The White Author's Burden: Justifications of Empire in the Fiction of British India

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Abstract
The White Author's Burden: Justifications of Empire in the Fiction of British India identifies a transformation in Anglo-Indian literature by exploring various fictional works (including novels, short stories, and poems) written by British authors between 1800 and 1924. Before 1857 (the year of the widespread Indian Rebellions that challenged British rule), Anglo-Indian literature focused exclusively on British life in India. Interactions with Indians were minimal, if present at all. After this date, however, British authors began to portray India and Indians almost entirely in ways that justified their own rule. This shift in the literature suggests that the British felt a new need to justify their empire. This thesis focuses on three literary themes offered by British authors that served to legitimize British rule in India in the second half of the nineteenth century: (1) the state of Indian women; (2) the alleged rivalry between Hindus and Muslims; and (3) the perceived incompetence of educated Indians for political rule. Each of these premises was employed as a tactic to justify the British Empire. This study investigates illustrations of India and Indians in British fiction against the backdrop of historiographical debate. These depictions in Anglo-Indian literature were caused by a deep-rooted fear of losing the empire that was brought on by the very real loss of authority and control in 1857-8 during the widespread Rebellions. This study aids in understanding the ways in which the British desperately tried to validate their necessity in the subcontinent through the implicit and explicit representations of Indian life in the literature of the day. It combines history and literary analysis to determine how these stereotypes were created, and how they were used to legitimize and emphasize the necessity of the British Empire in India.

Keywords
india, raj, british india, justifications of empire, communalism, babu, zenana, sati, age of consent, widow immolation, kipling, forster, hindu, muslim, bengali, landon, oman

Disciplines
History

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A Senior Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Honors in History.
Faculty Advisor: Lisa Mitchell

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A senior thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in History

by

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Philadelphia, PA
April 20, 2007

Faculty Advisor: Lisa Mitchell
Honors Director: Julia Rudolph
For Mom, Dad,
Scott, Andrew, and Jesse
"And this is India!" said Pagett for the twentieth time staring long and intently at the grey feathering of the tamarisks.

Rudyard Kipling, “The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P.”
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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Lisa Mitchell, the faculty advisor to this project, Professor Julia Rudolph, the Honors director, and my peer readers, Giselle Aris and Ethan Ravetch. Their criticism, wisdom, and enthusiasm have allowed this project to reach its fullest potential. They have guided its development from the conceptual stages to the finished product.

I would also like to thank Professor Ramnarayan Singh Rawat for the lively debates in his class, “Debating Colonialism,” and for his research suggestions; Professor Antonio Feros, whose advice has driven much of my European history major; and Professor Marion Kant, who taught me to write deliberately.

My friends have supported my devotion to this project, and have showed great understanding when I said, “I can’t – I’m working on my thesis tonight.” I am grateful for their encouragement and patience.

Mom, Dad, Scott, Andrew, and Jesse – your unending support has given me the confidence to complete this project. It is with love and gratitude that I dedicate this project to you.
GLOSSARY

Anglo-Indian: A British person living in India.

Babu: An Indian who has received an English education, originally equated with the English “gentleman,” but later taking on a negative connotation as an Indian attempting to ape British ways.

Brahman: The highest Hindu caste.

Burqa: The veil which covers the body and face of Muslim women.

Communalism: Loyalty to a particular ethnic or religious community.

Indian Civil Service: An organization founded in the eighteenth century which allowed British men to travel to India in the realms of administration, the army, and education; several authors discussed here were Civil Servants (referred to as Civilians).

Indian National Congress: An organization founded by educated Indians in 1885 in India; initially aimed at achieving fairer British rule in India, and later a large political party which fought for independence from Britain in the early twentieth century.

Indian Rebellions: The rising of Indian soldiers and civilians against British authority in 1857-58.

Kali: An Indian goddess who required human sacrifice in her name.

Kismet: Fate.

Memsahib: A British woman living in India.

Rabb: God (in monotheistic religions, especially Islam).

Sahib: A British man living in India.

Sari: The garb worn by Hindu women.

Sati: The immolation of Hindu widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands; outlawed in 1829.

Sepoy: Indian troops in the service of the East India Company; a rebellion of the sepoys against British troops sparked the Indian Rebellions of 1857-58.

Thagi: Literally “thief” or “rogue” in Sanskrit; professional pirates who traveled in gangs throughout India, attacking travelers on roads and often sacrificing their bodies to the
goddess Kali.

*Vedas:* The sacred scriptures of Hinduism.

*Zenana:* The women’s quarters of Indian households.
INTRODUCTION

[India] will never stand alone, but the idea is a pretty one, and men are willing to die for it, and yearly the work of pushing and coaxing and scolding and petting the country into good living goes forward.
Kipling, “On the City Wall,” 1901

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, British fiction writers who wrote about India focused on British life in India. They wrote of time spent in the European Clubs, extravagant parties which mimicked those in Britain, the hardships of their voyages overseas, the climate, and love triangles. Representations of interactions with Indians themselves were minimal. If Indians were present at all, they were only in the margins as they slipped into the lives of the British to serve tea or to deliver messages. Subjects of discussion between characters focused on the greatness of the empire. Anglo-Indians\(^1\) rarely wrote of issues which did not directly affect their own lives.

Beginning in the late 1850s, however, stories written by Anglo-Indian writers began to include Indian characters. But these Indian characters were represented almost entirely in ways that helped to further justify British rule in the subcontinent. This shift in the literature suggests that the British felt a new need to justify their empire. It is the latter representations of life in India which form the bulk of my analysis. In the three chapters that follow, I trace interrelated examples of how British literary representations of Indian life were used to justify British rule. The three recurring themes I have chosen to analyze are (1) the state of Indian women; (2) the alleged rivalry between Hindus and Muslims, and (3) the perceived incompetence of educated Indians for political rule. These themes were presented in

\(^1\) Although today’s definition of the term “Anglo-Indian” denotes an individual of mixed British and Indian descent, the definition which applied in the nineteenth century – and thus the definition which will be used through these pages – is one which designates “Anglo-Indians” as British persons living in India.
literature by Anglo-Indian authors as evidence of the continued need for British rule in the subcontinent. I show how Anglo-Indian authors painted images of India which reflected the India they wanted to believe existed, and the ways in which this image contributed to an argument for rule in the subcontinent. In other words, British fiction writers represented India and Indians in ways which made their rule seem essential.

The themes of the literature written in the second half of the nineteenth century varied widely. Common subjects were the effect of ruling on the rulers themselves,\(^2\) the increased loyalty to the British empire as a result of living in the periphery,\(^3\) the separation of British parents from their children upon sending the children to England to receive an English education,\(^4\) the Indian Rebellions of 1857-8,\(^5\) the treatment of Indian women, the nature of relations between Hindus and Muslims, and the stereotyping of English-educated Indians. Of these themes, I focus on the last three because they demonstrate my argument about how the British represented Indian society in a manner that justified British rule.

In Chapter I, I delineate the progression of illustrations of Indian women. In the first half of the century, as detailed above, the presence of Indian women in Anglo-Indian fiction was wholly lacking. Beginning in the 1860s, however, as Indian women began to enter the

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\(^2\) Christine Weston, “A Game of Halma”; Alice Perrin, “The Rise of Ram Din”; Bithia Mary Croker, “Jack Straw’s Castle” all demonstrate the harm ruling has on the British rulers. These stories, however, do not necessarily serve as pleas for the end of British rule in India. Rather, they imply that there is something inherent in Eastern civilization that destroys the integrity of the British character. For a more extensive discussion of this topic, refer to the Introduction in ed. Saros Cowasjee, *Oxford Anthology of Raj Stories* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). Other stories which canvas a similar theme, though are written about Burma, come from the pen of George Orwell: “A Hanging” and “Shooting an Elephant.”

\(^3\) John Eyton, “The Dancing Fakir” and Philip Mason, “The Crook” are beautiful examples of Britons who would risk their safety to save their fellow Englishmen. These stories have been reprinted in ed. Saros Cowasjee, *Oxford Anthology of Raj Stories* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

\(^4\) Much of Rudyard Kipling’s early years were defined by his separation from his parents and from his childhood home in Bombay. His short story, “Baa Baa Black Sheep,” serves as an autobiographical account of how Kipling dealt with his journey to England at age five with his younger sister, and how his return to India over a decade later became the source for much of his opinions about the nature of the British empire.

\(^5\) The most highly acclaimed novel which represents India during the Indian Rebellions of 1857-58 is Flora Annie Steel, *On the Face of the Waters* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1903). For a more extensive analysis of Anglo-Indian fiction on the Rebellions, refer to the Conclusion.
fictional realm – due in large part to the women’s movement in Britain and increased travel between the two locales – they were described in two ways: solely in terms of sexuality, and as objects at the mercy of supposedly dangerous Indian men and traditions. These stories suggest a justification for British rule: *we, the British, must remain in India in order to protect Indian women from the horrors of their religious traditions.* But at the turn of the twentieth century, Indian women began to be portrayed as respectable protagonists. At this point, the legitimization of empire became: *Indian women have advanced due to our efforts for reform.*

The women’s movement in Britain was intimately connected to the advancement of women in India. In her book *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915,* Antoinette Burton argues in a chapter titled “Female Emancipation and the Other Women” that the missions of these movements at home and abroad were mutually dependent. As Burton states, “while the women’s movement was crucial to the maintenance of the British Empire, empire was equally crucial to the realization of British feminists’ aspirations and objectives.” Feminists in Britain used the momentum of the movement to advance the fight for female rights abroad, and the fight for female emancipation abroad aided the feminist movement in Britain.

*Sati,* or the practice of widow immolation on their husband’s funeral pyres, was an example of an Indian practice which frequently made its way into British fiction about India. In her chapter on the nineteenth century in *The History of Doing,* Radha Kumar argues that

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7 Ibid., 12.
8 Ibid., 63-96.
the debate about sati between 1800 and 1830 created the myth that sati was a widespread practice. She maintains that sati was in fact a localized practice which was exaggerated in British accounts of its occurrence. Lata Mani contends in her article “Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India”\(^{10}\) that the debates about sati were more about scriptural interpretation than about women’s rights. As Mani states, “Tradition is reconstituted under colonial rule and, in different ways, women and brahmanic scripture become interlocking grounds for this rearticulation. Women become emblematic of tradition, and the reworking of tradition is largely conducted through debating the rights and status of women in society.”\(^{11}\) Mani concludes that this system of representing women as tradition was a result of a view of Indian society that created the perceived necessity of British rule.\(^{12}\)

Chapter II traces Anglo-Indian depictions of Hindus and Muslims as perpetually at war with one another. The British employed a binary system of understanding the religious groups in the subcontinent. In British consciousness, Hindu and Muslim were distinct categories which produced a volatile relationship. British analyses of violence in India were interpreted and represented primarily as violence between these two groups. The justification of empire inherent in these illustrations was the following: *Hindus and Muslims are groups with irreconcilable differences who have been fighting for many generations; we, the British, must remain in India in order to save the Hindus and Muslims from the havoc they intend to wreak upon one another.*

The alleged conflict between Hindus and Muslims has been taken up by historians Gyanendra Pandey and Harjot Oberoi. Pandey argues in his article “The Colonial


\(^{11}\) Ibid., 90.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 91.
Construction of ‘Communalism’: British Writings on Banaras in the Nineteenth Century” that British scholars created an image of India that portrayed Hindus and Muslims as inherently antagonistic groups. He examines the 1809 riots in Benares to analyze the ways in which twentieth-century records of the violence contradicted facts from the original reports of the violence. Pandey lists the particular scholars who misinterpreted and misrepresented the actual events and determines the ways in which these scholars created new “facts” of their own. Pandey concludes that this historical reconstruction was characterized by the removal of Indian history “from the political experience of the people to the identification of religion, or the religious community, as the moving force of all Indian politics.” Thus British historians essentially emptied all history out of India and constructed a new history in which violence could be explained by religious antagonism.

Harjot Oberoi examines the history of the Sikh tradition in India to draw conclusions about the nature of relations among the religious communities of the subcontinent. In his book, The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition, Oberoi argues that the various religious groups actually lived quite harmoniously with one another. He contends that Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs often participated in the customs and rituals of the other religious communities. He mentions overlap in census records of religious identity, concluding that the strict boundaries between the communities was a myth constructed by the British, and that Indians did not imagine themselves as split along religious lines.

14 Ibid., 132.
The third and final chapter discusses changing representations of educated Indians. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the term babu, or English-educated Indian, was used in a similar fashion as the English “gentleman”. It was largely a term of respect. But the phenomenal success of Indians in the realm of English education ignited a British fear that babus posed a threat to their rule. The British then represented babus as effeminate and incompetent, and later as tricksters and nationalists in fiction. The justification of empire implied in these representations was the following: the members of the babu class are quasi-educated in English subjects, unable to rule effectively, and ultimately are little more than petty trouble-makers. By portraying the babus in this manner, British writers offered a validation of the necessity of their empire to mask their own imperial concerns.

There is significant historiography on the subject of the babu class in the late nineteenth century. In the book, Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century, Mrinalini Sinha asserts that the categories of colonized and colonizer were not fixed. The book traces the evolution of the term “babu” from having a positive connotation, to acquiring a negative connotation, representing an effeminate, incompetent nationalist. As Sinha states, “Gender was an important axis along which colonial power was constructed, and…at the same time the category of gender itself was never distinct from national, class, caste, and racial categories.”

British illustrations of babus in effeminate terms created the image that they were not as “manly” as the British, and that they were therefore unfit to rule.

Rajiv Vrudhula delves into the construction of the image of the Bengali babu in his study titled The Bengali Babu: ideology, stereotype, and the quest for authenticity in colonial

South Asian literature. Vrudhula argues that “the stereotype of the babu…was a product of ‘knowledge,’” and of “the continuing process of Orientalist knowledge-production.” He contends that the stereotypes surrounding the Bengali babu were constructed due to a British fear that the babus were becoming “too British” – that the babus’ adoption of Western education, Western attitudes, and Western manners might ultimately prove to be a threat to British superiority. He analyzes the depictions of babus in Rudyard Kipling’s novel Kim and his short story “The Head of the District,” concluding that “imperialist ideology insist[ed] upon the Indian lack of capacity for self-rule.” The continuation of the British Empire in India was contingent upon the illustrations of babus in these terms.

I refer to the historical work of these scholars to analyze depictions of Indians in British fiction. The existing scholarship has informed my own argument, which effectively combines history with literary analysis. This study investigates representations of Indians in fiction as these scholars have done with historical events, and analyzes these representations against the backdrop of historiographical debate. Kumar and Mani have maintained that British reports of sati in the subcontinent were exaggerated. I trace this exaggeration in such stories as Kardoo: The Hindoo Girl and Sita: A story of child-marriage fetters, demonstrating that this embellishment was employed as a justification for British rule in India. Gyanendra Pandey and Harjot Oberoi have explored historical examples of how the British represented Hindus and Muslims as living in diametrically opposed categories that were fraught with antagonism. I further this argument by analyzing the ways in which this rivalry was created and sustained in literature. Mrinalini Sinha and Rajiv Vrudhula have discussed the ways in

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18 Ibid., 2.
19 Ibid., 188.
which British portrayals of educated babus created stereotypes of the babus as fundamentally inferior to the British. My analysis applies this argument to numerous works of fiction, and extends the identification of representations of babus to include images of femininity, incompetence, trickery, and nationalism. Moreover, I have combined each of these topics into one study, thereby drawing out the connection between the themes: each was employed as a tactic to justify the British Empire.

The first phase of my research consisted of reading as many works as possible from the nineteenth century. Distinctions among themes, time periods, and authorship were not established; I merely sampled all the works I could find. I found a significant thematic break in the literature before and after 1857. By this point, I had consulted 14 works written before 1857, and approximately 115 short stories and 15 novels in the period after 1857. The works written after 1857 were far more varied in their representations of Indian society, and thus formed the basis of the second phase of my research: concentrating on the works written post-1857, and finding more works from both time periods.

In total, I explored 300 works of literature written between 1800 and 1924. Of the 300 works I examined, 21 were written in the period from 1800 to 1857, and 279 were written between 1857 and 1924. I chose to begin my investigation at the dawn of the nineteenth century, because it was at this point that British writing on India became popular. There is, of course, some thematic overlap in these periods, as well as overlap among the themes themselves. Of the 21 works which were written before 1857, 13 were novels, 5 were drama and/or poetry, and 3 were non-fictional accounts (including memoirs, travel diaries, and discourses). All 21 of these works reveal personal episodes of the authors with regard solely
to their experiences with one another, and with adjusting to life in India. Only 4 of them mention any interactions at all with Indians, and in all of these works the appearance of Indians is sporadic and trivial: Indians perform the duties associated with being a household servant, such as serving tea, cleaning rooms, running small errands, and delivering messages.

I use 1857 as a dividing point in my analysis of the 300 works because this date marked the widespread Indian Rebellions of 1857-8, a much-studied episode of violence in which Indians challenged British rule in the subcontinent. Controversy surrounds numerous aspects of the violence, even in its title. Naming the revolt a “Sepoy Mutiny” suggests that violence occurred only within a specific group of the military; calling the revolt the “First War of Independence” implies the presence of a conscious national effort to liberate the subcontinent from British rule. Neither of these descriptions was wholly accurate. Prior to 1857, the British expanded their hold over many aspects of Indian life, namely in legislative reforms intended to bring about change in social customs, such as the prohibition of sati in 1829 and the Act of 1850. Other changes introduced by the British included the introduction of railways, telegraphs, and English-language learning in schools and colleges. The conquests of the various territories in the subcontinent had also elicited strains on Anglo-Indian relations. As Ainslie T. Embree has put forth, “both those who opposed the forces making for social change and those who advocated them tended to see clear evidence…of a

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22 According to page ix of Embree’s book, the Act of 1850 “made it possible for converts from Hinduism to another religion to inherit ancestral property,” and was “widely resented.”
23 Ibid.
widespread and well-organized conspiracy.”

By 1857, tensions had reached an all-time high, and a rebellion spread rapidly throughout the continent.

Thomas Metcalf’s book *The Ideologies of the Raj* captures the ways in which the Indian Rebellions of 1857-58 transformed British attitudes towards Indian society, and awakened the British to the vulnerability of their rule. Metcalf maintains that the British set up a system of British knowledge that marked similarities and differences between the British and Indians, and that after 1858, the justifications of empire which stemmed from this system relied increasingly on Indian “difference”. He ultimately concludes that the British were unable to effectively cope with the contradictions of their empire, evidenced in the many British legislative attempts to suppress the powers of Indians’ self-rule capabilities. His study extends into the twentieth century, offering a dynamic analysis of the ways in which ideas of India’s “difference” informed the decades before and after independence.

Thomas Metcalf argues that “no one among the British took seriously, or even tried to comprehend, the complex forces that moved Indians to act.”

According to historian Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri, “the English fought in the Mutiny with a passion and determination as though they were fighting in defense of their country and struggling for their cherished rights.” The implication here is that the British saw the danger inherent in the Rebellions, namely that their empire was in jeopardy. A common British interpretation of the events, typified by Wayne G. Broehl’s analysis, assigned a religious cause to the outbreak of violence. These historians assign the blame to the fact that a new rifle possessed cartridges

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24 Ibid.
lined with pig and/or cow fat, sacred animals to Muslims and Hindus, respectively. Broehl and others do not account for the complex forces at work which brought Indians to rebel. The events of 1857-58 were steeped in a longstanding frustration with British rule. The fact that historians like Broehl have represented the Rebellions in terms of a culture clash, and not in terms of a challenge to British rule, suggests that the British fear of losing the empire was so potent as to necessitate the expressed denial of that fear.

1857 thus serves as a breaking point in my analysis of nineteenth century British literature because of the significance of the events which took place in that year, and because of the ways in which the Rebellions changed British representations of Indian society and of themselves in India. The aftermath of the Rebellions saw the rise of insecurity concerning British rule in India. The events fundamentally shook British confidence in their empire, and served as the reason for offering new justifications of rule. The changing portrayals of Indian life accommodated new justifications of empire, which suggests that the British began to fear the fragility of their empire, and to mask that fear through literature. Anglo-Indian fiction provides insight into the anxieties of the collective British psyche, and the ways in which those anxieties were concealed.

Of the works written after 1857, I consulted 215 short stories, 47 full-length novels, and 17 non-fictional accounts. After 1857, Anglo-Indian authors began to present implicit and explicit justifications of their rule in their literature. Although 16 of these 279 works continue to deal exclusively with British subjects similar to those present in the literature before 1857, the remaining 263 explicitly illustrate British-Indian relations, and interactions among Indians themselves. None of the pre-1857 works present these justifications. Beginning in the 1920s, much of the literature began to focus on nationalism and the
independence movement. I have excluded works written thereafter, with the last work I discuss published in 1924.\textsuperscript{28} Once I noticed this shift, I concentrated my efforts on the works written in the second half of the century, because it was at this time that illustrations of the Indians themselves entered the fictional scene, and that the British began to offer justifications of their own empire through fiction.

I was able to obtain many novels and short stories in a Microform collection housed in Van Pelt Library at the University of Pennsylvania. The collection, titled \textit{Colonial Discourses: Series 3, Colonial Fiction, 1650-1914. Part 3, General Works and Fiction from India}, consists of thirty microfilm reels, each of which contains several fictional and non-fictional documents written by the British on the topic of India.\textsuperscript{29} The collection was published in 2002 by Adam Matthew Publications in Wilshire, England, and was purchased by the British Library in February 1993. The collection was later purchased by the University of Pennsylvania. Publication information for each of the individual documents on the reels is limited to the name of the original publisher, date, and location. In most cases, the works were published in England by private publishers.

By exposing the fact that Anglo-Indian literature helped to create and perpetuate certain stereotypes – concerning women, concerning the nature of Hindu-Muslim relations, and concerning English-educated Indians – we can better understand the manner in which these stereotypes were employed as justifications of empire. By revealing also that Anglo-Indian literature illustrated these stereotypes due to a deep-rooted fear of losing the empire that was brought on by the very real loss of authority and control in 1857-8 during the widespread Rebellions, we can better understand the ways in which the British desperately

\textsuperscript{28} E.M. Forster, \textit{A Passage to India} (San Diego: Harcourt Inc., 1924).


