

## The White Woman's Burden: The Dilemmas of Social Reform in the Fiction of Flora Annie Steel

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'If the conquest and administration of India be essentially the work of England's men', wrote Maud Diver, 'the enlightening of her wives and daughters is, as essentially, the work of England's women; and it cannot be said that they have neglected their share of the white man's burden in the East'.<sup>1</sup> And indeed, while in the earlier part of the 19th century social reform pertaining to the Indian woman had been the purview of male colonial administrators, in the latter half of the century there was a widespread induction of white *women* into the reform agenda. Given the policy of non-interference in Indian social customs in the post-Mutiny era, reform no longer took the shape of changes initiated through legislation (such as the Act banning *sati* in 1829 or the Hindu Widow-remarriage Act of 1856). Instead, these measures were mainly in the form of the education of Indian females, both inside the *zenana* as well as outside, and were actively carried out by British women from around the 1860s and 1870s onwards. These women came largely as evangelists, sometimes as secular missionaries and, far more rarely, as memsahibs.<sup>2</sup>

One such memsahib on whom Maud Diver, articulate spokeswoman of the British raj, showered the highest praise for being involved in the 'civilizing mission' was Flora Annie Steel (1847-1929).<sup>3</sup> Steel, who spent 22 years in Panjab as an ICS wife and, most unusually for a memsahib, engaged herself in the female education programme, was also regarded as one of the most important writers of Anglo-Indian fiction in the 1890s. In fact, while most of her contemporary writers (both men and women) tended largely to concentrate on Anglo-Indian station life and its concerns, Steel's best works are distinguished by their preoccupation with 'native' issues, especially those concerning Indian women, as well as by their greater degree of familiarity with Indian life.<sup>4</sup>

Steel's unusual personal life in India could perhaps account for her close knowledge of Indian life and customs. With her husband

being posted in remote areas like Kasur, she was sometimes the only European in the region. Steel undertook the task of learning the local languages and 'acquiring a knowledge of India and its people', albeit with the intention of 'learning more or less how to manage them'.<sup>5</sup> She led a highly energetic life. As the wife of a senior British officer, she threw parties, organized the usual amateur theatricals with zestful enthusiasm and took great interest in station life. But rather unusually for a memsahib in those days, she also took a special interest in 'native' female education, starting her own reading classes and eventually setting up a school for girls at Kasur. She was later appointed the first Inspectress of Girls' Schools at Lahore. In addition, Steel's maternalist interest in the uplift and social reform of Indian women found expression in her self-appointed task of giving medical advice to rural women and children as well as reportedly drawing the attention of the police to the prevalence of female infanticide in Panjab.<sup>6</sup>

Her involvement in the education of Indian women undoubtedly made her life unconventional for a woman of her social position. But this atypicality, which has been much-lauded by some modern critics like Margaret Macmillan and Daya Patwardhan, should not be mistaken for a radical, ideological departure from imperial values.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, Steel's interest in the education of Indian girls can be viewed as part of the 19th century agenda of social reform. From the 1860s onwards, a majority of the female reformers were evangelists. Others included British women, generally unmarried (like Mary Carpenter and Annette Ackroyd), who came out to India with the purpose of promoting 'native' female uplift through education, and whom we may call 'secular missionaries'. The induction of the memsahibs into this process was one of the imperialist paradigms envisaged and cherished around the late 19th century in Anglo-India.

Between the white woman's insertion into the 'civilizing mission' and the promotion of British imperialism, there were complex linkages and interconnections. As Maud Diver observes, by helping their 'Aryan sisters' the memsahibs would also assist in furthering 'love and respect for the British Raj' amongst the subject peoples.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the 'native' female social amelioration programme served as a tool of colonial ideology, with the British being presented as the rescuers of the Indian woman from the evil practices of her own society.

