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REINFORCING MARGINALITY THROUGH AN INVISIBLE CULTURE: THE ANGLO-INDIAN COMMUNITY OF INDIA

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The history of the Anglo-Indian Community began sometime shortly after the Portuguese settlement of India in 1498. Numbers were added to the community through both Dutch and French contacts. Yet, with the firm establishment of the British as the dominant colonial power in India, the minority solidified and became a functioning entity. The Anglo-Indian Community developed as a unique group having as its major distinguishing feature the cultural emulation of the British. Overt patterns of behavior, i.e., dietary, dress, language, religion, family system, etc., were uniquely European, especially British. Both rejected by and rejecting their Indian heritage, Anglo-Indians emulated those aspects of Indian life indicative of overseas British citizens. Through those centuries, until Indian Independence, the British served as their live and viable reference group.

Although Anglo-Indians accepted English cultural patterns as theirs, they never reached a plateau of social equality. At the same time they were never really a total part of the cultural or social composition of indigenous India. The position of this minority, in very realistic terms, could only be defined as on the margins, caught being a part of their British and Indian heritage and never totally being a part of either. No matter how much they tried, they were never totally a member of the British community. At the same time indigenous populations, especially those more nationalistic communities, never considered Anglo-Indians to be truly loyal to and thus never really a part of India. The rigidity of the caste system treated them as culturally polluted while the British treated them as social inferiors. They were on the periphery of both groups.

This condition of marginality continued through Indian Independence, and into the present. With the exodus of the British as the "colonial masters," in the late 1940s,

the visible reference group for cultural emulation was gone, but a unique phenomenon continued. What I am concerned with here is the continued use of this reference group, although for all practical purposes the everyday reality of a reference imagery is no longer present in India. Anglo-Indians were from their genesis forced into a condition of marginality. They were not accepted by the indigenous culture as they did not fit into the established social order. In addition, they faced rejection also from the British, who never considered them to be socially or culturally their equal. Thus, the membership of this minority found themselves forced to form a community with cultural and social characteristics which were independent of those possessed by the dominant group (i.e., British or indigenous Indian). Over time Anglo-Indian culture cultivated a richness through blending mostly British and yet numerous Indian traits into a distinct entity. The Anglo-Indian community illustrates quite well how ethnicity is socially and not biologically defined. The British Raj and the indigenous Indian community defined the Anglo-Indian community as something unique, totally outside of either dominant group. Even though the female and male progenitor may have had exact biological linkages to the child, one could not be Anglo-Indian if the mother were British and the father was Indian. The British parentage had to run through the lineage of the male since the patriarchal character of both British and Indian heritage were firmly established. Ethnicity and heritage played the dominant role of defining who was and who was not Anglo-Indian.

With these general social and cultural rules firmly established, Anglo-Indians were prevented from, intimate contact with the British. The model of reference (those social and cultural groups for whom they looked to for identity and ultimately imitation) available to them was therefore somewhat limited, becoming a synthesis of many bits of information which they were able to obtain. Members of this minority also faced the basic hindrance of not having available even those comforts and standards of living which were available to the overseas British.

It was under these conditions, tempered by historically fluctuating relationships with the British and Indian dominant groups, that Anglo-Indian culture emerged and solidified over a period of several centuries. Naturally in the formation of their community patterns, some outside model or reference was necessary, and this became the British rather than the Indian. Because of their political, economic, and

social dominance, the British provided perhaps a more tempting model. Of importance, too, was the fact that the early Anglo-Indians had been raised under the influence of their British fathers, speaking English, dressing in western tradition, and in many cases being sent to England for their formal education and apprenticeship. It should also be noted that early Anglo-Indians were ostracized from many interactions with their indigenous heritage because of the rigid caste and community mores. Thus Anglo-Indians has no choice but to build their own separated communities and at the same time turn to their British fathers for fundamental cultural traits.

