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Queen Victoria's discovery and involvement in India: personal interest with social, economic, cultural and political consequences

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Academic Year 2021-2022

QUEEN VICTORIA'S DISCOVERY AND INVOLVEMENT IN INDIA: PERSONAL INTEREST WITH SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES



Queen Victoria, Illustrated London News: Diamond Jubilee (Special Edition), 1897, taken from www.bl.uk.

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Master 1

Presented by **ASSIA SIMONNIN**

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Introduction

Between the XVIIIth and XXth centuries, Great Britain acquired more territories than any other European country creating the largest empire in history. The British Empire had establishments in numerous islands and regions across the globe. “Historians established that roughly 25% of the earth landmass was in control of the British.”¹ The controlled area was so vast that at any time there was daylight in one of the territories. Thus, the expression “The Empire on which the sun never sets” was put in use to illustrate the vastness of the British Empire.²

By the XIXth century, Great Britain expanded her overseas empire by including South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. This period was known as the Victorian era, one of Great Britain’s greatest eras, with Great Britain under the reign of Queen Victoria, ruler of the country which had become the world’s biggest empire with one-fourth of the global population owing allegiance to the queen. This period was also known in the wake of the expansion of the Industrial revolution marked by the development of the steamship, the railways and the telegraph.

The reign of Queen Victoria also coincides with the dissolution of the British East India Company due to mismanagement and the establishment of the British Raj. The Raj meant Imperial Britain’s takeover of the rights and responsibilities of the former British East India Company following the crumbled Indian Mutiny of 1857-58. Thus, India was no longer controlled by the distinguished British East India Company board of directors, but rather by a specially designated Viceroy. Years later, Queen Victoria was crowned Empress of India as a consequence of the Royal Title Act of 1876.

However, at the time the Indian Empire consisted of two separate entities — British India and Princely India, composed of regions ruled by Indian Princes. Despite this fact, the Indian Royalties were loyal to the British Crown showing little to no resistance. At that stage, the industrial revolution and the acquisition of colonies enabled Great Britain to control the seas with her formidable navy and become the paramount power in much of the world with her standing army

¹“What Does The Sun Never Sets On The British Empire Mean?” <<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-does-the-sun-never-sets-on-the-british-empire-mean.html>>. Accessed on 22 March 2021.

² This phrase was taken from the Spanish expression “*el imperio donde nunca se pone el sol*” which was originally used for the Empire of Charles V as he attempted to build a universal monarchy. It was used for the British Empire, mainly in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a period during which the British Empire reached a global territorial size with the acquisition of India. See “The empire on which the sun never sets” <http://www.owlapps.net/owlapps_apps/articles?id=1976026&lang=en>. Accessed on 20 November 2021.

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composed primarily of native Indian troops.³ Thus, the relation of Great Britain and India became at this stage essential – would there be no Indian troops the British Empire would crumble under the influence of European forces.

Therefore, Queen Victoria's role in bringing together her British and Indian subjects to establish a peaceful rule throughout her British Empire was crucial. It is well known that Victoria had a deep and continual interest in all matters relating to the welfare and happiness of her subjects in Great Britain and the colonies.⁴ She also had a keen interest in exotics, especially in India and Africa. She was not satisfied with the role given to her as a monarch and wanted to play the role she had defined for herself.

Although historians claim that the Queen was solely a figurehead, her involvement in her Indian Empire deems this assessment as inaccurate. In fact, Queen Victoria actively hired Indian servants and introduced Indian culture in her daily routine. All these efforts were made in order to make her faraway Indian subjects the center of attention of her British subjects. During the last decade of her reign, Queen Victoria achieved her aim through her relationship with her Indian secretary and teacher Abdul Karim, the Munshi. This relationship functioned as a link between the monarch and her faraway colony.

To help me visualize the relationship between Queen Victoria and India and understand how the queen's personal interest pushed her to discover her Indian colony, then to get involved in its affairs, I will rely on sources contemporary to the Victorian era and contemporary to this present research paper, among which writings of primary nature like official reports or declarations for instance the proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad on November 1st, 1858); correspondences between the Queen and her subjects for example the letter from Victoria to Salisbury on July 17, 1897; or between her subjects themselves for instance Lord Ponsonby's letter about Abdul Karim to one of his acquaintances, written on April 27, 1897; articles of journals or magazines like the

³ "Armies of the East India Company." *National Army Museum*, <<https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/armies-east-india-company>>. Accessed on 20 November 2021.

⁴ "Victoria (1819–1901), Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and Empress of India." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-36652#odnb-9780198614128-e-36652-div1-d15812e236>>. Accessed on 20 November 2021.

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article of Moulvie Rafiüddin Ahmad “The Queen's Hindustani Journal” published in *Strand Magazine* (Vol. 24) on December 1892; not to forget images of primary nature like pictures for instance the picture of the Durbar room at Osborne House, in the Isle of Wight, taken on July 28, 1892; paintings for instance “The carpet menders” by Rudolf Swoboda (1883); cartoons for instance *Punch* cartoons by John Tenniel; posters and sketches of the XIXth century like the poster of the “Exhibition of Indian Arts, Industries and Amusements” published in *The Era* on January 16, 1886.⁵

I will also rely on other writings of secondary nature with a more historical approach like *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* by Miles Taylor and *Victoria & Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant* by Shrabani Basu which offer a biography of Queen Victoria’s life on one hand and *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* by Saloni Mathur which offers details and information about the Great exhibition on the other hand. Other used works adopt a theory-oriented approach like *Culture and Imperialism* by Edward Wadie Said and *Essay on Exoticism an Aesthetics of Diversity* by Victor Segalen and Schlick Yaël Rachel.⁶

Thousands of volumes have been written about Queen Victoria, and there will doubtless be many more. This short study cannot attempt to cover the main events of the queen’s life, let alone the lives of her subjects. Instead, it will explore some of the moments that will help me examine how Queen Victoria’s personal interest led to her discovery and involvement in India and the impacts that resulted from it on Great Britain and its colony in terms of economy, politics, culture and society. This paper will be divided into four parts. Queen Victoria’s relation with India will be covered in the first part with an attempt to define its nature presented by a chronological approach. A focus will be put on the biographies of Queen Victoria, her husband and their mutual interest in all that is exotic and especially India.

Information about the queen’s discovery of the “Jewel in the Crown” will be provided in the second part. In this part, I will thoroughly explore the different steps of the queen’s discovery of India firstly through the accounts and the perspective of the British, then from the eyes of the

⁵ For the complete list of primary sources see the bibliography, “Primary sources” section.

⁶ For the complete list of secondary sources see the bibliography, “Secondary sources” section.

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Indians themselves and finally through the standpoint of the queen herself. A focus will be put on the queen's relationship with Abdul Karim and its function as a bridge between her majesty and the faraway colony. The queen's involvement in Indian affairs will be examined in the third part. In this part, I will mention Victoria's role as a constitutional monarch and her beliefs about the role the monarch should play in foreign policies. A focus will be put on the correspondences between Queen Victoria and the viceroys of India as a means of implication.

The impact of Queen Victoria's actions on the British masses and India and its acceptability for the British will be looked into in the fourth part. In this part, I will provide an overview of the effect of the queen's actions on the British society as reported on in contemporary newspapers and letters. I will also cover the outcome of the queen's activities on the Indian populations. A focus will be placed upon the relationship between Queen Victoria and the Munshi and its acceptability in the British and Indian societies.

Part 1: Queen Victoria's relationship with India

Chapter 1 - India as a link between Queen Victoria and her late husband

In this chapter, I will focus on the queen's and her husband's lives with regard to their fascination with the exotic and with India in three parts. In the first part, Queen Victoria's life with a reference to her general interest in the exotic will be examined. In the second part, the life of Consort Albert with a focus on his interest in India will be looked into, including his vision of the foreign country. In the third part, the historical information about Consort Albert's death and Victoria's intense mourning over him will be provided with an examination of India's relevance to the queen as a link between her and her late husband or as a substitute of the latter.

A- Interest in the exotic

London was at the epicenter of global trade in the XVIIIth century, with commodities and people arriving from all over the globe. Joseph Addison's persona Mr. Spectator describes the availability of the world's products to the British:

Our Ships are loaden with the Harvest of every Climate: Our Tables are stored with Spices, and Oils, and Wines: Our Rooms are filled with Pyramids of China, and adorned with the Workmanship of Japan: Our Morning's-Draught comes to us from the remotest Corners of the Earth: We repair our Bodies by the Drugs of America, and repose ourselves under Indian Canopies. (No. 69, 19 May 1711)⁷

Trade as Addison stated and the acceleration in the means and modes of travel entailed an unprecedented intermingling of cultures and peoples, through which a renewed appreciation for differences was triggered.

By the XIXth century, people became more interested in adventures and the outside world which could be demonstrated by the numerous maritime explorations and the literature that developed about voyages in that period. Writers started narrating about discovery of the world

⁷ *The Spectator*, 19 May 1711, No. 69. See: <<http://www2.scc.rutgers.edu/spectator/text/may1711/no69.html>>. Accessed on 29 December 2021.

beyond the British territory and about fortune beyond the nation's shores. The best example to illustrate this is *Treasure Island*, originally titled *The Sea Cook: A Story for Boys* (1883) by Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson which tells the story of buccaneers and buried gold. It has depictions of deserted tropical islands, treasure maps and parrots as the companions of seamen. Likewise, the narration on the discovery could also be found in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll, which tells the story of a young girl named Alice who falls down a rabbit hole into a magical realm filled with anthropomorphic creatures. The fantastic trait clarifies the novel's aim of exploring the unknown and the unfamiliar. This clearly reveals the Victorian's fascination with literary depictions of the exotic.

Originally, the word "exotic" derives from the Greek *exotikos* meaning "from the outside". In the 1590s, this term came to design the alien, unusual and unfamiliar.⁸ It was mostly used on plants and items. By the XVIIth century, it was used to describe striking or unusual things. Victor Segalen attributes the word "exotic" to everything that is other, everything that is "removed from the familiar world."⁹ Thus, the exotic came to "mingle with the mysterious."¹⁰ Words like "strange" and "alien" were employed as synonyms. In the XIXth and XXth centuries, the word exoticism became a synonym for "impressions of faraway lands, climates and foreign races."¹¹

This evolution of the meaning of the term exotic went hand in hand with the British's discovery of the outside world. In the XIXth century, the British's fascination with foreign lands grew stronger than ever and Victoria was no exception. Born at that time, she was bound to acquire a curiosity for the unknown. She was fortunate of growing up during the opening of Britain's first zoos, Regent's Park in 1828 and



Figure 1: Visitors to the Regent's Park Zoo, c. 1875, gathering around an elephant. (Hulton Archive)

⁸ "Thoughts on a Word: Exotic." *The New Inquiry*, <<https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/thoughts-on-a-word-exotic/>>. Accessed on 29 December 2021.

⁹ From the original Segalen, Victor. *Essai Sur L'exotisme: Une Esthétique Du Divers*. Fata Morgana, 1978, quoted in English in Segalen, Victor, and Schlick Yaël Rachel. *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity*. Duke University Press, 2002, 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

the Surrey Zoological Gardens in 1832.¹² Queen Victoria visited the Regent's Park Zoo during her sixteenth birthday and continually visited it later with her expanding family as she reported in her dairies on July 1848 while describing the joy of the children at the sight of "giraffes and elephants, on the taller of which Albert rode with the three eldest"¹³ of Victoria's children. Figure 1 features the elephant which Queen Victoria and her family might have encountered at the Regent's Park Zoo.

The royal family displayed their attraction to the exotic by owning a number of pets in their castles. On October 28th, 1847, Victoria described in her diaries the arrival of fourteen wagons carrying "monkeys, parrots, birds, a gazelle, a zebra, a rhinoceros, an elephant, a polar bear, a jackal, a hyena and a lioness with two dear little cubs."¹⁴ The monarch and her family not only owned but also loaned their exotic animals to the zoo. Indeed, an elephant gifted to Queen Victoria by Abyssinian visitors was sent to be "cared after in the Zoological Gardens" in August 1884.¹⁵ It could be said that growing up in a society valuing discovery and curiosity, Victoria and her family were bound to be attracted to the exotic.

B- Prince Albert and India

Living in a period of empirical expansion and colonization, Albert just like Victoria was curious about India. The faraway land was not yet a British colony, but was under the control of the British East India Company's board of directors until 1858.¹⁶ In other words, it was indirectly under the control of the British Crown as all the company's treaties required to be approved of by the governor-general in Council, who had to report back to London from 1784 onwards.¹⁷ There is no doubt that India as part of the controlled region attracted the attention of the sovereign and her consort.

¹² "Queen Victoria's Pets and Animals." *HistoryExtra*, <<https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/queen-victorias-pets-animals-dashy-dog-child-albert-melbourne/>>. Accessed on 29 December 2021.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "Government of India Acts." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Government-of-India-Acts#ref70364>>. Accessed on 5 January 2022.

¹⁷ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 53.

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In the case of Albert, it could be said that his interest for India started by his concern for foreign affairs. In fact, after his marriage to Queen Victoria in 1840, Albert assumed an ever-larger political role by handling public duties that Victoria could not and taking charge of the political issues that Victoria neglected.¹⁸ One of these was the Anti-Slavery Society's meetings of which the Prince Consort attended. The Society was working to abolish the last pockets of slavery in India, as well as pressuring Parliament to keep a closer eye on the inhumane new type of slavery — forced migration of poor Indian laborers to plantation economies in the West Indies and elsewhere, known as the “coolie” system.¹⁹

He addressed a speech at a meeting for the abolition of slavery on June 1st, 1840, urging the Society to abolish the atrocious traffic in human beings seen as “repugnant to the spirit of Christianity.”²⁰ Albert came to be also involved in the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel overseas, one of the oldest and most distinguished Christian missionary organizations in Great Britain. He became its president in 1851, and delivered a speech at the third Jubilee of the society on June 16th declaring proudly that the society is carrying “Christianity to the vast territories of India and Australia, which are at last again to be peopled by the Anglo-Saxon race.”²¹

Albert's statement testifies to his desire of exporting Christianity to India and making of it the new colony for English settlement. There is no doubt that he and Victoria understood India from a largely European and Christian perspective. However, as orientalist studies (the study of the history, languages and cultures of the East) were renewed in Great Britain in the XIXth century, drawing affinities between European and Indian culture, Albert's views might have changed.²² His personal library contained some eighty books relating to India, published between the 1830s and late 1850s, revealing his quest for understanding Indian culture.²³

¹⁸ “Accession to the Throne.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Victoria-queen-of-United-Kingdom/Accession-to-the-throne#ref24417>>. Accessed on 6 January 2022.

¹⁹ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 63.

²⁰ Albert's speech at a meeting for the abolition of slavery, 1 June 1840, in *The Principal Speeches and Addresses of His Royal Highness of the Prince Consort: With an Introduction, Giving Some Outlines of His Character*. J. Murray, 1862, 81.

²¹ Albert's speech at the third Jubilee of the Society for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, 16 June 1851, in *The Principal Speeches and Addresses of His Royal Highness of the Prince Consort: With an Introduction, Giving Some Outlines of His Character*. J. Murray, 1862, 131.

²² Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 89.

²³ *Ibid.*, 86.

He went even further by organizing with the help of Henry Cole (a council member of the Society of Arts) the Great Exhibition of 1851, aiming to encourage the arts, manufacturers and commerce.²⁴ On display were objects from British colonies and other regions of the world. An entire section was reserved for India displaying jewelries, a needlework carpet cover from Lahore and a bed from Kashmir with a bedstead of solid silver.²⁵ Being the driving force behind this remarkable event, the prince clearly demonstrated his interest in the history and culture of India. It can be argued that Albert's understanding of India was not attached to Victoria's. Even though he and his wife took an interest in the foreign land for the propagation of Christianity, he quickly became curious about its history and culture. Despite the degree or reason of interest, the couple without doubt shared a common fascination for India.

C- Death of Albert and Victoria's relation with India

Queen Victoria and her Consort became more interested in India than ever with the transfer of power from the East India Company to the Crown.²⁶ The experience of a divided command between the Crown and the Company in the suppression of the rebellion of 1857–58 made Queen Victoria eager to establish an Indian army under her direct command.²⁷ Reforming the Indian army quickly became the obsession of the married couple.²⁸

The monarch wanted to establish an order of chivalry to honor Indian Princes and Chiefs for their loyalty, as well as British officers and administrators who served in India. Prince Albert suggested it to be named the "Order of the Star of India" and designed its badges and robes which were later supplied for the first investiture of the Order on November 1st, 1861.²⁹ The dream the sovereign shared with her husband was realized. However, happiness did not last long. After

²⁴ "The Great Exhibition 1851." *Historic UK*, <<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Great-Exhibition-of-1851/>>. Accessed on 6 January 2022.

²⁵ "India, on Display: The Great Exhibition of 1851." *The Heritage Lab*, <<https://www.theheritagelab.in/india-the-great-exhibition-of-1851/>>. Accessed on 6 January 2022.

²⁶ "Government of India Act of 1858." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/place/India/Government-of-India-Act-of-1858>>. Accessed on 11 January 2022.

²⁷ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 133.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁹ "R & S Garrard - Star of the Order of the Star of India." *Royal Collection Trust*, <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/441296/star-of-the-order-of-the-star-of-india>>. Accessed on 11 January 2022.

several years of suffering from stomach ailments, Albert died of typhoid fever on December 14th, 1861³⁰, shortly after the appointment of the new order.

Victoria was devastated and for the rest of her reign, she wore black clothes. Ever since her husband's death, she spent twenty-five years in seclusion, only appearing in India as the Government of India circulated her name and her image far and wide in order to secure the new Raj.³¹ Victoria resisted carrying out her ceremonial duties yet she remained determined to retain an effective political role and to behave as her Prince Consort would have wished.

She found comfort in John Brown, her Scottish servant and one of her closest friends. So close were the Queen and Brown that she was often referred to as "Mrs. Brown."³² It can be argued that her relationship with her Scottish servant formed an indirect connection with her late husband. Overwhelmed by the loss of her spouse and unable to forget him, Victoria struggled to appease her sorrow. Wishing to keep his memory alive, she tried to maintain all traces of his presence. One of those is Mr. Brown. He used to be Prince Albert's outdoor servant and later became the leader of the Queen's pony at the suggestion of her Consort.³³ He might have reminded her of her husband, which explains the reason why she kept him close. She commissioned a portrait of Mr. Brown in 1876 and gifted to him on Albert's birthday, August 26th.³⁴ Unable to celebrate the birthday of her spouse, Queen Victoria might have opted to celebrate it with the ones close to him. The portrait could have been the queen's way of expressing to her husband that she is taking good care of his servant.

There is always this element that linked her to Albert or at least reminded her of him. This is also the case of India as the couple were both fascinated by it. Her interest with this new acquired colony might be an attempt of the old sovereign to maintain contact with her husband since she immersed herself in understanding its culture and language just as Albert did.³⁵ Another possible

³⁰ "Prince Albert." *Biography.com*, <<https://www.biography.com/royalty/prince-albert>>. Accessed on 11 January 2022.

³¹ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 120.

³² Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 83.

³³ "Widowhood of Victoria." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Victoria-queen-of-United-Kingdom/Widowhood>>. Accessed on 11 January 2022.

³⁴ "Queen Victoria with John Brown Painting by Charles Burton Barber." *TheFamousArtists*, <<http://www.thefamousartists.com/charles-burton-barber/queen-victoria-with-john-brown>>. Accessed on 11 January 2022.

³⁵ "Victoria and Abdul: The Friendship That Scandalized England." *Smithsonian.com*, <www.smithsonianmag.com/history/victoria-and-abdul-friendship-scandalized-england-180964959/>. Accessed on 11 January 2021.

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explanation could be that she viewed India as the substitute of Albert. She kept herself busy with the management of Indian affairs to forget the loss of her dear one. It is very likely that India served for Queen Victoria as a connection to Albert.

