राष्ट्रदुत 15 January 2025

#CULTURE

Good Times With Bad Music

Because certain types of music have been analysed so often, people assume they're important, even good.



maybe a friend, asks you to put on some music. You think for a minute, then put on something that you're sure will be a crowd-pleaser. Instead, you're met with a blank stare, or maybe, even a look of disdain. Someone, maybe, a now-former friend, asks you to turn it off. You've just faced the consequences of choosing bad music. But who decided what bad music is, anyway? This has been a debate for

a long time. In a paper presented in 1891 at the Proceedings of the Musical Association, teacher and composer, Henry Charles Banister, argues that enjoying music is a matter of taste. If it makes you happy, by all means, listen Music, like any other art form, has its standards, its 'principles or tests,' and 'the principles, which govern all true art, the coherence, consecutiveness, and inter-relationship of ideas' need to be taken into account. Sure, you

music that doesn't adhere to those standards, but for understand the rules to hear how they're being broken. Of course, a nineteenthcentury conference of musicologists is hardly the best or most diverse group to decide the 'rules' of music. Researcher Adrian Renzo points out that one of the criticisms of musicology is that through their analysis, 'songs

are legitimated and given a

sheen of 'importance,' simply

by being subjected to scholar-

lv analysis.

can listen, and even enjoy,

Because certain types of music have been analysed so often, people assume they're important, even good. But if that's true, people also argue that some music is just bad. And that inherent badness. Renzo notes 'is often positioned as ridiculous.' From ridiculous, it's just a short jump to bad, a distinction that he notes has been defined as music 'made by singers who can't sing, players who can't play, producers who can't produce.' Sounds like an argument that Banister could get behind. Researchers Martin Lüthe and Sascha Pöhlmann point to something else. unpopularity. Unpopularity can be 'related to value judgments such as offensive, con-

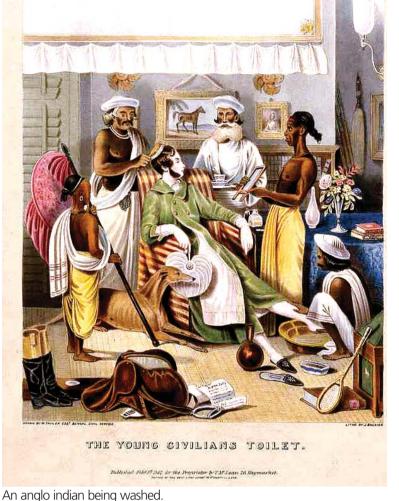
troversial, cool, ugly, (un)fash-



an element of being part of the war between high and low arguing that what 'unpopular culture does is draw attention to the aesthetic and political value judgments that are at the heart of the high/pop cul-Which side 'bad' music

falls on depends entirely on the listener. For every person, who thinks jazz is pure art, there's likely someone who finds it boring. And for every song hitting the top of the charts, there's someone who has grown tired of popular music. ("One interesting thing to note is that jazz has been both pop and high culture, like no other in music. Lüthe and Pöhlmann write.) As librarian Brenda Gale Beaslev writes, "Our choice of music helps us define our personal identity and sense

Taste isn't as simple as Banister and his cohort thought. As Beasley notes, "One cannot discuss 'taste without first delving deeply into culture and sometimes even its political climate." A group of nineteenth-century musicologists likely won't have the same experiences or tastes as modern listeners But there's a place for the bad, Lüthe and Pöhlmann explain. It can sometimes be a place to find yourself, a place to develop cult followings, a place 'that is still able to tell the stories and histories that nobody wants to hear, and sing the songs that nobody else wants to sing.'



Dramatic moments

Although a complex set of causes

led to the First War of

Independence, the final spark was

lit by the introduction of the

"One of the most dramatic

revolt against British rule, the so-

called 'Mutiny' of 1857, is indeli-

bly associated with the history of

food taboos in India and the

British insensitivity to them,"

writes Jayanta Sengupta in his

essay titled *India* in the book *Food*

source of anxiety during colonial

revolt, there was suspicion among

the home population that the

colonists were plotting to rob

Hindus and Muslims of their reli-

gion so that they could be convert-

ed to Christianity. One way people

believed that the British planned

to do this was by using ritually

polluting objects to defile them. In

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them amenable to Christianity

but also to crossing the oceans, or

kala pani, allowing them to be

shipped to other colonies as sol-

March 1857, when a mill owner in

Meerut sold several consignments

This fear reached a peak in

diers or indentured labour.

rule. For years before the 1857

Food had been a simmering

in Time and Place.

