

# India designs its own image as global power

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Brand India is the name of the organisation that since the late 1990's has been tasked with convincing international corporations and heads of state that they should invest in new, modern India. In return for their investment, they get, among other things, access to cheap, well-educated labour.

"The branding campaigns produce seductive images of 'new' [India](#): In the beginning the ads placed traditional Indian motifs together with images of mobile phones, computers, and motor ways to show the investors how India has developed," says Ravinder Kaur, who is director of Centre of Global South-Asian Studies at the University of Copenhagen.

In her article "Nation's Two Bodies: rethinking the 'new' India and its other", which will be published in the forthcoming issue of *Third World Quarterly* and available online 7 May, she analyses the Indian branding campaigns. And she points out that the campaigns are adjusted continuously so as to attract other kinds of investors and corporations:

"The most recent campaigns employ a different strategy in which large, multinational corporations, such as the luxury [car manufacturer](#) Bugatti, encourage other large, multinational corporations to invest in India and see the opportunities in India as a market for [luxury goods](#) that can be sold to the growing Indian middle-classes."

## "Old" India rears its face

Not all Indians, however, recognise themselves in the campaigns' glitzy images, and according to Ravinder Kaur the discrepancy between image and reality inevitably cause internal conflicts and antagonisms which the Indian government will find it increasingly difficult to suppress.

"Corruption is a huge problem in India, which was amply demonstrated when the country hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games. The Games should have been a triumph for 'new' India, but degenerated into a corruption scandal that government and industry desperately tried to talk down in order to assuage potential investors' concerns."

## **Get up-to-date on modern Asia**

Ravinder Kaur stresses that Western nations need to look beyond all the clichés about the new Asian powers, which are constantly repeated in the media; a country or a corporation that wants to cooperate with for example India must have in-depth knowledge of recent developments in that particular nation.

"India is shrouded in myth and misunderstandings. If you uncritically buy into all the stories about modern India, much crucial knowledge will evade you. And that is unfortunate if you consider India important. That is why I recommend anyone who is interested in modern Asia to tune in when University of Copenhagen hosts the international conference Rising Asia – Anxious Europe 2 and 3 May," Ravinder Kaur points out.

During the conference, which will be streamed live on the conference website, a number of internationally recognised researchers will discuss the future relationship between Asia and Europe.

## **The conference: Rising Asia - Anxious Europe**

On 2-3 May, the University of Copenhagen hosts a large international conference about the relationship between Europe and Asia. Danish Foreign Minister Villy Søvndal will open the conference which boasts a number of eminent international Asian scholars.

Provided by University of Copenhagen

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