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tried to validate their necessity in the subcontinent through the implicit and explicit representations of Indian life in the literature of the day. The following chapters combine history and literary analysis to determine how these stereotypes were created, and how they were used to legitimate and emphasize the necessity of the British Empire in India.
CHAPTER I
Transformations in the Depictions of Indian Women

In 1839, Letitia Elizabeth Landon wrote in a footnote to her story “The Zenana”, “A weak father, and an ambitious minister, led to the immolation of...the beautiful victim; an unmarried daughter being held to be the greatest possible disgrace.”¹ Landon does not identify the girl as a widow, but rather as an unmarried daughter. She simply alludes to the practice of sati,² or widow immolation, without explicitly stating what will happen to the young girl. The “greatest possible disgrace” receives more attention here than the girl who will suffer such a fate.

In “The Fearless Will Always Have It,” by Joseph Hitrec, the only woman in the story remains anonymous, and her only scene in the novel is one in which she has sex with an Indian nationalist.³ The smell of jasmine and the sound of her bangles jingling together are the only points that define her character. The woman is nameless, faceless, and ultimately void of identity outside of her womanness. Though she has gained a presence in Anglo-Indian fiction, she is depicted in these limiting terms.

A young Hindu girl, explains in an 1869 novel called Kardoo, the Hindoo Girl, “The reason of this custom, as of many others, I never could learn; whenever I asked, all that would be said was, ‘It is our custom.’ I hope, my dear readers, that I shall not weary you with the many descriptions that I give of our customs; but I want you to see the difference between our manners and yours, that you may better feel the many reasons you have for

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² In recent years, this term has been spelled sati. Until the early decades of the twentieth century, however, it was spelled suttee. Thus in this chapter when referring to the practice, I write sati; when quoting a work of fiction or older source, I write the spelling in which it appears.
³ Joseph Hitrec, “The Fearless Will Always Have It,” The Oxford Anthology of Raj Stories, ed. Saros Cowasjee (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). Unfortunately, Cowasjee does not include in his collection the date of publication of this story. Its content suggests, however, that it was probably written as early as the mid-nineteenth century, and as late as the turn of the twentieth century.
being thankful that you were born in a Christian country.”⁴ Kardoo, the main character of this novel (as the title indicates), laments being born into a world which she presents as unwelcoming, illogical, and mired in unquestioning “tradition”. She has little say in the stake of her own life, and must blindly obey the customs of her faith.

In a 1911 novel titled *Sita: a story of child-marriage fetters*, Mr. Chatterji gives a speech entitled “The Women of India.” He claims that “[Indian] women…are learning, now and then, to stand against the oppression and degradation of the ages….Our girls, the Christian young women, in that measure that they are true, earnest, self-reliant, and self-respecting, are India’s hope! They are…the prophecy of a future when India shall have a restored Young Womanhood, when her daughters shall be as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace.”⁵ Later in the novel, Sita, the central character and an Indian female, is called to speak on her own behalf in a courtroom. As the narrator states, Sita preaches “not for [her]self alone, but for [her] sisters – for Indian womanhood.”⁶ Indian women have been given a fictional voice.

The transition in the accounts cited above demonstrates the changing representations of Indian women in Anglo-Indian literature. At first, Indian women did not play a significant role – or any role – for British writers. As they began to enter the fictional scene in the mid-nineteenth century, Indian women were depicted solely in terms of their sexuality, and as helplessly at the mercy of their religious customs. As the nineteenth century progressed, Indian women began to be presented in fiction as protagonists of stories with needs, desires, and opinions. This transition in literature is indicative of a new British justification of

⁶ Ibid., 327-8.
Indian women exist at the mercy of their customs, and at the mercy of the Indian men who enforce those customs. We, the British, must hold our place in India for the betterment of the Indian women.

The absence in the early decades of the nineteenth century of Indian subjects was especially true for the case of Indian women, who at most were mentioned only marginally with regards to larger storylines. Those authors who claimed to encompass larger Indian themes failed to mention Indian women as significant characters. For example, several tales have a subtitle reading “An Indian Tale,”⁷ “Tales Descriptive of Society in India,”⁸ or “Sundry Chapters of Indian Experience,”⁹ and yet not one of these tales draws on the experiences or conditions of Indian women – or of Indians in general – in their native contexts. Where women are mentioned, they exist only in the margins.

One example of such a story is a collection of poems by Laetitia Elizabeth Landon that was published in London in 1839 called “The Zenana, and other minor tales of L.E.L.”¹⁰ In a letter to a dear friend, Mrs. S.C. Hall, Landon mentioned having written “The Zenana,” one of her few lengthy poems. She recalled the pleasures of writing a long poem, but nothing else is said of her opinions of zenana women.¹¹ In fact, Landon did not spend any duration of time in India (though her vacations South Africa – the place of her death – abound in her letters and memoirs). The “minor poems” to which the title refers is only tangentially related

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¹⁰ Landon was often referred to by her initials, L.E.L, both in her personal encounters and in her writing. The following information was acquired from F.J. Sypher, ed., *Critical Writings by Letitia Elizabeth Landon* (New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 1996), 7-22. L.E.L., 1802-1838, grew up in London and lived most of her life in Chelsea. In 1838, she married George Maclean, a colonial governor, and the couple moved to Cape Coast in West Africa. Two months after their arrival, L.E.L. died suddenly of an alleged accidental overdose of prussic acid.
to women’s issues, despite their titles. For instance, “The Hindoo Girl’s Song” has little to do with the experience of being a Hindu girl. The subject of the poem is a tradition in which Hindu girls place a small lamp on a hand-made boat made from cocoa-nut wood and send the small boat out to sea. The superstition states that if the boat sinks, the omen which accompanies it is ill-fated; if the boat stays afloat, a wish will come true.\textsuperscript{12} This poem does not illustrate life for Hindu girls; in fact the girls are not actually present in the poem. By using the definite article in the title, Landon asserts that this innocuous detail of life is \textit{the} Hindu girl’s song. Here, Hindu girls face no threats, and no troubles.\textsuperscript{13} This collection of poems demonstrates that the debate about the condition of women had not yet been established as a popular theme in literature; where it existed at all, it was merely hinted at by the authors.

Landon was an extremely popular writer in the first decades of the nineteenth century, evident in the fact that she published “seventeen volumes of poetry, three three-decker novels, two books of short fiction, and hundreds of uncollected works of poetry, fiction, and criticism, which appeared in periodicals, annual gift books, and anthologies. In the periodicals of the time there are innumerable reviews and discussions of her works.”\textsuperscript{14} As F.J. Sypher has noted in his collection of her critical writings, Landon “knew and was known by virtually everyone in literary London.”\textsuperscript{15} She wrote frequently for the \textit{Literary Gazette}, the \textit{New Monthly Magazine}, and \textit{The Court Journal}, periodicals published in London.\textsuperscript{16} The prestige of the \textit{Literary Gazette} cannot be underestimated. As Sypher as stated, “it was said

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{12} Landon, 195. \\
\textsuperscript{13} Landon’s poem “She Sat Alone Beside Her Hearth” has a similar effect. \\
\textsuperscript{14} Sypher, 7. \\
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 15. 
\end{flushleft}
that a review in the *Literary Gazette* could make or break an author’s sales and reputation, and that it was in general one of most influential publications in its effect on sales.”

The popularity of Landon’s writing speaks to the notion that these images of India were popular, or at least accepted. The fact that the titles of the poems lead the reader to believe that they are about Indian women indicates that a title is the extent to which Indian women can be depicted in fiction.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Indian women became a popular theme in literature largely due to increased travel of British women to the subcontinent. Many British women traveled to India with the intention of taking part in the empire, often as wives of the men in the Indian Civil Service. Of the five British women Barbara N. Ramusack describes in her article “Cultural Missionaries, Material Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945,” four of them were single and all five were childless. Many British women like the five she describes received an education in Britain, worked “in the public sphere in England as educators, social reformers, and suffragists, [and] extended their purview to include other women within the British Empire.”

As Antoinette Burton has argued, “throughout contemporary middle-class feminist discourse ‘the Indian woman’ served as evidence of British feminists’ special imperial ‘burden.’”

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17 Ibid., 17.
19 Ibid., 128. The five women Ramusack discusses are Mary Carpenter (1807-77), Annette Akroyd Beveridge (1842-1929), Margaret Noble – later known as Sister Nivedita (1867-1911), Margaret Gillespie Cousins (1878-1954), and Eleanor Rathbone (1872-1946).
20 Ibid.
voyaged to India, the more popular Indian women became as a theme in Anglo-Indian fiction.

But initial images of Indian women illustrated them solely in terms of their sexuality and exoticism. In Joseph Hitrec’s “The Fearless Will Always Have It,” the sole purpose of the female character in the story is to serve as the object through which nationalist Raman can exert his lustful tendencies.\(^{22}\) While running from the police for chalking nationalist expressions on the sidewalk, Raman gets pulled into a door by a woman. She is described by her perfume and her smooth skin. Her sensuality is encompassed in her effect on Raman: “Her smell became stronger, sending little shivers down his uncovered back.”\(^{23}\) In other words, her only characteristics Hitrec deems worthy of description are her sexuality and her exoticism. The darkness of the room hides the woman’s face, and Raman can barely determine the position in which she stands against the wall. In the morning, Raman awakens to find that his companion is missing. The story then abruptly ends with an affirmation of the nationalist cause. The woman character exists, then, only to have sex with Raman. The minimal role of the woman is reduced to that of a sexual being – a woman, but not fully human.

Leonard Woolf’s “A Tale Told by Moonlight,” written in the 1920s, is perhaps the harshest illustration of India’s women.\(^{24}\) For the first three-quarters of the story, the unnamed

\(^{22}\) The following information was acquired from Saros Cowasjee, Biographical Notes in Stories from the Raj: from Kipling to Independence (London: The Bodley Head, 1982), 269. Joseph Hitrec, 1912-1972 was born and educated in Yugoslavia, and worked for a British advertising agency in London in 1935. He later was transferred by the agency to Calcutta and Bombay. Hitrec remained in India until 1946, after which he lived in New York and became a United States citizen in 1951.

\(^{23}\) Hitrec, 330

\(^{24}\) The following information was acquired from Cowasjee, 269. Leonard Woolf, 1880-1969, was born and educated in England. From 1904 to 1911, he worked for the Ceylon Civil Service. He moved back to England, married Virginia Stephen (better known as Virginia Woolf), and founded a printing press. According to his autobiography, his anti-imperialist ideas had increased in his time spent in the Ceylon Civil Service, which ultimately proved to be the reason for his resignation from the Service.
narrator describes how a British man named Jessop had fallen in love with an Indian prostitute. At the beginning of the story, the woman and her friends are depicted in a somewhat sympathetic light, as can be inferred by the description of a cultural – or at least linguistic – reciprocity which existed between Jessop and his love, Celestinahami: “He taught her English and she taught him Sinhalese.”

The two had fallen in love and lived together in India. But Woolf illustrates how this type of love, this interracial, reciprocal love, could not survive. She had loved him not as a woman loves a man or as a wife loves a husband, but as a slave loves a master. For the remainder of the story, Woolf likens Celestinahami to a dog and to a child. After the relationship comes to an end, Jessop sees her once, and describes her as “lying on a dirty wooden board on trestles in the dingy mud-plastered room.” Woolf sends the message in no uncertain terms that an Indian woman on her own cannot live a reputable life, but that when in relations with the British, she can become somewhat more respectable. Jessop had not wanted a wife, he had wanted to be mutually in love. Celestinahami had not been capable of such a relationship. Woolf paints her as incapable of reciprocity in human relationships. Celestinahami, thus, is represented as not fully human.

Anglo-Indian writers also depicted the treatment of women in common Indian rituals and customs in fiction. As Antoinette Burton, a historian of British feminism and India, has contended, descriptions of forced prostitution and certain religious rites tapped into the hearts of those at home who believed in the altruism of worldwide British rule. Burton states, “descriptions of ‘Oriental’ women as prisoners of the harem, suffocated by religious custom and at the mercy of brutish husbands, frequently interrupted the narrative of emancipationist arguments…serving as brief but apparently graphic ‘proof’ of women’s fate in cultures

26 Ibid., 274.
where female emancipation went unrecognized.”

These representations elicited two reactions. On the one hand, the rise of the women’s movement in Britain raised consciousness of the status of women in the stories written about India. On the other hand, these descriptions gave rise to a new trend in travel of British women between the two locales, which in turn facilitated the exchange of knowledge.

Until the nineteenth century, British women remained in the private sphere as mothers, daughters, and wives.28 As Indrani Sen states in her study of *Woman and Empire*, British women were resigned to a “limited cultural role [in which] marriage and motherhood were identified as the central goals suitable for middle-class women.”29 Women were denied access to higher education and other realms of public interaction.30 Around the 1830s, however, individual women began to question their status in British society. It was at this time that the lack of women’s suffrage and other forms of female involvement in the public sphere first arose as unacceptable characteristics of British public life in the eyes of women.31 As Ray Strachey argues, “the first stirring of the feminist movement began through the awakening of individual women to their own uselessness….By the middle of the century there were quite a noticeable number of people who were familiar with the idea that there was something wrong with the position of women.”32 Especially in the 1850s and

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27 Burton, 63.
28 For a detailed discussion of the women’s movement in Britain, refer to Ray Strachey, “*The Cause: ’A Short History of the Women’s Movement in Great Britain*” (London: G. Bell and Sons, LTD, 1928); Martin Pugh, *Women and the women’s movement in Britain* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000).
30 Ibid., 3.
31 Strachey, 30-3. The following information can be found in the same book, on pages 30-44: The Charist Movement was the first to list women’s suffrage as a right in 1838, though the proposal was shut down soon thereafter.
32 Ibid., 44.
afterwards, British women were afforded more liberties, namely access to higher education, property rights, and the right to divorce.\textsuperscript{33}

The British women, especially British feminist women, who traveled to India often recorded their experiences. The substance of memsahibs\textsuperscript{34} writing on their encounters with Indian women, beginning in the later 1850s, demonstrates the extent to which they represented Indian women as being trapped by the customs of their religions. Because men – Indian and British – were not permitted to enter the women’s quarters in Indian homes, known as zenanas,\textsuperscript{35} entrance into this realm was the exclusive privilege of women. The experiences of several British women in India are captured in a collection of memsahib accounts by Indira Ghose. Ghose cites Anne Katherine Elwood, who wrote, “this Zenana…was a small dark apartment, with unglazed windows closed by wooden shutters.” Elwood goes on to provide an inventory of the furniture, including the barrenness of the beds, carpets, chairs, and dressers.\textsuperscript{36} Elwood describes the zenana woman as being “never allowed to leave her Zenana.” The lives of zenana women largely consist of infrequent interactions with men, and the repetition of many rituals involved in prayer. Many accounts of the zenanas follow a similar pattern.

Although there were some women who expressed a disdain for the zenana women – as in the account by Amelia Cary Falkland, who claims of the ladies, “one was more ugly than another; they had small, black, lifeless eyes, flattish noses, large mouths, teeth

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 61; 73; 74.
\textsuperscript{34} Memsahibs are British women in India.
\textsuperscript{35} Zenana is the Persian term used for the living quarters (or apartments) for the female family members of babus (Western-educated, literate Indian men). It was originally an Islamic tradition to seclude the female members of the household in separate quarters, but the custom spread through Hindus in India, as well.
\textsuperscript{36} Indira Ghose, ed., Memsahibs Abroad. Writings by Women Travellers in Nineteenth Century India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 144-5.
discoloured by chewing paun, and on their foreheads a red sectarian circular spot”\textsuperscript{37} – most took special note of the “harsh” conditions these women endured. Even Falkland seems sympathetic in that she is thankful when a chair is brought for a widow, despite the prohibition of such an act in tradition. She feels compassion for the zenana children, whom she refers to as “the poor things.”\textsuperscript{38} Marianne Postans, another memsahib, calls attention to the babies carried by the zenana women, and the degree to which the women have tried to make their space available to and comfortable for their children, likening the experiences of Indian women to her own. \textsuperscript{39}

Of the British women who wrote on India, none presented a more unique view on zenana life than Helen Mackenzie. She states, on the topic of zenana women, “I do not think their secluded life makes them objects of pity. They are hardly more devoid of excitement than I am myself; they see their female friends and their dearest male relations, and the tie between brother and sister seems to be very strongly felt by them.” Mackenzie differs from other writers by explicitly stating that she does not pity the zenana women, and calls attention to the commonalities she shares with these women. Mackenzie then continues her description, writing, “but it is not in human nature to be content with being only the fourth part of a man’s wife.” Here, she calls attention to the practice of polygamy.\textsuperscript{40} She goes on to say, “As no man can love two or more women equally, and as no woman can bear that another should share her husband’s affections, I plainly see there are heartburnings

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 148.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 146-49.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 150-56.
\textsuperscript{40} Polygamy had been practiced in Ancient India. During the nineteenth century, there was small debate about legislative action forbidding polygamy, but it took longer to secure this stipulation than other, more pressing social issues facing women. It remained a common practice among high caste Hindus.
innumerable.”"41 Mackenzie comments on what she deems the injustice of polygamy, and thus subtly criticizes the treatment of Indian women. The “heartburnings innumerable” mark much depiction of Indian women in memsahib travel accounts. The fiction of British men and the travel writing of British women thus amount to the same thing: they both portray Indian women as mere pawns in the game of strict devotion to the traditions of the land.

These portrayals then became integrated into the women’s movement in Britain. As Indira Ghose argues in another study, “women travelers sought access to Orientalism as a strategy to negotiate a form of gender power.”42 The movement of British women to India is thus intricately connected to the desire for increased women’s rights at home. As Antoinette Burton puts forth, “most if not all middle-class feminist groups in the period 1865-1915 identified themselves with the cause of Indian women and, through it, with the civilizing mission of the empire itself.”43 Discussion about the position of Indian women served two purposes for the feminists in Britain, detailed in Burton’s study: on the one hand, many equated the fight for Indian women’s rights with the fight for all female emancipation from oppression, and on the other hand, many saw the fight for Indian women’s rights as a point of unification for the various women’s groups at home, which were often split over such issues as female suffrage.44 Thus, as Burton concludes, the argument in favor of improving the conditions of women living in India actually solidified the argument in favor of improving the conditions of women living in Britain, and vice versa.45 As a result, the lives and status of Indian women became ever popular as a topic for discussion, and as a topic for fiction.

41 Ghose, 157.
43 Burton, 9.
44 Ibid., 9.
As this trend continued, British women began to represent Indian women in fiction. Though British women had been writing fiction in India for decades, it is at this moment that Indian women became a common theme in their stories. Authors like Sydney Owenson and Barbara Hoole, who wrote short stories and novels primarily between 1810 and 1830, wrote of British life in India, as their male contemporaries did. In 1874, William Browne Hockley was among the first British writers to delve into the topic of Indian women. Shortly after, writers such as Flora Annie Steel, Maud Diver, and Olivia A. Baldwin took on the role of discussing Indian women in their prose.

The primary concerns regarding Indian women were those which stemmed from certain Hindu beliefs and traditions. The practice of sati, whereby widows would be burned alive on the funeral pyres of their husbands, was of special concern. Early depictions of sati, however, were written largely without social or political agenda. For example, in an 1839 poem titled “A Suttee,” Letitia Elizabeth Landon writes in an overly romanticized style, and follows a simple abab rhyming pattern. The verse does not judge sati negatively, does not demonstrate the suffering of the dying woman, and does not make a case for the end of the practice. Instead, the poem focuses on the richness of the woman’s hair, the fragrance of the oils which blanket her skin, the softness of her feet, and the unquestioned removal of jewelry. In fact, Landon seems to find beauty in the death of the widow in the closing lines of the poem, which read as follows: “The red pile blazes – let the bride ascend, / And lay her head upon her husband’s heart, / Now in a perfect unison to blend - / No more to part.”

This romanticized version of a sati in 1839 became a terrifying ordeal – and almost murder –

46 Other works which fall into this category include: Mrs. Mary Ann Hartley, Indian Life: a tale of the Carnatic (London: Saunders and Otley, 1840); Emma Roberts, Oriental scenes, dramatic sketches and tales, with other poems (Calcutta: P.S. D’ROzario, 1830).
47 Landon, 175.
48 Ibid., 177.
of a young girl by 1911, when Olivia A. Baldwin wrote and published *Sita, a story of child-marriage fetters*.

The primary sources of fiction which apply to the discussion of sati are *Sita*, and *Kardoo, the Hindoo girl*, originally published anonymously by a missionary, and later allegedly published by Harriette G. Brittan in 1869. One problem in determining the usefulness of these sources lies in the lack of information regarding their authors and publications. *Sita* was published in New York in 1911 by a private publisher. It is impossible to know whether the tale was written earlier and merely published later, or whether it was written and circulated in London and only officially published in New York. *Kardoo*, similarly, has conflicting available publication information. On the original document in the Microfilm collection at the University of Pennsylvania’s Van Pelt Library, the tale is written anonymously and is published by the Religious Tract Society in London. Elsewhere, the tale is identified as having been written by Harriette G. Brittan and published privately in New York. Perhaps the age of the document can speak to why this conflicting information exists: a document originally published anonymously might later reveal the author. Knowledge of publication information is relevant because it helps to identify who the primary audience of the writer might have been. It is difficult to conclude the nationality of these authors, because they are displayed in a collection of British accounts of India, and yet seem to have been published in America. But references throughout the novel to “our place here” and “at home” (meaning Britain) suggests that the writers are British. These stories illustrate British sentiments of why Indian women became a dominant theme in Anglo-Indian literature.
Kardoo is written in the voice of a young zenana girl who is raised in a strict Hindu home. The title character is married to a Brahman as a young girl. Her cousin, Berash, is also married as a young girl, and is widowed shortly afterwards. For practical reasons, Berash is not sacrificed in sati, and lives as a widow thereafter. When Kardoo’s husband dies, her father tries twice to sacrifice her on the funeral pyre of her husband, but Kardoo’s body rolls off of the pyre. A local magistrate approaches the scene, and the sati is abandoned. When Kardoo awakens from her drug-induced stupor, she is in the care of Christian missionaries, who treat her wounds and show her great compassion. The story concludes with an image of Kardoo as an outcast from her society, praying to the Christian God for access into Heaven.

