Introduction

> *Poor Maqbul! Who knows how many more chillums he would have to prepare tonight! For tonight, there will be many more battles fought on this playground. The battles began the day the two friends acquired a taste for this game* (khel). *Now, you may ask if they have no work* (kām) *to do. Well, no. After all, what work could affluent landholders have? Praise be to God, both men belong to aristocratic families, and that too, of Lucknow! As the Mughal rule in Delhi remained merely titular, Lucknow emerged as the centre of culture* (tahẕīb). *The people of Lucknow have a taste for enjoyment and leisurely pursuits* (śauqīn mizāj)*; to them, work entails spending money on pleasure. There was another aspect to this culture. At the helm of this leisure-loving* (śauqīn) *populace was Navab Wajid Ali Shah, who had a taste for all kinds of pursuits* (śauq), *all but statecraft.*[1]

Satyajit Ray's (1921–92) 1977 cinematic adaptation of Munshi Premchand's (1880–1936) Hindi short story, "*Śatranj ke Khilāṛī*" ("The Chess Players", 1924)[2] weaves together two narratives of play and pleasure. One refers to the two friends – Mirza Sajjad Ali and Mir Roshan Ali – and their mutual obsession with playing chess. The other depicts the conquest of Avadh by the British East India Company, while the King, Wajid Ali, is far too immersed in the pursuit of his leisurely interests. Premchand's original story begins with a description of the culture of leisure in Lucknow, steeped in sensory pleasures, luxury, and opulence (Hindi, *vilāsitā*; Urdu, *ʿaiś va ʿiśrat*). In the film, this culture of leisure is personified in the figure of the king, his mood for enjoyment, his pursuit of pleasure, or *śauq*. Ray uses the concept of *śauq* to refer to activities of pleasure and leisure. In fact, *śauq* is often inadequately translated into English as 'hobby', 'interest' or 'vocation'. A more accurate translation would be 'pleasurable leisurely pursuits', which sounds clumsy and excessive to the English ear. The concept is more readily understood if we approach it from the perspective of

1 Satyajit Ray, *Shatranj ke Khilari*/*The Chess Players* (1977) 03:59. My translation.

2 The story was also rewritten in Urdu by Premchand under the title "*Śaṯranj kī Bāzī*" (c. 1926).

Published in: Farha Noor: Leisurely Feelings. Emotions and Concepts of Otium in South Asia. Heidelberg: Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing, 2024. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/hasp.1348

feeling, in terms of a 'leisurely temperament', or *śauqīn mizāj*.[3] In Ray's portrayal, *śauq* is what scholars of emotions term an *emotion concept*. It is both abstract, in its "relational schemas involving the subject", and concrete, as it concerns "subjective experience" and tangible embodiment in feelings and sensory experiences (Winkielman et al. 2018: 1).

The present study engages critically with emotion concepts like *śauq*, which are situated within complex contextual and cultural frameworks that often remain opaque within the established histories and semantics of cultural-linguistic boundaries. Building on the work of conceptual historians Margrit Pernau and Dominic Sachsenmaier (2016), my analysis is grounded in the understanding that the encounter of cultures often triggers the transformation of concepts. I particularly highlight moments of conceptual transformation of otium, leisureliness, and idleness, as represented in the diverse modern South Asian literary fields of Urdu and Bengali. The primary focus of my corpus rests on literary texts but also includes examples taken from literary history and scholarly debates and discussions. This enables us to gain a meaningful and nuanced understanding of the conceptual and emotional entanglements, and to locate leisureliness firmly within the literary context of South Asia.

To return to Premchand's story, the narrative compresses the prevalent leisurely mood of colonial Lucknow into a tightly woven tale of the two noblemen immersed in playing chess while their city is ravaged by British occupation. In contrast, Ray's cinematic adaptation juxtaposes Premchand's macro-narrative of excessive idleness and oblivious decadence with a micro-narrative which revolves around the king, Wajid Ali, and his leisurely attitude and interests, which ultimately culminates in the loss of his crown. The film elaborates on how this culture of leisure, embodied by the king, leads to the British takeover of Avadh and its capital, Lucknow. Ray locates the king's various cultural-intellectual pursuits in quotidian physicality – ranging from performing dance dramas to composing poetry, praying five times a day, to enjoying amorous rendezvous with his many wives, courtesans, and mistresses. Despite his vivid evocation of the times at the story's onset, Premchand's critique of leisureliness and decadence is clearly asserted in an admonishing narrative tone.[4] Premchand was one of many Indian writers and reformers who drew a direct link between the perceived excessive leisureliness of the aristocracy and the British usurpation of the Indian provinces.

3 *Mizāj* (Urdu) entails a person's temperament, mood, or disposition.

4 "Lakhnaʾo ʿaiś va ʿiśrat ke rang meṉ ḍūbā huʾā thā" (Lucknow was immersed in hues of opulence), "*Śaṭranj kī Bāzī*" (1983), 108.

In 1856, the East India Company annexed the province of Avadh under the Doctrine of Lapse while Wajid Ali Shah was incarcerated and exiled to Calcutta in the east. The failed Indian rebellion of 1857 marked a watershed for encounters and interactions between Muslim elites in North India and British colonial officials. Simultaneously, as the glorious lights of Delhi and Lucknow diminished, the comparatively young city of Calcutta emerged as the hub of colonial power, as well as the centre for cultural and literary revivals. These historical events had a lasting impact on the transformation of concepts of leisureliness, play, idleness, and otium in late colonial and postcolonial India. As we shall see, they become conceptually entangled and resist their separate definitions in the South Asian literary context.

While play and pleasure are depicted as excessive in both narratives, the indulgence in these practices of enjoyment in a carefree, immersive, and artful manner, as leisurely, is contrasted with the evolving colonial conceptions of utility in Ray's film. Premchand, a renowned progressive writer of the early twentieth century, also foregrounds this contrast, but his critique stems from the particular socio-political obliviousness among the people of Lucknow as they remain immersed in games, enjoyment, and pleasure:

> It was as if the entire nation was consumed with sensual enjoyment (*nafs parastī*). People were blinded by pleasure and intoxication. They had no clue as to what was happening in the world, the inventions in the fields of science and philosophy, or how the Europeans had taken control of the world. Here, people were busy fighting quails and training partridges [...]; boards for games of dice (*causar*) and chess (*śaṭ̤ranj*) were spread. [...] The armies on game-boards were being ruthlessly massacred. (Premchand 1983: 108)

On the other hand, Ray's history-inspired cinematic adaptation offers more nuanced ways of exploring leisureliness in the context of colonial North India. The Lakhnavi leisurely pursuits and finery in the arts – of the king and the commoners – are regarded as excessively wasteful by the colonial authorities at this point in history. However, relations between the British and the Indians, and the fascination of colonial officers with 'native' pastimes and lifestyles were not the same throughout the long period of colonisation.[5] Engaging with historical documents, Ray dramatises the political game being played by the colonial authorities around the events of 1857. With designs of the 'take over' of Avadh in place, Lord Dalhousie sends General Outram to investigate Wajid Ali's capacities as king and

5 See, for example, the painting depicting an officer of the East India Company with Wajid Ali's predecessor, Navab Asaf-ud-Daula (1748–97), engaged in a game of 'fighting cocks'. Artist: Unknown, Tate Britain Gallery. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, "Portraits of the Nawabs" (2008: 33).

ruler. The film skilfully captures the moment from whence these kinds of leisurely pursuits are devalued and transformed, turning Wajid Ali into a "frivolous, effeminate, irresponsible and worthless" ruler, in other words, a "bad king" (Ray 1977). The process of transformation occurs almost instantly, in the framework of a drawn-out dialogue between General Outram, who arrives in Lucknow with the explicit aim of ousting the king from his throne, and the residing Captain Weston, who is not only fluent in the local language but also harbours a certain degree of admiration for the king and his poetry. Up to this point, the king's lifestyle is portrayed in a manner that evokes awe and wonder – a lifestyle of fulfilling leisure in the pursuit of cultural-artistic fineries and pleasure. Outram's sudden diatribe against Wajid Ali's conduct and temperament as "nonsense" (ibid.) drastically changes the perception of leisureliness in the eyes of the viewer. Critical of Weston's praise for the king, Outram does not see any worth in Wajid Ali's poetry. Weston's hesitant reply is crucial to our understanding: "It doesn't translate very well, Sir" (ibid.). It is at this moment that translation, and more importantly, the *limits* of translation, become transparent.

Ray's narrative focuses on this mistranslation as the *problématique* in the cultural encounter between the Lakhnavis and the British, between what is perceived as a way of living by one community and a waste of time and resources by another. However, the difference is understood beyond simplistic binaries of colonial relations, complicated through the figure of Weston, who partly inhabits, and has grown to love the language, poetry, and culture of the locals in Lucknow. Ray's depiction of *śauqīn mizāj*, an artful and leisurely mood or temperament, is shown as elusive, only glimpsed in the emotional expressions of Wajid Ali's sadness and despair. The gap in translation, cinematically embodied in Captain Weston's overall hesitancy and uncomfortable silences, reveals breaches in conceptual equivalents, cultural encounters, and semantic equilibrium, and is often inflected with colonial-western perceptions of an 'Indian' leisurely lifestyle. At times, such perceptions have been (mis)interpreted as the excessive "idleness" and "indolence" of the "natives" (Parkes 2002: 10, 19, 244); alternately, they have been elevated as the "blessings of leisure unknown to the West", "the Peace that passeth Understanding" (Forster 1947: 261). The disparity continues to widen in the neo-colonial present through similar unidirectional perceptions of leisureliness in South Asia. It is, therefore, crucial to be aware of and address these kinds of conceptual differences within cultural encounters. I propose that we can fruitfully engage with, if not bridge the gap by engaging in close readings of emotion concepts, which inhabit the languages, texts, contexts, and moods wherein the transfer of ideas occurs.

