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Some Reflections On India As Depicted In The Journals, Personal Diaries And Novels Of The English

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If the sharer in all tittle-tattle really loves literature, he will agree that there is nothing so refreshing as the originality of the old writers. It is so pleasant to note what were men's ideas on subjects new and unhacknied; to see the quaint way in which they put these ideas into their setting of words at a time when book-making had not become a trade, nor 'special' or 'foreign correspondents' filled, like the air we breathe, all space.¹

Marianna Young: *The Moslem Noble*

India and the East in general was always very fascinating to the European eyes and ears. Some got opportunity to visit as families of company officials or some came of their own volition. We find many journals, diaries and letters of English men and women who spent some years of their lives living in India. This literature is of great interest as it gives a peep in as to what did the "unofficial" Englishmen and women think about India. Of these, I could not, of course, read everything, but it was possible to read enough to gain a good view of the terrain.

In those days of distant wonder, the idea of distant lands, and their often very hideous "curiosities," rather alarmed, "ancient Britons." Records of Indian experience left by British people multiply rapidly in the latter half of the nineteenth century as more and more British people come to India for work or holiday on account of the increasing stability of the Raj and the improving means of communication and transport between the two

¹ Young, Marianna, *The Moslem Noble, His Land and People*, Saunders and Otley, London, 1857, p. 88.

countries as well as within the subcontinent.² One feature that binds these books unmistakably to the general genre of the English diary is the predominance of women authors. A few, such as Mrs Sherwood, Mrs Fenton, and Mrs Parks, can be said to have achieved reasonable success in what Robert Fothergill, in his recently published study of English diaries, calls “serial autobiography.”³

The reportage on life in the journals is indeed so rich and varied. The writers take into their stride not only carnivals but also wars and famines; all kinds of injustice and oppression; epidemics and speculations on the causes of cholera, malaria, and smallpox; religious mendicants; crime, drug addiction, gambling, and prostitution; the lives of women and children; various forms of ritual suicide, euthanasia, and murder which were prevalent in the period. In effect, there is a bonanza of information for the social historian.

The Native Character

The encounter between the British and the Indians was a dramatic confrontation. Skinner records how the anchoring, in the vicinity of a village, of a formidable fleet carrying white people, would put all villagers to flight, but how, after the subsiding of the initial panic, the people would return with great caution, surveying the foreigners’ movements “with as much jealousy as they would the recreation of a herd of tigers.”⁴ Native character was indeed an endless source of perplexity, specially to those who were not astute enough to grasp the essential ambivalence of all human institutions, including those of Europe, and to those who never obtained a reasonable grounding in an Indian language and whose interactions with the Indians necessarily continued on a superficial level. “Hindu” mildness, apathy, and ruthlessness simply manifested themselves differently from their “Christian” counterparts and so provoked recurrent astonishment. To the Hindus the British seemed a people who had no code to live by, without a caste, without a dharma; to the Muslims they were infidels who had vexatiously snatched political power from them. Miss Roberts gives us some extracts from a Persian-language manuscript newspaper circulating in Delhi, which indicate the Muslim aristocrats’ horror of European entertainment and conviviality, “The gentlemen of exalted dignity had a great feast last night, . . . There was a little hog on the table, before Mr.—, who cut it in small pieces, and sent some to each of the party; even the women ate of it. In their language, a pig is called ham. Having stuffed themselves with the unclean food, and many sorts of flesh, taking plenty of wine, they made for some time a great noise, which doubtless arose from drunkenness. ‘They all stood up two or four times, crying “hip! hip!” and roared before they drank more wine. After dinner, they danced in their licentious manner, pulling about each other’s wives.”⁵ A Muslim dig at the consequences of female liberty and at British matrimonial morality can be found in another extract given by Miss Roberts from a hand-written Delhi newspaper, “Captain, who is staying with Mr.—, went away with the

² Dyson, Ketaki, Kushari, *A Various Universe, A Study of the Journals and Memoirs of British Men and Women in the Indian Subcontinent, 1765-1856*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1978, p. 3.

³ Fothergill, Robert, *Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries*, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 2.

⁴ Skinner, Thomas, *Excursions in India; Including a Walk Over the Himalaya Mountains, to the Sources of the Jumna and the Ganges*, London, 1832, Vol. I, p. 23.

⁵ Roberts, Emma, *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan, With the Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society*, London, 1835, Vol. III, pp. 188-189.

latter's lady (arm-in-arm), the palanquins following behind, and they proceeded by themselves into the bungalow: the wittol remained at table, guzzling red wine."⁶ Mary Martha Sherwood She was inclined to believe that shame was not a feeling to which black people were liable—"I never observed any symptom of it in either man, woman, or child of that complexion" —and that no black man could ever be witty and amusing.⁷ She loathed the gaieties and frivolities of British social life in India. She was convinced of the superiority of the intellectual achievements of Europe, "where the mind of man seems to flourish in preference to any other land," and was especially irritated by the passivity of "the lower Hindoos, who seem so resigned to all that I call evils in life."⁸ She also disposed of the Chinese civilization summarily, on the basis of the very scanty information available to her, "for though I admire many of the maxims of the great Chinese sage, I hardly think it would be worth while to take much pains to become more intimately acquainted with a people, whose morality consists in ceremony, — and whose wisdom is finesse,— and whose arts and literature have been at a stand these thousand years."⁹ In 1814 Mrs Graham published *Letters on India*, designed to be a manual on India for those going there from Britain at an early period of their lives.¹⁰ In the *Letters* she drew heavily from the Orientalist scholars and others who had written on India, such as Jones, Colebrooke, Wilford, Wilks, Orme, Dow, and Buchanan, and openly aligned herself with the Orientalist standpoint by stating that one of her purposes was to exhibit a sketch of India's "former grandeur and refinement" so that she could restore India "to that place in the scale of ancient nations, which European historians have in general unaccountably neglected to assign to it."¹¹ Hindus actually rose in her estimation. She grasped that the Sanskrit language itself was an index to a monumental cultural achievement, "Were all other monuments swept away from the face of Hindostan, were its inhabitants destroyed, and its name forgotten, the existence of the Sanskrit language would prove that it once contained a race who had reached a high degree of refinement, and who must have been blest with many rare advantages before such a language could have been formed and polished. Amidst the wreck of nations where it flourished, and superior to the havoc of war and of conquest, it remains a venerable monument of the splendor of other times, as the solid pyramid in the deserts of Egypt....."¹² She was still concerned with the maintenance of the superiority of European achievements, "I am not saying that the luxuriant shoots of the Oriental palm-tree surpass in beauty or in flavour the purple clusters of the European vine, but only that there is a beauty, inferior indeed, but striking and characteristic in these monuments of eastern civilization and literature."¹³ She had gathered that the "amatory poetry of India" was not deficient in "tenderness of expression and thought", but there was a reservation, "the passion it sings is too little refined for our western taste, though its language is highly polished."¹⁴ She envisaged

⁶ Roberts, Vol. III, Op. cit., p. 189.

⁷ Kelly, Sophia, *The Life of Mrs. Sherwood, (chiefly autobiographical) with Extracts from Mr. Sherwood's Journal during his imprisonment in France and residence in India*, London, 1854, p. 305-6, 293.

⁸ Graham, Maria, *Letter on India*, London, 1814, pp. 134, 144.

⁹ Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁰ Dyson, *A Various Universe*, Op. cit., p. 200.

¹¹ Graham, Maria, *Letters on India*, Op. cit., p. 2.

¹² Ibid., p. 11.