The story represents Indian women as existing at the whim of their religious rituals, and by such an illustration makes a case for the outlaw of the practice. Brittan calls attention to the distinction between voluntary and coerced practice of sati. When Kardoo’s husband (never mentioned by name) is killed three years after their marriage ceremony, it is decided that Kardoo – his first wife – would “have the honor” of being burned alive on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. She begs her father to save her and throws a temper tantrum until she falls asleep from exhaustion and fear. When she awakens, she wants to protest, but drugs have been fed to her keep her drowsy. With the heat of the flames and the fumes in her nose, Kardoo falls off the pyre. Her father lifts her body and places her back on the flames:

For if by any means a woman escapes after being brought to the suttee, she is considered as the vilest outcast, no member of her family, even her own child, daring to speak to her, or, if she is dying, to give her as much as a drop of water. She generally dies in the greatest misery and starvation, and is supposed after death to pass into the body of the most degraded reptile; any-one who should even speak to her, will have to inhabit the body of some

49 A Brahman is a member of the highest Hindu caste.
most inferior animal after death.\textsuperscript{50}

When a magistrate approaches, the crowd disbands. As Brittan leads on, the magistrate is thus the unofficial hero for stopping the sati, and the presence of the Christian missionaries when Kardoo wakes up indicates that she is safe from the actual fire of the pyre, and the metaphorical fires of Hinduism.

Almost immediately after the official legalization of sati in 1813, certain ambiguities in the responses of the pundits\textsuperscript{51} elicited further interpretation of Hindu scripture. The pundits reported “to the best of [their] knowledge” that although sati was not specifically encouraged by Hindu scripture, the texts did allow it in certain circumstances. They found that scripture promised religious rewards in the afterlife for the family if the widow performs sati. Beginning in 1815, a resistance movement, led by Rammohan Roy (who would later be labeled the primary figure in the advancement and reform of Hindu women) and by Governor of Bengal William Bentinck, began to advocate the abolition of sati. Pamphlets and news articles were circulated around Bengal, and claimed that Hindu scripture – primarily the Vedas – favored the continued life of a widow. In 1818, Governor Bentinck outlawed sati in the province of Bengal. The debate among British Parliamentarians was split along party lines: the Tories wished to practice nonintervention in the religious customs of their Indian subjects, while the Liberals supported legislative reform.\textsuperscript{52} Upon the 1829 report given by Chief Pundit of the Supreme Court Mrityunjaya Vidtalamkara that sati was not scripturally

\textsuperscript{50} Brittan, 132.
\textsuperscript{51} A pundit is a (Hindu) spiritual leader.
\textsuperscript{52} Radha Kumar, \textit{The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women’s Rights and Feminism in India 1800-1990} (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993), 9.
sanctioned, newly-appointed Governor-General of India Bentinck officially outlawed the practice.\textsuperscript{53}

The contradictory publication information of \textit{Kardoo} makes one point unclear regarding the dispersal of the crowd upon the magistrate’s appearance: is this a demonstration of the British distinction between voluntary and coerced participation in sati, or is this a demonstration of a sati being performed after it had been outlawed?\textsuperscript{54} It is possible that \textit{Kardoo} was written in 1869, but was meant to take place at an earlier time in which sati would have been legal in voluntary situations only. Kardoo obviously did not wish to engage in the practice, but was forced to do so by her father, which could have been the reason for why the crowd scattered with the arrival of the government magistrate. Further, if this was the case, the public recognized that a widow’s \textit{desires} could not be ignored according to British stipulation. Indian women, then, would be represented as possessing opinions concerning their own bodies and souls. It is also possible, however, that the story was written in 1869 about an event which occurred that year, which would imply that the crowd dispersed because sati was illegal. The new British justification of empire would be: \textit{we, the British, must continue our reforming efforts in India to protect Indian women from their dangerous traditions and the men who enforce them}. The story illustrates the ideas that the British needed new ways of rationalizing their rule, and that Indian women were regarded by the British as human agents capable of holding rights and opinions.

Stories like \textit{Kardoo} also illustrate the British perception of sati as a widespread custom. Radha Kumar has advanced the argument that sati was, in fact, a localized tradition,

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 9.

\textsuperscript{54} According to Lata Mani, the British differentiated between voluntary and coerced participation in the tradition in accordance with their 1805 inquiries into the written Hindu laws regarding sati: they prohibited the latter and permitted the former.
practiced by a small number of Hindus. As Kumar demonstrates, the only evidence of the practice of sati came from the areas around Calcutta and Bengal, which were the central locations for the debate. Kumar quotes a figure stating that of the 8,134 instances of sati reported between 1813 and 1819, 63% took place in or around Calcutta. If most (recorded) satis occurred in the places where sati was hotly contested, then the practice may have occurred only in those places. She also points out that these figures reporting sati actually included statistics of widow suicide, as well as widow sati. According to Kumar, a significant proportion of Hindu widows committed suicide several years after the deaths of their husbands because they could not economically sustain themselves. It was figures like these which were advertised as evidence of sati across India. Thus the debate itself played a role in perpetuating the mythical popularity of the practice.

Olivia Baldwin also demonstrates in her novel the idea that the British referred to Hindu scripture to determine whether or not the practice was compulsory according to the Hindu religion. For example, in *Sita: a story of child-marriage fetters*, young Sita is brought to trial for wanting a divorce from her husband. Both sides of the trial recall scripture in order to support their arguments for the status of women, and to determine whether Sita, who had become Westernized and Christianized, can leave the marriage. The “prosecution” claims that women are not permitted to read scripture in an effort to thwart Sita’s defense, but Sita replies that there are some sections of the *Vedas* that were in fact written by women. This fictional portrayal illustrates the method of returning to scripture instead of examining societal practices.

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55 Kumar, 9.  
56 Ibid.  
57 The *Vedas* (Sanskrit) are the oldest and most sacred scriptural texts of Hinduism.  
58 Baldwin, 318-324.
In 1805, when the British sought the advice of Brahmin pundits concerning the practice of sati, the initial response was that sati was allowed by scripture. The British considered these reports authoritative on the issue of sati, and took the pundits’ words as authoritative despite the pundits’ warning that they had read and interpreted scripture “to the best of [their] knowledge.” 59 Because the British framed the question to the pundits as “Does Hindu scripture sanction sati?” the pundits responded with a simple yes or no answer, instead of one which allowed for the actual customs of the society to be brought to light. The British further translated “permission” as “encouragement,” and concluded that Hindu scripture encouraged sati. Thus in 1813, the British legalized the practice. 60

The heavy British reliance on Hindu scripture reinforced their civilizing mission with regards to sati: reliance on Hindu scripture alone to measure sati’s importance allowed them to demonstrate the need for British intervention in “dangerous” Hindu traditions. Regulation XVII, A.D. 1829 of the Bengal code (4 December 1829) reads, “The practice of suttee, or of burning or burying alive the widows of Hindus, is revolting to the feelings of human nature.” 61 The fact that the regulation describes sati as “revolting to the feelings of human nature” proves, at least in part, that the British recognized sati as being disassociated from modernization. As was later interpreted by historian Edward Thompson, “suttee cut to the very roots of social morality, and the society which practiced it and gloried in it made itself an outcast from the civilized community of nations.” 62 Kumar’s argument that the British witnessed a local custom and advertised it as a widespread practice across the subcontinent

59 Kumar, 10.
61 Kumar, 10.
perfectly illustrates the notion that the British used the practice of sati as a justification for their rule in India: *we, the British, must stop this widespread practice of human sacrifice.* The British capitalized on the existence of this practice in an effort to justify their agenda for reform and their civilizing mission. Thus debates about sati reinforced the claimed need for empire.

Sati was not the only women’s issue which was brought to the forefront of imperial consciousness as a justification for the necessity for British Empire. Like sati, questions of widow remarriage and of the age of consent for marriage arose across India. In fact, these questions were the only social reform issues to unite reformers across the subcontinent in the 1880s, and the only issues that were debated by men and women alike. These two issues were widely discussed and intimately intertwined. In the story of *Kardoo*, the most significant case concerning the issue of widow remarriage is that of Berash, discussed above. Upon her husband’s death, it is decided that his body is geographically distant, and that to send Berash to the site to be sacrificed in sati would be too costly and impractical. Instead, she is forced to live the life of a widow: she is stripped of her jewelry, must sleep on the floor, and cannot eat with her family. As a result, she is malnourished and dies a few weeks later.

Of importance here is not only the treatment of widows, especially child widows, but the question of widow remarriage. Widows had been permitted to remarry since 1856, over a decade before this tale was allegedly published. The Preface to the work even states, “Laws have been made by the British government, which forbid infanticide and the burning of

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63 There were, naturally, other social reforms issues during the nineteenth century, such as the implementation of female education and the prohibition of polygamy. However, these two are the most significant discussions related to my argument, and inhabit the most interesting and prevailing presence in Anglo-Indian fiction.

64 Burton, 9.
widows with the dead bodies of their husbands." Clearly, however, this was not an option – or even a remote possibility – for Berash, whose family was intent upon seeing her suffer a widow’s life. No suitors are called, and no arrangements are made to care for the young widow. The same goes for the fate of Kardoo, who must face sati without knowledge of any alternatives. The messages of these stories presented by their British authors in this context are clear: the mandatory sacrifice of widows, or at the very least their inability to remarry, amount to crimes against humanity. The tales intend to present examples of the practices of Hindu worship as barbaric and inhumane, and moreover to make the British presence in India seem important and necessary in order to prevent participation in these rituals.

In a work in which even marginal characters are individualized, the only character in Flora Annie Steel’s 1896 work *On the Face of the Waters* to lack the development of emotional and intellectual sophistication is the Hindu widow Tara. Tara longs to marry the novel’s hero, Jim Douglas, an English horse-jockey turned spy. She is portrayed one-dimensionally: her sole purpose in the novel is to love Douglas, a love which could never prevail. Although Steel’s reasoning for never portraying the two as being lovers was probably due to her negative opinions towards interracial relationships, of implicit importance here is the attention to a widow’s right to remarry – or of a widow’s right to enjoy life after the death of her husband. When first introduced, she is presented as having

65 Brittan, 7.
66 Flora Annie Steel was married to an Indian Civil Servant; the couple and their family lived in India for about twenty years. While abroad, Steel was known for relating to people of all social standings, and especially for her ability to communicate with Indian women. Though she published a few stories while in India, her most noted writing was written as an afterthought once she had returned to England as an older woman. The information for *On the Face of the Waters*, Steel’s celebrated story of the siege of Delhi during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, was based on personal experiences, and was corroborated by extensive research after the violence had ended. (This information can be found in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.)
67 Douglas had already been criticized by his fellow Englishmen for having an affair with an Indian mistress, and Steel probably wanted to avoid having him err a second time, according to Saros Cowasjee’s Introduction to the novel.
burn scars on her face and a shaved head, a typical custom for Hindu widows. She “stands out bold and clear as a cameo.” She participates in a processional, and is exalted by the crowd.\textsuperscript{68} Here, the Hindu widow is not bound to the life of suffering to which her ancestors were subjected. However, she is still not offered a respectable role in Indian society; her unattractive personality and envious attitude preclude any sympathy for her character.

Steel was “undoubtedly, self-assuredly feminist,” as Karyn Huenemann has noted.\textsuperscript{69} Her abilities to portray Indian men and women of all social classes led her readership to admire the honesty and depth of her stories.\textsuperscript{70} Huenemann claims “Steel’s involvement with Indian women was greater than many Anglo-Indian women’s; as a result, she has often been heralded as the ‘voice’ of Indian women.”\textsuperscript{71} Steel believed that every woman had the right to define her own life, including the right to control her own body, a conviction that informed much of her stories.\textsuperscript{72} Though Steel had difficulty completely exonerating herself from the patriarchal system of imperial rule – as is evident in the fact that Tara is not completely granted a respectable position in society – her portrayal of Tara as free from the harsh customs that accompany widowhood is undeniably feminist.

In Henry Bruce’s 1909 tale \textit{The Native Wife; or, Indian love and anarchism}, a famine orphan, Tara, wanders the streets looking for food and shelter.\textsuperscript{73} The narrator states, “The age of twelve is a dangerous one in India, unprotected by law, and charged with more of

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\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 235.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 238.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} According to the \textit{World Biographical Index}, Henry Bruce was born Ernest Henry Bruce in 1881 and held the title of colonial police inspector general in India. Little is known of the novel discussed here.
\end{flushright}
womanly charm than home-keeping Europeans can well believe.”

Before being taken in by missionaries, Tara had experienced horrific crimes: “Tara could not afterwards bear to think of it, and refused to speak of it.” The story goes on to delineate her affair with an older Christian, which Bruce dismisses, concluding that Indian women will settle for the benefits of having affairs with British men, but their true hearts want to marry within their own race. This novel, then, does not necessarily demonstrate what can occur in the way of disobeying the age of consent, but rather raises awareness of what happens to young Indian girls once they become of age to marry and to consummate that marriage.

As Charles H. Heimsath has pointed out, “clearly, the younger the girl when she married, the greater the chances of her becoming a widow.” The Census of 1881 revealed that a large proportion (sometimes as high as one-fifth) of the general female population was widowed. British newspapers ran frequent editorials and articles on this issue. Such publicity demanded empire-wide attention to the question. At first, the government decided against intervening in the religious affairs of the Hindus, but they were willing to consider an amendment to an already-existing stipulation which set the minimum age of consent at ten years. Especially with pressures from the National Social Conference, developed in 1887 as an adjunct to the Indian National Congress, the British government ultimately raised the age of consent to twelve years in 1891. These three women’s issues—sati, widow remarriage, and the age of consent—brought awareness of Indian women’s issues to the forefront of

74 Henry Bruce, The Native Wife; or, Indian love and anarchism (London: John Long, Limited, 1909), 57.
75 Ibid.
77 Ibid., 493.
78 Ibid., 495.
79 The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885. Its original function was to obtain a greater say in government for educated Indians under the Raj. Though it did not initially oppose British rule, it became a major political actor in achieving Indian independence in the first half of the twentieth century.
Western consciousness, and served as an outlet by which the British could offer justifications of their empire according to an expressed civilizing agenda.

Rudyard Kipling’s short story “Kidnapped” deals with a related issue: arranged marriages. The tale begins with the following opening paragraph: “We are a high-caste and enlightened race, and infant marriage is very shocking, and the consequences are sometimes peculiar; but, nevertheless, the Hindu notion...of arranging marriages irrespective of the personal inclinations of the married is sound.” After establishing what appears to be a reverence for the Hindu custom of infant marriage, Kipling tells the story of a young British man, Peythroppe, who falls in love with the British Miss Castries. The engagement goes horribly awry. Peythroppe is kidnapped for seven weeks and is taken to hunt in Rajputana. He misses his wedding day, and his former bride-to-be marries another respectable Briton. Kipling ends the tale with the following witty quip: “Just think how much trouble and expense...might have been saved by a properly conducted Matrimonial Department, under the control of the Director-General of Education, but corresponding direct with the viceroy!” Decisions made on the part of a local institution, the fictitious Matrimonial Department, are made under the control of the viceroy. Thus marriages would be conducted by the state itself, not by the individuals involved.

On the surface, the story appears to uphold arranged infant marriage as a sensible institution. Kipling implies that adults who choose their own paths in the way of romance are

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80 The following information was acquired from Cowasjee, 269. Rudyard Kipling, 1864-1936, was born in Bombay and was sent with his younger sister at the age of five to receive an education in England. He returned to India in 1882 and worked as a journalist for the Civil and Military Gazette in Lahore, a job his father arranged. The 1880s saw the publications of numerous short stories, and in 1890 he left India for the United States.
82 Ibid., 137.
subject to a dreadful fate: that of ruining their loved ones and not marrying. The tale, however, contains traces of sarcasm. The idea of having such an organization as the Matrimonial Department seems ridiculous, and is not analogous to the manner in which Hindu marriages are arranged. In the former, the impersonal state makes decisions which control the personal lives of individuals to an unthinkable extent; in the latter, the parents of the marital parties make knowledgeable decisions in the best interests of their children. Thus by beginning the story by validating infant marriage, his explanation for why it is sound actually proves the absurdity of the idea. Kipling shows that human folly is to blame for failed marriages, not the choice to decide whom to marry in the first place.

“Kidnapped” is found in Kipling’s collection of short stories called *Plain Tales from the Hills*, printed serially in 1888 in the Lahore newspaper, the *Civil and Military Gazette*. According to the Author’s Note preceding the stories, Kipling revised these stories numerous times to make them more easily readable for his English audience. This copy contains the forty-two stories which were found in Kipling’s latest version. Kipling’s stories were clearly intended for the British reader, for they are steeped both in sarcasm directed towards the empire, but also in an inescapable racism which was popularized in his famous poem “White Man’s Burden.”

As fictional representations of infant marriage and other societal issues taken up by Anglo-Indian writers became increasingly popular, the civilizing mission of the empire as a whole made the argument for the advancement of women around the empire valid. As Antoinette Burton has stated, “the symbiotic relationship between nation and empire was one on which feminists of the period capitalized in order to legitimate the women’s movement as

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83 For the complete text of Kipling’s poem “White Man’s Burden,” refer to the following website: [http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/kipling/kipling.html].
a world-historical force and an extension of Britain’s worldwide civilizing mission.\textsuperscript{84} According to this logic, to further the status of women in the periphery was to further the prowess and prestige of the empire itself.

As this “world-historical force” gained momentum, advances in the movement began to be reflected in fiction beyond the prohibition of such religious customs as sati and infant marriage. Female Indian \textit{characters} gained a voice of their own. In \textit{Sita}, the title character constantly offers her own opinions and desires to those around her. Though at the beginning of the story she is relatively silent under her father’s orders, as she grows up she earns a say in the stake of her own life. She is permitted to go to school, to the bazaar, and even to court, where she speaks on her own behalf. At the trial in which she fights for the right for a divorce from her husband, a few other women who are called in as character witnesses speak their minds as well. Sita and the other women are thus granted a voice.

In reality, Indian women did gain rights to which had previously been denied, though at a much slower pace than is the case in \textit{Sita}. Especially after 1882, with Lord Ripon’s Hunter Commission, Indian women began to participate in the education system which the British had set up. As Sita says in Baldwin’s novel, “we never had a girls’ school in Raj Goan, and when I heard the girls here say something about school I thought it was a boys’ school.”\textsuperscript{85} Female infanticide was banned under the Special Act of 1870 – another stride in the area of basic human rights to add to the abolition of sati, the permission of widows to remarry, and the raising of the age of consent.\textsuperscript{86} Despite the fact that a woman’s right to full political participation did not come until 1947, women played a large role in the movement

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\textsuperscript{84} Burton, 6.  \\
\textsuperscript{85} Baldwin, 34.  \\
\textsuperscript{86} Janaki Nair, \textit{Women and Law in Colonial India: A Social History} (Bangalore: National Law School of India University, 1996), 84.
\end{flushright}
of Indians who wanted a greater say in their own governance – which began in an organized way with the Indian National Congress.\textsuperscript{87} Each of these advances came about after debates among the British and Indians alike, and brought Indian women one step closer to gaining a say in the matter of their own lives. Though there were small references to some of these gains in Anglo-Indian fiction, most accounts of women’s advances in India regarded the fate of widows and the age of consent. This emphasis, as Margery Sabin has put forth, was a manifestation of the British desire to sensationalize those aspects of Indian life which appeared to be farthest removed from the experience of British women.\textsuperscript{88}

In both \textit{Kardoo} and \textit{Sita}, Christian missionaries and secular forces alike rescue both the helpless and the powerful from a “troubled”, “dangerous” Hindu tradition. In the case of Kardoo, the characters who follow Christianity, or at least are open to its teachings, suffer enormous pain before ultimate redemption. Most notably, Kardoo’s Uncle Chundro overtly rejects Hinduism, leaving his mother and aunt to pray that the gods spare him and them from the inevitable wrath of disbelief. He reads stories from the Bible to Kardoo, instructing her that “[a] long time ago, our people were very ignorant and stupid,”\textsuperscript{89} and that Christianity is the light. He is sent from his home, and is later reported as having been attacked by \textit{Thugs}\textsuperscript{90} and killed by strangulation. Berash, his ten-year-old widow, is left behind, and dies shortly after from malnourishment and shame. Berash is comforted near death by the thought that she will go to the Christian heaven, and will no longer fear the wrath of the Hindu gods.

Kardoo, writing in the voice of a zenana girl converted to Christianity, sees the

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 122-3.
\textsuperscript{89} Brittan, 51.
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Thagi} was a custom by which god-fearing Hindus would capture travelers on roads and in seclusion, strangle them, and offer their bodies as human sacrifices to Kali, the goddess of vengeance. Thagi is the term from which the modern English definition of “thugs” is derived.
compassionate effect of Christianity on Berash. Later, when she awakens from her coma (brought on by her failed sati), the Christian missionaries see to her survival and comfort. In a way, the death of Chundro allows Kardoo and Berash to reach the point of belief in Christian salvation.

Thus by the turn of the twentieth century – after decades of being portrayed as having little worth outside of their alleged exotic features and sensual movements, and as subject to the “terrors” of their religion enforced by Indian men – Indian women were now represented in a more respectable light by British writers. They became human agents with rights that could not be ignored and opinions that mattered. The most glowing example of such a story is E.M. Forster’s famous 1924 novel *A Passage to India*. Though Indian women do not play a major role in *A Passage to India*, the scene in which they are present demonstrates Forster’s liking of them, solidified by the narrator’s and the reader’s disdain for the English Mrs. Turton, who treats the Indian women disrespectfully. At a party at the European Club, some Indian folks are invited. Mrs. Turton, the wife of the governor of Chandrapore, had not anticipated their presence, thus claiming, “They ought never to have been allowed to drive in; it’s so bad for them.”\(^91\) After being assured that she is “superior to everyone in India”\(^92\) by her British male counterparts, she attempts to speak to them in Urdu, though she cannot demonstrate verbal respect, for her only knowledge of the language is the use of commands which she uses with her Indian servants. As she apologizes for not knowing the language, one of the ladies responds in English, a bittersweet realization for Mrs. Turton: she recognizes that they can now communicate, but realizes that if some ladies of the group had been Westernized, they might apply her own standards of propriety and education to her,

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\(^{92}\) Ibid., 42.
which worries Mrs. Turton. Thus in this scene the woman of scorn is Mrs. Turton, an Englishwoman, and the women who seem to command respect are Indian. By the time of Forster’s novel, British fiction about India had assumed hints of a self-critical perspective, which would become more widespread in the years preceding independence.

