived, the sleepers would be eaten by white ants. And, in any case, it was unlikely that so conservative a people as the Indians could easily be accustomed to the idea of rail travel. But Dalhousie pressed on, and by 1868 a rail network linked the great cities of India. This was only the first stage of the plan. In the following decades branch lines were built that spread throughout the country, 18,000 miles of track by 1893, 35,000 by 1914. The boast was, then, that there was no village in India more than fifty miles from a railway.

Fears of conservative resistance to travel by rail were quickly shown to be unfounded. As early as 1855 an editorial in the Indian News was commenting snootily on the new fad: ‘The fondness for travelling by rail has become almost a national passion among the inferior orders’. In 1867 there were nearly 14 million passengers, by 1932 over 600 million. India had become a nation of travellers, and Indians travelled by rail.
Dalhousie’s aims were practical. The railways made it possible to garrison India more efficiently: troops could be moved quickly from one province to another. Trains opened up India’s arable hinterland, freeing Britain from dependence on American cotton. They made the whole of India a market for British industrial goods. They also made it possible to transport food from one province to another, and so helped to control the local famines that from time to time devastated whole areas of the country. Thanks to Dalhousie the administration and the economy of India became dependent on the railways. The railway unions are the most powerful in India, but their power is paradoxical. It is so great – the nation is so dependent on its rail service – that no government can allow it to be used. In 1974, confronted by a nationwide rail strike, Indira Gandhi responded by arresting and imprisoning all the union officials, a number variously estimated somewhere between 20,000 and 50,000.

The railways have a huge economic importance, but that was not what impressed the children in Satyajit Ray’s film. Trains were not for them a means of distribution, they were a new idea.

Life in a village is circular, bound in time by the cycle of the seasons, and in space by the fields grouped around the village at their centre. The life of the village is a self-contained, inward-looking life, and it offers those who live in it a place within a social fabric rich enough to make nostalgia for the village the commonest, and not an entirely factitious, emotion even in the prosperous city-dwellers of modern India. But such a life is not, and never has been, enough. This explains, I think, one of the most charming aspects of Hinduism, the reverence for rivers – not just the great rivers of the Indian plains, the Ganges which sprang from Siva’s hair, the Indus and the Jamuna, but for the local river, the river alongside which the small town or village grew up. The river, its waters rising in the hills and flowing to the sea, interrupts the circular life of the village. It has a place in the village’s religious festivals, but it has a place, too, in the life of every day. The villagers who bathe there in the morning, the children who play there, the people who take their walk there in the evening, or sit gossipping on the sands, are connected by the flowing water with the large spaces of India. Through rivers, one might say, Indian villages become provincial. But when Ray’s children found the railway track, and saw the train scream by, they stumbled on one part of a great network that spread throughout a sub-continent. They came home excited by the idea of a life beyond, they felt the first stirrings in them of the idea that they belonged to a nation.

Dalhousie planned the railways to tighten British rule of India, to make it more efficient. But the trains had one effect that Dalhousie surely did not foresee. They made possible the birth of the idea that was finally to put an end to the Raj, the idea that India was a nation. Trains connect the inward-looking life of the village with the life of the whole country. The roar of the train jerks Ray’s children out of the dreamworld of childhood, and makes them attend to what is outside their experience. To see a train is to be forced to recognize an outside world. The Indian imagination is, I suspect, as dependent on trains as is its economy.

In his autobiography, My Days, R. K. Narayan records how he came to write his first novel, Swami and Friends:

On a certain day in September, selected by my grandmother for its auspiciousness, I bought an exercise book and wrote the first line of a novel: as I sat in my room nibbling my pen and wondering what to write, Malgudi with its little railway station swam into view, already made, with a character called Swaminathan running down the platform peering into the faces of passengers, and grimacing at a bearded face . . .

All Narayan’s novels are set in and around Malgudi, a small South Indian town, but the economy of his fiction depends on the fact that Malgudi has a ‘little railway station’. Trains stop at Malgudi, newcomers arrive and disrupt the dreamy contentment of Narayan’s heroes. Without their intrusion the novels would have no plot, and, more than that, they would have no point.

