

Views on the British Empire

A British colonel attends a party hosted by an Indian family during the British Raj.

"Please, Colonel Sahib, please go into my house and the bearer will bring you a drink!"

Indrajit stepped in front of his son, his eyes lowered, and edged the colonel toward the interior of the bungalow. He had begun to sweat anxiously. Alicia smiled at several of their acquaintances, nodding to the left and the right, and the colonel relaxed slightly.

"But what I do not understand is why so many of our countrymen do not question the supremacy of the British. Pah! It would seem to me that we are all too afraid of putting the situation right." Jagat Rai had his back to the rest of the party as he spoke to a small group of young men in the corner of his father's large open drawing room. "It would seem to me" he broke as one of his friends jabbed him in the ribs. The colonel was within earshot and had glanced several times in their direction: his ear was constantly tuned to any talk of unrest. Jagat was undeterred.

"It would seem to me," he went on, but louder this time, his voice rising above the swell of small talk, "that where the British are concerned, we are frightened of speaking our minds, it would seem to me"... Jagat received a sharp prod with a bony elbow and turned toward his friend to protest. He saw then, quite clearly, that the colonel had stopped talking and was staring hard at him. The chatter around the room died away but he matched the colonel's stare.

Maria BARRETT, *Dishonored*, 1996