When placed in a global, transcultural framework, the challenge of accurately translating and understanding words, concepts and moods also reveals what Dilip Menon (2022) and others have termed *(in)commensurability.* Menon

argues that it is important to acknowledge the lack of a common epistemological framework, especially when dealing with concepts from non-Euro-American contexts. I do not wish to dismiss the inherent solidity of a concept, but it needs to be acknowledged that in the face of the epistemic brevity of a concept in English or other prevailing Western languages like German and French, concepts in other languages, especially from the erstwhile oppressed cultures, need elaborate parameters of reading and analysis. After all the European processes of knowledge-power nexus, which played a central role in conceptualising the Orient, the other, the non-western, was established within extensive procedures of "officializing", which systematically contributed to the project of the Empire.[6] To broaden the horizon of academic inquiries towards decolonial, global comparisons of concepts, we need to engage in "transdisciplinary conversations", which must necessarily be "multilingual" (Menon 2). I agree that rather than focusing on making concepts accessible to a global/Western readership, we, as scholars, must rethink how we approach complex concepts like *śauq*, leisureliness, and otium. This study seeks to contextualise the debates and conversations that marked a watershed in the way concepts of leisureliness/ idleness were perceived, negotiated, and represented in literary modes, particularly in modern prose in Urdu and Bengali. How can such approaches contribute towards a global understanding of a concept? What role does literature play in these conceptual transformations and in reading history? These questions are doubly significant, as engagement with the literary itself remains an experiential expression of emotion concepts like *śauq*, leisureliness, and otium; simultaneously, the literary history of leisureliness allows us to read (and write) a history that is largely missing from official records.

Aims and Objectives: Rethinking Leisure and Idleness

The present study provides ways of rethinking leisure, idleness, and indolence from a South Asian literary perspective by focusing on the aspect of leisure that can be expressed in the conceptual-emotional study of otium. Depending on context, otium is broadly understood as leisure, idleness, or indolence. I aim to show how concepts like leisure and idleness can be liberated from the established binary with work that continues to predominate in modern Western industrial-capitalist societies but now constitutes a larger narrative of global work culture. External perceptions of leisure commonly appear in either nega-

6 See Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (1996), 3.

tive or positive registers, such as idleness, laziness, sloth, and indolence, often emphasising a class, gender, community, or racial bias; alternately, they are exalted and exoticised, reaffirming these biases (Fludernik 2017: 133–34, also Fludernik 2014: 130–32). Not only do colonial perceptions of 'Indian leisure' carry biased allegation (associated with the 'myth of the lazy native') or exoticisation (an orientalist exaltation of 'Eastern' leisure), but the very use of these categories reinforces the homogenisation of 'India'/South Asia and its cultures and languages under a sweeping gaze of the 'West'. In fact, such a sweeping gaze glances beyond the borders of the Indian subcontinent and generally falls "to the east of the east-west binary", encompassing several deeply heterogeneous cultures in an act of marginalisation or othering.[7] To challenge these complex misconceptions, mistranslations, and biases, conceptual studies need to be approached from the language-literatures of the regions and cultures to enable bi-directional processes of knowledge production and place such studies within a global framework. The present work therefore engages with a variety of modern, regional South Asian language-literatures, namely Bengali and Urdu, as two distinct literary traditions of colonial and postcolonial South Asia. Additionally, the aim is to demonstrate how the study of a concept in a multilingual South Asian context can enrich and contribute to the field of conceptual history, a methodology rooted in the study of European modernity that initially focused on the transformation of concepts in monolingual contexts.

As historians of Global Conceptual History argue, concepts do not exist in isolation but evolve through encounters (Pernau & Sachsenmaier 2016: 2). These encounters continue to impact how concepts are perceived and how they function within communities. They also play a central role in informing community identities. It is often through these encounters that social and historical concepts undergo change, and such changes are reflected in the semantic transformations of concepts. While a semantic transformation can accompany a conceptual change in certain cases, in other cases, a concept's value can only be expressed through words that have now become obsolete or are used differently, a process that Quentin Skinner has termed "rhetorical redescription" (Skinner 2016: 138). For instance, in the context of this study, the archaic Latin term *otium* signifies a leisurely state or experiential attitude. It can be rendered in words as diverse as idleness, leisureliness, indolence, sloth, rest, repose, reprieve, and even peace. While the term 'otium' is no longer in use, owing to the sharp distinctions between leisure and work following the ruptures of modernity, it retains its subjectivity as a function of the self, a state of leisureliness embodied in a mood that

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7 Melis Hafez, *Inventing Laziness: The Culture of Productivity in Late Ottoman Society* (2022), vii–viii.

transgresses the borders between formalised work and leisure. The remnants of this inherent subjectivity of the concept can be traced to the emergence of eclectic ideas like work-life balance or flexibility in work cultures. As far as emotional expressions are concerned, we encounter otium in lexemes like idle, slow-paced, and indolent, to name but a few. A historical-semantic analysis is, in and of itself, not sufficient to grasp the ambivalence inherent in the concept of otium. Conceptual inquiry needs to overcome the constraints of semantic boundaries and consider complementary ways of finding meanings. The central question of this book is: what happens to concepts that are identifiable but do not have adequate semantic markers? Acknowledging the necessity of intertwining conceptual history with the history and study of emotions as proposed by Pernau and Rajamani (2016), this book aims to conceptualise emotional manifestations of otium in studying literary texts and contexts in colonial South Asia and postcolonial India. It also foregrounds the significance of contemplation in literary practices – reading, writing, reflecting, and composing, as emotional engagement beyond semantic analysis.

The concept of leisure that we are familiar with, it has been argued, is an early modern European invention following the ruptures of modernity (Burke 1995: 137–40). But the nature of rupture (or modernity, for that matter) is not uniform in varying contexts. In nineteenth-century India under firm colonial grip, the characteristics and effects of this rupture were manifold, resulting in a compressed form of modernisation[8], where new conceptualisations of work and leisure in several colonial societies were imposed rather than invented. These impositions, far from being unidirectional, drew great engagement and responses from writers, thinkers, and reformers under the colonial regime. Nevertheless, the intensity of impositions and responses took place in a short, sudden, and condensed manner. These condensed processes can be seen to introduce and, more significantly, normalise alien notions of work and non-work, along with value judgments and colonial/racial bias and prejudice. The new notions of labour and leisure had to be adapted immediately, leading to a pervasive feeling of confusion and alienation in the South Asian context. What impact did these impositions have on the perceptions of leisureliness and idleness for South Asian actors? How did vernacular semantics like *furṣat* (opportune leisure), *ārām* (rest), *abakāś* (space/opportune time), *abasar* (opportune time), *śān-*

8 The notion of 'compressed modernisation' is defined as a "civilizational condition in which economic, political, social and/or cultural changes occur in an extremely condensed manner in respect to both time and space". See Chang Kyun-Sup, "The second modern condition? Compressed modernity as internalised reflexive cosmopolitization" (2010).

ti (peaceful rest) and *śauq/śakh* (leisurely pursuits) respond to these binaries? This question acquires a heightened significance as historical semantics directs us to parallel, multiple connotations of lexemes like *abasar* that include anecdotal meanings like a pause caused by rain or a meeting held in secret.[9] Such anecdotal connotations, along with their meanings of leisure, opportunity, or a suitable time, give us a glimpse of the considerable extent to which words and their meanings were regulated and adapted in their use within colonial impositions of compressed modernity and concise dictionaries. Identifying colonial rule itself as an overarching hindrance to conditions of freedom, leisureliness, and rest for an indigenous population and their knowledge systems, this study seeks to map the story of leisure, its various manifestations, registers, and trajectories in South Asia. A focused gaze on the enormous transformations in colonial impositions and disciplinary measures also leads us to clues in understanding the modern disciplining of leisure that emerged from the Industrial Revolution. The simultaneity of the age of colonial conquests and the age of industrialisation is, after all, not a mere historical coincidence but played off each other, as forces of colonial capitalism were deeply intertwined with the near-criminalisation of idleness.

While conceptually, the contrast and connection between otium/leisure/idleness and work are significant, the present study aims to emphasise the conceptual differences in the two states or attitudes – i.e., *leisurely* (or idle, lazy) as informal and relatively free of official obligations; and *utilitarian* as efficient, official, and formal. These attitudes are central to my reading, both historically as well as conceptually. Work, too, can be leisurely (cf. Chapters 3 and 5), and leisure experiences, in turn, are conceived (increasingly) as more formalised and disciplined, motivated towards self-enhancement, often aiming at increased productivity. This difference lies at the heart of the mistranslation portrayed in Ray's film. Through the narrative, we witness how colonial authorities strive to bring 'productivity', 'efficiency' and 'brevity' into the leisurely Lakhnavi chronotope of enjoyment, play, and the pursuit of pleasure. These efforts are realised materially through the postal system, the railways, and even through the introduction of English rules in the game of chess, designed to end the game quickly.[10] The central tension of the narrative in Ray's film is between the lei-

9 See entry in *Student's Bengali to English Dictionary: with words, compound words, phrases, idioms, and proverbs*. Ed. Ashu Tosh Dev (1967): *abasar*. See also, Farha Noor (2021), 305–6.

10 According to the new rules, pawns reaching the opposite end of the board could result in the reinstatement of the queen (among other powerful pieces), resulting in a quicker endgame.

surely mood or *śauqīn mizāj* of Lucknow and the hurrying pace of colonial modernity. Between these two emotional attitudes, the concept of 'play' remains misunderstood in the portrayals of the East and the West.

These misunderstandings formulated the central discourses of the nineteenth-century vernacular literary fields in South Asia. Although there is a certain scarcity of studies on leisure concepts in this context, the present research demonstrates that modern Urdu and Bengali writers were deeply invested in discourses of idleness and leisureliness as they witnessed a transformation in the way of life after the decisive events of 1857. These transformations in life are reflected in literary transformations, responses, and innovations. It is important to note that the responses to this watershed event are seen to frequently vary, as the impact of colonial relations was not felt uniformly throughout the length and breadth of the subcontinent. More importantly, literary expressions and writing during this phase reveal a multiplicity in how their production was linked to specific colonial contexts and demonstrate varying attitudes towards colonial authorities (Harder 2022: 413). Conceptualisations of leisure/labour have to be read and provoked from fresh angles to address the gaps in the narrative. Histories of leisure, although scant, have been analysed in the context of colonial South Asia through a study of social practices like Dipesh Chakraborty's work on the Bengali sociality of *āḍḍā*, or Sumit Sarkar's study of *cāk*^{l}*ri* (salaried jobs). Recent scholars have also shown interest in and engagement with notions of pleasure, particularly that of *mazā* or enjoyment. Shapiro & Anjaria (2020), in their edited journal issue on *mazā*/"mazaa", have proposed the feeling itself as a methodology based on thoughtful reflexivity and sensuous viscerality. In a latest edited volume, Seema Bawa (2023) and other contributors have drawn attention to conceptions of and attitudes to leisure in various societies in South Asia, spanning the early and premodern history of the region. Acknowledging these significant studies, the present work picks up the story of leisure in South Asia when it becomes a highly contested concept in the aftermath of colonial encounters between communities with asymmetrical power over language policies and knowledge production. In effect, this study focuses on the concept of leisure when it attains the status of a 'counter-concept' (Koselleck 2004 a), conceptualised against the idea of progress, and as markers of community identity, transforming the concept into the myth ('of the lazy native' (Alatas 1997). The book highlights literary discourses on leisure, idleness, and otium in colonial and postcolonial South Asia, focusing on the concept's modern history.