The hero of The Guide is called Raju. He was born near the station, and his earliest memories are of trains:

The railway got into my blood very early in life. Engines, with their tremendous clanging and smoke, entranced my senses. I felt at home on the railway platform, and considered the station-master and porter the best company for man, and their railway talk the most enlightened. I grew up in their midst.
When he has grown up, he runs the station shop, and adds to his income by acting as a guide to tourists who come to Malgudi. He is known as 'Railway Raju'. He stands for all Narayan's central characters. They are all, willingly or unwillingly, placed like Raju, in Malgudi but vulnerable to the world outside. It is in this way that Narayan can be at once a defiantly provincial novelist, and yet retain his national and his international appeal. It is because the central characters are like Raju that it is appropriate that novels so steeped in Tamil culture as Narayan's should all the same be written in English.

Like his heroes, Narayan is a dreamy man, with the sweet temper of those whose consciousness is only gently impinged on by the world outside. For V. S. Naipaul, it is a visionary world unrelated to the cruel, poverty-stricken land that Naipaul sees around him when he visits India. Some Indian Marxists stiffly theorise Naipaul's point of view. Malgudi with its little middle-class inhabitants becomes a device by which Narayan protects his bourgeois ideology from the exposure to the real world that would threaten its inadequacies. If Narayan's novels survive these attacks — and I think they do — it is because Malgudi never quite becomes a fictional place scaled against contamination by the real India, a pastoral world of gossip, idli, and delicate politeness to which Narayan retreats from the bitter realities of the land where he lives. Malgudi is linked to the real India by a railway track — a train runs from Malgudi to Madras.

Narayan transferred the scene at the station in *Swami and Friends* from the beginning of the novel to the end. Swami runs along the platform as the train chugs out of Malgudi with his friend, Ramu, aboard. Swami is a boy, his been the seamless experience of childhood, and, as the train pulls out, he feels for the first time that the continuity of his life is broken. The child's cyclical sense of time, in which change is the condition of permanence, is brought up sharp against the adult sense that time is linear, and that change means loss. All children, Indian or otherwise, learn that, but Narayan seems to me characteristically Indian in associating this new sense with a railway track.

Ved Mehta was not yet five when his father sent him to the school for the blind in Bombay. The Frontier Mail stood at Lahore station, the train whistled, and his father handed him, crying, through the window of his compartment: The last words Daddyji said to Ved (and the first words I remember hearing) were, 'You're a man now'. Little Ved becomes a man because he is removed from his family circle, breaks out of it, as most young Indians break out, in a train.

Because Ved is blind through meningitis, he learns the lonely adult sense of himself as 'I' too early. His father had been a college student when he made the same discovery. He witnessed a painful quarrel between his parents, and suddenly decided that he could never again live under his father's roof. He had a vague plan of working his passage to America as a deckhand, and so he bought a third-class ticket on the Frontier Mail to Bombay. He arrived in Bombay with six rupees, and lived for a few days on a starvation diet, until a kindly British magistrate forced him to confess his story and packed him off home. It was just a childish escapade, and, back in Lahore, Daddyji resumed his studies. But it was also something more important. When Daddyji returned home his relationship with his father had decisively changed. 'Please do not worry about me,' he said.

To board a train alone is to make a journey through the shadow-line separating youth from manhood. It is an initiation rite, sometimes literally so. After the marriage of Ved Mehta's sister, Pom, her family go with her to the station to see her safely installed in the coupé, the two-berth compartment in which she and her new husband will travel to their new home. As the train pulls out, Ved heard his father's voice 'through the clatter and thunder, the sounds of finality itself'. Daddyji was speaking to the groom, 'Kakaji, take the journey gently... She's very innocent'.

The screech of the train signals the death of Pom's old life, as a daughter, within her family. It is just one of a series of such scenes that impressed themselves on Ved Mehta's mind until he remembers himself thinking, 'whenever I took the train something died in me'. The train tears the continuous web of his life, and the train journeys he remembers, he remembers as so many little deaths.

The platforms of Indian stations are crowded. It is as if everyone boarding the train has a family and friends to shout to through the window, to wave to as the train pulls away. Travelling on a train is a serious matter. It needs the presence of family and friends to
solemnize it. On the platform, smiling at well-wishers, trying to look serious as he is offered advice, his arms filling up with little packages of food to sustain him on the journey, the traveller is a son, or a daughter, a neighbour or a friend, tightly caught in the subtle tissue of family and social relationships in which every Indian is swaddled at birth. As the trains pulls away, and he settles back in his seat and looks around him at his travelling companions, he must find a new identity.