Complicating all this still further is Steel's claim, in her autobiography, that she had 'always been a vehement suffragette' and her statement that she was elected President of the Women Writers' Suffrage League in England in 1913.<sup>9</sup> In the same work she expresses

her sympathy for 'woman', who she feels 'has suffered sadly', and further elaborates, 'all my life I have been keen not so much on the rights as the wrongs of women'.<sup>10</sup> It is, of course, one of the anomalies of her 'civilising mission' that Steel displayed so much concern for 'native' female social reform while altogether ignoring the plight of poor white women and barrack wives.

What is more, rather surprisingly for a self-professed suffragette, Steel displays a degree of gender conservatism in her fiction and, among other things, attacks the white New Woman in the colony in a number of novels.<sup>11</sup> A possible explanation could be that she came out to India as an ICS wife, with no prior zeal for social uplift, and always remained in her perceptions and attitudes first and foremost a memsahib, and only secondarily, if at all, a feminist.<sup>12</sup>

Today Steel is rather unfairly remembered chiefly for her novel on the Rebellion of 1857 – entitled *On The Face of the Waters* (1897) – to the virtual exclusion of the numerous fine short stories she wrote on Indian life. These offer a fascinating account of the concerns of the 19th century agenda of reform, and the dilemmas and contradictions that bedevilled them. Her collections of short stories published in the 19th century include *From The Five Rivers* (1893, henceforth *FR*), *The Flower of Forgiveness and Other Stories* (1894, henceforth *FF*), and *In the Permanent Way and Other Stories* (1897, henceforth *PW*). Indeed, Steel's short fiction exhibits a degree of knowledge of 'native' life and its intricacies, especially among the lower social orders, that clearly distinguishes it from the writings of her contemporaries.

Anglo-India, of course, tended to be paternalistic towards the lower social orders – peasants, frontier tribes, hillfolk and domestic servants. And rather like the rest of her compatriots, Steel, comfortable with 'native' India's lower social orders, also concentrates upon the women of rural India of the northern regions. There are Panjabi peasant women, Kashmiri shepherdesses, schoolgoing girls, impoverished bird sellers at Delhi's Jama Masjid, and the declining Delhi aristocracy eking out lives of genteel poverty as *zardosi* embroiderers. Steel's preference for the Panjab peasantry can be seen in the way peasant women, who are shown as tall, strong, able-bodied, and the equal of their men folk, dominate a large number of stories. Indeed, the stories display such an amazing range and familiarity with the domestic life of the Indian peasant that it led a contemporary reviewer to remark that 'her native characters are more interesting, picturesque, and pathetic than her Anglo-Indians'.<sup>13</sup>

*The Indian Woman and Social Evils*

Steel's finer short stories address social problems such as Hindu widowhood and remarriage, female infanticide, child marriage, early childbirth and polygamy, some of which were on the 19th century agenda of reform.

Several stories contain an oblique criticism of the allegedly Indian notion that a woman's primary function is to bear children, and that barrenness is in some way a failure of female duty. Especially critiqued is the inordinate importance attached to having male children – with the resulting devaluation of female issue. In 'The Sorrowful Hour' (*PW*), the dying Saraswati needs to be falsely reassured that she has indeed given birth to a son, for it would be 'foolishness' to 'die for a girl – for a dead girl, too'.<sup>14</sup> Again, in 'Gunesh Chand' (*FR*), a dead female infant's body is left for the jackals in the belief that this will ensure the birth of future sons.

When a woman is childless, the proverbial tyranny of the mother-in-law is multiplied many times over. In 'Mussumat Kirpo's Doll' (*FF*), the 15 year old Kirpo, crippled and dull-witted, suffers hardships at her mother-in-law's hands because she has not performed 'her duty' of bearing a child.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, however, Kirpo belies expectations and saves the family at 'the expense of another bride by presenting it with a child' (p. 281). At the possibility of post-natal complications, the mother-in-law hopes that even if Kirpo cannot be saved, 'the child at least might not suffer' (p. 282). A son is born, but the baby is quickly removed from her side and becomes the possession of the mother-in-law. Kirpo's health does not permit her to survive childbirth and having, as it were, outlived her usefulness, she is placed in the courtyard to die. Fusing together several issues, the story underlines the inferior position of a woman in her in-laws' house, the onus on her of presenting them with a male child, as well as the domestic tyranny of the mother-in-law.