¹³ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 44.

a distant future when the Hindus might be converted, but was sad that “the means employed” were “so inadequate to the end proposed”: “whether, as happens in the physical world, doing little and unskillfully in a deep-rooted disorder, be worse than leaving nature to her own quiet operations, is to me not doubtful.” She trusted to the slow and gradual process whereby the Hindu would “shake off” his superstitions, with the lethargy of slavery,” and in the absence of miracles, built her hopes “on the silent operation of ages, and the certain though remote effects of moral causes on the mind of man.”¹⁵ To her Baluchi Tribe presented a perfect mixture of “ingenuous hospitality and predatory ferocity.”¹⁶ Burton attempted to draw a distinction between the “passive courage” of the Sindh Hindu, “in suffering braver than any woman”, and the “active courage” of the warlike Sikh, Rajput, and Nayar.¹⁷ The Hindu business community of Kalat provoked Pottinger to speak of the venality and thirst of gain inherent in the Hindoo character, and he found contemporary Persia “to be the very fountain-head of every species of tyranny, cruelty, meanness, injustice, extortion, and infamy, that can disgrace or pollute human nature; and have ever been found in any age or nation.”¹⁸ The Hindu business community of Kalat provoked Pottinger to speak of the venality and thirst of gain inherent in the Hindoo character, and he found contemporary Persia “to be the very fountain-head of every species of tyranny, cruelty, meanness, injustice, extortion, and infamy, that can disgrace or pollute human nature; and have ever been found in any age or nation.”¹⁹ He found the Sindhis to be “avaricious, full of deceit, cruel, ungrateful, and strangers to veracity”, and attributed this state of affairs partly to the debasing effect of an extorting, ignorant, and tyrannous government, but mainly “to that moral turpitude which may almost be pronounced, to pervade in a greater or lesser degree, the population and society of every nation in Asia, of which we have the slightest knowledge.” He hoped that he would not be stamped as a misanthrope because of the sentiments he entertained of ‘all Asiatics’. “I am convinced, the farther our researches spread, and the more intimately we become acquainted with the East, we shall discover stronger, clearer proofs of the general application of the conclusion I have drawn.”²⁰ Even the novelists of the time portrayed almost a similar picture of the natives. The ideal British hero was described as bold, aggressive, daring, honest, energetic, and masculine by novelists. The ideal English hero of this period in India constantly works like an ox,²¹ and is indomitable, unyielding, always fulfilling his duties with machine like regularity, stern, impenetrable, hard as granite.²² Treatment of the Indians is also seen as children in novels- the infantile yet subtle imagery of the Burmans,²³ page they are only children,²⁴ these large children²⁵ and like children they are incorrigibly gay.²⁶ Leadership was looked upon as being the true test of an individual’s or more importantly a race’s worth. The

¹⁵ Graham, Op. cit., p. 287-8.

¹⁶ Pottinger, Henry, *Travels in Beloochistan and Sindh; accompanied by a Geographical and Historical Account of those Countries*, London, 1816. p. 26.

¹⁷ Burton, Richard, *Scinde Or, The Unhappy Valley*, Vol. I, London, 1851, pp. 230-31.

¹⁸ Pottinger, Op. cit., p. 78, 212.

¹⁹ Pottinger, Op. cit., p. 78, 212.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 376.

²¹ Dell, Ethel, *The Way of an Eagle*, Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2016, p. 56.

²² Dell, Ethel, M., *The Safety Curtain and the Other Stories*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1917, p. 49.

²³ Jesse, Tennyson, *The Lacquer Lady*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1930, p. 115

²⁴ Ibid., p. 349.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 246.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 188.

crucial thing is that the British saw the ability to lead in terms of Race. It was the British blood which gave them their unique position. Kipling's Kim must order his Bengali friend to follow him and Huree Chunder Mookherjee must accept the order because Kim is British and hence the natural leader. Similarly, Harry Wylam in Merriman's Floatsam is described as a fair scion of the northern race which knows no rest or fear²⁷ and even though he's only an orphaned child, he shows the masterfulness of the dominant race over his passive ayah. The British believed that the position of majesty is a position which comes naturally to most Englishmen.²⁸ The keystone to maintaining their position of leadership is not to be found in the treatment of the Indians. It is, after all, in the English blood and the important thing is to keep the blood pure. For this reason intermarriage is dangerous. Equally dangerous, however, is the adoption of Indian customs and attitudes. There is something of a contradiction in this feeling that, despite the emphasis on pure blood, it is equally important to keep culturally pure. Indian culture must therefore be rejected as a destructive element. The most common explanation of what were Britishers doing in India is that they were mere fraction of white faces responsible for the safety of those millions of dark ones.²⁹ British novelists with great emphasis made the point that there is no such thing as an "Indian race," but rather there are numerous Indian races- Hindu, Muslim and Sikh; Bengali, *rajput* or *pathan*. They distinguished carefully between the racial characteristics of these groups, but at the same time did make certain generalizations under which all Indians were grouped. The foremost character trait of the Indian people is that they are like little children. Because they are children, they must be handled in certain ways. The image of Indian as a child fitted in very nicely with the British image of himself as a strong all-knowing leader. Almost any story of the Anglo Indian society is bound to have a heart rending account of the way India destroys the institution of the European family. Kipling's Baa Baa Black sheep is an autobiographical story written from the point of view of a child who has been sent away from his parents in India to a foster home in England. If the mother has not sent them away and has held onto them in India, she has probably seen her children spoiled by the Indian environment. Because they were being raised in a country where anyone white was better than anyone Indian, and since most of their companions were Indian servants, they quickly learned how to give orders and see them accepted. Their development as little despots was seen to be quickened by the treatment the children received at the hands of these Indian servants. The British writers do not reflect upon the possibility that it's the practice of teaching English children that they are superior beings that may be at fault. What they are worried about is that if they stay in India too long they will become Indianized. They worry that the children will pick up Indian speech inflections for its own sake because of the ease of the Indian life. These Asiatics are at any time ready to turn traitors, and to join the stronger, often felt to be untrustworthy.³⁰ Related to it are the other aspects of Indian personality such as senseless cruelty, a lack of concern with others and a tendency towards hysteria. The journal of the Marquess has attracted some attention from historians for its extreme views on Hindu inferiority. He had scarcely reached Diamond Harbour on his way to Calcutta from England, via Madras, when

²⁷ Scott, Hugh, *Floatsam: The Study of Life*, Hard Press, London, 2012, p. 90.

²⁸ Steel, Flora, *On the Face of Waters*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1897, pp. 15-19.

²⁹ Steel, Flora, A., *In the Guardianship of God*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1903, p. 54.

³⁰ Henty, G., A., *With Clive in India: Or, the Beginnings of an Empire*, Createspace Independent Publications, 2012.

