

TRANSLATED PEOPLE:
A SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF
ASIANS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND A
STUDY OF BRITISH RESPONSES TO
POST-WAR MIGRANTS FROM THE
INDIAN SUBCONTINENT.

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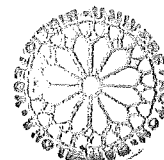
Vol. I

Tesi Doctoral dirigida pel Dr. Andrew Monnickendam Finlay

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Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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"... Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained."

Salman Rushdie, 1983a.

Donat que jo també sóc una persona traduïda, dedico aquesta tesi als meus tres traductors principals: Antonio, Daniel i Eric.

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Notes on Terminology.

* *Black*

Following the current use, *black* is used as a political term to designate non-white people and therefore can refer to both Afro-Caribbeans and Asians alike, regardless of actual skin colour. Whenever nuances of colour are deemed significant, the term *brown* is used to refer specifically to Asians, again in accordance with the practice of sociologists and anthropologists.

* *New Commonwealth*

The umbrella term *New Commonwealth* is used to describe those countries where the British ruled but did not settle in large numbers and which had considerable black indigenous populations, viz. the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the West Indies. I have included Pakistan under the heading *New Commonwealth* for the sake of brevity, despite the fact that it left the Commonwealth in 1973 and was not readmitted until 1990. Likewise, the land of Bengal was first known as East Pakistan after the partition of the Indian subcontinent as the

independent state of Bangladesh was not created until 1971. Therefore, whenever the term 'Pakistanis' is used it includes people from both East and West Pakistan unless otherwise stated.

1. Introduction.

Several studies have been carried out into the representation of blacks in literature (e.g. Street, 1975 & 1986; Dabydeen, 1986 and Kiernan, 1969 & 1987) and a great deal of research has been done on racism and racial discrimination (e.g. Banton, 1967, 1976 & 1987; Husband, 1987; Miles, 1989; Miles & Phizacklea, 1984; Rex, 1967 & 1973), most of which concentrates on the post-war period when large numbers of people from former British colonies settled in Britain responding to the demand for labour during the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s. However, there have been few attempts to forge a link between these textual images of black people, which tend to portray them in an unfavourable light, and the hostile reception afforded to the New Commonwealth migrants in the second half of the twentieth century. Imperial representations of the 'dark races' in popular literature, school textbooks and the press are still widespread and have conditioned British people's attitudes towards the subjects of the once powerful British Empire.

This dissertation aims to provide an overall study of the position of Asians in British society and to show the extent to which the influence of imperial stereotypes has

affected the integration of Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis into contemporary Britain. These images, which will be discussed at length in chapter five, have come to form part of British people's common knowledge, consequently, people 'know' what Asians are like because they have read all about them at school or in the press, although, in reality, they may not be personally acquainted with any.

The title of this thesis, *Translated People*, is taken from an article by Salman Rushdie (1983a) in which he calls the process of migration one of translation, as people are carried across the world from one environment to another in a similar way that a metaphor is a word or phrase that is taken out of its usual context to be applied to another. I understand this translation to be a two-way process. Migrants themselves take on a new identity, they speak a new language, adopt new customs and manners, but also the host population has to rearrange its world and its reality to make room for the new people. In many cases an old translation is relied on (imperial texts) without realising that new editions have appeared on the market (the demise of the Empire and the independence of the former colonies). I aim to show that not only are the Asians translated people, not only have **they** had to adapt to their new land to a greater or lesser

extent, but the British themselves and the concept of Britishness have undergone something of a reinterpretation.

This study concentrates on Asians for three reasons.

Firstly, while all black migrants have suffered from the prejudices of the host country, Asians are the ethnic group that is most resented and feared on religious, cultural and linguistic grounds. The reasons why the Asians have been portrayed as a threat to the unity of the British nation can be traced back to the medieval division of the known world into Christianity and Islam. Followers of Islam, who lived in what would become known as the 'Orient', were seen as the negation of Christianity and therefore of good. The association of evil attributes to the peoples of Asia and Africa survived the crusades and was given a new lease on life during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to justify overseas colonization. The idea that contemporary racial hostility can be seen as a legacy of medieval fears and is still used as a shield to protect oneself from one's enemy seemed to me to say more about the fragility of British culture than the power of Indian civilization, despite the fact that the British ruled India for over two hundred years. On the other hand, India is still regarded by many British people as a mystical place, a country full of depth and passion. The

attraction to the country, and at the same time rejection of the people, made the Asians, therefore, an extremely intriguing ethnic group to research into.

Secondly, I found Asians to be a fruitful subject of study because of the growing number of British Asian writers who are not just spokespeople for their community, but who are producing some of the most interesting work in English literature at the moment. However, the choice of authors has not been based so much on their merit as writers, as on their diversity of theme and approach to the ethnic situation. A profound literary analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation, since my interest in these new Asian writers lies in the political statements behind their creative activity. Furthermore, as they write in different genres (novels, theatre plays, television series, films, essays), they provide several alternative versions of life in a predominantly white person's country, which was thought to be more representative of the Asian reality in Britain today.

The third reason for concentrating this study on Asians as opposed to another ethnic group is because the British Raj has been a subject of fascination to me for many years. The subjugation of such an enormous country for over two centuries by such a small island, and the

stubborn refusal of the British to move with the times and hand the country back to its people until they had no other alternative seemed to me topics worthy of research. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the pomp and glory of the Raj, I was rather curious to discover and understand how it could have lasted so long. In fact, as chapter 5 will show, India may be an independent country, but for many people in Britain, the Raj ethos is alive and well. Certainly, there is still an enormous interest in, or nostalgia for, the Raj. The National Portrait Gallery held a spectacular exhibition from October 1990 to March 1991 on The Raj: India and the British, 1600-1947 and, on a more popular level, during the 1980s Paul Scott's The Jewel in the Crown and M. M. Kaye's The Far Pavilions were shown on television. As a schoolgirl in Britain in the sixties, my recollections of the content of history lessons dealing with the British in India are limited to the valiant exploits of Lord Clive and the dastardly crime of the Black Hole of Calcutta. Nothing was ever said about the British reprisals after the 1857 Mutiny and no mention was ever made of Amritsar and the massacre of April 1919. Consequently, I felt a kind of personal obligation not only to redress this fault by reading Indian versions of these events, but also to embark upon an analysis of the more momentous episodes of the Raj as

they were narrated to generations of schoolchildren, oblivious to the reality of the Indian subcontinent.

Although Asians are the centre of this dissertation, Afro-Caribbeans are mentioned whenever they are affected in a similar way, for example from the immigration laws which are discussed in chapter four. The experience of people from the West Indies has been somewhat different as they are English speaking and Christian, but they cannot be omitted completely from a study on racist and imperial attitudes and thus are referred to briefly either to contrast with the experience of Asians or to prove how other immigrant groups have undergone a similar process.

Chapter 2 provides a background to contemporary racial discrimination by outlining the development of racial ideas since Elizabethan times when Englishmen and women, like other Europeans, first began to wonder about the diversity of man. It provides a brief summary of how the dubious concept of 'race' progressed from identifying and subsequently categorizing human beings on physical traits to the transformation of these categories into cultural ones. It will be seen that race is now a meaningless concept to a biologist and, even to a social scientist, it only acquires significance through the definition it is given by a particular society. (van den Berghe, 1978:21) A discussion of present-day Britain and

the persistence of imperial notions of the inferiority of non-white people cannot be undertaken without analyzing the history of racist thought, which will demonstrate how nineteenth century racialism lives on in the twentieth century but under a different guise: tribalism or differentiation on cultural grounds.¹

Chapter 3 surveys the Asian presence in Britain from the seventeenth century, coinciding with the establishment of the East India Company in India, up to and including the arrival of Indians and Pakistanis in the post World War II period. The status of Asians in Britain will be seen to slowly deteriorate as their numbers increase. I have drawn on the work of historians and social anthropologists (e.g. Aurora, 1967; Roger and Catherine Ballard, 1977; Bhachu, 1985; Chandan, 1986; Desai, 1963; Fryer, 1989; Saifullah Khan, 1976a, 1976b, 1977 & 1979; Shaw, 1988 and Visram, 1986) for the elaboration of this chapter. It aims to present the Asians as a clearly distinct ethnic group with its own internal dynamic, which has undergone deep transformations to accommodate itself

¹ In order to avoid confusion over two terms which are often misused, I am following Tzvetan Todorov's distinction between *racism*, "contempt or aggressiveness toward other people on account of physical differences ... between them and oneself," and *racialism*, belief in the superiority of the white race over all others. (1986:171-3)

to life in Britain. The title and many of the sub-headings of this chapter have been deliberately chosen to parody the language of war and conquest which has been (ab)used when discussing post-war migration from the New Commonwealth. The settlement of UK citizens, who happened to be black people from former British colonies, has been likened to a full-scale invasion by unwelcome aliens, whereas the colonization of the homelands of these people was never seen in the same light. Thus, chapter 3 is entitled *The Asians Are Coming*, and many of the sub-headings evoke a similarly military feeling (*Reconnaissance Troops; The Anti-Raj Vanguard* and *Pre-War Pioneers*), while *Hooded Hordes*, which is the sub-heading for the second half of the chapter devoted to an analysis of the Asian community in post-war Britain, summarizes the reasons for the hostility felt by the host community towards the new arrivals: their numbers and their non-conformity to the British way of life.

