



RINDAS

The Center for the Study of Contemporary India, Ryukoku University

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RINDAS INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM SERIES 1

Voices for Equity Minority and Majority in South Asia

RINDAS

The Center for the Study of Contemporary India, Ryukoku University

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NIHU Programme Contemporary India Area Studies
The Center for the Study of Contemporary India, Ryukoku University

The image of India has recently shifted from “a country of stagnation and poverty” to “a country of great power” as a result of its growing economic strength. India has realized this remarkable economic development primarily because of its relatively stable “democratic” politics.

What interests us is that the norms and morals that maintain the Indian economy and politics reflect traditional Indian thought and philosophical concepts such as *Satya* (truth), *Dharma* (morality or duty), and *Ahimsa* (nonviolence), which have been formed during India’s long history.

Our project attempts to integrate the knowledge and materials on Indian philosophy and Buddhism accumulated during the 370-year history of Ryukoku University with the new findings of contemporary India studies, focusing on the “Living Tradition of Indian Philosophy in Contemporary India”.

The next generation of researchers will be fostered through their involvement in our project.

Research Unit 1: Politics, Economy and Philosophy of Contemporary India
Research Unit 2: Social Movements in Modern India across Borders

RINDAS INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM SERIES 1

**Voices for Equity
Minority and Majority in South Asia**

RINDAS the First International Symposium Proceedings

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Introduction for the Symposium

Nobuko NAGASAKI

Friends,

Following the two welcoming speeches, let me repeat how pleased I am to have you all here. This is the first international symposium, organized by two Research Centers in Ryukoku University. The first is the Research Center for Buddhist Cultures in Asia, of which Director is Professor Shoryu Katsura. The second one is the Center for the Study of Contemporary India, of which I am in charge. As the Director of India Center, and as a historian, I would like to say a few words about the aim of this symposium from a historical perspective, as well as from the Japanese point of view.

Every country or region faces the problem or issue of a particular era, which must be tackled and solved by its contemporaries. For example, the issue for late Tokugawa Japan was the opening of the country to the outside world, and this was immediately followed by the institutional and social change, which took the form of the Meiji Restoration. The issue for India from the mid-nineteenth century to 1947 was, of course, to end British rule and achieve independence. And it was through addressing this political aim that the issue of social and institutional change arose. Indian society needed an ideal, which would justify the political goal of the establishment of a nation state.

More specifically, the issue at stake was how to address the problems of the caste society underpinned by Hinduism. The most prominent among them was the problem of so-called untouchables, or Dalits, scheduled castes, or whatever it is called. But the issue remained unsettled throughout the nationalist movement, led by M. K. Gandhi.

It was after the independence of 1947 that the caste issue began to be raised in the main public discourse. Ambedkar became the chairman of the Committee for Drafting the Constitution and inserted the clause of the abolition of the untouchability in the Constitution of 1950. Furthermore, in 1956 he led the untouchable community, called Mahar, to abandon Hinduism and convert themselves to Buddhism.

But his death shortly after the mass conversion resulted in the temporary halt of the liberation movement of untouchables.

For the last twenty years, however, as Dr. Aloisius states, "The previous two decades have witnessed the rise to public-political focus, the plight, & struggle of those who have been governmentally categorized as Scheduled Castes and their moral and legal claims. While this is largely the achievement of these relegated and frustrated castes themselves, the reactive interventions of the Governmental agencies in the process could not be ignored either."

Papers collected for this symposium raise several issues relating to this recent state of affairs.

Session 1 discusses various aspects of the relationships between Dalits and Buddhism in India. As Dr. Rodrigues's paper addresses, there is the question of how to interpret the eventual conversion of those untouchables, led by Ambedkar, to Buddhism, in their quest for human rights. Why did Ambedkar opt for the conversion to Buddhism? Why did he not only abandon Hinduism but choose another religion? Does it imply that he believed in the need for a religion in an increasingly secular world?

What kind of movements are the former “untouchables” engaged in, and what kind of life do they lead? Papers by Dr Funahashi, Dr Enoki, Dr K.Adachi and Dr Das address these questions.

Tomorrow, in session 2, we will focus on religion and the relationship between different religions. Islam in Bangladesh will be discussed by Professor Harun-or Rashid and Professor Togawa. And Professor Zavos will discuss the issue of religious identity by taking the cases of a transnational religious organization in Britain and India.

In session 3, we will discuss how politics is dealing with the issues of Dalits. Dr Fitzgerald will discuss on the separation of religion from politics, and on the debate on what constitutes the Indian nation state.

Paper by Dr Sabharwal looks at women in these communities. The reactions of the society and the government will be discussed and their political implications will be examined by papers by Dr Kondo and Professor Yoshida.

In modern democracy the problems shared by the majority of people are relatively easily recognized, and the solutions are sought. But the issue of Dalit, raised by Ambedkar, involved the question of how to deal with a serious discrimination against those Dalits who are not the majority in society. His contribution was to publically seek the ways in which to dissolve social exclusion of Dalits, and suggest the means by which to make the social participation of the minority possible.

This issue is clearly not one unique to Indian society. The Japanese society has essentially the same problem of social exclusion in the forms of discrimination against disabled people, immigrants, single mothers and unemployed young people. We struggle to get grips with how to dissolve such social exclusion and how to develop socially inclusive policies for them.

Ideas and movements initiated by Ambedkar and followed by many Dalits give us hope and encouragement for the improvement of our own society. I hope that this symposium will contribute to the academic substantiation of such thoughts.

Session 1

Dalit / Buddhist Communities in Contemporary India

Ambedkar on Modernity and Religion

Valerian RODRIGUES

At the outset let me present the argument pursued in this paper in a nutshell. It is said that by converting to Buddhism, Ambedkar did much harm to the secular project in India, reinforced obscurantism and came in the way of the natural orientation of the people that he represented to seek a radical alternative to their condition.¹ Against such a stance, I wish to suggest that Ambedkar argued for a modern project foregrounded in a *specific conception* of religion. He also thought that modernity, as an invention of human reason, science and mode of interaction, cannot endure without being anchored in religion. This marks him off from most of the significant thinkers in the West and draws him close to some of the thinkers on modernity in India such as Aurobindo, Iqbal and even Gandhi who all invoked a certain centrality to religion under conditions of modernity. However, unlike Gandhi, he did not counterpose religion to modernity but saw their relationship as interlocutory. Since religion is not inimical to the modern spirit and the modern spirit to religion, discussion on the appropriate religion for our age becomes inevitable for the formation of public reason and consequently comparison across religions cannot be set aside. Religion therefore is not a private affair but a public concern to be deliberated on and contested beyond the immediate circle of the faithful. However, there are some religions which are resistant to basic human claims and public reason. Therefore resort to reappraisal and retrieval becomes inevitable, imparting meaning to religious beliefs and practices in the process of appropriation. When subjected to such a scrutiny, Ambedkar thought Buddhism scores over other religions. Therefore he thought that Buddhism comes closest to be the religion for our age, the age of modernity. It is not merely the 'religion of the oppressed'² or an 'engaged'³ and 'emancipatory'⁴ religion which of course to an extent it was, but something that is in tune with man's deepest and most profound striving.

There is a great deal of dilation and even equivocation in Ambedkar's conception of religion. We can

1. For this argument, See W.N. Kuber, *Dr Ambedkar – A Critical Study*, New Delhi, Peoples' Publishing House, 1977

2. A 'religion of the oppressed' may be said to have the following characteristics: It is an ethical view that tends to stand for an egalitarian social order that is at the same time sacralised against a prevalent one; It is an exercise of choice against an ascriptively given situation, often self-consciously rejecting a religion one is born into; there is a strong communitarian invocation built into it, marked by celebration in comparison to contemplation; a strong sense of mission and moral superiority is ingrained into its advocacy; and it tends to lend itself towards the formation of an emancipator identity based on its central beliefs and values, apportioning resources of tradition and culture afresh in support or opposition. See, Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religion of the Oppressed*, London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1963 & Paul N. Siegel, *The Meek and the Militant: Religion and Power across the World*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1986

3. *Engaged Buddhism* is a term employed by Christopher S. Queen to describe contemporary Buddhist movements which call for an active engagement with the world around. See Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, eds., *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, Albany, N.Y., State University of New York Press, 1996

4. The term has been employed by G. Aloysius to describe a specific construction of Buddhism pioneered by subaltern intellectuals such as Pandit Iyothee Thass in the later part of 19th and early 20th century in South India formally designated as Sakhya Buddhism. See G. Aloysius, *Religion as Emancipatory identity: A Buddhist Movement among Tamils under Colonialism*, New Delhi, New Age International (P) Limited, 1998. Ambedkar engaged with this trend extensively and employed the resources that it had generated generously. However, except for a brief digression in *The Untouchables; Who were They and Why They became Untouchables?* (New Delhi, Amrit Book Co., 1948), there is no evidence that he wished to walk the path of begetting an ethnic religious identity for untouchables/outcastes.

notice perceptible changes in his understanding of the domain of religion, its nature and significance for human life overtime. He distinguishes between one kind of religion and another: While there are religions whose beliefs, rituals and practices control and dwarf human beings, and for that matter, degrade or elevate them without good reasons, there are others which provide a conducive setting for human capacities to thrive forging durable community ties across their members. There are religions whose sources of authority lie outside the community of believers, while there are others which are expressions of the deepest and most profound human striving. Religions need not be always in opposition: There could be much overlapping across them. Further, religions are not equal: He argues that there cannot be greater error than believing that all religions are equal. He rejects Gandhi's argument of *sarvadharmā samābhava*, equality of all religions,, with its philosophical moorings in the theory of *anekantvad*.⁵ Besides, sometimes religions could just be the cloak for the furtherance of narrow mundane interests: When it is so, denoting some belief-systems and institutionalized ways as religion may be a misnomer and if such an appellation is extended to them others may have to be named differently. Religions, therefore, are subject to the same scrutiny as applicable to other enquiries

The Problem

The relation between religion and modernity is back on the centre-stage today⁶ contesting some of the perspectives and explanations that were widely accepted by the prevailing versions of modernity. Revisiting this relation afresh has drawn our attention to many issues and concerns that had just slipped out of our reckoning for long.

