

The Robinson Room Afternoon Discussion

The academic discussion in the Robinson Room was getting heated. The journalist from a weekend magazine, who prided himself on his knowledge of history, rose passionately from his seat.

‘You can at least show a bit of gratitude for all you people have received from the British Empire,’ he said, looking angrily at the woman. ‘I am not just talking about the railways we gave you – you would still be travelling by bullock cart if we hadn’t. What about science? Ronald Ross discovered how to cure malaria, which was killing Indians by the millions. India is called the world’s largest democracy – what, no thank you to Westminster? We liberated you women in India from dreadful practices like Suttee. Should you not be ashamed if you feel no sense of gratitude even now?’

The woman was silent for a long minute. Then, she spoke in a small voice.

‘Yes, I do feel some gratitude, though it took a long time. When the men who raped me left, they said I should be grateful they did not kill me. I am grateful I am alive.’