

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

A REFLECTION OF HOME  
DEFINING THE SPACE OF THE RAJ, 1857-1914

AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH  
HONORS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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SOUTH HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey was a thrilling one, but it is one that I could not have completed without the support and encouragement of many people. First, I would like to thank the library staff of the Five Colleges, the UCL Institute of Archaeology, and the University of London at Senate House. Their quick action many a time ensured that even the most obscure sources made it into my hands. The staff of the Oriental and India Office Collections and the Maps Room at the British Library deserve special credit for directing me to resources I would have never have discovered on my own.

Thanks are also due to Professor Jeremy King for his encouragement to apply for the Almará Grant, which supported my travel to London to pursue and finish my research. I am indebted to Professor Hayden Bellenoit for his commitment to advise me this year, despite the fact that he had never seen my work. I would also like to thank Professor Fred McGinness for his time and sometimes bemused comments. It was with him in an independent study of historical theory that the concepts and the larger picture of my work emerged. It is because of his kindness to a credit-poor senior that my ideas began to take shape.

I also could not have made it without my friends: Claire, for her always perfectly timed study packages, Melissa, for her little notes of encouragement hidden in my carrel, and Kristina for her eternal optimism and empathy. My

London friends, Negin, Emily and Yoanna, all deserve my deep gratitude for taking me in as a fourth flatmate in January, and especially for ensuring I never forgot about inspiration. Alumna Crystal Koga '05 deserves special recognition for her intensive editing of the first chapters of this work and her wise advice-sent all the way from Hawaii.

Finally, I could never have completed this without my mother, who always was there for me, even during late night phone calls when I thought I couldn't go on. Without her, this would never have been what I knew it could be.

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## INTRODUCTION

It all started in the fall of 2001, when my high school history teacher, Mr. Borrowman, was fond of proclaiming, “What news from the Punjab?” before my weekly report on the current state of affairs in India. Since that time, I have always been intrigued by India, and more particularly, by the British Raj. What made Mr. Borrowman, a Briton, say ‘Punjab’ with such a sense of excitement and mystery?

In the years since then, I have continued to research the British Empire, wondering what in particular made the British Raj special and so stereotypical, that even now we associate white-suited men in topees with imperialism. In researching this topic, contradictions jumped out between the self described purpose of the Raj and the way that the community actually lived. On closer inspection, these contradictions revealed that the underlying instability of the Raj ran deep, originating from its liminal location.

The ideology espoused by the Raj was created by members of the imperial power structure both in Britain and in India. This ideology was meant to be taken at face value and was found in the public record in publications such as *Punch*<sup>1</sup>, which were accessible to the general populace. Comparing the intended message

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<sup>1</sup> *Indian Punch* vol. 1, vol. 3, no 1-5 (Jun-May 1861), vol. 1, nos. 1-14 (June-Dec 1861).

of these ideologies with the actualities of the Indian context brings out the contrast crisply.

The members of the Raj must first be defined before serious discussion of their wider ideologies and realities can begin. For the purposes of this study, I focus on the highest echelons of society, the British Indian community. While the Domiciled community, which consisted of mixed race and permanent white residents, also had a place in India, the examination of the conflicts caused by liminality are most apparent in focusing only on the British Indians. Furthermore, entrance into this group was strictly regulated by voluntary entrance exams into the Indian Civil Service and the officer corps of the Army and Navy, which resulted in an elite and homogeneous membership.<sup>2</sup> Even the women of this society were elite, as they were allowed entrance only on the basis of personal connection.

I use the term 'British Indian' to avoid the ambiguity of 'Anglo-Indian' and to gain another layer of meaning in my discussion. 'Anglo-Indian' has a long history in the colonial context of India. It was first used to describe the highest social classes of the British colonists, but by the turn of the twentieth century, this term had been claimed by the Domiciled. In particular, it was used to describe people of mixed race. In current literature, 'Anglo-Indian' is used to describe both groups, which can cause confusion as they occupied very different places in the

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<sup>2</sup> This very term is used by Lady Vere Birdwood to describe the British Indian society of her childhood at the turn of the twentieth century. This is found in her interview with Charles Allen for his book, *Plain Tales of the Raj* and also found in the oral transcript of her interview, kept at the British Library in the Oriental and India Office Collections under MSS Eur T.7.

subcontinent. I prefer to use 'British Indian' as it was used by Curzon, one of the most imperialistic of Viceroy's. This term describes a colonial attitude that rejects native points of view and it carries with it the self-involved nature of the imperialist enterprise. By naming this group 'British Indians,' I am emphasizing their closed understanding of themselves while also pointing to the essential Britishness and Indianess that was merged in their culture.

Modern cultural interactions between East and West began in the seventeenth century. The Orient was 'rediscovered' by Europe with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt at the cusp of the nineteenth century. Edward Said points to this event as the inception of Orientalism as a way of looking at and interacting with the previously unknown East.<sup>3</sup> Said posits that by designating the East as the 'Other,' the West created an exclusive 'Self' that only existed by excluding undesirable characteristics belonging to the 'Other'. This leaves the 'Self' to be composed of more favored traits. Yet Said neglects the long historical interaction of the East and West, from the material and cultural interactions that were marked by the conquests of Alexander the Great, the trading activity of the Crusades, and the early colonial activities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He also generalizes too broadly to account for individual and specific situations and often robs the East of agency in the creation of their own identities and fates. The East or 'Other' in his argument is reduced by the West to little more than objects to be acted and gazed upon. He neglects interactions like those of early East India

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<sup>3</sup> Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

Company agents who lived their lives as members of the East, the ‘Other,’ negotiating with rulers and taking up native lifestyles.

However, his argument about the creation of Western identity rings true. This idea of how the West has dealt with the cultural differences of the East is invaluable in understanding the view that many Europeans had of this different world. It is evident in later dealings that the West had with the East that the ‘Other’ was frequently objectified and commodified for Western consumption and entertainment.

A modern theoretical conception of the Western viewpoint that is worth considering is the idea of the objective imperial gaze, laid out in Gary Sampson’s article ‘Photographer of the Picturesque: Samuel Bourne.’<sup>4</sup> Here, the East is merely an object for the West to use as a landscape or a view, not something that the viewer would engage with as a fellow subject. In this view, the imperial gaze is only concerned with the superficial qualities of the ‘Other,’ what lies beneath is of no concern beyond its picturesque value. The view of the picturesque is something consumable and disposable; it is not something to ascribe personal and lasting value to or to connect with.

Concurrent with Napoleon’s journey down the Nile in 1800 was a strong current of neo-classicism that was based on classical Greek thought. Alexander the Great had captured the imagination of Europe, inspiring Napoleon to conquer

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<sup>4</sup> Sampson, Gary D. ‘Photographer of the Picturesque: Samuel Bourne.’ Dehejia, Vidya, ed. *India through the Lens: Photography 1840-1911*. (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2000), 163-197.



the East, Tsar Alexander to seek glory in the military, and the British in India to seek out Alexander's influence in ancient Indian art and architecture.<sup>5</sup> The rational logic that the Greek philosophers employed in fifth and fourth centuries BC created a structure of order out of their chaotic universe. This philosophy had a resurgence and was applied to eighteenth and nineteenth century schools of thought. The savants of Europe used this classical rationale to create sciences out of politics, economics, and history, which trickled down into the everyday writings and culture of the educated populace.

Bringing this frame of mind to the subcontinent, the British saw Indian 'Otherness' as chaos, and tried to impose order using censuses and geography. The censuses of India that took place from 1871 onwards are excellent examples of this trend.<sup>6</sup> By collecting and organizing information on such a vast and diverse population, the British were, just like the Greeks, attempting to project a set and unchanging order onto a seemingly chaotic and unpredictable world. They organized natives not by region, but by religion and class. The colonials created a blend of rule that in their minds was completely rational and true to Indian character; they used native traditions, which they saw primarily in caste, to understand India. This fit neatly into their own worldview that rational order must be imposed on an unstable world.

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<sup>5</sup> Although the search for Alexander became popular only through the territorial expansion in Afghanistan and Parthia (personal communication, Professor Bellenoit, May 2, 2006), the dream of ancient glory haunted early explorers and cartographers and inspired them in their early activities.

<sup>6</sup> Cohn, Bernard, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia,' in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*. (Delhi, OUP, 1987), 224-54.

The Raj is used today to hearken back to a romantic past, one full of exoticism. The Pax Britannia is characterized as a place of quiet and firm rule that introduced the East to the scientific civilization of the West, while surreptitiously exploiting their colonies. Although there is debate on the true motivation of the empire builders, it is apparent that the effort of holding together and managing such a large empire created anxiety among the colonizers. In India, they found themselves facing a strange and alien culture, wildly diverse, extraordinary, and dangerous. The brittle racial lines that they drew had to do more with fear and concern over their identities as effective agents of power than with the repression of the native people.

The event that precipitated a change in attitudes and the freezing of the cultural development of the Raj was the Mutiny of 1857. The British position in India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was only a foothold, and a weak one at that. In this period, India was not an official colony of England, but under the control of the East India Company. Ports and small landholdings were places where lucrative trade occurred and the potential for riches lurked in every venture. India was an exotic place, a place to make a fortune, a place to lose oneself and a final escape from the West. High-ranking British officials often ‘went native’; they lived like native Indians, took native women as mistresses, and indulged in the hubble bubble after dinner.<sup>7</sup> Permanent British settlement was discussed in the 1820s and 1830s as the company’s control expanded with the absorption of more

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<sup>7</sup> Dalrymple, William. *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India*. (New York: Viking, 2002).

territory, and the situation in India appeared to be calm as the Mughal Empire quietly spun apart.<sup>8</sup>

The Mutiny of 1857 was a pivotal event that left deep and indelible scars on the British colonial project in India and would have significant consequences.<sup>9</sup> When the native soldiers employed by the East India Company rose up against their employers, the reaction in Britain was extreme. The terrible violence against the weakest members of British society, women and children, was invoked in the metropole as a basis to demonize the actions of the Indians. The imperial press in Britain portrayed the events as a Mutiny, or revolt from within, and not as a legitimate military maneuver. In the penny papers, it was described as a wild, unorganized and irrational attack by ‘barbarians’. The horror of the Black Hole of Calcutta was re-invoked, and later was portrayed in imperial historical texts as a cruel barbaric betrayal of the colonists. Henry Havelock, a British general who fought against the ‘rebels’ was celebrated as a hero both in India and in London, where his statue joined Nelson’s in Trafalgar Square. The strong reaction to this event left a deep and lasting impression. To the British, the message was clear: if this type of cruel and reckless ‘barbarity’ resulted from interference in native Indian ways, then there could be no allowance for Indianization. The Mutiny joined the canon of shared imperial memory, and dramatically changed the way Britain dealt with India officially and unofficially as a colony.

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<sup>8</sup> Harrison, Mark. *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Dewey, Clive. *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service*. (London: The Hambleton Press, 1993). Metcalf, Thomas. *Ideologies of the Raj*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Changes in the political structure were drastic. The prestige of the East India Company and its ability to govern were ruined by its inability to maintain order, forcing Parliament to step in to reassert control of the situation with troops and money. Control of the subcontinent was turned over to the Crown in 1858 as the East India Company was disbanded, and India became the star jewel in the imperial crown. Plain commercial exploitation was no longer fashionable; more subtle methods of control were employed. There was a creation of a complex bureaucracy, the Indian Civil Service, whose duty it was to formally rule, record and enforce all political and civil business. More importantly, the lines between the Indians and the British hardened as the colonists harbored fear of another violent uprising deep within, flamed by sensationalism and kept alive for years in the imperial press.<sup>10</sup>

The British consciously created a façade of their own identity as way to give an impression of their power, rationality, and strength for themselves and Indians. They hoped that this strong front would preserve their safety in India. While they may have wanted to reach out and find a place for themselves, all they could see were barriers, danger, and differences. They recognized the inherent hypocrisy in ‘civilizing’ a land that already had a great civilization. This was never resolved and created instability for their colonial identity. The physical manifestations of this instable liminality reveal to what degree anxiety and fear had penetrated the British mind after 1857.

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<sup>10</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*.

In the next three chapters, I use the three spheres of British Indian movement, ‘The Raj,’ ‘The Bungalow,’ and ‘The Station’ as areas to explore the contradictions that reveal the liminality of the Raj. In ‘The Raj’ I focus on time and myths to understand how the particular demographics of the community affected the justifications used for imperialism and how British Indians saw themselves. In ‘The Bungalow’ I use material culture and architecture in the domestic context to reveal how identity was created and maintained. Finally, in ‘The Station’ I explore how colonial anxiety affected theories of health, urban planning, and the position the British social world occupied.

## CHAPTER ONE THE RAJ

Situated between the imagined nation of imperial Britain and the physical reality of colonial India was the Raj. The highest level of the British colonial establishment existed in this limbo. They rejected the physicality of the Indian colonial environment, and instead sought to live exclusively on the shared identity of Britishness that linked together the Empire. This liminal space, hovering between two cultures and two sides of the world, is only revealed when the contradictions and discrepancies between the ideologies of the Raj and the realities of the colonial environment are examined.

The liminal state is one that exists neither here-nor-there. It is outside of cultural and social structures that organize daily existence. People or groups hang between dependency and independence in a period of transformation and development. Outside of the cultural environment, it is possible to see social structure from an outside point of view and to 'see the forest for the trees.' The value of this state is in the changed perspective and maturation that this temporary time of exile provides. The Raj however, never graduated into a fully matured cultural form in which they would have had to reconcile their physical environment with their strong psychological connection to Britain. Instead, they

remained in a tenuous and uncertain situation due to the persistence of this temporary state.

