

A TRAGEDY OF TEA, TRADING, AND TURMOIL:
A SOCIAL HISTORY OF INDIA UNDER THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

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A TRAGEDY OF TEA, TRADING, AND TURMOIL:
A SOCIAL HISTORY OF INDIA UNDER THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

by

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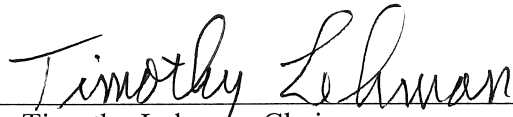
History and Political Science

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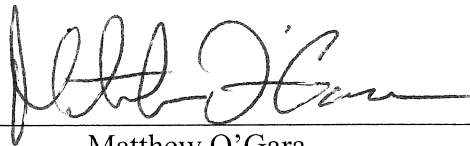
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ABSTRACT

Until recently, there has been a great gap between the subject of power and influence exhibited by imperial powers and the people they subjugated. Specifically, many schools of history embellish the accomplishments of the East India Company, while overlooking the people that operated under its rule. Throughout southern Asia, including China and particularly India, the social dynamics of India were greatly influenced by British power. The English should not be painted as conquerors abused by the very people they conquered, nor should the Indians be painted as helpless local victims of the birth of globalism. The relationship that Company officials shared with the ruling Indian elite and those who served under their native rule, often profiting at the expense of the lower classes and castes, was complex socially, politically, and economically. Interpreting these complex relationships through a social historical lens demonstrates how British presence influenced local labor, racial, and class dynamics, religious pervasiveness, and prevailing gender norms.

INTRODUCTION

Very few beverages have influenced the history of the world more than tea. While wine and spirits were traded internationally throughout the West and Near East, tea was the first truly global beverage. It was first planted in the hills of Southern China, eventually making its way to Japan via post-Classical Age trade routes. It was eventually be adopted by the British, to later be both drunk at nearly every dining table in England and dumped in the harbor of Boston, Massachusetts. In fact, the prevalence of tea in contemporary society often makes it easy to forget its symbolic role in British imperialism, from India to the Americas and all over the world. The widespread use of tea today can be largely traced back to a single document signed on the December 31st, 1600 by her majesty, Queen Elizabeth I: the Charter of the East India Company.

The original purpose of the East India Company was to capitalize on the growing spice market, satisfying the Western European demand for spices with the Southern Asian supply of nutmeg, pepper, and cloves, among other spices; the idea of capitalizing on the tea trade was likely not at the forefront of those who signed the Company charter. In fact, in spite of the growing popularity of tea, most of the tea the Company grew and sold was a mere drop in the bucket (or teapot?) compared with the rest of the goods traded, including indigo, saltpeter, opium, and perhaps most importantly, cotton. Each of these products would play roles in the history of the Company and England—and by extension, the World—to highly varying degrees.

None of the material, economic, or political success of the East India Company would not have been possible without the stream of supply provided to the Company by the resources and labor of India. The Company hired thousands of Indians to work for them, all the while turning a blind eye to the institutionalized practice of slavery that contributed to keeping manufacturing

costs down. Every step of the process, from setting up shop, to building entire military forts in town centers, to hiring natives to serve in the military protecting the Company that infringed on their own sovereignty, was all done in pursuit of convenient deals of—albeit sometimes expensive—economic advancement. Business deals were made between British Lieutenant Governors and Indian Princes to expand the profits of both, often at the expense of the workers' livelihoods. The mutual respect and trust between elites from both the British and the Indians, however, began to dissolve with rising cultural tensions.

Some of this antagonism existed long before the East India Company was even imagined, but much was created specifically as a result of its presence in India. India was never fully unified under the Mughal Empire of the north, nor under the Marathas Empire of the South. Hostility between Muslim and Hindu cultures (in each empire, respectively) were almost always present, but to varying degrees over time. Tensions among religious groups only grew as the Company did, however, especially when Christianity was introduced. Preconceived notions of British and Christian superiority over Indian and Hindu and Muslim traditions came to India both with the East India Company and with the British Missionary Societies. As religious influence grew, so did religiously-based views and expectations of the role of women; members of some gender groups faced small changes in their lives, some were dramatically affected, and some were completely abandoned by the colonial project. Perceptions of race, which were never at the forefront of social issues in India prior to Company involvement, became increasingly important as businesses, towns, and even families were divided.

Eventually these tensions would tear apart the relationship that the East India Company held with the local princes, paving the way for complete social upheaval. In 1857, Queen Victoria responded to violence that broke out as a result of cultural turmoil by declaring India a

direct colony of Great Britain, which effectively brought an end to the East India Company. From Queen Elizabeth to Queen Victoria, the Company controlled India and the people who inhabited it. Yet the moment that Indian soldiers began to fight back against the cultural impositions the Company placed on them, any hope of immediate independence was crushed by the weight of the Crown and direct colonial rule.

Thus begins a global tragedy, one of cooperation, betrayal, success, failure, prosperity, and bloodshed. Its players: the East India Company, the Mughal Empire among various other Indian states, China, and the men, women, and children who worked and lived in each. The stage: India. In order to best understand the setting, one must envision India prior to the foundation of the Company: at the height of the Mughal Empire.

BEFORE THE BRITISH: INDIA UNDER LARGELY MUGHAL RULE

Empires of the Subcontinent

Prior to English interference, northern India had been witness to great political, military, and economic strength through two formidable empires: the Maratha Empire of the South and the Mughal Empire of the North. Each empire was unified primarily based upon religious affiliation: the Marathas were Hindu, and the Mughals were Sunni Muslim. Of the two, the Mughal Empire of the North interacted politically far more often with the East India Company than the Maratha Empire, and possessed not only the most agriculturally rich areas of the Indian subcontinent, but also had established more extensive trade networks throughout the East.¹ These trade networks only expanded when the Mughal Empire took over more and more of the Marathas Empire in throughout the latter half of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries.

While the Islamic Empires of the 1300s and the Mughal Empire of the 1500s to 1700s both had expansive territory throughout central Asia, neither had too strong of a presence in southern India. Southern India in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries grew separately from the rule of the Mughals primarily because of the role that Hinduism played in southern Indian society. While Southern India was host to “political disunity, Hindu religious ideas spread south in the seventh and eighth centuries, and political leaders soon found Hinduism useful in ruling there too. Thus, not only was India politically divided, but a major religious divide between Muslims and Hindus opened as well.”² Conflicts between Muslims and

¹ Ian Copland, “Christianity as an Arm of the Empire: The Ambiguous Case of India Under the Company, C. 1813-1858,” *The Historical Journal* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), 52.

² Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 52.

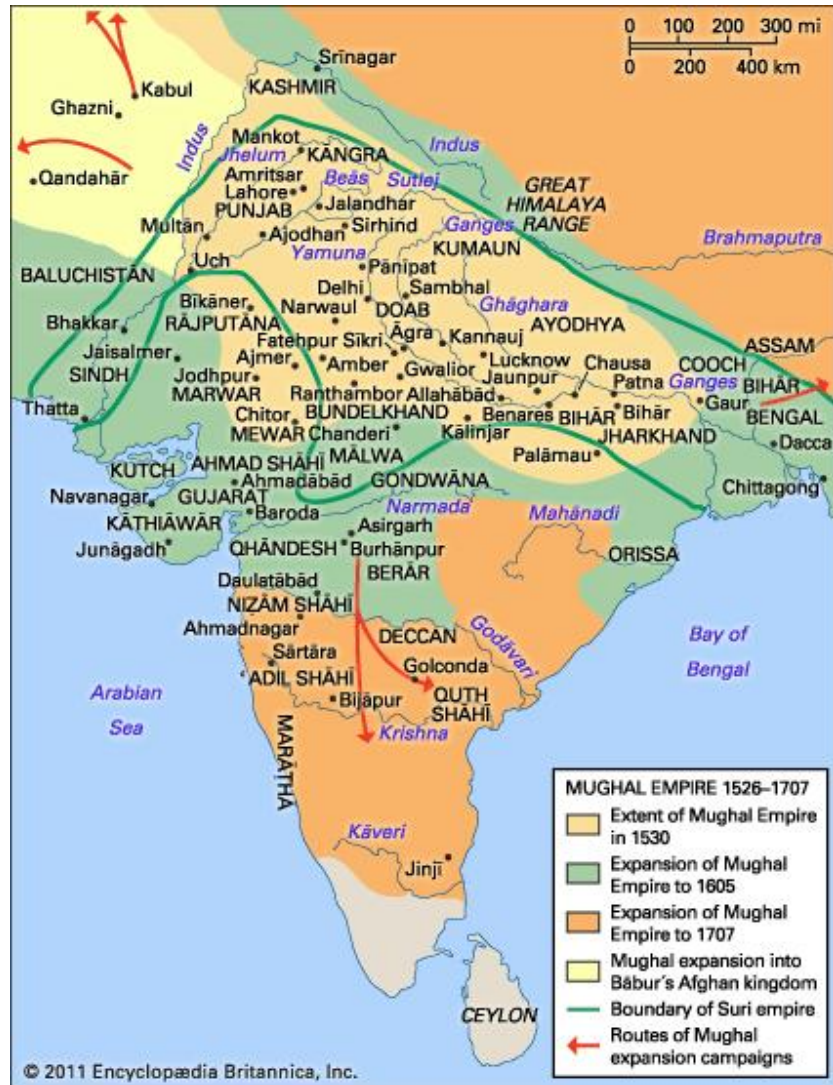


Fig 1. The Mughal Empire: its expansion and major cities.³

Hindus in India were by no means created by the British when they colonized the subcontinent; they existed long before the Company began its lucrative endeavors. The Mughal Empire reached its peak in 1700, but started to decline in the mid eighteenth century, partly because of the intervention of the English and partly because of local political entities taking hold.⁴ While

³ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, *Development of the Mughal Empire*. 2015. Encyclopædia Britannica, London. Available from: Encyclopædia Britannica: Mughal Dynasty, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mughal-dynasty> (accessed December 5, 2016).

⁴ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 419-420; Roy Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea: Addiction, Exploitation and Empire* (London: Robinson, 2009), 82.

these smaller political entities did not have nearly the same strength as the Mughal Empire and could by no means be considered imperial in scale, they still used the structures and procedures carried out by the Mughals to seize economic power. The Mughals, as will be explained more fully below, collected large amounts of raw materials, such as cotton and indigo, for the purposes of accruing wealth and expanding trade; villages, in exchange for protection and stability, were responsible for collecting these materials that were then submitted to the Empire to be used for macro-scale trade. These small states mimicked the confiscation of material goods implemented by the Mughals and “encouraged the maintenance and expansion of such surpluses ... to encourage peasant ‘reproduction’, to extend cultivation, to substitute a profitable crop for a less profitable one, to colonize virgin land, and to increase the possibilities of irrigation by wells and reservoirs ... The conversion of crops into coin was ... the cornerstone of the system.”⁵ The political and economic structures that were formerly serving the strong Mughal Empire came to serve the local states that grew out of the weakened Mughal Empire. While some of these small states remained independent under Company rule, the Mughal Empire eventually fell completely to the Company and its jurisdiction.

The state of Bengal, home to the city of Calcutta, remained within the Mughal Empire while states such as Awadh eventually broke free from Mughal rule. Calcutta was of particular interest to the Mughals because of their thriving shipyards and boating industry. Indian ships were not only incredibly efficient and contributed to India’s military power, but also played a crucial role in expanding India’s far-reaching trade routes. Many coastal cities, regardless of being connected directly to Mughal rule, had accomplished boating industries, particularly in

⁵ Fernand Braudel, *The Perspective of the World: Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century*, Vol. 3 (New York City: Harper and Row, 1984) 499-500.

Bombay and Cochin. Because these cities' prime coastal location, they were seen as a crucial asset to the Mughal Empire (especially Calcutta) for the purposes of trading cotton and other goods.⁶ As opposed to the city of Calcutta, the state of Awadh serves as an example of a regional state achieving relative political autonomy. Their rulers, called the "*Nawab-Wazir*," were considered the first ministers of the state, and differed from their Sunni Mughal predecessors in that they were Shi'a. While the Awadh government used Mughal symbolism in their court rituals to reflect their origins within the Mughal Empire, Awadh rulers differed from Mughal proceedings by implementing eunuchs, who "were the keepers of social and sexual boundaries and the protectors of *harim* or inviolable spaces." These *eunuchs*, who were men who often dressed in traditionally female saris (while the term "intersex" would be inappropriate, these *eunuchs* were emasculated men, many of whom had gender roles thrust upon them through castration at a very young age, when it was decided that these individuals would be neither completely man nor completely woman) served a variety of roles for the aristocracy. While the role of eunuchs included being watchmen for the female royalty, guards for the royal family, or messengers for the military, in essence they served as aides to local aristocrats and rulers.⁷

Most of these states, regardless of being under Mughal rule, were usually under a princely rule in one way or another; both regional states such as Awadh and cities within the Mughal Empire were led by princes. Status tied to the princely state was marked largely in two ways: wealth and kinship. Material wealth was important for the Indian aristocracy, and perhaps nothing marked these distinctions more than the trading and possession of elephants, which embodied what it meant to have and exhibit power, in part because they were very expensive to

⁶ Ibid, 506.

⁷ Jessica Hinchy, "The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion: Eunuchs and Indirect Colonial Rule in Mid-Nineteenth-Century North India," (Oxford, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2014), 417.

maintain. Regardless of the costs to care for an elephant, some princes embellished their elegance by pampering their elephants: one prince, a so-called “king of the elephants,” gave each white elephant he owned “a house of gold and got its food in vessels of gilt silver.”⁸ Elephants were also believed to have a divine connection,⁹ as white elephants were greatly revered in Buddhist tradition and the Hindu god Ganesh has the head of an elephant. Aside from religious influences, elephants were also very powerful and useful for military purposes; the Delhi sultanate’s elephants were highly coveted, and frequently grew in number as more elephants were collected for tribute.¹⁰ Later, the practice of raising elephants for military purposes was used to solidify Mughal control and expansion, only to be later adopted by the Company.

The mark of kinship was also greatly valued in Indian society, particularly among the royalty and aristocracy. This was primarily to keep the wealth of those in power in one direct family line. In cases in which a prince did not have a natural heir, it was customary for Indian rulers to adopt a son to inherit the title and merit.¹¹ This custom of kinship extended beyond the immediate family of the aristocracy, however; the eunuchs who served the aristocracy also greatly valued kinship, particularly in training new eunuchs. As Jessica Hinchy elaborates in her research on the role of eunuchs and their in-group leaders, called *khwajasarais*, “In early modern South Asia, various kinship-making practices were central to politics. At the same time, categories of kin, slaves and servants in households were malleable and could be blurred ... *Khwajasarais* often regarded the *khwajasarais* with whom they were trained and educated in childhood as their ‘brothers’.”¹² Principally, proximity to power blurred the otherwise sharp

⁸ Sujit Sivasundaram, “Trading Knowledge: the East India Company’s Elephants in India and Britain,” (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), 51.

⁹ Ibid, 29.

¹⁰ Sivasundaram, “Trading Knowledge,” 39.

¹¹ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 101.

¹² Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion”, 418.

social divisions reinforced by conceptions of gender norms. Most of this notion of proximity to political power and aristocratic kinship played a prominent role in bigger cities in which princes actively served, and not as much in smaller villages.

Even outside of large cities such as Calcutta or Delhi, Indian life was nevertheless shaped by the political structures of villages. While each village was unique in its own right, many shared organizational similarities as most were still subservient to Mughal rule. Fernand Braudel explains how the many villages of India had regional political organizations, the hierarchy of which was based in part on the caste system:

It had a vigilant leader, the village headman, and an exclusive “aristocracy,” the *khud-kashta*, a small minority of relatively wealthy or at any rate comfortably-off peasants ... These men effectively represented the famous village “community” about which so much has been written. In exchange for their privileges and the *individual* ownership of the fields they farmed themselves with family labour, they were *collectively* responsible to the state for the payment of taxes on behalf of the whole village.¹³

The aristocracy and village at large were susceptible to two outside forces: Mughal authorities and outside markets. The village leaders and aristocracy were in charge of making sure taxes and products were surrendered to the Mughal Empire. Meanwhile, Mughal authorities monitored the actions of the aristocracy to make sure they didn’t implement tenant-farming, share-cropping, or any other system that could yield more benefits for local villages than the empire as a whole.¹⁴ At the same time, each village had to respond to regional or continental shifts in the market; most of these, however, were either influenced or controlled by Mughal authorities.¹⁵ Even at the local level, every aspect of commerce was under the supervision and

¹³ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 500 (emphasis in original).

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 500-501.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 948.

rule of the Mughal elite. The role that laborers and slaves played in this dynamic will be expanded below.