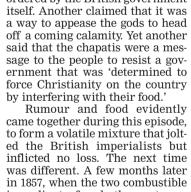
Chatterjee

Enfield musket in the army. To load this powerful rifle, sepoys had to bite open its paper car tridge and pour the gunpowder into the barrel. A rumour began to spread that the cartridges came greased with beef tallow, which is Independence, taboo for Hindus, and pork lard, which is taboo for Muslims. Angry strange phenome non came to the soldiers from both communities attention of the refused the cartridges and revolt-British imperialists ed against their British officers. Around the north of moments in the history of the British Empire in India, the outbreak of violent and widespread

the country, Indians were passing on thousands of chapatis. Not some special chapatis with coded messages in them! Just your regular, made-at-home, to-beten-with-dal kind of chapatis. Why they were doing this, nobody knew. Even the men, who baked the flatbreads and carried them from village to village, had no idea 'why they had to run through the night with chupatties in their turbans.

There were plenty of rumours and theories, though. One theory ordered by the British government by interfering with their food.'

ingredients fused, the cost was much higher.





Muhammad Ali Shaikh

Milk Drinking Ganasha Today... Spiked Atta Then... Food had been a simmering source of anxiety

during colonial rule. For years before the 1857 revolt, there was suspicion among the home population that the colonists were plotting to rob Hindus and Muslims of their religion so that they could be converted to Christianity. One way people believed that the British planned to do this was by using ritually polluting objects to defile them. In the case of Hindus, it was suggested, stripping them of caste and religion would not only make them amenable to Christianity but also to crossing the oceans, or kala pani, allowing them to be shipped to other colonies as soldiers or indentured labour.

#FOOD

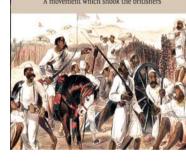


of wheat flour, or atta, to traders in Cawnpore (now Kanpur) for less than the standard price. Suspicions were raised and a rumour zipped around that the atta must have been adulterated with bone meal from pigs and

"Not a Sipahi would touch it (the atta), not a person of any kind would purchase it, cheap as was the price at which it was obtainable in comparison with all the other supplies in the market,' wrote British military historian, John William Kaye, in his 1865 book Sepoy War in India. "Bone dust atta alarm had taken hold of men's minds in several of our stations and sepoys, private servants, reminders attending court have flung away their roti on hear ing that five camel-loads or bone dust atta had reached the station." Such was the panic around bonedust atta that even those sepoys, who were loyal to their colonial masters at the start of the mutiny, turned suspicious of their

Where it was atta in the 1850s, it was salt in the 1830s. David Arnold ToxicHistories: Poison and Pollution in Modern India that in the Saran district of Bihar. it was rumoured that a sediment, resembling the ground bones of cattle, had been found in salt. The British adminis trators vehemently dismissed the rumour as





to prompt a boycott of salt. **Potency of Rumours**

of the 43rd Regiment in Barrackpore, warned about the

Distrust and disquiet made nearly everything a subject of misgiving. Ghee was feared to be contaminated ed with animal fat, medicines with the spit of Europeans, and drinking water with the flesh of cows

> anxieties around cartridges and powdered bones in sugar and salt. The letter also bemoaned the Burra Sahih's insistence on different castes eating together, a purported threat to their religion, and ended with a threat "Whoever gets this letter must read it to the

Chapattis being distributed at an

and pigs. One time, in Rajasthan

when burlap sacks leeched colour

into a consignment of sugar, turn-

ing it ochre, people's instinct was

to think that it had been drenched

revolt, historian Kave document-

ed a similar rumour that spread

like wildfire. "Among other wild

fables, which took firm hold of

the popular mind, was one to the

effect that the Company's officers

had collected all the newly-manu-

factured salt, had divided it into

two great heaps, and over one had

sprinkled the blood of hogs, and

over the other the blood of cows,

that they had then sent it to be

sold throughout the country for

the pollution and the desecration

of the Mohammedans and

Hindoos, that all might be

brought to one caste and to one

of the potency of these rumours.

Before the revolt, an anonymous

The British were well aware

religion like the English."

In his reports on the 1857

in cow blood.

Mayor as it is written," it said. "If he is a Hindoo and does not, his crime will be equal to the slaughter of a lakh of cows, and if a Mussulman, as though he had eaten a pig, and if a European, must read it to the Native officers, and if he does not, his going to church will be of no use, and be a

vants grew around the revolt of

1857, when many 'seemingly loval

servants' turned on their masters and tried to humiliate them, loot

them or murder them, especially

an army station. The British offi-

cers at the base accused the regi-

nental cooks of poisoning their

soup with aconite and detained

them. The cooks fiercely denied

the charge, but refused to taste

the preparation on religious

grounds. To settle the matter, a

monkey was forced to lap up the

soup. When the monkey promptly

died, all the cooks were sentenced

to death, without a trial, by John

Nicholson, an East India

Company officer, famous for his

callousness. After they were

hanged from a tree, he is said to

have strode into the officers' mess

and announced, "I am sorry, gen-

tlemen, to have kept you waiting

for your dinner, but I have been

Indian servants and fear of poi-

soning morphed into an aversion

for Indian food itself. Gone was

the British enthusiasm for explor-

ing the flavours of the colonised

land. "Only after the Great

Rebellion did the British grow sus-

picious of curry and rice,'

Andrew J Rotter wrote in Empires

of the Senses: Bodily Encounters in

Philippines. "Like the treacherous

sepoys, these foods seemed to

threaten their bodies, causing

them to lose control of their bow-

els, and perhaps, even poisoning

them. They reverted to their own

foods, imported from home or

other colonies, though in the end,

despite themselves, they could not

fully jettison the flavours conjured

by their Indian cooks."

