NEGOTIATING RESPECTABILITY: THE ANTI-DANCE CAMPAIGN IN INDIA, 1892-1910

By

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ABSTRACT

The thesis studies the British participation in the anti-dance campaign in colonial India as an act of negotiating boundaries of colonial British society and as an attempt to prescribe acceptable British attitude to a form of Indian entertainment. The thesis attempts a new interpretation of the British anti-dance campaign by applying Michel Foucault concept of biopower (1978) and by situating the anti-dance campaign in Ann Stoler's postcolonial theoretical framework (Stoler 1996, Stoler 2002). The discourse analysis of the British anti-dance campaign has revealed, that the British reformers identified sexuality connected to Indian dance entertainements as a form of dangerous sexuality violating late nineteenth century Western-centric conventions about respectability. These conventions were embedded in eugenic understandings of the body, health and morality as signifying race and nation. The anti-dance campaign shared sexual anxieties with the metropole, at the same time reflected colonial anxieties, such as defining proper European behaviour in the colonies.

Keywords: anti-dance campaign, demarcation of colonial boundaries, discursive formation of sexualities

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the British participation in the anti-dance campaign launched in the 1890s in the Madras Presidency of India (today Tamil Nadu, South India) (Parker 1998:627). The anti-dance campaign extensively criticised Indian female dancers, who as professional entertainers lived from singing and dancing, and at the same time were available for sexual services. The performances that caused British disapproval occurred in the homes of the Indian elite, who invited the performers to provide entertainments on festive occasion (Soneji 2012:5, in detail also see Chapter 2, Section 2.1). The initiation of the anti-dance campaign was the joint effort of British reformers and a layer of Indian society supportive of Western influenced reform, centering around the Hindu Social Reform Association operating in Madras (Srinivasan 1988:177). Reformers appealed to colonial government to take a stand against the continuation of employing dancing women, commonly referred to as nautch women, by the Indian elite and urged legal resolutions to identify dancing women as prostitutes (Singh 1997:164, proceedings of the Indian National Social Conference 1899, The Times of India 1899, January 6, 6). At the same time, reformers strived to gain public support for the discouragement of dance entertainments (nautch or nautch parties) by asking personal commitment from Indians, not to organize and attend dance parties, and from the British not to accept the invitation of Indians if dance is on the programme (in detail see Chapter 2, Section 2.5). Therefore the campaign relied heavily on influencing popular opinion: proposals were introduced on social reform debates, such as the annually held Indian National Social Conference (1894-1895; 1898-1901, The Times of India, 1894, January 13, 6; The Times of India, 1895, November 5, 4; The Times of India, 1898, January 5,6, The Times of India, 1899, January 6, 6; The Times of India, 1901, January 5, 8), literature was distributed on the

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harmful effects of the nautch (Nautches 1893, Fuller 1900) and reformer standpoint was spread by the popular press (mainly by The Madras Mail and The Indian Social Reformer).

The Indian campaign had an extensive history, its final moment was the Madras Devadasi (temple dancer) Act in 1947, abolishing temple dancer communities (Parker 1998:627). However, by this time the temple dancing tradition in South India was almost extinct (Srinivasan 1988:197). Actual laws suppressing religious and non-religious dancers were in effect already in the 1920s and 1930s, in Calcutta, Madras, Mysore and Bombay (Whitehead 1995:51). However, formal legislation was preceded by the marginalization of the dancing women due to the pressure of the anti-dance campaign. Albeit the anti-dance movement failed to secure legislative help for a long time, the campaign was hugely successful at an informal, community level (Wald 2009:20). The British and Indian reformers emphasized the sexual component of the dancing women's work, denying their artistic merits and religious significance (Chatterjee 1992:21). The dancing women, categorized as prostitutes, became alienated from their elite Indian customers (Chatterjee 1992:21). As the dancers lost their fame as entertainers and consequently their income, they increasingly turned to prostitution, thus reinforcing the image of the dancer as a prostitute (Levine 2003:192).While previously inviting dancing women was a symbol of prestige and welfare among the Indian elite, in the course of the anti-dance campaign collective action was organized, such as marches to the homes of Indians who continued to organize dance performances (Srinivasan 1985:1873).

The common belief the British and Indian Social Reformers shared was that sex work was unavoidably part of the profession of dance entertainers, and regarded the native female performer as shameful and degrading for Indian society (Whitehead 1998:97). However, Indian supporters of the oppression of dance performances were mobilized to construct new femininities acceptable for the Indian nationalist revival, and aimed to detach the cultivation

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of dance and music from the degraded figure of the performer woman. The Indian anti-nautch campaign reflected the inner tensions of Indian society (Whitehead 1998:97), however, these dances carried a different meaning for the British colonial community. The British campaign characterised Europeans as attending Indian dance entertainments, but uninterested and unaware of the lewdness and sexuality tied to these amusements. Nevertheless, these dances were popular features of social gatherings, and the female dancer was a source of fascination for the European audience (Paxton 1999:86-87). Furthermore, intimacy between European males and Indian female dancers was not rare (Wald 2009:18). The British anti-dance campaign had profound effect on the British attitude to dance entertainments as well. While dance entertainments could be openly attended, and could be features of public events, like official tours, after the anti-dance campaign was launched these were dropped from official programmes. While in 1889 giving a nautch was acceptable on the tour of Prince Victor Albert (Chatterjee 1992:23), in 1905 it was unanimously dropped from the programme of the Prince of Wales when visiting Madras (Thurston 1909:133).

The thesis argues that while the British supporters of the anti-dance campaign claimed a reform of Indian society and morality, the British campaign reflected British colonial anxieties of maintaining the boundaries of the European community. British anti-dance campaign addressed a social problem, the alleged widespread prostitution of female entertainers and its negative social consequences on Indian society. However, this problem gained new meanings through the interpretation of the British reformers, and nautch became a complex measure of sexuality, moral hierarchy and race. I propose an interpretation of the anti-dance campaign by situating it in a postcolonial framework that emphasizes the dynamism of exclusion and inclusion (Stoler 1995, 2002, Levine 2003). This approach allows exploring other dimensions of the campaign apart from the apparent claims of British reformers to spread Western civilisation. The moral judgment of the nautch was more

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complicated than the antagonism of Western or Indian interpretations of morality. The debate over nautch can be approached by asking who claimed the right to define appropriate sexuality and behaviour, and see it as a process of negotiating colonial boundaries. The purity campaigns of Britain greatly influenced conventions about sexual behaviour in the colonies (Collingham 2001:181, Stoler 1995:95-97), and the anti-dance campaign can be connected to the sexual code of the metropole, however, the campaign was contextualized in a colonial situation. This also suggests that it was a dynamic process. This postcolonial approach also makes it possible to delineate not only the boundaries built between the British and Indian colonial society, but also sheds light on the internal boundaries of British colonial society.

The discussion is divided into two chapters of analysis. In Chapter 2 I provide a contextualization of the anti-dance campaign, by introducing its claims, pursuits and consequences. I briefly describe the Indian traditions the British reformers were disapproving, however, the British reformer's conceptualization of these performers and performances is a more significant issue. This chapter demonstrates that the purification of colonial society was attempted from two directions: by the isolation of the performers identified as prostitutes, and by the boycott of the performances. However, as colonial government was reluctant to regulate dance entertainments, the campaign was significantly more successful at the level of informal segregation, community policing. The British anti-dance campaign succeeded in changing the British attitude to Indian dance entertainments and strengthening colonial boundaries: attending dance entertainments became grounds for public criticism. In Chapter 3 I identify the specific understandings of respectability, of colonial boundaries that were believed to have been violated by Europeans attending Indian dance performances. British reformers perceived the mobility and unregulated sexuality of the native female performer as endangering the European community. Through participating in an Indian dance entertainment, the British entered native space, intermingled with native society, and also

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dances could mean opportunities for interracial sexuality. The financial expenses of these performances and the potential health hazards were believed to be dangerous to the British individual, as these could result in losing social position that could undermine European prestige as well.

In order to maintain personal, national and racial privilege the British attempts at the suppression of Indian dance entertainments was a particular an example of marginalizing bodies that were seen as threatening to power relations. Although the context of the campaign is the past now, the consequences of colonial situations, such as the anti-dance campaign are with us. These are the circulating Western-centric discourses of attaching sexuality to the body of a racialized Other and the belief that the performer's body significantly determines the performance. [1]

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

In this research aim I analyze how the British anti-dance campaign contributed to defining the boundaries of the British colonial community between 1892-1910? This question is studied through the construction of dangerous sexualities and bodies in the campaign. The thesis employs discourse analysis, to identify the building blocks of the campaign material, and connect these arguments to late-nineteenth century conventions of respectability, nationalism, race and sexuality. For the purposes of this research, I selected to study the distal

[1] A particular, but indicative example is a poll posted on a Hungarian website dedicated to Indian dance, inquiring whether you think Hungarian girls are capable of mastering Indian dance (http://indiaitanc.network.hu/). The options are that unless you are Indian by birth, you have limited chances for success, or with enough practice your performance could be similar, but never the same as that of an Indian person, or Indian dance is like any other dance, you simply have to practice a lot. Fortunately only a few people felt that this is a question worth paying attention to. However, the formulation and the fact, that it is placed on a community website for enthusiast fans and learners of Indian dance shows the strong belief in inherent bodily difference affecting performances.

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context of these discourses (Phillips and Hardy 2002:19-21), to focus on social class, regional and cultural settings, as the context of discourses. I approach the texts from the social constructivist perspective, and not by studying directly the relations between language and power, but by placing more emphasis on revealing the ideologies producing the text. The British reformers established a language to represent native performances and performers. Professional female dancers were reported to be prostitutes, leading an immoral life, yet, being respected and had access to the best Indian society (Chapter 2, Section 2.3). I investigate the sources to reveal what was significant in the anti-nautch from the general, interconnected web of meanings around sexuality, gender, class and race (MacKenzie 2006:viii.) and of course what was omitted from the campaign material. This qualitative analysis points to the broad understandings of the terms "prostitution" and "nautch".

1.3 PRIMARY SOURCES

This thesis relies on tracts written and edited by social purity associations and on media of the time. These also reveal the communication between colonial government and reformers. The backbone of this analysis is the booklet published by the Madras Christian Literature Society under the title Nautches: An appeal to educated Hindus, 1893, in the series of Pice papers on Indian reform (Nautches 1983); and the compilations of moral tracts in the monograph titled The wrongs of Indian womanhood published by Mrs. Marcus Jenny Fuller in 1900. This concise source is the combination of 18 short essays on the situation of Indian women and on reform movements in India, and discusses the advancements of the anti-dance debate since its beginnings in 1892. The common purpose of the texts was to influence a wide audience. As compilations of tracts, these sources display a shared authorship: on the one

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hand described the opinion of reformers as a group. On the other hand, these incorporated articles, testimonies from Indian reformers as well.

However, since these tracts were issued by British authors and groups, and contained a selection from the Indian anti-dance campaign, this can be regarded as a representative sample of British standpoint. It also has to be emphasized, that the frequently quoted or reprinted articles came from British affiliated Indian newspapers, journals, such as The Indian Spectator (Phillips 2006:67) or The Indian Social Reformer, published in Madras (Whitehead 1995:56). I also used Edgar Thurston's ethnographic work, The Castes and tribes of south India, Volume 2 issued in 1909 that was a compilation of ethnographic descriptions, Indian Law Reports and material collected from the anti-dance campaign. Contrasting these sources, I used the archive of The Times of India, from 1880 to 1910, that that served the British residents of India, and provided space for debate on the nautch question, covered the proceedings of the Indian National Social Conference and published a weekly review of the Native Papers.