Many villages also had localized sociopolitical entities called *panchayats*. *Panchayats* consisted of a group of local individuals, often having an elderly or religiously significant standing in the village, who took part in regulating commerce and criminal justice. While there are not many precolonial accounts of the roles of these *panchayats*, the most contemporary research shows that “in nearly every case, *panchayats* were recognized either as religious or caste institutions that regulated discipline or as collective organizations representing specific groups of artisans.”¹⁶ The *panchayat's* proceedings differed from comparable criminal justice approaches in the West in that Indian society had no presumption of innocence until proven guilty, nor was there a presumption that witnesses were telling the truth. In dealing with criminal transgressions, those accused would be tried before the *panchayat* and had to produce multiple witnesses to corroborate a single story in order to prove innocence.¹⁷ Criminal justice within the empire was thus dealt with on a relatively local level, and was not universal to every town within the empire—contrary to what Company leadership believed—with different rules and regulations established in different villages.

The relationship between the Mughal Empire, regional cities, and smaller villages depended on the flow of money and resources from localities to princes and aristocratic authorities. The backbone of this arrangement rested in labor and slavery.

¹⁶ James A. Jaffe, “Custom, Identity, and the Jury in India, 1800-1832,” (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014), 133.

¹⁷ Ibid, 136.

Imperial Profits

The Mughal Use of Labor and Slavery

India's economy, while being heavily influenced by the supervision of Mughal authorities, was connected to a vast number of societies throughout both the east and west sides of Cape Comorin.¹⁸ This included trading with ports in the East Indies, China, and along the Eastern coast of Africa, in essence creating a practically "private sea" of the Indian Ocean.¹⁹ While Gujarat on her north-western coast frequently faced competition from Arab traders from the West, India was the cornerstone of an intricate south Asia trade dynamic.²⁰ Every place that Indian trade touched was influenced by the advanced capitalist system led by the Mughal elites who directed trade in India.

Foreign trade was highly profitable in the Indian economy, as was the banking sector.²¹ Banking, while mostly reserved for those in the aristocratic class or the higher castes, affected every aspect of the Indian economy through monetization of precious metals. These precious metals included both gold and silver, and while silver would play a larger role in colonial trade, India embraced both gold and silver equally as currency.²² Especially through the banking and trading structures, this currency was widely used both as an accrument of wealth and as a means of attaining more wealth, "which was on the way towards a certain capitalism—but one that would not encompass the entire society."²³ Monetary currency was useful for the Mughal

¹⁸ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 484.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 25.

²⁰ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 484

²¹ *Ibid*, 490.

²² Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce: Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century*, Vol. 2, (New York City: Harper & Row, 1982), 198.

²³ *Ibid*, 124.

authorities to impose on villages for tax-collecting purposes, but individual villagers did not have as much of an opportunity to receive wealth and accumulate capital as the aristocracy.

Instead, villagers would often work on the fields of the *khud-kashta*—merchants who handled money and served as middle-men connecting the two states of production—and raise cash crops. The *khud-kashta* could own individual fields under Mughal rule, and they farmed the fields themselves, but nevertheless had to pay taxes to the Empire. Tax revenue was often collected and managed by local *panchayats*, which was then sent to Mughal authorities (the revenue collection of *panchayats* were later adapted to suit the needs of the East India Company).²⁴ India grew a multitude of cash crops that helped provide the revenue necessary for the Mughal tax system. These cash crops included indigo, sugar cane, tobacco, opium poppies, and pepper-bushes. Those who produced the goods that created tax revenue however, were the laborers and slaves who worked on the field growing those cash crops.

As mentioned above, many who tended to the fields of the *khud-kashta* were family members who contributed their labor to ensure tax collection. However, some of the wealthier families also implemented the use of slave labor. While it is possible that some slaves came from East Africa, a great number of slaves on record came from Asia minor, usually from Iran or Iraq. One Awadhi family in particular, the Karbalai family, “were professional slave traders, the job being passed down from father to son. What is also significant is the name Karbalai—someone originating from the Shi’a city of Karbala in Iraq.”²⁵ The use of slavery—as is the case with the widespread use of slavery in the United States—was often justified through self-serving interpretations of religious doctrine; because of influences of both Islam and Hinduism, the

²⁴ Jaffe, “Custom, Identity, and the Jury in India, 1800-1832,” 133.

²⁵ Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India—Two Contrasting Cases,” (Leiden, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011), 62.

founding texts of both being relatively accepting of slavery, the use of unpaid human labor was a fairly integral part of the labor system of India. This normalization of unpaid labor later served as a rationalization for the Company to indirectly use slavery for its agricultural enterprise.

Many of the villagers who didn't labor in the fields devoted their work to artisanship. Throughout the 1600s, quite literally millions of people in India participated in artisanship in one way or another, either producing works of art for the local market or submitting their works to the state to then be traded throughout the surrounding region.²⁶ Because of the value of their completed works, authorities offered them "a share of the communal harvest, plus a plot of land to cultivate ... The share of his income confiscated by the state, by the lord of the *jagir* (surrounding land) and other interested parties might be anything from a third to a half, or even more in fertile regions."²⁷ Most of the artwork created by these artisans were designed fabrics weaved from the most profitable of Indian cash crops: cotton.

Exports and the People Who Managed Them

Cotton was such a big commodity in India that it was its biggest producer in the world in 1700, shipping throughout Southeast Asia, across the Middle East, along the coasts of both East and West Africa, and even to parts of Europe.²⁸ Cotton was a very common commodity throughout the Mughal Empire as well as in the Hindu regions of south India, and much of the cotton exported was in the form of manufactured fine fabrics, manufactured as close to the source (cotton fields surrounding local villages) as practical. While the final product was

²⁶ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 504, 503.

²⁷ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 501.

²⁸ Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 96-97.

exported out of three main coastal cities—Gujarat in the West, Madras in the South, and Bengal to the East—it was manufactured in homes throughout India, as Robert Marks explains:

Cotton was spun and woven in artisan homes with material advanced to them by merchants who then collected the thread and cloth for dyeing and printing before being brought to market to sell. Most of this cotton met internal Indian demand, but a considerable amount was produced for export ... Indian textiles traded as far as Poland and the Mediterranean. To meet both domestic and foreign demand for their cotton textiles, Indians had created a whole manufacturing system from growing the cotton to finishing it.²⁹

Despite the popularity of cotton as a commodity, the industry as a whole was highly decentralized. There was no central Company nor a central authority at all linking each step of the process from raw material to product as there was in Europe at the time.³⁰ Fabric manufacturers working close to the cotton fields did not directly transact with the *khud-kashta*. It was the massive amount of cotton—and agricultural goods in general—that ended up keeping wages for laborers down. This in turn kept the price of cotton low in India, which made it a competitive export in the region. In spite of this, the ratio from exported product to wages was much higher than in European comparatives—which meant a higher purchasing power, or real wage—than European counterparts.³¹

India's economy was more diversified than an entirely agrarian-based system, as another one of its main exports was saltpeter and gunpowder. India has had a long history of mining saltpeter, dating back before the Middle Ages. It was used by magicians, priests, and artisans who required it to make naphtha, which a material crucial to the textile-making process.³² Most of the salt-peter produced in India was made in the north-east region between Jaunpur (150 miles

²⁹ Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 51.

³⁰ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 508.

³¹ Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 97.

³² James W. Frey, "The Indian Salt-Peter Trade, the Military Revolution, and the Rise of Britain as a Global Superpower," (Tampa, Phi Alpha Theta, 2009), 512.

southeast of Lucknow) and Bengal, both cities eventually creating state-organized monopolies similar to the Mughal monopoly-like market for cotton. With the extensive state-sanctioned saltpeter mining and production, India was “roughly a century ahead of Western Europe in terms of developing the infrastructure for gunpowder technology.”³³ This later proved crucial in expanding Company and British power in the Indian subcontinent; as the Company grew to control more of the economy, so did it control salt-peter trade, growing its military capital.

The multiple state monopolies that bound the Indian subcontinent together was a complex network of transactions bound together by labor and reinforced by the structures of caste and class.

Class and Caste: Social Organization Through Stratification

Castes (the rigid social strata of Hindu culture) were religiously sanctioned classifications of individuals based primarily on one’s family that were grounded in Hindu tradition. The caste that people were born into was—with remarkably few exceptions—the same caste that they were wedded to throughout their entire life, and thus most who were born into the aristocracy remained aristocrats, most who were born into artisan families were raised to be artisans, etc. The castes of India throughout the first millennium CE and through Mughal rule were directly tied to economic standing, and can thus be compared to the Western notion of economic class.

The economic classes (which were largely influenced by the caste system) of precolonial India can largely be divided into five groups: (1) the (Mughal) aristocracy, (2) those who immediately served them (Brahmins and the military class, which would normally be in two separate strata according to Hindu tradition), (3) the merchant class, (4) artisans and farmers, and

³³ Ibid, 512-513.

(5) laborers (including slaves). In Southern India, where Hinduism was more prominent, caste played a larger role in the way society was structured, but similar structures existed within the Mughal framework as such social organization benefited the building and maintenance of the Empire.

The laborer caste in India often lived in meagre conditions and worked in even worse. Such was the case for those who processed nitrates in producing saltpeter, who were closely associated with the laborer class, *bildars*. These nitrate collectors, or *nuniyas*, while associated with other laborers in the caste system, still could not marry *bildars*, “for even *bildars* considered *nuniyas* to be ‘unclean,’ since their work brought them into daily contact with ritually polluting substances.”³⁴ In the eyes of those in higher castes, *nuniyas* were viewed as equally subordinate to the *dadani* (merchants based out of Patna who had control over the industry’s financial system) as the artisans and field-laborers of other villages.³⁵

While the laborers were the lowest among the low castes, the artisans and farmers were slightly above them in social standing, though obviously not having the same liberties as the upper castes. Artisans were generally treated better than those who labored in the fields or mined saltpeter, as they were sometimes given a portion of the village’s harvest and a personal plot of land, with some even earning an additional wage. At the same time, however, most of every artisan’s income was “confiscated by the state, by the lord of the *jagir* and other interested parties might be anything from a third to a half or even more in fertile regions.”³⁶ Nevertheless, many of these artisans had the benefit of organizing into *panchayats*, which had their share of

³⁴ Frey, “The Indian Salt-Peter Trade, the Military Revolution, and the Rise of Britain as a Global Superpower,” 522.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 524.

³⁶ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 501.

local privileges.³⁷ In spite of this localized level of organization, nearly everything that the artisans made was surrendered to the state and used to grow the state's economic power.

In Awadh, however, political rulers were not as entirely unsympathetic to those over whom they ruled. Those with whom they collaborated in court—particularly the *khwajasarais* that advised their politics—were treated with great respect. By all accounts, they “were numbered among the political elite of the state of Awadh” and while they were—like slaves—forced into subservience by their masters, they were “politically significant courtiers, government officials, military commanders, intelligencers, landholders and managers of elite households as well,” holding a very important and influential standing both politically and economically.³⁸ In spite of this, not all *khwajasarais* were treated equally, as there was a ranking-system that was “highly assymetrical,” with distinguished *khwajasarais* having far more influence and autonomy than those who were lower in ranking. These distinctions of rank did not, however, tear apart the strong kinship that was evident in the *khwajasarais* subculture. Again, flexibility within responsibilities and authorities is more evident among those who live in power or close accessibility to it. Despite their subservient job status, *khwajasarais* lived lives of relative opulence and influence because of their proximity to power.

Above servants and workers in the caste structure, administrators and land-owners at the village level were of the highest class in their respective localities. The *khud-kasta* were allowed to own their own land and together raised enough to pay for the village's taxes to the empire. Similarly, the *zamindars*, or land-owning class, of Bengal were considered of a high social standing.³⁹ However, they were still subordinate to the higher powers of the empire, and thus

³⁷ Jaffe, “Custom, Identity, and the Jury in India, 1800-1832,” 133.

³⁸ Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion,” 414.

³⁹ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 755-756.

served as effectively middle-of-the-road aristocrats. In fact, when the British ventured into India, they tried to find and partner with local nobility, but “had considerable trouble finding one because of the different legal frameworks ... private individuals did not really own land in Asia; everything was subject to the monarch’s overlordship.”⁴⁰ In spite of the relative freedom among some land-owners, everything was still controlled by higher authority; class was very much tied to one’s position within the political and economic framework organized by the Mughal officialdom.

Especially for those in the highest caste, the Brahmins, the caste system symbolized a social stability that conveniently placed them as the most important members of society. However, it must be noted that in Marathas, the Brahmins—especially on the eve of the arrival of the East India Company—were not priests as prescribed in the *Baghavat Gita* (a Hindu excerpt from the epic *Mahabharata* that defined the roles of each caste), but members of the administrative class for local towns.⁴¹ Whenever there was social unrest, particularly involving violence, Brahmins in the South reinforced the hierarchy within Hinduism in order to maintain local power, which was reinforced under their administrative position.⁴² However, this was not the universal case for the Brahmins of Southern India; while many appreciated administrative functions, some were isolated from their village. Still, others became farmers, which was an entirely different caste altogether according to Hindu tradition.⁴³ Thus, in the decades before Company arrival, the caste system of southern India exhibited a certain versatility of responsibility and power, especially for those in the highest castes.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 755.

⁴¹ Rosalind O’Hanlon, “Contested Conjectures: Brahman Communities and ‘Early Modernity’ in India,” (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2013), 775.

⁴² Ibid, 777.

⁴³ Ibid, 777.

The Mughal aristocracy was far and beyond the wealthiest of all the classes. They not only had military strength to back them up, but also vast amounts of material wealth.⁴⁴ As was mentioned earlier, the Mughals attained this wealth through seizing a certain portion of locally grown cash crops and locally manufactured goods. To ensure their economic strength and power, they kept close supervision on local land-owners and merchants to make sure they weren't taking too much of the wealth that should have gone to the empire as whole. Some of these merchants, however, expanded their wealth, despite living in "perpetual fear of torture and dispossession;" in fact, many of them banded together in intra-class solidarity and joined forces with merchants throughout the East Indies and all the way to Moscow.⁴⁵

Thus the caste system, with all its flexibility for those of a higher social standing, was a rigid social structure for those that served the material needs of the state. The caste system itself, or any Muslim interpretation of it for that matter, was ultimately tied back to religion.

Religion: Its Role in Politics and Cultural Interactions

While India had small communities of Jews and Christians prior to the arrival of the East India Company, the vast majority of India's populace was either Muslim or Hindu. In general, the Islamic populace was more highly concentrated in the North under the jurisdiction of the Mughals, while the Hindu population was more concentrated in the South under the Maratha state. This was mainly because the Mughal Empire, while having very expansive trade and imperial territory, failed to penetrate the southern regions of the Indian peninsula.

Hinduism, however, was very prevalent throughout India as a whole. Just as the Sunni Mughals spread their religious influence throughout their land, so did the Hindus of India spread

⁴⁴ Sivasundaram, "Trading Knowledge," 51.

⁴⁵ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 520.

their religious influence throughout the sea. Because of the immensely successful boating and shipping industry, Hindu merchants in the south expanded their trade routes to establish connections with the East Indies. These merchants were often accompanied by missionaries, which aimed to evangelize the long chain of islands, “successfully transferring to it [India’s] superior economic and religious way of life. The islands were thus converted to Hinduism.”⁴⁶ These missions proved very successful in spreading the influence of Hinduisim to local trade partners in the Indian Ocean, but Hindu missions on the main land were led by a different cause altogether: mere preservation. Brahmins throughout India—though particularly in the north—felt threatened by the political and military power of the Mughal empire. They sometimes took to military means to defend their *dharma*, their way of life, gods and Brahmins alike, against outsiders such as Mughal rulers or “Firangi” Portuguese, who started to colonize towards the latter half of the seventeenth century.⁴⁷ It is this threat from Mughal jurisdiction that resulted in several military conflicts between the Maratha and Mughal empires, appropriately coined the Mughal-Maratha Wars. Through these conflicts, “Brahmin religious orthodoxy [was asserted] as fundamental to the new Maratha state.”⁴⁸ Hinduism provided for the states of Southern India not only divine legitimacy, but political and economic legitimacy as well.

However, not every interaction between Hindus and Muslims in India always resulted in conflict. Prior to the Mughal-Maratha Wars, there were many attempts by the Mughal Empire to not only make peace with the Hindus in the south, but to incorporate their culture and values into the sociopolitical structures of the Empire. No ruler did this better than Emperor Akbar, who ruled from 1542-1606. Recognizing the importance of maintaining good relations with Indian

⁴⁶ Ibid, 523.

⁴⁷ O’Hanlon, “Contested Conjectures,” 779.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 780.

