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**'The Special Relationship' between the  
British Empire and its Jewel India in  
Shrabani Basu's**

***Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the  
Queen's Closest Confidant***

*A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English as Partial Fulfilment of the  
Master Degree in Literature and Civilization*

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## **Dedications**

*I am devoting this thesis to all my beloved people, especially my lovely mother, who have been my source of inspiration.*



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## Abstract

This work covers the hidden story of Victoria and Abdul ; a young Indian Muslim who came to play a central role at the heart of the British Empire and his influence over Queen Victoria at a time when there was so much talk of sedition and unrest in India. Yet, at its heart it is a gentle friendship story between an ordinary Indian who was sent to serve the Queen for her Golden Jubilee, and who opens up a new world of culture to the ageing Monarch that survived the resentment, jealousy and racism that he caused amongst Victoria's inner circle and the British Royal family who attempted to destroy this amity ,and took their revenge from him after the death of Kaiser El Hind. This research is a quest for rediscovering the Raj nostalgia by tracing how the Queen was surprisingly modern in her views on people from other cultures. Through the analysis of *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of The Queen's Closest Confidant* written by Shrabani Basu and which is adapted as a movie motion recently, this work aims at exploring the distorted relationship and cultural conflicts between India and Britain against the backdrop of a context wherein individuals failed to connect because the humanistic virtues, tolerance, sympathy and good temper were ineffective in a time of religious and racial discrimination. It is a story of an unknown Indian servant and his Queen, of an Empire and the Jewel in the Crown, and above all, of love and human relationships. On how a culture between different places are usually very diverse, the culture of an Englishman and an Indian are opposites. Despite the recent demands that try to reclaim any possible real synergy for the future ties between Britain and India on both the political and the economic fronts.

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# **General Introduction**



## General Introduction

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Britain's 19th century was a time like no time before. It is characterized by different changes that took part during the reign of Queen Victoria ; the longest monarch's reign of her time. It was a period of a multifarious incidents that touched society, culture, politics, and economy. The British imperialism of India was a focal point above all these, where Great Britain emerged as the most powerful nation, and it had turned into the world's workshop, and India was a major supplier of raw materials for that workshop.

Sometimes, history amuses, and sometimes, it fascinates ! Perhaps the greatest part of history is its gossip, all those historical episodes in which some everyday life and relationships made a mark in history. The Victorian Age was a time of great prosperity as it was the century of the Industrial Revolution which brought Britain a huge technological advantage, and also it was known as a time of peace and serenity under the rule of one of the significant and much talked about Monarchs in England's history ; the Queen and the Empress of India Victoria .

Significantly, this era of Queen Victoria was one of the most important times for the British Empire which emerged as the most extensive and powerful of the modern European Empires. Even though the positive aspects might seem to dominate, the bad or at least the questionable ones have to be mentioned mainly by bringing technology and within it violence, to promote democracy all over the world is a topic of a serious matter. However, with the example of India it becomes obvious, that the British where unethical in some ways, and violating people, and exploiting their goods to get control over others cannot be evaluated as good or modern. Even by hosting a great event like the Great Exhibition to showcase Britain's prestige and its colonial power through bringing the innovations and industries of its colonies together under one roof, notably the Indian ones, was a significant affair for the empire's benefit and strictly an imperial one.

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The English too simply arrived at an opportune time and succeeded to control India, though the Indian mutiny showed a desire on the part of Indians to win back control of their own country, but it lacked organization, support, and leadership, and it left widespread bitterness, and doomed to fail.

In the Victorian time frame, the British Raj was at the pinnacle of effectiveness and India was its heart. It was referred to as 'the jewel in the crown' for its significance inside the British Empire. Of all the valuable belongings, the connection among India and England had been of enormous prominence. Obviously, through colonialism that was awful including for a portion of the British authorities who managed the Raj, where a few came to see their job similar to a peacekeeper between different ethnic and religious gatherings, regardless of the incongruity of the British having energized and abused their pioneer subjects on these grounds at the first place, by which the British domain mushroomed with a few changes for its own advantages.

Recently, there has been a renewed interest in the Raj nostalgia thanks to the story portrayed by Shrabani Basu and narrated in her book *Victoria & Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*, and which had been adapted into a British movie entitled: *Victoria & Abdul*, seeking a deep interest in Indian affairs during the British rule over India. Additionally this book is about the social relationships which reveal an important phase in the Queen's life through this story that sparkled from the British agenda; a story of a unique friendship flourished between her Majesty the Queen of England and one of her Indian attendants of a Muslim heritage; Abdul karim who turned to be her Munshi, the man who was Queen Victoria's prized confidant whom she trusted enough to acknowledge his opinions about the British rule in India, and who not only made her love curry, but also taught her to read and write Urdu and the Holy Quran.

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The aim of this paper is to study the connection between Britain and India through the role that Queen Victoria played to strengthen a special bond with India. Unlike earlier sovereigns and even later ones, Queen Victoria developed a very determined and unconventional views of her times about racial inferiority, and about the treatment of her subjects be them Muslims or non-Christian peoples in her empire, though she never set even a toe on the Subcontinent. This English's affiliation with India has beautifully been described as a 'Golden Bird' which everybody tried to own it. This illustration can be noticed through the book written by the historian Shrabani Basu *Victoria and Abdul*, to set a new chapter of the Queen's life that describes the reality of the relationship between the two cultures and races, and on how the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized creates some bitter differences that cannot be crossed.

Knowing that the British are not interested in making lasting connections or any kind of friendships with Indians. They are more concerned with consolidating their power over the land and its people, on the belief that they are the conquerors and the Indians are the subjugated ones. The interest of this research work that Basu attempted to unfold and prove on the amity between India and Britain, through the lost and the hidden story of the Queen and her Munshi is centered on the following questions:

- What was the kind of the unlikely bond that led the Empress of India to befriend one of her Indian servants and rendering him her Munshi ? and what common ground do they share, despite their differences?
- How could a possible friendship be between the ruler and the ruled ; a British and an Indian under the colonial circumstances ?

Accordingly, the very idea of the British Raj, or the British rule over India seems extraordinary. Upon all it must be to reveal an empire rooted far more in violence than in virtue, far more in chaos than in control. Hence, the British exploited

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India's natural resources to the maximum of their capacities, leaving the Indians to salvage what they could when they left. By and large, India confronted a gigantic assignment to recuperate from the blows that two centuries of provincial principle arrived on its economy. The British Raj in India was a stupendous achievement, through which it functions as "dispenser of India's destiny". With regard to issues of racial and religious intolerance, opines that the relationship between the different races does not work smoothly in the imperial India, and the case of creating any kind of bonds between an Indian and an English is quite unusual, despite the influence that the Indian culture had on the British colonists, and which are felt till nowadays.

To answer these research questions, this work is divided into two chapters ; the first chapter aims at highlighting the importance of India to the British Raj during the Victorian Era where significant social and cultural aspects that characterised Queen Victoria's reign took place, through the many changes and improvements that were made ,and how colonialism was an exploitative practice typically the British rule in India that was expanded to a greater part of the world, and the eminent influence of it on the Indian culture and on creating any bond between the English and the Indians.

The second chapter, however, attempts to unfold the friendship that blossomed between Queen Victoria and her servant, Abdul Karim, and which scandalized the court, notably by the prejudices and feelings of superiority of the British royal courtiers toward this amity who tried to erase Karim from history once the Queen died, and to destroy an important chapter that had been discovered coincidentally from the British archives.

By the end, all elements of the research will be brought to an overall analysis to determine whether a friendship between an Indian and a British is possible like the case of 'Kaiser El Hind' and her Indian attendant Abdul, and to give other opportunities for researchers to look for the significance that Queen Victoria played and how she cherished her colony India.

# Chapter One

# The British Raj during the Victorian Reign

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### 1.1. Introduction

The Victorian Era was a major period in the history of Great Britain, where England became the world's most powerful and richest countries by ruling a quarter of the world's population, thereby having the largest empire. Despite the conflicts and obstacles that the British Empire faced during its rise and development, it spread to the far corners of the world and ultimately exerted its influence in numerous territories. Among which it reached India to be the focal point in its imperialistic history. Victoria was an important proponent in transferring control of India from the East India Company to the British government in 1858, and then she was declared "Empress of India" in 1876.

Thus, this chapter relates the significant events that characterized the Victorian Age including the British rule in India ; the cherished jewel of the British crown, and the way the British treated their Indian counterparts. It is not surprising then, that the British considered it the most valuable of all of Britain's colonies.

### 1.2. The Victorian Reign

Queen Victoria (1819-1901) was the primary English ruler to see her name given to the time of her rule while as yet living. The Victorian Age was portrayed by quick change and improvements in about each circle, from advances in scientific and technological knowledge into changes in populace development and area, which prompted monetary blast and thriving. Today, the nineteenth century can be related with, religious perception, institutional confidence, and family esteems.

For the most part, nineteenth century families were enormous and patriarchal. They energized diligent work, decency, social concession and religious congruity. While this perspective on nineteenth century life was legitimate, it was oftentimes tested by contemporaries. It saw the birth and spread of political developments, most eminently socialism, radicalism and composed woman's rights. British Victorians were

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energized by topographical investigation, and at sea their supremacy remained to a great extent unchallenged consistently.

During the Victorian heyday, work and play expanded dramatically. The stimulated travel and leisure opportunities had been appreciated by numerous individuals of this now great extent urban culture, and the progress of scientific thought led to vital changes in their society.

While this short overview can just incompletely abridge a few qualities of the nineteenth century, it illustrates that society was divergent and that nobody's highlight can serve to give a conclusive perspective on what it intended to be "Victorian". In fact, it does not adequately indicate the nature of this complex, paradoxical age that was a second English Renaissance. An age that deserved the connotation of 'the sun never sets on England'.

### 1.3. The British Society during the Victorian Age

The Victorian era was one of its kind in comparison to present times. Indeed, even the perspective on conduct had various things not equivalent to nowadays. In a period, where one as often as possible sit at the table with a hat on, it was unseemly for men to try and take a seat at a table with gloves on, much less leaving a hat and gloves on for an entire meal. Something very similar for the ladies if they used an older man's first name, for example ; this was viewed as improper and a lack of respect.

Since most Victorians prized propriety, one's notoriety was of tremendous significance. This is best exemplified by an eminent English writer: " On manners, refinement, rules of good breeding, and even the forms of etiquette, we are forever talking, judging our neighbors severely by the breach of traditionary and unwritten laws, and choosing our society and even our friends is by the touchstone of courtesy" (Young 13). The manner in which that society dressed additionally demonstrated how strict they were. It was a period wherein arms and legs were alluded to as extremities.



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Much the same as other mechanical social orders, the British society saw astounding changes amid this period. As the Victorian society was a separated one. Firstly, the Victorian upper class consisted of the royal family, and other aristocrats of the Victorian court. They were in a powerful position giving authority and had much better living conditions than anybody else, by managing large industries like the shipping or mining industry, and the fact that they were a part of the “royal” class gave them a bit of leeway over everything on account of the title that they had. Secondly, the middle class a new group emerged and it included businessmen and factory owners and was commanded by the manly rule. Nevertheless, it had a very successful time in Victorian England. Finally, the working class which was often referred to as the lower class that had become completely shut from the political process, and their working conditions were poor and made for an unpleasant life to live, adding to that the Industrial Revolution left them without occupations.

Amid the Victorian Era, the social class arrangement of that time unbendingly characterized the job of women. There were four main classes that the women were divided into they were: nobility, white collar class, upper average workers, and the lower common laborers. These harsh positions of the divisions between the classes made ladies have an unpleasant life, and they did not get many choices except to accept it the way it is. To the extent the British Empire is concerned, it proceeded with the obtaining of domains and exchanging dispatches amid this period with a large number of problems to face from poverty, injustice, and uncertainty of morals (Wilson 80). Something else that this general public started to place an incentive in was education that came to be regarded as a universal need, and eventually a universal right. By 1900, there was near-universal literacy, an epic accomplishment thinking about how the appalling circumstance of poor children had been years ago.

The same case was imposed on religion, the Victorians experienced a great age of doubt, the first that called into question institutional Christianity on such a large scale due to progress made in science and technology causing by that speedy changes

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in daily life that affected all categories and as a consequence the Victorian society. Victorian Britain's unprecedented prosperity brought material comfort and security to a far greater proportion of the population than ever before, but also disasters for the deprived ones.

### 1.3.1. The Industrial Revolution

Despite the fact that society overall would be seen as very conservative, the Victorian era was actually a very progressive era. It featured the Industrial Revolution, where machines were being worked to deal with numerous jobs, like railway lines that connected England's major cities of Manchester and Liverpool and opened the first public railway line in the world, and science was starting to take off with numerous new thoughts, including the theory of evolution that sparked during the Victorian era. The Victorians had a mission to portray and arrange the whole regular world, in particular, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, which shook many of the ideas they had about themselves. In addition to many scientific inventions that gave a boost to Britain's economy.

Therefore, Queen Victoria's routine saw the headway of science significantly, but also it symbolised Britain's progress and world pre-eminence for many networks in its cities. This frantic period of Britain's history carried with it a total change for the Victorians who grappled with this schizoid heritage of industrialism, wherein historians have characterized the Victorian era as " Britain's Golden years" (Porter 3).

### 1.4. Britain's Cultural Context during the Victorian Age

The Victorian era offered significant political, economical and cultural transformations to Britain. Victorian culture, particularly its architecture, which made its grandeur, was regularly fairly preservationist in its viewpoint maybe understandably and this was largely a Victorian creation. The designers of the many of England's 19th century buildings were the mostly anonymous in-house architects

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of building companies, like Thomas Cubitt who fabricated enormous pieces for the royal family's Osborne House on the Isle of Wight taken by Prince Albert, who had spread out brilliant greenhouses of his own.

The same was with arts which joined a solid enthusiasm for huge numbers of the technological innovations that had made mid-Victorian architecture so distinctive, with the rise of unique workmanship and the entry of modernization in the masterful scene that motivated the development and extension of the British Empire which used to mirror the world, not to admire it. Notwithstanding parks and gardens, where development and show of plants were made amid the Victorian time frame, complete with ornamental lake, expound parterres and spectacular fountains.

On the other hand, theatres were portrayed by drama and music crafted by authors and writers were excitedly eaten up, as there were also numerous new sports, such as croquet, football, cricket and rugby. Despite the fact that recreation was a curiosity for most, expanding quantities of Victorians discovered open doors that their forerunners could not have had to relish themselves.

### 1.4.1. The Victorian Literature

As is quite apparent from the title the sort of writing that developed amid the rule of Queen Victoria is magnificently referred to as Victorian era literature. It was a hopeful age where the incredible standards like truth, equity, love, fraternity were underscored by artists, writers and authors of the age. The writing of this time was combination of sentimental and pragmatist style of writing. Through the production of great poets like Alfred Lord Tennyson who held the poet laureateship for over forty years, and excellent prose due to its remarkable novelists such as : Charles Dickens and the Bronte sisters, in addition to playwrights Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw were each cunningly iconoclastic in their own particular manners, mocking the deficiencies of their society.

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In this respect, Sharpe and Henderson attest that: " The energy of Victorian literature its most striking trait, and self-exploration is its favorite theme. Victorians produced a staggeringly large body of literature renowned for its variety. Their writing is distinguished by its particularity, eccentricity, long-windedness, earnestness, ornateness, fantasy, humor, experimentation and self-consciousness"(469). It is basically a literature that talks about an age which saw an extraordinary change, in which diligent work, constancy, love and karma win out at last with a central moral lesson at its heart.