1.4 Explored and Unexplored Aspects of the Anti-Dance Campaign

The anti-dance campaign is an extensively studied subject, as the movement had considerable social consequences and seriously affected the development of cultural and religious art traditions (Soneji 2012:5). Therefore the campaign was approached predominantly from the perspective of the reconstruction and revival of dance traditions, more specifically, that of the devadasi (temple dance) tradition (Soneji 2012:5). The seminal work of Amrit Srinivasan (Srinivasan 1988) takes an ethnographic perspective and describes the unique religious and social roles of the Indian temple dancer community. This fundamental work provides an examination of the devadasi institution in South India, by highlighting those

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peculiarities that were seen as unacceptable controversies for Western influenced reformists of Indian society. Nevertheless, she focuses only on high-class devadasis and points to the universalistic, journalistic language used by the anti-dance movement. Since the campaign demanded governmental action to be taken against professional performers, namely to identify dancing women as prostitutes, legislation and the enforcement of the law (Parker 1998), and the surveillance of nautch women was investigated (Chatterjee 1992, Whitehead 1995, Wald 2009). Ratnabali Chatterjee in her study follows the process of the construction of the Indian prostitute in the nineteenth century. She devotes a section to the incorporation of indigenous categories of sex workers, who provided cultural embellishment apart from sexual service (Chatterjee 1992:19-26). She proposes that regardless of their artistic merits, the Western image of the prostitute was imposed on Indian female entertainers, and suggests that the British for the sake of administrative convenience refused to recognize the hierarchical difference between dancers. Judith Whitehead studied the gradual introduction of Victorian medical language and sanitary approaches into the regulation of prostitution in North India. She also stresses that understandings of prostitution in England significantly influenced the treatment of Indian professional dancers, and the image of working class prostitute was projected on devadasis and courtesans (Whitehead 1995:51). Similarly, Erica Wald traces the growth of the category of prostitution in India grounded in a medical context to prevent venereal disease in the British army (Wald 2009). She argues, that the combination of evangelical and medical efforts caused the marginalized of courtesans, nautch women and temple dancers, and suggests that the medical conceptualization of prostitution stimulated the British agents to support the anti-dance movement (Wald 2009:19-21). She also notes that a growing divide between Indian and British society was a possible reason for European involvement in the anti-dance campaign. Philippa Levine includes a brief discussion on the anti-nautch campaign in her book exploring imperial sexual politics (Levine 2004:191-193).

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She reads the ban on the devadasi system as a ban on commercial sexuality and agrees with former scholarship, that temple dancing was a deeply misunderstood local tradition, identified by the British simply as temple prostitution.

Above mentioned literature thus has seen the reasons for regulating Indian native female performers and the British participation in the anti-dance campaign as the result of the misinterpretation of Indian morality from a Western perspective (Srinivasan 1988:178,192, Levine 2003:191); of projecting Western imageries on Indian society and grounding respectability in Victorian sanitary and medical understandings (Chatterjee 1992:7-8. Whitehead 1995:49); recognizing nautch women as a sign of uncivilized state and exotic sensuality (Whitehead 1995:50) and seeing the temple dancer's divine dedication to the deity, as an attack on Victorian marriage ideals (Levine 2003:192). While I believe these claims are valid explanations and possible reasons for British disapproval of dance entertainments, it is false to treat the long anti-dance campaign as one single analytic category, as some works do. The different phases of the campaign were characterised by different concerns. For instance, in the first decade of the campaign the British did not highlight that the temple dancer was a formally married woman, as Philippa Levine suggested (Levine 2003:192), violating notions of marriage and domesticity. This ritual marriage was simply not recognized as marriage by British reformers. The temporal framework I selected for my analysis is approximately the first two decades of the campaign, from 1892 to1910, the period in which a change in the attitude to the nautch entertainments can be noted. The region under study is South India, Madras, where the anti-dance campaign started (Srinivasan 1988:195), and I attempted to collect my sources from that particular region. However, as the anti-nautch campaign expanded to other parts of India (Whitehead 1995:52-53), in describing the consequences of the anti-dance campaign, this framework expands also. While the social consequences of the anti-dance campaign on Indian society is a well-studied area (Soneji 2012:5), the restrictions

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the British campaign imposed on the British colonial society has attracted less attention. Therefore the aim of my study is to analyse the anti-nautch campaign as it negotiated and complicated the boundaries of colonial British society. Unfortunately, the historiography of the early years of the British anti-dance campaign is a neglected topic: European actors are not identified by person, a historiography was reconstructed by Nagendra Singh (Singh 1997), however this is an outline of the events described in The wrongs of Indian womanhood (Fuller 1900). A limitation of this work is that the anti-dance movement sparked resistance among Indians in the form of a revivalist movement that is embedded in anti-colonialism and nationalism (Whitehead 1998:91) and to account for these is well-beyond the scope of this thesis. Furthermore, since I believe it belongs to the area of cultural studies, I do not attempt to dissect the problem of different conceptualization of the erotic, and the relationship between the erotic and the sacred. Concerning the religious conflict of Christianity and Hinduism, that appeared in the campaign (Srinivasan 1988:178), I find it important to note, that the anti-dance campaign can be situated in the broader context of British evangelical attempts of Indian society (Fuller 1900, Wald 2009:21). The existence of temple dancers was interpreted as a further proof of the backwardness of Indian civilization, however, the direct focus of the campaign was the eradication of professional dancers, non-religious or religious, from colonial society, and not religious conversion.

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1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundations of this thesis are based on the seminal work of Michel Foucault's The History of Sexuality exposing how sexuality became the grounds for inclusion and exclusion from power and prestige in modern European history (Foucault 1978). Foucault identifies the creation of sexualities and sexual identities as acts of power and argues that

knowledge production and the solidification of newly produced sexualities are extensions of power. This discursive formation of sexual hierarchies significantly influenced the creation of the bourgeois order, and to defining sexual hierarchies. Most importantly, I rely on his concept of biopower, and the central role he places on the management of sexuality as the basis for the management of populations. In the nineteenth century the discourses on the classification, specification and medicalization of sexualities were transformed into principles of administering, spatial management and surveillance systems (Foucault 1978:25-26, 44-46). The categorization and solidification of sexualities, and incorporating the individuals into these categories, was an act of building boundaries between sexualized subjects. The population was divided on the basis of their fixed sexual identity, and defined as dangerous or endangered. A major analysis that addresses the technologies of managing bodies and sexualities was carried out by Judith Walkowitz (Walkowitz 1991). She applies the Foucauldian paradigm to challenge the Victorian repressive hypothesis through the case study of the implementation and repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864-1869. Based on Foucault's approach, she demonstrates that an ever increasing sphere of sexuality and sexualized subjects were brought under state control, in this case, nonconjugal, commercial sexuality. She explores the gender and class coded sexual behaviour in Britain, and the relationship of sexual ideology, respectability and social structure. One of her major results that helped me to formulate my analytic perspective was her in-depth analysis of the process, how the figure of the prostitute became identified as a source of anxiety. She demonstrated the power of social debates, legal and medical language in establishing the prostitute as a source of physical and metaphoric pollution.

The relationship of sexual hierarchy, moral behaviour and class belonging developing throughout the nineteenth century in England and Germany was explored by George Mosse (Mosse 1985). The ideals of middle-class respectability, such as sexual self-restraint and

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moderation were regarded to be distinctive markers of class belonging: low-classes were reputed to be unable to overcome their sexual urges and were associated with commercial sexuality, while high-classes had a profligate sexual code (Mosse 1985:10-13). Sexual morality and patriotism became tied together, and certain forms of sexuality, like excess sexuality, masturbation and homosexuality were pictured as debilitating not only for the individual health, but also posed the threat of degeneration on a national level.

Sexuality in imperial ideology and colonial politics was also employed in the construction of identities, was grounds to the surveillance of bodies and for the segregation of dangerous sexualities (Stoler 1995, Levine 2003). There are different models describing the relationship of colonial sexual politics and European developments (Phillips 2006:10-14). The diffusionist approach, as described by Ronald Hyam, envisions the metropole as providing the leading voice in definitions, legislations and readings of sexuality. Hyam contrasted the puritan sexual code of the late-nineteenth and twentieth century in Britain with the sexual opportunities provided by the colonies, stressing the centrality of the British experience (Hyam 1992., criticism Levine 2004:134, Phillips 2006:14). In this model, innovation and political activity is largely attributed to British agents in spreading developments. This centre-periphery approach is discredited by Ann Stoler (1995, 2002), and Philippa Levine (2003, 2004), who suggest a strong interconnectedness, a reciprocal relationship between the colonies and the metropole. These main models also entail the possibility of hybrid forms in the direction of sexuality politics and beliefs, depending on the contextualization and local power dynamics.

An extension of the Foucauldian framework, critical to my argument in the thesis, is presented by Ann L. Stoler, who devoted much of her scholarly work to incorporate the colonial experience of sexuality and desire into the exercise of power. In her works she repeatedly highlights the discursive construction of morality and sexuality in the metropole

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and empire (Stoler 1995, 2002), and the mutually constitutive, discursive formation of racialized and bourgeois sex (Stoler 1995:97). Her concept for analysing the late nineteenth century approach to the management of bodies is 'interior frontiers' (Stoler 1995:52, Stoler 2002:42-71). She suggests that due to the increased number of colonial subjects of mixed origin, racial belonging was not sufficient grounds for claiming privilege. As fears about cultural and racial hybridity increased, European distinctiveness had to be affirmed and re-affirmed. Interior frontier refers to the late-nineteenth century shift in colonial strategies, when Europeanness was not seen as secured by birth: a cultural competency, an enactment of Europeanness was demanded for the inclusion to European prestige. Attempts of homogenization of European behaviour resulted in a public surveillance of domestic, conjugal and sexual arrangements of imperial agents. As Ann Stoler importantly highlights, European respectability was based on middle class understandings of respectability, and excluded not only racialized segments of society from colonial rule, but poor European classes as well (Stoler 1995:179-182). The perceptions of sexual morality and the body, as the embodiment of national virtues, were in part invented in the colonies with relation to a racial Other, on the one hand, derived from the metropole. Philippa Levine's (Levine 2003) monograph on venereal disease illustrates the flexibility of laws, medical definitions on which sexual politics were based. She introduces widely shared conventions about sexuality in the British Empire, by devoting the second half of Prostitution, race and politics (Levine 2003) to introducing circulating ideas on a societal level on the regulation of prostitution, and sexuality. Levine, like Stoler, also regards that difference, here sexual difference, had to be defined and re-defined in the colonies and whiteness was believed to be critically tied to sexuality (Levine 2003:6, 177).

This theoretical framework provides a basis to study the British anti-dance campaign as a struggle to prescribe appropriate behaviour, and as an attempt to define respectable

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attitude to nautch. Admiration of the dances and Indian dancers was detached from the realm of private pleasure and attending nautch parties became a British community concern, a form of behaviour to be policed. The nautch was characterized and solidified as a dangerous form of sexuality, violating the idealized sexual code of British colonial settlers. In the campaign, general colonial anxieties, such as the management of European space, the fear of cultural, moral and racial contamination of native society were interlinked and complicated by notions of middle-class morality.

