



EDITORIAL

Robyn Andrews and Brent Howitt Otto

In the current issue we are pleased to present an article on the current sartorial choices of Anglo-Indian women with respect to their identity claims against the contention that the sari is the 'national dress', a critical analysis of Anglo-Indian portrayals in Malayalam Cinema, and a review essay on a recently published monograph on Anglo-Indian politics and Indian nationalism.

In her article, Jyothsna Belliappa draws on accounts of women teachers from the Anglo-Indian community to respond to a debate that occurred in the Indian media in 2018 regarding the representation of the sari as the 'national dress' following comments by fashion designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee. Women's bodies, she argues, often continue to be the sites on which national and community identities are inscribed. Until a few years ago, some Anglo-Indian schools in Bangalore required women teachers from the community to wear Western dress. Based on women teachers' accounts Belliappa argues that popular and powerful figures like Mukherjee attempt to inscribe national or community identities on the bodies of women by prescribing their clothing choices. Although women themselves evoke different strategies to conform with or to challenge these prescriptions, this enactment of agency does not always protect their identities from being threatened by majoritarian tendencies and leaves them vulnerable to harassment and prejudicial behaviour.

Priya Alphonsa Mathew & Rajesh James offer a careful critique of Malayalam cinema, in which they explore portrayals of Anglo-Indians with respect to the gendered, caste and cultural prejudices of the film industry. They argue that in most

every case, Malayalam films portraying Anglo-Indians ideologically affirm denigrating Anglo-Indian stereotypes, slyly 'othering' this 'hybrid' community, ostracizing them as the 'romantic outsiders' of Kerala and typifying them as 'non-realistic' in their approach to life. Historicising the production and reception of Anglo-Indian delineations in Malayalam cinema from 1970s to 2018, they show such films to be both processes and products of the complex historical, cultural and nationalist policies of majoritarian isolationist politics. They explicate not just the politics of signification, but the politics of (mis)representation, which is how the Anglo-Indian community gets pigeonholed in the filmic narratives produced in Kerala.

Historian of Modern South Asia, Dolores Chew, reviews Uther Charlton-Stevens' first monograph, *Anglo-Indians and Minority Politics in South Asia: Race, Boundary Making and Communal Nationalism* (Routledge, 2018). It is largely a political history of the emergence and development of the Anglo-Indian community through the vagaries of European colonialism in India, South Asia and to some extent Burma/Myanmar. Rather than focusing his work narrowly, Charlton-Stevens situates Anglo-Indians squarely in the context of late colonial nationalist politics. He argues that: "the 'problems' of those of mixed race lie not in the mixed themselves, but in the social boundaries and attitudes to which they are subjected and expected to conform" (p.8) in the broader social and political milieu. Beyond the political thought and activity of Anglo-Indians, Charlton-Stevens seriously engages Anglo-Indian thinking on race and class as well.

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