Trade and the rapid advancement of means and modes of transportation resulted in an unprecedented mingling of cultures and peoples, revitalizing awareness for distinctions in the XIXth century and making the British once more interested in adventures and the outside world as was the case of Victoria. She expressed a fascination towards the exotic as would suggest her interest in wild animals. After her marriage to Prince Albert, she relied on him to conduct some public duties and he grew interested in foreign affairs. India was attractive to the consort for his project of evangelization and for the making of a new English settlement. Soon enough, he was drawn to its culture and language. He died in 1861 leaving Queen Victoria devastated. She tried to gather the pieces of his presence to ease her grief, among which India. She started learning Hindustani and the Indian culture to maintain her connection with her deceased husband. It remains unknown whether or not she tried to forget his loss by immersing herself with Indian affairs. But did India simply represent for the British monarch a connection to her husband, or was there more that related Queen Victoria to the faraway land?

Chapter 2 – India’s significance to Queen Victoria

In this chapter, Queen Victoria’s relationship with India and the significance it represented to Great Britain and the queen herself will be examined. Based mainly on several caricatures taken from *Punch*³⁶, this chapter will deal with that in three parts. In part one, Queen Victoria’s new title will be examined alongside the personal meaning it held for her. In part two, India’s relevance to the British monarchy will be looked into from a political perspective. In part three, the importance of India to the British empire will be provided from an economic perspective.

A- Empress of India: title with personal meaning

Queen Victoria felt attached to India because of the memory it triggers about Prince Albert. But eventually there were more than just memories that linked her to the exotic land. Queen Victoria was forever connected to the Indian subcontinent³⁷ after she assumed the title of Empress of India. In 1843, before the British Crown took over India’s rule from the East India Company and over thirty years before Victoria received her official title of empress, Ellenborough³⁸ – Governor-General of India between 1842 and 1844 – put the idea of becoming an “empress” into the young queen’s mind by explaining how all the difficulties between Great Britain and India would be removed once her Majesty became the nominal head of the empire. He went on and declared that “the princes and chiefs of India would be proud of their position as the feudatories of an empress.”³⁹

³⁶ It is important to note that the *Punch* cartoons quoted in this chapter have been analyzed before.

³⁷ The term subcontinent signifies a subdivision of a continent which has its own distinct geographical, political, and cultural identity. From the early twentieth century, it was used to refer to India as it was a convenient term to refer to the region that included both British India and the princely states under British authority. This term has been particularly employed by postcolonial historians (Milton Walter Meyer, *South Asia: A Short History of the Subcontinent*, Adams Littlefield, 1976: 1; Jim Norwine & Alfonso González, *The Third World: states of mind and being*, Taylor & Francis, 1988: 209).

³⁸ For more information on Ellenborough see: Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 66.

³⁹ Ellenborough to Queen Victoria, 18 January 1843, in *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough*, 82-83. <<https://www.indianculture.gov.in/rarebooks/history-indian-administration-lord-ellenborough-correspondence-duke-wellington>>. Accessed on 12 February 2022.

After India was put under the control of the British crown in 1858, it is very likely that Queen Victoria thought that she was Empress of India from then on. In June 1872, when envoys from Burma refused to prostrate themselves before her upon their arrival at court, she exclaimed, “as Empress of India, I must insist on this.”⁴⁰ The following year, in 1873, Frederick Ponsonby, the queen’s private secretary, asked Foreign Secretary Earl Granville “how the title of Empress of India, which is frequently used in reference to her Majesty, has never been officially adopted?”⁴¹ It was thought that the title of empress had been used in the queen’s proclamation of 1858, so experts examined the proclamation in a variety of languages, including Persian, Urdu, and Hindi, as well as Gujarati, Malayalam, and Tamil, but no version contained the word “empress.”⁴²



Figure 2: “The Accession of the Queen of India.”, *Punch*, 11 September 1858: 107.

Surprisingly enough, the acquisition of a new royal title was publicized in *Punch*’s cartoon of September 11th, 1858 (see fig. 2). The cartoon’s title “The Accession of the Queen of India” indicates the elevation of Queen Victoria’s status from “queen” to “empress” or so it was supposed to. The press promoted the queen’s new title while the court rarely mentioned it. The matter gets more complicated as it appears that the queen was not the only one who thought of herself as an empress. The Indian Princes and Chiefs also believed her to be their empress. For instance, Wadiyar III, the twenty-second maharaja of the Kingdom of Mysore, addressed Queen Victoria as “Empress of Hindostan.”⁴³ Despite the ambiguity, the queen without doubt wanted to officially receive the title of Empress, but her court was devised – some saw the title as a sign that would link the monarchy with the empire further and bind India more closely to Great Britain and others thought it was synonymous with absolutism.

⁴⁰ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 40.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 144.



Figure 3: “New Crowns for Old Ones.”, *Punch*, 15 April 1876: 147.

In 1876, Benjamin Disraeli, Conservative Prime Minister brought the Royal Titles Bill before Parliament, facing opposition from the Liberals. Stereotypes spread about Disraeli, promoting the pejorative image of the prime minister featuring in *Punch's* cartoon of April 15th, 1876 (see fig. 3). Tenniel depicted Disraeli as trying to trick Queen Victoria into exchanging the crowns instead of the lamps from the original story of “Aladdin’s Lamp” included in *One Thousand and One Nights* also known as *Arabian Nights*. He used as the title of the cartoon the same phrase the evil magician used to talk Aladdin’s wife into exchanging the magical lamp for a more elaborate and newer but worthless lamp that did not contain the magical djinn or genie, except that he replaced the word “lamps” by “crowns.”⁴⁴ The cartoon’s aim is to show how Disraeli presents the Empress title as a wonderful creation that will strengthen the ties between India and Great Britain, while it is a symbol of oppression that could endanger the monarchy. Despite the opposition, the Royal Titles Bill was passed in the summer of 1876 and Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India.

For the first time since Prince Albert's death, Queen Victoria addressed Parliament in person to proclaim the change in royal title. After her husband died, the sovereign remained in mourning and in partial retirement. She refused to undertake the ceremonial responsibilities expected of a queen and withdrew to Balmoral and Osborne for four months each year, oblivious to the hardship and strain this caused her ministers.⁴⁵ However, she decided to resume her responsibilities by first assuming the title of Empress of India, marking her return to politics after twenty-five years of seclusion.⁴⁶

Queen Victoria rejoiced in this new title, as it underscored Great Britain's global power in a world increasingly dominated by other continental empires – Russia bearing down on the

⁴⁴ “Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp - the Original Aladdin Story: Pook Press.” RSS, <<https://www.pookpress.co.uk/aladdin-and-the-wonderful-lamp/>>. Accessed on 15 February 2022.

⁴⁵ “Widowhood of Victoria.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Victoria-queen-of-United-Kingdom/Widowhood>>. Accessed on 23 February 2022.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

northwest frontier of India and Germany unified under the Prussian imperial throne.⁴⁷ To illustrate the queen’s joy over her new title it would be best to take the example of the uniform of Indian servants in Queen Victoria’s household on which the queen insisted that the monogram “VRI” be embroidered, standing for “Victoria Regina and Imperatrix”, the Latin words for “Victoria, Queen and Empress.”⁴⁸ Therefore, it could be said that the title holds a personal meaning for the monarch as it binds her closer to India. In fact, the prestige she had obtained because of this title constantly reminded her of India and aroused her interest this foreign land.

B- India’s relevance to the British Empire in terms of politics

It is very likely that Victoria just like Disraeli thought of the Empress title as a way to link India to Great Britain and dispose of the animosity that might have been fueled by the Indian mutiny’s aftermath.⁴⁹ At the time, Great Britain was competing with Russia for land and influence in the East. The Afghan War of 1838-42 is the best example to illustrate the long-lasting conflicts

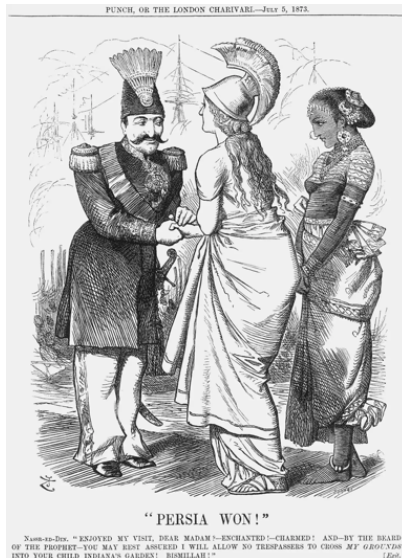


Figure 4: “Persia Won!” *Punch*, 5 July 1873: 269.

between the two European countries. Queen Victoria and Disraeli believed that Russia posed a severe threat to British interests in India.⁵⁰ In fact, Russia was building a vast empire in Asia. If it were to gain control of the state of Afghanistan, it might use it as a staging post for a Russian invasion of India. Great Britain’s aim was to maintain Afghanistan as a neutral country between her Indian possessions and the expanding Russian Empire.

⁴⁷ “Queen Victoria and India, 1837-61.” *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2. Indiana University Press, 2004, 265.

⁴⁸ “RCIN 2914332 - Hafiz Abdul Karim (1863-1909) and Sheikh Muhammad Bakhsh.” *Royal Collection Trust*, <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/eastern-encounters/the-queens-gallery-palace-of-holyroodhouse/hafiz-abdul-karim-1863-1909-and-sheikh-muhammad-bakhsh>>. Accessed on 12 February 2022.

⁴⁹ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 108-109.

⁵⁰ “Victoria (1819–1901), Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and Empress of India.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-36652>. Accessed on 15 February 2022.

The only way out for Great Britain was to seek an alliance with Persia to ensure the safety of India. After the visit of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar⁵¹ to London in 1873, the British received assurances from the Persian Shah that no Russian advances into British India would be permitted over Persian territory. *Punch*'s cartoon of July 5th, 1873, features the successful negotiation between Persia – now Iran – and Great Britain (see fig. 4). In fact, Britannia and the Shah of Persia are presented shaking hands indicating that they reached an agreement to protect Britannia's "child", India represented on the right-hand side. It was thought that as long as strong relations with Persia were maintained, the impact of Russia's actions on British interests in the East would be negligible.

Now that the British may rest assured of India's safety from outside invasion, they switched their attention to the danger that might arise from the inside — a rebellion of the natives similar to the one of 1857-8. In her proclamation of 1858, Victoria announced her wish to maintain security at home and in the colonies. She declared that prosperity and social advancement "could only be secured by internal peace and good government" in the Indian Subcontinent.⁵² Queen Victoria went on to declare that in the Indian "Prosperity will be the British's Strength; in their Contentment the British's Security; and in their Gratitude the British's best Reward."⁵³

She meant that the peace and tranquility of Great Britain would be restored once good management and security would be restored in India. Losing India and its army would have caused Great Britain severe consequences as in this case India would fall under the influence of the Russian Empire. Therefore, by crowning herself Empress of India, Victoria sought to cement good relations between her Indian subjects and the British Crown, symbolically granting them equal status to her British subjects. In this way, the monarch hoped to appeal to the chiefs and princes of India and eventually gain their support. By doing so, she believed that British superiority would be maintained.

⁵¹ Persian monarch from 1848 to 1896. For more information on Nasser al-Din see: "Nāṣer Al-Dīn Shāh." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Naser-al-Din-Shah>>. Accessed on 15 February 2022.

⁵² Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad), 1 November 1858.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

C- India’s relevance to the British Empire in terms of economy

In the XIXth century, India was extremely valuable to the British for its cheap labor and raw materials — mainly tea, indigo, coffee, cotton, jute and opium.⁵⁴ It was also the largest major market for British manufactured goods. In fact, India exported cheap raw materials to the British industries, while finished goods from Great Britain were imported for consumption in India. The British imposed a monopoly over Indian exports and imports, favoring the growth of the British economy. It is important to note that the large export surplus generated from foreign trade with India was not invested in the Indian economy, instead it was used in administrative and colonial purposes by Great Britain.⁵⁵

India became crucial for the British economy from 1860 onwards as flows of raw cotton from the southern United States to Great Britain's active textile mills were disrupted by the American Civil War of 1861-65. Prior to the outbreak of the conflict, the United States supplied more than three-quarters of Great Britain's cotton, and the British were the world's largest consumer of cotton, purchasing eight hundred million pounds in 1860. Due to a northern naval blockade that

prevented the South from exporting its goods, the British turned to purchase cotton from British India instead.⁵⁶



business elsewhere, at the Indian Cotton Depot “over the way”. This cartoon illustrates the British merchants’ turning to India for cotton during the American Civil War. At that stage, India became the most important exporter of raw materials for Great Britain.

It might be argued that Great Britain became dependent on Indian raw materials and natural resources — that is to say Indian exports. Without the monopoly of Indian imports and exports, Great Britain would face great economic difficulties and might even lose its place in the global trade. By obtaining the empress title, Queen Victoria might not only have desired to preserve Great Britain’s status as the greatest colonial power but also to preserve its dominant place in the global economy.

The empress title holds personal meanings for the monarch, marking at the same time her return to politics and the elevation of the British monarchy’s status among European royalties. Queen Victoria was bound by name and by responsibilities towards her new subjects. It could be argued that the empress title was for Victoria a way to ensure peace in Great Britain but also in the colonies by preserving Great Britain’s place as a major political power and its predominance over the world’s economy. At this stage, India became significant for the British and more specially for the queen as it held for her at the same time personal, political and economic significance. The queen’s interest in India would soon lead her to learn more about the exotic land she rules.



After examining chapter 1 and chapter 2, the queen’s relation to India turns out to be a complex one since Queen Victoria was attached to India not only by her responsibility towards her new subjects but also by the curiosity she expressed for the exotic land. As duty became joined with interest, the relation of the sovereign to her colony became blurred and more difficult to determine. Was it her interest in the foreign land that drove Queen Victoria to get involved in Indian affairs or was it her responsibility as Empress of India that made Victoria interested in her colony? This question remains unanswered but what is sure is that this new title of Empress motivated the monarch to discover India in three steps as it will be explained in the next part.

Part 2: Discovery of the “Jewel in the Crown”

Chapter 3 – A glimpse of the exotic land

During her long reign, Queen Victoria never visited India herself. One may wonder how she discovered her colony. This chapter will deal with the first step of the queen's discovery of India through a European perspective in three parts. In part one, Queen Victoria's discovery of India through accounts of British settlers in India will be provided alongside photographs and paintings of the exotic land. In part two, India's representation in the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 will be looked into. In part three, India's representation in the British press will be examined.

A- Accounts about the British settlers in India

Victoria and Albert were fortunate enough to be surrounded at court by scholars, travelers and soldiers whose tales and researches kept them informed about Great Britain's Eastern empire.⁵⁷ From such materials as these, Victoria and Albert developed their knowledge about India and its culture.

India became more embedded in Queen Victoria's immediate world from 1848 onwards as the husbands of the two lady-in-waiting to Queen Victoria – Lady Charlotte Canning and Lady



Figure 6: Watercolor of the Hill Fort of Kangra Valley, Himachal Pradesh, by Lady Canning, c. 1860 (*Wikipedia*).

Susan Ramsay – went on to occupy the highest position in India: Ramsay (also known as the Marquess of Dalhousie) served as governor-general from 1848 until 1856, when he was succeeded by Canning, the first viceroy of India after the East India Company's government was transferred to the Crown.⁵⁸ Both men took their wives with them to

⁵⁷ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 84-85.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

India, who kept the queen up to date with news from the colony.⁵⁹

Lady Charlotte is described by historian Eugenia W. Herbert as the “most memorable and the most accomplished of the women botanical illustrators in India.”⁶⁰ She wrote frequently to Queen Victoria, describing her impressions of India, her travels, family affairs and events in India.⁶¹ She was also one of India's earliest photographers and painters.⁶² In 1895, she sent to Victoria her own watercolors and ink drawings⁶³, many of which were picturesque scenes featuring ancient buildings and landscape views or simple depictions of the cities of Farrukhabad, Kanpur and Lucknow. Figure 6 illustrates one of Charlotte’s watercolors depicting Indian landscapes which was probably seen by Queen Victoria.



Figure 7: Waxed-paper negative by Dr. John Murray displaying a view of the Nagina Mosque at Agra Fort, c.1857–1860 (*Getty Museum*).

Not only did Charlotte Canning send her paintings and photographs to the monarch⁶⁴, she even encouraged the queen to seek visual representations of India from two photographers – Dr.



Figure 8: The Munchee Bau or old Citadel of Lucknow by Felice Beato, c. 1858 (*National Army Museum*).

John Murray and Felice Beato.⁶⁵ Figure 7 illustrates one of the waxed-paper negatives Murray produced while working in India, that might have reached Victoria. Figure 8 presents a picture by Beato of the old Citadel of Lucknow, offering a vision of the Indian civilization regressive in the face of British modernization. It could be said that the photography shot by Murray and Felice allowed the British to romanticize Indian civilization whilst at the same time asserting its backwardness in the face of Great Britain’s progress.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶⁰ Herbert, Eugenia W. *Flora's Empire: British Gardens in India*. Penguin Group, 2013, 175.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶³ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 109.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

As pictures speak louder than words, Victoria discovered the Indian subcontinent in a way that accounts of the British settlers failed to convey. However, the work of Murray, Beato and Charlotte Canning presented to Queen Victoria an eastern sublime – beautiful ornate mosques, palaces and temples⁶⁶ – that could only offer the queen a glimpse of the Indian culture. Similarly, the accounts of India provided to Victoria only a part of the whole picture that would not satisfy the monarch's interest, since she hoped to learn more about India during the 1851 and 1886 exhibitions.

B- India's representation in the exhibitions

In 1851, more than six million people frequented London's Hyde Park to witness “wonders from across the world”.⁶⁷ The Great Exhibition of the works of Industry of All Nations – regarded as the brainchild of Prince Albert – was a global display of art and manufacturing. It took place in the Crystal Palace, a specially constructed glass and iron structure, and was inaugurated by Queen Victoria.⁶⁸

An entire section was dedicated to Indian display, organized by the British botanist John Forbes Royle. Unlike the rest of Great Britain's colonies, India was presented by the “East India Company”. Following its official opening on May 1st, Victoria, Albert, and their children paid numerous visits to the exhibition. On July 16th, after being guided around the Indian court by Dr John Forbes Royle, Victoria declared in her journal that “[the Indian section] is of immense interest, & quite something new for the generality of people, these (...) articles having hitherto, only come over as presents to the Sovereign.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

⁶⁷ “India, on Display: The Great Exhibition of 1851.” *The Heritage Lab*, <https://www.theheritagelab.in/india-the-great-exhibition-of-1851/>. Accessed on 18 February 2022.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 91.

Her comment implies that Victoria was sharing with the nation instruments and tokens of



Figure 9: The Ivory Throne - now part of the Royal Collection Trust – gifted to the Queen by the Maharaja of Travancore (*Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851: India N°1*).

high diplomacy. In fact, many of the Indian objects on display were gifts and symbols of homages for the queen, especially ordered for the exhibition by Indian princes.⁷⁰ Among the list of gifts offered to the queen, there was an ivory state chair from Travancore; shawls, scarves and carpets from Kashmir; ivory from Jodhpur and Nepal; leather from Cutch; bedsteads from Benares; and a model of one of the largest diamonds in the world from Hyderabad.⁷¹

Other prominent showcased objects provided a view of the Indian court: embroidered elephant trappings, carved rosewood furniture, the King of Oudh's crown, an ivory throne and a costume of an Indian Chief (see fig. 9). Moreover, Indian jewelries were also exhibited, including Koh-i-Noor, the diamond that had been presented to Queen Victoria by the East India Company under the Treaty of Lahore in 1849.⁷² This diamond even featured in the *Illustrated London News*, showing the importance it held for the monarch (see fig. 10).