Of particular significance to the development of this minority culture are the social-psychological ramifications which historically impacted on members of the community. Anglo-Indians generally insist that they are basically western, closely tied to the British -- rejecting, at the same time, a bulk of Indian cultural ties. They consciously avoid most cultural and social patterns which would be considered Indian. Generally speaking, they have a self-conception that has historically, in their eyes, elevated themselves to a position superiority over the Indian, They have, by these very attitudes, limited their own alternative choices for life-chances, thus ensuring that they have remained on the margins of society. Through this process they have rejected those segments of Indian culture which lack a Western orientation. Over decades, this picking and choosing of identity references has had a major impact on their location in society both within and outside of India.

Because of the unique history of the Anglo-Indian Community, the reference group toward whom they made identity was exclusively a British model. Although this model did, and to some extent still does, indeed exist, the nature of it requires extensive clarification. It must, of course, be noted that the culture of England, as transposed to India, was never a true reflection of that existing in England. Instead it was of necessity a hybrid, adapted to the culture and resources of India. The very fact that those who came to India had gone through a process of self and official selection and elimination prior to and after arrival, made the overseas Europeans not entirely representative of the countries from which they came. Although the overseas British attempted to retain the culture and society of their home-land, this could not be totally accomplished in India. So far removed from Europe, these personages were forced to integrate certain aspects of India into their culture, i.e., certain words,

some foods and spices such as curries, dress, etc. Their groups were usually dominated by military and company officials, and were predominantly male, somewhat independent of the homeland British society. Although all of this is indisputable and overseas British failed to be fully European, an overwhelming majority of their culture was transplanted to India and the rest of the world where they settled. Anglo-Indians and others had ample opportunity to observe and emulate the highly visible British Raj.

REFERENCE IMAGE

Although the British officially departed India in 1947, there remains today a "reference image" within and outside of India against which Anglo-Indians can compare and contrast their culture, society, values, and attitudes. This is an imagery similar to that discussed by Charles H. Cooley when he suggested that the self emerges through the person imagining how she or he looked, as if gazing into a mirror, and then feeling pride or humiliation as the image was evaluated. Just as the individual changed the self and personality to comply with the image that he or she wanted to see, so does the collectivity we call the Anglo-Indian Community when that group compares itself with the image that it constructs of the "ideal" British typology. One must keep in mind that the young adults of today and possibly even their parents never lived in an India that was ruled by the British. Their imagery of what constituted the British Raj has been and is created from a variety of sources. The memory of what British society in India was prior to independence remains vivid in the minds of many older Anglo-Indians, but is reinforced in younger members of the community through more secondary sources. There are many members of the group who have visited England or Australia and returned to India, migrated for a period of time but eventually returned, or who have friends and relatives in England (or other Western nations) with whom they are often in correspondence or contact. This and other communication has provided a continuously updated knowledge of what should be, and in a sense a touch with the ways of life of the British.

Most noteworthy as models for this reference imagery is the presence of such factors as the press, satellite television, and the cinema as tools that provide for an almost daily reinforcement. In the major urban centers of India, where the overwhelming bulk of Anglo-Indians reside, the English-language press is quite

large. Anglo-Indians read these and are provided with a further reinforcement. News and entertainment magazines are regularly read by Anglo-Indians. In addition there are a limited number of Western movies that the Anglo-Indians attend but today television programming that they watch is usually western in orientation and are primarily produced in the United States or Europe provides a twenty-four hour per day opportunity for Anglo-Indians to construct the social reality in which they live. "Star Television," a satellite television group located in Hong Kong, beams Western programming, including an Asian version of MTV into India every hour of the day. Hereby they are able to see "westerners" live in a style of life that they themselves have come to accept as theirs.

The association with these ever increasing media enterprises provide additional means of reinforcement for this "reference image." In addition to the visible features enumerated, literally dozens of other opportunities present themselves to assist in this process of reinforcement. Western culture now permeates the lifestyle of the everyday Indian in a way that could not have been imagined when the British abandoned India in 1947.

