CHAPTER I

WOMAN, IDEOLOGY, EMPIRE: THE INVENTION OF WOMANHOOD IN 19TH CENTURY BRITISH INDIA

Historical circumstances brought England and India together in a colonial encounter that left its indelible impress on the culture and ideology of both the countries. The British people in India who came over in mid-19th century on administrative and allied work formed the cusp of this alliance. The Anglo-Indians, as they were called, revealed in their perceptions an intermeshing of ideological strands carried over from Victorian England (always the 'home' of this small community) and the modifications and shifts brought about by their experience of empire in India.

In many ways the second half of the 19th century was particularly important with regard to the question of gender in British India. The events of the Rebellion of 1857 had culturally foregrounded white women - a trend further strengthened by the arrival in India of English women in large numbers around mid-century onwards. At the same time, the Anglo-Indians carried their ideological baggage from 'home' and Victorian England saw during this period a gradual cultural devaluation of women brought about by a complex of economic and political factors including the expansion of empire overseas. All along during this period there was the invention or construction of ideological positions about women in British India through constant
discussion and debates in newspapers, journals and other printed matter. A surprising amount was written on women - both white and Indian. And these attitudes, entrenched in their Victorian English origins, picked up other resonances from the culture of India as well as from the lived experience of colonial life.

The fiction of the British Raj in the 19th century and its representations of women were rooted in this cultural milieu and in its gender, race and class biases - illustrating the intricate relationship between literary production and the historical pressures that generate them. Undoubtedly, Anglo-India's web of social attitudes with its diverse strands would have both shaped the fiction, even while being reinforced by it.

What kind of ideological milieu was early British Raj fiction written in? What were the myths and assumptions about white and Indian women that prevailed in Anglo-India? How were these different from that of the home country? These are some of the questions we hope to address in this introductory chapter which attempts to take a look at the background of history and discursive writing against which British Raj fiction needs to be studied.

We shall begin with an examination of the major trends in the metropolitan country in Section I, since the ethos of British India was embedded in it. Thus Section I focuses on gender attitudes in Victorian England, concentrating especially on whether and how colonialism contributed towards a general hardening of attitudes. Section II focuses
on the white woman in India. It explores the different ways in which these women, from various classes, were perceived in British India. This would include an examination of the major stereotypes, myths, as well as debates generated through the discursive writings of that community. Section III explores how Anglo-Indian discursive writing projected the Indian woman during this period and how this projection was strategically linked to its imperial role and gender anxieties. Finally, since the ideological positions of these cultures and the issues involved were so complex and sometimes even contradictory, each section is broken down into a number of sub-sections for the sake of greater clarity.

SECTION I - 'SUFFER AND BE STILL': PERCEPTIONS ON WOMEN IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND

The ideology on women in Victorian England was complex, sometimes contradictory and was shaped by many currents, such as the process of industrialisation, the rise of capitalism, the growth of a competitive ethic, enhanced by Darwinism, both biological and social, the dominance of 'scientific' theories, as well as the expansion of empire overseas.

A debate on women's position in society began to occupy a certain space in public discourse. This came to be identified as the 'Woman Question' and was the result of a distinct and vocal movement, albeit middle class in essence,
which fought for greater legal and political rights for women. The tension generated by these different, though often intersecting, questions pulled the cultural fabric of Victorian England in opposing directions. While the economic and political developments tended to create a general devaluation of women in the arena of production, enhanced by a greater economic dependence on men, the rise of a women's movement marked the beginnings of a resistance against this overwhelming, though implicit, subordination.

Probably the most prevalent ideology, popularly identified as typically 'Victorian', was that which glorified feminine helplessness, self-sacrifice and passive gentleness. Articulated in 1865 by John Ruskin this point of view located woman as physically and intellectually man's inferior and requiring his protection. Ruskin defined man as "eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender". Man was looked upon as active; as an epitome of rationality (the head), as the procurer and the protector. Woman, in contrast, was located as his complement - she was deemed to be passive, ruled by the heart, she was the nurturer and in need of protection. Not that Ruskin was voicing anything really new. It was just that in the post-industrial context of 19th century capitalism the 'traditional', or age-old patriarchal notions of female subservience were consolidated through further economic changes.

This point of view was hotly contested, notably by John Stuart Mill in 1869. Placing women among "other subject
classes**, he asserted that it was "a means of holding women in subjection, by representing to them meekness, submissiveness, and resignation of all individual will into the hands of a man, as an essential part of sexual attractiveness". Nonetheless, the Ruskinian model predominated in the cultural life of Victorian England. Recurrently, the terms 'womanly' and 'manly', much popular in the period, underlined the apparently mutually exclusive traits. While 'manliness', a much-glorified Victorian ideal implied courage, fortitude, leadership qualities, and "energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest", virtually the opposite, or complementary qualities were connoted by the term 'womanliness', such as "patience, self-sacrifice, tenderness", as well as the passive virtues of "loving forbearance, patience under difficulties".

The Victorian doctrine of 'separate spheres' located the home as the realm of the woman and the world outside as the combative arena of man, where he would "encounter all peril and trial", and "the anxieties of the outer life", while the woman would remain "protected from all danger and temptation". The home was thus visualized as an area that ensured safety to the woman from the dangers outside. But it was equally a space that contained the sexuality of the woman. Underneath this veneer of protection and care there lay the troubling question of female sexuality and its control. The notion of separate spheres obviously carried within it, among other things, an anxiety about this
question and was an attempt to impose a sort of 'chastity lock' on the female body by confining it within the four walls of the home. At the same time there was a refusal to acknowledge the existence of female sexuality and a widespread cultivation of the pretence that good women were ethereal and spiritual beings incapable of sexual response. 'Suffer and be still', was the classic advice on sexual behaviour to women of the middle classes whose sexuality was attempted to be obliterated in the ideal of the 'angel in the house'.

The age-old duality of madonna/whore, which had been used to categorise women, was now given a class dimension. Thus the middle-class woman, conceptually de-sexualized as ethereal and madonna-like, tending to the "vestal temple" of the hearth, was contrasted with the supposedly sensual woman of the lower social orders. The term, 'nymphomaniac', was actually used in mid 19th century to describe any woman who felt sexual desire and such women were seen necessarily as abandoned, as women of the lower classes, women of the streets. The degradation of one group of women was inseparable from the false reverence kept for the wife. The middle class man tended to locate in the prostitute (who was often seen as synonymous with the lower-class woman) all the sensuality denied to his own woman. And as we shall see later with the growth of colonies overseas, this sensuality became associated with the women of subject races, as well.

It was no coincidence that the problem of prostitution in Victorian England was of such magnitude. In many ways
the practice of prostitution was the obverse of the Victorian notion of the family. The concept of the chaste, sexless wife could be practically sustained only by the services of the whore and prostitution became almost an essential part of the system. Drawn generally from the deprived sections of society and very often from the servant class, these prostitutes were living symbols of class and sexual exploitation. This was a fact further borne out by the evidence of many Victorian youths having their first sexual experience with a female servant living with the family. Thus the future servants of empire learned early enough to equate women of subordinate classes - and by extension, subject races - with easy sexual accessibility.

Throughout this period there was also a resistance to the adoption of a new morality which was often equated with the women's movement. The fear of female sexuality became particularly evident in the bitter hostility with which the notion of the 'New Woman' was received in the 1880s and 1890s. With this concept the Victorian Woman Question was enlarged to encompass issues such as personal and sexual freedom for women, the articulation of a new female ideal of independence and intelligence, the frank discussion of gender-related topics such as contraception, venereal disease, adultery, divorce, as well as the possibility of alternatives to marriage - like divorce and free love. The concept of the New Woman also contained the ideals of
economic freedom and a woman’s fulfilment in a career. But by the turn of the century the idea of the New Woman, marginal in its impact on the Woman Question, slid from prominence in the cultural debates of the period.

In the limited cultural role assigned to women during this period marriage and motherhood were identified as the central goals suitable for middle class women. In an ethos predominated by 19th century *laissez faire* capitalism as well as by social Darwinistic notions of the ‘survival of the fittest’, marriage was seen as the best female profession. Employing commercial terminology, *The Saturday Review* could proclaim in the late 1850s: "Married life is woman’s profession and to this life her training - that of dependence - is modelled.... The mischance of the distressed governess and the unprovided widow, is that of every insolvent tradesman". Notwithstanding several voices of dissent, notably that of feminists of the 1860s, like Josephine Butler who protested, "I cannot believe that it is every woman’s duty to marry, in this age of the world", or the Socialist position articulated by Engels in the 1880s, of marriage being the "domestic enslavement of the woman", the cultural valorisation of marriage was overwhelming and ‘spinsters’ were regarded as failures. Insufficiently educated, ‘spinsters’ were compelled to seek poorly-paid employment as governesses, tutors, or missionaries.
SECTION I(a) - 'REDUNDANT WOMEN': GENDER AND THE COLONIAL ENTERPRISE

What role did empire and the colonial enterprise then play in strengthening the cultural devaluation of women in England and pushing them further to the margins? To begin with, colonialism created in metropolitan England the problem of 'surplus' women, about which concern was expressed around mid-century and the suggestion made that unmarried women emigrate and thus rectify the population imbalance. For, due to several factors, including colonialism (i.e. male emigration to colonies), a numerical imbalance had visibly affected the female population adversely in Britain. Around mid-nineteenth century for every 1,000 men there were 1,050 women. Terms, such as 'superfluous', 'surplus' or 'redundant' were employed to define these women numerically doomed to spinsterhood.

While the colonies were seen as a source of possible employment and livelihood for men, they were equally viewed as offering 'spinsters' opportunities for marriage or for employment as governesses or missionaries.

For the sake of empire and the job of nation-building the role of women as mothers and progenitors of future generations became a focal point. Child-bearing was projected as a woman's "main function in life". The question of health ("The health of women cannot stand much evening reading") was in fact cited to establish female incapacity to be empire-builders. Presumably women could only be the hangers-on of empire: "Not one girl in a hundred
would be able to work up the subjects required for an Indian Civil Service examination in the way which boys do", stated Elizabeth Sewell in 1865.

To the traditional glorification of motherhood were now added eugenicist anxieties about "female intellectual work at the price of a puny, enfeebled and sickly race". Imperial anxieties about the falling birth rate and the need for careful breeding were stridently voiced in the late 1880's by The Fortnightly Review which declared that "it is mathematically demonstrable that most women must become the mothers of at least four children or else the race must cease to exist ... the race and the nation must go on reproducing themselves". By 1900, the Earl of Rosebury could declare: "An empire such as ours requires as its first condition an Imperial Race - a race vigorous and industrious and intrepid. Health of mind and body exalt a nation in the competition of the universe. The survival of the fittest is an absolute truth in the conditions of the modern world".

This focus on health, fitness, vigour, intrepidity was in keeping with the late Victorian cult of 'manliness', which coincided with the growth of public schools and a tremendous valorization of athleticism. Appropriately, the colonial enterprise, involving adventure, warfare, conquest and administration, was regarded essentially as a manly activity, based on aggression, control, competition and power. During the course of the century there was indeed a marked shift in the meaning of 'manliness'. The earlier idea
of moral integrity and Christian earnestness, gave way to an emphasis on physical robustness, hardness, discipline, and a rejection of anything effeminate or excessively intellectual as 'un-English'. All these qualities could be summed up in the one word that was full of magic potency for Victorians: 'character'. In the cultural stress on athleticism evident from the 1860's onwards the games-ethic, emphasizing stamina, grit, discipline and team-spirit was seen as a good foundation for a career in the empire. Similarly a stoic, public school philosophy, which included the need to experience pain was held as a useful preparation for the self-reliance and hardships of the imperial frontier.

Colonialism thus contributed to the strengthening of gender polarities and the privileging of masculinity over femininity. Indeed, it was so much of a male enterprise that old school-tie loyalties, club fellowship and fraternities often seem to have been more important as emotional props than marriage for many servants of empire. Given this bias, it was not surprising that women in the colonies would sometimes be seen as an impediment. By the first decade of the next century the concept of 'manliness' had been re-defined, partly due to the experiences in the outposts of empire, to mean not sexual prowess or machismo, but sexual restraint and 'cleanliness' – thereby effectively pushing women further to the margins of imperial life. Indeed, the notion of the imperial ruler was always that of a white, masculine, self-disciplined protector of women and morals. The English man was seen as the legitimate ruler and the
institutions of administrative control remained till the end overwhelmingly masculine.

SECTION I(b) - 'RACE THEORIES' AND THE SHAPING OF GENDER PERCEPTIONS

This masculinist tendency was further reinforced by pseudo-scientific theories regarding race and gender. The Victorians tended to classify all human races from an evolutionary point of view. They conceived of a hierarchy of races, which, they believed, reflected levels of physical, intellectual and even moral advancement. The white races were placed at the top with the African at the bottom. Indians were placed somewhere between. The faith in progress, the comparative and hierarchical mode of thinking, the Victorian obsession with classification and ranking and 19th century 'race theories' (which drew upon science, especially Darwin's and Gobbineau's theories) were deployed to establish the inferiority of both coloured races and women. Darwin's *Descent of Man* (1871) noted women's similarity to "the lower animals" and her possession of "intuition, perhaps imitation ... faculties of the lower races ... and of a past and lower stage of civilisation". On the other hand, the male was characterized by the higher faculties, "reason, invention, imagination" and would always dominate, being aggressive and competitive, while women, according to Darwin, were "instinctively maternal".

Comparative anatomy, especially of the brain was
deployed to establish the intellectual inferiority of women, "the ascertained physiological fact that the actual capacity of the average male brain is considerably greater than that of the female". The services of Phrenology, a 'science', with which the century was obsessed, were deployed to confirm this supposedly indisputable biological evidence: "The skulls of man and woman are to be separated as if they belonged to two different species ... we may therefore say that the type of the female skull approaches, in many respects, that of the infant, and in a still greater degree, that of the lower races". Thus in a conflation of racism and sexism women and the darker races were bracketed as similar and inferior to the white male - as volatile, undependable, passive, irrational, childish and timid. In addition, the darker races were also seen as cowardly, treacherous, sensual or fickle. This argument sought to reinforce the theory of the inability of women and the darker races to govern either themselves or others, both at the macrocosmic level of politics and at the microcosmic plane of the familial home - thereby validating the necessity for their being governed and controlled by the adult white male.

Yet, at the same time all whites, including even the morally ambivalent white woman were, in general, identified as more civilized, ordered, and sexually pure than their black counterparts. Doubts and anxieties nevertheless persisted about the possible linkages between black and white races in the matter of female sexuality. At one
level, white women were seen as less lascivious than black women and the duality of angel/whore centred around colour, with white women being equated with chastity and the black with sensuality. But there were other, contradictory strands in thinking as well. Woman's supposedly low position on the evolutionary scale, considered as an index of her physical, intellectual as well as moral backwardness sharpened anxieties, peculiar to this period, about the nature of female sexuality and the disturbing possibility of its linkages with the sensuality of the darker races. This was especially noticeable when it came to the question of white prostitutes who were considered equally sensual as black women. Indeed throughout the period there was the recurrent image in European art of the white prostitute of the metropolitan country accompanied by a black female. This in fact would seem to signify that not just English, but European perceptions as well, tended to conflate class and race biases and to think of the white prostitute and all black women as equally debased sexually. The latter were associated with a sexuality that was sometimes seen as primitive, sadistic, and active, especially in the case of African women. Such colonial fantasies on the 'animal' sexuality of subject women were, to all appearances, also accompanied by fears that in the colonies their own middle-class 'angels in the home' might relapse, in a lascivious environment, into the eroticism of the black female.