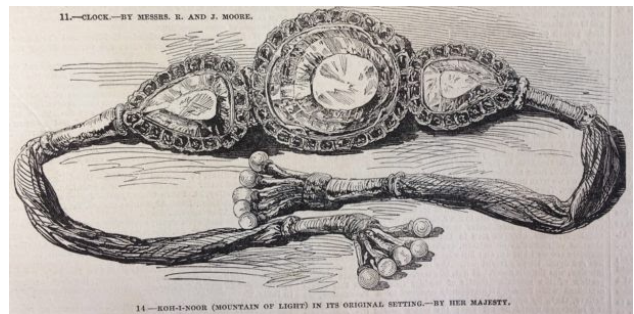


Figure 10: The Koh-i-Noor, between two other diamonds, as it was originally presented to Queen Victoria. *Illustrated London News*, May 31, 1851. NAL pressmark: PP.10.

Greatly impressed by the Great Exhibition of 1851, Queen Victoria would attend more exhibitions to learn more about India. In 1886, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition took place welcoming more than five million visitors.⁷³ A wide range of goods was donated by the Indian princes and Indian states for the exhibition – art, architecture, economic commodities, silks, and anthropological studies were among the Indian displays. A display of “native artisans” – thirty-

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷³ “Making Britain.” *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886* | *Making Britain*, <<https://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/making-britain/content/colonial-and-indian-exhibition-1886>>. Accessed on 18 February 2022.

four men from Agra showcasing various crafts and vocations, from sweetmeat maker to potter to carpet weaving – was also featured in the exhibition.⁷⁴



Figure 11: “Woodcarvers (Courtyard of Indian Palace).” *Illustrated London News*, Colonial Indian Exhibition: The Indian Empire section, July 17, 1886: 84.

These men were actually inmates from Agra Jail who had arrived in Great Britain on April 20, 1886 with Dr J. W. Tyler – the jail superintendent – and were invited to meet Queen Victoria on July 1886.⁷⁵ Figure 11 features one group of the Indian artisans, the woodcarvers. The queen commissioned Rudolf Swoboda to paint the portrait of the participants of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. He produced eight portraits in total, of the native inmates, one of which is the portrait of Bakshiram, an older potter from Agra jail.⁷⁶ Queen Victoria liked the resulting paintings so much that she paid Swoboda to go to India and paint the life and the work of her Indian subjects.

C- Indian culture in the British press

In the XIXth century, India was featured in numerous periodicals and magazines. It was affirmed by *The Strand Magazine* that India was most celebrated for its “jugglers”, described as “the wonder of India.”⁷⁷ In fact, “Indian Jugglery has a great reputation in Europe” for its “Jadoo” or magic working which concerns mainly three great tricks: the basket trick, the mango-tree trick and the rope trick.⁷⁸ For this reason, India came to be known as the “land of magic”.⁷⁹ Many tales spread about India and its conjurors romanticizing the subcontinent. When the British inquired about these tales, Indians answer that “all in imagination, all in traveler tales.”⁸⁰

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ “Rudolf Swoboda (1859-1914) - Bakshiram.” *Royal Collection Trust*, <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/403826/bakshiram>>. Accessed on 18 February 2022.

⁷⁷ “Are Indian Jugglers humbugs?” *The Strand Magazine*, Vol. 18, December 1899, 657.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

India had also been known for the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, regarded as the “principal event” leading to the assumption of the Indian administration by the British Crown, and for its “huge territory and immense population.”⁸¹ However, despite the glorification of the exotic land, India was regarded as lagging behind Great Britain's progress. It was declared in *The British Medical Journal* that:

The history of India during Her Majesty's long reign has been one of progressive development – of orderly and humane government; of increased protection of person and property; of the enactment and supremacy of good laws; of great educational advance; of growing material prosperity; of rapid increase of postal and telegraphic communication, of railroads, canals and public works beneficial to convenience, comfort and health; of liberty and self-government, and generally of great elevation of the standards of personal and social life.⁸²

This statement clearly undermines India's backwardness in the face of Great Britain. In fact, Indians are presented as an inferior race, unable to govern themselves properly and who are in constant need of the British's help in order to lead good lives. The British superiority is also demonstrated by the words of the British conjuror Mr. Bertram declaring that “there is not a single trick which the Indians perform that European conjurors cannot do as well, and even better.”⁸³ In fact, he astonished the Indian jugglers to the point of “falling down on the ground before him and kissing his feet in token alike of admiration and acknowledgement of his superiority.”⁸⁴

Not only Indians are not modernized but also wild. Indeed, it was stated in *The British Medical Journal* that “native towns, bazaars, villages and hamlets [in India] were left alone in filth and disease, and native communities allowed to pursue their objectionable ways without lit or hindrance.”⁸⁵ This means that Indians are filthy and dirty, leading unhealthy lives because of their ignorance just like wild animals.

Thus, India was dubbed the “land of disease” as “danger to health lurked in the native quarters.”⁸⁶ Even when a sanitary reform was proposed to fight against diseases, pushing Indians to adopt measures conducive to public health, it was met with a rejection described as “ignorance,

⁸¹ “India In the Victorian Era.” *The British Medical Journal*, 26 June 1897, 1668.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ “Are Indian Jugglers humbugs?” *The Strand Magazine*, Vol. 18, December 1899, 657.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 664.

⁸⁵ “India In the Victorian Era.” *The British Medical Journal*, 26 June 1897, 1669.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

prejudice, apathy, poverty and ineptitude which opposed obstinate and almost hopeless barriers to reform.” The journalist went on to declare that Indian “representations have been a voice crying in the wilderness”⁸⁷ indicating Indians’ backwardness in the medical sphere – not only there are ignorant of their health issues but are also unable to cure the diseases.

Another possible explanation could be that because of their filthy lives, diseases spread widely across the subcontinent. If they had adopted preventive measures, diseases might not have emerged in the first place. Moreover, the word “juggler” suggests that Indians are here to entertain the British, as animals do in a zoo.

Queen Victoria like any British probably read the articles written about India and discovered the exotic land under the lens of a European perspective. Whether it was intentional or not to compare the Indian and the British civilizations, it was constantly done in each time India was referred to and the example of conjurors is enough to affirm it.

Queen Victoria heard many accounts about India from people in her court and from acquaintances aboard. She even inquired about the lives of her Indian subjects by sending painters like Swoboda to fill in the missing part of the puzzle and quench her curiosity. Journals and magazine articles also contributed to the discovery of India by the monarch even if they did not stop asserting British superiority over the Indians. It could be said that this was the first step in the discovery of India by the queen through the eyes of Europeans presenting only the tip of the iceberg. The queen would soon take her second step to discover India this time through the eyes of the Indians themselves, namely Abdul Karim.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Chapter 4 - India through the eyes of Abdul Karim

This chapter will deal with the second step of the queen's discovery of India through the eyes of Abdul Karim in three parts. In the first part, Queen Victoria's encounter with the Munshi will be provided with a mention of the impression the queen had of the young Indian man. In the second part, the new vision of India offered to the queen by Abdul Karim will be examined. In the third part, the way the British ruler practiced Indian culture will be provided.

A- Victoria's encounter with the Munshi

By 1887, Queen Victoria was the longest serving monarch in British history and Great Britain was the most powerful country on earth with a portion of every continent under its dominion.⁸⁸ Among all of Great Britain's colonies, India was considered to be the "Jewel in the Crown" since it was the main source of raw materials and the potential market for manufactured goods.⁸⁹ In that year, it had been exactly thirty years since India was directly governed by the British Crown. Thus, the Golden Jubilee Celebration of 1887 was the occasion for the nation to celebrate its imperial, bureaucratic and technological achievements.⁹⁰

The Queen hosted dozens of foreign rulers at a luxurious banquet and a large number of Indian Princes were expected to pay homage to their Empress in person during that event.⁹¹ Therefore, it was decided that two servants be brought from India to the royal court for a year to help Victoria address the Indian princes at her banquet.⁹² According to English historian and author Shrabani Basu, the Indian servants were chosen by the Agra jail superintendent, John Tyler, who

⁸⁸ "What Does The Sun Never Sets On The British Empire Mean?" *WorldAtlas*, <www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-does-the-sun-never-sets-on-the-british-empire-mean.html>. Accessed on 27 February 2022.

⁸⁹ "Jewel in the Crown - Imperialism.india." *Google Sites*, <<https://sites.google.com/site/imperialismindia/home/economic-reasons>>. Accessed on 25 February 2022.

⁹⁰ "British Raj." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/event/British-raj#ref343745>>. Accessed on 27 February 2022.

⁹¹ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 40.

⁹² *Ibid.*

had recently escorted thirty-four prisoners to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 in London to show off the carpets they had woven as part of their rehabilitation program.⁹³

In fact, Queen Victoria was fascinated by the Indian culture on seeing sophisticated carpets woven by workers under Tyler's assistant clerk, Abdul Karim, at the Colonial Exhibition.⁹⁴ So, she asked the Agra jail's superintendent to assign her two Indian servants in order to assist her at her Golden Jubilee. Abdul Karim was selected along with Mohammed Buksh, an experienced servant who ran the household of a British general.⁹⁵ Unlike Buksh, the twenty-four-year-old Abdul Karim was not prepared for his new duties. Therefore, before their departure for London, they received a course in English language and in British royal customs.⁹⁶

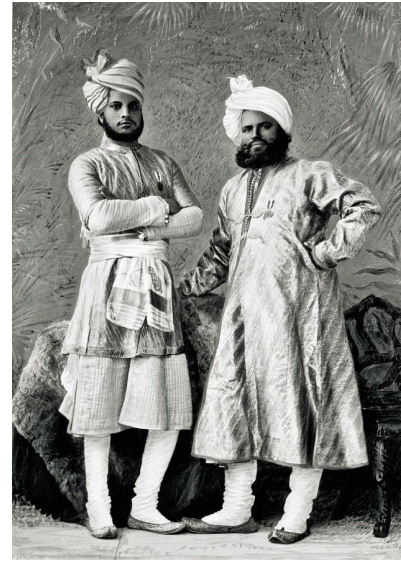


Figure 12: Abdul Karim and Mohammed Buksh, hand-coloured photo. (*The Royal Collection* © 2009 HM Queen Elizabeth II)

Abdul Karim and Mohammed Buksh arrived at Windsor Castle three days before the beginning of the Jubilee celebrations. On June 18th, the Queen sent a telegram to Dr Tyler expressing her wish to see Abdul Karim and Mohammed Buksh at Windsor.⁹⁷ They had to wait near the dining room before meeting the Queen in her mourning clothes and white veil, accompanied by the Duke of Connaught and Princess Beatrice. The Indian servants stood to attention as the Queen drifted past to inspect them. As she walked, Tyler knelt before her and Abdul Karim greeted her in an oriental style. Then, he presented a Nazar, or a gift of gold coin, to the Queen in the palm of his hand that she touched and returned as was the Indian custom.⁹⁸

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

Queen Victoria's first impression of the Munshi⁹⁹ was recorded in her diaries:

The other, much younger, is much lighter [than Buksh], tall, and with a fine, serious countenance. His father is a native doctor at Agra. They both kissed my feet.¹⁰⁰

She was much more impressed by the tall, handsome and grave young man than the older, darker and plain looking Buksh who remained a servant until his death at Windsor in 1899.¹⁰¹ In the following days the Golden Jubilee was to take place.

On the day of the Jubilee, Queen Victoria greeted screaming crowds from her palace balcony before she led a grand procession to Westminster Abbey in an open carriage, escorted by the Indian cavalry. As the queen's "orderly", the Munshi expected to join the procession but he did not, which disappointed him.¹⁰² Once their jubilee duties were finished, Abdul Karim and Buksh moved with the queen to Osborne in the Isle of Wight as part of the continuing Jubilee tour.¹⁰³ There, Abdul Karim distinguished himself by surprising Victoria with his curry recipe. He cooked a chicken curry using spices he had brought from Agra.¹⁰⁴ According to Victoria's biographer A.N. Wilson, the queen declared the dish "excellent" and even added it to the royal recipes. But what impressed the old sovereign the most was Abdul Karim's proficiency in the Urdu language (known as Hindustani at the time), for which she honored him to be her teacher.¹⁰⁵

In 1888, the Emperor of Germany and the husband of the queen's daughter died leaving his wife completely devastated. Victoria was heartbroken as her daughter experienced the loss of a dear husband and Abdul Karim comforted her.¹⁰⁶ Moved by the understanding manner and

⁹⁹ A term used to refer to a secretary or a language teacher. It was later used to refer to Abdul Karim after Queen Victoria bestowed upon him the title of "Munshi Hafiz Abdul Karim". The other term *Hafiz* is used to refer to a Muslim who knows the Koran by heart. For more information on this term see: Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 101.

¹⁰⁰ "Victoria & Abdul." *Good Times*, <<http://www.goodtimes.com.pk/victoria-abdul>>. Accessed on 25 February 2022.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 53. Historian Basu claimed that Abdul Karim accepted the offer of becoming the queen's orderly because he understood the word "orderly" in the Indian context, which means a person who accompanies the sovereign or other person of high rank on horseback. It was a higher rank than that of an orderly in the British army. Therefore, he expected to follow the queen on horseback. He was later chocked to know that the word "orderly" meant someone who perform minor tasks.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 68. For more information on this teacher-student relationship see "C- Indian culture in practice".

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

presence of her Indian servant at difficult times, the Queen decided to promote him and keep him by her side. In her diary she wrote the following:

He [Abdul Karim] is anxious to return to India, not feeling happy under the existing circumstances. On the other hand, I particularly wish to retain his services, as he helps me in studying Hindustani, which interests me very much, and he is very intelligent and useful.¹⁰⁷

Soon after, she had bestowed upon him the title of “Munshi Hafiz Abdul Karim”¹⁰⁸ relieving him of his servant duties and making him her official Indian clerk and teacher. The Golden Jubilee year was nearing its end.

B- Fresh perspective on India

It was the queen’s encounter with Abdul Karim that made her see India through from a different perspective. When the Munshi first came to Great Britain to wait on tables in 1887¹⁰⁹, no one could have imagined that the young Indian would bring together Queen Victoria and India in the years to follow. From the moment he was appointed as a servant, Abdul Karim acted as a bridge between the monarch and the Indian societies. Whether it was intentional or not, the Munshi was without doubt making cultural exchange.

By definition, cultural exchange is sharing different ideas, traditions and knowledge with people coming from different countries to promote mutual understanding.¹¹⁰ This is exactly what Abdul Karim did. He brought to Great Britain his native culture as well as his oriental beliefs, and gradually he introduced the queen to Indian language, customs, traditions and religion.¹¹¹

This phenomenon of cultural exchange is described as “cultural mobility” by Nayar, a historian who studied the tactics of leaders of imperial Britain. He interpreted it as “the conspicuous

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹⁰ “What Is Cultural Exchange?” *Greenheart International*, <greenheart.org/blog/greenheart-international/what-is-cultural-exchange/#:~:text=Cultural%20exchange%20is%20sharing%20different,different%20background%20than%20your%20own>. Accessed on 27 February 2022.

¹¹¹ “Queen Victoria & Abdul's Story.” *British Muslim Magazine*, <<http://www.britishmuslim-magazine.com/2016/07/queen-victoria-abduls-story/>>. Accessed on 26 February 2022.

movements of peoples, objects, images, and ideas.”¹¹² He indicated that cultural mobility is usually carried out in “contact zones.” In the case of Abdul Karim, the contact zones would be his interactions with the queen and the royal household.

This process of cultural exchange began with the display of Oriental clothes and cuisine. The Munshi exposed to the Empress of India his native clothes at their first encounter at Windsor Castle. He was “dressed in striking scarlet tunics with white turban.”¹¹³ Then, without delay he presented to her his native dishes. He prepared for the Queen “chicken curry, *daal* and a fragrant *pilau*”.¹¹⁴ According to Basu, Queen Victoria was for the first time in her life “introduced to the taste and smell of India.”¹¹⁵ The queen liked the dish and called it “excellent”. Encouraged by her comment, the Munshi presented more dishes from the Mughal kitchens to Victoria like the exotic *birianis* and *dum pukht* for instance.¹¹⁶ However, the chicken curry remained the favorite recipe of the Queen as she included it in her royal menu. Yet, the cultural exchange was at its early phase and was by no means restricted to fashion and food. This cultural mobility that Nayar talked about manifested its second phase under the request of Victoria. It concerned language exchange.

Eager to learn more about the country she ruled from a distance of over four thousand miles and the Indian culture, Victoria asked the Munshi to teach her Urdu. The lessons were at the beginning somewhat simple as the Queen described in her diary. “Am learning a few words of Hindustani to speak to my servants,” Victoria wrote. “It is a great interest to me, for both the language and the people.”¹¹⁷

Her interest in India grew as the Munshi told her about his country, his native city of Agra and the romantic story behind the Taj Mahal.¹¹⁸ The queen was very much touched by the enormous love of Shah Jahan who built the Taj Mahal, a tomb that took twenty-two years to be constructed and would later become an everlasting monument of love, to mourn his dead Queen, Mumtaz

¹¹² Nayar, Pramod. “Aesthetic Understanding: From Colonial English to Imperial Cosmopolitans.” *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA, 2012, 239.

¹¹³ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 57.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹¹⁷ “Victoria and Abdul: The Friendship That Scandalized England.” *Smithsonian.com*, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/victoria-and-abdul-friendship-scandalized-england-180964959/>. Accessed on 26 February 2022.

¹¹⁸ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 68-69.

Mahal. Victoria understood the sorrow of Shah Jahan who lost his wife upon childbirth. She even recalled the mausoleum she had built at Frogmore for Prince Albert.¹¹⁹

Beyond the similarity, a connection was formed between the old sovereign and the far-off country. Abdul Karim was without doubt transporting Queen Victoria into a different land and culture.¹²⁰ As the Munshi described his homeland and the splendor of the Taj Mahal, India came to life before the Queen. The stories and descriptions of India that Queen Victoria heard of inspired her to build a representation of India in her own palace, the Durbar Room.¹²¹

Soon, the Munshi reached the third phase of cultural exchange that is sharing beliefs. According to Sushila Anand, Abdul Karim's biographer, Queen Victoria's letters indicate that "her discussions with the Munshi were wide-ranging philosophical, political and practical. Both head and heart were engaged."¹²² The Munshi's conversations went even further and concerned his religion. The religious discourse she had with her Indian servant is confirmed in the Queen's letter to Sir Theodore Martin in 1888.

Munshi is an excellent, clever, truly pious and very refined gentleman, who says 'God ordered it', God's orders are what they implicitly obey. Such faith as theirs and such conscientiousness sets us a great example.¹²³

This letter indicates the fascination the Queen expressed for the Muslims' conduct. At that stage, her conversation with her Indian servant revolved about everything and even included his family matters. As she continued to converse with Abdul Karim, the British monarch found in him what could satisfy her curiosity. There is no doubt that the Munshi was in Victoria's eyes "the respected personal embodiment, ever at her side, of that exotic Jewel in her Crown with all its varied languages and peoples,"¹²⁴ as argued by the historian Walter Arnstein.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 148. For more information see chapter 5, "B- Durbar Room: Indian microcosm in the palace".

¹²² "Victoria & Abdul." *Good Times*, <<http://www.goodtimes.com.pk/victoria-abdul/>>. Accessed on 26 February 2022.

¹²³ Victoria to Sir Theodore Martin, 20 November 1888, quoted in Basu, p. 65.

¹²⁴ "Acting with Intent: How Queen Victoria Brought India Home to Britain through an Indian Prince and an Indian Servant." *La Salle University*, <<https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=graduateannual>>. Accessed on 26 February 2022. Taken from Walter L. Arnstein. *Queen Victoria*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 197.

