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### EDITORIAL

In this issue there is a concentration of different readings of eminent Anglo-Indian writer Allan Sealy's book *The Trotter-Nama*. The book first appeared in 1988 and was republished in 1999. The author himself, in the second edition, commends Indian readers for having been enthusiastic about its appearance on the literary scene. It is Indians most of all, and in particular, Anglo-Indians who are familiar with 'versions' of their history and their origins, as well as their portrayal in various literary texts not written by them but about them, who are able to grasp the complex contexts of this seminal work.

Sealy displays in this book such a vast knowledge of the Anglo-Indian being as well as the cultures which they are rooted in, though portrayed as belonging nowhere by all sorts of earlier commentators. He does so in multifarious ways and with literary devices that many of us may have to learn to use to be able to fully appreciate this telling of the Community's history, through his mimings, impersonations (through his characters) and paraphrasings, that are invaluable as the first mammoth literary attempt to present ourselves to ourselves (and to the world at large), as wholly as possible. Sealy has included certain 'key' texts, papers, novels etc. written by non-Anglo-Indians about Anglo-Indians which are more well-known (and which serve to present again and again the historicised portrayal as unfavourable stereotypes) than any actual historical text or literary work by an Anglo-Indian. The texts by Anglo-Indians that may be more genuine and present the real-life situations of members of the community are used by Sealy alongside these derogatory tales, to make this a more complete and true story.

Commentaries of *The Trotter-Nama* in many other, (though some Indian forums too), have been puzzled, or have been unable to ride with the contexts, and many have disparaged it in readings that display unfamiliarity with the many twists that apply to

unravelling this knowledgeable text. The fact that it is so unlike all the previous presentations of the Anglo-Indians and is also cleverly a play on words and events means that the informed reader will delight in it but the uninformed will possibly be annoyed by its very unusualness. The fact is that to fully appreciate this monumental work, a back-ground in literature, the colonial history and present situation of the 'hyphenated' identity that is the Anglo-Indian (and thus the 'neither here nor there dilemma' that is attributed to their situation), is required. But it then reveals and unravels the gripping and interesting pathways that the author takes his reader on. In personal blogs etc, there are pointers to the fact that readers have also read it as fiction and enjoyed it. However, from their comments, it is obvious that the enjoyment was apart from the ability to deconstruct the text's real situations so cleverly fictionalized and also its importance to the small community it is dedicated to, again because of unfamiliarity with, yes, a part of INDIAN history.

This issue of the *IJAIS* carries three commentaries on this work. It seems relevant, at any time, in 2012 as well, to talk of the quixotic *Trotter-Nama* because it has historical value for scholars of Anglo-Indian literature, sociology, or any other aspect of Anglo-Indian identity, such as the study of hybridity, which forms the basis of some of the articles included in this issue. The three distinguished scholars in this issue deal with the novel in their individual readings. It is not an easy read for those of us who are not familiar with literary schemes and terms and facts about the creation of the community through the centuries. It is nevertheless, a significant work that reconstructs from a great many sources the not fully-told story of a group so tiny yet of such interest to others. It is not a text for Anglo-Indians to ignore but to work on if necessary, in the process of understanding. There is no 'one' history or 'one' story of the Anglo-Indians and Sealy has shown that to make it relevant and whole, to whatever extent a writer can, there are a myriad sources to be discussed. And because he is aware that there is no 'serious history' or 'story' as such that has been officially recorded in any one place, he mocks those voices that would put it down in their own incomplete tellings, in disparagingly and unseemly ways. For Anglo-Indians this is a book to cherish. It is an urging almost, to try to take those many pathways on their own, to make the Anglo-Indian history a comprehensible and clearly told one by themselves in the many histories and stories they know and can get to know from *The Trotter-Nama*, the story about Trotters – and Trotters in this case represent all

Anglo-Indians. Trying to understand *The Trotter-Nama* is a lesson in understanding the importance of writing our own stories. All articles that appear in the *IJAIS* are not necessarily academic but often are serious reflections on the Anglo-Indian situation. These are informative to read as personal histories of members of the community and in this issue we include one from the late Chief of the Indian Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Denis Anthony La Fontaine. The brief article in its personal voice, serves to touch on how Anglo-Indians, particularly in earlier times, have internalised some of the myths that surround them and have even repeated about themselves what was portrayed about them by the coloniser and by the 'home' culture that they also belonged to but were not accepted by and so the important question, "Where was 'home'?" As Sealy himself displays, many Anglo-Indians were keen to be a part of the complex whole that is India, but who defined that whole? Now we are into the 21st century and the faces and the inner dreams and desires of India have taken on a westernizing influence that the Anglo-Indian was once ridiculed for. English is the language to speak in. Not to do so can mean that one is not on the cutting edge of the new culture. In doing so, in this far-reaching westernization, who has given ground and who has been faithful to themselves?

In conclusion, and on another subject altogether, I make a point of asking for contributions when introducing each journal and of course that invitation stands. Anglo-Indian voices are important to collate and this journal values them.

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