A major part of Steel's short fiction castigates the practice of child-marriage and early childbirth, both of which were on the reform agenda of the British in India. The danger to life of both the mother and child in early pregnancy becomes a particularly important theme. In 'Mussumat Kirpo's Doll' (*FF*), the young girl, virtually a child-wife, keeps calling pathetically, in her death-throes, not for her newly-born infant but for a cherished doll she used to secretly play with. And in 'Amor Vincit Omnia' (*PW*), a youth of 16 and his 14 year old wife helplessly watch their puling infant die.

The corollary of this social premium placed on bearing a child is polygamy because, if the first wife is barren, the husband marries again. Most of the stories emphasize the disastrous consequences of a

second marriage.

In a number of instances, married men are enamoured by their second wives, who epitomize feminine enticement, preferring them to their sober and dignified older spouses. Echoing common Anglo-Indian prejudices about Indian men, Steel projects them as essentially weak, lacking in principles and 'character', and ruled by their sensual impulses, thus accounting for the inevitable victory of the younger woman time and again. This configuration within an Indian marriage cuts across lines of class and religion, involving groups as diverse as the Hindu peasantry and well-to-do Western-educated, upper class Muslim families.

Echoing another common Anglo-Indian prejudice, Steel always maintains that Indian women, especially purdah women of the towns, display an 'obsession of sexuality'.<sup>16</sup> She locates this as part of a larger preoccupation with sex that she (like many of her contemporaries) believes characterized Indian culture as a whole.<sup>17</sup>

Although, in her autobiography, she romanticizes Panjabi peasant women as being free of this alleged sensuality, her fiction argues otherwise.<sup>18</sup> Time and again her stories about rural Panjab are torn by discord and tragedy, and lying at the root of innumerable problems is the destructive female sexuality of many of her peasant women. Indeed, Steel's short fiction is replete with instances of fiercely possessive 'native' women in triangular domestic configurations. Their smouldering desire is shown to sometimes drive them to desperate remedies to retrieve their men – managing, in the process, only to ruin everything, even themselves. For instance, in 'The Sorrowful House' (*PW*), Saraswati, driven by fierce jealousy at her husband's infatuation with the seductive younger wife, tries to win him back by presenting him with a child, only to die herself in the process of childbirth.

Perhaps nowhere else is the issue of female sexuality more problematic than in the case of the Indian widow. Widow-remarriage is tied up, in Steel's texts, with a widow's sexuality, which is shown to be destructive of family harmony. This is best illustrated in 'In the House of the Copparsmith' (*FF*).

This story brings together various strands woven around the problem of Hindu widowhood. Starkly illustrating what *The Calcutta Review* calls, 'the hopeless and wretched lives of widows', it shows the status of Durga Dei undergoing a sea-change at the death of her husband.<sup>19</sup> As a widow she has to wait 'for such a dog's share of food as might be left' (p.195), with always the possibility that 'they had eaten everything, and she must stave off her whole day's hunger with

a handful of parched grain' (p. 195). The 'days of honoured wifehood' (p. 206) are over and the once-beautiful woman, staring in 'a sort of helpless indifference over the blank walls' (p. 189), is now reduced to 'a shapeless bundle of widowhood' (p. 195). The one escape from the opprobrium of widowhood that is available to her, according to custom, is marriage to her younger brother-in-law, whose own wife is childless.