Chapter 4 discusses twentieth century nationality and immigration policy which will be seen to be wrought with paradoxes and contradictions. On one hand, after World War II Britain needed labour urgently to fill the jobs that the white population were shunning, but on the other hand, governments were loath to extend an official welcome to black UK passport holders for fear that they would

emigrate in vast numbers and would remain as permanent settlers. It will be argued that the gradual but firm restrictions on non-white immigration were rooted in a kind of elite racism, which, conversely convinced the electorate that such restrictions were necessary and desirable and, in some cases, insufficient. Many decent-minded people strove unsuccessfully to come to terms with their belief in an open, tolerant society and the image of black people as menaces to the integrity of Britain, officially endorsed by the successive legislation. The role of the media in stirring up an already tense atmosphere in the late sixties is likewise discussed in this chapter and returned to in chapter 5. It will be seen that neither of the two main political parties of the United Kingdom emerges spotless from the introduction of racist legislation, although the three Race Relations Acts were passed under a Labour Government. Appendix 1 provides an outline of the legislation passed in Britain from 1905 to 1981 concerning the entry and settlement of immigrants and Appendix 2 reproduces part of Enoch Powell's 1968 speech, which played such a decisive role in the politicization of race and immigration.

Chapter 5 aims to explain the origin and development of negative Indian stereotypes by covering three main areas. After a brief introduction to textual

representations of the Other, an analysis is made of a selection of school history books dealing with three events occurring in British India, with particular emphasis on the 1857 Mutiny or Uprising. The texts show a gradual demystification of the role of the British, but even relatively recent ones fail to narrate these events with the plurality of perspective that one would wish.

The second area covered in this chapter is the influence of popular literature on the survival of these stereotypes. A brief summary is made of Indian characters in British fiction, followed by a more detailed analysis of five novels that focus on the events of 1857. As the Mutiny fired the imagination of British people much more than any other event in the history of the British Empire, being the subject of a considerable number of novels, the image of the Indian in these books would impress itself very deeply on readers. Moreover, the Mutiny was a watershed in Anglo-Indian relations, as the British began to fear a people about whom they had previously felt merely paternalistic. Thus, it seemed an ideal event to chose as a clear example of the persistence and, in many cases, deterioration of a received image. The novels have been chosen to represent the peak of the imperial period: Flora Annie Steel's On the Face of the Waters (1897); George Alfred Henty's Rujub the Juggler (1901), and the

post Independence era: John Masters' Nightrunners of Bengal (1951); Mary Margaret Kaye's Shadow of the Moon (1957) and J.G. Farrell's The Siege of Krishnapur (1973). I will set out to show that imperial images have survived 1947 and that Indians are still not allowed to take active parts in their own so-called Mutiny.

The final section of chapter 5 examines the part played by the press, both popular and quality, but in particular the former, in reproducing, and therefore consolidating, negative images of black people. A selection of ethnic events and a number of headlines are quoted to illustrate how the newspapers reinforce fixed ideas about the innate criminality and deceitfulness of the black or the Oriental, as opposed to the essential lawfulness and honesty of the British character. This chapter, thus, aims to demonstrate how

"the metaphors of 'blood' and 'stock' have bitten deep into the English vocabulary and are unthinkingly but daily recapitulated by teachers, dramatists, journalists and politicians." (Banton, 1967:373)

Chapter 6 presents a selection of creative writing by the British Asian community which challenges the very notion of Britishness in the post-colonial period by rewriting, as it were, the narrative of post-war immigration from a migrant's perspective. Salman Rushdie

stands out as being the most ambitious and accomplished of all the writers I have chosen. He has written several articles on 'the state of Britain' (e.g. 1982a, 1982b & 1983b) from a post-colonial viewpoint, which, together with his controversial novel, The Satanic Verses (1988), which deals with the plight of the 'translated person', have provided me with the basis for this thesis.

Hanif Kureishi's work includes theatre plays, screenplays and a novel, The Buddha of Suburbia (1990). Besides this novel, I have chosen one of the plays in which he turns to the problems of Asian immigrants, Birds of Passage (1983), (in many of his earlier plays Kureishi writes with a distinctly 'white' voice), and his film, My Beautiful Laundrette (1986), because, not only do they describe the situation of Asians in Britain, but they also say a great deal about the British and the way Britain itself has changed since decolonization.

Farrukh Dhondy differs somewhat from both Rushdie and Kureishi on account of his very optimistic view of the integration of the Asian community in Britain ² and because his children's stories, which outnumber his adult

² Dhondy considers that this integration is already an established fact, emphasizing "the remarkable rapidity with which the Asian community has made their peace with British democracy, prejudice and opportunity." (Goldberg, 1991:28)

prose and plays, tend to deal with Asians in more deprived areas with very mundane problems, ranging from adolescent pimples to how to ask a white girl out, (e.g. East End at Your Feet, 1988) instead of well-to-do Asians running businesses, such as Kureishi's characters.

David Dabydeen's first novel, The Intended (1992), paints a moving picture of a Guyanese Asian coming to terms with his own identity in post-colonial England. In many ways this novel throws more light on the image British people have of themselves rather than on the attitudes of the white majority towards their former colonial subjects.

As far as Asian women writers are concerned, their literature in Britain is, according to the magazine Artrage, "still in a relatively fledgling state". (Summer, 1991:23) However, out of a growing number of women writers, I have selected three who present another, feminine, perspective on the immigrant experience. Ravinder Randhawa's first novel, A Wicked Old Woman (1987), is centred around a rebellious Indian girl who grows up to become an extremely refractory old woman. Atima Srivastava's Transmission (1992) evolves around a young Indian woman, born and brought up in North London, who is faced with a serious moral dilemma, but who will find more support from her Indian background than from her

English upbringing. Finally, Farhana Sheikh's The Red Box (1991), like much of Dhondy's teenage fiction, is set in a London comprehensive school and shows the conflicts that British-born Asians are confronted with. Sheikh also analyzes the antagonism felt by the some of the white pupils towards the Pakistanis and the subsequent withdrawal of the latter into the safety of their ethnic community.

Throughout these five chapters I propose to provide a broad survey of Asians and Asian culture in Britain and to explain the reasons why British people have felt disturbed and threatened by the arrival of people from the Indian subcontinent instead of feeling themselves to be in debt to the citizens of a country that their ancestors had colonized and exploited in the name of civilization. I do not intend to justify this antagonism, based as it is on the transmission of stereotypes born from ignorance and fear of the unknown. On the other hand, neither is this dissertation meant to extol the virtues of the Asian community. Instead, it is an attempt to reconcile the 'truths' of the Empire with the reality of Britain in the late twentieth century.

2. Biological Phenomena and Social Myths.

*"'Race' is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth."
UNESCO, 1950.*

2.1. Biological Phenomena.

2.1.1. Multiracial Britain?

Britain in the 1990s is said to be a multiracial nation. Some people would perhaps grudgingly agree to this definition because, after all, facts are facts. But what are the facts, or rather, the official statistics? The 1981 Census revealed that out of a total population of 53,697,000 a mere 2,176,000 were non-white. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Official Handbook for 1992 shows that almost a decade later, 4.8 percent of the total population of Great Britain are non-white (2,600,000), 46 percent of whom had been born in Britain. Taking into account the larger number of births among non-whites than among whites, especially Pakistanis and Indians, and the fact that some non-whites also emigrate, it appears that the ethnic minorities only make up

a very small percentage of the total population. Even estimates for the year 2000 do not anticipate that the black and brown population will comprise more than 6 percent. (Richardson & Lambert, 1986:28) This percentage, viewed as a whole, seems insignificant, but owing to the comparative youth of the non-white sector, it has been estimated that by the end of the century, approximately twenty-five percent of all school-leavers will be from ethnic minorities. (Cashmore, 1991:20) Moreover citizens of New Commonwealth descent are not spread evenly over the country. On the contrary they are concentrated in certain areas, in particular, the inner city areas of large conurbations, such as London (Southall and Tower Hamlets), Bradford and Birmingham (see figures 6.1 & 6.2.). Thus 86 percent of the Indian population, 92 percent of the Pakistani and 94 percent of the Bangladeshi live in metropolitan regions. (Smith, 1989:31) Consequently, it is in the large industrial centres where Britain does "look" multiracial.

In actual fact Britain all over is multiracial if we take into account all the various races that have settled there from the Celts and the Romans to the Vikings and Normans, not forgetting of course the Anglo-Saxons. This sounds absurd because the peoples just mentioned do not naturally constitute a "race", or do they? The post-Roman struggle for supremacy between Celts and Anglo-Saxons was due

to linguistic and cultural differences rather than racial ones. However, in the late 19th century scientists became interested in distinguishing between Anglo-Saxons and Celts on racial terms (Husband, 1987:12; Kiernan, 1987:39; Miles, 1989:36 & Stepan, 1982:100). Irish Home Rule was much in the news at the time and it might seem that the political climate encouraged scientific discussion of non-existent physical differences. Likewise, in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, the influx of Irish immigrants arriving in New England fleeing famine and poverty stirred up racial antagonisms. The "Irish race" was deemed inferior until they gained dominance in the political arena, for example in city organizations such as New York City's Tammany Hall in the latter part of the century. (Kennedy, 1986:18 & 51; Marshall, 1968:157-160)

If we use skin colour as our defining criterion, both Celts and Anglo-Saxons may be said to belong to the same race, or to be more precise, to the same mixtures of "races". The absence of clear-cut phenotypical markers that differentiate between them points to the political expediency of inventing racial types to justify the contempt felt towards the Celts. (Gilley, 1978) Although people of Celtic origin, of which citizens of the Irish Republic are the most obvious example, are not clearly distinguishable from the resident British population, they are still

immigrants and

"in purely numerical terms the number of Irish migrants to Britain has been far in excess of any other migration." (Miles & Solomos, 1987:77)

Whether or not one considers the Irish to belong to a different race, they are unquestionably immigrants but in contemporary Britain the term "immigrant" is synonymous with non-white, which has led people to believe that Britain's multiracial character is a recent phenomenon. For the more conservative sectors of society pre-World War II Britain was populated by people of a single stock and if the country is now made up of a variety of "races", this is owing to the influx of black and brown citizens and not to the upwards of one million Irish born people living in the United Kingdom.

