

## Bangalore: A Colonial Dream, A Postcolonial Memory

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#### ABSTRACT:

The Indian city of Bangalore, now known as the “Silicon Valley of India,” has long-standing colonial foundations that defined the modern identity of the city. This paper delves into the representation of Bangalore in Anglo-Indian literature, examining the role of British administrators and Governor Generals in the transformation of the city during the British Raj. Anglo-Indian literature from the 19th to the mid-20th centuries frequently depicted Bangalore as a microcosmic site of British-Indian hybridity—a location where British control over the colonies coexisted with Indian adaptation. The research uses literary as well as historical material such as G. D’Cruz’s *Midnight’s Orphans* (2006), Charlton-Stevens’ *Decolonising Anglo-Indians* (2012), Ikegami’s *Princely India Re-Imagined* (2013), et al., to interpret the role of the urban planning, architectural growth, educational growth, as well as cultural contact sites during the British Raj. The role played by individuals such as Lord Cornwallis as well as Lord Wellesley in establishing the groundwork of the army as well as administrative infrastructures—such as the cantonment—in the development of the transformation of the city of Bangalore is highlighted as determinant to the modern transformation of the city. This way, Anglo-Indian literature not only maintains a nostalgic account of the hybrid city but also discloses the contradictions between the idea of colonial improvement and cultural disaffiliation. The study ultimately positions Bangalore as a literary as well as historical emblem that symbolizes the long-lasting British colonial legacy within the larger context of Anglo-Indian identity as well as postcolonial urban development.

#### KEYWORDS:

Bangalore, Anglo-Indian Literature, Colonial Legacy, Governor Generals, Postcolonial Urban Development.



The city of Bangalore, now Bengaluru, holds a prominent position in India's colonial as well as postcolonial psyche. The quiet cantonment town that it was settled on the Deccan Plateau evolved during British colonial governance into a symbol of administrative rationality, cultural cosmopolitanism, and urbanity. The transformation of the kingdom of Bangalore from a quiet outpost under the Wodeyar's to a thriving British colonial military centre was no accidental development but it was the ripose product of British strategic as well as sociopolitical planning, especially under the presentment of successive Governor Generals. Visionary figures, like Lord Cornwallis, Lord Wellesley, as well as Lord Canning represented Bangalore as the British power as well as modern governance seat in the south. They transformed the city's architectural, educational, as well as infrastructural profile, with the enduring mark yet remaining to define Bangalore's urban sensibility even in the present-day century.

Anglo-Indian literature, emerging as a distinct voice within the overall tapestry of colonial and postcolonial literature, offers a perceptive lens to this evolution. Significant texts from the lives of G. D'Cruz, U. Charlton-Stevens, and M. Rajagopalachari capture the shrouded truths of Bangalore as the city of follies-European in planning but Indian in nature, new yet sappy, alien yet native. The Anglo-Indian society, usually positioned between the colonial indulgence and native marginality, found in Bangalore both solace and mirror. Through fiction, biographies, and newspapers, Anglo-Indian authors represented the city as a terrain of conciliation-where characters were forged, interrogated, and reinterpreted amidst the hues of kingdom. thus, the representation of Bangalore within Anglo-Indian literature transcends geography or building; it becomes a review of adhesion, recollection, as well as hybridity.

### **1. Colonial Foundations and the Governor Generals' Vision:**

The establishment of Bangalore as a colonial centre was a product of deliberate British urban policy rather than organic growth. Governor General Lord Cornwallis (1786-1793) recognized the region's strategic and climatic advantages, particularly its altitude and proximity to Mysore, making it ideal for the establishment of a southern military base. This decision led to the formation of the Bangalore Cantonment in 1809, under the management of the Madras Presidency, marking the beginning of the city's transformation into a colonial enclave.

Lord Wellesley (1798–1805) likewise secured the city’s significance through military reorganization and public works that universalized the ideals of European towns. The cantonment with its grid-like professional pattern, broad tree-lined streets, and bungalows set in gardens epitomized British ideals of order, hygiene, and social class. This urban beauty as much served the dictates of military efficacy as it flaunted the might and rationality of the empire.