Hindus, Akbar ordered the translation of several Sanskrit texts to make them more accessible in Mughal society. He hired a committee of multilingual scholars under the supervision of the Mughal court to translate such texts as the epics of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, as well as the scriptures of *Atharva Veda*.⁴⁹ In addition, Akbar attempted to establish more inter-religious cohesion by “developing a basic belief in the commonness of all religions, but never to the extent of heresy against Islam or coercing his citizens to follow a new faith;” his court rulings of banning cow slaughter in respect for his Hindu subjects is a prime example of this.⁵⁰ The commonality between the two religions carried throughout the duration of Mughal rule to varying degrees; some Muslim rulers even attended and endorsed Hindu festivals such as Holi and Diwali, though part of the reason for this was the similarity between Hindu and Muslim calendars.⁵¹

Cooperation among Hindus and Muslims went further than merely imperial recognition; local artists also worked to bridge the gap between the two religious worlds. One such artist was Kabir Das, a Hindi poet who “spawned a large body of followers, known as ‘*Kabirpanthis*,’ who practice a *mélange* of Islamic and Hindu rites and rituals ... he was critical of hypocrisies of religious leaders and wanted the people to seek God within themselves and follow the path of honesty, simplicity and integrity;” His influence was so great that one myth suggests that his death sparked conflict between Hindus and Muslims only so far as both groups wanted to ensure

⁴⁹ Maqbool Ahmed Siraj, “India: A Laboratory of Inter-Religious Experiment,” (Leiden, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008), 321-322.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 324-325.

⁵¹ Hayagreeva Rao and Sunasir Duta, “Free spaces as organizational weapons of the weak: religious festivals and regimental mutinies in the 1857 Bengal native army,” (New York City: Administrative Science Quarterly, 2012), 637. The Hindu calendar operates under a lunisolar cycle, while the Muslim calendar follows a lunar cycle. While this sometimes led certain festivals to take place on separate days, more often than not one festival was followed by another in relatively short durations.

the greatest respect for his body according to their respective rites.⁵² Another, more historically influential example is the life and legacy of Guru Nanak. The founder of the Sikh religion “placed his emphasis on vibrant intercommunity relationships based on the subaltern versions of Islam and Hinduism. His teachings ... are a synthesis of the values of both the religions—such as reincarnation and the doctrine of *Karma* from Hinduism, and *Tawhid* (monotheism) and congregational worship from Islam.”⁵³ Guru Nanak’s work was founded on the principles of commonality and cooperation amidst religious conflict, and continues to have broad influence through the authority of the Sikh religion today.

Regardless of religious unity, conflict still ensued and equally continues to plague India today. Despite the progress made by unifying actors such as Guru Nanak and Emperor Akbar, the following leadership within the leadership of these empires was “marked on either side by a heightened rhetoric of religious warfare,” paving the way for the Mughal-Maratha Wars.⁵⁴ The Mughals of the north found the teachings of Islam to be beneficial in securing rule by providing internal structures that facilitated recognition of authority, with material wealth from trade with the Near East to conveniently back them up. Hindus of the south implemented the caste system to equally solidify order and rule. Despite the similarities between religions (some coinciding festivals, seeking honesty and integrity, even—in some circles—permitting slavery⁵⁵), the deeply ingrained religious values of each respective culture bred not only political division, but religious division as well.⁵⁶ It was precisely this division and conflict between the Maratha and Mughal

⁵² Siraj, “India,” 323-324.

⁵³ Ibid, 326.

⁵⁴ O’Hanlon, “Contested Conjectures,” 779.

⁵⁵ Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 65.

⁵⁶ Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 52.

Empires that allowed the British to wedge a wider gap between the two to assert its jurisdiction when the East India Company set up shop.⁵⁷

The Spheres of Men, Women, and Those in Between

Most of the current research on gender dynamics in pre-colonial India has concerned women of high-social status, primarily because of the lack of records on women in lower social castes or classes. The research that does exist, however, shines light on the roles of manliness, womanhood, and expectations of those who were neither fully male nor fully female.

The realm of politics in Mughal India in particular (and by extension Awadh) was largely confined to normative men; it fell outside of the generally accepted sphere for women and women's affairs. Manhood and kinship were important to rulers as they passed down their political power to their son; if they didn't have a son, they often adopted to continue the male line of power.⁵⁸ While both men and women were—to varying degrees—involved in Indian politics, segregation not only of influence and power but also of physical locations was common among the Mughal elite.⁵⁹ While the degree of separation between the genders varied according to the role that members of each gender fulfilled, separation was in general very important:

Male space incorporated nearly everything, from the social free-for-all of the city *bāzār* to the imperial Hall of Special Audience (*daulat-khāna-yi khāss*) entered only upon the emperor's express invitation. Female space, on the other hand, was sharply circumscribed and sealed off visually and physically by the wall of the *haram*, whether that wall be set in stone in a fort like Agra, or temporarily established in heavy tent-cloth as the peripatetic Mughals moved around their empire.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 65.

⁵⁸ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 101.

⁵⁹ Hinchy, "The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion," 415.

⁶⁰ Katherine Butler Schlofield, "The Cortesan Tale: Female Musicians and Dancers in Mughal Historical Chronicles, c. 1556-1748," (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2012), 153 (emphasis in original).

The realm of manhood evolved throughout the history of the Mughal Empire. According to Sufi tradition (rooted in mystical Islam), very few biological men were considered true, accomplished men, as most lacked the experience both physically and spiritually to live a fulfilling life.⁶¹ Throughout the beginning of the Mughal Empire, the ideal man was one who was well-adjusted both physically and spiritually. Those who exhibited traditional “manly” characteristics had “powers and faculties ... acquired through techniques of the body ... dependent on the right balance between heat and cold, dryness and moisture, the minute analysis of the qualities of particular foods ... [and] an intimate connection between temperament, bodily constitution and physical environment.”⁶² As the Mughal Empire grew in influence and power, the notion of what an ideal man is began to incorporate aspects of material wealth and connoisseurship as well. The idea was that material wealth provided for the ideal man the means to achieve two differing ends: to attain spiritual purification, and to make him a more benevolent ruler. Through attaining and maintaining a certain amount of income, a man could manipulate the environment around him according to what was most productive for his spiritual life, surrounding himself with goods, colors, sounds, and smells that helped achieve spiritual balance.⁶³ In addition to this (and especially for the case of men who were not as in tune with spiritual balance), material wealth was used to provide gifts intended to solidify diplomacy and cooperation.⁶⁴ Though material opulence was not as important to the notion of manliness throughout the course of Mughal rule, physical and spiritual harmony were almost always crucial in order to achieve normative gender ideals.

⁶¹ Rosalind O’Hanlon, “Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India,” (Leiden, Koninklijke Brill NV, 1999), 52.

⁶² Ibid, 52.

⁶³ O’Hanlon, “Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India,” 69.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 59.

Sexuality within and among the Mughal elite was quite complicated, with each gender having varying degrees of liberty to express their sexuality, but only under specific conditions. In general, men were given more sexual liberty than women in the Mughal courts. Homosexuality and bisexuality were relatively normalized, with depictions of same-sex romance among women being evident in *rēkfī* poetry⁶⁵ and erotic encounters with both men and women being commonplace among Mughal nobles.⁶⁶ Regardless of this normalization of sexual relationships among the elite, many aspects of male sexuality were expected to be hidden. For example, for a Mughal ruler to let his friends gaze on the sexual partners that he had was “a serious breach of honour and religious precepts ... let alone to watch them perform seductive arts of music and dance.”⁶⁷ This tied back to a dichotomy between love and political power—a dichotomy that will be discussed in detail when further discussing women specifically.

As was mentioned above, an entire community of individuals who were neither completely men nor completely women served the courts of Awadh, called *kwajasarais*. While many of the *eunuchs* that served in court were born *eunuchs*, many were emasculated in their childhood, likely when they landed in India after their journey from South Asia or East Africa.⁶⁸ Their characteristic ambiguity of identity between being strictly male or strictly female was an accepted fact of the Awadhi government. Even in the Mughal government, rulers used servants of similar gender alignment that were “intended both to transcend differences of law and religion, caste and region, and to present imperial service as the best— indeed the only—medium for its realization,” ultimately striving for tolerance and acceptance of these refined norms

⁶⁵ Schlofield, “The Cortesan Tale,” 152.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 158.

⁶⁷ Schlofield, “The Cortesan Tale,” 156.

⁶⁸ Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion,” 417.

throughout the empire.⁶⁹ Sometimes these servants were used for more domestic purposes, entrusted to assist within the women within their sphere, and sometimes others had to exhibit “demonstrations of manliness ... required to secure loyalty” to regional political figures.⁷⁰ However, the *kwajasarais* were held in high regard within the courts primarily for their counsel. Mughal rulers depended on the loyalty they had to their servants because it was through their loyalty that rulers were better able to find solace and more logistically seek personal advancement.⁷¹ In addition, the sexuality of these servants was very apparent (though not publically overt) to Mughal authorities. Some servants had open sexual relationships with higher figures on the courts, while others were more reserved. When rulers took measures to try to restrict the sexual practices of these servants, several “proved resistant to suggestions that they abandon their sexual attachments with favorite young men,” including higher members on the court, who saw “beautiful boys ... as one amongst a range of sources for sexual pleasure, rather than denoting a particular and exclusive ‘homosexual’ identity.”⁷²

The categorical roles of women, on the other hand, were largely determined by their degree of sexual relationships with other people, men in particular. Part of this stems from Islamic devotionism, which dictates that women’s procreation led them to be more susceptible to the qualities of the lower self, or *nafs*, than men.⁷³ Regardless, women in Mughal government served a variety of roles, some of them performing only within the forbidden area (*haram*), those who performed within both the male and female spheres, and those who performed in strictly

⁶⁹ O’Hanlon, “Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India,” 55.

⁷⁰ Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion,” 419.

⁷¹ O’Hanlon, “Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India,” 60.

⁷² *Ibid*, 80.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 53.

male spheres; some of these women received some of the highest income available in the Mughal government structure.⁷⁴

Women that were allowed to move among the male and female spheres were given the title *dōmnīs*, who were more handsomely paid than the women who were restricted to specific areas and were granted significant cultural freedom through being able to pass through the *haram* wall (a literal division in the court that separated men from women). This was primarily because of the fact that *dōmnīs* did not engage sexually with Mughal officials; they, like the women who were paid below them, served to sing and exhibit court etiquette, but differed from the other women in that they either remained virgins throughout their lives or had contracted with other men in the town or city.⁷⁵ The other women—who were restricted to certain areas within the court—engaged sexually with Mughal rulers in private settings, and were viewed as the sexual property of their respective Mughal rulers.⁷⁶ Any women who served in the court had to exhibit many talents, including singing, dancing, and likely was compensated with wealth, land, political influence and respect. Those who engaged in sexual acts were given full permission to interact with several unrelated partners and do so without legal ramifications.⁷⁷ However, this was not the case for all the women who served in the court: “the courtesan was forbidden from playing the concubine, and the concubine from playing the courtesan. To put it simply, it seems that all female performers who were legitimately sexually involved with their male patrons, whether inside or outside the *haram*, were prevented from crossing between male and female space.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Schlofield, “The Cortesan Tale,” 150-154.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 154-155.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 156.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 157.

⁷⁸ Schlofield, “The Cortesan Tale,” 158.

Sexuality expressed by women severely restricted their ability to interact with all influential aspects of the court, and the reason has a lot more to do with men than with women.

The male sphere concerned politics, government affairs, and international dealings. To be a successful ruler, a man needed to focus all his energy on his spiritual, physical, and material well-being. Thus, he should not be distracted by the chance of falling in love, or “the erotic power of the beloved, which was thought to be enhanced to the point of irresistibility by the affective power of music.”⁷⁹ Specifically, it was not necessarily eroticism that posed a threat to the social order, but it was the possibility of falling in love that threatened to tear a man from his work. Such passionate love, according to Mughal officials, should be paid only towards God; not even to one’s wife.⁸⁰ A man must be spiritually balanced in order to be a balanced ruler. It is not surprising that women were not seen to possess the same capacity for achieving spiritual balance. In some cases, “women could come to possess those qualities of body and spirit, but this very often meant that they could no longer be considered mere women.”⁸¹ Specifically, men—however few—could attain perfection and still be qualified as men, though women could not both remain women and achieve spiritual and physical stability.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 158.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 158.

⁸¹ O’Hanlon, “Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India,” 54.

ENTER THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

Now the stage is set for the East India Company and its enterprising conquerors.

Queen Elizabeth signed the East India Company's charter on the 31st of December, 1600, "intended to establish what we would call direct trades in the Indies, planning to purchase spices and pepper" to compete with other Europeans Companies at the time.⁸² The Dutch had already developed extensive trade networks with the East Indies, dominating the pepper and nutmeg trades, and Portugal had already developed smaller networks of trade with northern India. The English attempted to capitalize on the wave of trade that many other Western European nations founded, and ultimately disrupted the Portuguese monopoly over the Cape route trade, bringing an end to competition in the Indo-European trade.⁸³ The English joined the market primarily to control trade, but the foundation of the Company itself was rooted in the notion of making profits; this is the qualifying feature that distinguished it from other state-funded European Companies.⁸⁴ French and Dutch Companies, for instance, both competed with the British to control as much of the spice trade as possible, but it was the British East India Company who specifically focused the growth of capital. However, like other European Companies—such as the VOC (Dutch East India Company)—the East India was granted the right to exercise its own sovereignty independent from—but was reinforced hegemonically by—the British government:

Burke relates that near the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the East India Company was first chartered "with large extensive powers" and the object of increasing England's trade and honor. Their engagements in India were distant from the mother country, and contact with "many great, some barbarous" local principalities necessitated an increase in the Company's capacities commensurate with the dangers of the situation. Among the

⁸² Valerie Forman, "Transformations of Value and the Production of 'Investment' in the Early History of the East India Company," (Durham, Duke University Press, 2004), 612.

⁸³ Jan DeVries, "The Limits of Globalization in the Early Modern World," (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 717.

⁸⁴ Forman, "Transformations of Value," 612.

powers granted was that of “Law Martial,” that of extraterritorial justice in India, and finally, the right to make war.⁸⁵

Profit was the main quality that guided the East India Company’s policies; the Company was not so much concerned about shipping tea or planting cotton as it was simply making money. This led the Company to involve itself in a variety of business expenditures, including participating in intra-Asiatic trade,⁸⁶ it was through this that the Company expanded its profit margins to a much more significant degree.

One of the ways in which the Company did this is by developing port-to-port trade within India. It is true that the Company sent large amounts of product (cotton, tea) back to England, but they also spent a significant amount of resources trading the products they controlled in India throughout the East Indies; specifically, “the Company traded primarily bullion ... for calico and indigo ... much of which was in turn used to barter for spices that were then sent back to England and sold there or reexported to Europe (or even the Levant) to acquire the necessary bullion—the purchasing power—with which the cycle would begin again.”⁸⁷ It was specifically the drive for profit that prompted the Company to organize these elaborate trade deals. The British used Indian goods, particularly their fine cotton, to trade for spices in the East Indies, to then be shipped back to England, taking profit every step of the way.⁸⁸

One of the many countries with which the East India Company engaged with was China, which suffered to a very severe degree because of the trade deals arranged by the Company. It was through interaction with China that the Company capitalized on multiple agricultural products of addicting quality, one of which was tea. Through the tea trade, tea consumption in

⁸⁵ Brian Smith, “Edmund Burke, the Warren Hastings Trial, and the Moral Dimension of Corruption,” (Chicago, University of Chicago, 2008), 79.

⁸⁶ DeVries, “The Limits of Globalization in the Early Modern World,” 724.

⁸⁷ Forman, “Transformations of Value,” 613.

⁸⁸ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 18.

Britain grew in popularity beginning in the 17th century and continuing to this day. While tea was commonly drunk in China, India, and Japan, Company officials argued that they could plant tea with much greater efficiency than Chinese locals, even to recruiting Chinese laborers to plant tea in Northern India.⁸⁹ The British observed that tea was planted in Chinese farms on a very small, individualized scale. Given the Company's profit- and capital-driven philosophy, they sought to change the way in which tea was harvested in the East, and created several plantations, "where economies of scale and real 'scientific' production could take place."⁹⁰ However, with tea being planted in these plantations on such a massive scale, the Company was facing a massive trade imbalance with China. This prompted them to trade a new product with China, one that was created in India and the influence of which could allow the Company to produce more raw materials to fuel the cycle of profit; the Company began to trade opium.⁹¹

It is no secret that England took a liking to Indian and Chinese tea, however, the international trade truly depended on opium to thrive throughout the 18th and early 19th century. In the grand scheme of things, opium was not only more strategic to this trade arrangement than Chinese tea, but it also provided the means through which the British controlled the Chinese (many of whom suffered from crippling addiction to the drug), in addition to gaining capital from the Indians who grew it, which would in turn be used to trade cotton back to England.⁹² In short, the Company took hold in India seeking to capitalize on the spice trade. Instead, they used silver to trade for cotton to both ship back to England and to purchase spices. When they discovered a market for tea, they traded silver for tea, but found it was much more profitable to

⁸⁹ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 85.

