

Race and Caste in Asia and America : Case Studies of Power, Community, and Psyche

Anglo-Indians : The Bonds of Affection and Loyalty

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Cultures on the Borders : Creoles in Asia and America

How can we understand the complex social world we have inherited at the beginning of the 21st century? One way is to look for examples of peoples and communities who have already experienced what the rest of the world now faces.

As we move into an era of hyper-driven human contact and multiple human relationships, often across fractured lines of difference, we would do well to study those peoples who have a history of moving between cultures. Usually located in and around borders, these peoples transgress and violate traditional ideas of ethnic purity and national purpose. Their stories are windows to our future multicultural world.

This is the first paper in a series planned for a deeper look at communities on the borders. Although traditionally marginalized in their own local contexts, such communities range all over the planet, their experiences having particular resonance where the forces of power and economics converge. Their encounters have been either colonial, neo-colonial, post-colonial, or a combination of these frames of relationships. They usually occur where a “great power” has seen itself as providing benign guidance for the greater good, arrogating vast changes in direction for traditional societies and peoples to itself. Largely, though not exclusively Western / European / American, these powerful “modern” cultures have collided head-on with traditional

civilizations that have deep historical roots and vast networks of symbolic meaning.

When these societies have met each other, passionate embraces, as well as strong resistance, have occurred. Staging areas for previously unseen patterns of human relations and social organization these embraces have resulted in new societies based on the premise of a mixing between cultures. What we are most interested in here is the relation of race, community, and psyche. Or, to put it another way, cultural power, community relations, and individual identities. It is in the complex interaction of these three key components that we find a new world, *a transnational, transcultural world*.

In the Caribbean and the American South these embraces were borne from the bitter legacies of slavery and have resulted in what have been called Creole and Creolized societies that have led to new meldings of human endeavor. Some discussion about what these Creole societies have meant is necessary for understanding theory as it applies to the blending of cultures, with particular respect given here to examples from the New World Creoles (see especially Spitzer, 2003, and Baron and Cara, Introduction, 2003).

We have also seen the development of Creole trading cultures from the late 19th century in Japan, China, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere in Asia, as well as on the Western Coasts of North and South America. These are cultures which have quietly flourished, especially following World War II. From the ashes of this terrible war arose, for example, not only new economic powers like Japan, but new social arrangements which more freely permitted, even encouraged, the mixing of Japanese (read as *feminine, receptive, flexible*, at least until recently) and Western cultures (read as *masculine, aggressive, hard-headed*). These arrangements produced not only mixed children by blood, but, more significantly, gave the tacit go-ahead to a further mixing of cultures. The Pacific Creoles which arose from these cultural flash-points have generated enormous productive value for their respective cultures as conduits and affirmers of transformative cultural processes.

From the beginning of the English/British colonial experiment in India, too, large numbers of Englishmen, Scots, and Irish from military, diplomatic, merchant or laboring backgrounds, intermarried with local women of various races and castes, producing a sizeable, powerful community borne of “colonial desire” (Young, 1995), one that quickly took over the name originally assigned to those Englishmen long gone to the East: *Anglo-Indians*. It is this community and its imagined society which have particular resonance for us in terms of issues of race, caste and psyche, three powerful denominators of social division and dissonance which must be more deeply understood if humanity is to move forward to greater social justice.

Creole India, like Creole America and Creole Japan, deserves a deeper recognition, a more sophisticated understanding. This paper will begin with a look at Creole theory, followed by case studies of the Anglo-Indians, especially families found today in the Anglo-Indian enclaves of Madurai, Tamil Nadu, South India.

Creoles and Creolization : From Transnationals to Transculturals

Creole Culture and *Creolization* seem unlikely themes for cross-cultural encounters occurring in India, being concepts originally associated with the distinctive mixtures and unique historical developments of Louisiana and the Afro-Caribbean. Yet the power of Creolization as a transformative cultural concept draws us to view socio-historical processes in a new, creative light.

Creole is a word describing *creation*, the creation of new life, the melding of peoples. Creole has multiple meanings, one of the first being a description of the diverse examples of newly created peoples, whether in Africa or the Americas, who have had cultural and/or racial mixing in common.

Creole then came to describe those historically and culturally distinct societies which played major social roles in Louisiana, Belize, Haiti, and other areas of the Caribbean. It also to be used in Spanish (*criollo*, *criolla*) to describe elite white societies in Latin America, the

members of which had been born in the Americas (as opposed to Europe).

At the same time Portuguese enclaves which included Creolized peoples developed in India, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, to be followed later by even more complex Creolized encounters which included the Dutch, British, and French. We later see Creoles and Creolization in places as diverse as Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, New Guinea in the Pacific, and Surinam in South America.