The Raj's suspension in an underdeveloped cultural phase can largely be attributed to the trauma and aftermath of the 1857 Mutiny. The psychological stress created by the British imperial reaction changed the way in which Britain and her people understood, related to and governed India. The development of the Indian colonial culture into a mature developed mix of native and cosmopolitan forms was frozen and reversed. Unlike other colonial cultures, the British Indian community did not develop into a permanent settler colony that had a self-sustaining population and active and separate cultural forms from the metropole. Instead, the Raj was petrified like a chrysalis in amber in a partially developed state. The days of the Nabobs<sup>11</sup> disappeared and were replaced by hyper-Britishness. In this state, Oriental objects such as tableware, which were accepted back in Britain, were not deemed British enough to enter a British Indian household.

The ideologies of the Raj were self-conscious. Members of the imperial power structure, both in Britain and in India, counted themselves as members of the same group. Within this small coterie of men, they created and executed the business of Empire. In India, these men shared the same imperial ideologies, but they did not work as smoothly as they did in London. Instead, there was an alternate reality of the physical colonial environment that vied for attention and

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<sup>11</sup> The term 'Nabob' describes the colonists of the East India Company who practiced native customs and frequently took Indian women as mistresses and wives.

resolution. Oftentimes, the realities of India were openly ignored, but other times they were accepted alongside of metropolitan ideology.

Various ideas, metaphors, and ideologies circulated throughout this shared imperial community to describe the British Indian sojourn in India and the experience of Empire. It is important to explore these metaphors, which were found in contemporary works of literature, cartoons in *Indian Punch*, eulogized in poems, and even used by the colonizers themselves, as in *Plain Tales of the Raj*.

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#### PERIPHERY VS. METROPOLE

The colonies inhabited the periphery of the empire, and acted as an alternative place that attracted those for which there was little or no place in the metropole, such as younger sons, criminals and religious fanatics. However, India's case was highly unusual in the degree of connection and control that was maintained by the metropole. Other colonies, which were predominantly white or black, such as Canada or Nigeria, were allowed for the most part to govern themselves. Only their international policy, military matters, and tariffs were regulated by the Colonial Office. India, on the other hand, had its own branch of the Colonial Office in London, the India Office, and a dedicated bureaucracy on the ground, the Indian Civil Service. This bureaucracy was in charge of the day-to-day running of the country. When left alone to an independent subcontractor,

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<sup>12</sup> Sources include popular literature of the times, such as tales and poems by Kipling, and in children's literature, such as in *Our Empire Story* written by Frederika MacDonald, which was used to teach history to children. Charles Allen's work, *Plain Tales of the Raj* is based on oral interviews by the last living generation of British Indians, and he uses their words and memories to reconstruct a slice of imperial life, first on BBC radio, and then in this manuscript.



the East India Company, the Mutiny of 1857 had proven that direct micromanagement of this particular colony by the Crown was necessary.

The shared imagined community of empire was strong in India, maintained mostly by the printed matter that flowed back and forth between the metropole and the subcontinent. With the establishment of the telegraph, the empire became closely knitted together, providing a wider sense of identity for those belonging to the British Empire. Every day, news from around the empire appeared in newspapers across Britain, and indeed across the various colonies. Literature was extremely important in constructing Indian identity. British literature cannot be discounted in its importance in the peripheral sphere. Reading rooms and libraries in India were vital because as Crossette argues, “Current European events and thinking, new ideas and attitudes, the latest fashion, traveled through the printed format and popular literature.”<sup>13</sup> The printed word was a constant link between the metropole and the periphery. This imperial discourse used a common language of ideologies and shared metaphors that united metropole and periphery.<sup>14</sup>

However, due to the unusual British community in India, which was not a permanent settler community, the amount of contact between this particular colony and the metropole was especially frequent. Those in India felt that it was in their best interests to stay on top of the print culture in order keep up to date

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<sup>13</sup> Crossette, Barbara. *The Great Hill Stations of Asia*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 37.

<sup>14</sup> Robert MacDonald discusses this common imperial language further in fascinating detail in his work, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918*. (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994).

and to maintain their membership in the home culture of Britain. By reading the print news and latest novels, they kept a foot in Britain as well as in India that allowed them to remain ‘British’ while not actually residing there. The increased imperial feeling and the use of the telegraph only brought the two worlds of periphery and metropole closer together.<sup>15</sup> This allowed information from the periphery, in this case India, to infiltrate the consciousness of the metropolitan culture. This fed back into the imperial press, and therefore into India and other colonies, creating a unified sense of an imagined imperial community.<sup>16</sup> In the Indian context, this played out as British Indians migrated home, and took with them ‘Indian’ commodities, such as cashmere shawls,<sup>17</sup> that exemplified the ‘real’ India for those back Home. In the metropole, these items became assimilated into

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<sup>15</sup> At the turn of the Twentieth Century, the Boer War was the apex of the popular patriotic militaristic movements that were occurring in the metropole. Many organizations, such as the Boy Scouts, were founded out of this fervor and the empire was used as a way to unify disparate populations and to sell products. Castle, Kathryn. *Britannia’s Children: Reading Colonialism Through Children’s Books and Magazines*. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996), Dawson, Graham. *Soldier Heroes. British adventure, empire and the imagining of masculinities*. (London: Routledge, 1994), Dyhouse, Carol. *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), Haste, Cate. *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War*. (London: Allen Lane, 1977), MacDonald, Robert H. *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918*. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994), MacDonald, R. *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), Springhall, J. *Youth, Empire, and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940*. (London: Croom Helm, 1977), Dunne, Patrick A. ‘Boys Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914’ (*Victorian Studies* (24) 1980-81), 105-121, Warren, Allen. “Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920” (*The English Historical Review*. Vol. 101, No. 399 (Apr., 1986), 376-398.

<sup>16</sup> This feedback loop of influences from the periphery is well discussed in Lyons, Claire L. and Papadopoulos, John K., eds. *The Archaeology of Colonialism*. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> In her article, ‘Shawls, Jewelry, Curry, and Rice in Victorian Britain,’ Nupur Chaudhuri explores the currency that shawls (and other material goods) had in loops of exchange that stretched from India to England and back again. In Chaudhuri, N and Strobel, M, eds. *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 231-246.

popular culture and were subsequently mirrored back into British India. Ideas were traded the same way, as Kipling imported Indian ideas and terms into the metropolitan culture, which disseminated back out into the periphery.

Despite this connection through imperial culture, there was a lingering sense of isolation. The word ‘exile’ was used frequently by the British Indian community to describe their time in India. As Elizabeth Garret wrote for her fellow British Indian women,

What wonder then, that finding herself left alone for many long hours in the day, cut adrift from all the old associations, surrounded by servants whose language and ways are incomprehensible to her, she should be tempted to look back with a sigh to the happy home across the seas, which she feels she has never, perhaps, really valued until now. But if dear old England has its pleasures, surely there are occupations and pursuits in which we may engage, nay, in which, if we only set out hearts bravely to the task, we may become deeply interested in this our land of exile.<sup>18</sup>

The idea of exile was even showcased in Rudyard Kipling’s poem, ‘The Exile’s Line.’<sup>19</sup> This described the sojourn of the Indian colonial community. But for the people undergoing ‘exile’ it was not an archetypal exile since they were still intrinsically connected to the Home culture and it was a voluntary separation. Their exile was characterized by a continued alienation in a new culture, where they felt out of place and unsure of their own identities and belonging. This sense of dislocation, of being excluded, is probably the sense that the British Indian

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<sup>18</sup> Garrett, Elizabeth. *Morning Hours in India: Practical Hints on household management, the care and training of Children &c.* (London: Trubner & Co., 1887), 45.

<sup>19</sup> Kipling, Rudyard. *Rudyard Kipling: Complete Verse.* (New York: Anchor, 1988).

community was trying to describe, albeit jokingly when they referred to their time in India.

Moreover, the exiles were proud of the noble work of empire that they were performing. The colonials were not forgotten by their home culture. Their exile was noble in its self sacrifice for country and empire. Furthermore, it was self-inflicted, and was ultimately a choice that each member of the British Indian community had to choose to live. They were choosing to sacrifice their membership in the home society for membership in an exiles' community and a life that was lived between two continents. Their exile was, in other words, the supreme execution of duty, a proud British trait. Duty was a driving force of the times, and held as great a place in the temple of imperial virtues as honor and bravery. Duty held people into their proscribed roles and places in society. But for those venturing to India, they were escaping their traditional roles as second sons and middle class clerks. In a sense, they transferred their sense of duty from society to empire.

#### INDIA AS A SPECIAL CASE AS A COLONY

India was a special colony, there was no doubt about that. It was neither a white colony, such as Canada, or a predominantly black one, such as Nigeria. Instead, it was a strange place, filled with culture and civilization, but not the 'right kind' of civilization. As the star jewel of the imperial crown, it certainly stood out. White colonies were characterized by 'emptiness' before British colonization. As the British saw it, the aborigines and Native Americans had, in

their minds, done nothing of consequence to rank them as true people on the map of great civilizations and cultures.<sup>20</sup> Often filled with hunter-gatherer tribes who lacked written history, it cost the British nothing to simply push these people aside and to gaze at these particular imperial landscapes as empty expanses awaiting opportunity.

The black colonies of Africa, which also lacked written histories, were not encouraged to be as heavily colonized by whites. The conditions under which these black colonies were settled, that is, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, were of a later imperial ideology. These colonies were established for their strategic value near India. There were varying degrees of settlement, but it was largely an upper crust of colonial ownership and power that existed independently above the native African tribes.<sup>21</sup>

India, falling between these two, was neither white nor black. It was neither encouraged for white permanent settlement, nor used purely for economic exploitation. It also had the further difference of the presence of millennia of ancient civilization. India met all the requirements of advanced culture—monumental architecture, great literary works, developed religious traditions, and a written history that stretched back and even touched Western history.<sup>22</sup> The

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<sup>20</sup> This idea of empty colonies is an older one, one that is taken for granted now in discussions of metropole and periphery. Some sources that operate on this are MacDonald, *The Language of Empire* and *Sons of Empire*, Hall, *Cultures of Empire* and *Civilizing Subjects*, and Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*.

<sup>21</sup> Personal Communication, Professor Hayden Bellenoit, May 1, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> The debate still rages today about the degree of contact Alexander the Great had with the Mauryan empire of India. While scholars such as S.P. Gupta, *The Roots of Indian Art*. (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1980), argue that Alexander marched far enough into the subcontinent to

subcontinent had been a formidable environment for colonization during the early days of the East India Company, and it only succumbed to Robert Clive's military victory at the battle of Plassey and to the later helpful strategy of divide and conquer.

India was the most valued colony not only because of its special character, but also because of its difficult and uncertain nature. Strategically, it was valuable, as it occupied the middle of the trading routes between China and Southeast Asia and Europe. Its army, despite the Mutiny, was the best in the Empire and was used to fight the battles of conquest around the globe. It was the colony that had the greatest presence in the British metropole's mind, and it was only briefly overshadowed by South Africa in the Boer War, only to return to prominence shortly thereafter. For many, India was the embodiment of Empire, but at the same time, it was a terrible example of it. It had little to no permanent white settlement, and could not be justified as a civilizing mission. India already had civilization, the British could only update what was there already. This very unusual nature created a difficult situation with which no other colonial society had to face.

#### INHERITORS AS JUSTIFICATION

In living between two cultures, the British Indians had the possibility of claiming membership in either one. While they mainly aligned themselves with

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have direct contact with the Mauryans. Others such as N. Ray, *Maurya and Sunga Art*. (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1945), insist that cultural influences can be explained through trade, and point to the lack of archaeological remains of the march of Alexander's large army through the Indus basin as negative evidence of direct contact.

the dominant British identity, when it came to justification of imperialism in India, they fit themselves into both cultures. As stated above, India was a unique colony, and one in which the usual paternalistic justification of bringing civilization did not apply as flawlessly as it did in 'empty' colonies. The British could only update Indian civilization, not design it from the ground up, as they did in other colonies. In an unusual case of adaptation to the environment, British India took on the history and myths of India and described itself as the inheritor of the Mughal emperors.

For the British, the idea of inheriting India was a much more palatable one than a vision of a conquering horde, which is how they characterized the Aryans' and the Mughals' rise to power in India. By claiming inheritance, the British removed the action from themselves and became the passive recipients of a large burden and gift. It was much easier for them to extol their mighty sacrifice and hard work, as well as reluctance and goodness when they did not openly seek to expand and grab land in India for their own self-interest.

Furthermore, by placing themselves as successors to a great and ancient line of rulers who did much in British eyes to civilize India, they legitimized their own presence. As those in a long line of beneficent rulers, the British characterized themselves as innovators and civilizers, simply following the tradition that was already established by Akbar the Great.

This characterization of the British Indian community as inheritors of the Mughals was physically evident in the Indo-Saracenic architectural style. The

British, in referring back to a distant past, refrained from alluding back millennia to the Hellenistic influenced court of Asoka.<sup>23</sup> Instead, they pointed more frequently to the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar. The Indo-Saracenic influence was reflected in motifs such as intricate stone carvings, fantastic shaped brackets, rich friezes.<sup>24</sup> Also used widely were *chattris*, small domed pavilions which lined rooflines and eaves, and the classic Indian bucket pointed arch which was used in arcades and verandahs. As Mark Crinson points out,

...these buildings were conceived in relation to certain ideas that were held about their Oriental settings: particularly notions of Islamic display, (and) of the essential elements of Islamic urbanism and architecture...<sup>25</sup>

As the British took on this Islamic motif, so too did they take on the overtones of the greatness of previous Indian empires. They aligned themselves with an Indian past. Yet they did not reject Britain altogether, and also used classical architecture, with features such as symmetry, Corinthian columns, and temple-like facades, to hearken back to their Western origins.