Ambedkar is not the only one who invokes religion in the modern project. One of the features that strikes anyone wading through the complex tapestry of modern Indian thinking is the salience of religion. If we bracket the last 200 years as encapsulating broadly this period there are few thinkers who reject religion in a categorical fashion. Jawaharlal Nehru, Ram Manohar Lohia and the Marxists are generally included within the latter enumeration. While such a description may hold good to an extent on the basis of their public stances in this regard it is also important to note the restricted concept-space that religion encompassed in many of their pronouncements. There was always a sense of bewilderment, ecstasy and wonder in Nehru that was irreducible to a materialist conception of life and could be attributed to an immanent conception of striving towards the ultimate.⁷ Lohia decried superstitions, rituals and beliefs which he found deeply oppressive and enslaving but saw history as the embodiment of the *geist* (spirit) with progressively unfolding cycles of enchainment and emancipation very different from Hegel and Marx.⁸ There is no strong evidence to suggest that Marxists in India shunned religion in a strong sense. For its leaders generally hailing from upper castes much of religion and its practices were wrapped in

5. *Anekantvad*, a central concept in Jainism, suggests that there are several routes to attain *Moksha* or salvation

6. See Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, The John Hopkin's University Press, 1993; *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford University Press, 2003; *On Suicide Bombing*. Columbia University Press, 2007; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2007

7. "Life does not consist entirely of what we see and hear and feel, the visible world which is undergoing change in time and space. It is continually touching an invisible world of other, and possibly more stable or equally changeable elements, and no thinking person can ignore this invisible world", J.Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, New York, John Day Co., 1946, p.14

8. See Rammanohar Lohia, *Wheel of History*, Hyderabad, Rammanohar Lohia Samatha Vidyalaya, 1974 and "The Doctrinal Foundations of Socialism" in *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, , Hyderabad, Rammanohar Lohia Samatha Vidyalaya, 1964 pp. 320-363

culture, and popular practices such as pilgrimage or visit to temples were not regarded as mandatory. The masses were steeped into religious practices and Marxists did not initiate any major movement to slough off these practices from their followers or critically engage with them. By default, many of the sacral practices continued among Marxists particularly in the familial settings or as residue available on demand. The one major attempt to confront religion head-on was made by Ramaswamy Naicker in the South but it could be argued that his entire attempt was primarily directed against the Brahmanical practices and its offshoots while retaining significant aspects of the moral core of religious practices. Individual affront to religion have been plenty in Modern India, manifest in the shunning of practices supposedly associated with it and there has been much confession of the same in the public sphere but such posturing has been much imitative of the secular-religious divide in the West and there has been little philosophical reflection on what it means to be on the other side of the religious divide in context. Even if we consider, the instances cited above as subtracting religion from the project of modernity, there are other strands, enjoying great popular acclaim, that expect modern India to cherish a religious ideal or, at least, not to be indisposed to it. Social movements of subaltern groups have often presented themselves in a religious hue. We can recall hardly any thinker hailing from minority religious communities or *adivasis* who makes a strong plea for a modern India sans religion. Ambedkar's crafting of his religious project is intimately bound with the acknowledged significance of religion in the modernist discourse in India and was intimately bound with its moral and even constitutional desiderata.

The Modern Project

The relation between modernity and religion that came to be formulated in India was markedly different from the way mainstream understanding of the relation between modernity and religion in the West⁹. The latter stipulates that processes of modernity resulted in desacralisation of public life begetting what Weber called, 'disenchantment'. Theoretically such an outcome was grounded on the argument that religious beliefs have no objective foundation. Consequently their truth value cannot be established with surety and certainty. Given the lack of an objective basis to religious belief, a plurality of such beliefs can be entertained by people and therefore they cannot be foundational to the constitution of the public domain and its institutions. Religious beliefs and practices are best left alone to the choice of the believers. Such an understanding decisively marked the divide between the private and the public domain. While the private domain among several other things was crowded with diverse and incommensurable systems of beliefs and values the public domain was constituted around shared understandings and interests. There were several combinations of such shared understandings and interests that were possible begetting divergent approaches to issues and concerns. One of the important principles that fore-grounded this mainstream understanding, in spite of disagreements on details, was a conception of the human person with powers and capacities to distance himself/herself from the immediately given attachments and interests and arrive at a judgement of common good grounded in reason. This reason now was no more an attribute of human nature as such but of each individual who through deliberation within a bounded community, made of similar others, arrived at an understanding of shared interests and pledged his actions to confirm to such an understanding. Immanuel Kant was to provide a decisive philosophical defense to such a project.

9. This is in spite of the acknowledged plurality of the construction of this relationship, both in discourses and practices across the complex cultural tapestry of the Modern West.

It was not that there were no other perspectives on modernity staking their claim implicating religion in this project. The Deists for instance put forward the argument that human autonomy and choice need not necessarily negate the existence of God and the transcendental domain. They however denied the hitherto prevalent conception of divine providence in human affairs and argued that God destined man to take charge of his own affairs and those of the world and he has to be eventually accountable to the creator for his own actions. In other words God leaves man in charge of the creation as a whole although He provides the ultimate superintendence and elicits accountability without intervening in day to day affairs. In other words, the God-question is not pertinent in ordinary human affairs. The unfolding of modernity also saw the proliferation of diverse religious sects, which promised to their adherents a close communitarian bond, new spiritual experiences and gateways and a sense of self-reflectivity and meaningful engagement with self and the world. There were also sociologists such as Auguste Comte and political thinkers such as Saint Simon who proposed and advocated the need for a civic religion. In fact the Comtean positivist religion was to become hugely popular among certain sections in India in late 19th century, particularly in Bengal. These incursions seeking a public place for religion, however, remained marginal to the constitution of the body-politic.¹⁰

Significance of Religion

In many ways Ambedkar was groomed in the project of mainstream Western modernity that we sketched above, defended that project as a great advance and saw in it the prospects of human emancipation. But he always acknowledged the place of religion in human affairs and thought that it is a potent force. He differed with the widely held view that religion is a private affair. According to him,

“It is an error to look upon religion as a matter which is individual, private and personal....religion becomes a source of positive mischief if not danger when it remains individual, private and personal. Equally mistaken is the view that religion is the flowering of special religious instinct inherent in the nature of the individual. The correct view is that religion like language is social for the reason that either is essential for social life and the individual has to have it because without it he cannot participate in the life of the society.”¹¹

When religious and secular callings are in conflict, for many, the demands of the former tend to override their other earthly concerns. Often men set aside professional pursuits and even attachments when they cannot be squared with a religious duty. “A religious ideal has a hold on mankind, irrespective of an earthly gain. This can never be said of a purely secular ideal.”¹² He thought that many a Hindu practiced untouchability because they thought that there is a religious sanction behind it. When Gandhi rejected untouchability as ordained by Hinduism and called for

10. In recent days the philosopher Charles Taylor has suggested a differing perspective on the issue. He has argued that the secular emerged in the midst of the religious and that a religious perspective was insinuatingly present throughout the unfolding of the project of modernity. It was not in the margins of modernity that religion thrived. He argues that this imagination of the religious standpoint within the modern offers interesting possibilities of envisaging the future. See, Charles Taylor, *op.cit.*

11. Valerian Rodrigues, ed., *Essential Writings of B.R.Ambedkar*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 225

12. B.R.Ambedkar, ‘Philosophy of Hinduism’, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (BAWS), Vol. 3, Bombay, Government of Maharashtra, Department of Education, 1987, p. 23

the inclusion of untouchables within its fold as equals, Ambedkar thought that many believing Hindus are unlikely to give heed to such a call. To many a Hindu untouchability is embedded in purity and pollution, values central to their conception of religion.

Ambedkar saw the relation between a specific articulation of religion and modernity as complementary rather than hostile. Religions that could not rise up to this demand became an obstacle to the full development of man, and modernity that did not have its moral grounding in religion had little to speak for it. At the same time many of the embedded beliefs and practices that went in the name of religion did not deserve such an appellation. Therefore it is possible to demarcate the right religion from the wrong and compare one religion with another and argue the case for one against the other. He did not think that religions can be considered as equal, or for that matter anyone does so seriously, although everyone's choice of their religion deserves equal respect and consideration. Therefore, modern societies need not shy away from public debate and deliberations on religious beliefs and practices. In fact given the significance of religion these beliefs and practices deserved a priority that many other concerns did not.¹³ In fact, by confining religion to the private sphere modernity demonstrates its disbelief in itself and allows prejudices and half-truths to be confirmed as truths.

While he admitted the existence of diverse religions and respected religious freedoms including to make religious options he at the same time thought that certain religions hinder human fulfillment and do not stand up to the scrutiny of reason.¹⁴ The broad distinction that he suggested was religions considered sociologically and normatively. While there are some religions that are unacceptable on both these counts, there might be others which might be desirable on either of these counts or in terms of some facets of both. He sometimes resorted to such distinctions as 'religion of rituals' or 'religion of principles' or 'dharma' and 'dhamma' to express the same.

The Flipside of Existing Modernity

Ambedkar discussed several variants of modernity. For an intellectual from a colony in the context of the socialist revolutions it was in a way inevitable: He thought that liberal modernity was far too caught in relations of inequality. He thought that its framework made it insensitive even to grapple with the kind of deprivations suffered by the vast masses and often it tended to protect interests in spite of its profession of rights.¹⁵ With regard to the Marxist variant of modernity as found in the Soviet Union, while some of its insights about society such as the existence of classes and class struggle and the need to foreground equality in public life were commendable, it had little capacity in morally grounding a society. Therefore the social bonds that it would beget would necessarily be brittle and cave in when the mundane and material expectations give way.¹⁶ Eventually such a society would call for a great deal of force to keep itself afloat, bartering freedom in the process.

13. It is not true that Ambedkar rejects religion for *Dhamma* and uses the concept of religion always in a negative sense. However, he does so in some instances in *The Buddha and His Dhamma*. The purpose of the text was to defend The Buddha and His Dhamma.

14. There are scholars who have pointed out at the diverse usages of the concept of religion in Ambedkar making it unwieldy as a normative and analytical tool: See for instance, Timothy Fitzgerald, 'Analysing Sects, Minorities, and Social Movements in India: The case of Ambedkar Buddhism and Dalit(s)', in Surendra Jondhale and Johannes Beltz, eds., *Reconstructing the World: B.R. Ambedkar and Buddhism in India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 267-282; 'Ambedkar, Buddhism and the Concept of Religion', in S.M. Michael, ed., *Dalits in Modern India*, New Delhi, Vistaar, 1999, pp. 118-134; Martin Fuchs, 'Buddhism and Dalitness: Dilemmas of Religious Emancipation', in Surendra Jondhale and Johannes Beltz, op. cit., pp. 283-300

15. See, B.R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*, Bombay, Thacker & Co., 1945

16. See, B.R. Ambedkar, 'Buddha or Karl Marx', in BAWs, Vol. 3 (1987), pp. 441-462

Further, he thought that Marxism is not sensitive to the complex superstructures that any economic base, be it capitalist or otherwise, throws up. He thought that certain articulations of the superstructural elements may limit economic options in such a way as to almost negate them. Further, he felt that any prospective envisaging of the future must necessarily take into account human possibilities and limitations and the inevitable conflicts that may arise in human relations. Therefore institutions such as the state and rule of law would be required in the foreseeable future and any kind of benign hope of their withering away would not merely be utopian but inevitably affect the options before human agency. Ambedkar was also in favor of resolute mass action and did not think that force and coercion have the capacity to transform human nature. In all these instances, there needs to be a normative anchor to sustain as well as limit human action and to mark its purposes and orientations. He thought that religion alone was able to foot such a bill.

Within the colony Ambedkar was confronted with the limits of the modern project. Modernity rarely kept its promise within the colonies and colluded with structures that were deeply inimical to its original mainstream impulse. In India, British colonialism shored up obsolete structures of religiosity and greatly aided the consolidation of Brahmanism and constructed distinct versions of religiosity to assign Indians to groups with little in common. He thought that the socialist project in India cannot take off because class action becomes well-nigh impossible with deferences and contempt constitutive of the caste system. Such deferences and contempt were perceived by the concerned agents as religiously ordained with its characteristic modes of legitimation and sanctions. He thought that mainstream nationalist perspectives in India to the extent that they ignored caste or conceived the nation as inclusive of all castes allowed a specific mode of religious dominance, manifest in caste dominance to prevail over the emerging idea of the nation. He thought that such a dispensation was not merely not conducive for the respect and equal consideration of those below the social hierarchy but also for a viable conception of the nation itself. While Ambedkar did not agree with the way colonialism nurtured the religious project in India, he at the same time disagreed with the way the nationalist project was inserting religious dominance in the name of freedom. Therefore while he rejected both the colonial and nationalist invocation of religion, he thought that religion is far too important in social reconstruction and cannot be wished away as suggested by some modern stances.