on 2 October 1813, he formed a very unfavourable impression of the Bengali villagers.³¹ “In the Hindoo villages the dwellings are but three or four feet asunder; they are insulated, irregularly grouped as if by accident, and those which lie in the centre are approachable only by tortuous paths; and, as these habitations are simple huts, without exterior precincts, and are in part composed of mats pervious to sight, the possibility of the people’s living in that huddled manner implies a destitution of those energies of mind on which moral feeling depends. Pudency cannot exist in such a crowded assemblage, notwithstanding the professed segregation of the women; and that state of society can be maintained only by reciprocal tolerance of all that is offensive and, all that is indecent. The Hindoo appears a being nearly limited to mere animal functions, and even in them indifferent. Their proficiency and skill in the several lines of occupation to which they are restricted, are little more than the dexterity which any animal with similar conformation, but with no higher intellect than a dog, an elephant, or a monkey, might be supposed capable of attaining. It is enough to see this in order to have full conviction that such a people can at no period have been more advanced in civil polity. Retrogradation from an improved condition of society never takes this course. According to the circumstances which have dissolved its government the fragments of such a community either preserve the traces of effeminate refinement, or the rough fierceness stamped upon them by the convulsions amid which the centre of the fabric perished. Does not this display the true condition of India, and unveil the circumstances through which we have so unexpectedly and so unintentionally obtained empire here? There surely never has been an active and vigorous Hindoo population; nor are any of the bold, though rude, monuments of antiquity (as I think) ascribable to this race.”³² By 1814 he had reached the following uncomplimentary conclusion about the Bengalis, “Every day more and more satisfies me that I formed a just estimate of those who inhabit Bengal at least. They are infantine in everything. Neat and dexterous in making any toy or ornament for which they have a pattern, they do not show a particle of invention; and their work unless they follow some European model, is flimsy and inadequate. Their religious processions constantly remind me of the imitation of some public ceremony which English children would make. One sees seven or eight persons gravely following a fellow who is tapping on a kind of drum that sounds like a cracked tin kettle, and though nobody looks at them they have the air of being persuaded that they are doing something wonderfully interesting. The temples they build are-just such as would be constructed by schoolboys in Europe, had they the habit of dealing in brick and mortar.”³³ As regards the ‘manners and customs’ of the hill people, James Fraser was disgusted by polyandry and considered that the lack of female chastity implied a rare degree of “brutish insensibility”, though he was forced to admit that “in these promiscuous and complicated connexions, disputes seldom arise.”³⁴ There is a slight touch of arrogance and cruelty in some of his casual comments about the people, e.g. “cautious self-possession was apparent in each line of their wrinkled countenances drawn up into

³¹ Dyson, p. 209.

³² Rawdon, Francis, Hastings, *The Private Journal of Marquis of Hastings*, Saunders and Otley, London, Vol. I, 1858, pp. 31-32.

³³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 66-67.

³⁴ Fraser, James, Baillie, *Journal of a Tour through Part of the Snowy Range of the Himala Mountains, and to the Sources of the Rivers Jumna and Ganges*, London, 1820, p. 208.

a cringing smile.”³⁵ He came to the conclusion that the Himalayan “highlanders” had all the predatory vices of their European counterparts but none of their virtues, while they had all the Asiatic vices: all the goodness had been ‘blasted’!³⁶ But he was impressed by the fortitude and good humour of the Gurkhas. Huggins work throws a flood of light on British, Eurasian, and Indian life in Calcutta and Tirhut. While the grand parts of Calcutta merited the appellation of the City of Palaces, its Blacktown presented “a very different spectacle”: “take it all in all, perhaps no city in the world deserves to be called a mass of misery and magnificence more justly.”³⁷ Very early, before Bessie Fenton, who came to India with her first-late husband, Neil Campbell and later married Captain Michael Fenton, had had any significant interaction with them, she began to imbibe prejudices against the Indians from her god-like Niel and his circle. From them she gathered that the natives were “an abject and contemptible race”³⁸ While she observed and delineated with sensitivity the beauty and peace of rural life, and even felt her “compassion for fellow-men” excited by such observation, she could not forget that those people were “debased”, “Some very old men were weaving a coarse kind of muslin under the shade of a banyan. Many of those wicker huts were so completely covered with creepers and melon blossoms, they resembled a mass of leaves and flowers. A low, and very neat bamboo paling formed an enclosure where the herds of buffalo, cows, and goats were assembled to be milked. Infant children lay on the mats at the thresholds of the door sleeping with the kids. The women returning from the tank with lotus-shaped pots of water on their heads, wrapped in their peculiar drapery, their curiosity to see, and unwillingness to be seen,—all formed an interesting picture of simplicity, and excited your compassion for fellowmen even though debased.”³⁹ Gradually, the natives became to her “a mass of obstinate inertness”, “degraded beings” without “any spirit of emulation or self-respect to supply the place of bodily energy”, issuing from their “dens”, “barbarous, half-naked, and as if on the watch to take hold of you.”⁴⁰ Bessie could not stand Indian ayahs, of whom she speaks with an almost physical loathing, “I could not endure their hands about me; the oil which forms a part of their toilet, the pawn they eat, renders them so offensive that I could not bear them in my room;.....”⁴¹ “... it seems very miserable if I must have this black faced thing always at my elbow.”⁴² Treatment of Westernised Indians is just as harsh. The novels prove this point. “The only influence our culture has on some of the men I know is that it makes them want to wear their hats and boots at the same time.”⁴³ The contrast between the noble aborigine Am-ma and the wicked aborigine Gu-gu in one of Flora Steel’s novels is entirely based on this concept. Gu-gu plots with the Raj’s opponents, while Am-ma comes to their rescue, thereby pledging his support for the British victory.⁴⁴ According

³⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 486-7.

³⁷ Huggins, William, *Sketches in India, treating on Subjects connected with the Government; Civil and Military Establishments; Characters of the European, and Customs of the Native Inhabitants*, John Letts, London, 1824, pp. 8-9.

³⁸ Fenton, Bessie, *The Journal of Mrs. Fenton, A Narrative of her Life in India, The Isle of France (Mauritius), and Tasmania during the Years 1826-1830*, Edward Arnold, London, 1901, p. 17.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 133.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 199, 253.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴² Ibid., p. 25.

⁴³ Steel, Flora, *The Hosts of the Lord*, Read & Co. Books, 2020, p. 72

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 330.

to Percival Christopher Wren, an Englishman and a Malayan girl have wedded, but fate will not allow them to find happiness because they are of different races. To prove his thesis, Wren adapts Rudyard Kipling's "The Ballad of East and West." "It has been remarked, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet. Nevertheless, in defiance of this law, they do occasionally meet. Perhaps it is because the meeting is in defiance of the Law that it is usually disastrous. Whether it is a Law of God, of man or of Nature, is not stated, but it would appear that all three endorse the rule. There have been many meetings of East and West, but rarely a fortunate one."⁴⁵ Wren sees absolutely no chance for a good relationship between individuals of different races—even though they are in love or are strong men.⁴⁶

Bishop Heber, who served as Bishop of Calcutta in 1823, reports that the Bengalis were regarded as "the greatest cowards in India," that "the term of Bengalee is used to express anything which is roguish and cowardly," adding, however, that "such as they are..... I am far from disliking them."⁴⁷ Mrs. Fanny Parks, the daughter of Major E. G. Archer and the wife of Charles Crawford Parks of the Bengal Civil Service, records the following conversation between herself and "up-country" Hindus, "It is a vile Bengali skull; and those sons of slaves, when we ask a question, only laugh and give no answer." "Perhaps they do not understand your up-country language." "Perhaps not, that may be the reason; but *we hate them*."⁴⁸ Anne Katherine Elwood was the wife of Colonel. Charles William Elwood of the Bombay Army. Although sometimes called the Hindus "benighted" and saw commerce as a glorious instrument for furthering the cause of Christianity,⁴⁹ her position was moderate, not fanatical. Godfrey Charles Mundy served as A.D.C. to the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Combermere, in 1825-30. He speaks very wittily of the hybridization of Indian taste under British influence, "He [i.e. the Nawab of Rampore] affects Anglicism in many other points, an assumption by no means rare among Mussulman potentates; but the commixture of British and native manners seems as unnatural as the blending of oil and water: the ill-sustained attempt at John Bullish cordiality soon sinks out of sight, and the frothy pomp of the Mahommedan floats again to the surface. His dress was a singular mixture of splendour and bad taste, consisting of a black velvet surtout, richly embroidered in gold—such as one might imagine Talleyrand to have worn at the Congress of Vienna—upon which he had stuck several rows of the Honourable Company's livery

⁴⁵ Wren, Percival, Christopher, *Odd-But Even So. Stories Stranger Than Fiction*, John Murray, 1941, p. 135

⁴⁶ Greenbeger, Allen, *British Image of India: A Study in the Literature of Imperialism, 1880-1960*, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 167.