Time in India was much more ancient, much different from that of Britain. The collective memory of the Raj in India was much like a child's. In comparison, their time 'alive' in India was much less than those of Indians. They had little community history in India, compared to other groups, who had resided there for centuries or even millennia. The British Indian memory of India had little to draw

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<sup>23</sup> Asoka ruled in the mid third century BCE

<sup>24</sup> Metcalf, Thomas R. *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 84.

<sup>25</sup> Crinson, Mark. *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture*. (London: Routledge, 1996), 232.



on to guide them into a new position of power. Like children playing a game of domestic life, they had little actual experience of India to fully draw upon. Unlike children they had a repository of British collective memory that was shared across the oceans. The Mutiny precluded any further investigation of a developed integration of British Indians into native society and culture, and instead the connection to the metropole was strengthened. Their cultural development was cut short, and the British Indian community was left suspended, forever in a tenuous state of cultural adolescence.

More importantly, the British fit themselves into the rhythms of time in India. By characterizing themselves as part of the Indian historical narrative, the process of adapting to the environment had begun. If cultural maturation had been complete, it would have been the only myth and justification of rule to which the British subscribed. However, since they continued to use paternalistic attitudes and justifications, their liminal status between these two cultures, national myths, and rhythms of time, are evident.

#### FAMILY METAPHOR OF EMPIRE

The paternalistic attitudes of those in the metropole were not limited to justifications of colonialism. The idea of family formed the core of the imperial and metropolitan identity throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Family was the core unit of identification in Britain, and was used as the basic unit upon which society was built. In Victorian and Edwardian culture, family was the center of the public and private worlds. It was the exclusive sphere of

women and children, and the private sphere of men.<sup>26</sup> People saw themselves as belonging to a familial household rather than operating as individuals in society.

The metaphor of family was also used on a broader scale, with Queen Victoria embodying Britain, the mother country to her daughter colonies. Britain watched over and guarded her daughter colonies as they grew to maturity.<sup>27</sup> She introduced them to industry, bureaucracy, and rational government. Together they formed the family of the Empire that reflected the minute scale that was at work in the metropole.

While the British Indians professed to believe in this ideology, it had in their view, failed them. In 1857, England failed to protect her ‘children’ from each other, with disastrous results. The ‘parent’ had not been concerned enough to watch over her ‘children’ and prevent violence and tragedy from breaking out. The government of England had left the colonists to fend for themselves under the care of a substitute authority. It was the common belief in the metropole, that neglect and inefficient rule had resulted in violence and tragedy.

Furthermore, family was not the core unit of organization on the ground in India. Instead, people operated primarily as individuals, and did not place great

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<sup>26</sup> The concept of spheres is one that is heavily used in studies of Victorian England to characterize the virtually separate worlds that people of different sexes lived in. Men had a wider sphere of movement than women who were limited to the home. Within the domestic context, the business of the household was the work of the mistress, not the master; he ceded power to her within the home. (Personal Communication, Professor Catherine Hall to the author, November 2004).

<sup>27</sup> The metaphor of family was widely used in contemporary literature, but most especially in propoganda near the turn of the twentieth century. Primary sources include MacDonald, *Puck and Pearl*, Marshall, *Our Empire Story*, Trevelyan, *The Golden Oriole*, and Steel, *Indian Housekeeper and Cook*. Secondary writings about the wider metropolitan literary tradition include Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning* and MacDonald, *The Language of Empire*.

value in extensive networks of families.<sup>28</sup> Demographically, the British Indian community was unusual because it was not self-propagating. Those who had finished their period of ‘exile’ retired to England to live out their days on pension in the backwater communities of Bayswater and Cheltenham.<sup>29</sup> More significantly, children were sent back to England from the age of six for education.

There was no place for children in the idealized British Indian community. It was thought that the bracing climate of England was more important than the loving embrace of family.<sup>30</sup> The importance of family in the ideology of Empire cannot be overestimated. Ironically, it is strange that the members of this exile community would find it desirable to break apart their own families. The presence of a strong familial unit would be optimal for maintaining an identity in a strange land. However for British Indians, the loving embrace of the Empire was considered a sufficient replacement for absent families.

The demographics of the exiled community were largely determined by the requirements for membership into the British Indian community. It was the degree of connection to Britain that determines not only eligibility but rank. If a child grew up in India, he would be immediately excluded from the social class in which he grew up and shunted downwards into the Domiciled category of permanent residents and products of miscegenation. In order to ensure stability of

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<sup>28</sup> All the oral transcripts from which Allen based his work *Plain Tales* mention the separation of childhood which encouraged extreme independence and a loss of the family unit in India.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Buettner discusses these British Indian enclaves back in England in more detail in her work, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

social class, it was necessary to return children to England so that a connection with Mother Britain could be established.<sup>31</sup> The Britishness in the British Indian identity was thought infinitely more valuable, and safe, than the polluting Indian aspect.

The rationalization of familial division originated from concerns over health. India was characterized by its damaging environment that was believed to render British Indian children sickly if they remained for their childhood. The environment, from its extreme high temperatures, hot sun and humidity, were seen as the primary culprits that robbed children first of their energy and then of their health. Other environmental stresses included ensuring the purity of food, cleanliness of homes, and safety from wild animals and natives. These too could rob children of their lives. While sanitary measures were to be used, the high risk of death encouraged parents to remove their children from the colony to ensure their survival. Take for example this excerpt of advice to parents from *Goodeve's Hints for the general management of Children in India*,

With regard to the period of sending children to Europe, it is difficult to lay down precise direction, so much depends on their health. In cases of delicate children it may be necessary that they leave as soon as they are weaned...As a general rule, children in ordinary health should not be detained in India after they are six years of age.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Collingham, E.M. *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj c. 1800-1947*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 99, and Buettner, *Empire Families*.

<sup>32</sup> Ewart, Joseph. *Goodeve's Hints for the General Management of Children in India*. (Calcutta: Thacker & Co., 1872), 26.

Characterizations of India as a dangerous place are best seen in contemporary children's literature. Puck, a small British Indian boy in the children's novel *Puck and Pearl*, has a fairy godmother who watched over him constantly, getting him out of many 'scrapes' and helping him to avoid the dangers that kill so many British in India. He narrowly avoided being kidnapped by a gypsy Afghani, and dying from sunstroke on his roof.<sup>33</sup> In both of these situations, the danger he was in is attributed to native negligence by his *ayah*, nursemaid. Puck and his sister Pearl noticed that everything was 'backward' in India: the color of faces, the amount of clothing, the weather and the environment. For them, it is like falling through the looking glass; everything was vaguely familiar, yet strange and dangerous. Puck and Pearl represented the two typical responses exhibited by children. Puck delighted in the strange environment which lead to curiosity and danger, while Pearl fell ill from the extreme weather. In either case, death lurked as close as their own shadow, and they were only safe when they could leave it behind them in India. In England at least, the dangers were known and quantifiable. In India it seemed that they were doomed, no matter how much they strove to stay healthy and out of harm's way. As Pearl said to her fellow British Indian mates, "...that is the best of England. There are no alligators, or sharks, or tigers, or wolves, or snakes, or even scorpions."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> MacDonald, Frederika. *Puck and Pearl, the wanderings and wonderings of two English children in India*. (London: Chapman & Hall, 1887).

<sup>34</sup> MacDonald, Frederika. *Puck and Pearl*, 216.

Children were an area of great consternation for British Indian community because of their vulnerable nature. Their position in society made them closest to the natives as they were essentially brought up by them.<sup>35</sup> However children were not meant to fit into the Raj. Their vulnerability and innocence was not a part of the Raj's ruling façade, and was one of the most obvious contradictions in their imperial ruling ideology of the family. In this weakness of children was displayed the weakness and anxiety that all of the British Indians felt consciously inside; they were outnumbered, outweighed, and bewilderingly out of place in such an environment. The snobbery for which the exiles were famous sprang from this anxiety. The criticisms about children raised in India, such as Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden*, were that they were snobbish and imperious. These same criticisms were leveled at many of the British Indian Mem Sahibs who had lost their youth and innocence to India and quite a few of the Sahibs as well.<sup>36</sup> M.S. Kisch notes in a letter back to his family in England how a friend of his, a recent inductee to the British Indian community, "has now undergone very much that same change that I have and looks upon the faults of Englishmen in India as due rather to the natives that they come in contact than to any bad qualities in themselves."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families*, and Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) further discuss the ideology of family and the further implications of children in close contact with natives in the periphery.

<sup>36</sup> Ponder, Stephen Einar Gilbert. *Seven Cantonments*. (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1938).

<sup>37</sup> Cohen, Ethel A. Waley, ed. *A Young Victorian in India: Letters of H.M. Kisch of the Indian Civil Service*. (London: Johnathan Cape, 1957), 109.

Because children and the elderly were sent away, there was no sense of generational time. It was hard to gauge a person's age, as there were few non-adults in the same family to compare them against. In this all-adult world, family lost meaning as a unit of identification, as adults held the only currency. Time flowed differently in this community, since relationships were not measured by family and not kept by generations. Instead, memories were transferred from adult to adult. Knowledge of how the Raj worked and behaved was passed on from the experienced adults to those who had just arrived from Britain. A phantom of immortality became almost tangible for this group in India, as they missed seeing children grow and the old die, markers in experiencing the passing of lifetimes. These strange demographics had an effect on the way that the British Indian community saw its place in India. With this immortal sheen, the community of exiles found it hard to fit in with the generational rhythms of the natives of India and Britain.

### CONCLUSION

The Raj never emerged from the process of cultural development which would have resulted in integration with the Indian context. Instead, it sought to reflect metropolitan culture and to ignore the native physical realities with which they were faced. This state was ensured by the membership requirements of their community and their reactions to the world around them. The adolescent and undeveloped nature of this culture is evident in the pressing issues of their community. They were concerned with time and memory, specifically regarding

their legitimacy in India, a place that had a far more ancient culture than their own. Furthermore, their own memories and understandings of time were shaken by the strange demographics of their community that made age nearly impossible to gauge and nullified generational memory.

These particular core beliefs formed one side of the incongruity between imagined and real. In the day to day life over the period after the Mutiny until the First World War, British Indian life flowed placidly. There was little change in the ways of living, and the ideologies and the traditions of life held stable throughout this era. In the placid environment of the bungalow, these ideologies would physically manifest themselves. The identity of the British was more than their ideas and trinkets, as we shall see.



CHAPTER 2:  
THE BUNGLOW

In between the crumbling whitewashed walls of the bungalows lived dozens of British Indian families during the Raj. The sardines on the table were imported in tins from Britain, the conversation was in English, and the tea was poured into Wedgwood crockery. But the Bungalow was more than a replica of an English home; it was a stage where the larger interactions and contradictions of the Raj were acted out on a human scale.

These houses had a uniform layout which created a sense of stability that transcended constant repostings. The permeable nature of the compound and house encouraged the mixing of races. Furthermore, the openness created a centrifugal motion that pulled the activities of the inhabitants out of the dark confines of the private interior space onto the bright and airy public verandah. In these semi-public spaces, all of India could view the performance and participate in the creation of these British Indian identities.<sup>38</sup> While the British Indians were strict about maintaining the racial character of objects brought into their homes, the servants, who were their closest and most personal contact with India, were integral in creating these ‘British’ identities through their labor and opinions.

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<sup>38</sup> King, Anthony D. *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976) first touches on the idea of performance in the bungalow but does not expand on the idea.

## HOUSE AND COMPOUND

The architecture of the bungalow was a blend of native forms and British ideology. As a South Asian building type, it differed greatly from the row house, cottage and low wooden houses of middle class England. Cavernous, dark and massive, these bungalows single-storey structures that were built to keep out the heat and encourage cooling breezes with many entrances and windows, which could be opened to prevailing winds.

As Flora Annie Steel, author of the eternally popular *Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, a guidebook for British Indian women, remarked, “It may be a laudable desire to imitate the natives by living in mud huts, but native constitutions and ours are not alike. It will be found no extravagance to have good airy rooms, where work can be carried on and good sleep obtained.”<sup>39</sup>

Style-wise, Bungalows used both Indo-Saracenic and Neo-Classical traditions<sup>40</sup> but had a unique appearance all their own. They were based on the Bengali native hut, which were characterized by thick mud walls and heavy thatched roofs.<sup>41</sup> The low roof extended out to protect the foundations from washing away in violent monsoon rains.<sup>42</sup> In the British Bungalow, these roofs remained, but were usually tiled to prevent arson (one of the few practical

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<sup>39</sup> Steel, Flora Annie. *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*. (1904), 160.

<sup>40</sup> As I specified in earlier chapters, these styles indicate a conflict between which justification and identity the British Indians believed in. In the domestic context, the importance of architectural style was less important than in public buildings for it was subordinate to material culture and the performance of identity.