⁹⁰ Alan Macfarlane and Iris Macfarlane, *The Empire of Tea: The Remarkable History of the Plant that Took Over the World*, (New York City: The Overlook Press, 2009), 105.

⁹¹ Weimin Zhong, "The Roles of Tea and Opium in Early Economic Globalization: A Perspective on China's Crisis in the 19th Century," (Leiden, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2010), 88.

⁹² *Ibid*, 96.

use the economy they already manipulated in India to grow opium that would then be sold to China in exchange for tea. Growing opium in India allowed the Company more direct control over the economy in India, thus enabling the British to so thoroughly corner the markets on the subcontinent.⁹³ Such manipulation of markets, however, extended far beyond such a macro, international, and interdependent scale.

Many of the Company's government funds were used for personal expenditures as well, and permitting such frivolity ultimately led to widespread conflict among local actors. Ironically, it was a desire among those back in Britain to limit the power and scope of the Company that led it to expand its corruptive influence. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, a lobbying campaign prompted Parliament to split the East India Company into two separate companies. In doing so, they both intentionally expanded the Companies' military power, and unintentionally catalyzed the means through which individual officers could gain personal power through side businesses.⁹⁴ While it was generally frowned upon (though allowed through technically legal means) to take part in drug deals, many Company officials sold opium on the side, using the profits they made on an individual level not only for personal advancement but as bribe money to keep their subordinates quiet about clandestine activities, becoming "less and less a trading Company, and took on far more evident qualities of a crime syndicate."⁹⁵ Opium was not the only good being smuggled: cotton and especially tea were smuggled rather frequently.⁹⁶ It was the combination of informal side-businesses and an expanded military presence in India that prompted multiple military confrontations, particularly the Battle of Plassey in 1757.

⁹³ Macfarlane and Macfarlane, *The Empire of Tea* 180.

⁹⁴ William A. Pettigrew, "Constitutional Change in England and the Diffusion of Regulatory Initiative, 1660–1714," (Hoboken, Wiley, Blackwell, 2014), 862.

⁹⁵ Smith, "Edmund Burke, the Warren Hastings Trial, and the Moral Dimension of Corruption," 85.

⁹⁶ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 23.

As France and Britain tried to expand their Companies' influence throughout India to control more and more trade, the Company sent many troops—most of them native Indian soldiers—to take over neighboring French forts and cities. The reigning *nawab* of Bengal, Siraj ud-Daulah, was vehemently opposed to the influence of the East India Company expanding at the expense of Indian resources and lives, particularly in the state of Bengal and surrounding areas. This led him to charge an attack on the Company-held port at Calcutta with the support of French forces. In response, the British sent in reinforcements led by Colonel Robert Clive and took control over the city once more, defeating the Bengali uprising and the French forces that assisted them.⁹⁷ It is specifically the act of military intervention itself that distinguishes the Battle of Plassey as a major turning point in the policies held by the Company. The Company was founded primarily to capitalize on trade, ultimately seeking profit above all else. However, the Battle of Plassey is the first large-scale example of military intervention by the Company in Indian life (despite it being part of the larger conflict between Britain and France in the Seven Years War). It is a shift in control from Mughal rule to Company rule; prior to military intervention, “the Indian economy was [already] slowly rotting away. The Battle of Plassey (23 June 1757) hastened its collapse ... the English Company did not have much trouble taking Bengal; it took advantage of certain favourable circumstances and the artillery did the rest.”⁹⁸ The Mughal Empire was already beginning to crumble under the presence of Company officials and the competition that the Company placed on them economically. This led the Mughal Empire to loosen its control over independent states, many of whom “underwent an unparalleled decline”⁹⁹ to eventually be taken over by the British. Slowly but surely, Plassey opened the

⁹⁷ Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 99. The French assisted in the uprising in the hopes that they could diminish the competition the East India Company placed on their French equivalent Company.

⁹⁸ Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, 222.

⁹⁹ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 419.

floodgates that allowed the Company to expand their influence and trade throughout more and more of India. Britain was no longer merely a trading presence in India, it became a military power that came to dominate nearly every aspect of Indian life. As a result, the “Company expansion in Bengal and then southern and western India split the Company’s history in two: between an older, early modern era of ‘trade, finance, and power,’ and a new modern one of ‘warfare, expansion and resistance.’”¹⁰⁰

Thus begins a dynamic relationship between the East India Company and the subcontinent she ruled: one marked by power, manipulation, cooperation, and rebellion.

¹⁰⁰ Philip J. Stern, “Soldier and Citizen in the Seventeenth-Century English East India Company,” (Leiden, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011) 84.

SAME JOB, DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT: INDIA UNDER COMPANY RULE

Centralizing Political Power

At the helm of this operation was not the Crown, nor the military, nor the individual officers serving for the Company, nor the very notion of government, but money. Basic forms of government were set up for administrative purposes, but “capitalism moved in firmly and adapted itself to all administrative quirks and difficulties;” under the Company’s monopolistic administration, however, the accumulation of capital was not subject to massive competition, the leadership of the Company was “conservative and in no sense looking for change or innovation. They were too comfortably-off to have a taste for risk. And we may even hazard the disrespectful suggestion that they did not represent the brightest and best of business intelligence.”¹⁰¹ The business and administrative practices of the Company were riddled with scandal, corruption, and a lack of regard for the well-being of the vast majority of their labor-force: Indian farmers and artisans. What concerned the Company was money and stability, which they found not in independent states like Hyderabad and Awadh (over which they had no technical jurisdiction),¹⁰² but with the strength of the Mughal Empire.

The Mughal Empire had an intricate network of political connections that facilitated the flow of commerce for the sake of the empire as a whole. This system was adopted by the Company, who believed that “a peaceful and prosperous country [would] be more stable and secure ... able to support higher taxes, and have more money to spend on British goods,” but also manipulated by the same Company who believed that it had “a moral duty to act to ameliorate the lowly condition of its cowed, ignorant peoples by introducing them to the

¹⁰¹ Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, 446-447.

¹⁰² Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 63.

uplifting alchemy of” the British way of life.¹⁰³ This was facilitated by the already weakened by the crumbling Mughal empire, whose administration in Delhi was already facing attacks from the Marathas and the Afghans.¹⁰⁴ Seizing the opportunity, the Company began constructing military forts, and used them to house soldiers as well as to prevent local unrest. Following the Battle of Plassey, the new *nawab* of Bengal, Mir Kasim, grew upset at the level of British intervention and the amount of British troops stationed at locally built forts, in addition to the degree of self-enrichment the British exhibited in holding private armies, and rebelled. However, especially with the growth of military presence in Calcutta, the Mughal uprising was thoroughly defeated.¹⁰⁵ Mughal authorities had to pay the British administration restitution money, and the center of government—and the flow of commerce—officially moved from Delhi to Calcutta.¹⁰⁶

The degree to which the British administration influenced local politics was highly varied from city to city, village to village. In general, however, cities with large amounts of people and/or wealth had more direct rule: “some departments were placed under the direct rule of the East India Company (after 1858, the Crown) ... some five hundred other territories throughout India retained their *maharajahs*, *nizams*, and so on ... a few border regions came under special military administration.”¹⁰⁷ Independent states like Awadh, on the other hand, grew close to the powers that be in the Company without being directly ruled by them. For example, the community and kinship exhibited by the *khwajasarais* was officially acknowledged by many Company elites as a legitimate “family,” a recognition that would change with time and more direct influence on Indian affairs; on the flip side of this coin, many British officers “cohabited

¹⁰³ Copland, “Christianity as an Arm of the Empire,” 1039.

¹⁰⁴ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 82.

¹⁰⁵ Macfarlane and Macfarlane, *The Empire of Tea* 82.

¹⁰⁶ Peter J. Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 312.

¹⁰⁷ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 581.

with Indian women in relationships that were characterized by asymmetrical power relationship, but facilitated ‘participat[ion] in local practices, often to productive [political] ends.’”¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, proximity to power again benefited the *khwajasarais*, who valued the work they did for Awadh more than the interactions they had with British officers, and used their power to “exert influence in the *darbar* (court) on their behalf,” retaining their autonomy to a degree that will be explored further in a discussion on gender. In areas that were under more direct Company control, however, many local government structures were completely altered. This became problematic when the Company “superseded [the] traditional village headmen (*patel*) and clerks (*curnam*), the Company had undermined their ‘ancient authority’ and thereby weakened their support of the government.” Completely reshaping the localized system of government that functioned properly for hundreds of years proved damaging to local political unity.

The strength of military presence—and specifically building cities and towns around military forts and establishments—facilitated the transfer of power. Especially in the fallout from Plassey, the Company began some of the largest construction projects in its history creating military forts at major cities and towns for administrative purposes, sometimes even renting out privately-held speculations to assist in administration.¹⁰⁹ These forts, while primarily serving governmental and military ambitions, also served as social places, with the gates of the fort serving the role of town square, a place to post new laws, grants, and treaties, as well as a space for ceremony, commemoration, and celebration.”¹¹⁰ Cities that were too small to hold a full-size military fort often had at minimum a governor’s palace, barracks for local troops, and a church, with perhaps a hospital and a few nicer houses if European officials were more present there.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion,” 420.

¹⁰⁹ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta under the Rule of the East India Company,” 314.

¹¹⁰ Stern, “Soldier and Citizen in the Seventeenth-Century English East India Company,” 89.

¹¹¹ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 284.

For the cities that were big enough to hold a fort, the forts “served as metonyms for the town itself: Fort George for Madras, Fort William for Calcutta, Fort St. David for Cuddalore and Tevanapatam ... Forts were situated to be politically and architecturally, if not literally, central to a town plan,” with the height of each fort setting the maximum height of any other building.¹¹² The political strength of the Company was manifested in the military strength reinforced by the forts.

Other attempts to solidify political control over the Indian states and cities were by adopting *panchayats* to fulfill the needs of a criminal justice system. In spite of the relatively decentralized nature of *panchayats* (and their role as local boards of elders protecting artisans and their trade), the Company tried best to understand the nature of *panchayats* as local juries that settled legal disputes, also operating under the illusion that the cities of India possessed common law.¹¹³ Observing the role that these local boards contributed to their respective cities through the perspective of an Englishman who was well-acquainted with the system of jury by trial, it is not surprising that one Company official paid special attention to local issues “convened by regional administrators, the *subadars*, and conducted before a *panchayat* whose decision was then sent for review and sentencing to the *diwan*, Mysore’s chief minister,” with *panchayats* also settling civil cases that involved large sums of money.¹¹⁴ Applying this perspective, the Company set up local courts structured similarly to *panchayats*, and hearing many of the same disputes (though admittedly more criminal disputes) as the *panchayats*, while requiring jurors to read, write, and speak English fluently, and only allowing Christians to serve on grand juries or juries that heard Christian defendants.¹¹⁵ Regardless of the restrictions placed

¹¹² Stern, “Soldier and Citizen in the Seventeenth-Century English East India Company,” 88.

¹¹³ Jaffe, “Custom, Identity, and the Jury in India, 1800-1832,” 141.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 135.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 149.

on potential jurors, the criminal justice system as it was controlled by the Company greatly expanded into the nineteenth century. Under this system of Company courts assuming the perceived roles of *panchayats*, Company courts grew by 40 percent in 1818, and “throughout the next several years, the record of the *panchayats* showed no improvement and their relevance because even more marginal.”¹¹⁶ Out of this debacle rose Raja Rom Mohan Roy (also called Rammohan), whose political, social, and religious reforms led him to be called the “father of modern India.” Educated in England but understanding local knowledge of *panchayats*, Rammohan envisioned a criminal justice system

in which the assessors would supplement the European judges’ lack of knowledge of the language, customs, and habits of the people while the judges would impart “the dignity and firmness of the European” to the assessors ... [viewing] the institution of trial by jury [as] a necessary bulwark against ... corruption ... In effect, the *panchayat* system imagined by Rammohan was one based on English practices, directed by colonial officials, and staffed only by local elites.¹¹⁷

Such a compromise among cultural values dramatically changed the way India handled criminal justice, and is evident of a cooperation between those in power within the ranks of precolonial India and Company officials.

Cooperation, particularly with those in power, was very important to the Company despite its history of military intervention. While battles were fought with rebellious princes, princes who were willing to work with the Company were valued for reasons that will be explained in the next two sections. Those that resisted often faced violent responses by the Company military:

The Burmese had taken over the coastal Kingdom of Arakan in the late eighteenth century. Refugees from Arakan had fled north into Bengal and then made raids into Burmese-controlled areas. The Burmese had retaliated by incursions into Bengal, but

¹¹⁶ Jaffe, “Custom, Identity, and the Jury in India, 1800-1832,” 144.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 154 (emphasis added).

been repulsed by the Company's army. A further incursion into Bengal, and the capture of an island which belonged to the Company, led the British to declare war on Burma in 1824. Rangoon was attacked from the sea, and fell to the British in 1824 ... At least 15,000 'British' troops died, nearly all Indians. The Burmese were finally defeated in 1825. The entire cost of the war was charged to the Indians. In the treaty that followed, large areas of territory were ceded to the Company, including Assam.¹¹⁸

Thus, when officials considered creating restrictive laws on Hindu religious practices, “the East India Company was especially leery of provoking hostility from nominally allied princely states by calling for an outright ban, concerns that they had conspicuously not held in relation to imposing their will on Bengal and adjoining north-eastern regions.”¹¹⁹ As those relationships deepened, the Company’s decision to form business relationships with English missionaries—other prominent and power players—complicated the business dynamics with local elites. Though the initial “infiltration of the ranks of the Company’s service by Evangelicals had little immediate impact on its religious policy,” it “made the government, from a Christian standpoint, more legitimate,” which gave the missionaries leverage to exert more control over the religious life of Company subjects.¹²⁰ As this happened, however, religious and social strife caused conflict between the English and the Indians, and in spite of the Company’s desire to control them, a rise of prison outbreaks¹²¹ toward the mid-nineteenth century—fueled by religious entanglement with Company policy—prompted the most important social movement in the history of Company-ruled India.

But the growth of the power and scope of the Company that allowed for this religious strife would not have been possible without the use of labor and slavery.

¹¹⁸ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 88.

¹¹⁹ Daniel JR Grey, “Creating the ‘Problem Hindu’: Sati, Thuggee and Female Infanticide in India, 1800–60,” (Oxford, Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), 501.

¹²⁰ Copland, “Christianity as an Arm of the Empire,” 1038.

¹²¹ Rao and Duta, “Free Spaces as Organizational Weapons of the Weak,” 647.

Company Business: Continuing Mughal Labor and Slavery

Indeed, the “dramatic expansion” and “immensely expensive projects” that P. J. Marshall describes could not have been completed without the large-scale use of both Indian and British labor. Much of the construction of these projects was led by the military, which “was made possible by a system of taxation which the British inherited from Indian regimes that they had displaced. This gave them a public revenue on a scale unmatched by any other British colonial enterprise,” with taxation in India providing half of the tax revenue of Britain as a whole from 1830 to 1850.¹²² Furthermore, such government expansion would not have been possible without collaborations between Company officials and Mughal authorities, which were then used to establish connections among all those who served the Mughals: bankers, interpreter-secretaries, and skilled workmen (artisans and builders).¹²³ These commercial connections allowed the British to take control of the trade balance in India. The Company’s intervention in the Indian economy gave rise to massive imports of goods and silver for trade. This facilitated the fall of the economic power of the Mughal Empire.¹²⁴ As a result, the British began to fill the vacuum of power with their own men—some of whom were indigenous workers under their authority—to fill the roles of judges, police, and tax-collectors.¹²⁵

This combination of reciprocal business relationships and power-grabbing are ultimately what allowed the Company—and especially the military branch of it—to expand its dominion over a plethora of labor practices and revenue sources. This enabled the Company to fund not only the construction of its forts and the maintenance of its armed forces, but also facilitated the

¹²² Peter J. Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 91.

¹²³ Kapil Raj, “Colonial Encounters and the Forging of New Knowledge and National Identities: Great Britain and India, 1760-1850, (Chicago, Osiris, 2000), 121.

¹²⁴ Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, 221.

