

INDIA TEACHER RESOURCES

CULTURE-ART-EXPRESSION

Attack on Indian Women at an Indian Bar Intensifies a Clash of Cultures

Sri Ram Sena, or the Army of Ram is an “obscure Hindu group” that attacked several Indian women at an Indian bar called Amnesia in the southern college-town in Mangalore. The attackers criticized the women for being un-Indian by “drinking and dancing with men.” 10 members of the Sena were arrested but bailed out less than a week later. After this attack, several debates and arguments were held by TV hosts, politicians, and others on whether or not the women should or should not be out; many people condemned the violence that broke out.

Sengupta, Somini. “Attack on Indian Women at an Indian Bar Intensifies a Clash of Cultures” [The New York Times](#). 9 February 2009.

An Artist in Exile Tests India’s Democratic Ideals

Maqbool Fida Husain, one of India’s most famous painters, is exiled from his home in India. Husain’s works of arts have been greatly criticized due to the lack of conservatism in his work. He is mainly accused of “promoting enmity” among faiths because his works paint Hindu goddesses sometimes in the nude. Freedom of expression has come under fire in India, as the country tries to balance commands of its secular democracy with radical religious and ethnic majorities. India is put in a position where its liberal democracy is at risk, because of its social instability and its lack of consenting what their citizen’s freedoms are. Husain lives a posh lifestyle in his lavish apartment in Dubai, Qatar and has a pessimistic view on returning to his home or not. Most of Husain’s families are in India who work around the difficulties of his absence. Husain lives his life traveling from one home to the next, but that doesn’t bother him, ultimately his work belongs to India.

Sengupta, Somini. “An Artist in Exile Tests India’s Democratic Ideals” [The New York Times](#). 9 Nov 2008.

Cultural Ecology in India: An Interview with Stuart Cox

Cultural ecology has become a new concept in India because of its endangered performing arts, an important aspect of cultural life. There has been an effort to preserve the genre of folk performance in North and West India which started the week-long event, Conference Workshop & Festival of Performing Folk Arts Toward a Cultural Ecology. Stuart Cox had his first visit to India in 1987 and later organized this conference to preserve the traditional folk theatre arts amongst Borunda. Theatre has

become a way to improve the tensions between the communal divisions, which have affected the agriculturally rich area of Western India. They performed *Trystan and Essllt* Khyal style in Borunda by combining professional and community performers. Anyone that wanted to participate was able to perform. There were semi-professional actors, more than 30 boys and girls from a school in Borunda, and older men. Women usually do not perform in Khyal, but this does not apply to pre-pubescent girls. Women in Borunda wanted to perform, but did not because of the shame that they could create for their families. *Trystan and Essyllt* transforms into a historical Rajasthani episode where the main characters are involved in a dilemma that anyone can relate to, no matter what their social status is. Khyal's three pillars are song, dance, and comedy. The performers were scared to perform *Trystan and Essyllt* the way they would perform Khyal because they did not want to make mistakes. However, anything is right when performing Khyal. The regularity of rehearsals had become familiar in the village which attracted field workers and other people in the community to view them. Thousands would be gathered to sit and watch by the time they did the dress rehearsal. The performance would take place in a 35-foot square stage, which was first built with a dry stone wall, a slight slope, hard packed sand, and a canvas. There was also a small generator for lights and a sound system. This attracted an audience of 4,000 on the first night and 5,000 on the second, while the third night was canceled due to weather. The two final nights brought in 6,000 then 8,000 on the last night, while 99 percent of the people stayed each night until the finish at 1:00 am. Cox thought that the number of women in the audience was one of the most pleasant aspects of the performance because a Khyal audience usually consists of drunken men that demand songs that are demeaning to women and comic interludes with women as sex objects. This deters women from the audience because of their personal safety and subject matter. Cox describes this theatre as a communal celebration of being alive because they were able to gather 23,000 people in four nights and reveal how we can all be comic, sad, joyous, and celebrate our common humanity.

Richmond, Farelly. "Cultural Ecology in India: An Interview with Stuart Cox." Teaching South Asia An Internet Journal of Pedagogy II (Spring 2003). 27 Aug. 2008 <<http://www.mssu.edu/projectsouthasia/TSA/VIIN1/Richmond.htm>>.

Indian Modernism via an Eclectic and Elusive Artist

The bruise of British colonialism in India had become as intolerable to artist as to everyone else. At that time, India had no living art; India's indigenous traditions were dead and western classicism was the only classicism at the time. Indian artists had to learn Western oil painting and esthetics if they wanted to have careers. Naturally some people believe Indian art was dead. The artist Abanindranath Tagore, taught and developed a type of painting based on Indian rather Western models. A prize student of Tagore named Nandalal Bose took the ideas of Tagore and unleashed his art upon the world.