King, Anthony. *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 24.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

concessions to the Mutiny) and gave the houses a low, dark and heavy look. Architectural motifs were added to the exterior, and Indo-Saracenic influence in the form of pointed arches were popular, but later Neo-Classical styles prevailed, with arcades and front porches marking formal entrances. With the Neo-Classical tradition also came modifications of the roofs; the traditional low roofs threw off the precise proportions, so they were discarded in favor of flat roofs. In practical terms however, these roofs were not as effective in keeping out water and shading the structure, and for the most part the comfort a roof provided took precedence over style.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to large protective roofs that sheltered the interior from the hot sun and beating rains, Flora Annie Steel suggests in her handbook that, “Houses should be raised at least four to five feet from the ground to avoid damp, to prevent snakes getting in, and to make the house cooler.”<sup>44</sup> Tied up in the philosophy of domestic architecture was the science of health. Sanitary measures were taken for the protection of health. These ranged from controlling the water supply to dictating the width of roads. Health and sanitation were a large concern for this exile community, one that appeared in nearly every aspect of their lives. It figured so large in their discourse because life was short and unstable in India-

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<sup>43</sup> The Neo-Classical style was popular in official buildings, such as barracks and offices. Very grand bungalows used this style, especially if they were located near a large city. However, this style was unusual up-country in small stations and cantonments, where the basic styleless form of the bungalow was favored. The use of Indo-Saracenic and other forms are explored in more detail in Crinson, Mark. *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture*. (London: Routledge, 1996), Davies, Philip. *Splendours of the Raj: British Architecture in India, 1660 to 1947*. (London: John Murray, 1985), and Metcalf, Thomas R. *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>44</sup> Steel, *Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, 160.

any measures to prevent illness and death were taken. As anthropologist E.M. Collingham discusses so well in his excellent book, *Imperial Bodies*, by effecting control over the immediate environment through sanitation, the British were ensuring the safety and purity of their sanctum sanctorum: their bodies.<sup>45</sup>

In the bungalow and compound, a clean and open area surrounding the house was necessary to encourage breezes to sweep through the dwelling. The positioning of the main building was crucial to ensure that the afternoon winds would blow directly through the house. It was important to locate native housing and auxiliary buildings downwind, since even the smell from these structures could carry disease and the unpleasant smell of cow-dung fire.<sup>46</sup>

The open compound was sanitary and the lack of unruly tropical foliage, which grew thick and fast ensured that that undesirable creatures, such as mosquitoes and scorpions, did not have easy access to the interior. Snakes, while not permanent guests, frequently crawled into the bathroom through the sweeper's door. By building the house a few feet from the ground, snakes were discouraged and the unhealthy damp night air, the miasma, rolled safely underneath the house. Isolated in a bare patch of land and raised from the harmful influences that resided on the ground, the bungalow strove to be a clean refuge from exterior pollution.

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<sup>45</sup> E. M. Collingham in *Imperial Bodies* argues that the most private sphere was the body, while others like Anthony King argue that the sanctum sanctorum was located outside the body in the private areas of the bedroom and bathroom. Closer study of the open and permeable nature of these spaces by Collingham nullifies the private nature of any space in the bungalow.

<sup>46</sup> King, Anthony D. *Colonial Urban Development*, 134, 154-155. King thoroughly discusses the orientation of the bungalow in his work and discusses the health benefits that precise orientation to sun and wind afforded.

Yet these measures were the only line of protection from exterior attack. The bare open compound was rarely enclosed by walls or significant fortifications that could be defended against outside incursions. The military presence in the cantonment was expected to be the line of defense for the British community, despite the horrors of the Mutiny. The barriers from the most private of interiors to the outer limits of the compound were few. The bedrooms and bathrooms were commonly arranged on the exterior walls and corners of the building and opened into a common reception room in the middle. The bathrooms each had their own access to the exterior for the sweepers, the servants who cleaned human waste, to enter without tracking dirt through the rest of the bungalow. This layout was uniform in all types of bungalows and created a phantom of stability for families that moved every few years. They could always count on a home that had been constructed with their health in mind and a focus on the exterior.

Good sanitation also meant encouraging airflow through the building, and it was a widespread practice to completely remove the interior doors off their hinges and to hang the doorframes with curtains instead.<sup>47</sup> The movement of air was essential in keeping the environment comfortable for Europeans, but allowing the movement of air also allowed easy access of light and people. This created a permeable private space; from the sitting room the Memsahib could be seen in her 'private' bedroom while the smell of cooking drifted through the house.

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<sup>47</sup> I.O.R. *The Bungalow Beautiful, or, some hints on how to make an Indian house pretty and comfortable*. Madras: Higginbotham, 1909.

A verandah was located in the underhang of the roof behind an arcade of arches. The reception and dining rooms had multiple exits onto this space, and the entrance to the home was commonly by way of the verandah. The verandah was the true living space of the bungalow. It was the most comfortable space in the compound, shaded and open to breezes. It was conspicuous, raised up on high foundations and surrounded by a clear and open compound. It was the nursery for the children, the domestic outpost for bartering with *box wallahs*, native traveling salesmen, and the afternoon retreat for a cool drink. The house was a stuffy, dark refuge during the heat, barely tolerable for delicate European constitutions. The verandah provided a cooler option. *Tattis*, or screens, of woven mat were soaked in water and hung to cool the feeble breezes of the hot season.

Verandahs were the place of British interaction with India. The living space inside the bungalow was racially regulated, with Indians only entering as servants or Rajahs. British Indians could only enter native dwellings as rulers, but the verandah was a space in between these two extremes. It was a shared place where the races could meet and interact. Both the expatriates and Indian met and did domestic work in this porch that was not inside or outside. Then again, the verandah was still a place of performance, open and visible to India. It was more casual and relaxed than other racially charged places, but the image of ruler and ruled were not discarded.

The insignificant exterior defensive barriers and bare compounds ensured that not only did the exiles had a clear view of India, but also that India had a

clear view of them. The British Indians were performing their roles as rulers on the stages of their home. The bungalow was barely a private space, due to its open nature, and the verandahs were the least private of all. Yet while the racial identity of the verandah was not fixed, the interior was strictly limited and guided in its identity by its contents.

### INTERIOR DECORATION

An Indian bungalow, the very name conjures up a vision of bare white walls, rooms with endless doors, and verandahs with cane lounge chairs and little tables, at first sight a most hopeless place to make beautiful, - but it will be found really much easier and cheaper than furnishing and decorating a house in the “old country.”<sup>48</sup>

As the British moved often to new postings, inhabitants put little work into fixing or maintaining bungalows. However, housewives were encouraged by pamphlet writers to keep the paint fresh and rooms airy to increase comfort and to negate the squalid grandeur in which they lived. Despite such admonitions, most wives focused on filling their homes with objects from England. As many homes came furnished with basic utilitarian pieces, few families traveled with their own personal set of furniture, especially as it was expensive to transport. Instead many preferred to personalize their spaces with tableware, pictures, and trinkets.

A family very rarely inhabited a bungalow for more than a few years. It was even rarer for a family to own the house that they were living in, making

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<sup>48</sup> I.O.R., *Bungalow Beautiful*, 8.

improvements seem expensive and pointless. As I.O.R., the author of *The Bungalow Beautiful*, so vividly explains,

“The Anglo-India housewife is often content to lapse into a style of living amidst surroundings that she would hardly deem good enough for a housemaid at Home. How often do we not see, up-country at any note, curtains strung from nail to nail by a not over taut string, pictures awry with dirty glasses and chipped frames; wall covered with nails and nasty little bits of string attached thereto, bequests of long by gone tenants which the careless Indian workman never dreams of removing when he white- or color-washes the house; dirty and dog eaten dhurries; and a hundred other lesser, but scarcely less annoying eyesores”<sup>49</sup>

The rooms of Bungalows were large and hard to fill with the few pieces of furniture available. However, as long as the rooms were clean, austerity was simply a problem to decorate. Once the home was clean and whitewashed inside and out, it was up to the housewife to create a semblance of a ‘Home.’

One of the finest ways of creating a British home, or a remembrance of it, was to use the Army & Navy catalogue, printed by the Army & Navy Cooperative Stores in London. As Lady Vere Birdwood reminisced from her childhood, “Everything was sent for...we existed on what was known as the Army and Navy Catalogue...a sort of mail order affair...we used to order a great deal to be sent up.”<sup>50</sup> Here one could order through the mail the major and minor trappings of ‘Home’. A contemporary of the Sears Roebuck Catalogue, everything could be

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<sup>49</sup> I.O.R., *Bungalow Beautiful*, 3-4.

<sup>50</sup> Birdwood, Lady Vere. Oral history transcript of interview conducted by Charles Allen, 1972-74. British Library OIOC private papers collections, MSS Eur T7.



found here, from campaign furniture to corsets to tinned food. More importantly all could be shipped out to India for a small fee.

None of these objects of daily use were considered heirlooms, but instead the necessities of life. Tableware was often of plainest English crockery, pictures were stenographs of common bucolic English scenery, and trinkets were ephemera brought from England. Life was hard for objects in India, and they were often destroyed by white ants or broken en route. Although precious to the British Indians, the all too short lifespan of these objects was a reminder of the fragility of their own lives in India.

While the ephemerality of objects was mourned, it was also useful as a way of keeping up easily with the new fashions in England. A new purchase was an opportunity to reestablish one's connection with Britain. New British objects had not yet acquired an Indian history and been weathered by the trials of the Indian climate. So too did the British hope that every new purchase from 'Home', that they could become new again and British, that they would not acquire a permanent Indian history that would show on them, like it did on their books and belongings. By buying new things and tossing out the old and worn, they could pretend to in India and not be affected by it. They could admire safely from a visitor's distance, rather than with the wearisome perspective of a resident.

The 'exoticness' of the Orient was comfortable when far away, but in India it was threatening. It was one thing to perform Britishness with lavish displays of social power, but to constantly maintain it in every object of a fully

furnished nineteenth century home was tiring. Rather than work hard to keep a perfect replica of a British home in India, which was impossible (because of moving and the quickness with which things deteriorated), they preferred to instead to have few belongings and even fewer objects of distinctly Oriental manufacture. Items that had been accepted into metropolitan culture such as rugs and tea were accepted. Other Oriental items first had to travel through the filter of metropolitan culture before they were allowed into colonial homes in the Orient.<sup>51</sup> Direct transfer of Oriental items into colonial domestic sphere threatened the Western identity of the entire household.

Teapots and picnic sets are an excellent example of the type of objects treasured by British Indians. In their forms and decoration, they betrayed the staid ideas about food and the table. The teapots all distinctly cried out “England!” with roses and flowers sprayed across stout shapes and intricate raking patterns. This porcelain called to mind tearooms and middle class drawing rooms.<sup>52</sup> These were plain in their uniform stockiness of shape and restraint in decoration- as if gaudiness betrayed an Indian affinity for lavish decoration. In fact much of the British establishment was lacking sumptuous decoration.<sup>53</sup> Lavishness was reserved for clothing, parties, and dinners, but never for teapots, houses, or

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<sup>51</sup> The idea of feedback loops of colonial influence and cultural interaction between the metropole and periphery is explored in more detail in Lyons, Claire L., *The Archaeology of Colonialism*.

<sup>52</sup> Army and Navy Co-operative Society. *Yesterday's Shopping: the Army & Navy Stores catalogue, 1907: a facsimile of the Army & Navy co-operative society's 1907 issue of 'Rules of the Society and price list of articles sold at the stores'; introduced by Alison Adburgham*. (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1969).

<sup>53</sup> Lubar, Steven and King, David W., eds. *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).

furniture. Only the ephemeral are allowed to be large and grandiose, while the day to day of lives were dreary and plain, as if to deny to exoticness of everyday life in India.

### CLOTHING

As the most intimate and constant reminder of identity, clothing was perhaps the primary visible signifier of identity. The tenacious refusal to adapt Western dress styles to local conditions was perhaps the most obvious indication of the stubbornness of the British Indian character in regards to how they saw themselves. Clothing was a second skin that protected the internal environment from exterior pollution. It was also one of the strongest social signifiers that identified class, race and gender. In India, it denoted of the degree of contact a Briton had with the mother country.

To keep in the latest styles was always a challenge, especially when it took so long for new styles to arrive. According to *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, an order for goods could be sent and goods received in six weeks. As *Indian Punch* slyly remarked, 'India is never much behind in the fashionable world. They may adopt any new style of dress in Europe that they choose, and the Anglo-Indian community is but a mail in arrears.'<sup>54</sup>

Often, women would have the native tailor, the *dirzee*, make new dresses by copying patterns from old dresses. The real challenge was to get a hold of the latest silhouette as soon as it became fashionable in the metropole. To create new

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<sup>54</sup> *Indian Punch*.

patterns, all that was required was for a Memsahib to bring a cutting of a picture of the latest fashion with fabric and the *dirzee* could create the latest and most up to date fashions right on the verandah. But because of the time it took for printed pictures to arrive from the metropole, styles that were new in India were already dated back in England. However, it was only on setting foot back home that a colonial felt out of place and outmoded. In India, they were all out of vogue together.<sup>55</sup> As long as the exile community could keep ahead of the social pretensions of the Domiciled and distinguish themselves as different from this socially lower group, they had fulfilled the social purpose of fashion in India.

The sheer amount of clothing that was needed, both by women and men, was incredible. British Indians were expected to at least dress for dinner, if not for exercise as well. Most colonists bathed at least twice a day, usually after physical exercise both in the morning and in the afternoon. Such excessive bathing was believed to be good for the health. Sweat was never allowed to remain on the skin, as it was thought it would encourage chills. It was used solely as a preventative against disease, and like sanitation, was not thought of in terms of hygiene, but in health.<sup>56</sup> “Cleanliness, is, if possible, more important in India than in England,”<sup>57</sup> This extended into clothing, which had to always be fresh. A clean home was a healthy home; so too was a clean body a healthy one. British Indians

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<sup>55</sup> Birdwood, Lady Vere. Oral history transcript of interview conducted by Charles Allen, 1972-74. British Library OIOC private papers collections, MSS Eur T7.

<sup>56</sup> Collingham., *Imperial Bodies*, 45-47.

<sup>57</sup> I.O.R. *The Bungalow Beautiful*, 26.

were expected to change into fresh exercise outfits, tea gowns, suits, and gowns after every activity.

Sporting outfits, tweeds and print dresses were all part of a wardrobe that was brought out. Women were advised to save their best things for the afternoon, and to reuse outmoded outfits as morning dresses. Flora Annie Steel wrote pages of advice on clothing, and warned girls not to bring too many evening gowns, especially for up country, since they would, ‘...go hopelessly out of fashion before you get a chance of wearing them.’<sup>58</sup> Where life was uncertain, they were to only take out enough for six months ahead. “On the other hand, if life is certain for six months, dress becomingly in that period, and never, even in the wilds, exist without one civilized evening and morning dress.”<sup>59</sup> Steel advocated dressing for the climate and thought it excessive to keep on multiple petticoats during the hot season. There were other opinions about clothing and although *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* seems to recommend extravagance, but it was highly unusual because it advocated moderation (for the times) and adaptability of attire to the climate.