Victorian writers were inspired by different realms across their country, it reached even the colonies that they ruled over, mostly the writings of artists coming from the Subcontinent. Specifically India which possesses a stupendous heritage of literature accumulated over the epochs.

In terms of literature influenced by India, the period featured the book that is viewed as the principal criminologist novel, Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868). The plot is set in England 1848, where the Moonstone a yellow precious stone, huge "as a plover's egg" with "light of the reap moon" (70), from India is stolen and thus is accepted to be cursed. Collins mirrors the picture Victorians had of the colorful and secretive India. Also, the precious stone can be viewed as the portrayal of India as "the jewel in the British crown." Or another depiction for the secret story of the Kohinoor diamond that bewildered their oriental quest, and welcomed many orientalist to take on the chance to visit India and enjoy the magnificence of its mosques and temples which can serve as a basic settings for most of their novels.

By and large, Victorian literature turns into an incredible instrument for human advancement to veer off from the severe standard of "art for art's sake" and attests its ethical reason, reflecting by that conventional qualities and demonstrating greater frustration and uncertainty, which would turn out to be all out in the twentieth century .

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### 1.4.2. Britain's Prestige : "The Great Exhibition"

The primary motivation for the British was indeed their own benefit by looking at the British prestige, what they had to offer in the exhibition, and what they stood to gain by hosting such an event of a great and a majestic value that added to their charming culture.

The Great Exhibition, once in a while alluded to as the Crystal Palace Exhibition was a global presentation that occurred in Hyde Park, London, from 1 May to 15 October 1851, and was sorted out by Henry Cole and Prince Albert, spouse of the authoritative ruler, Queen Victoria. It was the first in a progression of World's Fairs, shows of culture and industry that became fashionable within the nineteenth century, and it was an eagerly awaited occasion. It was gone to by well known individuals of the time, including Charles Darwin, Lewis Carroll, George Eliot, and William Makepeace Thackeray. Britain additionally wanted to supply the globe with the hope of an improved future.

Sophie Forgan says of the Exhibition that "Large, piled-up 'trophy' exhibits in the central avenue revealed the organisers' priorities; they generally put art or colonial raw materials in the most prestigious place. Technology and moving machinery were popular, especially working exhibits." She also notes that "visitors could watch the entire process of cotton production from spinning to finished cloth. Scientific instruments were found in class X, and included electric telegraphs, microscopes, air pumps and barometers, as well as musical, horological and surgical instruments" (596).

Hence, a unique structure, nicknamed The Crystal Palace, or "The Great Shalimar", was worked to house the show. It was a tremendous achievement, thought about a building wonder, yet additionally a designing triumph that demonstrated the significance of the Exhibition itself by displaying materials and items from Britain's

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colonies to show the varied nature of the empire itself to the guests who might even study the various colonies within the empire through maps and dioramas.

One of the remarkable displays was from India, a standout amongst the most significant colonies of Britain, where there was an assorted scope of things. The exhibition likewise put an accentuation on India's tremendous measure of riches and natural resources, which would thusly convey extra wealth to the British Empire. In this respect Buda states that : "India was the most important land for the English and it was because of this reason that they called India 'the jewel in the crown' in Queen Victoria's empire" (Buda 2). One of the largest attractions from India was the presentation of the Koh-I-Noor diamond, a strangely huge stone that was taken from India and considered one of the royal gems of Britain. Likewise present was a real estimated imitation of an Indian court, including items like : ceramics, silks, leather, furniture, dyes, and personal gifts to the Queen from the rulers of India, which incorporated a royal position with a covering of purple velvet, which visitors could stroll through and admire.

Overall, the exhibition held many different meanings for different people and not everyone agreed on its purpose; while some historians argue that the exhibition was a method of self-promotion for the benefit of the British Empire, there are others who emphasize the exhibition's character as an international event. However, one can say that the Great Exhibition of 1851 was a grand, successful event that drew people from all over the world and put Britain and its empire in the spotlight and brought it additional knowledge, prestige, and wealth.

### 1.5. The British Empire

The British Empire was the best realm the world has ever observed, and for over a century Britain was the preeminent worldwide power, by building up abroad colonies, their main reasons was exchange and financial benefits. The years 1815 to 1914 are alluded to as Britain's magnificent century, and right now, the Empire

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included in excess of a fourth of the total populace and it was said that 'the sun never set on the British Empire', an expression ascribed to a Scottish essayist, John Wilson.

With matchless quality adrift, Britain assumed the job of worldwide policeman, in some cases called the Pax Britannica or tranquility of Britain (Johnston 508-10). In fact, the British Empire was the biggest formal realm during the reign of Queen Victoria, in terms of trade and army ,thus making it a wealthy nation.As stated before, the Great Exhibition of 1851,the very first World's Fair, was a celebration of the diversity and richness of the Empire, in addition to the British imperialism that was considered by many as a vehicle for enlightenment and civilization and was accordingly something to be proud of during the nineteenth century.

It may be inquired as to whether the British Empire was useful for the world and the response to that maybe relies on where one's is standing. There is no doubt that Britain gave a huge legacy to developing nations, teaching them the ways of democracy, and providing a structure that could lead to self government.On the other hand, it could be argued that by taking goods and resources from the colonies, it exploited and profiteered unfairly, on the basis that the British saw themselves superior over other races that they ruled, i.e 'the White Man's Burden' theory, to explore and civilise the barbarian and which resulted in a system that highlighted an insidious legacy for the colonized .

This led many British political thinkers struggled to make sense of the 'strange' character of the British rule in India; in Henry Maine's words, it was the " most extraordinary experiment involving the virtually despotic government of a dependency by a free people" (233). In particular, the equation of 'good government' did not prove to be that true one because imperialism was the fulcrum in shaping the rule of the British Empire in India, and also domestic British history and British identity.



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### 1.6. The British Imperialism in India

One of the urgent highlights of the Victorian reign was the rise of imperialism by Great Britain, where the mid nineteenth century was overwhelmed with acquisitions which served a twofold purpose ; raw material and tapping potential markets for their merchandise. Their primary focus of time was India which the British figured out how to get by the Great Mutiny in 1857, and in 1876 when Queen Victoria was declared the Empress of India at Disraeli's instigation. By the end of the century, increasingly countries started coming under the empire's dominance.

The British had been in India for two centuries, right off the bat as traders and after that as rulers. The later years brought about unexpected twists in the relation between India and Britain from the reign of the Mughals in India, however, Britishers slowly began to establish themselves by taking permission from the local rulers to expand their factories. So, as to assume responsibility for their host country 'India', they even taken on a few conflicts that cleared a path for the English standard to bring the whole nation under one single power. For that, the British could not bear to lose India which was an image of British fortune, noticeable quality, and authority which enabled them to prosper more and more. As stated by James Morris who acknowledged its worthiest value, " India was important to all sorts of people. It fascinated the Queen and the commonest person. It was like a jewel or a golden bird for which every one tried to get or catch it" (34).

The British initially started by bringing the same number of domains under their control by snare or by artifice. Over the period of time, Indians were given administrative occupations in the workplaces, armed force, and so on, and had even taken part in both the World Wars for the benefit of England. The treatment distributed to Indians in contrast with their outside partners before long made the Indians realize the ulterior thought process of the British. This was noticed clearly in the novel written by E.M Forster *A Passage to India* which was considered as a magnus opus of its time, as it shed light on the separation that exists between the



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Indian and the English sectors, and even when an Indian and an English attempt to pledge eternal friendship in spite of their differences. Underlying these surface contrasts is, of course, the feeling of predominance of the British decision class and the sting the Indian feels as the subject race, not to mention the mutual lack of respect, mass ignorance and communal rivalry decimated the entire structure of the country.

That what led many historians to claim that the conflict between the Indians and the British during the colonial rule cannot be understood or forgot. As the Englishmen were not willing to suppress their arrogance, highhandedness and insularity that rose in the wake of what is called the ‘Social Darwinism’, where they saw themselves as the better race and the best people in the world, and the Indians as inferior. They tend to see the Indians as incapable of the skills needed to rule themselves.

Though, they shared a long period of coexistence with each other to forge a special relationships illustrated in the English language, the western culture, interracial marriages, in addition to numerous examples of amities that sprung between the natives and the settlers from the time of the East India Company’s existence. Nevertheless, the golf was huge to trasgress because they adopted the concept of racism which unabled any friendly association, and that they were for a mission of civilising the Indian colony, but their treatment was shocking and not for any humanitarian reason .It was for financial goals , forming by that a cultural bubble and a racial composition between the two nations, if not also social restrictions which juxtaposed remoteness and rudeness of the racist English. This take one’s to the idea that the English were insular because India was perceived by them as a horrible place and the Indian as ‘Stereotypes’ (Kundu 31).

Certainly, there was always this friction caused from the British toward the Indians who were in their soil ,but considered as strangers and they were always

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suspicious about them , and the only category that benefited or enjoyed a lavish life was the loyal princely states ‘rulers from Rajas and Ranis’ who were able to mingle with the Britshers thanks to their social status .The arrogant behaviour and prejudice spoiled the objective of harmony and understanding between the two and ,thus widened the gap.Besides the patriotic side and the nationalist feeling of the Indians confronted them from the possibility of befriending their English counterparts, who divided them in their country and rendered them the foreigners.

The British were too discriminatory and very oppressing in their way of ruling India, adding to that the sololy factor which created this kind of misunderstanding and displeasure from the two parts ;that is of colonialism and the sense of indifference commited by the ruler in his relation with the ruled made it impossible for any intimate sociability. This weakness of interpersonal communication which characterized the behaviour of the royal household of Queen Victoria towards the Munshi when analysing their intimate story in the upcoming chapter.

This cultural split was illustrated in many literary works as stated afore, which demonstrated the case of an amiable confrontations between the two nations of Britain and India, but due to the severe period of the Raj and the stereotyped attitude together with the feeling of superiority of the European culture and the rightness of the Empire,made it impossible for a peaceful cohabitation and a confusion among races,and the threshold for any amity could happen only after the end of the imperialism and officialism imposed by the Britshers on the Indians.

Notably, British rule in India hit the Indian economy so hard that it was never able to recover, besides the religious conflicts and gaps that expanded.It was regarded as an enormous system of exploitation and sway. Slowly, the resistance movement began to gather momentum against the wrongful annexations, most notably by the first Indian independence in 1857, that was the real beginning for the nationalist

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movements led by the Indians to sack the British conquerors from their land, unwilling by that of any sort of friendly correlation.

### 1.7. The British Raj

The historical backdrop of the British Raj alludes to the time of British rule on the Indian subcontinent somewhere in the range of 1858 and 1947. The rule is also called Crown rule in India, or direct rule in India, and its arrangement of administration was organized in 1858 when the standard of the East India Company was exchanged to the Crown in the individual of Queen Victoria who in 1876 was announced Empress of India. It went on until 1947, when the British areas of India were divided into two sovereign domain expresses of India and Pakistan, leaving the royal states to pick between them. Then, the two later turned into the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Thus, suzerainty more than 175 regal states, the absolute biggest and most important, was practiced by the focal legislature of British India under the Viceroy; and a Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, or Chief Commissioner. However, many Indians did rise against the British and its despotic rule, and others also fought for the British, and the majority remained seemingly compliant to British rule which imposed on them a completely new way of life.

#### 1.7.1. The Indian Mutiny of 1857

One of the remarkable events that recognized the British Raj occupation in India was the Mutiny of 1857. It was a noteworthy stun to the British as it could have effectively removed their command over India. This uprising which started in one piece of the nation before long spread in different locales (Marshall 197). Be that as it may, the quirk in which the English managed this revolt additionally strengthened the disturbance.

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In 1858, the control of the pioneer India was detracted from the East India Company by the British Crown denoting by that the genuine start of the British rule in India ,where the legislature of India Act was passed in 1858 to reinforce the control of the Crown. It was amid the rules of Lord Dalhousie and Canning that greatest regional acquisitions occurred.

The Indian Mutiny was encouraged by feelings of hatred conceived of differing discernments, including intrusive British-style social changes, brutal land charges, rundown treatment of some rich landowners and rulers of the princely states which in some cases sold out outstanding mercilessness, that was caused on the two sides, on British officers, and on the revolutionaries, and their supporters in certain regions, of Delhi ,Lucknow most notably in Awadh, where the rebellion took on the attributes of a patriotic revolt against European presence (Bayly 357). As the quick reason for the Mutiny was the cartridge for the new Enfield rifle, which must be chomped before it was stacked ; where bits of gossip spread that the cartridge was greased with cow-fat and pig-lard; and since the cow is sacred to the Hindus and the pig considered unclean by the Moslems, both religious gatherings were offended.India was from there on regulated straightforwardly by the British government in the new British Raj. Even in this way, the resistance demonstrated to be a significant watershed in Indian and British Empire history (Bandyopadhyay 179).To the British merely thought of their standard as a type of " despotic paternalism".Eventhough ,Queen Victoria issued a decree to Indians, which while coming up short on the authority of a protected arrangement, guaranteed rights like those of other British subjects.

Among the remarkable heroes and leading figures of this great revolt of 1957 was the ‘Rani Lakshmibai’ ; the Queen of Jhansi who died fighting the British and became a supreme symbol of Indian nationalism, and immortal in the hearts and minds of her countrymen.In a book on Lakshmibai entiteled *The Rani of Jhansi, Rebel against Will*, the author Rainer Jerosch puts her role into context :

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The entire life of the Rani is intimately linked to the causes and the events of this 1857 revolt. However, it should be noted that she only emerges as a leading actor in the historical stage in the later phase of the insurrection. It moreover appears reasonable to assume that she has only over the course of the Mutiny that she developed into the personality which we encounter in the history books. The highly civilized, polite lady, as the well-schooled eyes of political Sir Robert Hamilton perceived her before the Great Mutiny, provides little, if any, indication of the resolute warrior who would one day challenge British rule with such determination and military prowess (8).

After the outbreak of the rebellion in Meerut, the radicals all around immediately achieved Delhi, whose 81-year-old Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah Zafar, they announced the Emperor of Hindustan. The East India Company's reaction came quickly as well. With help from fortifications, Kanpur was retaken by mid-July 1857, and Delhi before the finish of September. (Metcalf & Metcalf 100–106). In addition to many districts of huge royal states turned out to be massively well off under the British routine; the Nizam of Hyderabad, for instance, turned into the world's most extravagant man. The Punjab, Kashmir, Mysore, and Travancore just as the littler ones of Rajputana, did not join the resistance, serving the British, in the Governor-General Lord Canning's words, as "breakwaters in a storm." (Spear 147-148).

In spite of the fact that the mutiny had shaken the British undertaking in India, it had not crashed it. At an increasingly down to earth level, it was felt that there should have been more correspondence and kinship between the British and Indians not simply in armed force yet in non military personnel life also. New regiments were made out for the Muslims and Brahmins who were disbanded, whereas the Sikhs and Baluchis, in British estimation, had exhibited faithfulness, were framed.