C- Indian culture in practice

Fascinated by India, the old sovereign did not content herself with discovering her colony and began to practice Indian culture herself. In fact, Abdul Karim encouraged Victoria to take a closer step towards the Crown Jewel of her Empire by teaching her the Indian spoken language.¹²⁵ He even made her a book of common words and sentences in Urdu. Victoria carried it around in case she attempted to speak with Indian servants or visiting Royalty.¹²⁶ Maharani Chimnabai of Baroda was among the first to be spoken to in Hindustani on December 1899.¹²⁷ Soon afterwards, greeting Indian Princes in their mother tongue became a habit of the British Queen.

However, Abdul Karim's influence did not end here. He cooked for the Queen his favorite recipe, which he had asked his wife to teach him before travelling to Great Britain.¹²⁸ Ever since Victoria tasted the chicken curry prepared by Abdul Karim, it remained "a tradition in the last decade of Victoria's reign that curry would be cooked every day and served, regardless of whether or not her guests ate it."¹²⁹ In fact, Shrabani Basu indicated that the Queen served "curries to the visiting Indian Princes and nobility who continued to call."¹³⁰

However, that was not all. The Queen wished to experience the Indian culture every day. Therefore, fascinated by their traditional outfits, the Queen ordered that the Indian servants' clothes "must be made in Indian fashion and the Pageri [turban] always be worn."¹³¹ She even indicated that "Mahomet Buksh and Abdul Karim should wear in the *morning out of doors* at breakfast when they wait, their *new* dark blue dress and always at lunch with any 'Pageri' [turban] and *sash* they like,



Figure 13: Franz Xaver Winterhalter, Queen Victoria, 1852 (Royal Collection Trust).

¹²⁵ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 68.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹²⁷ "Victoria & Abdul." *Good Times*, <<http://www.goodtimes.com.pk/victoria-abdul/>>. Accessed on 26 February 2022.

¹²⁸ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 68.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

only not the *Gold Ones*. The Red dress and gold and white turban and sash to be always worn at dinner in the evening.”¹³²

In turn, the queen even participated in this oriental experience by wearing Indian jewelry. As Koh-i-Noor failed to live up to the expectations of the British public, Prince Albert decided to have the diamond recut. This resulted in the diamond being more brilliant and appealing than before, despite the significant weight reduction. It was later mounted as a brooch, which can be seen in Queen Victoria's portrait by Franz Xaver Winterhalter (see fig. 13).¹³³

Historians rarely mention Victoria other than with reference to her love for her husband Albert, her intense mourning for him, and her friendship with her Scottish servant, John Brown. Another man, whom the queen holds dear, would appear in her life during the Golden Jubilee and become a source of influence over the old sovereign. This man is Abdul Karim, a young Indian Muslim who travelled to Great Britain in order to serve the Royal Household during Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Soon after his arrival, he proved his worth to his sovereign and became her teacher. Impressed by him and overjoyed by his presence, the Queen bestowed on him the title Munshi Hafiz Abdul Karim.

Curious about her far-off colony, Victoria was eager to learn more about it. Thanks to the Munshi, she got to know not only the language, but also the exotic country, its people and customs. Abdul Karim described India, its landscape and monuments like the Taj Mahal to the Queen. He continued to immerse Victoria in India by describing his city of birth, Agra. The Queen spent a year of celebration and splendor and was moved by the devotion of her servants. She managed during the Golden Jubilee's year to acquire a once lost happiness by discovering India, acquiring Indian servants and learning Hindustani. Of all the jubilee's memorable events, it was the queen's encounter with the Munshi that became the most significant one.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 72.

¹³³ “Henry Cole and the Koh-i-Noor Diamond • V&A Blog.” *V&A Blog*, <<https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/caring-for-our-collections/henry-cole-and-the-koh-i-noor-diamond>>. Accessed on 26 February 2022.

Chapter 5 - India brought to Great Britain

This chapter will deal with the queen's personal discovery of India in her own palace in two parts. In the first part, the meeting of Queen Victoria with some members of the Indian royal family will be provided, mainly with Sunity Devi and her husband Nripendra Narayan. In the second part, the Durbar Room, an addition to the royal castle will be looked into with a description of its construction and its Indian design.

A- Indians at court

There is no doubt that Victoria was an *exot*, a term Victor Segalen attributed to those "from the depths of their own clump of patriarchal soil, call to, desire, sniff out what is beyond."¹³⁴ That is to say, people who wish to discover the unknown beyond their national shores. In fact, Queen Victoria falls into this category as she had always been fascinated by India, even though she could never visit it herself due to her old age.¹³⁵ She decided to bring the vast country to her by importing Indian manservants and royals.¹³⁶

The Jubilee celebration of 1887 was the occasion of the queen to meet Indian Princes as they were expected to pay their homage personally to their Empress.¹³⁷ This caused an issue for most Hindu Maharajahs¹³⁸ because their religion forbade them from crossing the *kala pani* (dark waters), therefore from travelling the seas.¹³⁹ However, some Indian royals honored their Empress with their presence.

¹³⁴ From the original Segalen, Victor. *Essai Sur L'exotisme: Une esthétique Du Divers*. Fata Morgana, 1978, quoted in English in Segalen, Victor, and Schlick Yaël Rachel. *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity*. Duke University Press, 2002, 63.

¹³⁵ "Queen Victoria the Person, Not Just the Crown." *Deccan Chronicle*, <www.deccanchronicle.com/lifestyle/books-and-art/251118/queen-victoria-the-person-not-just-the-crown.html>. Accessed on 14 March 2022.

¹³⁶ "Victoria & Abdul." *Good Times*, <www.goodtimes.com.pk/victoria-abdul/>. Accessed on 14 March 2022.

¹³⁷ Sunity Devei, Maharani of Cooch Behar. "My First Visit to England." *The Autobiography of an Indian Princess*, John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., London, 1921, 107.

¹³⁸ Maharaja, also spelled maharajah is a Sanskrit title for a "great ruler", "great king" or "high king". Historically, maharaja refers specifically to a ruler of one of the principal native states of India. The feminine form is maharani. For more information see: "Maharaja." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/maharaja>>. Accessed on 14 March 2022.

¹³⁹ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 43.

The first guests to arrive for the Jubilee were the Maharajah and Maharani of Cooch Behar, a tiny principality of the North-Eastern hills of Bengal, famous for its tea plantations and forests full of rhinoceroses and tigers.¹⁴⁰ Nripendra Narayan was at the time a twenty-five-year-old Maharajah who had been educated in the elite Presidency college in Calcutta. His wife was the twenty-two-year-old Sunity Devi, the first Indian Maharani to visit the English Court as she declared in her autobiography.¹⁴¹ She was the daughter of the Bengali reformist Keshub Chander Sen, who had established the Brahmo Samaj, a new branch of Hinduism that believed in the emancipation of women.¹⁴² She became later the first Indian woman to write in English when she published her memoir, *The Autobiography of an Indian Princess*, in London in 1921. The couple had travelled to Great Britain with their three children, Sunity's two brothers, an English secretary and Indian servants.¹⁴³

During their meeting with the queen, Nripendra Narayan wore silk embroidered Indian tunics with ornamented turbans. He always kept his pearl strings and ruby and diamond encrusted rings. As for Sunity Devi, her gowns combined Eastern and Western styles, allowing her to wear saris with European-style blouses and petticoats.¹⁴⁴ In fact, she declared in her autobiography that on the morning of the Jubilee, she wore "a pale orange-colored gown with a sari to match."¹⁴⁵ The next day when she attended the Drawing-room, she wore a "white and gold brocade gown and a *crepe de Chine* sari."¹⁴⁶ Like her husband, jewels always sparkled around her neck and on her fingers.

Appearing in their native clothes was not a surprise as Queen Victoria insisted that Indian guests present themselves in their traditional outfit.¹⁴⁷ The British monarch was very much pleased upon seeing their national costume.¹⁴⁸ In fact, the visit of the Indian Princes was the occasion for the old sovereign to get a close glimpse of the oriental style. It was also her chance to deepen her

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁴¹ Sunity Deveen, Maharani of Cooch Behar. "My First Visit to England." *The Autobiography of an Indian Princess*, John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., London, 1921, 97.

¹⁴² Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 48.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Sunity Deveen, Maharani of Cooch Behar. "My First Visit to England." *The Autobiography of an Indian Princess*, John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., London, 1921, 105.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

knowledge about Indian home-life and customs. Sunity Devi was ready to answer the queen's questions and even ready to take her empress to an imaginary visit to India by offering her "a little diamond pendant with an uncut ruby in the middle."¹⁴⁹ Queen Victoria would wear the jewel which Sunity Devi had presented to her whenever she met the Indian Maharani.¹⁵⁰

During their stay in London, the Indian couple "went to a grand garden-party at Buckingham Palace" where thousands of men and women were assembled. While waiting for the queen's arrival, Nripendra Narayan stood right at the back, while Sunity anxious to see everything, stood in the front line. To her surprise, her Majesty walked straight up to her and kissed her. She was the only woman there whom the Queen kissed as she declared in her autobiography.¹⁵¹ Devi was greatly amused "the following day when the newspapers made some sarcastic remarks about the Indian Princess receiving more attention than any of the others."¹⁵²

Queen Victoria was so fond of the Maharani of Cooch Behar that she offered her the decoration C.I. (Crown of India) while saying a few words with it which was greatly appreciated by the Maharani even more than the present itself.¹⁵³ The Indian royal couple stayed after the Jubilee celebration until the following year, which gave Victoria more time to discover India and its people.¹⁵⁴

Other Indian royals attended the Jubilee celebration like Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, the Maharajah of Baroda and his wife Chimnabai; the architecture-loving Maharajah of Indore, Shivaji Rao Holkar; the Maharajah of Bharatpore, Jaswant Singh; Maharajah Bhagwatsinghji Sagramsinhji, the Thakore¹⁵⁵ of Gondal, who had studied medicine at Edingburgh and was much respected by the British press; the Thakore of Limri, Jaswantsinghji Fatehsinghji; the Thakore of

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁵⁴ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 231.

¹⁵⁵ Thakur or Thakore is a feudal title and a surname used by upper class communities in India and Nepal. For more information see: *Thakore Surname Origin, Meaning & Last Name History*, <<https://forebears.io/surnames/thakore>>. Accessed on 13 March 2022.

Morvi, Lukhdirji Bahadur, appearing in a layered turban in the Rajasthani style; and Rao of Kutch among others.¹⁵⁶

All Maharajahs arrived with their secretaries, servants and personal cooks. Some of them even brought their horses with them, others their cows.¹⁵⁷ The British were astonished, as it was unexpected for royals to bring their animals with them and especially their cows. However, for Hindus the cow is considered to be a sacred symbol of life that should be protected and revered. In the Vedas, the religious text about Hinduism, the cow is associated with Aditi, the mother of all the gods.¹⁵⁸ So, the cow occupies an important place in the Hindus' life. It could be argued that Indian Hindus committed a taboo by crossing the *kala pani* (dark waters), so they brought a sacred animal with them to appease their God. This probably allowed Queen Victoria to discover more about the Indian religions. However, importing Indian servants and royals was not enough to extinguish the curiosity of the monarch, so she decided to build her own microcosm of India in Great Britain.

B- Durbar Room: Indian microcosm in the palace

Unable to visit the exotic land that triggered her curiosity, Queen Victoria might have opted to create a substitute of India in her own palace, the Durbar Room. This addition to the house was built to provide a much-needed banqueting hall at Osborne so that Victoria could hold state banquets. The Indian Room takes its name from the traditional Indian word *darbar* meaning both a state reception and the hall where such audiences were held.¹⁵⁹

In 1890, Queen Victoria commissioned John Lockwood Kipling¹⁶⁰ and his most talented student, the Punjabi craftsman Ram Singh, to create a new banquet hall at Osborne House designed

¹⁵⁶ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 48-49.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

¹⁵⁸ "The 'Splainer: What Makes The Cow Sacred to Hindus?" *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/the-splainer-what-makes-the-cow-sacred-to-hindus/2015/11/05/acdde3e2-840c-11e5-8bd2-680fff868306_story.html>. Accessed on 14 March 2022.

¹⁵⁹ "Empress of India: The Durbar Room - Google Arts & Culture." *Google*, <<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/nAWh8uM3CkhkIQ>>. Accessed on 15 March 2022.

¹⁶⁰ A designer and architectural sculptor, curator and educator, illustrator and journalist. For more information on Kipling see: "V&A · Research Project: John Lockwood Kipling." *Victoria and Albert Museum*, <<https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/research-project-john-lockwood-kipling/>>. Accessed on 15 March 2022.

and decorated in an elaborate and popular Indian style.¹⁶¹ The construction of the room took two years to be completed only in 1892.¹⁶² The fact that the sovereign chose her summer palace on the Isle of Wight to recreate her own version of India indicates the importance India represented for the queen. Originally, Osborne House was purchased by Consort Albert and was later the castle in which Victoria sought refuge after her husband's death.¹⁶³ Historian Palmore indicates that it was "one of the royal residences preferred by Queen Victoria."¹⁶⁴ Therefore, adding an Indian room to her favorite palace indicates the queen's desire to integrate her colony in her daily life.

In the Isle of Wight, Osborne House was undergoing an extension to accommodate the new Durbar Room. "The sixty-foot long, thirty-foot wide and twenty-foot-high room was to be built adjacent to the pavilion."¹⁶⁵ It was linked to the main house by a long corridor called the Indian corridor, on the walls of which the queen displayed Indian portraits. This corridor leading to the room was lined with Rudolf Swoboda's famous portraits of Indian subjects.¹⁶⁶ Other paintings were displayed in the Durbar room mainly about Indian people and landscapes, including several figures of interest for the queen like Abdul Karim.¹⁶⁷

The design of the Durbar Room was influenced, in part, by Victoria's daughter the Empress Frederick. In fact, she indicated in a letter to her mother that her Majesty had so many "lovely Indian things to put into it [Durbar Room], and [Rudolf] Swoboda's heads and studies would look very pretty there too."¹⁶⁸ In 1894, Swoboda's portraits, which were initially hung at the queen's

¹⁶¹ "Empress of India: The Durbar Room - Google Arts & Culture." *Google*, <<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/nAWh8uM3CkhkIQ>>. Accessed on 15 March 2022.

¹⁶² Mathur, Saloni. "Indian Things." *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2011: 109.

¹⁶³ "Inside Osborne: Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's Island Residence." *Osborne House: Explore Victoria and Albert's Island Residence*, <<https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/osborne-isle-wight-queen-victoria-prince-albert-royal-retreat-look-inside/>>. Accessed on 16 March 2022.

¹⁶⁴ Lauren, Palmor. "Queen Victoria's Durbar Room: The Imperial Museum at Home." *Past Tense: Graduate Review of History* 3, 1, 61.

¹⁶⁵ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 148.

¹⁶⁶ Lauren, Palmor. "Queen Victoria's Durbar Room: The Imperial Museum at Home." *Past Tense: Graduate Review of History* 3, 1, 61.

¹⁶⁷ "Victoria and Abdul." *English Heritage*, <<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/osborne/things-to-do/victoria-and-abdul/>>. Accessed on 15 March 2022.

¹⁶⁸ Lauren, Palmor. "Queen Victoria's Durbar Room: The Imperial Museum at Home." *Past Tense: Graduate Review of History* 3, 1, 61.

residence in Windsor, were transferred to this new wing of Osborne House.¹⁶⁹ There is no doubt that both mother and daughter contributed to the design of this Indian room.



Figure 14: Indian Durbar Room, Osborne House, Isle of Wight, 28 July 1892. Photograph from the album Royal Tableaux, Osborne. (*English Heritage*)

Hindu motifs, making it a small representation of “the Mughal India and the Hindu temples in Rajasthan.”¹⁷² Kipling even described this room as “a sort of a Hinduized version of the work of the Akbar period.”¹⁷³

The ceilings and walls of the room were made of marble and covered in intricate carvings by Ram Singh, and then enriched with decorative motifs like the Hindu elephant god, Ganesh, and the enormous peacock fireplace (see fig. 14).¹⁷⁰ As for the balconies, they were fitted with Indian-style *jali*, a latticed screen usually with an ornamental pattern as can be seen in figure 15.¹⁷¹ To cut a long story short, the Durbar room’s architecture brought together Muslim and



Figure 15: Jali at Bibi Ka Maqbara, Aurangabad with Typical Indian Motifs, taken on 1 November 2011 by Upsani, R. Niranjana. (*Wikipedia*)

Moreover, the Indian room was well-supplied with art and objects specially designed by

Ram Singh and John Lockwood.¹⁷⁴ Yet, the large carpet that covered the floor and the curtains were embroidered in India then exported to Great Britain.¹⁷⁵ In her historical encyclopedia of Victoria’s life, historian Helen Rappaport declares that “in 1897, it [Durbar Room] was crammed, like an Aladdin’s cave, with many of the beautiful gifts that the queen received from royal relatives on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee.”¹⁷⁶ In fact, glass cases were added in the center of the room to display rotating

¹⁶⁹ Mathur, Saloni. “Indian Things.” *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2011: 109.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 149.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Lauren, Palmor. “Queen Victoria’s Durbar Room: The Imperial Museum at Home.” *Past Tense: Graduate Review of History* 3, 1, 62.

¹⁷⁴ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 148.

¹⁷⁵ Lauren, Palmor. “Queen Victoria’s Durbar Room: The Imperial Museum at Home.” *Past Tense: Graduate Review of History* 3, 1, 62.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

selections of the princely gifts from India, which were offered to Victoria during her jubilees of 1887 and 1897.¹⁷⁷

Once the construction of the room was finished, the Durbar Room was used as a “Banqueting Room,”¹⁷⁸ where Queen Victoria received visiting Indian Royalty and British nobles wishing to partake in an oriental experience. The Durbar Room became a repository of Indian culture and traditions.¹⁷⁹ As a unique combination of a private and public space, a banquet hall and a museum, the Durbar Room remained a private chamber for the royal family and state affairs until it was opened to the public in 1904, three years after the queen’s death.¹⁸⁰ As a historic site of international exchange, the Durbar Room has traditionally functioned as microcosm of India – a museum offering insight into Indian culture.¹⁸¹ By looking at the room, it could be said that Victoria recreated the India she could not visit in Great Britain, where she could immerse herself in a new sensation of exotism.

Victoria never visited India. Therefore, she decided to bring the vast country to her by inviting Indian royals to her Jubilee celebration of 1887. Her meeting with the Maharani Sunity Devi allowed her to discover more about the Indian culture and lifestyle. The meeting with other Indian royals provided her with insights on the different religions and practices in India. She was probably astonished when she learned that Indian Hindus had brought cows with them to atone for committing the taboo of crossing the sea. However, Queen Victoria’s curiosity could not be extinguished. Her will to discover more about her colony led her to build a microcosm of Indian in her own palace, the Durbar Room. This addition to the Osborne House was built as a banqueting room that soon turned into a museum where the queen displayed her Indian possessions, mainly composed of gifts from Indian Royalty. This room was itself a discovery for the sovereign as the design of the Indian hall combined Hindu and Muslim motifs tracing the history of India.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁷⁸ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 148.

¹⁷⁹ Lauren, Palmor. “Queen Victoria’s Durbar Room: The Imperial Museum at Home.” *Past Tense: Graduate Review of History* 3, 1, 61.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

After examining chapter 3, 4 and 5, the queen's discovery of India turned to be done in three steps. Firstly, through a European perspective thanks to the accounts about India, its representation in both exhibitions and the British press. The second step of discovery was made through Abdul Karim's eyes and the versions of India he created in the queen's mind. This step allowed a level of personal experience that permitted Victoria to taste Indian food and practice Indian language and culture. The third step of discovery presented an autonomy to the British sovereign allowing her to decide the kind of experience she wanted to go through in order to deepen her knowledge about India. That is to say, the experience that allows her to personally feel the otherness or the exotism. This experience consisted in bringing the vast country to her by receiving a variety of Indians at court and building an Indian microcosm in her own palace. Although Victoria never visited India, for much of her reign it was visited in her imagination through sources both at home and on the subcontinent. Soon, India would occupy a central place in her Majesty's daily life, leading her to interfere in Indian affairs.