There is a huge difference between this representation of Indian women, and the one which had been ever-present in the decades before the publication of this novel, owing in part to Forster’s personal experiences and views on India. Forster grew up in England, and was educated at Cambridge. In 1920, he became the literary editor of a Labor newspaper called the *Daily Herald* which was popular for receiving reviews by many well-known writers. By the time he arrived in India as an adult, he had already been exposed to certain Indian languages and customs through his experience tutoring an Indian Muslim in England. The two became very friendly, and upon arriving in India Forster was introduced to Britons and Indians alike. In *A Passage to India*, as Lionel Trilling has contended, “we are at once taught to withhold our sympathies from the English officials,” and to regard “Aziz and his Indian friends with affectionate understanding.” His compassionate views toward Indians are well-documented, and comprise a common theme in his novels.

The image of Indian women as sexualized, and as helplessly at the mercy of their religion and of the male figures in their lives, had been replaced by an image of Indian women as worthy of respect, and capable in their own right. This transformation had been preceded by one which allowed Indian women to enter the imperial consciousness in both the

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93 Ibid., 43.
95 Syed Ross Masood.
96 Ibid., 144.
politics and the fiction of the day, stemming in large part from the women’s movement which sent British women to India to learn firsthand the condition of its women. The constructed representations written and published by British authors justified their empire: remember the dreadful rituals to which Indian females used to be subjected, and know that we, the British, are responsible for the removal of these conditions, and the betterment of the female condition. These implicit and explicit claims overshadowed the buried fear of losing their empire, and made their rule in India appear necessary.
CHAPTER 2
The Pitting of Hindus Against Muslims

In a 1910 novel by Edmund White entitled *The Heart of Hindustan*, two British men exchange thoughts about an upcoming Muslim festival. They worry about the potential for the outbreak of violence between the Hindus and Muslims, because the “Hindus have lately grown uppish, and the air has consequently become charged with electricity.”¹ Their discussion gets interrupted by a report from a Deputy-Magistrate of a riot in a nearby town:

[A] party of Hindus had assembled about mid-night in a private house to listen to a recitation by a Brahman from Kankhal. During the entertainment some one of the party had blown the conch; and thereupon the Mahomedans of the ward, irritated that their dirges over the taziya in the House of Mourning should be interrupted by the blatant sound, assembled about the house with angry remonstrance; a dispute arose, blows were exchanged, and a club fight ensued between the rival factions, resulting in serious injury to several men on both sides. Some arrests had been made, precautions against further riot had been taken, but the Deputy Magistrate recommended that an English officer should come at once to the spot, as both Hindus and Mahomedans were greatly excited and ready on a slight pretext to renew the combat.²

The two British men now fear that the nearby riot will incite violence in their town: they fear that the administrator of the town, a “bigoted” Muslim, will “be exposed to mischievous domestic influences in a contest for predominance between Hindus and Musalmans. So, on the whole, I think it prudent to send an English officer out to hold the balance, and give full confidence to the Hindus that they will be fairly dealt with.”³

This British account exhibits assumptions about the nature of Hindu-Muslim relations in India, and about the role of the British in controlling that relationship. From the British perspective, the Indian people were divided into two religious groups: Hindus and Muslims.

¹ Edmund White, *The Heart of Hindustan* (London: Methuen and Co., 1910), 29. According to the World Biographical Index, Edmund White was an army officer stationed in India, and lived from 1870 to 1902, which signifies that *The Heart of Hindustan* was published posthumously.
² Ibid., 30.
³ Ibid., 31.
The two categories were believed to be diametrically opposed to one another – a dichotomy which the British thought explained virtually all clashes between groups of people. As Gyanendra Pandey examines, riots in which Hindus and Muslims were mentioned as key players became part of a grand tradition of British representations of communal violence. Pandey defines communalism as a “conflict between people of different religious persuasions.” As such a pattern began to be constructed an alleged Hindu versus Muslim conflict was applied retroactively through India’s history to explain accounts of violence, dating back to pre-colonial times. Pandey states, “Indeed the list of Hindu-Muslim riots in colonial and pre-colonial India lengthens all the time with lengthening research – as indeed it must if ‘riots’ are what one is looking for.” The British then used this “new” history they had rewritten as a justification for rule through its portrayal in the literature of the day. The idea circulated was that Hindus and Muslims are fundamentally, and have always been, at odds with each other. There are reports of riots which have taken place dating as far back as pre-colonial times that prove this point. Our presence is therefore necessary here to control these antagonistic groups, and to prevent the Hindus and Muslims from killing each other in years to come.

On the first page of John Campbell Oman’s 1898 novel Where Three Creeds Meet: A Tale of Modern Indian Life, the premise is set for what will become a complex relationship among the Muslims, Hindus, and Britons of an Eastern village called Mozung (located just

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4 Gyanendra Pandey, “The Colonial Construction of ‘Communalism’: British Writings on Banaras in the Nineteenth Century,” ed. Ranajit Guha, Subaltern Studies VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 132. This definition is the most simple and all-encompassing definition I have come across, and thus have decided to use it as the definition to which I refer throughout this chapter.

5 Ibid., 135.
outside of the city of Lahore). The Muslims, “whose turbulent ancestors established themselves on the spot in the lawless and stirring days of a not very distant past,” the Hindus, “whose presence serves to keep alive there the smouldering embers of the antagonist, universal, bitter, and centuries old, which exists between the followers of Hinduism and Islam,” and the Europeans who have established their own quarter in close proximity.

Already, Oman has revealed his perspective on the identities of those who live in the village: its inhabitants can be categorized into three distinct and easily-defined groups, wherein the Hindus and Muslims comprise the village’s major actors, whose relationship is “turbulent” and “antagonistic.” The Europeans make up an outside force that needs description not in their history, but only in the location of their homes. Oman’s lack of description of the third group, the British, except by location demonstrates their placement in the novel as mixed up in this conflict, and yet taking neither side. The fact of their minimal introductory description shows Oman’s prejudice that the alleged rivalry between the Hindus and Muslims pre-dates the influence of the British, and that this so-called antagonism is inherent in the existence of the two groups.

A few chapters into Oman’s novel, a fight breaks out in Mozung. Abdulla (an eighteen-year-old student at an English college, and the Padre sahib’s favorite student) has been giving Lateefun (a six-year-old Muslim girl) lessons on English language, culture, and religion. After the lessons have been going on for a few weeks, Lateefun’s mother, Fatamah

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6 According to the World Biographical Index, John Campbell Oman lived from 1841 to 1911, and was a college principal in India who often wrote on the history of India. The Nineteenth Century Masterfile reveals that it is possible that Oman wrote a journal article called “The Text of the Minor Prophets,” which can be found in An Alphabetical Subject Index and Index Encyclopedia to Periodical Articles on Religion 1890-1899.

7 Throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the word “Muslim” was written and pronounced as “Muhammadan.”

8 John Campbell Oman, Where Three Creeds Meet: A Tale of Modern Indian Life (London: Grant Richards, 1898), 1.

9 A sahib is a British person in India. A padre sahib is a head of a British school in India.
(whose name is not revealed until the eighty-seventh page of the novel), receives a visit from her brother, Sadiq Ali. Sadiq had received word that Lateefun had been learning English, and so traveled to Mozung to orchestrate a proper Muslim marriage for his niece. Though Fatamah and Lateefun both refuse, Sadiq arranges for Lateefun to marry Mahir Din, who pays 500 rupees for his new wife. The now-heated discussion moves to a public space in the village. Moradun, a recent Muslim convert and a secret lover of Mahir Din, enters the scene. When Mahir threatens her, Ajeet Singh intervenes on Moradun’s behalf and proceeds to get into a fistfight with Mahir. Moradun breaks up the fight by striking Mahir. Ajeet then turns on Moradun, ashamed that a woman has fought his battle. Just at that moment, the police arrive to “arrest the disturbers of the public peace. Their arrival was the signal for a general stampede.” Men on both sides of the brawl then bribe the constables, and the fight ends.

From the events which transpire in this chapter, the reader can obtain a more in-depth illustration of what public violence might have entailed. It appears on the surface as if the fighting erupts due to both sides defending their religions, or fellow believers in their religions: A Muslim threatens a converted Muslim woman; a Hindu intervenes on the woman’s behalf; the woman returns the favor; the police arrive to reestablish order; the violence spreads; the constables are paid off and the fighting ends. However, Oman has skillfully framed the context for each individual action. In the scene immediately preceding the violence, Ajeet Singh has begged Moradun to return to her Hindu ways, thus establishing his stereotypical function in the narrative as the staunch Hindu. And the intentions of the

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10 Oman, 90.
11 Ibid., 96.
12 Ibid., 91-5.
police are stated outright: they are there to “arrest the disturbers of the public peace.” The reader calls these circumstances to mind when evaluating each character’s intentions in the fighting. Thus Oman has depicted a perfectly constructed, religiously-caused public riot.

However, there are hidden objectives introduced by the author which must also be taken into account. First, Mahir Din threatens Moradun not because of her status as somewhat in between two religions, but because she is the only obstacle he faces in his desire to take Lateefun for a wife. Moradun matters to Mahir Din only in that she wants him for herself, which poses a potential problem in his plot to marry Lateefun. Second, Ajeet Singh has a close relationship with Moradun. When he stepped between the latter and Mahir Din, his desire to protect his friend played more heavily in his mind than the fact that he wanted to defend a Hindu to a Muslim. Third, though the police arrive with the explicit purpose of breaking up the fight, when they arrive, the violence escalates. Perhaps such an escalation resulted from the addition of more bodies to the scene. Or perhaps they arrived with the hidden intent of being paid off; it is only after they are given bribes that they are willing to depart, and it only their departure which triggers a reduction in the violence. The “beneficent” British police, in this context, further provoke the conflict. If this type of fighting has occurred before, those involved probably believe that paying off the British police will bring an end to the violence, and that the British police come to the scene to over-zealously establish their authority, thereby inciting feelings of anger and resentment towards them. When these objectives are taken into account, it is revealed that the violence is not completely devoid of a religious element, but that this religious element plays a much smaller role than the individual motives play in the outbreak and perpetuation of the fighting. It is only a bystander in the bazaar, not the narrator himself, who states, “Many unfortunates,
whether they were Hindus or Mussulmans, passed away in those dreadful days. Such, poor things, was their *kismet*\(^{13}\).\(^{14}\) The author thus blames alleged religious antagonism for violence, while presenting the British as mediators.

Later, in the final chapters of the novel, Oman depicts a scene of large-scale violence. As Lateefun and Abdulla board a carriage to abandon their homes to lead Christian lives, Lateefun is attacked by an unknown assailant and dies covered in her own blood. Moradun is accused of the murder, and the town turns against her. During the course of the trial, however, Sher Afghan (father to the now-deceased Hakim Ali, Lateefun’s former Muslim fiancé), angry over the death of his son and the English habits Abdulla teaches to Lateefun, admits to having aimed for Abdulla, and having accidentally killed Lateefun. Sher Afghan claims that his actions were driven by the spirit of the Muslim god. As Oman narrates, “many of the Muslims present were agitated to a dangerous degree by the confession of the religious motive of the crime.”\(^{15}\) With the confession comes a volatile reaction from both the Hindus and the Muslims, who eventually turn on each other. Within the courthouse walls, Oman presents the English magistrate as representing “imperial power, impartial justice, and strict religious toleration.”\(^{16}\) It hardly seems, however, that the English magistrate performs these functions to the fullest extent possible, for if Moradun had not begged the European Mr. Baxter to find her a suitable lawyer to defend her alleged crime, she would have been found guilty of a crime she did not commit. If not for the police presence outside the courthouse, Oman implies, the Hindus and Muslims would have fought each other in a great collision: “the police guards were hastily doubled, and this show of firmness, together with the

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\(^{13}\) *Kismet* can be defined as fate.

\(^{14}\) Oman, 98.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 154.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 155.
presence of a couple of English police officers, who were promptly on the spot, served, happily, to prevent any overt act of turbulence.” Oman thus presents the British as acting in a mediating role, both by the magistrate in the courthouse and the police waiting outside for the trial to end.

He explicitly states his belief that the Muslims and Hindus want to kill one another, when in fact the Muslims and Hindus alike get upset that Sher Afghan uses the name of Islam to defend his crime. Muslims resent Sher Afghan’s implication that Muslims should kill in the name of religion, and Hindus resent the use of religion in general as an excuse for his actions. With the exception of Sher Afghan, whom everyone hates, the disorder in the courthouse results from the revelation of the truth behind Lateefun’s death. The British magistrate in the courtroom, and the British police outside have thus assigned religious tension to a scene where none existed. The representation of the British as a neutral, peace-keeping force solidifies their belief that the Muslims and Hindus want to fight each other, hence justifying the necessity of British presence.

Gyanendra Pandey examines an historical example of such a misinterpretation of violence in his study of the construction of the 1809 riots in Benares. The essay indicates the points at which the riots and the fabricated story of those riots diverge, and why these discrepancies came about. Pandey uses Benares as his primary example of the misconception of communal riots both for the magnitude of the riots which occurred there, and because the city was among the first to be actively studied in the colonial period. In 1907, the District Gazetteer of Benares compiled a list of riots which had occurred in the preceding century. A comparison of the information cited in the article concerning the Benares riot of 1909-10 and

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17 Ibid., 155-6.
18 Pandey, 136.
the original documents used to compile that information reveals three important inconsistencies: the cause of the fighting itself, the exact location of the riot, and the number of individuals killed and wounded.\textsuperscript{19} Disagreements occurred among those researching the data, even though each one of the accounts written in 1907 was “authenticated by the claim that it was based on the original government records or information supplied by officials who were in Benares at the time.” These bare “facts,” Pandey concludes, were constructed from the prejudices of the twentieth century writers,\textsuperscript{20} and amounted to an understanding of the riots as \textit{religious} riots, when in fact religion played a small role.

A similar representation of the police presence as described in the second incident above in Oman’s novel is analyzed in Pandey’s study of Benares. The initial report of the 1809 riots mentioned that Hindu and Muslim police officers were present on both sides of the action. Subsequent accounts of the military-police feud attempt to categorize the Hindus and Muslims as diametrically opposed to one another. As Pandey aptly states, the “failure of the indigenous population to conform to the colonial stereotype of Hindu and Muslims” led British scholars to categorize such an occurrence as an innate characteristic of Indian society.\textsuperscript{21} As Pandey continues, “the real point of [the 1907 report]…was to describe the ‘native’ character, establish the perverse nature of the population, and the fundamental antagonism between ‘Hindus’ and ‘Muslims.’”\textsuperscript{22} The misinterpretation of the military-police brawl which took place after the initial Benares riot further demonstrates the British proclivity to categorize the Indian people into two distinct groups, Hindus and Muslims, and their inability to fathom a breach of these categories.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 140.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 137.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 148-9.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 147.
British authors often depicted a preference for one creed over the other. This theme suggests not only that the British understood religious society in Indian in binary terms, but that the British found it difficult to reconcile their relations with those groups. Flora Annie Steel’s\(^\text{23}\) short story “Shub’rat” and Maud Diver’s tale “The Gods of the East” illustrate an unambiguous depiction of Muslims as sharing more in common with the British themselves, and thus as more worthy of respect, while simultaneously illustrating Hindus as inherently different from the British, and as therefore inferior. The former is a glorification of Islam; the latter is a denunciation of Hinduism. Steel’s story opens with a detailed description of a mosque’s bell-ringer named Deen Mahomed, a follower of Islam, as his name implies. Mahomed engages in very little dialogue throughout the story; his eyes serve as the reader’s eyes to a world torn at first by religious differences in reaction to the tragic death of a young boy, and later by the aftermath of the widespread Indian Rebellions. Clear connections are established between Christianity and Islam. The mere presence of Christian texts inside the Muslim temple, the speech of the grandfather of the dead child preaching one God and His prophets, “Moses and Elias, Jesus and Mahomed,”\(^\text{24}\) the fact that Muslims and Christians alike take part in the holiday of Shub’rat, a ceremony of prayers and offerings to the spirits of dead ancestors – all of these examples draw overt ties between the two religions with respect and reservation of judgment.

\(^{23}\) Flora Annie Steel, 1847-1929, lived in India outside Lahore for the majority of her adult life, and was married to a member of the Indian Civil Service. She was known to contemporaries and scholars as one who moved easily through the classes of the Indian people, thus providing her with ample material for her novels and shorts stories from multiple perspectives. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edition, s.v. “Steel, Flora Annie,” by Rosemary Cargill Raza; available from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36262; Internet.

At the same time, however, by keeping Deen Mahomed painstakingly silent for the first three quarters of the story, Steel implies that he is tolerable in part because he is stoic and “keeps his life to himself.”

His religion is thus tolerable to Steel because he does not flaunt it. But it must not be forgotten that Deen Mahomed is a man of honor. He rescues a child from a dangerous situation, and rests with the exhaustion of accomplishment in the aftermath of the Rebellions. His cries of prayer are ones whose “echoes so often resound like thunder through the world,” as Christian prayers might be depicted. This representation of a follower of Islam is juxtaposed with the sole character of the Hindu faith in the story: one who chases Deen Mahomed as he tries to rescue the child. The Hindu is described as a drunken, idolatrous man who is doglike and mad. This juxtaposition demonstrates the author’s preference for Muslims over Hindus.

A similar preference can be found in Maud Diver’s story “The Gods of the East.” At the beginning of the tale, Ram Singh’s evening meditation and prayers are honored: he is a “thinker who still retain[s] unshaken faith in the gods of his forefathers, in traditions and customs handed down, through countless generations, even to his own.” Ram Singh, a non-Brahman Hindu, is treated with dignity and admiration through such a description. However, it is his unending devotion to the traditions of his ancestors which ultimately kills

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25 Ibid., 61.
26 Ibid., 64.
27 Ibid., 75.
28 Maud Diver, who lived from 1905 to 1930, wrote several histories of India, most notably Royal India: a descriptive and historical study of India’s fifteen principal states and their rulers (New York; London: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1942).
30 A Brahman is a member of the highest Hindu caste. A non-Brahman, then, holds a lower caste position.
him. Following the *dharna*,\textsuperscript{31} Ram Singh gets his head chopped off by a Brahman for falling deeper and deeper into debt.\textsuperscript{32} Diver’s message is that while it is notable to continue the practices of one’s ancestors, doing so only with just reason makes sense and ensures survival. Moreover, the laws of Hindu scripture are seen as cruel and unforgiving, thus providing a negative image of Hinduism.

The most significant example of the negative treatment of Hindus occurs in the last scene of *Where Three Creeds Meet*. Moradun’s baby is taken in the night and killed by a Hindu woman wishing to sacrifice the baby to Kali in prayer.\textsuperscript{33} Ultimately, then, it is Hinduism and its practices that kills Moradun’s baby. Since the reader has grown to sympathize with Moradun throughout the second half of the novel, the reader resents that her baby is taken from her, especially in the name of Hinduism. Oman thus presents fanatical Hinduism; until this point, only radical Islam had been displayed in the story. And it is fanatical Hinduism, for Oman, which must be feared.

This favoritism can be seen in many areas of Oman’s novel. Oman even goes as far as to imply that true Islam is a key to harmonious living. He criticizes a British man who could not see the enlightened view of Islam that Abdulla’s father has passed down to him. Abdulla’s father looked past creed and religion and saw only *Rabb*.\textsuperscript{34} In the end, he believed, there would be no religion, only the Supreme Being. Oman narrates, “thus were [Abdulla’s] sympathies widened, his religious sentiments made more liberal, and the rigid sectarianism of his Muslim creed destroyed, to the great delight of the worthy Christian missionary who

\textsuperscript{31} According to the Oxford Essential Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English, *dharna* can be defined in Hinduism as a “social or caste custom, right behavior, law; justice, virtue; natural or essential state or function, nature.”
\textsuperscript{32} Diver, 198.
\textsuperscript{33} Oman, 221-3.
\textsuperscript{34} *Rabb* means God.
conducted his education, and whose very son discovered the boy’s singular freedom from Muhammadan bigotry and fanaticism, though he never divined the real cause of his indifference to the dogmatic teaching of Islam.” It is Abdulla’s devout belief in the teachings of Islam that is responsible for his religious tolerance. His belief in the power of Islam is destroyed by the notion of fanatical Islam, which teaches Islam as superior to all other religions. True Islam transcends superficial religious differences to reach one Supreme Being. Thus true Islam seems preferable to all other religious identities, including Christianity.

Could a British author writing at the turn of the twentieth century present such a notion: that Islam is nobler than Christianity? In Oman’s novel, the answer is no. Perhaps Islam in its truest sense leads to religious harmony, but even such a devout believer as Abdulla cannot hold himself to this belief in the society where the religions are pitted against one another. Abdulla’s loss of faith still amounts to a loss of faith, and conversion to Christianity. He seeks comfort and justice, and finds both in his newfound faith. True Islam might be nobler than Christianity, but for Oman it is also unattainable.

Whereas Abdulla used to want all religions to meld into one, sharing their monotheistic beliefs in common efforts for prayer, there are also examples of Muslim characters who maintain their superiority, especially in the face of Hinduism. Lateefun’s mother, for instance, comments, “The Hindu – may the curse of God rest upon him! Has everything now. Look at the fine mansions those detestable idolaters are building for themselves over there, while we of the stock of the once ruling race have to live in

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35 Oman, 32.
discomfort and indigence!"36 She curses the Hindus and resents their presence. She then proceeds to cover her ears at the sound of the Hindu temple bells. Fatamah’s comments are typical among the Muslim neighborhood’s women, thus providing another example of the so-called “antagonistic” relationship between Hindus and Muslims, and pointing out Oman’s preference for Muslims over Hindus.