This attention towards the literary, the historical, and the conceptual is inherently inextricable from the study of emotions. I accentuate the macro- and the micro-narratives around idleness and leisureliness through a methodology that engages in both conceptual history and an exploration into emotions. As

the brief reading of Ray's film shows, at the heart of the discourses of leisure, enjoyment, or idleness are emotions, feelings, temperament, mood, and atmosphere. Complex emotions like nostalgia, melancholy, and haunting (among others) are read here as manifestations of otium. The argument, however, is that these emotions are not universal or *sui generis* but that each emotion needs to be explored in its physiological, psychological, and social aspects in its context, text, and language. The danger of anachronism in understanding emotions, as has been cautioned by Thomas Dixon (2020) and others, should also be extended to the pitfalls of anachorism.[11] The present study engages with the elusive leisurely mood with which much of modern Bengali and Urdu literature is preoccupied. It approaches the rapidly transforming concept of otium in South Asia through an enquiry into emotions, which, in turn, inform modern India's literary history. My analysis argues for rethinking the ways in which leisure concepts are understood today, globally. The context of colonial South Asia and post-colonial India can be instructive for scholars of otium in a global context, as it foregrounds *speed/acceleration* and *discrimination/exclusion*, both nexuses constituting central aspects of the concept. Leisure and leisureliness have become associated with notions of privilege today on a global scale. Simultaneously, with the deep impact that technology and (social) media has on people's lives and time in the present, ideas of leisure and labour often seem to dissolve. Yet, leisureliness, idleness, and laziness remain integral factors in quotidian, emotional, and physical life for individuals and peoples across the globe.

Otium as Concept: Definitions, Translations, and Transformations

The semantic absence of 'otium' pertains to the functioning of modern capitalist societies, and simultaneously, to the interdependence of social history and conceptual history, as theorised by Reinhart Koselleck (2016 b: 71–72). In European Antiquity, *otium* was used to connote a 'reprieve', or 'retirement' from one's daily business. *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1968) lists *otium* as "Unoccupied or spare time (as needed for doing something)", "the time", "the leisure". It locates the experience of otium as "at leisure, in peace, undisturbed". It relates to ideas of work as "freedom from business or work" and appreciates the indulgence in otium as "devoted to cultural pursuits". Monika Fludernik and Miriam Nandi have contextualised otium in contemporary times, describing it as a scenario that allows "individuals to take account of themselves, to focus on their subjectivity" and "frequently result in experiences of transcendence from

11 I thank Margrit Pernau for drawing attention to this significant discussion.

immediate trivial and mundane concerns"; simultaneously, such scenarios "can also provide a space of communal interaction, sociality, bonding, recreation" (Fludernik and Nandi 2014: 4). While the English words leisure, idleness, and indolence can at times (depending upon context) express experiences of otium, the use of adjectives and adverbs in English, like *idle, leisurely*, *restful*, or *indolent* are often utilised to express similar experiences. Simultaneously, adjectives of otium can take up quite different registers. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) lists the adjective *otiose*, as "[a]t leisure or at rest; unemployed, idle; inactive, indolent, lazy", but also refers to something as "[h]aving no practical function; idle, superfluous, useless" ("Otiose").[12] Hence, depending on context, otium and its semantic significance remain contested and ambivalent.

Often perceived as the opposite of *negotium* (busyness, active life), otium denotes a sense of time that is felt and experienced as free, leisurely, peaceful, undisturbed, and idle. With reference to cultural pursuits, it is closely linked with the feeling of enjoyment or pleasure, attained in the leisurely pursuit of cultural activities. Literary activities – reading, writing, and composing poetry – are also perceived as significant activities of otium or as encompassing experiences of otium, as "practices and enjoyment of creative leisure" (Fludernik and Nandi 2014: 4). However, the reflective and contemplative mood of otium – for instance in the experience of literary creativity, cannot only be a positive feeling. Melancholy, too, has been read as a significant manifestation of otium (Zirfas 2007). Historically, otium has been associated with experiences within concepts of religion and asceticism, love and obsession, poetry, art, as well as medicine and healing. The experience of time, as unhurried, felt as a duration rather than as progressive, chronological, and sequential time is thus central to the concept. Brian Vickers (1990) has shown that the essential opposite of otium, in antiquity, was not *negotium* but, in fact, *officium* – a concept that entailed obligation, formality and compulsion to work. In the contemporary context, Gregor Dobler has argued that the opposite of otium is not work but alienation/"*Entfremdung*" (Dobler 2014: 68). These proposed dichotomies already assert that an understanding of otium requires a deeper appreciation of its experiential and emotional qualities, along with context, rather than mere recognition of semantic affinities and disparities.

12 Julian Barnes's recent novel, *The Only Story*, uses "otiose" to mean superfluous (2018) 73.

Leisure has increasingly become linked to ideas of recreation, consumption and filling one's free time with 'leisure activities'.[13] Idleness, the target of several Enlightenment philosophers like Emmanuel Kant and John Locke, has been labelled a social taboo in the face of accelerated modernity and accentuated, escalated productivity. And yet, in various contexts, for example, in the early Victorian era, both leisure and idleness could be used interchangeably and in semantic proximity (Liedke 2018: 19). This breach in semantics emerges from a marked change in the social history of leisure, idleness, and indolence. The most significant social upheaval in this context was the Industrial Revolution in England, which corresponded with the peak of colonial imperialism, reaching new heights with Victorian puritanism. The modern split of time as productive time or 'working hours' and unproductive time or free time (increasingly meaning recreational time) is perceived as a consequence of the "fundamental discontinuity or the great divide between pre-industrial and industrial society".

> The modern distinction between the ideas of work and leisure, like the regular alternation of work and leisure, was a product of industrial capitalism. Pre-industrial societies had festivals (together with informal and irregular breaks from work), while industrial societies have leisure, weekends and vacations. The emergence of leisure is, therefore, part of the process of modernisation. In other words, the history of leisure is discontinuous. (Burke 1995: 173)

Peter Burke formulates the modern idea of leisure through the binding pact of modern society, entangled with Michel Foucault's concept of "discipline" and Norbert Elias's concept of "civilisation" (1995: 149). In Burke's understanding, the rise of leisure as a modern concept relates to these two very modern concerns, circumscribing the idea of "*regulation*" (ibid.). In the now regulated, heavily scheduled and categorised version of time, the experience of *play* undergoes discipline[14], and otium or otiose forms of leisure and their emotional expression, i.e., leisureliness, are perceived as lost to modernity. The relationship of play with otium and leisure is complex and intricate; in certain circumstances, otium allows for play and in other situations, an experience of otium can emerge from play. Both can be contrasted with notions of obligations but not necessarily with seriousness. But play, like leisure, or the semantic concepts signified, have come to acquire a register of opposition to work, which has

13 See, for example, the convergence of leisure studies with research on tourism, marketing, and sports. Rojek, Shaw & Veal, "Introduction" (2006), 1, 6–8, 15–16. See also, Part 4, 335–415.

14 See Burke (1995), 149. "In the 'disciplinary society', even play has to be subject to rules saying when, where, and among whom 'it is permissible'".

acquired a centrality in attitudes to *living* and *doing*; consequently, play and leisure became marginalised notions, acquiring registers of trifle and slight. They have also increasingly become designed, as Johan Huizinga has claimed, as utilitarian in their functions of rejuvenation and recreation towards increased productivity, thus disciplining the 'leisurely' and the 'playfulness' – the essence of the concepts (Huizinga 1949: 2–5). Thus, the sense of time with which one could do as one willed, enjoy idle and restful leisure, indulge in play, a sense of time-space that is free of obligations, an opportunity for contemplation or immersion in pleasurable cultural pursuits, or time with which one may do nothing, now seems to have transformed socially into a relic, rendering otium as an anachronic concept. Nevertheless, as the above phrases reveal, it is not *time* that is the active agent in these transformations, but a function of free will, of the sovereignty of the self, which is disciplined and regulated within a disciplinary society. And the period of the Industrial Revolution did not merely coincide with imperial prowess for England and Europe, but as mentioned before, was directly dependent on acquiring material and labour resources from the expansive colonies; the Industrial Revolution in England must be seen as a process that went hand in hand with colonial capitalism (Chapter 1).

Against these assertions of disciplinary norms imposed by industrial development and civilisational modernity that continue to impact our present-day notions of temporality, the concept of otium is often found to resonate in its ambivalence with varying experiences of idleness, leisure, immersion, play, and freedom to one's will, outside official obligations. Sometimes, semantically, such concepts can be seen to persist as categorised within culturally exclusive terminology like the Italian *dolce far niente* or the German *Muße*, while remaining subject to descriptive elaboration in English, in a tussle between idleness and leisure, contrasted with influential values of utilitarianism. Contemporary discourses on leisure and leisurely states in the 'West' have harnessed much attention owing to theories of acceleration/deceleration and studies on work-life balance, well-being, and an increasing emphasis on the need for a slow-paced life.[15] Simultaneously, loose, unbound, and unstructured leisurely experiences and practices are considered to be the hallmark of the self-perception of South Asian, or as often branded by themselves, '*desī*/*deśī*' (from the country, *deś* [of origin]) people. Such experiences are frequently illustrated in the popu-

15 Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (2013); Judy Wacjman, *Pressed for Time. The Acceleration of Life in Digital Capitalism* (2015); Robert Skidelsky & Edward Skidelsky, *How Much Is Enough? The Love of Money and the Case for the Good Life* (2012) are a few examples.

lar practices of *āḍḍā, gap*, or leisurely banter/chatting[16]; *āvārahgardī* or *tafrīḥ*, i.e., loitering or strolling/walking leisurely and aimlessly[17]; and *maḥfil* or an assembly/meeting to discuss art, literature, music, and/or poetry, a gathering.[18] Expressions like the Punjabi (but equally intelligible to Hindi and Urdu speakers) *vehlā*, the Bengali *lyād* and the Urdu/Hindi *k͟hālī*/*khāli* are used more commonly and colloquially in the present, in a (self-)derogatory style to refer to being/feeling idle. Practices and elements of play in the South Asian context, often harking back to allegedly excessive playfulness of the erstwhile decadent classes, are negatively alluded to in collocations like *khel-tamāśā* (play and spectacle). At the same time, significant lexemes of leisure like *furṣat* are used to emphasise its absence (*furṣat nahīn̲*, to not have the opportunity or leisure). The widely familiar emotional-experiential lexeme *mazā*, on the other hand, reveals how playfulness (experientially articulated as 'fun' in English) and sensual/sensory enjoyment are intricately linked with notions of taste (as one of the meanings of *mazā*) (Kabir 2020: 243–45). Taste – with its abstractions and sensory enjoyment – has also been traditionally used to reflect appreciation of literary, artistic, and creative expressions, in the aesthetics of *rasa*. A global conceptual history of leisure and related concepts thus needs to appreciate encounters and transformative processes as intertwined with emotions beyond historical semantics.