Perhaps the most important feature of "reference imagery" as an social ingredient historically contributing to the condition of marginality for the Anglo-Indian Community is that it continues today to be a pervasive aspect of their existence. Although most Anglo-Indians would unequivocally reject the idea that their lives are in a large part patterned after an "invisible culture" of England, in the practical text when one thinks about society and culture the existence of these habits are real. Once begun, the pattern of inter- and intra-group interaction which dominated the everyday lives of Anglo-Indians in essence perpetuated the condition of emulation and marginality into a non-ending process. This condition has basically reached a state wherein continuation could hypothetically continue as long as the community continues to exist.

Thus, Anglo-Indian reside in a social context that continuously provides overt and visible "reference images." Although India has undergone, and will continue to undergo, nationalism and a marking of unique culturalism, there is no indication that the peculiarity of emulation will disappear. They will undoubtedly continue as will Anglo-Indian observation, reference, and subsequent emulation of them.

ANGLO-INDIAN MARGINALITY

Throughout much of the recorded history of human civilization, the reader can locate many examples of groups who have been destined to live in a social and cultural location somewhere between one or two more dominant groups. The position of these marginal clusters in the existing social structure of more dominant groups has generally manifested reactions somewhere between ambiguity and conflict. This hazy definition of cultural positioning has often been expressed through a numerous cultural interactions, both overt and covert in character and quality. Certainly there have been examples of parallel cultures existing side by side without overt conflict, thereby producing a subsequent reduction of this ambiguity, but such examples are scarce. The concept of marginality, as it is used in this essay, has reference to the general and all-inclusive condition that exists when a group is culturally, socially, and social-psychologically situated on the periphery of, has continuous interaction with, has a dependency upon, and deviates in certain socially normative patterns from a more dominant group.

This marginal group may be within the more dominant group (such as an occupational category), or equally it may occupy a position as a discrete entity outside of that group (such as a racial category). As a result, marginality occurs in the relations between two or more groups, each being clearly defined, though perhaps systematically linked. In a sense this is a relative matter. No group, not even the black majority during apartheid in South Africa, was ever completely outside the dominant group. A marginal group both defines itself and is defined by outside groups, especially the dominant group, as being distinct and occupying such a position. The location of the dominant group within society may be large or small in size. The importance is the power that it exerts over the marginal group and the subsequent domination that it enjoys.

The idea of marginality is general, and can be applied to a variety of situations. In this essay attention will be directed toward the interaction within and between groups (social), the cultural patterns of these groups, and the attitudes of both marginal and non-marginal groups toward each other. In this context a marginal group should be thought of as a number of people who consciously share certain, but not necessarily all, social, cultural, or social-psychological characteristics, i.e., interaction patterns,

cultural patterns, and attitudes (as well as values), held by a dominant or more powerful group. The dominant group, as it is being used in this essay, first has reference to the colonial power which controlled India prior to Independence in 1947, the British; and second, to the indigenous populations of India, especially in the post-Independence period. The marginal group that is, of course, the Anglo-Indian Community of India.

A person in the circumstance of marginality is one who practices and accepts as his or her own patterns of behavior that are not common to the more powerful local or outside collectivities. In his classic work, Everett V. Stonequist identified the following four types of marginal man: the migrant foreigner, the second generation immigrant, the Jew emancipated from the ghetto, and the person of "mixed blood." In the social category that is focus of attention in this essay the fourth type, the biological hybrid, is being discussed. The combination of several marginal persons [men, as Stonequist used the term], each reflecting similar marginal features, comprise a marginal group. These marginal persons collectively may or may not constitute a "community."

When considering the idea of marginality an additional factor must be taken into account. A group is considered to be marginal when it is defined by itself and by non-marginal groups as occupying such a position. If members of the marginal group conceive of themselves as being marginal, for all practical purposes they stand in such a relationship. Recognition of this marginality by the group itself is an essential factor since many of the manifestations of marginality would remain covert if the group did not define itself as marginal and subsequently act accordingly. In this respect the membership of the Anglo-Indian Community views itself as occupying a marginal position, a view which it shares with the remainder of the Indian population.

This view reflects an awareness on the part of all groups about the social, cultural, and social-psychological characteristics that distinguish Anglo-Indians from Indians.