Part 3: Queen Victoria's involvement in Indian affairs

Chapter 6 – The monarch’s role in foreign policies

This chapter will deal with the monarch’s role in foreign policies in three parts. In the first part, the restricted role of Victoria as a constitutional monarch will be examined. In the second part, her view of the role a monarch should play in politics will be looked into. In the third part, the new responsibilities the title Empress entail will be examined. This part will cover how India provided Victoria with a new role as an Empress.

A- Constitutional monarchy: a restricted role

In order to discuss Queen Victoria’s role as a constitutional monarch, it is required to trace back in history the origin of this new form of government and how it altered the role of the sovereign. It could be said that everything started with the Glorious Revolution, which served as a stepping stone for the installation of a constitutional monarchy in Great Britain.

Fearing for the Protestant religion after the prosecution of Seven Bishops alleged of going against the established order¹⁸², members of the English political class invited William of Orange to assume the British throne. William was the stadtholder of the Netherlands who married Mary Stuart, the daughter of King James II and the niece of Charles II, in 1677.¹⁸³ He was a Calvinist, an extremist Protestant sect that rejected any free will and relied instead on predestination.¹⁸⁴ Because James II – the ruling King at the time – was a Catholic who sought political support from France (the typical enemy of the British), William offered a better choice for Parliament as he would preserve the Protestant religion and ensure the liberties of the British subjects. In fact, possessing an indirect claim to the British throne as the son of Willem II of the House of Orange,

¹⁸² On April 1687, James II issued a *Declaration of Indulgence* ensuring the freedom of religion in the British Isles and imposing tolerance of the Catholic religion. He ordered the bishops to have the declaration read in every church in Great Britain. However, seven anti-Catholic bishops “petitioned” to be excused, arguing it relied on an interpretation of Royal authority declared illegal by Parliament. The bishops were charged with seditious libel and held in the Tower of London before being executed. For more information. See: Rowley, Charles K., and Bin Wu. “The Demise of the Divine Right of Kings, the Decline of Monarchic Power, and the Rise of Parliament, 1689–1775.” *Britannia 1066-1884 from Medieval Absolutism to the Birth of Freedom under Constitutional Monarchy, Limited Suffrage, and the Rule of Law*, Springer International Publishing, Cham, 2014: 105.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 99.

he sought support from parliament to be crowned as a king. Thus, he agreed to the conditions proposed by Parliament and approved the Bill of Rights.¹⁸⁵

The Declaration of Rights – later known as *Bill of Rights* – was the first constitutional change that redefined the relationship between the monarchy and Parliament.¹⁸⁶ Articles 1 and 2 of this declaration abolished the suspending as well as the dispensing powers of the king without the consent of Parliament.¹⁸⁷ This act of legislation asserted the supremacy of Parliament over the king in making laws and in raising taxes. Thus, the Glorious Revolution challenged the king’s supreme power and promoted the idea “that the King was the chief servant of the law, but not its master; the executor of the law, not its source; that laws should only be alterable by Parliament-Kings, Lords and Commons together.”¹⁸⁸ As a result, the Glorious Revolution marked the end of true monarchical authority, the beginning of Parliamentary rule, and a shift in the reason for governance from divine right to popular sovereignty — the belief that the people are sovereign. The Acts of Union of 1707 supported the political transition of Great Britain from the arbitrary rule by the king to the rule by Parliament under conditions of a constitutional monarchy.¹⁸⁹

However, despite the restriction of the monarch’s powers the king retained the ability to select and dismiss ministers, call and dismiss Parliament, and influence the composition of Parliament through town charters and elevation to the nobility. He also maintained the power of royal patronage allowing him to influence the behavior of members of Parliament.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, although Queen Victoria no longer had a political or executive role, she played an important role in the life of the nation as she undertook constitutional and representational duties. She also had a less formal role, that of a figurehead or “Head of Nation”. In fact, she served as a focal point for national identity, unity, and pride; she provided a sense of stability and continuity; she publicly honored accomplishment and greatness; and she promoted the voluntary service ideal.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁸⁷ *The Bill of Rights*, 16 December 1689.

¹⁸⁸ Rowley, Charles K., and Bin Wu. “The Demise of the Divine Right of Kings, the Decline of Monarchic Power, and the Rise of Parliament, 1689–1775.” *Britannia 1066-1884 from Medieval Absolutism to the Birth of Freedom under Constitutional Monarchy, Limited Suffrage, and the Rule of Law*, Springer International Publishing, Cham, 2014: 102.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁹¹ Kirsty.Oram. “The Role of the Monarchy.” *The Royal Family*, <<https://www.royal.uk/role-monarchy#:~:text=Monarchy%20is%20the%20oldest%20form,resides%20with%20an%20elected%20Parliament>>. Accessed on 24 March 2022.

The sovereign also possessed a religious role as the “Head of Church”.¹⁹² Queen Victoria appointed archbishops and bishops on the advice of the prime minister, who choose the appointee from a list of nominees prepared by a Church Commission. The Crown's role in the Anglican Church was only titular; the Archbishop of Canterbury was the actual spiritual leader of the Church and of the worldwide Anglican Communion.¹⁹³ Beside the religious role, Queen Victoria played an important role in foreign policy.¹⁹⁴ Her role mainly concerned meeting with other royals and exchanging gifts so as to maintain the political bound with other nations.

B- Victoria's view about the role of a monarch

Queen Victoria was not satisfied with the role given to her as a constitutional monarch and wanted to play the role she had defined for herself. Like Prince Albert, Queen Victoria believed that the sovereign had an important and active role to play in politics, even though the political role of the Crown was by no means clear at the time nor was the permanence of the monarchy itself.¹⁹⁵ The couple proved that the sovereign had a special part to play in foreign affairs and could conduct them with the help of a secretary of state. With this in mind, they visited and were visited by other monarchs in order to maintain the political bound with other nations.¹⁹⁶

Although historians claim that the Queen was solely a figurehead¹⁹⁷, her involvement in her Indian Empire deems this assessment as inaccurate. In fact, the British sovereign used her powers of royal patronage and made sure to participate with the making of decisions at home and in the colonies. The best example is the issuing of the Government of India Act of 1858, the act of governance of India. When Prime minister Derby and his ministers drafted the proclamation

¹⁹² “The Queen and Religion.” *British Monarchist League*, <<http://www.monarchist.org.uk/the-queen-and-religion.html#:~:text=There%20is%20no%20established%20Church,in%20the%20UK%20and%20Commonwealth>>. Accessed on 24 March 2022.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 50.

¹⁹⁵ “Relations with Peel.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Victoria-queen-of-United-Kingdom/Relations-with-Peel>>. Accessed on 14 March 2022.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Among the historians who describes Queen Victoria as a figurehead Jone Johnson Lewis, a Women's History writer. She is an ordained Humanist minister who has taught at Meadville/Lombard Theological School on the theme of women in religious history as an adjunct faculty member. Another historian who agrees with opinion is Simon James Heffer an English historian, journalist, author and political commentator. He has written several biographies and a series of works about British social history from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of World War I. In 2017, he was named a professorial research fellow at the University of Buckingham.

announcing the transfer of power from the East India Company to the British Crown, it was the queen and her consort who changed fundamentally the tone of the document in ways that ensured it would become known as the “Magna Carta” of Indian liberties.¹⁹⁸

Victoria and Albert insisted that the Government of India Bill be drafted and redrafted throughout the summer and early autumn of 1858 to ensure the passage of some the key components.¹⁹⁹ For instance the formation of a single army with a single command structure; a specific commitment by Great Britain to public irrigation and railway projects; a limitation on the powers and the composition of the new advisory Council of India; the right for the new secretary of state to override the Council; the requirement that all dispatches relating to India must be seen by the Crown, and all government proclamations in India must be proclaimed in the queen's name; and, finally, the reconciliation with the Indian princes, through the respect of their religions and the recognition of their lineage and legitimacy.²⁰⁰

Victoria's influence over the bill transferring power from the Company to the Crown contradicts her image as a constitutional monarch with limited powers. In fact, she sought an explanation on every subject that concerned her responsibilities throughout Cabinet talks and Parliamentary debates.²⁰¹ She even altered the bills and declarations as she saw fit. Therefore, there is no doubt that Victoria played an active role in politics as she aspired to do.

C- Empress: title with a new role and a new responsibility

Denied a political role at home, she found it instead in her Indian colony.²⁰² In fact, as Empress of India, Queen Victoria could intervene in Indian affairs. This new title of empress provided Victoria with new responsibilities towards her imperial subjects.²⁰³ It was stated in the Queen's proclamation of 1858 that the sovereign was bound to do her duty to Indians in the same way as she was obliged to all her other subjects. In fact, she declared that:

¹⁹⁸ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 102.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁰³ *Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India* (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad), 1 November 1858.

We hold Ourselves bound to the Natives of Our Indian Territories by the same obligation of Duty which bind Us to all Our other subjects; and those Obligations, by the Blessing of Almighty God, We shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil.²⁰⁴

This definition of a common imperial subjectivity was accepted by the new Government of India and later used to preach for equality between natives and British subjects.²⁰⁵

In her Proclamation of 1858, Victoria promised to protect and help her Indian subjects and demonstrated her growing awareness of the faraway colony’s significance to the British Empire.²⁰⁶ She expressed her “responsibility of distributing justice to all the inhabitants of the British territories.”²⁰⁷ The queen's proclamation was significant because it committed to respect all of the East India Company's initial agreements and not to break any single deal with a native state.²⁰⁸

In this respect, the key phrases of the proclamation were the queen’s assertion that Great Britain had no desire to extend its “territorial Possessions” and that the “Rights, Dignity and Honor” of the native princes would be respected as the British’s.²⁰⁹ There was no need to inquire further to know that this meant the end of Dalhousie’s doctrine of lapse, which allowed Great Britain to annex Indian states without a legitimate and direct heir.²¹⁰ It also implied the acceptance of the right of adoption “in accordance with religion and race”²¹¹, that is to say, the succession of someone not blood related to the deceased ruler which was previously denied by the British government.

It also ensured to the people of India the respect of their religions and laws, that Indians could participate in the administration of their country, that public utilities would be modernized, and that clemency would be offered to those who had taken up arms against British rule during the Indian mutiny of 1857-58.²¹² The Christian socialist J. M. Ludlow described the proclamation as

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 126.

²⁰⁶ *Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India* (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad), 1 November 1858.

²⁰⁷ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 101.

²⁰⁸ *Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India* (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad), 1 November 1858.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

“British India’s Magna Charta” as it advocated for Indian liberties.²¹³ More than 150 *sannads* – treaty agreements – were issued formalizing the promises contained in the queen’s proclamation, namely that native titles, properties and succession would henceforth be recognized and honored by the Government of India.²¹⁴

In her proclamation of 1858, Queen Victoria expressed also her will to secure peace and good Government in Great Britain and in the colonies.²¹⁵ This proclamation hinted at the queen’s ascension, that is to say, her change in status from “queen” to “empress” and to her new responsibilities as the ruler of India. However, as explained in chapter 2, Queen Victoria would only be recognized as “Empress of India” with the passage of the Royal Titles Act of 1876.²¹⁶ Although her title would be recognized officially a few years after her proclamation, her duties towards her new subjects were recognized and put into action from the moment her proclamation was declared.²¹⁷

The Glorious Revolution and the Bill of Rights determined the role of a constitutional monarch. In fact, the Sovereign’s supreme powers were restricted under the supervision of Parliament. However, Queen Victoria retained the power of royal patronage, the right to call and dismiss Parliament and influence its constitution. Her role extended to represent the nation as a figurehead and to represent the religion as the head of the Anglican church. Her role in foreign policy was reinforced further due her representative duties.

Queen Victoria believed that the monarch should play an essential and active role in politics, so she constantly intervened in the making of decisions. She also sought an explanation concerning her responsibilities throughout Cabinet talks and Parliamentary debates. All her mentioned efforts were to ensure the good governance in Great Britain and in the British Isles. She

²¹³ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 122.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 142-43.

²¹⁵ *Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India* (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad), 1 November 1858.

²¹⁶ “Making Britain.” *Queen Victoria Becomes Empress of India | Making Britain*, <<https://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/queen-victoria-becomes-empress-india#:~:text=About%3A,India%20more%20closely%20to%20Britain>>. Accessed on 25 March 2022.

²¹⁷ *Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India* (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad), 1 November 1858.

Chapter 6 – The monarch's role in foreign policies

was deeply concerned about her duty as a Queen but also as an Empress of India. This new acquired title added responsibilities on the shoulder of the old sovereign and offered her an important role in politics that was partially denied in Great Britain. However, one may wonder how the queen intervened in Indian affairs.

Chapter 7 – Letters and implications

This chapter will deal with Queen Victoria's correspondences with the government of India from 1844 to 1860 in three parts. In the first part, the purpose of the correspondence between the monarch and the government of India will be examined. In the second part, the way Victoria's letters served as a tool of implication will be looked into. In the third part, the limits of the sovereign's implication in foreign policies and mainly in Indian affairs will be examined.

A- Purpose of the correspondence between Victoria and the Government of India

The correspondence between Queen Victoria and the members of the Indian Government served for many purposes. The first aim of exchanging letters with the queen was to keep her informed about the situation in her Indian territories and to report back the essential issues encountered in India. The best example to illustrate this is the letter of the Governor-General of India Sir Henry Hardinge, to Queen Victoria on November 23rd, 1844, in which he reported back to the queen about the improvement of education in India as he declared the following:

Boys of fifteen years of age, black in color, will recite the most favorite passages from Shakespeare, ably quoting the notes of the English and German commentators. They excel in mathematics, and in legal subtleties their acuteness is most extraordinary.²¹⁸

He basically informed her majesty that Indians started learning the British curriculum and slowly but surely were becoming qualified "to fill the public offices which fall vacant throughout Bengal."²¹⁹ The queen's letter to the Marquis of Dalhousie – the Governor-General of India – on November 24th, 1854, clearly demonstrates this aim to keep the queen up to date with the situation in India as she declared in her letter that "it is peculiarly gratifying to hear of such quiet and prosperity in her [Majesty's] vast Indian dominions."²²⁰

²¹⁸ Sir Henry Hardinge to Queen Victoria, 23 November 1844, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 2. John Murray, 1908: 29.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Queen Victoria to the Marquis of Dalhousie, 24 November 1854, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 54.

Moreover, the queen's letters serve as a tool allowing her majesty to supervise the Viceroy of India as well as the other members of the Indian Government. In fact, in her letter to the Secretary of State for India Sir Charles Wood on February 9th, 1860, Queen Victoria declared her objection to “the unlimited power of the Governor-General and Viceroy [of India].”²²¹ Thus, she expressed her will to limit the powers both of the Viceroy and Governor-General of India to make sure that no one in the Indian Government abuse their powers.

Queen Victoria also used her letters in order to pass orders to her British subjects. For instance, the sovereign sent a letter to the Earl of Derby on January 30th, 1855, to summon him to the Buckingham Palace in order to discuss some matters with him.²²² “The Queen would wish to see Lord Derby at Buckingham Palace [...] tomorrow at half-past eleven,” she wrote. She also used her letters to grant permission. In fact, in her letter to the Secretary of State for India, Sir Charles Wood, on February 9th, 1860, Queen Victoria authorized the Viceroy of India to distribute Indian honors as he saw fit. “The highest dignities and titles ought to proceed directly from the Crown at the Viceroy's recommendation,” she affirmed.²²³

Besides, the sovereign's correspondence with the Government of India allowed Victoria to propose solutions to upcoming issues in India. In fact, Queen Victoria sent a letter to Viscount Canning on December 2nd, 1858, to express her joy upon hearing the Viceroy's approval of her proposal of religious tolerance in India.²²⁴ Another purpose of her letters is to encourage the British troops in India. In her letter to the Governor-General of India Marquis of Dalhousie, on November 24th, 1854, Queen Victoria declared that:

The heroism of our noble Troops in the midst of herculean difficulties and great privations is unequalled, and will fill Lord Dalhousie's loyal and patriotic heart with pride and admiration.²²⁵

²²¹ Queen Victoria to Sir Charles Wood, Windsor Castle, 9 February 1860, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 388.

²²² Queen Victoria to the Earl of Derby, Windsor Castle, 30 January 1855, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 80.

²²³ Queen Victoria to Sir Charles Wood, Windsor Castle, 9 February 1860, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 387.

²²⁴ Queen Victoria to Viscount Canning, Windsor Castle, 2 December 1858, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 305.

²²⁵ Queen Victoria to the Marquis of Dalhousie, 24 November 1854, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 54.

It could be said that the sovereign tried to encourage the British troops by praising them and honoring their efforts.

Thus, the queen's letters aimed to praise soldiers as it was expressed above, but also to reward Indian and British subjects alike. In fact, Queen Victoria sent letters to the Viceroy of India to grant honors to Abdul Karim and his family members. She had addressed the Viceroy several times in order to convince him about this honor grant, but her first attempts failed. However, she was never discouraged and continued and tried her best in order to provide any kind of help to Abdul Karim's family. Her efforts paid off at the end as Dr. Wuzeeruddin – Abdul Karim's father – received New Year Honors and the title of Khan Bahadur, which the doctor could not have obtained under ordinary circumstances.²²⁶ The Queen even offered Dr. Tyler, the superintendent whom Abdul Karim worked under, a promotion to the position of Acting Inspector General of Prisons.²²⁷

Therefore, it could be said that the sovereign's letters served for many purposes and allowed her to stay in contact with India and its administration. The correspondences between her and the Indian government led her to inquire more about Indian affairs and even to intervene in the governance of her new acquired colony.

B- Letters as a tool of implication

By keeping Queen Victoria informed about what happened in India, the correspondences between her and the Viceroy of India allowed her to pass her voice and asset her opinion, even if she was not physically present at the assemblies of the Indian Government. For example, in her letter to the Secretary of State for India Sir Charles Wood, she expressed her will to limit the powers of the Viceroy and the Governor-General of India.²²⁸

²²⁶ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 171-2.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

²²⁸ Queen Victoria to Sir Charles Wood, Windsor Castle, 9 February 1860, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908, 388.

“The Queen has so often expressed her views that she is almost reluctant to reiterate them,” asserted Lord John (afterwards Earl) Russell, who was appointed as foreign secretary in 1859.²²⁹ His words show that Queen Victoria did not restrain herself and constantly gave her opinion concerning foreign affairs. In many of her letters, she sought to assert the influence of the crown in matters of foreign policy.²³⁰ She was even described as eager to put her convictions into practice and determined to use her position as sovereign to ensure them.²³¹

This is exactly what happened in 1858, when Queen Victoria asked Derby, her prime minister, to meet her at Buckingham Palace in order to discuss the Indian government bill in further details.²³² She wished to confirm some terms of this bill as she disapproved of the first draft enough to say that the text “must be almost entirely remodeled.”²³³ After asserting her disapproval in many of the letters she sent to her ministers, she succeeded in modifying a passage of supreme importance in accordance with her wish.²³⁴

She was described in *The English Historical Review* as follows:

So courageously tenacious of her purpose, and so true a woman, that she never shrank from returning to a problem so long as she believed herself able to exercise any influence upon its solution, or from upholding a principle so long as she held it worth asserting.²³⁵

From this description, it could be understood that Queen Victoria believed that as long as she was persistent, she would be able to influence some decisions or to alter them. Her condemnable skill was her persistence and her tenacious character when dealing with public questions and with public men.

Her belief in the important role of the monarch in the administration and the governance of a nation led her to constantly interfere in Indian affairs as well as to supervise the Indian Council.

²²⁹ “Queen Victoria’s letters, 1837-1861.” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 23, No. 89, Oxford University Press, 1908, 70.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

²³² Queen Victoria to the Earl of Derby, Buckingham Palace, 21 February 1858, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 269.

