



EDITORIAL

Susan Dhavle

From a scholarly point of view the 8th World Anglo-Indian Reunion in Perth Australia, in 2010, was remarkable for the Researchers Workshop organized by Robyn Andrews, and the Symposium which was part of the main events. The Researchers Workshop saw some Anglo Indian researchers and writers outlining their current work as well as auditing the work that others were doing. It was an engaging morning and it would be wonderful if it translated into contributions to the IJAIS. Grateful thanks are due to Robyn Andrews for making that meeting possible as well as for sending in her review of the book that I asked her to do while I was there. It would be wonderful if the IJAIS got more voluntary submissions from the many scholars doing important work in the field of Anglo Indian Studies.

The Symposium was of interest because well off Anglo Indians and other philanthropic minded Anglo Indians underscored means by which poverty among the AIs in India is sought to be addressed.

In this issue two interesting articles on Anglo Indian cuisine make a debut. We know that social and personal identities are constructed through food and food choices. Food habits shared by far flung Anglo Indian inhabitants of various countries of the diaspora go a long way in strengthening bonds of community. At the Perth reunion the food catered to the participants at many functions, as well as the successful Food Fair, meant that significant memories of food and eating in India was brought out by the way people frequented certain stalls to eat the kathi rolls or potato cutlets or biryanis, (often prepared in bulk by members of the organizing committee or their family members). People there were being united by a love for a cuisine that originated in India. The food served to remind them of these origins, still not forgotten, and still referred to affectionately. Food has become a significant marker of the AI identity, symbolic of their roots in India, and displays how AI define

themselves as a cultural group. The perspectives of both writers in this volume differ but both show how food signifies what is important in a culture that has been diffused globally but traces its roots to India. Indeed food is so central to AI identity that a Facebook page also exists, known as “Anglo Indian Mouth-watering Dishes”. Every interaction on this page is not necessarily to do only with food though recipes exist and may have been copied down and tried by the subscribers. It displays the *mélange* that AI cuisine consists of - the colonial contribution as well as the Indian one.

A vast multidisciplinary scholarship already exists on food and identity. The AI contribution to this is a valuable departure point. A notable community identity underlies the emphasis on AI cuisine in the articles presented in this issue, researched from surprising sources. It also indicates that rooting through food in a shifting place called ‘home’ for diasporic and Indian AIs. The memories that AIs associate with food was underlined at the Food Fair at the reunion, and is also sought to be addressed in the articles in this issue.

This issue also carries other articles. Peter Moore pays tribute to his father who served in the Calcutta police and also had other sporting skills. Biographies are important to AI, as well as the compiling of military history, a genre largely unexplored as yet in academic writing, though plenty exists in popular articles by various Anglo Indian authors.

Robyn Andrews reviews the book “Lines of the Nation: Indian Railway Workers, Bureaucracy, and the Intimate Historical Self” by Laura Bear. The respondents in this book are poorer class AI and the author of the book takes a quizzical look at them.

English is considered an elitist language to use for writing in India. Yet the English speaking AI write in this native language of theirs and are writing about aspects of culture that clearly show the marginality of AI in contemporary and early contemporary life in India. Only now have they started speaking about themselves. In this vein Aubrey Millet’s article touching briefly on AI as subalterns needs elaborating. The subjects of Bear’s book are also people who ‘stayed back’ to quote Millet, but they HAD to stay back because they did not have the means to go...though they might have WANTED to migrate. Is their harping on their memories

and attachment to colonial lifeways something that is authentically their past? Should it be constructed as being questionable? “Can the subaltern speak?” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has famously asked elsewhere. This makes one reflect on a statement by Spivak in *The Hindu Literature Review* of February 2011, where she says, “When the subaltern speaks there is not enough infrastructure to recognize it as resistant speech”. Ideas expanding on this would be illuminating to read. As always, the invitation to contribute scholarly articles to the *IJAIS* stands.

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