⁴⁷ Heber, Reginald, *Narrative of A Journey Through the Upper Provinces of India, From Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-1825*, Vol. 1, John Murray, London, 1828, p. 67; Vol. II, pp. 355-56.

⁴⁸ Parks, Fanny, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque, During Four and Twenty Years in the East; with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*, Vol. II, Pelham Richardson, London, 1850, p. 310; One reason for this dislike was the material success of the Bengalis. Heber points out how the Bengali henchmen of the British in the Upper Provinces came to be intensely disliked there, "by one means or other, these Bengalees" had "almost all acquired considerable landed property in a short time among them," Heber, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 331.

⁴⁹ Elwood, Anne, Katherine, *Narrative of a Journey Overland from England by the Continent of Europe, Egypt, and the Red Sea, to India; Including a Residence there, and Voyage Home, in the years 1825, 26, 27, and 28*, Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, London, 1830, Vol. II, p. 125, Vol. I, p. 425.

buttons, displaying the rampant lion upholding the crown. This chef-d'oeuvre was, as he assured us, perpetrated by an English tailor at Calcutta.”⁵⁰

An entourage of Native servants

A large retinue of servants was always at the service of English. The strict division of labour among domestic servants according to caste functions was a source of annoyance to the sahibs, but it prevented the servants from being exploited by their masters and gave them abundant leisure. To the Indian rich this was, of course, part of the way of life: they accepted that if they wanted service, they would have to pay a large number of servants. But the Europeans chafed at the expense and sometimes yearned for the all-purpose servant. The picture presented by the journals in this respect is corroborated by a telling passage in the travels of the French scientist Victor Jacquemont, which indicates to what extent the caste roles could be genuine privileges for the ‘lower orders’ to cling to, when in confrontation with the European work ethic, “... when I told my water-carrier to put his water-skin into one of the cars in the day-time, and walk near me with my paste-board, for drying plants, under his arm, he said that it was not his business, and that too in a very impertinent tone. I did not hesitate to give him a hearty kick immediately, otherwise another would have told me that it was not his place to carry my gun, another have refused to carry my hammer, and so on. I take good care not to order anything forbidden by their religious laws; with this exception, I exact imperiously, in addition to his own special occupation, every service that each can render.”⁵¹ Often attitudes to servants were marred by racial feelings; Mrs. Fenton could not stand her ayah, “it seems very miserable if I must have this black faced thing always at my elbow.”⁵² But against this extreme attitude we may pose Mrs Elwood’s pleasing and complimentary portrait of her ayah Zacchina and Miss Eden’s affectionate portrait of her ayah Rosina. The British community in India were specially indebted to the Indian women who worked as wet-nurses, without whose assistance the British could not have reared their children in the Indian climate in those days. The lives of the children of the wet-nurses themselves were often sacrificed so that the white infants being breast-fed by them might survive. It is interesting that the British should have condoned this, while vigorously condemning the female infanticide practised by certain castes in certain parts of India. It did, however, deeply disturb the conscience of Mrs. Sherwood, who thought the solution was to recompense the heathen foster- mothers by helping them to obtain Christian salvation.⁵³ Some complained that the Indian domestics were lazy, ‘addicted to do nothing, and to help each other in doing nothing.’⁵⁴ Behind this, however, loomed the more general charge of Indian indolence. Mrs. Kindersley is vaguely aware of the link between poverty and indolence, perceiving the second half of the circle, namely, how indolence completed

⁵⁰ Mundy, Godfrey, Charles, *The Journal of a Tour in India*, John Murray, London, 1841, Vol. II, p. 9.

⁵¹ Jacquemont, Victor, *Letters From India; Describing a Journey in the British Dominions of India, Tibet, Lahore, and Cashmere, During the Years 1828, 1829, 1830, 1831*, 2nd edition, Vol. 1, London, 1835, p. 176.

⁵² Fenton, Bessie, *The Journal of Mrs. Fenton, A Narrative of her Life in India, The Isle of France (Mauritius), and Tasmania During the Years, 1826-1830*, Op. cit., p. 25.

⁵³ Kelly, Sophia, *The Life of Mrs. Sherwood, with Extracts from Mr. Sherwood’s Journal During His Imprisonment in France and Residence in India*, Op. cit., pp. 497-498.

⁵⁴ Huggins, William, *Sketches in India, treating on Subjects connected with the Government; Civil and Military Establishments; Characters of the European, and Customs of the Native Inhabitants*, Op.cit., p. 92.

the people's misery, but not perceiving the first half, that at least part of the indolence was caused, in the first place, by the very poverty which she so eloquently and compassionately describes. She was not in a position to realize that malnutrition, especially protein deprivation in childhood, actually produces lassitude and mental retardation. Also, the Indian attitude to physical exercise was an adaptation to the climate; failing to make the necessary adjustment, the British in India in the eighteenth century often killed themselves through over-exertion and overeating. Mrs. Kindersley was partly aware of the connection between the climate and physical languor, but was puzzled by the complexity of the total picture.⁵⁵ The palanquin-bearers, boatmen, and messengers were capable of the most arduous physical labour, indicating that 'the natives are not incapable of using exercise; and, although the climate is certainly extremely relaxing, it seems to impair their minds more than their bodies; to which indolence of spirit, a despotical government and its consequences has perhaps not a little contributed.'⁵⁶ There is a necessary suggestion of an opposition in ethos between India and Europe: indolence versus industry. The image is strengthened by her annoyance at the long time taken by Indian workmen, such as tailors and embroiderers, to finish a given job. "This extreme slowness is the cause of all the works being excessively expensive; for although the wages of each person is not more than three or four rupees a month; the length of time they are about every piece of work, makes it costly at the end."⁵⁷ Given the low wages they were paid, it was only natural that the workmen should have drawn out the time spent on each job. She also disliked the way, because of the workman's lack of funds, a payment had to be made to him in advance, as partial remuneration for his forthcoming labour and for the purchase of material.⁵⁸

Native Women

An aspect of the encounter that is of particular human interest is the reaction of the writers to what could be glimpsed of the Native Women. Mrs. Sherwood was disturbed by the influence of dancing girls on her countrymen. "The influence of these nautch-girls over the other sex, even over men who have been brought up in England, and who have known, admired, and respected their own country-women, is not to be accounted for. It is not only obtained in a very peculiar way, but often kept up even when beauty is passed. It steals upon those who come within its charmed circle in a way not unlike that of an intoxicating drug, being the more dangerous to young Europeans because they seldom fear it; for perhaps these very men who are so infatuated remember some lovely face in their native land and fancy they are wholly unapproachable by any attraction which can be used by a tawny beauty."⁵⁹ "I often sat by the open window, and there, night after night, I used to hear the songs of the unhappy dancing-girls, accompanied by the sweet yet melancholy music of the cithara; and many were the sad reflections inspired by these long-protracted songs. All these Englishmen who were beguiled by this

⁵⁵ Kindersley, Jemima, Op. cit., p. 97.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 182-185; The climatic, economic, and socio-political causes of "indolence" are present as components in the sketch of the situation she presents, but it was not possible for her to knit them together into a coherent analysis which would take into account the interrelation of the different factors and the cyclical nature of the processes involved.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 240.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 243.