Cotter, Holland "Indian Modernism via an Eclectic and Elusive Artist" 20 August, 2008.

The Cult of the Dabbawala

Shivaji Bhosle was a warrior king who defeated the Mughals of India and established the Maratha Empire in the 17th century. He was a "tactical genius." His Malva-caste

soldiers' descendents are known for their organizational skills. They have established a color-coded meal delivery system in which an average of one mistake occurs for every 6 million meals delivered. They are recognized today for the speed and accuracy of their deliveries. The field of management consulting is greatly intrigued by the logistics behind this feat. The dabbawala's system has developed over time. Generally it is a strictly managed by time and strong teamwork. What is most intriguing about dabbawalas is that they do not rely on anything but their own "human endeavor." Both Indian and international companies are interested in learning of this approach. Many companies have invited dabbawalas to speak about and explain the system.

"The Cult of the Dabbawala: Business-school gurus take lessons from an unexpected source," Economist.com. 10 July 2008.

A Flying Tiger

On June 30th, a tiger was moved from one of India's smaller national parks to a bigger park that had no tigers. This move highlighted the possible extinction of tigers in India. A February study indicated that India had a total of 1,400 tigers; there has been a 60% decrease over the last five years. Project Tiger was started in the 1970s by Indira Gandhi which was an effort to save the tiger population of India. She reversed the decreasing population through this project and the trend would have continued for the next 15 years had it not been for poachers and corrupt forestry officials. The effort to save the tigers is going strong once again in India which is headed by a \$125 million budget. The task is not small, especially with opposition presenting 600 million people of which some are poverty-stricken. It is a long feat, but not impossible.

"A Flying Tiger: India Relaunches Its Effort to Save Tigers" Economist.com 7 July 2008.

The Riots and Wrongs of Caste

Bhagwan Datta Mandir, a Dalit (lower-class) temple, experienced violence that traumatized the village of Belkhed; 15 homes were destroyed 15 homes and badly damaged the others. Belkhed's dominant community, the Malis, ransacked the Dalits' homes. The Dalits of this village are poor agricultural laborers. They lived in small homes, often shared between 12-15 people, and included a common wall shared with neighbors. The Dalits were headed to the temple for the cattle-worshipping festival. The Malis brought their own cattle to the temple, which they usually didn't visit. Many of the Malis were drunk and abused Dalits and proceeded to burn and loot them of their homes and possessions. When the Malis were confronted they simply stated that the Dalits "...burned their own homes."

Sainath, P. "The Riots and Wrongs of Caste" 29 September 2005.
<<http://www.indiatogether.org/2005/sep/psa-belkhed.htm>>.

Untouchable

As member of the Dhobi or Bhangi, sects of India's Untouchable caste, many Hindus are subject to extremely inhospitable living conditions. Seen as impure and unclean, many individuals of the Untouchable class are forced to perform tasks such as cleaning sewers without protection, transporting and laying bricks, and burying the dead, a job

traditionally reserved for the lowest members of society. Members of the Untouchable class are denied even the most basic of human needs. A man by the name of Girdharilal Maurya had his house burned, wife and daughter beaten, fence torn down and tractor stolen by men of the upper class because he tried to move up the social ladder. Believed to possess bad karma, the Untouchables are considered to be born directly into their class level, and there is little that can be done to move out of the caste to which you are born. Only a government job or university scholarship can bring the Untouchable out of their inevitable poverty and seclusion. Regardless of how perfect an Untouchable lives in the current life, his class status will follow him for all of his life. Many militias have also formed to eliminate the Untouchables, and each death goes unchallenged by the government. Other punishments for bearing the Untouchable name include frequent beatings, and having acid thrown on you. Lastly, the government of India has passed legislation forbidding discrimination against Untouchables, but it has yet to be implemented.

O'Neil, Tom. "Untouchable" [National Geographic](#).

Sculptor as Magician

London-based sculptor Anish Kapoor creates pieces that seem like magic tricks. Kapoor combines visual illusions with reality in his sculptures. Mr. Kapoor's work ranges from acrylic and resin volumes to half-domes painted with deep wax. He puts great emphasis in his work from the modernist monochrome styles. He steps outside minimalism, by exploring different material's capacities for visual illusion. Mr. Kapoor becomes a master at combining his art as conundrums and surface pleasures, which tend to open subtly forms of thought in the viewers mind.

Smith, Roberta. "Sculptor as Magician" [The New York Times](#).