His endeavour became to espouse and defend *a particular conception of religion* rather than defend religious freedom in the name of separation of the public from the private domains. Such a conception of religion cannot be deployed to sustain overt and covert modes of dominance but needs to factor in human dignity and equality, reason and human endeavour towards perfection, however incomplete such search might be. While he admired the central values infusing modernity such as liberty, equality and fraternity he eventually realized that they were not exclusive to the prevailing version of modernity and existing versions of modernity could rarely be considered their realisation. In fact, Ambedkar increasingly tended to delink the 'modern' project from its historical trajectory and projected it as a distinct way of being and relating to the world. The Buddha was the very embodiment of the most salient and noble in this project and was the beacon-light for mankind's future.

While the idea of the modern can assume several contextual articulations, there is a philosophical core to it which it shares across its diverse manifestations. It is particularly important to invoke this core because it articulates the relation between human condition and religion under modernity in very different ways in comparison with the past epochs.¹⁷ With modernity reason and human

17. For Ambedkar, two such past epochs of the trajectory of religion are singularly important: the mythological, when natural phenomenon was invested with human meanings and desiderata and religious-cosmological, when

experience are at the centre-stage. Truth-propositions have to validate themselves before reason and experience, affirming, critiquing or disapproving human action. It is not that modernity sets up an entire way of life, beliefs and practices but it definitely validates and invalidates them and should. Otherwise, human beings will allow their past, an un-reflected ascriptive past, to dictate terms to them. Buddhism becomes crucial to him in this encounter.

Ambedkar's critique of and acceptance of religions was normative and sociological, and different religions were differently situated in terms of this critique. The hermeneutic term that he adopted to develop these critiques were also varied and specific to religious formations. While he subjected some religions to a critique by employing universally justifiable arguments, others he critiqued for their embodied practices and drew attention to their lacunae manifest in their practices. He made deep historical forays while assessing Hinduism and Buddhism. In the rest of this paper we will discuss his critique of the different religions; His arguments for the defence of religion and why he thought that Buddhism answers some of the basic quests of man. In the process we will consider his conversion to Buddhism just before his death not as a mere episode but as his quest towards fulfillment that remained with him throughout his life.

Conception of Religion

Ambedkar wrote extensively on religion in different contexts. Two principal usages in which he employs the notion stand out: as a set of practices that ultimately revolve around the idea of God for their explanation and justification and irreducible to mere human endeavour and secondly, a set of practices that humans collectively ordain for themselves as their ideal. While the first conception is generally advanced when he discusses religions in a comparative perspective, the second stands out when he intervenes to pronounce a value judgment on the issue. As per the first usage, he said, "I take religion to mean the propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance the aim and object of which is to make the social order in which men live a moral order."¹⁸ Such an activist posturing is based on a threefold thesis : "1.That God exists and is the author of what we call nature or Universe 2. That God controls all the events which make nature and 3. God exercises a government over mankind in accordance with his sovereign moral law"¹⁹ To the extent that these theses are formulated through a process of reasoning and their consequences drawn, the system so constituted is natural theology, and if it is based on revelation it is revealed theology. Ambedkar does not see both these perspectives as in contradiction. Revelation can let the results of natural theology endorsed or give them 'richer and deeper meaning'. The constitution of such an ideal scheme and the moral order that is postulated on that basis could be through a process of evolution, stage by stage, or by revelation, as in what he calls positive religions. In the later case we have 'religious innovators', such as Jesus or Prophet Mohammad, laying down the divine scheme. Interestingly Ambedkar identifies, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam as positive religions.

But to what extent the ideal scheme proposed by such a conception of religion is defensible as ideal? What kind of criteria we employ for the purpose? Ambedkar thinks that for the purpose we

universal religions advanced explanations to natural and human condition, and human agency was situated within such explanations (See, B.R.Ambedkar, 'Philosophy of Hinduism', BAWs, Vol. 3, pp. 10-22)

18. B.R.Ambedkar, 'Philosophy of Religion', in BAWs, Vol. 3, p. 6

19. *ibid*

need to 'study the revolution that a religion has gone through': He thinks that initially religion is pervasive of all aspects of individual and social life. Soon the 'empire of religion' came to be highly circumscribed and such 'chopping of wild growth was a welcome process'²⁰. In the process of this shift 'the relation between God to man, of society to man and of man to man' underwent profound changes. In the savage society religion was primarily placatory and was expressed through magic, totem, tabu and fetish. But whether in the savage society or in the 'civilized', the end religion sought was 'life and the preservation of life'. The idea of God is not essential to subserve such an objective and the savage society did not have one. But a set of practices and morality came to be essential components of religion in the post savage phase. They were initially disconnected but came to be fused. Religion thereby came to mean the consecration of 'elemental facts of human existence', such as life, death, birth and marriage, and morality that 'furnishes rules for their preservation.'²¹

The domain that religion encompassed underwent a major change with the coming of modern society. In the antique society men were inhabitants of the same space. There was no distinction between the 'spheres of religion and of ordinary life' and there was kinship between God and men. Every group was tied up with their gods. Members of a society were inserted into a set of religious practices rather than having reasons for their beliefs. In modern times religion became a matter of inner conviction and 'reasoned belief'. While in the earlier stage external conformity was the most important thing in modern times inner convictions became its core concerns.²² The pre-modern society did not conceive God as universal but he was confined to one's own community. In the modern society God came to be distanced from his attachments to a community, people and nation. While the development of science restricted the scope of religion, which Ambedkar calls as external revolution, the internal revolution within religion recast it in fundamentally new ways: "By this revolution God has ceased to be a member of a community. Thereby he has become impartial. God has ceased to be the father of man in the physical sense of the word. He has become the creator of the universe. The breaking of this blood bond has made it possible to hold that God is good. By this revolution man has ceased to be a blind worshipper of God doing nothing but obeying his commands. Thereby man has become responsible person required to justify his belief in God's commandments by his conviction. By this revolution God has ceased to be merely the protector of society, and social interests in gross have ceased to be merely the centre of the divine order. Society and man have changed places as centres of this divine order. It is man who has become the centre of it"²³. Such a historical sociology of religion revolved a great deal on the contemporaneous discourse on comparative religions although it is not bereft of normative considerations. Some religions meet such criteria better than others while the others prove to be positively obnoxious.

In the second usage, strongly grounded in normative considerations, Ambedkar sees religion as a call for the universalization of values and human sympathies. It is a call that runs counter to a mechanical conception of the world, imparting meaning and purpose to things. It is a means by which society exercises control over the conduct of individuals transforming egoistic orientations to being sensitive to the concerns of the others. Quoting Charles A. Ellwood, he says, "Religion is the

20. Ibid, p. 9

21. Ibid., p. 12

22. Ibid, pp. 18-19

23. Ibid, p. 21

most powerful force of social gravitation without which it would be impossible to hold the social order in its orbit”²⁴ He sees it as a device that upholds the dignity of the most insignificant human beings and makes his actions to have infinite significance. He thinks that positivists, such as Comte, do not engage with such inclusive concerns. It persuades people to love one another and groom them to be respectful, just and humane to others. It cements community bonds and cherishes such virtues as gratitude, love, pity, benevolence and altruism. It makes a community to take reparative measures against the wrong done to others. In other words religion encompasses a whole set of moral dispositions, the complementary dispositions and the universal invocations of the same.

As per the second usage, the norm to judge a religion in modern times is not the utility that it serves but justice. It is the norm which enables people to decide what is right and wrong in the conduct of men. It cannot be merely construed as earthly norm, because it addresses the entire human totality. Justice as an inclusive norm connotes at the same time equality, ideas of proportion and compensation, right and righteousness and rules and regulations that go with them. In this sense it becomes inclusive of liberty, equality and fraternity and the ‘foundation of moral order.’²⁵

Ambedkar thought that religion engaged with some of the foundational issues and concerns of human existence such as the nature of the self and its relation to the other; the nature of the world and its place in the cosmos; human understanding and its bearing on human conduct; Ignorance and bliss; birth and death; human action and its consequences; the significance one assigns to inheritance and authority etc. He saw these issues and concerns as foundational to the conception of a moral order. Rights and invocation of rights become tenable only by foregrounding a moral order.

Critique of Existing Religions

Contextually Hinduism remained the other in Ambedkar’s contestations with religion and in the crafting of the modern project but I wish to suggest that the critique that he makes of Hinduism could be applied to any other religious formation to the extent that it embodies the attributes that he subjects to a critique in Hinduism. Ambedkar also takes stock of the arguments of the defenders of Hinduism, such as of Gandhi, saying that his critique is not merely directed at one set of beliefs and practices vis-à-vis others but the very normative grounding of Hinduism itself. In other words, he thought that mere social reforms, or for that matter, demonstration of the existence of a sane feature is not adequate in its defence. His focus was the core values and practices of Hinduism, what Gandhi called the *Sanatana Dharma*. He was deeply aware that Hinduism is deeply plural and diverse streams feed into it (Gandhi used the metaphor of a huge tree with different branches to denote it and compared it to the Ganges with its numerous tributaries.) At the same time like most of his nationalist contemporaries he thought that there were a set of core texts, beliefs and practices that it was woven around and they were constantly invoked to authoritatively negotiate across disputes and conflicts, and reinforce a position vis-à-vis another. It was not thin and nebulous as to be of no consequence. He also thought that protest movements such as *Bhakti* did not challenge this core and even when some of them did, the resources of its authority were deployed to ward off or contain the challenge.

The criteria that Ambedkar employed to critique Hinduism were not those deployed by such

24. Valerian Rodrigues, ed. *B.R. Ambedkar: Essential Writings*, op. cit., p. 227. The quote is from Charles A. Ellwood, *Sociology in its Psychological Aspects*, New York and London, D.Appleton & Co., 1912, p. 357

25. B.R. Ambedkar, ‘Philosophy of Religion’, op. cit. p. 25

monotheistic religions such as Islam or Christianity, but values central to the project of modernity. He inveighed Hinduism for denying human agency and freedom. He thought that Hinduism confined its members to a complex web of rules and regulations that assigned them and their actions to gradations and rankings which they themselves did not choose or work for. Those who found themselves at the receiving end of such a system had little to hope for in the present and were doled out deferred credits in future births. Therefore human action and its consequences could not be based on reasonable scrutiny and anticipation. Such a religion made the privileges of some and the miseries of others wholly justified and inscrutable. The theory of social practice that inscribed this religious formation had little relation to action and its palpable consequences, and consequently there was no reasonable correlation between agency and affirmation of one's own self. At the same time it had enormous power in sustaining the misery of some and the privileges of others. The injunctions inscribed in the texts of Hinduism may not work in a law-like fashion but given the social structures and the belief systems these texts tended to affirm and reinforce them rather than undermine them. Such a religion of course did not have respect for the worth and dignity of the human person. Those who exercised authority over such a religion remained absolutely unaccountable. The argument that Hinduism is a different religion and should be judged on its own terms rather than on a heteronomous basis was not just acceptable to Ambedkar. Religion was meant either for the welfare and fulfillment of man or it was simply superfluous. It is important to note that Ambedkar invested massively in re-crafting Hinduism and initially saw someone like Gandhi as his ally in the process. He greatly admired Justice Mahadeo Ranade for championing rights and freedoms upfront. The reforms in the Hindu code Bill that he envisaged, as his adversaries understood correctly, was intended to be a frontal assault on what he thought was the normative basis of Hinduism.