As Durga Dei sits habitually huddled, a crumpled, shrouded figure, over the smouldering embers of the kitchen fire, the embers seem to signify her own inchoate raging passions, as she watches her brother-in-law Gopal's bare, muscular body at work, with its 'scanty clothing' (p. 193). Swept by a complex tangle of emotions, she starts secretly sleeping with him, hoping that he will marry her because custom sanctions such a marriage.

She becomes pregnant, but her suspicious 'dewarani' (p. 189) connives to arrange a second marriage (for the sake of progeny) elsewhere for Gopal. The man, characteristically a 'coward to the backbone' (p. 210), agrees, especially now that his passion for Durga is spent. Torn with 'sheer animal jealousy' (p. 212), Durga allows him to drink tamarind water which has been lying too dangerously long in one of his own copper vessels, knowing full well its fatal consequences. Though she gains nothing from his death she has, by the end, the satisfaction of having removed Gopal beyond the reach of all her rivals.

By the late 19th century, debates on the Hindu widow were beginning to shift to the question of remarriage and, implicitly, to a widow's sexuality. Steel's lauding Hindu widow celibacy as holy and 'comparable to that of a nun' suggests a bias against a contemporary social reform issue.<sup>20</sup> Despite her obvious sympathy for the miserable plight of the widow in her fiction, a central tension in the narrative undermines the notion of widow remarriage. And a contemporary reform item stands complicated by her irrational anxieties about the chaotic potential of a widow's physical desire.

### *The Englishwoman and the Imperialist Agenda*

In Steel's fiction, the role of white women in the colonial enterprise is perceived in diverse ways. Generally, the memsahib is regarded as possessing certain imperial responsibilities, especially towards 'natives' of the lower social orders, where a total ignorance of the Indian language or culture on her part is criticized as a disqualification. In the 'Mutiny' novel *On the Face Of the Waters* (1897), Kate Erlton's

self-isolation is deprecated. In the short story 'Mussumat Kirpo's Doll' (FF), the ignorance of the memsahib at a school prize distribution is subjected to authorial irony. The 'half-bewildered look' (p. 297) on the face of the Commissioner's wife, who has been invited by the women missionaries to give away the prizes, betrays her total inability to understand either the 'native' children or the language: 'She neither understands them, nor the fluent scholastic Hindustani' (p. 276) of the mission ladies. 'Still she smiles and says, "*Bohut uchcha*" [very good], and nods as if she did' (p. 276).

Thus, at one level, Steel seems to advocate the role of educating and nurturing generally envisaged for the white woman in the 19th century, and defined by Barbara N. Ramusack in a recent essay as 'benevolent maternal imperialism'.<sup>21</sup> But side-by side with this benevolent maternal image, the memsahibs are also sometimes projected as figures of stern authority when interacting with 'natives'. This privileging of the 'masculine' qualities of control and masterfulness in the white woman may be traced to the perspective of *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1888), which Steel co-authored with Grace Gardiner, which exhorts the memsahib to rule the domestic empire with a firm hand.

However, all said and done, it is the female evangelists rather than the memsahibs who provide a vital mediating point between the ruling race and the 'native' woman. Kindly, well-meaning and fluent in local dialects, they are shown to enjoy, in some of the stories, the affection of the Indian girls they interact with. Nevertheless, the proximity of the women missionaries to 'native' India, and their close contact with Indians of all classes, are looked at askance as lacking in proper dignity. In 'Mussumat Kirpo's Doll' (FF), such women, working in schools 'in the slums of the city' (p. 278), or threading their way through byways to spots never witnessed by the memsahib, 'utterly unmindful of a turgid stream of concentrated filth' (p. 280), are presented with unstated censure.