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CHAPTER 2: THE NAUTCH QUESTION: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION

This chapter focuses on the process, on how the British anti-dance campaign became a movement attempting to define the acceptable behaviour of the British and Indian colonial elite. The anti-dance campaign started in the last decade of the nineteenth-century, in the Madras Presidency (today Tamil Nadu) (Srinivasan 1988:195, Parker 1998:627). The anti-dance campaign, on the basis of Chandra Mohanty's analytic approach to colonial discourses (Mohanty 1991) can be interpreted as a Western political and ideological project, attempting the normalization of Indian society. The British anti-dance campaign judged Indian dance entertainments by Western standards, and constituted Indian women, primarily the nautch women, and men through colonial power relations. In the course of the anti-dance campaign the British appeared as civilizing agents and educators of Indian society (Section 2.5). However, closer study reveals that the exemplary behaviour the British reformers demanded from the British as imperial agents defined the moral standards of the British community as well. Although British reformers were preoccupied with saving the "oppressed Indian women" and Indian society from the alleged harmful effects of the nautch entertainments, the proposed solution could hardly serve the interest of the performer women. The British reformers categorized nautch women as prostitutes (Chatterjee 1992:21), and demanded colonial legislation to implement measures against this form of prostitution (Singh 1997:164). Registering and administering professional dancers as prostitutes could have been beneficial in order to introduce more effective prevention of the trafficking in women and children. Nevertheless, the anti-dance campaign took place after the debate on the repeal of the British (1886) and Indian Contagious Diseases Acts (1888) that revealed the devastating consequences of strict regulation on prostitutes (Walkowitz 1991:90, Levine 2003:92). Of

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course, these debates did not create a universal opposition to the official regulation and resulting maltreatment of prostitutes, however, it directs attention to the contradiction of aiming to improve the situation of the nautch women with means of surveillance. I suggest that the British anti-dance campaign claimed the moral uplift of Indian society, at the same time expressed the discomfort and anxieties dance entertainments posed on the British colonial society.

In order to argue that the British standpoint against dance entertainments was motivated by general colonial anxieties and sexual fears, it is necessary to separate the different levels on which the campaign acted. On the one hand, there existed a social problem, the sexual exploitation of a number of women who lived as hired performers and sex work could be part of their work, and the prostitution of minors. From this social reality, British reformers created a representation of the Indian native female performers and attached a symbolic meaning to a social problem. Therefore I introduce briefly the traditions the campaign criticised and delineate the process of British knowledge production. Philippa Levine also suggests, that the temple dancers of India gained symbolic meaning in the course of the anti-dance campaign, and were described as examples of Indian vice (Levine 2003:192). However, in this analysis I would like to focus on British knowledge production as a key moment of characterizing the sexuality of dancing women and the sexuality of their patrons. Its significance lies in the fact, that establishing a language to represent the nautch was already an act of power, and part of a struggle to claim the right to define the moral standards of British and Indian colonial society.

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2.1 INDIAN WOMEN PERFORMERS

Before untangling the pursuits of the British involvement in the anti-dance campaign, it would be helpful to briefly describe the traditions and social customs the anti-dance campaign disapproved. The British campaign applied to dance performances the word "nautch", the anglicized version of the Hindi verb "nach" meaning "to dance", and referred to performers as "nautch girls" "nautch women" or 'dancing girls' (Srinivasan 1988:179). The word "nautch" failed to differentiate between religious and non-religious dancers, ignored regional variation and the class background of the entertainers (Jagpal 2009:269). Nautch was interchangeably used for the tawaifs, Muslim courtesans in Northern India, for devadasis, who were dedicated to temples and performed religious duties, and practically for any professional dancer (Jagpal 2009:269). The correct usage of the nautch is closest to describe 'salon type of dances' (Soneji 2012:5), dance entertainments arranged in private homes, without religious or ritual function. The British participants of the South India based anti-dance campaign were most likely mobilized by this kind of entertainments (Soneji 2012:5), however, British reformers were also committed to the suppression of dances taking place in temples (Srinivasan 1988:192)

The devadasis, or temple dancers were fulfilling religious functions, such as caring for the cult statue of the divinity, singing and dancing at rituals (Srinivasan 1988:183-186). Among them there were outstandingly educated women, accomplished at literature and poetry, classical dance and music. Devadasis were dedicated to temple service before reaching puberty. This dedication ceremony was a formal marriage to the deity that ensured a privileged legal status, and a status of a married woman to the temple dancer, who was entitled to inherit and hold property, and to adopt children. As being married to the divinity, the devadasi was also protected from the vulnerable position of becoming a widow. One of her main social function resulted from this privileged status, her presence in weddings was considered auspicious and believed to ensure that the bride could also escape the fate of

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widowhood for long (Srinivasan 1988:183-186). High-class devadasis could be honoured with an outstanding income that derived from their fees and gifts for performances and from sexual arrangements with patrons. Highly trained artists were usually available for sexual liaisons for an elite clientele, however, considerable was the number of those, who lived in moderate circumstances. For instance, Edgar Thurston in his ethnographic description of South India described the basavis, whose ritual functions were nominal, and fulfilled household duties as concubines to poor men (Thurston 1909:135-136).

The devadasi communities constituted a unique Indian institution (Srinivasan 1988:191), however, the nautch women, were less characterised by such cultural specificity. These women were professional entertainers without religious or ritual function. Invited into private houses, nautch women were often escorted by musicians, and entertained patrons with singing and dancing (Chatterjee 1992:21). The profession of the non-religious dancer could also be a profitable profession, but the nautch women were stigmatized by Indian society. The temple dancers' social standing was slightly elevated by their religious function, but nautch women as public performers did not have a favourable reputation in Indian society (Whitehead 1998:50). Again, there were significant differences between the artistic merits, clientele and circumstances of the nautch women: some became well-known and sought, others resided in poor dwelling areas and had low-class customers (Chatterjee 1992:21).

Throughout the nineteenth century organizing nautch in honour of British guests was customary among Indians, and preceding the anti-nautch campaign positive appraisals of the nautch women were expressed by the British (Wald 2009:18). There were only few European remarks describing the nautch performances as improper, the erotic or sexual components of the dances were rarely highlighted. Participating in a nautch was not considered improper, and nautch entertainments were frequently organized in honour of high British official on tours, such as to entertain the Viceroy Lord Dufferein, as the memoirs of his wife, published soon

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after they left India in 1889 illustrates. Lady Dufferein talked about nautch with a moderate interest, but did not consider it inappropriate:

> The nautch was very pretty, the women having most lovely dresses, and being more active in their movement than usual (Ava 1889:13). After dinner we had native music and a nautch. Have I yet succeeded in instructing you as to the extreme propriety and dulness [sic] of a nautch? There is never any incident in it, and no apparent purpose, and it is a most incomprehensible amusement, though I like a little of it (Ava 1889:334).

In 1889, on Prince Victor Albert's Indian tour, dispute sparked off whether to provide a nautch in the official programme. On this occasion the principal of the Madras Christian College, Reverend Dr. Miller supported the organization of a nautch, and saw nothing improper in a nautch party (Chatterjee 1992:23). The Viceroy of India in 1892 in careful language dismissed anti-nautch appeals by stating that

> He has, on one or two times, when travelling in different parts of India, been present at entertainments of which a nautch formed a part, but the proceedings were as far as His Excellency observed them, not characterised by any impropriety, and the performers were present in the exercise of their profession as dancers...(qtd by Singh 1997:168).

These sources reveal the judgment of nautch on social gatherings, and show, that although not all Europeans found the nautch entertaining or lively, the public performances were not seen improper. It is a different question to reconstruct to what extent were dancing women sexual partners to Europeans. Medical reports noted that dancing women were involved in prostitution, and posed a risk of venereal disease to European men, however, preceding the anti-dance campaign they made a distinction between dancing women and prostitutes (Wald 2009:18). Because of their skills in dancing and music, devadasis were valorised concubines among the British until the mid nineteenth century (Paxton 1999:87). Nancy Paxton applies the concept of abjection to describe the representation of dancing women in Anglo-Indian novels, an objectionable, but erotic attraction. A relevant source, that

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shows this abjection and a growing divide between colonial Indian and British society, is John Shortt's report, who was Surgeon-General Superintendent of Vaccination in the Madras Presidency noted, that temple dancers could be very attractive "of a light pale colour, somewhat yellowish in tinge, with a softness of face and feature, a gentleness of manner, and a peculiar grace and ease, which one would little expect to find among them" (qtd by Paxton 1999:89). He admitted that European officers "frequently became infatuated by these women in days gone by". A defendant of the nautch also gave voice to the double standard of European attitude to dances that was to a great extent due to the anti-nautch campaign:

> Who has not heard of the nautch girl of India? Music and dancing girls are the chief attraction to every social function in the East, and Anglo-Indians who hate the nautch-girl on paper listen with rapt attention to her song, and continually marvel at her elegant trot, wonderful nimbleness and leopard-like agility.' (The Times of India, 1903, November 10, 4).

2.2 Dancing Girls and Temple Prostitutes: British Reformer Knowledge Production

British reformists strived to collect information from various sources, and displayed an insightful knowledge on certain aspects of the dances and dancer communities; however, the organization and interpretation of this information was not a neutral process. The campaign material on the nautch question contained citations from manifold sources: these incorporated articles from journals and newspapers, popular or anecdotal stories on the luxury nautch girls enjoyed, confidential stories of Europeans invited to nautch parties, and Indian testimonies (Nautches 1983:3-5, Fuller 1900:130-133, 172-173). The articles reprinted in the British tracts were selected from Western influenced or directly British affiliated media. Such newspapers were The Indian Spectator (Phillips 2006:67) or The Indian Social Reformer, published in Madras (Whitehead 1995:56). Indian testimonies were collected from Indian intellectuals,

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doctors or school inspectors most commonly referred to as educated or enlightened Hindus. The foreword of The wrongs of Indian womanhood assures the reader, that great efforts were taken to verify the descriptions of Indian customs (Fuller 1900:16). The information was said to be largely gathered from Indians, both Hindu and Christian, refusing the charge that Europeans reformers would simply misjudge Indian thought and customs.

The Indian anti-dance movement primarily reflected the tension and developments of Indian society (Whitehead 1998:91). In part, Western influenced reinterpretation of traditions and modernisation attempts stimulated protests against nautch. However, Brahmanic and non-Brahmanic understandings of female chastity also caused disputes over the nautch question, similarly to caste antagonism (Whitehead 1998:91). Therefore, although the British borrowed material from Indian reformers, dominant questions in the Indian nautch debate, such as caste antagonism did not appear in the British campaign material, therefore it can be concluded, that the British created a new representation of the nautch. The British knowledge production was a form of Orientalist knowledge production (Said 2003:45-46). This is evidenced by the strong belief in the possibility of giving an overall picture of the nautch, mapping it entirely, and consequently broadly applying that knowledge. British reformers claimed that their descriptions of the nautch were valid without horizontal or vertical differentiation. For instance, nautch was said to be "the same in the North as in the South" (Nautches 1893:2), and the descriptions were "representing the whole of India" (Fuller 1900:16). "In South India she [the nautch woman] has her right and place in the temple. In Western India she is there by invitation; and in society all over India she is everywhere." (Fuller 1900:133). "The dancing-girl is everywhere. It is she who crowns the merriment at all times." (The Subodh Patrika, qtd. Nautches 1983:1). A crucial instance of this generalizing logic is that campaigners treated performers, religious and non-religious, temple dancers and nautch dancers without differentiation (Jagpal 2009:269). The statements of the reformers therefore became easily

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verifiable, as they weaved together different traditions, under one umbrella-term, that of the nautch.

> These *Bhavins*, *Muralis*, *Jogtins* and others seem to be considered a lower order of being than the *devadasi* or the nautch-girl; but under whatever name these women pass, and however much the details of custom among them may differ, *the principle is the same in all, immorality under the shelter of religion and custom*. (Fuller 1900:125, emphasis in the original).

Apart from the rhetoric of building convincing arguments, British reformers attempted to verify their sources in order to prove the legitimacy of their knowledge production. Nicholas Dirks studied the competing knowledge production of different interest groups in a late nineteenth century colonial campaign in the Madras Presidency (Dirks 1997). The tactics of the reformers described by Dirks (Dirks 1997:189-190, 205) can be applied in case of the anti-dance campaign. In the compilation of British tracts already considerable efforts were invested to establishing authenticity, in order to argue a position of authority. Before and at the start of the campaign, the regulation of the nautch came from Indian society and religion. With the step of gathering information from their perspectives, interpreting the tradition, British reformers claimed the right to regulate the nautch.