The more formal aspects of contemporary Western understanding of leisure ideas, like work-life balance, are often anachoric to realities and discourses of leisure in South Asia, catering, however, to a certain educated upper/middle-class milieu. In the West, particularly in specific Western European contexts, the need for a work-leisure balance is accentuated in the booming leisure industry, now seen to cater towards experiences of quality leisure time, not just filled with activities and consumption but with tailored wellness programs, courses on mindfulness, meditation, and trips to 'ashram-retreats'[19], often ori-

16 See Dipesh Chakrabarty, "*Adda*: A History of Sociality" (2000), 180–213. For an elaborate picture of literary, urban, and rural formulations of *āḍḍā*, see the Bengali compendium, *Bāṅālir Āḍḍā* (2014 [2009]).

17 Although I do not agree with these labels, Anna Suvorova identifies these as variants of *flânerie* or *derive*. See Suvorova, *Lahore: Topophilia of Place and Space* (2011), 12, 141–42.

18 Suvorova (2011), 157. In a Bengali context, see Kumarprasad Mukhopadhyay's memoir of cultural-literary-musical gatherings, *Mahphil* (1960).

19 'Ashram' in this phrase is loaned from the Sanskrit *āśrama*, meaning hermitage, a space for ascetics, translated into contemporary retreats that are designed to enable a complete break from mundane concerns of quotidian, hectic life. Such an adaptation

ented towards ideas of self-optimisation and enhancement of productivity.[20] For many so-called Western leisure-seekers, perceptions of the East are still often pictured (as well as critiqued) in popular imagination, literature, and cinema, as projected onto images of the Himalayan sublime, in Buddhist/Hindu/Sufi ascetic retreats and 'Eastern'/'oriental' wisdom towards release and detachment from a structured, accelerated life of professional and social ambitions. Simultaneously, the popular perception of leisure as a quality experience for many in contemporary South Asia (and other parts of what is perceived as the 'global south') has been propelled by representations of the wandering traveller backpacking through Europe, an image of the 'good life', holidaying in the 'first' world, to offer some deliberate stereotypes. More significantly, in the 'east', popular ideas of a successful and fulfilling professional life have drawn heavily from the stringency of rigid work structures and certain formal notions of 'professionalism' prevalent in the West. Many of these conceptual exchanges and perceptions in the wake of global capitalism and globalisation have a more extended history, which can be traced back to the heydays of European colonisation. These perceptions continue to influence our ideas of leisure, work, idleness, efficiency, and a fulfilling life. Concepts related to otium, therefore, not only undergo constant change through cultural and linguistic contact, but these encounters also continue to create new (or reiterate extant) notions of culture and community.

A significant aspect of contemporary leisure discourses (at least in the West) is its stark opposition to work. This results in two distinct and significant aspects of leisure today. As work and its formalness, i.e., the official obligation of work, has become central to a Western – arguably, global – value of life today, leisure, too, has increasingly become formulaic and categorised to be experienced in structured ways. Secondly, through such structuring of leisure, it is now designed to function as an experience of self-enhancement, motivated towards increased productivity. I argue that this difference in the functionality of leisure is central to its history of encounter and exclusivity. While experiences and practices of leisure and idleness are ubiquitous in literary, artistic, and quotidian representations from colonial and postcolonial South Asia, as modern concepts, they have been heavily influenced by colonial and neo-colonial impositions regarding work and its formalities, inspired by English ideas of utilitarianism, efficiency, and brevity in the colonial and post-colonial context, as well

of retreat and its role in enhancing writing can be seen in the German conception of a '*Schreibaschram*' or writing retreat. https://schreibaschram.de/en/ accessed on 24th June 2018.

20 See, for instance, Inga Wilke, *Muße als Strategie* (2023).

as European and American conceptions of increased productivity in the neo-liberal globalised context. With the rise of global capitalism, these influences have led straight towards further discrimination and bias in their perception. And yet, as earlier discussions have shown, what is understood by leisure or leisureliness in the West is often expressed and perceived differently in parts of the Indian subcontinent, and *vice versa*. This difference, too, has a history of encounters and conceptual transformations. This study focuses on that history to arrive at contemporary discussions on leisure in the South Asian context; it restricts the literary study within colonial and post-colonial India and to literary texts and contexts in Urdu and Bengali.

The intention is not to look for a lost concept prevalent in European Antiquity but to recognise the concept's potential as not merely historical but as located within the function of the self's awareness, feelings, and relations with others – human, non-human, and the environment. Although otium may have undergone semantic shifts in its variations in European languages that have had lasting impact on colonial disciplines, dictionaries, and discourses, it continues to manifest in different patterns, experiences, and practices; one may safely say, globally. These patterns and practices can vary from the desire for *Waldeinsamkeit* in German to the experience of deep immersion in composing and listening to *rāgā*s in a South Asian context, from solitary *flânerie* in the streets of Paris to *āvārahgardī* (idle loitering, wandering) through the old walled city of Lahore. It can be traced in big decisions like staring ahead at a year of one's life with no plans whatsoever, refusing to sit at a desk for the next three hundred and sixty-five days, giving up on urban, hectic, competitive life and relocating to the countryside to live close to nature as has been marked as a recent lifestyle trend. It can also be recognised in the small (in)voluntary (in)actions like reminiscing the simpler, more leisurely, 'good old days' and longing for an imagined time of idle freedom while simultaneously losing track of the present. It can be *tasted* in the experience of going to collect mangoes in summer and being lulled into a stupor by the fragrance of the orchard, in spending a potentially productive day in the pursuit of being idle, in feeling the need to be a recluse, and do nothing at all.

Variations of otium as predominant emotion concepts have indeed existed and resurfaced from time to time in multiple languages and cultures. The Portuguese *saudade*, the Turkish *hüzün* and the reminiscing of a time gone by in Urdu – *guzrā huʾā/ guzaśtah zamāne kī yād* – do not entail the same meaning. Still, if unpacked in their emotional contexts, they can be seen to overlap in what they connote as shared feelings, entangled in conceptual overlap, and can initiate dialogue from their particular and global contexts. While such concepts vary in linguistic and socio-historical contexts, concepts like acceleration, occupational burnout, and chronic dissatisfaction have attained global resonance as

work and social life see patterns of repeating homogenisation. This is not to return to the binary of work *versus* otium, but to highlight that far from being lost, concepts like otium, semantically identifiable or not, need to be explored and analysed more than ever. As this book demonstrates, although under-represented as a semantic concept (equivalent to the Latin otium), depictions, emotions, and debates surrounding discourses of idleness, laziness, indolence, and leisure are ubiquitous in South Asian colonial and post-colonial literary and intellectual contexts.

Research Contexts

Studies on concepts of leisure, laziness, or idleness within the South Asian context are few. It is imperative to acknowledge various conceptual complexities as well as their transformation and translation within cultural encounters, especially since such encounters tend to be highly asymmetrical within the nexus of colonialism. Most discussions on topics related to leisure in the context of colonial India are influenced by the history of English attitudes to the binary of work *versus* leisure/idleness, transferred to a context that may not have dwelled in such binaries before (Thomas 1965: 98–99).[21] While colonial travellers and writers have often subscribed to the 'myth of the lazy native'[22], there has been constant fascination regarding the *blessings of leisure unknown to the West*, as has historically been demonstrated in the colonial coinage of the term *nabob*. Originating in the Arabic *nā'ib* (governor), the English declension emerged out of the aristocratic Indian/Persianate *navāb*, and the Portuguese *Nabâbo*. While it then became associated with a rank title, the term was frequently used in the eighteenth century to refer to English officers who gathered surplus wealth and social status during their service in the East India Company.[23] It began to be used pejoratively to refer to someone who had turned corrupt and licentious owing to their excessive wealth.[24] This is an apt example of how British colonial authorities and their epistemic encounters in India frequently led to misun-

21 See Chapter 1 for an elaborate discussion.

22 On the discourse of this historical recrimination against forces the ideology of colonial capitalism, see Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (1977), 1–18.

23 See entry under "Nabób" in *Hobson-Jobson*. Eds. Burnell, Yule and Crooke, (1903 [1886]), 610. https://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/hobsonjobson_query.py?page=612 accessed on 18th March 2019.

24 This connotation became emphasised with Samuel Foote's comedy *The Nabob* (first performed in 1772). The term became emblematic of the scandalous, profligate India-

derstanding, mistranslation, and transformation of concepts. While detailed discussions follow in the various chapters of the book, I wish to point out here that the history of leisure vis-à-vis colonialism is multifaceted, entangled, and heterogeneous, to say the least, and that one must be cautious against generalising and homogenising the colonial experience/encounter.

A conceptual history of otium needs to locate two parallel semantic processes. The first one is the analysis of lexemes for otium in the linguistic-cultural context: this can vary from the simple use of the words *furṣat* or *abasar*/*avasar* – intelligible to speakers of Urdu, Bengali and Hindi as the leisure or opportunity for something – to words in the semantic field like *ārām* or rest/reprieve, to more complex concepts like the already explored Urdu *śauq*, rendered as *śakh* in Bengali. The second is the more significant and challenging task of investigating how such lexemes are deployed rhetorically to depict experiences of otium (if they do) in the literary texts studied. Such an exercise can yield fascinating results: for example, in Premchand's already discussed story written in 1924, contextualising 1857, a conceptual critique of leisurely excess is accompanied by the use of the lexeme "*furṣat*"/opportune leisure in collocation with the absence of rest/opportunity from the obsession with leisure-activities like playing chess. He uses *furṣat* and *mauqā* (opportunity) as words to describe their absence or negation due to the characters' fixation with the game: "*khāne kī furṣat nahīṉ*?" (no leisure to eat?) (c.1926: 109). Conceptual developments thus need to be studied, focusing on the socio-political context and literary-cultural mood portrayed in the texts. Conceptual studies then need to go beyond the analysis of lexemes and delve into the study of emotions that inhabit the concepts in their contexts (Noor 2021: 301–6). This is also in keeping with the study of otium, which repeatedly reveals the ambivalence of the term rather than a simplistic, binary, and redundant reading of the concept as merely 'positive' leisure or 'negative' idleness.