Is it ridiculous to include the Irish in a racial argument? Is it not equally nonsensical in the last decade of the twentieth century to discuss the concept of races at all? The idea of "race"¹ as a means of classifying human beings according to their intellectual or moral worth has ceased to be a valid scientific term. The only characteristics which could once be used with any degree of scientific efficacy were physical and physiological, as the innate mental traits of the various groups of humankind do not differ significantly. Furthermore, within each group a

¹ From this point on, whenever race appears between inverted commas it will show the ambiguity of the term.

vast range of mental capacities can be observed, which means that variability is as great among individuals belonging to the same group as between individuals of supposedly different "races" (Jones, 1981:189).

"Race", therefore, can only be a biological distinction, never a social or cultural one, although within the world of science the validity of using an obsolete term to refer to a new phenomenon, that is to the patterns of genetic variation which are not observable to the eye, is also being debated (Miles, 1991:70). Moreover, J.S. Jones argues that

"only about ten percent of the total biological diversity of mankind arises from genetic divergence between 'racial' groups". (Jones, 1981:189)

It stands to reason then that "races" do not exist and yet common sense tells us that a white European is "different" from a black African or a yellow Japanese and that this difference is simply one of race. It might be argued that the term "race" is being correctly used if this visible "difference" lies in a smaller or larger amount of melanin pigment in the skin, more or less facial hair, lighter or darker eyes or a thinner or wider nose. However, as will be discussed below, none of these is a reliable racial marker. On the other hand, if the classification of an African or a Japanese into a different race involves not only these phenotypical features but also any possible cultural, linguistic, religious, economic or intellectual

dissimilarities, the scientific definition is surely being misused and, instead, a social myth is being perpetuated.

We all know what we mean by "race" but nobody has managed to classify the groups of humankind neatly without any overlapping. Although it has been proved that race is only a valid taxonomy for the convenience of physical anthropologists and geneticists, and even then with reservations, the layman tenaciously clings to the traditional belief in profound racial differences. (Montagu, 1974) Even if such a belief is false, if it is sufficiently widespread among the members of a society, this fallacy becomes a reality in its social consequences and may lead to extreme attitudes and prejudices against those of supposedly different "races". "Race" is a definite entity to the average person in our society and s/he is supported in this belief by its practical utility and because of the insistence on its existence by the media and by public figures and institutions. (Miles, 1991:71; Murray, 1986:4-5)

What emerges from this is the need to find another more suitable term instead of the overworked "race". Attempts have been made to find a new word to express the notion of a biologically differentiated group to counteract the negative connotations attached to "race". Peoples belonging to different nations, faiths or linguistic groups are frequently and erroneously classified as a "race", whereas

in anthropological terms, "race" can only be applied to "groups of mankind possessing well-developed and primarily heritable physical differences from other groups." (UNESCO, 1951:41)

That the French or all French-speaking people do not constitute a "race" goes without saying; nobody would suggest that Catholics or Zoroastrians² are definable as a "race". However, it is not unusual to refer to the Jews as a "race", and the myth of the Jewish race has been used to racists' advantage for centuries. Ashley Montagu proves that Jews are only distinguishable on cultural grounds. By means of historical and biological evidence, such as blood group and cephalic index data, he concludes that

"from the standpoint of physical anthropology, and from the standpoint of zoology there is no such thing as a Jewish physical type, and there is not, nor was there ever, anything even remotely resembling a Jewish 'race'." (1967:317-338)

The Jews are a culturally determined group but in spite of the evidence that refutes it, there is a consensus about the physical and behavioural characteristics of the Jews which set them apart from the rest of the human species.

The UNESCO statement of 1950, paragraph 6 reads as follows:

"National, religious, geographic, linguistic and cultural

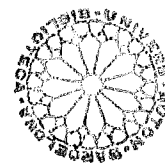
² However, not everybody shares this opinion. G.M. Towler Mehta states that "in fact, many Parsees consider Zoroastrians to be not only a unique religious group but a unique racial group as well." (Towler Mehta, 1982:245)

groups do not necessarily coincide with racial groups; and the cultural traits of such groups have no demonstrated genetic connection with racial traits. Because serious errors of this kind are habitually committed when the term "race" is used in popular parlance, it would be better when speaking of human races to drop the term "race" altogether and speak of *ethnic groups*."

The advantage of the phrase "ethnic group" over the much debased "race" seems to be the fact that the former does not trigger off a series of emotions and preconceived ideas. "Ethnic Groups" do actually exist, the term does define a subspecies of humans capable of maintaining their difference, either physical or cultural, by means of isolating barriers, which could be geographical or social. In this respect the Jews form an ethnic group, as do gypsies and Turkish Armenians, but not a "race".

The origin of the word "ethnic" derives from the Greek *ethnos* which meant a number of people living together and, by extension, a tribe, group, nation or people. This implies a much more open terminology as the precise status of the group is not fixed. Moreover, it is a reasonably neutral phrase devoid of any painful historical connotations, contrary to the now obsolete and misleading term "race".

Although official forms request applicants to fill in their ethnic origin, the notion of "race" has not yet died out in Britain. However hard the authorities try to eliminate any racial discourse, the fact remains that ideas of "race" as a distinguishing feature among humans has



survived in spite of, or perhaps because of, the many attempts to legislate against discrimination of minority groups. The acts of 1965, 1968 and 1976 are "Race" Relations Acts and the Commission established in 1976 to investigate unlawful discriminatory practices and to issue non-discrimination notices, is for "Racial" Equality. Thus even the title of this legislation has perpetuated the idea of biologically discrete populations. (Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:58) Charles Husband explains this apparent incoherence:

"That we have in Britain politics defined in terms of race relations rather than ethnic relations is not a minor semantic oddity. 'Race' as a means of categorizing people theorizes the 'social facts' of colour difference in a rigid and absolute way which carries all the implicit naturalness and authority of centuries of 'race'-thinking." (1987:16)

Logically enough then, British people still believe in "race" as a living, meaningful concept. A background to the development of "race" has been included, which does not pretend to do justice to a subject of great complexity, but which is needed in order to contextualize contemporary racial attitudes and to give a tentative answer to the question: what is, or was, "race"?

2.1.2. "Race" Before 1800.

Prior to the nineteenth century the traditional biblical story of the creation was relied on for a meaningful interpretation of the origin of man. Religion was so powerful a force in everyday life that any unorthodox view about the origin of the human species outside the monogenetic one of humanity as descendants of Adam and Eve was extremely unlikely. Adam and Eve were supposed to be the original parents of all humankind as the earth was thought to be as old as the Bible claimed it was, that is about six thousand years old. The Bible is also responsible, in a manner of speaking, for the creation of the myth of "race". According to Genesis, X, 32 the three sons of Noah form three distinct lines of descent and "by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood".

In fact the word "race" did not enter the English language until the early sixteenth century. Its origin, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is "obscure" but appears to have been a borrowing from French or Spanish. The first recorded use of the word "race" in the sense of "a set or class of persons" was in the poem The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Sins written in 1508 by William Dunbar: "Bakbyttaris of sindry racis." In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the term "race" was usually used to

denote the offspring or posterity of a person, for example, in Paradise Lost (1667), X, 385-6, Milton writes:

"High proof ye now have giv'n to be the Race/ of Satan."

Race as lineage coincided with the biblical version of the origin of the differences between mankind. The descendants of Ham, Shem and Japheth founded a separate stock in, presumably, different parts of the globe.

Race as a scientific concept appeared in the late eighteenth century coinciding with the Linnaean classification of all living phenomena. The Swedish botanist, Carl von Linné or Carolus Linnaeus as he is perhaps better known, published Species Plantarum in 1753. In it Linnaeus devised a binomial taxonomic system for classifying all living things, assigning them a "genus" name and a "species" name, for example *Homo Sapiens*. He realised that, as was the case with animals and plants, there could be subgroups or subspecies which were different but were still mutually fertile, that is could produce fertile offspring.³ Therefore he divided mankind up into four groups: *Africanus negrus*, *Americanus rubescens*, *Asiaticus fucus* and *Europeus albescens*. These oversimplified classifications were soon to be contested by the other

³ An example of two similar animals which do not constitute a subspecies would be horses and donkeys because mules, which are produced by mating a female *Equus caballus* with a male *Equus asinus*, are sterile.

founding father of physical anthropology, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who, in his De Generis Humani Varitate Nativa, published in 1775, proposed dividing man, not in terms of his continent of origin, but rather in terms of his apparently most important distinguishing feature: the colour of his skin. Blumenbach's racial groups were: Caucasian, Ethiopian, Mongolian, Malayan and American. Although he, like Linnaeus before him and Buffon after him, thought, as would anthropologists right up to the twentieth century, that to classify was to explain, he made clear the essential unity of mankind. These three scientists were conscious of the arbitrary nature of their groups and in no way claimed for the superiority of one group over another. In fact the notion of a common ancestry was not questioned until the end of the eighteenth century, when the growth of biological and human sciences made the racial debate decisive.

The eighteenth century witnessed the expansion of the overseas empires, which meant an increasing exploitation of, in general black, slavery. In the pre-slavery epoch, differences between groups of mankind were not thought to represent anything fundamental and certainly no idea of the alleged superiority or inferiority of races had emerged. In the ancient or medieval world slaves were not racially distinguishably from their masters. In many cases they had lost their freedom through personal misfortune or because of

the outcome of wars, but there was no clear connection between a slave's social status and his/her racial group. (Stepan, 1982:x-xi)

The growth of the empires threatened the traditional monogenetic view of the origin of the species as reports of different people came back from abroad and Europeans began to wonder why these people looked so different. By the end of the eighteenth century there were serious doubts in intellectual circles about the unity of all man in a single created species, *Homo sapiens*. More and more scientists were keen to embrace the religiously unorthodox view that the human races were separated from each other by such profound mental, moral and physical differences as to constitute separate biological species of humankind. (Stepan, 1982:2)

2.1.3. "Race" After 1800.