With regard to Christianity he had both theological and sociological problems. He thought that several theological truths of Christianity were not comprehensible to human reason and therefore were simply an imposition over the believers in the name of faith, such as Jesus being God or the idea of Trinity. Ethically the notion of suffering that Christianity upheld would lead to mischievous consequences as he found in the gleeful regard in which the 'Sermon on the Mount' was appreciated by people like Gandhi. He thought that such notions may have detrimental consequences against the struggles of the oppressed for emancipation in this world. He was quite aware of the bliss that the *Karma* doctrine promised to a subservient self and mainstream Christian ethics was largely in tune with such an approach. Ambedkar also did not think highly of the devices adopted by Christianity to spread itself across the world. He refers to the generous use of the sword in the process of evangelization and the complicity of Christianity in colonial expansion. In terms of its embeddedness in sociological practices he referred to the continuing caste practices within Christianity and its failure to respond to this challenge effectively. Therefore Christianity did not seem a reasonable proposition.²⁶

With regard to Islam Ambedkar had three important issues to raise. The first concerned his general stand with regard to any theistic religion and the larger arguments regarding the existence of God and the soul. The second argument was with regard to the finality of the prophet and the revelation. The finality argument he felt is an affront to human creativity and new possibilities. He thought that a set of substantially revealed propositions impose an authority on

26. There is little evidence to suggest that his rejection of Christianity has anything to do with cultural reasons.

the creative possibilities of human reason that were uncalled for. Finally he thought that Islamic formations have rarely succeeded in undermining social gradations and hierarchies and have tended to live with them. However, he was much appreciative of the relative egalitarianism that prevailed in societies where Islam had come to be embedded. However, as in the case of Christianity, he was deeply apprehensive of force and coercion that a set of given truths can enforce on believers and unbelievers alike.

Ambedkar is not less scathing towards existing Buddhisms. He found them trapped in their formal discourses, unable to respond to the world. Their stances had little to do with the teachings of the Buddha. The existing Buddha Sangha had become 'a huge army of idlers' lost in empty pursuit of 'meditation or idleness'. He called it 'deadwood' unable to inspire people in the present.

Recrafting Modernity through Buddhism

Given the embodied religions and their track records, what is the space for religion under modernity? Conversely, how would religion look like when you foreground it in reason, experience and core human concerns, including suffering. Ambedkar thought that religion as myth had little capacity to sustain itself under modernity where reason had inserted itself as the arbitrator of truth and human freedom is constantly open to newer possibilities. Revealed religions to the extent they make the believers adhere to and practice a substantial set of principles have little capacity to validate themselves in the longer run. He drew up an array of arguments against the existence of God from the stock of Buddhist tradition and thought that the argument of *Patit Samutpad*, dependant origination, finally nailed down the belief in an ultimate being²⁷. To the extent religions foster a faith in God and in a soul to that extent he thought they can stand little scrutiny of reason.²⁸

The Buddha marks the possibility of what a human being could be. His persona is not merely a radical reassertion of the world but also an engagement with it with the full potentiality of what a human being can be. He does not offer a body of substantial truths for men to adhere and assent to but invites them to a fulfillment which, although extraordinary, is within the reach of every man and woman. He is not a *moksha data* (savior) but a *marga data* (guide). Good reason and sustained enquiry are the hallmarks of his endeavour. You can reason with him and he is prepared to correct himself. At the same time, he has waded his way through all the knowledge systems that claimed truth for themselves. He has practiced the most stringent ascetic practices, eventually to reject them for the middle path. In this sense he embodies the modern spirit to the fullest extent possible. The Buddha draws attention to the centrality of mind and consciousness.²⁹ At the same time, for Ambedkar, *Nibbana* is a radical assertion of our belongingness to the world. It does not refer to the salvation of the soul but the happiness of a sentient being in this world. It denotes control over

27. The argument of dependent causation stated that nothing can be caused out of nothing. Either God has caused the Universe from something or he has not caused it at all. If he has caused it from something then it preceded his action and disproves creation or His sole primordial existence. For the arguments see, B.R.Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma: A Critical Edition*, Aakash Singh Rathore and Ajay Verma, eds., New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2011, p.136

28. For the arguments against the soul, see, *Ibid.*, p. 138-141

29. "Mind precedes things, dominates them, creates them. If mind is comprehended, all things are comprehended....The first thing to attend to is the culture of the mind. The second.....is that mind is the fount of all the good and evil that arises within, and befalls us from without. The thirdis the avoidance of all sinful acts. The fourth is that real religion lies not in the books of religion, but in the observance of the tenets of religion.". B.R.Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma: A Critical Edition*, p. 62

flames of passion to enable one to walk on the path of righteousness.³⁰

In the *Buddha and His Dhamma* Ambedkar attempts to hammer hard the distinction between *Dhamma* from *Dharma*, and religion from right conduct. *Dhamma* is concerned with man and 'the relation of man to man in this life on earth'. Its foundation lies in 'recognition of suffering and the way of removing suffering'. Following the path of purity, of righteousness and of virtue is the only way of eliminating suffering. *Dhamma* does not merely draw our attention to the existence of suffering but lays equal stress on its removal. For the purpose *avijja*, 'ignorance of the existence of suffering' has to be removed. To the contrary, *Dharma* lays stress on duties and obligations, rituals and ceremonies, God and soul. Its injunctions and stipulations often run counter to reason and morality. Its stress lies in individual salvation rather than social good. Engaging with human suffering is rarely its priority.

One of Ambedkar's continuing themes of emphasis, including in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* was that our existence revolves around a set of principles without which human beings cannot be human and human existence can be little reproduced. These principles are closely bound with social good. He argued that a conducive community in constant and continuous interaction and deliberation is a necessary condition for the fullest development of the self. Such a community accepts one another as equals while constantly begetting conditions of sustaining such equality. He was one of the first to register the argument that a person can fulfill himself only in encounter with others and ample opportunities of critical interaction were important in this regard.³¹ But above all he thought that it was only in and through freedom that human beings can be open creatively towards the future. In many ways for Ambedkar this creative openness to the future was divine and held up a criterial benchmark to human striving. There was a strong immanentistic conception of the divine which marked this understanding in tune with the Upanishadic strivings, that he appreciated, although he decried the latter striving for depreciating community bonds and responsibility on one hand and prioritizing the transcendental domain on the other.

Ambedkar reinterpreted the *Kamma* doctrine and the idea of recompensation for action in tune with his radical assertion of the world. *Kamma* for him is the instrument of moral order in the world. It rests on man's action. *Kushala* (good) and *akushala* (bad) consequences are its products. While the former sustains the entire social order, the latter deforms and undermines it. *Kamma* does not necessarily recoil on the doer but on the entire moral order. The responsibility to sustain a moral order therefore befalls on the whole community. The progeny inherits the effects of the *Kamma* not through the transmigration of deeds but the bearing that a person's actions have on the entire community. We find him stressing over and over again that the *Kamma* doctrine of the Buddha is in tune with reason and science, and far removed from the theory of transmigration of the soul in Brahmanical Hinduism.

Ambedkar thought that an ideal vision of human life was already anticipated in the person of the Buddha. He has shown the path of such realization. There was no reason why it could not be retrieved in the present. In fact all his arguments tended to suggest such a retrieval. He did extensive forays into Buddhist literature, the scriptures as well as the commentaries, and thought that such a strain of thinking is appropriate to the present.³² There was much that he decried in

30. Ibid, pp. 125-127

31. See B.R.Ambedkar, "Evidence Before the Southborough Committee", *BAWS*, Vol. 1, Mumbai, Government of Maharashtra, 1979, pp.243-278

32. Christopher Queen points out that he found in Ambedkar's collection over two hundred and fifty books on Buddhism heavily marked with Ambedkar's comments, approvals and disapprovals apart from the Buddhist Cannon. See Christopher Queen, "Ambedkar's Dhamma: Source and Method in the Construction of Engaged

existing Buddhism and he thought that interpolations are galore in Buddhist scriptures. But if one can wade through such sediments and brazen and interested partisanship the teachings of the Buddha, his person and his actions, constitute the normative ground for the human future particularly in the context of oppression and marginality. The Buddha was the very embodiment of reason as enlightenment. He sought to found a community grounded in morality. But the sphere of morality itself came to be redefined to encompass all human relations, and relations between the human on one hand and nature on the other. There were no obstacles that were placed on the path of anyone to access such a community and its processes were foregrounded on deliberative reasoning. There was a deep concern for human self-fulfillment in his teachings, while admitting the limitations of the human condition. Ambedkar's Buddha is a joyous person, adorable as a human ideal, and his face is turned towards the world rather than withdrawn from it.

This formulation of Buddhism bonds harmoniously with Ambedkar's conception of social order, public institutional vision and policy. At the same time, it is infinitely open to the future for review and recrafting. For him this was not a version of Buddhist modernity, but the only feasible version of modernity. He thought that eventually all other perspectives on modernity, including those religiously inspired, will veer round this position as it was the most reasonable perspective to hold on to.

Invocation of Tradition as Modern

The authenticity of the sayings and actions of the Buddha that we encounter in Ambedkar's writings has been a subject of much comment over the years. The issue relates to the status of Ambedkarite or Navayana Buddhism within the fold of Buddhism and the acceptance of Ambedkar's *The Buddha and His Dhamma* as embodying the authentic teachings of the Buddha. Three issues are significant in this context:

1. Canonicity of the teachings of the Buddha: This issue became highly pertinent in Buddhist Studies in the West in the later part of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Its significance however, has much to do with the debate on *Historical Jesus* within Biblical scholarship rather than being an issue within the practices of existing Buddhist communities. Many scholars however disputed whether the question of canon as raised in Christianity can be applied to the teachings of the Buddha³³. Ambedkar himself seriously disputed the existence of a canon of the teachings of the Buddha.

2. To what extent Ambedkar's magnum opus, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, is a true rendering of the teachings of the Buddha, even if one does not accept the existence of a canon. Within a couple of year of the publication of the text, the *Mahabodhi* commented that the book's title "should be changed from '*The Buddha and his Dhamma*' to that of '*Ambedkar and His Dhamma*' for he preaches non-dhamma as dhamma for motives of political ambition and social reform."³⁴. Subsequently, many others have repeated the argument that Ambedkar puts his own pet project in the mouth of the Buddha.

However, an increasing chorus of scholarship over the years has come to vouch that much of the

Buddhism", in Surendra Jondhale and Johannes Beltz, *op.cit.*, 132-150

33. Vasudha Dalmia, Angelika Malinar, and Martin Chrostof, eds., *Charisma and Canon: Essays on the Religious History of the Indian Subcontinent*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2001; Janet A. Contursi, 'Political Theology: Text and Practice in a Dalit Panther Community', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 2, (May, 1993) and Christopher S. Queen, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, Albany, N.Y., State University of New York Press, 1996

34. Jivaka, Book Review: *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, *Mahabodhi*, 68 (December, 1959)

The Buddha and His Dhamma is taken from a large body of the teachings of the Buddha and studies and reflections on Buddhism.³⁵ Admittedly, Ambedkar casts this body of retrievals into a framework distinctive to his own.