It is on this fact that devotees of progress pinned their hopes of the Indian railway. Marx looked to trains, and the modern industry that would result from them, to ‘dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power’. The liberal historians who compiled the great Cambridge History of India pointed to the railways as ‘the most powerful educative force in India’. Trains ‘necessarily tended to break down the barriers of ages, to stimulate movement, and exchange of thought’. In railway carriages ‘Brahmans and Sudras, Muslims and Sikhs, peasants and townsfolk sat side by side’. The traveller in the compartment of a train loses the reality of his family or caste identity. He has to re-define himself, find a place within the larger life of the nation.

It is not, of course, a place within a homogeneous, egalitarian society. In a train the Muslim may sit next to the Sikh, but both will be distinguished from other passengers within the most complex hierarchy of ticket classes that any nation has seen fit to devise. There are the first, the second, and the third classes, but these are only the principal notes, and around them, as in a raga, are woven intricate variations. It is possible for the traveller to signal in the ticket he buys not only the extent of his wealth but also its kind; first-class coupé for the old-fashioned rich man who owes it to himself to travel in the slippers of a private compartment, air-conditioned car for the young executive whose prestige is better supported by purchasing in a train the odourless discomfort of air travel.

Boarding a train can be for an Indian a fraught experience: the compartment he enters signals his place within a national hierarchy. When the young Gandhi definitively insisted on travelling in a third class compartment, Gokhale, Gandhi’s patron, and then one of the two most famous political leaders in India, insisted on seeing him off at the station. Gandhi asked him not to trouble himself, ‘I should not have come if you had gone first class, but now I had to,’ Gokhale replied. It is a sensitiveness that the Indian traveller takes with him when he goes abroad. Ved Mehta’s Daddaji stood paralysed on the platform of Union Station in Washington. The train was divided into cars marked ‘Whites Only’ and cars marked ‘Blacks Only’. He asked the conductor which he should take, and the conductor said, ‘Hindu? You’re white’.

It is tempting to think that if the South African conductor who examined Gandhi’s first-class ticket as his train stood at the station in Maritzburg one evening in 1893 had made the same decision, India might never have been born. Instead, the conductor insisted that Gandhi leave the compartment and travel in the guard’s van. Gandhi refused, was ejected from the train by a policeman, and spent the night shivering in the station waiting room. The next morning he caught the first train to Charlestown. From there, Gandhi had to take a stage coach to Johannesburg. He agreed to take his seat on the outside of the coach, though his ticket entitled him to travel inside, with the whites. Then, in the afternoon, the conductor decided that he would like to sit in Gandhi’s place. He spread some dirty sacking on the footboard, and told Gandhi to sit there. Gandhi refused, and the conductor beat him up. Gandhi had only just arrived in South Africa. That journey from Durban to Johannesburg changed his life.

Gandhi arrived in South Africa a failure. He had insisted, with a single-mindedness that characterized him throughout his life, that his family — provincial Gujarati notables and none too well off — send him to London to read for the bar. He returned to India a qualified barrister only to find that he was too painfully self-conscious to address a court. His shyness was not a sign of diffidence, but of utter self-absorption. He had developed already the narrow, intense range of interests that stayed with him throughout his life — dietetics, alternative medicine, and sex, the typical preoccupations of the self-obsessed. He had, it is true, great gifts. He was very intelligent, had enormous energy, and a terrifying obstinacy. But he was also — thanks to the peculiar English notion that barristers needed social rather than intellectual qualifications — eccentrically self-educated. His encounters
with English intellectual life had been pretty much confined to vegetarians and theosophists. He seemed set fair to develop into one of those cranks who seem harmless, even charming, until they corner you in a bar and reveal themselves as intolerable momomaniacs.

What happened to him on that first South African journey was horrible. But it needed to be. Gandhi was a proud man, but even so I doubt whether any insults less gross than those casually delivered by the average Boer in his everyday dealings with his non-white neighbours could ever have breached Gandhi's armour of complete self-absorption. Shivering in the station waiting room at Maritzburg, clinging to his seat on the stage coach while the white man punched his head, something happened to Gandhi. He became an Indian. When he stepped down from the coach in Johannesburg he was already a nationalist leader. I find it a proper coincidence that this, the crucial event of Gandhi's life, should have begun on a train.