Moreover, the manner and methods adopted by these women missionaries in their education programmes is often questioned for being ingenuous and short-sighted. Particularly satirized in 'Mussumat Kirpo's Doll' (FF) is the enthusiasm of the 'eager, kindly, foreign faces' (p. 275) for an education system that does not really work, where 'paper-pupils' (p. 279) hardly attend and prizes are given to all. Forbidding dolls as prizes for little girls who are married, in a naive effort 'to emphasize our views on the child-marriage question' (p. 277), is shown to be an equally ridiculous and ineffectual gesture. Especially ironic is the story about 'the philanthropic great ones'

(p. 144) who believe that 'education was really at last beginning to leaven the mass of deplorable female ignorance in India' (p. 145).

Curiously then, despite her own personal involvement in the education of Indian girls, Steel's fiction is ambivalent about the issue. It is true that schools are shown to be a source of immense pleasure to the students as an alternative to the daily drudgery of home life. However, the actual acquisition of knowledge in this system remains a moot point, and the 'young offshoot of the Tree of Knowledge' is shown to be 'uncertain either of its own roots or of the soil it grew in',<sup>22</sup> In 'At a Girls' School' (*FF*), while the younger children learn by rote, in the higher classes the students 'did not always understand what they themselves were saying'.<sup>23</sup> What is more, in the same story many girls seem to be studying mainly for the stipend money, having 'quite understood that learning meant livelihood' (p. 155).

#### *The Indian Woman, Social Reform and the Female Paradigm*

Broadly speaking, the female paradigm enjoined upon the Indian woman who was emerging from the veil in the mid-19th century was that of the European woman. The Indian New Woman was to be modelled on the pattern of the Victorian woman. Part of this process of re-casting was the dress reform movement, whereby diaphanous Indian female garments were sought to be replaced by a supposedly less sensuous Europeanized design.<sup>24</sup>

But a story like 'Feroza' (*FF*) clearly questions the project of both Westernization and its corollary of dress reform. When Feroza's husband is due to return from England after becoming a barrister, she fears that after being exposed to the 'mems' he may find her too 'native' and uninteresting. With the help of a mission lady she embarks on a course of 'Westernization' so that, by the time her husband returns, she has had an uncomfortable transformation. Ill-at-ease in unfamiliar apparel, 'she sat on a chair now, and her white stockings and patent-leather shoes twisted themselves tortuously about its legs' (pp. 172-73). Moreover, she has adopted 'the dress of the advanced Indian lady' which, according to Steel, manages 'to destroy all the grace of the original costume' (p. 199). 'The lack of braided hair and clustering jewels degrades the veil to an unnecessary wrap; the propriety of the bodice intensifies its shapelessness; the very face suffers by the unconcealed holes in the ears and nose' (p. 179).

Her husband's Westernization is shown to be only skin-deep. He promptly resumes, on his return, the clothes and life style of 'an orthodox Mohammedan' (p. 179), and is far more attracted to

Kareema (the widow of his younger brother) than to his modernized wife. Indeed, Kareema's appearance is presented as the epitome of 'native' sensuous grace: 'bare feet tucked away in shells of shoes; long gauze draperies showing a shadow of silk-clad limbs' (p. 180).

In her turn Feroza, on realizing this attraction, quickly loses her own acquired Western veneer as she regresses 'down from each new-won foothold, down, down, to the inherited nature underneath' of 'sheer animal jealousy' (p. 173). Here Steel seems to draw a distinction between simple female education or literacy and Anglicization. While she commends the former, she finds efforts at Westernization deplorably short-sighted. The folly of the Anglicization experiment is sought to be established not only through the husband's inherent 'Indianness' but also through Feroza's own replace to an innate, uncontrollable jealousy at the time of a crisis.

Thus, the story also questions the wisdom of such 'mixing of unknown chemicals' (p. 169). The point seems to be that no matter how much education is given to Indians, essentially they do not change; it is only a 'polishing of the surface of things' (p. 178). It thus fuels one of the enduring colonial myths of the 19th century – that of an 'unchanging India'.