The French naturalist Georges Cuvier continued Linnaeus' work and compiled a study of the animal kingdom. For Cuvier *Homo sapiens* was divided into three subspecies: Caucasian, Mongolian and Ethiopian. All mankind was one species as it is inter-fertile. Cuvier argued that individuals of similar "race" looked alike because of their common descent. Cuvier can be said to be responsible for the subsequent

confusion and ambiguity of the word "race". He used it indistinctly to refer to lineage or stock, which was the earlier use, and the concept of a variety. Cuvier also relied heavily on the concept of a biological type, which would facilitate the way for his successors to discuss differences without specifying whether they were differences at the level of genus, species or variety. (Banton, 1987:29-31) A racial type was a kind of essence or pure physical form lying underneath all the appearances of diversity. The nineteenth century would be marked by its tireless construction of racial typologies. The difference between the eighteenth and nineteenth century conception of race lies in the fact that a general term with no more than an arbitrary value came to be enshrined within scientific terminology and methodology, which hid the fact that there was no objective reality there. (Montagu, 1967:65) Even nowadays the idea of a permanent racial type which is transmitted to subsequent generations regardless of the geographical, socio-economic or cultural environment dies very hard indeed.

Logically, if scientists began to accept "race" as type in preference to "race" as subspecies, it meant that the polygenetic view of the origin of mankind was gradually gaining ground over the monogenetic or biblical one. The monogenetic view depended upon the assumption that human

life on earth was to be counted in not more than six thousand years. However, anthropologists began to doubt that the existing range of racial diversity could have appeared in such a short period of time. The early nineteenth century saw not only the growth in biological sciences but also in geology and palaeontology. No-one doubts the enormous impact Darwin's On the Origin of the Species had on nineteenth century thinking, but the way had been paved, not so much by Robert Chambers' Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation, published in 1844 and in which the idea of evolution was first introduced to Victorian England,⁴ but by Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology published between 1830-33. Lyell claimed that geological change was gradual rather than catastrophic and thus directly challenged the biblical story of creation. (Bowler, 1989:133 & 143-8) The earth was therefore much older than had been believed. If the earth was that much older, it stands to reason that mankind could also have existed for longer than the orthodox four to six thousand years. The findings of ancient skulls in remote parts of North America and Africa together with other archaeological evidence obliged scientists to extend the timescale and conclude that the great biblical empires were comparatively recent

⁴ Chambers did not exploit the process of adaptation to the environment, which was one of Darwin's main theses.

products of a long-standing progressive trend. Not all Victorian scientists believed in life as an ascent of a ladder towards a higher state of development, a continuous progression towards a divinely ordained goal. Many saw life as a kind of cyclic model of development. Even in the latter part of the century when the debate over human origins had ceased to be controversial, some biologists were still convinced that evolution was a discontinuous or cyclic process. (Bowler, 1989:183) But whether life was a progression or a succession of cycles, inherent in both world views was the idea of hierarchy and a struggle to perfection.

A great chain of being, in which higher forms could develop from lower, had been in vogue since Linnaeus referred to a *scala naturae*. Cuvier had placed the Caucasian higher than the Mongolian or Ethiopian in his hierarchy. The botanist Lamarck claimed that animals could be ordered so as to show a graded series of perfection. His linear hierarchy indicates the order in which the classes have evolved. However, race was gradually being identified with culture and the idea that the diversity of human customs and behaviour might be dependent on biology as opposed to external factors such as the environment encouraged European scientists to consider the polygenetic view of human origins as the answer to their questions. (Banton, 1967:26; 1987:17)

British scientists were more religiously orthodox than their European colleagues, but, even in Britain, by the 1840s monogenism began to be undermined. On one hand, James Prichard, who was a strong opponent of slavery, embraced the monogenetic view established by Linnaeus and Blumenbach. On the other hand, two figures, James Hunt and Robert Knox, stand out as firm polygenists and, what appears to be a logical consequence, racialists.

The nineteenth century saw the birth of race science. James Hunt, who was to break away from the monogenist Ethnological Society and form the racialist and polygenist Anthropological Society of London, used more data and more sophisticated techniques than Prichard had. His conclusions were based more and more on the permanency of racial types and the existence of a scale of racial worth. (Stepan, 1982:32-3 & 45) Robert Knox, the Scottish anatomist, whose career was seriously damaged by his connection with the body-snatchers Burke and Hare (Banton, 1987:55), was close in spirit to Count Arthur de Gobineau, the French reactionary and aristocrat of the Second Empire. Gobineau's work The Inequality of the Races (1853-5) argues, amongst other things, that man is not bound to be free because the belief in the equality of man is a fallacy. He also considered that intermingling races was bad because it diluted the character of the "best" races. Knox argued

strongly along similar lines advocating for the predominance of the Saxon race. For him race was a kind of deformation, a deviation or arrest of embryological development. As the human embryo developed, it was 'arrested' at different points to make the different races of mankind, leaving the Saxon race at the most highly developed stage of the organic plan. (Stepan, 1982:43)

This recapitulation theory had many adherents among the embryologists of the early nineteenth century. The history of civilization, it was claimed, followed the same pattern as the growing embryo. The supporters of this analogy assumed their species represented the highest stage of development reached at the time. In this way they could explain why there were so many cultures or species which had not developed as far as it was possible to do up the evolutionary ladder. They were simply immature versions of the higher species. (Bowler, 1989:141) Knox's The Races of Men (1850) was to spread ideas of racial typology considerably and attract many followers. His often quoted statement

"With me race, or hereditary descent, is everything; it stamps the man" (quoted in Stepan, 1982:4)

summarizes the standpoint of much of mid-nineteenth century scientific thought.

Meanwhile, 1859 saw the publication of Darwin's On the Origin of the Species, which was the link between the monogenetic view of race as lineage and the polygenetic view of race as type. Darwin's work was not understood or accepted in its entirety as it contained too many theories for the scientific establishment to accept in one go. It verified the basic idea of evolution and pioneered the theory of natural selection, this latter theory being the one which enjoyed a relative lack of success in Darwin's own time. In fact, natural selection remained peripheral to most biologists' views until the late nineteenth century. (Bowler, 1989:144) Darwin was not interested in either the monogenetic or the polygenetic interpretation of the world, that is, he was a monogenist in the sense that he believed the human species evolved from a primate ancestor before dividing into different races (Stepan, 1882: chapter 3), but otherwise he found the issue irrelevant to evolution. He sought to explain both the change and the continuity in man. Man was one species but had not descended from a single pair, in contrast to what the traditional monogenists thought. (ibid.: 104) The implications of Darwin's theories would have been unpalatable to the Victorian idea of achievement of a particular goal. For this reason he made sure this was implied in the conclusion.

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved." (Darwin, 1964:490)

His model of evolution was not a ladder of development but a branching tree in which there was no central trunk running through to mankind as the goal of creation (Bowler, 1989:12). Physical anthropologists could not reject the belief in an undying essence each individual could be attached to. Anthropology itself would have seemed impossible if racial traits or types were not relatively persistent. Thus, the fact that scientists still clung to the concept of racial types even after Darwin's theories had been accepted by the scientific establishment proves that the theory of evolution had not supplied a valid alternative for the age of imperialism. Instead, what evolution had supplied was a new scientific language with which to express old prejudices. The "lower" races were the ones which had "evolved" least far up the evolutionary ladder or they represented the "childhood" of the white man. (Stepan, 1982:83) The discovery that Europe itself, the cradle of civilization, had once been inhabited by stone-age peoples, whose way of life must have been as "primitive" as that of the lowest known savage obviously gave a boost to the view of European cultural maturity and an unquestioned view of

the inferiority of less industrialized societies. Archaeological findings, such as Pengelly and Falconer's discovery of stone-age tools at Brixham Cave in 1858, seemed to prove that man's stone-age ancestors, like modern savages, were both culturally and mentally inferior to the modern white race. A widespread conclusion was that they had poor tools because they had not yet developed the mental powers that would allow them to produce better quality work. (Bowler, 1989:81)

Evolutionism justified racial attitudes which had already emerged as a consequence of white imperialism. The drive to find differences in the races of mankind grew out of the general social climate of the day. A natural stratification of the races mirrored the social stratification of the classes. Michael Banton argues that in the second half of the twentieth century "race" has come to indicate minority status as a replacement of old class distinctions. (Banton, 1987: chapter 5) Thus, a hierarchy of species was too clear, too natural and much too convenient to reject. It became a central part of race science as the vast number of new data being collected about fossils, extinct species, skull shapes and sizes all pointed inevitably towards the idea of a graded series, in short, the old Great Chain of Being. (Stepan, 1982:12-15)

Scientists untiringly tried out and rejected a number of criteria for establishing racial markers. Linnaeus had proposed skin colour and continent of origin. Blumenbach rejected the latter but retained the former. Both racial markers were found to be too general. Before the "discovery" of America, the Caucasian race mainly lived in Europe and the Negroid in Africa. Imperialism and slavery greatly altered this state of affairs. As regards skin colour, only the ends of the colour continuum, for example extreme white or extreme black, have any value. In between there are so many shades and gradations of colour that scientists could not agree on where to make the breaks to form racial groups based on skin colour.

A Swedish anatomist, Anders Retzius, first introduced the cephalic index in 1844. (ibid., 97) Even though initially it seemed a breakthrough in the search for a definite racial marker, dolichocephalic (long-headed) people were to be found amongst West Africans as well as amongst Europeans and brachycephalic (broad-headed) people could also be found in the north of Europe as well as among people of the Negroid race. Moreover, Franz Boas would prove that the skeletal development of a person can be affected by diet and other environmental factors. (Boas, 1940:60-75) Other criteria had to be found. Ernst Heinrich Haeckel, a German biologist, suggested differences in hair type, that is

straight, wavy or curly, might be of racial significance until it was discovered that all three hair types were equally distributed among Europeans. (Klass & Hellman, 1971:34-5) Paul Topinard, a French anthropologist, put forward the nasal index as a more reliable criterion. Narrow noses were associated with cold climates, broad noses with tropical climates. However, nasal index soon died the same death as previous attempts to categorize mankind. Among other reasons, Eskimos, an obviously different race to Europeans "have the narrowest noses in the world". (ibid., 36)

The problem was that "races" were known to exist but just how many there were and on what criteria the divisions were to be made occupied scientists all through the nineteenth century. The desire to force facts to fit pre-existing theories seemed to be behind all race classification. Racial typology required the existence of a definite, infallible non-adaptive trait and Karl Lansteiner's discovery in 1909 of four distinct types of blood seemed to herald the long-awaited end to what had appeared to be an impossible search. People of different blood groups could not interchange blood, therefore people could be assigned to the race indicated by their blood type. Again, this classification was short-lived. All four types of blood are distributed among the entire human species.