It was Gandhi who created India. Nehru's title for him, father of the nation, was the right one. It is a title that the British have claimed for themselves. Colonel Robert J. Blackham, an old India hand, speaks for all the other old India hands when he ends his rather plummy account of the sub-continent with the words, 'I must insist that India was only a geographical expression until she was welded into the beginning of a nation by the genius of British administrators ...'

What the colonel means is that Britain gave India a more or less unified legal and administrative system, and such a system, it is true, is a necessary condition for the existence of a nation. But it is not a sufficient condition. India could never have become a nation until India existed not just as an administrative unit but as an idea present in the minds of people who lived in thousands of scattered villages, and it was no part of British policy to assist in the spreading of such an idea. That was Gandhi's work.

It was work he accomplished without ever losing his cranky obsession with what went into his body and what came out of it. He kept that to the end of his life—bitterly regretting his inability to give up goat's milk, insisting that his young female disciples sleep naked with him to test his vow of chastity, recording in a long newspaper article his shock and puzzlement when, in his late sixties, he experienced a nocturnal emission. He always believed what he wrote at the beginning of his autobiography, that 'all his ventures in the political field' were incidental to one, private, apparently quite unpolitical end, the desire for 'self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha'.

Moksha, release from the cycle of birth and death, can be achieved only by the man who has total control over his own mind and body. What happened to Gandhi as he travelled from Durban to Johannesburg was that this ambition met with the demand that his countrymen win control over their own country: self-realization became dependent on swaraj.

What Gandhi did when he returned to India was to transform the nature of the Congress party. He found it a party, led by Gokhale and men like him, that represented the urban middle classes of India, and was inspired by a Western ideal of parliamentary democracy. He made it into a party of the masses, and he did so by establishing himself, as in the strong sense of the term, a charismatic leader, which is to say that he came to represent in his own person the national identity of his people.

He prepared himself for his rôle. In 1901 he took what seemed to his patron, Gokhale, a quixotic decision. He toured India travelling in third-class railway carriages, all his luggage stored in a 'canvas bag worth twelve annas'. It was the first of many such tours, though, after 1918, Gandhi travelled second class, no longer thinking himself fit enough to withstand the rigours of third-class travel. Gandhi criss-crossed India on trains. Where the train did not go, he walked. He is the only Indian politician who has ever been able to say without gross exaggeration that he 'knew India, and it was through Gandhi's knowledge of India that India came to know itself.

Charismatic leadership can only express itself symbolically, and Gandhi was a subtle and inventive symbolist. As he bent over his charkha, his spinning wheel, he extruded a thread that he would wind around each of his countrymen, binding them to him. The khadi movement was not just an economic programme, it was a vision of every Indian recognizing his own responsibility to spin and weave the social fabric of the nation. The typical Gandhian action is at once severely practical and symbolically resonant. He undertook his first
they will be able to insist that the railway authorities offer a reasonable standard of comfort. That is the practical programme, but Gandhi also travels in trains as a way of linking himself with the lives of all those who share his carriage, as a way of asserting his identity with them and theirs with him.

The carriages of a train are separated yet linked, the passengers are grouped but divided, the engine, the power that keeps them together, is visible to the passengers only at rare moments, when the train takes a bend. India is so diverse that it is hard to see how any structure simpler than a train could appropriately figure its unity. In Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *A Backward Place*, Sudhir, an idealistic young Bengali, throws up his job in Delhi to work in a Literacy Institute in a backward province. As his train cuts through India, his fellow passengers, who had first struck him as irritating and banal, come to seem 'a manifestation of all the variety and unexpectedness of the fertile lives that sprang out of this soil, which was in itself so various and unexpected, and was now desert and now flourishing fields and now the flattest plains and now the highest and most holy of mountains'. He has a vision of the diversity of India, and it is through this vision that Sudhir recognizes himself as an Indian. He sees the variety of the people he travels with and the land he travels through, and it is through that variety that he feels himself at one with them. He has learned to read the significance that Gandhi attached to trains.