According to this myth, a stagnant, centuries-old, decadent civilization will never change and, therefore, efforts at social reform are worthless and even questionable.<sup>25</sup> Although many of Steel's stories are concerned with issues of social reform, there is an underlying position in these stories that voices the impossibility of change. So even while on the surface the need for social change is being urged, the underlying thrust in a few of the shorter fiction seems to be that change or reform is difficult in this country, if not altogether impossible.

Thus, in Steel's stories, the notion of the ideal female paradigm seems to be rent with contradictions. Occasionally, the white woman provides an exemplary model of female emancipation, as in 'Gunesh Chand' (*FR*) where the peasant woman Veru admiringly cites 'the great queen' (p. 19) as proof that 'girls are every whit as good as boys' (p. 19). But sometimes, as in a story like 'Uma Himavuttee' (*PW*), Indian women are held up as the ideal of wifely sacrifice that women in the West are exhorted to emulate. 'Uma Himavuttee' provides an exemplary picture of marriage for the West to follow, with the West being castigated for 'discussing, in a thousand ways, the dreary old problems of whether marriage is a failure or not' (p. 179).

And, indeed, like many of her contemporaries, Steel regards Indian womanhood as the epitome of 'the greatest amount of self-

abnegation', and valorizes the myth of the submissive and sacrificing Indian wife.<sup>26</sup> Thus she projects the 'native' female as a prescriptive model meant to contain the self-assertiveness of Western women – in a curious ambivalence – and points out that 'the Western woman has as much to learn from the Eastern woman as the Eastern has from the Western.'<sup>27</sup> In this matter Steel is echoing certain dilemmas about the female paradigm that are visible in Anglo-Indian discursive writings of the time. Occasionally the European role model was questioned, as by *The Friend of India* and *The Statesman*, which half-jestingly suggested that the much-maligned *zenana* 'would be a desirable institution in some sections of the European community'.<sup>28</sup>

In a reversal of role models then, English women are appraised in a few of Steel's works through Indian eyes and found wanting in modesty. According to Steel, 'native' women, themselves the object of reform, look upon European women, who are supposed to provide them with a role model, as shameless, dancing 'like bad ones' with 'bare breasts and arms' with strange men.<sup>29</sup>

Nineteenth century Anglo-India often expressed anxiety about 'native' misapprehensions of Western modes of white female social behaviour and attire. *The Pioneer*, for instance, expressed reservations about 'decollete gowns and dancing matrons'.<sup>30</sup> Behind all this lay subtle attempts to curb the memsahib's display of her sexuality in the colony.

In Steel, too, this motif of looking through 'native' eyes becomes a strategy for controlling the English woman's public display of her sexuality. Implicitly enjoined here are curbs on her dress and conduct. The disparagement of Anglo-Indian 'immodesty', no doubt, serves the additional purpose of being a caveat to the memsahib – a reminder of the need to uphold the image and prestige of the Europeans in the colony. With the female role model of the social reform agenda itself being undermined in this fashion, Steel's discharge of the 'white woman's burden' stands contradicted by ambivalences in the narrative.

To sum up, for someone associated with the suffragette movement in England, Flora Annie Steel's views on women, including female sexuality, are rent with contradictions. With regard to social reform, a yawning gap separates her own interest in 'native' female education and her undermining of it in much of her fiction. In certain cases, Steel's fiction goes so far as to question the desirability of the Westernization or 'modernization' of the Indian woman, even hinting that social reform is perhaps not possible in an 'unchanging East'.