Thus the emotions of smug superiority as well as sexual
anxiety co-existed uneasily in the way the white woman in the colonies was perceived. 'Natives' in colonies were generally regarded with suspicion as lusting after white women. Myths about the phallic power of Africans as well as the effete, effeminate sensuality of Asians were part of the commonsense of racism. To the Victorian mind the danger seems to have lain both to the woman from the environment, surrounded as she was by 'sensual' dark men, and within the woman, in her secret, sensuous response to the freedom from social constraints. Understandably, then, the maintenance of discipline and order in the colonies would also include the management of their own women's sexuality and its governance.

SECTION I(c) - FEMALE COUNTRY, EFFEMINATE PEOPLES: THE VIEW ON INDIA

Moreover, perceptions of the coloniser-colonised dialectic itself often carried overtones of a male-female interaction. For in many ways the colonial enterprise, involving aggression and conquest, and bearing what may be called a husbandly or lordly prerogative, suggested 'masculine' energy. In keeping with this, colonised countries were pre-eminently conceived of as passive, female entities, sometimes with a teeming sexuality, waiting to be mastered. Around the late 19th century Rider Haggard's fiction of the 1880s, for instance, tended to project the sprawling African continent as a supine female body, imparting to the topography of the land, with its
combination of luxuriant vegetation and hills, all the suggestion of an abundant female sensuality. In a similar fashion, 19th century English projections of India too cast the sub-continent as female. A cartoon in *Punch* in 1890 depicted it as a voluptuous child-wife while the novelist, Maud Diver, put it more romantically when she observed in the early 20th century: "India may truly be said to rank with Italy as a 'woman-country'... India, even to her intimates, seems still a veiled mystery, aloof, yet alluring, like one of her own purdah princesses". This kind of gendered categorisation would no doubt have served to underline even further the cultural subordination of the 'feminine' colony and to sanction its conquest or subjugation by a 'manly' colonising culture.

In many instances therefore the way colonized peoples were perceived betrayed not just race but also a form of gender-based prejudice. For instance Indians were admitted as belonging to the same Aryan family as Europeans - but as an *effeminate*, inferior, degenerate branch, which had declined through inter-marriage with the dark, indigenous races of India. Some stressed the role of climate in producing 'effeminacy' and James Mill pronounced in *The History of British India* (1840) that the "Hindu, like the eunuch, excels in the qualities of a slave". Anglo-Indians were indeed uncomfortable about the common racial origins of Indians and Anglo-Saxons. They often used the term "our Aryan brotherhood" with irony and in the 1880s *The Friend of*
India freely admitted that "though theoretically we all admit that the ... Aryan of the East and of the West are one and the same ... unconsciously almost the greater number of us look upon the Asiatic and especially the Indian, as a different and inferior species". While Indians were conceded to be sometimes superior in intellect - G.O. Trevelyan noted Hindu 'sagacity' in 1865 - they tended to be considered deficient in 'manliness' and 'character'.

Nineteenth century Anglo-India appears to have broadly located Indians within the sometimes overlapping dichotomies of Muslim-Hindu, Punjabi-Bengali, rural-urban. Significantly enough, these narrow categories were pre-eminently coloured by, what we may call, a gendered dimension. Thus groups identified as 'masculine' were preferred over those identified as 'effeminate'. The label of 'manly' was bestowed especially on the sturdy Punjab peasantry and on the tribes of the North-West Frontier who happened largely to be Muslims. The latter were seen as possessing a fierce and admirable independence of spirit, similar to the white man's. Voicing the century's fascination with the North-West Frontier, Curzon noted in the 1890's that the Pathans were "brave as lions, wild as cats, docile as children", adding that "those wild clansmen have an individuality ... a manliness in their patriotism and a love of independence in their blood that is akin to our own". It is important to note that in its 'divide and rule' policy Anglo-India projected Muslims in a more favourable light than Hindus from mid-century onwards. While Muslims tended to be shown
as fearless and energetic, Hindus in general and Bengalis in particular were condemned as 'unmanly'. Trevelyan lamented the "deficiency in the Hindoo character of manliness, honesty and self-respect", while in the 1880's John Strachey declared that the "feeble and effeminate Bengali" was both racially and mentally unfit to rule. The Civil And Military Gazette asserted in 1875 that "The Sikh ... hates and despises" "an effeminate Bengalee" and added that this hatred "for timidity and unmanliness" was natural from "a gallant race".

Indeed, the western-educated Bengali Babu was, throughout the period, a stock figure of ridicule in Anglo-Indian writing and supposedly a symbol of physical and moral weakness. In reality, behind the derisive mirth there lay, in all likelihood, the fear of political sedition from a group increasingly regarded as contentious. For much the opposite reason, the peasantry tended to be romanticized over city dwellers, as simple, child-like and obedient - fitting in with the Anglo-Indian self-image of a "benevolent despot", a paternalistic "Mai-Baap sarkar". Indeed, a Punjab civilian could declare in the 1880s that, in essence, the people of India were not the westernized Indians but "the dumb toiling millions of peasants inhabiting the villages, hamlets and scattered homesteads of the land".

The factor of skin-colouring too, which allegedly denoted the degree of admixture with the dark indigenous peoples, played a clearly perceptible role in determining
Anglo-Indian attitudes to 'natives'. Thus along with a perspective based on notions about gender, there also existed a marked colour prejudice. One of the reasons behind the preference for Pathans and the people of Panjab was evidently their being fair-skinned, tall and sturdily-built. Conversely, the despised Bengalis tended to be darker and more slightly built. In its turn, the caste system too seems to have been approached on one level at least, from the point of view of colour; as one opinion put it, somewhat later, in 1910: "At one end of the scale is the Brahman, with light complexion and almost European type of face and build; at the other the swarthy, squat form of the coolie in the streets".

By the middle of the 19th century Hinduism was regarded with puritanical abhorrence as an arcane, ritualistic and vile religion with erotic under-pinnings. Indians were reported to be obsessed with sex and this was variously attributed to the premature sexual intimacy of child-marriage as well as to the linkages between sex and religion in Hinduism with its all-pervasive presence and worship of male and female sexual symbols. Anglo-Indians sometimes voiced revulsion of a people "who while dreaming warm dreams of sexual gratification love to speculate about the soul and the All-Soul", thus combining "mysticism and occultism" with "orgies".

But perhaps in no other area were the associations of India with femaleness more disturbing to Anglo-Indians than in the sphere of Kali worship. The Tantric tradition with
its rites were often invoked as evidence of Indian (and specifically Hindu) depravity, while Kali and Durga worship in particular were criticized for being accompanied by what was termed as "licentious songs and lewd dances of a highly unseemly character". They seem to have found the image of the goddess deeply unsettling, with its various associations of destruction, blood, sacrifice, thuggee, as well as female empowerment. So much so, that by the century's end the figure of Kali came to be seen as a symbol of political subversion as well. During the nationalist struggles around the first decade of the next century "the constant invocation of the terrible goddess, whether as Kali or Durga, against the alien oppressors" was pointed out. It was also noted that "amongst extremists, one of the favourite euphemisms applied to the killing of an Englishman was 'sacrificing a white goat to Kali'.

SECTION II - THE WHITE WOMAN IN 19TH CENTURY INDIA

From around the 1860's onwards, sometime after the takeover by the Crown, Englishwomen started coming out in greater numbers to be resident wives in India. Not that they had been absent before this. Earlier on ship loads of women, derisively called 'fishing fleets' would face the hardships of the sea voyage and come out to the east. Later, in the earlier part of the 19th century, women had sometimes accompanied their husbands (e.g., Fanny Parks), or brothers (e.g., Emily Eden) and journeyed with an active and energetic
curiosity and interest in India. By mid-century the white female population was indeed large enough to become the focus of attention and anxiety in England during the Revolt of 1857, especially at Lucknow and Kanpur.

However, a crucial difference in the situation now was that after 1858 Englishwomen voyaging out to India were coming as imperialists to their Indian empire. A collocation of several factors accounted for the large female presence in India. These included the reduced journey-time from England due to the introduction of the steamship and the greater opportunities of making a "good match" that India offered, with its new generation of administrators. Perhaps, most important of all was the feeling that the presence of white women would aid in the encouragement of an 'imperial identity' that was considered necessary in the ruling race. The cultural aspirations and aims of this generation of colonials, by virtue of their being middle-class Victorians, endowed with the awareness of being empire-builders, were quite distinct from those of the earlier generation. The latter had generally consisted of more easy-going 'adventurers'. Moreover, this new set of colonisers belonged to an imperial culture that was marked by a defensive aloofness from 'natives' and a simultaneous cultivation of an English identity overseas. It was hoped that the sizeable community of Englishwomen would help strengthen this identity by performing, what may be called 'moral policing' or in other words, helping to put an end to
inter-racial sexual relations. In addition, their presence would help in consolidating an English life-style and values in distant stations.

Regardless of her class origin, the white woman in India, whether she was a memsahib or a barrack-wife, found herself, by virtue of her race and membership to the ruling group, automatically in a position of superiority over all 'natives' including those of social eminence. Even as early as in 1856 Lady Canning had noted that India bestowed an instant aristocracy based on race and that "the maids live like ladies". And enhancing the air of aristocracy was the ostentation and grand ritual that Anglo-India borrowed from the ceremonial-based feudal ethos of 'native' princely states. It was held that "an aristocratic basis of government is natural to the peoples of India" and for Anglo-India the term 'British Raj' spelled 'Oriental splendour'. The middle-class memsahibs quickly adapted to their new life-styles full of colonial magnificence and luxury, consisting of spacious bungalows, retinues of servants and plenty of leisure. Of course this generation of colonisers (unlike their 18th century predecessors who lived extravagant and unrestrained lives characteristic of 'Indianized nabobs'), were endowed with a sense of self-righteous cultural superiority, as we have noted earlier. This led them to re-create, to the best of their ability, a part of England and 'English culture' even in the remotest station and to ignore the teeming 'native' life existing outside the flower-beds of their civil lines. Nonetheless,
even these 'pukka' sahibs and memsahibs could not quite escape from the feudal nature of their existence. And notwithstanding their best efforts to retain their 'Englishness' they acquired, in effect, an Anglo-Indian identity which was distinct from, although drawing upon, both their 'English' identity left behind at 'home' and the 'native' culture surrounding them.

SECTION II(a) - THE MEMSAHIB AND THE BARRACK-WIFE: THE ISSUE OF CLASS IN ANGLO-INDIA

Middle class Anglo-India exhibited all the complacency, puritanism and suspicion of alien cultures typical of their counterparts in Victorian England. Class snobbery was reinforced by their experience in India, their love of hierarchy being reflected in the rigid observance of social and official ranking. Right at the top were the members of the civil administration - with the Collector's wife at the apex of the pyramid - followed by the military wives, with the wives of planters and other non-official British much closer to the base.

The word 'memsahib' (i.e. 'madam sahib') seems to have originated around 1857, suggesting that the connotations of power, privilege and status associated ordinarily with the male administrators or the sahibs, were by this time being extended to encompass the sahibs' wives as well. Evidently the latter were enjoying the derived or reflected power of their husbands' rank in the colonial hierarchy. Inevitably,
in a bureaucracy-dominated community the women's obsession was with their husbands' rank, promotion and with items like social precedence. This largely echoed the preoccupations of the men and amplified the community's social stratification. Indeed, the social hierarchies assumed, in effect, some of the rigidities and elaborateness of the Hindu caste system with the Anglo-Indians often using the term 'white Brahmin' or 'ruling caste' to define themselves. Conventions like 'precedence' were fiercely guarded by the women especially and social policing was carried out through gossip.

While Anglo-India was essentially middle class in its class composition it is important to note that other, less-visible, classes and groups also existed so that the term, 'white woman in India', cannot be viewed as a monolithic or un-problematic category. Although, as we have already noted, all white women enjoyed the special status of belonging to the ruling race, within the community itself class divisions were sharp. An enormous gap, for instance, divided the memsahib from women missionaries, who, though of the same race, were generally looked down upon by the community. These women-missionaries, who were often of lower middle class origins and wives of missionaries themselves, were unique among white women in mixing closely with 'natives'. Fluently speaking Indian languages, visiting womenfolk in their homes, they played an active role in evangelical as well as reform activities. However, Christina Bremner, a metropolitan visitor in the 1890's was quick to notice Anglo-Indian class snobbery. She remarked that "women
missionaries who toil and labour among their sex and often develop or acquire a deep sympathy for native life" find that their "position in society is often invidious".

In actuality it was precisely this easy accessibility to 'natives' that accounted for their inferior status. This was compounded by their lack of official power or position, existing as they did, outside the charmed circle of colonial bureaucracy. For, by working at such close quarters among 'natives', missionaries exhibited a disregard for social distance and aloofness from the subject race, the maintenance of which was considered imperative in the imperial code. The empire-builder's personality was deemed to rest on a visible dignity, with proper role-playing as well as aloofness from the local populace as a means of arousing awe and reverence. It was with this in mind that Maud Diver, the champion of the memsahib and the concept of the 'white woman's burden' criticized the missionary habit of "living as nearly as possible on the same lines" as the local populace for, she argued, "the Oriental is a profound respecter of persons, as of all outward and visible signs of power".

An even greater source of embarrassment to British prestige as well as a living symbol of class-contradictions within Anglo-India were the poor whites. These were "the loafers and semi-loafers", contempt for whom was often expressed in Anglo-Indian newspapers. The Civil and Military Gazette in 1875 compared them to "loathsome
bandicoots", while *The Englishman's Saturday Evening Journal* in 1870 expressed annoyance at the sight of drunken European loafers "reeling about the Bazaars among jeering natives". The fear of such a sight lowering the prestige of the rulers in 'native' eyes was frequently voiced, as by *The Friend of India* in 1875, which warned that the "low morality" of a growing number of poor whites would pose "a serious danger in the Empire".

But the greatest source of embarrassment by far may possibly have been the European prostitute, operating as she did openly in the native bazaars. The prostitute in Victorian eyes was, as we have seen, a symbol of sexual degradation and sensuality. British prestige suffered a great blow with the presence of white prostitutes in India, although rather unconvincingly, there were attempts to establish that no English woman was among them, as at a Meeting on Social Evil in 1891. Although the majority of the white prostitutes are said to have been East Europeans, fleeing from anti-semitism in Europe, the evidence is insufficient and no generalisations are possible. But it cannot be ruled out that some of these prostitutes might have been of British origin.

In any case race, rather than nationality seems to have been the crux of the problem and their visibility at native bazaars a source of considerable mortification for the British rulers. In England *The Sentinel* in 1888 complained of houses in Bombay's red-light area being "tenanted by European women, more bold and shameless [than native
prostitutes] .... Conspicuously displayed in one of the shops of this licensed market of sin, I noticed a large framed portrait of Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, and Empress of India". What seems to have rankled most were "groups of native men who were watching the scene"; a point echoed by the same newspaper in 1894: "No educated Native thinks he has properly 'done' Bombay unless he has seen the seething hell of European vice".