⁵⁹ Kelly, Sophia, *The life of Mrs. Sherwood*, Op. cit., pp. 405-406.

sweet music had had mothers at home, and some had mothers still, who, in the far distant land of their children's birth, still cared, and prayed, and wept for the once blooming boys, who were then slowly sacrificing themselves to drinking, smoking, want of rest, and the witcheries of the unhappy daughters of heathens and infidels. I cannot describe the many melancholy feelings inspired by this midnight music."⁶⁰ Mrs Sherwood asserts that she heard that "many an English wife lost her life from the jealousy of native favourites."⁶¹

Journals of authors in the military profession display a marked interest in the opposite sex. But not just those, the journals of men in other occupations and indeed those of the women authors are generous in their responses and rich in their descriptions in this respect. But there is a touch of something extra in the style of the military men when writing about women—a dash of showmanship, an added relish, a sense of delight and exhilaration. The soldiers had a flair for the subject of ladies. Captain Williamson justified the practice of keeping native mistresses as being far more economical than maintaining European wives and as demanded by the exigency of the situation of the expatriate bachelors. "I trust this detail will convince, even the sceptic, that matrimony is not so practicable in India as in Europe; and that, (unless, indeed, among those platonic few whose passions are unnaturally obedient,) it is impossible for the generality of European inhabitants to act in exact conformity with those excellent doctrines, which teach us to avoid "fornication, and all other deadly sins." There are certain situations, and times, in which the law must be suffered to sleep; since its enforcement would neither be easy nor wise: such is the instance now before us."⁶² Mrs. Kindesley, who was never quite reconciled to the skin-colour of Indian women, though she had heard it said that "their black skins have a most delicate softness," expresses the white woman's gingerly view of the business. "The Eastern ladies, however, are not without such charms as are pleasing to their countrymen; and there are many proofs that Europeans do not think them altogether intolerable; time and custom reconciles them to the yellow and the black, which at first appears *frightful*."⁶³ It would appear, from Mrs Sherwood's reporting, that in the early nineteenth century soldiers of British Army regiments in northern India were more or less encouraged to form liaisons with local women, with its inevitable consequences in terms of human suffering. "... the white men in barracks are allowed to take each of them a black woman as a temporary wife whilst they are in India. These women, for the most part, live in huts near the barracks, and act as servants to the men; and the only idea these poor creatures have of morality and honour is, that whilst thus engaged to one man they are to be faithful to him, and faithful many are, perhaps following him for years, bearing him many children, and may be standing with those children on the sands of the river to see the last of him and of the vessel which bears him away. I have had scenes of this kind described to me by such of these poor creatures as have themselves gone through them, and I cannot recall the recollection of them without tears. The lower orphan-school provides refuges for many of these poor children; but the mothers have no refuge, nor can I understand how one can be provided. She has lost caste by her union with the white

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 449-450.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 449.

⁶² Williamson, Thomas, *The East India Vade-Mecum; or, Complete Guide to Gentlemen intended for the Civil, Military or Naval Service of the East India Company*, Vol. I, London, 1810, pp. 456-457.

⁶³ Kindersley, Jemima, Op. cit., pp. 221, 230.

man, and has no resource but, if she can, to form such another temporary union with another white man.”⁶⁴ Mrs. Sherwood was also particularly indignant about her countrymen’s neglect of paternal duties towards their half-caste offspring. Referring to two half-caste sisters who were her pupils, she wrote with some vehemence of feeling, “These, and many such as these, are the daughters of Europeans, of Englishmen and English gentlemen—of men who have known what it is to have had a tender, well-educated Christian mother, and honourable and amiable sisters. How can such men, by any sophistry, reconcile it to themselves so utterly to forget the first principles of morality, and then neglect the good of their own offspring, as they, alas! too often and often do? But this is a subject I dare not enter upon.”⁶⁵

Mrs Sherwood believed that “the miserable effects of a false religion” could be seen “in the countenances” of the persons who professed it. The result can be seen in the following passage, “I should utterly despair of conveying to the minds of gentle and elegant females in England the feelings which I first had on seeing many together of the women of Madras in their streets or at the doors of their houses. The character of the countenances which are seen is such as I never beheld in an English woman. The old women especially are fearful to look upon; their skin is shrivelled and hanging loose, the lips thin and black, and the whole expression that of persons hardened by misery and without hope, having in youth exhausted all that life can give, and, through this rapid exhaustion, having grown old before the youth of an honourable English wife would have begun to fade: all this evident misery, without counting the many secret cruelties which abound in every heathen land, in every dark comer of the earth, being the effect, either direct or indirect, of those abominable creeds which we think it an act of charity not merely to tolerate but to patronise.”⁶⁶

In the nineteenth century we hear of the occasional sahib of distinction and wealth living with an Indian woman in some form of life-long relationship. He is likely to be a man whose life has been moulded by the India in the initial years of 19th century when liaison was still cordial between the Indians and British. The British youth of the neighbourhood “mixed themselves with the young ladies at the table and looked and spoke sweet things, though in their hearts they probably despised them.”⁶⁷ At least in some parts of India native mistresses continued to be an essential feature of British military life down to the mid-nineteenth century. Burton testifies in his autobiography that this was true of western India in the 1840s. He states, “... in those days, most men, after their first year, sought a refuge in the society of the dark fair. Hence in the year of grace 1842 there was hardly an officer in Baroda who was not more or less morganatically married to a Hindi or a Hindu woman.

⁶⁴ Kelly, Sophia, Op. cit., pp. 485-486.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 428.

⁶⁶ Kelly, Sophia, *The life of Mrs. Sherwood*, Op. cit., pp. 252-253.

⁶⁷ “When the Misses G— invited Mrs. Sherwood to see their mother, she was taken by surprise, ‘... that she was anywhere where I could see her, I had no idea. Of the multitudes of half-native ladies with whom I afterwards became acquainted, I never heard of the existence of the mother. I never knew of one, besides the mother of Dr G—’s children, to whom the same respect was paid as to this woman. On the contrary, I have heard of shocking instances of the neglect of these poor creatures, who, whilst their daughters are revelling in all Oriental luxury, are often left in the most abject situations. It was greatly to the credit of this family that they paid every respect to their mother,” *The life of Mrs. Sherwood*, Op. cit., pp. 309-312.

This could be a fertile ground for anecdote, but its nature forbids entering into details.”⁶⁸ “These irregular unions were mostly temporary, under agreement to cease when the regiment left the station. Some even stipulated that there were to be no children. The system had its advantages and disadvantages. It connected the white stranger with the country and its people, gave him an interest in their manners and customs, and taught him thoroughly well their language. It was a standing joke in my regiment that one of the officers always spoke of himself in the feminine gender. He had learned all his Hindostani from his harem. On the other hand, these unions produced a host of half-castes, mulattos, “neither fish nor fowl, nor good red herring,” who were “equally despised by the races of both progenitors.”⁶⁹ With the large influx of *bibis* into India as passages between the two countries became easier and cheaper, the *bubu* (*coloured sister*)⁷⁰ eventually lost ground.⁷¹ The dislike towards intimate liaison between the races is testified by the Novels also. Because the child of such a relationship would be a degraded race carrying the character flaws of both, such unions, in and of themselves, were bad things, as we saw earlier with the eurasian community. Being weighed down into the Indian lifestyle will damage the British guy and cause him to abandon his English values. In Kipling's “Yoked with an Unbeliever,” the Indian, Dunmaya, assists the Englishman, Phil, in overcoming his feeble character and becoming a man. However, even here the problem has a solution only because Dunmaya is a Hill-woman and thus has more things in common with the Englishman, including skin colour, than would a woman of the plains. In none of these stories do the authors permit children born of the union to survive. Even though, the dilemma has a remedy because Dunmaya is a Hill-woman, who shares more characteristics with the Englishman, including skin colour, than a woman from the lowlands. The authors of none of these stories let children born from the coupling to live. A character summarises two of the British explanations for arguing that Westernization was of little use while speaking with Hindus, who are always identified with India's most traditional aspect. “You cannot really change them..... Why, what have the Mohammedans ever actually done in a thousand years towards producing a radical change in Hindu thought, except by violence? And dont we all know that those of the Hindus who are most closely connected with Europeans are the very ones to display the greatest animosity and revolt against our rule and customs?’

