

## So Why Are We So Proud To Have Been An Empire?

By Julie Corbett

The powerful and the wealthy find no value in fair give and take,  
their countries have two states profit and loss, ease and ache.

The advantage of privilege gives no special rights or protection  
against the habits of exploitation, pollution and over consumption.

So why then are we so proud of having been an empire?

Henry V111 declared England empire, a chance for one legitimate son,  
binding his subjects over to total and humble obedience from then on.

Unfurling sails England went East and West seeking out trade routes,  
buccaneers and privateers making landfall wearing England's boots.

Colonizing and conquering countries from the indigenous and the free,  
local then global Great Britain changed the world's atlas and its history.

Cotton, sugar and spice produce wealth and tax out over those waves  
from ports Bristol and Liverpool fancy goods in exchange for slaves.

Buying and selling people, chattels packed shoulder to shoulder,  
three million individuals transported across that deep Atlantic water.

Say again Wilberforce's words, "You may choose to look the other way  
but you can never say again that you did not know." Still as true today.

Queen Victoria, long to reign over us, happy and glorious,  
Empress of India what cost that pomp, that circumstance.

That world has changed, empire unravelled from under the British heel,  
but greed, spicy or sweet remains such a profitable, palatable meal.