One recurrent feature appears to have been the frequent comparisons drawn between 'native' and European prostitutes, to the advantage of the former. For example, Bishop Thoburn observed about south Calcutta in 1893: "It is a striking fact that the most shameless characters in the city are not Indian but persons imported from Europe". Echoing this The Sentinel remarked a year later that, in comparison "the Native streets of vice are decorous in the extreme ... the women are decently clothed and many of them veiled, and the contrast is most humiliating". Evidently, apart from casting a blot on white prestige these women outraged Victorian sensibilities of Anglo-India in their open flaunting of white female sexuality—which, in a colonial context, would have been regarded with even greater apprehension. The knowledge that these women were sexually accessible to 'native' customers and the disturbing thought that white female sensuality seemed greater than that of 'native' prostitutes of corresponding classes, no doubt complicated the matter further.
Noticeably invisible in the writings of Anglo-India was the barrack-wife, between whom and the memsahib in her bungalow virtually no connection existed. In keeping with the over-all silence on this class of white women, The Calcutta Review which debated intensively on various issues relating to the memsahib during the period 1860-1890, seems to have completely ignored the barrack-wife and all women of lower social orders during this time. Unlike in the case of officers' wives there was no clear government policy on barrack-wives. Marriage for British 'other ranks' was discouraged as a rule and they tended to form attachments, quite often not fully legal, from among poor white women or Eurasians.

Inside the barracks the condition of the women was even worse than that of the men; drunkenness, wife-beating, desertion by husbands, poverty and squalor, along with high female mortality were common features. Two decades back, it was the same The Calcutta Review which in 1845 had broken Anglo-India's over-all silence on the topic at a time when empire was not on the political agenda and concepts such as 'imperial prestige' had therefore not crystallised as yet. Disclosing the appalling living conditions of the barrack-women it decried the widespread practice of a kind of 'child marriage' and early motherhood. One of the typical instances it cited was that of a 14 year old wife who would be habitually beaten by her much older husband, because, busy playing marbles with boys of her age, she would forget to make his meals. Going on to condemn the immense class gap
and the apathy of the memsahibs who "saw their sisters perishing and passed by on the other side", it argued that these poorer white women suffered even greater degradation than did 'native' women whose uplift was in the foreground of the colonial social reform programmes. Reprovingly pointing out "the condition of mothers and daughters in our barracks — living and growing up without any instruction, principle, or restraint", it expressed the fear that these unfortunate women were devoid of the "self-respect which even native women may feel". Poorer whites remained more or less peripheral to the concerns of Anglo-India, despite a fairly large presence. As The Calcutta Review admitted, "there is scarcely a station in India that does not contain women and children, perhaps of purely European blood ... who require to be excavated from the mass of heathenism". They were obviously an embarrassment to the prevailing theories of racial superiority. Their marginality from the consciousness of the community was so completely effected that Lady Canning, echoing a common misapprehension, could in the 1850's comment on the apparent class-homogeneity of this society and express her ignorance of any "poor people, except very dark half-castes or natives".

Nonetheless the middle-class memsahib was numerically the most predominant among the white women in India. Despite occupying a position of power and privilege on the grounds of race and class, her status in terms of gender was quite equivocal. With regard to the men of her own class, the
colonial administrators or military officers, or even planters, she suffered certain obvious disadvantages. In a world of busy male activity she found herself in a situation of enforced idleness. Confined to limited sources of entertainment or recreation, such as amateur theatricals, picnics and parties, she was restricted from mixing with 'natives' and had few outlets for intellectual activities, which in any case were considered 'bad form' in Anglo-India.

SECTION II(b) - CONCUPISCENCE IN THE COLONY: THE MYTH OF THE DISORDERLY MEMSAHIB

The representation of the memsahib in 19th century memoirs, letters, newspapers and journals both in British India and Victorian England tended to be negative. The stereotype of the idle, pleasure-seeking, materialistic and sometimes adulterous woman in the colony was often set against the normative figure of her metropolitan counterpart. With the latter held up as a moral ideal, the anxious, troubled question most frequently posed was: "What is the influence of Indian life and surroundings on England's daughters? .... Are their lives as a whole, on a higher or a lower level than those of their sisters at home?" The fear, as we shall see later, was essentially that of female disorderliness, of deviations from the Victorian code of female conduct that the departure from metropolitan England might unleash.

With the cultural privileging of marriage as the only goal for women, India spelled unparalleled matrimonial
opportunities for most young girls setting out from England. While in the mother-country demographically women outnumbered men 1,050 to 1,000 the opposite was true of India where, at the highest point, men outnumbered women 3 to 1. Yet, from the earlier East India Company days boatloads of women coming out to India to find husbands were the object of much satire and were, as we noted earlier, derisively labelled 'fishing fleets'. The women were attacked for being "artful and designing" and "at all times ready to sell their charms to the highest bidder". These 'fleets' no longer existed in the second half of the 19th century. A Calcutta Review article, eager to dispel prejudiced notions about 'adventuresses', noted as far back as in 1845 that times had changed and that "marriages in India are not often than elsewhere made from sordid motives". But the fact is that the charge of materialism lingered on. And so did the importance given to matrimony. Girls in particular who married husbands from the highly-paid Civil Service were envied while those who failed to get married at all were ridiculed as unsuccessful "spins" who had "not yet gone off".

By the 1880s, according to The Calcutta Review four kinds of middle class women came out to India: metropolitan brides joining administrator husbands, unmarried sisters coming out to keep house for their brothers (with the eventual objective of finding a husband), grown-up daughters rejoining their parents after schooling at 'home' and women,
mostly of lower middle class origin, coming out either as missionaries or as their wives. Nevertheless, for the former three categories of women India continued to be associated with marriage and. The Calcutta Review complained that "the chief duty of girlhood is to secure a good match ... she, who in the matrimonial market doeth well to herself will in India be well-spoken of".

The situation was obviously fraught with irony. While British men seeking employment in colonial services overseas were unabashedly attracted, among other things, by their lucrative salaries, yet similar materialistic motives in the women became a matter of outraged moral censure. What was forgotten in the process was the fact that these women were merely exhibiting the materialistic values of a colonizing culture of which they, like their men, were a constitutive part as well as a product.

Furthermore, there existed the great myth of Anglo-Indian Immorality which was rooted primarily in a fear of female sexuality as well as in a puritanical disapproval of 'frivolity' and gaiety. Anglo-Indians and especially their women were seen as people preoccupied with parties and flirtations. Moral obliquity in this case was seen to lie in the memsahibs' proclivity "to laugh, to dance, to sing, to beguile time and to chase dull cares". This pleasure-loving, frivolous memsahib—almost an antithesis of the ideal of the gentle, sexless, Victorian 'angel in the house'—was projected as belonging to two categories. Firstly, there was the idle 'Miss Saheb' in search of a good 'catch'
in the marriage market (satirized in a typical article, entitled, "Is Miss-Saheb a failure?" in The Madras Mail in 1890), and secondly there was the married flirt.

Anglo-Indian marriages were often under considerable stress. They involved frequent separations, with the wife going 'home' to escape the climate or to accompany the children, or going to the hills in the hot season, receiving inevitably the adulation of numerous unattached young male admirers. Understandably the problem of adultery was a subject of constant discussion, and hill-stations which became popular from around the 1880s onwards were often seen as sites for furthering flirtations. Earlier, The Friend of India, castigating the lax moral tone of society in the stations, noted in 1875 that though unlike in the previous century, Indian mistresses may no longer be kept, "the 'flirtations' — as they are euphemistically called between married men and married women, too often ending in separation and the Divorce Court ... are as disastrous". In a similar vein The Madras Mail regretted in 1869 that a "penchant for another man's wife" was "not an uncommon occurrence in Madras". Not surprisingly, the problem was given a gendered dimension in most cases, so that adultery was often implicitly attributed to the woman's 'immorality'. Nor was it restricted to the middle classes alone — liaisons between barrack-wives and soldiers were evidently fairly common. Yet, instances in these discursive writings of indictment of men — of husbands making merry in
the absence of their wives who might be away at 'home' were much rarer.

One possible factor behind this voluble obsession with the woman's 'morality' and sexual disorderliness could be the numerical imbalance and the critical stress it created. In this unusual situation women, far from being 'surplus' or 'redundant' as in England, were fewer than and in a position of psycho-sexual power over their men. Perhaps there was a fear of female sexual domination and a corresponding male helplessness and vulnerability. No doubt this compounded the old colonial anxieties about a female relapse into sensuality in the freer, racially-mixed world of the colonies.

This overwhelming preoccupation with a woman's 'morality' took the form of exhortatory writings in Anglo-Indian journals, newspapers and books during this period. These focused on the moral responsibilities of the English woman in India, in both her gender relationships and her imperial duty as a member of the ruling caste. So much so that even Maud Diver's *The Englishwoman in India* (1909), one of the first systematic and prominent defences of the memsahib, operated with the premise of a lax female morality in the colony and only sought to explain or contextualize it. It attributed this alleged mental and moral torpor in the memsahibs to the climate, the disrupted life-style, separations from children and other problems. But even more harsh than Anglo-India was metropolitan England about
this 'immorality', leading Maud Diver to protest: "English women are disposed to pass judgement on their Anglo-Indian sisters .... From pedestals of sober respectability and energetic industry they denounce as idle, frivolous and luxury-loving, those other women of whose trials and temptations they know little or nothing".

Probably among the most damaging charges against the memsahib in the long run was that of racial prejudice. For long this remained one of the enduring myths of the British Raj; so much so, that in the liberal and post-colonial perception on the white woman this continued to be a deeply-etched premise. In the 1870s The Madras Mail could admonish "were it not for the influence of European ladies many English men would probably see more of natives at their houses" and state that by encouraging inter-racial mixing these ladies "could, if they would, effect a social revolution".

Furthermore, the issue of gender came to be deployed for reinforcing a racist ideology, as all Indians were projected as contemptuous of women in general. In the 1860s G.O.Trevelyan echoed an old cultural prejudice when he noted: "The wide and radical difference between the views held by the respective races with regard to the weaker sex alone, forms a bar, at present insuperable, to any very familiar intercourse ... [Indians]—cannot bring themselves to look upon women as better than playthings". This view was not particularly linked to the takeover by the Crown. In fact, long before the 1857 Revolt or the establishment of
empire. The Calcutta Review had voiced a similar sentiment in 1845: "All natives, even the best educated among them have the most profound contempt for women and regard them as formed alone for their pleasure", thereby indicating that Anglo-India's racism was deep-rooted and probably an inevitable outcome of the colonial enterprise itself.

SECTION II(c) - MEMSAHIBS: WOMEN IN 'PURDAH'

The whole point is that when the memsahib displayed racial prejudices it was primarily an amplification of her culture's imperial arrogance, its intolerance of other religions, a middle class suspicion of foreigners, and deep-rooted colonial fears of a sexual threat from men of colour. Moreover, behind the much-berated racism of the memsahib lay the racist prejudices of the 'sahibs'. For the increased racial segregation from mid-century onwards was partly linked to the larger presence of the memsahib in India and a general attitude of suspicion regarding possible 'native' designs upon the white woman's chastity. Moreover, these notions of the 'sensual native' were further compounded, in all likelihood, by male anxieties regarding the woman's sexuality. There may have been inchoate fears of her getting corrupted (liberated as she was from the bonds of Victorian values), by the erotic environment of India, with its all-pervasive religious symbols of male and female sexuality.

Thus, at the root of the memsahib's racism possibly there lay male sexual insecurities and complicity. As The
Calcutta Review clearly indicated in 1886, "Many Englishmen have an insuperable objection to the ladies of their families having intercourse of any kind with the natives", a view echoed by Maud Diver's supposition about the "probable discouragement of her husband" regarding the memsahib's mixing with Indians.

More perceptively still, a memsahib's letter of 1911 complained that the white men in India "prefer [their women] to be as wholly absent from every kind of Indian society as are the inmates of zenanas. Their argument is that until an Indian gentleman will allow them to meet his wife they will not allow him to meet an English lady". Indeed, this did culminate in a purdah-like situation. When female missionaries stepped out of this segregation, it was sometimes feared that zenana visits and close intermingling with Indians could pose a danger for these "young unmarried ladies", in the shape of "familiarity or insult from the male members of the house-hold". By around the 1870s the segregation was so complete that the only 'native' males the memsahib interacted with were the domestic servants. Fearful of a possible sexual menace from the latter, newspapers and journals exhorted the women to guard against "a careless indolence", to avoid being unmindful about their own sexual charms in front of servants and to conquer the tendency (which incidentally denoted its own brand of race and class arrogance) to "look upon them as mere bundles of clothes".
Statements such as these, coupled with press reports in the 1880's and 1890's of "insults [to] European or Eurasian ladies" on Calcutta's streets by "lower class native men", and other, supposed or real, incidents of sexual molestation served to reinforce myths of the sensual native and to harden racial antipathies. It was no surprise then that in 1883 the Ilbert Bill was vehemently opposed in Anglo-India. The outcry was over what was perceived to be a danger to English womanhood from 'native' judges. Evidently then, the tendency was to make a cultural scapegoat of the memsahib for the problem of racism, which demonstrably had larger and more complex factors behind it.

SECTION II(d) - THE EPIC OF THE RACE: THE MEMSAHIB AND THE 'MUTINY' OF 1857

There is little doubt that the 'Mutiny' of 1857 exacerbated fears about a sexual threat to Englishwomen in India. The outbreak added its own myths about women and sharpened some pre-existing notions. In the mythology of Empire the event was seen as such a cataclysm that it became deeply etched in the Victorian mind as "the epic of the Race".

Although Delhi and Lucknow had also witnessed long sieges during the 'Mutiny', it was Kanpur, which was selectively focused on in popular accounts. Kanpur (or 'Cawnpore' as it was then referred to) had been the scene of a massacre of a large number of Englishwomen and children.
evidently at the orders of the Nana Sahib, their bodies subsequently being thrown into a well. The most significant feature about 'Cawnpore' had been this conspicuous presence of white women as the target of the 'mutineers'. In the mid-Victorian period womanhood was elevated to some kind of a mystic plane of purity and the vision of white women and children killed or hurt by 'mutineers' filled them with a sense of outrage. Innumerable essays, sermons, novels, and plays, generating political hysteria came to be written in England and by the British in India, the majority focusing on one spot, the well at 'Cawnpore'. By treating 'Cawnpore' as the essence, public mythology about the 'Mutiny' then came to institutionalize white women as national martyrs.

The 'Mutiny' served to further underline certain images about English women in India. G.O. Trevelyan's influential *Cawnpore* (1865) stressed the pathos, the helpless vulnerability of the women massacred in the Bibighar as well as the brutality of their death - with the site described as being "ankle-deep" in blood after the event and the walls marked with sword-cuts "low down; and about the corners, as if a creature had crouched to avoid the blow". Such accounts, along with descriptions of mothers agonizedly watching their children die in the siege, all combined to project the myth of the Englishwoman as pathetic victim. Yet another co-existing strand of thought emphasized these women's courage. John Kaye, for instance, noted that, "the gentle-women of Cawnpore gave up perhaps the most cherished
components of their feminine attire to improve the ordnance", because they had contributed bits of personal garments which served as wadding for damaged guns. Over 30 years after the event The Pioneer recalled in 1888 how the "Mutiny ladies" had "displayed as much heroism and self-devotion as the bravest soldiers could".