While Indian women were often eulogized, by male as well as female authors, for their beauty and for qualities like grace of deportment, gentleness, modesty, or docility, they were also reported to be particularly vituperative when enraged, and by some of the authors they were seldom forgiven if they were not physically attractive. Youth and physical beauty were rather important, and the wrinkles of old age in women could provoke unpleasant comments. “.. . such hideous old women!” wrote the Wallace-Dunlop sisters, the sisters of Robert Henry Wallace-Dunlop of the Bengal Civil Service, “... their frightful wrinkled faces, and a filthy mat of ragged

⁶⁸ Burton, Isabel, *The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton*, Vol. I, Chapman and Hall, London, 1893, p. 108.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

covering. Really Macbeth's witches were respectable old ladies compared to these hags."⁷² To some, plainness in dancing-girls could be unpardonable. "Among them," Major Edward Caulfield who too served as A.D.C. to Lord Combermere, wrote of one unfortunate troupe, "there were only two who could escape from the term "ugly." In another group he found "only one whose features redeemed the whole bevy from deserved condemnation of hideousness."⁷³ The rigid seclusion of the women of high-ranking and wealthy families contributed to the idea that they must all be exceptionally handsome, but as Mrs Parks, Major Archer's daughter, found, "in a whole zenana there may be two or three handsome women, and all the rest remarkably ugly." The mysterious harem could let the inquisitive visitor down. "For a woman not to be pretty when she is shut up in a zenana appears almost a sin, so much are we ruled in our ideas by what we read in childhood of the *hooris* of the East."⁷⁴

Heathen Religion

According to the Novelists of the time, Indians are believed to be basically conservative, "Megasthenes account of his travels through India in the year 300 B.C. might have been written today, for these people do not change, except under pressure from without, and then they disintegrate suddenly."⁷⁵ Of all the various Indian groups it was the Muslims who were most favoured. "I am a Occidental, not a Oriental... I think I like Indian Mohammedans, but I cannot go much further in an easterly direction."⁷⁶ Muslims are seen in a favourable historical light because of their conquests but they are depicted as possessing the values of activity, masculinity and forcefulness which to these writers, were the most important values. In Patricia Went worth's novel of the mutiny, although the leader of the trouble is the Hindu sereek Dhundoo Panth, he is incapable of any forceful action. It is the Muslim gray eminence Azimullah who is able to see what he wants to go ahead and get it. An image is brought out in an interesting comparison between two of mason's characters- the prince of Chiltistan, Shere Ali; and the minor personage of Bahadur Gobind, Barrister – at – law with a B.A. from Cambridge. The Hindu is described as the most seditious man in the city. It is not bad in the English eyes that he is seditious, but, in addition, he is "meanly seditious because all he does is to write letters over a pseudonym in the native papers."⁷⁷ In contrast, after Shere Ali has revolted against the British, the local political agent says that he still admires the Indian. He points out that Shere ali is unlike one of the weak princes of the south who would have taken to drink when they found that they could not get what they wanted. It is not enough that the Hindu, as seen by the authors and shown to their readers, is not brave, but he is also a poor athlete. Whereas, the Muslim rode his horse magnificently and became a fine polo player or cricketer, the Hindu showed no interest or ability in these sports which were deemed necessary in the development of the Late Victorian gentleman. In the story *The*

⁷² Wallace-Dunlop Madeline, Rosaland, *The Timely Retreat; Or, A Year in Bengal Before the Mutinies*, Vol. I, R. Bentley, London, 1858, p. 296.

⁷³ Archer, Edward, *Tours in Upper India and in Parts of the Himalaya Mountains: wit Accounts of the Courts of the Native Princes*, London, 1833, Vol. I, p. 361, pp. 367-8.

⁷⁴ Parks, Fenny, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 215, 40.

⁷⁵ Steel, Flora, A, *The Potter's Thumb*, Vol III, Willaim Heinemann, London, 1900, p. 212.

⁷⁶ Kincaid, Dennis, *British Social Life in India*, Rupa Publications India; First edition, 2015, p. 45 (said by viscount Morely)

⁷⁷ Mason, A., E., W., *The Broken Road*, McLeod and Allen, Toronto, 1907, p.292.

Head of the District by Kipling, the viceroy appointed a Bengali as chief administrator of a frontier district and immediately trouble began there because of his inability. The British assistant puts it down while the Bengali flees for his life. Before making post-haste for safety he did as had been predicted early in the story and sought to put all the blame on the British. The story brings out not only the cowardice of Hindu, and particularly the Bengali, but also his inability to rule and his unwillingness to do his duty and stick to his job. Manliness had two sides to it. First, it was the opposite of childishness and, second, it was the opposite of femininity.⁷⁸ India was seen to be the “home of fatalism” and the Hindus were the most particularly affected by this. When Wentworth’s Sereek Dhundoo Panth hesitates over whether or not to take part in the mutiny, he is persuaded by Azimullah’s clever use of the idea that it is his fate to do so. The Hindi yields while thinking, “Who was he to fight against fate, that real unchanging deity of the east,”⁷⁹ Not only the character of the Hindus, but also the religion that they followed was a reason for this dislike. Whereas Islam could be understood as something Western in basis, Hinduism seemed to the British to be completely in conflict with western ideas. The religion is seemed to be negative and passive. Hinduism was also seen to be a cruel religion. Ramoo in Henty’s *Colonel Thorndyke’s* secrets has spent serving colonel Thorndyke only to regain a jewel taken from his temple. Despite love for his master, the Hindu kills him to regain the Jewel. Personal feelings cannot interfere with the demands of his religion. It is further interesting to note that Henty does not condemn him for this act personally – it, at least, shows a willingness to act rather than to sit around and do nothing. Steel sums up his whole attitude in the words of the Brahman Shevdeo after killing a little Indian albino boy who he feels is a curse on his English master, “What is a Sudra or two more or less to the Brahman?”⁸⁰

The journals provide a wide coverage of Hinduism and Islam in the subcontinent, the journals also provide us with reports on Zoroastrianism, Sufism, Oriental free-thinking, Indo-Portuguese Christianity, etc. The authors had greater difficulty in obtaining reliable information on Jainism and Buddhism, especially the latter. Religion, of course, was a vital area of the cultural encounter, and almost every author makes a contribution to our knowledge of the event. The fierceness of the religious debate is best brought over by Henry Martyn, who entered the service of the East India Company as a chaplain, arriving in India in 1806. Most of his active life in India was spent at Dinapore and Cawnpore, and his major labour was the translation of various parts of the Christian scriptures into Oriental languages. He provoked theological arguments with nearly everybody he met. Pressed hard by the Christian offensive, the spokesmen of the various non-Christian creeds were driven to self-defence, and they performed so well that Martyn’s missionary task became a desperate, uphill struggle. He began his task on his voyage out, asking the lascars in broken Hindustani if they knew who Jesus Christ was. They replied in the negative. When he told them that Jesus had come into the world to save sinners, they smiled amongst themselves, saying the equivalent of “well, well” He found some common ground with the Muslims in

⁷⁸ Newsome, David, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal*, Cassell and Co., January, 1961.

⁷⁹ Wentworth, Patricia, *The Devil’s Wind*, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1912, p. 188.