All the traits which had once been proposed as clear racial markers (blood type, skin colour, hair shape, skull size) have an independent distribution so it was inevitable that the twentieth century would see features other than phenotypical ones put forward as a means of classifying mankind into races.

A few words must be said about the rise in phrenology. Its adepts firmly believed in the correlation between people's mental abilities and the shape of their heads. A logical consequence of this was to move from the study of any one individual to the study of group differences. A link between brain size and mental faculties came to be taken for granted, proof of a growing materialism among late nineteenth century society, suggesting that mental faculties did not derive from one's immortal soul. (Bowler, 1989:88-9) Scientists claimed they could detect clear differences between white and non-white races. Skulls were collected from many parts of the world and measurements of the cranial capacity were carried out in large scale fashion. Conclusions were reached about the mental capacity of the owner of the skull and, as usual, generalizations were made

and "phrenology justified empire-building". (Fryer, 1989: 171)⁵

One of the natural consequences of Darwin's theory of evolution was eugenics, which could be defined as the science of racial improvement through selective breeding on the human species. The eugenists believed that differences in mental, moral and physical traits between individuals or groups of individuals or "races", were hereditary. This was a belief that had been implicit in race biology since the early nineteenth century. It seemed clear that man himself could improve the human race by encouraging the fittest to breed and discouraging the weakest or the unfit from having children. In other words eugenics was promoting the work of nature (natural selection) but faster and possibly more efficiently. The eugenists introduced the idea that intelligence was fixed by heredity, which would be taken up later by Jensen and Eysenck. Therefore they insisted on nature rather than nurture as being important. They did not consider that the family could be a social as well as a biological transmitter. The eugenists also felt they had a moral obligation to "improve" the human race. That is man had to weed out where nature did not. (Stepan, 1982:chapter 5)

⁵ Although phrenology was "already on the wane in European science" by 1840 (Stepan, 1982:28), J.G. Farrell's Magistrate in The Siege of Krishnapur (1973), set in 1857, is a great believer in its principles.

It must be remembered that the late nineteenth, early twentieth century was a time of economic depression, growing poverty and political radicalism. The Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902) had raised the alarm that the British were becoming degenerate and if nothing was done about it, Britain would not be able to continue her imperial mission because the population would not be mentally and morally capable of it. While in Great Britain eugenics was more of a class rather than a race phenomenon, it is still obvious that eugenics continued the racial discourse started by Hunt and Knox earlier in the century. Moreover, immigration was fast becoming a scientific issue. In 1905 the Aliens Order (see 4.1.2.) was the

" first restrictive measure to limit the entry of Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe and it formed the foundation for subsequent legislation until after the Second World War". (Miles & Solomos, 1987:79)

If eugenisists were promoting the improvement of the biological quality of the people at home, it seemed a pity to see Britain invaded by inferior elements from abroad.

In the first half of the twentieth century the general consensus was that abilities were fixed at birth and were not likely to change. Environmental or social factors were not taken into account. This can be seen in Britain in the education system that classified a child early on in his/her school career, depriving him/her of the possibility of

progression from the low category to the high. Thus nature was seen to determine a person's intellectual capacity more than nurture and the adoption of this criterion into the institutions gave legitimacy to an unscientific fact. (Husband, 1987:15)

Before the discovery of genetics and its importance for reliable racial classification, "race" scientists always averaged out their findings in order to make the data fit the "facts" instead of questioning these facts. (Montagu, 1967; Stepan, 1982:xv) Mendel was the first to understand that it was the inheritance of separate traits and not complexes of traits which had to be studied. Conceptions of "race" which involved transmitting large aggregates of characters ("race" essences or racial types) were seen to be meaningless. The early twentieth century witnessed a slow decline of the old racial science and mankind then came to be seen in terms of populations as opposed to fixed racial types. The old, classificatory biology of race rooted in anatomy and morphology gave way to a new evolutionary biology of man based on genetics, ecology and environment. The phenotype was replaced by the genotype and genetically defined populations do not always correspond to the old anthropological idea of race. The unit of analysis became the population, defined neither morphologically nor behaviourally but genetically and statistically. Instead of

people being forced into a racial straitjacket, from which racial stereotypes were to develop, every individual in a population is considered to be genetically unique, owing to the independent assortment, recombination and mutation of genes controlling traits. Groups of individuals can share a characteristic distribution of genes and form a population which is statistically differentiated from another population. (Stepan, 1982:176)

Thus, however plausible the racial hierarchy theory appeared, it was soon found to lack any solid basis. Race and culture are two different things, that is if "race" is anything at all. Culture or learned behaviour

"allows for much greater adaptability to circumstances [than animals], but it progressively lessens the importance of biologically transmitted behaviour," (Benedict, 1942:11)

and Benedict's point is driven home with the inclusion of a long list of peoples who have radically modified their behaviour patterns in accordance with the circumstances. One example she gives are the warlike and bloodthirsty Vikings, who are the ancestors of the peaceful, non-aggressive Swedes and Danes. The obvious absence of any permanent trait of superiority is also underlined by Richardson and Lambert who observe that many African civilizations were at the zenith of their power when Europe was still in the Dark Ages. (Richardson & Lambert, 1986:12)

Following the Second World War and especially because of the holocaust, UNESCO published a series of statements on race and race prejudice. (1950, 1951, 1964 & 1967) These statements by distinguished anthropologists hoped to bury once and for all the "scientific" basis of race and racial prejudice. If they did, it was short-lived, because in the late 1960s two figures emerged with data that proved the existence of distinct racial differences in intellectual abilities. Jensen argued in 1969 that heredity was far too important a factor to be overlooked when educational performance failed to achieve the foreseen goals. Eysenck (1971) also strongly presented the case for racial difference in intellectual abilities. He argues that although the notion of a 'pure race' is a myth, this does not mean that different peoples do not have a different genetic endowment that can be investigated and which can be used to distinguish them. For him the facts are indisputable. In his surveys blacks scored up to fifteen points of IQ below whites and even when environmental, educational and socio-economic influences are evened out as much as possible, this difference does not seem to diminish much. Eysenck ventures to suggest that there are good reasons to believe that a considerable amount of this difference is genetic in its origin. He takes great pains to say that his conclusions should not be misinterpreted, that blacks should

not be segregated into 'special' schools because of their apparent low IQ, and yet he devotes a whole chapter to the intelligence of the American blacks, as if they formed a homogeneous group. He denies suggesting that IQ measurements determine a person's worth but he, as well as Jensen before him, both insist on there being 'racial' differences by which they keep alive a concept which by the 1970s has been proved to lack any real scientific validity.

The early 1970s saw a resurgence of new scientific race theory in the shape of sociobiology, which represents a kind of fusion of Darwinian evolutionary theory and population genetics. Amongst other claims, sociobiology seeks to find a biological basis for almost every human activity, disregarding social and environmental factors completely, and it links racism with nationalism, both of which are "natural extensions of tribalism". (Rose & Rose, 1986:51) Sociobiology emphasizes the biological explanations for social discontents. For the sociobiologist cultures are not, and possibly cannot, be acquired. In the same way that insect society, in particular that of ants, is organized on hierarchical terms, human society is likewise. Social inequalities are, according to their views, not man-made but "all in the genes". As B. Banerjee points out "The problem will become more complex and acute if attempts are continued to biologize every social attribute, be it racialism, castism or nazism." (Banerjee, 1981:730)

The race question seems to be alive and well and still capable of creating controversies within the scientific community. The problem is that these debates over, for example, race and intelligence, raised by Jensen and Eysenck or a built-in biological determinism as suggested by sociobiology merely serve to reinforce rather than erase false notions about race and what will be discussed in chapter 5, racial stereotypes.

2.2. Social Myths.

2.2.1. Ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism is identification with one's own group. At its best it is defence of one's own and at its worst, it is the feeling or a belief that your people are the centre of the universe and that other people are not only different but also inferior. Ethnocentrism is not an invention of the twentieth century as all people or peoples are or have been ethnocentric. The Ancient Greeks divided humanity into two groups: Greeks and everybody else, everybody else being

barbarians, that is alien to Greek civilization. What is of interest to us here is the European attitude towards the black man.