Occasionally, in discussions on the event the 'Mutiny' was deployed to reinforce the notion of a gap between a supposed western glorification of women and an alleged Indian denigration of them. Trevelyan thus pointed out that "No one can rightly read the history of the mutineers unless he constantly takes into account the wide and radical difference between the views held by Europeans and Asiatics with reference to the treatment and position of the weaker sex". The sepoy's "estimate of a European lady", was said to be "compounded of contempt, disapprobation, and misconception".

Furthermore, myths about the lustful Indian generated by the Revolt fanned deep-rooted colonial fears of a sexual threat from the 'natives'. It was suggested that lascivious Indians had sexually abused their victims. Early accounts related that white women had been crucified, hung up by the hair, and raped. They had been tortured, flogged, violated, mutilated alive and in public gaze. Such reports sought to establish the notion of the sexually threatening 'native'. But evidently, the colonizers were caught in a dilemma. After all, the formulation about the lustful Indian
would necessarily imply the degradation of Englishwomen at the hands of 'natives'. This would be tantamount to a blot on British prestige and even the British nation - not to speak of the smirch on the image of spotless, inviolable English womanhood.

Most of the accounts were probably fabricated in any case because special commissioners appointed later to investigate reports of rape and torture failed to come up with evidence. In any event there subsequently followed wide-scale denials of the earlier accounts of rapes as 'fables' and "gossip", as Trevelyan did, for instance. Dismissing early reports of white women being publicly "maltreated" he clarified in 1865 that they had died "without apprehension of dishonour". Even prior to this Lady Canning had tried to assuage Queen Victoria's (and the nation's) anxieties regarding the 'ill-usage' of women during the uprising, a subject which held a deep and morbid fascination for the Victorians. Lady Canning claimed in 1858 that "there is not a particle of credible evidence of the poor women having been ill-used anywhere ... and the dreadful mutilation and insults perpetrated upon dead bodies have given rise to the most dreadful stories". Regardless of where the 'truth' of the matter really lay, Anglo-India's shifting position on the question of rapes in the 'Mutiny' reveals the ambiguities and contradictions in the interfaces of issues such as race, woman and nationhood in 19th century British India.

By the same token, abductions of Englishwomen during
the outbreak seem to have been regarded equally with horror. In some instances such women were reportedly allowed to re-enter the Anglo-Indian fold after having lived through the turbulent times with their Indian abductors, sometimes as their 'wives'. But in a great many cases such women were cast out from white society, by simply being declared as dead. In the most famous instance General Wheeler's daughter who reportedly lived with her Indian rescuer, was stated officially to be dead and accepted as such, by The Friend of India in September 1857. Myths of heroism in death were built around her: she was said to have cut off her ravisher's head with a sword and then committed suicide by jumping into a well. All along, while the commemorative tablet at the church at Kanpur declared her dead with the rest of her family, Miss Wheeler continued to live quietly with her Indian abductor, never returning to Anglo-Indian society - a fact that was gradually discovered and disclosed by accounts published around the 1860s.

Finally, by way of contrast, most 19th century accounts of the Revolt seem to have largely ignored the Indian woman. Thus a virtual silence enshrouds the atrocities that were perpetrated on her during the phase of British reprisals after the 'Mutiny'. One of the rare references to Indian women was made in accounts of the fall of Delhi. Their deaths were attributed generally to suicide, with disavowals of British troops having harmed or molested them in any way. Regarding the earlier phase of the rebellion
Trevelyan mentioned the "womanly commiseration" exhibited by the women of the Nana's household for a pregnant Englishwoman. But in general 'Mutiny' reports painted 'native' women as cruel, with the British newspaper *News of the World* condemning them as "active instigators of the sepoys in their worst atrocities". References to the Rani of Jhansi often tended to be derogatory, with *The Bombay Times*, for example, calling her a Jezebel, a handsome but lascivious she-fiend. One of the rarer instances of praise for the Rani came from the British officer responsible for her defeat. He reportedly remarked that "the Indian Mutiny has produced but one man, and that man was a woman".

SECTION II(e) - THE LAND OF REGRETS: THE WHITE WOMAN AS TRAGIC EXILE

As we have earlier noted, the most predominant stereotypes and myths created by Anglo-Indian and metropolitan writings sought to project the white woman in a censorious light. But side by side there existed a much more muted perhaps, but a definite, contradictory strand. This latter sought to produce the image of the memsahib as a tragic exile, shouldering, along with her male compatriots, hardships, discomforts and tragedies and making sacrifices, equal to any male coloniser, in the course of empire-building. Like her male compatriots in India, she was seen as subjected to constant role-playing, lacking in personal freedom of choice, deracinated and rootless, belonging
neither to Britain nor to India. Subjected to colonial fears and anxieties regarding an India about to erupt politically and surrounded by hostile aliens, these women often articulated apprehension about another 'Mutiny'. A letter from a lady in *The Madras Mail* in 1869 complained that "it does seem very hard to have such numbers against so very few".

In addition to these commonly-shared problems, the Anglo-Indian woman was seen as suffering from certain other difficulties by virtue of being a woman in the colonies. These included physical hardships in the tropical climate, the danger of diseases, the enforced idleness and absence of meaningful activities, the traumas of separation from children or husband, the inevitable dislocations of the family and last but not least, the frequent death of their infant offsprings.

This concept of the colonial woman as a tragic exile co-existed with the image of the idle pleasure-seeker over a fairly long period — with Trevelyan sympathizing as early as in 1864: "The ladies, poor things, come in for all the disagreeables of up-country life". But it was towards the 1880s onwards that it apparently gained greater recognition with journals, newspapers and books giving voice to it. Focusing on the plight of the Anglo-Indian woman in several articles around the 1880's, *The Calcutta Review* had queried whether there was "no touch of pathos, no appeal to sympathy in the position of the Englishwoman in India?"
popular press too articulated the difficulties of the white woman in the East with The Pioneer, generally Eurocentric and gender conservative in its coverage, engaging in a debate in 1888 on this issue and remarking: "She too often sees life in its sterner aspect and knows too much of its tragedies".

This defence of the memsahib probably reached its apotheosis in Maud Diver's The Englishwoman in India. Appearing in 1909 it came as a virtual culmination of the exhaustive discussions on the topic which had appeared in journals and the press in the last two decades of the 19th century — with Diver systematically arguing that these women were "heroines and martyrs" rather than villainesses of empire. But even prior to Diver, off and on in the 1860s and apparently more consistently two decades later, problems such as enforced female idleness (and implicitly the limited cultural role permitted to Anglo-Indian women) were addressed. Thus Trevelyan pointed out in 1864 that "without plenty of work India is unbearable" while The Calcutta Review queried about this enforced idleness in 1886: "Why should we suppose that the mere difference of sex should so completely alter the character ... that what is utter weariness to the one, should be a satisfying existence to the other?"

But perhaps, from a Victorian perspective the memsahib's greatest tragedy lay in the break-up of the family, for in India she was faced with the inevitable choice of parting from either husband or child. Either
marriage or motherhood had to be sacrificed by her—necessitated by the common practice of sending growing children to study in England. It was feared that English children in India would become 'Indianized' and would "grow up weak and feeble not only in body but in moral strength as well" — quite clearly an appalling state of things for a carefully nurtured, future generation of an imperial race, the robustness of which, as we noticed earlier, was of national concern.

In Anglo-India's childless homes, however, this amounted to a break-up of the precious Victorian institution of the family or as The Calcutta Review put it in 1886, "the loosening of the sacred-family bond" which it termed the "saddest, yet inevitable result of Indian life". Expectedly, the role of the wife and mother remained bitterly debated within an ambit of little choice. The Pioneer in 1882 warned of the loosening of the bond between parent and child, declaring that "that bond can never be renewed in after-life" and squarely accused mothers who stayed back in India, of being selfish. The Calcutta Review, on the other hand, viewing this kind of lonely "Indian" motherhood as "self-sacrificing" could proclaim: "If ever motherhood deserved the dignity of being recognized as a mission, requiring all the exclusiveness of enthusiasm and of self-devotion, it is in India". These ideological positions—the one censorious and the other sympathetic or laudatory— that were sought to be projected in the
discursive writings of Anglo-India, were contentious. Eager to demystify the maligned Englishwoman in India, a letter from a lady in The Pioneer asserted in 1888: "Her duty to husband and children often means hardship and self-sacrifice.... Of late years too the Englishwoman's lot in India has become still harder ... and unless some remedy is found, Anglo-India for the Englishwoman will become soon intolerable".

Moreover, the memsahib along with the men of her community was subjected to psychological stresses which were inherent in their situation. The constant role-playing, the brooding in lonely places, the fear of numbers - as a memsahib wrote in the 1890's, "the overwhelming crowds of people frightened me ... what was there to prevent these myriads from falling upon and obliterating us as if we had never existed?" - is said to have created a tension in their minds and a sense of being on the verge of a break-down.

Instances of mental health-problems - nervous disorders, breakdown, depression, hysteria and homesickness were said to be found especially among the women and alienation, monotony and boredom tended to be seen as particularly female problems in the colonial context. Thus in 1864 Trevelyan remarked on the prevalence of "delirium tremens" among barrack-wives, while in 1885 The Calcutta Review discussed the widespread incidence of "homesickness", which it identified as a specifically female complaint. Later still, Diver pointed out the common occurrence of restlessness, irritability, mental and physical fatigue,
which she attributed to the dislocations attached to residence in India and drew attention to the "rapid waste of nervous tissue more injurious as a rule, to women than to men".

This last issue, of problems of mental health, does not seem to have been addressed in most studies on women of the Raj. In all likelihood the limited role already assigned to women by Victorian ideology became more claustrophobic in the colonies. Condemned to a culturally marginal existence, with few or no meaningful activities available, suffering from an acute form of alienation - from the surrounding culture, from her children, from her busy and sometimes preoccupied husband - it is little wonder that she should have been psychologically vulnerable.

However, while it is indeed imperative that the disadvantages these women faced because of their gender be recognized, it is equally necessary to beware the danger of creating a counter-myth, that of the memsahib as martyr or heroine that some modern critics, such as Pat Barr in her The Memsahibs, tend to do. There is always contrary evidence - such as The Calcutta Review's article in 1885, which, after taking full cognizance of all the much-discussed problems and difficulties, nonetheless concluded: "This period of an Englishwoman's life in India is undoubtedly the happiest". Similarly, while Diver complained, like many others, of the hardships of the Indian climate, Christina Bremner pointed out that, "I never heard of any
lady being struck by heat apoplexy”.

In other words, the situation of the memsahib was full of complexities and even contradictions. Despite the criticism of female frivolity in its discursive writings, Anglo-India in actual practice tolerated a far greater level of sexual freedom for women as compared to Victorian England. Englishwomen at ‘home’, according to Diver, “are more strictly encompassed by ‘the conventions’ than Anglo-

Indian women of the same standing”. But it would be more accurate to note that while greater sexual licence was tolerated, other social conventions predominated here, such as the pressure to conform and become a memsahib. This consisted of suppressing one’s individuality, adopting a sporting, non-intellectual life-style, and becoming an uncritical member of the team.

SECTION II(f) - THE WHITE WOMAN’S BURDEN : THE MEMSAHIB AS IMPERIALIST

In any case whatever disadvantages these women may have faced as compared to their men, the inescapable fact is that from the 1860s onwards they too were drawn into the colonizing process as co-participants. There was indeed a striking difference from the earlier half of the 19th century when imperial aloofness was not considered mandatory and there were possibilities of a woman moving almost on a footing of equality with ‘native’ families, as did Fanny Parks in the 1830s and 1840s. From mid-century onwards however, white women in India, as members of the ruling
race, demonstrably participated in the colonial agenda in diverse and complex ways.

It is important to recognize the induction of these women into the otherwise largely male enterprise of empire-building. For, in a related trend, noticeable especially towards the last two decades of the century, analogies came to be often drawn between the running of a home and the management of an empire. Here the memsahib's position at the apex of a large and elaborate household, consisting of a vast retinue of servants, was no longer seen as a position of idle luxury. Instead, it was re-viewed as "domestic administration". Discussing this The Calcutta Review pointed out in 1886 that "Great scope ... may be realized within her own compound. Her dominion is a conglomerate not of individuals as in England but of families".

But it was a little later, with memsahibs being exhorted, like "all public servants in India ... to keep written accounts showing their total yearly receipts and expenditure" that the concept of the white woman as domestic administrator was given firmer shape, in The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook, by Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner. Published in 1888, and the bible of all young memsahibs it conferred upon housewifery all the practical skills and responsibility of administering a colony. Advising young brides to go on regular inspections in the compound, maintain monthly auditing and manage the servants with a "balance of rewards and punishments", it
urged the learning of 'Hindustanee' since it was "The first duty of a mistress" ... to be able to give intelligible orders to her servants. This command of language was underscored by The Calcutta Review which argued that "no lady can be a good mistress, even in the ordinary sense of the word, without a knowledge of the vernacular". The crux of Steel and Gardiner's argument was that "an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige than an Indian Empire".

More closely, although still indirectly, the English woman was incorporated into the process of cultural imperialism by being projected as a role-model for the Indian woman who was emerging from the veil. Underlining the grave imperial responsibilities of all middle class white women, The Calcutta Review intoned in 1886 that "the future of India's women" was tied with "the unsuspected influence of the lives and characters of their more privileged English sisters". Such an exhortation simultaneously served a double purpose. On the one hand it urged a western model for the New Indian woman to follow. On the other hand it deployed notions such as 'British prestige' and the 'white woman's burden' to control the white woman's morality and any possible disorderliness or deviations from the norm.

As The Calcutta Review pointed out as early as in 1845, tremendous weightage was given to the white woman's "every look, word and gesture", and the need to project an orderly personality became a colonial responsibility. The Calcutta Review went on to warn that the memsahibs'
behave daily reported and canvassed in their Harems, and every instance of depravity confirms them in the wisdom of their own custom of seclusion. Did one-half of our country women reflect that, upon their conduct depends possibly the emancipation from imprisonment of thousands of their sex, they would be doubly guarded in their behaviour.

These reminders that the Anglo-Indian women lived closely-watched public lives, were also presented in an effort to contain them within certain socially-permitted modes of conduct and dress. Notions of 'permissible' and 'forbidden' conduct seem to have been re-defined in the colonial context of the Raj. For instance western modes of social behaviour and attire like ball-room dancing and low-cut evening gowns were sometimes disapproved of on the grounds that these would create among the 'native' men of a purdah-bound society, a disrespect for white women as 'shameless nautch girls'. In this regard Trevelyan had observed in 1864 that "The free and unrestrained life of an English lady excites the strangest and most unjust ideas in the mind of an Hindoo". He pointed out that "dining and talking and dancing with men connected with them neither by blood nor marriage, never fails to produce upon [Indians] a most false and unfortunate impression".

But while Trevelyan seemed to lay the blame on the 'native' men for mis-reading a different culture's social practices, some years later in 1881, The Pioneer wryly urged
its readers to "see ourselves as our Aryan brethren see us — in the matter of decolleté gowns and dancing matrons to wit". The onus now appeared to lie with the women for dressing and behaving so thoughtlessly. The colonial experience evidently had played its part in hardening certain gender attitudes among the colonisers.