Language has figured prominently in Creolization, as have religion, music, and cuisine. Creole has been used to describe a wide range of phenomena, of the mixing of languages, religions, cultures, cuisines, and music, in ways that were almost always relegated, at least initially, to second-class status. The archipelago of cultures and languages in the regions where Creole cultures and languages have existed have mirrored their geography : “slowly shifting, multi-layered, constantly arriving at new forms and possibilities.” (Glissant, in Mignolo, 2000 : see also Szwed, 2003, for a sophisticated discussion of Creole theory)

There are also raw sides to this creolization. Many of the encounters which have produced Creolization have been violent, erotic, and transformative. Creolization has the following characteristics, according to Edouard Glissant, one of the foremost theorists of Créolité :

- 1) *The Lightning Speed of Interaction Among Its Elements***
- 2) *The “Awareness of Awareness” Thus Provoked in Us***
- 3) *The Reevaluation of the Various Elements Brought Into Contact***
- 4) *Unforeseeable Results*** (Glissant, in Mignolo, 2000)

This cultural interbreeding and its often violent encounter of peoples and cultures is seen by Glissant as *the condition of a new way of being in the world, of an identity both rooted in a land and enriched by all the lands now related* (Ibid.). The key is *relation*, which contextualizes the mixture transversally instead of hierarchically, the opposite of a clash of civilizations or cultural/political domination of the Other which reduces diversity. It is a fraternal relationship, not one of

causes and effects. *Creolization is the idea of a continuous process capable of producing the identical and the different.*

Creolization is clearly not concerned with smooth transitions but with the processes of disjunctions and displacements. These processes are being enacted in the following cultural spaces :

- 1) **Creole Cultural Spaces.** *The first is predominantly (and from the time of their creation / generation) Creole. The perspective is from the Creole point of view.*
- 2) **Creolized Cultural Spaces.** *The second is about one or more larger cultural space(s) which have been 'invaded' by someone or something new and where a mixture has resulted. That mixture fills some of the spaces of the larger culture with provocative processes of transformation.*
- 3) **Creolizing Cultural Spaces.** *The third is about the process itself first and secondly about the cultural spaces. The raw side of the historical documentation of transformation fits here.*

All of these can be placed along a **Creolization Continuum**, the range of responses being located from an assimilationist Creolization on the one hand, to structural Creolization at the center, to a destabilizing, radical Creolization that subverts and reverses the current of social trajectories, on the other hand. What we are witnessing with the case of the Anglo-Indians examined in this paper is a transformation from a transnational to a transcultural community, from a transnational identification with symbols of nationality (England, Britain, India) and movements between these nationalities physically and psychically, to transcultural positions of flexibility, strength, and negotiation in the borderlands of cultures. Creolization, above all, recognizes that *culture is not a given but is always being negotiated.*

Creoles in India : The Anglo-Indians in History

The first Creoles in India in the modern era were those mixed people of Portuguese and local descent in the colonies of Goa and elsewhere. Their descendants, members of the Portuguese Creole diaspora, are found throughout the world, from the slave ports of West Af-

rica to the spice ports of India. Ironically, much of the slave trade to the Americas was a result of the huge demand for sugar, a crop first processed in India. The parallel spread of sugar and Creolization is thus not surprising.

Beginning in Bengal and Madras in the middle of the 18th century we find robust new Creole communities, the offspring of the English colonizers and local peoples we have spoken of earlier, the Anglo-Indians. The term was first used for British subjects who had settled in India and was later extended to include mixed-blood individuals and their larger community. By the early 19th century, these Anglo-Indians, as they had come to be called, had creolized certain cultural spaces and far outnumbered the actual population of British colonizers, assuming control and operation of the colonial bureaucracy at all but the uppermost layers. Their legacy of working for, yet being apart from, the colonizers would characterize the Anglo-Indian community into the 21st Century.

Marriages with Indians were of course greatest in numbers, yet English men, as well as other Europeans and other traveling peoples such as Armenians were especially attracted to women of Portuguese and French origin, at least partly because they were of the same religion and more accessible, but also quite simply because European or other women were unavailable. Some of the local women were upper caste and came from treaties with Indian princes and Maharajahs, while others were widows and family camp followers, including Muslims and Hindus. They were usually baptized, with a Christian marriage ceremony soon following. Such alliances were considered strategically wise, creating bonds and ties with locals. This Indianization or Creolization period of the British was further transformed after the opening of the Suez Canal, which ensured a steady supply of women from England.

The communities in-between were variously seen as either buffers between local and colonial populations or as threats, being privileged at some moments, despised and discriminated against at others. The members stressed their paternal ancestry with the colonial power,

downplaying their maternal side. Profound issues of identity, deterritorialized status, and close ties (social, cultural, biological) with the colonial rulers were joined with Creolized lifestyles deeply related to the local setting. In India, at least, these Indo-British Creoles adamantly declared themselves British. Some were very British indeed, while others were much less so. These distinctions that remain today.

We are especially interested in this paper in the socio-historical background of Creolized mixed communities like the Anglo-Indians. What we would like to do here is to look at one specific community, the Anglo-Indians, and consider their intersection, or interface, with traditional castes. Much of the work that has been done until now has simply assumed that there are rigid *jati* boundaries and that these boundaries are supposedly not crossed over (we note that caste is itself a Portuguese word). The reality is, of course, something else altogether. What we are also doing, then, is suggesting a new approach to issues of caste/*jati*/stratification in South Asia.