Before the colonisation and population of America, the main focus of interest and concern was the Orient, which comprised the Middle East, North Africa and India. In fact the Arab world represented the Other for many centuries and would exist as a place isolated from the mainstream of European progress and badly in need of Western redemption. (Said, 1991:206) Hence, the European vision of the Other was that of the heretic, "barbaric, degenerate and tyrannical". (Miles, 1991:19) Islam was the negation of Christianity therefore Mohammed was anti-Christ, a devil. Consequently the Other was represented in terms of a binary opposition: Christian/heathen. This apparently simple dichotomy, established during the time of the Crusades, was not going to undergo a radical transformation with the discovery of new lands, but would be extended. That is to say, **Christian** included whiteness of skin, and all the Elizabethan connotations of white, purity, virtue, beauty and good. **Heathen**, on the other hand, included darkness of skin and embedded in the term 'black' were a vast number of negative attributes in common use during the sixteenth century. Dirty, foul, malignant, sinister, atrocious, iniquitous, threatening, wicked are some of the twenty-four

listed in the Oxford English Dictionary. White Englishmen and women unconsciously classified non-whites as 'bad' as well as 'different', which would take many generations to eradicate, if it has ever effectively been totally eradicated. It will be argued below that in fact this early prejudice has lain dormant only to be revived at certain crucial moments. (cf. Walvin, 1987:69-70)

Initial contact with the blacks did not coincide with European involvement in the slave trade. On the contrary, Peter Fryer records that during the Roman occupation of Britain there were African mercenary soldiers. which means that there were blacks in the country even before the English came. Throughout the Middle Ages blacks were unusual but were not such a rare feature of court life. In 1555 five West Africans were taken to England to learn the language so they could act as interpreters. This incident occurred eight years before the English started trafficking in slaves and can be seen as an attempt to break into the gold and ivory market hitherto monopolised by the Portuguese. (Fryer, 1989:1-10)

The African's blackness disturbed and intrigued sixteenth century Englishmen and women. They had presumed that the effect of the sun was the cause of a dark skin, but when it was proved that the Africans who lived in England remained as black as the day they arrived, the environmental

explanation began to lose ground. Living in a less sunny climate did not cause their skin colour to fade and even any children born in England were the same colour as their parents. The Bible was resorted to for the answer to all these questions. Jeremiah had said that the African would always be black: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (XIII:23) It was inevitable that in many cases Africans' and Indians' skin colour would come to be interpreted as being the result of God's curse on Ham. (Genesis, IX:25-7) The Elizabethan adventurer, George Best, pursued this even further. Ham disobeyed Noah while in the Ark and copulated with his wife so that the first child born after the flood would inherit all the dominions of the earth. God punished Ham by making the child and his descendants "blacke and lothsome", a kind of scarlet letter publicizing his sin forever. (Jordan, 1987:56-7)

Thus, a definite link was established between blackness and sexuality. It must be remembered that Africans were considered to be lecherous, lustful, and beast-like. It was rather unfortunate that apes were discovered at the same time as Africans, which led people to wonder if the latter were not the result of mating chimpanzees and some unknown African beast. (ibid.,51-3) This belief about the African's animal-like sexuality was common knowledge before s/he became pre-eminently a slave. Much of English literature had

already confirmed the lustful nature of the inhabitants of the African continent. The embraces of Shakespeare's Othello were "the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor" (I,i,127) and Aaron in Titus Andronicus is almost the incarnation of lust when he defiantly carries off his black bastard son. Although Othello is a long way from conforming to the conventional stereotype of a black villain with the ambiguities of blackness and whiteness that are raised in the play, in Renaissance drama black characters generally tended to represent a threat to order and decency and, above all, white womanhood. (Cowhig, 1986:4)

Consequently, from the sixteenth century onwards Africans, and by extension all dark-skinned people, were seen as over-sexed and immoral and the association of uninhibited behaviour with black people would survive well into the twentieth century. In the aftermath of the 'race riots' of 1958 (see 4.2.1.), The Times published the following comment:

"[In areas affected by the riots] there are three main charges of resentment against coloured inhabitants of the district. They are alleged to do no work and to collect a rich sum from the Assistance Board. They are said to find housing when white residents cannot. And they are charged with all kinds of misbehaviour, especially sexual."
(3 September 1958)

Undoubtedly, the hostility and fear provoked by the blacks was also tinged with a certain amount of envy and it became

convenient to ascribe to them a kind of conduct that was as desirable as it was socially unacceptable. (Banton, 1976:49)

The theme of sexual assault by dark-skinned men on white women, which has been exploited for possible racialist ends in many works of fiction, can be traced back to Shakespeare's The Tempest, in which the native subject Caliban is accused by the colonizer Prospero of having attempted to violate the honour of his daughter Miranda. This pathological lust of black men for white women would figure as a leitmotif of much of early Anglo-Indian fiction (Narayanan, 1986:19) and lies at the core of E.M. Forster's A Passage to India (1924) and Paul Scott's The Raj Quartet (1966-1975). In the former novel, the hysterical panic that results from the mere thought of interracial rape suggests that the foundations of colonial authority were as much at risk as the purity of the white "race". (Ware, 1992:234) In both Forster's and Scott's novels, and much of earlier Anglo-Indian fiction, the theme of rape can be seen as indicative of the fear and the guilt of the colonizers. The fear of mutinous attacks coexisted with a sense of guilt for violent British suppressions of nationalist fervour and the rape of a white woman by a native is a kind of "symbolic atonement ... for the white man's political rape of India". (Naik, 1991:44)

2.2.2. Imperialist Attitudes.

Racial antagonism, as we understand it today between blacks and whites, possibly never existed in the world before 1492. (Cox, 1970) Certainly sentiments of racial superiority coincided with the growth of the overseas empires. What is not clear is whether the whites made the blacks slaves because they saw they were inferior and ill suited to any other work or whether the inferiority of blacks was a convenient excuse in order to justify enslaving them. Peter Fryer considers that the latter is probably true, (Fryer, 1989:165) and it does seem that the whole notion of "race" was an invention of an exploiting class bent on maintaining its privileges against what was profitably regarded as an inferior social class. The slave-owners justified slavery very easily by saying that some men were born to be masters and others to be slaves. Taking a leaf out of Aristotle's book,⁶ they happily invented a theory which justified social discrimination.

"Might was Right" was the watchword for imperialism, and few could deny the truth of it. James Anthony Froude,

⁶ "By nature, too, some beings command, and others obey, for the sake of mutual safety; for a being endowed with discernment and forethought is by nature the superior and governor; whereas he who is merely able to execute by bodily labour is the inferior and natural slave." (Aristotle, Politics Book I Chapter 2.)

author of English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century (1895) stated that strength of will and love of freedom were racial characteristics which gave the English a right to dominate others. Sir Charles Dilke in his work, Greater Britain (1869) advocated the superior potential of the Teutonic race. The Triumph of 'Saxondom' is the rise of the British Empire. Although Sir John Seeley, a professor of modern history at Cambridge, made no claim for white superiority, he supported imperialism and claimed the conquest of India had been carried out owing to the superior discipline of the English. Indeed, for the vast majority of people during the heyday of the empire, Britain's, and by extension the white race's, power was due to an innate efficiency, skill, intelligence, in short, superiority of its members. The question people asked themselves was why Britain had advanced so much leaving all the other nations of the world far behind. The answer that came to mind with increasing frequency was that the races were endowed with different capacities for intellectual development and the Anglo-Saxon "race" had been dealt more than its fair share. Victorian readers of Walter Scott's Ivanhoe (1820) must have been influenced by the struggle between two races and the ideal mixture of Saxon and Norman elements implied. Scott played on the theme of racial conflict, perhaps even introducing it for the first time into popular fiction.

Events overseas strengthened the preconceived ideas people had about "other races", that is, non-whites. In 1756, the year before Clive's victory at Plassey, the infamous affair, known in history books as "The Black Hole of Calcutta" took place. Civilized Europeans were shocked at the inhuman punishment meted out to 146 unfortunate British subjects. Although the incident

"may have been exaggerated, ... it has never been disproved" (Bowle, 1974:133)

and nobody can condone the Nawab's behaviour, the herding of so many people into such a small space for so long in such heat may have been due to lack of foresight or sheer incompetence rather than deliberate cruelty. What is interesting about the affair is how it was reported and the omission of the minor detail concerning the British Governor's abandonment of his compatriots to the mercy of the Nawab Suraj-ud-Daula while he and his entourage escaped the attack on the city. The incident served to prove the essential barbarism of the Indians.

Likewise, another occurrence in the overseas empire would reinforce widespread views about the brutality of the Other. In 1865 twenty Europeans were murdered during a rebellion of black farmers at Morant Bay in Jamaica. However, Governor Eyre's reprisals far surpassed any atrocities committed by the blacks. Over four hundred

people were killed and at least six hundred were flogged or tortured including children and pregnant women. Public opinion was divided in Britain. James Hunt and the members of the Anthropological Society of London staunchly defended Eyre's conduct and held him up as a paragon of imperial virtuosity. Among Eyre's detractors were John Stuart Mill, Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer, called by Thomas Carlyle "nigger philanthropists." Eyre was retired from active service but with a governor's pension, proving that his excessive zeal was officially condoned. (Bowe, 1974:287-8; Fryer, 1989:177-9; Hall, 1989; Lorimer, 1978: chapter 9). The spilling of Negro blood was accepted as an inevitable part of empire-building and the only way to keep the savages in check was for the whites to govern them.

Eight years before this regrettable incident in Jamaica, the event that was to bring India into the mainstream of British politics and public concern took place. In 1857, exactly one hundred years after Plassey, the fate of the East India Company was sealed. What British history books call the "Indian Mutiny" and in India is known as "The Great National Revolt" or simply "The Uprising of 1857" evoked the first manifestations of popular imperialist sentiments. Whatever one wishes to call it, the rebellion of 1857 was a watershed in British-Indian relations. It did not merely lead to the transfer of power from the East Indian Company

to the Crown, it also heralded a profound change in Anglo-Indian attitudes. From 1857 onwards the British gloated over their racial superiority, creating an unsurmountable gap between the foreign rulers and the natives. In Britain people were outraged by the atrocities committed by the rebels and the cruel revenge taken by the British soldiers was heartily approved. Some dissident voices were heard in protest about the way the gruesome reprisals were boasted about. In particular John Stuart Mill, who resigned from the Company in 1858 in opposition to direct Crown administration, was one of the public figures who spoke out against the sensational treatment given to the savage reprisals in the press. However, the view that the Indians had shown themselves in their true colours, that they were culturally, intellectually and racially inferior, was one shared by the great majority of people. The Times of August 15th 1857 assured its readers that

"wherever the British have made a stand, with ever so small a body capable of fighting at all, they have maintained the superiority of their race and their cause."