But the really active and directly intervening cultural imperialists were not the memsahibs as much as the female evangelicals. Unlike male imperialists they had free access to the zenanas and were able to actively participate in 'native' female education programmes both in the zenana schools within the Indian homes and in the Normal schools outside. This was supplemented by the Female Medical Aid movement which entered the zenana with western medicines from the 1880s. Since, as we noted earlier, this category of white women mixed far more freely and familiarly, without the imperial hauteur of the memsahib, they were able to exercise a profound influence and contribute to the process of change in Indian women.

In the earlier part of the 19th century 'native' female social reform had been the purview of English male administrators (aided by Indian intellectuals) who initiated changes through legislation like Bentinck's banning of Sati in 1829 or the Hindu Widow Re-marriage Act of 1856. By the end of the century however there was widespread induction of white women — as missionaries, educationists, doctors and sometimes even memsahibs — into the social reform programmes and their implementation. Thus by the turn of the century
Diver could boast: "If the conquest and administration of India be essentially the work of England's men, the enlightening of her wives and daughters is, as essentially the work of England's women; and it cannot be said that they have neglected their share of the white man's burden in the East". Arguably there were linkages and inter-connections between the 'native' female uplift (or 'modernisation') programme and the process of British cultural imperialism in which white women consciously participated. This is evident in Diver's observation, that by helping their 'Aryan sisters', the memsahibs would succeed in furthering "that love and respect for the British Raj which it is the duty of every English man and woman in India to uphold when and whenever opportunity offers".

We may point out here that women's voices seem to become more amplified particularly during the last two decades of the century. Many of those who actively participated in these debates on the white woman, through their writings in journals, newspapers, or even through independent studies were women—people like some of the writers in The Calcutta Review, or some of the contributors of letters to the press, or women like Flora Annie Steel or Maud Diver. The majority of them seem to have been busy countering the old charges of immorality and selfishness. On the other hand, having internalized the prevailing cultural notions of the late 19th century, they were also among the
most vocal in promoting the memsahib's imperial role through their writings.

SECTION III - THE INDIAN WOMAN AND ANGLO-INDIA

How did Anglo-India perceive the Indian or the 'native' woman? How visible, in the first place, was she in the discursive writings of that period? Was she projected in a monolithic fashion or were the varying determinants of class, region and religion recognized? To begin with we find that the 'native' woman occupies a position of surprising prominence in Anglo-Indian non-fictional writing in the second half of the 19th century. *The Calcutta Review* in 1869 called the 'native' woman question "the absorbing topic of the day". This journal focused on the Indian woman in several issues during the period 1861-1891, covering various aspects, such as female education and other social reform topics, but mainly concentrated on the position of Indian women in ancient times.

SECTION III(a) - BEHIND THE VEIL: ANGLO-INDIA AND THE ZENANA

One of the most striking things about Anglo-Indian perceptions on Indian women was its preoccupation with the purdah. The purdah was in fact the great divide, the impenetrable barrier, subject to numerous fantasies, curiosity and myth-making, separating as it did the women of India from the imperial rulers. In most regions of the country, upper-caste and certainly all upper-class families
(regardless of their religion) hid their women inside the *zenana*, the *antahpur* or the *gosha*, as it was variously called. Access to this world of women was available (and that too, in a limited and closely monitored fashion), to English *women* alone. These were in the form of the occasional, mutually-disliked purdah visit by memsahibs, or the *zenana schools* or Female Medical Aid programme run by female missionaries. But these Indian women of wealthy households and of the upper-castes remained completely and literally invisible to the white *man* (barring of course, a few women such as the Parsis in Bombay or those from 'advanced' families in Bengal who had started emerging in mixed company sporadically around the 1860s, but more numerous by the 1880s).

It has often been pointed out that the Anglo-Indians, especially the men, harboured a resentment against the purdah system because they felt that it placed them on a footing of disadvantage over their male subjects. For while their own women were visually available to the Indians, they themselves were prevented from seeing Indian women. Instead, they were "dependent, entirely, or almost entirely on such information as native gentlemen themselves choose to give us", as *The Friend of India* and *The Statesman* complained in 1880. Moreover as *The Calcutta Review* cautioned in 1861, the Indian in his turn, "resents as an insult, or suspects as an insinuation, any enquiry into his domestic affairs". Thus while 'native' men evidently
sought to control their women's sexuality by shutting them inside the zenana away from public gaze, the efforts of the Anglo-Indians were geared towards bringing these very women through the gradual eradication of the purdah system, out in the open, within sight of the white people. This tussle between the two groups became, in effect, a struggle for mastery over the 'native' woman. It may not be fanciful here to read within this cultural struggle and reform programme undertones of a psycho-sexual desire to possess the Indian woman. Indeed, in the last phase of the controversy which surrounded the Age of Consent Act (1891), Indian journalists attacked the British for harbouring lascivious intentions behind the facade of the law.

Not surprisingly, therefore, an enormous curiosity seems to have prevailed in the mind of Anglo-India regarding the zenana which the missionary, Mrs Weitbrecht, articulated thus in *The Women of India and Christian Work in the Zenana* in 1875: "What is a zenana? This is a question constantly asked by those who are being aroused to sympathy for their Hindu sisters". Indeed, the need to disseminate ideas and information on the subject appears to have generated a number of studies from around the 1850s to the 1870s, usually by missionaries. As the category of white people with arguably, the greatest access and supposedly the closest knowledge of the intricacies of 'native' households, missionaries wrote authoritatively on the subject.
The majority of them projected a negative picture of the purdah as an oppressive system. Influenced by their descriptions The Calcutta Review in 1861 drew attention to the barrenness of existence, the idleness of women "doomed to inactivity", the lack of education or access to it, and the tyranny of the mother-in-law. Elucidating further on the physical discomforts, the missionary accounts of the zenanas described it as located in the darkest, dampest, unhealthiest part of the house:

The women have always the worst part of the house assigned them ... usually presenting to the eyes of the European the appearance of a prison; for the windows, if any, on the outside are very small and high up, so as effectively to preclude the possibility of the women looking out, or of anyone from the outside looking in.

Clearly, architecturally too the purdah was perceived as signifying 'native' fears for the woman's chastity from external threat as well as fear of the woman's own potentially disorderly desires.

It may not be out of place here to notice some striking similarities in the Anglo-Indian projection of the mental health of veiled Indian women and their depiction of the hysteria to which (as we saw in the last section) they claimed, white women in India were vulnerable. Not unlike the memsahib, the purdahnashins too were perceived as having little to do, whatever may have been the actual household burden they had to bear. "Idleness and listlessness are also grave defects of the character of Hindu ladies.... They should be well and actively employed", advised The Calcutta Review in 1864, while Weitbrecht remarked about a decade...
later, "the life of the rich lady is most uninteresting.... Listening to slander is one of her favourite recreations .... Many a fearful quarrel springing out of such gossip varies the monotony of zenana life". In the first decade of the next century, Flora Annie Steel too made a similar observation: "they are quarrelsome, they are petty, they are idle; indeed idleness in the women of the towns... is responsible for much".

As in the case of the memsahib, the question of female mental health occasionally came up and the projection of a woman's susceptibility to fits of despondency, anger, jealousy, nervous breakdown or hysteria was noted. Thus Margaret Urquhart in her study of the Hindu purdahnashine of Calcutta remarked in 1924: "The monotony and confinement of the women's lives often result in a lack of nerve control which shows itself in various forms of hysteria", going on to add, "Many Bengali women are noticeably hysterical and neurotic, whatever the cause." Whether they were projected as being more vulnerable to nervous disorders, being the 'weaker sex', or whether the reported instances of mental breakdown were socially-caused through the stresses that they were subjected to, cannot be established with the present data but further exploration of this falls outside the scope of this present study.

A variety of views on the zenana are available in that period. Mary Frances Billington, the journalist-author of Women of India (1895) sought to demystify its lurid aura and
called it a rather dull place, if anything, while in 1909 Maud Diver wrote about the community behind the purdah ruled by the Big Mother or grandmother. She saw it as a female domain, with plenty of human communication, initiating thereby a dominant myth which was to later have wide currency.

Different views prevailed about the origin of the social practice of seclusion. Although some still believed that it was the result of Muslim conquest, from around the 1860s onwards the general Anglo-Indian opinion appeared to trace it to a 'native' distrust of female sexuality and located the purdah as an attempt to control it. In 1861, The Calcutta Review thus protested that seclusion had existed for "centuries even before the rise of Moslemism". It stated that "the evils of the zenana" were really due to "the tyranny and selfish folly" of the male sex, but attributed by Indians to the instability and temperament of women, recalling that "Menulserhad criticized female sexuality thus: "It is the nature of women in this world to cause the seduction of men". Echoing this viewpoint, the missionary Mrs Weitbrecht pointed out: "Everywhere it means the same thing, namely that women are not to be trusted, but must be shut up as birds in a cage—must be hidden from the sight of all but their own husbands". In this manner the notion of 'native' patriarchy and the proverbially low 'native' opinion about women were further reinforced in Anglo-Indian eyes.
The white community then seems to have been vocally critical of what it believed to be the sexual suspiciousness of the Indian male as well as of his reported tyrannical patriarchy. Nevertheless it seems possible that these associations of female sensuality with the purdah entered the white people's psyche even while being discounted, and paradoxically gained credence. As a result the Anglo-Indians themselves seemed to have covertly subscribed to a similar notion of the Indian woman as sensual and dangerous, and in need of being contained or re-shaped. Thus at various and different levels, their writings seemed to focus on the languid sensuality of female life behind the veil. For instance in 1880 *The Friend of India* and *The Statesman* remarked about zenana life: "Many of the amusements are indelicate and are utterly unfit to be witnessed by [women]", questioning how it could be possible that "a woman may see and hear any amount of immoral behaviour and conversation without detriment to her modesty". Several years later, in the first quarter of the 20th century Flora Annie Steel disapprovingly commented on secluded women's "obsession of sexuality" and regretted that "the wealth of ceremonial which has gathered round the exercise of the sexual function has necessarily made it the central topic of lives confined to twelve feet square of roof". Margaret Urquhart too denigrated the
"purdahnashin's too great emphasis upon her purely physical functions", the "subtle atmosphere of animality" arising from seclusion and denounced "that precious cultivation of the sex instinct, and the insistence upon the glories of fecundity" which she claimed to have found in Bengali antahpura.

Strictly speaking, Urquhart was writing well beyond the period under consideration in this study but her views go to show what an enduring hold this myth of female sensuality exercised on the Anglo-Indian imagination. Moreover, this perception was actually a part of a larger western notion that Indians in general, regardless of their sex, were a decadent and lascivious people. Cited as evidence were Hindu religious worship of male and female phallic symbols, erotic temple carvings and the early sex experienced by girls especially under the child marriage system (referred to, by The Calcutta Review in 1861 as "a premature acquaintance with the contingencies of connubial life"). Other cultural practices, such as polygamy, early parenthood and a marriage relationship supposedly based only on a crudely physical need, rather than on love or companionship, were also referred to.

Then again considered as sensual in appearance was the sari. Initially a single piece of material worn without any other undergarment, it was denigrated for its transparency and implicitly regarded as a mark of the woman's and the culture's sensual moorings. In fact, even somewhat earlier, in the first half of the 19th century Fanny Parks, an
otherwise ardent admirer of most things Indian, demurred about the sari that she saw worn by Calcutta zenana ladies: "On beholding their attire I was no longer surprised that no other men than their husbands were permitted to enter the zenana.... The dress was rather transparent, almost useless as a veil ... the form of the limbs and tint of the skin is traced through it". On the other hand it is equally true that about two decades later the missionary, Mrs Weitbrecht, commented on the modesty of the sari: Her sari — the one piece of dress for a Bengali female — was most modestly disposed — only a little of her neck and half way up her arm — which was so far covered with bracelets — could be seen.

But only a minority viewed the sari as a modest garment. The majority perception continued to be, till the century's end, that it was obscene. Indeed, the dress-reform movement, which in Bengal became an intrinsic part of the social reform programme around 1860-1870 and was spearheaded by the westernized Bengali intelligentsia, possibly had some of its roots in this English notion of 'decency'. At any rate, the guiding principle behind the movement was a very Victorian concept of female modesty, and the reformed dress, clearly far-less-suited to the climate and obviously designed on an English sartorial model, aimed at concealing and covering the female form. It consisted of a blouse, an under-petticoat worn beneath the sari, along with shoes. Evidently based on the role-model provided by
the English woman it demonstrated how the colonisers and their Indian allies participated in a strategy to conceal and suppress the supposed libidinousness of their subject women.

The mythical sensuous appeal of the hidden Indian women was sometimes heightened by the reports of their beauty and allure. The Calcutta Review in 1861 expounded on "the beautiful symmetry of their small hands and feet, the clearness of their complexions, and the great regularity, if not exceedingly delicate chiselling of their features". Similarly, The Englishman's Saturday Evening Journal, rapturous over a Muslim lady's beauty, wondered in 1867 "whether the Eastern houris, do not, after all, bear away the palm of beauty from their Western sisterhood". And it has indeed been pointed out that Indian, like all Asian women were associated with an exotic feminine mystique by European colonisers.

But this was by no means a unanimous view. Women were not always exempt from racist contempt although by and large men were the targets of attack. Nearly a decade and a half later, The Friend of India denigrated the Bengali woman's reported beauty in patently racist terms, sneering that "her lota-crowned head requires a kind of toilet [that] can be seen any day going on in the bazaars or in the monkey's cage in the zoological garden". Possibly, this kind of racism was linked with the shifts and changes in politics, particularly during the last two decades of the century, when there was a sharpening of a narrow sense of an imperial
identity which included, among other things, the abjuring of all things 'native', including perhaps the concept of female beauty.

One specific Anglo-Indian view continued to posit power behind the purdah. It discerned within the oppression of the veil, a form of female domination over men. In the 1850s Fanny Parks, referring to her experience two decades back, stated, "Women have more influence over men in India than in any other country". This was echoed in 1861 by The Calcutta Review, which pointed out that "their influence behind the scenes, is not less powerful than western women's" - a point it went on to enlarge in 1864: "She is neither a slave nor a drudge ... as several old and some recent writers would have the European world believe. She, on the contrary, exercises a considerable influence on the domestic and social concerns of the Hindu".

Indeed this viewpoint continued to be reiterated, emphasizing the tyranny of the purdah women over their men-folk. This myth of female power of course had several other complex connotations, besides that of female sensuality. One was the notion of the effeminacy and effemeness of Indian men who could thus be dominated by their women's sensual hold over them. As Flora Annie Steel noted in India (1905), "the general form of Home Rule is feminine despotism, veiled by a slavish subserviency in trivial details", concluding that "the woman's law" or "stri achchar" prevailed in the zenana.
SECTION III(c) - IN SEARCH OF THE SATI: THE IDEAL OF THE SACRIFICING INDIAN WIFE

But behind the myth of female power there also lay, inextricably intertwined, the other important myth - that of the devoted Indian woman. Modern scholars today recognize as intrinsic to colonial cultures the co-existence of these twin myths of sensuality and devotion. The women of the subject race are projected as the 'Other' and fantasized as sexually compliant, excitingly sensual, subservient and eager to please. When Diver in 1909 praised the "multitudes of veiled women who, by reason of their worshipful service, dominate the men they serve as unveiled women cannot hope to do", it was this aspect of devotedness that she seems to have had in mind.