2.3 THE NAUTCH QUESTION: AS THE BRITISH REFORMERS PERCEIVED

The British reformers described nautch women as inescapably prostitutes and nautch plainly as immoral (Fuller 1900, Nautches 1893). "Stripped of all their acquirements, these women are a class of prostitutes, pure and simple. Their profession is immoral and they live by vice."(Nautches 1893:1). The figure of dancing girls and temple dancing girls was captured in the duality of being a seductive, fallen woman and being a victim at the same time. The British reformers claimed, that girls were trained from infancy to a life of vice and

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were initiated into their profession in such an early age, that they failed to judge the consequences and moral character of their acts. Reformers argued, that the glamorous jewellery and attire of the nautch women was a corruptive example to other women: the welfare of nautch women lured outcast and poor women to join the profession (Fuller 1900:128). The British reformers did not question the education of dancers, nor their charms: "It frequently happens, that these dancing-girls are rich, beautiful and very attractive, besides being witty and pleasant in conversation" (Fuller 1900:130). Nevertheless, the performances were not described as intriguing or amusing, were overwhelmingly judged to be monotonous to the European audience. British reformers did not mention that the nautch dances were sexually suggestive either, while the songs accompanying the performances were said to be obscene; that Indians understood, however, Europeans due to language barriers did not. Concerning the clothing of women, it was noted, that it was not the slightest revealing, rather nautch women are said to be the most decently dressed among Indian women (Thurston 1909:130). Nevertheless, British reformers referred to the dancing women as prostitutes, as if it was a well-grounded fact, that dancing women were invariably providing sexual services what "every one [sic] knows, or ought to know" (The Indian Social Reformer 1892, June 4 qtd Nautches 1983:2). As Dr. Murdoch a British reformer argued, the payment the nautch women received for their dancing and singing was not all of their income:

> Such payments, however, form only part of the expenses connected with [sic] such women. The sight of one of them at a public performance creates a desire for private intercourse. Such visits are never welcome unless accompanied by gifts. (qtd Fuller 1900:132)

Or as a supportive Indian testimony suggested:

> The Indian Nautch is not always so tame an affair as our English friends seem to think. It is apt to be very lively at times, or at any rate the consequences are almost invariably so, except on those seasoned sinners who have become saints in spite of themselves. Those who condemn Indian music and dancing as monotonous speak without the book. Unluckily both

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these arts have been for ages divorced from purity of life and conduct. (The Indian Spectator qtd The Times of India, 1893, July 1, 8)

According to the British reformers, patrons were affluent members of Indian society, who made considerable expenses to elevate the fame of festive occasions by inviting nautch dancers (The Indian Social Reformer, June 4, 1892 qtd Nautches 1983:1). These events could be dinner parties, weddings, house-warmings, organized in mainly private space. Europeans were portrayed as present on nautch entertainments as guests in Indian households, British reformers did not mention that Europeans ordered the services of nautch women for private purposes.

This representation of the nautch displayed certain ambiguities: most apparently the claim of the immorality of the dances is unsupported, or the immorality of attending a nautch performance. It is speculative to attempt to reconstruct the sensuality of the performances that probably varied at least according to the audience and to the purpose of the entertainment. I believe that these could range from explicitly sexually suggestive dances to dances that lacked any erotic component. The training and the professional standards of the dancers could also vary greatly: some women could be nautch women only in name, and provide sex work instead of cultural embellishments, while others could be in a position to choose their partners, or relied more on their dancing and singing talents. Ethnographic reconstructions suggest that high-class courtesans took pride in their artistic merits, and were accustomed to the high admiration of Indian society (Chatterjee 1992:21). They greatly disliked British customers, who treated them as bazaar prostitutes. According to a courtesan, the British lacked good manners, and preferred having plain sex to being entertained by dance, music or poetry (Chatterjee 1992:21).

The sources suggest that British reformers were preoccupied with sexuality as a potential part of the nautch entertainments, and the association of the British with

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entertainments that featured women of questionable reputation. Neverthless, the "visible" part of the nautch, the dances performed for a broad audience were not described as improper. In my opinion, it was the presence of the nautch women in social gatherings, the presence of a perceived prostitute in society that stimulated British disapproval. British reformers argued that the immorality of nautch could go unnoticed because both the British and Indians got accustomed to the presence of ill-reputable women on festive events. Indians got acquainted with nautch already in their childhood (Nautches 1893:6). The example of the father and high ranking members of society appreciating the nautch encouraged the youth to develop a fascination with nautch women (Nautches 1893:6). According to British reformers, Europeans also failed to recognize the impropriety of the nautch, because they were unaware of the full circumstances of these performances, such as the lewdness of the songs, and the sex work of the nautch women. In the phrasing of the British reformers, Europeans were unaware of profession of the nautch women, namely that they were prostitutes (for example The Rast Goftar, The Indian Spectator quoted by Nautches 1893:9). In the second decade of the campaign voices criticizing the nautch strengthened, as the Times of India wrote:

> The nautch girls are recruited from a class of depraved females who eke out livelihood by the exchange of their womanly virtues for filthy lucre...The fact should not be missed that there can be no reclaiming a class that is steeped deep, from their childhood, in the worst practice of immorality and where its members are so lost to all sense of virtue and chastity as to be past redemption. Even if it were possible to attempt a few rescues, the experiment of bringing respectable society face to face with such degraded dregs of humanity should always be considered as the most unsafe and dishonourable course. (The Times of India, 1907, April 10, 8)

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2.4 POWER AND REFORMERS

The arguments raised by the British anti-nautch campaign did not receive direct administrative or legislative help for considerable time (Parker 1998:629), however, the

campaign was successful in changing British attitude to nautch. The British reformers formed an authority external to the colonial government, and often demanded reforms that colonial government found threatening as evoking tension and dissent (Fuller 1900:183-185). The British reformers refrained from expressing outward criticism of the colonial government, however, they pointed to the inadequacy of British colonial social policy making. British reformers regarded colonial rule as overtly compromising and tolerant towards native customs and religion (Fuller 1900:183-185).

The first recorded appeal directed to the colonial government was the petition submitted by the Indian Social Reform Association in 1893 that was joined by British reformers and was forwarded to the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and to the Governor of Madras (Singh 1997:164, who quoted the full texts 1997:164-168). Organized into nine points, this appeal argued, that the nautch women were invariably prostitutes and there was already an agreement between reform supporters to discourage nautch entertainments. The petitioners themselves took responsibility for not attending nautch parties and requested colonial officials to do the same, and expressed their hope in the practical help of the colonial government. These appeals were refused by both the Viceroy and the Governor of Madras in 1893, on the grounds that the alleged immoral character of the nautch performances was not proven.

More clearly defined demands for legislation appeared on the agenda of the Indian National Social Conference in 1899, when a turn could be noticed in the pursuits of the campaign (Singh 1997:168, Fuller 1900:137; The Times of India, 1899, Jan 6, 6). Apparently, attention was directed on temple dancers: a ban on dancers' dedication to temples and a ban on the adoption of minors by temple dancers were demanded. This petition of two girls aged 17 and 19 illustrates the tactics of temple dancers attempting to avoid criminal prosecution in

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Madras. This document demonstrates how the campaign enforced performers to identify as prostitutes:

> Our father and mother are dead. Now we wish to be like prostitutes, as we are not willing to be married, and thus establish our house-name. Our mother also was of this profession. We now request permission to be prostitutes according to our religion, after we are sent before the Medical Officer. (Thurston 1909:134)

It was not earlier than 1924 that an amendment was added to the Indian Penal Code, defining as a penal offence the selling, hiring of a person under eighteen years old (Parker 1998:629). Unless otherwise proven, it was presumed that the trafficked female was used for the purposes of prostitution. The anti-nautch campaign attempted to curtail the practice of the nautch on two levels: legislative help was requested from the colonial government and at the same time public action against the nautch was urged.

Following the introducing of the pursuits and knowledge production of the campaign, I would like to apply Michel Foucault's theoretical framework and concept of biopower (Foucault 1978:25-44) in the interpretation of the British anti-nautch campaign. In the course of the campaign, British reformers defined the nautch entertainments as a form of dangerous sexuality. Sexuality tied to the nautch was characterized and isolated, and British reformers attempted to make this sexuality intelligible to the colonial government and to the British and Indian society. The nautch became a new divide of dangerous and endangered segments of population, and a divide of respectable and unrespectable population.

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2.5 INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION

Parallel to seeking governmental intervention, British reformers proposed that nautch could be eradicated from society if the custom of inviting dancers was abandoned (Nautches 1893:10, 12, Srinivasan 1988:192). The British and Indian reformers addressed members of

both Indian and the British community: they asked the Indian elite not to organize and accept invitation for nautch parties, and asked Europeans to stay away from houses where nautch performance could be expected and make previous inquiries if nautch is on the programme (Nautches 1893:10, 12). The press and pamphlets repeatedly pleaded individuals not to encourage dances and invite dancers, meanwhile there were also attempts to organize community-based and non-official surveillance of the practice. The innovation of the Indian National Social Conference of 1899 was to take pledges from the members of regional purity associations to carry out practical steps in the promotion of social reform (Fuller 1900:137, The Times of India, 1901, January 6, 6). Among the proposed resolutions concerning "the nautch question" was the need for stricter observance of personal duty, the purification of personal, public and family life (Times of India, 1901, January 6, 6). However, the demands for exemplary behaviour published by the media spoke to a broader audience. Here is an example from The Rast Goftar :

> But I doubt, if your denunciation against nautches ... ever reached our European friends, and it is for them, that you should now make a full exposure of the serious risks to public morality of attending nautch parties. It is the practice of Governors and Collectors, before accepting invitations to evening parties, to ascertain the kind of company that is invited to meet them. And if only the consequences of their presence at a nautch were plainly represented to them, I feel sure they would further insist on previously scrutinising the programme of entertainments. The moral effect on native society of such an authoritative disapproval could not fail to be great and we should then see the last of nautch parties. (The Rast Goftar qtd The Times of India, 1888, May 29, 3)

The colonial government's authority and responsibility were imposed on the person of the officials, as representatives of the British empire. Reform supporters appealed to the personal authority of colonial officers that the British considered to accompany colonial power (as a common strategy see Phillips 2006:26). The belief that it was a British national duty to promote social advance (Burton 1994:35-37) was strongly present in this claim. Initially, campaigners saw their main duty as exposing the social ill the nautch was causing,

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and to make it recognizable to colonial rule and to British. A revealing example is the following comment that was published in The Indian Social Reformer in 1893. The reluctance of the Viceroy and the Governor to support purity reform caused great disappointment:

> Their Excellencies should not forget that they represent in this country a sovereign whose respect for purity and piety is as great as she is great. The people of India cannot but look with wonder on the representatives of her Majesty being present at the performances of women, who everybody knows, are prostitutes, and their Excellencies, hereafter, at least must know to be such. Do they get prostitute dancers to perform at entertainments given specially in honour of the royalty in Europe? (The Indian Social Reformer, October 14, 1893 qtd. Singh 1997:167)

After the first two years of the campaign, from 1892 to 1894, optimistic declarations took place, on the progress of the campaign and the rapid decline of the nautch (for example proceedings of the Indian National Social Conference 1894, 1895 The Times of India, 1894, January 13, 6; The Times of India, 1895, November 5, 4; The Times of India, 1903, January 30, 5). The nautch was hoped to die out, however, and the campaign soon lost much of its intensity (Fuller 1900:147). Nevertheless, European ignorance was not an acceptable excuse for attending a nautch. Lieutenant Governor Sir Charles Elliot was accused of attending a nautch already in 1893 as follows: "His honour has been in this country for a long time, and does he not know to what class these dancing girls belong?" (Chatterjee 1992:23). Contrasting the popularity of the nautch preceding the campaign, fewer dance entertainments were given during official tours (Thurston 1909:130), albeit it was not dropped unanimously from official programs. Nevertheless, attending a nautch could evoke public criticism. The scope of attention was not limited to public events, since the British often participated in nautch parties in Indian homes:

> Within the last few days the newspapers have published accounts of wedding parties and processions of native families, in which the nautch has been a prominent feature, and which are said to have been attended by high European officials and non-officials, ladies and

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gentlemen...It is not beyond the mark to say, that nautch-girls are invariably unfortunates, and prostitutes by choice and preference... now that the facts are made clear to them [Europeans] it is hoped, that they will resent it as such. Is it womanly to take pleasure in the writhings of a miserable sister who is so steeped in infamy as to be unaware of it? (The Times of India 1907, April 2, 8)

Another example is this circular letter, issued by a British officer, eager to express his solidarity with the anti-nautch campaign:

during my jamabandy (land revenue settlement) tour, people have sometimes been kind enough to arrange singing or dancing parties, and, as it would have been discourteous to decline to attend what had cost money to arrange, I have accepted the compliment in the spirit in which it was offered. I should, however, be glad if you would let it be generally known that I am entirely in accord with what is known as the anti-nautch movement in regard to such performances (Thurston 1909:133).