The notion of the 'civilizing mission' necessarily presumed a

European role model to be enjoined on the 'native' female. But, as we have seen, the very concept of a female role model is ridden with ambiguity in Steel, so that even while implicitly upholding a Western female paradigm, a good deal of her writing ends up advocating the ideal of the self-sacrificing Indian woman for the Western woman to emulate. The dilemmas of social reform were, of course, much larger than Steel's personal dilemmas, and were located in the nature of the 'colonial embrace' which had locked the two cultures together for well over a hundred years by that time. Almost inevitably then, the agenda of the 'white woman's burden' stands dismantled in Steel's fiction by deep-rooted contradictions and ambivalences.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India* (Edinburgh and London, 1909), p. 128.
2. Cf. Mrs M. Weitbrecht, *The Women of India and Christian Work in the Zenana* (London, 1875); Maud Diver, *ibid.*, p. 76; Geraldine Forbes, 'In Search of the "Pure Heathen": Missionary Women in Nineteenth Century India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 21, No.17, 28 April 1986; and Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: Women, Racism and History* (London and New York, 1992), pp. 119-66 discuss secular missionaries, like Annette Ackroyd, and her involvement with the female education programme.
3. Maud Diver (*op. cit.*, p. 78) observes that 'women like Mrs Steel... would seem to be as rare as they are admirable'.
4. Among the popular writers of the late 19th century who were contemporaries of Steel and shared her Anglo-Indian-centric position were B.M. Croker, Alice Perrin and Sarah Jeannette Duncan. Even Kipling, who wrote contemporaneously, does not possess as detailed a knowledge of 'native' female life.
5. F.A. Steel, *The Garden of Fidelity* (London, 1929), p. 52.
6. See Daya Patwardhan, *A Star of India: Flora Annie Steel, Her Works and Time* (Pune, 1963) for biographical details.
7. Margaret Macmillan, *Women of the Raj* (GDR, 1988), p. 205; Patwardhan, *op.cit.*, p. 3.
8. Maud Diver, *op.cit.*, pp. 79-80. More recently, the linkages between the social reform programme and colonial ideology have been probed in 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and the Indian Woman, 1865-1915' *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1990, pp. 295-96.
9. F.A. Steel, *The Garden of Fidelity*, p. 222.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 222, 265.
11. See *The Potter's Thumb* (1894) and *Voices in the Night* (1900).
12. Nancy L. Paxton notes this in 'Feminism Under the Raj: Complicity and Resistance in the Writings of Flora Annie Steel and Annie Beasant', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1990, p. 337.

13. *The Spectator*, 20 June 1903, p. 985.
14. F.A. Steel, *In the Permanent Way and Other Stories* (London, 1898), p. 218. All subsequent citations from this collection are followed by page numbers in brackets.
15. F.A. Steel, *The Flower of Forgiveness* (London, 1900), p. 281. All subsequent citations from this collection are from this edition and are followed by page numbers in brackets.
16. F.A. Steel, *The Garden of Fidelity*, p. 245.
17. Steel suspected that, in Indian culture, human happiness consisted 'solely in sexual pleasures'. *Ibid*, p. 247.
18. *Ibid*, p. 161.
19. 'Women of India', *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. 36, No. 72, 1861, p. 343.
20. F.A. Steel, *The Garden of Fidelity*, p. 176.
21. Barbara N. Ramusack, 'British Women Activists in India: 1865-1945', in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1992), p. 3.
22. F.A. Steel, 'Mussumat Kirpo's Doll', *The Flower of Forgiveness*, p. 275.
23. F.A. Steel, *From the Five Rivers* (London, 1897), p. 145. All subsequent citations from this collection are followed by page numbers in brackets.
24. The term 'New Woman' is used to denote the reformed Indian woman in Margaret M. Urquhart, *Women of Bengal: A Study of the Hindu Pardanashins of Calcutta* (London, 1925), p. 148. For the dress reform movement, see Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 244-48.
25. Cf. Rudyard Kipling, *The Naulahka* (London, 1892) which presents this argument.
26. F.A. Steel, *India* (London, 1929), p. 159.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
28. *The Friend of India*, 22 September 1880, and *The Statesman*, 22 September 1880, p. 882.
29. F.A. Steel, 'Feroza', *The Flower of Forgiveness*, pp. 154, 156, 156.
30. *The Pioneer*, 28 January 1881.