When the Anglo-Indian Community is considered as a distinct marginal minority it allows for an analysis of the most obvious social characteristics of the group, the fact that it is and has been viewed as a separate social category existing partly outside the framework of both British and Indian societies. Such an observation allows the social and cultural existence of the group to be placed in proper conceptual

perspective. In this discussion the social, cultural, and social-psychological characteristics of the Anglo-Indian minority exist within the conceptual framework of marginality.

Data have been collected since 1963 about the Anglo-Indian community. These data are historical, demographic, and based on the qualitative and quantitative observation and analysis of over 400 Anglo-Indians in India, Canada, United States, and England. Over the years a close observation of the Anglo-Indian Community resulted in the following generalizations.

1. the Anglo-Indian Community is (as it has been historically) marginal to the dominant cultural patterns of India (as exemplified by the Hindu majority), but not to the cultural patterns of England.

2. the Anglo-Indian Community is (as it has been historically) marginal to the social structures of both India and England.

3. the Anglo-Indian Community is social-psychologically marginal to India and is semi-social-psychologically marginal to England.

4. these forms of marginality have affected the development of the Anglo-Indian Community, and have served to perpetuate its existence as a distinct entity.

Although information is available for elaborate illustration of the validity of these propositions, space limitations allow for only a brief discussion of the major points.

CULTURAL MARGINALITY

Cultural marginality focuses on those behavioral patterns, systems of beliefs, customs, and organizations of the marginal group as distinguished from cultural patterns of the dominant group. The multitude of minority groups found throughout today's world sustain various patterns of social behavior which can usually be isolated, identified, and observed. These patterns may be, with slight variation, the same for many groups, indicating both similar features and those which may be unique to a particular collectivity. The Anglo-Indian Community of India, accepting British patterns of behavior as their own, maintain forms that are more characteristic of the English than of indigenous Indian groups. Because of the geographic and residential location of this minority in a culture that is non-western in orientation,

some local patterns do diffuse, but they are not pervasive. Generally, persons who identify themselves as Anglo-Indians attempt to reject those cultural elements that are identified as being Indian, and accept those patterns of behavior that are identified as basically British in nature, or at least Western. As a result, the Anglo-Indian Community maintains a marginal cultural position in contemporary Indian society.

This general emulation of the British is as inclusive as possible. In India it is often said that Anglo-Indians are "more British than the British." Although this comment is intended to be derogatory, and is to some extent stereotypic, it may contain some truth. Anglo-Indians sometimes speak of England as "home," although few have ever been there and almost all of those remaining in India are legal citizens of India. Other patterns of behavior that are easily observed, such as language, dietary, dress, recreation, residence, occupation, religion, etc., characterize overtly this condition of cultural marginality.

SOCIAL MARGINALITY

Social marginality is concerned with the structural or organizational characteristics of the two groups as well as the interrelationships that exist between them, including interaction processes (e.g., such things as conflict, cooperation, competition, accommodation, and assimilation). One may, for example, distinguish the process through which an accommodative plateau between the dominant and non-dominant groups is achieved, and subsequently the process through which an assimilative stage may be reached (as is the case with reference to many Anglo-Indians who remain in India or who have migrated to England).

The Anglo-Indian Community has since it was first founded been marginal with reference to its total position in Indian society. In the historical development of the minority there were some periods during which the community was accepted by the British, while at other times it was rejected. Interaction between the British and the community ebbed and flowed with rejection and acceptance. This "pick and choose" acceptance and subsequently patterns of marginality resulted in the minority developing and maintaining a consciousness of kind and an awareness of its marginal status. Although the group was often valuable to the British in their long-range effort to build an empire in India, complete trust was not characteristic of the

relationship between these groups. Initially there were some fears expressed that the Community could and would openly compete for power with the British (as had happened in other overseas colonies), or more important, give their support to the Indians. Although there were never Indications of the actual development of such an anti-British movement, restrictions were imposed to prevent this inevitability. Perhaps equally important in keeping the Anglo-Indians in a marginal position (or perhaps "in their place") was ethnic prejudice on the part of the British, especially as indicated by their attitudes toward the what they often called "half-caste" groups, i.e., the early Anglo-Indians.