Strengthening this myth of devotion was the influence of British Orientalism of the 18th and 19th century, where scholars like William Jones and H.T. Colebrooke had recovered the spiritual and devoted Vedic woman of a noble, historical past. Some of the writings of mid 19th century and a little later showed a similar interest in the woman of the past. Among them was Mrs Speier's Life in Ancient India (1856) written under the influence of British Orientalist scholarship, and specifically Max Mueller's writings. It focused on ancient Indian "women's interests in holy themes" and glorified Maitreyi's learning and her urge to "contemplate the soul alone since everything is soul". In a related vein, Clarisse Bader's Women in Ancient India
(1867) eulogized the "spiritual tenderness" of the Vedic woman who, according to her, displayed "Ardent piety, spiritual and ascetic tenderness, complete abnegation of herself, unlimited devotion to her family, a boundless need of love".

During this period The Calcutta Review too published a number of articles which focused on the Vedic woman and her legacy of nobility and spirituality. In 1872 it referred to "the development of the spiritual element" in Vedic Indian women, going on further, to "exalt "a ready moral perception and an ability to discharge domestic and social duties". It attributed this to "the precepts of the sastras [which] were powerful in their influence on the female mind and instrumental in the continued formation of exemplary female characters". The idea of the relevance of spirituality in the present was further voiced in 1880 by the journal when it advised that Indian female education "must be distinctly religious" since woman was "the moral providence of man, superior to him in heart".

A related strain glorified the ideal of the self-sacrificing and devoted wife - the three names most commonly reiterated being those of Sita, Savitri and Sakuntala. The Calcutta Review in 1861 admired how "the beautiful story of Savitri gives a picture of womanly fidelity and tenderness which is very touching", a view echoed by Weitbrecht in 1875: "We cannot but admire the beautifully unselfish devotion to the partner whom she [i.e. Savitri] has
chosen". Indeed, behind this ideal lay the image of the woman who had become a sati, the wife who makes the ultimate self-sacrifice.

The word 'sati' meant a faithful wife, while what the British called 'suttee' was the practice of self-immolation on the husband's funeral pyre. The practice of sati had of course been banned in 1829, but even in the past, despite its opposition to widow immolation, the European imagination seems to have been fired by the image of a burning woman — inspiring horror but, in an attitude full of ambivalences, also some kind of covert admiration. More so, now that it was no longer seen as a pressing contemporary problem by mid-19th century, the practice seems to have aroused admiration. This is evident for instance in Mrs Speier's study where it is equated with womanly love and an expression of a "free woman's character". Somewhat later, Clarisse Bader saw sati as awe-inspiring, as an expression of woman's ability to go beyond the "bounds of requirements", noting that while the "law commanded the woman to identify her life with her husband's" the woman who committed sati "went further and identified her death with his".

It was in keeping with this mid and late 19th century ideology on women that the idea of sacrifice and female passivity were seen as a kind of strength by Urquhart. In a spirit similar to Speier's and Bader's, she valorised the concept of "wise passiveness": "Passivity has its victories as well as activity ... to be passive ... is to wield the
greatest of all forces". Behind such a perspective there obviously lay a Victorian outlook which glorified gentle and sacrificing 'womanliness'. This also meant that in a subtle fashion 'native' women, who were at one level proscribed for their sensuousness and other alleged failings, were also held up as a prescriptive model of feminine behaviour. Indeed, the European woman and the Indian often came to be, implicitly or otherwise, set against one another for comparison. Sometimes this was in fact to the distinct disadvantage of the memsahib, who at other times was presented as a female role-model. Statements like the following, made by an Anglo-Indian magistrate in the 1870s, indicated a preference for the 'feminine' role-model deemed to be offered by the 'native' women. He described the latter as 'so amusingly playful, so anxious to oblige and please' and stated that a person "after being accustomed to their society shrinks from the idea of encountering the whims or yielding to the fancies of an English woman". Admittedly he was referring to the experience of the earlier decades of the 19th century; such a categorical preference for the Indian woman might perhaps not have been so easily found by mid-century, given the large presence of the memsahib and the establishment of a more 'English' self-identity.

It nevertheless seems reasonable to suggest that the process of colonisation probably contributed to the hardening of a masculinist bias in the Anglo-Indian culture,
as patriarchal elements from the 'native' milieu were selectively absorbed. So that even while the British in India were busy attacking structures which they associated with the 'native' oppression of women, they succeeded instead in also reifying their own male biases.

SECTION III(d) - ANGLO-INDIA AND THE AGENDA OF SOCIAL REFORM

In the 19th century Anglo-Indians saw themselves as social reformers, the uplift of the Indian woman being their primary target and the socially oppressive practices that they identified included the problem of female infanticide, widow-remarriage, child marriage, polygamy, female illiteracy and of course, purdah.

The 'native' woman question in fact became a tool of colonial ideology and the Anglo-Indians presented themselves as the rescuer of the Indian woman from the oppressive social practices of her own men - thereby also justifying the need for their continued presence in India. The 'native' perception of women was, as we noted in the last section, seen as degrading unlike their own 'exaltation' of womankind. This was a theme The Calcutta Review voiced in 1861, when it explained that "chivalrous sentiments of English men and the benign and elevating aspects of our sublime faith towards the sex" prompted this concern for oppressed Hindu women. Some years later in 1868 the same journal proclaimed in self-congratulatory tones: "Englishmen have saved the children from the Ganges, the aged widow from
the flames and the child wife from that living tomb, in which she was confined after the death of her sexagenarian 210 husband”.

This perception however was, at one level, fraught with contradictions. While the ruling race proclaimed its cultural, moral and political superiority over a decadent subject people, it simultaneously suffered from a sense of being rejected as inferior by Hindus through the caste system. Thus the self-styled saviours of ‘native’ women were conscious that as ‘mlechhas’ and ‘untouchables’ existing outside the caste system, they were, in their turn looked down upon by Indians, including Muslims. Similarly the womenfolk of upper caste families or those of wealthy, upper class, princely or zamindar households, both Hindu and Muslim, viewed the middle class memsahib as their inferior, so much so that sometimes taking advantage of the white woman’s ignorance of the ‘native’ languages they would be rude to her face - as Flora Annie Steel experienced.

The target of the social reform programme in the century was the Hindu rather than the Muslim woman. We can only speculate about the possible reason. Although Muslim women also observed purdah and suffered from a variety of oppressive practices the British in India chose to focus on Hindu women. Among other reasons or factors, perhaps the ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British which made them favour Muslims for political gains, particularly accounts for this anomaly.
Among the issues concerning the Hindu woman the situation of the widow was often highlighted. With sati being banned for nearly a generation now, the sympathy was for what The Calcutta Review called in 1861, "the hopeless and intensely wretched life of widows", a sentiment echoed by Weitbrecht and Diver - and the debates (found for instance in The Calcutta Review) now shifted to the question of widow-remarriage, and implicitly, to her sexuality.

It ought to be noted; at this juncture that the projection of the 'native' woman in Anglo-Indian writings of this period displayed a large degree of plurality. Thus missionary writings, even when discussing the Vedic past, concentrated on the present degradation, and generally provided a negative picture of social evils. On the other hand, a journal like The Calcutta Review focused on works of Orientalist scholarship and a recovery of the glorious past. In contrast, the Anglo-Indian press, as a whole, barely showed any interest in the 'native' woman, except in the area of female education with newspapers like The Madras Mail and The Friend of India especially, giving wide coverage to the growth and development of schools for girls during the years 1869-1890.

While the earlier part of the 19th century had seen the colonial government intervening in the 'native' woman's reform issue through a series of legislations banning social evils, by the second half of the century the focus had shifted to the gradual removal of social evils primarily by re-casting and re-shaping the minds of Indian women through
education. Education was perceived as a means to strengthen and shape female morality and to equip Indian women to be good wives and mothers. The Calcutta Review in 1864 argued that "education ... need not oppose nature, which has framed her to be a wife and mother"; and simultaneously urged the importance of "the connection between education and morality". In essence the thrust of this educational effort appears to have been to re-cast the much-maligned Indian female sensuality of the zenanas, with its preoccupations with the body and its functions and with its rites focusing on sex and sexuality.

Not only was the emergence from the zenana to be the long-term objective of the education programme, the attempt was, equally importantly, to help in shaping the Indian "New Woman" — a phrase used by Urquhart to denote the westernized, modern woman — who was to be modelled on the pattern of the English (Victorian) woman. The concept of the Bengali Bhadramahila, for instance, which came into prominence around this time (i.e. the 1860's and 1870's) was, among other factors, a product of the Westernisation of Bengali male reformers. It coalesced the Hindu female's ideal of self-sacrifice with the Victorian lady's ability to co-operate in the furtherance of her husband's career with her moral goodness, basic education and social presence — apart from also being his companion and helpmate.

Significantly enough, neither by the imperialists nor by the Indian intelligentsia, was the 'strong-minded',
independent Victorian spinster like Mary Carpenter or Frances Power Cobbe held up as a role-model. Instead the ideal was the Ruskinian notion of the gentle and subservient wife. It is true that Weitbrecht had expressed some reservations about the Savitri ideal, since its "principle of unquestioning obedience ... has brought about the enslavement of women", but in the end even she endorsed the ideal "of self-denial and ... the cultivation of that meek and quiet spirit".

By the turn of the century these attitudes to the 'woman question' seemed to be fairly crystallised. Not surprisingly, in a manner reminiscent of the resistance to women's higher education in Victorian England, university education for 'native' women was strongly opposed by Anglo-India. Maud Diver, a great advocate of basic 'native' female education wrote against their higher education. She argued that the "premature development of mind and body rest upon no solid foundation of physical strength"— and attributed the purely coincidental early deaths of several gifted, educated Indian women to this. Billington too supported Diver's position (which was also voiced by Mrs Wheeler, inspectress of schools in Bengal in the 1890s), that university-educated Indian women "become arrogant, are seldom successful as teachers, and frequently develop hysteria and nervous complaints. It is too great a brain effort with no hereditary preparation".

Indeed, this category— albeit numerically small —of Indian women, westernized, middle class and educated,
remained virtually ignored in much of the Anglo-Indian writings - for example, in the press and the journals. Only towards the end of the century, in some studies by memsahibs, did this class of Indian women receive some attention. E.F. Chapman's *Sketches Of Some Distinguished Indian Women* (1891) paid tribute to women who were highly educated, while Diver's *The Englishwoman In India* (1909) devoted an entire section to "Pioneer Women of India" where she highlighted achievements of women like Toru Dutt, Pundita Ramabai, Anandabai Joshi. Nonetheless, Diver was careful to caution: "But more than one generation must pass away before the undeveloped brains and bodies of India's women can safely be subjected to the ruthless strain put upon them by spirits athirst for knowledge".

Possibly, behind this studied silence were feelings of insecurity regarding a category of Indians whom they probably perceived as potentially subversive - politically, culturally, as well as socially. With the Universities of Madras and Calcutta being opened up to women before even London University was (the first B.A. degree being awarded to a woman in Calcutta University in 1883) Anglo-Indians were in no position to patronise this category of women. No doubt their worries and insecurities were increased by the entry of the educated Bengali woman into anti-colonial politics at the turn of the century. Yet, as imperial rulers, fraught with their own colonial anxieties and insecurities, they needed the reassurance of feeling
superior — without fears of the subversion which they increasingly located in the problematic, emerging category of the educated middle class Indian, both male and female.

SECTION III(e) - AYAHs AND PEASANTS: COLONIAL PATERNALISM AND THE INDIAN WOMAN

Not surprisingly therefore, the Anglo-Indian press, which indicated the broad majority preoccupations of that community, focused upon the Indians of the lower social order and in particular on the ayah. As we have earlier seen, the colonial rulers were always most comfortable with 'subalterns' — peasants, domestic servants, 'simple' tribals — whom they could treat with benevolent paternalism. Also the ayah was the Indian female with whom the average white man or woman came closest in contact particularly after the establishment of empire and the cultivation of social distance by the imperial rulers.

But Anglo-Indian opinion on the ayah seems to have been divided. For instance, The Pioneer in 1880 praised her, rather pompously as "a confidential secretary in the Home Department" going on to eulogize, "She has given her life for years to her master's family.... The children will carry in their hearts the ayah's laughter and tears ... after all else Indian has passed out of their lives". On the other hand, a memsahib could express her reservations in The Calcutta Review in 1885 about the undependableness of 'native' servants in general and especially "the tender
mercy of the native ayah (the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel!"

In either case, whether seen as 'devoted' or 'wicked', the ayah's influence on children was clearly considered undesirable and British nannies were recommended by Steel and Gardiner during the child's early years in India. It is important to note, however, that the close relationship between the ayah and Anglo-Indian children, both communicating in the same 'native' language, with the ayah almost a surrogate-mother, created a deep bond. This was perhaps sensed to be potentially dangerous, threatening to dismantle the barriers between the ruler and the ruled, between coloniser and colonised, and posing the danger of creating an 'Indianized' English.

Certain other socially subordinate groups and their womenfolk were projected sympathetically in colonial writings. These included the peasant women, especially of the Punjab, 'spirited' Pathan tribeswomen of the North-West Frontier Province and simple hill-girls, tall and fair-skinned. In addition to class, the factor of race too seems to have played an operative role here - all these women were markedly 'Aryan' in their skin colouring, physiognomy, as well as build. "I really think hill-women ... are charming," noted The Calcutta Review in 1885, while Christine Bremner, the metropolitan British visitor in the 1890's admired, and in so doing voiced an Anglo-Indian preference, for hill women: "She was a slender, refined-looking girl of about
seventeen with handsome Caucasian features. She walked 150 miles in less than a fortnight... I often gazed with admiring eye on her admirably poised figure”. About Punjabi peasant women Flora Annie Steel in her autobiography was all praise, observing, “here was a Hinduism which was not enervating, which was worthy of respect and admiration. They were a tall people, men and women, physically fit... the work of the women in the fields was valuable”.

Clearly enough, in both the instances, to the traditional colonial preference for a supposedly unthreatening rural simplicity was appended a noticeable emphasis on physical fitness and athleticism. This was perhaps an echo of the late 19th century masculinist bias and philathleticism which, as we noted earlier, was characteristic of the ethos of empire in the 80s and 90s. Interestingly, in the projection of these women the ‘masculine’ traits of industriousness, physical fitness, bravery, and honesty were highlighted.

Hints of the cultural valorisation of ‘masculinity’ were in fact anticipated earlier on in the 1860s - but only as a minor strand - when Orientalist scholarship, discussing the noble Indian woman of the past, drew attention to the virangana figure with her martial prowess and fierce spirit. The Calcutta Review in 1869, seeking to fill the gaps, in “the utter blank in the history of the female sex”, praised the “Ranee of Jhansi” as “a woman of high spirit and conspicuous talent”. But this strand remained, to the
end, subsumed by the other predominant myths about 'native' female sensuality and devotedness.

SECTION III(f) - INDIAN BIBI - WHITE SAHIB : THE PROBLEM OF MISCEGENATION

Since, as we have seen, the 'native' woman was generally perceived as alluring and sexually desirable, what were inter-racial sexual relations like, between her and the white coloniser? And how were these relations affected by shifts and changes in the course of empire-building?