This proclivity for Muslims over Hindus grew from a complex desire for the British to align Islam with Christianity, and to pit Hinduism as different from both. Robert Eric Frykenberg, a noted historian, cites marked commonalities between Islam and Christianity, and a pattern of alleged moral “abuses” in the traditions of Hinduism, thus providing one reason for why this preference for Muslims arose among Anglo-Indians. As Frykenberg states, Hinduism was “the term used, in negative ways, to characterize all things in India (especially elements and features found in the cultures and religions of India) which were not Muslim, not Christian, not Jewish, or, hence, not Western.”37 A preference for Muslim over Hindu emerged over time: Muslims as masculine and respectable, and Hindus as effeminate and unworthy. As Bernard Cohn has argued, the British saw Hinduism as inconsonant with European ideas of rationality, empiricism, monotheism, and individuality.38 Hinduism as the opposite of all things Western implied a preference of Muslim over Hindu.

There are also instances within Oman’s novel, however, that demonstrate his liking of Hindus, although an explicit justification for a preference of Hindus over Muslims is not provided in the work. Oman does not make broad judgments about Hinduism, but he does

36 Ibid., 9.
present Hindu individuals in a positive light. Throughout the tale, the Hindus preach unity between the creeds. However, their role in the novel is quite limited, given that Mozung is populated mainly by Muslims. Just as Abdulla’s father taught him that Muslim and Hindu distinctions are superficial, and that in the end all that will remain is God, the secondary Hindu characters (there are no main characters of the Hindu faith, except perhaps for Moradun, the recent convert to Islam) claim the same idea. A Hindu man preaches in a bazaar towards the end of the novel that “all religions are prisons, or, if you like, a police for the restraint and punishment of the thieves, liars, adulterers and other criminals who inhabit this perishable body, this veritable temple of the world-soul. Expel these abominations as not necessary to you, and you are above all religions.”39 Though it appears as though the main message in this speech is to persuade his listeners to avoid fanaticism, the underlying implication of the speech is that worldly religions matter less than the manner in which an individual conducts him/herself. This Hindu preacher seems respectable for the same reason Abdulla’s faith in the true Islam seems respectable: both characters wish for the antagonism between the followers of the two religions to end. Naturally, the desire for an end to communal strife implies the existence of communal strife. The Hindu preacher here is praised for his ability to see beyond the religious tension that “permeates” Indian life. Oman has ensured that his characters feel trapped in this religious antagonism, which the British in reality have represented as a truth of life in the subcontinent.

Oman further demonstrates a respect for the Hindus during Moradun’s trial. When Moradun realizes that there is evidence to suggest her guilt for the killing of Lateefun, she begs Mr. Baxter to hire for her a high-powered lawyer. He hires Ram Nath, a Hindu lawyer

39 Oman, 198.
who had joined a society established on the “grand purpose of effecting the religious and social regeneration of India.”

With the help of Ram Nath, the Hindus ban together in defense of Moradun to oppose the Muslim claims that she was the perpetrator of the crime. Thus the few Hindus present in the novel are worthy of respect.

This preference for Hindus over Muslims, according to David Ludden, was manifested in the British effort to convince Hindus across India that they needed to “purify” their religion and culture from the alleged “decadence” and “contamination” that the Muslims had brought and perpetuated for a thousand years of rule. The British aimed to demonstrate to Hindus that India had become stagnant, a state which could be blamed on the oppression of the conquering Muslims; moreover, their Islamic counterparts were “conservative, haughtily contemptuous of things ‘modern,’ and too much under the influence of an obsolete system of education.”

Similarly, Bernard Cohn argues that the British put forth an agenda in which Hindus needed to turn their attentions toward recapturing a “golden age” of its past, which had allegedly been stolen by the Muslim invaders – a time when Hindustan had been the pinnacle of human progress.

Given that the fiction demonstrates a preference for Hindus over Muslims on certain occasions and Muslims over Hindus on others, the effort to relive the “golden age” of Hindu rule seems disingenuous.

This line of reasoning gives rise to a subsequent argument that the British tried to raise the status of Hindus while simultaneously attempting to lower the status of Muslims in Hindu consciousness. Fearful that the Muslims wanted to reestablish their rule, and that there was greater Muslim loyalty to Islam than to the Raj, the British represented Muslims to

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40 Cohn, 219.
42 Ibid., 186-87.
43 Cohn, 226.
Hindus and to the British alike as oppressive and anti-progressive in fiction. However, as Ludden points out, “most Muslims were prepared to make the colonial government work and to seek adjustments within and gain benefits from colonial administrative and bureaucratic structures.”\textsuperscript{44} The majority of Muslims maintained that their agenda was merely to get along with the British government.\textsuperscript{45} This literary preference for Hindus over Muslims, then, took the form of representing the Muslims as trying to usurp the power of the Raj, deepening the fictional hatred of one group towards the other. Hinduism and Islam were favored at times when the other needed to be suppressed. The very existence of a preference of one religion over the other proves the British need to categorize the Indian people and to maintain their rule in India. The facts that both religions are preferred in certain circumstances and detested in others demonstrate that the British wanted to represent a division between the two religions, to advance their own ruling agenda.

Instances in the literature itself belie the binary system, just as they did in reality. In Oman’s novel, there are scenes in which the British lump the Hindus and Muslims into one category that exists at a “lower” level than that of the British themselves. Sarfaraz (Abdulla’s friend, and a student in the medical college at Lahore) reports that a Hindu Reformer has preached that “it is highly desirable that Mussulmans and Hindus should draw together….for the good of India.”\textsuperscript{46} Yet such a harmonious co-existence can be realized only in dialogue – fictional dialogue – and not in action. Even in these circumstances, however, there still exists the underlying distinction between the two groups. The British still establish the difference between Hindus and Muslims, even where they claim to do otherwise on the surface.

\textsuperscript{44} Ludden, 188.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 192.
\textsuperscript{46} Oman, 37.
In another example from Oman’s novel, after Lateefun’s burqa\textsuperscript{47} has been torn off by her unruly cousin, two European men engage in a dialogue that is quite telling of their perceptions of life in India. One wonders what the East would be without the burqa, without the seclusion of its women. The other responds, “A very different place indeed! Take away the burqa, or whatever may do duty for it, and the entire life of the Muslim world and of India, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, would be profoundly changed.”\textsuperscript{48} In this conversation, it appears that the distinction between Hindu and Muslim dress has been erased. Both religions, according to the British man, engage in the seclusion of women, represented by the burqa; the worlds of both religions would be profoundly changed if the burqa was removed. However, the inclusion of the phrase “whether Hindu or Muhammadan” actually underscores the assumption that Hindus and Muslims fit into distinct groups.

There are instances in other works of fiction where the division between Hindus and Muslims seems to be both minimized and underscored. In these stories, such as Flora Annie Steel’s “The Gift of Battle,” the breaking down of categories takes place through the actions of Hindus and Muslims themselves. Steel’s story begins with the premise that Sirdar Bikrama Singh and Khan Buktiyar Khan were born into the alleged centuries-old feud between Hindus and Muslims, respectively. Yet when the two are appointed lawyers in the same court of law, they see past each other’s differences and focus on what they share in common: devotion to justice. Bikrama Singh claims “The Muhummadan is no fool” and Buktiyar Khan admits “the Hindu is not such a blockhead as I deemed him.”\textsuperscript{49} When they argue a case with which Tim O’Brien (the Irish court official) disagrees, both are forced to resign. Ultimately,

\textsuperscript{47} A \textit{burqa} is a “long veil covering the entire person...[which is] provided with eye-holes,” according to a footnote in Oman’s novel.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 4.
they enter a duel set up by the British and each takes the other’s life. Though Steel’s intended moral is probably that Hindus and Muslims can get along, given the sympathy for the two characters and the resentment for those who disapprove of their joint court, the lesson the reader takes away is that this type of friendship is strictly suppressed by the British. With O’Brien’s statement, “one would think…we were in danger of losing India tomorrow,” Steel implies that the Europeans are not in danger of losing India. Further, British rule is not threatened due to the divided system that the British have set up. In the British mind, Hindus and Muslims are devoted to fighting one another, and not to fighting the state as a whole. Steel’s tale illustrates the belief on the part of the British that even those Muslims and Hindus who think they can work together ultimately end up pitted against one another.

The discussion in *Where Three Creeds Meet* of the outbreak of a cholera epidemic that spreads throughout the city during Ramadan further demonstrates this point. Disease, by its very nature, does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, religion, gender, or any other mark of difference among humans. As the narrator explains, “the whole village seemed to join as one family in the earnest prayer for help.” Disease and death, then, are the great equalizers in a city inundated with divisiveness, for they affect all people with equal devastation. Even Lateefun’s mother – a devout Muslim woman who had cursed the Hindus – seeks the advice of a Hindu woman in an attempt to cure Lateefun herself, who had slipped out of consciousness due to the disease. The Hindu woman suggests that Lateefun’s mother take down her hair, and with it sweep an exit path leading to the front door which the disease can follow. Here, the reader is privy to a literal transference of one religion to another. A

50 Ibid., 46.
51 Oman, 46.
52 Ibid., 48.
Muslim woman would normally protect her hair under her burqa at all times; but Oman implies that in dire circumstances, religious beliefs can be suppressed. Yet Oman still makes the implicit point that Lateefun’s mother has not converted to Hinduism; she merely twists her behavior to accommodate a Hindu superstition in a desperate attempt to save her daughter. Thus the distinction between Hindus and Muslims has been minimized due to the presence of a force which affects everyone with equal cruelty, and yet for the British writer there remains a Hindu-Muslim difference.

Another literary example where the Hindus and Muslims appear to get along, but where the British must maintain the division between them, is in a scene of Oman’s novel in which Muslims collect rupees to pay for a sacrifice to the gods to atone for the sins of the people at the close of the epidemic. As Oman explains, “though this was essentially a Mussulman movement, Hindus also put in their oblations, for it was no time for indulging religious animosities when all were suffering from so severe a visitation, and no one could tell for whom the morrow’s sun would rise.” Oman’s assumption, of course, is that “religious animosities” are prevalent in the village. The nineteenth century British reader probably interpreted this event as follows: Hindus and Muslims are working together. But Hindus and Muslims hate each other. Therefore, there must be certain forces which can cause the Hindus and Muslims to overcome their great animosity. The idea, then, is not only that Hindus and Muslims can put aside their differences, but that the groups have differences.

The literary depictions of the alleged Hindu-Muslim conflict reveal that the British actually saw that the followers of both religions treated each other with respect and participated in each other’s festivals and traditions, but that the British represented this

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53 Ibid., 60.
friendship as unfeasible in fiction. As David Ludden comments, British civil servants noted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that “there was a strong tendency among Muslims to assimilate in all externals with their Hindu neighbors….Hindus and Muslims cheerfully attended each other’s festivals and sang each other’s songs.”  

Hindus regularly journeyed to Muslim shrines, certain Muslim rituals bore many similarities to Hindu rituals, and Hindu and Muslim army officers often made special provision for the prayers of both religions. All of these instances are examples of what Ludden calls a “mutual dependence and friendship.”

Even in fiction there are individuals who seem to exist outside – or perhaps in between – the two groups. Those characters who transcend the stereotype become the objects of negative attention at best, and hostile violence at worst. One example of an element in the novel that demonstrates the evasion of the two-part system is the presence of Moradun. Moradun, a Hindu who has converted to Islam, perfectly embodies an attempted “mixture” of the allegedly incompatible creeds. Her actions illustrate Oman’s difficulty with creating such a character, and also the ease with which he presents her multiple personalities. Once a Hindu milkmaid to a British family, the Baxters, Moradun had abandoned her sari for a burqa, and traded in her Hindu beliefs for those of Islam.

54 Ludden, 190.
57 Ludden, 190.
58 Oman provides a bit of expository narrative. Having been married as an infant, and then widowed at age ten, Moradun was left on the doorstep of an orphanage. The Baxter family took her in as a milkmaid. While working with the family, Moradun grew close to the Baxter’s youngest daughter, Daisy. When Daisy was a toddler, a mad dog had attacked her, but Moradun had gotten in the dog’s way to protect her friend. Daisy was forever grateful, and Moradun ever since has maintained that it was her duty to her British friend. The girls were quite close, and Daisy even learned to speak Hindustani.
The importance of both forms of dress is described in two separate incidents in the novel. The first is where Lateefun is approached by her two male cousins, Abdulla and Muhammad, in age order. The younger boy strips Lateefun of her burqa, which causes Lateefun, who is “astonished and bewildered by this act of unpardonable rudeness,” to throw a brick at Muhammad, though the brick does not strike him. The burqa for Lateefun is the symbol of her Islamic faith and her protection against the men in her life. The importance of the sari is detailed in one of the final scenes of the book, in which Moradun replaces her burqa with her sari, thus symbolically and literally shedding the remnants of her adopted faith to return to the faith into which she was born. The fact that Moradun ultimately cannot remain in the Muslim religion connotes her failure as a Muslim. Oman’s message, then, is that transference from one religion to another cannot occur.

Moreover, Moradun has a beautiful singing voice, and often strolls through the streets of Mozung singing Hindu songs. Oman expresses the song as follows: the Hindu music was “giving melodious expression to the joys and sorrows of the race.” Moradun still sings Hindu songs despite having converted to Islam. Oman seems to imply here that a person can switch religions in appearance – by replacing her sari with her burqa – but not in fundamental identity – represented by the music she sings. Another example of this point is revealed in the third chapter, wherein Mahir Din, a local Muslim, asks Moradun to bring him pork (so that he would not have to handle the animal himself). At first Moradun refuses, for she is committed to leading the life of a true Muslim. But when Mahir Din mentions the possibility of marrying her if she complies, Moradun retrieves the pork. As Oman comments, Moradun

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59 According to the *Oxford English Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English*, a *sari* is “a traditional garment of Hindu women, worn over a choli and an underskirt, consisting of a length of cotton, silk, or other cloth wrapped around the waist and draped over one shoulder.”
60 Oman, 7.
61 Ibid., 16.
is “too much of a Hindu at heart to feel any real compunction about handling the bacon, although, as a professed Muslim, she dreaded detection.” By ultimately giving in to Mahir Din’s demands, Moradun demonstrates that the degree to which she has actually converted to Islam is quite low: a true Muslim would have refused to handle the meat. Oman provides the background information for why Moradun had converted to Islam later in the story: Mahir Din, a devout Muslim, had wanted her for a wife. Her intentions, thus, were not “genuine”: she wanted to convert for personal reasons, rather than religious reasons, a fact which invalidates the purity of her conversion.

When Moradun ultimately is put on trial for Lateefun’s death, she returns to Hinduism and directs her prayers towards the Hindu goddess Kali. She recognizes Mahir Din’s true intentions – he loved her only when it was convenient, and wanted Lateefun for a wife – and sheds her burqa (the symbol both of Islam and of the sacrifice she had made to win over Mahir Din) for a sari. As she prays to be freed of the allegations against her, she thinks, “surely the offended gods of her fathers were avenging themselves for her mad desertion of the old faith which had satisfied generation upon generation of her ancestors.”

When her prayers are answered, and she is relieved of the murder charges, Oman narrates, “she had made an open confession of her conversion to Islam, yet, in her inmost heart, her faith in the old deities of Hinduism, who had watched over her childhood and a hundred generations of her people, remained practically unshaken.” But, in the final chapter of the novel, it is the Hindu goddess who indirectly causes the death of her child (whose father is Mahir Din). A woman who desperately wants to marry Mahir Din steals Moradun’s baby in

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62 Ibid., 24.  
63 Ibid., 214.  
64 Ibid., 161.
the middle of the night and sacrifices it to Kali in prayer. The novel closes with a tragic view of Moradun: waking up to find that her baby has been taken from her, and about to find out that it has been killed. Thus Hinduism is her true religion, but it is the source of her suffering after she has tried to convert to Islam. Oman’s punishment for Moradun’s conversion from one religion to another, then, is the death of her child.

While Moradun’s problems surface with her conversion from Hinduism to Islam, the problem facing Abdulla and Lateefun is their breach of a different standard: the separation between the Indian and the European, and moreover between the Hindu/Muslim and the Christian. The implications for such transference are far-reaching, for they challenge the idea that the British must be able to categorize their subjects. Throughout the early chapters of *Where Three Creeds Meet*, Oman often reminds the reader that Abdulla has become largely Westernized. His dress reflects his personality: he wears patent-leather shoes and European pants. Abdulla, who has a crush on Lateefun, even places a Christian Bible under Lateefun’s arm as she awakens from the coma induced by cholera. At that moment, she sees outside of her window a mosque which has started to decay, and “closes her fingers convulsively over the brown volume in her hand, as if clutching it for support and comfort.” This small scene is loaded with symbolism that leads the reader to predict that Lateefun will convert to Christianity. The decaying mosque outside of her window amounts to a literal manifestation of her decaying Muslim past and beliefs. The icon of her faith, the holy mosque itself, disintegrates, while the Christian bible provides “support and comfort.”

Oman states his intentions in an Author’s Note following the text: “In the foregoing tale I have tried to present, on a very restricted canvas, a sketch of one aspect – the religious

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65 Ibid., 41.
66 Ibid., 58.
aspect – of the complex and many-sided life of the natives of upper India, with its many amiable traits, its picturesqueness, its blind prejudices, its occasional fanaticism, and its almost complete absence of sympathy with Western feeling and sentiment.” Oman delineates his intentions as representing the religious aspect of society. He goes on to state, however, that he tries to illustrate the “absence of sympathy with Western feeling and sentiment.” The implication here is that he intends to represent the religious aspect of life in Upper India. For Oman, religion is inherent in Indian life. His illustration is intended to portray the distinct “Indianness” of his characters: their attentions are towards each other, and their actions do not abide by “Western feeling and sentiment.” A Western audience at the turn of the twentieth century might have interpreted Lateefun’s actions as abandoning her heathen ways for the enlightened, comforting path of Christianity.

As Abdulla tutors Lateefun in British subjects, Lateefun becomes obsessed both with Abdulla and with her studies. She grows jealous of his ability to intersperse English vocabulary into his Urdu speech, and cherishes her English doll among her possessions. Lateefun acquires a Westernized outlook on her prospects in life: “she knew, what Abdulla reluctantly admitted, that the wisdom of the English, or, at any rate, their practical skill, was far superior to that of the Indians; for the English, with their railways and telegraphs, and other wonders which she had seen or heard of, had far surpassed her ancestors, great as they had been.” It is even predicted by Begum, the family servant, that Lateefun will marry a Christian. Lateefun and Abdulla plan to run away together in order to be able to practice their Christian beliefs without fear of reaction from the townspeople. The Padre sahib then secretly

67 Ibid., 225.
68 Ibid., 76-7.
converts Abdulla to Christianity, and marries him to Lateefun. Ultimately, however, it is the staging of their escape which kills Lateefun, and forces Abdulla into exile. Oman’s message, then, comes across in no uncertain terms: those who fit outside the compartmented beliefs of Hindu or Muslim or Christian cannot survive in this world.

In reading Oman’s novel, the reader concludes that his perspective is not unique among the British, and that his position as a Briton greatly effects his outlook on the goings on in the village. His opinions probably closely match those of the Padre sahib, the head Christian missionary in Mozung. The Padre sahib’s role in the narrative is quite intriguing. The chapters which involve him are written in epistolary style; everything the reader knows about him is revealed through letters he writes to his brother. The missionary confides his fears that he will suffer many cruel aspersions for the part he played in the disaster of having Lateefun and Abdulla married as Christians. Upon Lateefun’s death, however, the missionary cannot find Abdulla, who has left the ashes of the Christian Bible and the Koran behind, and the missionary learns that Lateefun has been buried in a Muslim burial ground with Muslim rites. The missionary writes to his brother: “In this strange land where three creeds meet, three well-established creeds – Christianity, Islam and Hinduism – with their respective histories, traditions, aspirations, and ritualisms, a perpetual contest, a fierce battle,

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69 Ibid., 117.
71 Oman, 120-3.
is going on for the souls of men.”\textsuperscript{72} It is the outsider – the Briton – who makes
generalizations about the battle being fought for the “souls of men.” The fitful existence of
Britons in the novel serves as the voice of someone not involved in this dreadful conflict. The
missionary’s role in converting Abdulla and marrying him to Lateefun is merely a
manifestation of what Abdulla and Lateefun had chosen for themselves. He becomes, then, a
neutralizing force, which represents the justification for the imagined British role in India: to
maintain neutrality in order to prevent the ever-warring Hindus and Muslims from
annihilating one another. “When three creeds meet”, they battle for the souls of men, but it is
clear who will win in a British novel. For Oman, Hindus and Muslims will be perpetually
engaged in a contest; the British must serve as the mediator between the two “hostile” creeds,
and are thus superior to both.

More than fighting one another, Oman presents the idea that all Indians are prone to
fits of irrationality, and that the British presence in India keeps these fits in check. After
young Muhammad has stripped Lateefun of her burqa in the opening scene of the novel, two
sahibs pass by, which causes the children to “scatter in fright.”\textsuperscript{73} Even though the quarrel
here does not take place between a Hindu and a Muslim, but rather within the Muslim
community, the idea is that the British can keep Indians’ irrational behaviors in check. With
the presence of the British, however, the boys “scatter in fright,” subconsciously
acknowledging what the British might label “the error of Islamic ways.” Moreover, the belief
that an Indian’s irrational characteristics cannot be changed is affirmed: the children do not
stop being Muslim, nor do they abandon their malicious intentions toward their cousin; they
simply control their behavior.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 141-2.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 7.
In Pandey’s study of Benares, the original reports of violence stated that the fighting began as a religious “frenzy.” This frenzy, she maintains, became for the British a defining feature of Indian culture, as “furthest removed from the restrained, privatized, ‘civilized’ life of modern Europe. It is volatile as well: insurgency and violence lurk just beneath the surface here; it is all too easy for the primitive to get out of control.”\textsuperscript{74} The British must (in their eyes) rescue the Indian people from their “insurgent,” “violent,” and “primitive” tendencies, and must act as the voice of “restraint.” They see their role as more than defending Hindus and Muslims from one another, but as defending rationality and civilization, and as bringing these characteristics to the subcontinent.