The present study emerges from the context of the Collaborative Research Cluster (SFB or *Sonderforschungsbereich*) 1015 "Otium"/*Muße* at the University of Freiburg.[25] Through the two phases of research (funded by the German Research Foundation/DFG) for eight years (2013–16; 2017–20), the cluster has documented a complex, richly ambivalent, and varied understand-

returned officer, the 'Oriental despot' during the trial of Warren Hastings, often referred to as the worst of the *nabobs*. See, for example, Michael Edwardes, *Warren Hastings: King of the Nabobs* (1976). See also, Tillman Nechtman, *Nabobs* (2010), 146–55; Smylitopoulos (2012), 11; and Fludernik & Nandi (2014), 7.

25 See the website of the cluster: https://www.sfb1015.uni-freiburg.de/de (accessed on 24th October 2023).

ing of otium. Within the cluster, participation in the sub-project G4, "Leisure in Contemporary Indian Fiction", and research collaboration with Monika Fludernik and Melina Munz have been instrumental. Their studies focusing on narratives of otium in post-colonial Anglophone novels from India have acted as an accompanying as well as contrasting research on otium in the context of colonial South Asia; their findings have informed the present study to a great extent.[26] According to their findings, otium or entangled expressions of nostalgic longing, inaction and ennui, aesthetic immersion, and ideas of uselessness seem to resurface and recur in post-Independence Indian English novels by writers like Sunetra Gupta, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amit Chaudhuri, and others. The present work formulates a dialogue with their research, locating itself within the study of concepts and ideas in the field of literary studies in and literary history of Modern South Asian languages. It argues that literary discussions and formulations of otium in the modern languages (Bengali and Urdu) do not only engage in similar (and at times different) conceptualisations of modernity in recent instances but have been engaged with these themes since (and as a consequence of the encounters during) the colonial period; in fact, several recent perceptions of otium in the Indian context emerge from the colonial period. Tracing that history (in a restricted manner so as to be feasible) and unpacking the various emotional manifestations of the concept, I argue, can contribute to realising a genealogy of otium, leisure, and idleness in the South Asian context.

The cluster's research emerged out of concentrated themes like concepts, spatiality, figures, boundaries, chronotopes, and practices. It focused on studies of otium or idleness concerning spatial and temporal dimensions[27], experiences of productive work, unintended productivity, and entertainment[28], and as a con-

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26 Monika Fludernik, "Nostalgia for Otiose Leisure: Laying Claim to an Indian Tradition of Otium" (2019), "Narrating Otium—A Narratology of Leisure?" (2021), "In the Twilight of Nostalgia: Ambivalences of Leisure, Patriarchy and Genre in two Classic Muslim Novels" (2021); Melina Munz, "Village Idyll? The Blending of Work and Otium in Contemporary Indian Fiction on Rural Life" (2020), "Leisurely Being in the City as a Critique of the Functionalist Modern City Space in Amit Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* and Navtej Sarna's *We Weren't Lovers Like That*" (2021). See also Munz's dissertation, *The Promise of Purposelessness: Alternative Temporalities and Experiences of Otium in Contemporary Indian Fiction in English* (submitted 2020).

27 See, for example, the perception of spatial experience over a consciousness of progressive time in Günter Figal, "Die Räumlichkeit der Muße" (2014), 30–31.

28 Gregor Dobler, "Muße und Arbeit" (2014), 54–68; Dobler, Tauschek, Vollstädt & Wilke "Einleitung", *Produktive Unproduktivität* (2020).

cept transgressing free time and leisure time[29] (among several volumes of research output on the topic). The present study has developed, in several ways, from discussions within this impressive body of research and recurs to them when necessary. However, charting a divergent course, my study emphasises the centrality of emotions to the concept and focuses on the field of modern South Asian literary studies in conjunction with the conceptual history of otium. In doing so, it traverses a parallel cultural-linguistic context and asks new questions about the conceptual study of otium in the context of literature. Acknowledging the indispensability of the theoretical angles that the Research Cluster has focused on, I argue for a fresh methodology, approaching the study through an exploration of the emotional manifestations of otium. For example, nostalgia for leisureliness that is now perceived as lost is a recurring emotion within which leisure discourses can be firmly located.[30] I emphasise the need for conceptualising otium in its emotional manifestations within literary expressions. Reading emotional manifestations of otium as expressed in emotion concepts like topophilia, melancholia, mourning and inactivity, the romance of a leisurely lifestyle, and being haunted by memories of (and the absence of) idle pleasures – can lead to relevant and significant meanings of otium as it undergoes upheavals and transformations on spatial and temporal trajectories.

Broadening the scope of research on otium, the present study aims at a conceptual history of otium, for which it focuses on the transformations of several concepts related to otium while engaging with modern literature in Bengali and Urdu as the field and source of study; but as we shall see, the literary, too, has remarkable overlaps with otium, infusing the concept with a theoretical complexity. My attempt here has been to reframe the research questions surrounding the study of otium in order to transcend boundaries enforced by semantics, languages, and philosophies that limit the study in non-European contexts. Thus, in several ways, the present work aims to be an act of translation, which also entails transgression. This translation is not aimed merely at translating otium in the context of South Asia (from Europe to Asia, or the other way around) but at locating it in the broader context of cultural encounters to enable a 'global history' (Schulz-Forberg 2014: 1). This is attained in the parallel translation of otium in its various emotional manifestations, a line of enquiry that is surprisingly understudied and, as this study reveals, can be instructive in understanding the concept beyond linguistic and cultural bound-

29 Jochen Gimmel & Tobias Keiling. "Einleitung" & "Konzepte der Muße", *Konzepte der Muße* (2016).

30 See also Fludernik's works on nostalgia, ref. f.n. 27. See Munz dissertation chapter, "Nostalgia for the Possibility to Experience Otium?"

aries. Drawing on the expansive and inspiring work of historian Margrit Pernau in the context of emotions and concepts in South Asia, the argument is that taking from the toolbox of conceptual history, questions regarding colonial and contemporary conditions can be reframed and responded to while asserting the need to remain sensitive to text, context, language, and mood. At the same time, I would further wish to provoke the question – what do such re-framings and responses from different epistemological traditions bring to the arguably 'Western' field of the study of concepts? Can a global conceptual history reorient our understanding of 'concepts' themselves?

My work is also inspired by the specific style of comparative study of South Asian languages and literatures that Hans Harder engages with. If not rigorously comparative in analysis (for in-depth comparisons need adequate contextual equilibrium rather than bring in forceful comparisons), the aim is to offer a comprehensive and nuanced overview of South Asian literary texts and contexts so as to create a platform from where reflective comparisons can be made possible, within a global or transcultural framework. For example, in Harder's essay on "Urbanity in the Vernacular" (2016), the global discourse of Urbanity is explored through various genres in several modern South Asian literatures – Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, and Marathi – to investigate the possibility of an "alternative urbanism" (Harder 2016: 435). I find such an approach not only encouraging in its analytical scope but also in how it contributes to the disciplinary formulations in the context of South Asian literary studies (as a distinct discipline with multiple complexities and nuanced variations) and its resonance in a global and interdisciplinary framework. Alternately, the restriction in such discipline-based study is seen, often, in the focus on one literary-language community based on region, language, or history. While this possibly emerges from proficiency and expertise in the language-literature, or arguably, to enable in-depth and intense analysis (and rightly so), they may tend to isolate scholarship on South Asian literary and cultural studies or, alternatively, demonstrate Bengali or Marathi as representative of a South Asian phenomenon. Attempting to keep in view 'the larger picture', nevertheless with the limited three languages (counting English as a South Asian language) I am adept at, my attempt here has been to broaden the scope of the study and allow exchanges of conceptual and emotional transformations. While tracing such transformations within these contexts in a focused manner is not central to this study (as that would burden the already expansive study), my work enables and often engages in such transformations and influences while remaining sensitive to revealing such relational transformations, when possible; for instance, the Urdu concept of *śauq* explored in Ray's portrayal of Wajid Ali is revisited in his own Bengali popular fiction, as a post-colonial leisurely romance – rendered in Bengali as *śakh*. The attempt has been to look at instances of encounters and histories of

conceptual change rather than to go into deep comparisons within South Asian traditions. The comparison is used as a tool in the study of broader encounters vis-à-vis the history of otium as expressed in and as the literary.

In the present study, I use otium as an analytical term to read the various emotional experiences and debates surrounding overlapping aspects of leisure, idleness, and indolence. It can be located in (1) a sense of freedom *from* obligation towards work, (2) freedom *for* contemplative, artistic or aesthetic engagements devoid of official, binding pacts, (3) an idleness that *may be* productive but is not so by any force or design, (4) a pronounced reluctance to deliberately structured obligations of work, and resistance to a lifestyle driven by capitalist economy, and (5) the yearning or desire for a leisurely state of being. Alternately, to denote these experiences in an emotional qualifier, I use the phrase 'leisurely feelings' to describe the shared aspects of the abovementioned states of being and address several emotion concepts elaborated in the following chapters.