India was Gandhi's idea, and some would say that it died before he did. He refused to celebrate India's independence day. He observed the occasion sadly, in fasting and prayer. The India that was coming into existence was not the India that he had thought of. In the last months of his life the partition riots brought him closer than he had ever been to despair. We will never know how many died. They died in the streets of Lahore, in mud huts in villages, and in tenements in Calcutta. The dead clogged the rivers that formed the boundaries between India and Pakistan. Others died on trains. The trains carrying Muslim refugees to Pakistan and Hindu refugees to India were some of them ambushed, and their passengers murdered.

It is the deaths on trains that are remembered. The partition of India and the killings that accompanied it have impressed themselves
on the imagination in a single image, as an attack on a train. Khushwant Singh’s cool documentary novel, Last Train to Pakistan is perhaps the classic account. But the scene has become a cliche. In the Raj Quartet it is enlivened by some theatrical heroes. The train is stopped, and a mob bangs on the compartment door screaming for Muslims. Kasim, the son of a staunch Muslim Congressman, is anxious to spare his European travelling companions the inconvenience of seeing him hacked to death. ‘It seems to be me they want,’ he says, and steps out of the compartment. The image has become so dominant that when Ved Mehta recalls the nights in the early months of 1947 that he spent in a room in Lahore, huddled together with the women and children on the Hindu families of the neighbourhood, listening to the noise of the Muslim mob approach and recede, he remembers himself feeling as if he were in the compartment of a train.

Narayan’s handling of the scene is typically reticent. In Waiting for the Mahatma Sri Ram travels from Malgudi to Delhi on the Grand truck express. It is a bad journey:

His greatest trial had been when two men appeared suddenly from somewhere when the train was in motion, and scrutinized all the people in the compartment: when they came to him, they stopped in front of him and asked him a question. He could catch only the words ‘Mister’ and ‘Hindu’ with a lot of other things thrown in. They were rowdy-looking men. He said something in his broken Hindi, and Tamil and English, which seemed to make no impression on them. They came menacingly close to him, peering at his face; Sri Ram was getting ready to fight in self-defence. He sprang up and demanded in the language that came uppermost, ‘What do you mean, all of you staring at me like this?’ As he rose, one of the two pulled his ear-lobe for close scrutiny, saw the puncture in it made in childhood, and let go, muttering, ‘Hindu’. They lost interest and moved off. After they were gone, a great tension relaxed in the compartment. Someone started explaining, and after a good deal of effort in a variety of languages, Sri Ram understood that the intruders were men looking for Muslims in the compartment: if Muslims were found they would be thrown out of the moving train: an echo of the fighting going on in other parts of the country. Sri Ram lapsed into silence for the rest of the journey.

Narayan’s prose is so limpid, so easy, that one has to keep reminding oneself how active it is. He focuses here on India’s linguistic diversity. When the ‘rowdy-looking men’ leave, and the tension relaxes, the different languages become just a badge of human variousness. They cause difficulties, but with ‘a good deal of effort’ these can be overcome, and they do not prevent the people from recognizing their shared experiences as travellers. But when the two rowdies confront Sri Ram, he is saved not by his broken Hindi, nor by his fluent Tamil and English, but by a puncture in his ear-lobe, by a sign that when he was an infant, at some time before his memory begins, he underwent a ceremony that stamped him as a Hindu.

Sri Ram is saved by a pierced ear. The incident marks Narayan’s sense that the partition riots were a regression from citizenship to tribalism. The train figures India’s admission to what Forster calls ‘the drab nineteenth-century sisterhood’ of nations, but it seems drab only to those like Forster, so sophisticated that they have grown weary of the exercise of a political responsibility that most of the world has never known. On the train Indians who belong to different cultures, and speak different languages can still forge a sense of common identity. But that sense is fragile, vulnerable. It takes only two rowdy-looking men for the passengers to find themselves unable to look to each other for support. Instead, each turns inwards, and finds in his primitive, tribal identity the only safe refuge in an insecure world.

Then the eyes of those children that Satyajit Ray filmed begin to shine not with wonder but with hatred. The train becomes a threat to the tribal group, not a promise of a bigger world. The lines are torn up, the train is stopped, and the tribe enacts its ancient ritual of murder.