2.6 CONCLUSION

In the British anti-dance campaign, the task to advocate social reform was portrayed as a British national duty, similarly to educating Indian society through example. Nevertheless, the British preceding the anti-nautch campaign both as official and as private programmes frequented nautch parties, therefore the British reformers' claims to avoid the nautches imposed restriction on the British as well. These attempts can be interpreted as efforts to prescribe and re-define attitude to nautch. By mapping and representing the nautch, categorizing it as a dangerous sexuality a new boundary was created between respectable and unrespectable members of society, regulating both the nautch women, their patrons and their audience. It was a newly articulated behavioural code for both Indian society, and for British colonial society. The assumption, that the anti-nautch campaign was an act of negotiating acceptable behaviour and marking boundaries, is supported by the fact that the regulation of nautch was not part of the sexual politics of colonial government. It was not a coherent policy, or initiated from above to British colonial society, it arose as an internal attempt. The

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reluctance of colonial government to intervene in the marginalization of public dancers encouraged the possibility of community-based, sporadic and non-official policing of colonial boundaries.

The British anti-dance campaign was not isolated from the Indian anti-dance campaign, British reformers relied on the Western influenced layers of Indian society in the campaign. However, at the same time the British anti-nautch campaign attempted to emphasize the distinctiveness of Europeans on the basis of the attitude to nautch. Participating in a native dance entertainments could violate the spatial management of European colonial society, class coded behaviour and European association with an Oriental entertainment. The next chapter is devoted to identify, what was perceived to colonial boundaries by the British reformers in the nautch.

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CHAPTER 3: THE NAUTCH AS A SYMBOLIC SITE OF DIFFERENCE

In the British anti-dance campaign the British were depicted as indirect supporters of the nautch. The British did not organize nautch parties, however, with their presence supposedly legitimized the continuation of dance entertainments among Indians. In order to influence public opinion, achieve governmental and legislative support, the British campaign created a systematic representation of the nautch women that attempted to demonstrate the immorality of professional entertainers and that of Indian society. This chapter analyzes in-depth the British reforemers discursive formation of the nautch women, as a racialized prostitute and the sexuality tied to the nautch entertainments as a form of racialized sexuality. This analysis also reveals the colonial boundaries that British reformers perceived the nautch women could transgress. The analytic approach I apply relies on Ann L. Stoler's scholarly work, who has extensively studied the 'intimate' in colonial rule: that of sexual relations, body politics and familiarity (Stoler 1995, 2002). From a number of perspectives the anti-nautch campaign can be situated into her transnational framework, and can result in a new reading of the British participation in the anti-nautch campaign. The systematic, organized British anti-nautch campaign began in a phase of colonial rule, when the criteria of Europeanness was believed to be depending on the sexual, conjugal and domestic arrangements of imperial agents (Stoler 2002:42-71). Due to the heterogeneity of colonial European society, uplifting and homogenizing European standards, such as standards of behaviour, standards of living was considered vital in demarcating the difference between European and native communities. In late nineteenth-century societal thinking sexual behaviour was considered to be revealing morality, race and nation (also Levine 2004:136) and consequently, there were considerable efforts invested in keeping European sexual and moral code distinct from the sexual and moral code of native population. It has to be

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emphasized, that bourgeois sexuality and racialized sexuality were mutually dependant constructs (Stoler 1995:97), and an attack on the nautch as a form of racialized sexuality could secure the distinctiveness of European norms. Maintaining Europeanness in the colonies was understood as a scientific project, supported by a medical language of sexuality, eugenics and hygiene (Bashford 2004:118, 122, 130). Physical cleanliness, order was believed to reflect moral cleanliness and order, and the segregation of European and native population on the grounds of public health was a means of surveillance of colonial bodies. The individual body, besides of attracting medical and governmental attention, was considered to signify nation and culture (Mosse 1985:10-13). The British visualization of the body as an instrument of colonial rule was studied by Elizabeth M. Collingham (Collingham 2001). In the second half of the nineteenth-century the imperial agent's body was measured as reflecting the vitality of the nation and signifying British superiority (Collingham 2001:165-167). Individual health was seen as the prestige of the entire colonial community, thereby maintaining health became a patriotic responsibility. This approach to health and body gave moral resonance to daily and domestic practices, since body, health and morality was seen as interdependent (Collingham 2001: 165-167).

These conventions were reflected in the particular conditions of the Indian nautch the British anti-nautch reformers highlighted and found problematic. Apparently, the British reformers disapproved more than the possibility of commercial sexuality attached to the figure of the nautch woman, or perhaps to dance performances. It was the potential displacement of prostitution, the visibility of the nautch women, and their mobility in society that was equally disturbing. The nautch raised questions directly connected to sexuality, to conventions, where prostitution was possible in spatial terms, what are dangerous sexualities, and what has to be policed (on these question of prostitution in general see Walkowitz 1991 and Levine 2003, 2004).

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3.1 THE EXPANDING CATEGORY OF PROSTITUTION

Firstly, it should be clarified how the category of prostitution was used by British reformers. The nautch women were undeniably involved in commercial sexuality, however, it is a difficult task, to reconstruct the availability and sexual component of the nautch women's life. Even British reformers acknowledged that temple dancers often engaged only in singing and dancing, perhaps only in singing (Fuller 1900:124). The central issue that stimulated the anti-nautch campaign was likely to the conceptualization of prostitution: the nautch women's casual sex work was an 'irregular' form of prostitution from a Western-centric perspective (Chatterjee 1992:19-23, Whitehead 1995:51). For instance among temple dancers it was customary to live in long-term agreements with one man (Srinivasan 1988:180-181), and as the nautch women provided music and dance, cultural entertainments, their work did not fit the Western image of the working class prostitute (Whitehead 1995:51). In summary, the British reformers overemphasized commercial sexuality as part of the nautch women's life. Categorizing the nautch women as prostitutes can be explained by a broad and expanding understanding of prostitution and connecting to that, an anxiety, that nautch, as a dangerous form of sexuality was not controlled (Chatterjee 1992:19-23 and Wald 2009:17-20). The famous parliamentary report on prostitution in India, The Queens's daughters in India, classified the nautch women as forming a wholly separate group from military prostitutes, and reported that the nautch women could be found in civil society (Andrew and Bushnell 1899:28). This report also described nautch women as prostitutes, but it emphasized that the nautch women received incomparably better treatment than military prostitutes. It is worthwhile to highlight, that in Madras the Contagious Diseases Acts did not cover professional performers, indeed a number of registered prostitutes asked exemption from

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examination on the grounds that they were hired only for singing and dancing, and did not provide sexual services (Levine 2003:220).

British reformers also seldom noted that the nautch women were different from military prostitutes and from working-class prostitutes. As the Indian Messenger described, nautch women "move more freely in native society than public women in civilised countries are ever allowed to." (Fuller 1900:131) "According to the Madras Census of 1881, the number of female dancers in the Presidency was 11,573. Throughout India, there must be very many more. This is exclusive of public women, who are far more numerous." (Nautches 1893:7). Nautch women were thus seen as sources of anxiety: as representing an unregulated, but dangerous form of sexuality, that escaped the pervasive control characterizing registered prostitution. Indian native prostitutes who provided sexual service to British soldiers were exposed to regular medical investigation and treatment in lock hospitals from 1868 (Arnold 1993:85). However, regulating the nautch belonged to the regulation of interracial sexuality in civil society. Increased policing of interracial sexuality in India began in the late nineteenth century, an example of this, was the attempt to categorize Indian native women cohabiting European men as prostitutes (Collingham 2001:183-184, Stoler 2002:50-51). This step was a discouragement of the colonial institution of European men living in concubinage with native women, and contributed to push interracial sexuality, at least as a form of legitimate relationship to the margins of society (Collingham 2001:183-184). These were efforts to establish a self-contained European settler community (Sen 2001:3). The increasing presence of British women was aimed to exclude the Indian native women from the European male's domestic sphere (Sen 2001:3).

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3.2 SPACE, MOBILITY AND VISIBILITY

British reformers expressed their disapproval of the presence of Indian dancers on festive occasions. Predominantly the impropriety of private performances was highlighted, when the nautch woman was allowed to participate in a social gathering. These performances took place in the Indian home, and in such case, a debased entertainment was said to be coming to the private realm:

> The nautch woman is invited to perform, it must be remembered: which is a very different thing from people going to theatres or other places where people of bad character may be engaged to entertain the public. (The The Indian Social Reformer 1893, October 14 qtd Fuller 1900:143)

This described mobility and the visibility of the nautch women violated the spatial segregation of sexualities. The sanctity of the Indian home was questioned, as openly giving space for commercial sexuality. In this section I would like to discuss the connotations of spatial segregation to cleanliness and morality, and the depicted contrast of the European and native space.

Lock hospitals in India served the purpose to isolate prostitutes until cured or deemed healthy, thus reducing the potential health risks posed to their clientele (Arnold 1993:85). Brothels were also expected to be restricted to certain localities, and were to be kept under surveillance (Levine 2003:300). The prostitute operating outside designated areas was seen as a serious medical and a corruptive moral problem (Levine 2003:300). As Philippa Levine writes colonial "sexual commerce upset western boundaries of public and private" (Levine 2003:298) and I believe, that the nautch woman invited to the home was interpreted by British refomers as a prostitute out of place, who blurred the boundaries of public and private. Perceiving the prostitute as a source of danger, as potentially infiltrating into the home was a fear not uniquely articulated in the colonies (Walkowitz 1991:34) however, in the colonial setting there were increased fears of maintaining the private sphere and the European sphere (Levine 2003:298-299). The colonial European home was believed to be exposed to the threat

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of disease, carried by the native population (Bashford 2004:130, Collingham 2001:165, Levine 2003:299). The European home was described as an ordered place, while native space was seen as chaotic, unorganized (Levine 2003:299). The possibility, that nautch women, cetagorized as prostitutes could openly enter the Indian home, built a sharp contrast with the sanitary and behavioural definitions of the British home. In the British anti-nautch campaign the morality of the native home was criticized, for example by the famous sermon of the Bishop of Bombay (The Times of India, 1893, July 7, 6). This is an excerpt from a letter to the editor of The Times of India written by a British anti-dance campaign supporter, accusing the newspaper of being too compromising in the nautch question:

> Instead of this, you treat the matter as unimportant, on the ground that the performances of nautch-girls in themselves are neither lively, nor decorous, and so long as this can be said, it matters nothing what they are off the stage. May I be allowed to put the matter in another light? What have we, Europeans and Christians not owed, in the formations of our morals, to the idea of the sanctity of the home? How much have we all been indebted, if we had tried to make a fight against our passions, to the fact that the homes of our mothers were considered so sacred to goodness, that their character would be violated for ever if one who did evil for her living were allowed to set her foot across the threshold ? (The Times of India, 1893, May 20, 4)

I find the next quotation to be a revealing passage on the relationship of the nautch dances and spatial regulation. This excerpt is from a British moral tract addressing Europeans, who fail to notice the immorality of the nautch:

> many of them would watch a nautch performance, as they would a snake charmer's feats, a travelling juggler's tricks, as something novel and curious, or perhaps tiresome, and to be endured with the best grace possible. Out of sight it would be out of mind. But should an English host bring for their entertainment into the drawing-room a similar class of Englishwoman, they would leave the house scandalized and insulted. They would regard it as recognition of immorality and vice that could never be endured. (Fuller 1900:143)

This concise excerpt points to many aspects of the representation of symbolic difference between European and Indian native space, between the European home and the

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Indian home. This passage aimed to demonstrate the immorality of the nautch to those Europeans who believed it was an innocent entertainment (see Chapetr 2, Section 2.3), by drawing a parallel with British actors and context. The phrasing "similar class of Englishwoman" refers to prostitutes, and to the campaign's central claim, that Indian dancers are not categorized as prostitutes, despite of engaging in sex work. In spatial terms the dense symbolism of the bazaar and the difference between the English and Indian home appears. The drawing-room appeared as a cultural symbol, a distinguished place of cultivating social relations, implicating, that in Indian homes there was no such room. It can also be interpreted as a privileged space for cultivating Europeanness, therefore a nautch entertainment would be unimaginable there. The snake charmer, the juggler suggests that nautch qualified as a low-class entertainment, and denied that nautch dances could be appealing to an educated or cultured audience. In spatial terms, the nautch was tied to the entertainments of the bazaar. Representing Indian dance in such terms was an already established practice and spoke to a wide public in the British Empire. The Indian Village exhibition in Albert Palace, 1885, where the London audience could learn about the life and amusements of the "people compromising our vast empire", juggling, snake charming and nautch was offered (The Observer, 1885, November 5, 6). Another correspondent also highlighted nautch, wrestling, and "some clever juggling" on the programme (The Guardian, 1885, December 27, 6). Similarly, the India and Ceylon Exhibition at Earl's Court in 1896 was advertised with featuring nautch girls, jugglers, dervishes, illusionists (The Manchester Guardian 1896, May 11, 6). The broader framing of nautch as an unsophisticated, farce like entertainment was already associated with native space. It is interesting to contrast these broadcasts with the account of the Times of India on the Indian Village exhibition, remarking that the performance of the nautch girls could be informative and educational to the British audience, because "it is popularly believed in England that the nautch has a spice of naughtiness about

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it, and we have no doubt about it, that practical acquaintance with it will serve, in great measure, to dispel this allusion…" (The Times of India, 1885, Jul 14, 3). This statement suggests, that although European opinion was divided on the merits of Indian dance, in the late nineteenth century there were already concerns to represent the colonial European community as uninterested in Eastern entertainments, and especially to refuse associations with Oriental eroticism.

An association with the bazaar, a place of native entertainment was more than undesirable for the European colonial community. Due to the growing attention to hygiene, in the late nineteenth century Europeans were advised to avoid the food, entertainments and the prostitutes of the bazaar (Arnold 1993:89-90). The bazaar was seen as place for mixing with the native, disease-ridden population, whereas European environment was regarded as a safe, controlled space, continuously threatened by its filthy surroundings and by the infiltration of natives. These assumptions are related to eugenic ideas, by seeing disease as a bodily mark of morality: those who could not resist the attractions of the bazaar were disposed to the risk of contagious diseases (Arnold 1993:90).

The British reformers also gave a piece of advice to Indians regarding the regulation of space. This advice also connected morality and inappropriate living conditions, and contrasted native ill-management of space with the arrangements of European space. Reformers presumed, that the turmoil of extended families living together caused many Indian men to visit the nautch women (Nautches 1893:11).

Because of the habit of inviting professional dancers, in the view of British reformers, the Indian home was not clearly separated from public space: it was a place where prostitution was possible. Also the metaphoric and physical filth, associated with prostitutes and low-classes (Walkowitz 1980:3), in the colonial context with the native population (Bashford 2004:130), could be carried into the Indian home by the prostitute, and Indians allowed that.

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For Europeans, as guests on nautch entertainments in Indian homes, there was the threat of unwillingly crossing the boundaries between public and private, and entering an unsafe place.

3.3 GENDER IN THE ANTI-NAUTCH CAMPAIGN

After demonstrating the contrast between the Indian and British home, I would like to turn to the constructions of gender identity in the British anti-nautch campaign that were in part connected to domestic space. The seclusion of Indian women (purdah), that became a popular cultural trope, was practiced in middle- or upper-class Indian homes (Hall 2004:53). The purdah system was frequently criticised from a Western-centric approach, it was seen to be causing bodily symptoms, passivity and idleness (Hall 2004:53). The debate on the purdah system appeared in the anti-nautch campaign also: British reformers presumed the Indian male preferred the company of the nautch women, because the Indian wife was uneducated, secluded who could not be an equal partner in marriage (Fuller 1900:134, Thurston 1909:131). The theme of the degraded Indian woman recurred in the dualistic representation of the uneducated, spatially bound wife and that of the seductive, mobile prostitute. Dr. Murdoch, a British reformer suggested that it was a natural consequence that Indian men developed attraction to the nautch women (qtd by Fuller 1900:131). An unarticulated, but underlying assumption behind these statements is the recognition of male sexual desire. While maintaining, that in Western understanding, self-mastery, the ability to control sexual desire was considered a sign of racial, national and class-belonging the social control of male desire (or the lack of it) was a female responsibility (Mosse 1985:5-11), Stoler 2002:71). The females of the household, practicing the seclusion of the purdah system could only be spectators of the nautch and were denied the possibility of intermingling with male guests. Therefore, in an almost exclusively male environment, desire for the prostitute was seen as an

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outlet of male desire. On the other hand, Indian males in British colonial discourses were often described as engaging in unnatural practices, and were characterized by immorality and lust (Hall 2004:55). Inviting prostitutes to the home, experiencing sexual arousal for the nautch women in the presence of the spatially segregated wives pointed to the indecency and immorality of Indian men. The Indian wife was described as being unable to control the morality of the home. The bodily and moral inaptness of the Indian woman can be placed in opposition to the idealized qualities of the British wife: energetic, active, who did not sink into Oriental laziness (Collingham 2001:181). Furthermore, the European woman in the colonies was pictured as a guardian of virtue, and her duty as an imperial agent was to maintain morality and the morality of the home (Stoler 2002:71). The presence of European women in the colonies, was to prevent the intimacy between European males and native females (Stoler 2002:33), and the same was their duty when present on nautch performances. The wrongs of Indian womanhood presented a confidential story of two Englishmen, who upon their returning to their tents found nautch women sitting on the carpet:

> Immediately our friends arose to depart, and when pressed to stay, they clearly stated their reason for going. An English government official sitting near whispered to the husband: You are doing quite right in going. If my wife were here, I would do the same. These friends would not have gone to the dinner, had they known that nautch was on the programme. (Fuller 1900:136)

The tract of Dr. J. Murdoch specifically addressed English ladies, to put in effect their influence on their husbands, and encourage them to leave, whenever nautch dancers are introduced to the entertainment of guests (Jagpal 2011:76). This gender-coded duty of the English women presumed European men as potentially getting under the erotic influence of the nautch women (Jagpal 2011:76). Charn Jagpal also describes the nautch women as "home-wreckers", threatening the domestic sphere by having sexual raltionship with married men, however, his results are based on the literary representations of the nautch women in

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Anglo-Indian novels (Jagpal 2011:75-77). (On the gender constructions of Indians in the anti-nautch campaign see also Section 3.7).

3.4 THE EXPENSES OF THE NAUTCH

Recurrent and lengthily discussed themes in the British campaign were the financial costs of nautch entertainments and the greed and wealth of the nautch women. The "loss of money" is among the first enlisted harmful effects of inviting dancing women (The Indian Social Reformer, n.d., April 16, Nautches 1893:4). Popular stories were cited about the high fees of the nautch women, and about the valuable jewels and estates presented by patrons to the nautch women. British reformers also attempted to prove the immorality of the nautch by pointing out the nautch women's greed and emphasized, that the nautch was entirely profit-driven, and ignored the religious or cultural functions of the dancers. The British reformer Dr. Murdoch complained about the money spent unreasonably on nautch, as on money spent on unworthy purposes by Indian patrons:

> They [the nautch women] are as a rule avaricous… : Very large sums are often wasted on these women by men, who will not give a pice [1/64 of a rupee] for female education. Some time ago a jewel, set with precious stones valued at about 2000 rupees, was presented to a dancing girl in the neighborhood of Madras.' (qtd by Fuller 1900:132).

Nautch entertainments were known to be expensive, elite entertainments. British reformers represented the nautch as a ruin of many families and as a cause of the decline of Indian aristocracy. However, this passage also refers to the participation of the middle-class in nautch entertainments:

> It is saddening to see royal and aristocratic families irretrievably ruined by these women. Many a wealthy man has had to court poverty and disgrace on this account. Even in middle

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class society, many fritter away their youth and money to quench the insatiable thirst of sanctified immorality...(The Indian Social Reformer, 1892, April 6 qtd. Fuller 1900:133)

The fact, that nautch dances were given in honour of European officials in Indian homes also suggests that the British anti-nautch discourse is about the participation of ruling classes in the nautch, either European or Indian. Nevertheless, I believe that representing professional dancers solely as avaricious courtesans reflects what captured the British attention and imagination: the nautch was red as a sign of Oriental, luxurious decadence, and an entertainment that was not appropriate for the middle-class.

First, I would like to review, what participating in the nautch could impose on Europeans. Leaving the boundaries of the self-contained British colonial community held the risk of entering dangerous native space, and attending unrespectable social gatherings. Admiring and desiring the nautch women could mean an opportunity for interracial sexuality, and a transgression of colonial boundaries between Europeans and Indians. The British reformers articulated spatial and national boundaries in the campaign, but at the same time the class aspect of social stratification was a dominant concern of the campaign. Avoiding the nautch could be the sign of conforming to middle-class morality. The distinctive code of the middle-class celebrated self-moderation, discipline and separated themselves from the aristocracy and from the lower-classes (Mosse 1985:10-11). The heavily criticized potential sexuality of the nautch, commercial and interracial, spoke to a behaviour associated with poor classes and soldiers. In nineteenth-century societal thinking soldiers and low-classes were considered to be unable to overcome their passions and desires (Mosse 1985:10-11), therefore turning to commercial and interracial sexuality was an acceptable behaviour of them (Stoler 1995:179). The British anti-dance campaign demanded the boycott of the nautch from British and Indian elite classes, by claiming, that the nautch did not have a place in a respectable home, and in decent society. However, it did not consider the regulation of the nautch as a

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low-class entertainment. British reformers explicitly claimed that the purity reform is supported by the upper social classes. British reformers aimed to "relegate it [the nautch] to the place where it morally belongs - outside of decent society (Fuller 1900:136)." "For the sake of all that is pure, *nautch* girls should be banished from respectable society (The Indian Spectator qtd. Nautches 1983:9).

The dangers of the nautch were not only described in financial terms. British reformers also emphasized, that the nautch could result in decayed health, loss of vitality and in the neglect of patriotic duty. However, due to the colonial situation, the perceived conflict of prostitution and idealized middle-class morality was a more complicated question. The figure of the prostitute, as draining the resources of the "better classes" (as a characterization of the prostitute in Great Britain see Walkowitz 1991:34) in this case was a native woman. A racialized image of prostitution (Levine 2003:228), as in case of the intimacy of European males with the nautch women, can be connected to the colonial fears described by Ann Stoler, as of white pauperism caused by native prostitution (Stoler 1995:182.) Consequently, the British anti-dance campaign can be interpreted as an attempt, to educate and draw the attention of Europeans to the dangers of the nautch.