The amount of clothing that was gone through in a week was voluminous but again Flora Annie Steel had advice and reassured, “...it must not be forgotten that the increased necessity for constant change is almost counterbalanced by the corresponding facility in getting things rapidly washed.”<sup>60</sup> The *dhobi*, a native

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<sup>58</sup> Cohen, *Letters of H.M. Kisch*, 218.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>60</sup> Steel, *Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, 24.

washerman, was very effective, and often he would do a household's wash at least twice a week, if not more, to simply keep up with what the Sahib and Memsahib were wearing. However his method of cleaning involving beating the dirt out of clothes at the nearest water source, be it either a river or a tank<sup>61</sup>. While clothes often ended up clean, they didn't last long with such treatment, and there are certain things that ladies would not allow the *dhobi* to touch.

Care of particular types of clothing, such as feathers and silks were complex, and required helpful instruction in the climate of India. *The Bungalow* offered tips to readers on how best to preserve precious goods brought out from England, 'To Wash Thin Silks. - Very thin silks must be very carefully washed with a sponge and rinsed, then spread out on a table and kept in place by pins to dry as they will not bear ironing.' And 'Cigar Boxes for Feathers. - Cigar boxes are the best receptacles for keeping feathers in.'<sup>62</sup>

For delicate things like stockings, Flora Annie Steel advised first time colonists to buy cheaply since sand wore down the heels. She encouraged women to ensure that their *ayahs* washed them, not the *dhobi*. She continued, "The fewer frills the better for Indian underclothing, for the *dhobi* is relentless; and it is a great saving of bother to do away with buttons altogether, and substitute studs in their place... Where decoration is liked, hand embroidery on the cloth and coral stitches may be employed, but any attempt to combine the Indian *dhobi*'s

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<sup>61</sup> A local manmade pond or reservoir

<sup>62</sup> Roche, Mrs. C, ed. *The Bungalow, A Paper for Anglo-Indian Homes* (4<sup>th</sup> January, 1896, No. 1, Vol. 1, 1896).

prejudices with fine Madeira edgings will be disastrous to the latter.”<sup>63</sup> In fact, treasures such as real lace were sent back to England to be washed- they simply were not trusted to the ministrations of the natives. Elizabeth Garret points out most tellingly, “Real lace, should of course, be sent home to England to be cleaned.”<sup>64</sup> Delicate items must be saved, treasured and cared for, by those who knew their value, not beaten on a riverbank by a hired stranger.

Clothing had a more practical function as a barrier that protected the body from the pollution of the environment. Skin was not exposed, for fear of mosquitoes and the sun, and was always covered up. White was popular, since it was believed to reflect the sun's rays and be cooler. Khaki was disliked by mosquitoes, and explains the favored color palette of the British Indian styles.<sup>65</sup> These colors formed the official and unofficial uniform for the expatriates and marked them out as different.

Flannel was recommended to be kept close to the skin to wick away sweat and dampness to prevent prickly heat, a type of skin infection caused by constant pooling of sweat. It was also believed to protect against sudden changes in temperature, such as from the chill of the early morning to the intense heat of midday. Cholera belts were recommended universally to promote digestion and prevent disease, and consisted of a swath of flannel that was wrapped around the midsection and worn night and day. The largest amount of discourse centered

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<sup>63</sup> Steel, *Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, 217.

<sup>64</sup> Garrett, *Morning Hours in India*, 29.

<sup>65</sup> *Indian Punch*, 224.

about the sun and the nervous system.<sup>66</sup> “We should remember that the sun is a good friend to air, and purify and cheer, but a deadly enemy if met without a shady pith hat and a white umbrella,”<sup>67</sup> The sola topee, (the sun helmet) umbrella, and corked vest were all important items of clothing that were insulation against the burning rays of the sun that caused intense sunstroke and delirium.

Hats from the Army & Navy were specialized into tropical categories of topees and terais to shade the eyes, encourage circulation of air around the head, and to stand up to bright and unrelenting tropical sun. They were an example of the few adaptations that the British undertook in tropical climates, and came to signify their colonial status. Because the topee promoted health, it was easier to justify the change of attire from ideal British styles.<sup>68</sup>

Flora Annie Steel recommended particularly that, “Where the great heat of the sun has to be braved, a large pith hat should be worn, a real mushroom, that will protect the nape of the neck. A cork protector, made by quilting shredded cork down the middle of a sleeveless jacket, should be worn over the spine. An umbrella covered with white and dipped occasionally in water will make a hot, dangerous walk less dangerous.”<sup>69</sup> It was feared if a person was exposed for a long enough periods of time the sun could even cause permanent mental deterioration. The sola topee in particular had a lengthy discourse surrounding it. The sun, as part of the colonial environment, was dangerous to Britons who were

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<sup>66</sup> Bishop, Sydney Olive. *Medical Hints for the Hills*. (Darjeeling: Scotch Mission Orphanage Press, 1888).

<sup>67</sup> Steel, *Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, 160.

<sup>68</sup> Army and Navy, *Yesterday's Shopping*, 895.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 180.



adapted for cold, cloudy climates. The strength of the sun was believed to cause physical damage to the body, and especially to the nervous system. Books on health, such as *Goodeve's Guide*, even advised that the sun would cause the degeneration of race through mental instability and infertility. Hence, it was important for the British Indians to protect the head and spine from sunlight.<sup>70</sup>

While it protected British Indian men, women and children alike, it came to be strongly associated with the Raj itself.<sup>71</sup> Anglo-Indians<sup>72</sup> took to wearing topees as well to associate themselves with this ruling class. Even today, the topee is a symbol that can stand alone as a symbol of an older era.<sup>73</sup> It was part of a second skin that came to stand on its own and carried the identity of the colonials by itself.

Yet the need to keep up with the very latest fashions also belies the how essential it was to display the strength of the connection to the metropole. Care for special and delicate items from England, such as feathers and embroidery, were carefully monitored to ensure that they would survive cleaning. Clothing was one of the only public ways to advertise how “British” a British Indian actually was and delicate items exhibited how well that ‘British’ identity was cared for. At the

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<sup>70</sup> Ewart, *Goodeve's Guide*. Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*.

<sup>71</sup> Birdwood, Lady Vere. Oral history transcript of interview conducted by Charles Allen, 1972-74. British Library OIOC private papers collections, MSS Eur T7.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Anglo-Indians’ here refers specifically to the group of mixed race peoples who formed part of the lower social class of the Domiciled.

<sup>73</sup> De Caro, Francis A. and Jordan, Rosan A. ‘The Wrong Topi: Personal Narrative, Ritual, and the Sun Helmet as a Symbol’ *Western Folklore*, Vol., 43, No, 4. (Oct., 1984), pp. 233-248.

same time, clothing was tough, and protected and sheltered the vulnerable colonial body from the dangers of India.<sup>74</sup>

## FOOD

As the source of nutrition and energy, food set apart different groups of people by their culture, and in India, by the caste and religion. The British Indians were no different, and while they did indulge in Anglicized native dishes, when it came to formal meals, they favored staunchly British fare. Meals were the most important performance of Britishness, with sanitation and purity being vital at the table.

The kitchen was often a place that most Memsahibs gave up trying to control, resigning themselves that as long as the food came out to the table fairly well cooked, there was no need to subject themselves to the horrors of the kitchen. Elizabeth Garrett, in her handbook for Memsahibs, observed, ‘An Indian cook room is so painfully unlike a kitchen at home that a visit to it affords little pleasure to the English matron.’<sup>75</sup> There were tales of *kitmughurs*, cooks, using their toes to make toast over a fire, dipping unwashed fingers into sauces, and washing plates with greasy rags. Kitchens consisted of a fire on the dirt floor of a hut with a few pots and pans. The pantry was a table laden with food- quite different from the extensive equipment and storage in English kitchens.

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<sup>74</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*.

<sup>75</sup> Garrett. *Morning hours in India*, 19.

These filthy conditions were in striking contrast to the degree of sanitation that was expected at the table. All vegetables were to be dipped into a cleansing solution before being cooked and served, and meats were often boiled plain to ensure purity. Milk for consumption had to be milked directly from the cow into a clean container in front of the Memsahib each day by the milkman to ensure that it wasn't being watered down or adulterated.<sup>76</sup>

Because of caste and religious restrictions, getting meat was sometimes a problem. As H.M. Kisch, a lower member of the ICS in the 1860's wrote to his family,

One of the great disadvantages of Pabna is that we get no beef, and have, therefore, to be contented with poultry and mutton. The latter is also only procurable about once a week. You can hardly imagine how tired people in India get of fowls, but they are almost the only things that you can get everywhere, and are therefore always provided when other food is not procurable. In an ordinary Anglo-Indian household, from five to ten fowls are consumed daily. The two of us living together (at the circuit house, two bachelors) here have usually the following dishes for breakfast and dinner- the only two heavy meals in the day- breakfast at 10 a.m.- fish, one hot side dish of fowls, one cold dish of fowl; dinner at 7 p.m.- soup (made of fowl), one side of fowl, a joint of roast fowl. This is now the best time of the year for vegetables, and we get peas, tomatoes, potatoes, lettuces, carrots, turnips, parsnips and other vegetable in great abundance, and at ridiculously low prices.<sup>77</sup>

While the British considered imported tinned goods delicacies, they also had absorbed a few Indian dishes that were, of course, adjusted for their palates. These dishes were popular in Britain as well as in India, and had lost much of the

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<sup>76</sup> Ewart. *Goodeve's Hints*. Steel. *Indian Housekeeper and Cook*.

<sup>77</sup> Cohen, *Letters of H.M. Kisch*, 107.

spice and flavor that had originally characterized them. These dishes such as kedgerree, eggs, fish and rice, served at breakfast, and pish pash, a mix of rice and chicken, were made for invalids and children. The extreme tastelessness of this food marked it out as British food, especially in contrast to the strongly spiced food that was eaten by Indians.

The timetable of meals was set and invariable for most of the day, but there were two distinct routines around breakfasting. The English way was to sleep late and breakfast at nine. The Indian way began with a *chota hazree*, or light meal, when rising early, around five or six. This was followed by exercise and a large breakfast at ten or eleven. The benefit of this was to take advantage of the better part of the day, which in India was thought to be the early morning before the sun grew too hot to permit exercise. Those who lounged in bed, and especially those who breakfasted in bed, were seen as lazy and indecorous- taking advantage of their high-class situation. However during the cold season and in the hills, when the better part of the day lay ahead in the midday and afternoon, it was permissible to follow the English routine and take breakfast at nine.<sup>78</sup>

This importance of displaying ‘Britishness’ at the table was evidenced by the favor of bland British dishes and imported delicacies. One of the most enduring images of the Raj is of colonists dressing for dinner and sitting down to a full service, no matter what the conditions. The table was the site of the biggest

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<sup>78</sup> Garret, *Morning Hours in India*, 2.

performance of Britishness, where the exiles showed their native servants what being British really meant.

### SERVANTS

Like the imagery of family that was used to depict the British Empire, so too was that imagery reapplied to the real family household in British India to create an Empire in miniature. Here the Sahib was the father and king, the Memsahib the mother and queen, and the servants were the children and subjects. This was a common metaphor, but when used in India with native servants, it created an official imperial pallor that took on symbolic significance and meaning. Because of this, even the smallest matters had importance, for laxity within this constructed metaphor meant laxity within the Empire. ‘We do not wish to advocate an unholy haughtiness; but an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian Empire.’<sup>79</sup> Performing imperial roles ensured and upheld the metaphor, and therefore the true nature of the Empire.

Servants were characterized as children, and their image was not helped by their childlike innocence and ignorance of ‘correct’ English ways. While they were fluent in how to live properly within their own culture, when it came to functioning in the British cultural sphere, they were at a level of fluency with a child who was just learning the cultural system. This childlike innocence of correctness was picked up and emphasized by the British, almost to a humiliating

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<sup>79</sup> Steel, *Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, 9.

degree. Flora Annie Steel, took a very condescending attitude, ‘To show what absolute children Indian servants are, the same author for years adopted castor oil as an ultimatum in all obstinate cases on the ground that there must be some physical cause for inability to learn or remember.’<sup>80</sup>

However on the whole, attitudes towards servants varied. Steel was unable to stick with her paternalistic attitude and reversed her position a few pages later, ‘Finally, when all is said and done, the whole duty of an Indian mistress towards her servants is neither more or less than it is in England.’<sup>81</sup> The relationships between family and servants was much more complicated and intricate than the familial model of Empire suggested.<sup>82</sup>

The amount of servants in India was considered extravagant by English standards. But the Memsahib justified their number by referencing caste restrictions, which precluded servants from doing work outside their caste. The bare minimum for a basic British India house was a *bearer*, the butler or valet, a cook, a *sycee*, the groom for the horses, an *ayah*, the nursemaid for the children and ladies maid, and a sweeper<sup>83</sup> for the bathrooms.

There are stories of women who lived in India for most of their lives with only twenty or thirty native terms, to their knowledge. They made no effort to

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>82</sup> Collingham points out this complexity (*Imperial Bodies*, 113) but then retreats to dealing with the interaction of British image with native India and misses the personal aspect. The relationships between master and servant were a group effort to create and support the ruling identity.

<sup>83</sup> The native term for sweeper varied considerably, from *bhangi* to *chamar*, depending on the locale. Generally the British Indians referred to this person as the sweeper. (Personal communication, Professor Bellenoit to the author, May 2, 2006).

integrate or work themselves into the culture of India. However there were those who took great pride in speaking native languages and having long term personal relationships with their servants.<sup>84</sup> The bearer, as the most senior servant, was usually the closest to the family and trusted with the most responsibility. He often traveled with a family for decades from station to station, and was the only constant native presence.