⁸⁰ Steel, Flora, *The Flower of Forgiveness*, Vol. I, Macmillan and Co., London, 1894, p. 146

respect of “faith and works.”⁸¹ The Hindus were very eager for dialogue and keen to find a common ground, but disappointed by the hard core of exclusivism in the Christian doctrine which did not make sense to them.⁸² Jemima Kindersley is disappointed by the decadence of learning among both Hindus and Muslims, criticizes the Brahmins for their intellectual indolence and for keeping the masses of people in a state of ignorance, and while finding Hinduism “so overgrown with absurd and ridiculous ceremonies, that it is difficult to believe there has ever been any degree of common sense in it”, admits that “the division into casts and tribes promotes subordination.”⁸³ She traces the ills of Hindostan to climate, religious superstition, excessive wealth in some hands, and despotism. She blames despotism most heavily and supports herself by extensive quotations from Montesquieu.⁸⁴ Hodges was deeply impressed by the decorous public behaviour of the Hindu masses and their artless courtesy to foreigners. “The simplicity, and perfectly modest character, of the Hindoo women, cannot but arrest the attention of a stranger. With downcast eye, and equal step, they proceed along, and scarcely turn to the right or to the left to observe a foreigner as he passes, however new or singular his appearance. The men are no less remarkable for their hospitality, and are constantly attentive to accommodate the traveller in his wants. During the whole of the journey in my pallankeen, whatever I wanted, as boiling water for my tea, milk, eggs, &c. &c. I never met with imposition or delay, but always experienced an uncommon readiness to oblige, and that accompanied with manners the most simple and accommodating.”⁸⁵ “In perfect opposition” to the manners of the Hindus was “the Mussulman character”: “haughty, not to say insolent; irritable, and ferocious.” He hastened, however, to add that this description applied only to ‘the lower classes’, “for a Moorish gentleman may be considered as a perfect model of a well-bred man.”⁸⁶

The rituals and superstitions of popular religion, whether in Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity, were ridiculous in Forster’s eyes. He had a rationalist impatience with the profusion of “extravagant and disgusting fables” which the Hindus had incorporated into their records of antiquity.⁸⁷ Forster believed that the Muslim conquests had disrupted and damaged Hindu culture, and through his journal he tried to perform his share in the rehabilitation of the Hindus.⁸⁸ His sympathetic approach to philosophical Hinduism helped him to see Hindu practices in their place, how even a rite very offensive to European taste, like suttee, could have a rationale in the context of Hindu society and therefore “ought not to be hastily condemned, or imputed altogether to the dictates of cruelty or injustice.”⁸⁹ Henry Martin looked towards India, and remembered “they were heathens, perhaps ten times worse than anything I had seen.”⁹⁰ “India is consigned by the world, to the irrefragable chain of Satan. Oh that God may soon interfere to remove her reproach,... Lord, increase my zeal, that though I am but

⁸¹ Wilberforce, S., *Journals and Letters of the Rev. Henry Martyn*, New York, 1851, Vol. I, 283.

⁸² Dyson, *A Various Universe*, Op. cit., p. 108-109.

⁸³ Kindersley, Jemima, Op. cit., pp. 176-7, 132-3, 135.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 177, 184-6, 190-92.

⁸⁵ Hodges, William, *Travels in India*, Op. cit., p. 34.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

⁸⁷ Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 37, 41, 255; Vol. II, p. 147.

⁸⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 51-52.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 59.

⁹⁰ Wilberforce, *Journals and letters*, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 302.

a feeble and obscure instrument, I may struggle out my few days in great and unremitting exertions for the demolition of paganism, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom."⁹¹ One may well ask what good work he could perform in India with an attitude like that revealed in the following description of his visit to an evening service at a Hindu temple, "As we walked through the dark wood which everywhere covers the country, the cymbals and drums struck up, and never did sounds go through my heart with such horror in my life. The pagoda was in a court, surrounded by a wall, and the way up to it was by a flight of steps on each side. The people to the number of about fifty were standing on the outside, and playing the instruments. In the centre of the building was the idol, a little ugly black image, about two feet high, with a few lights burning round him. At intervals they prostrated themselves, with their foreheads to the earth. I shivered at being in the neighbourhood of hell; my heart was ready to burst at the dreadful state to which the Devil had brought my poor fellow-creatures. I would have given the world to have known the language, to have preached to them."⁹² The gigantic task of converting "the Mahometans and Heathens" of India lay heavily on his conscience, his feelings alternating between excitement at the prospect—"How would the spirit of St Paul have been moved"—and sheer despair at the size of the undertaking as he walked through the crowded bazaars, "What shall be done for them all?"⁹³ Martyn was irritated and daunted by the formidable multiplicity of languages and dialects.⁹⁴ His annoyance vented itself in the expression of contempt for Eastern scholars, "You would learn more Arabic from a grammar in one year than from an Eastern blockhead in ten. Whether it is a dull Rabbi, a formal Arabian, or a feeble Indian, he is a drawler in science."⁹⁵ He hoped that by learning Sanskrit he might be able "to strike at the heart of Hindooism."⁹⁶ but there was the additional embarrassment of his trying to subvert Indian religion while belonging to an alien ruling race. When the crowds, "manifestly disaffected", cast angry and contemptuous glances at his palanquin, he rejoiced with a masochistic ardour in being persecuted, "Let men do their worst, let me be torn to pieces, and my dear L. [Lydia, the woman he loved] torn from me; or let me labour for fifty years amidst scorn, and never seeing one soul converted, still it shall not be worse for my soul,... Though the heathen rage... I will sing praises into the Lord.... Here every man I meet is an enemy; being an enemy to God, he is an enemy to me also on that account; but he is an enemy too to me, because I am an Englishman."⁹⁷ His tongue was parched and his hands trembled from the violent arguments he had with his moonshee and pundit.⁹⁸ Unable to convince the educated Indians to whom he talked, he took refuge in pouring savage scorn on Hindus and Muslims in his journal and letters. He came to think that "human nature in its worst appearances is a Mahomedan" and that Mohammed was "a filthy debauchee" to whom the name of prophet had been allocated by "the most wicked race of mortals under heaven." Islam was a "filthy religion", "The Lord soon destroy their detestable dominion!"⁹⁹ He had 'an

⁹¹ Ibid, Vol. I, p. 325.

⁹² Ibid., p. 449-50.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 471, 513.

⁹⁴ Ibid, Vol. I, p. 521, Vol. II, p. 165, 205, 281.

⁹⁵ Ibid, Vol. II, p. 249.

⁹⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 478.

⁹⁷ Ibid. Vol. I, p. 515-516.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 28.

⁹⁹ Ibid, Vol. II, p. 32, 74, 154, 164.

aversion' to the sight of his own countrymen, because they were "impudent children, and stiff necked"; he was sorry for his "disdainful and abandoned countrymen among the military."¹⁰⁰ The effect of his preaching on one soldier was that he "parted at once with his native woman", allowing her "a separate maintenance", but Martyn was so "wounded" by the behaviour of some other soldiers that he exclaimed, "Oh these wicked men, what will become of them!"¹⁰¹ Martyn went from India and Ceylon to Arabia and Persia, attacking all sects, and what might have been, for another person, an enriching experience, was for him, because of his Evangelical monomania, just a barren crusade. Mary Martha Sherwood had a profound horror of heathenism, its dark rites, and its evil influence on character. The high-water marks of this horror are her lurid impressions of Benares and of the motley crowd of beggars, cripples, lunatics, and other freaks to whom Martyn used to preach on Sunday evenings at Gawnpore. "... Horrible and disproportioned figures, similitudes of the gods of their depraved imaginations, painted on the walls of the buildings, or carved in stone or wood, occur in every direction, and seem to point out the more immediate presence in the place of the Prince of the Powers of Darkness. The streets are commonly filled with human beings in whose fierce countenances every horrid passion—nay, even such as should not be named among Christians—is marked to the eye in characters of hell; with miserable and depraved cripples, dying by slow famine and disease, languid, squalid infants who never felt the soothings of a mother's love, and beasts of burden for which there is no Sabbath, goaded, emaciated, bleeding, and dying. Contrasted with these are gaudy spectacles—shops displaying the wares of vanity, splendid midnight shows, diabolical instruments uttering harsh music, filthy choruses, and obscene religious rites, performed by torchlight, with peals of wanton laughter, overpowering the feeble sighs of woe, the more public parts of the city ringing with the clamour of the intoxicated idolater, whilst discord, adultery, and murder lurk everywhere." This passage, however, though written when the impression made by Benares on my imagination was very recent, gives but a very imperfect idea of the horrors of this principal seat of the Hindu religion.¹⁰² "Sometimes Mr Martyn's garden has contained as many as five hundred on a Sunday evening. No dreams or visions excited in the delirium of a raging fever could surpass these realities. They were young and old, male and female, bloated and wizened, tall and short, athletic and feeble, some clothed with abominable rags, some nearly without clothes, some plastered with mud, others with matted, uncombed locks streaming down to their heels, others with heads bald or scabby; every countenance being hard and fixed, as it were, by the continual indulgence of bad passions, the features having become exaggerated and the lips blackened with tobacco, or blood-red with the juice of the *henna*. [Here she has made a mistake; lips would have been red with pan, not henna.] These and such as these formed only the general mass of the people; there were among them still more distinguished monsters."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 512-3.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.44, 108.