Edgar Thurston, Louis Dumont and other traditional ethnographers of India say little about such mixing, not surprising when their own models of caste are so rigid. There has however, always been intermarriage, in all societies. How those people in-between have been assigned a place in their larger society makes a fascinating and important field of study. Inter-caste examples are at the same time hot political footballs because they challenge all the old assumptions on both sides. The daughters and sons of inter-caste, inter-faith marriages like the Anglo-Indians know this. They may, on occasion, realize what revolutionaries they are, yet they may also often find being a change-agent of the new and different an excruciating burden to bear. What we are trying to do here is to get some insight into this territory of cultural transformation by looking at the historically created and imagined community of Anglo-Indians.

Anglo-Indians as Creolized Transnationals/Transculturals

At the time of Indian Independence in 1947 there were approximately 300,000 Anglo-Indians of various backgrounds in India. The

Anglo-Indian community was the only community defined in the Indian Constitution of 1950. As Article 366 (2) of the Constitution states : “*An Anglo-Indian means a person whose father or any of those male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled with in the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident there in and not established there for temporary purpose only.*”

In many ways, the Anglo-Indians were more Anglo than Indian. Their language and culture were English, their religion was Christianity, and their ideas about their place in the society were firmly rooted in a land many of them had never seen. Rigid class and social barriers created by the British between themselves extended to Anglo-Indians, for whom class and being of “the right community” or standing out from “the crowd,” were (and are) very important.

At the same time the Anglo-Indians were left in a “twilight zone of uncertainty,” even feeling betrayed by their forefathers when they left India to return to Britain (*Who Are the Anglo-Indians?* <http://www.margaretdeefholts.com/angloindian.html>, July 18, 2003). Some of the British treated the Anglo-Indians cruelly, calling them half-caste and making a point of discriminating against them. The borderlands of culture for the Anglo-Indians were extended from the 1950s and 1960s to newly Creolizing cultural spaces in Australia and beyond, with the migration of perhaps half the community to newer opportunities.

Almost always featured in any talk of the encounters between East and West in South Asia, the Anglo-Indians have been portrayed in novels and movies like *Bhowani Junction* and *Cotton Mary*. They are a staple feature in Indian films and novels portraying the mixing of Indian and Western cultures. Their dress, eating habits, and attitudes set them apart from, while they are yet still a part of, India. They are, moreover, unfailingly described as the masters of making India run properly, the men in key positions in government bureaucracies, the military, and the railways, in particular; while Anglo-Indian women were taking leads in teaching, nursing, and secretarial

work.

The Anglo-Indians were “the wheels, the cranks, the levers” of the British Empire (Anglo Indians Pioneers and Prodigies, <http://www.indiaprofile.com/lifestyle/angloindians.htm>, July 17, 2003), go-betweens forever negotiating cultures and borders. The railways have been a particular work venue for Anglo-Indians, with Railway Colonies of Anglo-Indians being found even today in India’s major cities. Indeed, Anglo-Indians often call themselves “the Children of the Railway.”

“Generations of discipline born in the schoolroom and the sports field, bred an esprit de corps in the Anglo-Indian. Many a steam locomotive was manned by a father and son team. They took pride in the tip top condition of the engine and its split-second punctuality, so much so that one could set one’s watch by the Indian Railways.” (Ibid.)

The high ranks of the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as the private armies of many Nawabs, Nizams, Princes, and Maharajahs throughout the Subcontinent were staffed by Anglo-Indian officers. At the same time, Anglo-Indians dominated Indian sports, especially hockey, boxing, and athletics.

Unfortunate stereotypes were created at the same time, too, Anglo-Indian men being seen as lazy parasites and Anglo-Indian women as promiscuous sirens/sinners. These images can be seen as emanating from conservative India’s critique of a community that loved dancing, parties, and entertainment (and still does). The lives Anglo-Indians led were seen as risqué and dubious by mainstream Indians, bound as they were by traditional social strictures. Within the Anglo-Indian community itself, color marked opportunity as much as class, those who were fairer being given more opportunity than those who were darker. This legacy is not only from the British, of course, as the preference for “fair” brides or “fair” husbands in Indian matrimonial advertisements so well demonstrates even in the early 21st century.

The Anglo-Indians have, however, been out in front as symbols as well as images of race and power, however these might be delimited or enacted. Ironically, many Indians seen to be emulating what was

previously viewed as an Anglo-Indian life-style, while the Anglo-Indians themselves have adopted Indian culture, dress, and languages.

Anglo-Indians continue to be very proud of being Anglo-Indian, however, while also able to look at their own community critically and amusingly. To understand the Anglo-Indians better we need to look at them personally. Our study in this paper now turns to an ethnography of Anglo-Indians in Madurai, South India. We will examine two case studies in this paper, drawn from field interviews made by our principal author/researcher, J. Rajasekaran (who, not incidentally, has spent much time with Anglo-Indians as the lead singer of a rock-'n-roll band with a number of Anglo-Indian musicians during the 1970s-1990s).