Servants were interpreters of local languages and customs for the British Indians. As the only connection to India they could trust, India was filtered through these servants and explained to the exiles as they saw fit. The interpretation worked both ways, and often times the servants interpreted the exiles' actions and lifestyle to Indian contacts in nearby bazaars and towns. Despite the obvious value of such effort, the amount of work that servants accomplished was underestimated by their masters.

On a trip away from home, Kisch wrote,

One of the best points about native cooks and table servants is that they cook a meal, and a very good meal, anywhere and at a few minutes notice. A few sticks of wood to light a fire, and a saucepan, are all that they require to turn out three or four dishes of different kinds. Thus, on Sunday last, we did not send out anything before we ourselves left, and all our provisions had to be carried on foot for 12 miles; still, we had a 1 o'clock a breakfast with both hot and cold dishes, and everything just as comfortable as we had in our house in Pabna.<sup>85</sup>

While Kisch praises his servants, he also shows his ignorance in how much work went into securing his comfort. More organizing went into planning

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<sup>84</sup> Birdwood, Oral history transcript.

<sup>85</sup> Steel, *Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, 107.

his breakfast than a few sticks of wood and a spark. It was likely that his bearer had planned and distributed provisions and equipment among half a dozen men, and had been up hours before Kisch, planning the logistics of the morning meal.

Yet it was the servants to a large degree who dictated how the British should live in India and consequentially, how much work they would have to perform. In defending the lavish way that they lived, British Indians often pointed out that when they tried to cut back their extravagant lifestyles, the servants would think less of them as capable rulers and would even say, “It is not the custom.”<sup>86</sup> The servants’ power in directing how their employers lived dictated to a great deal how they expressed their Britishness. Tellingly, the servants were also the audience for this Britishness.

The Indian servants lived in basic, ‘primitive’ huts on the edges of the compounds that faced inward to the large and elaborately planned bungalows which inhabited the center. The open nature of the bungalow and compound allowed the Indians to enter, serve and watch freely. They characterized the typical ‘primitive native’ and were there to watch the ‘civilized’ British rule. Yet at the same time the servants had much more power than a typical audience. Through their work and their acquiescence, they helped to create and maintain British Indian identities. Through interactions with these natives of India that British Indians constructed, performed, and maintained their pure British identity.

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<sup>86</sup> Collingham discusses this (*Imperial Bodies*, 106) but simply points to conflict, rather than exploring the complicity on both sides.



## CONCLUSION

Collingham summarizes the lot of British Indians by saying, “The protective structure of Anglo-Indian...domestic space demonstrated British ingenuity in the construction of effective barriers against the threat of the tropical environment... Paradoxically, the need to structure their world around the threat of India also demonstrated just how vulnerable the British were outside their own environment. Their vulnerability was highlighted by their need to create a familiar world around themselves evocative of the metropolitan country.”<sup>87</sup> While he recognizes the importance of defense against India as an important part of the domestic context, he misses the vital interaction between native and exile.

The bungalow was the private face of the Raj. It housed the British refuge that was so necessary to reestablish contact with the mother country. Clothing, food and material culture all had strong metropolitan influence and displayed a household’s degree of Britishness. However, in spite of the ‘racially pure’ objects, the bungalow was not a refuge. Instead, because of its permeable nature, the bungalow was a site for the negotiation of the identity of the rulers of India. While the exiles remained British in their minds, in the bungalow, they were actively interacting and negotiating their roles with their servants, the representatives of India.

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<sup>87</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 84.

### CHAPTER 3: THE STATION

The extreme isolation of the British stations was like the purely British nature of the bungalow, deceptive. While separation between the races was more evident in the situation of the settlements, the nature of the boundaries that surrounded these larger performance spaces were just as permeable.

From the distance of a few miles, the nearby native town was reduced to a view, safely objectified in picturesqueness and removed to prevent pollution of the station. However, in its distant isolation the station was viewed by Indians as well. Outside the station, dealings with India were official and awkward. They were the interactions of a tourist in a strange land, not those of a resident. Within the compound, society was extremely hierarchical, yet at the same time casual and familial. Inside the boundaries of the stations, the community was free to exert as much control as needed, without worry that they were interfering in the culture of native India. Rule over the larger world outside of the station took the form of concern about climate. Health was believed to be strongly affected by environment, and control over interactions with India was translated into concerns about sanitation.

#### SANITATION AND URBAN PLANNING

The anxiety over sanitary measures and health in India stemmed from the uncertainty about life and the lack of control and understanding of the Indian

environment. Their fears about the unpredictability of the native population could be handily displaced onto environment and health. By attempting to create ‘sanitary’ conditions, the British could control the use of land without interfering with native culture. Furthermore, by characterizing Indians as carriers of disease, the British removed the native agency. Instead, the expatriates saw Indians as passive carriers of danger.<sup>88</sup>

Again, much of this anxiety about control and obsession over separation stemmed from the traumatic events of 1857. The British had been aware of the tensions surrounding cultural matters, but they hardly expected the widespread explosion of violence. They most certainly did not expect so much of this violence to be turned towards them.<sup>89</sup>

Punishment and change were swift. Crown rule was instituted in 1858, and the East India Company was broken down and the British immediately set about rebuilding burned settlements. In Lucknow, as the site of the first uprising of the Mutiny, punishment was harsh. The movement of Indians was highly restricted. The British authorities even went so far as to evict the entire native population of the city and only allow those loyal to the British back in.<sup>90</sup>

Lucknow paid for the Mutiny, literally and figuratively for the rest of the Raj. It was the most highly taxed city in all of India. The British were not about to let the natives of Lucknow go unpunished and forget what their forefathers had

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<sup>88</sup> Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions*.

<sup>89</sup> Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*.

<sup>90</sup> Oldenburg, Veena. *The Making of Colonial Lucknow 1856-1877*. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984).

done.<sup>91</sup> Other forms of revenge in Lucknow were particularly vengeful. Troops were billeted in the mosques, and instructed to wear shoes inside, and were served pork so as to desanctify and pollute the holy space. Later attempts to control the population were kept to the realm of sanitary measures, such as control over the water supply.

In Lucknow, Oldenburg's exploration of the treatment of the native population after the Mutiny reveals that,

“The danger perceived was not from external attack but from internal conspiracy, rebellions, or sabotage...cleanliness was the Victorian shorthand for a variety of related concerns: morbidity, disease, sanitation, salubrity, drainage...water supply, vegetation, clean air...density and overcrowding...disaffection had spread like a disease and the entire urban environment had to be politically sanitized.”<sup>92</sup>

As she documents, the city was a center for the Mutiny, and was seen by the British as an impenetrable rabbit warren of filth and disease, which needed to be cleansed, organized and streamlined (as well as punished).<sup>93</sup> The native city was a dark place that was extremely private and inward looking. The native architectural forms of courtyard-centered houses presented an imposing façade to the street and enclosed the mysterious character of the inner life of India.<sup>94</sup> The effect of this private isolation and easily defensible front made the native home a fortress of the ‘real’ India, pushing away and excluding outsiders like the British. Additionally, the haphazard and organic nature of the layout of the native city reflected this inward focus and lack of concern over wider impressions of use.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*, xv-xvi.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., and personal communication from Professor Bellenoit to the author, May 1, 2006.

<sup>94</sup> King, *Colonial Urban Development*.

Native settlements had dark winding streets that twisted back on themselves and lead to nowhere.

To the British, this jumbled mass was impenetrable. On maps, these native areas were colored in and left with only the boundaries marked off. The interior was black, as that was where the British understanding ended.<sup>95</sup> These medieval cities, with winding and organic streets reminded the British of their own feudalistic past, marked by fanatic religiosity and outbreaks of the plague.

The British did not attempt to map the labyrinth of organic winding streets.<sup>96</sup> They saw this maze as one of the unfair advantages the natives had when they fought the colonial troops. As the soldiers had wound their way through the city to relieve the siege of colonial settlers, they had lost their way and been attacked on all sides in the narrow streets. To negate this advantage, the British opened up the city to access by creating large avenues, and to introduce healthy light and air to what had formerly been a close and dark haven of danger.<sup>97</sup>

These boulevards were created with no regard for native layout. In an overlay of Western rationality in the form of Beaux Arts boulevards, the British attempted to bring the feudal city up to modernity. While they could not rebuild India in their understanding, they could overlay and alter what was there in a half hearted effort to encourage progress and to look into this mysterious unseen

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<sup>95</sup> Berger's *Military Map of India, with the stations and divisions of the Indian Army shewing the position of the British Troops and Cantonments*. (Delhi: London, 1858).

<sup>96</sup> King, *Colonial Urban Development*.

<sup>97</sup> Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow*.

world. These boulevards opened up the city to view, allowing the British to look below the surface of the strange, picturesque native city.

As the British resolved not to interfere again, their issues of control changed to focus inwards on their own health. Continued reactions were seen permanently in the dealings of the Raj with India in the layout of their own settlements. While the British relinquished their tight control gradually over native settlements, there were still efforts to exert control through the health and environment. Architecturally, openness and performing still remained large factors, and sanitation remained at the forefront of planning as architects sought to negate the ill effects of the Indian plains. The close dark nature of the Indian city served as a counterpoint to British Indian urban planning.

#### ON THE PLAINS

Throughout the subcontinent, urban planning and sanitation were used in all settlements. Within the cantonments and civil stations, there was a uniformity of layout, with common elements in every station. A set vocabulary of architectural elements, such as a main road, The Mall, open space, and the Parade Ground, were identifiers of a common shared identity.<sup>98</sup> These elements were assembled in the strictly rational lines, the opposite of the chaotic and erratic nature of the outside world. No matter what the climate or situation of a station, these forms were reassuring in their omnipresence and helped to soothe the

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<sup>98</sup> King, *Colonial Urban Development*.

instability of a life of constant repostings, sickness, and separation. By grouping together, the British felt safe in numbers, and where they combined resources and formed efficient administrative centers, they created incubators of ‘Home’ culture. Strict hierarchy grew inside the cantonment boundaries. The social world of the Club was highly stratified into a concrete ladder of rank. Only those who had a rung on the ladder could inhabit a corresponding ranked patch of land in the station.

Cantonments were in the form of loose rectilinear patterns. While these were effectively ‘suburban’, and located outside the native city, they were not limited to residential areas. They were self contained; there were shops and supplies available in the cantonment bazaar. Soldiers, civil servants, families, and support staff lived and worked within this area. The roads and layout were arranged on the basis of wind and sun patterns to encourage breezes to blow through bungalows and barracks and to keep native quarters downwind of British ones. The officers’ bungalows had their own private plot of land to own and manage, while soldiers’ areas were consisted of communal barracks and large outdoor spaces in which to train. Each of these, soldiers, officers, and natives were separated and distinct. There was no mixing of these sections of the cantonment, although they were often located quite near each other.<sup>99</sup>

Within stations trees, mango groves and bamboos were discouraged as prejudicial to health, particularly during the rainy

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<sup>99</sup> *Berger’s Military Map of India, with the stations and divisions of the Indian Army shewing the position of the British Troops and Cantonments.* (Delhi: London, 1858).

season, as they engendered a stagnant atmosphere by obstructing ventilation, besides harboring filth and insects. In order to facilitate the free circulation of air the houses were well-spaced and laid out along wide street which were watered in order to lay the dust. In fact, Anglo-Indian urban space was structured in opposition to the perception of Indian urban space. The wide avenues of the British stations were juxtaposed to the narrow streets of Indian towns; regularity of form contrasted with an unplanned irregularity of layout, and cleanliness opposed filth.<sup>100</sup>

Openness and cleanliness were key. Wide streets and plenty of land kept sickness at bay. Like the bungalow compounds, vegetation was cut back to create open and sanitary expanses of space. These rational, open layouts were in counterpoint to the close, densely populated native cities. Instead of being private, the stations were wide open and public.

The parade ground was vital in public performance. It was prominent, but often to one side of the settlement, no doubt to allow it to expand if needed.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, on the smaller and less built up stations, there were no separate riding or artillery grounds, and the area surrounding the parade ground was an open space, in which there was enough land to practice such skills. Ladies were not permitted to cross this space or visit at all, except on official occasions. The parade ground was a strictly official masculine military place which was not fit for civilian use. On this open field, the display of force was performed every morning. When the troops paraded, the wide open station acted as a stage for all of India see British power. This performance was the primary line of defense-stations did not usually occupy strategically valuable positions. Instead, the sheer

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<sup>100</sup> Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 83.

<sup>101</sup> King, *Colonial Urban Development*.



number of troops and officials create a vision of unbreechable power and authority.

Other architectural forms were used as symbols of power. At train stations, Victorian clock towers were erected to dominate the landscape, displaying the order of the modern British age. Like the railroad, the clock tower marked efficient, modern economic development. Clock towers proclaimed prosperity and marked points of trade.<sup>102</sup> They ordered and rationalized time just as the British ordered and rationalized India. Everything was properly organized and had a place.

The Mall was the aorta and the vena cava, channeling people through the main area of power in each settlement. Every building of importance was located along its route,

The Mall, which is always the main road, even in the smallest cantonments, is several miles in length. At one end, that nearest the city, is Government House, a fine, imposing pile, surrounded by spacious grounds and lawns. At the other end are the *bhoosa* stacks, and in between these two points are many things; the bungalows of senior officers, officers' messes, a Masonic lodge, barracks, a few shops, including a bank; and last, but not least, the Club.