²³³ “Queen Victoria’s Rather Personal Relationship with India.” *Telegraph India*, <<https://www.telegraphindia.com/culture/books/queen-victorias-rather-personal-relationship-with-india/cid/1699661>>. Accessed on 30 March 2022.

²³⁴ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. Yale University Press, 2021, 113.

²³⁵ “Queen Victoria’s letters, 1837-1861.” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 23, No. 89, Oxford University Press, 1908, 65.

She mainly interfered in matters concerning the treatment of dispossessed native princes, their interests and the welfare of the Indian population.²³⁶ Historian Basu argued that the queen felt that her discussions with her Indian secretary Abdul Karim helped her ascertain her general opinion of Indian affairs, as she was getting the native's view about the efficacy of the British administration.²³⁷

Because of her friendship with Abdul Karim, the Queen was always concerned about Muslims in India, and she never failed to express her worry to the Viceroy or Secretary of State.²³⁸ Having discussed at length with her Indian secretary about the passing of the Indian Council Bill, which aimed to give representation to Indians in the Provincial Councils, she was convinced that Muslims would not be adequately represented as they were a minority in India.²³⁹ She discussed this issue with the Viceroy and urged him to find solutions for a fair representation in the native assemblies.²⁴⁰ He replied that a specific amount of nominations to the Councils would have to be made via direct nomination in order to protect the rights of minorities.²⁴¹ He argued that this solution “would afford the means of securing proper representation for Mahomedan interests.”²⁴² There is no doubt that the sovereign's intervention ensured that Muslims had a fair representation in the Indian Council.

This opinion was also shared by the queen. In fact, Queen Victoria herself believed that keeping abreast of developments in India would allow her to know the cause of the problems and to take the necessary measures to solve them. The case of the native representatives in the Indian Council is the best example to illustrate this. By comparing the Viceroy's reports about India and the point of view of Abdul Karim, the queen was able to construct her own vision of the administration of India and to put her fingers on the issues that required more attention.

What her correspondences with the Government of India show is that she constantly tried to assert the authority of the crown through her letters while she sought to solve the matters that

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

²³⁷ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 114.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *Ibid.*

she felt neglected by the Viceroy of India. Her letters demonstrate that the assistance of the crown and the parliament was mutual and that they were both complementary and necessary for the governance of India as well as that of Great Britain.

C- Limits of the monarch’s implications in foreign policy

Following the adoption of the Government of India Act of 1858, which transferred control of India from the East India Company to the British Crown, the Governor-General representing the Crown in India came to be known as the Viceroy.²⁴³ Charles John Canning, the first Governor-General of the imperial government, was the first to receive the title of Viceroy in India.²⁴⁴ The designation “Viceroy” is by definition a term used to refer to a ruler exercising authority in a colony on behalf of a sovereign. This means that he is supposed to act on behalf of the monarch in their absence.

The Viceroy was advised by the Council of India and had to report directly to the Secretary of State for India²⁴⁵ in London. He was among the most powerful men on earth in the Victorian era, ruling over an entire subcontinent with a large military force at his disposal in the form of the British Indian Army.²⁴⁶ However, he was required to report to the queen the principal deeds and events of his administration, which was also subjected to a judicial review.²⁴⁷ Thus, the Viceroy of India was the one to rule the Indian subcontinent and take decisions concerning its administration. Queen Victoria supervised his work and made sure he did not abuse his powers, nor stray from his duties.

The Viceroy occupied a central position in the governance of India and played a similar role to that of a prime minister in Great Britain. He was the one to make decisions and the queen

²⁴³ “Governor-General.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/governor-general>>. Accessed on 2 April 2022.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ The Secretary of State for India was a British Cabinet minister and the political head of the India Office, which was in charge of the British Indian Empire's administration. This post was created when the East India Company's control in Bengal came to an end in 1858, and India, with the exception of the Princely States, was brought under the direct administration of the British crown. For more information see: “Viceroy.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/viceroy-government-official>>. Accessed on 2 April 2022.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

could only offer her opinion and suggestions; the final say went to the Viceroy. The letter of Queen Victoria to the Viceroy Charles John Canning sent on December 2nd, 1858, clearly demonstrates her limited powers in the Indian affairs since he was the one to “approve” of her proposal.²⁴⁸

Her intervention in India concerned mainly monitoring the Indian Council, proposing solutions if needed, giving her opinions on certain occasions and withholding the power to wage war and control the Indian army.²⁴⁹ However, the political role of the crown was by no means clear at the time nor was the permanence of the monarchy itself. Therefore, the roles were not set yet, and Queen Victoria had to fight in order to maintain the royal prerogative in Great Britain but also in India. Her letter to the Foreign Secretary Earl of Derby, on July 8th, 1858, justifies this need for the queen to constantly assert and confirm her authority in foreign affairs.²⁵⁰

In the following letter, the sovereign expressed her surprise with the fact that “in several important points her government have surrendered the prerogatives of the Crown.”²⁵¹ She went further and expressed her disapproval and her will to retain her powers in her following statement:

As to the right of the Crown to declare war and make peace, it requires not a word of remark; yet Lord Stanley agrees to Mr. Gladstone's proposal to make over this prerogative with regard to Indian questions to Parliament under the auspices of the Queen's Government; she is thus placed in a position of less authority than the President of the American Republic.²⁵² [...] The Queen must remind Lord Derby that it is to him as the head of the Government that she looks for the protection of those prerogatives which form an integral part of the Constitution.²⁵³

She asked Lord Derby to protect the royal prerogative as the “head of government” and disagreed with Gladstone’s²⁵⁴ proposal, which consisted of handing the command of the British Indian Army to the Viceroy and allowing him to decide whether or not to wage wars.

²⁴⁸ Queen Victoria to Viscount Canning, Windsor Castle, 2 December 1858, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 305.

²⁴⁹ Queen Victoria to the Earl of Derby, Osborne, 8 July 1858, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 295.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² A key change added at Mr. Gladstone's request stated that the Queen's Indian forces should not be used in operations outside India without Parliamentary approval, unless it was to fight an actual invasion or in an emergency. Stated in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, Vol. 3. John Murray, 1908: 295.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ He was chancellor under Lord Aberdeen (1852–1855), Lord Palmerston (1859–1865) and Lord Russell (1865–1866). In 1868, Gladstone became prime minister for the first time. He would be elected as Prime Minister in 1880 and again in 1892. For more

Therefore, Victoria's intervention in foreign affairs was somewhat limited. Yet, this never prevented her from advising the Viceroy, encouraging him or even warning him. She kept her Indian Council in check by using her royal patronage powers. She even used her royal title to her advantage to keep informed about what happened in her colony.

The sovereign's letters may be considered to have fulfilled a variety of objectives and allowed her to maintain communication with India and its administration. Those letters served as a tool of implication as Queen Victoria insisted on seeing all dispatches to India and being advised on cabinet appointments. Viceroys and other imperial officials, predictably, found her refusal to be a purely nominal head vexing. There is no doubt that the land she had never visited gave her a sense of power and a revitalized sense of monarchy. As a result, for better or for worse, she was able to leave her stamp on the events that shaped modern India even though her intervention was somewhat limited.

After examining chapter 6 and 7, it could be said that the queen got involved in Indian affairs because of the role she believed a monarch should play in foreign policy but also because of the interest she expressed for the colony. Despite her royal powers being limited, Queen Victoria never despaired and constantly tried to interfere in the making of decisions at home and in the colonies. The sovereign eventually found a way to stay informed about what happened in India and to stay in contact with her ministers — it was exchanging letters. In fact, she figured that her correspondences with members of the Indian government could serve as a tool of implication. One may wonder if the queen's actions had any consequences on the British and Indian societies or not?

information see: "William Ewart Gladstone." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Ewart-Gladstone>>. Accessed on 2 April 2022.

Part 4: Consequences of the Queen's implications on India and Great Britain

Chapter 8 – The influence of Queen Victoria’s interest in India on the British society

This chapter will deal with the influence that the queen’s interest in India had on the British society of the nineteenth century with the help of contemporary newspaper articles, advertisements and books in three parts. In the first part, the queen’s influence on the British economy will be examined. In the second part, Victoria’s influence on the British aesthetics will be looked into. In the third part, her influence on the British culture will be examined.

A- Economic influence

As the Head of State, Queen Victoria was shaping the British subject’s identity in the late nineteenth century. There is no doubt that her actions had an impact on the public life and social norms of her subjects. Historian Nayar stated that during the XIXth century “English taste suddenly demanded different, exotic, global flavors and styles.”²⁵⁵ So, it can be argued that Victoria’s interest in India spread throughout the British population.

As her actions were in accordance with the social boundaries of the time,²⁵⁶ the public accepted them and went as far as to support her activities. The best example to illustrate this is the fact that contemporary advertisements confirmed a desire for Indian goods. Indeed, Indian silks were advertised as summer costumes by *Myra’s Journal of Dress and Fashion*.²⁵⁷ Also, an advertisement for *Benjamin and Sons* publicized the newly arrived “elaborately embroidered” Indian products.²⁵⁸ Another commercial for the well-known Rayo Lamp emphasized the uniqueness of their products by mentioning their use of West Indian oil coy.²⁵⁹ These advertisements prove that a variety of goods from India were strongly purchased by the people of Great Britain during the Victorian age.

²⁵⁵ Nayar, Pramod. “Aesthetic Understanding: From Colonial English to Imperial Cosmopolitans.” *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA, 2012, 224.

²⁵⁶ For more informations see “B- Acceptance of Victoria’s relationship with the Munshi”.

²⁵⁷ “Multiple Display Advertisements.” *Myra’s Journal of Dress and Fashion*, Issue 6, 1 June 1879, 8.

²⁵⁸ “Just Received.” *The Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal*, Issue 870, 11 January 1879, 33.

²⁵⁹ *The Royal Gazette*, Vol. 86, Issue No. 88, 29 July 1913, 2.

Indian products were slowly integrating the daily lives of the British. The best example to illustrate this is the Indian tea which became a vital aspect of the British way of life in the XIXth century. In fact, Indian tea culture gave birth to the tea rooms, the tea stores and the practice of afternoon tea in Victorian England.²⁶⁰ This was mainly possible because the Queen expanded the



Figure 16: Figure 1 “5 O’Clock Tea” by David Comba Adamson, painted between 1884-1898. (*Dundee Art Gallery and Museum*)

production of tea in India and increased the tea trade to Great Britain, following the Government of India Act of 1858 which gave the British Crown the control of trade with India. As a result, tea prices in Great Britain became cheaper, which made tea an essential part of British life.²⁶¹ The numerous paintings about the afternoon tea similar to the painting by David Comba Adamson (see fig. 16) testify to the importance the tea practice held in the British society of the nineteenth century.

The most famous tea brand was Lipton with its famous slogan promising a cup of tea “directly from the Tea Gardens to the Tea Pot”.²⁶² One of its advertisements in the Victorian era featured an illustration of an Indian woman dressed in jewels, probably to show that the product came from the tea plantations in India.²⁶³ By 1892, one million packets of Lipton’s Tea were sold every week in Great Britain because the brand offered a standardized product in a variety of weights to appeal to a variety of customer budgets.²⁶⁴ Lipton’s tea was without doubt very popular among the British, showing that some Indian goods were well received by the British.

There is no doubt that the consumption of tea was a marker of English national and cultural identity because it suggested a widening of English taste. Historian Nayar argued that in the Victorian era “English taste was redefined as the ability to take to new tastes, flavors, and

²⁶⁰ “Indian Influence in the Victorian Era.” *Indian Influence in the Victorian Era*, <<http://reframingthevictorians.blogspot.com/2014/11/indian-influence-in-victorian-era.html>>. Accessed on 12 April 2022.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² “Advertisement for Lipton’s tea.” *The Illustrated London News*, Vol. 1, 17 September 1892, 383.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ “Advertisement for Lipton’s Tea.” *British Library*, <<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/advertisement-for-liptons-tea>>. Accessed on 24 May 2022.

fashion.”²⁶⁵ Since various types of colonial items, ranging from foods to clothing, were easily acquired for consumption, an increasing number of Indian products, such as antiquities and ornamental objects, circulated in British stores and households.²⁶⁶ “Consumption, ingestion, and decoration” of colonial products was a mode of acquiring a taste for and of the Empire.²⁶⁷ Home furnishings and Indian antiques formed “collections” in British houses, changing the fundamental nature of the British home’s design.²⁶⁸ It could be said that this practice was somewhat influenced by Queen Victoria since she was collecting Indian artifacts and displaying them in her own palace.²⁶⁹

While Indian products entered the British’s everyday life, thereby rendering the Empire – and more specifically India – ordinary for the common British, they also created a sentimental attachment to the imperial territories. This is a clear sign revealing that the public was following the Queen’s lead by acquiring Indian products and by such including Indian culture in their lives. However, it is important to note that the British had been trading with India ever since the XVIIth century via the East India Company²⁷⁰ and that Queen Victoria only reinforced the existing British’s interest in Indian goods.

B- Aesthetic influence

Queen Victoria not only succeeded in influencing her subjects in economic terms but also aesthetically. Historian Taylor argued that “Royalty was the filter through which the eastern exotic became ordinary.”²⁷¹ In fact, Queen Victoria played an important part in rendering Indian taste common to the British. She started by promoting the Indian dressing design and more specifically the shawls.

²⁶⁵ Nayar, Pramod. “Aesthetic Understanding: From Colonial English to Imperial Cosmopolitans.” *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA, 2012, 224.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 221.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁶⁹ Basu, Shrabani., *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 148.

²⁷⁰ “East India Company.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/East-India-Company>>. Accessed on 13 April 2022.

²⁷¹ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. London: Yale University Press, 2021, 93.

The Maharaja of Jammu was compelled to send a quantity of Kashmir shawls to the queen each year as a tribute under the Treaty of Amritsar, which ended the first Sikh war on March 9,



Figure 17: Complex and Sophisticated Paisley motif on Long Kashmir Paisley Shawl. Made during the Sikh Period, ca. mid 19th century, in Kashmir. (RISD Museum)

1846. As a result, for the rest of Victoria’s reign, a parcel of shawls from Kashmir arrived every year at Windsor Castle.²⁷² The queen unwittingly sparked a new consumer sector by lending one of her shawls to a textile factory in Scotland, resulting in the distinctive Paisley design, based on the Kashmiri teardrop motif. The Paisley version of the Kashmir shawl (see fig. 17) dominated the British market for two decades – during the Victorian and the Edwardian eras.²⁷³ This shows that Queen Victoria deliberately or unintentionally had a strong impact on the British society and their aesthetics values.

In the 1860s, the shawl was available in all weights and all fabrics including silk, lace, muslin, and cashmere wool, and priced for all budgets.²⁷⁴ The shawls were popular among women of every social class, and well-represented in art and literature of the day. Shawls were referenced in the novels of literary public figures such as Elizabeth Gaskell and William Makepeace Thackeray.²⁷⁵ They were also featured in countless portrait paintings, draping around the shoulders of fashionable XIXth century ladies of every age.²⁷⁶ Thus, Queen Victoria without doubt played an essential part in promoting this trend.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁷⁴ “Shawls and Wraps in 19th Century Art, Literature, and Fashion History.” *Mimi Matthews*, <<https://www.mimimatthews.com/2015/07/29/shawls-and-wraps-in-19th-century-art-literature-and-fashion-history/>>. Accessed on 13 April 2022.

²⁷⁵ Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-1865) was an English writer. In 1832, she married a priest, William Gaskell. They lived in Manchester, where several of her books are set. Her most famous works are *Mary Barton*, *Cranford*, *North and South*, and *Wives and Daughters*. William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) was a British novelist, author and illustrator. He was famous for his satirical works, particularly his 1848 novel *Vanity Fair*, offering a panoramic portrait of British society, and the 1844 novel *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*. Both of them were public figures who had a strong influence on the Victorian society. For more information on Gaskell see: “Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Elizabeth-Cleghorn-Gaskell>>. Accessed on 15 April 2022. For more information on Tackeray see: “William Makepeace Thackeray.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Makepeace-Thackeray>>. Accessed on 15 April 2022.

²⁷⁶ “Shawls and Wraps in 19th Century Art, Literature, and Fashion History.” *Mimi Matthews*, <<https://www.mimimatthews.com/2015/07/29/shawls-and-wraps-in-19th-century-art-literature-and-fashion-history/>>. Accessed on 13 April 2022.

Chapter 8 – The influence of Queen Victoria’s interest in India on the British society

The British’s range of interest extended beyond Indian clothes to Indian art and architecture. It can be argued that the addition of an oriental room in the royal palace inspired the nobilities to imitate the queen in an effort to either match or surpass her. As a result of this imitation, an appreciation of Indian architecture was spread in Great Britain. In fact, an article described the exhibition’s Durbar Room set up as “a great central ball-room”²⁷⁷ at a new museum which was under construction at the time, similar to the one found at Osbourne House.

From this article, it is clear that Indian architecture was so popular that it was displayed in museums, allowing a large number of people to appreciate it. Therefore, there is no doubt that the goods purchased by the British masses, their aesthetic values and their opinion of India have all changed due to the queen’s influence. The old monarch’s actions might have created knowledge for the British subjects, shaping how they understood India. Prime Minister Salisbury once commented that the queen had a skill for understanding her subjects.

She had an extraordinary knowledge of what her people would think – extraordinary, because it could not come from any personal intercourse. I have said for years that I have always felt that when I knew what the Queen thought, I knew pretty certainly what views her subjects would take, and especially the middle class of her subjects.²⁷⁸

One possibility states that the queen read the newspapers to learn about her subjects’ opinions and then used her knowledge and understanding that Salisbury spoke of to shape the way her subjects thought of Indian people, art, architecture, literature and goods.

Another possibility could be that the British monarch might have used the newspapers to measure the acceptability of her actions. As journals and magazines informed the public about Victoria’s actions²⁷⁹, the queen could have been aware of what was being printed on them and adjusted her actions accordingly. Without the support from the news media the queen might not have succeeded in making from her own interest her people’s interest.

²⁷⁷ “The Sunbeam Museum”, *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 22 March 1888, 2.

²⁷⁸ Burdiel, Isabel. “The Queen, the Woman and the Middle Class. The Symbolic Failure of Isabel II of Spain.” *Social History*, Vol. 29, No. 3, Spain, August 2004, 305.

²⁷⁹ “Queen's Hindustani Tutor”, *The Graphic: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*, 16 October 1897, 7.

C- Cultural influence²⁸⁰

Queen Victoria was slowly introducing Indian culture to the British and making from it an important part of their daily lives. She started by familiarizing the English with the Indian language. Indeed, Victoria has given her Private Secretary Sir Henry Ponsonby and probably many others “a Hindi vocabulary to study,”²⁸¹ allowing the Hindustani language to circulate in her household.

She then switched her focus to Indian food. The 1924 poster entitled “India: If you appreciate Indian Foods take your lunch at the Indian Pavillion” shows that after the queen’s death, the British seemed to have developed a taste for Indian Food.²⁸² They were most likely influenced by Queen Victoria since she was serving curry to an increasing number of her visitors.²⁸³

Victoria succeeded in making her subjects accept India and its different culture and traditions. The best example to illustrate this is intercultural marriage. As a consequence of Queen Victoria's equal treatment of Indians, the British accepted the natives and even integrated them into their lives. Intercultural marriage was common at the time and officially recognized by the public as suggests the following description “Indian and Indian-born Europeans of mixed parentage” which featured in one of the articles of *The British Medical Journal* entitled “India in the Victorian Era.”²⁸⁴ Many other references of intercultural marriages featured in other newspapers and magazines demonstrating that this practice was common at the time. However, the most famous intercultural marriage was that of the Indian Princess Gowramma, who had been taken under Queen Victoria’s wing since her childhood, to lieutenant colonel, John Campbell, with whom she had a daughter of her own called Edith.²⁸⁵ There is no doubt that the British monarch had a hand in this marriage whether it was direct or not.

