

Profane relations: The irony of offensive jokes in India

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The ability of offensive jokes to undermine intolerance is the subject of a study by a University of Kent anthropologist.

In a paper published by the journal *History and Anthropology*, Dr Andrew Sanchez, Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University's School of Anthropology and Conservation, explains how exchanges of offensive humour enable people to distance themselves from the values that inform religious and [ethnic violence](#).

Based on research in a multi-ethnic workplace in India, the study shows how joking relationships between colleagues make an apparently offensive commentary on the public life of ethnic difference. Dr Sanchez looks at the unspoken political content of this humour, to show why such jokes do not always cause offence.

The paper shows that the exchange of humorous insults implicitly critiques religious and ethnic violence, by suggesting that one's personal relations are not governed by the principles of offence and retaliation.

While communal politics never forgives insult and never forgets the past, Dr Sanchez argues that offensive joking operates on more tolerant principles rooted in the present.

More information: Andrew Sanchez. Profane Relations: The Irony of Offensive Jokes in India, *History and Anthropology* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2016.1147439](#)

Provided by University of Kent

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