¹²⁵ Raj, “Colonial Encounters and the Forging of New Knowledge and National Identities,” 122.

collaboration of British and Indian knowledge in development of sciences, namely in Company-run colleges, which proved beneficial in mapping and surveying India.¹²⁶ The Survey of India was not the only way in which the Company collaborated with and/or appropriated Indian knowledge to benefit their military. Namely, while the British decried the “violent and savage” dependence on nature and entrapment of elephants by the Mughal military, they learned to capture elephants and use them for their own military campaigns.¹²⁷ In addition to elephants, the British appropriated the large-scale use of saltpeter to manufacture gunpowder from the already existing—and highly profitable—saltpeter trade. While it is no secret that the British had artillery as did the Mughals, the British overtook them at Buxar in 1764, and in the process, “secured Company control over Bihar and permitted the monopolization of the saltpeter trade. The significant of these events cannot be underestimated. By seizing Bengal, the British exerted mastery over 70 percent of the world’s saltpeter production during the latter part of the eighteenth century.”¹²⁸ Through assimilating the saltpeter mines, the Company expanded its military power even further. The military, especially after Plassey, served two purposes: to expand territorial jurisdiction (which it did with the help of Indian forces),¹²⁹ and to secure the economic endeavors (servitude and farming) of Company officials to better ensure a continuing flow of profit.¹³⁰

They accomplished this by dramatically transforming the complex arrangement of Indian labor. One way they did this was by capitalizing on the cotton industry. The Company recognized that Indian cotton was not only very valuable, but very cheap to make given the low

¹²⁶ Ibid, 133-134.

¹²⁷ Sivasundaram, “Trading Knowledge,” 41.

¹²⁸ Frey, “The Indian Salt-Peter Trade, the Military Revolution, and the Rise of Britain as a Global Superpower,” 509.

¹²⁹ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 124.

¹³⁰ Stern, “Soldier and Citizen in the Seventeenth-Century English East India Company,” 98.

wages of Indian laborers. On one hand, they could have sold fully manufactured textiles straight from India and made a significant profit from the transactions. However, what they decided to do instead was ship most of the raw cotton back to England to be manufactured into fabrics in the motherland, which was suffering from competition from Indian textile mills.¹³¹ Out of work and needing jobs, many Indian textile workers turned to other occupations, such as being household servants. While the British in general frowned upon the practices of slavery in the plantations, they were passive towards the use of household slavery and servitude. This was because of the British tendency to “erect boundaries between the household, market and state, [which] obscured the commoditisation of persons in the elite Indian household. As such, the right of masters to retain possession of household slaves was upheld by colonial courts even after the delegalisation of slavery in 1843.”¹³² Regardless of the justifications made by English elites, household slaves and servants were treated poorly by their masters; though they weren’t treated as poorly as the slaves on plantations, they were worked for little to no wage, and were forced to live in “*bustees*, or small huts alongside of their employer’s house in the white [elite part of] town.”¹³³ Most of the former cotton weavers, however, turned to farming, aiming to grow cash crops, not to plant and render to the Mughal authorities, but to sell to pay for taxes placed on them by the British, who collected taxes in money, not products.¹³⁴

Indeed, much of the wealth accrued by the Company came from tenancy arrangements made by land-owners and farmers according to terms set to them by Company managers. For cash crops that required manufacturing to be made into a usable product, such as sugar cane, opium poppies, or indigo, capitalist investments were made to facilitate manufacturing, “with

¹³¹ Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 99.

¹³² Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion,” 421.

¹³³ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 318.

¹³⁴ Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 130.

active cooperation by large tax-farmers, merchants, representatives of the [East India Company] and of the Mogul government which attempted to create a state monopoly by a policy of granting exclusive tenancy agreements.”¹³⁵ Some of the opium produced from poppies was then traded to China (whose dependence on the drug damaged Chinese society and led to the Chinese government to declare war on England, later known as the Opium Wars) in exchange for tea, another addictive agricultural product. While tea was not planted at an industrial scale in India until the latter half of the nineteenth century, it still proved a profitable source of income for the Company. As the Company worked to control more of its own trade, it started to recruit Chinese laborers and manufacturers to produce tea in the hilly parts of northern India for profit.¹³⁶ Once tea started to be produced more efficiently under English jurisdiction than Chinese jurisdiction, the Company started to recruit more and more Indian labor, decreasing their trade balance with China for the sake of producing tea with Indian labor costs of two to three pence a day.¹³⁷ Even with such low labor costs, the Company demanded high taxes from land-owners that produced cash crops. Some of these taxes were so high that “native land-owners, to avoid foreclosure, were forced to surrender up to 90 percent of their harvest to pay their taxes ... [which] made famines more likely by sapping earnings and leaving Indians without savings or a safety net.”¹³⁸ This forced many land-owners to harvest their crop through the means of slavery. While the slave-trade was highly frowned upon, the Company—whose restrictions and high demands reinforced the need for slavery—saw the use of slaves in a “paternalistic”¹³⁹ light, often viewing Indian (Hindu and Muslim) culture as backwards for depending on slavery so heavily.

¹³⁵ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 502.

¹³⁶ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 85.

¹³⁷ Macfarlane and Macfarlane, *The Empire of Tea*, 114.

¹³⁸ Christopher M. Florio, “From Poverty to Slavery: Abolitionists, Overseers, and the Global Struggle for Labor in India,” (Bloomington, *Journal of American History*, 2016), 1010.

¹³⁹ Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 65.

Slavery was always a complicated issue for Company officials, who recognized its value in creating profit but demurred its disregard for the value of human life. Nevertheless—and unsurprisingly—profit was held in higher regard in this and many other cases. The primary reason for the British to consider outlawing slavery was “to prevent Indian children from being captured by other European powers and taken out of the country to work in Dutch or French colonies,” while still allowing Company ships the “transporting [of]slaves from Africa to India up to 1830.”¹⁴⁰ In fact, not only did the Company facilitate in the slave trade from Africa to India, they also built garrisons and stationed troops to protect the plantations.¹⁴¹ Some even participated in private armies that used coercion to make sure that laborers and their masters stayed in line, through a process which has been described as “acts of violence, which although they amount not in the legal sense to murder, have occasioned the death of natives.”¹⁴² In response to many of the atrocities committed by slave-owners, Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which progressively emancipated 800,000 or so slaves in India and ended unpaid apprenticeships. Lucknow Governor General Lord William Bentinck, upon passage of the Act, declared, “every favourable opportunity should be taken of exerting the influence of our friendly advice to discourage the practice [of slavery], and that in the case of children or others kidnapped from the British territories, effectual means should be adopted for obtaining redress and preventing the repetition of the offence.”¹⁴³

There were a variety of ways—aside from enforcing the Slavery Abolition Act—that the Company sought to ameliorate the issue of slavery in India, and they were largely unsuccessful. One method was international in scale, in which American abolitionists aimed to spur production

¹⁴⁰ Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 64.

¹⁴¹ Stern, “Soldier and Citizen in the Seventeenth-Century English East India Company,” 102.

¹⁴² Quoted in Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 113.

¹⁴³ Quoted in Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 63.

of cotton from (naturally) low-wage workers in India to compete with cotton in the American South, eventually forcing American plantations out of business. Through this system, “the overseers were to hire laborers and pay them regular wages for their work on the ‘experimental farms’ the overseers were to superintend,” all for the sake of choking out the slave-driven cotton industry in America.¹⁴⁴ This, however, proved largely unsuccessful, not only in that overseers were hired from other plantations that used slaves, and thus treated the laborers harshly, but also because of unfavorable weather conditions during the overseer program’s existence and the overseers’ inability to establish legitimate authority over the Indian and African workforce.¹⁴⁵ The other method, far more long-lasting in effect, was to try to reintegrate former slaves into Indian society. They did this by locating African slaves after they were released and providing them employment. However, this program’s effectiveness differed greatly by region. In Bombay, for example, “there was an emphasis ... on helping liberated slave children integrate into their new surroundings ... [and] were treated as ‘the deserving poor’, a category in use in Britain from Elizabethan times.”¹⁴⁶ Those in Lucknow however, if they were even found (they and their descendants were hard to locate) were treated as the “undeserving poor,” who were not offered work.¹⁴⁷ This was in part reinforced by the idea that their punishment was deserved, given their participation in the climax of our tragedy, which will be explained later on.

But to truly understand the hostility among different labor groups, one must consider how the notions of caste and class were affected by the Company.

¹⁴⁴ Florio, “From Poverty to Slavery,” 1019.

¹⁴⁵ Florio, “From Poverty to Slavery,” 1021.

¹⁴⁶ Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 69.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 60, 69.

Adopting and Adapting India's Castes and Class Structure

The people of India under the rule of the Company were separated in several ways, the biggest of which were class and race. Though race played an important role not only in the interpersonal reactions that officers, soldiers, and laborers alike shared together, as well as the way in which society and literal cities were structured (more on this in the section on race), it did not play as divisive of a factor as class. Even when racism and prejudiced thinking dominated the sociopolitical rhetoric in Company-led India, “the solidarity of skin color and nationality by no means universally cancelled the solidarity of class. Wealthy Indian merchants or Malayan aristocrats were as a rule barred from British clubs in the large colonial cities, but so were ‘poor whites.’”¹⁴⁸ Indeed, when the English set up shop in India, the elite tried to establish relationships with local elite to create mutually beneficial partnerships. However, in practice, this was rather difficult. Other than the Mughal rulers themselves, there were no specifically ‘elite’ land-owners on a local level other than the *zamindars*, who were still subject to Mughal authority to a much higher degree than land-owners in Britain were subject to the Crown.¹⁴⁹ The British understanding of class in India was further muddled when the government sought to understand and appropriate the *panchayat*. Regardless of the effects of such misapplication, the *panchayat* was revered as a “jury” of a variety of classes in some cases, and in others consisting of the social class of the “offender.”¹⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the Company had a specific vision of what the class structure in India would be like after they were introduced to British rule. Through their policies, the Company hoped to “cultivate an élite class capable in time of encouraging and reproducing civil society on

¹⁴⁸ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 286.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 755-756.

¹⁵⁰ Jaffe, “Custom, Identity, and the Jury in India, 1800-1832,” 152.

the barbarous frontier. At the center of this vision was the figure of the free planter, who—unlike in the ‘plantocracies’ of Barbados and Virginia—could develop into a genteel elite and a coherent political class, and in turn promote order and hierarchy through the trappings of geniality.”¹⁵¹ This, however, was inhibited in practice by the Company’s philosophy of holding profit in higher regard than any other facet of business. Those who were not in the elite of the Company often suffered from low wages and could not profit off of individual ventures like share-cropping or planting their own agricultural goods.¹⁵² Thus, there was a huge disparity of income and wages between the rich and the poor, which was most prominent in the nineteenth century and didn’t diminish in importance until the British seized complete control under the British Raj.¹⁵³ This disparity in the distribution of wealth, amidst all the trade agreements between India and China, ultimately benefited no party more than England itself, second only to government officials who ruled India, who were known to accumulate personal wealth upwards of £1,200,000.¹⁵⁴

This accumulation of wealth was in part because of the elite positions that these men held in British society, but largely because of the massive salaries they received as government officials in India. In fact, some civil salaries were much higher in India than back in Britain. Some men working as Secretaries within the government received annual salaries of £1500, £2000, or even £5000 for some Secretaries in Bengal.¹⁵⁵ Competition for high government positions in Bengal “became so acute that only young men of wealth and politically influential families stood much of a chance of success, [producing] an elite who prided itself on its gentility:

¹⁵¹ Stern, “Soldier and Citizen in the Seventeenth-Century English East India Company,” 97.

¹⁵² Forman, “Transformations of Value,” 627.

¹⁵³ Macfarlane and Macfarlane, *The Empire of Tea* 248.

¹⁵⁴ Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, 222.

¹⁵⁵ Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” 99.

sons of English landed, professional and financial families, together with a very large number of aspiring Scots,” with those in power using their influence and resources to continue a cycle of accruing more and more power and influence.¹⁵⁶ For this reason—in Calcutta in particular—towns were known not only for their public buildings but also the huge mansions that housed the local economic elite, who were usually British.¹⁵⁷

Despite this British distinction, the accumulation of wealth and power among the elite would not have been possible without intentional collaboration with what the British deemed to be local money-managers and elite within the Mughal framework. For the British, those who controlled the money of the Mughal Empire were important players to exploit: “the British took care not to displace the Parsee, Gujerati or Muslim merchants who continued to amass huge fortunes there in foreign trade or as owners of the port’s merchant fleet—until the arrival of the steamship in the 1850s. Nor, despite several attempts, did the English banking ever entirely manage to eliminate” the banking system of India, choosing instead to take advantage of already well-established streams of revenue.¹⁵⁸ Thus, most of those responsible for managing the flow of money from the fields to the financiers were indigenous land-revenue officials, judges, and local police.¹⁵⁹ Not only were revenue-collectors important, but local princes who held political and financial power were also crucial for maintaining elite status. Most of the property that ended up being used by officials—but especially governors—under Company rule was taken from estates that were left by those high in the Indian caste system or class structure.¹⁶⁰ Company elites also appropriated the trading of elephants from Mughal elites.¹⁶¹ This proved useful not only in

¹⁵⁶ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 312-313.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 314.

¹⁵⁸ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 490.

¹⁵⁹ Raj, “Colonial Encounters and the Forging of New Knowledge and National Identities,” 122.

¹⁶⁰ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 316.

¹⁶¹ Sivasundaram, “Trading Knowledge,” 36.

showing the local populace that the British held political and economic authority, but also in carrying out military campaigns.

There was, however, a sharp division between the Company/government officials and those who worked for them in terms of income and social standing. As was the case in the flexibility of social roles and powers among the elite in pre-Company India, so were the British in India “sharply stratified between an elite, within which there were considerable gradations, and what can be very loosely regarded as the equivalent of a working class. There was very little in between.”¹⁶² Originally, the Company was set up in such a way that a balance of power between military and government powers—in each a separate balance of power between those higher in command and those who worked for them—was “designed to tame the worst inclinations of those in positions of authority through a combination of habituated offices and institutional transparency.”¹⁶³ Every last expense and every last source and amount of revenue was recorded in Company records. However, when Governor-General Warren Hastings came to power, he rid the Company of such transparency, choosing instead to fill his own pockets and the pockets of his cronies. This left most of the British officers and soldiers with “no means beyond their pay ... only in the army or in default of some other profession.”¹⁶⁴ As a result, many soldiers and officers were in positions that inclined them to accept bribes and hush money, especially in carrying out more clandestine policies (overseeing slavery, trading opium, etc.). This top-down system of bribery, by which higher officials bribed lower officers and soldiers to carry out ethically questionable streams of revenue, and the “employees’ necessary complicity in

¹⁶² Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” 91.

¹⁶³ Smith, “Edmund Burke, the Warren Hastings Trial, and the Moral Dimension of Corruption,” 84.

¹⁶⁴ Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” 98.

indirect and direct financial gains [that] could not help but lead the Company as a whole to corruption.”¹⁶⁵

The division of classes was also influenced to an extent by religious institutions intervening in both Indian society and Company politics. Originally, the Company refrained from receiving resources from missionary societies, as it didn’t want to appear to want to radically change the social and religious culture of India, but merely to profit from its resources. However, as time progressed, the behemoths of semi-colonial government and missionary societies joined forces, both aiming to use their economic strength to establish a stronghold in Indian life. Thus begins a complicated system of relationships, where

politicians [who were] committed to imperial expansion cultivated pragmatic relationships with economic and religious groups[;] merchant capitalists entered into pragmatic relationships with power political actors and religious groups in order to maximize their first priority, economic gain ... [and] missionary societies mastered the same kind of pragmatic negotiation in order to further their commitment to global evangelism.¹⁶⁶

Through this relationship, churches grew and expanded into India. Many of them raised large amounts of money through tithing and growing cash crops on their own, further establishing themselves within the class structures in India. As a result, they were able to gain a certain amount of leverage with administrative functions, calling for the foundation of charity schools. Though these charity schools and many other programs provided financial assistance to the poor of all races, separate funds were also established to address the needs of poor Europeans specifically.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Smith, “Edmund Burke, the Warren Hastings Trial, and the Moral Dimension of Corruption,” 83.

¹⁶⁶ Jon Miller and Gregory Stanczak, “Redeeming, Ruling, and Reaping: British Missionary Societies, the East India Company, and the India-to-China Opium Trade,” (Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 348.

¹⁶⁷ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 320.

How the Company's policies and attitudes toward class did not affect India as much as the distribution of labor and notions of race, which will be discussed below. Many of those who worked in India continued with their previous professions, with the exception of artisans, many of whom became farmers.¹⁶⁸ Rather than being dramatically changed in terms of social standing, those who had disposable income were able to take part in some of the European cultural practices that joined the officers on the ships eastbound. While there is not much evidence suggesting that British and European music was particularly popular among Indians until the latter half of the nineteenth century, "European theater was clearly of absorbing interest to some ... Selections from Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar' were among the first productions" in Bengali theaters.¹⁶⁹ Books by British authors also became popular in India, especially as missionary societies and government-run schools worked to teach Indian children to be fluent in written and spoken English. While no notable publishers established in India during Company rule, "by the mid-nineteenth century India had become a very major outlet for the British publishers. Consignments of books were shipped out in such huge quantities that prices were generally kept low," even to be purchased by Indians with relatively low income.¹⁷⁰

While class was a strong divisive tool used to bring about "social order" in India, it is—in this case as in many others—tied to race and the prejudices that Company officials upheld with regards to race.