The constant presence of these buildings ensured the image of the British colonial establishment was uniform. The precise order and rationality of their architecture stemmed from the need to display the performance of identity. The British were constantly acting as rulers, whether at work or in the home, so every moment of life was lived on stage. Strict rules and hierarchy of order grew to help

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<sup>102</sup> Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*.

regularize the appearance of power. This took the responsibility of rule away from individuals and placed it on the system. The power of the Raj at the stations was housed in universal architectural forms and hierarchy. The only place where this image could be relaxed was the Club.

Towards the far end of the Mall, from Government House, and on the right-hand side of the road, is the Peshwar Club. It stands well back and is a low, straggling building, surrounded by tennis lawns, gardens and various outbuildings; this famous club is, naturally the social focal point.”<sup>103</sup>

The club was the private face of the official Raj. Here was where performance of identity did not need to be flawless. As a social gathering place, it provided neutral ground that allowed relaxation from rigid hierarchy and performance. At the club, subalterns could have a drink with their superiors without concern over appearances and protocol,

On the left of the hall is first, the bar, and then the bridge and reading-rooms...he (goes) to meet his friends, and to be able to talk without having continually to censor his conversation.

Beyond the swing doors is a long, dark hall, off which several rooms open out. The first on the right is the lounge in which are easy chairs and small, round tables where in the winter evenings come the womenfolk to dance to a gramophone, talk to their friends, or look at the illustrated papers. Opening directly off this lounge is the spacious dance-hall, with its excellent floor and small stage.<sup>104</sup>

The Club was the center of the social world of the station. Recreation, from cricket matches to garden parties, took place nearly every afternoon. The evenings were rounded out with quiet drinks and occasionally a fete. The Club was *the* gathering place for the British Indian population.

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<sup>103</sup> Ponder, *Seven Cantonments*, 67-69.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

The social world of the Raj was notorious for being exclusive and snobbish.<sup>105</sup> This exclusion derived from a very strict hierarchy. Caste was the inspiration for this rigid structure. Each member of the Raj had a given status, with accorded privileges and duties. Society in British India was much more stratified than at 'Home.' Indian traditions had penetrated much farther than many admitted. Still, strictly hierarchical and regulated as it was, the social world was a place over which the British had complete control.

The social world was homogenously British and filled only with those who had passed tough entrance examinations and socially accepted into the station. The station presented a young strong face to India, with only those suckling infants to mar the image of immortality and exclusion from the passage of time that characterized the heaven born.

The officials of the 'heaven born' Indian Civil Service were at the apex of the social pyramid with those officials of other covenanted services a close second. Of the same social rank as the civilians were the military officers of the British army posted at headquarters. Then there was the mercantile community, the ones in commerce were socially acceptable while traders who owned or sat in shops were regarded as distinctly inferior. The Eurasians or Anglo-Indians, and the Domiciled Community- people of British stock who settle in India- manned the senior clerical positions. These formed the fringe of British society.<sup>106</sup>

The hierarchy actually had printed guides to their world. The India Office printed its' List which was a reference manual filled with information on every

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<sup>105</sup> Allen, Charles, ed. *Plain Tales from the Raj: Images of British India in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

<sup>106</sup> Kanwar, Pamela. *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj*. (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1990), 72.

member of the Indian Civil Service.<sup>107</sup> A listing of the entire male community was ranked socially, and sorted according to status, locality, and profession. The Warrant of Precedence was often compared to a caste listing, as it divided the entire social world into distinct classes. Within these classes were ranked groups of professions, from Viceroy to Inspectors-General. Subalterns, or junior members of generally less than twelve years service were not granted a place on the lists, but there was a supplementary list to be added into certain places that included the unusual professions and positions that did not fit into a normal hierarchy. While all of this seems to be easy and simple, in effect on the ground, it was still difficult at times to sort out precedence, especially when there were outsiders who were not in the Lists present, such as overseas visitors or educated natives. Furthermore, there were multiple positions within a given rank, and if one or more people were of the same rank, it was often difficult to tell who was the more senior of the rank.

Salutes and salaries were also listed, to provide for quick reference, and to set everything down properly to ensure that protocol was always followed. The salaries and jobs were listed out by province. The Viceroy, the Queen's representative, was at the top of the List, and received 2,50,800 rupees per annum, while the Inspector General of the Police in Bengal received only 30,000 rupees per annum.<sup>108</sup> Positions were divided into classes for easy ranking. The members of the Viceregal government and the Governors of Provinces were listed in the

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<sup>107</sup> India Office Library. *India Office List: 1907*. 1907.

<sup>108</sup> India Office, *India Office List*, 201.

First Class. Each class thereafter decreased in pay and prominence. Postings were arranged according to the amount of responsibility shouldered as well as seniority.

A similar but more useful handbook was also available, *Thacker's Indian Directory* was for all of the British Indian settlers, from the Indian Civil Service to the officers in the Army.<sup>109</sup> It had lists of protocol, as well as maps of the major stations in South Asia. It contained business directories, mail delivery times, postal rates, and basic train tables. In short, all the information needed to live in the world of the Raj.

The collection of stories in the book, *In Cantonments: A few sketches of India* is a delightful collection of stories about the social world of the station and the Raj. One of the most interesting deals with class and caste, 'Bari Mem' regards the social standing of the woman of an ICS civil station. A new arrival, Mrs. Elliot, overthrows the standing and official social order and snubs the most senior lady, Mrs. Bigge. While first by virtue of her youth shows Mrs. Bigge her age and how improper it is for her to dress like a juvenile, it is Mrs. Elliot's poor breeding, rather than her social snub that causes her downfall. When her father visits the station, it is revealed that she is a Domiciled and her father is a planter, of whom she is ashamed and snubs as well. While it may be fine to socially snub, to be ashamed of family, even ones that are unsuitable, is not acceptable, and she and her husband are forced to leave the station, where her husband finally castigates her for her flashy and uncaring behavior. She cannot escape her class,

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<sup>109</sup> *Thacker's Indian Directory*. 1907 vol. 1 and 2.

as she tried to do by being a social butterfly. The natives in these stories are submissive, and exist in the background. They are perfectly obedient, and play no part in the British social world. The native servant's power of directing identity was limited to the domestic sphere of the bungalow and had no power in the wider social structure.<sup>110</sup>

Hierarchy was laid out in the arrangement of the stations. Each area in the station was allotted for a different class of people. The soldiers were set apart in barracks near the parade ground, or sometimes near the entrance of the station. Barracks, wherever they might be, always had a wraparound verandah, as well as a mess, sergeant's quarters, water and day room for the troops to use. Since they were confined to their quarters for the large part of everyday to keep them out of the sun, it was necessary that they have enough space that was their own. While not private, the allowances for number of men to space was generous and more than enough to create a sense of personal belonging.<sup>111</sup>

Officers lived in bungalows on private compounds that were arranged in groups around the station. Different groups of homes held different ranks of officers. The commander of the cantonment or highest ranking civil official occupied the largest home in the choicest spot in the station. He was surrounded by his next in rank, and subalterns were placed in groups of homes farther away in a less desirable part of the settlement.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ponder, *Seven Cantonments*.

<sup>111</sup> Crossette, *The Great Hill Stations of Asia*, 135.

<sup>112</sup> *Berger's Military Map of India*.

The hierarchy of the social world was necessary to shoulder the burden of rule. The stations were built around the continuing performance of the British identity. This identity was not negotiable, and because it was limited and defined by the hierarchy, it was not as flexible and personal as the private identity of ruler that was crafted in the bungalows. By using sanitation as a way to control and change the native environment, the British Indians ensured that natives would see their power, even in their dark and closed cities. There was little rest for the exiles, and the only place in their wide open stations to take off the mask of ruler was inside the Club. This was a temporary fix, and was not considered enough to recharge the British aspect of their identities. A better place for shrugging off this burden was available, but it was high above their heads.

#### IN THE HILLS

The hill stations clung to the slopes of the Himalayas as microcosms of the British colonial experience. Established and constructed as the model colonial settlement, their physical expression was emblematic of the ideal British Indian experience. Performance was not such a concern, because although still visible, the hills were so far removed from natives as to negate their view. Therefore, the British Indians were free to behave as they liked.

Although supported four to one by native servants, to go to the hill stations was to leave India behind altogether for an unpopulated Eden ideal. As retreats from India, all reserve and hesitancy about integration and moderation was thrown to the winds. British culture was embraced to the fullest degree to create a

whirl of gaiety and distraction. In the hills the atmosphere was jovial and relaxed, with picnics, walks, festivals, plays, and balls filling the time. Hill stations were a playground, a sanatorium, a Mount Olympus, many things to many people, but in all of these characterizations, hill stations were a retreat from India.

Simla was the most emblematic of hill stations. Located in the foothills of the Himalayas, it was the summer capitol of India. Every year, from April to October, the viceregal government would move entirely up to Simla to conduct business. From there, they used runners, and later the telegraph, to keep in contact and to rule their subjects from above.<sup>113</sup>

The architecture in the hills was very different from what it was in the plains. There were no Indo-Saracenic styles in Simla, the summer capital of the Raj. Instead, the Indian Civil Service and private families indulged in European architectural flights of fancy. Architects referred to neo-Gothic forms for Christ Church, stolid medieval castles for the Viceroy's residence, and quaint colloquial cottage forms for unofficial buildings.

Housing types were different in the hills because of environmental and psychological differences. Instead of bungalows, houses in the hills were based on English Tudor cottages or Swiss chalets- small retreats that brought to mind rural idylls. They were constructed of wood, as these quaint styles called for exposed timbers.<sup>114</sup> They were often two stories, with the front entrance on one side, and a

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<sup>113</sup> Kanwar, *Imperial Simla*.

<sup>114</sup> Barbara Crossette in *The Great Hill Stations of India* (p. 27), mentions the use of wooden construction in reference to the timbered styles used in domestic residences in the hills.



back exit onto a garden at another lower level, since they were located on hillsides. Roofs were slanted to ensure that snow would slide off. These roofs were not of tile but of galvanized iron, which was very loud during the rains, but effective, cheap, and easily portable. This was enough to ensure their popularity in the hard to access hill stations. These architectural difference ensured that these homes were novel and a vacation from the bungalow form on the plains.

Quoted in *The Great Hill Stations of Asia* originally from Lady Wilson's *Letters from India*,

I am delighted with our new quarters. You can't imagine the kind of material pleasure one has in material things that simply look English. The roofs of this house enchant me, merely because it slants instead of being flat: the ceilings, because they are much lower than those at Shahpur and are plastered, so that beams are concealed. The woodwork is actually varnished: the bow-windows are really windows, not doors: the fireplaces are in the right places; and not that our books, pictures, piano and general household goods have arrived, we are cosy as cosy could be, and feel as if we had been established for centuries, instead of five weeks.<sup>115</sup>

The larger public buildings of the hill stations were not built of wood but of more permanent materials, such as stuccoed brick or even stone for important projects. Many public buildings completely discarded the Indo-Saracenic, and the practical aesthetic of the white Classicism was abandoned as well for the more fanciful European styles. Simla's Mall in the 1880s looked like a fanciful recreation of a Dutch city. There were exposed timbers on the larger buildings such as the Post Office, which brought a medieval flair. Others embraced the elaborate Victorian revival Gothic style, such as Christ Church. This was not the

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<sup>115</sup> Crossette, Barbara. *The Great Hill Stations of Asia*, 22.

Venetian Gothic which was used for the administration buildings of the plains, but instead a revival Gothic that was more restrained and conservative than even the revival Gothic of the same period in England, found on the Houses of Parliament in London and Scarisbrick Hall in Lancashire.

The Mall was often located on the only level surface that was available on hill stations, and was most certainly on the highest flat space because it was the high point and center of community. The Anglican church had the best and most prominent position on the Mall, often at the highest and most central location, which other churches relegated to less prominent positions. Along the mall were the high priced import stores, called emporia, that were filled with goods from Britain and the rest of the European continent. Natives were banned from this place- it was strictly a street that could be imagined back in the metropole.<sup>116</sup>

There were no parade grounds for the military. Any available flat space was not turned over for the performance of strength, but instead for pleasure ground and race tracks. In Simla, Annadale was a large open space that could have held a company of soldiers. Instead, it was the site of a racetrack and annual fairs and picnics.

The hills occupied strategically valuable locations which obviated the need for a show of force. Furthermore, on these hilltops, the native view was reduced, and the performance of Britishness was no longer a major concern. From this safe perch, the Raj was safe to monitor the native population below without

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<sup>116</sup> Kanwar, *Imperial Simla*.

the pressure of heat and Indian gaze. However this ideal, like so many others, still had serious failings.

Unlike the plains, where there was room to situate a settlement away from native towns in order to segregate and manage race relations, hill stations had little flat ground for building, and in fact, little ground at all. Dense urban space had to be shared with native bazaars if the accustomed lavish British Indian way of life was to continue. There were four servants for every Briton, and they were necessary to continue the way of life the exiles had grown accustomed to on the plains.<sup>117</sup> Efforts to circumscribe native movements did not cease because of the relaxed atmosphere of the resorts. Control of the many native bazaars and limits on the availability of public space to natives was strictly maintained and was always a contentious issue for such communities. Furthermore, space on the land surrounding the cottages was limited, so the bazaar was necessary to house these servants. At times, there were twenty Indians sleeping in a room in the bazaar for lack of space elsewhere. "...the Victorian fetish about cleanliness had driven the British planners, convinced of the dirty degenerate ways of natives, to pen Simla's Indian population as far as possible within the confines of the bazaars."<sup>118</sup> Unfortunately for the cleanliness of the British Indians, the lack of building space on the hilltops mean that the native living spaces were next to and even in between the colonial settlements. This created a dangerous and unsightly sanitation situation that marred the ideal British settlement.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>118</sup> Kanwar, *Imperial Simla*, 138.