The prestige claimed by the members of the minority never equaled that of the British. Although Anglo-Indians were, during certain historical periods, generally accepted, they were never completely recognized by the British as social equals. During the early years of British colonial domination there was a semi-shared status, but the membership of the Community never reached a social level equal to that of the British.

In contemporary Indian society the status which has been attained by the Anglo-Indian Community is somewhat obscure. In many instances the members functioned historically in occupational positions that would generally be considered middle-class. They were and are granted specific political representation, as in the national parliament, which placed them in an advantaged position in comparison with the political representation afforded other minority groups. A large number of Anglo-Indians, however, are unemployed or if they do have jobs do not have incomes that guarantee them a high or even medium standard of living. Most members of the minority feel very apprehensive about their future. They have not accepted Indians as their social equals, and in turn have been unaccented by Indian nationals. In order to survive they often change their names, religious affiliation, and language to that of modern India. Outside of their homes they often become as Indian as the most nationalistic Indian, but in their homes they revert to their cultural heritage of being an Anglo-Indian. Their limited numbers coupled with the ever diminishing influence or imagery of the Raj makes for future that is less and less likely to add to the survival of their community. Factually, the Community does not enjoy a secure positioning in the society of contemporary India.

In recent years many members of the Anglo-Indian Community have experienced considerable change in almost every part of life and their lifestyle. More often now, especially in their work, they come into contact with indigenous Indians. The fact is, they cannot, in work situations, openly reject association with these Indians and hope to remain employed and to be socially accepted. The consequence has been evidenced by increased informal social contacts with indigenous persons.

SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL MARGINALITY

The major concern of social-psychological marginality is with certain attitudes of the marginal group, the deviation of these attitudes from those of the dominant group, and the impact of various experiences in the marginal minority which result directly from membership in that group. As the cultural and social spheres become more tenuous, the social-psychology of the community likewise sits on a foundation that is less stable than in the past. Much of the research which has been presented concerning marginality has centered on this particular area of inquiry. Stonequist often addressed himself to the attitudes of inferiority which existed with minority membership, to the feeling that cultural demise was to be inevitable, and to the unique psychological reaction toward conflict situations that he felt to be characteristic of the marginal group and/or marginal position.

It has also been proposed that such marginality may have any of a number of psychological consequences. These include ambivalence, role strain, self-hatred, inferiority complex, egocentrism, aggressiveness, and withdrawal. The last of these is widely evidenced both in the exodus of Anglo-Indians from India (over half of the total population during the past fifty years ... mostly to England, Canada, and Australia), their passing into the local culture with no trace of their heritage remaining (some thirty to forty percent of their original numbers) and their self-segregation in many spheres of life. It is probable that numerous individuals do exhibit several of the above mentioned characteristics, but since these factors have not been well researched only speculative conclusions emerge. It should, however, be noted that such items as alienation, rejection, and identify were noted from the research to be items present in the lives of Anglo-Indians that are strongly related to social-psychological marginality.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Anglo-Indian Community of India represents only one of the many unique multi-cultural or multi-racial minority groups found throughout today's world. This group, both through desire and limited alternative models, developed as a community that was highly dependent upon overseas British in India. During the process through which the group solidified into a discrete entity their cultural and social structure became common to the British through emulation. The identification with British patterns almost totally permeated and defined their world. The failure, however, of the members of the Community to be integrated into the overseas British social system, and at the same time Anglo-Indian rejection of the Indian social system, produced a situation in which the group was socially marginal to both the British and Indian. With Anglo-Indian emulation of British culture and rejection of Indian culture a space developed wherein the minority was and is culturally marginal to India, but not totally to the British. Finally, social-psychologically the Community developed a scheme of marginality toward indigenous populations and a semi-marginal situation toward the British. The ramifications of such forms of marginality are extensive, and in many ways permeate the basic structure of individual and community relationships within which Anglo-Indians locate themselves.