¹⁶⁸ Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, 130.

¹⁶⁹ Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company," 329.

¹⁷⁰ Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company," 323.

Physical and Social Division: Race Relations in India, 1757-1857

Prior to the Battle of Plassey, a certain degree of racial segregation existed in India, particularly in cities like Calcutta. In general, the white authorities who moved in and set up shop either congregated separately from the Indians who lived in the cities or moved into the areas previously occupied by Indian elites, particularly from the Mughal Empire. The Battle of Plassey did very little to change the segregation of racial populations in Calcutta specifically, where “the buildings of the white town would remain entirely European in inspiration and no attempt would be made for many years to plan the use of space or to lay out the town in any order.”¹⁷¹ While much of this partition was because of social conventions, some of was codified in Company law. In 1826, J. B. Bonsanquet, the Company solicitor, officially released an opinion in which the term ‘British subject’ meant “not only that an individual’s legal standing was determined solely by the father, but also that the male parent had to be British-born ... no Native of the British Territories in India though a Subject of the King ... Indians were thus identified as ‘subject’, but not ‘British subjects.’”¹⁷² If racial perceptions in India were bleak, they were by no means better back in Britain, even the more radical or liberal politicians back in Britain “saw no way of applying their doctrines in India ... Europeans were vigilant in resisting any extension of rights which seemed to threaten,” a philosophy that would carry beyond the rule of the East India Company.¹⁷³ The many peoples that inhabited India were seen as inferior to the British colonizers through a variety of ways. Some said that the British were more advanced for developing science and implementing it in their daily lives, some said that the British rule of law was more sophisticated than Mughal or Marathas equivalents, and some even suggested that the

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 315.

¹⁷² Jaffe, “Custom, Identity, and the Jury in India, 1800-1832,” 149-150.

¹⁷³ Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” 103.

British men embodied the ideal of manliness compared with the Sikhs, Gurkhas, Pathans, or the “effeminate races” that lived in Bengal.¹⁷⁴

The general British attitude towards the races of India is marked with an air of perceived superiority, and it was this forced distinction between the different races that prevented many indigenous peoples in India from fully accepting British values, and vice versa. Social norms were only accepted by the other racial group if they were seen as advantageous (e.g. elephants used by Company military, Mughals working with Company officials to raise revenue). On the British side of the equation, “Britishness” was reinforced through sheer determination and despite slow communication channels with Britain; thus, while the notion of “Britishness” in Britain seemed to evolve more with the times in the homeland, “Britishness of the British in India could look odd or outdated to sophisticated visitors.”¹⁷⁵ On the Indian side of the equation, many rejected the English way of life (language, law) that was taught in educational institutions. In fact, if it can be said that British norms influenced the way of life of Indian society, educational indoctrination proved to have much of a “less practical effect than the largely accidental diffusion of western culture by the British elite of the white town of Calcutta.”¹⁷⁶ Jürgen Osterhammel, as has been mentioned earlier, argued that race was nearly as distinctive of a social division as class. However, for the most part—with the exception of Indian elites—race and class were incredibly intertwined, especially for the lowest classes. While poor whites were barred from certain British clubs, and some of them struggled to find work given Indians’ willingness to work for low wages,¹⁷⁷ they were still favored by the Company in a cultural sense and more favored by the law (they were at bare minimum still considered British subjects).

¹⁷⁴ Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion,” 424-425.

¹⁷⁵ Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” 106-107.

¹⁷⁶ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 308.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.

Calcutta, the capital of Bengal, embodied the racial tension between Indian and British subjects in the way that it was organized: literally divided between “white” town and “Indian” town, also called “black” town. Calcutta is an interesting case study in that it fully symbolizes the physical and social separation between different racial groups in Company India, but also—in practice—embodied the blending of the two cultures. For example, white town was dominated by private mansions that were built in the English style and housed exclusively by the white people who ran the Company.¹⁷⁸ On the other hand, all of these private mansions, and even the public buildings, were built along roads that “grew in an entirely unplanned way. What were called ‘streets’ were largely dirt tracks, evidently deeply rutted by carts in the dry seasons, flanked open by ditched ... Cotemporary British ideals of a classical townscape into which buildings were to be harmoniously fitted according to an overall pattern were disregarded.”¹⁷⁹ Indians who formerly lived in Calcutta moved far north, to the Indian town. The planning of the Indian town was similar to that of the white town, but houses were smaller, and it was completely separated from the main bustle of the city, separated from the white town by neighborhoods full of Portuguese and Armenian tradesmen and families.¹⁸⁰ Eventually, architectural styles began to bleed into the design of buildings in the black town when “rich Indian customers evidently bought furnishings, especially glassware, at the European shops,” but this occurred late in the Company’s presence there: towards the 1830s. The specific means through which this diffusion of styles took place is still unknown.¹⁸¹

Not only was there physical segregation between the “white” and “black” towns, there was also very clearly de jure segregation as well, with white British subjects (most of them

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 314.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 318.

¹⁸⁰ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 315.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 329.

surprisingly Scots or Irish, not necessarily British)¹⁸² predominantly holding most of the political power and all the benefits that come along with it. Those who led the government in wealthy white town, the mayors and alderman, were nominated by the Governor and the Company's Council, whose control over appointments assured that predominantly British subjects (in this case, white Company employees or recruits) maintained power.¹⁸³ Black town, still under the rule of the Company, had very little say in the development of their city. The Justices of the Peace, however, did not see the lack of Indians in government as a problem worsening the Indian community, because the Company "did their work to good effect [with] a huge population [in black town] living in undrained swamps with a totally unpolluted water supply."¹⁸⁴ It must be said that this patronizing attitude did not extend to all British officers: Sir Thomas Munro, governor of Madras from 1814 to 1826, is an example of this. Despite his misrepresentation of the function of a *panchayat*, he thought the Indian people as reasonable, educated citizens who were capable of serving on the equivalent of an English jury, and implemented regulations and reforms according to this idea. Still, many others, such as his successor Stephen Lushington, "resisted the implementation of Munro's Regulation because of the Indians' alleged propensity to religious fanaticism, superstition, caste prejudice, apathy, and corruption, among other things."¹⁸⁵ Perception of Indians participating in government was bleak, but perceptions of Indian laborers was abysmal. Those Indians who worked on the fields for the Company were thought by their masters to have an "inherent love of idleness and hatred of steady exertions ... so great, that he [the laborer] much prefers this uncertain mode of living."¹⁸⁶ Thus, it was not

¹⁸² Marshall, "British Society in India under the East India Company," 90-91.

¹⁸³ Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company," 319.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 319.

¹⁸⁵ Jaffe, "Custom, Identity, and the Jury in India, 1800-1832," 152.

¹⁸⁶ Quoted in Florio, "From Poverty to Slavery," 1020.

merely physical buildings and city planning, but rhetoric and prejudiced thought that starkly divided the two towns.

Nevertheless, the intermingling of the different racial groups was inevitable, and sometimes worked to Indians' advantage. The British intermarrying or at the very least cohabiting with Indian women was almost inevitable. The amount of women allowed to travel from Britain to India was very restricted, but records show that there were far more marriages than women were permitted to travel; many of these marriages were with Indian Christians or women of mixed race.¹⁸⁷ Marrying Indian women was fairly commonplace for British subjects in India, and these unions often had children; these children, being of mixed race, were often discriminated against in terms of not receiving wealth or a quality education, but were sometimes able to use their parent's wealth and status to rise above the social restrictions on race.¹⁸⁸ Not all officers found the idea of marriage with Indian women to be a legitimate "marriage" as it was not a matrimonial union with a woman of European origin, but these same men often waiting to be married back in Britain while at the same time cohabited with Indian concubines.¹⁸⁹ Whether marital, pre-marital, or extra-marital, many of these interracial relationships produced many children of mixed race. While these children were more melanin-inclined and thus less privileged in the social framework than their fathers, they often ended up doing menial work, such as being servants. For some of these children, however, the need for servants within the government "stimulated pressure for 'native agency,' especially in judicial employments, and enabled Anglo-Indians of mixed race to entrench themselves for a time in the uncovenanted administrative posts."¹⁹⁰ These marriages and connections to and within the Company government are

¹⁸⁷ Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company," 311.

¹⁸⁸ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 95.

¹⁸⁹ Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company," 311.

¹⁹⁰ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 100.

emblematic of a broad conclusion that can be made about race relations in India: “In a society with self-consciously British norms, Indians, if they participated at all, would have to be willing to participate on British terms. This was a possibility only for a very few.”¹⁹¹

An even smaller few, the African community is one racial group that is often ignored in telling the history of Company-ruled India. The transportation of Africans to India was used prior to Company involvement, with the Mughal Empire fully capitalizing on slave labor in their contributors’ farms. Even after the Company began business, independent states like Awadh recruiting Africans straight from the continent—called *Hubshiyān Risālā*—to raise an African regiment.¹⁹² Again, these recruits only served as soldiers at best, and as slaves at worst; there was not much opportunity for advancement for those who came from the African continent. From the British perspective, slaves were seen as commodities, as the main reason that the Company even considered officially rejecting slavery was to prevent slaves (including both Indian and African children) from being seized by other Europeans Companies to add to their labor force. In addition, Company ships continued the transporting of slaves from Africa to India until 1830, despite the British Parliamentary Act of 1807 banning the transportation of African slaves by sea.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, the Company’s views on slavery officially changed in 1834 following the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, when officials started to suggest the complete annexation of the *Nawabs* of the Mughal Empire for its decadent use of slavery, “which was [ultimately] accomplished in February 1856 and became an important factor in the Indian Mutiny a year later,” but following the mutiny, it became very difficult to locate the *sheedis*, or descendants of African slaves.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” 102.

¹⁹² Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 61 (emphasis in original).

¹⁹³ Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 64.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

The use and acceptance of slavery in the first place was justified on the grounds of bastardizations of religious ideals, which were equally shaped by Company involvement in India.

Religious Policy and the Eventual Enabling of Evangelization

British attitudes toward traditional religious culture in India was misinformed at best and patronizing at worst. While Governor-General Warren Hastings was well-known for his tendency toward corruption, he did make attempts to understand the Vedic tradition of Hinduism. He sent men to locate transcriptions of Vedic scriptures written in Sanskrit and Persian to then be translated into English for cultural understanding. However, in doing so, translators inadvertently “imposed British understandings of kinship, rights, and duties,” deviating from the original text significantly.¹⁹⁵ One example of British subjects misapplying Hindu principles to understand them in British terms was Rev. W. Ward’s survey, stating that [Ganesh’s] elephant head does not symbolize wisdom, but rather the mystical sound Om,” the analysis of which “served as a vantage point from which to make sense of the alien,” even if it wasn’t genuine and accurate.¹⁹⁶ While some in the Company had a desire to make the Hindu unknown knowable, others merely looked at Indian religion in general with disdain. Some interpreted the scriptures of Hinduism to be murderous and posing a serious threat to the freedoms of Hindu women, as well as a “flawed” definition of masculinity (this will be discussed further in the section on gender).¹⁹⁷ In addition, there was an attitude that argued British religious practices were superior, whereas the British had mastered the use of nature, Hinduism prescribed the worshipping of nature and the Mughals used the taming of elephants as an allegory to their

¹⁹⁵ Grey, “Creating the ‘Problem Hindu,’” 499.

¹⁹⁶ Sivasundaram, “Trading Knowledge,” 48.

¹⁹⁷ Grey, “Creating the ‘Problem Hindu,’” 498.

rule.¹⁹⁸ Some even tried to convince Indians to leave their religion in the pursuit of science, despite science's growing distance from religious orthodoxy: "One stream of missionary thought on the question of conversion held that a strong dose of Western science and philosophy, though secular, could serve, by exposing the falsity of the superstitions on which Hinduism rested, to make ready the minds of the natives to receive God's Word."¹⁹⁹

This belittling attitude reflected the policies that the Company enacted to promote British social order. As has been mentioned earlier, the preliminary policy of the Company was to intervene as little as possible in terms of religious traditions, still allowing Hindus and Muslims to worship as they pleased as long as they continued making the Company money. In practice, this was rather difficult to achieve. First of all, "while the Company strove conscientiously to guard the religious rights of its Muslim and Hindu subjects, it failed to extend the same consideration to the rights of native Christian converts. It turned a blind eye ... to the harsh communal sanctions that were applied to caste Hindus."²⁰⁰ Indians who converted to Christianity, whether from Portuguese or British missions, had to abide by Hindu rules as the Company allowed them in Indian society. Nevertheless, these same Christian converts were given priority in some aspects of government, particularly in dealing with criminal justice; only Christians were permitted to serve on petty juries for Christian defendants, let alone sit on grand juries.²⁰¹ Despite such restrictions, some Hindus did exert influence in law-making, but mostly by Hindus of significant power and if they were willing to collaborate with the British. One such man was Jagannātha Tarkapanchānana, a legal expert at the Calcutta Supreme Court, who argued for a collaboration between Company judges and Hindu court-pundits to serve as assistants in

¹⁹⁸ Sivasundaram, "Trading Knowledge," 53.

¹⁹⁹ Copland, "Christianity as an Arm of the Empire," 1041.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1034.

²⁰¹ Jaffe, "Custom, Identity, and the Jury in India, 1800-1832," 149.

interpreting Hindu law.²⁰² Such collaboration benefited local Hindus, as well as expanded the cultural competency of Company judges, but only had a small impact on religious interaction in India as a whole. As the Company's territory expanded during its reign, its desire for control over Indian life—even in religious terms—grew little by little: “it inherited not only the lands and revenues of the former regional kings but also their religious obligations, which involved, amongst other things, overseeing the management of state-owned temples and making ceremonial appearances at important Hindu festivals.”²⁰³ As the Company grew more and more complacent towards religious interaction with India, it became equally more complacent toward working with missionaries.

Originally, the Company avoided interacting with religious institutions, particularly missions from England, for two reasons: primarily they didn't want to meddle with Indian customs as it could put the willingness of Indians to work with the Company in jeopardy, and secondly the Company believed that the state shouldn't be invested in the religious life of those it ruled over. Thus, from the get go, missionaries failed to evangelize many Indians in the early days of the Company, as “obstacles were placed in the way of their purchasing land for buildings; they were discouraged from travelling into the interior of the country; and they were barred from preaching in certain places sacred to Hinduism such as Nasik and Puri.”²⁰⁴ A petition began in the 1790s back in Britain to convince Parliament to revise the Company's Charter to allow missionaries to proselytize in India, which passed a few years later.²⁰⁵ The new charter allowed missionaries to grow and expand their small influence in India into a much more powerful one, a feat accomplished through proximity to Company power. The more missionaries

²⁰² Raj, “Colonial Encounters and the Forging of New Knowledge and National Identities,” 123.

²⁰³ Copland, “Christianity as an Arm of the Empire,” 1033.

²⁰⁴ Copland, “Christianity as an Arm of the Empire,” 1032.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 1031.

that entered India, the more they provided charity and services that the Company neglected to provide; this allowed certain men of power from the missions to assume political power in administrative functions.²⁰⁶ Not only were missions able to grow territorially and politically, but the revised Charter also allowed churches to capitalize on the skewed balance of trade enforced by the Company.²⁰⁷

The missionaries of India operated under the belief that evangelization would be easier if two conditions were met: missionaries raised large amounts of money to build more churches, and services provided by missionaries greatly benefited the lives of Indian workers. Thus, it is not surprising that the missionaries made close ties to business. One of the first cash crops used by the churches was indigo, managed in partnership with the Company and harvested by Indian labor ripe for conversion.²⁰⁸ As the missions grew monetarily and administratively, they became more intertwined with the trading of other goods, particularly opium. There was great debate in the missionary community about the ethical dilemma of forming business ties with opium dealers, but ultimately, many missionaries believed the ill effects of opium use (particularly of the Chinese population, who suffered greatly from an influx of opium traded into their country) were not as bad for society as the continued protection by the Company of the “heathenism” and “evils” of Hindu religious practices.²⁰⁹ Even as the British Missionary Society (BMS) grew in both political and religious power, it still demurred the large-scale selling of opium not because of the dwindling quality of life of users, but because labor conditions at poppy plantations “disrupted communities in Patna and Benares” and “stable families and communities were

²⁰⁶ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 320.

²⁰⁷ Miller and Stanczak, “Redeeming, Ruling, and Reaping,” 338-339.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 337.