With time, this distrust of

hanging your cooks.'

One such incident occurred at

Although it is hard to tell for certain, it is suspected that the anxieties around the assault on religions emerged first in colonial prisons. "The practice was introduced in some district jails of making prisoners eat food which had been cooked by a single man, such a measure as this was fatal to the caste of Hindus," Savvid Ahmad Khan wrote in *The Causes* of the Indian Revolt (1873). Muslims too disliked the practice, even though it did not affect them. "They looked upon it as another proof that the Government wished o meddle with all creeds alike," wrote Khan. "They saw in it but another part of a huge plan.'

Fear and suspicion

In a country ruled by force, fear and suspicion naturally flowed both ways. If Indians were afraid British were afraid of losing their lives. Sometimes, for good reason.

In the essay, *The Poison Panics* British India, David Arnold tells the story of a Puniabi Muslim khansama, whose abusive English master threw a jug of boiling milk at him, scalding his face. To avenge himself, the khansama mixed ground glass into his master's favourite dessert, guava meringue. But before his plot could succeed, the housemaid alerted the mistress of the house, saving the master's

Arnold says that the European distrust of their ser-

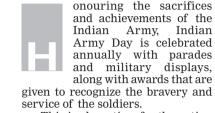


the 1857 uprising. Credit: Charles Ball

#BRAVERY

Indian Army Day

On Army Day, we honour the extraordinary courage, unwavering commitment and sacrifices of our Army personnel.



This is also a time for the nation to remember the sacrifices made by soldiers, who have lost their lives defending the country.



The history of the Indian Army dates back to the early 18th century, when the East India Company established a standing military presence in the country. The Army played a key role in the Indian Rebellion of 1857, also known as the Indian Mutiny, and in the subsequent annexation of India by the British Empire. After India gained independence in 1947, the Indian Army played a crucial role in defending the country against external aggres sion and internal conflicts. Todav. the Indian Army is one of the largest and most powerful military forces in the world, with a significant presence on the global stage. Every year, 15 January is com-

memorated as 'Army Day' to remember the occasion when General (later Field Marshal) K. M. Cariappa took over the command of the Indian Army from General Sir FRR Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief in 1949 and became the first Indian Commander-in-Chief

Independent India. The decision to appoint an Indian as the head of the Army was a significant step towards greater autonomy and independence for the country. Since then, Indian Army Day has been celebrated annually to recognize the service and contributions of the Indian Army. The Indian Army has the sole objective of protecting the nation from any foreign aggres sion that arises, ensuring the nation's security. They also try to protect the nation from internal threats. During natural calamities. the Indian Army conducts humanitarian rescue operations to save people's lives.



ndian Army Day is celebrated across India by the general public, as well as by military members and government offi-

cials. There are a variety of ways, in which individuals can participate, for the celebration of



Attend a Parade or Military Display

Many cities and towns host parades and other events to mark Indian Army Day. These events often feature displays of military equipment and demonstrations by various branches of the Indian Army. Attending one of these events is a great way to show appreciation for the military and learn more about the work that they do.

Participate in a Community Service Project

Another way to honour the Indian Army is to engage in community service. This could involve volunteering at a veterans' hospital, working with a military-focused non-profit organization, or participating in a local fundraiser for the military. By giving back to your community, you can show your appreciation for the sacrifices made by members of the military and their loved ones.



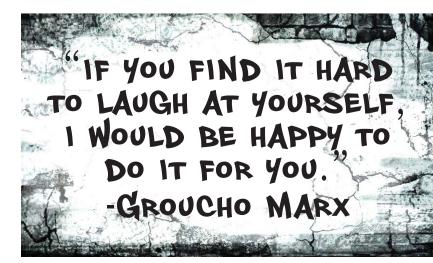


Display the National Flag One simple way to demonstrate your support for the Indian Army is to display the national flag. This can be done at home, at work, or at any other public place. You can also con sider wearing clothing or acces sories that feature the flag.

Show your Appreciation to Members of the Military

If you know someone who is serving in the Indian Army, take the time to thank them for their service and sacrifice by writing a letter or mak ing a phone call to a soldier serving overseas. Additionally, you can make a donation to organizations that support the military and their families.

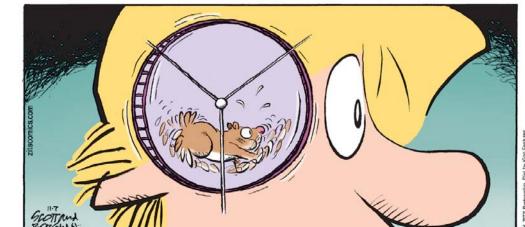
THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