There was rarely any doubt about the legitimacy of British rule in India in the first place. The wrong had been done by the "Mahomedan pretenders and Hindoo fanatics" and the leader continues in the same vein:

"Looking to the affair as a mere campaign, everything is going on well, and the complete reassertion of our authority has become a question of time." (August 15th)

Apparently, what The Times calls "this unmerited insurrection", carried out by "the native rabble" on "unsubstantial grounds" (July 1st) needed to be stamped out so thoroughly that it "shall never die or decay in Indian memory" (August 15th). Certainly the sight of the severed heads of the two young Mughal princes neatly presented on a platter to their father, the emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, by William Hodson, or the bodies of numerous Indian leaders blown from cannons would not be easily forgotten. Robert Montgomery, who succeeded John Lawrence as Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, wrote to Hodson congratulating him on "catching the king and slaying his sons. I hope you will bag many more!" (Quoted in Thompson, 1925:65)

This was obviously what The Times meant by

"...we are the Providential governors of India, ...we must now inflict a terrible retribution and purge the land of its crimes. We have done much, if not our utmost, to *humanise* the people, to teach them *justice*, and to give them *liberty*;" (August 15th 1857; emphasis mine.)

India progressed from being a distant colonial possession, ignored by the majority of the population in the mother country, to a symbol of Victorian imperial might and splendour, in short "the jewel in the crown". Thus the role of Britain underwent a change. Instead of gently coaxing

the Indians into embracing Western civilization and Christianity, Britain in the post-rebellion period limited her activity to reaping enormous profits from trade and imposing a rule of a white elite on the natives. As the Indians were incapable of governing themselves, it was the white man's burden to put order among the chaos their country had fallen into. The British being the best examples of the white race, it fell to them to educate the Indians into European habits and culture.

The cultural and racial inferiority of the non-whites was demonstrated by these barbaric outbursts against authority, an authority which was clearly established by the cultural and racial superiority of the whites. The concept of "race", which had first been based on misguided evidence and simple superstition, became enshrined in scientific terminology. Even when race theories were subsequently found to lack any solid basis, the seed of racial prejudice had been sown. Racial stereotypes survived and still survive, bolstered up by fiction, newspapers, history books and even institutionalized by law, as we will see in chapters 4 and 5.

3. The Asians Are Coming.

"It is ... truly when he looks into the eyes of Asia that the Englishman comes face to face with those who will dispute with him the possession of his native land."

Enoch Powell. 5.11.71.

3.1. Reconnaissance Troops.

Until the 16th Century all the continents could be characterized by the colour of their inhabitants. Europe was white, Africa black, Asia yellow and America and Australasia red. All the 'races' were neatly confined to, what Blumenbach considered to be, their original habitat. (Stepan, 1982:36-8) This convenient classification was shattered with the advent of colonialism and the slave trade, which involved the forced migration of millions of Africans to North and South America and the Caribbean. In turn, this would be followed by the voluntary migration of whites to the New World.

When the British Empire was at its zenith, a large number of Britons in the mother country had some connection with the running of the colonies either through relatives or friends but this does not mean that they had

any **personal** contact with the natives.¹ Possibly many only knew about them from travel books, conversations with people who had been 'out there' and simply from generally shared knowledge.

However, while it is safe to say that people were not accustomed to working alongside blacks or living next-door to them, non-white people were not unheard of in Britain before 22nd June 1948, the key date for the beginning of black immigration to the United Kingdom, when the *Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury carrying Jamaican men who were coming in response to the call for labour. Despite official concern over their arrival (Dean, 1987:317) these men were by no means the first of their colour to live and work in Britain.

Peter Fryer records black men, mercenaries of the Roman army, in Britannia as early as 210. (Fryer, 1989: 1-2) It is difficult to know with any accuracy exactly where the non-white people mentioned originally came from. Until the latter half of the 19th Century little attention or interest was attached to the country of origin of dark-coloured people with the result that all were inevitably

¹ Many people worked in the London office of the East India Company and may never have set foot in India in their life. One of the better-known employees based in England was John Stuart Mill, who rose to become head of the London office.

classified as 'black'. Likewise, any Asian seaman, regardless of whether he came from India, China or Arabia, was termed a *Lascar*.² Certainly in Elizabethan days, the term 'blackamoor' could include practically any inhabitant of Asia or Africa. The initial contacts of the East India Company, granted its first charter in 1600, were with people of South India or Bengal, which explains why Englishmen would habitually think of all Indians as 'black'. (Kiernan, 1969:34) In 1601 Queen Elizabeth I issued her famous proclamation ordering the expulsion of all the "negars" and "Blackamoors" from her kingdom in the hope that their absence would alleviate the economic problems of her white subjects. (Fryer, 1989:10-12; Cashmore & Troyna, 1983:35) While most of these undesirables were no doubt of African origin, faraway lands were still too remote to make individual classification of them necessary. It is also clear from the regal proclamation that expulsion of the black population was seen as expedient in order to cure the

² "Lascar" was the name traditionally given to all Indian seamen before Indian Independence in 1947, although the term was used loosely and could easily include other Asian sailors. There are various theories about the origin of the word. Visram (1986) suggests that it comes from the Urdu 'Lashkar' for soldier, while Dunlop & Miles (1990) also quote the definition given in J. Salter, *Missionary to Asiatics in England* (1873), which is a combination of the Persian 'Khalasi', sailor, and the Tamil 'Kara', a worker.

country of its ills. During the reign of the second Elizabeth, a similar solution, euphemistically called 'repatriation', would be suggested.³

As far as Asians were concerned, they were known to perform in the Lord Mayor's pageant in seventeenth century London and they certainly were not an uncommon sight in the eighteenth century. Towler Mehta claims that the first Indians to visit England arrived in 1742. (Towler Mehta, 1982:244) In 1790 an Indian Gentoo [Hindu] conjuror was performing at Bartholomew's Fair (Chandan, 1986:23) An unfortunate case is recorded of a Indian family of strolling players, originally engaged to perform in Suez, who were taken over to England without receiving any money and subsequently abandoned to their own fate. The performers, who spoke no English, were eventually shipped back to India at the expense of the India Office. The prompt humane action of repatriation may have been due to the desire by the authorities to keep the London streets free of destitute Asians, which was to become a serious problem in the first half of the eighteenth century. In order to prevent a similar case occurring, an Emigration Act was issued in 1864 which declared:

³ Apart from the National Front, the loudest voice among those clamouring for repatriation of (especially) the Asian settlers was that of Enoch Powell, Conservative MP for Wolverhampton South-West.

"England is not a place to which emigration (for the purpose of labouring for hire) from British India is lawful; consequently any person who takes strolling players or men following similar professions to England violates the law, since these men labour for hire in the full legal sense of the term" (Act N^o XIII. India Office Records. Quoted in Visram, 1986:23)

The first presence of Indian slaves in Britain dates back to 1621, when William Bragg claimed £6,875 from the East India Company, which included 13 negroes or Indians, six women and seven men and boys. (Chandan, 1986: 21) Many of the black servants it was so fashionable to own in the eighteenth century were from India. (Fryer, 1989: 77) Most of these servants had been brought back from the East by the nabobs, those enterprising gentlemen who had made their fortune in India in the early days of the East India Company. Trade being the sole purpose of the Company at the beginning, it became a status symbol to have an Indian servant to show how successful one had become on one's return to England. Likewise, many families came back with *ayahs* (Indian nurses) for their children. After a pampered life in India, these people were reluctant to give up such luxuries. Warren Hastings, one of the early, more inspired Governor-Generals, returned with two Indian boys and four Indian maid servants. (Chandan, 1986: 22)

Not only could higher officials from India and retired plantation owners from the West Indies enjoy this privilege, people who were ordinary clerks for the East India Company also made a triumphant reappearance in England with Indian servants. Many of the Englishwomen who travelled to the East brought Asian servants back with them. Among the best-known of these travellers is Eliza Fay, who records having stranded her Indian maid servant on St. Helena because of the girl's bad behaviour. The girl was subsequently sold into slavery but her sins caught up with Mrs. Fay on a return trip to the island. She was denounced and obliged to repatriate the servant. (Fay, 1986: 242 & 284)

Climatic conditions in India being so hard for the Europeans together with parents' fears that English children might become too "nativized", many children were sent back to England for their schooling. (Allen, 1992: 34-5 & 215) On many such trips they were inevitably accompanied by Indian servants. The novelist W.M. Thackeray recalls returning from India in 1817 in the company of "a Calcutta serving-man". (Visram, 1986: 11)

Not only were these Indian domestics a status symbol, they were also a cheap source of labour and, like African servants, became extremely fashionable in the eighteenth

century, to which many paintings of the period testify.⁴ These Asian servants shared a similar fate to their African counterparts. They were often ill-treated and many ran away from their masters, that is, if they had not been abandoned first. Many British families only required the help of an ayah during the sea voyage and cast them out to fend for themselves in a foreign country without food, friends or shelter. Newspapers of the period give evidence to the large number of forsaken servants. Many of these unfortunates advertised their services in exchange for a passage back to India. (Visram, 1986: 12) Others were even advertised for sale as the following advertisement in Tatler shows:

"Black Indian Boy, 12 Years of Age, fit to wait on a Gentleman, to be disposed of at Denis's Coffee-house in Finch-Lane near the Royal Exchange." (9-11 February 1709)

Consequently, as domestics were, by and large, the bulk of the immigrant Indian population in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, all Indians came to be seen as servants, that is, people of an inferior, subservient class. However, not all the Asians in Britain at this time were performers or servants. Indian seamen, or

⁴ Examples of such late 18th century paintings are Johan Zoffany's *Warren Hastings, his wife and an ayah* (c. 1787); *The Auriol and Dashwood Families* (c. 1783) and Sir Joshua Reynolds' *George Clive with his family and an Indian maidservant* (c. 1763-5)

Lascars, came to public notice after a letter was sent to the Public Advertiser in March 1785 drawing the attention of the public to the distressful state of these men

"who have been dragged from their warmer and more hospitable climates by our avarice and ambition"
(Quoted in Fryer, 1989: 194 & Visram, 1986:37)

Indeed, by the end of the century, Lascars had joined the ranks of the black poor population of London. They were employed on ships that sailed between Britain and the East. Often flogged or forced to eat forbidden foods on board ship, many were cast adrift in Europe with remote possibilities of finding a return passage to their port of origin in India. The East India Company had washed its hands of these men because they did not actually own the ships that the Lascars sailed on. They hired the vessels and once they arrived in London, the seamen were discharged until they would presumably find a return passage. This waiting period might last several months, during which the Lascars were left to their own devices. After several complaints were made, from the public and the Lascars themselves, the Company was obliged to take charge of these men while they were in Britain, which they did after 1795, but they refused to provide the men with temporary employment because the foreigners would be seen to be stealing jobs from the indigenous population of

English and Irish labourers. (Visram, 1986:43) An echo of this argument would be heard just over a hundred years later with regard to black seamen, whose services were no longer required after World War I.