Robert King

Robert King worked as a waiter for the I.T.D.C. (Indian Tourism Development Corporation) for three decades. Last year when the hotel was sold by the Indian Government, all the employees were given voluntary retirement. Robert was very quick to take the cue from one of his bosses and invested in a computer with varied programs, such as Photo-Shop. His wife is a teacher of kindergarten children, like many other Anglo-Indian women, much sought after by private English-medium schools since their mother tongue is English. Their knee-length dress is considered a signature symbol of a good English Medium School.

For the last five years or so, however, Robert's wife Sandra has taken up wearing mostly *salwar kameez*, a Northern Indian dress for women that is easy to wear. Robert says it is a convenient dress for working-women, and that, moreover, his wife does not draw attention from others, as she did wearing dresses. This is a key indicator of the changing "cultural mores" of Anglo-Indians as they adapt to the local culture, along with customs surrounding food, such as eating with one's hands rather than using cutlery.

We asked Robert to give us some comments about how people



Figure 1. Mr. Robert King offers a ring to his wife Sandra on their 25th wedding anniversary



Figure 2. Miss Theresa King is selected as Queen of the Ball

could be identified as Anglo-Indians, and he replied as follows,

Wearing a dhoti is considered very Indian. I always wear pants and shorts, sometimes a lungi, never a dhoti. You can't say Anglo-Indians (are) descended from like a . . . people try to say because British came to India they moved with the Tamilians, that is how the Anglo-Indians are born. That is wrong saying. That is what I say . . . 90% of our Anglos still don't have proof to show they are Anglos. Actually, how I have . . . my records of my dad's. But it is luck also. Because it depends upon the parents also . . . see that is what my dad's way of life. He used to maintain records. Whatever done, you know, like . . . is schooling. His type-writing. It is only being misplaced. It is all there. I needed a certificate to prove that my dad T.M. King is the son of John Jacob King.

Robert takes a break to see his son Edward off to school and comes back with biscuits and tea in cups and saucers. I make a remark on the absence of stainless steel ware, which would be found in typical South Indian homes.

We use cups and saucers and porcelain plates. I took my dining table in because we have parties, you know, and dancing is a problem. Now it has become my computer table and my wife scolds me.

As for food and drink :

We have Indian breakfast. Sometimes bread, eggs, porridge, corn-flakes. Coffee, black coffee. My wife takes one coffee, but I am a regular coffee drinker. It depends upon the moods of my wife, what we are having. We have iddli, dosa (traditional South Indian foods). That is what my brother-in-law says. Children should know what is their tradition. So we should maintain our tradition. When we go out together, like family fun. Our way of life is totally different. We go out to some picnic spot. To dam sites like Vaigai Dam. We have this new falls outside Madurai. We take some food, like chappati, biryani, some Non-Veg, take a van, close friends and family.

For weddings and all, other Anglo-Indians come and participate in decorations. Making cake, making wine . . . all those things. That is the Anglo-Indian way of living. Cake and wine are important. We make cakes for weddings, Christmas, even casually also. Wine . . . we keep a stock at home. Now my stock is gone. Otherwise I would have offered you some. Home-made wine.

Food, dress, music, dance, and the English language are for Robert the embodiments of Anglo-Indian Culture. These are of course, attributes of any westernized Indian, raising the question : Will the new bilingual generation of Anglo-Indians integrate with the Indian mainstream within the next few decades and disappear? The younger

generation doesn't seem to think that holding on to an Anglo-Indian label is an advantage. Yet, among middle-aged people there is still a desire to cling to the culture they have cherished and continue to dream about the home they haven't seen. These are the Creole Cultural Spaces, real and imagined, of Anglo-Indians.

Like others in his community, Robert is proud to be an Anglo-Indian.

My grandmother named me Robert . . . because, you know, at that time it was not based on India. It was European. It was all British. You know we had the picture of the Queen of England and the members of the royal clan in our living room.

Robert has three children. The eldest son, who is married, lives in London, the second child is a daughter finishing her post-graduation in English Literature, while his last child, a son, is studying in the 10th grade in the local Anglo-Indian School. We note here that Anglo-Indian schools have their own, separate curriculum, one that has traditionally been considered very demanding.

Robert grew up in Maupalayam, a neighborhood near the Madurai Railway colony where many Anglo-Indians live. His father worked for the railways. In those days, it has been said, each locomotive driver had his own signature whistling of his locomotive to let his sweet-heart know he had arrived so that there would be some hot tea and quick snacks ready (*Anglos in the Wind*, August 2002). Schools, housing colonies, even certain sounds themselves, were (and are) Anglo-Indian Creole Cultural Spaces.

Robert's mother was a housewife and then became a girl's college warden for 32 years. Robert attended the Railways Mixed High School, the only co-ed school in Madurai at that time. He later joined the I.T.I. (Industrial Training Institute), preferring that to college, to which he was also admitted.