Ultimately, the British felt embittered with Indian response to social change. Until the resistance, they had eagerly pushed through social change, conventions and traditions in India were excessively solid and too unbending to possibly be changed effectively; particularly in issues managing religion. This was exemplified further in Queen Victoria's decree discharged following the defiance,

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showing official British responsibility to go without social mediation in India. As a matter of fact, the more profound reasons for the Mutiny were hatred over the Westernization of India and dread that local traditions, religions, and social structures would be lost, in spite of the fact that the ultimate result was triumph for the British.

### 1.7.2. Empress of India

As a signal to connect the Monarchy with the Empire further and tie India all the more near Britain, Benjamin Disraeli, Conservative Prime Minister, had Queen Victoria announced as Empress of India in 1876, while likewise exhibiting Britain as a predominant world power, and without a doubt from a cutting edge viewpoint, she and her thugs put strongly about seventy five percent of the world under British principle "at Heaven's command".

As the symbol of the best country on the planet, the Queen savored the experience of her new title and wrote in her journal, " my thoughts much too taken up with the great event at Delhi today, & in India generally, where I am being proclaimed Empress of India"(BBC). Where a salute of one hundred and one salvos of artillery was fired. As a colossal imperial celebration for the new contract between the Queen and her Indian subjects (History Press).

Queen Victoria paid attention to her obligations as Empress very seriously and when her Golden Jubilee came around in 1887 she bent over backward to grandstand her 'jewel in the crown of the British Empire'. She hosted lavish banquets and parties for Indian princes and European nobility and rode in elaborate processions accompanied by the Colonial Indian cavalry. Indian attendants were brought to the royal household to help with the festivities as well. The Queen wanted to know everything about India, a place where she ruled but could never visit, and this what her Indian servant Abdul who became her 'Munshi', or teacher, succeeded to do, and they began a friendship that would last over a decade, and that raised too much controversial views over it. Especially at a time where racism was relevant among the

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Victorians, who did not mingle with their subjects. This made the English furious because any sort of confrontations would weaken their political superiority and their prestigious social position.

Having Victoria declared as Empress of India was not especially new, as Major-General Sir Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's Private Secretary, had requested English contracts to be examined for supreme titles, by the year 1874. Since “the Tsar was an Emperor,” Victoria, the leader of the nation restricting him in Asia, should be an Empress. Another factor may have been that the Queen's first child, Victoria, was hitched to Crown Prince Frederick, the beneficiary to the German Empire and this would outrank her mother. At first, Victoria had really considered the style "Empress of Great Britain, Ireland, and India", however Disraeli had influenced the Queen to confine the title to India so as to maintain a strategic distance from discussion. As Robert Blake explains in his biography of Benjamin Disraeli, “proposals to adopt the imperial title for India had been in the air ever since the Mutiny. The plan can only be understood if the traumatic nature of that disaster is remembered” (539).

Numerous in the United Kingdom respected the supposition of the title as a conspicuous advancement of the British Raj. Though, many Indians disliked the British organization, yet they regarded the ruler. Indeed, her greatest dedication is in Kolkata 'the Victoria Memorial'. Thus, this great gathering in the Delhi Durbar to proclaim Her Majesty as an Empress was looked upon by many as an evidence of Her Majesty's increased interest in, and appreciation of, the vast Empire of India with its many different races and peoples.

### **1.8. Indian Influence on the Victorian Era**

For the pioneer pride of the Victorian Era, India became known as "the jewel in the British crown" for its importance to the British Empire. For this very reason India's security turned into the real to shield the "Golden Sparrow" from its European opponents. After the move in power of the British Raj, the ascent of photography in



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the nineteenth century made India progressively available to the British, and Samuel Bourne's photos of India in Kashmir and Himalaya, moved toward becoming proof of the colorful nation they had heard so much about. Additionally, the Great Exhibition which gave individuals the likelihood and enthusiasm of encountering the Indian culture.

A big shedlight can be put on the British fashion that developed through Indian influence in the Victorian era especially by the growth of fabric import from India brought the development of Indian textile on the English market, and this opportunity had been embraced by British designers who were inspired by Indian designs displayed in exhibitions, such as: Indian chintzes and weaving that were utilized on materials and wallpapers, particularly shawls made by genuine cashmere as related to the Indian town, Shāliāt, and which turned into a piece of a lady's outfit in the nineteenth century. The sumptuous Indian shawl is for example referenced in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel, *North and South* (1855), which portrayed Margaret's "joy in their delicate feels and their splendid colours" (9). Hence, several emporiums opened in London to scope Indian products from gems, furniture, and carpets.

Apart from that, Indian tea culture made the foundation of lunch nooks, coffee bars and the convention of evening tea in Victorian England conceivable when the Government of India Act 1858 gave the British Crown the control of exchange with India. Even, the Queen extended the generation of tea in India and expanded the tea exchange to Britain which wound up less expensive, Charles Dickens, in his novel, *Great Expectations* (1860), describes tea as a basic piece of the British characters' daily life, where Pip's depictions demonstrate that they discovered incredible solace in drinking tea. In addition, the joy they felt when drinking tea may recommend why tea turned out to be so famous among Brits in the Victorian Era. Thanks to the Duchess of Bedford who thought of the elegant idea of evening tea and which wound up customary for the social world class, center and common laborers. By 1900, Indian and Sri Lankan tea represented 90 percent of Britain's tea imports, a



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reality reflected in a showcasing effort for Lipton tea. Indeed, it turned into a staple of Victorian Britain, assuming a focal job in the ceremonies of day by day life.

More than that, it was during the Victorian period that Britons fell in love with curry, a culinary concoction that is today Britain's favourite dish. Though, it was initially the preserve of the elite, spicy food had percolated down into the middle and working-class diet, curry powder, pastes, chutneys and pickles became available on a mass scale, by the 1860s. Curry was also perceived to be nutritious and economical particularly when used with leftover meats.

In the field of sport, Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji the Maharaja of Nawanagar was arguably the most celebrated of all Indians in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, feted as a sporting hero and adored by the British public, and a prominent test cricketer who played for the English cricket team. 'Ranji' was widely described "as graceful as a panther", and one of the finest batsmen who brought innovation and style to cricket and changed the face of British sport. While cricket would go on to be widely popular, polo was a more elite activity, introduced to Britain by Indian army officers in the 1870s. Another subcontinental pastime brought to Britain in the 19th century was Indian club swinging.

In terms of popular culture, theater was especially successful. Outside the theater, Victorians were engaged by Indian road performers and artists or 'Tom-Tom players'. According to the 'Strand Magazine': "Approach the normal man for what India is most celebrated, and chances are ten to one that he will disregard the wonders of the Taj Mahal, the usefulness of British rule, even Mr Kipling, and will unhesitatingly answer in one word, 'Jugglers'" (History Press).

For good and bad, Indian influences were discernible in all aspects of Victorian society, from novels to politics, sports, popular culture, to fashion and diet, the truth that proves Britain's passion for its precious colony 'India'.

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### 1.9. Significant Influence of the British Rule in India

English presence was there on Indian soil for right around 200 years. During this period, in spite of the fact that the British attacked and plundered the nation of its assets, there were sure great just as awful things that happened. The British and the Indians would proceed to influence each other in significant ways that are still workable today. As both positive and negative logical inconsistencies were brought through the empire's inheritances.

One such thing was the execution of legitimate educational framework. At the point when the British touched base in India, 'ashram' system was in vogue. Soon the British understood that they need increasingly English talking men to work for them, they accordingly started to show Indians English as a language presented in schools and colleges, and it also acquainted Indians with the advanced political and social thought, and due to the variety dialects spoken in various Indian districts, the British presented mandatory English in the Educational systems with the point of getting administrative staff, and a common language for communication. Thereby, Indians began to have a better outlook of the world, society and systems which helped modernize their nation.

Also, with the beginning of British came the western idea due to which numerous social reformers had the option to helpfully reprimand the incomparable expert of the Vedas, and this ignited logical reasoning in Indian minds, which in turn helped in abolishing social injustice. It was the British who brought changes to: the monopoly of Brahmins, Sati system in which the widow was to commit suicide by burning herself in her husband's funeral fire, was banned in 1829, widow remarriage, Sharda Act was passed in 1929 to prevent child marriage, women education, and polytheism etc... In addition to many legal measures were adopted to improve the women's status in India. On this set, James Mill, a Scottish economist and political philosopher of 19th century, by putting aside the racist and the disdainful undertone of his thinking, the British rule in India did definitely have some positive effects on

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the Indian sub-continent thought the following about India : "The Asian societies were at a lower level of civilization than the British. Hindu and Muslim despots ruled the country. British rule, miller felt, could civilize India", and he thought that, the period of India before British arrived on its shores was a period of darkness"(Medium).

India has profited by the British Raj as far as transportation and correspondence system. The British, for their advantages of transportation and to move their men and materials, they set up a wide system of roadways and railways, where the first rail opened in 1853, among Bombay and Thane. It helped the British government to administer India, yet additionally the Indians, who began to move from spots to places and ,thus brought solidarity among various pieces of the nation.

Furthermore, the British left behind a large number of public buildings proud of its architectural splendor, like 'The Rashtrapathi Bhavan' which is the largest residence of any head of state in the world, 'The Parliament House', and 'Gateway of India' which is an arch monument built during the British rule in Mumbai, and many more buildings which remained as a witness on the great transformation of civilization made by the British conqueror.

Even, agriculture in India was popularized, with the presentation of yields like tea, espresso, opium, indigo, cotton, sugarcane and so on, and a significant number of dams and channel water system frameworks, that are utilized today were worked amid the British Era.

However, many revisionists generally consider the British presence in India, while on occasion horrendously brutal, to be a standout amongst the most kindhearted and gainful in colonial history. That what the Indian-American journalist and TV host Fareed Zakaria wrote in his book, *The Post-American World*:

India's democracy is truly extraordinary. India's political system owes much to the institutions put in place by the British over two hundred years ago. In many other parts of Asia and in Africa, the British were a relatively temporary presence. They were in India for centuries.

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They saw it as the jewel in their imperial crown and built lasting institutions of government throughout the country—courts, universities, administrative agencies. But perhaps even more importantly, India got very lucky with the vehicle of its independence, the Congress Party, and its first generations of post-independence leaders, who nurtured the best traditions of the British and drew on older Indian customs to reinforce them (The Atlantic).

Without missing, the transformation of India from independent monarchical states to a united democracy and a unified nation. Nevertheless, during the British rule, India lost its self-character and once known for its rich culture, turned into the captive to Britishers who utilized 'divide and rule' policy which overcome Indian spots and made Indian rulers redundant struggling with high taxation rules, which resulted in zero growth economically. This was regarded even in religion, the British started the hatred of communism between the Muslims and Hindus of India which later led to the division of the country into India and Pakistan.

Even on the social level, the British attitude toward Indians degenerated, it was never again feasible for them to know whether they abhorred or adored each other, and appeared to have befuddled the picture of their different fates. Previously, there had been some limited social mixing between the British and Indians, with no sense of superiority or inferiority, over time that changed. Biased concepts regarding non-western cultures and non-white peoples, arising from so-called 'Social Darwinism' provided rationale for imperial rule. Thus, it is not coincidence that the heyday of imperialism was the Victorian age, and by making the British Raj as a mix of the White Man's Burden and Ma-Bap ; a mother-son relationship. This self-serving and reckless administration brought about a devastated people and a smothered society, not a superb Indian realm. The best delineation of the British mentality can be said by Lord Kitchener, British commander in chief of the army in India: " It is this consciousness of the inherent superiority of the European which has won for us India. However well educated and clever a native may be, and however brave he may

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prove himself, I believe that no rank we can bestow on him would cause him to be considered an equal of the British officer"(The Spectator Archive).

Additionally, racism was a core characteristic of the British Empire in India, while implying political superiority, it did not have racial implications. However, cultural and political factors were to add racial distinction to the concept under the British. Even in creating relationships of any kind, in India only the English are free to make overtures of friendship. The Indians know from past experiences, that the friendly English newcomers usually become tiresomely condescending in a short time due to Indian and English customs, attitudes, and beliefs contradictions. The causes were numerous, and included forcing the use of Western technologies, imposition of English as a new form of education, administration and religion of course, all served to undermine the local counterpart. As a result, most of the generation born when their lands were under the influence of the empire adapted the western mannerisms.

Atrocities became commonplace on both sides as well, first by the Sepoy's Mutiny of 1857, and were to be repeated by the British in the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 which indicated the extent of unrest and trouble among the Indians with the death of approximately 379 persons. Clearly, the imperial rule was for the profit of Britain, not for the welfare of the people of India, this was shown even in the governmental response to famines like the Bengal famine that made 20 percent of Bengal's population perished. Thus, English abhor expanded, and for the Indians, hatred rotted.

It is noteworthy that the British had conquered a precious and a wealthy land and exploited its goods by rendering it like a poster child, and their rule in India had impacted the nation adversely. Hence, no matter how was imperialism, was it formal or not, it remains a cruel thing and an unnatural process.

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### 1.10. Conclusion

One can say that the Victorian Reign portrayed the zenith of a great Empire as the British one, and what began as a commercial enterprise in India had turned to be witnessed as the peak of Britain's colonial era, when India was considered the crown's jewel of a huge Empire on which, as a contemporary phrase put it, "the sun never set." So, Britons during the Victorian reign fell in love with the subcontinental culture, where Queen Victoria herself proclaimed an incredible enthusiasm for the realm's biggest belonging and most prominent exchanging accomplice, advancing Indian style, adornments, fineness and engineering.

The genesis of this passion for India can be traced back to Victoria's interest in India that sprang, at least in part, from her Indian assistant Abdul Karim, who came to Britain in 1887 to serve the Queen and who rose within Victoria's affections, as well as in status to the title of 'Munshi'. A controversial friendship story that will be revealed in the next chapter.

**Chapter Two**  
**Victoria and Abdul :**  
**The True Story of The**  
**Queen's Closest**  
**Confidant**

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## Chapter Two:Victoria and Abdul:The True Story of The Queen’s Closest Confidant

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### 2.1. Introduction

The British Crown fondness to its jewel India surpassed all the imperialistic views ,and prejudices of the time when a humble Indian servant stepped into the royal court and became a powerful figure inside it, where within a year Abdul and the Queen Empress Victoria formed an unlikely bond ,at a time when the British Raj established its power and dignity over India.

India was a rich bonanza center for raw materials and other goods for British factories.This made the British Raj a fascinating story that inevitably raises passions throughout the Indian subcontinent and in Britain itself.Hence,a controversial friendship story arose and had been covered by the author Shrabani Basu after a hundred years of burial. *Victoria and Abdul* a story between a Queen and her Indian Munshi that exceeded all the racism, stereotypes, and class stratification of the royal household to survive its best.It is about a precious gift from India that was given to Queen Victoria in her Golden Jubilee to became an essential part of her life and the British royal court.

This chapter will reveal an old secret that was hidden in the British historical archives and which had been adapted as a movie entiteled :*Victoria &Abdul* directed by Stephen Frears to revive the colonial nostalgic past between India and Britain, after the research conducted in Shrabani’s book *Victoria and Abdul : The True Story of The Queen’s Closest Confidant*.The historical research dealing specifically with Karim and Queen Victoria has often pointed to the resentment felt by the Queen’s family and the household staff toward a friendship they deemed inappropriate because of race and class norms.