In the linguistic-cultural traditions within colonial India, as we have seen in the example of Ray's rendition of *The Chess Players*, the state of a leisurely existence not yet bifurcated by the dialectic of work and indolence was often widely misunderstood and misconstrued by British officials and travellers (arguably with more deliberation than not, since such dissonances would further advance the need to 'civilise the barbarians'). In this context, where European/English industrialisation overlapped with colonial modernity, previous discourses of leisure, idleness and otium underwent debates and revisions that intensified in the nineteenth century and altered the understanding of leisure severely, now brought in direct opposition with progress and development. While many works on such experiences from colonialist and English perspectives have been produced, few books on the topic have been written from the vantage point of modern Indian language-literatures. Writing a case study of leisure in India, Kumkum Bhattacharya disappointingly identifies leisure in the context as "niche" and "cocooned", "as found among the tribes, rural populations and some other categories (religious, linguistic or ethnic) that are integrally connected with festivals and occasions" (Bhattacharya 2006: 88). I would also like to bring to attention Reena Dube's thorough study (2005) of Ray's rendition of *The Chess Players*, and her parsing of "colonial enterprise" through which indigenous attitudes to living, work and play as habits are portrayed as "the other", leading to misconceptions and mistranslations (Dube 2005: 1–3, 41–43, 56–61). Acknowledging the significance of her study, the present study argues for the need to investigate such mis-formulations and gaps within the larger literary-cultural field of South Asian Studies. In the literary-cultural field, leisure-related concepts often inhabit the centre rather than the periphery, and the elite/'high' expressions rather than the "niche". While I am only too aware that this study focuses solely on the elite/high literary expressions, I do so as they were highly influential for

their literary and feeling communities (see Chapter 1), especially in formulations of self-fashioning. The attempt is also to initiate a discussion in the hope that other scholars will address the many questions and contingencies that I have not been able to accommodate.

State of the Art and Proposed Interventions

Apart from the studies conducted by Bawa et al., Modi, Dube, and Fludernik, in the Indian/South Asian context, noteworthy analyses like Sumit Sarkar's historical study of salaried jobs for the Bengali Indian middle classes under colonial rule have been significant in noting the contrasting perceptions of work, and resistance to work in the context of the present study.[31] Sumit Chakrabarti's recent book (2021) on the colonial clerk in Calcutta has explored this theme to its great potential, nevertheless focusing mainly on ideas of labour. These examples further signify the need for a dedicated study on the ideas of leisure, idleness, and laziness in the modern South Asian context under colonial rule and after. The past decades have seen a resurgence of interest in idleness and leisure as various movements argue for the need to 'slow down' (slow living, slow food), particularly in the 'West'. The *Idler Academy* in London or the *Haus Bartleby* in Berlin demonstrate institutional support for such initiatives. Influential work on the topic (interchangeably, of idleness, contemplation, leisure), based in English literary studies are Richard Adelman's reading of *Idleness, Contemplation and the Aesthetic, 1750–1830* (2011) and Heidi Liedke's *The Experience of Idling In Victorian Travel Texts. 1850–1901* (2018). Important philosophical works constitute *The Philosophy of Leisure* (1989), edited by Cyril Barrett and Tom Winnifrith, and Brian O'Connor's *Idleness: A Philosophical Essay* (2018). These overlapping topics have drawn the attention of sociologists, historians, and anthropologists (among others), leading to significant studies in the humanities like Hartmut Rosa's *Social Acceleration* (2013)/*Beschleunigung* (2005) and *Alienation and Acceleration* (2010), which formulate a new history of modern life through its conception of society functioning under pressures of 'high speed' and 'velocity', often engendering 'alienation' through 'accelaration', 'competition', and promises of the 'good life'. Han Byung-Chul's phenomenal book *The Burnout Society* (2015) has presented a critique of this 'excessive positivity' of the twenty-first century, resulting in what he terms "infarctions" of the present age, including depression, attention deficit hyperactive disorder and burnout.

31 See Sarkar's essay, "Colonial Times: Clocks and Kaliyuga" (2002), and an earlier version of it, "Kaliyuga, Chakri and Bhakti: Ramakrishna and his Times" (1997c).

Defining acceleration of social change through "the concept of the *contraction of the present*", Rosa argues that "the "present" contracts as much in politics as in the economy, science, and art, in work relations as much as in family arrangements, and just as much in moral as in practical everyday orientations" (Rosa 2013: 76–77). His work on *Resonance* (2019) or *Resonanz* (2016) responds to the crisis of social acceleration through what he terms our (successful/unsuccessful) "relationships to the world".[32] Speaking from the discourses on alienation and modernity, he argues that an experience of 'resonance' can enable humans to engage in a relationship with the world in which we both affect and are affected by the world we inhabit. I propose that *exclusion* and *encounter* are significant axes to the problem of alienation and acceleration, as they are to the ideas of resonance and, of course, to relations. Byung-Chul has highlighted how exclusion and otherness have been transformed into modes of consumption, in the form of the exotic. We cannot discuss acceleration or the pace of modernity without addressing the formulations of encounters with otherness, exclusions, and consumption; they are integral to the experience of modernity as shrinking. Theories of modernity on the theme of the 'contraction of the present' have been proposed by several scholars, including the influential German philosopher Reinhart Koselleck, regarded as a co-founder of the discipline of Conceptual History (*Begriffsgeschichte*). Koselleck's work on temporality, particularly in his two "historical categories": the "space of experience" (knowledge of the past) and "horizon of expectations" (anticipations regarding the future) (Koselleck 2004 b), is central to the understanding of modernity in the increasing gap between these categories. How is this increasing gap felt and represented in the context of exclusion and encounter in colonial modernity? How can our relationship with the world be explored and understood through a close reading and analysis of these relations as debated and presented in literature? This study addresses (and responds to) these complex questions by traversing the history of otium and attitudes to leisure and idleness, as well as the debates and discussions surrounding otium in colonial India. It traces this history through a study of conceptual-rhetorical change, focusing on emotions, attitudes, and moods through which these changes are mediated in literature.

The title of this book, *Leisurely Feelings: Emotions and Concepts of Otium in South Asia*, indicates its interest in exploring how leisure/otium/idleness and related concepts are felt and negotiated in literary representations in South Asia. This methodology focuses on representations of otium as experiences and encompasses the attitudes, emotions, and feelings towards otium and associa-

32 See Rosa (2019), Foreword; see also Introduction, section 2, "The Basic Idea: Successful and Unsuccessful Relationships to the World".

tive experiences. Thus, emotions are both analysed in textual sources and seen as significant factors within literary discourses and the production of literature. *Leisurely* is the keyword which enables us to appreciate the quality of experiences, moods, and emotions through which otium is mediated. I use it as an umbrella term to provide a comprehensive approach to the reading of otium, leisure, and idleness based on the study of emotions, focusing on the *elusive feeling of leisureliness*. I also use the word 'leisurely' to question categorisations in semantic connotations of leisure and idleness, laziness, and indolence. By identifying and analysing emotion concepts, I explore the individual textual representations of leisurely experiences and the historical contexts and encounters within which these discourses are located. I do not insist that reading otium in its emotional expressions is the only or the correct way to study these overlapping concepts, but on the necessity for an enquiry which unpacks the essence of leisureliness in the texts and contexts, in their multiple historical and conceptual entanglements.

This necessity is intensified by two factors: firstly, conceptual research on leisure, idleness, and otium in the context of South Asia is negligible; moreover, the extant studies often offer historical-sociological understandings of select case studies rather than engaging with contextualised literary history. Secondly, and more significantly, in several primary texts written during the colonial period, for example, in the influential works of Altaf Husain Hali (1836/7–1914) or Bankimchandra Chatterjee (1838–94), repeated arguments are made against leisureliness and leisurely attitudes, often represented in discussions of decay, decadence, and regress (as does Premchand's story). However, these assertions and reactions are, at best, ambivalent and require close reading and analysis, situating them within the historical-literary contexts and debates surrounding leisure on the one hand and perceptions of progress on the other. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) emphasises the differences between laziness as wasteful and idle leisure as fruitful towards artistic composition – in fact, in several essays and letters, idle, contemplative leisure emerges as not only something conducive to artistic and literary creativity but is also professed to be a necessity in the modern condition. In-depth and nuanced discourses on leisure and literature in the context of South Asia seem to be elusive at a glance. At the same time, discussions on work/labour, progress, and development take a front seat in the wake of colonial modernity, intensified in ideals of Nehruvian nation-building in the aftermath of Independence.[33] How are ideas of leisure and idleness then incorporated into the nation's literary perceptions? This book follows

33 Ref. Nehru's stimulating slogans like "ārām ḥarām hai" (rest/relaxation is forbidden).

this journey in reading and analysis of leisurely feelings in Urdu and Bengali literatures.

Before I present the corpus and choice of texts, a brief disclaimer is in place vis-à-vis postcolonial theory as a theoretical approach in this study that traverses colonial and post-colonial India. Acknowledging the immense prowess and continuing relevance of Edward Said's formulation of 'orientalism' (1978) in his reading of colonial and Western hegemonies in epistemological perceptions, as a scholar, I find myself slightly cautious regarding the rather arbitrary homogenisation and categorisation of texts from vastly different contexts into the single historical experience of colonialism and colonial hegemony, often perceived as the only truth of these texts. This perceived singularity of the colonial experience has already been shown (even as this book shows) to be correct, but also, often, as 'missing the point'. My approach to the study of otium in two varying South Asian literary fields emphasises experiential and historical differences within colonial encounters, even within the same perceived nation/colony – British India. The other problem of this 'singularity', put forward by Gayatri Spivak (an erstwhile and renowned proponent of 'postcolonial theory'), is that postcoloniality originates in ideas of nationalism, the present formulations of which itself are a construct of European ideas of imperialism, nationhood, and colonialism (Spivak 1999: 1, 140–46, 160–62, 191). Moreover, the enduring colonial, neo-imperial, and globalised present that shapes our ways of experiencing, reading, and expressing cannot be adequately encompassed within a postcolonial critique which vantages itself on differences between neat categories of the coloniser and the colonised. Furthermore, the trend in the field to categorise writings by non-Westerners as postcolonial texts, submitting them to an imposition of 'writing back', has also been questioned and critiqued.[34] Notwithstanding that postcolonial criticism has served as an influential and resonating theoretical intervention much required in its time, and that it continues to resound in clear significance, and given that it has been immensely instrumental in restructuring questions of power and episteme, it could benefit immensely through a reorientation in interpreting the dynamics between several groups.

