

The Victorian Compromise



Meaning



- Expression coined by Prof. **Lawrence Friedman**
- Referred to that **double standard** of behavior which **tolerated** sin and vice, so long as they remained hidden in the private sphere.
- This duplicity characterized Victorian:
 1. Morality
 2. Society
 3. Empire



VICTORIAN MORALITY

- Men and women had to preserve their reputation to be respectable.

HENCE

It was required to seem respectable rather than actually being respectable

- Virtues were public while vices were kept private



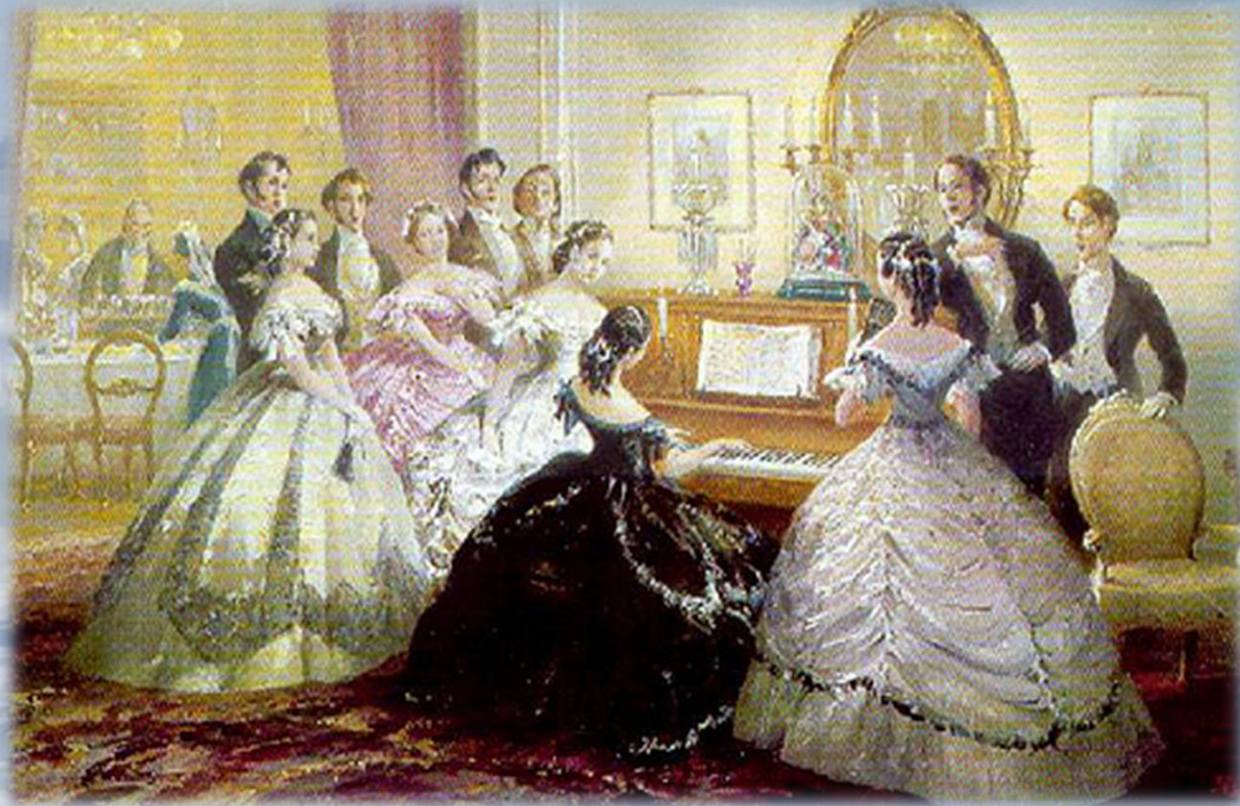
A Respectable Man Had:

- Connections
- Station
- Money
- Education
- Decorum
- Good-taste
- Godliness
- Good manners



A Respectable Woman Was:

- Accomplished
- Elegant
- Connected
- Chaste
- Devoted



Social Victorian Compromise

- Industrial progress produced wealth but also suffering.
- Upper and middle classes enjoyed marked advancements in wealth.
- Working classes suffered greatly because of:
 1. Poor living conditions
 2. Exploitation
 3. Child labor
 4. High mortality rate



INDUSTRIAL PROGRESS



WEALTH

POVERTY



MIDDLE
CLASS

LOWER
CLASSES



You might be wondering how all this was justified, as it could not be hidden easily!

You should take into consideration the Puritan impact on English culture!

Success was proof of God's good will! Hence, the poor were all sinners!

Even Darwinism was given a peculiar interpretation.