After 1947 the train represented a smaller idea of India. Trains no longer ran between Bombay and Lahore, between Calcutta and Dacca. Nehru rode the trauma of partition much more robustly than Gandhi. He was younger, of course, and had never been committed to nonviolence as a sacred principle. But it was also, I think, because the riots laid bare paradoxes at the heart of Gandhi’s character. He had been for many years what Mulk Raj Anand calls him, ‘the greatest liberating force of the age’, but he had also been a reactionary with the extravagant ambition of dragging India back to the twelfth century. It was as if, in the partition riots, in the attacks on trains, the two aspects
of his personality declared war on each other. It left him wanting to die. That prayer at least was granted.

Gandhi was afraid of flying. Even when he was urgently needed in some distant part of the country, he would travel only by train. Nehru, on the other hand, was fascinated by aeroplanes. Unlike Gandhi, he was committed to machines. His ideal was economic prosperity in an industrial society, and he was right. India has been able to maintain the appallingly low living standards that it offers hundreds of millions of its people only because Nehru inaugurated a programme of massive industrial expansion. Without that, millions of Indians would not be poor, they would be dead. But Nehru's achievement had a cost. Nirad Chaudhuri spells it out in the waspish attacks on Nehru that punctuate his *The Continent of Circe*. Nehru industrialized India by allowing one tiny segment of its population, the educated, anglicized Hindus, to dominate the whole country. If Chaudhuri is unfair - and I think he is - it is because Nehru did not act to serve the interests of his own caste, he allowed the anglicized Hindus to monopolize power, because he could see no other way of doing what he knew had to be done.

Nehru's autobiography was provoked - Nehru says as much - by his need to break free of Gandhi's hold on him, as a way of resisting Gandhi's capacity for what Nehru describes as 'psychic coercion'. Its saddest moment is the moment that marks Nehru's success. Throughout the book Gandhi has been 'Gandhiji', until, in the final pages, he is suddenly referred to with cool formality as 'Mr Gandhi'. It is not that Nehru has stopped loving him, but that he has accepted that in crucial matters he and Gandhi are political opponents. Nehru is utterly out of sympathy with Gandhi's reactionary and religious romanticism, and he can no longer find it in himself to subscribe to a paradox as thought it were a policy.

Nehru wins a bitter victory, and it is the bitterer because he realizes that in winning free from Gandhi he is winning free from the Indian people. Gandhi, he recognizes, is 'the quintessence of the conscious and subconscious will of the peasant masses of India', and he achieved that position not in spite of, but because of the fact that he was a compendium of startling paradoxes. 'Almost he was India', writes Nehru, and in his wonderment, just for a moment, he slips into the syntax of an Indian rather than a Cambridge man. But it is only for a moment. Significantly, even though Gandhi has more than a decade to live, Nehru uses the past tense.

Gandhi's leadership was secured by his inability to distinguish himself from the people of India, and their inability to distinguish themselves from him. Nehru's leadership was glamorous. He wonders wryly how much of his popularity he owes to the rumour that he and his father send their laundry to Paris every week. Glamour, unlike charisma, is rooted in difference.

The class that gained power under Nehru still rules India. One meets them on Marine Drive in Bombay, in Delhi's Connaught Place, and in the novels of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Anita Desai. They are foreigners in their own country, whose only contact with the India that Gandhi knew is a peasant craftwork that he encouraged, and that they have transformed into interior decoration. It is as if India has suffered a second partition. Before it, Indians travelled in different compartments, but in the same train. There was the maharajah's state carriage, for the zamindars there was a first-class compartment with its surplus of uniformed waiters, and there was the third-class unreserved where four people crouched on a single luggage rack and the normal mode of entry and exit was through a window. But all the carriages were pulled by the same engine. Now the new rulers of India do not often travel by train. They have found alternative means of transport.

Paul Scott's *Staying On* is set in the hill station, Pankot, where Tusker and Lucy Smalley live in retirement in a bungalow in the grounds of Smith's Hotel. India is much changed since the time when Tusker Smalley was quartermaster to the Pankot Rifles. The train from Ranpur still arrives at Pankot at 8am, but few passengers take a taxi from the station to the Shiraz, the new luxury hotel: 'Most of the Shiraz's guests arrived late in the day by private car or by the Indian airways bus that picked them up in mid-afternoon at the airfield down in Nansera'. India survived its first partition. It remains to be seen whether it will survive the second.