The dignity of labor is a unique feature among Anglo-Indians. This is very much unknown to those in Tamil society, which is very hierarchical, being caste-based, In such a caste society manual labor is seen as the province of lower, laboring castes. An Anglo-Indian,

however, whether a fitter, a foreman, a mechanic, or even the lowest grade in the locomotive shed, would do the job with dignity.

In 1972, after the Indira Gandhi-government decided to phase out locomotives run on coal and move to diesel and electric traction, job opportunities in general began dwindling for those associated with the loco sheds. Moreover, jobs with the railways on a hereditary basis for the children of Anglo-Indians also ended. This led Anglo-Indians like Robert to turn to education, where their mother tongue of English has helped them a great deal. Many have been employed by the hotel industry as barmen, waiters, and musicians, as well as in allied businesses such as tour and travel agencies. In the 1970s and 1980s there were many Anglo-Indian bands, and Anglo-Indians appeared in Tamil movies as token white men and women. All of these can be seen as Angle-Indian Creole Cultural Spaces.

We asked Robert about his parents :

Were they very much like what people might think of as Anglo-Indian parents?

Yeah, yes. My dad would never allow us to move with the local crowd like.

Ways and habits, he was a very adamant Anglo-Indian. There was a British way of railways at the station, when he was in his job. He got many (20) certificates from the railways.

And your mom? How was she?

Very easy-going . . . She gave us liberty. When my dad was not there, we had freedom.

It is now, of course, nearly impossible for the Anglo-Indian children to be isolated or to isolate themselves. Many of their families have moved to middle-class neighborhoods where they are exposed to Tamil traditions and where the transition takes place silently for them. This was not the case not so very long ago.

My wife came with only one dress and one pair of shoes. You won't believe Dad sat and stitched clothes for her, with his own hands. Those days we did lot of stitching at home. We call those dresses as frocks. We used to follow the tradition. Then the mini skirt came, then maxies

. . . but now the ladies are changed you know . . . Because they go out to work and all. Recently my wife is wearing salwar kameez. She feels comfortable, you know, traveling by bus and all. Because when you put dress and all Tamilian guys misbehave with you. And they make you out (meaning they are recognized as Anglo-Indians).

They call them Chattai Kari (meaning one who wears a shirt instead of a saree, or, in the case of men, instead of going bare-chested). Once they used to call us Appakari (aappam is a Tamil pancake made of rice flow), then it became Chattakaaran and Chattakaari. That is how the movie *Chattai Kaari* came in Malayalam. Not that way . . . I don't want my family to be identified in that crowd. I mean . . . Why give cause? Yeah, I am proud to be an Anglo-Indian, definitely, because our way of life is totally different. Although we move with the crowd. We are friendly people. Our style of living. We may see that 99% of Anglo-Indians are very poor. But when you go to their houses, you know, they keep their houses very neat. It is the kept things . . . curtain, carpet, our furniture."

In the 1960s and 1970s, if one walked inside the Madurai Railway Colony, one would see homes with small gardens, grandmas sitting on cane chairs knitting or doing embroidery, keen on teaching this skill to their grand-daughters, in scenes reminiscent of the English writer Jane Austen's novels portraying Victorian England. In the evening when the job was over Anglo-Indians would be seen wearing their best dresses, pointed shoes, and high heel slippers, going with their women and friends to one of the two cinema theatres in Madurai which showed English-language movies, the Regal Talkies and the Parameswari Theatre, located a stone's throw in distance from the Railway Colony. These two exclusively showed English-language movies, counting mostly on the patronage of Anglo-Indians. Yet, Anglo-Indians cannot be picked out from a crowd anymore. (There is, of course, a great deal of intermixing of the dress styles among men and women of all communities today).

Here I would like to add an anecdote. It was 1962. One evening I went to see a film by Cliff Richard, *The Young Ones*, at the Parames-

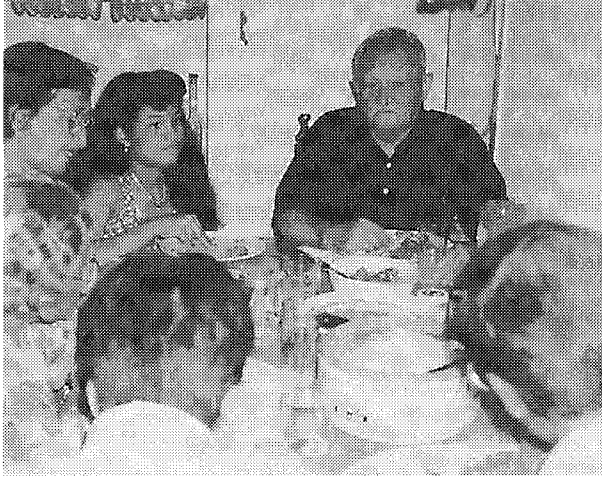


Figure 3. New Year's Eve dinner in a typical Anglo-Indian home, Madurai, South India

wari Theatre. The Anglo-Indian community was there in full strength. Cliff Richard was always addressed fondly by Anglo-Indians as “our boy from Lucknow,” the claim being that this English pop star was one of their own, born in the northern Indian city of Lucknow. Before the show, the theatre usually played records from popular films of that time such as *Come September*.