In this study, I have attempted to stress this element by bringing in the study of encounters and conceptual change through a reading of literary histo-

34 This is intricately linked to Spivak's critique of postcoloniality, orientalist nationalism, and essentialism, as reflected in Frederic Jameson's much-critiqued 1986 essay on "Third-World Literature" and "national allegory". See Aijaz Ahmad's critique, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'", *In Theory* (1992 a [1987]), especially 96–97.

ry and emotion concepts within colonial and postcolonial contexts. In this reading, colonialism is seen as one of the parameters of encounters between communities, and a parameter that is variable. Global conceptual history can create alternate trajectories for scholarship on South Asia. It looks at the bi- or multi-directional flow of knowledge, ideas, and agencies and can help locate South Asia within a broader global framework while allowing the study of encounters among various communities within South Asia. Furthermore, a sound criticism of orientalist or colonialist discourse would need to go beyond the English "tyranny of monolingualism" (Menon 2022: 25) and turn towards a methodology that is shaped by the languages – not only as Arabic, Hindi, or Bahasa Malaysia, but as systems of knowledge formation, creativity, and communication – literatures and sources of colonised peoples, and move away from colonialist "enquiries" and "modalities" (Cohn 1996: 5–11). We also must keep in mind the origins of "field" and "area studies" within the investigation processes in the post-colonial world that aim for "smoothly functional social change" in erstwhile colonised societies (Cohn 1996: 15). Instead, as this book demonstrates, these changes are haphazard, chaotic, and innovative, and require a shift in attitudes towards methodology and research approach. These shifts can only be envisioned when we interact directly with the variety of expressions – literary and emotional, critical, and socio-political – that are available in South Asian sources, and admittedly, often in English. However, the vernaculars and modern language-literatures are mainly missing in such studies and need urgent attention. In the case of India's diverse and multitudinous linguistic landscape, English remains a language of encounter. It has gradually become internalised as one of India's many languages, a unique medium of communication for its vast, multilingual population. Nevertheless, English cannot entirely detach from its origin and its privilege, being the colonisers' language and the alienated, metropolitan language of the present (Mufti 2016: 14–18, 31–33, 46–48, 154–56). And resting upon this singularity of language, multiple and varying experiences of the 'postcolonial condition' cannot be explored; neither can the life-worlds lived in Urdu, Hindi, or Bengali be adequately analysed solely through Anglophone postcolonial criticism to unpack the complex semantic histories and emotional intricacies of concepts in these language-literatures.

Corpus and Organisation of the Book

The temporal framework of this book is the late colonial period to the post-Independence period of Nehruvian development. However, it spills over to the 1990s and the onset of India's neo-liberalisation. Taking 1857 and the failed revolt as a watershed moment in the history of northern India, this study

moves (not strictly chronologically) towards the turn of the century. It traverses the struggles of political independence and the 1947 Partition and draws to a close with late twentieth-century discussions and outlooks. The choice of periodisation is motivated by the various significant changes and upheavals in discourses of leisure, laziness, and idleness in the Indian context during the shift from modern colonial India to post-colonial India in a rapidly globalised world.[35] Discussing contemporary conceptualisations of otium in the Indian literary context is also significant; I have attempted to do so despite the already vast timeline. Contemporary discourses on leisure, idleness, and otium are, by necessity, predicated on understanding the rise of economic liberalisation in India in the late twentieth century. Moreover, such discussions must also consider the rapidly changing economic conditions and their impacts on the present and attempt to address the significant question of media and technology on such experiences. I merely explore the representations of these changes (or their absences) in a selection of literary instances at the turn of the millennium. My study aims to facilitate future research by initiating a theoretical-analytical and conceptual study of otium in vernacular South Asian literary contexts. A more detailed reading of otium in the contemporary context will need to understand, first and foremost, how discourses of otium underwent sudden, multiple shifts in the period when late colonialism gave way to political independence[36], and that history of transformation remains at the centre of the present work.

While this book focuses on prose texts from the traditions of modern Bengali and Urdu literatures, I have explored the topic through its interconnections with genres and narrative styles. This decision stems from two distinct but

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35 The use of the term 'globalisation' here does not entail that global interactions were any less prior to the twentieth century. I use the term here to roughly refer to what is accepted as the process of globalisation and global capitalism in the aftermath of the two World Wars and the end of the Cold War.

36 This argument flows in the vein of Sheldon Pollock's opinion "that as crucial to contemporary theory as understanding postcolonial South Asian literary cultures may be, these represent a very thin slice of a long historical experience whose careful preservation in texts makes this region of the world so special. Equally important—and here we confront a weakness of a certain species of postcolonial critique—these contemporary forms of culture and the role of colonialism in shaping them cannot be understood without a deeper understanding of the long premodern past" (Pollock, Introduction in *Literary Cultures in History* [2003], 32). While such a study is necessary, it is not possible within the scope of one study. However, by choosing the period of late colonialism to early post-Independence, some understanding of continuity, rupture and asymmetry will be addressed, rather than beginning, all of a sudden, with the postcolonial in South Asia.

interdependent reasons: first, the aim was to select texts that provided significant representations, discussions, and debates on leisureliness and idleness. Second, as literary trends in Urdu and Bengali underwent various transformations, specific genres were preferred by most writers over other genres in certain periods and often served as the best medium to write on the topic. For instance, although the study begins with the modern Urdu literary sphere and its ambivalent relationship with otium as reflected in the rise of the Urdu novel in the late nineteenth century, this line of enquiry would be challenging to sustain as the novel, as a genre, witnessed a decline in the early twentieth century as the Urdu short story emerged and reached heights of popularity. As a point of contrast, in Bengali, I find the innovation of making epistolary writing accessible to an anonymous public readership more fascinating in its deliberations of a new reading practice that Sudipta Kaviraj has called an "introspective literary culture" (2014b: 79). I therefore turn to the letters of Rabindranath Tagore, which provide a richer source for his conceptualisation of otium than his novels. Tagore's global fame in the early twentieth century as the Nobel Prize winner for literature is closely linked, as he stated, to the portrayal of his leisurely and idle thoughts in these letters written in his youth. Remaining faithful to the significance of the discussions and debates on otium and the innovations these texts brought within the literary landscape, I have prized these genre innovations over genre affiliations. I also argue that genre conventions and distinctions have a different meaning for writers writing in Urdu and Bengali than writers of Anglophone literature, more so in the nineteenth century (see Chapter 1). This study offers a comprehensive reading of various prose genres in Urdu and Bengali in alternating chapters to explore how literary genres generated discourses of otium. For example, the immense popularity of the detective novels/novellas of the leisurely *bhadralok* detective, *Pheludā* (created by Satyajit Ray), after Independence, reveals a new romanticised conceptualisation of 'leisurely' as a masculine lifestyle, expressed in the freedom of choosing one's professional obligations, balanced by loyalty to (Indian) Bengali notions of culture-and-intellect. The postcolonial detective novel, therefore, brings together intellectual stimulation hand-in-hand with a yearning for a leisurely lifestyle while enculturing a new generation of readers in a newly independent nation at the crossroads of economic development and sovereignty.

This book is divided into three parts and six extensive chapters. Part I includes this Introduction and Chapter 1, which serves as a theoretical-conceptual guideline for the rest of the book and offers a contextual overview. In Chapter 1, I provide a brief intellectual and semantic enquiry into otium and introduce the background of colonial South Asia while contextualising the concept's relevance to its history. This chapter also introduces the literary field in colonial India and maps the literary as a space for *creativity* and *play*, an

opportunity and a mode of struggle for expressions of the self. Therefore, the argument is that otium is to be studied along with literature and the literary in this context. The chapter foregrounds a conceptual study through an extended reading of emotional translations to make sense of the concept. It looks at the relations that emotions and otium have with time, space, practices, and communities relevant to this work.

Part II includes four extensive chapters, each focusing on one literary genre, exploring emotion concepts, and demonstrating a shift in perceptions regarding idleness and leisureliness. In every chapter comprising Part II (which can also be read as case studies), an introduction to the literary context has been provided to situate the texts within the intellectual ambience and discussions regarding otium or related concepts. In each case, the development of genre and style in response to leisurely (alternately, regulated) reading practices has been explored. Furthermore, the texts and the contexts, with reference to a literary, "feeling community" (Pernau 2017), are analysed through the discourse of emotion concepts, like nostalgia or melancholy. A close reading of these different emotions and the in-depth textual analysis constitute the core of the chapters. Towards the end of the respective chapters, I have provided an overview of how the texts have emerged from a certain literary context and witnessed, negotiated, or affected conceptual change regarding otium and the literary.

In Chapter 2, I begin with a brief reading of Altaf Husain Hali's influential poem, *Musaddas-i Madd va Jazr-i Islām* (*The Ebb and Flow of Islam*, 1879) to register the literary-critical shift from poetry traditions to prose traditions. This is not to say poetry traditions became obsolete; in fact, new traditions of poetry emerged. This transition proved significant in reading the emergence of the early Urdu novels with regard to otium. Hali's poem is read in contrast and comparison with the surge of the Urdu novel and what the novel/*nāval* entailed for Urdu writers at the time. The new genre of the novel, which had arguably begun with attempts at severance from the idle perceptions of the past steeped in poetic compositions, in fact, emerges as a platform allowing writers to negotiate emotions towards the past and introduce innovations in how the past could be remembered and longed for, in a swiftly changing world. These negotiations are explored in the ambivalences inherent in nostalgia as treated by two significant early novels, *Taubat-un-Naṣūḥ* (*The Repentance of Nussooh*, 1873–74) by Nazir Ahmad (1830–1912) and *Umrā'o Jān Adā* (1899) by Mirza Hadi Rusva (1858–1931). In these analyses, I explore the portrayal of two varying responses to the loss of a leisurely way of life.