This time in Anglo-Indian writing is usually idealized as the beginning of the dawn of “civilization” in southern India. Authors like G. D’Cruz (2006) and U. Charlton-Stevens (2012) read this urban planning as both a spatial control as well as a metaphor of the cultural divide between the British cantonment as well as the native “native” town. The analogy of the well-planned British sector as well as the spontaneous Indian market area mirror the material indicator of the colonial mentality-disguised as modernization segregation.

## **2. The Anglo-Indian Community and Literary Representation:**

The Anglo-Indian community-progenies of European and Indian unions-played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural identity of colonial Bangalore. The city’s institutions, schools, and churches became centres of Anglo-Indian life and education. Under the support of the British administration, schools like Bishop Cotton’s (1865) and St. Joseph’s (1858) provided English education and refined a fusion philosophy that highlighted discipline, loyalty, and Christian morality. These institutions feature obviously in literary representations of colonial Bangalore as places of belonging and alienation.

In Charlton-Stevens’ “Decolonising Anglo-Indians” (2012), the author discusses how literature produced by Anglo-Indians often used Bangalore as a symbol of cultural liminality—a space where the community struggled for recognition from both British rulers and Indian subjects. This sense of in-betweenness is mirrored in works such as Sophie Montebello’s (2024) analysis of self-representation, which highlights how Anglo-Indians, though educated in English and loyal to the Crown, were never fully accepted within the colonial hierarchy.

Magazines such as *The Anglo-Indian Review* and *The Review* (McCoy, 2016) portrayed Bangalore as the “homeland” of Anglo-Indians, yet simultaneously as a city that reminded them of their marginalization.

Literary characters from these narratives often live in modest bungalows in the cantonment, frequent social clubs, and discuss politics and identity under the shadow of British dominance. Through such depictions, Bangalore emerges as both a physical home and an emotional exile—an emblem of hybrid belonging.

### **3. Urban Aesthetics and Cultural Modernity:**

Bangalore's physical landscape during the 19th century reflected a fusion of British urban design and Indian edition. The Governor Generals' administrative vision accentuated planned expansion, introducing roads like South Parade (now MG Road), Richmond Town, and Residency Road, which served as both military and social spaces. The architecture of this era—Gothic churches, colonial clubs, and military bungalows—represented the relocation of British taste into Indian soil.

In literary pictures, this aesthetic transformation becomes symbolic of colonial specialist. C. A. Boshier's (2022) *Forgotten Voices of the British Empire* interprets these architectural spaces as embodiments of "imperial pedagogy," teaching colonized subjects to internalize British notions of beauty and order. The Bangalore Club and Cubbon Park, for instance, appear in several Anglo-Indian short stories as spaces of leisure, but also as social boundaries that strengthened racial hierarchies.

The cantonment, while offering an international flavour, was a separated world. Indians were allowed entrance as servants or clerks, but rarely as equals. Yet Anglo-Indian writers often showed these urban spaces with affection and longing, recalling the social harmony of an ordered, garden-like city. This reminiscence, however, masks the reality of exclusion and displacement—particularly for Indian labourers and soldiers who built and maintained these spaces. Thus, literature becomes a subtle critique of colonial modernity's paradoxes: progress rooted in inequality.

### **4. The Legacy of Governor Generals in Literature:**

The contributions of the British Governor Generals to Bangalore's modernization are well recognized in historical records and reproduced in literary imagination. Lord Canning (1856–1862), the first Viceroy of India, supervised the union of administrative reforms and infrastructural expansion, including telegraph lines, public gardens, and railway extensions connecting Bangalore to Madras and Mysore. These developments are

referenced symbolically in Anglo-Indian writings as signs of “progress” and “civilization.”