Pandey concludes his article by arguing that other reports of riots contributed to the notion that Indian violence resulted from an irreconcilable division between the Hindus and the Muslims. Each of these instances, Benares included, conforms to the pattern of British colonial thinking: all riots are incited by religious differences. The rewriting of the history of India amounts to the “emptying out of all history…from the political experience of the people, and the identification of religion, or the religious community, as the moving force of all Indian politics.”\textsuperscript{75} India’s history thus becomes specifically and exclusively defined by the alleged religious antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims. Pandey continues this notion when he eloquently states that “by the later nineteenth century, it is no longer the power of the English sword, nor simply the superiority of English science and commerce, but also the argument that the ‘natives’ are hopelessly divided, given to primitive passions and incapable of managing their own affairs, that legitimizes British power.”\textsuperscript{76} Representations of

\textsuperscript{74} Pandey, 143.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 132.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 151-2.
such fits of irrationality and of a nation hopelessly divided along strict religious lines thus serve to justify the British role as mediator in the subcontinent, and to justify British rule itself.
CHAPTER 3
Attempts to Disempower Educated Indians

“I am only Babu showing off my English to you. All we Babus talk English to show
off,”¹ says Rudyard Kipling’s character, Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, in the novel Kim.

Hurree Babu, a fictional member of the Indian Survey Department working as a spy, lives
between the Indian world and the British world, and yet fits into neither. The spelling of
Hurree Babu’s speech – a literary device to indicate his exaggerated tone and
mispronunciation – is a representation of a mediocre education: “I am of opeenion that it is
most extraordinary and effecient performance. Except that you had told me I should have
opined that – that – that you were pulling my legs. How soon can he become approximately
effecient chain-man?”² He constantly tries to please the white men around him, and yet no
one shows him respect.

In another Kipling story called “The Head of the District”, a babu travels to the Kot-
Kumharsen District to rule when a sahib³ passes away due to illness. Kipling introduces Mr.
Grish Chunder De as being “more English than the English,”⁴ and as a “suave, portly Bengali
in English costume.”⁵ When his succession of the sahib is announced, a member of the
government asks, “Has the Government gone mad to send a black Bengali dog to us?”⁶ Grish
Chunder fails to rule effectively, and the district falls into violent chaos until an English sahib
returns to reestablish order. Kipling’s portrays Grish Chunder as incompetent and cowardly.
The fears of the British who question the decision to appoint Grish Chunder to rule the Kot-

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² Ibid., 207.
³ A sahib is a British man in India.
⁴ Kipling, “The Head of the District”, The Oxford Collection of Raj Stories, ed. Saros Cowasjee (Delhi: Oxford
  University Press, 1998), 199.
⁵ Ibid., 123.
⁶ Ibid.
Kumharsen District turn out to be valid, implying that the British are justified in assuming that babus cannot rule effectively.

In yet another Kipling tale, an Indian deity, the ageless Venus Annodomini, is worshipped by ‘Very Young Gayerson,’ the story’s protagonist. Here, babus are likened to dysentery: “‘Very Young’ Gayerson’s Papa held a Division, or a Collectorate, or something administrative, in a particularly unpleasant part of Bengal – full of Babus who edited newspapers…in addition to the Babus, there was a good deal of dysentery and cholera abroad for nine months of the year. ‘Young’ Gayerson…rather liked Babus, they amused him, but he objected to dysentery.”7 The amusement “Young” Gayerson finds in babus implies the British tendency to dismiss babus in literature as worthy of jokes, and not of respect. The fact that “Young” Gayerson can tolerate babus but cannot tolerate dysentery likens babus to a condition like dysentery, but not as likely to pose a serious threat. The lightheartedness of this passage is a metaphor for the reduction of babus to a trivial and non-threatening element of a village. Though the mere presence of the babu in the story indicates that they might be more significant than “Young” Gayerson imagines, “Young” Gayerson cannot acknowledge such significance.

Babus are dismissed as characters not to be taken seriously even in moments tangential to the storyline. In another tale, though having very little to do with babus, a young Indian girl, Janki, yells, “Babuji! What do these fat slugs from Calcutta know? He draws and draws and draws, and talks and talks and talks, and his maps are all wrong.”8 The babu “draws and draws and draws” and yet his “maps are all wrong,” and he “talks and talks and

talks” without saying much of value. This representation shows babus educated, but not quite educated enough to take seriously.

All of these examples point to the question: why did British writers represent English-educated Indian citizens in such a degrading manner? A wide range of British Indian fiction and historical non-fiction reveals that the term babu changed from a positive title signifying respect, similar to the title “gentleman” or “Mr.” in English before 1857, to a more derogatory label of an effeminate and incompetent Western-educated Indian in the 1860s, and finally to a category signifying a “subversive nationalist” or “middle-class agitator” by the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the image of the babu was exploited, exaggerated, and manipulated by Anglo-Indian writers, who used these representations to further justify British rule in the subcontinent: *since the babus have a mediocre education and are incapable of effective rule, we, the British, must remain in charge of India for their own good.* The fact that the British justified their rule through this inaccurate representation demonstrates their fear that the babus are educated and are capable.

Until the early part of the nineteenth century, “babu” was a title of respect. In an 1834 story called simply *The Baboo,* Augustus Prinsep depicts a babu as a servant – a scribe who works for an individual family. The babu is a minor character in the novel. In fact, the first 200 pages of the book mention the babu only once, and even at that point he remains anonymous. The babu drifts in and out of the story at times convenient for the British. The novel’s title, then, belies its actual plot: a British woman who comes to India to live with her

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9 Augustus Prinsep, 1803-1830, was a Civil Servant in India. He is most famous for his book *Journal of a voyage from Calcutta to Van Diemens Land: from original sketches taken during the years 1829 to 1830* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1833), and for his work as a Sanskrit scholar. *The Baboo* was published posthumously by the same publisher in the following year. As the preface to the novel indicates, Prinsep did not finish revising the novel before his death. His wife published anonymously what had been written after his death in London. It was only later that the story was identified as having been the product of Prinsep’s imagination.
aunt discovers that her former fiancé is still alive, though she had received word of his death months earlier. The indication in the title that the babu will be the story’s central character is ironic given the tale’s plot, thus demonstrating that acknowledgment for the babu can exist only in name but not in practice.

Beginning in the 1860s, however, Anglo-Indian writers began to represent babus as effeminate, incompetent, and disloyal. Especially after the widespread Indian Rebellions of 1857-58, the need for the British to justify their empire was brought to the forefront of imperial consciousness.\(^\text{10}\) Two schools of thought, as outlined by Thomas Metcalf, have analyzed the causes, effects, and meaning of the violence. On the one hand, several scholars\(^\text{11}\) have maintained that the Mutiny was an isolated incident with local causes, often referring to it as the Sepoy Rebellion. On the other hand, many historians\(^\text{12}\) have identified the Indian Mutiny as the first battle for independence, and subsequently as the turning point in British rule in the subcontinent. Regardless of the interpretations, the facts are the same: Indian citizens had collectively risen up against their British officers. The revolt represented the awakening of the fragility of the British Empire, a realization which shook what Francis Hutchins calls “the illusion of permanence.”\(^\text{13}\) As Thomas Metcalf has said, “the searing trauma of this revolt was but the first of a series of checks to the expectation of a slow but steady march of progress whose end point would be the triumph of liberal principles throughout the world.”\(^\text{14}\) Thus, the British were forced – in a conscious or subconscious way

\(^{14}\) Metcalf, 43.
– to search for new justifications of empire, and to express these justifications more explicitly.

In Kipling’s short story “The Head of the District,” written in 1899, the Deputy-Commissioner of the Kot-Kumharsen District, Yardley Orde, falls ill and dies, leaving his assistant, Tallantire, to appoint a successor. Grish Chunder De, an Indian leader of a peaceful district, is then called in. Kipling introduces the successor to the reader at first by merely stating that he is a “good man, but too weak for Frontier work.”¹⁵ Later, when the reader learns that Orde’s successor is Mr. Grish Chunder De, a Bengali babu, Kipling offers another description: “[t]here was a gentleman and a member of the Bengal Civil Service who had won his place and a university degree to boot in fair and open competition with the sons of the English. He was cultured, of the world, and, if report spoke truly, had wisely and, above all, sympathetically ruled a crowded District in South-Eastern Bengal.”¹⁶ When Grish Chunder De arrives, however, there are revolts in the area because of the appointment of a “native” to government, and the new Deputy-Commissioner cannot control the crowds. He fakes an illness, while a white member of the administration – though actually suffering from an illness – takes control of the area and restores order.

Kipling implies that it is Grish Chunder De’s inherent and inescapable femininity that ultimately causes his cowardice. In the speech wherein he addresses his new subordinates, the latter scoff at Grish Chunder De’s attempt to rule them, and his perceived lack of manliness, his inferiority, and his physical weakness. His subordinates see his appearance as too effeminate to rule, and Kipling himself describes him in effeminate terms, calling him “a

¹⁵ Kipling, “District”, 117.
¹⁶ Ibid., 119.
As Kipling has set up, the district has gone from being ruled by a great, masculine leader to being ruled by a cowardly, incapable leader, and such a transition has been outlined along gender lines.

Affirming the idea that Grish Chunder’s downfall is his alleged femininity is Tallantire’s rebuke at the end of the story: “rest assured that the Government will send you a man!” Tallantire insinuates that Grish Chunder De is not a man, and that only a man can rule this troublesome district. This notion harkens back to the original place held by the dying leader, Orde, who is succeeded by Grish Chunder De. Throughout the tale, Orde is seen as the paternalistic figure; his followers turn to him for help, they follow his instructions, and offer him the utmost respect. Grish Chunder De, then, serves as Orde’s character foil. The fact that Grish Chunder De cannot command this type of respect from his subordinates and the people at large demonstrates his lack of physical prowess, his manliness.

The idea that babus are labeled effeminate is even more apparent in Kipling’s short story, “On the City Wall.” Wali Dad is the primary educated Indian in the tale, who is in love with the town prostitute, a beautiful woman with a harmonious singing voice. In the first physical description Kipling offers of Wali Dad, the babu is described in explicitly feminine terms. The first the reader learns of Wali Dad’s physicality is the following: “In reality he was only a clean-bred young Mohammedan, with penciled eyebrows, small-cut nostrils, little feet and hands, and a very tired look in his eyes.”

Though Kipling repeats that Wali Dad is quite young and that he has a neatly kept beard, the features described – most notably the

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17 Ibid., 120.
18 Ibid., 134.
penciled eyebrows – are most commonly found in women. Thus from the very outset of the
tale the reader is meant to view Wali Dad as possessing a degree of femininity.

The scholar who most completely analyzes the British construction of Bengali babu
femininity is Mrinlini Sinha in Colonial Masculinity. In this book, Sinha argues that gender
and race were intertwined in British India. She begins her discussion by noting that property
and manhood are intertwined, and that since the Bengali middle class lacked property rights,
they were devoid of the masculine quality of property ownership. As Sinha states, the
“relationship to property…was gradually eroded for the Bengali middle class in the second
half of the nineteenth century,” educated Bengalis took on professional and administrative
positions without their manhood.20 As they began to demand greater degrees of
independence, according to Sinha, the babus began to represent an unnatural or perverted
form of masculinity.21 As Sinha continues, though the term “babu” had been likened to the
British “gentleman” as a title of respect, around the middle of the nineteenth century, the idea
of a “babu” came to represent an Indian who gained a Western education due to a desire for
economic and social mobility. “Babu” took on a negative connotation that was intimately
connected with a lack of masculinity.22

Especially in the 1880s and 1890s, around the time of the Ilbert Bill controversy and
the Indian National Congress, the representation of Bengali babus as too feminine to earn
greater responsibility and independence, and moreover as too feminine to rule, became
popular in Anglo-Indian fiction. The Ilbert Bill of 1882 was proposed to amend the 1861
Criminal Procedure of the Indian Penal Code, essentially giving Indian officials limited

20 Mrinalini Sinha, Colonial Masculinity. The ‘manly Englishman’ and the ‘effeminate Bengali’ in the late
21 Ibid., 2.
22 Ibid., 2-3.
jurisdiction over Britons in the subcontinent. As Thomas Metcalf has stated, the bill sought to “empower Indians acting as magistrates in the countryside to try European British subjects.”23 The debate had been going on for over a decade, but did not receive widespread attention until an Indian judge was due for a promotion, at which point an Indian would preside over cases involving British plaintiffs.24 When a law member named C.P. Ilbert recommended that all stipulations for promotion based on race be removed, he was supported by several senior officials, most important of whom was Lord Ripon. Opponents of the bill, however, spoke loudly about what they claimed was they enduring “difference” of India, and the bill was defeated, never having gone into effect.25

The stereotypes of the “manly Englishman” and the “effeminate Bengali babu” that Sinha identifies played important roles in this controversy: opponents of the original bill articulated their contempt for the Bengali babus by using effeminate terms, often drawing parallels between British women and Indian men.26 The main strategy of opposing the Ilbert Bill, following Sinha’s argument, was to “shift the onus of debate from the straightforward defense of racial privileges to a question of the fitness of native civil servants….Anglo-Indians singled out middle-class Bengali Hindus in their diatribes against the Bill.”27 The idea that babus suffered from a physical weakness and unmanly fearfulness inherent in their race became a common excuse of British Civilians,28 “explaining” why their Indian

23 Metcalf, 203.
24 Ibid., 204-5.
25 Ibid., 205-8.
26 Ibid., 33-4.
27 Ibid., 40.
28 A British Civilian was a member of the Indian Civil Service.
counterparts would not effectively be capable of ruling the country, or even of a slightly higher degree of rule.\textsuperscript{29}

More than being represented by the British as too effeminate to rule, babus came to be depicted as incompetent. The most loathsome presentation of babus as incompetent is revealed in Kipling’s story “The Head of the District.” There are several notable elements in this tale. Kipling repeats again and again through the voices of various characters that the British in charge of making the appointment believe in Indian self-governance. One white officer says, “More easy to win a reputation for far-seeing statesmanship, originality, and above all, deference to the desires of the people, than by appointing a child of the country to the rule of that country? Two hundred million of the most loving and grateful folk under Her Majesty’s dominion would laud the fact, and their praise would endure for ever.”\textsuperscript{30} Still another asks, “Did anybody see any objection to the appointment, always on principle, of a man of the people to rule the people?....As regarded the mere question of race, Mr. Grish Chunder De was more English than the English, and yet possessed of that peculiar sympathy and insight which the best among the best Service in the world could only win to at the end of their service.”\textsuperscript{31} The British appear to be confident in their decision, acknowledging the great leadership potential of the Bengali successor. They believe, also, that their fellow Britons would approve of their decision, calling attention to the alleged universality of these opinions among the British.

However, these words of confidence in the abilities of the Bengali are merely representative of Kipling’s inimitable sarcasm. When he states through the mouths of British

\textsuperscript{29} Sinha, 43.
\textsuperscript{30} Kipling, “District”, 118.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 119.
officials that every respect and confidence should be placed in the newcomer, he actually means to demonstrate that it is not that the British who do not have high expectations for the Bengalis, but rather it is the Bengalis who disappoint the British with their lack of leadership skills, first and foremost of which being courage to control the masses. In other words, Kipling means to illustrate the following notion: *we, the British, had every confidence that the Bengalis could rule, and yet their behavior proves that they cannot.*

The presence of the babu as an object of hatred in several of Kipling’s stories is consistent. Similar presentations of the babu as incapable of self-rule and unworthy of respect appear in “Beyond the Pale,” “The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P.,” and others. In each of these stories, the babu characters are portrayed as trying to become British that they actually become a mock Briton: one who speaks English, but with tinges of “native cant,”

one who sees himself among the British, but is “flawed” with Indian appearance, and one who has received an English education, but remains educated merely in books and not in “character.” As John McBratney has stated, Kipling was “stubbornly unwilling to…embrace a vision of India as capable of meaningful and wholesome change.” The educated Indians in his stories, thus, are depicted as attempting to become British, but not quite fitting the mold. Kipling saw the British Empire as a necessity in the subcontinent; for

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34 Other Kipling stories not discussed here which present babus in a similar light include “Without Benefit of Clergy” and “The City of Dreadful Night”.
37 Ibid., 24.
him, no English-educated Indian could fill the shoes of the British. Though he mocks the babus’ level of education, Kipling implies that no level of education would be sufficient.

Those who appoint Grish Chunder stipulate to “brigade De with a very strong Deputy-Commissioner on each side of him; give him the best Assistant in the Province; rub the fear of God into the people beforehand; and if anything goes wrong, say that his colleagues didn’t back him up.” The British appear as wanting Grish Chunder De to succeed, giving him every support possible, even to the point of blaming those around him if anything goes wrong. And yet by setting up this support system, the British officials ensure that if anything does go wrong, there will be plenty of white administrators – those who had been Orde’s subordinates – who can fix it. This way, as the British officers intend, Grish Chunder can try his luck at Deputy-Commissioner, and when things go awry, British officials can simply step in and restore order. It is as if Grish Chunder was appointed for the purpose of failing, in an attempted demonstration of Bengali incompetence. Moreover, this inevitable failure appears to be known by the British who actually arrange the appointment. Even the dying Orde, in his last breath, advises his men to turn to Tallantire if anything is needed, as opposed to going to his successor.

Kipling, however, cannot merely set up this farce without including some characters who actually foresee Grish Chunder’s failure instead of success. He includes several British and non-British officials alike who offer their explicit suspicions of the Bengali’s abilities. When Orde’s assistants and friends are informed of the decision to appoint a Bengali as Orde’s successor, they are outraged. Khoda Dad Khan even states, “Has the Government

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38 Ibid., 22.
40 Ibid., 117.
gone mad to send a black Bengali dog to us?” Tallantire, adhering to the notion of wanting to instill a false sense of confidence in his followers, replies, “He is a very clever s-sahib.”

The fact that he stutters over the words indicates his disbelief in their veracity. Even when Grish Chunder delivers his first speech as Deputy-Commissioner, stating, “It is my order,” the crowd laughs with scorn. Naturally, when Grish Chunder De fails to control the violence that has broken out on the frontier, Kipling narrates, “It was undoubtedly an insult that the Bengali, the son of a Bengali, should presume to administer the Border.”

Thus the story has come full circle; the initial “confidence” of the British officials has been shattered by the incompetence of the Bengali ruler. The story concludes with an interesting twist of narration: the violence is seen as unnecessary, but at least it got rid of the Babu.

This representation of babus as incompetent was closely associated with the representation of babus as having only a quasi-English education. But this portrayal was far from accurate. In 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay issued his (in)famous Minute on Indian Education. The Minute was the last in a series of propaganda articles which had lasted over half a century calling for education of Indians in the English language. The Orientalists argued that “native” education institutions should be promoted and improved, while the Anglicists maintained that the existing structure should be replaced by one that reflected those of British schools in Britain. Macaulay’s Minute was the culmination of the debate,

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41 Ibid., 123.
42 Ibid., 123.
43 Ibid., 126.
44 Ibid., 130.
with the implementation of Anglicist ideas. As Elmer H. Cutts has noted, Macaulay’s interest in India probably began with his election to Parliament in 1830 as a Whig. Macaulay had attended the debates over education policy in India in the first three years of his position as an M.P. Because of the respect Macaulay had earned among his colleagues, his call for English-language education did not fall on deaf ears. The details of the Minute were adopted into the New Education Policy drawn up by Lord Bentinck. Although English had been declared the official language of communication between Indians and the British government two years earlier, the policy virtually made English-language instruction mandatory in government-supported secondary schools.

The intention of the Minute was to make the Indians “co-operate effectively in the administration of the country, the raising of the moral standard, and the development of the economic resources of the country.” More than demanding the instruction of certain subjects in a certain language, the Minute laid the foundation for British educational policy in India thereafter. Macaulay wanted to “form a class who may be interpreters between [the British] and the millions whom [they] govern, – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.”

48 The Whig Party in Great Britain ultimately became the Liberal Party today. In the 1830s, the Whigs won a large majority in Parliament and subsequently passed numerous precedent-setting reforms, such as the ending of slavery in 1833, the ending of the commercial functions of the East India Company, and the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, which eliminated old oligarchies in government. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, online edition, s.v. "United Kingdom"; available from http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:9022/eb/article-44921; Internet.
49 Cutts, 830.
50 Cutts, 824.
51 Cutts, 829.
53 Thomas Babington Macaulay’s *Minute on Indian Education*, Point 34 (2 Feb 1835).
was educated in a system that was intended to set them up as middlemen between two populations, part of both and yet part of neither.

But babus were in fact gaining an education beyond what would make them a class of “interpreters,” evidenced in the fact that they became well-versed in the specifics of the administration of the British over their country and in the opportunities from which they were excluded. Individual Indians began lobbying for greater inclusion in government administration, such as access into the Indian Civil Service. But as this Indian interest in the Civil Service grew, new stipulations were introduced which made it increasingly difficult for an Indian to take the examination and to receive a passing score. As Malti Sharma outlines, the Indianization of the Indian Civil Service was a long and arduous process, and one which was met with great opposition. The new inclusion policies put forth by Viceroy Lord Ripon and the success of the Indian examinees challenged the interests of the Anglo-Indian officials.54 Especially after 1857, efforts were made by British officials to exclude Indian men from the Service,55 which suggests that the Indians who passed the examinations and entered the Service experienced success.

According to Shaibal K. Gupta, even after the exam was opened to “all British subjects, regardless of color” in 1858, appointment in the Service still required a nomination by the Court of Directors, which made exclusion easy.56 Formal exclusion also took place in the administration of the examination itself, as Gupta details. First, the exams were initially only offered in London, which made even sitting for them quite difficult for Indians.57

Second, the content of the exam consisted of subjects based on Western curricula, and were

54 Sinha, 38.
57 Ibid., 18.
weighted accordingly. Latin and Greek carried 750 marks, and British examinees could take both parts, while Sanskrit and Arabic carried only 350 parts, and an Indian could not take more than one part. As changes which made taking and passing the exam easier for Indians were implemented, the stipulations of the exams were reverted back once the Indians began to do so. So “in 1859…the marks in Sanskrit and Arabic were raised to 500, but immediately after the first successful candidate, Satyendranath Tagore, got through in 1864 with high marks in Sanskrit, it was again lowered.”58 Thirdly, the British placed an age limit on the examinees. The age limit began at twenty-three, then was reduced to twenty-one in 1869, and was lowered again to nineteen in 1876. The constant lowering of the age limit made traveling to London to sit for the exams even more difficult for Indian men.59

In an effort to mask gains made by Indians, British fiction writers depicted babus as wanting to mimic British ways, but as too uneducated to do so. As Mrinalini Sinha argues, babus began “demanding a share in the exclusive privileges of the British colonial elite. The new attitude towards this group of Indians was reflected in the colonial ‘discourse’ that characterized them as an ‘artificial’ and ‘unnatural’ class of persons.”60 The very notion that the British had to keep inventing new ways to prevent Indians from joining the Service indicates that Indians were succeeding in joining the Service. British writers put forth an image of babus as incapable of education and incapable of rule to minimize the threat babus posed: they did gain an education, and they were becoming capable of rule.