The nautch women, reported to be prostitutes, represented a form of sexuality that violated the sexual code of the middle-class. Nineteenth-century public opinion regarded non-marital and excess sexuality as redirecting attention from patriotic duty (Mosse 1985:11). Those who indulged in the pleasures of the nautch were said to be wasting energy and bodily strength instead of working on higher purposes. According to British reformers, these patrons were Indians. The consequences of unrespectable behaviour, that is patronizing the nautch women, were said to be appearing medically, as manifested in 'nervous debility', 'enfeebled health', 'degenerate offspring' as a result of wasting semen, and syphilitic infection could be a danger of the nautch (Nautches 1893:5-7). The loss of semen was said to be especially

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dangerous to the youth. As the Bombay School Inspector testified: "The great majority of the boys are exhausted and spent by the time they reach seventeen. Their former energy and youthful brightness have gone [sic]." (Nautches 1893:5) Furthermore, the nautch patrons were said to be obeying their low, animalistic instincts, and since selfishness fulfilled their existence, they were uninterested in the welfare of their country:

> Look at the character of the men who keep dancing girls? [sic] Are they interested in the welfare of their countrymen? Are they the supporters of every movement for their benefit? No; selfishness is their leading feature. Their money, as far as available, is devoted to sensual pleasure (Nautches 1893:6).

This excerpt illustrates how the British reformers conceptualized proper middle-class attitude to sexuality, interpreted the sexual behaviour as reflecting morality, and saw a connection between patriotism and sexuality.

3.5 "WHAT IS IMMORAL IN ENGLAND, IS IMMORAL IN INDIA"

The figure of the nautch woman as a luxury prostitute implies the profligate sexual code of aristocrats (on the sexual code of European aristocrats see Mosse 1985:5). Liaisons with professional dancers in Europe, such as ballet dancers were in the metropole associated with the ostentatious lifestyle of high classes (Rendell 2002:121-122). However, ballet was also commercialized, and in the metropole there were also debates, whether gifts from patrons and sex work designated dancers as prostitutes. In late nineteenth century Europe, high class patrons could also be connected to professional dancers, and supporting a dancer was a sign of social standing (Rendell 2002:121-122). British reformers raised a similar concern with regard to nautch: "In large cities, like Madras, I am afraid the general opinion is that a man is not worth his position if he does not attach himself to a dancing girl..." (The Indian Social

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Reformer 1892, April 16, qtd. Nautches 1893:3). Associations between bodily performance and sexuality, debates on the social standing of performers were common in Britain as well (Levine 2003:191).

Previous literature has also noted, that Victorian sexual code, Victorian norms of respectability and chastity stimulated the British anti-nautch campaign (Whitehead 1995:42). However, a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between the colonies and the metropole can be drawn: these sexual anxieties were class coded. The anti-nautch campaign in this respect can also be a particular example of Ann Stoler's approach to colonial studies: the colonies and the metropole shared anxieties and shared the dialectics of inclusion and exclusion (Stoler and Cooper 1997:3-4). Part of the notions of middle-class morality were imported from Europe, others were invented in the colonies, articulated in reference to a racial Other (Stoler 1995:99). It is important to note, that the moral code of the British colonial society was increasingly following the moral definitions of respectability of Britain (Collingham 2001:181-182). The sexual code emerging in the 1880s in Britain resulted in a decrease in sexual opportunity and in increasing policing of extramarital sexuality (Hyam 1992:64-65). The refusal of commercial sexuality and especially the concerns about youthful sexuality in the anti-nautch campaign could reflect the influence of the new puritan sexual code of Britain. (The section title is quoted from Fuller 1900:116)

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3.6 THE NAUTCH AS A CIVILIZATIONAL DIVIDE

The British reformers' disapproval of the nautch was also a refusal of Oriental decadence. In order to examine fears of being associated with Oriental entertainments, the best supportive evidence is to study the question, how the divide of East and West was imposed on colonial society through this campaign. As the simple binary of colonizer and

colonized does not adequately describe the power relations of colonial society (McClintock 1995:7), in the campaign Western civilization was not simply represented by British, and Eastern civilization and morality by Indians. The anti-dance campaign was the combined effort of British and Indian reformers, who followed Western values, such as undertaking civilising responsibility, advocating social reform (on the conceptualization of Western duty see for example Burton 1994:35-37). The Western perspective, according to British reformers had a beneficial influence on recognizing the perils of the nautch system. "Although nautches have been performed in India for thousands of years without apparent protest, it is satisfactory that their evils are beginning to be seen by some educated men."(Nautches 1893:10). The attitude towards the nautch became a sign of cultural and civilizational affiliation. Idealized Western behaviour was to be followed as an example by reform supporting Indian circles.

> There is not a more melancholy sight in Madras, not one which all true well-wishers of the educated Hindu community more sincerely deplore than the spectacle of high-educated Hindus, men of light and leading, and recipients of the most civilising and humanising form of Western culture, living in the state of adultery and concubinage with these sirens (Madras Mail, 1893, March 2 qtd Nautches 1893:3).

This melodramatic passage points to the fact, how appropriate behaviour, here sexual code had contributed to the definition of the social elite. Curtailing the nautch was interpreted as conforming to Western definitions of morality. Adultery and concubinage as non-acceptable forms of sexual relationships for the middle-class were to be abandoned by the Indian ruling classes as well, and the Indian elite were to be policed according to British understandings of morality.

The significance of avoiding the nautch is even more apparent in the second decade of the campaign, in the 1900s. By that time, the British and Indian reformers took it for granted, that due to their enlightening work, the immorality of the nautch was a known fact, and participating in the nautch could serve as grounds for open criticisms. This criticism affected

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public persons and communities. Those who avoided the nautch were highlighted as exemplary, 'advanced communities' (The Times of India, 1903, Jul 15, 3), who were 'beginning to see this evil in its proper light' (The Times of India, 1902, Aug 27, 3). Leading figures, who promised to discard the nautch in their palaces, estates received congratulations (The Rast Goftar qtd by The Times of India, 1902, Aug 27, 3). However, organizing nautch entertainments could result in criticism and in debates on where the nautch was possible.

> It was therefore with no small surprise and regret that the announcement of that Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had consented to patronise a performance by a nautch-women was received...Another surprising feature of the affair was that the authorities who are generally over strict in regard to lending the use of the Town Hall, had placed it at the disposal of the promoters of this so-called concert. (The Indian Social Reformer, qtd The Times of India, 1907, August 7, 8)

3.7 THE NAUTCH AS SIGNIFYING RACIAL DIFFERENCE

Although the British anti-nautch campaign complicated the social divide between Europeans and Indians, it was based on deeply embedded understandings about racial difference. The campaign played a considerable role in identifying the nautch as a form of racialized sexuality. The question, what made the nautch erotic, what was immoral in the nautch performances was inadequately answered by the campaign. The answer lies in the racialization of the acting groups. Who could fall under the spell of a prostitute dancer, for whom was the sexuality of the nautch women appealing?

Firstly, the need for the nautch was said to be coming exclusively from an Indian context, Europeans encountered the nautch only as guests of Indian hosts. Europeans were depicted as uninterested in watching a nautch, considering it ungraceful and monotonous, and watched it out of courtesy, since they were well-aware of the financial costs of a nautch

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entertainment (see the circular letter of the British officer, qtd in Chapter 2, Section 2.5; or The Times of India, 1907, April 2,8). Or they figured, this must be the 'Hindu's idea of giving them [European guests] pleasure' (Fuller 1900:135).

> If now those European gentlemen, and what is worse, ladies, who are so civil as to undergo halt-an-hour's real martyrdom, sitting stiffly while the dusky girls writhe before them to the tune of their own cracked voices,- if only they knew, as does every native in the hall including the host, the character of these women, and understood their lewd songs, how far, I wonder, would these same ladies and gentlemen feel grateful to their host? (from The Rast Goftar qtd. Nautches 1893:9)

Europeans, due to language barriers, did not understand the obscene content of the songs, therefore were unaware of the impropriety of such events. Reformers argued, that the cultural background of Europeans, as accustomed to respectable entertainments, such as the European ball prevented them to be shocked by the immorality of the nautch.

> Dancing is an honourable English custom, and it is therefore I think, that Englishmen in India from the Viceroy down to the Mofussil Magistrate, think a *nautch* of dancing girls as harmless as dancing in the ballroom in the Viceregal Palace... (The Indian Spectator qtd. Nautches 1893:9)

Indians on the other hand were reported to be fully aware of the profession of the nautch women and knew that everyone in the company is a possible customer of the nautch women (The Times of India, 1907, April 10, 8). Some opinions even went further, suggesting it was not Indian enthusiasm about their cultural product, but a deliberate insult to suppose that these performances could be pleasing to Europeans (The Times of India, 1907, April 10, 8).

If Europeans were unimpressed by the clumsy, unsophisticated moves of the nautch girl, that is an indicator of the sensitivity and sexuality of those who found the nautch dances and the nautch women attractive. It asserts, that not the dances were sexually suggestive, but the oversexualized Other perceived them as sexually charged. These notions on the unlimited sexual desire can be connected to broader, Orientalist discourses on the undifferentiated

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sexual drive of the Oriental other (Said 2003:188-187, 311). The British reformers gave further characteristics of the Indian males, who admired the nautch. These were the wicked man, who visited the temples under the guise of religion, whereas his real purpose was to see the dancers; the simple-minded, but affluent man, who after the bewitching encounter with dancers returned to his home as a ruined man (Fuller 1900:120), and the youth, whose character was said to be too immature to resist the charms of the nautch woman:

> She is the bane of youthful morality. In her rich dress, her trained voice, and the skilful manipulation of her hands and feet, she is the centre of attention to young impressionable minds. If their introduction to her is too early, there is yet no repulsion about it. (The Subodth Patrika qtd Nautches 1983:6)

Of course, these specific examples did not cover all patrons of the nautch women, but it is worth underlining, that these people were specifically mentioned. These could illustrate the indecency of Indian males, their overabundant sexual desire, on the other hand, these sexualities, as of premature and that of a simple-minded man have a relatively low place in the hierarchy of sexualities (see Rubin 1984:279).

Not only Indian males were described as hypersexualized. The British reformers perceived the nautch woman as characterized by greed and sensuality. This is supported by the preoccupation of the discourses on the impossibility of saving her, as sunk too low into indecency, that she could not be redeemed (The Times of India, 1907, April 10, 8). There were voices of comparing the nautch to European theatrical performances, ballet performances. This is an excerpt from the letter of the Governor of Madras, from 1893, denying his support of the anti-nautch campaign:

> His Excellency has been present on several occasion on which notches have been performed at none of which has he ever seen anything in the remotest degree he considered improper; and it has never occurred to him to take into consideration the moral character of the performers at these entertainments, any more than when he has been present at performances which have been carried out by professional dancers or athletes either in Europe or India. (qtd by Singh 1997:167).

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However, British reformers denied the validity of comparisons between European dancers and Indian nautch dancers. (Fuller 1900:133). There were two reasons for this. One explanation was that the nautch woman was trained into her profession from an early childhood, therefore her character became corrupted at an early age (Fuller 1900:144-145). While the British reformers admitted, that European female performers could also engage in sex work, they maintained, that there was a possibility for European women to quit their profession. The assumption behind this comparison could be that the native woman was regarded as oversexualized, and by a belief that sexuality is inseparable from her person and her sensuality could not be regulated.

The other, more prominent distinctive marker between the European ballet dancer and the nautch woman was the claim, that the nautch women were respected in Indian society. British reformers reported, that many Indian family was ruined, husband and wife became estranged because of the influence of a prostitute, of the nautch woman. "But our readers may say that this may occur in any land. That is true; but the nautch-girl has a recognized place in society and religion that gives her a peculiar vantage ground." (Fuller 1900:133) The nautch women were described to be present on weddings, on dinners in wealthy houses, moreover, they were invited to be there. The nautch women were said to be part of the private and public life in India (Chapter 2, Section 2.2). British reformers applied binary oppositions to accentuate the moral insensitivity of Indian society: that of the innocent bride and the prostitute, the immature youth and the prostitute, and used the juxtaposition of esteemed members of society and the prostitute (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.) "Besides the ordinary performances at marriages, Hindus have the horrible custom of getting a dancing girl to take part in the ceremony." (Nautches 1893:10) "What has a prostitute to do in a marriage ceremony? How does her presence add grace or sanctity to such occasion (The Indian Social

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Reformer, 1894, June 9 qtd. Fuller 1900:173).' Adding to that, the nautch was described as characterising the whole country, suggesting that the prostitute was everywhere horizontally and vertically.