The 1860's seem to have coincided with a major change in attitudes to miscegenation. Initially, the pattern here, as in all European empires tended towards inter-marriage with local women. By mid 18th century it is estimated that 90 per cent of Englishmen in India formally married either Indian women (sometimes of upper classes with many Company officers marrying into aristocratic Muslim houses, for instance) or Eurasian women. But by the beginning of the 19th century inter-racial marriage virtually came to an end though the 'native' concubine or bibi continued to be kept and inter-racial sexual liaisons continued to be widely and openly practised. Indeed, as late as in 1858 a military officer could openly write, in his letter 'home', about his "Eastern princess" mistress who answered "all the purposes of a wife without any of the bother".

From around the 1860's miscegenation was frowned upon by society and by government, and having a bibi became a
matter of shame, to be received with sharp disapproval. The reasons for this change were several. These included the 'Mutiny' which caused a rift between the races, the establishment of empire, a consequent cultivation of an aloof imperial identity, and the encouragement by government of white, resident wives. As we noted in the last section, the ethos of empire was, among other things, rooted in a middle class sensibility marked by a preference for a self-contained English-style society and moulded on the pattern of 'home'.

Increasingly, an Indian mistress probably came to be viewed as a threat to white cultural hegemony, eroding the cultural identity of the Englishman and possibly making him 'go native'. Notwithstanding this, in actual practice, the keeping of Indian mistresses continued sporadically especially in a covert fashion, in remote, far-flung plantations or distant mofussil postings. Among the former, in particular, for the next thirty years, it remained fairly common to keep an Indian bibi and after some years, acquire an English wife from England and suitably pension off the 'native' woman. Of course. By and large an eloquent silence was maintained in Anglo-Indian writings on this kind of gender and colonial exploitation.

Even if secret, sexual liaisons with Indian women were grudgingly tolerated by the community, the intensity of public opinion against inter-racial marriage is evident in the discussions generated by a letter, significantly enough, from a metropolitan Englishman in The Friend of India in
1871. Calling it an "insult" that the English had been "treating the women of the country as fit only to be concubines and not the wives of Europeans" it advocated inter-marriage as a means of preventing the danger of "deservedly losing India". The resulting hue and cry among the readers was so great that the Editor had to hastily clarify that the writer was not advocating but had merely "charged Englishmen either to marry Hindoos or to have nothing at all to do with them in that way".

While the colonial government of India frowned upon miscegenation among the 'officer' class, in contrast, it virtually arranged for the British soldiers, coming from the lower classes, to visit Indian prostitutes. It ensured their safety from venereal diseases, by passing the Indian Contagious Diseases Act in England. Then again, military authorities often emphasized that prostitution was a hereditary profession among 'natives' and therefore not 'immoral' by Indian standards. Nevertheless the contradictions in the official attitudes to miscegenation with regard to different classes of Englishmen indicated a concern to preserve the structure of power and to ensure the necessary social distance between the official elite and the subject people.

SECTION IV - THE EURASIAN : HOSTAGE TO INDIA

The products of miscegenation were the Eurasians. Consequent to the various changes in social conditions by
the 1860s they were usually the offspring of lower-class Englishmen and Indian women of the servant class or prostitutes. In an earlier generation, especially till the end of the 18th century, Eurasians were sometimes the product of inter-racial marriages between Company officers and women (especially Muslim women) from courtly families. The children of such upper class marriages generally integrated into the white community. Aided by their class background, they seem to have been accepted readily and usually married later on into white families. Thus in 1800 James Kirkpatrick, Resident at the Nizam's court, made a romantic marriage with the daughter of the Nizam's paymaster. Similarly, in the early part of the 19th century one Colonel Gardner was married to a princess of the Cambay royalty. In such instances the begums maintained purdah, the family kept opulent Oriental life-styles and the children in their earlier years were brought up in 'native' style. Such marriages evoked mild criticism but were otherwise readily accepted, while the children, subsequently Europeanized through later residence in England, most commonly integrated with the white community.

From 1791 onwards Eurasians were systematically discriminated against, no longer being considered eligible for service in the East India Company and all avenues of prosperous employment closed to them by government policy. Nevertheless their lack of prosperity was often cited as proof of their fecklessness, lack of enterprise and energy—
racial stereotypes that were, in fact, also applied to Indian males. The most commonly-held perception throughout the 19th century was, as The Calcutta Review noted in 1870, "the worst points of both the European and native character are not unfrequently combined in the hybrid". By the second half of the 19th century, the Eurasian was looked down upon, and along with other poor whites, considered an embarrassment and a blot on British prestige and imperial dignity. Moreover, a person of mixed blood was viewed with uneasy disfavour as threatening to bridge that vital social distance between the ruler and the ruled.

Eurasian men as well as women seem to have been fixed within the same stereotypes as the 'natives'. If anything, Eurasian women were probably looked down upon even more than the 'native' woman - as more sensual and lacking in will-power and therefore, by inference, more prone to 'immorality'. The slack morality of impoverished Eurasian women was often discussed in the press. The Friend of India, for instance, voiced its concern in 1870 about the financial insecurity of widows and children of both the poor whites and the Eurasians (both of whom were often grouped together). It feared the danger of their taking to prostitution and reported with distaste, the high incidence of wife-beating among the "East Indian community" of the "lower middle class". Unlike 'native' women who were constantly referred to in Anglo-Indian discursive writings, the Eurasian woman was more or less ignored. In these fleeting and very occasional references she was usually seen
as a source of anxiety and embarrassment to the ruling 243 community. A large number of Eurasian women seem to have been barrack-wives. They were reportedly less inclined to the bottle, but more prone to spending on finery; while several women of Eurasian origin were employed as nursemaids in white homes or as Bible-Women, a few others are estimated to have practised as prostitutes through the century.

The idea of creating a new race through inter-racial marriage was occasionally brought up. It was pointed out that this race would be better suited to the exigencies of the climate which was too harsh for the English, and would therefore allow for a colonisation involving permanent settlers. This, it was argued, would also help in creating harmony between the races and thereby reduce Anglo-India's insecurities and anxieties. In the 1870s The Madras Mail, making such a proposal, nonetheless admitted its inherent flaw because of the factor of class: "Some have strongly advocated inter-marriage as a likely means of bringing about a more congenial state of things.... At present natives of high caste cannot give their daughters to Europeans, while on the other hand, few Englishmen of standing would choose a native, however high her caste might be, for a wife".

However, given Anglo-India's late-Victorian penchant for racial purity, race was as much a factor as class in preventing integration. A Eurasian request in the 1880s that a new racial classification be implemented, based on the degree of admixture with 'native' blood, could make little
difference to European attitudes. Irrespective of fairness of skin, Anglo-India continued to look upon people of mixed races with a combination of contempt and moral suspicion.

SECTION V - ANGLO-INDIA AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

Before we conclude, we need to address the Anglo-Indian perspective on the Woman Question, an issue, that was of such prominence in contemporary England. As we have seen, the colonisers claimed to give to the gender question enormous weightage, projecting themselves as the great emancipators of Indian womanhood. This indeed lends an even greater significance to the subject and necessitates our briefly examining it.

The Woman Question, which was generating such passionate debates in the mother-country was, to all appearances, either ignored completely or met with hostility in the Anglo-Indian press during this period. In 1870, The Englishman’s Saturday Evening Journal, in keeping with its generally conservative stand, made fun of masculine women who were "wild for woman’s rights", branding them as "bold in habits or without modesty in mind". Twenty years later the same newspaper went on to question the contemporary British "eulogies in praise of the mental capacity of women", asserting that men's intellectual superiority and women's inferiority would increasingly become clearer. In its turn, The Madras Mail – an otherwise fairly liberal paper – opposed medical professions for women in the 1860s,
this 'immorality', leading Maud Diver to protest: "English women are disposed to pass judgement on their Anglo-Indian sisters .... From pedestals of sober respectability and energetic industry they denounce as idle, frivolous and luxury-loving, those other women of whose trials and temptations they know little or nothing".

Probably among the most damaging charges against the memsahib in the long run was that of racial prejudice. For long this remained one of the enduring myths of the British Raj; so much so, that in the liberal and post-colonial perception on the white woman this continued to be a deeply-etched premise. In the 1870s The Madras Mail could admonish "were it not for the influence of European ladies many English men would probably see more of natives at their houses" and state that by encouraging inter-racial mixing these ladies "could, if they would, effect a social revolution".

Furthermore, the issue of gender came to be deployed for reinforcing a racist ideology, as all Indians were projected as contemptuous of women in general. In the 1860s G.O.Trevelyan echoed an old cultural prejudice when he noted: "The wide and radical difference between the views held by the respective races with regard to the weaker sex alone, forms a bar, at present insuperable, to any very familiar intercourse ... [Indians]—cannot bring themselves to look upon women as better than playthings". This view was not particularly linked to the takeover by the Crown. In fact, long before the 1857 Revolt or the establishment of
programme of 'native' women's social amelioration. Sometimes in fact they went so far as to openly express a preference for certain 'native' social practices that they had all along condemned as oppressive and had sought to eradicate. Thus in 1861 The Calcutta Review, while discussing the purdah and other social evils and urging their removal, went on to actually qualify that the purdah was "attended with less evil, than if women were advanced towards the English idea of their rights and privileges". And nearly two decades later The Friend of India and The Statesman, while sharply criticizing the zenana system, referred to an individual Anglo-Indian opinion that the zenana "would be a desirable institution in some sections of the European community". This was a viewpoint that the newspapers may have rejected, but which, nonetheless, had indeed been articulated. This may not have been a popular viewpoint, but occasional murmurings to this effect were not unknown.

The other angle to the question is that 19th century British feminism assumed other implications once translated into colonial India. We should note that the relationship between the women's movement in England and imperialism itself was a problematic one. Recent research suggests that the programmes of Victorian feminism were not free of imperialist assumptions. These feminists were of course by no means a homogeneous group. Some tended to draw upon the image of the enslaved 'native' female and adopt the civilizing mission because it both satisfied their womanly
sympathies for their downtrodden 'native' sisters and at the same time affirmed an emancipatory role for themselves. In any case, Victorian women who were involved in 'native' female social upliftment could not but be infused with the idea of moral responsibility and sense of mission that characterized imperialism. The 1860s and 1870s saw Victorian 'spinsters' like Mary Carpenter and Annette Ackroyd plunging themselves into 'native' female social amelioration. They were not evangelists interested in Christian proselytisation but what we would today call 'feminists', passionately involved in the social upliftment of 'native' women, primarily through education. But in the context of India the perceptions of Victorian feminism were rent with tensions and contradictions. By being part of the civilizing mission women like these could not help being drawn in, however indirectly, into the imperialist agenda. Consequently, we find complex inter-connections, involving both differences and common trajectories, between the projects of 19th century British 'feminists' as well as imperialism in India.

To sum up, we see an intrinsic link between the enterprise of empire in the 19th century and the growth of an ideology on women. Evolving out of the material conditions of Victorian England and an interplay of several factors, colonialism seems to have hardened attitudes to women, despite the nascent women's movement in England from the 1860s onwards.
Around this time, in Anglo-India white women were inducted into the imperial project in diverse ways. Nonetheless, this trend seems to have co-existed with a strong anti-woman strand, borne out of a criss-crossing of inherited Victorian values, colonial anxieties, and a complex process of drawing upon patriarchal notions from Indian culture. When it came to the Indian woman, the colonisers projected themselves as paternalist saviours fighting Indian patriarchy. But, as we have seen, in effect, they seemed to have opposed any real emancipation, furthering at best, a 'Victorianization' of the Indian woman.

All through the period Anglo-India seemed to have been busy, preoccupied with 'woman', debating and discussing women's roles, creating myths and counter-myths through their writings. Indeed, there was the creation of an ideology, based on the written word, which may sometimes have even distorted, or created its own reality, departing from material conditions. Finally, although at some points there seems to have been a curious sameness, an unbroken continuity, in terms of attitudes throughout the second half of the 19th century, it would be reasonable to submit that on the whole this period witnessed an overall hardening of gender conservatism, which went hand in hand with an increased race arrogance and sense of imperial superiority.
NOTES


5 Ruskin, op.cit., p. 16.

6 Ruskin, op.cit., p. 17.

7 Ibid.


9 From 1858 to 1868 police estimates of known prostitutes in London ranged from about 5,500 to 7,100, and for England and Wales, from 24,300 to 29,500. In that period, if clandestine prostitution were to be included, the figure for London alone is estimated at 8,000. See Ronald Hyam, Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience (Manchester, 1990), p. 60.

10 Several different surveys suggest that in 19th century England up to 40 to 50 per cent of prostitutes were
drawn from the servant classes. For this and for schoolboy sex with a female servant in the family home see Hyam, pp. 59-61.


12 Despite his spirited opposition to the subjection of women, even J.S.Mill said, "Like a man when he chooses a profession, so when a woman marries, it may be understood that she makes a choice of the management of a household and the bringing up of a family, as the first call upon her exertions", *The Subjection of Women*, Chapter 2, op.cit., p. 214.


15 Male emigration to colonies was three times as much as female emigration. By 1871 for every 3 women over 20 who were wives in England, there were 2 who were widows or spinsters. See Patricia Hollis, ed. *Women in Public 1850-1900*, p. 32.
16 W.R. Greg, "Why are Women Redundant?", National Review, April, 1862 (no pagination) cited in Patricia Hollis ed. Women in Public. He goes on to argue that emigration would "afford relief to the whole body corporate - just as bleeding in the foot will relieve the head or the heart from distressing or perilous congestion", op. cit., p.38.


20 H. Maudsley, "Sex in Mind and in Education", Fortnightly Review, April 1874, cited in ibid., p.25.


23 For empire and the concept of masculinity see Ronald Hyam, pp 71-74; Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism (Delhi, 1983), pp.4-9.

24 Helen Callaway in Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria (1987) in discussing colonial
Nigeria, points out how white women were seen as "subordinate and unnecessary appendages", not as rulers. Cited in Chandra Talpade Mohanty et al eds. Third World Women And the Politics of Feminism (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991), p.16.

25 See Introduction to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ibid., p. 10, p. 16.

26 For 19th century 'theories' on race, which sought to establish, in pseudo-scientific ways, the Afro-Asian's sensuality, inability to govern, fickleness, inherent backwardness and lack of vigour, see Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914 (Ithaca and London, 1988), pp.21-24 and 35. Also see Margaret Macmillan, "Anglo-Indians And the Civilizing Mission, 1880-1914", in Gopal Krishna ed. Contributions to South Asian Studies, Vol.-2 (Delhi, 1982), pp. 82-85.


29 M. Burrows, op. cit., p.145.


31 Rebecca Stott, ibid., pp. 71-81.


34 Ashis Nandy, p. 5.


37 Mrinalini Sinha notes (in the context of the Ilbert Bill controversy) the conflation of racist and gendered terminology in discursive writings: "Consequently in the colonial context racial ideology was often articulated in gendered terms and gender ideology in

38 For a discussion on 19th century 'Race Theories' in India see Margaret Macmillan, "Anglo-Indians And the Civilizing Mission, 1880-1914", pp. 82-85.


41 For the Indian's cleverness see G.O.Trevelyan, *Cawnpore* (Delhi, 1992, originally ptd. 1865), p. 48. Also see J.C.Oman, *Cults, Customs And Superstitions Of India* (Delhi, 1972, first published London, 1908).


44 "The Bengali In The Punjab", in *The Civil And Military Gazette*, March 17, 1875.
45 Cf. Flora Annie Steel, "Not but the Bengalis are excellent folk, but they are born agitators". F.A. Steel, _The Garden Of Fidelity_ (London, 1929), p.189.