Based on a plethora of primary sources, this is a window shedding light not only on Queen Victoria and Munshi Hafiz Abdul Karim specifically, but both British

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and Indian society during the British rule in India. So, what was this unlikely friendship story that scandalised the Royal household and add to its disdain for the Indian subject who exceeds the Scottish gillie John Brown ?

### 2.2. About the Author

Shrabani Basu was conceived in Calcutta and experienced childhood in Dhaka, Kathmandu and Delhi. She graduated in History from St Stephen's College, Delhi and finished her Masters from Delhi University where she was a trainee journalist. After that, she moved to London to fill in as the reporter of *The Telegraph*, and she has done prohibitive gatherings with famous celebrities including Benazir Bhutto, Sheikh Hasina, and Salman Rushdie. Where She has constantly joined her news coverage with her adoration for history and every one of her books have developed from her perceptions about the mutual chronicles of India and Britain.

She has been welcomed to talk at a few artistic celebrations including Cambridge History Festival, and Jaipur Literature Festival. In addition to writing several works including *Curry: The Story of the Nation's Favourite Dish*, *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan*, and *For kings and Another Country : Indian Soldiers on the Western Front 1914-1918*, and most notably for her book *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant* in 2010 which covers the 'mysterious' kinship between Queen Victoria and her hireling and partner Abdul.

The first run through which Shrabani Basu knew about Abdul Karim, she was doing research for a book about the historical backdrop of curry. While on vacation, she went over a work of art of Karim in Osborne House, where she noticed that Karim whom she thought was a servant had been painted "perfectly, in red and gold," with a book in his hand an honorable man," Basu tells the *TIME*, wherein she saw two pictures: one of the Queen's compatriot John Brown, and underneath it, Abdul.

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Thus, Karim's painting sparked Shrabani's curiosity. Who was this young Muslim man from Agra, northern India, at the heart of Britain's royal court? And what had his association with the Queen of England been similar to? Hence, she committed herself to researching Karim's story by searching the royal archives through the private papers of the Queen's household mainly her doctor, Sir James Reid, and her Viceroys to be fructified in a new historical account that resulted in the book of *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*.

After her deep investigations, Shrabani conducted a presentation sharing the journey of Victoria and Abdul, how the two met, how the two formed a deep and unique friendship and how the entire royal household plotted against Abdul. In fact, she acknowledged her work as being one of the enjoyable experiences in her career saying that: "Working in the historic archives of Windsor Castle was one of the most pleasurable moments of writing this book" (Basu 18). She kept eager to contact any of Abdul Karim's descendants, though he had no children except the descendants of his nephew, Abdul Rashid and who had left Agra after the partition of India and Pakistan. Be that as it may, she took the challenge until at long last found a golden thread; the last survivor of Abdul Rashid's children, Begum Qamar Jehan, who had nevertheless vivid recollections of her days in Karim Lodge in Agra where the family showed Basu pictures of Abdul Karim and Abdul Rashid and told her there was a diary in Karachi (22). Then, she met the rest of the family and see the diaries of Abdul Karim, some pictures and artefacts that the family managed to hide during the partition movement.

For over a hundred years, the secret of this mysterious friendship between an ageing Queen and her Indian servant finally became unfolded, and through the screen adaptation Basu stressed on the fact that this story happened and is not a fantasy or some concocted 'jewel in the crown' Raj sentimental story (Time).

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### 2.3. Victoria and Abdul's Synopsis

The history has related the romantic tale of all illustrious romantic tales of Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert.It also shedlight on her controversial companionship with her Scottish servant John Brown.Now a new spotlight came to discuss another anecdote in the life of the Queen Empress most notably upon her relation with her colony India, through another special friendship and lesser-known one, yet wildly fascinating.It is about her Majesty Queen and Empress of India Victoria and her loyal Indian Munshi Abdul Karim ,who was an important figure in her life.

However,this controversial relationship would lead to a near revolt in the royal household and to a bitter resentment and often friction which survived all their attempts to destroy it, till the end where the new heir Edward VII put and end to this senical farce in his view , and sacked the Munshi to India after destroying any relative correspondance between him and the Queen, which resulted in the disappearance of the colourful turbans and the smell of curry from the royal court.

Shrabani Basu's historical masterpiece *Victoria and Abdul:The True Story of The Queen's Closest Confidant* turned the extraordinary true story of an unexpected friendship in the later years of Queen Victoria with whom she forged an unlikely and devoted alliance, into a movie entitled *Victoria &Abdul* starring Judi Dench as Queen Victoria and Ali Fazzal as Abdul Karim.It is set during a difficult period in England's history, the Raj era, a time characterized by imperial oppression for India and Indians and it presents Queen Victoria's views as unexpectedly progressive,which have drawn some controversial criticism and a few fans from the time of the story.

For most of its critics, the book together with the movie succeeded to depict a friendship between the second-longest-reigning monarch of England and an Indian Muslim.Between the British Raj and its colony India whom Queen Victoria adored

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and had been mesmerised with its oriental magic. Though some critics saw the movie as an endeavour to whitewashing the British rule in India and a covering up to the brutalities of colonialism. The story of Victoria and Abdul may appear for many as a fairytale that comes from the universe of the Arabian Nights and had been retold by Scheherazade. Nevertheless, it may remain a nostalgic story from the time of the British rule in India.

### 2.3.1. Queen Victoria (1837-1901)

Queen Victoria is without a doubt a standout amongst women in world history, as the archetypal matriarch-monarch, where it is hard even to resist the nostalgic lure of such a self-confident era of the Victorian age, she epitomized a historical significance which has been limited to her job in pleasing the government.

Victoria was conceived at Kensington Palace, London, on 24 May 1819. She was the only daughter of Edward, Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III. On William IV's death in 1837, she progressed toward becoming ruler of Great Britain and Ireland (1837–1901) and Empress of India (1876–1901), at the age of 18 she experienced many new changes in her life and reign, by being a sole sovereign of the extraordinary nation ” (Smith 149). Thanks to the diligent tuition of two men whom she was influenced by: her first Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, and then her husband Prince Consort Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, whom she married in 1840, who showed her how to be a ruler in a 'constitutional government'.

Her marriage to Prince Albert created nine children where most of them married into other Royal families of Europe and with 42 grandchildren, Victoria garnered the nickname “Grandmother of Europe”, and her descendents can be found in the regal families of Germany, Russia, Greece, Romania, Sweden, Norway and Spain. Actually, Victoria reigned in a society that idealized both motherhood and the family.

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Albeit her unrepentant prejudices in certain quarters, it did not prevent her from frequently demonstrating the most even-handed clear sightedness when it came to areas where rampant Victorian prejudices prevailed such as in matters of religious practice, class, and racial prejudice. As Lady Lyon once noted, "there was a vein of iron which ran through the Queen's extraordinary character," (Encyclopedia Britannica). Mainly through her impossible kinships with her Scottish gillie and Indian Munshi.

Consequently, Albert turned out to be successfully the Queen's private secretary as indicated by himself, "her permanent minister" who helped her preside over the transformation of the sovereign's political role into a ceremonial one and, thus preserved the British monarchy. He also poured himself into the task of organizing the international trade show that became a symbol of the Victorian Age, that is of the Great Exhibition which displayed Britain's wealth and technological achievements to a wondering world. To Victoria she felt proud of this achievement and it gave additional proof of her significant husband's virtuoso, and despite the fact that Albert was keen on scholarly and logical issues, Victoria's preferences were nearer to those of the vast majority of her people. Nevertheless, they shared mutual inclination for nudes in painting and sculpture, and their love for their pets mainly dogs, that were one of the closest companions to the Queen till her death.

However, this happy life did not last forever, with the death of Prince Albert in 1861. His influence on Queen Victoria was lasting ; he had changed her personal habits and her political sympathies which led her sank into depression ,and for the rest of her reign she wore black and remained in mourning and in partial retirement.

By then, the British monarchy had changed. As the historian G.M. Young said, "In place of a definite but brittle prerogative it had acquired an undefinable but potent influence." (Encyclopedia Britannica 490). She shied away from playing out the

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stately capacities expected of the ruler and was widely criticised for living in seclusion and quite a strong republican movement developed. Yet, she remained determined to retain an effective political role, and since she accused her son for Albert's demise who had returned sick from Cambridge when he had gone to see the Prince of Wales regarding an indiscretion he had committed in Ireland. Thus, the rupture was never truly mended.

Afterwards, Victoria succumbed to Benjamin Disraeli who was able to enter into the Queen's grief, compliment her, reestablish her fearlessness, and make the desolate crown a simpler burden. One of the bonds shared by Victoria and Disraeli was a sentimental connection toward the East and the possibility of Empire. Especially after the expansion of "Empress of India" in 1876 which excited her. What add mainly to her popularity as the Queen Empress were the Golden (1887) and the Diamond (1897) Jubilees, which were marked with great celebrations.

The Queen died at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, on 22 January 1901 after a reign which lasted 63 years and her son Edward VII succeeded her. In the mean time, she had picked up the warmth of her subjects after her passing as seen by Lord Salisbury " She had an extraordinary knowledge of what her people would think extraordinary, because it could not come from any personal intercourse. I have said for years that I have always felt that when I knew what the Queen thought, I knew pretty certainly what views her subjects would take, and especially the middle class of her subjects" (Encyclopedia Britannica 492). She, nevertheless, had woven a legendary reign.

By the length of her rule, the longest in British history until that of Elizabeth II, she remained tough with an extra level of confidence to get the job done, and to restore the crown's popularity, and none will scrutinize her high feeling of obligation or the straightforward trustworthiness, of her regal character. Thus, Charlotte Yonge



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praises the loyalty of the Queen in her book *The Victorian Half Century* and she said: " Maybe thankful that through this critical period, when every throne around us has been shaken and many overthrown, that we should have been blessed with a sovereign whose personal character commands not only loyalty but love and reverence whose heart beats for all is high and noble.Who sympathises with all suffering, guides all wholesome effort, and discourages all that is foul or cruel " (Yonge114).

Finally, it must be said of Victoria that her greatness was that of a true womanhood that drew to her the hearts of her people, with a quality of friendship that no English ruler has ever called forward. Among the historians who praised her majesty was Woodham Smith and made sure to show the Queen's compassion and humanness, "Honesty, generosity, loyalty were her good qualities; she never bore malice and it was rare to come into close contact with her without being inspired with true devotion (Smith 431).

### 2.3.2. John Brown (1826–1883)

" So often I told him no one loved him more than I did or had a better friend than me" (Cullen 225) ,the Queen by these words was mourning her dearest servant John Brown ;the Scottish personal attendant who was her most loved for a long time and he was valued by her for his competence and companionship, however,resented by others for his impact just like the case of the Indian servant Abdul karim,and due to the nature of his association with the Queen which keeps controversial till nowadays.

In the depths of her most gloomy,after the death of Prince Albert, the Queen doned to her grief without a friend in the world.However,she found such reassurance within the fiercely protective orbit, her Highland servant John Brown who would occupy a unique position in being the only person never to stand on ceremony in the



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Queen's presence, able frequently to contradict her and make her do what he wanted. Such behavior on Brown's part frequently invoked incredulity among observers and seemed to be a complete contradiction of everything that the monarch stood for. In 1851, Brown was appointed as a personal gillie to Prince Albert, by which time he was also one of the Queen's regular outdoor attendants, and quickly he made himself indispensable.

After the Prince's death in 1861, Sir Charles Phipps, the keeper of the Privy Purse, had expressed the concern about how the Queen would cope by asking: "What will happen where can she look for that support and assistance upon which she had leaned in the greatest and the least questions of her life?" (Smith 430). After three years of the Queen's consort death, it finally became apparent precisely where she would find the support from the shock which she never fully recovered from. John Brown became a good friend and supported the Queen and she also vested her trust and her total dependence on him, and ordered that he accompanies her whenever she was out of doors and gave him responsibility for the organization of her horses and carriages when she wanted to drive out, as well as taking charge of her many dogs.

The decision to make Brown the most important member of her household would cost Queen Victoria's public image dear, with rumor and increasingly salacious gossip circulating over the years about the nature of their obviously close relationship, which some suspected of harboring a "sinister familiarity" (Longford 345). From the Queen's children and inspired jealousy among members of the royal household. Even the Queen's daughters joked that Brown was their "Mama's lover", Victoria herself dismissed the chatter as "ill-natured gossip in the higher classes" (Duff 199).

For the Queen, however, Brown was a rock on whom she could depend, and the strong arm that would protect her. It was not just Brown's devotion and care, but

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also his nonsense truthfulness that won the Queen's enduring admiration and kept him in her service for the rest of his life. As he had once reassured her: "You'll never have an honest servant" (Brown 33). Her private secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, view that Brown posed no threat; his real strength lay in his ability to understand the Queen and make her do what others, Ponsonby included, could not. Perhaps the most compelling evidence of the depth of Victoria and Brown's relationship comes from the pen of the Queen herself, upon a recent discovery of a letter written by Victoria shortly after Brown's death, to Viscount Cranbrook, reveals the true extent of the loss:

Perhaps never in history was there so strong and true an attachment, so warm and a loving friendship between the sovereign and servant ... Strength of character as well as power of frame the most fearless uprightness, kindness, sense of justice, honesty, independence and unselfishness combined with a tender, warm heart ... made him one of the most remarkable men. The Queen feels that life for the second time becomes most trying and sad to bear deprived of all she so needs ... the blow has fallen too heavily not to be very heavily felt (History Today).

In March 1883 John Brown fell ill with a chill that turned to a fever and resulted in another attack of the erysipelas with which he had been plagued for many years. He died in his room at Windsor after a private funeral service was held and his coffin was sent to Scotland for burial in the churchyard at Crathie, here the Queen had Brown's tombstone inscribed with the words from St. Matthew (25: 21): "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of the Lord" (Duff 15). John brown stubbornly neglected his own well-being in his dedication to the Queen.

Shortly, after Brown's death, Queen Victoria poured out her woes in a letter to the poet laureate, Lord Tennyson: "He had no thought but for me, my welfare, my comfort, my safety, my happiness. He was part of my life and quite

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invaluable” (Dyson and Tennyson 103–104).She even commissioned a life-sized statue of Brown .Once more Victoria found herself faced with the same devastating shock of another strong and powerful reliable arm and head (Weintraub 391), as she had on the death of Prince Albert in 1861.



**Figure 1:Queen Victoria on" Fyvie"with John Brown at Balmoral, by George Washington Wilson, 1863.**

The revealing of such story in the Queen's life came to light until the 1990's and the publication of the biography of the Queen's doctor, Sir James Reid, where it showed the true extent of Victoria's feeling for John Brown, where after her body had been laid out in its coffin ,Reid had added a few secret items, about which Victoria had given him before her death.Although the coffin contained many photos and mementos relating to Prince Albert and her children, the most personal one would be a photograph of John Brown together with a small case containing a lock of his hair,a pocket handkerchief of Brown , and his mother's wedding ring that the Queen had worn since his death, and a few final letters carefully hidden by Reid, so that none of the royal family could see them before the lid of the Queen's coffin was screwed

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down (Brown 162). Perhaps the final assessment should rest with Randall Davidson, who concluded, as regards the speculation over the Queen's relationship with Brown, that "one had only to know the Queen to realise how innocent she was" (Bell 31).