That memorable evening *Rock Around the Clock* by Bill Haley and the Comets was played, immediately sparking a reaction from a young Anglo-Indian couple, who began dancing inside the cinema hall, followed by other couples. The non Anglo-Indian crowd was simply flabbergasted. It was such a joy for everyone. I, myself, a kid who was a fan of Cliff and the Beatles, enjoyed their dancing very much. This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, one that could happen then because there were enough Anglo-Indian families to participate and show to the others proudly that, “*This is our culture.*”

Defining who is Anglo-Indian and what is Anglo-Indian culture is not so simple today. Robert's son Anthony recently got married, and while the father-in-law is an Anglo-Indian, the mother-in-law is a Tamil woman. I asked Robert, “Do you think your son is married to

an Anglo-Indian woman?"

There again, Raj, we don't look that way. Because you know the British thing, not only everywhere in the world. The man carries the genealogy of the family. That is what my brother-in-law always argues. The mother is Tamil so the child can't be an Anglo-Indian, but I said no, it is not the thing. Because among the British it goes through the male and everywhere in families it goes through the male. Now the Government is saying that women also have a thing (the State Government had passed legislation that a woman has the option to take either her father or mother's name, or both, as a suffix). I think it is a foolish thing to say. Man is a man. That is what my Dad (said), to have a rule over my Mum. Not otherwise saying he is superior, but he always says it's a man's world. He didn't like women going to work when he retired, though he wanted my Mum to work in 1971.

I then asked him about his daughter, what would happen if she marries an outsider, even if it were someone with "decent social standing."

According to Blair R. Williams in his book Anglo-Indians : Vanishing Remnants of a Bygone Era . . . every decade there is about 10% increase in Anglo-Indians marrying outside their community. They are losing their endogamous status slowly and steadily. The Anglo-Indian community is basically a patriarchal society. The women who marry outside the community are losing certain social rights. They are deprived of voting power within the Anglo-Indian Association election. They cannot represent the community in important gatherings. In the Anglo-Indian community cemetery they and their children are denied burial. Though some women feel marrying outside the community opens up many doors for them, especially when one's father is not an Anglo-Indian.

When Anthony got married that day we sat and spoke it over. I told Anthony, "I don't mind you are leaving the church, but I still would like you to hold on to the church (Anthony, a Protestant belongs to the Anglican church, but Julie Anderson, the girl he is to marry is a Seventh Day Adventist)." Because we are a family when we go to

church . . . We go together and the main thing is the cemetery. We are all buried in one place. My oldest brother changed to Roman Catholic because of his wife's family, a Tamil Roman Catholic. Since he didn't go to church he couldn't be buried. So I told my son, "These are the things that stand between us."

He said "Dad, church is between marriages." "If you marry out of the church," I said, "Your decision. The only thing is the church. You have to decide. You can ask Julie to come on our side. If she is interested in getting married to you." He said "No, Dad." That was the understanding, the way of explaining things in a better way, like arguing things. Good thing, you know, I had a cordial relationship with my children . . . He said, "Dad, you see, the other side, if I ask Julie to change, her Mum and Dad will lose their job. In the Seventh Day they get a lot of benefits, the children's education and all. That will hamper their whole life. It won't be nice if I try that. I think I will change." I told him, "Decision is yours, you are a man . . . you are making a bet. You have to lay on it, go ahead," I said.

Immediately my daughter asked "What about me?" "Don't ask about you, I said." "I am not bothered about you," I said. She got upset. My wife said, "Don't say that." I said. "No, my girl, it is not that way, see, he is carrying my name King. I don't like the King's name going astray. But you are my daughter now, but tomorrow you are some other man's wife. So I don't have much. "She got upset about that, what I am saying. But she is also very choosy."

Robert then continued his talk about his son Tony wedding :

I took Tony for granted. Julie's dad was my close friend. Julie's Dad, also, although he married a Tamilian, we didn't give him that thing, feeling that he married a Tamilian. He is an Anglo-Indian. And, you know, he used to get friendly with me because of music. They used to come here for music. That is how Julie and Tony met. That is what I say, you know. We still : you go back to any Anglo-Indian family. They talk about country music only. Except for the children who are present. We still listen to country music. Youngsters, you know, are changing the tradition because they are going to pop . . . But still they



Figure 4. Tony King's wedding with Julie Anderson

do all the traditional dancing . . . waltz, quick step, fox trot.