> ...In the Punjab, the dancing-girls enjoy public favour; they move more freely in native society than public women in civilised countries are ever allowed to. In fact, greater attention and respect are shown to them than to married ladies. In the North-West Provinces we have seen a dancing-girl treated with as much courtesy as if she were a princess descended from a distinguished royal line. In Bengal, even now, after so many protests, the very best men do not scruple to patronise the class by giving nautches in their houses. (Indian Messenger qtd. Nautches 1893:2)

This passage summarizes a number of points the British reformers criticized in the Indian nautch. British reformers perceived the nautch women as a class of women, who were distinct from regular prostitutes, but also prostitutes, and could flourish only in India. (Although these characterisations are to some extent reminiscent to describing the nautch women as a caste, such as the profession being hereditary, the nautch women did not form a caste. On this question see Srinivasan 1988:177). However, the nautch women were of ill-reputation within Indian society, and although devadasis were generally held as auspicious, still they were stigmatized (Whitehead 1995:49). Campaigners simply equated the mere presence and wealth of the nautch women with social esteem.

3.8 CONCLUSION

From the British reformers' perspective, nautch was understood as a form of deviant sexuality: commercial and racialized. The nautch violated many aspects of the desired governability of bodies: the nautch women could move freely and could enter the private domain, at the same time British patrons could easily turn to commercial and interracial sex. Expanding the category of prostitution to incorporate nautch could have curtailed the

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privileges that British reformers perceived the nautch women enjoyed. On the one hand, the British anti-nautch campaign attempted to isolate dangerous Indian female bodies, and demanded the segregation of respectable society from the nautch as well. Attending the nautch was established as a form of unrespectable behaviour. Drawing on Ann Stoler's framework (Stoler 1995:99-97, 115-119, 179-182), participating in the nautch could appear as a problem of defining proper European conduct in the colonies. The British campaign strived to achieve a newly prescribed behaviour, by claiming a right to define whose sexual behaviour was acceptable. However, since sexual behaviour was interpreted as revealing morality, class and national belonging, therefore the attitude to nautch could gain significance. Ann Stoler describes the sexual possibilities of male subjects in the colonies as a basic tension in colonial sexual politics (Stoler 1995:179). I would like to cite her excellent summary on the problem of governing desire in a colonial context:

> In the name of British, French and Dutch moralizing missions, colonial authority supposedly rested on the rigor on which its agents distinguished between desire and reason, native instinct and white self-discipline, native lust and white civility, native sensuality and white morality, subversive unproductive sexuality and productive patriotic sex. (Stoler 1995:180)

The supposed distinction between British norms of sexuality and racialized sexuality (Levine 2003:228) could be violated by Europeans attending the nautch. Even if the nautch performances were often not characterized by impropriety, the fact, that the nautch women were sexually available, their mobility and presence in society could blur colonial boundaries, and make British norms less clearly distinguishable from native norms. The nautch could be perceived by the British reformers as endangering Europeans on an individual level, but at the same time could undermine the prestige of the entire British colonial community.

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CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

The thesis has argued that although the British anti-nautch campaign was encouraging a reform of Indian society, at the same time contributed to demarcating the boundaries of British colonial society. In the discourses of the campaign, the British were portrayed as indifferent observers of nautch, but even as such, were committed to address the problem, since as representatives of the empire, it was conceptualized as a personal and national duty to set an example to Indian society by avoiding nautch parties. However, closer study reveals that the campaign demands were already ambiguous, and suggest, that the British support of the anti-nautch campaign had more complex motivations than the moral uplift of Indian society. Applying Michel Foucault's seminal theory of biopower (Foucault 1978) and the theoretical implications of Judith Walkowitz's major study (Walkowitz 1991), I have interpreted the British anti-dance campaign as a boundary marking act. The British reformers attempted to characterize the sexuality connected to the nautch women and to the nautch entertainments, and strived to make it intelligible to colonial government, and to Indian and colonial British society. On the basis of the attitude to nautch, in other words, on the basis of sexual behaviour, respectable and unrespectable members of society were produced by the British reformers. Identifying nautch women as prostitutes could ensure restrictions on the mobility of the nautch women and segregating professional dancers from the elite, both from Indian and British. Warning the colonial elite to avoid the nautch entertainments served informal segregation, policing and negotiating the boundaries of acceptable behaviour In order to reveal the specific boundaries of the British colonial society the nautch women was perceived to be threatening, I have relied on Ann Stoler's scholarly work, and her transnational framework of identifying the role of sexuality, morality and the domestic in

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defining the social hierarchies of colonial society (Stoler 1995, Stoler and Cooper 1997, Stoler 2002).

Although the initiation of the anti-nautch campaign was the combined effort of British and Indian reform supporters, the nautch posed different threats to the British colonial society, such as the difficulty of maintaining Europeanness in a colonial context, the difficulty to avoid the moral, sexual and cultural contaminations of native society. A number of Indian opponents of the nautch already articulated Westernized ideas, and the British campaign material built and selected from this material. However, other internal tensions of Indian society that contributed to the outbreak of the anti-nautch movement did not appear. Although the British supporters borrowed arguments from Indian participants of the anti-nautch campaign, the figure of the nautch woman gained new interpretations in British perception and for the British colonial society. The British campaign supporters established the nautch women, an amalgam of different dance traditions and contexts, as a saturated symbol of Indian culture, nation and race. The nautch woman was represented as the embodiment of objectionable Oriental eroticism, her art as a bazaar spectacle, but alarmingly, she could transgress colonial boundaries. The concerns of British campaign supporters reflected the threats the nautch women, a native female body could pose on European colonial settlers.

In-depth analysis of the campaign has revealed the discursive formation of the nautch women, sexuality and ultimately that of race. General patterns can be identified in the discursive colonization of Indians through the British anti-dance campaign by applying Chandra Mohanty's theoretical framework (Mohanty 1991). Nautch was interpreted from a Western-centric viewpoint and from a perspective that neglected and attempted to eradicate plural codes of behaviour, of sexuality and of morality. As British reformers established a language of the nautch, Indians were depicted as non-thinking and being regulated by religious and social custom, thus failing to notice the indecency of nautch. Western influence

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was depicted as an impulse to recognize this social problem, as the nautch was an ancient, non-changing tradition, in which Indians took delight generation after generation. Immorality was handed down from father to son, as the nautch woman was welcome in the Indian home, the Indian domestic sphere was portrayed a place of corruption. The British and Western influenced layers of Indian society were portrayed as educators and reformers, while native society was depicted in need of external intervention for social advance.

At the same time, the British anti-nautch campaign articulated highly specific points of racial difference embedded in late nineteenth, early twentieth century understandings of health, body and vitality. This aspect of the campaign was studied by applying George Mosse's (Mosse 1985), Elizabeth Collingham's (Collingham 2001) and Ann Stoler's works (Stoler 2002). The gender constructions of the campaign were permeated by interpretations of the body as reflecting morality, sexuality and as signifying nation and race. The secluded Indian wives were characterized by bodily idleness, the nautch women were described as oversexualized, whereas the British women were portrayed as guarding the morality of the European male, and colonial boundaries. According to British reformers, the Indian women could not maintain the morality of the Indian home or prevent the immorality of their husbands, even more, they were powerless witnesses of it. The European male was depicted to be potentially influenced by Oriental eroticism in case of attending the nautch. Overabundant Indian sexuality could corrupt him, in case of entering native space and intermingling with Indian natives, in other words leaving the boundaries of the colonial British society. On the other hand Indian males, as organizers of nautch parties patronized immorality, and engaged in unproductive and unpatriotic sexuality. The British reformers depicted the inferiority of Indian males and Indian society in a quasi-medical language, by attributing dangerous and debilitating sexualities to Indian society, such as excess, commercial and premature sexuality, that were understood as roots of national or racial

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degeneracy. The drainage of money, energy and unproductive eroticism, that Indian patrons were exposed by favouring nautch, contrasts with European behaviour as regulated and led in a clean, organized space. Nautch was also an attack on the home and on the family that were the bases of national survival. Nevertheless, as British campaigners denied that nautch entertainments were organized by the British and in the European home, it was a damage done to the individual Indian home, morality and to Indian society.

The campaign thus defined nautch as a form of racialized sexuality, and strived to expand the category of prostitution, by incorporating the nautch women as well. In the British campaign supporters understanding, the nautch woman, despite of being a prostitute, was recognized and respected, and was part of social and religious life. Moreover the dancing women were said to be the best educated out of Indian women, and cultivators of Indian art and music. The British reformers depicted Indian as a society that invested in the education of prostitutes, but not in the education of other women. In the first decade of the campaign British reformers mainly attacked dance entertainments organized in the private realm for festive occasions, however, these dances, that did not have religious connotations displayed little cultural specificity. As raised by defendants of the nautch, European ballet performances displayed similarities to nautch. A major difference could be the spatial arrangement, alleging, that only theatre and music halls can serve as locations of dance performances, nevertheless, salon or soiree types of dances organized in the home existed in Europe also. Professional performers in Europe, although celebrated often did not qualify as respected members of society, nevertheless, the nautch was evaluated as an evidence of Indian promiscuity. The performances of the nautch women were not described as sexually suggestive, instead British campaigners attributed sensuality to the nautch women and their patrons. In my opinion, this is the result of projecting these qualities to the body of the oversexualized native. As a contrast, Europeans in the campaign were described by restraint, who could be exposed to the

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eroticism and sexuality of native women, without being attracted. The campaign rejected any enchantment with the nautch, as a form of native entertainment it was described as boring and for Europeans tiresome to watch.

The British anti-dance campaign can be a particular example of Ann Stoler's postcolonial theory, in terms of the metropole and the colonies sharing the dialectics of exclusion and inclusion (Stoler and Cooper 1997). A number of considerations of the anti-nautch followed the sexual anxieties and sexual code of Britain, nevertheless, the campaign cannot be described by a centre-periphery relationship. The anti-nautch campaign was a response to the newly emerging sexual code of the 1880s in Great Britain, such as restricting sexual opportunity, concerns about youthful sexuality and increased policing of extramarital sexuality. However, conventions from the metropole were rearticulated in response to a colonial situation. The figure of the nautch woman reflected metropolitan fears of identifying the prostitute as a source of pollution, and was merged with colonial fears of seeing the native population as a source of pollution.

The anti-nautch campaign can be interpreted as expressing sexual anxieties and a struggle to tie privilege to accepted forms of sexuality. British reformers produced nautch as a form of dangerous sexuality, and claimed a right to define whose sexuality is acceptable. Although the regulation of sexualities occupied a central place in colonial governmentality (Stoler 1995, Levine 2003), the nautch practice was not judged by colonial government as a practice to be regulated and controlled. British discourses attempting to prove that the nautch was a social ill were not only directed at the colonial government, these aimed to draw the attention of Europeans to the harmful effects of the nautch. Although the campaign omits reference to sexuality between Europeans and nautch women, other sources suggest, that it was not a realistic representation. The risk of losing financial stability, health could threaten the individual European, but threatened the prestige of the British colonial ruling community

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as well. Despite of the fact, that the possibility of European attraction to forms of native entertainment, sexuality, as violating racial and cultural boundaries was denied, the British participation in the anti-nautch campaign can be interpreted as an act of negotiating the boundaries of the British colonial community.

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