3. What is the legitimacy of the mode of retrieval and interpretation that Ambedkar employed in the *Buddha and His Dhamma*? Can there be a plethora of readings of tradition that invoke the same doctrine. Are there possible readings of tradition sanctioned by tradition itself?

Ambedkar, of course, rejected any privileged tradition, and interpretation resting on the same. His primary endeavour was not to create a separate Buddhist identity but to capture the modern project and make it morally sensitive and politically emancipatory. He thought that Buddhism eminently lends itself for the purpose.³⁶

Conclusion

There are several loose ends in Ambedkar's conception of religion as well as its relation to modernity that he set out to explore. We could highlight some of them by outlining his central argument: He ardently felt that modernity, devoid of a religious underpinning, would lend itself to a mechanical course of affairs and in the process sustain multiple modes of dominance. Religion therefore becomes foundational to craft a human and humane world. But any religion will not do. Such a religion must be the 'right religion' that took into account the robust achievements of modernity. He thought that a religion informed by modern reason has not much to trust in a transcendental domain or an essentialised self. Such a religion must encompass the highest possible strivings of every human being and through associated ways extends the necessary compassion and support to pursue the same. Such associated ways of life must be fair and should not come in the way of freedom of pursuit. They should be open to critical reflection and transformative action. Such an association of human beings arraigns itself against all modes of domination over man and nurtures the appropriate social relations for the purpose. He argued that the Buddha and his Dhamma epitomized such an association. They demonstrated what is possible for human beings in association, imbued with the right perspective and disposition, to achieve. Ambedkar's was a radical reassertion of this world and its finality for human striving. But it was also a world open to the future and to cosmic promptings.

While he deferred to the freedom of people to choose their religions, he also found existing religions wanting in many respects. But he saw them undergoing great transformation under the impact of modernity. Such a transformation had a definite slope towards accepting the worth of human beings, their dignity and autonomy, and the finality of the world itself. In fact, he found Buddhism endorsing all such values. These values were foundational to the constitution of a just society. A religion invoking such values cannot be private. It cannot but engage itself with other conceptions that claim to be religions openly and publicly. Buddhism, in such formulation, becomes human reason and compassion writ large which however respond to myriad quotidian practices and ways of life.

Some of the significant loose ends in this argument are the following:

35. See Bhikhu Anand Kausalyayan, trans., *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (in Hindi), 1971; Adele Fiske and Christoph Emmrich, "The Use of the Buddhist Scriptures in B.R. Ambedkar's *The Buddha and his Dhamma*", in Surendra Jondhale and Johannes Beltz, ed., op. cit., pp. 97-119 and B.R. Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma – A Critical Edition*, op.cit.

36. Ambedkar was not short on hermeneutics in defence of his reading of Buddhism. See, Valerian Rodrigues, 'Reading Texts and Traditions: the Ambedkar-Gandhi Debate', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVI No.2, pp.56-66

1. Religion as a scheme of divine governance intended to transform the social order into a moral one cannot be easily reconciled to the other which sees religion as a set of practices that humans collectively give to themselves as their ideal. There is much tension in attempting to reconcile between an ideal scheme reaching down to man and an ideal scheme being reworked through human endeavour and available for continuous reevaluation. Ambedkar's historical sociology and normative ideal were a mismatch.

2 There is much confusion in Ambedkar with regard to the status of Buddhism. Sometimes he sees it is a religion, and at other times as an ideal scheme grounded in reason, i.e., *dhamma*. This confusion partly owes to the confusion on the conception of religion.

3. Ambedkar's understanding of *Kamma Niyama* could undermine both responsibility and freedom. If the consequences of an action do not have a pertinent bearing on the concerned agent, but have a wider impact on the community/world, responsibility could be undermined. On the contrary, anticipating the impact of an agents' action on the larger community/society, if an agent is closely monitored/disciplined then the scope of personal freedom will be compromised.

4. There are very strong themes drawn from the Upanishads and the Sankhya Philosophy, deeply mired in immanentism that insinuate his understanding of the ideal order. I think there is an element of deism too that gets into the picture. Whether God exists or not is not an important query at all because human beings collectively have to govern the destiny of themselves and the universe.

5. Ambedkar is far too overconfident about the power of human reason. His celebration of the Buddha is in many ways is a celebration of the reach and capacity of human reason. This makes him to invoke Buddhism as possibly the spirit of the modern times and almost propose it as the anticipation of an ideal modernity. Ambedkar underestimates the power of the revealed religions to hold on and reach out to other significant domains. In the process however one does not know what Buddhism holds out in addition to what human beings can collectively give unto themselves. Ambedkar's commitment to a plurality of religions too seems dubious since he thinks that Buddhism is a more defensible religion in comparison with others. In his scheme of things they need to eventually give way. In fact the scheme proposed by Ambedkar seems to be something that Shankaracharya proposed where reason seems to be the ultimate but the masses may have to have religious affiliations because otherwise they will have little else to commit themselves to a moral order.

A moral order is a human design, grounded in reason. You do not need to invoke religion for the purpose. By instituting Buddhism as some sort of absolute moral order Ambedkar seems to place it beyond the reach of human beings and to be accepted as some sort of truth. What is the special status of this truth which he seems to shroud in a mystique in *The Buddha and His Dhamma*? The esoteric elements in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* cannot be simply wished away in the work.

6. Religions as a way of life cannot be merely consequences of evaluative reasoning on a continuous basis. In such a case its impact on day to day life is either going to be too thin or day to day life will define such religion in its own way. Ambedkar probably recognized it and made his adherents to take the additional vows at the *Deeksha* ceremony in Nagpur following his own embracing of Buddhism. In this regard, the attempt of Sakya Buddhism pioneered by Iyothee Thass and others was full of promise. Ambedkar was very aware of this experiment and studied it closely but his own apprehensions that collapse into identity may offset search for universality made him to be cautious towards this and similar other identitarian considerations.

But there is no doubt that in his search for a religion anchoring public life, in the context of religious pluralism, Ambedkar had little choice but to think of a religion of the kind such as

Buddhism. In the process, he also reached out to a complex body of thought in India which related the transcendent to man's striving after perfection.

Negotiating with ‘Caste’: A Case of Buddhist-Dalits in Contemporary Uttar Pradesh

Kenta FUNAHASHI

1. Introduction

It is often said that the ‘caste system’ is tightly linked to Indian society and the life-world of Indians. ‘Untouchables’ (Dalits) are people who have been positioned/oppressed at the bottom of this system. There have been many Untouchable liberation movements/Dalit movements, especially since Independence, and Buddhist movements are one type of these movements. Numerous Dalits have converted to Buddhism and this tendency has gradually increased since Dr. Ambedkar’s great conversion.

In this short article, I will focus on one group of these ‘Converted Buddhists’, the Chamar Buddhist-Dalits living in contemporary Uttar Pradesh. In western Uttar Pradesh, Buddhist-Dalits are a small minority and most of their relatives and affinities are Hindus. This situation is worth considering, especially compared with the situation in Maharashtra. On the one hand they are claiming that their ancestors were Buddhists, and on the other they believe in Ravidas, a medieval Chamar sant (saint-poet). Both the Buddha and Ravidas were egalitarians and ‘egalitarianism’ is attractive for Dalits. Buddhist-Dalits are selectively observing religio-ritual practices in order to maintain their relationships with their relatives and affinities, and Ravidas is functioning as the point of connection linking the Buddhist-Dalits and Hindu-Dalits.

By analyzing their religio-ritual practices and their narratives, I will consider how they live/negotiate with ‘caste’, and concretely speaking, how they live/negotiate with their relatives and affinities.

2. Background and Some Issues

It is helpful to begin with an explanation of some of the key terms in this article.

First, ‘Buddhist-Dalits’ are ex-‘Untouchables’ who converted from Hinduism. In western Uttar Pradesh, most have their origins in the Jatav or Chamar community. They have often been called ‘Neo-Buddhists’ though they themselves dislike this name.

Second, the Chamar are the large ‘Untouchable’ community in North India. They have traditionally worked as tanners, leather workers, shoemakers, village servants, tenants and so on [Briggs 1999; Cohn 2004; Khare 1984; Singh 2002]. In my research field, they are mostly working as factory workers, agricultural labourers, and daily-wage labourers.

Next, I will identify two main actors in the conversion to Buddhism in western Uttar Pradesh. One is Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956). He was (and still is posthumously) the prominent leader of the Dalits. He was born in a family of Mahar, which is one of the most numerous ‘Untouchable’ castes in Maharashtra, in 1891. He studied hard and finally earned Ph.D.s at both Columbia University in the United States and the London School of Economics in the United Kingdom. Dr. Ambedkar declared his renunciation of Hinduism in 1935 and embraced Buddhism in 1956. He passed away about two months after having embraced Buddhism.



Fig. 1 The Statue of Dr. Ambedkar in Village V

The other actor is the Buddhist Society of India. This organization was founded by Dr. Ambedkar himself in 1955, so they have strong reason for insisting on their ‘legitimacy’. The purposes of the Society are the spread of Buddhism and the conducting of Buddhist rituals. This means that they have been doing only ‘religious’ activities. The Society has thus been leading a Buddhist movement in western Uttar Pradesh.

I will now discuss some of the issues of this article in relation to previous studies. There are two main research topics related to this article: one is Dalit studies and the other is Buddhist-Dalit studies [Fitzgerald 1997].

Concerning Dalit studies, most recent studies have been focusing on the identity of Dalits. They posit Dalits’ self-reflection, as well as the re-interpretation and assertion of the identity of Dalits. Here we can see that Dalits are considering their own ‘Past’ well. You can find many such studies focusing on Dalit identity [Khare 1984; Deliège 1993; Dube 2001; Lamb 2002; Ciotti 2006; Arun 2007; Narayan 2008].

Regarding Buddhist-Dalit Studies, most of the previous studies have insisted on the feature of ‘discontinuity’ with Hindus [Beltz 2004, 2005; Burra 1996]. However, I think it is better to think of ‘conversion’ not in terms of discontinuity but of ‘continuity’ [Viswanathan 2001; Heredia 2004]. In this way, we can see how they live with the majorities more clearly.

In this article, I will focus on the consideration and re-interpretation of the ‘Past’ of Buddhist-Dalits. They are asserting themselves as descendants of the Buddha as well as of Ravidas. Both these revered figures were insisting on ‘egalitarianism’. Finally, I will highlight some practices that are conducted as Buddhist or as Chamar, and then a selection of practices that are basically related to Hinduism.

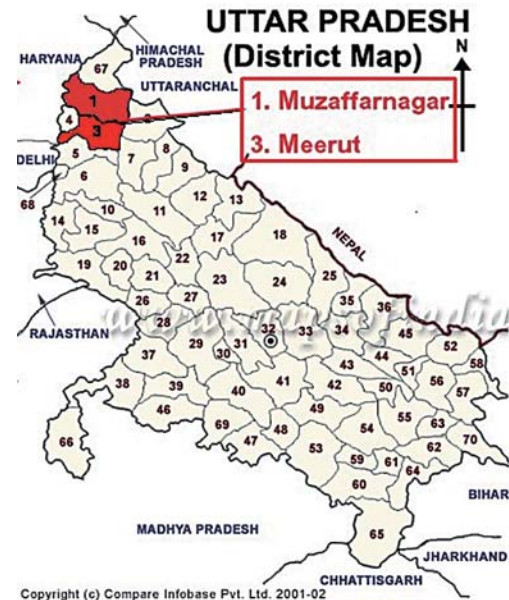
3. The research

I conducted the first component of my field research in February–May 2003 and June–October

2004 (a total of 9 months) in Meerut city, western Uttar Pradesh. There I researched about Dalit movements, especially Buddhist movements (the Buddhist Society of India), their organizations and leaders. The second component was carried out in March 2003, then from April 2005 to February 2006, and finally in March 2009 (a total of 13 months). I lived in the village V in the Muzaffarnagar district, western Uttar Pradesh, and researched the everyday practices and ritual practices of Buddhist-Dalits.