Chapter 3 introduces the unique relationship of Bengali literary intelligentsia with the English language and literature and contextualises discourses of otium regarding new reading, writing and socio-literary practices. With the

turn of the century, a parallel discourse of leisure emerges in Rabindranath Tagore's literary creativity, especially in his poetical compositions. Tagore's conceptualisation of leisure(ly) and idle freedom can be perceived in the transformations he brought to the language, literary creativity and pedagogy, as these changes drew great attention in the early twentieth century, particularly after 1913, when he received the Nobel Prize. The chapter situates Tagore's literary career within the discourses of modernity and its relationship with literature while exploring his conceptualisation of modernist enchantment (*māẏā*) as an expression of abstract love. I read love as directed towards both the fleeting perception of time and for open, immense space, particularly the open spaces of rural Bengal as recorded in his collections of letters. Foregrounding topophilia or 'love of space' that emerges as central to his conception of "lonely leisure" and "fulfilling pleasure of idleness", this chapter traces the effect(s) of leisurely experiences in his pedagogical activities, which in turn influenced modern Bengali notions of leisure, nature, and learning for a long time to come. Supplemented by a reading of his multiple essays, speeches, and memoirs, the chapter focuses on two collections of letters that are read as poetic compositions in prose. These are *Chinnapatrābalī* (Collection of torn leaves/letters, written from 1887 until 1895, published in 1960) and his first collection of letters, written during his travels in Europe, *Ẏūrop Prabāsīr Patra* (Letters from a sojourner in Europe, published in 1881). The chapter discusses the genre of private letters and memoirs/autobiographical writing through the lens of otium and a private or *introspective* resonance of literature.[37]

The early twentieth century saw major upheavals in the subcontinent as feelings of rebellion against foreign rule continued to brew, intensified by Marxist-nationalist ideologies. These forces were harnessed by writers, artists, and thinkers, and transformed into the first nationwide literary movement, propelled by the All-India Progressive Writers' Association (est. 1936). Urdu 'progressive' writers became the major force in not only initiating the movement (c. 1936) but also because several Urdu writers and intellectuals of the time, like Sajjad Zaheer and Rashid Jahan, were members of the Communist Party of India. Under the aegis of the PWA, the modern Urdu short story flourished as a genre, expressing the sordid realities of the colonised, poverty-struck, and alienated society. Ideas of leisure, idleness, and contemplation were not themes most progressive writers were interested in; they prioritised society and its suffering over the individual experience. Writing against the grain, Saʿadat Hasan Manto (1912–55) penned some of the most innovative short stories on urban

37 See Kaviraj's conception of literature or poetry as a "reflective private craft", (2014), 79.

idling or *āvārahgardī* in the sprawling metropolis of Bombay in the 1940s. While Manto's fame largely rests upon his bitter, violent, and intimate portrayals of human tragedy, particularly in the aftermath of the 1947 partition of the subcontinent, the focus here is on the earlier stories in the framework of colonial melancholy as a recurrent emotional manifestation of otium, as registers of protest and resistance against colonial and global notions of progress and capitalism. The stories read are "*Taraqqī Pasand*" (Progress-loving, 1914), "*Inqalāb Pasand*" (Revolutionary, 1935), "*Bū*" (Odour), "*Pīran*", and "*Bādśāhat kā Khātmah"* (End of empire, 1950). These stories of drift and urban idling demonstrate Manto's focus on the magnifying of the 'moment' and the aimlessness of 'drift', both explored remarkably with the genre innovations of short prose.

The second part of the chapter turns to the post-Partition stories written by Qurratulʿain Hyder (1927–2007), mostly in the early 1960s. Childhood and the past are remembered and juxtaposed with the 'golden era' motif of a pre-Partitioned India where *leisurely* is perceived politically as peaceful, as a pace of life lived in communal harmony and unity. The violence and trauma of the Partition are negotiated in the emotion of post-Partition nostalgia, explored in the stories "*Ḍālanvālā*", "*Jugnū'oṉ kī Dunyā*" (A world of fireflies) and "*Yād kī Ek Dhanak Jale*" (A glowing rainbow of memories). Theorising 'post-Partition nostalgia' for the multicultural and inter-communal coexistence of 'Indians' as a grand narrative of the subcontinent's past, this chapter reinstates the significance of nostalgia for twentieth century Urdu literary discourses, where migration to Pakistan vis-à-vis memories of a united subcontinent continue to resurface. Although ambitious in its conception, Chapter 3 traces the emergence of the Urdu short story (*afsānah*) vis-à-vis utilitarian, 'socially relevant' literature and responds to the dissonance of temporality in the works of Manto (in his elaboration of the present as suspended) and Hyder (in her conceptions of the past as looming in the present), traversing the troubled terrain of the 1947 partition.

After Independence and during the early years of nation-building, discussions of leisureliness are permissible only as entangled with work (profession as vocation), fraught with questions of unemployment and autonomy. Chapter 5 goes on to contextualise post-colonial urban Calcutta in the framework of Nehruvian notions of development, and the ensuing disillusionment with unemployment, corruption, and political unrest in the city. In this precarious scenario (even more for leisurely experiences), Satyajit Ray's popular detective fiction series provides a hopeful fantasy of a leisurely lifestyle with the romance of the autonomous vocation of the 'private detective'. Reading the overlapping aspects of knowledge and idleness in the figure of the Benjaminian *flâneur* and the postcolonial Bengali detective, this chapter locates Ray's eponymous protagonist, Pheluda, as the leisurely, intellectual, and cerebral *bhadralok/*

gentleman, reorienting investigative *flânerie* in his critique of colonialism. Reading the concepts of culture and intellect as central to the romance of civility (*bhadratā*) for the *bhadralok*, the chapter explores the familial and the familiar sleuth, the construction of a leisurely and genteel masculinity and the instilment of these values in continuing the leisurely pedagogy on a parallel scale. The chapter also locates detective fiction, particularly Ray's detective fiction, as highly popular and leisurely reading across various age groups at this time. Referring to Ray's other works, this chapter focuses on six novellas in the series and two short stories, including the first published story, "*Pheludār Goẏendāgiri*" (Pheluda Turns Detective 1965) and "*Lanḍane Pheludā*" (Pheluda in London, 1989). The novels include some of the most popular texts of the series: *Bādˡśāhī Āṃṭi* (*The Emperor's Ring*, 1966–67), *Sonār Kellā* (*The Golden Fortress*, 1971), *Raẏāl Bengal Rahasya* (*Royal Bengal Mystery*, 1974), *Jaẏ Bābā Phelunāth* (*The Mystery of the Elephant God*, 1975), *Gorosthāne Sābdhān* (*Trouble in the Graveyard,* 1977), *Ṭinṭoreṭor Yīśū* (*Tintoretto's Jesus*, 1982) and *Rabārtˡsaner Rubi* (*Robertson's Ruby*, 1992). This chapter constitutes the final, in-depth 'case study', as texts and contexts in independent India of the 70s and the 80s rush towards liberalisation of the 1990s.

Part III consists of Chapter 6 and a Coda. This section draws from the previous chapters and the various conceptions of leisurely feelings already explored. Looking forward, it analyses specific conceptual changes in how discourses of leisureliness are advanced in a setting that is presented as different, even asynchronous in its pace, heading towards economic upheavals and beyond the grasp of the lived present. In Chapter 6, I read various works in Bengali and Urdu genres of the short story, the long story, and the novel to determine how questions of otium are conceptualised in late twentieth century India of neoliberal acceleration. The themes of gender and class discrimination and a renewed capitalism merge with emotions of haunting and being haunted, requiring new lenses of reading otium. Simultaneously, the environment and the mythic, with their deep entanglements with literature (story) and creativity (music), provide for discussions of spatiality and temporality in the experiences central to modern-day leisure questions. Chapter 6 presents diverse and provocative trajectories of otium through the analytical tool of hauntology to explore otium's entanglements with the occult, the mythic, the dystopian, and the environmental.

Khalid Javed's Urdu long story "*Tafrīḥ kī Ek Dopahar*" (2008) is a significant example discussing questions of idleness vis-à-vis haunting. Several writings by Intizar Husain connect the literary with the uncanny and their shared itinerant characteristics. In the Bengali context, I analyse Bani Basu's novel *Gāndharbī* (1993) as a text that situates experiences of immersion, freedom for artistic creativity, and gender constraints against the backdrop of a society at

the brink of economic transformations. I go on to explore economic upheavals, class consciousness, and globalised capitalism in contrast to individual and collective freedom, idleness and otium in the works of Nabarun Bhattacharya, including his phenomenal novel *Hār^lbārṭ* (1993) and his short stories about the rebellious and notorious flying humans, *Phyātāṛū* (written from 2004). Chapter 6 locates otium in the context of a new trend of capitalism where otium emerges, in the examples above, as a complex critique of discriminatory society through deliberations with haunting and hauntology. This idea, I hope, will be explored further to enrich and expand studies of otium and emotions. The chapter acts as a threshold that looks back at the several manifestations of leisurely feelings through a century of Urdu and Bengali literary attachments, as it remains poised towards the future, inviting further research on the topic. The Coda at the end directs us to a reflection on the significance of concepts like otium and their studies in the global south to our current concerns on a global scale. It discusses methods of knowledge production and conceptualisation for a deeper understanding of concepts, ideas, and emotions towards a resonance between individuals and communities, while addressing the question of the non-western self.

Some disclaimers regarding the corpus and choice of texts are in order. I am cautious regarding the "triangle of categories that is at the bottom of literary history", i.e., literature, language, and nation (Harder 2018 b: 7). While such a formulaic narration of the "nation" vis-à-vis otium is one of the dangers of my choice (inclusion/exclusion) of texts, the scope of a research monograph makes it challenging to overcome this slippery slope. At the same time, I am certainly conscious of "the gaps in knowledge, as well as the great fluidity and unquantifiability of what is known" of the so-called idea of 'Indian Literature'; as Aijaz Ahmad has rightly pointed out, the conceptual connotation of such a category is chastening, and we must be cautious of claiming to cover these gaps (Ahmad 1992 b: 247–48). While I do not claim to theorise or read otium in "Indian Literature", I concede that the project should have included literary examples by Pakistani and Bangladeshi writers. However, such a corpus is beyond the scope of this first book. It would also mean overstepping the mark to yoke several contemporary Urdu sources from India and Pakistan in one section without equal and sustained attention to their shared and yet distinct genealogies. The discourses of leisure and idleness in post-colonial Pakistan and Bangladesh, as represented in Urdu and Bengali literature, are evidently slightly different from their Indian counterparts (while they are also identifiable on several levels) and therefore need adequate attention and fine-tuning for a sensitive and justified reading. Precedence has been given to retaining the alternating view of India's Bengali and Urdu traditions to resist another hegemonic literary history of regionalism. I see various possibilities for research that would

include several other writers. This book aims not to 'cover' the topic but to establish a literary study of otium and provoke further discussions in the larger context. Another brief disclaimer is in place, perhaps, regarding the oft-perceived communal/linguistic-cultural division of Bengali/Hindu authors *versus* Muslim/Urdu authors that may seem misleadingly apparent from the corpus. It is a matter of choosing texts rather than authors. As has been clarified by scholars like Jennifer Dubrow (2018) and Kavita Datla (2013), Urdu has been and remains a secular and cosmopolitan language and has seen writers from various communities. Similarly, several Muslim Bengali authors, such as Syed Mujtaba Ali, would be an excellent choice for such a study. Without delving into extensive histories of communal strife, linguistic ideologies, and literary modernity (which require more space), I would like to state, for any uninformed reader, particularly in the current ambience of intolerance, that contrary to orientalist viewpoints, traditions of idleness, indolence, contemplation and creativity discussed in this study are not communally exclusive. *Leisurely*, as this book argues, is a state of being, a pace of life, and a description of a certain mood/temperament/emotion (*mizāj*) that perhaps, at the risk of sounding hopelessly romantic, is one of the many shared aspects within diverse and heterogenous traditions in South Asia.