²⁰⁹ Miller and Stanczak, “Redeeming, Ruling, and Reaping,” 338.

considered a prerequisite for successful evangelism.”²¹⁰ This is not to say that the BMS rejected the selling of opium altogether; it still raised quite a profit from its involvement in the opium business, which allowed it to fund missionary projects, such as the Medical Missionary Society, among other educational endeavors.²¹¹

Education of the British populace, including higher education, was already provided by the Company, but grew significantly and became more inclusive of the Indian populace when the Company allowed missionaries to teach classes. Under the college at Fort William in Calcutta in 1800, newly recruited officers were to spend three years studying on local languages, religious laws, economic history, math, and geography.²¹² However, the educational programs offered and the services provided by the Company were limited: it was only after involvement with the missionaries that the Company’s educational institutions began to teach in detail Sanskrit and Bengali grammar as well as the “religion and manners of Hindoos [as] standard governmental reference work.”²¹³ The grammar and syntactical nuances of Sanskrit and Bangla were taught to a much smaller degree in pre-missionary Company colleges, but were expanded with missionary involvement. This was largely because of the knowledge that missionaries had of the native languages for evangelizing purposes; it was actually the missionaries who founded the first printing press with fonts for the Indian vernacular.²¹⁴ The Company’s views on education differed from that of the missionaries in that the Company was complacent with regards to native education as long as indigenous workers continued to serve the Company, while missionaries depended on native education to spread their Word; thus the schools set up to educate the Indian

²¹⁰ Ibid, 339.

²¹¹ Ibid, 340-341.

²¹² Raj, “Colonial Encounters and the Forging of New Knowledge and National Identities,” 125.

²¹³ Copland, “Christianity as an Arm of the Empire,” 1038.

²¹⁴ Raj, “Colonial Encounters and the Forging of New Knowledge and National Identities,” 125.

populace, while supported by the government, was mainly run by missionaries.²¹⁵ This was matched by a certain Company complacency towards allowing access religious texts—including the Bible—in school libraries in the 1840s, and in classroom instruction in 1854.²¹⁶ It was because of this blurred deviation between religious mission and Company commission that likely “led the populace [to perceive] missionaries as an arm of the East India Company; sepoys in the Bengal Army increasingly came to believe that the policies of religious tolerance by their British officers were rapidly being eroded and would soon be a thing of the past.”²¹⁷

This much was evident in the way the Company used religious values to justify the altering of traditional gender norms.

Patronization Meets Patriarchy

Gender roles are often reinforced through societal values, which are largely influenced both by political legitimacy and religious doctrine and customs. Both played a role in which women were treated in India, not only before, but also after the Company set up shop.

As mentioned earlier, the Company vastly misinterpreted the religious texts that were established in pre-Company India and used these interpretations, in theory, to better understand Hindu culture, but in practice, to exercise their own prejudices of Hindu culture as justification for annexation. Similarly, “early colonial attempts to codify Hindu law and custom were inherently gendered, and as such had correspondingly far-reaching and enduring implications for colonial understandings of supposedly ‘authentic’ Hindu gender roles.”²¹⁸ One example of this can be found in British Orientalist Nathaniel Brassey Halhed’s transcription of Hindu code,

²¹⁵ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 322.

²¹⁶ Copland, “Christianity as an Arm of the Empire,” 1043.

²¹⁷ Rao and Duta, “Free Spaces as Organizational Weapons of the Weak,” 641.

²¹⁸ Grey, “Creating the ‘Problem Hindu,’” 500.

which projects deeply colonial and patronizing views of Indian women into Hindu literature: “Women have Six Qualities; the First, an inordinate Desire for Jewels and fine Furniture ... the Second, immoderate Lust; the Third, violent Anger; the Fourth, deep resentment ... the Fifth, another Person’s Good appears Evil in their Eyes; the Sixth, they commit bad Actions.”²¹⁹ Through these interpretations—however erroneous and distorted they be—the British were able to assume the moral high ground in intervening in social affairs by painting Hinduism as dangerous to women and girls specifically, citing both physical and moral dangers.²²⁰ Towards the end of the eighteenth century, such interpretations had perpetuated “the enduring belief that Hindu women and girls, were, in essence, eternal victims to the vicarious whims and violent abuses of their male relatives stretching across the life-cycle from cradle to grave.”²²¹

Three practices that caught the attention of Company officials were *sati* (a practice where a recent widow would throw herself onto her husband’s pyre), *thuggee* (a professional strangler-cult who worshipped Kali, the Hindu god of destruction), and female infanticide. Plymouth University Lecturer in World History Dr. Daniel J. R. Grey devotes his work to gender issues in colonial India, focusing on these three justifications for colonization and intervention. He points out that despite the fact that these practices are not specifically religious but in fact cultural in nature, the mere rhetoric about Hindu doctrines were regularly used to justify intervention, even in numerous cases when so such perceptible connection could be made.²²² Even the case of female infanticide, which was impossible to connect to Hindu doctrine, appeared in the eyes of Britons to be “inexorably bound up with Hinduism ... these ideas involved the women in

²¹⁹ Halhed, *A Code of Gentoo Laws, or, Ordinations of the Pundits, from a Persian Translation, made from the Original, written in the Shanscrit Language*, 283.

²²⁰ Grey, “Creating the ‘Problem Hindu,’” 498.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 499.

²²² *Ibid*, 500.

question being overruled by their husbands with greater or lesser subtlety: they might be seen to imbibe the superstition of their husbands' and thus seem in favour of the custom themselves."²²³ Meanwhile, the men that Grey mentions were painted as selfish, dominant figures in interpersonal dynamics, particularly those in the higher castes, who used their power and influence to exert influence and sometimes kill women; it was not the prevention of potentially high dowry payments or cultural influences that led them to kill their daughters, but pride and self-service.²²⁴ Even in the case of women killing their daughters, in which men played no apparent part, Hindu men were blamed for perpetuating a culture that pressured women to kill, a narrative that "could continue to be used as symbols of the need for colonial intervention and ultimately, the broader imperial project."²²⁵

These rationalizations for colonialization ultimately affected people in India across the gender spectrum, each being assigned to roles that either best fit the Company's use for the "colonial project" or restricted them from areas that prevented the project's growth. In this way, most Indian women either continued to work in the community or in the home as before, but took on different specific roles. Some Indian women slept with officers regularly through consensual transactions, but were often looked down upon for doing so. Poor women in particular tended to stay at home more, expected to "cultivate 'reading, music, drawing and working' and 'archery, riding and gardening,'" with most of this being taught by the white populations in town.²²⁶ Other women of the working classes (including slaves), particularly in agriculture, spent time inside processing or cleaning what was picked out in the fields, a task

²²³ Ibid, 502.

²²⁴ Grey, "Creating the 'Problem Hindu,'" 503.

²²⁵ Ibid, 503.

²²⁶ Marshall, "The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company," 327.

usually completed by men.²²⁷ Both of these groups of women often received assistance from charitable organizations set up either by religious institutions, the government, or a collaboration between the two. This stemmed from a fairly contemporary view of gender from Britain that “the main public sphere for females ... was ... in the organization of charity. Societies specifically catering for the needs of females and children were established and managed by women.”²²⁸ Other native women, especially most of the women who interacted with the British officers directly, did so in the presence of hookah, alcohol, and “coarse behavior,” actions that officers usually partook in (they were very well-known for often being drunk and rowdy), despite their growing belief that such actions showed “society in India still seemed to lack refinement.”²²⁹

This did not stop many Indian men from not only engaging sexually with Indian women, but forming domestic partnerships with them. As mentioned earlier, many British officers, while officially putting off marriage officially until going back to Britain, lived with Indian concubines while in India. This practice, despite being frowned upon by the Company as a whole, was rationalized on an individual basis when officials “*selectively* privileged textual religious law over diverse customary legal practices as the basis for Hindu personal law, thereby ‘validating elite conceptions of sexual practices’ that dovetailed in some respects with Victorian constructs of domesticity.”²³⁰ After all, if cohabiting with men in this way was purported to be Hindu tradition, who would a Company official be to impose on such highly-regarded cultural values? Out of many of these domestic partnerships, children were inevitably born. More people of technically British descent meant either more wives for British soldiers or more soldiers and

²²⁷ Florio, “From Poverty to Slavery,” 1017.

²²⁸ Marshall, “The White Town of Calcutta Under the Rule of the East India Company,” 327.

²²⁹ Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” 107.

²³⁰ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 420 (emphasis in original).

more labor.²³¹ These children were seen in the eyes of the Company to be useful in that they could be potential labor, and so “the Company’s governing court of committees in London encourages the intermarriage of English soldiers and ‘native’ women at Bombay and Madras; they even provided short-lived financial incentives: the men to receive payment upon marriage by the women only upon the child’s christening.”²³² Even in “marriages” or cohabiting partnerships, women in India were treated differently from men through the eyes of the Company.

Perhaps the biggest gender group influenced by the Company were the eunuchs who served the Awadhi court, the *khwajasarais*; by the 1840s and 1850s, these servants to the Awadhi elite were seen as “‘creatures’ [with] ties [that] were criminal and politically ‘corrupt.’”²³³ This stemmed from the British interpreting *khwajasarais* to be inherently linked to domestic space, working with women in the court and satisfying the sexual needs of both women and men.²³⁴ As a result of the sexual involvement that the *khwajasarais* had with Awadhi officials, they were labeled as “politically ‘corrupt’ officials” responsible for “misgovernment with gendered and sexual disorder;” as a result, the Company did everything in its power to reduce the work of *khwajasarais* to “benign” and “menial, domestic forms of slave labor.”²³⁵ In spite of this, some *khwajasarais* “continued close proximity to the Padshah, [and] were able to retain their power within the Awadh court. Into the 1850s, eunuchs formed key factions in Awadh court politics. Elites and nobles paid *khwajasarais* to exert influence in the *darbar* (court) on their behalf.”²³⁶ It was not to last, however. The British would continue to grow in

²³¹ Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” 93.

²³² Stern, “Soldier and Citizen in the Seventeenth-Century English East India Company,” 93.

²³³ Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion,” 424.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 422-423.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 414-415.

²³⁶ Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion,” 428.

scope and influence throughout the nineteenth century, eventually both choking out the functioning role of *khwajasarais* and replacing them “with an administrative class overwhelmingly composed of free, high-caste Hindus.”²³⁷

Even after the Company fell, the British continued to grow in India, eventually forming a legitimate political colony directly managed by the Crown. Everything changed after the Great Sepoy Rebellion of 1857.

²³⁷ Ibid, 415.

THE SEPOY REBELLION: BRITAIN BITES THE BULLET

The Sepoy Rebellion is considered the climax of the relations between the East India Company and the people of India, from the Mughal rulers to the working class, men and women alike, and people from every race. All were affected by the three sepoy (native Indian soliders who served under British rule, adopted after the Persian word for Mughal infantry soldiers) regiments forming a mutiny in Delhi, beginning by most accounts with a specific revolt beginning on May 10, 1857²³⁸, but with a few smaller “acts of collective disobedience, arson, and violence” as early as January 1857 in eastern India.²³⁹ The revolt broke out through a resistance to British authority, specifically in the field of the military. The Company had a long history of using Indian troops in their military, and the Indians had a long history of resisting the Company’s military authority; a petition to Parliament in 1780 called for a more Europeanized government and military presence in India to choke out the native “spirit of contempt,” Macaulay’s Black Act established the British as the “conqueror ... dominant race” in 1836, and a bill in 1849 actually stationed outside the Company’s courts and surrounding cities, all of which sparked protest among the Indian populace.²⁴⁰ Because of this, many Indians within the Company’s military arm led what could be characterized as a “proto-nationalist” movement, urging independence from the Company and the Crown, but most importantly the cultural impositions placed on Indian soldiers and citizens.²⁴¹ Unfortunately for those who fought in the uprising, the opposite would come to pass; while the East India Company disbanded in 1858, a full-scale colonial campaign by the British government would take its place.²⁴²

²³⁸ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 552.

²³⁹ Rao and Duta, “Free Spaces as Organizational Weapons of the Weak,” 643.

²⁴⁰ Marshall, “British Society in India under the East India Company,” 103.

²⁴¹ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 553.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 445.

The actual reason for the rebellion ultimately rested on religious grounds. As the Company's military technology grew, so too did the technology behind guns and bullet cartridges improve in efficiency and design. A new type of rifle, which was expected to be used by both British and Indian alike, required the soldier firing the weapon to bite the tip off of the cartridge containing the bullet. While this was standard procedure, the particular cartridges in use for the new rifles were coated in animal fat, usually from either cows or pigs.²⁴³ This was especially problematic for most Indian soldiers, as Hindus customarily did not ingest any part of a cow, and Muslims customarily did not ingest any part of a pig. Many soldiers who refused to bite the tips off of the cartridges for religious reasons were thrown in jail. The three regiments of sepoy from above mutinied, releasing the Indian soldiers, killing several British officers, and marching towards the city of Delhi.²⁴⁴ Once there, they confronted the king, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who urged the soldiers to reduce violence and looting for the sake of security. Most soldiers refused to comply with his request, raided the Company's posts, and killed many more British, regardless of rank or profession. With soldiers rebelling against both the Company government and the local kingship, lawlessness in the city ensued and lasted for four months and four days.²⁴⁵ Eventually, Bahadur Shah Zafar would show support for the rebellion.

The strength of the backlash by the Indian soldiers was fueled primarily by religious identity, but ultimately by cultural identity. Many historians are quick to point out that the mobilization of the Sepoy Rebellion was possible because of the common identities established by military camaraderie and religious solidarity (and some African troops in particular who

²⁴³ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 101-102.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 102.

²⁴⁵ Arshad Islam, "The Backlash in Delhi: British Treatment of the Mughal Royal Family following the Indian 'Sepoy Mutiny' of 1857," (London, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 2011),198.

showed great loyalty to the Emperor because of their upbringing in slavery)²⁴⁶, however, the most contemporary research shows that this is an overly simplistic view; it was not only religious and army relations that brought sepoys together, it was isolated religious festivals (ergo, largely proximity to others of similar identities) which instilled common identity that led to the widespread movement.²⁴⁷ It is true that both army and religious connections spurred revolt. The Company's military, while culturally diverse, did little to address the cultural differences between the 45,000 British soldiers and the 232,000 Indian soldiers serving in 1857; the overall strategy of the Company army was inherently British in nature, and acted with little regard to Indian governments (let alone the rumors spreading of forced Christianity for Indian soldiers, which were substantiated by the new bullet cartridges).²⁴⁸ One of the specific cultural differences between the two groups was in religion: "three-fourths of the infantry were high-caste Hindus, and one-fourth was composed of low-caste Hindus and Muslims; the majority were Brahmins and Kshatriyas. These high-caste recruits to the infantry were farmers' sons and carried their own utensils for cooking and drinking water to maintain religious rituals," which helped not only maintain religious piety but also cultural distinction.²⁴⁹ The cultural segregation on religious grounds was furthered by the joint actions of the Company and British missionaries; the Indians came to view the missions as essentially branches of the East India Company, which explains why Hindus and Muslims that were located close to British missions were more likely to revolt.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Llewellyn-Jones, "The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India," 61.

²⁴⁷ Rao and Duta, "Free Spaces as Organizational Weapons of the Weak," 658.

²⁴⁸ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 552.

²⁴⁹ Rao and Duta, "Free Spaces as Organizational Weapons of the Weak," 632.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 641.

The biggest factor in creating a common identify of the Indian sepoy against the British other, however, came from location of recruitment. The Company recruited soldiers and organized them not based on name or creed, but location; this was largely done to categorize the towns that were good for recruitment of soldiers and supplies apart from the others. This is because “community ties are sociological superglue that holds groups together and enable swift mobilization through neighborhood kinship ties, even in the absence of alternatives such as free-spaces for large-scale mobilization” (which was eventually used by the sepoy regiments to unite people for the rebellious cause).²⁵¹ Many of the soldiers in each regiment were thus culturally tied to similar geographic locations with the same religious festivals. Consequently, “the Company’s policy of recruitment by referral through village and family connections reinforced the parochialism of these regiments.”²⁵² While this was originally seen as advantageous for the Company, it backfired when the sepoys united to rebel on religious terms.

In response, the British attacked without reservation against the Indian upper classes, both soldier and aristocrat alike. The retaliation began on September 14th, 1857, when after the four months’ occupation of Company-led Delhi, British forces re-entered the city and “took full control of the area” after five days of violence.²⁵³ The bloodshed of those five days was direct and merciless. As described in the words of Associate Professor of History and Civilization at International Islamic University Malaysia Dr. Arshad Islam,

the soldiers looted and plundered the homes of the helpless people. They loaded their plunder on the heads of the male members of the family and dragged women and children to Colonel Burns’ camp, who ordered his soldiers to select the “big fishes”, and kick the rest of the Muslims out of the city from Ajmeri Gate. It was an exodus in which

²⁵¹ Rao and Duta, “Free Spaces as Organizational Weapons of the Weak,” 660.