However, the soundest conclusion one can come to, is that the Queen's unqualified love for Brown was never anything other than platonic and one that never breached the enormous class divide that separated Brown, the servant, from his sovereign (Bell 31). Like the episode of the Munshi, after her death in 1901, her son and heir, King Edward VII, set about systematically destroying Brown's legacy and ordered the destruction of any of his correspondence with the Queen.

Thus, the closest bond which was suspected then to be a passionate relationship between her Majesty and her loyal highland servant turned to be released as a movie in 1997 entitled *Mrs. Brown*, a very famous British drama film starring Judi Dench again as Queen Victoria and , Billy Connolly as John Brown .The film shows the story of a bereaved love affair which broke all the rules ; Queen Victoria and her Scottish servant, John Brown. It seems that John Brown was much more like Abdul and proved to be one of the closest friends and confidants of the Queen Empress Victoria, who stood like a rock and a mainspring in her life.

### 2.3.3. The Munshi (1863–1909)

After the death of her loyal Scottish servant John Brown in 1883, no one, it seemed, would ever be able to replace him as Queen Victoria's trusted confidant and adviser. The ageing Victoria, with all her children now grown up and married, and feeling herself lost and despaired of finding a reliable helpmate. But her Golden Jubilee in 1887 brought with it much celebration in her Indian empire and the arrival at court of a new Indian servant ; Abdul Karim.

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Mohammed Abdul Karim (1863 –1909), referred to as " the Munshi", was an Indian attendant of Empress Victoria. He served her during the final fourteen years of her reign, gaining her maternal affection over that time. Abdul Karim was born into a Muslim family at Lalitpur near Jhansi, his father, Haji Mohammed Waziruddin, was a hospital assistant stationed with the Central India Horse, a British cavalry regiment. He was taught Persian and Urdu privately and travelled across North India and into Afghanistan during the Second Anglo-Afghan War (Basu 48-49).

After the war in 1880, Karim's father transferred to a civilian position at the Central Jail in Agra, while Karim functioned as the naib wakil; an "agent" for the Nawab of Jawara in the Agency of Agar, and then moved to Agra ; the city of Taj Mahal, to become a clerk at the jail. In 1886, 34 convicts ventured out to London to show cover weaving at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in South Kensington. Karim helped Jail Superintendent John Tyler in arranging the outing, and chose the floor coverings and weavers. At the point when Queen Victoria visited the display, felt enthusiastic for India and requested that Tyler select two orderlies who would be employed for her Golden Jubilee.

Thus,Karim was hastily coached in British manners and in the English language and sent to England, along with Mohammed Buksh another Indian servant. He then presented her Majesty a nazar ;or a gift of a gold mohur( Basu 67).It was planned that the two Indian men would initially wait at table, as a khidmatgars and learn to do other tasks.The Queen depicted Karim in her journal for that day: " The other, much younger, is much lighter [than Buksh], tall, and with a fine serious countenance.His father is a native doctor at Agra.They both kissed my feet"(Basu73). Of the two, the Queen's favorite, Karim, seemed to her to be rather too dignified for the role of mere servant, and thus she promoted him.

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Desirous of learning more about the Indian subcontinent over which she reigned, the Queen enlisted him, as her personal Indian clerk, with the task of teaching her Hindustani or urdu and educating her in Indian culture, which she used during an audience in December to greet the Maharani Chimnabai of Baroda, and prepared for her curry which turned to be one of her special dishes. By time, Victoria took a great liking to Karim and ordered that he was to be given additional instruction in the English language.



**Figure 2:Portrait of Abdul Karim by Rudolf Swoboda.**

Now referred to by her as “the Munshi” teacher/guru, Karim found himself at the head of a growing retinue of his own countrymen, and he proved himself being intelligent and useful. Upon this Karim was allocated the room previously occupied by John Brown, this made the court alarmed at the degree of trust and confidentiality she invested in the Munshi; the obvious parallels with her former close relationship with John Brown.

Many suspected the Munshi of being a manipulative, and his influence over the Queen created jealousy and discontent among the members of the Royal Household, who might ordinarily never blend socially with Indians beneath the position of



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Prince. The Queen anticipated that they should greet Karim, an Indian of standard starting point, into their middle, yet they were not willing to do as such.

After that the Munshi was granted the use of private cottages on the Queen's estates at Windsor, Osborne, and Balmoral, which created resentment if not open hostility toward him, to the point where Victoria's own doctor admitted that she was "quite off her head" about him (Aronson 234). Karim also embraced the opportunity and demanded from the Queen a pension for his father and a promotion to his former employer, John Tyler, and she accepted his request.

The ageing Queen did not trust her relatives and the Royal Household to look after the Munshi after she was gone, and so sought to secure his future, she wrote to Lansdowne, and the Secretary of State for India, Lord Cross, for " a grant of land to her really exemplary and excellent young Munshi, Hafiz Abdul Karim" (Basu 155). Though it was impossible the Viceroy managed to find one in the suburbs of Agra.

Now comfortably fat and excessively self-important, the Munshi was almost universally loathed. Much of the hatred toward him was undoubtedly bound up in the racial attitudes of the times, but nothing could disguise the fact that he was taking increasing liberties in his insistence on special treatment as the Queen's right-hand man and favourite.

The Queen welcomed even his wife and mother-in-law who accompanied him, and who wore according to the religious rituals, Victoria wrote, " the two Indian ladies ... who are, I believe, the first Mohammedan purdah ladies who ever came over. keep their custom of complete seclusion and of being entirely covered when they go out, except for the holes for their eyes" (Anand 45). Victoria visited Karim's family regularly, bringing with her the Princess of Wales and the Empress of Russia. Marie Mallet, the Queen's maid-in-waiting and wife of civil servant Bernard Mallet, recorded:

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I have just been to see the Munshi's wife (by Royal Command). She is fat and not uncomely, a delicate shade of chocolate and gorgeously attired, rings on her fingers, rings on her nose, a pocket mirror set in turquoises on her thumb and every feasible part of her person hung with chains and bracelets and ear-rings, a rose-pink veil on her head bordered with heavy gold and splendid silk and satin swathings round her person. She speaks English in a limited manner (Basu 278).

Day after a day, the Munshi was perceived to have taken advantage of his position as the Queen's favourite, causing displeasure in the court, when he was about to be appointed as a "Nawab", the Indian equivalent of a peer, and the Queen wanted him to be a Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (KCIE), which would make him " Sir Abdul Karim", however, the Viceroy of the time Lingin threatened her that this would have little political implication in India. Nevertheless in 1899, on the occasion of her 80th birthday, Victoria appointed Karim as a Commander of the Victorian Order (CVO), a rank intermediate between member and knight.

The following year, during Victoria's annual holiday in continental Europe she insisted on the King Umberto I of Italy to meet her Munshi, who in turn did not understand why this magnificent and imposing Hindoo should have been formally presented to him. Since the prevalent thought in Italy is that the Munshi is a hostage Indian Prince, who is taken about by the Queen as an outward and obvious indication of Her Majesty's matchless quality in the East (Good Times).

By the time Victoria had visibly aged, and her health was failing and within three months she was dead in 1901, and the Munshi was allowed to pay his last respects at her open coffin, before being commanded by Victoria's heir, Edward VII, to burn all letters he had received from the Queen. He was swiftly removed from his comfortable sinecure and pensioned off to a cottage back in India. Lady Curzon wrote this set on 9 August 1901, Charlotte Knollys told me that : "the Munshi bogie which had frightened all the household at Windsor for many years had proved a ridiculous



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farce, as the poor man had not only given up all his letters but even the photos signed by the Queen and had returned to India like a whipped hound.All the Indian servants have gone back so now there is no Oriental picture & queerness at Court" (Anand 102 ).

The Munshi passed on at his home, Karim Lodge, on his domain in Agra in 1909. He was survived by two spouses, and was entombed in the Panchkuin Kabaristan graveyard in Agra close to his father.

On the guidelines of Edward VII, the Commissioner of Agra,W. H. Cobb, visited Karim Lodge to recover any residual correspondence between the Munshi and the Queen or her Household, which was appropriated and sent to the King.Karim's family however, who had emigrated to Pakistan during the Partition, kept his diary and some of his correspondence from the time concealed until 2010, when it was made public. After the discoveries of Shrabani Basu (The Daily Telegraph).

As the Munshi had no kids, his nephews and grandnephews acquired his riches and properties.The Munshi's family continued to reside in Karachi, Pakistan, while the estate, including Karim Lodge, was confiscated by the Indian government and distributed among Hindu refugees from Pakistan which turned to be a nursing home and doctor's office.

While Karim did not have a royal status, he was accepted as a part of the royal family in the public's eyes, as he taught the Queen how to speak and write Hindustani. In return, the Queen bestowed numerous honors on him .By awarding these titles to Karim she was connecting the periphery of her Empire more closely to the metropolis. Indeed, Karim represented India to the people of Britain, and when he returned home, he would have represented Britain to the people of India. He was being rewarded for his obedience to Victoria who was his British-monarch-mother and surely fulfilled John Brown's shoes with his endless loyalty till the very end.

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### 2.4. Queen Victoria's Fondness of India

During the zenith of the British Raj, the Queen Empress Victoria was involved in all what concerns her cherished colony, that was presented to her as a precious diamond .She regarded her Indian jewel with extreme tenderness, as Queen Victoria actively hired Indian servants and made Indian culture a focal point in her daily routine.

The Queen's enthusiasm for India developed as she matured. It started in the mid 1850s with the landing of the Maharajah Duleep Singh, the boy-ruler of the vanquished Sikh Empire. Though at this point, she must have felt a lack of control over her empire because of the Sepoy Mutiny that occurred in 1858, and eventually Duleep Singh's rebellion over the British rule in India.Nevertheless, her proclamation of 1858 promised to protect and help her Indian subjects and demonstrated a growing awareness of her colony's significance, and possibly in an effort to better link her empire's center and its periphery, the Queen took the title Empress of India in 1876.

Her interest peaked during the 1880s and 1890s the years that coincided with the celebrations of the Golden and Diamond Jubilee.The Queen as an Empress of India was delighted by this title and send a message to her Indian subjects held in the Delhi Durbar saying : "we must trust that the present occasion may tend to unite in bonds of yet closer affection ourselves and our subjects, that from the highest to the humblest all may feel that under our rule the great principles of liberty, equity and justice are secured to them"(Basu 45).

What made her Golden Jubilee as a showcasing for the British Empire was the part Indian Princes who were specially invited by the crown and who would form a major part of the celebrations.It was suggested by the government that the wealth and glamour of the heavily jewelled Maharajas and Maharanis would add to the pomp of the Jubilee and display the loyalty of the Indian rulers and the colonies(Basu 56).

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Among the notable Indian royalties whom Victoria marvelled were the Maharajah of Cooch Behar Pertab Singh and his Maharani Sunity , she noted their clothes and jewellery with fascination and was delighted by their gifts , which were a carved ruby pendant with fine large diamonds and an inlaid ivory writing (Basu 78), and whom the Queen in turn gifted and called for the welding of India and the mother country into one harmonious and united community, and of course,with the coming of Indian servants to the palace whom which one of them grow closer over the remainder of her life ; her Munshi Abdul Karim.

As what was stated before,to demonstrate a growing interest in her colony ,she shows her devotion to Indian art in various ways by patronizing the embroidery, carpets, gold and silver industries of every kind, and showing interest toward the Indian literature (Wisconsin 5).Indian architecture is another of her hobbies,she even added the Durbar Room to her favorite palace, Osbourne House that was among the finest exhibitions that displayed Indian works and culture to the British public, which also had been dispersed through newspapers and magazines ,where even ordinary Britons became fascinated with India and supported the relationship between the British Raj and its jewel, and this motherly sentiment that was personified through the English Monarch ; as The Friend of India & Statesman stated, “It is a true instinct that has conferred upon Her Majesty the name of "mother of her people” (4).

The Queen also defied convention by establishing a close relationship with her devoted Indian servant “Munshi”, as it was maintained by Walter Arnstein “In her later years, Queen Victoria looked on her title Empress of India not solely as an honor but also as a responsibility, and in her eyes Abdul Karim, the Munshi, became the respected personal embodiment, ever at her side, of that exotic Jewel in her Crown with all its varied languages and peoples”(197).

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India remained a place of mystery, exciting Her Majesty’s curiosity. This was remarkable even when it related her hoggish habit toward food and ,especially when her Indian khitmatgar Abdul surprised her with a typical Indian meal, to discover another world in her oriental splendid,karim had prepared her :chicken curry,daal and a fragrant pilau , birianis and dum pukht, dishes from the Mughal kitchens(Basu 86). British food historian Annie Gray, who chronicled Victoria's lavish appetite in her book, *The Greedy Queen: Eating with Victoria*, stated that in any case, in Victorian England, curry was a way to use up leftover meat and vegetables, which the Queen favoured. This made Victoria taste and smell an Indian aroma and orderred it to be served for her regularly, and she even wanted to taste a mango, ‘the queen of fruit’, but due to the distance it went off before it reached her hand.

Karim had always fascinated the Queen with tales from India. For her India has always been the diamond of her crown ,but due to the long sea travel and the danger that she would be assasinated forbid her to see India in her lifetime, eventhough Abdul was able to fill this void by explaining her the tales of the exotic land, like the story of Taj Mahal. Notably, the very Queen who took out the Kohinoor from India had a liking to learn Hindustani. This was stated clearly by Shrabani Basu, "It had been a year of celebration and splendour and the Queen had been moved by the devotion of her servants. Her discovery of India, her Indian servants and her freshly acquired knowledge of Hindustani had all given her a new-found happiness"(115).Even when the Battle of Flowers was held on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice and which was one of the Queen’s favourite festivals, she saw two Indian jugglers ‘perform some very clever tricks’ and was ‘very pleased’.

Apparently, the Queen was always enthusiastic about India and wanting to learn on this country which she ruled and the link between this exotic land through her Indian Munshi karim who transported her into another world. Her enthusiasm for India was obvious,from her edgy wish to eat a mango and her perspective on Karim

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as her top choice, and even in her engagement in religious matters notably in the conversations with Karim who kept her up to date on India and who would often voice his concern that Muslims, being a minority, could be marginalised in India. This demonstrated a totally extraordinary side of the Queen's life that had been recently recorded by history specialists.

Furthermore, in the achievement of her milestone Diamond Jubilee, the large number of Jubilee presents from Indian Princes, committees and individuals showed how the Queen was referred to as a mother figure in India. The Queen was overcome with all the love and affection she received that she recorded in her Hindustani Journal, she wrote: “Aj hamari sawari ka jalsa bahut khoshi aur umdagi se khatam howa. Mausam bahut achcha tha. (Today my procession passed through the city and the celebrations ended with a lot of joy and happiness. The weather was very good.)” (Basu 306). This showed how keen she was toward her beloved colony ‘India’, and excited about all its matters.

In forming her subjects' comprehension of India, Queen Victoria was to be sure an embellishment of what it intended to be a British subject in the late nineteenth century. As the people of England and Europe read about the Queen learning Hindustani, building an Indian-inspired room in the palace, befriending the Indian Abdul Karim, and through her relationship with her ward Dullep Singh, she demonstrated a kind of ‘imperial motherhood’ as Britain was regarded as the mother country to her colonies, which most likely built a more grounded bond among home and abroad and made the Queen viewed as a mother-like ruler. Additionally, her activities satisfied the job of a guardian and the acknowledgment of this parenthood was shown in an animation which demonstrated Queen Victoria as a mother, holding her baby India, and encompassed by her other pioneer children. The fact that India was the child in her arms strongly supported the fact that the people of England were well aware of her special affection for this colony.