Map 1 India



Map 2 Uttar Pradesh



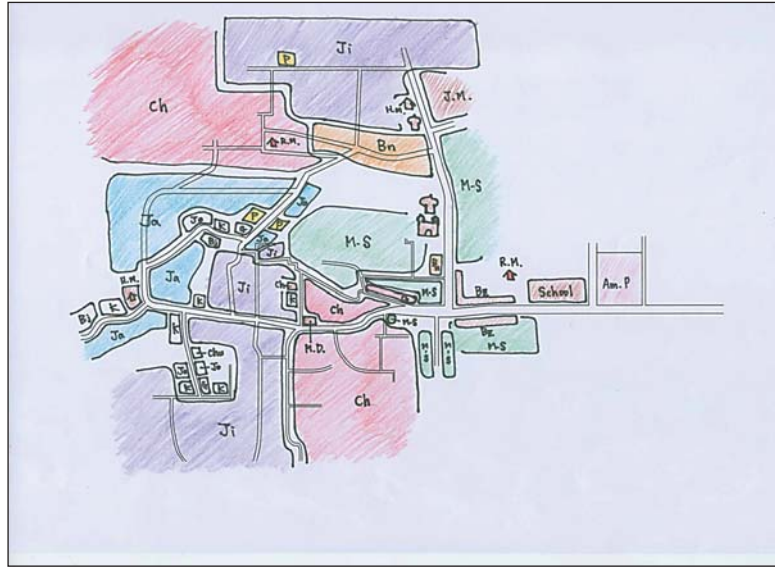
Map 3 Meerut District and Meerut City



Map 4 Muzaffarnagar District and Village V

4. The case study

Next, I will describe the case study. Map 5 is a map of village V, and you can see the Chamar residential areas (the focus of my study) in red on the borders of the village. The population of village V is 3,982 according to the 2001 census. Scheduled castes, specifically the Chamars, comprise about 21% of the population (847 people), and this includes the 237 Buddhists (37 households, 120 males and 117 females) counted in March 2009.



Map 5 Village V

Fig. 2 is the graph of the population composition of village V by ‘caste’. The most populous caste is the Jinwar, who are OBCs (Other Backward Classes), and the second largest caste is the Chamar.

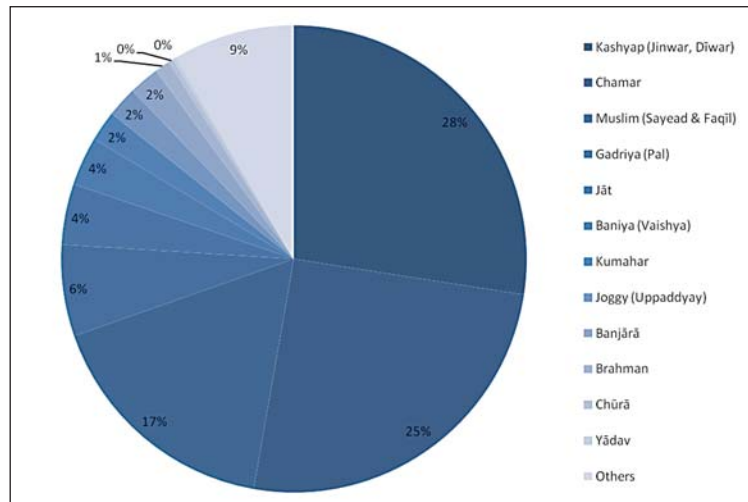


Fig.2 The Population Composition of Village V by ‘Caste’

Most of ‘Buddhist-Dalits’ living in village V participated in a *Diksha* (conversion) ceremony led by the leaders of the Meerut branch of the Buddhist Society of India in 1996. They have a strong adherence to ‘egalitarianism’, and they regard Buddhism as their ancestral, original religion. Additionally, they have great respect for Dr. Ambedkar.

i. Buddhist Practices

I will now discuss some practices currently being conducted as Buddhist. The first example is the Name-Giving Ceremony. This is the ritual of giving a name to a newborn baby. Participants make an altar with a portrait of the Buddha, flowers, candles, incense and so on. The second example is *Dhamma Jijaya*. This ritual is held on the same day as *Dasahrā*. On this day, while Hindus and some Buddhists are celebrating *Dasahrā*, some Buddhists instead pray to Buddha.

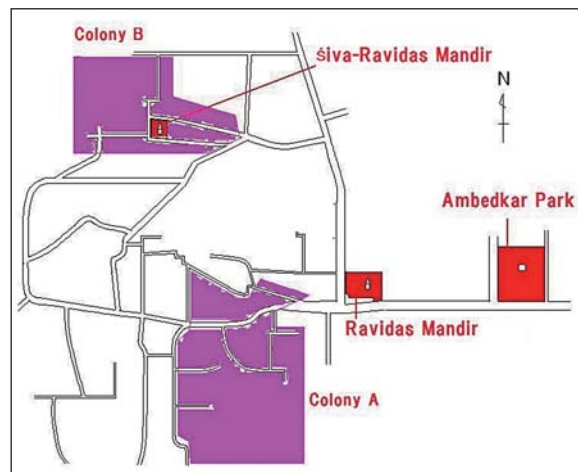
This ritual practice shows their strong assertion as Buddhists.

ii. Chamar Practices

One example of the practices of the Chamar is the case of *Ravidas Jayantī*. Here we can consider Ravidas as a point of connection between Buddhists and Hindus. Ravidas lived in Varanasi around the 15th century. He was a sant (saint-poet) of the Hindu Bhakti movement and was born in a Chamar family. It is said that he was an egalitarian and objected to the caste system and all discrimination.



Fig. 3 The Statue of Ravidas in the Ravidas Mandir near Colony A



Map 6 A Rough Map of Village V

Map 6 is a rough map of village V. There are two Ravidas mandirs (temples) in this village: one is near colony A and the other is in colony B. The Ravidas Mandir near colony A has a statue of Ravidas only, while the Śiva-Ravidas Mandir at colony B has statues of both Ravidas and Śiva.

For the day of the *Ravidas Jayantī*, residents organized committees; in the case of colony A, it consisted mostly of Buddhists and in colony B, Hindus. They planned some events of the *Jayantī*

separately. On the day of the *Jayantī*, colony A had special guests from Muzaffarnagar town: members of the Lord Buddha Club, though there is no direct linkage between Ravidas and the Buddha. Meanwhile at colony B, they were performing a puja dedicated to Ravidas, Ganesh and Śiva. This was the big difference between the two committees' events. However, in the afternoon, those in colony B formed a band of musicians and started marching through the village, and the residents of colony A gradually joined this march. In the end, both groups were dancing enthusiastically.

We can thus think of Ravidas as the core element for Chamars. Buddhists believe in Ravidas because he was an egalitarian and was born into a Chamar family. Buddhists also do not disconnect with that which is their own past, that is, their caste of Chamar. And for both Buddhists and Hindus, Ravidas is a great presence and is functioning as the point of connection tying them together.

iii. Selectively Observing Religio-Ritual Practices

Here, I will illustrate some religio-ritual practices that are selectively observed. First, you can see the genealogy of a man named Aman in Figure 4. Aman is a 'Buddhist-Dalit', but you can discern that not all his relatives and affinities are Buddhists. You can also see that in general, the people who are living in village V are Buddhists but the others are not.

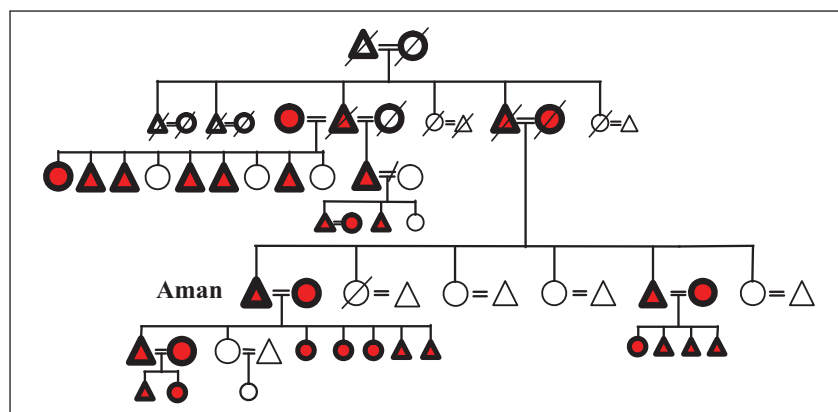


Fig. 4 The Genealogy of Aman
(Bold: Living in Village V; Red: Buddhist)

The photos below depict the marriage ritual of Aman's second daughter (Fig. 5, 6). You can discern that this ritual is conducted in a Hindu way. Concerning this point, the following quotations are from narratives of the bride's family members:

This ritual is not *Bauddh Dharm* but *Hindū Dharm*.

(Sisters of the bride)

There is no problem with being married to a Hindu. The bridegroom's father doesn't believe in superstition (*andhvishvās*). He is a Hindu but has much knowledge. He knows well about Dr. Ambedkar and Ravidas-jī.

(The Father of the bride)

Family members of the bridegroom strongly requested Hindu rituals. If they were not

performed, the engagement would have been dissolved. So we finally agreed reluctantly.

(The Mother of the bride)

The difference between the above comments of the mother and father is especially interesting. At any rate, we can determine that there was some negotiation between the bride's family and bridegroom's.



Fig. 5, 6 The Marriage Ritual of Aman's Second Daughter

I will now shift to a case concerning the *Dīwālī* festival. Fig. 7-9 are photos of the day of *Karvā Cauth*, and all those pictured are Buddhists. *Karvā Cauth* is related to Hinduism, but Buddhist-Dalits observe the practice. It can be thought that they observe it because *Karvā Cauth* functions to bond the marital relationship. One husband said, "There is a *Pūjā* dedicated to God, but we don't do it. We do only the husband and wife's ritual".



Fig. 7, 8, 9 Scenes of the Day *Karvā Cauth*

The next example concerns *Bhāī Dūj*. Of the *Dīwālī* festival, the 3rd day is the main *Dīwālī*, the 4th day is *Govardhan Pūjā*, and the 5th day is *Bhāī Dūj*. In case of the Aman family, during the *Dīwālī* festival, they observed only *Bhāī Dūj*. *Bhāī Dūj* has a function in the maintenance of relationships with family and relatives, regardless of whether they are Hindu or Buddhist. The Aman family said, "This is a festival about brothers and sisters".

With these examples briefly described, I would like to propose some considerations on these rituals. Firstly, in the case of marriage rituals, the style of the rituals depends on negotiations between the families. Secondly, in the case of the *Dīwālī* festival, decisions depend on the meanings and the functions of the rituals, which is the bonding of family ties. Thus, we can say that it is better to consider conversion not as discontinuity but as continuity.