²⁵² Ibid, 639.

²⁵³ Islam, “The Backlash in Delhi,” 198.

thousands of starving men, women, and children were roaming barefooted for shelter but in vain.²⁵⁴

Several Indian soldiers had stationed their encampments around the city of Delhi in tents, ousted from their own city, many sick or injured, and many others waiting for the right moment to attack and reclaim Delhi. Before they could, British forces, led by Captain William Hodson and joined by Company Commander Edward Vibart, invaded these camps, killing sick, injured, and healthy soldier alike.²⁵⁵ The British, however, did not stop at killing soldiers in their retribution. Betraying their tradition of noninterference (and sometimes indirect support) of Indian religious spaces, British soldiers, joined by some Sikh soldiers, “danced around a victory fire inside the Jama Masjid [a famous Mosque in Delhi]. The Sikh soldiers cooked halva next to the minaret and the British cooked pork inside the mosque. The whole mosque was turned into a military barracks,” with British soldiers releasing their dogs to roam the mosque, and Sikhs taking the liberty of urinating on its floor.²⁵⁶ Delhi was—and soon too would most of the rest of Company-led territory—no longer a city of Mughal values, but one of British imperial values.

This is evident not only in territorial terms but hegemonic ones as well. The upper classes of India, particularly the Mughal elite, faced perhaps the most drastic changes because of the Rebellion. It is not surprising that the British felt betrayed most by those in the upper castes; it was the soldiers (Kshatriyas) who rebelled, and they were supported by Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar both legally and militarily, going against the partnership between Mughal and Company authorities upon which the Company depended. Despite this partnership, the British overlooked the fact that “the upper castes of the Northwest Departments ... had been [progressively] losing their privileges,” which played a contributing factor in their decision to ally with rebellious

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 199.

²⁵⁵ Islam, “The Backlash in Delhi,” 201-202.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 199.

soldiers.²⁵⁷ The Company, so focused on their own imperial project, grew in power at the expense of the Mughal elite, the very class that helped grow Company business in the first place. Unrest within the Mughal elite led some—specifically Bahadur Shah Zafar—to turn their backs on the British. Both parties felt short-handed by the other, but in the end, the British held their military and hegemonic advantage: a significant number of the Mughal elite were killed under orders of Captain Hodson with permission from General Wilson. Hodson carried the lot of princes in a cart, “ordered them to get out, and to take off their shirts. He then shot each one of them with a revolver from a point-blank range. He brought the bodies to the Kotwali and left them on display for a day and a night,” finishing the deed by drinking their blood.²⁵⁸ Hardly any of the Mughal elite survived. Most of the male princes perished. The women of the Mughal elite that survived the slaughter lived on the streets of Delhi, many begging for food and shelter, some of them lucky enough to land jobs as maids.²⁵⁹ By completely ousting the royal families out of power, the British filled the power vacuum they created to better establish colonial power.

²⁵⁷ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 552.

²⁵⁸ Islam, “The Backlash in Delhi,” 203-204.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 204-205.

WHAT'S PAST IS PROLOGUE: PAVING THE WAY FOR THE BRITISH RAAJ

The Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 marked the beginning of the end of regional sovereignty for most economically rich cities and much of the surrounding area in India. After the British took over the city of Delhi, much of India came directly under Crown rule. Queen Victoria officially ousted the East India Company from India in 1858, replacing its hegemonic influence with a form of direct rule that would be known as the British Raj, which would last until 1947.

Prior to the rebellion, there were no specifically British districts within the city of Delhi, but after the bloodshed of the British reclaiming the city, many British individuals actively avoided living in the “native” center that had been ravaged by military conflict.²⁶⁰ Still, a British colonial government was instituted. The racial tensions that had festered in the decades prior mounted to a height during and after the rebellion: “The British became more arrogant; even more confident of their racial superiority. To tighten their control, they boosted their military forces in India, especially those manned by British soldiers. The British had spent a great deal of money on suppressing the rebellion. Eventually, the total cost would be charged to India.”²⁶¹ Despite the increased British presence—especially in military terms—the British still depended on Indian personnel to maintain their military power. To this end, they enlisted Indian soldiers, doing everything in their power to prevent future rebellions. They did this by “generat[ing] regimental camaraderie. The organizational gamut of the regiment was designed to reduce individuality at the cost of bureaucratization... to transform the soldiers into a set of automata.”²⁶² In essence, the British fabricated a “regimental consciousness” that brought

²⁶⁰ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 287.

²⁶¹ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 102.

²⁶² Kaushik Roy, “The Construction of Regiments in the Indian Army: 1859-1913,” (Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, Ltd., 2001), 147.

soldiers together to inspire them to fight in what appeared to be their own cause (despite having an ultimately pro-Britain end goal) instead of merely fighting for pensions or monetary gain.²⁶³

Such loyal soldiers were in need for securing the economic fate of the empire. Soldiers fought through the end of the second of two Opium Wars with China, which not only strengthened their military presence in Asia but also solidified Britain's standing on trade in the Far East. While China ultimately struggled as a result of trading with Britain because their economy was not well-equipped to receive a huge influx of silver, India—under direct British control—possessed a “seemingly endless capacity to absorb silver,” which “facilitated the gradual monetization of the rural economy and the collection of land taxes on which British rule rested;” this, however, proved unfortunate for India when silver prices began to plummet in the 1870s, decreasing the exchange rate of the rupee, making it harder for India as a whole to pay home charges to London and wages for those in the colonial government.²⁶⁴ While agricultural regions did not suffer directly from the rebellion (Assam's “biggest inconvenience” was a brief obstruction of river transport, with a small-scale mutiny at Chittagong and some planters leaving their estates), all regions ultimately felt the economic pressure of keeping up with British demands.²⁶⁵ Everything became subject to the Crown.

The Rebellion and the beginning of the British Raj had a broad cultural impact as well, with one social group greatly affected by the British takeover being African slaves. The practice of slavery—specifically the act of owning a slave—officially became a penal offense with the passing of the Indian Penal Code of 1860.²⁶⁶ This, however, did not guarantee that the British would aid recently freed slaves. While some slaves received some benefits from their former

²⁶³ Roy, “The Construction of Regiments in the Indian Army,” 147.

²⁶⁴ Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 732.

²⁶⁵ Moxham, *A Brief History of Tea*, 104.

²⁶⁶ Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 65.

king, “Some of the men applied to the British Government for a pension, as the former servants had done, but they were turned down by the Chief Commissioner ... It was claimed that up to 300 former slaves had died of starvation since the British took over and in 1869 the bodies of some of these victims had been carried to the office of the Chief Commissioner of Lucknow.”²⁶⁷ Some did not apply for pensions, but some *habshi* slaves (some of them eunuchs) from East Africa requested a continuation of their pensions, but were rejected numerous times because of their participation in the rebellion.²⁶⁸ Some slaves and servants rebelled in other ways, such as the *khwajasarais*, but “despite *khwajasarais*’ attempts to subvert colonial norms of politics work and gender” through their roles in the Awadhi court, when the British completely took over, the appropriation “led to a loss of political patronage and employment. Consequently, *khwajasarais* were impoverished and eventually disappeared as a social role.”²⁶⁹

Despite religious tension catalyzed by both the British missionaries and mere British presence in India, Christianity grew. Much of this is attributed to the missionaries once again working independently from the government in India following full annexation by the Crown.²⁷⁰ While many in India still maintained their Muslim or Hindu faith, Christianity grew in popularity significantly, and became a much bigger part of the religious conversation in India.

If India had any semblance of independence or self-determination in its partnership under the East India Company, it all but disappeared when India became a direct colony of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

²⁶⁷ Llewellyn-Jones, “The Colonial Response to African Slaves in British India,” 467.

²⁶⁸ Hinchy, “The Sexual Politics of Imperial Expansion,” 429.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 427.

²⁷⁰ Copland, “Christianity as an Arm of the Empire,” 1053-1054.

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The Mughal Empire already had a preexisting network of political connections throughout northern India, all of which sought to not only establish political control, but to facilitate the management and flow of commerce from the fields of farmers to the accounts of the empire and the aristocracy. Villages were expected to pay large sums to Mughal authorities in the forms of crops (cotton), manufactured goods (gunpowder, steel), and artisanal works. However, many of the political structures set in place in the Mughal Empire began to crumble throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, even before the Battle of Plassey. The Battle of Plassey may signify the effective end of the Mughal Empire (it officially disbanded in 1857, but Plassey marks the beginning of a consistent decline of power and authority), but many of the political structures of the Empire began to dwindle independent of British action. Even in areas of India not under Company rule, states and cities began to rebel and establish independence from imperial rule. Some states existed outside of the direct jurisdiction of the Mughal authorities, such as Awadh. Given the state of the Mughal Empire, it is not surprising that some Mughal authorities sought political or business relationships with Company bureaucrats.

The Battle of Plassey signifies the growing influence of the Company and a large-scale violent resistance on the Indian side, significant in itself because of the time periods both before and after Plassey (with the exception of the Sepoy Rebellion) showing significantly less violence. While there were minor examples of resistance from India prior to Plassey, most of the records show that there was a cooperation—even dare say a respect—between the Indian elite and the British elite. In fact, most of these military conflicts were the exceptions to the much more prevalent rule of Mughal-Company cooperation. There was indeed colonial resistance and

plights for local sovereignty, but these were not as prevalent as the Mughal rulers who sought opportunities to solidify stability in their crumbling empire in any way that they could: in most cases this was through cooperation through the British. For a long while, both the Mughal elite and the Company capitalists both benefitted from the infrastructure—built by the Mughals and expanded by the Company—that directed flow of wealth from the bottom to the top of the socioeconomic strata. The Mughals expanded their wealth at the expense of the working classes, but did little to expand their political control over India, especially in competing with Company political growth. Still, they were willing to cooperate with the British because there were clear benefits from doing so: working with the Company was lucrative and provided stability in an empire desperately needing it.

The British clearly had an upper hand in these arrangements however, which is a point that must never be forgotten. The Mughals may have benefitted, but the British benefitted to a far greater extent, and almost all benefits made by the elite were at the expense of the laborers who provided both groups of elites with the means of attaining vast amounts of capital. In addition, post-Plassey India saw progressively increasing amounts of Company control. Where the Mughal Empire crumbled, the Company was quick to fill in the cracks, taking full advantage of the political and economic power vacuum. This was especially convenient given the system of taxation that the Mughals had already established in their own rule. The tax system needed to be adopted to collect money instead of material goods, but the economic infrastructure was there. The *panchayat* needed to be adopted in a way that not only the British could attempt to understand its function but also to (perhaps inadvertently) establish a system of criminal justice that favored Anglophonic Christian males over other citizens, but the system for a board of citizens making decisions that affected the community—and to a certain extent, local plights of

justice—was already there. Military forts needed to be constructed in cities to create centers for political (regulatory) functions, but the cities were already there. Indeed, even while the Mughal Empire dwindled in power, the Company was in a position for easy semi-colonial conquest because of the already existing infrastructure that was developed to its full, intricate extent by the Mughals. The caste/class dynamics in India already reinforced the economic power of the elite, and were thereby easily manipulated for the colonial purpose. Thus, while both the Mughals and the Company saw opportunities for expansion through each other, it was the British who came out on top, not only because of the state of Mughal authority at the time of intervention, but also because of the manipulation of a full-fledged capital-driven economy, one that the Mughals began but one that wasn't fully exploited until the Company took over.

The extent to which the actions the Company took affected the everyday lives cannot be overstated; politically, it affected people in nearly the same way that the Mughal Empire did, but culturally, the difference is significant.

One of the many ways in which India changed with Company involvement was through race relations. Race was not at the forefront of Indian thought before the Company set up shop and set up literal boundaries in Calcutta with “white town” and “black town.” In that case, it was clear that the economic power between the two races fell with the British, as white town was the one that had the most mansions and black town had the smaller houses. While the Indian elite used African slaves and servants, and the State of Awadh even using immigrating Africans to fill their regiments, they were not discriminated against solely by race. It is true that an African would have a significantly hard time advancing to anything beyond a servant or slave, but this was also the case for Indians that fell into the lower castes. Ironically, the British demurred to the Indian practice of using slaves from Africa. Simultaneously, they profited from the African

slavery, all the while scoffing at the Indians who used slavery, which was clearly a practice that the more sophisticated British would never condone. Indeed, the half-hearted disavowal of African slavery, combined with the air of racial superiority that many British held against the Indians, encapsulates the paradox of racist thinking in Company India. This incongruity in logic did nothing to stop the Company from distancing themselves from Indian customs, both culturally and physically. What originally started as a cooperation between elites quickly eroded into a dichotomy of British perseverance versus the Indian people and culture that gave the Company its power. The separation of white and black town, the preference to Anglophones in Company government and trials, and the preference to marrying white women to Indian women are all evidence of this.

Much of the preference to the English people and way of life stemmed from either direct or indirect influence from British missionaries. With the goal of missions being evangelization, there was naturally preferential treatment to those who accepted the dogma and traditions of Christianity. Despite the Company originally having preference for Hindus and Muslims (Christian converts had to abide by Hindu and Muslim traditions/norms), Christians were given preference in criminal justice and in certain government functions, particularly within the framework of the Company government. All of this was reinforced by the Missionary project, which sought to save as many souls as they could, sometimes providing charities and educational services not only in performing their “religious duty” but in getting more exposure to the Indian populace. The Company originally wanted to establish neutrality when it came to religious affairs, but found that it became much more difficult as the missionary societies grew in India; it became all but impossible when the Company started to actively work with the missions in fulfilling the colonial calling.

The Company did everything in their (admittedly limited and partisan) power to be conscious of Indian religions and act through a noninterventionist framework. They did this by hiring translators to translate Hindu and Muslim texts, a task which proved convenient for the British when translators' rose-tinted lenses conveniently led to a perception of British cultural values and "justification" for imperialism. Furthermore, this endeavor fell short in reaching out to Indians in that it failed to reciprocate the transfer of knowledge of language; few Indians knew how to speak English. Though the Company might have had the means to teach the English language via the Company colleges, it was the missions that were incentivized to teach English to further their evangelizing endeavors.

Thus, the merging of Company and Missionary objectives in expanding education marks the beginning of Company complacency towards missionary cooperation, and by extension, religious policies in general. On the flip side of the coin, missionaries were wary at first of the Company's manufacturing and distribution of opium and the social ills that such enterprises caused. However, eventually the missionary societies withdrew their criticisms and even benefitted monetarily benefited from the industry, arguing that Hinduism was far more dangerous to society than a market for addictive drugs. Thus, there was great complacency from both parties of each other: the Company was complacent about missions being involved with educating Indians and serving government functions, and the missions became complacent about the Company's questionable economic endeavors. Signifying a marrying of Company-driven profit and mission-driven evangelization, the cooperation between business and belief blurred the line between religious policy and government policy. It was specifically this mutual complacency that led many Hindu and Muslim Indians to believe that neither the Company nor the missions had their interests at heart. These suspicions were given material justification when

the Company asked its sepoy soldiers to bite bullet cartridges dipped in animal fat, a move which sparked the beginning of the end of the East India Company.

Issues of religion affected everyone in India, but particularly affected women; while some women and eunuchs were valued for what they could contribute to the imperial project, culturally, they were restricted by religious precepts. The Company not only misinterpreted the religious texts of Hinduism, construing certain cultural practices as acts of male oppression instead of voluntary acts of feminine expression, but also used such misinterpretations to justify intervention; the Company surely had a moral obligation to intervene if Indian men were mistreating their women. This line of thinking, unsurprisingly, did not prevent British officers from engaging in lewd behavior with Indian women at bars and in areas of town known for ill repute. The officers found convenience in prostitutes and Indian women that they cohabited with, but frowned upon marriage with Indian women, usually citing a racial protection of “Britishness,” the sanctity of marriage, or a combination thereof. The *khwajasarais*, while being seen by the Awadhi court as convenient both for governmental and for intimate purposes, were seen by the British as potentially compromising to the Company’s business- or government-related efforts, as their sexual interaction with government officials made them “corrupt.” The common thread that weaves through all of these examples is a perception of women as convenient ways to exert power insofar as they didn’t corrupt social—specifically religious—expectations and boundaries.

In a sense, the entire Company project can be seen as one of convenience. We should not be surprised that the torch-bearer of globalism and large-scale capitalism would view the colonial project in any other way. Even in the best examples of attempts to bridge the cultural gap between India and the East India Company, biases colored any possibility of mutual social

understanding. No matter the intentions to better understand the world we find ourselves in, we all conveniently see what we choose to see, and conveniently ignore what we elect to ignore. The tragedy rests not only in our failure to truly empathize, but in the lives that are affected by such shortcomings.

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