When one of the bazaars would burn, it was greeted as an opportunity for urban planning and better control of native living conditions. In Simla, the Upper and Main bazaars were moved in 1861, and rebuilt in 1875 after a cholera outbreak and a fire. In 1894, the Simla Time Advertiser reported that “an ugly overcrowded bazaar (occupied) the very portion of the site which should have been noblest and handsomest.”<sup>119</sup> With every fire, the British pushed natives away and down the slopes of the Himalayas in the name of sanitation. In every rebuilding, public health measures were used to repair racial boundaries.<sup>120</sup> But while measures were often planned, they were rarely carried out.

The hill stations had many other worries, mainly water, waste, and wood.<sup>121</sup> Finding water was a problem. There were a few natural springs, and they were soon contaminated by the waste that deposited everywhere. The town council had to recourse to piping in water from an artificially created reservoir several miles away to public taps. On these ridges, there was always a lack of space that made the depositing of waste a problem. With the increasing density of population in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, measures had to be taken, and in Simla it was resolved that certain *khuds*, or steep ravines, would be designated to receive waste, and wooden drains would be constructed to lead to these *khuds*. These were only for the European areas, and the native bazaar was

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Kennedy, Dane. *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 9.

<sup>121</sup> Kanwar, *Imperial Simla*, 47.

completely ignored. In fact, the bazaar was such a ‘rabbit-warren’<sup>122</sup> that it was hard for officials to pick a place to start improvements. Many of them could not navigate through the bazaar, much less come up with a waste removal plan or map of proposed drainage lines.

Finally, wood was a precious commodity, despite the fact that most of these mountains were covered in forest. Early settlers had used wood extensively for the construction of their homes and the favorite habit of later generations of wood fires contributed to this problem.. Deforestation occurred rapidly, and because of landslides, it was decided that wood would only be allowed to be collected from certain groves that were far from Simla.<sup>123</sup>

As these station grew increasingly popular, it became fashionable and practical to move to the outskirts of the settlement. Suburbs, like the many that surrounded Simla, were a popular way to escape the crush in the center and were easy to distinguish from native areas of residence. Each home had a small plot of land, and were laid out to afford views of the skyline. There were different hill stations for different parts of the social community. The areas and communities in Simla held strong social meaning,

The Committee of Secretaries superimposed a social hierarchy in its allocation of sites for government staff, a feature facilitated by the topography. The privately-owned and annually rented large estates on the upper terraces of the hill were taken by the higher *varnas*... The flank was reserved for Anglo-Indian clerks; the lower peripheral regions of the bazaar for the Indian clerks. The former

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<sup>122</sup> Kipling, Rudyard. *Complete Verse*.

<sup>123</sup> Kennedy, Dane. *The Magic Mountains*.

merited small cottages, the latter, where were not expected to bring their families, single rooms in barracks.<sup>124</sup>

Like the stations below, the land was graded according to hierarchy, and the house or plot of land that one occupied precisely signified social standing. Although the British hoped to leave behind India by escaping to the hills, they could not leave all of it behind. The strong hierarchy that they had taken on in the plains was so ingrained that it remained with them on the hills, where it was no longer needed. In fact, the social structure became even more important as social activities took precedence over the official business of the Raj. The large concentration of British Indians in the hill stations encouraged new acquaintances to use social standing to judge and reevaluate their own standing in this new, larger society. They were no longer limited to the same dozen faces in their isolated station. Now they were surrounded by hundreds of new people, all of whom had to be categorized and put into their respective classes relative to each other.

The hills were believed to be healthier because they had a temperate climate. Therefore, women and children frequented the hills more often than men; they needed to protect their delicate constitutions. This reversed the demographics of the plains. Down below, women and children were scarce, but upon the hills, they were the majority.

“By concentrating their women and children in these mountain enclaves, the British were able to replicate the domestic, educational, and social institutions

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<sup>124</sup> Kanwar, *Imperial Simla*, 56.

of their homeland with startling exactitude. Here they endeavored to restore a sense of common identity and imperial purpose to their lives and to pass these convictions on to their offspring.”<sup>125</sup> In an ideal reconstruction of Britain, it was theoretically safe for children to grow and thrive. Yet few offspring actually grew up in these communities. As a concentration of the thinly spread British Indian community, there were more women and children present in hill station than in the average sized station on the plains. Yet these increased numbers did not indicate a complete and self replicating society. Instead, the hill stations were a place in which the exiles could cavort in safety.

While among the clouds, the stations were not counted as part of India, and so the British Indians felt free to recreate for themselves their idea of heaven, Britain. The hills provided a safe place to be ‘themselves’ and there was a ferocious consumption of British culture in the hills. The grouping of such large numbers of Europeans created a ready market for British import business that enabled the community to recharge their links to the motherland. Styles were updated, new literature read, plays acted, and balls given; it was a perfect festival of Britain.

It was safe to forget about the cares of India and its climate. Ladies didn’t wear topees in the hills- they no longer needed to protect their heads from the hot sun.<sup>126</sup> They could exchange their distinctive headgear for more fashionable metropolitan millinery. The right clothes, British clothes, could be worn since it

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<sup>125</sup> Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains*, 223.

<sup>126</sup> Kincaid, Dennis. *British Social Life in India, 1608-1937*. (London: Routledge, 1938), 232.

was cool enough for flannel. Delicate items, such as feathers, had a better survival rate in higher altitudes due to lack of heat and humidity combined together on the plains to create a deadly atmosphere for these fashionable markers of Britishness.

As Anthony King has argued, “As the civil station was a cultural response to the indigenous city, so the hill station was a social response to the colonial settlement on ‘the plains’.”<sup>127</sup> Hill stations, “provided the single setting where public postures could be relaxed and the mask of authority removed.”<sup>128</sup>

On the slopes of the hills, the British were free to revel in their ideologies, such as the idea that they belonged to the ‘heaven-born.’<sup>129</sup> They resided on the slopes of their Mount Olympus, and ruled the ‘sweltering masses on the plains’ from above, cool and untouched. The demographics of their society nullified generational and personal aging, so people appeared immortal, and time flowed much slower. They fit themselves into the caste system of India as the ‘ruling caste,’ above all others. Although considered untouchables by the natives, they saw themselves not as existing below the native social structures, but instead hovering above them. In their liminal state, they were not fully integrated into the native context. This distance preserved the aura of immortality and difference that set the British apart from any other Indian rulers.

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<sup>127</sup> King, *Colonial Urban Development*, 165.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>129</sup> Although this term was used to refer specifically to the members of the Indian Civil Service, it was widely used within the entire British Indian community and specifically was used in reference to Simla. As the summer capital of the government, it was called the retreat of the heaven-born by multiple sources including Millington, *In Cantonments*, and the oral transcripts for Allen’s *Plain Tales of the Raj*.



## CONCLUSION

The social world of the exiles was one that continued to reach back and imitate 'Home' culture. Yet they also integrated their own interpretations of a local Indian tradition, caste, into their world to create a supportive structure. Ruling a subcontinent was a weighty responsibility, and by creating rigid hierarchy and bureaucracy, the pressure was lifted off of the shoulders of individuals and put on the wider community as a whole.

The hierarchy did not carry all of the weight of rule, and individuals still needed to perform. Each member of the bureaucracy had an important part in the whole. They had to fill their roles in the hierarchy to ensure that it held up. They were representatives of the colonial power structure, and had to appear powerful and capable of rule at all times. Their performance of this identity was continuous, and the architecture of their settlements ensured that this was visible. Urban planning and sanitation, besides improving health, also opened up the native cities to British understanding as well as ensured that the natives would be able to see the British, even from within their own enclosed homes.

Only in the hills were the British Indians able to relax their stiff façade and indulge in creating safe havens. From the hill tops, it was all too easy for them to get carried away in their ideology, and forget about the natives on the plains. From the hills, they could rule without actually being present in India, and imagine themselves all the more clearly back in Britain.

## CONCLUSION

The Raj was a place of mystery, of quiet afternoons at the Club, and obsequious native servants. Today there are only apologies or accusations for this unique colonial community, but it is necessary to get behind the hard shell of stereotype to understand the motivations of the colonial project. By locating the Raj between the metropole and the colonial environment, more in-depth investigations into the interactions between the ruling caste and the 'real' India are possible.

While the Mutiny of 1857 is important in conceptualizing the formation of the mindset of the exiled community, it diminishes in importance when compared to the undeniable evidence for liminality. Over nearly 60 years, the Raj existed frozen in a temporary state. Reactions to the Indian environment guided British Indians to create reflection of their 'Home' culture. The conflicts that surfaced in the ideologies, the architecture, and the social world reflected this unstable foundation.

The shared imaginary nation of Britain was vitally important for the members of the Raj. More than any other colonial community, they dialed into this imaginary world, created by print culture, catalogue consumerism, and a shared sense of belonging. What in Britain was used to create nationalistic

feelings and sell kitsch<sup>130</sup> was taken seriously in India to be representative of the current British character. Used alongside real guidebooks for behavior in British India,<sup>131</sup> these links created and kept up to date the changing character of the exile community. While the ‘real’ native India never seemed to change, the real Britain changed continuously, creating consternation in the exile community over the accuracy of their Britishness.

The connection to Britain certainly was not complete. India infiltrated the expatriate consciousness more than they acknowledged. In their justifications for their rule, British Indians vacillated between the paternalistic attitudes of the metropole and the longer Oriental imperial traditions of the subcontinent. The contradictions between the ideal Britishness that the exiles saw in themselves and the native adaptations that surrounded and were absorbed by them are evidence of the unfinished development of this community.

In the bungalow, their insistence on the racial purity of British objects was in high contrast with the native servants who maintained and cared for these objects. Furthermore, the layout of the house and the compound encouraged the exaggeration of Britishness by locating the private domestic world on a public stage, open as a performance for the natives, representatives of India. The verandah was a common ground between the racialized bungalow and hut. It was a place for races to mix casually and provided a location for personal interaction.

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<sup>130</sup> MacDonald, *The Language of Empire*.

<sup>131</sup> *Thacker's Indian Directory*.

On this individual level, performance of identity still permeated all forms of contact.

Even more, the Indian servants, as the closest personal link that many exiles had with Indians, were integral for the characterization of the British aspect of this exclusive community. The grandeur oftentimes attributed exclusively to class aspirations was also needed to impress the natives and through them all of India, as to their suitability as rulers. Servants had more power than as audience members, but also acted as directors, helping to shape the pure British identity with their labor and acquiescence.

In the stations, the separation of the races took the fore. The concern over sanitation and the universal architectural language created a safe environment for the execution of the private social world of the Raj. Even though, like the bungalow, the station was permeable and in its isolation viewed from all directions, the presence of military fortifications created a barrier of force which ensured the separation of 'real' and British India. The strongly hierarchical social world replicated the strong hierarchy that the British saw in caste. Once again, the influence of 'real' India had entered into the British Indian consciousness. Class in England was much more subtle and unspoken than in India, where handbooks precisely listed the class, precedence and salary of each position.

Escape from these influences was found in the hills, where the ideal community that the British Indians saw in their minds could be executed, free from the native gaze. Although natives were still needed to support these resort

communities, their presence was pushed down the mountain, away from the mountaintops that the British possessed exclusively. From this secure position of power, the British finally felt safe. On these ridges the ideal British character that they imagined for themselves had free reign. In these resorts they constructed architectural flights of fancy and stuffed themselves with British imports. The intense whirl of gaiety compensated for the slow monotonous pace of life down on the plains and made them forget where they were in favor of who they were. As a refuge and a sanctuary, the hills were second best to “Home” for reestablishing connections with Britain.

In the entrance requirements and social modes of identity formation, the British Indian community ensured that its liminal status continued. Those that went too long without recharging outside of India risked losing their prime British Indian status. The British Indians who never returned to England were shunted downward into the category of the Domiciled.

Liminality was the particular identifier of British Indians. They felt at home neither in India nor in Britain. They split their families and their lives between two sides of the world. When in India they invoked Britain, and when in Britain, they invoked India. This liminal nature cropped up again and again. They felt most comfortable on verandahs, which were neither inside nor outside. If they couldn't live in Britain or escape India, the ideal solution was to literally rise above the plains of India to recapture Britain. They were caught between two alternatives of ideas and reality and found themselves unable to choose. Instead

they tried to hold a middle ground, but it was one that could not remain permanent. They made a strong image of power and a illusion of permanence by clinging to their hierarchy, but in the end, it was not strong enough.

Contradictions could not be put off forever and needed to be resolved.

Their exile nature is one common in transnational communities, but is special in this case because they held power over an entire country. In any other liminal community, this work would only have been an ethnography of a peculiarity. Here, it is a social history, one that is vital for understanding the wider history of the colonial project in India.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF NATIVE TERMS  
(based on the glossary of *Plain Tales From the Raj*)

*Ayah*- nursemaid or ladies' maid

*Bearer*- valet or butler

*Bheesti*- water carrier

*Box wallah*- traveling merchant

*Chaprassi*-office servant; messenger

*Chattri*- small pavilion, often located in Indo-Saracenic design along the eaves of a building.

*Chota hazree*- light morning snack eaten after rising

*Dizree*- native tailor

*Dohbi*- native washerman

*Hajib/Hijab*-a head covering worn by Muslim women

*Khitmagar*-butler, waiter

*Khud*- deep ravine

*Masalchee*-scullion

*Punkah*- fans made of planks of wood and strips of cloth that hung from the ceiling and were pulled by servants hired expressly for that purpose

*Punkah wallahs*- seasonal laborers hired to pull the *punkahs* in the hot season, during which time they lived on the verandahs of the bungalows

*Purda*- seclusion undergone by high class Indian women

*Tattis*- bamboo or grass screens placed around verandahs and wetted to cool air

*Tonga*- two wheeled carriage

*Sola Topee*- a particular type of sun helmet worn by the British to protect their

heads from the heat and glare of the sun

*Sweeper*- an untouchable who handled human waste

*Sycee*- groom



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