51 Ibid., pp. 27 and 24.

52 Valentine Chirol, _Indian Unrest_ (New Delhi, 1979, first pub. 1910), pp. 102-3.

53 J.C. Oman, _The Brahmans. Theists And Muslims of India_, p. 20.

54 Ronald Hyam, pp. 119, 208-9.


56 Sir J.D. Rees, _Modern India_ (1910), p. 175, cited in Margaret Macmillan, "Anglo-Indians and the Civilizing
Mission 1880-1914", p. 99. For the invention of a vocabulary of ritual and gesture to signify power, see Bernard S. Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India", in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds. The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge, 1983).


58 For probable date of origin of the word 'memsahib' (i.e. 'madam sahib'), see The Oxford English Dictionary (London, 1961), Vol. VI, p. 332.

59 Margaret Macmillan, Women of the Raj, p. 58; Dennis Kincaid, pp. 219-20.

60 Some missionaries were of lower middle class or Eurasian origins. See Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj (London, 1980), pp. 112-15.


62 For 'social distance' as a component in the imperial identity, see Kenneth Ballhatchet, p. 121 and especially Ronald Hyam, pp. 119, 208.


64 Phrase used by The Friend of India, June 20, 1872, p. 715 for both poor Europeans and Eurasians, who were often clubbed together in this category. Other issues
of the Anglo-Indian press on this subject include: The Civil and Military Gazette, 15 December 1875, p.9; The Friend of India 28 January 1875, p. 82; 11 September 1975, p. 830; 2 October 1875, p. 918.


66 The Friend of India, 6 November 1875, p. 909.

67 In 1880, out of 7,001 prostitutes in Calcutta, 65 were European and 46 Eurasian; in 1893 the number of European prostitutes was 70 and in 1894, 50. See Kenneth Ballhatchet, pp. 132-33.


69 Most of the white prostitutes were East Europeans. See Kenneth Ballhatchet, p. 164.

70 The Sentinel, Jan. 1888 (no pagination), cited in Ballhatchet, p. 125.

71 The Sentinel, January 1888, ibid., p. 125; The Sentinel, March 1894 (no pagination), cited in Ballhatchet, p. 134.

72 Cited in Kenneth Ballhatchet, p.131.

73 The Sentinel, March 1894, (no pagination), op.cit., p. 134. Cf. "And yet Calcutta has no Vice flaunting itself outside as London has", The Friend of India, January 12, 1871,p. 35; "Vice may thrive, but it is silent ... there is nothing to suggest sex in an Indian city ... there is outward decency at least", Flora Annie Steel,

74 Many critics (e.g. Dennis Kincaid) tend to ignore the barrack-wife who is discussed by Margaret Macmillan, Women of the Raj, pp. 19, 122; Joanna Trollope, Britannia's Daughters: Women of the British Empire (London, 1983), p. 121.

75 "Review of the Progress of Sanitation in India", The Calcutta Review No. 99, Vol. 50, 1870, p. 103 noted the higher mortality rate among barrack wives and children as compared to that of the men. In 1870, with improved hygienic conditions the male mortality rate dropped to 26.55 per 1,000, that of women (46 per 1,000) and children (80 per 1,000) remained the same.


77 Ibid., p. 124.

78 Ibid., p. 124.

79 Ibid., p. 121.

80 Cited in Charles Allen, p. 29.


85 *The Calcutta Review*, criticizing this attitude, uses these terms in J.E. Dawson, "Woman in India", *op. cit.*, p. 351.


91 *The Friend of India*, June 12, 1875, p. 551 also accuses the society of materialism.

92 *The Madras Mail*, 29 April 1869 (no pagination). Also see *The Madras Mail* 4 May 1869 (no pagination).

93 The grass-widower is treated with irony, as deliriously dancing with the prettiest girls in *The Times of India*, 19 June 1861, p. 3.

94 Maud Diver noted that, "The large tolerance ... slips all too easily into a certain laxity - mental, moral and physical", Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India*, pp. 6-7.


96 A view echoed by contemporaries, e.g. "the presence of English ladies ... has helped to widen perceptibly the
breach between the governors and the governed", Bremner, p. 20. Critics in this century tended to support this theory till recently, e.g. Dennis Kincaid who cited the oft-quoted racist remark of a memsahib in the late 19th century: "I know nothing at all about them, nor I don't wish to. Really, I think, the less one knows of them the better", in Kincaid, p. 193. More recent critics tend to contextualize it, e.g. Margaret Macmillan, *Women of the Raj*, pp. 60-65; Ronald Hyam, pp. 118-19, 208-9.


nudity is of no more account than the nudity of cattle...

... Englishwomen will sometimes similarly disregard all the covenances before their male domestics", The Friend of India and the Statesman, 15 December 1880, p. 1157.

The Englishman's Saturday Evening Journal, 9 August 1890, p. 747, complained that "lower class" native men "insult European or Eurasian ladies when they find them unprotected", and that Indian bystanders did not come to their aid, when a "whole body of students molested a lady who happened to pass them". The Anglo-Indian press also made a hue and cry over a 'native allegedly intruding into a white woman's bedroom at night and touching her knee - The Friend of India and the Statesman 28 July 1883, p. 1067:

Ballhatchet, p.6; Meredith Borthwick, The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905 (Princeton, 1984), p.338; Jenny Sharpe, Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text (Minneapolis and London, 1993), pp.89-90 discuss reactions to the Ilbert Bill.


Ibid., p. 53.

112 The Pioneer, 10 November 1888.

113 G.O. Trevelyan, Cawnpore, p. 75.

114 Ibid., p. 75.


116 G.O. Trevelyan, Cawnpore, p. 177.

117 Ibid., p. 177.


119 Pat Barr, The Memsahibs: The Women of Victorian India (New Delhi, 1976), cites the abduction, 'marriage' to captors, escape and subsequent rehabilitation of Amelia Horne ("the only woman known to survive the Cawnpore Siege"), pp. 118-19.


121 W.J. Shepherd, A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak And Massacre at Cawnpore during the Sepoy Revolt of 1857
See Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*, p. 74. Sharpe's study offers one of the best documentation on the subject of the white woman and the 1857 Rebellion.


*The Times*, 16 October 1885, cited in *ibid.*, p. 35.

The Madras Mail, 18 May 1869 (no pagination).


Maud Diver, p. 10.


"Englishwomen in India", by An English Woman in India, *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 8, No. 159, 1885, p. 150, p. 147. It voices a widespread opinion when it warns that "it is even more difficult to keep their minds healthy than their bodies", because of the possible influence of the low "moral tone" of native servants, p. 150. Also see
Maud Diver, who notes that keeping children in India would be to run the "risk of handicapping them, physically and morally in the race of life", Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India*, p. 42.


135 Attack on Anglo-Indian mothers in "Social Problems: Anglo-Indian Children", *The Pioneer*, 1 February 1882, p. 3. In response to that, in a subsequent issue, there was a letter to the Editor from "A Wife and Mother", defending the memsahib: "That the necessity for such a choice should exist is the bitterest drop in the cup of our exile in this land", pointing out that the bitter alternative could very well mean estrangement from the husband. See *The Pioneer*, 20 February 1882, p. 5.


138 Anne C. Wilson, *Letters from India* (1911) cited in Margaret Macmillan, *Women of the Raj*, p. 37. In the first census held in 1881, there were 145,000 Europeans out of a total population of 250,000,000. See Margaret Macmillan, ibid., p. 42. Regarding the problem of colonial tension, Kincaid mentions "a strange tension in the minds of these men, so that even in their most heroic moments is evident a mental condition that seems occasionally unbalanced and almost hysterical", Dennis Kincaid, p. 181.


141 Waltrand Ernst, *Mad Tales From the Raj: The European Insane In British India 1800-1858* (London, 1991) largely ignores this aspect.

142 "Englishwomen in India" by An Englishwoman in India, The Calcutta Review, p. 139.

143 Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India*, pp. 8-9; Christina Bremner, p. 18.

144 Maud Diver, *ibid.*, p. 23.


148 Ibid., p. 365.


150 Ibid., p. 4, p. 2.

Voicing the benevolent paternalism characteristic of British colonial administration, Steel and Gardiner observed: "The Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child; that is to
say, kindly, but with the greatest firmness”, *ibid.*, p. 3.


152 F.A. Steel and G. Gardiner, p. 9.


154 A. Duff and F.C. Skipwith, “Married Life in India”, *The Calcutta Review*, p. 412. Evidently, the idea of the Englishwoman as cultural role-model, as well as the preoccupation with white female disorderliness predates the establishment of empire and is closely linked with the colonizing process itself.


160 Although the Calcutta School was formed in 1818 and the Bethune School opened in 1849-50, it was, significantly, in 1862 that the first zenana missionary was sent. Diver praised “the splendidly practical female Medical Aid movement which has brought such wondrous changes in dim zenanas where India's women lie
in their pain and anguish, nursed by superstition and doctored by incantations and charms", Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India*, p. 76. The Female Medical Aid Movement started in the 1880's.


162 *ibid.*, pp. 79-80.


164 Meredith Borthwick, pp. 261-65.


172 Weitbrecht, pp. 106, 94.
174 Flora Annie Steel, India, op. cit., p. 162.
176 Mary Frances Billington, Women of India (London, 1895), p. XII, Maud Diver, p. 168. Cf. Billington's observation: "Indian women are not altogether in such a pitiful plight as some of their so-called friends come and tell us", p. XIII.
177 Maud Diver argues that purdah life is less lonely than a single, English working-woman's, and that well-meaning English workers behind the Zenana have not understood the complexities of the situation. See Maud Diver, pp. 165-68.
179 Ibid., p. 319.
180 Weitbrecht, p. 104.
182 Flora Annie Steel, The Garden of Fidelity, p. 245.
183 Margaret M. Urquhart, pp. 67, 69.
185 Fanny Parks, Wanderings of a Pilgrim, pp. 59-60.
186 Weitbrecht, p. 45.
187 Billington deprecates, "many of them profess to find the native dress 'unseemly', 'indecorous', or, as I have even frankly heard it called, 'indecent'... alas!
for readily-offended and pious sensibilities, these dainty little garments are not sufficiently opaque!",

Women of India, p. 178.

188 See Merdith Borthwick, pp. 244-48.


191 See Ronald Hyam, p. 203.

192 The Friend of India and The Statesman was questioning a metropolitan English visitor's admiration for the Bengali woman's "delicate banglel wrists and anklets" and "her small classic head", 25 February 1880, p. 162.


195 Flora Annie Steel, India, pp. 162-64.


197 Maud Diver, p. 145.


201 Ibid., p. 57.


204 See Uma Chakravarti, p. 31.

205 Mrs. Speier, Life in Ancient India, p. 454, cited in Uma Chakravarti, p. 44.

206 Clarisse Bader, p. 332, cited in Uma Chakravarti, p. 46.

207 Margaret M. Urquhart, p. iv.


211 For the adoption of the caste system by Muslims and their rejection of white people, see Flora Annie Steel, India, op. cit., p. 74.

212 Flora Annie Steel writes of a Nawabin being subtly rude to her in the format and address of upper class Indian
courtly etiquette, and points out that this kind of problem existed with the upper-class 'natives', The Garden of Fidelity, p. 166. A letter from a 'native' gentleman to The Friend of India and The Statesman remarked: "There are thousands upon thousands even in Calcutta who would consider themselves defiled by shaking hands with a European... European ladies visiting the zenana meet with the feeling most strongly from the elderly Hindoo ladies... loathing from the idea of shaking hands... or even of touching their garments", in The Friend of India And the Statesman, 21 July 1883, p. 1049.


214 Some of the newspaper issues dealing with this question are: The Madras Mail, 5 March 1869; 13 March 1869; 8 May 1869; 12 January 1874; 23 January 1874; 1 February 1881; 21 March 1881; 3 June 1881; 20 February 1890; 15 March 1890, 8 April 1890. The Friend of India, 13 April 1871; 2 May 1872; 1 April 1875; 12 February 1880; 24 November 1880.

216 Margaret M. Urquhart, p. 148.
217 Meredith Borthwick, p. 56. See also Malavika Karlekar, *Voices From Within: Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Women* (Delhi, 1991), for the emergence of the bhadramahila.
219 Maud Diver, p. 193.
220 Billington, p. 34; Maud Diver, p. 127 echoes the same point.
221 In all the newspaper issues that I saw, I came across only one reference to highly educated women, like Pandita Ramabai, *The Friend of India*, 13 February 1883, p. 241.
222 Mrs. E.F. Chapman especially noted Chandramukhi Bose, the first M.A. from Calcutta University in 1884, and Kadambini Ganguly, the first Indian woman graduate and doctor. See E.F. Chapman, *Sketches of Some Distinguished Indian Women* (London, 1891), pp. 17-18.
223 Maud Diver, p. 230.
224 By 1883, the roles were almost reversed, when, during the Ilbert Bill agitation, Ripon was told by bhadramahilas in support of the Bill, that, while many of them were well-educated and some even had degrees, there was not "a single graduate" among the English ladies who were opposing the bill; cited in Meredith Borthwick, p. 338.
225 *The Pioneer*, 22 October 1880, pp. 5-6.
227 Steel and Gardiner, p. 166.


229 Shirley, "An Indian Hill-Station", The Calcutta Review, Vol. 81, No. 162, 1885, p. 413; Christina Bremner, p. 68.

230 Flora Annie Steel The Garden of Fidelity, p. 161. She also notes that "in rural India the women do a lion's share of outdoor work", India, p. 162.


233 Ibid., p. 118.


236 The Friend of India, 13 April 1871, p. 427.

237 The Friend of India, 11 May 1871, p. 538.

238 Unlike in England, no appeals against detention were possible on the part of the women, and there was no upper time-limit for detention. See Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, Sex and Class Under the Raj, pp. 44-62 for a discussion of prostitution during the British Raj.

240 Integration of this type noted in H.A. Stark, *Hostages to India* (Calcutta 1926), p. 35.


243 *The Friend of India*, 14 March 1872 touches upon the workshops for poor women "living in the backlanes of Calcutta", p. 291. The same newspaper discusses settling the "growing numbers of poor Europeans and Eurasians in the country" in the hill-tracts under the East India Colonization Scheme, 11 September 1875, p. 830.


245 *The Madras Mail*, 5 March 1874 (no pagination).

246 *The Anglo-Indian*, 9 January 1886, p. 19, made a suggestion of the following classification: 'Anglo-Indian': Applied to those who have either no or very slight admixture with the native races; 'Eurasian': Those in whom the European and native descent are more
evenly balanced; 'East Indian': Those of remote European descent and approaching more closely to the native type”.


248 The Englishman's Saturday Evening Journal, 1 November 1890, p. 1035.

249 The Madras Mail, 22 January 1869, p. 2.


252 Christina Bremner, pp. 119 and 121.


255 Antoinette Burton, "The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and the Indian Woman", Women's Studies International Forum (Vol. 13, No. 4, 1990), pp. 295-308, argues in rather a monolithic manner about Imperialism underwriting feminism. For a more sensitive analysis of Victorian feminism and its dilemmas with regard to Imperialism see Vron Ware, Beyond the Pale: Women, Racism And History (London and New York, 1992), pp. 119-166. For the contradictions in Annette Ackroyd's involvement with the female education programme see Vron Ware, pp. 121-147.