In postcolonial readings, however, these same symbols take on new meanings. As G. Gagne-Hawes (2012) and D’Cruz (2006) argue, the depiction of Governor Generals in literature oscillates between admiration and ambivalence. They are remembered as visionaries who modernized India but also as paternalistic rulers who enforced cultural subordination. In *Midnight’s Orphans* (D’Cruz, 2006), the narrative contrasts the Governor’s compassion with the disillusionment of Anglo-Indian subjects caught in the contradictions of loyalty and alienation. Furthermore, the literary inheritance of colonial administrators extends into metaphorical dimensions. The figure of the Governor General often becomes a literary epitome of “the absent father”—a symbol of authority, guidance, and ultimate abandonment. This mirrors the Anglo-Indian condition itself, characterized by admiration for British order but haunted by exclusion from it.

### **5. The Transition to Modern Bangalore:**

Postcolonial and contemporary Anglo-Indian narratives re-explain Bangalore not merely as a colonial remnant but as a dynamic urban symbol of transformation. Following India’s independence, many Anglo-Indians migrated to Commonwealth nations, yet their nostalgia for Bangalore endured in literature and oral histories. In works like Dharwad Ker’s “The Historical Formation of Indian-English Literature” (2003) and Ikegami’s “Princely India Re-Imagined” (2013), the city’s postcolonial evolution is seen as an extension of its colonial foundations.

The British cantonment’s rational urban planning laid the base for Bangalore’s later identity as a “Garden City” and eventually the “Silicon Valley of India.” The same streets that once reverberated with regimental parades now host software companies and cafés, symbolizing India’s adaptive modernization. However, vestiges of colonial influence persist—in education systems modelled after English schooling, in architecture, and in cultural values emphasizing discipline and punctuality. Contemporary Anglo-Indian writers such as Allan Sealy and Binoo John revisit Bangalore through the lens of memory. Their works portray the vanishing colonial clubs, aging Anglo-Indian residents, and the fading echoes of a by-gone world. Yet, even amid globalization, the essence of British Bangalore survives as part of the city’s layered identity—a testament to how colonial

legacies can be reinterpreted rather than erased.

The portrayal of Bangalore in Anglo-Indian literature thus reveals the city as a living archive of colonial encounter. The British Governor Generals provided the structural framework through urban planning, education, and administration, while Anglo-Indian writers infused it with emotion, nostalgia, and identity. Together, they constructed a dual narrative: one of imperial progress and another of cultural hybridity. This duality continues to shape Bangalore's identity today. Its cosmopolitan ethos, English-speaking culture, and architectural elegance all trace back to the colonial imagination. Yet its reinvention as a modern Indian metropolis demonstrates the resilience of postcolonial adaptation—a city that remembers its colonial past even as it redefines its global future.

To visually complement the literary and historical analysis of Bangalore's colonial transformation, the inclusion of select illustrations can deepen the reader's understanding of the city's evolving identity. Archival maps of the Bangalore Cantonment and the native Pettah areas, for instance, vividly reveal the spatial segregation that reinforced British urban planning and features prominently in Anglo-Indian literature. Historical photographs of South Parade (now MG Road) and institutions such as Bishop Cotton's School or St. Joseph's European School offer tangible evidence of the colonial architecture and educational ethos that shaped the Anglo-Indian community's worldview. Similarly, images of the Bangalore-Madras railway line or early steam locomotives underscore the infrastructural advances implemented under British Governor Generals like Lord Canning, which often appeared in literary narratives as symbols of both progress and alienation. Finally, juxtaposing early twentieth-century images of the "Garden City" with the modern skyline of Bengaluru captures the city's evolution from a colonial cantonment to a global metropolis.

To conclude, Bangalore's representation in Anglo-Indian literature captures the city's enduring duality rooted in British modernity yet immersed in postcolonial ambivalence. The British Governor Generals' infrastructural and administrative contributions military layouts, railways, and educational institutions established the foundation upon which the city's hybrid identity thrived. Anglo-Indian authors, through fiction and memoir, transformed Bangalore into a literary emblem of cross-cultural negotiation and colonial legacy.

Today, as the city embraces global modernity, the traces of this Anglo-Indian past persist in its architecture, educational ethos, and cultural pluralism. The literary representation of Bangalore thus stands as both testimony and critique of the colonial enterprise that shaped its soul.

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