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The British in India were notorious for the complexity of their social hierarchies and obsession with ceremonial precedence. It was almost as if they wished to replicate what they perceived as the complicated system of castes and other forms of ordering within Indian society. As is well known, they theorised much about caste, often creating unreal straitjackets in the process. Yet if the Indian reality was often different from the suppositions of their imperial rulers, so too was the sense of strict categories which the British created for themselves. India actually afforded opportunities for class destabilisation. Individuals who would be classified as working class in Britain could aspire to higher, sometimes considerably higher, status within the Empire. Moreover, the British seemed to seek practical ways in which Indian caste and social hierarchies could be translated into the British class system. Through these efforts at reconciliation, apparent rigidities could be shaken out into new structures. And this happened most notably within Britain itself.

Martin Wainwright's study examines in illuminating detail the multifarious ways in which the British not only attempted to create class comparabilities, but brought their sensibilities about social pretensions and proprieties to bear on many practical situations. Many different sorts of Indians visited Britain: lascar seamen, ayahs, craftspeople at exhibitions and other shows, performers of various sorts, high-born visitors, curious travellers, petitioners, women, and of course, most notably, students. The India Office and other agencies frequently had to make decisions about such people: how they should be received, how disputes were to be settled, what should be done with the indigent, whether they should be repatriated at public cost or not. As Wainwright demonstrates, such decisions were made on the basis of various criteria, including loyalty to the British Empire, potential for success within the processes of the 'civilising mission', and perceptions about supposed social position within a class pyramid. Invariably, such criteria were more important than those of race or religion, while in the gendered sphere Indians were judged according to how well they fitted the concepts of 'gentleman' or 'lady', categories which were themselves heavily imbued with class overtones. To aspire to these, it was necessary to fulfil requirements of 'breeding', 'manners', education (private), as well as the capacity to alternate between city and country (with a particular emphasis on the latter), to participate in the hunting, shooting and

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fishing fraternity, and to value 'character' over educational attainment.

Yet the British seemed to have no desire to create some kind of *évolué* class along French lines. Deculturation was not part of their mission. Indeed, on the contrary, they preferred Indians to continue to look like Indians, represented by their dress and other aspects of visual and cultural affiliations, even down to a willingness to accept ancient oriental languages in the place of Latin and Greek. In attempting processes of social assimilation and rapprochement, members of British and Indian elites developed a similar anxiety about the social orders 'below' them. But to all of this we must add further complications of ethnicity. Just as Indians came from many parts of the sub-continent, so too did the British represent a variety of nations within the United Kingdom. It is inevitable and appropriate that for a pioneering study like this much of the evidence comes from England and the 'golden triangle' of educational institutions at Oxford, Cambridge and London. But some day we need a related study of Indian experiences in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. These were undoubtedly different. There were many Indian students at Scottish universities such as Edinburgh and Glasgow and these institutions (as one example) were providing full access to degrees for women from the 1890s, almost three decades before Oxbridge permitted their formal taking of degrees. Social rankings and codes might be seen as somewhat distinctive in the 'Celtic fringe' and an examination of whether the Indian experience was consequently variable outside of England would be exceptionally interesting. But for the moment, Martin Wainwright's book offers many suggestive pointers to further research as well as to the further conceptualisation of these processes.

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