Many of Robert's comments here seem related to cultural rules and mores laid down by the Anglo-Indian Association, an organization that was founded for "keeping us together, as a community, helping the poor." When their former President Frank Anthony was told by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that the Anglo-Indians would be given a place in the Nicobar and Andaman Islands, he refused. He did not want Anglo-Indians to all be in one place because they were already found throughout India. Yet, in spite of being in different parts of the country, they follow certain core traditions of dancing, cooking, and so on. As Robert told us, *These things keep us together when we meet.*

The agenda (previously) was that the children should not go out of the culture, like getting married out of the community. Even as recently as the late 1990s, the President of the Association was adamant that Anglo-Indian women were not to be given a chance to go out and marry Tamils or other men. Now things are changed, and while young men from other communities can come and sit as visitors at dances, they are still not allowed to dance. Women are also now al-

lowed to come to meetings of the Association at the local level, but they still cannot represent local chapters in the All-India Anglo-Indian meetings.

In the late 1990s, the Madurai Anglo-Indian community stopped the tradition of the May Queen Ball and the June Rose Ball because there were fewer and fewer families that could participate, with many people leaving for Australia and with marriages outside the community. Robert believes that the Association will go on, but that it will likely be gradually modified in terms of membership, voting rights, and so on. The future of the Anglo-Indian community in Madurai and elsewhere clearly speaks for transition and transformation.

Mrs. Nancy Wilson

Mrs. Nancy Wilson is in her early 40s and works as a stenographer in an automobile dealership. She presents a different picture of Anglo-Indians, and not only because she is a woman. Anglo-Indian women have of course also established themselves in teaching in primary schools as well as nursing. They were the first women in the work force to be employed in office settings in South Asia. Mrs. Wilson's educational background is high school graduate. At present she is doing her Masters in Public Administration through a correspondence course. Her husband also works for the same company. They have one 17 year-old son studying in a college in Chennai. Her answers to my questions were very straightforward and crisp.

Mrs. Nancy (as she is addressed in India) comes from an Anglo-Indian Catholic family of six children. Her dad was a foreman on the Southern Railway and her mother was an elementary school teacher. Being the only girl child among five boys she enjoyed a lot of attention from the other siblings and her parents. She married her own aunt's (father's older sister's) son. Cross-cousin marriage is, of course, widely practiced in South India, here apparently even in the Anglo-Indian community. Her mother-in-law, Mrs. Gladis, was married to an Indian Catholic who was a close friend of Mrs. Gladis's brothers "way

back in the 1940s.”

By marrying an Indian, Mrs. Gladis had lost her Anglo-Indian lineage/status, something which, as we have seen, is rather strictly defined according to the male line. Nancy lost hers as well by marrying Aunt Gladis’s son. The day she got out of her wedding gown she slipped into a *sari*, the traditional dress of Indian women. Though she does not talk directly about losing her Anglo-Indian status, she has, apparently, gone in the other direction, perhaps in order to make up for the loss she has experienced. This is evident in her keen desire to transform herself with all the markings of a Hindu woman.

To my question, “Are you proud to be an Anglo-Indian?” She said an emphatic, *No! Why? People take us for granted*, meaning that non Anglo-Indians think that Anglo-Indians do not have morality. She doesn’t want to reveal her Anglo-Indian identity except when it is necessary. She believes that the English language has given Anglo-Indians an edge over others, with herself as a good example, noting that, *Even people with under-graduate degree could not speak a sentence in English*. She prides herself on that advantage.

Her son doesn’t have girl friends. To her this is the age for learning. She gives lots of importance to education. *Getting a degree is*



Figure 5. Best men, bridesmaids, and candle girls at the wedding

much more important than having girl friends. Religion is very important for her, too, though. Her son is free to marry anyone he wants to as long as the girl gets converted to Catholicism. *When they have children there should be no confusion, you see.*

Mrs. Nancy is more or less masquerading as a Hindu. She even looks like a high-caste Brahmin, wearing a large *thilak* on her forehead, piercing her nose and wearing a nose-stud, and participating every Friday morning at her office when they offer payers at a Hindu shrine. After prayers, the *prasad* (blessed food) is offered to the devotees. She says, humorously, how that takes care of her appetite. She even noted how people mistake her for a Brahmin woman, staying that, *The image you make is very important ; they started by looking at you.* She wears one necklace with small black beads which has a resemblance to a *taaly* (necklace worn by married women to show they are married) worn by Karnataka Brahmin women belonging to the Raos, a subcaste Brahmin community.

Mrs. Nancy also admits that it is becoming very difficult to locate Anglo-Indians on the streets as they have merged with "***the crowd.***" It is very interesting to note that (Mr.) Robert also used the same word whenever he spoke of non-Anglo-Indians. And the behavior of Anglo-Indians has changed, according to her : *Twenty years back Anglo-Indians didn't believe in saving money. They lived for the day. Nowadays they even build their homes like any other middle class, through their savings and bank loans.* (This is at least partly because, with the rise of the middle class in India banks are offering more generous home loans).

India as a nation is going through a period of transition due to external and internal forces. The Anglo-Indian community cannot be immune to these changes. On the one side the desire to emigrate is strong, though this is also noticed among other middle class people. The matrimonial ads found in the August 2002 issue of *Anglos in the Wind*, an international magazine published in Chennai, rerealed that the majority of advertisements are from abroad, "from those seeking the best alliance they could get from their Mother-Land of India."