Even E.M. Forster’s acclaimed A Passage to India adheres to the idea that babus did not have a real education. The story delineates a love triangle among a British woman and

58 Ibid., 19.
59 Ibid., 18.
60 Sinha, 4-5.
two British men, which turns into a judicial trial when the British woman accuses Aziz, a Muslim doctor, of rape. Though Aziz is one of the novel’s more likeable characters, Forster still maintains Aziz’s position as a babu who aims to ape British ways by befriending the Britons whom he encounters. Despite his position as one of the most educated characters in the entire novel, having earned his medical degree, and capable of conversing on English literature and poetry, the reader senses his resentment towards the British characters. For instance, in one of the opening scenes, in which Aziz sees a white woman in a mosque and orders her to leave without recognizing the propriety of the woman’s behavior, it is clear that Aziz thinks Britons do not respect Indian ways. Aziz shouts, “Madam! Madam! Madam! ....Madam, this is a mosque, you have no right here at all; you should have taken off your shoes; this is a holy place for Moslems.” Mrs. Moore’s only response is, “I have taken them off.” This encounter enlightens the reader to Aziz’s opinion that white people in India do not understand the land they inhabit. The fact that Mrs. Moore has obeyed the laws of the mosque indicates that Aziz underestimates the comprehension of Anglo-Indians. Additionally, Aziz and his educated friends prefer communication through euphemisms and assumptions, rather than through direct, honest speech. Though his respectable qualities, such as his bravery and intellect, are the focus of Forster’s attention, Forster implies that his “flaws” are due to his inherent “Indianness.”

Though Forster intends, arguably, to criticize the British characters who treat Aziz and the other educated Muslims poorly, his depiction of Britons who do so indicates that such treatment occurs regularly in India. This idea holds especially true in the case of Major Callendar, Aziz’s superior. Callendar constantly calls for Aziz’s assistance for frivolous

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tasks, indicating that he deems Aziz capable only of small, trivial tasks, and not of greater
duties. In the first chapter, for example, Callendar calls on Aziz to help with a small task, but
when Aziz arrives, Callendar is nowhere to be found. Instead, two British women (one of
whom is the wife of Major Callendar) take Aziz’s tonga (carriage) for their amusement, and
Aziz walks home. Later in the novel, at a party, four British characters look scornfully
upon the dress of the Indians present, which is a mix of Western and Eastern styles. As is
noted in the book, “European costume had lighted like a leprosy.” But the fact that this
description accompanies the frivolous chatter of the English women, whose “words seemed
to die as soon as uttered,” implies that the reader is meant to assign the description of
Indian garb little weight. Though Forster intends for the reader to feel sympathy towards
Aziz, and while not making a direct justification of empire, Aziz’s position in the eyes of the
British characters is like that of any common Indian, and his high level of education does not
make him more worthy of respect in the eyes of the British.

More than simply incompetent, babus are depicted as tricksters in much of Anglo-
Indian literature. In Kipling’s novel, Kim, the title character, teams up with a Tibetan lama
on a search for a river which washes away sin (according to a Buddhist prophesy). Kim’s
white ancestry gets him caught up with an Irish regiment, and he gets recruited by the
English Secret Service, the role he fills to the end of the novel. When Kim and the lama
arrive at the train station to head for the city of Umballa toward the beginning of the novel,
Kim approaches the clerk selling tickets. He asks for two tickets to Umballa, but the clerk
gives him a ticket only to the next station. “‘Nay,’ said Kim, scanning it with a grin. ‘This

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62 Ibid., 20.
63 Ibid., 39.
64 Ibid.
may serve for farmers, but I live in the city of Lahore. It was cleverly done, Babu. Now give
the ticket to Umballa.” 65 Having been caught trying to trick the youngster, the clerk scowls
and gives Kim the proper ticket to Umballa. Though this instance is relatively innocuous,
Kipling’s portrayal of the babu parallels his treatment of all babus: as petty tricksters. In
order to keep babus in their place, the British represented babus in a scathing light.

This scathing light continues well beyond the notion of babu as trickster, into the
realm of babu as disloyal to the empire. As Edwin Arnold, a former principal of an Indian
government college, wrote in the 1880s, “English education, it is sometimes said, makes the
young men discontented and disloyal. If discontentment is made synonymous with aspiring
for self-improvement, and striving for greater independence, then surely the educated classes
in India are indeed a discontented lot.” 66 Arnold here intends to demonstrate that the
educated classes in India strive for knowledge and for higher self-governance. In doing so, he
acknowledges that some of his colleagues might deem their desire for self-improvement as a
desire for independence from Britain.

Even in Kipling’s Kim, the seemingly respectable Hurree Chunder appears
subversive. It is never easy for the reader to trust Hurree Chunder, for his words and the
descriptions and the assumptions of other characters do not often match up with Hurree
Chunder’s actions. Hurree Chunder repeats again and again throughout the novel, “I am a
fearful man,” and yet he lives a life of danger in the duty of the British Secret Service. His
name cannot be revealed beyond a small radius of people for his own safety, and dispatches
containing information about him must be written in code. The first thing Kim notices about
Hurree Chunder, in fact, is his manliness. He is physically capable and worthy of respect. In

65 Kipling, Kim, 75.
66 Edwin Arnold, Education in India: A letter from the ex-principal of an Indian government college to his
the climax of the novel, Hurree Chunder manages to fool the Russian spies, the imperial enemies of the British, with Kim’s assistance.

Despite his manliness and his supposed bravery, Kipling presents the Bengali’s bravery as somehow having stemmed from his “native” shrewdness. As Rajiv Vrudhula argues, “Kipling created an independent, physically capable babu while simultaneously suggesting the impossibility of such a creature.” Hurree Chunder’s bravery is not the same as Kim’s bravery. Kipling’s apparent defiance of the babu stereotype is thus incomplete, as Hurree Chunder cannot remain completely worthy of respect. It is ultimately his capacity for deception which makes him a successful Secret Agent, but it also reminds the reader of his innate Indianness, the sign for the British of his distance from them. As Kim relays the story of Hurree Chunder’s success with the Russian spies to the lama in the last pages of the novel, he says, “He robbed them. He tricked them. He lied to them like a Bengali. They give him a chit (a testimonial). He mocked them at the risk of his life – I never would have gone down to them after the pistol-shots, and then he says he is a fearful man….And he is a fearful man.” Hurree Chunder, then, is reduced to a caricature of a British-labeled trickster babu, a con artist in his own right.

The most negative depiction of babus comes in their “alliance” with subversive nationalism. In Joseph Hitrec’s “The Fearless Will Always Have It,” a group of college boys roams the street chalking nationalist messages on sidewalks and walls: “QUIT INDIA OR BEWARE” and “FREEDOM IS HERE.” The phrases are written in perfect English. The three boys use the cover of night to express their sentiments through graffiti. They speak in

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67 Rajiv Vrudhula, “The Bengali Babu: Ideology, Stereotype and the Quest for Authenticity in Colonial South Asian Literature” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 1999), 188.
whispers, and move quietly behind poles and other street structures to dodge the police.\(^{70}\)
The boys perceive their actions as brave and “daring,” and yet when the police come, they scatter in fright. Hitrec presents them as cowards and thieves. The boys are obviously well-educated, as they attend college and use extensive English vocabularies in such expressions as “That’s a hackneyed idea” and “Observe the attachment of the ruling classes.”\(^{71}\) Even the woman who pulls Raman into a room (discussed in Chapter 1) recognizes Raman’s high level of education: when he asks how she knew he was a student, she responds, “From your speech.”\(^{72}\) There are other characters in the story, however, who have not received an English education. The boys curse a man on the street for being uneducated, and for “[sleeping] while your country is awakening.”\(^{73}\) They imply that a lack of education allows a man to be lazy, while an education gives a man the bravery to claim his independence from the empire. In the end, the graffiti the three boys have produced amounts to nothing. They imagine the city will see their writings in the morning and take action, but “morning” never comes. Hitrec’s intention, then, is to accuse the education of the Indian population of producing nationalists, and to represent Indian nationalists as cowards and thieves who are not to be taken seriously.

In Kipling’s tale “The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P.,” written in 1913, two British characters, Orde (a government official in Bengal) and Pagett (a Member of Parliament in England, as the title indicates), debate the significance of the Indian nationalist movement. With each assumption Pagett makes about India, Orde disagrees. Pagett has come to India to

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 323-26.  
\(^{71}\) Ibid., 325-26.  
\(^{72}\) Ibid., 329.  
\(^{73}\) Ibid., 324.
learn of “the progress of India…the National Congress movement, and other things;”\textsuperscript{74} Orde’s response is to state that the nationalist movement essentially does not exist. Orde and Mr. Edwards, another Civilian, agree that there is no common voice of the Indian people, which precludes the emergence of a truly widespread nationalist movement. Even the first Bengali to speak in the story, a Muslim artist named Bishen Singh, recognizes that there is too rigid a system of internal rivalries among the provinces and among the classes that the Indians cannot be considered a united people in his statement that “race pride [implies] race-hatred.”\textsuperscript{75} As the story continues, nearly all of the assumptions Pagett has carried with him to India have been contradicted: he believes a strong nationalist movement is underway, but it is not; he believes the Indian people vote in elections, but they do not; he believes the Indian people earn respect through education, but the opposite is true.\textsuperscript{76} All of these negations add up to the “enlightenments” Member of Parliament Pagett comes to realize. Kipling thus represents the movement for independence as existing only in the imaginations of those British officials who had never traveled to the East. He dismisses nationalists as unimportant in the grander scheme of rule, and ridiculous in the face of government.

In Edmund Candler’s novel \textit{Siri Ram, Revolutionist}, written in 1912, the Indian sense that “the country is [theirs]” is the root of British animosity towards Indian nationalists.\textsuperscript{77} Set in the Punjab, the story follows the life of Siri Ram, an ignorant villager easily excited by nationalist propaganda. After being expelled from college for an anti-British speech, he is recruited by seditious nationalists to edit an anti-British newspaper, for which he goes to prison. He cannot escape the cunning nationalists around him, and is even flattered into

\textsuperscript{74} Kipling, “Enlightenments”.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Saros Cowasjee, Introduction to \textit{A Raj Collection}, ed. Saros Cowasjee (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), xxxiv.
shooting a British government officer upon his release from jail. Though he hopes – and assumes – that his nationalist friends would break him out of prison and ignite a revolution, his time on death row takes its toll and Siri Ram commits suicide. Here, the uneducated Siri Ram is duped by the highly educated nationalists who recruit young men to do their dirty work, such as killing British officers, or expressing seditious points of view. For Skene, the British principal of Gandeshwar College, the British had conquered India according to the rules of imperialism, and thus have the natural right to lay claim over India. Skene claims, “When the Indians are strong enough to govern it, they will be strong enough to take it, and they won’t ask us.” This phrase is loaded with fearful sentiment: on the one hand is the implication that the Indians are not yet ready to govern themselves, and on the other hand is the notion that the time when they will be ready to govern themselves is inevitable.

According to Benita Parry, Candler’s “view of the East is determinedly and sometimes aggressively that of a Western man who, having been impelled to explore the strange and the different, discovers that pleasure is to be found only in the familiar.” During his time in the subcontinent, Candler wrote articles for several Anglo-Indian journals, including The Pioneer, the Outlook, and the Civil and Military Gazette. He taught English literature in a Madras college in 1900, and wrote Siri Ram: Revolutionist twelve years later while living in the Punjab. He disliked the trend of Anglo-Indian relationships and friendships, and remained there because he found few job prospects in London.

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79 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 132-3.
83 Ibid., 134.
to isolate himself from his surroundings, and championed his psychological and physical distance from Indians.\textsuperscript{84} During his stay in the Punjab, nationalism was picking up speed.\textsuperscript{85}

For Candler, as Parry has maintained, Indian nationalism was

\begin{quote}
the expression of a vain, verbose, flabby and sentimental people. The older conspirators are cowardly and unscrupulous; their propaganda machine spreads abusive and venomous misrepresentations about the crimes inflicted on the Motherland by the British. They use silly and patriotic young men to do the dangerous work while safeguarding their own persons and property.\textsuperscript{86}
\end{quote}

This opinion of the nationalist movement in the subcontinent informed his perceptions of the events occurring around him, and he represents the characters in his novel as fitting these molds.

In each of these stories, the British authors represent the nationalists as educated, as trouble-makers, and as a threat which exists only in name, but not in reality. As Vrudhula argues, “babus” came to mean “all middle-class agitators.” He continues that the linking of babus with agitators posed a heightened threat to the security of the empire. He states, that “never having ruled in India, and prey to invaders, the Bengalis have no experience that would warrant their ascension to positions of greater responsibility in the government.”\textsuperscript{87} As a class of Indians who had gained a Western education and who had access to the internal workings of the British governance, “a large part of nationalistic resistance arose from the educated section of the Indians, from people like Hurree Babu.”\textsuperscript{88} Especially when the Congress Party was formed in 1885, and as nationalism became a popular movement, babus began to voice their opinions in a language the British could not ignore. It was precisely this

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 135.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 149.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 150-1.
\textsuperscript{87} Vrudhula, 201-2.
trend that inspired the British to invent new ways of justifying their empire. Depictions of babus as subversive nationalists served as one more way in which the British tried to sustain their rule over the peoples of the subcontinent.

The depictions of babus as effeminate, as incompetent, as tricksters, and ultimately as subversive nationalists (the ultimate tricksters) symbolize the British desire to relegate babus to an inferior position in order to maintain the racial and gender hierarchies the British had worked to establish and maintain. The fear associated with the fragility of empire that grew from the decades following the Indian Rebellions of 1857-58 was given a literal face in the educated babu. For the British, the babu symbolized the similarities they began to see between themselves and the Indians who were supposed to represent Eastern “difference.” The idea that the babu could become too much like the British was thus suppressed in fiction: authors instead depicted as the babu attempting to become like the British, but failing to do so. Conversely, the notion of the British coming to greater understandings of the empire over which they ruled was often championed, most notably in Kim, Kipling’s only full-length novel.

As mentioned above, a babu is a central character in this novel, Hurree Chunder Mookerjee. Hurree Chunder adopts everything Western liberals espouse: a well-rounded education, appreciation of English literature, and an understanding of Indian culture. Yet he remains, and must always remain, a “native.” Hurree Chunder is both English and Indian, and yet cleanly fits into neither category. When Hurree Chunder tries to be more British than the British, he is condemned. As noted above, Hurree Chunder has an imperfect command of the English language. His speech overemphasizes certain vowel sounds, most commonly
replacing words like “only” with “onlee” and “opinion” with “opheenion.” Hurree Chunder’s broken English leads the reader to believe that he attempts an English education, but ultimately cannot succeed.

His education does not make the British respect him; instead they belittle his education as a mock English education. When listing the men worthy of such noble causes as “going abroad at the risk of their lives [to] discover news,” Lurgan Sahib counts Hurree Chunder among the top ten who are the best, but qualifies that statement by stating, “[A]nd that is curious. How great, therefore, and desirable must be a business that brazens the heart of a Bengali!” The fact that Lurgan Sahib states “and that is curious” indicates that most Bengalis are not worthy of such a distinction, or rather that the British portray the babu as not worthy of distinction. It appears as though Lurgan compliments Hurree Chunder by stating that he is one of few courageous men, and yet he implies that it is “curious” that Hurree Chunder has overcome his “Indianness” in order to be so courageous, indicating that he believes that most Bengalis could not be courageous in this manner. The previous example, however, indicates that babus are worthy. Thus an interesting discrepancy between the portrayal of babus and the actual position of babus is brought to light: Hurree Chunder seems educated and worthy of respect, but the British characters (with the exception of Kim) and Kipling himself represent him as not respectable, and as an unsuccessful brown Briton.

The cultural hybridity for which Hurree Chunder is condemned, however, works in two directions. Kim himself can be seen as a cultural hybrid. Young Kimball O’Hara, though an Irish soldier’s orphan, resembles Kipling’s boyhood self: a sahib moving between two cultures and two languages. Kipling was born in Bombay in 1865, and was sent back to India.

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90 Ibid., 209.
England at the age of five to receive an English education. He spent the first twenty years of his life lamenting his lost homeland (India), and ultimately returns a few years later. In the novel, Kim is “burned black as any native,” and speaks the vernacular by choice.\(^{91}\) He wears two garbs,\(^{92}\) one for each culture, and refers to “my country” when referring to the Punjab.\(^{93}\) All he knows of his white ancestry is contained in a leather amulet he has worn around his neck since early childhood. The amulet reveals that his parents were both white, though his mother had died of cholera and his father had been a drunken soldier in the Irish Regiment. Despite his whiteness, he begs in the streets and plays in the bazaar as any native boy.

Throughout the novel, Kipling praises Kim’s ability to move freely between the two cultures. When he and the lama approach two Irish soldiers (a move which Kim believes to be fulfilling a prophesy his father had instilled within him before the latter’s death), the Irish soldiers ask Kim to translate what they tell him into the vernacular for the lama to understand. Instead of translating the soldiers’ actual words – that they want to take Kim with them to get a proper sahib’s education – he tells the lama that he will go with the soldiers, and then run away after a few meals to rejoin the lama in the quest for the river that washes away sin.\(^{94}\) Kipling champions Kim’s ability to exist in both cultures. The lama acknowledges, “A Sahib and the son of a Sahib…But no white man knows the land and the customs of the land as thou knowest.”\(^{95}\) Even Kim’s epithet indicates that he is a cultural hybrid: “Little Friend of all the World,” and occasionally “Friend of the Stars.” Being a

\(^{91}\) Ibid., 49.
\(^{92}\) Ibid., 81.
\(^{93}\) Ibid., 114.
\(^{94}\) Ibid., 138.
\(^{95}\) Ibid., 139.
“friend of all the world” works in Kim’s favor, and is supported by Kipling. For Kipling, it is good to be a “friend of all the world,” but only a white person should strive to be so.

Inherent in this notion of cultural hybridity is the belief that a person is born exclusively into one race, but can take on the characteristics of another. Such an idea is manifested not only in the privileges afforded to certain characters and not to others, but in the very titles of the characters. White men in various works of fiction are almost exclusively introduced as “sahibs,” and Indian men and women are almost exclusively introduced as “natives,” or by the position they hold in the society. In Kim, Hurree Chunder is referred to as Hurree Babu, and oftentimes simply Babu. Though there are other characters in Kim who are referred to by their positions – the lama, for instance – most characters, especially white characters, are referred to by their names in addition to their title. Lurgan Sahib, for example, is identified as a Sahib, but as a specific sahib. Kipling replaces Hurree Chunder’s name with his official position, which suggests that Kipling may have wanted to highlight the universality of babu characteristics; Hurree’s poor English, his obesity, and his eagerness to please may then represent those qualities which Kipling believed to be present in all babus.

Even those characters in the novel who are not British perceive Hurree Chunder in this manner. A Russian whom Kim meets in the latter half of the novel labels Hurree Chunder in the following manner: “[h]e represents India in transition – the monstrous hybridism of East and West.” This sentence is loaded with symbolic meaning. Most obviously, Hurree Chunder’s place as a “monstrous hybridism of East and West” is self-explanatory: with his English education, he has become part of both East and West, but not in a way that is favorable for the imperialists. For the Russian, Hurree Chunder is monstrous in

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96 Ibid., 288.
that he has assumed the worst characteristics of the East in his imitation of the West: he is educated and respectable, but somehow not enough of either.

The idea of “India in transition” must be acknowledged. India is in transition between what and what? The most logical answer is that it is in transition between being blindly oppressed by the British, and being educated enough to take a stand in their own governance. Had a British official made this statement, this explanation might suffice. But the fact that a Russian made such a comment draws reference to the competitive imperialism between the British and the Russians. The British viewed the Russians as their imperial rivals in the East, especially after the Russians moved into Afghanistan and other locations neighboring India in the late nineteenth century. Imperial competition with the Russians serves as a backdrop for much of Kim. The statement, having been made by a Russian, combines the themes of the Great Game of imperialism and the education of the Indian people. The implication is that not only are the Indian people themselves in transition – between lack of English education and sufficient English education – but British imperialism in India is itself in transition – between rule by an empire filled with confidence and rule by an empire fearful of its demise.

Kipling believed in the goodness and necessity of British imperialism. As Benita Parry has commented, “Kipling articulated the pride which a segment of the British people took in seeing themselves as a nation of law-givers.” His pride in the empire informed his opinions of the conditions in which he lived: he did not want to see the empire crumble. Despite his deep sarcasm, Kipling’s depictions of babus throughout his short stories, novels, and poetry undoubtedly comprise his views towards this group of Indians, and reflected the

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97 Parry, 207.
98 Ibid.
ways in which he was attempting to minimize the possibility of Indian independence from
Britain. His love for the subcontinent was conditional on Britain’s possession of India.

It was for these reasons – the fear of the empire’s demise, the fear of Indian power,
and the fear of Indian desire for greater control over their rule – that made these justifications
necessary for the British to perpetuate. As Thomas Metcalf eloquently states,

Behind this condescension lay unvoiced, anxious fears. By his mimicry of
English manners, the babu reminded the British of a similarity they sought
always to disavow; and, steeped in English liberalism, he posed by implication,
if not by outright assertion, a challenge to the legitimacy of the Raj. [The
Indian male needed to be] portrayed as no more than a caricature Englishman.\(^{99}\)

The history of the nineteenth century representations of babus by British writers, then, reads
as the history of a white race trying desperately to keep a non-white race at bay, and to justify
their own empire.

\(^{99}\) Metcalf, 106.
CONCLUSION

One would think…we were in danger of losing India tomorrow. 
Flora Annie Steel, “The Gift of Battle,” 1890s

The day of the English Raj is over. Their sun has set…forever; 
they will never rise again….We are ready, we will meet and kill [the British].
Clive Robert Fenn, *For the old flag: a tale of the Mutiny*, 1899

In the first quote above, from Flora Annie Steel’s short story “The Gift of Battle,” the character Tim O’Brien expresses a paradoxical emotion present in much Anglo-Indian fiction: British writers claim to *not* be in danger of losing India, and yet their need to make such assertions suggests a fear that the empire might, in fact, be at risk. They claim to be confident for the purpose of disguising their anxiety. This masked fear comprises many justifications of rule throughout the literature discussed in the preceding pages. Their newly-recognized vulnerability and perceived need for validating the empire began in 1857-58, as is evident in the ever-growing literature about the widespread Indian Rebellions.