Social Darwinism

- Human groups and races are subject to the same laws of **natural selection**.
- Societies evolve from lower **barbarian** to higher **civilized** forms.
- Natural selection: the most capable **survives**, the least capable **dies out**.
- Wrong to interfere with this process.
- It justified:
 1. Imperialism
 2. Racism
 3. Eugenics
 4. Social inequality



Victorian Compromise and the Empire

- Great expansion of the British empire.
- Patriotism was influenced by ideas of racial superiority.
- The white man had a civilizing mission and duty as **culturally superior**. This concept justified:
 1. Exploitation
 2. Submission
 3. Destruction of native cultures.



Robinson, the Prototype of a Colonizer

“... when he espied me he came running to me, laying himself down again upon the ground, with all the possible signs of an humble, thankful disposition, making a great many antic gestures to show it. At last he lays his head flat upon the ground, close to my foot, and sets my other foot upon his head, as he had done before; and after this made all the signs to me of **subjection, servitude, and submission** imaginable, to let me know how he would serve me so long as he lived. **I understood** him in many things, and let him know I was very well pleased with him. In a little time I began to speak to him; and teach him to speak to me: and first, I let him know his name should be **Friday**, which was the day I saved his life: I called him so for the memory of the time. I likewise taught him to say **Master**; and then let him know that **was to be** my name.
(Robinson Crusoe)



The White Man's Burden. Kipling.

- *Take up the **White Man's burden**-*
- *-Send forth the **best ye breed**-*
- *-Go bind your sons to exile*
- *To **serve** your captives' need;*
- *To wait in heavy harness,*
- *On **fluttered folk and wild***
- *Your new-caught, **sullen** peoples,*
- *Half-**devil** and half-**child**.*
- **Burden:** a heavy responsibility
- **Breed:** children
- **Harness:** boring daily work
- **Fluttered:** unsteady
- **Folk:** people
- **Sullen:** bad-tempered; gloomy



The POEM



- Rudyard Kipling originally wrote the poem to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.
- He revised it in 1899 to exhort the American people to conquer and rule the Philippines.
- He defines **white imperialism** and colonialism in moral terms as a “burden”.
- The white race must take up in order to help the non-white races develop civilization.
- The phrase "**white man's burden**" remains notorious as a racist justification for Western conquest.

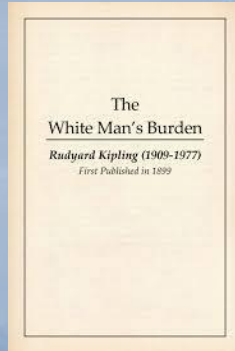


SUMMARY

- The speaker exhorts the **white audience** to share the burden of civilizing mission which has been assigned to them by virtue of their **whiteness**.
- This task will require the **best people in white society** , that is, an entire generation of **young men** essentially being exiled.
- Paradoxically, the young men will have to **SERVE** the **unwilling** captives.
- The young white men will be harnessed like horses awaiting a call (for help) of an unreliable, nearly savage people.
- These same people are not human adults but both **childlike** and **evil**.



THE BURDEN THEME



- Using the word "burden," the poet highlights all the difficulties of an imperialist project.
- The natives will never offer the imperialists any thanks or praise.
- Imperialism is a sober, **tedious duty** rather than a grand adventure
- The larger part of “the white man’s burden” is thus an exercise in “patience”.

HENCE

Imperialism is a thankless task, taken up by whites purely out of goodwill for other races.