Figure 6. A family snap from the wedding

There are also announcements of scholarships for higher studies for deserving Anglo-Indian candidates.

The First World Anglo-Indian Day was celebrated all over the world on August 2, 2002. When 150 years of the Indian Railways was celebrated later in Chennai in January 2003, too, the National Forum of the Anglo-Indian Association was formed. The community has a representative in the Indian Parliament, Dr. Beatrice D'Souza, and is also represented in the Tamil Nadu State Assembly. Even today the Anglo-Indian curriculum at the high school level in India is the most respected of all school programs. In comparison to other caste-based communities with larger populations, the Anglo-Indians are treated well and the community's voice is heard in the right places.

At the same time, the feelings of nostalgia on one side and a fervent logic to move on, leaving the past behind, on the other, seem to prevail. Harry Maclure, Editor of *Anglos in the Wind*, has said that, *Anglo-Indians should awake, leave the past alone, adapt to the present and plan for a brighter future*. While this is of course something which could be said to be true for any community, close friends of the Anglo-Indians, like myself, still long for a Rose Queen Ball in the month of June at the Madurai Railway Institute and a good hockey



Figure 7. Bride and bridegroom dancing

tournament organized by Godwill Anderson. The Anglo-Indians are, after all, our “colonial cousins.”

Conclusion

As people who not only bridge cultures, but who live them in new ways, Anglo-Indians bring new understandings of cultural formation and its projection in the societies of which they are a part. There is some fear that Anglo-Indians are going to disappear, not least among

Anglo-Indians themselves. Moreover, what were once seen as the typical cultural mores of the Anglo-Indian community are now found widespread among most Westernized Middle Class Indians, raising the question of how Anglo-Indians might distinguish themselves as a community in the next century. Will the Anglo-Indians, continue to be a viable community?

Being absorbed by surrounding cultures is thus a key worry for some Anglo-Indians. While this may be partly happening for those marrying out and finding themselves isolated from other Anglo-Indians, the reality is that there are very few individuals who entirely leave the culture. Instead, what we are seeing is a resurgence of Anglo-Indian identity, as evidenced in the proliferation of websites, clubs, associations, and academic work being done on Anglo-Indians. The Anglo-Indians, Transnationals almost since they have been imagined as a community in India, are now in a transitional stage, one which will likely take them to an even more complex role, that of *Transculturals*. Especially notable in this regard is *The International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies* (Gilbert, 2003), with its articles and monographs from Australia, India, and elsewhere. Lionel Caplan, Professor Emeritus of the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies has made particularly important contributions (2003 a, 2003 b) to this journal.

As Caplan has noted in his important study on "Anglo-Indians as Transnationals" (2000), what is now called for is a multi-locale and multi-method series of ethnographies. Recognizing that there are many transnational circuits and networks is a first step in this research. We can already see the clear differences between Anglo-Indians from Madurai, Madras, and Calcutta. More work is now needed by Cultural Studies researchers to demonstrate how Transculturals (*Transmigrants*, in Caplan's terminology) like the Anglo-Indians "reterritorialize" their lives and identities.

That these Transculturals make reference not only to the idea of an ancestral "home" but also to their new "home" needs to be understood. Home for the Anglo-Indians is an imagined state, one that

never existed in a concrete way. England for them is a land of deep cultural attachments, some of which existed in reality, but never in quite the same juxtaposition as the Anglo-Indians might have it. What is especially clear is the attachment to the colonial era. More study is needed of this centrally powerful idea in this community. As Caplan notes, "Contemporary practices, it seems to me, must be related to the historical contexts in which transmigrating groups evolved." (Ibid.)

Yet, as we understand from the work of Stuart Hall and other Cultural Studies researchers, too, another long-hidden, even long-suppressed, aspect of the identities of Anglo-Indians is now being discovered and discussed : the Creolized cultures, practices, and identities of Anglo-Indians. When Anglo-Indians imagined themselves in the colonial era as a people whose home was elsewhere, and which many never even saw before they died, they revealed the unlimited power of human imagination in the construction of cultural identity. Some emigrated to that nebulous homeland. Others chose to stay on in India and construct a new set of lives in changed circumstances. Some have experienced economic hard times, while others have enthusiastically integrated themselves into a cosmopolitan India that has rewarded them handsomely. Hopes or fantasies of "abroad" still dominate the perspectives of those less fortunate, continuing their position as "transnationals of the mind." But what is most striking is how quickly others have repositioned themselves in a new India, with new goals for the future, as we can see in Robert King's dialogue concerning himself and his family.

The power of Anglo-Indians as an example teaches us this : that it is not how you were born or what position you are in when it comes to the caste system, but how you imagine yourself and those around you, that can dramatically affect and actively position you as more or less successful as individuals and as a community in today's world.

Authors and Research Support

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