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Queen Victoria's interest and fondness became more public in the last fifty years of her reign, but there has been little serious analysis of the Queen's actions relating to India and her self-conscious role as an imperial sovereign. For instance, Shrabani Basu's *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant* focused mostly on the resentment of the household staff towards her Indian servant and ignored public opinion on the matter and thus fails to appreciate the broader imperial dimensions of this relationship (Basu 104).

More than this, Sushila Anand has written about the Queen's connection with both the Black Prince Duleep, and the Munshi Abdul, but her work's utility is undermined by unfounded intimation of a possible romantic relationship between the Queen and Abdul Karim and a perpetual focus on royal scandals (Anand 45). Whereas other writers have taken a more serious approach without trying to sensationalize the relationship. For example, G.R. Searle explained that "in a moment of rare common sense, she warned that colour prejudice threatened to break up her Empire: having curry prepared each day in her palace of residence, on the offchance that a hungry Indian Prince might pay a courtesy call, was her own particular contribution to good race relations "(33).

In this case, the Queen's fascination with India was well documented and was highly publicized in the last era of her reign and especially through her friendship with the Munshi Abdul. Her actions maintained the cultural and political power structures of Britain over India, and a mothering monarch over her subjects.

### 2.4.1. Duleep Singh and the Kohinoor Diamond

Duleep Singh nicknamed the Black Prince of Perthshire, was the son of the powerful "Lion of Lahore," Ranjit Singh, who controlled the Punjab for half a century. After his passing, the child's mother, Rani Jindan, announced him as a Maharaja in 1843. The Sikh armed force picked up power day by day, rejected its remote officers,

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and had multiplied its quality when the First Sikh War against the British erupted, recognizing Duleep as a Sikh Maharaja and made him a ward of the government of British India.

In 1848 an anti-British outbreak led to the Second Sikh War 1848, where at the Battle of Gujarat, the Sikhs were defeated, and thus the Maharaja was deposed and his kingdom annexed to British India and all his fortunes were taken over, including the last symbol of the Sikh Empire ‘the kohinoor diamond’, as a precious treasure. The heavenliness of the jewel and its worth symbolized the intensity of the new owner; the British Empire. Then, he was given a generous annual pension, and converted to Christianity and chose to live in England, where he was well received in society.

'The Kohinoor' which means " Mountain of Light" in Persian, that was once the largest diamond in the world, was originated in the state of Andhra Pradesh in India along with its double, ‘the Daryanoor’ the "Sea of Light" and it has belonged to various rulers who claimed its possession from India, Persia, and lastly Lahore where it was seized by the East India Company and became part of the British Crown Jewels when Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1877, and whom she proudly wore the Koh-i-Noor as a brooch, revealing in her new-found knowledge of India, and its glorious history. Though the rumors circulated about the fact of its curse, it had been said that the owners of this stone would possess the world, yet will likewise know every one of its adversities, and that only females could wear it without retribution (Kaur 200). Indeed, the proprietors of the Koh-I-noor have had a disaster come to pass for them. Afterwards, the stone was displayed in the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park. The Kohinoor diamond is still in England and recently there were reports in the media regarding efforts by the current Indian government to retrieve it.



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Then, in the 1850s, Duleep became the exotic, partially-Westernized Indian Prince who stayed frequently as the guest of Queen Victoria and Albert who were fond of him, and made him part of the royal family , and often the Maharajah was painted with them "wearing his complete national Sikh costume, with all its splendid jewels, when he went to court or at any great entertainment" (Chakrabarty 66) as the Queen utilized Singh as an acquaintance of India with the British public,and his royal standing enabled him to mingle amongst British aristocracy.

Chakrabarty carries on to state that the Queen's fondness for Duleep was chronicled, much in the same way it was for Abdul Karim, where she never forgot his birthday and always showering him with valuable gifts and gracious tokens of her interest (70). But this life finally broke down in the 1880s amid recrimination against British authorities over the loss of his inheritance.

Duleep Singh's insubordination was, in this manner, less a matter of either patriotism or egotistical peevishness as it was of dynastic respect, after the annexation of Punjab because of a rebellion in which he took no part, the Maharaja proclaimed: "I have been most unjustly deprived of my kingdom," and "I am still the lawful Sovereign of the Punjab"(Winright71). However, he expressed his gratitude to the Monarch.It is clear that for Duleep's concept of allegiance was neither ethnic nor national, but rather dynastic.

Finally, in the early 1890s as an ailing man facing death,he sought and received a royal pardon and tried to regain the standing that he had lost with his British friends especially Queen Victoria that she conceded it, and which enabled the Maharaja to visit England once again, where he died in 1893.

According to numerous twentieth-century Indians, contingent upon their mentality toward the relationship of the Sikh people group to the remainder of the subcontinent, he was either a legend of the early autonomy development or a hero of



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Sikh patriotism.To this day Punjab's last Maharaja remains an enigmatic and problematic figure.

### 2.4.2. The Durbar Room

To add much to its glamour and prestige, the Queen Empress ordered the building of an Indian hall inside the Osborne House, to marvel with its splendour, as if she brought a mini India to England. Upon the suggestion of Abdul who told her : "In India we also commission great artists. Each Mughal Emperor would bring the greatest craftsmen to make great glories for their Durbar Room"(Hall 48).Which she filled with Indian chintz, and many gifts she received from Indian Princes as Empress of India ,and which turned now as a strange amalgam of private and public space, dining room and museum that was inspired by the architectural traditions of north India, fusing Hindu and Islamic decorative features as a revelation of the Queen's love for India.

The Durbar Room was built to provide a much-needed banqueting hall at the Osborne House and it was designed by John Lockwood Kipling, and Bhai Ram Singh a master craftsman at the Mayo School of Art, Lahore,in Indian style, and through which the Queen explored an artistic confession of her 'India', and most notably it took its name from the Indian word meaning for a state reception or a hall where great gatherings and celebrations took place, for instance the Delhi Durbar that was the first witness on the claiming of Queen Victoria as an Empress of India.

To all its grandeur, the Durbar Room gives a real insight into how the Queen Empress lived out the last part of her reign. It was the room where she entertained European royalty, and her personal retreat with family.As Basu wandered through the house's Indian wing, she could not help notice several portraits and a bust of an Indian servant called Abdul Karim which was the first thread to write about their friendship story.

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### 2.5. Racist Attitudes

The Victorian Age was built upon a firm belief of excellence of the British Empire influenced by ideas of racial superiority and hierarchical pride. Though, Britain’s supremacy over India was sponsored by race and class, many Britons, despite the feelings of the royal family and staff, viewed Victoria’s relationship with her Indian counterparts as appropriate because she created a visual representation of suitable race and class hierarchies as an “essential difference between the rulers and the ruled” ,and this what many historians have examined when dealing with matters which concerns race calling it the “rule of colonial difference”(Sinha 183).It is clear that Queen Victoria and Abdul Karim personified this difference.

For the most part, the Queen’s actions were not criticized by her subjects because her actions subscribed to norms of the era. Occasionally, negative sentiment was seen in the newspaper reports and from her royal courtiers. Usually these reports reflected racism of the time or a lack of understanding of various aspects of Indian culture and dealt with her relationship with karim ‘the Munshi’.

One newspaper stated, “The Munshi is eminently a grave man, for he is never seen to smile, and he regards everybody and everything with and apathetic indifference which is thoroughly Oriental” (Vanity Fair). This was not an accusation against the Munshi, but against all people from Asia.However,the Queen contradicted this description of Karim’s demeanor and demonstrated her support to him against any negative reports from media or her household, this was stated by Victoria’s biographer Carolly Erickson who described the situation:

The rapid advancement and personal arrogance of the Munshi would inevitably have led to his unpopularity, but the fact of his race made all emotions run hotter against him. Racialism was a scourge of the age;it went hand in hand with belief in the appropriateness of Britain's global dominion. For a dark-skinned Indian to be put very nearly on a level with the Queen's white servants was all but

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intolerable, for him to eat at the same table as them, to share in their daily lives was viewed as an outrage. Yet the Queen was determined to impose harmony on her household. Race hatred was intolerable to her, and the "dear good Munshi"deserving of nothing but respect(241).

This made the hatred of the household toward Abdul elevated and more overstrung, because for them this was not just threatening but also wrong.

### 2.5.1. Royal Household's Tensions about the Munshimania

Queen Victoria's companionship with her Munshi whom they were referring to as the 'brown John Brown' (Hall 44) found a dislike from her royal entourage who opposed it fiercely and reacted badly.

To the point that,their close friendship caused friction between the Queen and other members of the Royal household, who felt superior to him.They were not comfortable with how he accompanied her on travels and was seated in the best seats at the opera and at banquets ,these are much elements of class snobbery and racism that have been cited as reasons for their dislike of Abdul .Obviously,the Royal Family were simply Royals of that time period,they held that the British Empire was ran by the most privileged and important family upon earth ,and they felt that anyone who was not an entitled white person was below them.

Though it is a harsh criticism but the complete truth ; he was at the heart of the court, and this had never happened before, and what is worse for the court is that he is a commoner, not even a Prince, or someone of upper class stock and a Muslim, that was unbearable for them.

Therefore,all the Royal family, ladies and lords of the court had all raised concerns about Karim with the Queen, who refused to listen to what they had to say, but was very angry as she did not believe in racism and class differences, she was simply a spunky woman ahead of her time who never tolerate such kind of prejudices

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in her court. Thus, every power was pushing the Queen to abandon her interest in Abdul who was spied upon and defamed, but the Queen defended him and showered titles and gifts upon Abdul and his family.

Fritz Ponsonby one of the household members wrote to Elgin the Viceroy of India that Karim was profoundly disliked in the Household, and that he involved particularly a similar position as John Brown used to (Anand 54). John Brown had remained a servant till his last day, even though his closeness to the Queen was well known, but the Munshi had been elevated in rank and the Household found that intolerable.

Hence, closer he got to the Queen the more the court tried to drive them apart, they accused him of being a spy for the Amir of Afghanistan Abdu Rahman Khan, and that he had access to political papers and would pose a threat to the state. Notwithstanding, the Queen stubbornly safeguarded Karim and swore he did not peruse any political papers particularly that Abdul become friends with Rafiuddin Ahmed, who revitalized the Muslim League (Hibbert 448). However, there was no evidence and found to be trustworthy, and the Queen remained unshakable as a reflection of her long love affair with India and her Indian servants.

Though some Historians agree with the suspicions of her Household that the Munshi influenced the Queen's opinions on Indian issues, biasing her against Hindus and favouring Muslims, as stated by Marina Warner who has referred to Abdul Karim’s importance: “Despatch boxes about Indian affairs were shown to him, his advice was solicited, and he was taking part in the holy privacy of family theatricals, as a figure in the ‘tableau vivant’ of an Indian bazaar”(200). In that sense, the mentalities showed the race and class demeanors of the time, a characterizing highlight of the British-Indian relationship amid the time of the British Raj in India.

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The Queen was clearly in great distress and had now decided that she would stick up for her Munshi against all odds. Meanwhile, Abdul continued to get eulogistic press coverage, much to the wrath of the Household, relying on the Queen's protection and infatuation with him.

In this regard, bigotry was genuinely endemic at the time, and Abdul had begun to get somewhat snobbish, though he was devoted to her, but hierarchy and colour prejudice was everything in those days. As curries stewed in the imperial kitchens, so did the regal family, as he gets advancements and praises, and stroll around with a sword and a chest of medals.

Abdul, as far as it matters for him, expected to be treated as an equivalent, for instance at the Braemar Games, he was seen hobnobbing with the gentry, and when a stunned Duke of Connaught saw his turban swaying among the top hats in the structure, he sent for Henry Ponsonby and asked him how the Munshi had come to be situated with the refined men, and Ponsonby recommended that it was "by the Queen's organization", the Duke should approach the Queen about it, and this entirely shut him up (Waller 441).

Even Sir Henry Ponsonby, a man usually patient and tolerant, grew ballistic, "The advance of the Black Brigade is a serious nuisance" he wrote to Reid (Basu 223). The Royal family and the aristocracy that made up the Household had never shared the Queen's total lack of race or class barriers, which contradicts with their so called 'etiquette'.

On the other hand, Dr. Reid was frequently called upon to act as an intermediary between the Queen and the household, was persuaded that her Majesty was 'off her head'; and continued to hold discussions about the Munshi with the household including a strong ally 'Bertie' the Prince of Wales who planned to certificate the

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Queen as insane. This made Queen Victoria very offensive, saying in one scene in the movie *Victoria & Abdul*:

I am eighty-one years of age. I have had nine children, forty-two grandchildren, and almost a billion citizens. I have rheumatism, a collapsed uterus, I am morbidly obese, deaf in one ear. I have known eleven prime ministers, passed 2,347 pieces of legislation. I have been in office for sixty-two years, 234 days – thus I am the longest-serving monarch in world history. I am responsible for five households and a staff of more than three thousand. I am cantankerous, boring, greedy, ill-tempered, at times selfish and myopic, metaphorically and literally. I am, perhaps, disagreeably attached to power and should not have smashed the Emperor of Russia's egg. But I am anything but insane (Hall 88).

The Queen concluded that the household were being racist, together with her son and that they had all 'behaved disgracefully'.



**Figure 3: The Royal Household among them; Sir James Reid, Marie Mallet, and Fritz Ponsonby in 12 June 1897.**

Moreover, the courtiers' resentment came to a head after the Queen promoted Karim to Indian Secretary. Then, when the Queen's maid of honour Harriet Phipps, informed her of the collective decision of the household upon the trip to the Cimiez to not allow the Munshi escort them, and even they decided to resign. The Queen

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became furious, and accused them of treason.Upon this chapter in the household’s days they become poisoned with ‘Munshimania’.

All these tensions happened because the Household had been openly hostile to Karim, and they had never understood what the Queen had seen in him. To Fritz Ponsonby, the Munshi was like a sort of pet, like a dog or a cat which the Queen will not willingly give up, and Lord Salisbury was of the opinion that the Queen enjoyed the spats over the Munshi with her Household because it was the only excitement she had (Basu 80).

Notably, two topics rise up out of this record of the connection between Abdul Karim and Queen Victoria. The first is the quality, indeed tenacity, of the Queen and her total opportunity from supremacist slants, and the other one is the wimpishness of her retainers (The History Press). The Queen stayed firm with all due respect the Munshi, she believed she was taking on a battle against the bigotry and self importance of the privileged societies.

Despite the obstacles that they faced from the royal courtiers, their friendship remained until Queen Victoria’s death .Then All traces of Abdul were removed from her diaries and it was only decades later that his existence was discovered by a complete accident.It is entirely befuddling to consider this circumstance, since Queen Victoria enabling a servant to develop nearer to her was very shameful around then.Karim was not her equal, and for that matter, the household did not like him and they oppose their companionship that succeeded to fight all the circumstances.

### **2.5.2. The Anti- Racist Queen**

Queen Victoria was known to be against racism and slavery, however, her family was not so understanding, they hated both her servants, John Brown as well as Abdul Karim who had been raised in a lower social status, but he treated the Queen



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with utter difference and as a servant's heart, which her advisors and family did not quite treat her that way as she got older.