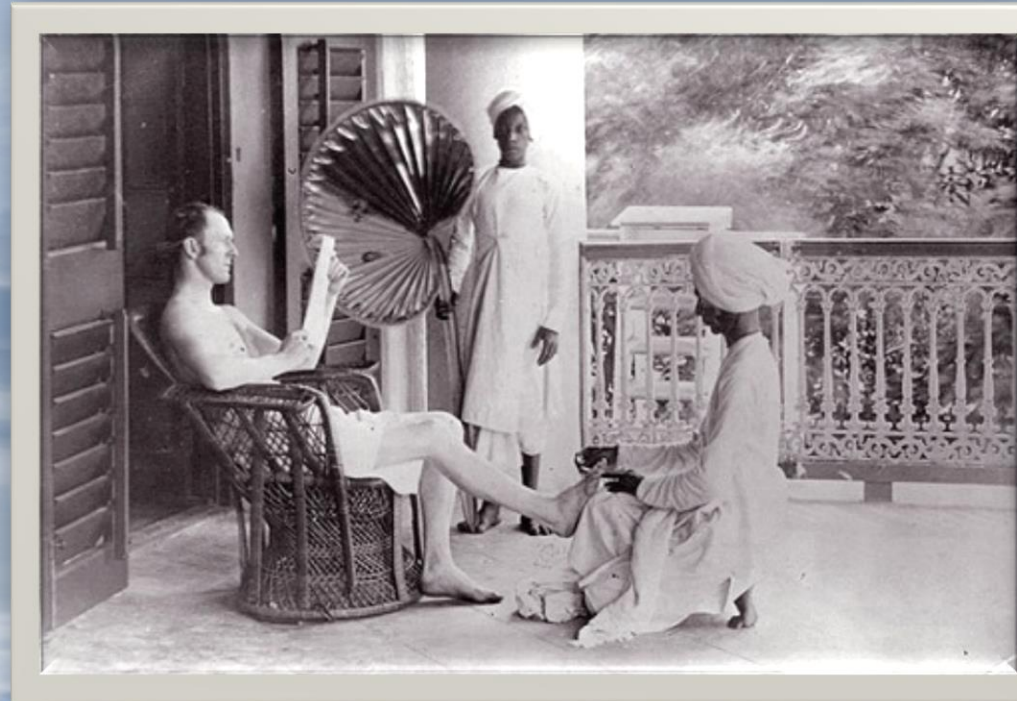
The White Colonizer

Characteristics according to propaganda:

- Naturally superior
- White
- Gentle
- Educated
- Compassionate
- Patient
- Technologically advanced

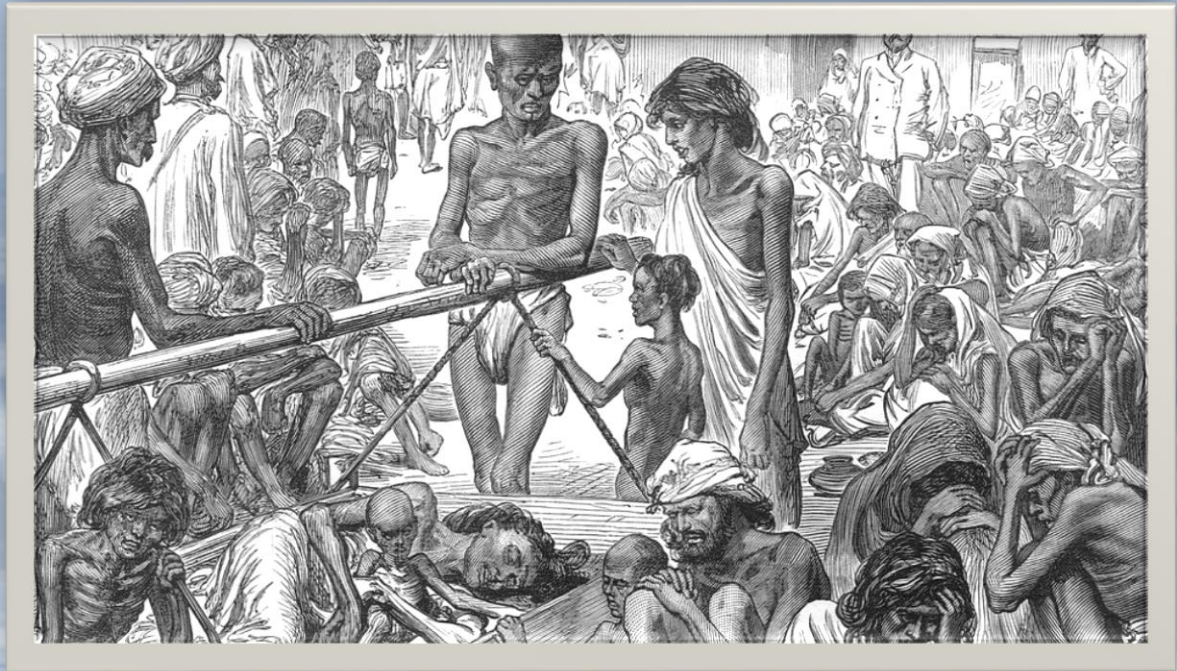
HENCE

He has the **moral duty** to help the non-white races develop civilization.



The Captives

- Savage
- Unreliable
- Evil
- Heathen
- Sinful
- Backward
- Naive/gullible/
ingenuous



RACISM

- According to propaganda the white man's conquest aims at helping and educating the non-white races.
- The **white races** are **SUPERIOR** and **CIVILIZED**, while **non-white races** are **INFERIOR** and **SAVAGE**.
- Indeed, white imperialism was never driven by selfless motives.

Real outcomes:

1. **DEVASTATION** of conquered lands
2. **ENSLAVEMENT** of native people
3. **SLAVE TRADE**
4. the **PROFIT** and **POWER**
5. national **PRIDE** that Britain derived from its empire on which "the sun never set".



Conclusion

The Victorian period was marked by a strong dualism in any field . The alluring mask made of wealth, expansion and rigorous moral conduct was boasted to hide the other «unpalatable» truths, which were to be kept secret or invisible as much as possible.

«Public virtues and secret vices» was to become the motto of an entire era, the most glorious one in English history, whose borders are, nevertheless, blurred.