5. Concluding remarks

Now, I will make a few concluding remarks. In this article, I tried to examine how Buddhist-Dalits live and negotiate with their own 'caste'. And for that purpose, I focused on their consideration of their own 'Past', and analyzed their narratives and religio-ritual practices. The following are narratives about the reasons for their conversion regarding their own 'Past':

We Indians were all Buddhists in ancient times. Buddhism is our ancient religion (*purānā dharm*). So we believe in Buddhism.

(Male, Forties, Factory worker)

We embraced Buddhism, as Buddhism is our ancestors' religion. We didn't change religion. We accept our ancestors' religion.

(Male, Sixties, Farmer)

As we can see, Buddhist-Dalits are asserting their identity as Buddhists. Buddhism is a religion with Indian origins and is a world religion. Thus, they can strongly assert their linkage not with Hinduism but with India [Khare 1984: 6]. One final point: Buddhist-Dalits believe in both the Buddha and Ravidas, as they were egalitarians. Buddhist-Dalits can negotiate with Hindu-Chamars by balancing being Buddhist and Chamar, because they believe in the Buddha and Ravidas, that is, they believe in 'Equality'.

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Role and Network of Buddhist Institution in Bijapur, Karnataka ~ Renaissance of Indian Buddhist ~

Miki ENOKI

Map1: India Map



Map2: Karnataka Political Map



Table1: Religious Population in India

Religious Composition	Population	%
Hindus	827,578,868	80.5
Muslims	138,188,240	13.4
Christians	24,080,016	2.3
Sikhs	19,215,730	1.9
Buddhists	7,955,207	0.8
Jains	4,225,053	0.4
Other Religious & Persuasions	6,639,626	0.6
Religion not specified	727,588	0.1
Total	1,028,610,328	100.0

(Source: Census of India 2001)

1. Research Assignment

1-1. Purpose of the Study

The conversion to Buddhism in India, in recent years, has been found active even in southern part of Nagpur city which is the epicenter of the Buddhist movement. This movement is introduced by Reverent Bodhi Dhamma¹, popularly known as Bhadant Bodhi Dhamma in India. He has taken

1. Reverend Bodhi Dhamma was born in 1961 in Nagpur, Maharashtra, India. His family belongs to Mahar, Untouchable. Although his family has been Buddhist, the family registered as Mahar, Hindu. He did not have any consciousness of his root till he became high school student. When he was a high school student, he was discriminated by caste Hindus and has realized his root since then. Because of this, he took monkhood under Reverent Shurei Sasai's supervision beyond the caste consciousness. By Rev. Sasai's introduction, he went to study Buddhism at *Nihonzan Myohoji*, one of Japanese Buddhist temple, at Bodhgaya, Bihar for 2 years. In 1986 (when he

this initiative since 2000s especially in southern part of India such as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The historical event that made the strong flush in South India was Mass Conversion with 80,000 people in Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka.

In the same year of the mass conversion, he built the Bodhi Satva Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Bhikhu Academy, Indo-san Sogenji Zen Monastery, so-called *Zen-juku*, for their youths to learn Buddhist ideology in Bijapur city, Bijapur district, Karnataka. Those students are mainly from both Karnataka or Maharashtra. The students learn Buddhism, especially on Zen Buddhism in Japan, as well as school education in general, however, are encouraged to be a monk in future when he graduates the *Zen-juku*.

After the Mass Conversion in 1956, Buddhist movement in India has received huge attention from the view-point of the conversion to Buddhism, which is seen as swift, applicable and meaningful. On the other hand, it is difficult to distinguish the short or long-term concerns of observing one's faith and preserving of Buddhist community.

In this survey, role and network of the *Zen-juku* as a Buddhist Institution for the youth, will be examined through research upon actual situation of the organization that caters to the need of nurturing, motivation and attribution of these youths. Moreover, I try to verify Indian Buddhists' vision and real situation of their community, which work with the strategy of mid/long-term.

For this purpose, the *Zen-juku* in Bijapur, Karnataka is assumed to be a case study. Here, both Buddhist community and non-Buddhist community that has shown a certain degree of interest towards Buddhism are also clarified.

1-2. Research Methodology

In this research, to examine its role and network of the Bodhi Satva Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Bhikhu Academy, Indo-san Sogenji Zen Monastery, so-called *Zen-juku*, as a Buddhist Institution for the youth, I tried to study the social and individual environment and consciousness of the students of *Zen-juku* and his relatives. For this, I conducted house visit and interviewed to each student of *Zen-juku* and his relatives to ask their motivation and attribution of the individual who have chosen to get admission at this institution. House visits have helped to identify actual way of worship in the household as well as among the community.

1-3. Research Period

- 26 October ~ 4 November 2009: Preliminary Research, Center for the Study of Contemporary India, Ryukoku University (RINDAS) — Mainly in Mumbai, Bijapur (Karnataka), Gulbarga (Karnataka), Adilabad (Karnataka), Nagpur (Maharashtra)

14~26 October 2010: Field Research, The Research Center for Buddhist Cultures in Asia, Ryukoku University (BARC) — Mainly in Nagpur (Maharashtra), Bijapur (Karnataka), Gulbarga (Karnataka)

- 4~7 November 2010: Field Research, The Research Center for Buddhist Cultures in Asia, Ryukoku University (BARC)— Mainly in Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh), Bijapur (Karnataka), Gulbarga (Karnataka), Bidar (Karnataka)

was 25 years old), Rev. Genpo Fuji, a Japanese monk, introduced him to *Sogenji*, one of the temple of Rinzai-Zen Sect, Okayama, Japan. He studied Buddhism for 15 years. After 1995, he has worked in India at least 2 months in a year. Around 2000 (39 years old), he has put stress on his activities in India, especially in southern part than Nagpur city.

2. Buddhist Movement in South India

2-1. Bhante Bodhi Dhamma: Inheritance and Development of Ambedkar Thought

Rev. Bodhi was born in Mahar² family. Mahar is one of the major 'Untouchable' communities in Maharashtra. His mother tongue is Marathi. He took monk-hood when he was 18 years old under the initiation of Reverend Arya Nagarjuna Shurei Sasai³, so-called Bhante Shurei Sasai, and has led Buddhist movement with Rev. Sasai in Nagpur city. In 1994 at Nagpur, he has established IBYO (International Buddhist Youth Organization) – this was one of his first individual activities. After this he has gradually shifted his performance from Nagpur to whole South region of India.

He has a strong urge to communicate with downtrodden people those who are from outside of India. He was sometimes invited to Chamar community, an 'Untouchable' community, who immigrated from Punjab of India to United Kingdom. When these people visit temporarily to their hometown in Punjab, on their invitation, Rev. Bodhi also visits them and holds gathering among them. The Chamar Community has not embraced Buddhism, however, they have shown strong interest in Ambedkar⁴.

Rev. Bodhi wears monk's cloth. However, he spends more time and puts more stress on episode of Ambedkar, his publication and his speech rather than Buddhism related story such as Buddhist philosophy or *Jatakas*; stories of previous births of Buddha. During my visit too, he shared with me a lot of those things that were given by Ambedkar to downtrodden such as how can they inherit in a contemporary context, how can they conquer the discrimination. According to him, Ambedkar's thought, speech, achievement and all the effort should be understood and practiced equally for the understanding and realization of Buddhism. For him, knowing 'Ambedkar' means studying Buddhism and the Buddhism without understanding of Ambedkar is impossible.

He has a belief that the attribution and life of Ambedkar, beyond State and Language, gives a hope and show a path towards those people who are forced to be lived as 'Untouchable'. The word 'our people' is used frequently by Rev. Bodhi. This word means plural context that the people can share the experience although who may not be Mahar, the people who are forced to be 'Untouchable' and the people who are treated inhumanly by Caste Hindu. Although he has never

2. Mahar is the biggest Untouchable/Scheduled caste in Maharashtra. Their traditional occupation includes removal of dead animals, cleaning in front of the municipality office, messenger, watchman and so on. Especially their habit of eating cow is regarded as impure custom for Hindu religion.

3. Rev. Arya Nagarjuna Shurei Sasai (born on 30 August 1935). He was born in Okayama prefecture in west Japan, entered the monkhood in Shingon-sect in Japanese Buddhism in 1955 when he was 20 years old. In 1966 (31 years old) he went to study Buddhism in Thailand and then visited to India in 1967 (33 years old). At first, he took training at *Nihonzan Myohoji* Temple, Rajgir, Bihar. A day before of his departure to Japan, he received a message of Nagarjuna, went to Nagpur and accordingly become the voice and religious leader of Buddhist community. He took Indian nationality in 1987. In present, he is working actively to get the possession of the land and management committee in Maha Bhodi Buddha Vihar in Bodhgaya, Bihar since 1992. Besides, he started excavation of Buddhist remains in Mansar, Maharashtra. During BJP government in 2002, he had been chosen as member of National Minority Commission and was completed for 3 year terms.

4. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891 – 1956). Although he was born as Mahar in Konkan area, western coastline of India, he received higher study even though his strata. He went to study abroad such as USA, British, and Germany, eventually he became a lawyer in 1922. He started this career as a lawyer through the issue for the Untouchables at the same time he developed his political activities in Maharashtra during 1930-40s as a leader for liberation movement for the Untouchables. Labor Minister in 1942, Law Minister in 1947, and he drafted Constitution of India 1949. On 14th October, 1956, he took embracement for Buddhism with the mass of Mahars and passed away on 6th December, 1956. Indian Buddhist, so-called 'New Buddhist', pay respect to him as *Baba-saheb* (the father) or Bodhisatva. He is called as 'father of the Untouchable'. In recent situation, he is respected by the Scheduled caste and other people of the strata.

defined the exact meaning of the word, people who gather for the event, interpret the word and listen with tears sometimes. Rev. Bodhi gives his speech in Hindi, Marathi or English whereas occasionally eminent person of the community or his son translates into their local language if it is found necessary.

The activities of Rev. Bodhi have influenced nearly 2000 people in south India, especially to Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Thereafter, the figure reached to 80,000 people, supporting his activities and making it more popular in the southern region.

2-2. Flow and Pattern of the Gathering Organized by Rev. Bodhi Dhamma

Apart from the events of downtrodden community where Rev. Bodhi visits he also conducts initiation ceremony of Buddhism. At these occasions he formulates and organizes several other events before and after the initiation. Most of the communities are consisted only Holaya or Mahar although OBCs and Muslims lived closely with them. There is also the presence of ex-Naxalite activist within that community (within the territory of Andhra Pradesh).

He explains energetically on Ambedkar's thought, speeches and speaks about the concept of Buddhism. Sometimes he leads demonstration, cheers and chants for appealing the existence of Buddhist in and outside of the community. He advocates the use of words for greeting such as 'Jai Bhim'⁵, recommends the people to wear white cloth during the function of Buddhist and repeats common slogan.