Actually, they had a huge difference of opinion when it came to her treatment of Abdul, and they began to question her rules and ways. Therefore, her children hated it when she formed relationship with her Indian Munshi Abdul. It was probably because of the racist imperialist attitudes of the time, that he was a brown skinned colonial, besides, they were too simply jealous of him.

As a matter of fact, Queen Victoria herself was not racist, and took the opportunity to learn Hindi from Abdul and to get to know about his culture and land, India. According to Basu their bond, was a mother -son relationship, perhaps a mother trying to repair the relationship of her country and family with her big daughter, the country India through this newfound son, Abdul Karim.

Concerning her ward, Prince Duleep Singh, even after his disastrous attempts at rebellion, the familial connection continued. The Milwaukee Journal covered the marriage of Singh's son, "At the present moment a Hindoo bridegroom and his English bride are enjoying their honeymoon on the Riviera, and the Queen rejoices to know that her godson - child of her favorite Dhuleep Singh- has formed an alliance with one of the highest families in the land by his marriage with the beautiful Lady Anne Coventry" (Wisconsin 5). Here, it had been noticeable, the progress of the Queen's anti-racial discrimination policies as her Indian godson married an Englishwoman.

More than that, the Queen and her husband Prince Albert enjoyed a passionate private life that saw them share nine children, but what is little known is the fact that they had a tenth child in the wake of receiving a Nigerian Princess following the severe homicide of her regal parents. Sarah Forbes Bonetta was only five when she was caught by the cruel King of Dahomey in 1848. But before she too could be



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killed, she was rescued by British naval officer Frederick Forbes and presented the child as a 'gift' to Victoria who provided her with tenderness, and raised her as one of her children. The Queen for her was a loyal friend and protector until she was old enough to marry.

Sarah Forbes Bonetta was, definitely the object of significant interest in England and was appreciated for her impressive knowledge and whatever challenges she had, the Queen remained a significant impact in her life, and she cherished Victoria that much she named her oldest girl after her, and who consented to be the child's godmother.

This revealing of the story come after Mr Awoonor-Gordon her great-great grandson, and who is a retired broadcaster from Sierra Leone made a request with Windsor Castle and found his illustrious connection while exploring his family ancestry, he called Victoria a 'pioneer' and praised her for her open-minded attitude: "For an African slave to be taken on by the British royal family in the 19th century is remarkable. Queen Victoria was very kind to her, and it was a relationship that was really ahead of its time"(The Mirror).

These facts made Queen Victoria considered by many to be one of the greatest monarchs of her time who ruled more than half of the world, and whom behind her typical British royal customs lies a rather motherly nature of her which has been kept hidden, she valued human relationships and respected their beliefs and norms, the thing that was not expected from any of her royal counterparts.

### **2.5.3. Queen Victoria and Islam**

Queen Victoria was head of the British Empire, Empress of India, and a leader of England's congregation, and numerous individuals, hypothetically, her Muslim subjects owed loyalty to her. However, some suspensions rised concerning her

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convertibility to Islam as the Empress of India and due to her special relationship with Abdul Karim, her Indian Muslim Munshi who taught her the Holy Quran, and Urdu, and thus found out much about Islam.

In a world full of intolerance, Islamophobia and growing inclination there has been an increase in jealousy and prejudice against Muslims and Islam; they have suffered greater pain and losses, and Abdul complained to her about these serious matters. To the extent that his influence on her is clear from her thoughts, which she expressed to the Viceroy: "She thinks Mahomedans do require more protection than the Hindus, and they are decidedly by far the most loyal. Though the 'Mahomedans' cow killing is made the pretext for the [Hindus'] agitation, it is in fact, directed against us, who kill far more cows for our Army than the Mahomedans" (Basu 219). Thus, she encouraged that Hindu ceremonies be re-booked so as not to strife with Muslim ones.

Of course the royal household's Islamophobic attitudes were clear to the Queen, as explained by the author Basu that the presence of such Muslim inside their court caused so much unrest and confusion which escorted the Victorian time (The Telegraph). Though, the British are accused of creating the Hindu-Muslim divide.

However, the Queen paying attention to her very own words in the 1858 decree, when she guaranteed to be a Queen of all religions in India. Besides, Victoria was able to distinguish a Muslim from a Hindu, and during her reign she encountered with noble Muslims and kept in correspondence with them regardless of what their religion was, for instance, she met the mother of the King of Awadh Nawab Birjis Qadr; Begum Hazrat Mahal, the Nizam of Hyderabad, who came to London seeking favours from the Queen-Empress, and with Shah Jahan, the Begum of Bhopal, exchanging gifts and books.

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Regarding the assumptions towards the Queen being a Muslim or not is a subject of hot debate, as no evidence was found of her Islamic name which reffered to her in her diary, and due to political establishment this great information was kept hidden between Queen Victoria and her Munshi Abdul.Since they were close friends, their relationship might have opened the Queen's mind regarding racism and religion, i.e, by learning Hindustani and the Holy Quran. The story’s narrative was charming but due to racism and religious prejudice of the Victorians, it was bound to end badly.

### 2.6. Victoria’s Hindustani Journals and karim’s Diary

The veracity of the Queen’s story with her Munshi would not see the light if there was not a strong thread of confidential matterial and source to support the true nature of the pair’s friendship, which lasted for almost 13 years, without examining Queen Victoria’s Hindustani journals where Abdul would teach her what is now known as Urdu, and founding the lost diary of Abdul by the author Shrabani Basu.

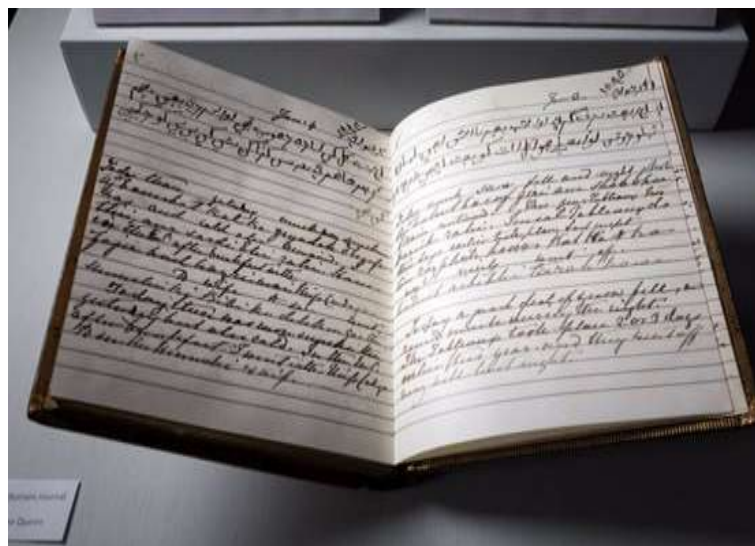
Upon consulting the journals by Basu who explains: “No one had seen them up to that point. The blotting paper fell out of these journals which had not been opened for 100 years presumably because all Queen Victoria’s biographers had been Westerners and could not follow Urdu”(The Telegraph).These Hindustani journals and other couple of records that endure fire are held at Windsor castle, and had been meticulously interpreted by Basu, and in which she showed the intense relationship between Queen Victoria and the Indian instructor.

The Queen loved to hear Abdul Karim talk about India and his own city of Agra, and within a few weeks of his arrival he had started to teach her some words of Hindustani.She took a great liking to learn the language that her favorite subject spoke with, she wrote: "I am learning a few words of Hindustani to speak to my servants. It is a great interest to me for both the language and the people, I have naturally never come into real contact with before"(Longford 502).

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It is thought that Karim wrote the lines first in Urdu, followed by Urdu in roman script so that the Queen could read out the lines, then finally the English translation. This was notable even by media that reported “The Queen-Empress takes the warmest interest in her Eastern Empire, and is an industrious student of Hindustani, and each day at the appointed hour, takes a lesson from the Munshi, her Indian secretary. She also keeps a diary in Hindustani” (The Quiver).

Thus, the tutor-pupil relationship started, where there were many messages between Karim and Queen Victoria exchanged in Hindustani, and the Queen’s substantial progress in learning Urdu, and her enthusiasm for it was remarkable; the language of the Mughal Emperors in India appealed to her, she wrote: “Aj yeh chhati kitaab shuruat hain.Umid hai ki yeh bhi bakhubiat tamam hogi. (This sixth book is on its way today. Hopefully, it will be very intense)” (Basu 210).



**Figure 4:Queen Victoria's Hindustani Journals.**

When discussing the Queen’s Hindustani education, Richard Holmes, her biographer and the librarian at Windsor Castle, observed the following: “In the last ten years a signal proof of the warm interest which her Majesty has always taken in her Indian Empire has been given by the Queen’s study of Hindustani, under the instruction of the Munshi Abdul Karim”( 297).The Windsor archives likewise contain

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letters from Queen Victoria to Karim, much of the time signed as: “your closest friend”; or “Your loving mother”, or “Victoria R.I.” She nearly always signed these in Urdu. A confirmation that Abdul inspired the Empress of India who considered him as a son, author Shrabani Basu told the BBC.

In addition to her praise for him and the unnumbered titles that she bestowed upon him, among which he had been considered as her Indian teacher, and most confidant friend. Basu quoted that the Queen wrote, “I am so very fond of him. He is so good and gentle and understanding and is a real comfort to me” (The Telegraph).

In the same regard, Karim's diaries add weight to suggestions that the Queen was arguably far closer to him more than John Brown, and thus they have been used by Basu to update her book *Victoria and Abdul* which tells the story of this remarkable man in the life of Queen Victoria. Upon a correspondence of the surviving family members of the Munshi in India and Pakistan, which made Basu reach Karim's diaries, ‘the golden thread’, and which detailed his friendship and servitude for the British Queen Victoria.

A passage written by Abdul in the Queen's Urdu journal reveals a man who seems genuinely devoted to Victoria, heaping praise on her ‘wisdom and fine senses’ and thanking her for defending him against his enemies in the royal household, “You are wholly good, honest and truthful. You have been gracious enough to take me in your service. And have been gracious during all these years” (Companion Booklet). Abdul also wrote here about the ‘jealousy and prejudice’ which he saw against Muslims and Islam around the world, and which he experienced personally at court, and on their first encountering, and his enamour by Balmoral.

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**Figure 5:Abdul Karim's Surviving Diary.**

It is clear that, Queen Victoria was unfathomably inquisitive about India and its customs, so to learn Hindustani and write in Urdu was a side interest to which she stayed loyal nearly up to her passing. Though, some records of her relationship with Karim had been destroyed by her son Edward VII, but the Queen’s Hindustani journals, and more miraculously the founding diary of Abdul survived, a wish which history has certainly granted when Basu come across it coincidentally.

What is significant , is for Abdul's story to at long last be told. Queen Victoria learned Urdu for 13 years; which is a big deal, especially during this time of anti-Muslim feeling (Biyokulule). So, it was really amazing to consign to the depths of history and to discover an important chapter in the monarch’s life.

### **2.7. Unlikely Friendships**

The tale of Queen Victoria and the Munshi places the Raj in a new viewpoint. On the historical ladder, it shows a kind of reciprocal amity between the colonizer and the colonised personified in the British Queen and her Indian Munshi, much similar to many other possible friendships that arose during the colonial rule between the Englishmen and the Indians and which were seen as an extraordinary thing, but

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most of them were doomed to fail because of the patriotic circumstances on each side while claiming for a liberal humanism.

Regarding the story of the Empress and her servant karim, many revisionists agree that no one could hear of Abdul in particular until the publication of Frederick Ponsonby's memoirs in 1951, and an insightful examination of his life and association with Victoria started around the 1960s, concentrating on the Munshi as a delineation of class and race prejudice in Victorian England, and mostly the relationship of the Raj and its jewel.

As stated afore, Karim had landed on British shores to be a khidmatgar and a waiter, and within a year, he became as a Munshi, the Queen's teacher and official Indian clerk (Basu 134). Victoria liked him, as her son and showered him with gifts and honours, and obtained a land grant for him in India. As a testament to their friendship, the Queen sought to provide for Karim after her death (Anand 96). She appointed different pictures of him, and had him reviewed in the Court Circulars and local periodicals, and he was afforded to be among her principal mourners at her funeral. In the meanwhile, karim was a steadfast and loyal for her majesty and remained grateful for her kindness.

In this regard, Nayar stated that, "The Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child; that is to say kindly, but with great firmness" (11). This would have been the image that the Queen had helped to create in her British subjects.

However, the Munshi affair seemed quite turbulent for the royal court who abhorred him, and were always seeking to discredit him. Yet they had begun to accept that they could do nothing about him during the Queen's lifetime and were prepared to draw up a secret plan to deal with him after her death. As Karim was a clear



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favourite over the others, and the Queen always relied on him and treated him like a friend no matter how the social status and the place they are in might neglect this fact.

Beyond the imperialistic tensions, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was fulfilled by presents from Indian Princes, committees and individuals showed how the Queen was revered as a mother figure in India, and an iconic Queen who did not know the anxiety and distress that she was going through and the trouble brewing in her Court(Basu 302).Yet what should have been a glorious celebration for Victoria, in the achievement of her milestone Diamond Jubilee was the presence of her dear friend who looked like a Prince in his turban and fine clothes,and above all the memories of the men who had been closest to her in life; her beloved Albert and her gillie John Brown.Nevertheless,as a disagreeable friendship assumed by her royal entourage, they had never supported such kind of bonds between the ruler and her Indian subjects.

Besides,the reflection of these elements on the English and Indian relationships during the British Raj can be best seen in E.M.Forster's masterpiece *A Passage to India* , which has remained widely studied in India for eight decades, and has also emerged as the most controversial of all his works since its first publication in 1924 till date for varied reasons. It likewise manages the inquiry "whether it is conceivable to be companions with an Englishman" (Forster, 10), and with "colonization as disappointing any opportunity of kinship between the English and the Indians under the colonizer/colonized status quo"(68-69).Forster's last vision of the likelihood of English-Indian fellowship, through the friendship between Aziz a Moslem doctor and Fielding the English principal of the government school is a critical one, yet it is qualified by the likelihood of friendship on English soil, or after the freedom of India.

No matter how hard they try to maintain their friendship, their differing political views will always be there to remind them of their differences mainly the issue of colonialism. Hence, true friendship cannot withstand a lack of respect by one



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of the people involved, though they respect each other as men, but they can not be friends until the country of one man, Britain respects the country of the other man, India. So, the depiction of the inter-racial friendship between Aziz and Fielding, fell on the longing for connection which is not enough to resist racial tensions and social conventions of the British colonizers and the Indian people at the time of the British Raj, because there are simply too many barriers to overcome within the society.

In the same regard, Kipling, in his novel *Kim* in 1901, presents an image exposing the positive interaction of the cultural identities which rather validates the tolerance among cultures than clash. Basically, the friendship that arose between the lama and kim, and it is devoid of that depth of spirituality which draws an interpretative diagram of several cultures blended in India. Kipling assumes the idea that the diverse human groups and individuals can rather embed coexistence and correlation than conflict. Even on Kim, the Irish boy and Mahbub Ali's, the Afghani Muslim, relationship is a fusion between affectionate friendship and practicality which have bridged the doctrinal gap between the two.