¹⁰² Kelly, Sophia, *The life of Mrs. Sherwood*, Op. cit., p. 240.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 374.

Indian *nautch* and music

A discussion of the cultural encounter recorded in the journals would not be complete if attention was not drawn to the authors' response to Indian dancing and music. Their varied reactions, ranging from contempt to enthusiasm, to what they could see and hear of these arts, make an entertaining and instructive reading. It is not surprising that greater interest was usually taken in the costume and jewellery of the dancers than in the art itself. For some, there was some sex appeal in the dancers' gestures. Whether the words of some songs and some of the movements of the dancers were 'decent' or not was a much-discussed issue. 'Indecency' was usually avoided by the performers if there were white women in the audience. Colonel Gardner informed Mrs Parks that the songs of the *nautch*-girls were "never indecent, unless by "particular desire", and then in representing the bearer's [i.e. palanquin- bearer's] dance,—a dance which is never performed before ladies."¹⁰⁴ This particular genre of song and dance was known as the *kaharwa*; Captain Mundy could enjoy a "sprightly *kaharwa* air."¹⁰⁵ That the genre had a reputation of being salacious is corroborated by a comment made by Captain Williamson in *The European in India*. In elaboration of his statement that the dancing-girls of Bengal Proper used more 'wanton gestures' than those of the Upper Provinces, he says, "certainly, in the opinion of the oldest judges, [the former dancers] accompany the *caharwah*, or fandango of India, with such meretricious action, as decidedly gives them the claim to unparalleled immodesty!!!"¹⁰⁶ Many amongst the authors found the singing of the *nautch*-women too shrill and the instrumental accompaniment discordant.¹⁰⁷ It is also curious that the popular drumming on festive occasions is almost always spoken of in disparaging terms. However, the British could certainly enjoy dances with simple mimic messages and the simpler, less involuted melodies as in ghazals, folk airs, boatmen's songs, etc.¹⁰⁸ In the early nineteenth century Mrs Sherwood considered the vocal music "wonderfully melodious"¹⁰⁹; later in the nineteenth century Mundy became "quite a fanatico for Indian minstrelsy,"¹¹⁰ Burton developed a taste for Sindhi minstrelsy—"an honest, downright bit of barbarism"—and Mrs Parks learned to play a few "Hindustani" airs on the sitar.¹¹¹ It would seem that at least among some there was indeed a measure

¹⁰⁴ Parks, Fanny, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Vol. I, Op. cit., p. 427.

¹⁰⁵ Mundy, Godfrey, *Journal of a Tour*, Vol. I, Op. cit., pp. 348-9.

¹⁰⁶ Williamson, Thomas, *The European in India*, Op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁰⁷ A general response is that of Huggins, on whom Indian music fell flat and who found the singing of the *nautch*-women monotonous, but who nevertheless conceded that the ensemble of singing, dancing, and gestures constituted "a whole sufficiently agreeable," Huggins, Op. cit., p. 214.

¹⁰⁸ Dyson, *A Various Universe*, Op. cit., pp. 110-111.

¹⁰⁹ Kelly, Sophia, *The life of Mrs. Sherwood*, Op. cit., p. 451.

¹¹⁰ Mundy, *Journal of a Tour*, Op. cit., p. 349.

¹¹¹ Parks, Fanny, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, Vol. II, Op. cit., p. 25.

of authentic aesthetic response.¹¹² But for many it was repetitive and ‘monotonous.’¹¹³ The Hindoos say, that though we excel them in many things, in music they are decidedly our superiors. This appears rather laughable, for theirs has the sound of riot and ill-managed merriment, Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds. When for their teeming flocks and granges full. In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,” but perpetual exposure to such ‘noise’ had reconciled their ears to Indian music. “I ultimately rather liked it than otherwise, and there were some tunes that had a wild simplicity, by no means unpleasant.”¹¹⁴

As we read the diaries, we start to understand how seemingly invisible connections connect views like racial arrogance, contempt for the “lower orders” or “the heathen,” or anti-feminism, connected mental states that manifest in this or that author to varied degrees of power. Some people readily adopt prevailing beliefs, whereas in others, additional intellectual and emotional pulls modify the already prevalent values. Groups of people are easily categorised when people are focused with superiority and inferiority complexes. Similar statements have been made about women, Hindus, and Asiatics in general. For instance, they have been made to imply that these groups are inferior to men, Christians, and Europeans in general and that women excel in intuition, imagination, and imitation but not intellectual activity. British observations that Hindu men were effeminate and that Hindu culture was passive and feminine while Western culture was aggressive and masculine became clichés. The focus on India is largely abandoned in favour of an impassioned argument for completely overhauling India. India is transformed into the Great Other, the repugnant, ominous, awful, and terrible alien whose identity must be erased. Her culture is outright disapproved of. Regardless of their complaints, India was the source of their “themes,” and people would remember them for the ways in which they expressed the Indian experience in their “Indian literature.”

¹¹² Valuable evidence on this point is provided by Williamson in *The European in India*, “..... between the years 1778 and 1785 ... the prime sets of dancing girls quitted the cities, and repaired to the several cantonments, where they met the most liberal encouragement. Then the celebrated Kaunum was in the zenith of her glory! Those who did not witness the dominion she held over a numerous train of abject followers, would never credit, that a haughty, ugly, filthy, black woman, could, solely by the grace of her motions, and the novelty of some Cashmerian airs, hold in complete subjection, and render absolutely tributary, many scores of fine young British officers! Nay, even the more discreet and experienced, many of whom could not, with propriety, say, ‘Time has not thinned my flowing hair, nor bent me with his iron hand,’ were found among the most fervent of the proud Kaunum’s admirers,” Williamson, *The European in India*, Op. cit., commentary on Plate XV.

¹¹³ “The nautch girls then sang only two at a time, but without any attempt at a duet after our fashion. It is very remarkable that, when it must be a great object to every one of these girls to show herself off to advantage, female tact has never instructed them to adopt a dress which might display gracefulness of form, or to attempt a dance which might exhibit accuracy of ear and lightness of step. On the contrary, they wear cumbrous trousers which entirely cover the feet; they have a profusion of petticoats with broad fringes, which they seem to be under the continual necessity of hitching up; their only movement is the shuffling forward three or four paces, and then retiring in the same way, sometimes extending a stiff arm with the fingers spread, sometimes bending the arm on the head; and their highest elegance in winning airs appears to be the slipping off and putting up again the part of the mantle or veil which thrown over the head. There is a perpetual repetition of this last gentility. The natives will sit for hours enjoying this exhibition. To us nothing can be more tiresomely monotonous.” *The Marquess of Hastings*, op. cit., Vol. I, pp.145-6.

¹¹⁴ Elwood, Anne, *Narrative of a Journey*, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 121.