With the British presence in India an immediate and available reference group was at hand and easily utilized for conscious and unconscious emulation. However, with Indian Independence this referent image departed India, leaving the Anglo-Indian minority in additional conditions of marginality. Yet, Anglo-Indians have continued to perpetuate reference imagery through a variety of primary and secondary sources. The now firmly established patterns of British culture and semi-institutionalized reference imagery has assisted in constructing a life in which that have been able to perpetuate their existence. However, realistically, one can only speculate what the future will hold.

FOOTNOTES

1. The original presentation of concepts found in this paper was at the "Minority Group Relations: Identity, Ethnicity, and Nationalism" section of the International Studies Association meetings, New York City, March 15, 1973.

2. It should be noted also that Anglo-Indians have basically been urban dwellers, residing in the major population centers of India.

3. There are secondary sources of imagery in India for the British or European model. For instance, the cinema, television, books, magazines, and especially overseas Europeans and Americans who still reside within or pass through the country.

4.See: Wright, Roy Dean, and Susan W. Wright, "The Anglo-Indian Community in Contemporary India." Midwest Quarterly XII(Winter, 1971)175-185.

5. Reference is often made, in general terms, to the Indian society. Such reference is indeed difficult to make because of the fact that India is not a homogeneous society, but instead a very heterogeneous entity composed of many groups. Certainly there is a Hindu majority, but when observed in detail this majority is internally differentiated to a large degree. The caste system, various interpretations of the religious orientation, modern traditional Indians, etc., help provide for this heterogeneous character.

6. Although recognized as a discrete entity, the are few, if indeed any, cultural features that can really be considered uniquely Anglo-Indian. the basic patterns are those of other groups -- whether British or Indian -- not specifically those of the Anglo-Indian Community.

7. "Reference image" can be defined as a situation wherein visible social and cultural symbols are utilized so as to reinforce a group definition of the situation. "Reference image," in this respect, is a phenomenon closely tied to the definition and character of a reference group.

8. See: Cooley, Charles H. Social Organization (New York: Scribner, 1909).

9. Gillin, John, "'Race' Relations Without Conflict: A Guatemalan Town," The American Journal of Sociology. 53(March, 1948)337-347. Here Gillin discusses the ladino and the Indian communities of San Luis Jilotepeque, Guatemala. See also: Gillin, John, "Parallel Cultures and the Inhibitions to Acculturation in a Guatemalan Community," Social Forces. 24(October, 1945)1-14. Redfield, Robert, "Cultural Contact Without Conflict," American Anthropologist. 41(1939)514-517. Tax, Sol, "Ethnic Relations in Guatemala," American Indigena. 2(1942)43-49.

10. This discussion arises from previous research, analysis, and publication of 244 unstructured interviews with Anglo-Indians residing in Delhi and New Delhi, India. The initial work was begun in 1963 and 1964 when the author was in India on a Fulbright grant.

11. Stonequist, Everett V. The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937). See also: Park, Robert Ezra. Race and Culture. (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950).

12. See: Wright, Roy Dean, and Susan W. Wright, "A Plea for a Further Refinement of the Marginal Man Theory," Phylon. 33(Winter, 1972)361-368. See also: Gist, Noel P., "Cultural Versus Social Marginality: The Anglo-Indian Case," Phylon. 28(Winter, 1967)361-375. Wright, Roy Dean, "Marginal Man in Transition: A Study of the Anglo-Indian Community in India." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. University of Missouri, Columbia, January, 1970.

13. For purposes of this discussion the dominant group is the Hindu element of India which comprises 85-90 per cent of the population. There do exist several other cultural elements in India, but these, as is true of the Anglo-Indian, occupy minority status.

14. Stonequist, Everett V., "The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict," in Ernest W. Burgess and Donald J. Bogue, editors. Contributions to Urban Sociology. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 337-339.

14. Stonequist, Everett V., The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict, op. cit., pp. 139-158.

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