²⁸⁰ Culture is defined as a system of shared beliefs, values and traditions, including behaviour, dress, art, language, food, relationships and religion. Cultural influence refers to the influence that affect a particular society, its ideas, customs, and art. It is an important aspect of power, linked to the economic influence and the development and the spread of new technologies. For more information see “Cultural Influence.” *A*, <<https://geographyrevisionalevel.weebly.com/74c-cultural-influence.html>>. Accessed on 30 May 2022.

²⁸¹ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 68.

²⁸² Anon., “India: If you appreciate Indian Foods take your lunch at the Indian Pavillion.” *The Times*, British Empire section, 24 May 1924, iii.

²⁸³ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 67.

²⁸⁴ “India In the Victorian Era.” *The British Medical Journal*, 26 June 1897, 1668.

²⁸⁵ Taylor, Miles. *Empress: Queen Victoria and India*. London: Yale University Press, 2021, 94.

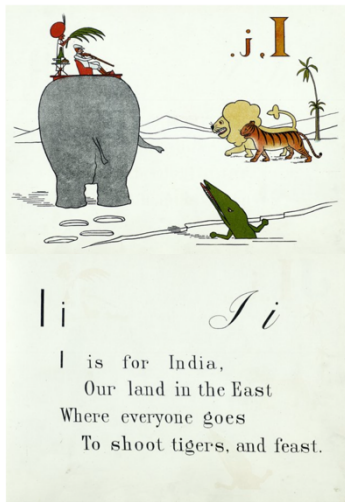


Figure 18: Ames, Mary Frances. *An A B C, for Baby Patriots*. Dean & Son Ltd., 1898, 10.

Queen Victoria’s aim was to bring India to the center of attention of her British subjects and highlight its importance for the British empire. By looking at the educational book entitled *An ABC for Baby Patriots* (1898) by Mary Frances Ames, it could be said that the Queen succeeded in achieving what she aspired to do. In fact, in this children’s book features illustrative figures of tiger hunts in India and of tourist rides on elephants (see fig. 17). This book highlights the importance of acquiring knowledge about the British empire and incites children to learn more about Great Britain’s imperial possessions. It is clear from the recurrent description of the colonies and the British Empire in the book. For instance, it was stated that the letter C stands “for colonies rightly we boost, that of all the great nations Great Britain has most”²⁸⁶ while the letter E stands for the British Empire “where sun never sets; the larger we make it the bigger it gets.”²⁸⁷ However, India was the only colony mentioned in the book which illustrates its crucial importance for the British. While the British attitudes towards India were but different expressions of the ideology of the empire, it is interesting to note that Queen Victoria highlighted the fact that India was Great Britain's largest colony and clearly set it apart from the rest of the British colonies.

In the XIXth century, India was at the heart of Great Britain in the form of products and consumer goods. The integration of India in the British culture could be measured by the quantity of Indian products that was purchased in London, from tea-gowns to tea. The expansion of commodity culture was a marker of British national identity – obviously, because more distant parts of the Empire were brought, literally, into the parlor, the houses and the market-place. Queen Victoria without doubt passed her interest in India to her people and inspired a new trend of shawl fashion. One may wonder whether the queen also had an influence in India.

²⁸⁶ Ames, Mary Frances. *An A B C, for Baby Patriots*. Dean & Son Ltd., 1898, 4.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

Chapter 9 – The consequences of Queen Victoria’s actions in India

This chapter will deal with the influence that the queen’s interest in India had on the Indian society of the nineteenth century in three parts. In the first part, the queen’s acceptance by the Indian population will be examined. In the second part, the establishment of Abdul Karim’s social status in Agra will be looked into. In the third part, the animosity fueled between Muslims and Hindus as a consequence of the queen’s actions will be covered.

A- Acceptance of the Queen by the Indian populations

Queen Victoria's interest in India earned the Indian’s trust and acceptance of her majesty. It could be said that there were two important moments that contributed to this: firstly, the message sent by Queen Victoria on January 1st, 1877, to the people of India; secondly, the fact that the queen mastered an alien language (Hindustani) and kept a daily account of her work in this new language.

After Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (1874–80) gave Queen Victoria the title of Empress of India in 1876, her majesty sent a message to the Delhi Durbar on January 1st, 1877:

We must trust that the present occasion may tend to unite in bounds of yet closer affection ourselves and our subjects, that from the highest to the humblest all may feel that under our rule the great principles of liberty, equity and justice are secured to them.²⁸⁸

Abdul Karim and many Indians heard the Queen’s message and grew up admiring her. Following the massacre that occurred after the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8²⁸⁹, it may be said that Queen Victoria’s vow of treating Indians with equity and justice while guaranteeing their liberty assuaged

²⁸⁸ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 34.

²⁸⁹ After the British successfully suppressed the Indian mutiny, few mutineers were apprehended alive. Thousands were indiscriminately hanged and many innocent civilians killed in the process. When trials were held, those convicted of mutiny were bayoneted or shot from cannons in an outburst of British fury (though some British officers did protest the bloodshed). It was a cruel punishment with a religious overtone. The victim's hope of entering paradise was shattered as the body was blown to bits. This event remains in the Indian collective consciousness due to the ferocity that accompanied it. For more information see “Decisive Events of the Indian Mutiny.” *National Army Museum*, <<https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/decisive-events-indian-mutiny>>. Accessed on 25 May 2022.

their wrath. By appointing Abdul Karim as her Indian Secretary, the queen was fulfilling her promise of giving Indians equal treatment.²⁹⁰ Thus, the Indian people accepted her as they overjoyed at the thought that their Empress would not discriminate against them.

Furthermore, the fact that the Queen was studying Hindustani earned not only the approval of the subjects in Great Britain²⁹¹, but also those in India. Indian journalist Moulvie Rafiuddin Ahmad commented in *Strand Magazine*:

The fact of the Queen's studies has reacted in the most sympathetic manner in India. The princes and people of that country recognize in this Imperial act a further mark of tender care and parental attention towards her subjects in the East. It serves to add one stronger link to the chain of loyalty and attachment which binds them to the throne of England. The Queen has set a noble example to the princes of India and scholars of the East.²⁹²

Here the people of India pleaded allegiance and showed loyalty towards their monarchical mother as she showed her respect for them by learning their language. Mastering an Indian language proved the Queen's sincere desire "to know the wants, manners and customs, ways and thoughts of the people, and particularly of the women, of India."²⁹³

B- Establishment of Abdul Karim's social status in Indian society

One the consequences of Queen Victoria's interest in her colony was the international recognition of Abdul Karim as Her Majesty's Indian secretary and teacher (Munshi). In fact, Abdul Karim not only gained fame in Great Britain and the British Empire but also in Europe and India.²⁹⁴ It is very possible that his fame spread throughout Europe as a consequence of travelling with the Queen.²⁹⁵ In a way or the other, the British Queen was introducing her Indian secretary to the world as she took him with her during her travels in Europe. One French magazine introduced him as "Le

²⁹⁰ *Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India* (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad), 1 November 1858.

²⁹¹ For more information on the acceptance of Victoria's actions by the British see chapter 10, "B- Acceptance of Victoria's relationship with the Munshi".

²⁹² Ahmad, Moulvie Rafiuddin. "The Queen's Hindustani Journal." *Strand Magazine*, Vol. 24.12, December 1892, 552.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 196.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

Munchy, secretaire Indian de S. M. Britannique” (The Munshi, Indian secretary to her British Majesty) and included a sketch of him.²⁹⁶

At seeing this article, the court and the household members were not satisfied at all with the attention the Munshi received from Victoria and the Europeans as well, since they “were hardly ever noticed or commented on by the European media.”²⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the Queen kept doting on the Munshi. He was allocated cottages in all castles²⁹⁸ alongside with a royal carriage and a footman.²⁹⁹ A massive plot of land was also given to him by the Queen as a token of gratitude.³⁰⁰ She ensured that his life was comfortable even after her death by granting him this vast plot of land in Agra and a small fortune generally accorded to war heroes. She even required from the Viceroy to reserve a seat for Abdul Karim among the Viceroy staff during the Durbar (formal assembly of notables), held in India.³⁰¹ He had been welcomed as a member of the Queen’s personal Household and this helped establish the Munshi’s social standing in Agra’s society.³⁰²

The Viceroy was trying to balance his Queen’s demands with the strict formality and protocol of the Indian Government. Upon his arrival at Agra station on November 21st, the Governor of the North-West Provinces, Auckland Colvin, and other officials including John Tyler greeted him. However, the Munshi was not allowed to welcome the Viceroy since Colvin claimed that only persons of “high official positions or native personage of rank” were allowed on the platform.³⁰³ Upon learning this, the fifth Marquis of Lansdowne, who was the Viceroy of India at the time, asked to meet Abdul Karim personally in the afternoon of his arrival. He surely wanted to get the Queen’s favor by befriending her Indian secretary. The Viceroy received the Munshi and handed him the letter sent by the Queen and later allowed him to have an interview with his wife, Lady Lansdowne. In the evening, the Viceroy was holding a levee (a reception in his honor), and issued an order that the Munshi could attend it with members of the Viceroy’s staff.³⁰⁴ However,

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.

³⁰⁰ “Victoria and Abdul: The Friendship That Scandalized England.” *Smithsonian.com*, <www.smithsonianmag.com/history/victoria-and-abdul-friendship-scandalized-england-180964959/>. Accessed on 28 April 2022.

³⁰¹ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 132.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

the protocol required Abdul Karim to make an application to the Deputy Commissioner for permission to attend the levee, which the Munshi did not. Lord Lansdowne overlooked this protocol and Abdul Karim missed the levee.³⁰⁵

To make up to his error, the Viceroy invited the Munshi to his next Durbar and arranged things for him to attend with the Viceroy's staff. Since Abdul Karim's position as the Queen's teacher did not give him the right to be included among the regular guests of the assembly, Lord Lansdowne opted to include him among members of his staff. He justified Abdul Karim's right to join the assembly by stating the fact that the Munshi held an appointment in the Queen Household, so it "seemed only natural and proper that he (Abdul Karim) should, upon such an occasion, attend."³⁰⁶ He had arranged a seating plan for the Durbar and assigned the Munshi a specific place between the Viceroy's staff and the "distinguished visitors".³⁰⁷

Before the Viceroy left Agra, he arranged for meeting Abdul Karim and his father privately while Lady Lansdowne scheduled an interview with the Munshi's wife and mother-in-law.³⁰⁸ It was the first time an Indian clerk, who had been no more than a humble servant, had been asked to meet the Viceroy of India. This clearly demonstrated Abdul Karim's value to the Empress. Moreover, holding an audience with the Viceroy helped the Indian Secretary to her majesty to enhance his social position in India and make him one of the distinguished personalities of Agra.

C- Animosity fueled between Muslims and Hindus

It could also be said that the queen's actions have exacerbated enmity between Muslims and Hindus. Everything started when Abdul Karim shared his political views with Victoria as he hoped to make the situation better in India.³⁰⁹ He indicated to her what might be the cause of riots and proposed some solutions to her. Since Victoria was always interested in helping minorities³¹⁰, she decided to discuss this matter with the Viceroy. She wrote to him about the Muharram (one of the

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

³¹⁰ "Victoria (r. 1837-1901)." *The Royal Family*, <<http://www.royal.uk/queen-victoria>>. Last accessed on 4 May 2022.

four sacred months of the year in Islam) causing riots between Muslims and Hindus and suggested some propositions to prevent any further hostilities.³¹¹ From what the Queen learned from the Munshi and the Viceroy, she believed that the religious riots were made by Hindus against Muslims.³¹² Ever since, Victoria has become considerate towards Muslims in India as they represented a targeted minority in her opinion.³¹³

The Queen's closeness to Abdul Karim meant that she remained constantly concerned for Muslims in India and never failed to convey this to the Viceroy or the Secretary of State. Having discussed at length with the Munshi the passing of the Indian Council Bill, which gave representation to Indians in the native assemblies, she was convinced that Muslims would not be adequately represented and urged the Viceroy to consult various bodies on this. "The Mahomedans are undoubtedly by far the most loyal of the Indian people, and would be a great support in Council," she said.³¹⁴ The Viceroy replied that it would be necessary to fill a certain number of appointments to the Councils by direct nomination in order to safeguard the rights of minorities. "This", he said, "would afford the means of securing proper representation for Mahomedan interests."³¹⁵ Like that the Empress ensured that Muslims had a fair representation in the Indian Council.³¹⁶

This matter did not satisfy the imperial court. Some members believed that Abdul Karim intervened in Indian affairs and pushed the Queen to action. However, Victoria clearly denied this fact in her letter to Prime Minister Salisbury (1895-1902). She declared that "no political papers of any kind are ever in the Munshi's hands, even in her presence. He only helps her to read the words which she cannot read or merely ordinary submissions on warrants for signature. He does not read English fluently enough to be able to read anything of importance."³¹⁷ Consequently, it is very unlikely that he could have had any kind of impact on Indian policy.

³¹¹ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 115.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 152.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 114.

³¹⁴ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 159.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ Victoria to Salisbury, 17 July 1897, quoted in Longford, p. 540.

However, some Hindus accused the queen of displaying favoritism towards Muslims, a form of inequality according to them. All Indians experienced racism in the nineteenth century as there was a “social gulf of separation between the rulers and the ruled in India.”³¹⁸ The fact that the Muslims were treated differently put them in a better position than the Hindus. The latter believed that Abdul Karim was the one who convinced Queen Victoria that Muslims were better than Hindus. Her statement asserting that “the Mahomedans are undoubtedly by far the most loyal of the Indian people”³¹⁹ justified their thinking.

The different treatment that Muslims received added fuel to the pre-existing tensions between Muslims and Hindus. Even though Muslims represented only a minority in Agra, the queen ensured that they would have a fair representation in the native assemblies. Hatred and tensions between Muslims and Hindus grew, leading to the Partition of India (August 15, 1947) into two separate states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. One reason for this partition was the two-nation theory introduced by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan³²⁰, which stated that Muslims and Hindus were too different to live in the same country.³²¹ He argued that the history of India is largely a history of conflicts between the Hindus and the Muslims. “I am convinced that these two nations, Hindus and Muslims, will never reach on any agreement upon any matter in the future,” he declared.³²² Syed Ahmed Khan believed that Muslims were a separate nation and therefore should have their separate homeland. He developed the Two Nation Theory, which argued that the cultural, political, religious, economic and social dissimilarities between the Hindus and the Muslims gave rise to two distinct political ideologies. “I am convinced now that Hindus and Muslims could never become one nation as their religion and way of life was quite distinct from each other,” he asserted.

³¹⁸ Ahmad, Moulvie Rafiuddin. “The Queen's Hindustani Journal.” *Strand Magazine*, Vol. 24.12, December 1892, 557.

³¹⁹ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 159.

³²⁰ Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (October 17, 1817 - March 27, 1898) is a Muslim educator, jurist, and author. He is the founder of the Anglo-Mohammedan Oriental College at Aligarh and the driving force behind the revival of Indian Islam in the late nineteenth century. His works included *Essays on the Life of Mohammed* (1870) and commentaries on the Bible and on the Qurān. In 1888, he was made a Knight Commander of the Star of India. For more information see: “Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sayyid-Ahmad-Khan>>. Accessed on 4 May 2022.

³²¹ “Two Nation Theory.” *Pakistan Studies: Two Nation Theory*, <<http://notesonpakistan.blogspot.com/2009/08/two-nation-theory.html>>. Last accessed on 4 May 2022.

³²² *Ibid*.

Chapter 9 – The consequences of Queen Victoria's actions in India

According to him, the two nations – Muslims and Hindus – have their own common achievements and common sufferings. On the one hand, Abdul Karim's rise to the position of the Queen's secretary was without doubt among the common achievements of the Muslim community since (they believed that) he convinced his queen to advocate for more rights for Muslims. On the other hand, this friendship between Queen Victoria and the Munshi was listed among the common suffering of the Hindus since they believed that Muslims set the queen against them. Therefore, even though Queen Victoria's actions did not result directly in the partition of India, it added fuel to the existing conflict between the Muslim and Hindu communities and aggravated the tensions between them.

Queen Victoria's interest in India and the actions she took in order to discover it left an impact in India. In some cases, this impact was positive as it promoted the mother-like figure of Victoria, who took an oath to protect Indian's liberty and equality in front of the British. Her actions also led to the successful promotion of Abdul Karim's social standing in Agra. In other instances, the impact left on the Indian society was negative like the stirring of conflict between the Muslims and the Hindus. Both communities had been living together in the same region for many centuries. However, they never agreed with each other. It is very likely that the issue of being favored by the queen was only a pretext to justify the hatred and anger that each community had held against the other for many years.

Chapter 10 – Victoria’s actions: between acceptance and rejection

This chapter will deal with the British’s response towards the queen’s actions in three parts. In the first part, the familiarity of the subjects with the queen’s life will be examined. In the second part, the acceptance of Victoria’s relationship with the Munshi will be looked into. In the third part, the criticism of her relationship with Abdul Karim will be examined.

A- Familiarity of the British subjects with the Queen's life

In the nineteenth century, there was an unprecedented access to descriptions of Victoria’s everyday life. Numbers of poems, prints and street ballads were written, all of which extolled Victoria.³²³ This was partly due to a revived royal popularism, and partly due to changes in graphic reproduction. Historian Plunkett explained that “the 1830s saw a large expansion in the trade in individual prints and in the number of illustrated periodicals.”³²⁴ The effective resurrection of wood engraving, a medium excellent for delivering affordable but high-quality illustrations, was especially prevalent throughout the 1830s. This method was most famously employed by two periodicals, the *Penny Magazine* and the *Saturday Magazine*, both of which first appeared in 1832.³²⁵ In addition to such changes in graphic reproduction, Plunkett stated that the early 1830s saw the craze for cheap literature, the dispute over the unstamped press, and the eventual reduction in Stamp Duty in 1836. Put together, these changes meant that, “to an unprecedented degree, Victoria's image was available via a diverse assortment of media ranging from dioramas to street ballads.”³²⁶

Furthermore, the royal image was firmly planted on the mass-produced articles. Historian Thompson argued that “the queen’s picture decorated souvenir mugs from all school children as well as flags, bunting, plates, dishes, handkerchiefs and a huge range of commercially-produced

³²³ Plunkett, John. “Of Hype and Type: The Media Making of Queen Victoria 1837-1845.” *Critical Survey*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Berghahn Books, 2001, 7.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

merchandise, from chocolates and condensed milk to Colman’s mustard.”³²⁷ The consumer culture of the XIXth century enhanced Queen Victoria’s popularism as her image was available for the masses. In way or the other the popular songs, articles, and satires of the Queen, which both lauded and mocked her were projecting the British subjects’ deepest hopes onto the new monarch.

Many articles in journals and magazines started covering Queen Victoria’s life. For instance, *Strand Magazine* provided detailed information about the sovereign’s Hindustani journal, her lessons in Urdu and about her teacher Abdul Karim while including a sketch of him.³²⁸ With the media covering the Queen’s everyday life, her subjects felt involved and invested in her every move. The fact that there was a coverage of the sovereign’s life demonstrates the subjects’ interest in their monarch. Newspaper periodicals requested that Victoria uses the media to actively communicate with her people. “The Queen’s role was not just to submit to her appropriation by newspapers, periodicals, and artists,” argues Plunkett, “royalty had to actively encourage the creation of themselves as media beings.”³²⁹

This shows how the media helped spreading a positive image of the queen. It also encouraged her subjects to inquire about her life and actions. The British felt close to her as they were informed of her every move. Washington Gladden, a minister of the First Congregationalist Church in Columbus, Ohio, preached a sermon in which he praised the British queen:

Finally, it must be said of Victoria that her greatness was that of a true womanhood. It was her pure womanliness that drew to her the hearts of her people, with a strength of affection that no English monarch has ever called forth. There was no sufferer anywhere in her realm who was not sure of the queen's sympathy; the neediest and lowliest felt that her heart was with them. And it was her womanliness that made her a great ruler.³³⁰

In this statement, Gladden clearly demonstrated the importance of knowing the monarch’s actions for the British masses, as it assured them of her good intentions. The coverage of the queen’s life was itself a political move that ensured to the middle-class their queen’s benevolence. It was a

³²⁷ Thompson, Dorothy. *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power*. London: Virago, 2008, 132.

