

Editorial

## Post Colonialism, South Asian Diaspora and the Emerging Culture



In the past twenty years Post-colonialism has been well served in terms of literature and journals, which have interrogated, or indeed promoted debate within the field. The term 'Post-colonialism' has become rather all encompassing, as the concept has grown and accommodated different versions of what it is to be post-colonial. This of course varies according to nation, race and is specific to the texture and duration of the colonization which took place. The post-colonial period is of course ever expanding, and once-colonized nations and cultures continue to develop, evolve and change within a contemporary global context.

With the launch of SACS it is hoped that a broad theme within a specific location will provide a focus for a particular branch of post-colonialism. This is sought to be achieved by concentration on the particular geographical space of South Asia, a group of nations which share a regional identity, and on the nature of transnational culture practiced and disseminated through its diaspora communities now situated in various parts of the world.

To some extent the South Asian diaspora in Britain presently enjoys a privileged position in the mainstream popular culture. In film and on TV programmes it is the source of both comedy and serious drama. We have seen this genre develop over the years. Initially it was produced from within the community by South Asian diasporic writers, and often depicted grim realities, or in fact sometimes reinforced stereotypical images of what it is to be British and Asian. Then there was a period of comedy with the Meera Syal/Sanjeev Baskar team at the BBC, and films such as *Bhaji on the Beach* and which have since become an integral part of British popular culture. Interestingly, mainstream writers from outside the South Asian community are now generating these. In January Channel 4 premiered *Yasmin*, which was directed by Peter Cattaneo who also directed *The Full Monty*. Anna Claydon provides an enlightening review of *Yasmin* in the journal. So this 'privileged' position of South Asia continues with West End musicals influenced by Bollywood, and the present retro-Hippie fashion frequently looks to India for inspiration as well the import of textiles and jewelry.

SACS aims to promote dialogue and generate the exchange of ideas between academics, writers and researchers in the humanities and social sciences. Constructions of identity, particularly national, ethnic, religious and gender continue to be contested, particularly within contexts of the evolving social, cultural and political tensions in modern South Asian nation states. Therefore critical analysis of the relationships between culture, environment and changing political economies in South Asia is key to understanding the region's relationship within a global / postcolonial context.

The launch of SACS represents an attempt to engage with dominant discourses and modes of representation disseminated through the popular cultural means of cinema, television, and sport, and also illustrated through an interrogation of the impact of traditional cultural practices on the evolution of diasporic communities. Of particular interest is the potential or actual impact of this in terms of political or social consequences.

SACS is interested in the nuances, or problematic relationships and the cultural exchanges between South Asia and the wider world, which takes into account the colonial encounter as a defining event in the histories of both South Asia and the West. Therefore we have a particular concern with the related transnational cultures and their changing relationships within specific and distinct host communities.

In order to go some way to fulfilling these aims SACS is launched as a biannual on-line journal aimed at an international readership with both general and multi-disciplinary interests in South Asian culture viewed from a range of critical perspectives. Cultural interrogations will aim to engage with popular modes of expression and lived experience, as well as literary, performance and artistic forms of representation. Consequently the journal will engage with current critical debates in the fields of cultural, literary, language, media and film studies, and how these interact and interface with other disciplines such as history, critical geography and social sciences, therefore juxtaposing theoretical perspectives, which underpin 'post colonialism'. The journal is interested in promoting a diverse range of cultural and intellectual voices on South Asian practices from a varied range of cultural and intellectual voices on south Asian cultural practices from varied geographical contexts.

Future editions of SACS will present particular themed events on South Asian cultural interests. However, the first edition represents the diversity of interest presently emerging from the field of South Asian studies.

The journal opens with two commentaries, which map out contrasting political scenarios. Polly Datta's piece charts the recent participation of Bollywood film stars in Indian politics, and while the paper begins by acknowledging this as a global phenomenon, it goes on to provide an interesting account of the political culture of India in particular. Anandi Ramamurthy provides a focus on a more conventional political movement, but it is of interest as it seeks to document a history of social and political struggle by South Asians in Britain. Tandana-Glowworm is an archiving project involved in collating material relating to the Asian youth movements of the 1970s and 1980s, in order to provide a heritage through which to understand aspects of a Diaspora community.

The diversity and interests of the journal are reflected in the articles included. 'Education, Media and Hindutva' by Roshni Sengupta discusses the BJP's successful 'saffronization' of the media, and how they have successfully filled the vacuum as the political center occupied by Congress collapsed. Sengupta's analysis traces the influences of the tele-serial *Ramayan*, positing the idea that the creation of a dominant Hindu public sphere can be traced back to this event. This article provides an insight into how the Hindu right influenced teaching, the production of history and its impact on contemporary culture.

Saroj Giri's article 'Against 'Reality': The Maoists In South Asia' discusses the Maoist intervention in South Asia, using the framework of a Leninist-Lacanian analysis. This paper endeavors to look beyond the liberal discourse, which identifies such movements as 'totalitarian', and as such closes down the possibility of debate and understanding.

The potential transformation of culture within South Asian Diaspora communities is illustrated in 'Linguistic Manipulations in the Bengali Language by the Bangladeshis in Manchester' by Salman Al-Azami. This paper outlines a comparative study in the linguistic behavior between first and second-generation Bengali speakers through a close analysis of the 'language shift' between the two generations, and the cultural implications for the community.

The final item in this edition is a report of a conference held at Manchester University, which demonstrates a profound and continuing interest in the impact of colonialism on the culture of South Asia. Anindita Ghosh outlines the interests of several leading academics in 'Women in Colonial India: A Contour of Resistance'. The researchers at the conference focus on moments of resistance in the everyday lives of ordinary women through poetry, songs, domestic practices, which may be seen as attempts to challenge dominate male discourse.

The concept of SACS was first discussed a couple of years ago during the publication of our edited volume *Picturing South Asian Culture in English* (Shakur, T and D'Souza, K 2003). Since then, more constructive meetings have taken place at various South Asian academic meetings of British Asian South Asian Studies (BASAS) and European Conferences on Modern South Asian Studies (ECMSAS) at the University of East Anglia, UK and Lund University, Sweden. The ability to sustain the appearance of this free international refereed journal is entirely reliant on people continuing to support our humble initiative, and we would urge anyone reading this to introduce the journal to others in their own countries for both as readers or as contributors. We are particularly grateful to a host of international editors who have agreed to act as advisors for this journal. Much of the credits should go to Mike Gildersleeves who has spent a huge time in devising the website. Finally, special thanks to EdgeHill Web Team for hosting this journal in the College Web.

Shakur, T and D'Souza, K (2003)

*Picturing South Asian Culture in English: Textual and Visual Representations*, Open House Press, Liverpool

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