However, in 1823, as a result of a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, a Merchant Shipping Act was passed. The act obliged the East India Company to notify the authorities of all Asian sailors or Lascars employed on board each ship, and to repatriate any such natives left behind in Britain. By means of this act the poor law authorities could claim from the Company any relief afforded by them to destitute sailors left behind by shipowners. (Visram, 1986:47)

In spite of the provisions of this act in the 1850s these Indian seamen were still enduring appalling conditions during their stay in Britain. Peter Fryer records that many were "herded like cattle" living six or eight to a room without bedding, chairs or tables. Those who fell ill lay for days in hospitals or workhouses unable to communicate their needs across the language barrier. (Fryer, 1989:262) Nor did the Merchant Shipping Amendment Act of 1855, which ensured the natives of India employment in a vessel returning to the subcontinent, put an end to all the hardships suffered by the Lascars, both on ship and ashore.

The year of the Indian Uprising (1857) saw the opening of a "Strangers' Home for Asiatics, Africans and South Sea Islanders" in Limehouse, East London (ibid.) and the Glasgow Sailors' Home (Dunlop & Miles, 1990:150). It seems an ironic coincidence that an attempt at Christianity at home should contrast so greatly with the brutality being carried out in the Empire. Lascars were employed on British ships well into the twentieth century and the Home operated until 1937, when it was demolished. Thus, around many British ports Indian seamen were a familiar sight for over two hundred years. (Visram, 1986:49) Conditions on board ship were far from pleasant and in spite of the relative comfort of the Homes or lodging houses for Asians, some seamen deserted their ships and stayed on in England. In the East End of London and in Liverpool small Indian communities began to grow. Their numbers were small but

"they could scarcely find a congenial atmosphere in a Britain where Indians were looked down on as 'natives' and, for years after the Mutiny, vilified."
(Kiernan, 1978:52)

As would be the case in later years, they strove to maintain their own festivals and religious rites. In 1889 an Islamic mosque, the first in Britain, was opened at Woking (Illustrated London News, 9 November) It is practically impossible to guess the numbers of Asians

living in Britain in the nineteenth century. Two thousand Lascars were said to visit the country every year but this "might have been an exaggeration". (Chandan, 1986:23) A missionary who toured the country in 1856-7

"met only 81 Indians, 18 in Liverpool, 14 in Manchester [the rest in London]. In Birmingham he found three lodging-houses for Asians" (ibid.)

The plight of the Lascars may give the impression that all Asians in Britain prior to the 1950s were despised and only barely tolerated. While this is basically true, there were a few exceptions which are worthy of comment, although reading between the lines, an underlying hostility seemed to condition their acceptance by the host community. Whenever individual Asians are mentioned, they are usually middle-class professional people, invariably male, who earned the grudging respect of their white contemporaries.

One such individual, who was famous in his time although not much admired, was Abdul Karim, who became a great favourite of Queen Victoria. He was an Indian servant brought as a gift from the Empire on the occasion of her Golden Jubilee in 1887. The Viceroy's 'present' was so well liked that he was singled out from the royal retainers and promoted to be Victoria's *munshi* or teacher. He was allowed special privileges such as putting the powder on the blotting paper and standing behind her

chair as she wrote, so, in terms of protocol, he became quite important. Victoria was very fond of him and Karim taught the Queen all about India, its religion, customs and language. In 1890 Von Angeli was commissioned to paint a portrait of the munshi and in 1894 he was appointed "Indian Secretary". Such high honours being conferred on a mere 'native' did not make him popular among the members of the court, who spared no efforts to disgrace him in Victoria's eyes. In France rumours were circulated that they were having an overfamiliar relationship. Lord Salisbury thought that he would sell secrets to the Turkish court and jeopardise the security of Empire. (Dhondy, 1984, *passim*) However, not very much is known about Karim because all the papers relating to his period of service were destroyed after the Queen's death. His wife was only allowed to keep a few letters in Victoria's handwriting when the munshi himself died in 1909. (Visram, 1986:30-33; Gifford, 1990:27)

Abdul Karim's success story is not well known, in spite of its 'Dick Whittington' flavour. He certainly does not figure in traditional history textbooks, no doubt due to the fact that he was hated by Victoria's household for being so close to the Queen, and any documents that might recall his presence were conveniently removed. It would be altogether too tempting to

attribute the contempt he inspired merely to racist feelings. He was clearly an upstart, whose sudden rise to fame and fortune had gone to his head. He thought he was so grand that he sent Christmas cards from himself to the Viceroy, the Governor of Bombay and other high-ranking officials but they were returned without being opened.⁵ He had the effrontery to send Christmas cards to people who belonged to a higher class, which suggests that the insult was more to do with rankist attitudes than racist. A Christmas card from a Rajah would definitely **not** have been returned.

An example of "the black contribution ignored" (Visram, 1984:8) was Sake Deen Mahomed, "Shampooing Surgeon to His Majesty George IV". This former surgeon of the Indian army travelled to England out of personal choice, as opposed to the hundreds of Lascars and servants, Abdul Karim for one, who were shipped off to a strange and unwelcoming land. Mahomed married an Irish girl and settled in Brighton, where he introduced his Indian vapour baths and shampooing establishment. Shampooing, from the Hindi *champi*, meant a massage of the

⁵ This additional information about Abdul Karim was obtained during an interview with Farrukh Dhondy on 16th July 1991. His one-man drama, *The Empress and the Munshi*, written for television in 1984, is one of the best sources of information about Karim.

limbs, which was carried out, from behind a flannel tent, during a steam bath. This innovative method soon achieved great popularity and Mahomed's establishment became famous in high circles. It was patronized by distinguished clients, such as Lord Castlereagh, Lord Canning and Sir Robert Peel, and he was entrusted with the supervision of the Royal Baths at the Brighton Pavilion.

Mahomed cured a large number of patients, mostly rheumatism and lumbago sufferers, some of whom were even sent to him by eminent physicians. (ibid.,9) That this, initially, unorthodox treatment should have become so popular owes much to the enterprising spirit and medical skill of this native of India. Mahomed was, perhaps, the most famous of all Asian doctors, but he was by no means the only Indian practising medicine in Britain. Well-to-do Indian parents often sent their sons to Britain to be educated at public schools and university. The majority returned home after graduating but some remained to practise law or medicine. A large number of these professionals became anglicized and thus merged with the indigenous population. (Allen, 1971:34) In the last decade of the nineteenth century a small number of Indian oculists or 'eye specialists' were practising in various British towns, among them Edinburgh. (Dunlop & Miles, 1990:148)

From the early part of the nineteenth century onwards, as communications became easier between India and Britain, the movement of people in both directions increased. While it is impossible to give definite numbers before the 1960 census, in which ethnic origin was asked, it is estimated that there were approximately 10,000 black people in Britain before World War II.⁶ (Sherwood, 1985:116). Sheila Allen calculates that 5,000 Indians had been in Britain "for a fairly lengthy period" by 1949, of whom 500 were seamen settling before World War II and between 3,000 and 4,000 peddlers and their dependents. (See 3.4) The remainder would include professional and business groups. (Allen, 1971:35) James Walvin quotes the Indian population of Birmingham in 1939 to be 100 (including 20 doctors and students), six years later this figure would have increased tenfold, the majority being former sailors who had resettled in local industries. (Walvin, 1984:109)

⁶ The heading 'black residents' embraced Africans, West Indians, Indians and Arabs. Apart from seamen, musicians, shop-keepers, and peddlers constituted the bulk of the non-white population. Black professionals, including doctors, could not have numbered more than a few hundred.

3.2. Political Voices.

3.2.1. Moderates.

The first Asians in Britain who were involved in any political activity rarely went as far as questioning the presence of Britain in India and demanding the withdrawal of the imperial government. Until World War I they were generally moderates who believed in essential British justice and thought that by educating public opinion about the wrongs of British rule, people would realize that reforms were needed and would insist that they were carried out. Rajah Rammohun Roy is known as the 'father of Indian nationalism' as during his stay in Britain he submitted a report to the parliamentary committee on Indian affairs, which was

"the first authentic statement of Indian views placed before the British authorities by an eminent Indian".
(Fryer, 1989:263)

Roy was only in Britain for three years (1830 to 1833) but even in so short a space of time he notched up three important 'firsts' for himself. He was the first Brahman to visit Britain, (ibid., 262) the first Indian to involve himself in politics in Britain and, most significantly of

all, he first brought the reality of British rule in India home to the British.

Despite his pioneering effort, Roy never managed to awake the consciousness of ordinary people, for whom India meant "a hundred million crouching Hindus" (Kiernan, 1969:25) The early Indian challengers to the Empire had an arduous task trying to convince the public that the "crouching Hindus" were their intellectual equals and were capable of taking an active part in the running of their own country. The bulk of the British people accepted without question that India had to be governed by the British for its own good. (Metcalf, 1965:324) One man who did carry on effective propaganda on behalf of India for more than fifty years, both inside and outside the House of Commons, was Dadabhai Naoroji, Britain's first Asian Member of Parliament. He was, in fact, Britain's first black M.P. but had his skin been a shade or two darker, it is doubtful whether he would have been accepted as a candidate for Central Finsbury, let alone elected in 1892. Regardless of personal characteristics, Naoroji could win support for his campaign because he had

"the appearance and the manner of a cultivated English gentleman, his face a shade or two off colour, perhaps, but certainly not darker than many an Australian ... and his mastery of our language is marvellous in its fitness and its fluency." (Quoted in Visram & Dewjee, 1984:10)