³²⁸ Ahmad, Moulvie Rafiuddin. “The Queen's Hindustani Journal.” *Strand Magazine*, Vol. 24.12, December 1892, 557.

³²⁹ “How the Media Made Queen Victoria.” *Jstor Daily*. <<https://daily.jstor.org/how-the-media-made-queen-victoria/>>. Accessed on 12 May 2022.

³³⁰ Burdiel, Isabel. “The Queen, the Woman and the Middle Class. The Symbolic Failure of Isabel II of Spain.” *Social History*, 2004, Vol. 29, No. 3, Spain: Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 2004, 301.

strategy to promote the royal family and create a closer bond between the queen and her subjects. This might be the reason why the British, and especially the middle-class, came to accept the queen’s actions and behaviors.

B- Acceptance of Victoria’s relationship with the Munshi

The relation between Abdul Karim and Queen Victoria was considered as a colonial bond that respected racial, gender, and class norms of the nineteenth century. The Munshi and Victoria embodied what was happening within the British Empire on a small scale. It is possible that Queen Victoria resorted to imperialist ways, such as having an Indian servant and being interested in the “Jewel in the crown” in order to remind her subjects that they belong to a great empire, and to educate them about the other members of the British Empire. This explains why the people of Great Britain seemed to accept the Queen’s interest in India.

The fact that the Queen was learning Hindustani, building an Indian room in her palace, and befriending a non-aristocratic Indian never shocked the public since Victoria spread a representation of suitable hierarchies. As the British Queen keeping an Indian servant, she strengthened race and class hierarchies and demonstrated her monarchical authority over her servant. Thus, Britain’s supremacy over India and the monarch’s supremacy over her servants were maintained. Historians who examined the “rule of colonial difference”³³¹ argued that an “essential difference between the rulers and the ruled”³³² was personified by Queen Victoria and Abdul Karim.

In fact, historian Levine argues that there were “mapping hierarchies of racial difference”³³³ in the XIXth century and the British were considered as the “dominant race”³³⁴ who had the right to subjugate inferior peoples. Such an argument finds echoes in Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*, which states that the empire or as it was called *imperium* was understood as “protracted, almost,

³³¹ Levine, Philippa. “Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century.” *Gender and Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 48.

³³² *Ibid.*, 183.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 50.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples.”³³⁵ As the British Queen, Victoria was in place of dominance while Abdul Karim was in place of subordination as was expected from Indians. The colonizers and the colonized were clearly distinguished, and this was based on the metropole's dominance over its subject peoples. Since her relationship with the Munshi respected the racial hierarchy, it was accepted by the British.

Moreover, Victoria was viewed as a mother-like ruler taking care of her colonial children. She fulfilled the role of imperial mother and caregiver which is typical of her time. In fact, historians argue that British women filled the roles of “mothers, guardians of value, culture, religion.”³³⁶ It has been stated that in the XIXth century, a “society’s well-being, its wealth, its ability to feed and clothe itself, its very future, were frequently perceived as directly related to women’s ability to bear healthy children.”³³⁷ Queen Victoria personified this idea as she was a mother, not only to her own nine children, but also to a nation and a large empire. Victoria took in Abdul Karim, an Indian servant, treating him as a mother would have treated her child. She even signed the letters she sent to him with “Your loving mother,”³³⁸ or, “Your affectionate Mother.”³³⁹ So, it can be said that Victoria was carrying out the traditional colonial role of women. She was maintaining a good relation between Great Britain and India in an acceptable way to the British, with a maternal regard for her colonial children.

Additionally, it can be argued that the public’s expectations would have had a great influence on the Queen’s actions. In fact, Victoria knew acceptable boundaries of that time and she acted within those norms when she dealt with Abdul Karim. Her interest in India and the relationship with the Munshi followed the norms of the time period, acquiring as a result the public’s widespread approval. Queen Victoria was a British-monarch-mother and this role

³³⁵ Said, Edward W. “Empire, Geography and Culture.” *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Vintage Digital, 2014, 10.

³³⁶ Levine, Philippa. “Introduction: Why Gender and Empire?” *Gender and Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 10.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

³³⁸ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 107.

³³⁹ “Victoria and Abdul: The Real Story Behind the Queen’s Controversial relationship.” *Vanity Fair*, <<https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2017/09/queen-victoria-and-abdul-real-story#:~:text=%E2%80%9CIn%20letters%20to%20him%20over,to%20do%20at%20that%20time>>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

respected all norms of the time³⁴⁰, which made her actions, as reported in contemporary newspapers, acceptable to the British masses.

Her actions were always acceptable because they maintained the social status as well as Great Britain’s supremacy. This idea of clear boundaries marking who is in charge and who is following orders is demonstrated by the way the public viewed this relationship, the way Abdul Karim dressed, the roles he played as the Queen’s servant, teacher and Indian secretary, and the manner in which newspapers covered their interactions. The public did not question this bond between the monarch and her servant because from outside the palace walls, it seemed like the typical example of race, class, and gender norms’ representation. Great Britain ruled India, the monarch managed her servants, and a mother took care of her children.

Furthermore, the fact that the Queen was studying Hindustani earned not only the approval of the subjects in India, but also those in Great Britain. The British viewed the study of the colonized country’s language as a sign of imperial conquest as there was no mention of resentment or any kind of reproach.³⁴¹ They even considered the Queen as a mother to the Empire. Overall, everything Victoria did was according to the norms of the time period, including her relationship with Abdul Karim. However, this colonial bond between the monarch and her servant extends notably beyond certain norms.

C- Criticism about Victoria’s relationship with Abdul Karim

During the last decade of her reign, Queen Victoria developed a special relationship with an Indian servant, promoting him to a trusted advisor and infuriating her court.³⁴² Historical researches dealing specifically with Abdul Karim and Queen Victoria pointed that while their relationship earned the acceptance of the British subjects, it only earned the animosity of the royal

³⁴⁰ Since early in the nineteenth century the role of mother had been idealized. Motherhood was not simply a reproductive function, but it was imbued with symbolic meaning. For more information see: “History - Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain.” *BBC*, <www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_06.shtml>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

³⁴¹ Ahmad, Moulvie Rafiuddin. “The Queen’s Hindustani Journal.” *Strand Magazine*, Vol. 24.12, December 1892, 552.

³⁴² Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 101.

family and the Queen’s household as they deemed it inappropriate because of race and class norms.³⁴³

The royal household was responsible for taking care of the needs of the old sovereign and her relations. The positions were usually attributed to aristocratic families and many of them were hereditary. Thus, all members were part of the nobility. At the time, the members of the Queen’s Household felt compelled to accord respect to Indian Princes and Nawabs (native governors or persons of high status), but considered Indian citizens unworthy of their association. This was partially due to racism and partly due to a class divide that existed between Indians themselves at the time.³⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Abdul Karim demanded to be treated as an equal and not as a servant and even moved among the higher circles as the Queen’s “Secretary”.³⁴⁵ This was absolutely not acceptable for the royal household, nor for the royal family. At the end of the day, he was an inferior dark-skinned Indian and seeing him seated at the same table with the superiors was like an insult for the nobility. Victoria’s biographer Carolly Erickson clearly explained this fact in his following statement:

“Racism was a scourge of the age; it went hand in hand with belief in the appropriateness of Britain’s global dominion. For a dark-skinned Indian to be put very nearly on a level with the queen’s white servants was all but intolerable, for him to eat at the same table as them, to share in their daily lives was viewed as an outrage.”³⁴⁶

To make the matter worse, during Victoria’s stay at Balmoral on September 1889, she and the Munshi stayed alone for one night in seclusion at the remote cottage Glassalt Shiel at Loch Muick, built as a private retreat for Victoria and Scottish servant Mr. Brown.³⁴⁷ She had sworn never to stay there again after Brown died³⁴⁸, but she made an exception for Abdul Karim. This stay created

³⁴³ “India from Queen Victoria’s Time to Independence.” *The History Press*, <<http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/india-from-queen-victoria-s-time-to-independence/>>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

³⁴⁴ “Mohammed Abdul Karim: The Concealed Royal Munshi.” *Heritage Times*, <<https://www.heritagetimes.in/mohammed-abdul-karim-the-concealed-royal-munshi/>>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

³⁴⁵ “Victoria and Abdul: The Friendship That Scandalized England.” *Smithsonian.com*, <<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/victoria-and-abdul-friendship-scandalized-england-180964959/>>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

many commotions and enraged the royal household as Abdul Karim was rumored to be Victoria’s lover.³⁴⁹

The resentment of Abdul Karim grew as the days passed by and was shared even by the other Indian servants. Ahmad Hussein, Indian servant of the Queen’s household, was especially known for his animosity towards the Munshi. According to historian Basu, Hussein hated the special attention Abdul Karim received from the Queen and wished to be on the same footing as him. This animosity was driven by jealousy.³⁵⁰ So, Ahmad complained to Reid, Victoria royal doctor, and to the Queen herself on many occasions hoping that the newly appointed Indian secretary loses his privileges. However, the Queen paid no heed and called any reproach against the Munshi “shameful” and refused to believe any negative comments about him.³⁵¹ To make it worse, in 1889, Hourmet Ali, Abdul Karim’s brother-in-law, sold one of Victoria’s brooches to a jeweler in Windsor.³⁵² The Household thought Ali had stolen it, whereas Victoria believed Abdul Karim’s explanation that Ali had found the brooch and that it was customary in India to own anything that one found.

Within a month of the brooch accident, the Munshi was assigned the room previously occupied by Dr James Reid, Victoria’s doctor, and given the use of a private sitting room.³⁵³ The royal household was at that time more determined to free the Queen from Abdul Karim’s influence as they believed he brainwashed her. They started a conspiracy to send him back to India, but the Queen remained firm about her position towards her teacher and “was determined to impose harmony on her household. Race hatred was intolerable to her, and the ‘dear good Munshi’ deserving of nothing but respect.”³⁵⁴

The Munshi was aware of the ill-feelings towards him, but was not discouraged as he had the Queen as his supporter. He continued to spend a lot of time with Victoria and even helped her

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 120.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 113.

³⁵³ “Victoria and Abdul: The Friendship That Scandalized England.” *Smithsonian.com*, <<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/victoria-and-abdul-friendship-scandalized-england-180964959/>>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

with her daily administration with letters.³⁵⁵ The household feared that the Munshi was seeing confidential letters and passing the information on to groups pressing for self-governance in India using Rafiuddin, Abdul Karim’s friend, as a medium. Thus, Abdul Karim was thought to be associated with radical Muslim groups by befriending Rafiuddin Ahmed.³⁵⁶ In fact, rumors were circulating that Rafiuddin was linked to Radical Muslim groups in Afghanistan and was the implanted spy of the Amir of Afghanistan.³⁵⁷ Being a member of the Muslim League, a political organization in India, Rafiuddin was at the center of suspicion since Muslims were believed to be at the origin of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Therefore, his actions were always monitored.

The Munshi was cleared of charges³⁵⁸, but the hatred for him in the household intensified, be it the Queen’s son Arthur, her secretary Fritz Ponsonby or her doctor, Sir James Reid who was the most hostile towards Abdul Karim. He wrote a threatening letter to him stating that he is “from a very low class and can never be a gentleman”.³⁵⁹ Everyone in Abdul Karim’s opposition group shared this thought. In fact, Ponsonby wrote to his contemporary nobles “you see the Munshi is a sort of pet like a dog or cat which the Queen will not willingly give up.”³⁶⁰ The fact, that a lowly servant was accorded more importance than nobles infuriated the royal household to the point of making them conspire against him.

That being said, the Munshi was very pleased with the Queen’s attitude and protection. He was very indispensable for the monarch that she asked for his company wherever she went. In 1893, Victoria insisted that Abdul Karim would accompany her to the Riviera, despite the refusal of her household and even “had a revolt on her hands.”³⁶¹ The officers of the household informed Victoria that they would refuse to take meals with him. “When the Queen clearly disapproved of their attitude, they relented,”³⁶² wrote Victoria’s biographer Baird.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 188.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ “Mohammed Abdul Karim: The Concealed Royal Munshi.” *Heritage Times*, <<https://www.heritagetimes.in/mohammed-abdul-karim-the-concealed-royal-munshi/>>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

³⁶⁰ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 191.

³⁶¹ “Victoria & Abdul.” *Good Times*, <www.goodtimes.com.pk/victoria-abdul/>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

Queen Victoria was well aware of this animosity towards Abdul Karim, and did not tolerate it. Fritz Ponsonby, her private secretary, stated her unwavering stance:

“The Queen insists on bringing the Munshi forward, and if it were not for our protest, I don’t know where she would stop. But it is no use, for the Queen says it is ‘race prejudice’ and that we are jealous of the poor Munshi.”³⁶³

She knew the court would not pay Abdul Karim the same respect once she was dead, so she heaped gifts and titles upon him. She even asked that multiple portraits of him be made, and requested that he be mentioned in the Court Circulars and local Gazettes. All these efforts were made in order to ensure that the Munshi would be comfortable and remembered.³⁶⁴

Victoria’s fears were justified. Upon her death on January 22, 1901, Victoria’s children worked immediately to evict their mother’s favorite advisor. Edward VII sent guards into Abdul Karim’s cottage and ordered them to seize all letters from the queen and burn them on the spot.³⁶⁵ They even instructed the Munshi to return to India immediately, without farewell. Nonetheless, Victoria had predicted this and changed her will with utmost secrecy securing a land grant for Abdul Karim back in Agra and a small fortune generally reserved for war heroes.³⁶⁶ It was the final token of appreciation between friends. She made sure that even after her death, her closest confidant would live comfortably regardless of her children’s opposition.

In the nineteenth century, there was a growing interest in the royal family’s life as the people were satisfied with the performance of the old queen. Her life was always monitored by the press and the public. Therefore, her relationship with the Munshi was known to the public. This relationship respected racial, gender, and class norms of the XIXth century. At the same time, it overcame the norm and class barriers since it was more than just colonial ties. The bond between Victoria and Abdul Karim operated at various levels — he was her closest friend, her confidant, her son, her teacher, her servant and her Indian secretary.

³⁶³ Lord Ponsonby about Abdul Karim, 27 April 1897. *Karimletter*, <<http://vll-minos.bl.uk/learning/images/asiansinbritain/large124396.html>>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

³⁶⁴ “Mohammed Abdul Karim: The Concealed Royal Munshi.” *Heritage Times*, <<https://www.heritagetimes.in/mohammed-abdul-karim-the-concealed-royal-munshi/>>. Accessed on 15 May 2022.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ Basu, Shrabani. *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen’s Closest Confidant*. The History Press, 2017, 177.

Nonetheless, this relationship was openly accepted not only by the British masses, but also the Indian population. However, the Queen’s Household officers, politicians, and her family members, especially her son Edward VII were against the Queen’s favorable treatment of Abdul Karim, considered by them as an outrage. As the Munshi climbed up the social ladder, his enemies grew in number. They tried every means to send him back to India. They claimed that his brother-in-law stole from Victoria and even complained to the Queen on many occasions. However, the old monarch defended him furiously, accusing those who criticized him of racism. Hence, there is no doubt that the queen’s actions were hanged between acceptance and rejection. Sometimes she was praised and others criticized. Everything depended on the interpretation of the Queen’s actions.



After examining chapter 8, 9 and 10, it could be said that the queen’s implication in India as well as her interest in the colony had an influence on India and Great Britain in terms of economy, politics, culture and society. While the Queen was rendering Indian products or rather India common to the British, she was getting the approval of her Indian subjects. The impacts of her actions were sometimes negative and other times positive. It depended on the subjects’ interpretation of her actions, their environment and their conditions. The British found it legitimate and logical for the queen to intervene in Indian affairs while the Hindus found it outrageous since they believed that she would side with the Muslims. Therefore, it was only natural that for the sovereign’s actions to be accepted by some people, and rejected by others. Whether her actions were accepted or not, the Queen without doubt influenced Indian and British societies of the nineteenth century. It could even be said that the act of accepting or rejecting the queen’s actions was itself a manifestation of the influence of her actions.

Conclusion

To tackle my subject, I first went through Queen Victoria's relation with India, and after hers and her husband's mutual interest in all that is exotic and especially India. Then, I explored the different steps of the queen's discovery of the "Jewel in the Crown", and delved into the different perceptions of India provided to Victoria firstly through the accounts and the perspective of the British, then from the eyes of Abdul Karim and finally through the standpoint of the queen herself. I deduced that the queen's relationship with Abdul Karim functioned as a bridge between her majesty and the faraway colony. After addressing the different steps of the queen's discovery of India, I explained Victoria's role as a constitutional monarch and her belief about the role a monarch should play in foreign policies, and examined the queen's involvement in Indian affairs. I came to the conclusion that the correspondences between Queen Victoria and the government of India served as a means of implication in Indian policies. Finally, I analyzed the impact of Queen Victoria's actions on the British masses and Indian population, and measured their acceptability for the British. Now, it is perhaps finally time to address the interrogations that led to the writing of the present paper.

With the help of the complementarity of primary and secondary source documents of different natures, I have proven in this research work that it was Victoria's fascination with the exotic and her longing for her husband that made her interested in India. Her responsibility as Empress of India motivated her to learn more about the land she ruled from afar. As India occupied a central place in her Majesty's daily life, she interfered in Indian affairs. I deduced that the queen's belief about the role a monarch should play in foreign policy and the personal interest she expressed for the colony were both factors of her involvement in Indian affairs. It could be said that the title of Empress of India, which offered Queen Victoria an important role in politics that was partially denied in Great Britain, was another major factor of her implication in the governance of India. However, one may wonder how the queen intervened in Indian affairs. Despite her royal powers being limited, Queen Victoria tried to interfere with the making of decisions at home and in the colonies. The sovereign found a way to stay informed about what happened in India and to stay in contact with her ministers — it was exchanging letters. She figured that her correspondences with members of the Indian government could serve as a tool of implication. She used her letters to the fullest and made sure to pass her voice and assert her opinion, even if she was not physically present at the assemblies of the Indian Government. But what were the consequences of the queen's actions

Conclusion

on the British and Indian societies of the XIXth century? In Great Britain, the impact could be resumed to the integration of India in the British culture. As the expansion of commodity culture was a marker of British national identity, more distant parts of the Empire – and especially of India – were brought, literally, into the parlor, the houses and the market-place. This cultural integration of India went hand in hand with the economic expansion and the development of the consumer society. As the Indian goods were acquired by the British, the British's aesthetical values, their consumed products, their fashion but also way of life changed. Queen Victoria without doubt passed her interest in India to her people and inspired a new trend of shawl fashion. However, in India, the impact has either been beneficial or detrimental to Indians. The queen's actions either promoted the mother-like figure of Victoria and made her accepted by Indians or stirred conflict between the Muslims and the Hindus. I wondered if her actions were at the least accepted by the British. It turned out that the queen's actions were hanged between acceptance and rejection. She was complimented at times and criticized at others. It depended on the subjects' interpretation of her actions, their environment and their conditions.

An extension of this work could be done either by using new sources or by studying the continuity of the link between the monarchy and India. This extension could focus on Edward VII and his relation to India, the way this relation resembles that of his mother, the way it differs from it and its possible consequences on the British and Indian populations during the Edwardian era. This research might indicate the reason why Edward VII strove to erase Abdul Karim from history and burn every document in his hand. It would be also interesting to compare Queen Victoria's relation with India to her relation with another colony of the British Empire like Cape located in South Africa. Both countries were the object of the queen's interest. Comparing the difference and similarity of the relation the queen maintained with another colony might highlight the complexity of Victoria's relation to India or negate it altogether.

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