The second quote above, from Clive Robert Fenn’s novel *For the old flag: a tale of the Mutiny*, demonstrates British beliefs about sepoys’ intentions. The story, written by a British author for a British audience, articulates the very real British fear that zeal for the sepoy cause was mounting. In this quote a sepoy encourages his Indian friends to believe that the British forces will be overcome. This image – that sepoys would gather out of earshot from the British to conspire about the demise of the empire – was the fictional manifestation of the Anglo-Indians’ deepest fears. British fiction about the Rebellions reveals the tensions between the fear experienced by the British and the literary attempts to mask that fear.
As Shailendra Dhari Singh has identified, certain themes were common in British literature on the Rebellions, none of which are surprising: “portions of the history of the Mutiny, a picture of the conspiracy to revolt, love intrigues, picture of cantonment life, and…a realistic portrayal of scenes during the Mutiny.”¹ The themes of love intrigues and cantonment life are continuous with pre-1857 fiction of Anglo-Indians. They consist of episodes in which Britons are the only characters, and in which Indians play a limited role. With the Rebellions, however, Britons were forced to confront a serious challenge to their empire. As they attempted to squash those challenges, they began to offer justifications for their rule in fiction. After 1858, strikingly new themes that reveal the masking of fears and the fears themselves enter literature.

The images of the British and the sepoys illustrate a contradictory sense of British moral righteousness and bravery, but also an implicit sense of nervousness. British writers often witnessed the events of the Rebellions, and recorded their experiences in ways that reflected their particular vantage point and interests.² British authors – similar to historical British accounts of the Rebellions – made little attempt to understand the complex causes of the violence, and did not imagine the violence as having the weight which history would assign to it.³ Doing so would have entailed an acknowledgment of British complicity in the outbreak of the Rebellions and the legitimacy of their rule.

In *Shunkur: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny of 1857*, published anonymously in 1874, the wives of British soldiers discuss the possibility of an uprising, imagining that if it does occur, it will occur on a small-scale and will be immediately suppressed. Mrs. Quinn, asks, “Would

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² Ibid., 34.
³ Ibid., 25.
they harm us, the brutes, if they rise?” Her friend, Mrs. Burney, replies, “The sepoy is not so bad as that, you know. The fact is, I don’t believe that our sepoys here will rise at all.” Mrs. Burney’s comment minimizes the possibility of an uprising, and yet the narrator informs the reader that “despite these expressions of hope and confidence, however, there was a general sense of depression all over the station.” The conversation between these two British women articulates British confidence in their empire. They say out loud that sepoys will not cause much harm, yet the narrator reminds the reader that “there was a general sense of depression” among the British. The juxtaposition of these two ideas mirrors British sentiment surrounding the Rebellions: explicit reassurance and confidence, and implicit fear and “depression.”

After the rebellions have broken out in the novel, two British officers debate the action the British should take after the Rebellions have been suppressed. One maintains that only those who perpetrated the violence should be punished, especially those who had committed atrocities against British women and children. He claims that “a little more foresight and prudence on the part of our own officers would have prevented many of the massacres which have been perpetrated by the rebels being so much as attempted with impunity.” He believes that the fighting was relatively limited, and could have been avoided if the British officers had been paying attention to the needs of their soldiers. The other argues that the depth and horror of the atrocities should be cause enough to rule all of India

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5 Ibid., 41.
6 Ibid., 152.
more harshly, seemingly acknowledging the importance of the rebellions. This ambivalence would mark British opinions about the Mutiny for the second half of the nineteenth century.

British confidence in their abilities to defeat the rebels inundates Clive Robert Fenn’s novel *For the old flag: a tale of the Mutiny*, written in 1899. Set in Calcutta in August of 1857, Arthur, the story’s central protagonist and the son of British Colonel Dudley, is approached by a white man, who gives Arthur a secret dispatch to be delivered to General Clarke. The dispatch, however, appears to contain false information, and General Clarke’s garrison is led directly into a clash with a contingent of sepoys, which the British win handily. One of his fellow soldiers discovers that the anonymous white man had been French, not British, but that Arthur’s bravery in battle redeems his mistake. A few battles are described, in which the British defeat the sepoys, and the remainder of the novel traces three simultaneous love stories among British troops and the women housed with them at Fort Bagh. The novel ends with the Frenchman apologizing to Arthur for his dishonesty, and leaving his fortune to Arthur upon his death.

A sense of British confidence is manifested both in the depictions of British soldiers as exhibiting bravery and heroism, and in the simultaneous illustrations of the sepoys as inhuman, cowardly, and falsely zealous. In the opening chapter of Fenn’s novel, the narrator portrays the aura of a British camp as one of “complete confidence.” Before and during each successive battle in the novel, there is no doubt as to which side will emerge victoriously; the British seem unbeatable, both generally and concerning individual British

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7 Ibid., 150-174.
8 Ibid., 25-80.
9 Ibid., 81-125.
10 Ibid., 125-232.
11 Ibid., 16.
soldiers. The most extreme example of British heroism occurs when a young boy, dying on
the ground after being wounded in the neck, continues to beat his drum to uphold the spirits
of his fellow soldiers. The boy dies with the highest honor, and the other soldiers speak of
him with the utmost respect.

Serving as the collective character foil for the British soldiers are the efforts of Indian
sepoys, who are primarily depicted with respect to atrocities committed against British
noncombatants, episodes of cowardliness, and organized conspiracies in launching and
sustaining the fighting. In the opening of the novel, Colonel Dudley refers to the sepoys as
“vile brutes” and calls attention to a massacre at Cawnpore, in which the sepoys “slaughtered
all those women.” This event is also captured in Shunkur, with special attention paid to the
murder of a six-year-old girl, though specific reference to Cawnpore is omitted. The
slaughter at Cawnpore refers to an actual event which took place on May 24, 1857, as Bingham
detailed. On this day (Queen Victoria’s birthday), “tension had been mounting, and an
outbreak was expected at any time.” Word reached a British camp where soldiers and their
families had been staying that the women and children will be granted safe passage to
Allahabad. But as the women and children boarded their boats, they were attacked by sepoys.
200 women and children were taken prisoner, and were murdered by sepoys. Many
characters in the novel remember this episode when defending their perceptions of sepoys as
murderous and inhuman. Further portrayals of sepoys in this light occur in Shunkur, in which
there are reports of sepoys having set fire to English bungalows with families sleeping

\[13\] Ibid., 88.
\[14\] Ibid., 2.
\[15\] Shunkur, 66.
\[16\] Singh, 20.
\[17\] Ibid., 21.
inside. As the narrator describes, “Great was the pleasure of Nana [the leader of the sepoy]...at the success of his treacherous and cowardly enterprise.”

Captured women and children are killed by sepoys on three occasions throughout the novel. The images in these incidents amount to the majority of the portrayals of sepoys in *Shunkur*.

The British characters continue their attacks on the character of sepoys when referring to the latter’s lack of bravery. In Fenn’s novel, Arthur ponders his enemy with disdain, thinking, “It is longer odds still when the enemy to a man welcomes death with that almost pathetic fatalism of the Oriental, who is told by his creed that if he falls in fight against the infidel, he is translated to Paradise at once.” This image is one in which the sepoy cannot be brave, for he welcomes death, and is devoid of reason. In *Shunkur*, Nana commits the ultimate act of weakness in the novel: he flees the city for safety. Sepoys are represented as cowardly, especially in the face of English bravery.

This one-sided representation carries over into the depiction of sepoys as conspiratorial and uncontrolled. Though Fenn’s novel does not deal at all with the Indian perspective, Arthur imagines the sepoys’ intentions when he sees them marching in the distance as follows: “huge native armies were marching and counter-marching, endeavoring, though happily in vain, by force of numbers, to sweep the English out of the land to recreate the Empire of the Mogul Emperors of old.” The “marching and counter-marching” suggests Arthur’s vision of the sepoy forces as working toward a goal and subsequently undoing their work. The image is a metaphor for the idea that the sepoys attempt to reach a goal and yet

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18 *Shunkur*, 53-4.
19 Ibid., 67.
20 Fenn, 86.
21 *Shunkur*, 197-206.
22 Fenn, 4.
somehow counterbalance their attempts due to lack of ability. Arthur imposes interpretations of the sepoys as having advanced with “reckless enthusiasm,” and thus as incapable. He interprets the sepoys’ objectives as attempting to reestablish the Moguls as the rulers of India. The phrase “happily in vain” furthers the notion that the ultimate purpose of the sepoys will not be reached.

The opening scene of *Shunkur* reveals two Indian men conversing about strategies for rebellion. One of the men, Azimoolah Khan, states his opinion that feelings of disaffection among the Indian army toward the government are “very general,” and that “all the sepoys complain everywhere of unnecessary restrictions imposed on them…. [T]he little consideration shown for the feelings and caste prejudices of the men has spread disaffection everywhere; and I cannot but believe that the troops in every place are quite ripe for a revolt.” He divulges his plan that Muslims want India to be divided between Hindus and Muslims, and to create a puppet government at Delhi, which would retain nominal supremacy over all. The narrator concludes the scene by stating, “So ended the last great conference of the conspirators before the mutiny broke out.” Labeling Azimoolah Khan and the other Indian man “conspirators” implies the author’s perception of the men as organized and subversive – an image which amounts to the realization of opposition to the empire.

The authors of *For the old flag* and *Shunkur* were both removed from the events of the Rebellions by forty-one and sixteen years, respectively. *Shunkur* was published anonymously, and little is known of Clive Robert Fenn, but they resemble the attitudes which

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23 Ibid., 85-6.
24 *Shunkur*, 13-5.
25 Ibid., 18.
26 Ibid., 22.
many British authors exhibit in their writing on the Rebellions. In the aftermath of the violence, as explicit justifications of empire became more popular, representations of sepoys and Indians in general as atrocity-committing, mutinous barbarians became more popular as well – and indeed more necessary for the British to sustain their rule. Their focus on this portrayal of sepoys stemmed from the desire to minimize the implications the Rebellions undoubtedly had on perceptions of the British Empire. As D.A. Washbrook has contended, “the contradictions of British rule – caught between inventing an Oriental society and abolishing it – were manifested in many of the complex patterns of revolt witnessed in 1857.”

Especially for Fenn and the Britons writing in his time, who saw the formation of the Indian National Congress nearly fifteen years before Fenn’s novel was published, the need to trivialize the effects of the Rebellions and to depict sepoys as mutinous and inhuman became more potent.

As Singh has argued, part of the British sense of confidence resulted from the belief that the sepoys would never rise up against their commanding officers. British officials put complete faith and trust in their Indian units, and often “did not prepare themselves, until too late, against such an eventuality, though reports reaches them from every side.” Believing that sepoys would never rise up allowed British officers to remain ignorant of their role in the causes which ultimately led to violence. As a result, British historical and fictional accounts tended to deal almost exclusively with the experiences of the British officers, who were presented in a heroic light. What little mention there is of the movements on the Indian side

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28 Singh, 17.
29 Ibid., 17.
showed them as “murderers and cowards.” If the British could not recognize the events which led to the Rebellions, it is not surprising that British authors would paint sepoys in a treacherous light.

Evident in the writings of the second half of the nineteenth century, there was also ambivalence in the British lack of understanding of the events in which they were involved. There are occasional representations of sepoys as men of honor and sympathy, though each of these circumstances possesses qualifying aspects that limit the British sense of insecurity. In Fenn’s novel, there are sporadic portrayals of sepoys as possessing sympathy, confidence, and honor. Towards the beginning of the novel, Arthur is captured by a band of sepoys, and is forced to march with them. When Arthur falls down in physical and emotional fatigue, one of the Indian soldiers orders that the boy be killed. Another, however, rejects the order, claiming, “No, no, we do not make war on children.” The sympathy of this particular sepoy complicates the vision of sepoys as monstrous, murderous animals, an image which stands in stark contrast to what other sepoys wanted to do. His minimal presence in the novel serves to show how infrequently the British imagined a loyal Indian to exist. Ultimately references to the massacre at Cawnpore far overshadow instances such as this one.

In British fiction, sepoys intermittently exhibit confidence in their objectives to win the war. One declares, “The day of the English Raj is over. Their sun has set…forever; they will never rise again….We are ready, we will meet and kill [the British].” But this statement is not heard by any British characters; this confidence remains within the arena of sepoys. Similarly, in Shunkur, Nana’s mother states that the power of the English has

30 Ibid., 26.
31 Fenn, 33.
32 Ibid., 34.
declined, asking who will fight the battles of the English once the mutiny is won by Indians.\footnote{Shunkur, 49-50.} Again, this conversation takes place behind closed doors with only Indians present. Conversely, when the British exclaim their ability to quell the rebellion, they do so both to one another and to the sepoys themselves. The idea that sepoys gathered out of earshot of the British demonstrates the worst fears of the British. The fact that the British in this novel can announce their confidence to both sides represents the confidence that the author wants British to possess.

There is even an honorable figure – perhaps the most honorable in Fenn’s novel – who is Indian. Though a relatively minor character, Mahm Dass rescues Arthur from a cell when he is captured by sepoys by digging a hole in the cell wall. When the pair escape into the forest, Mahm Dass is attacked by a tiger and killed.\footnote{Ibid., 42-54.} The qualification here is that Mahm Dass is Colonel Dudley’s servant, and is not a sepoy. He has ulterior motives for saving Arthur, and does not sympathize with the Indian cause.\footnote{Other titles of British works on the topic of the Rebellions include: Flora Annie Steel, \textit{On the Face of the Waters} (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1903); G.A. Henty, \textit{In Times of Peril, A Tale of India} (New York: Hurst & Company Publishers, 1899); Alice Clifton, \textit{An Unwilling Wife: a tale of the Indian Mutiny} (London: Remington & Co. Publishers, 1890); Joyce Emmerson Muddock, \textit{The Star of Fortune: a story of the Indian Mutiny} (London: 1895); Noah Alfred Chick, \textit{Annals of the Indian Rebellion...containing narratives of the outbreaks...during the Mutiny} (Calcutta: Sanders Cones & Co., 1859); George M. Fenn, \textit{Begumbagh: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny} (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1879).} In British eyes, Mahm Dass is the ideal Indian: he has remained loyal to the British as his peers have gathered in remote locations away from the British to conspire a revolt. He reinforces the subversive actions of other sepoys through contrast.

In reality, as Singh points out, “[a] British force of 36,000 men was opposed by 257,000 sepoys and an unspecified number of native inhabitants.”\footnote{Singh, 20.} As Singh continues, “in
skill and strategy the British were undoubtedly superior. At all the centers of revolt, the Indians were numerically stronger than the British, and also had artillery force and trained gunners at their command. Yet in all these places the British were successful. For in the tactical movement and effective use of troops, the British possessed the key to victory.”

The success of the British troops encouraged blindness towards their own shortcomings regarding an understanding of the violence.

Though the British masked their own imperial vulnerabilities, there was little Indian pressure for independence from Britain through the first two decades after the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, as Dadabhai Naoroji put forth in his Poverty and Un-British Rule in India in 1901. Instead, Indians demanded changes in the administration of India that would make the government more British; Indians wanted to be governed as subjects of the Queen comparable to subjects of the Queen in Britain. As Naoroji claims in the Introduction to the volume,

> [t]rue British rule will vastly benefit both Britain and India….There is a great and glorious future for Britain and India to an extent inconceivable at present, if the British people will awaken to their duty, will be true to their British instincts of fair play and justice, and will insist upon the ‘faithful and conscientious fulfillment’ of all their great and solemn promises and pledges.

Naoroji goes on to quote several promises made by British officials of fairer rule in India which had not yet been accomplished. He closes his introduction with the following statement:

> In the ‘faithful and conscientious fulfillment’ of solemn pledges, India expects and demands that the British Sovereign, People, Parliament, and Government, should make honest efforts towards what the Bishop of

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37 Ibid., 26.
38 Dadabhai Naoroji, Poverty and Un-British Rule in India (Delhi; London: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 1901).
39 Ibid., viii.
Bombay described as the aspirations and necessities of India – ‘Self-Government under British paramountcy’ or true British citizenship.\(^{40}\) Naoroji acknowledges the supremacy of the British government, and desires that India remain an integral piece of the British Empire. Yet he also demands that if this is to be the case, the Indian people must be granted all the rights and responsibilities that accompany full British citizenship. It would be another two decades before demands for independence would begin to spread throughout the subcontinent.

Nevertheless British efforts to suppress Indian advancements suggest that the British were not willing to embrace Naoroji’s ideas. Indians were succeeding in all facets of learning – in education and in the Indian Civil Service, for example – but did not push for independence in the nineteenth century.\(^{41}\) Yet the British saw the advancement of Indians as a potential threat, and aimed to slow that advancement as much as possible, as was manifested in the controversy over the Ilbert Bill of 1882-3 and the new regulations regarding eligibility for the Indian Civil Service in the 1880s and 1890s. As Noel Annan has said, in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, Anglo-Indian society “politically, nervously, physically, and spiritually quivered on the edge of precipice.”\(^{42}\) The British fear that their empire was on the brink of slipping away was accurate, necessitating the masking of fears in the literature of the day. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the British had to do more than represent Indian society as needing the British; they needed to take active measures that would suppress the advancement of Indians themselves.

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\(^{40}\) Ibid., ix.


The Ilbert Bill aimed at giving Indians more power in the jurisdiction of the countryside.\textsuperscript{43} Under the bill, Indian magistrates in the countryside would be able to try Britons in a court of law. Supporters of the bill, among them Lord Ripon, formulated their views based on an ideal that India would one day be in charge of its own governance. Opponents of the bill adhered to the belief that India and Britain were fundamentally different, and that it was because of this difference that India would never be able to rule itself, and certainly should not be allowed to make decisions regarding the fates of Britons.\textsuperscript{44} But clashes over the bill were purely theoretical in nature, for the number of Indian judges who would gain this right was quite small. As Thomas Metcalf points out, in 1872, only four members of the Indian Civil Service were Indian judges, and all of them were relatively junior.\textsuperscript{45} By 1882, however, thirty-three Indian civil servants were due for promotion.\textsuperscript{46} When C.P. Ilbert proposed the bill, which would bring thirty-three Indians to the position of being able to try a European in a court of law, these thirty-three Indians became a symbolic threat to the Britons who opposed the bill. The bill was ultimately shot down, and never implemented.\textsuperscript{47}

The debate over the bill brought the question of greater Indian independence to the forefront of imperial consciousness. As Thomas Metcalf has argued, “the Ilbert controversy forced the British for the first time to seriously consider how they should accommodate the demands of India’s educated for a share of political power…[A]s they debated the Ilbert Bill, the British found themselves unable any longer to evade the issue of India’s political

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 206.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 204.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 205.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 203.
advance.”48 Though twenty-five years after the rebellion of all classes of people in northern India, the dispute over the Ilbert Bill was the first time the British devised a formal response to Indian demands for greater participation in their rule.

The debate intensified when the Indian National Congress was formed in 1885. The organization was formed by the Indian educated elite, who, according to Metcalf, “asserted their equivalence to their rulers, and so claimed the rights they felt entitled to as British subjects.”49 With the establishment of the Congress, the British were again made aware of the pressure to include more Indians in the administration of the empire. Two ways in which the British tried to circumvent the transfer of power to the Indians, but still tried to appear to award Indians a greater say in government, were to allow certain Indians membership on boards and to include Indians as candidates for titles and awards.50 As Metcalf has drawn out, titles – namely those of Raja, Nawab, and Rai Bahadur – were distributed to loyal princes and officials.51 In addition the government created the Star of India in 1861, which was a special English order of knighthood reserved for “the most influential princes and senior officials, [which] at once became the most coveted of all the distinctions at the disposal of the viceroy.”52 However, these new awards and titles were merely artificial in practice, and did little to change the extent of Indian recognition and participation.53 These new mediums of incorporating Indians into the non-discriminatory label of “British subjects” did not give Indians the greater responsibilities to the extent to which they were desired.

48 Ibid., 222.
49 Ibid., 160.
50 Ibid., 185.
51 Ibid., 51.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 194.
For the remainder of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, demands for greater participation in government became an increasingly prevalent feature of Indian consciousness. The reforms which had been enacted to ease the tensions caused by this demand – such as the attempted Ilbert Bill and the awarding of titles and honors to deserving Indians – came to a head in 1909 in the so-called “Morley-Minto reforms,” which increased the degree of Indian participation in government. As Metcalf delineates, the legislative councils were enlarged, and election procedures were made more inclusive. More and more reforms were enacted, which suggests that the British were forced to confront demands from Indians to give them increased participation in their own governance.

As it became clear that the British could no longer ignore the desires of Indians for a greater voice in their own governance – as manifested most seriously in the widespread Rebellions of 1857-58 – Anglo-Indian authors offered representations of Indian society that provided justifications of empire in their writing. The perceived need to protect Indian women from the alleged dangers of their traditions, the pitting of Hindus against Muslims to create the image of a hopelessly divided Indian society, the portrayal of English-educated Indians as effeminate, incompetent, disloyal nationalists – all of these legitimizations of empire were incorporated into nineteenth century Anglo-Indian literature. The British used these justifications and the ones provided by depictions of the Rebellions to create the view that India needed Britain for its own survival.

As John McBratney has argued, “Throughout his life, Kipling believed that white men, particularly white Englishmen, had for a time a special…responsibility as latter-day

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54 Ibid., 223. For a more extensive description of the Morley-Minto reforms, refer to Metcalf, 223-4.
Romans to uphold the law and keep the peace throughout the world…. He felt that the English of his day had the finest capacity for moral and political leadership." Ultimately, the exaggerated representations of Indian society and the actual reforms which were put in place by the British were insufficient. These attempts by the British to cling to their empire, even as they felt it slipping away, grew increasingly desperate and explicit. Literature was an effective means to offer these justifications, for it both represented and masked the underlying fears of its authors.

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