That is what Kipling unveils through Kim's expressions of thankfulness and his profound connection and dependable apprenticeship to the lama, " I owe to the lama here. Also to Mahbub Ali also to Creighton Sahib, but chiefly to the Holy One. He is right a great and a wonderful world..." (Kim 210). Interestingly, Rudyard Kipling's fascination of the Indian milieu extends to include the cultural coexistence and tolerance among its people, mainly in the Indian subcontinent where multiple cultures, and diversity blend together for instance ;Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Muslim, Christian positively live and interact. Consequently, Kim and the Lama are able to be befriended, and disregarded any disturbances in relation to their cultural backgrounds.

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Furthermore, William Dalrymple’s *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth Century India* that was published in 2002, is another example that threw light on an interesting period of the interaction between Britain and India during a time much earlier than Queen Victoria and her Munshi’s time, where most historians ignored the Indian conquest of the British imagination, and the intermingling between the two cultures.

The work is about the tragic and romantic tale that crossed and rose above all the social, religious and political limits of its time. It also examines the interactions of Christianity and Islam, emphasizing the surprisingly porous relationship between the two religions. Between Colonel James Achilles Kirkpatrick and Khair unNissa ; ‘Most Excellent among Women’ the great niece of Nizam’s Prime Minister of Hyderabad, and a direct descendant of the Prophet. Where he married her, according to Muslim law, and had really changed over to Islam and had turned into a twofold operator working against the East India Company and for the Hyderabadis.

Though it is mostly on the interracial marriages, but Dalrymple wanted to shed light on the common attitude for westerners to take on the customs, and even the religions, of India, and through this story it succeeded to some extent, however, it is only bigotry, prejudice, racism and fear drive them apart. It is the hostility of India and Britain to interracial relationships that made them fail to prevent their love. But they have met and mingled in the past; and they will do so again. This what had been noticed through Kitty Kirkpatrick, the daughter of James and Khair, who grew up as an Evangelical Christian in England, but remained attached to her half Indianess, as she managed to re-establish contact with her grandmother Sharaf un-Nissa, in Hyderabad, in spite of the conflicted relationships between British colonists and native Indians.

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Thus,the tensions between the Indians and the British resulting from misunderstanding and differences in terms of race, culture, and religion are presented in the astonishing story of the curious friendship between the Queen and her Indian servant, yet they established a relationship which caused such controversy that upon Queen Victoria’s death, her family tried to erase the story of Abdul entirely.

Such subtleties confuse the recognizable generalizations of the colonial experience propagated by stories such as Victoria and Abdul. According to Karim biographer Sushila Anand, the Queen's own letters testify that her discussions with the Munshi were wide-ranging philosophical, political and practical. Both head and heart were engaged "(Good Times).



**Figure 6:Victoria with her Loyal and Trusted Confidant Abdul Karim at Balmoral in 1890**

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More importantly, the English’s sense of superiority over the Indians; and the resultant effects of this psyche on the relationship between the English Queen and the Indian servant that led the royal courtiers behave like that, as what the Munshi's great grandson, Javed Mahmood, said " he had been portrayed as a social climber who was having some sort of illicit relationship with her, but it was like a mother and son relationship. She became an Indophile in part because of her affection for him. But the prejudice of her family percolated down to Victoria's staff "(The Telegraph).

So, the cool relationship between the ruled and the rulers as personified in such friendships between the Indians and the British could succeed to some extent, but in any case, the way that highbrow character and intolerance can made it difficult for individuals to have significant associations with one another,which created hurdles to develop cordial relationships, and the fact that all these aspects of a friendship between the colonizer and the colonized go against the order of colonialism for colonialism itself is unnatural and debatable.

### 2.8. Death of the Queen and the End of the Fairy Tale

As all the good and sweet friendships did not last for ever, the Victoria - Abdul’s one come to an end when the Queen passed away after a short and painless illness. On January 22, 1901, Queen Victoria died, surrounded by her family and household top of them the Indian Munshi who was among her principal mourners and the last person to see her coffin, at the Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, at age 81,and her death was mourned around the world and signaled an end to the Victorian Era. There was hardly a place on the map that did not record the news of the death of the “Empress of Hearts” and memorialize it in some way.

The country had given its Queen a fine and emotional send off. As what Maurice Baring noticed on the day of the Queen’s funeral, “London was like a dead city, and as someone said at the time: "one went about feeling as if one had cheated

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at cards” (216). It was a city mourning not just for its Queen but for itself and the end of an era. People’s thoughts now turned to the new king and expectations for the future.

Additionally, Henry James wrote “We all feel a bit motherless today, mysterious little Victoria is dead and fat vulgar Edward is King.” (Encyclopedia Britannica). She was buried beside her husband Prince Albert in the mausoleum at Frogmore near Windsor. Immediately, the Royal staff took their revenge from the Munshi along with his family and threw them out of England and also burned all the letters and photographs that were exchanged between him and the Queen , all the records had been destroyed in order to erase any proof of their friendship from the face of the world.

In India, the Viceroy’s office in Calcutta was flooded with mail. The Queen’s death had led to a clamour for a memorial for her from the native societies or individuals who all referred to the late Queen as their ‘mother’. Notably, she was venerated by many Muslim historians in India , such as Muhammad Zakaullah of Delhi, who compiled lengthy tributes to the Queen in Urdu, and the Nizam of Hyderabad, just to realise how much Queen Victoria meant to her Indian subjects.

After many years abroad, Abdul came back to the place where he grew up ,and built his cottage on the land that the Queen had given him in the heart of Agra, and he lived comfortably on his sizeable income surrounded only by the remaining souvenirs and the precious moments he had spent with the Empress of India in the gardens at Osborne and Frogmore,when he was her tutor,and the gifts he had received from her and other European Royalty.He spent his last days riding in his carriage to MacDonald Park, sitting by the statue of Queen Victoria and watching the sun set over the Taj Mahal.

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Afterwards, Abdul the Munshi had fallen ill and in 1909, he died quietly in his Lodge surrounded by his family at the age of 46.His death coincided with the celebration of the festival of Holi, which he had so often described to the Queen.

Yet King Edward’s paranoia was not quelled, and his relationship with the Munshi had always been uneasy.Thus, he sent agents to India to request that all memorabilia identifying with the Queen be scorched.Nevertheless, Abdul was perceived as an important man among his people and his closeness to the Queen was legendary. The situation in India of course did not continue and British rule was abolished less than fifty years after the Victorian reign, mainly by the coming of Gandhi a new chapter in Indian history was about to be written, concerning the Anglo-Indian relationship.

Their forgotten story was noted by Basu after a hundred years ago of obscurity, after consulting the Queen’s Hindustani journals, and most importantly the fresh information from Abdul’s diary in which he records his extraordinary relationship that united him with Queen Victoria. Finally, Basu untangled a hidden and a very complicated chapter in English and Indian history.

### **2.9. Conclusion**

While taking into account the various and often controversial views regarding this astonishing friendship, one can say that Victoria and Abdul are one of those fascinating characters who when one come across, and look into history, discover the strong impact that the jewel India posed on the British crown, they broke stereotypes and constraints of their period and remained the best friends ever. Perhaps, they passed through many hurdles, above all the royal household’s racist attitudes and their snobbich behaviours, and the conflicts and misunderstandings that escorted the time due to colonialism that made any friendship between an Indian and his British counterpart a forlorn one and impossible.That is what Bhabha describes when he said

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" the imperialistic and colonial structure poses as a great barrier on smooth way of personal and cultural relationships" (29).

Thus, Basu presented a true story of two different people, two different places, and two different cultures were gathered by coincidence to become friends. Where East can meet West on a plane where every one endures and acknowledges the other. Particularly, Victoria's actions created knowledge for her subjects, shaping how they understood the British Empire and their places in it. Though the reason for the Queen's fascination is undeterminable, the impact of her Munshi was culturally substantial inspite of the wavering disagreement from her royal staff, to mingle with Indians who are less positioned and do not belong to the royalty.

In such stifling conditions, there can be no friendship to prosper between an Indian and a British, however, Abdul won the favor of her Majesty by dint of love, tolerance and sympathy, and they kept their companionship till the very end ,as stated by Hall in the last scene between Victoria and her Munshi where he quoted a poem in Hindi from the great poet Rumi saying, "Prema puri hai. Hama kevala tukare kara rahe haim. Love is the whole. We are only pieces"(94). They were too simply the best friends that destiny united them, but in the wrong time.

# **General Conclusion**



## General Conclusion

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As a conclusion , one can say that the British Raj was a momentous period in the historical background of India and Britain regarding the different tendencies that escorted the laudable period of the Victorian Age from politics to culture, India had a great impact in shaping the British Empire,the link between the two have been unattainable, and through the singular friendship that scandalised the British court and caused so many contradictions,between the Queen and Empress of India Victoria and her Indian Muslim Munshi Abdul karim, though in its core was a platonic one, it faced many criticisms from the royal entourage, and shaped the old amities that formulated the jewel and the crown.Hitherto,it is common and agreed that the Victorian Age with its various and divert events was an era of so much paradoxes and challenging events.

The Story that the author Shrabani Basu came across was a true , and it showed that the household as English people were not only insular, narrow, arrogant ,but also snobbish and racist in their outlook and behavior,especially, when the foundation of the British Raj and its relationship with the Indian subjects whom were seen as inferior, and within these imperialistic personalities influenced profoundly the mentality and the individual connections which were wanted to take roots between the ruled and the ruler. They believed themselves to be at the highest rung of civilization and,thus they tried their best to erase a whole chapter from the Queen's life.But history and truth cannot be deleted, as Shrabani Basu penned this journal with trustworthiness and enough equity about the overlooked man who was Queen Victoria's closest companion in her later years, and despite the innuendo, Abdul Karim's diary records only a platonic relationship, and a true friendship which his descendants describe as 'maternal'.

Thus, this thesis rised the attention towards the Queen's interest in her beloved colony India and her Indian subjects. During a time where India was thought to be like a baby or a wild nation that needed every care and heed, so that relationships between the different races mainly an Indian and a British do not work smoothly in

## General Conclusion

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the imperial India. Yet, the Empress in all her many dealings was primarily an anti-racist progressive due to her great strength of character and her insistence, at all times, on truthfulness and respect to her Indian subjects, whom more or less considered her as a 'mother'. This motherly sentiment extended beyond India to other colonies, as a filial bond between Victoria and her great empire from her former.

That is why the topic has been chosen, to discuss a possibility of any sort of friendships between the coloniser and the colonised, an issue that many historians studied, mainly the emotional affiliations and the structures of sociability between India and Britain. This notion of friendship was contrasted in many works of the former books that had been discussed previously.

Notably, where Forster represented the connections of the English with the Indians in all respects practically and criticized the English for being discourteous and latent, and that only cordial and good relationship between the two individuals could bring harmony and mutual understanding. But due to civilization and cultural differences the two races could not connect together. He demonstrates his attitude toward a country that rules another as he coordinates unpleasant satire toward the British Raj, and so was the case with Basu when she revealed the story of Queen Victoria with her Munshi Abdul, in their exceptional and impossible friendship that the royal household destroyed entirely, due to their racist antagonism.

To emphasise on the point that, English and Indians will remain two separate and different cultures, and due to the stereotyped attitude of Kipling and Forster's works along with Dalrymple was based on the prejudices and biases, concerning the feeling of superiority of the European culture and the rightness of the Empire made a marvellous history insular and annoying through their behaviors and mentalities, and it ruined the possibility of any friendship and love stories. Simply because the colonizers believe only in authority, domination and submission, not in relations. Yet this story shows the opposite as Queen Victoria befriended one of her Indian subjects

## General Conclusion

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Abdul and made him her most dear Munshi and closest confidant, through this poignant book that must be read to learn how an Indian, who was then despised by the British, won the heart of the ultimate Empress of India by narrating her the rich tales of Indian history and culture. Basu talks about how hard it was for the young widow to have friends as the “Queen Empress”, and how, despite their social status, this confidant was loyal to Her Majesty as the case was with her Scottish gillie John Brown, while held in low esteem by the Royal Family and the household for their race prejudice and snobbish views.

Eventually, this investigation concluded that resentment over being subjugated is the reason why the Indians cannot befriend the British. Almost all the stories though they succeeded to some extent, but they relinquished due to the fact of imperialistic humiliation, and what is more, if the connection among India and Britain is bit by bit moving past its nostalgic system to look towards a future that is ready with circumstances, the connections they induce between the two countries and their peoples produce a progression of thoughts and helps build trust, which must be the bedrock of any maintainable long haul relationship, the evils of British imperialism’s legacy and impact ;however, are still given the dishonest and selective nostalgia about it, and not many Indians agree on any sort of companionship with Britain and this can be seen once again in the demand of the lawful property of the colonial booty personified in the ‘kohinoor diamond’ that was looted and placed on the British Crown.

So, this marvellous friendship between Queen Victoria and her Indian teacher is just an exceptional one that happened once upon a time during the imperial period of the Raj and above all else, it is a story that is unlike anything we have seen and one that we desperately need in these divisive times of imperialism, at least it is no more confined to the dustbin of history. Whereas, others saw that the future holds a number of opportunities for strengthening relations between Britain and India, and goes beyond relying on their shared history together, and found the story something to be

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proud of in their shared nostalgic history and they had been inspired by this friendship that is truly transcendent ;it transcended gender, race, religion, and class.

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## ملخص

يغطي هذا العمل قصة صداقة فيكتوريا وعبدول الخفية ؛ شاب هندي مسلم جاء ليلعب دورًا محوريًا في قلب الإمبراطورية البريطانية وتأثيره على الملكة فيكتوريا ، في وقت كان فيه الكثير من الحديث عن الفتنة والاضطرابات في الهند. من خلال تحليل فيكتوريا وعبدول: القصة الحقيقية للمقرب الأقرب للملكة التي كتبتها شرباني باسو، والتي تم تكيفها كحركة فيلم في الأونة الأخيرة، لاستكشاف العلاقة المشوهة والصراعات الثقافية بين الهند وبريطانيا ، على خلفية سياق فشل فيه الأفراد في التواصل لأن الفضائل الإنسانية والتسامح كانت غير فعالة في زمن التمييز الديني والعنصري.

## Résumé :

Ce travail couvre l'histoire cachée de l'amitié entre Victoria et Abdul; un jeune Musulman Indien qui est venu jouer un rôle central au sein de l'Empire Britannique, et de son influence sur la Reine Victoria à une époque où l'on parlait tant de sédition et de troubles en Inde. À travers l'analyse de *Victoria et Abdul: L'Histoire Vraie du Plus Proche Confident de la Reine*, écrite par Shrabani Basu et qui a été adaptée récemment comme une motion de film, pour explorer la relation déformée et les conflits culturels entre l'Inde et la Grande-Bretagne, dans un contexte où les individus ne peuvent pas se connecter car les vertus humanistes, et la tolérance étaient inefficaces à une époque de discrimination religieuse et raciale.

## Summary:

This work covers the hidden story of Victoria and Abdul's friendship ; a young Indian Muslim who came to play a central role at the heart of the British Empire and his influence over Queen Victoria at a time when there was so much talk of sedition and unrest in India. Through the analysis of *Victoria and Abdul: The True Story of The Queen's Closest Confidant* written by Shrabani Basu, and which is adapted as a movie motion recently, this work aims at exploring the distorted relationship and cultural conflicts between India and Britain, against the backdrop of a context wherein individuals failed to connect because the humanistic virtues, and tolerance were ineffective in a time of religious and racial discrimination.