The ceremony or gathering is usually held whenever Rev. Bodhi arrives at the village/town. Although there are different characteristics in accordance to locality and the community but then there are certain flow and pattern in common. It takes about 90-120 minutes from the beginning to the closing of function. These gatherings begin with the reception from the local residence and ends with the farewell by them. Chronological order of the flow and pattern is as follow;

- Member of IBYO come to receive the guest at hotel or at the main road of the venue.
- Reach at the venue
- Meeting with the member of IBYO or eminent person in the area
- The guests including Rev. Bodhi sits on the front chair. Majority of the people sits on ground or on the chair.
- Offer the lamp, flower and incense towards idol or picture of Buddha and Ambedkar
- Chant Buddhist sutras, most of the time it chants in Pali Language.
- Rev. Bodhi introduces the purpose of the visit including the guests
- Speech made by the guests
- Speech made by Rev. Bodhi
- Rev. Bodhi receives the donation
- Take pictures with Rev. Bodhi including the guests
- Move to a Buddhist temple, community hall or Buddhist residence along with Buddhist flag and so on.
- Eat a meal as a donation at the different place
- Rev. Bodhi expresses his thanks to the people who implemented the function
- Move to next venue

5. This word is based on the name of Bhimrao R. Ambedkar. Although the original meaning is 'victory of Bhim', people use it as 'viva Ambedkar'. As the greeting word 'Namaste', common in India, people use 'Jai Bhim' when people meet or see-off and so on. In case of more polite situation, people use the word with pressing their hands together as 'Namaste' does.



(Left to Right)

Picture 1: Youth leads our vehicle to the venue

Picture 2: Function in a town

Picture 3: Meeting at the residence of Buddhist

2-3. The Community that underwent Buddhist Initiation.

It is widely said that the mass initiation from Hindu to Buddhism has taken place among Mahar who are the largest Scheduled Caste community in Maharashtra. It is said that 75% of the Mahar is Buddhist [Zelliot1998: 127]. Even after the Mass Initiation in 1956, the initiation happens mostly in Maharashtra. The activities, which is implemented by Rev. Arya Nagarjuna Shurei Sasai, are applied in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh and within the Mahar community in most of the time. Therefore, the Mass Initiation to Buddhism is regarded as happening within the Mahar communities whose mother tongue is either Marathi or Hindi. Besides, in general, it is believed that the 90% of the Buddhist who took the Initiation in 1956 are from Mahar community. This is the reason why people have stigma that Buddhist means Mahar. Hence, around the Nagpur, the meaning of 'Bauddha' is Mahar in Marathi.

In this paper, I have underlined that all the communities that I had visited are communities of Scheduled Caste. When I asked their jati, they did replied just Holaya. I thought the name 'Holaya' is different from 'Mahar' but they are regarded same as Untouchables. Later I have found an interesting book written by Enthoven although we have to be careful because this book was written in 1922 under the British rule and was research on around Bombay in those days [Enthoven 2008(1922)]. According to him, Holaya is a sub-division of Mahars; a synonym for Holar and their dress and ornaments resemble the Mahar [Ibid.:74-75]. The Holaya are called 'sons of soil' as same as the Mahar who also is known as son of the soil (*Bhumiputra*) [Ibid.:75]. Moreover, in the social scale they occupy the same place as the Mahars of the Marathi-speaking districts and the Dhedas of Gujarat [Ibid.:81]. They eat carrion, cows and drink liquor as the Mahar does [Ibid.:80-81]. Regarding the occupation, the main occupation of the Hoyala is removing of dead animals, making sandals, and ordinary field work, especially at harvest time, watchmen, messenger and so on [Ibid.:80], which the Mahar owed traditionally.

In the research field, although I did not get any discourse that the Holaya is the sub-division of the Mahar, I assume that the one of the reason why Rev. Bodhi could access to the Holaya community is the similarity of the language, habit, the experience including the discrimination, which can be shared with the Mahars. If the Holaya is the sub-division of the Mahar in real sense, the easy-access towards the Holaya community strongly depends upon the affinity of the origin.

In case the Holaya whom I have met at the research field is the sub-division of the Mahar, in this sense, the movement of Buddhist could be termed as the activities within the community of Mahar in larger picture. However, as far as I have interviewed to them, the people of Holaya never admitted that they are one of the Mahar. Enthoven aside, if the person concerned have

distinguished themselves from the Mahar even though the third party alleged that they are similar, it is better to respect the feeling the person concerned. I will make it clear in further research.

2-4. Youth as their Future of Movement

Rev. Bodhi is keen to train youths at least since late 1990s. He maintains this view that the youth do not follow traditions and believe blindly as the elder generations do. The youth will also challenge if they find anything legitimate whereas it is also a challenging task to moderate the value of consciousness that the elder generations have went through. And here he is not dealing with simply a group of the monks, *Sanga*, but a very lay youth group, IBYO, Rev. Bodhi organized a gathering as a first step of his own activities when he returned from the study in Japan.

In all the places where I visited as a field worker, local IBYO or eminent youth fellow of the region organized the function and took care of reception, farewell and fooding, seeking necessary permission from the concerned department for the approval of public function. These youths have either heard or watched about the activities of Rev. Bodhi. As impressed by his movement, the key person then invites Rev. Bodhi to visit the community. Since he himself is passionate about involving the youth in his movement he doesn't miss these invitation but explores an opportunity to embrace as many of them as possible. It is not only once that he pays the visit but he keeps continuous visit to these communities. During any one of such visits, he assigned a Dalit youth, who could be between 20s to 40s of his age, active and sincere, to organize IBYO with an assignment to be achieved till his next visit. For instance, he will come there on this day, till then the youth has to collect and put all idols of the Hindu Gods at one place from each and every house hold of the village.

Rev. Bodhi always emphasize upon training the future leader who can represent 'Ambedkar' and preserve Buddhism. He believes that this could be done with the involvement of youth as mentioned above and with Zen-juku as mentioned-below.



(Left to Right)

Picture 4: Prayer by Buddhist youth in front of the statue of Ambedkar

Picture 5: A monk leads the offering

Picture 6: Gathering of the youth in front of the statue of Ambedkar

3. The Bodhi Satva Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Bhikhu Academy, Indo-san Sogenji Zen Monastery, so-called Zen-juku,

3-1. Management of the Zen-juku

To study Buddhism in Japan, Rev. Bodhi was sent to Sogenji of Rinzai sect in Okayama prefecture under the supervision of master Shodo Harada⁶. Because of this influence, the Zen-juku is the practical arena for the Buddhist philosophy and the meditation developed through Zen of Rinzai sect. This institution was established by the donation which comes from Japanese volunteer who joined a meditation class or so⁷. All Dalit boy above 11 years of his age can be enrolled the Zen-juku without any condition⁸. According to Rev. Bodhi, those boys are mainly from either Karnataka or Maharashtra. In Zen-juku, it is recommended that a boy who studies Buddhist philosophy and methodology of meditation through boarding system should become a monk after his graduation from this institute.

A student wears monk cloth while he stays inside the Zen-juku, he change his cloth to layman's such as shirt and trouser when he goes to school. Cooking and cleaning duty is assigned through rotation. Rev. Bodhi Prajna who was earlier a student of Zen-juku, takes most of the responsibility for Rev. Bodhi when he is absent from Zen-juku for other activities. Sometimes, those either Buddhist or the people who have strong interest on Buddhism visit to ask special function in their household. According to the request of concerned person, either Rev. Bodhi or Rev. B.Prajna organize and attend the function.

Age group; when I had visited the Zen-juku for the first time there were 10 years old-1 student, 11 years old-0 student, 12 years old-2 students, 13 years old-4 students, 15 years old-4 students and unknown-1 student. The hearing from these 17 students, Rev. Bodhi and Rev. B. Prajna are as follows;

- Application of the admission is publicized in newspaper. Its criteria for the candidate are being SC/ST, above 11 years old, male, and recommend to be a monk when the boy graduates.
- The boy fulfills the criteria with willingness of both boy concern and his parent(s) upon admission to the Zen-juku.
- About 60 students apply every year, but most of the students are dropped out within few months of the admission.
- Rev. Bodhi and Rev. B.Prajna wish at least one boy among them should become a monk in future.
- Their parent(s) views Zen-juku as a hostel with free of charge.
- Although it should not be, Rev. Bodhi and Rev. B.Prajna wish the boy in the Zen-juku receive school education and study Buddhism. The boy can be a monk or can serve to the society even though he does not become a monk.
- The biggest significance of the Zen-juku is providing the ground for the youth.
- 7 students among 17 want to become a monk in future.

6. *Sogenji* is one of the Zen monasteries of Rinzai sect where locals in Okayama city in Okayama prefecture, Japan. Except the master Shodo Harada, all monk and nun are from abroad. This is the reason why the temple is known as 'foreigner's temple' in general.

7. The funding comes from the source of donation or fee for the meditation class of Sogenji and so on.

<http://www.urban.ne.jp/home/babaesta/indo10.html>

<http://www.urban.ne.jp/home/babaesta/indo9.html>

8. At current situation, the Zen-juku admits only boys. This is because of the tradition in India that male teacher can teach boys and girl should be taught by a female teacher. On the premise, securing is the manpower, especially hiring a female teacher, the Zen-juku wish to admit girl student in future.

- 4 students among 17 want to become a teacher in future.



(Left to Right)

Picture 7: Zen-juku appearance

Picture 8: Students of the Zen-juku on October 2009

Picture 9: A room in Zen-juku. Pictures of Buddha and Ambedkar can be seen in classroom.

3-2. Life in the Zen-juku

Basically the Zen-juku is the monastic institution for the novice and monk. It functions for a teenager in a way that he can receive both a school and Buddhist education through communal living as Buddhist novice. At this moment, the boy is not required to become a monk in future whereas Rev. Bodhi wishes at least one of them should become a monk. He also thinks that the boy can work for the society even though the boy does not become a monk in future. In this sense, training monk does not mean necessary but training a human being who has a wider scope with Buddhist ideology.

However, although he says 'Buddhism', it is within the framework of Rinzai-Zen of Japan such as sutras, usage of the language, value and time conception. Even during the time of meal, manner of eating is controlled with fixed form and good discipline based on the rules and regulation as enshrined in the principles of Zen monastery. If you have slight knowledge on Zen sect, you witness the practice of spirit of the Zen which put stress on the order.

Why the Zen sect? I assume that the fund comes from the donation or contribution by those people who join the meditation class in Japan. Besides, Rev. Bodhi study Zen Buddhism in Japan and perform its rituals.

[Time Table] Indosan Sogenji Zen Monastery, India

Morning	4:40	Wake up Bell
	5:00 - 5:30	Chanting (Pali & Japanese) Kinhin
	5:30 - 6:30	Zazen (Meditation) Han
	6:00	Sanzen
	6:30 - 7:00	Kinhin (Walking Meditation)
	7:00 - 7:30	Shukuza (Breakfast)
	7:30 - 8:30	Soji (Cleaning, outside and inside)
	9:00 - 11:30	Zazen
	10:00	Sanzen
	11:30 - 12:00	Kinhin (Walking Meditation)

Afternoon	12:00 - 12:30	Saiza (Lunch)
	After Lunch 1:50	Rest
	2:00 - 3:30	Teiso (Dhamma Discourse)
	3:30 - 4:00	Nibenorai (Toilet)
	4:00 - 4:30	Sarei (Tea Time)
	4:30 - 5:30	Zazen
	5:30 - 6:00	Kinhin (Walking Meditation)
Evening	6:00 - 6:30	Yakuseki (Dinner)
	6:30 - 6:50	Nibenorai (Bathroom)
	7:00 - 7:30	Kinhin (Walking Meditation)
	7:30 - 8:30	(Discourse on Meditation)
Night	8:30 - 9:00	Chanting (Pali and Japanese)
	9:00 - 9:30	Yaza (Night Sitting)
	9:30 - 10:00	Toilet and Rest
	10:00	Light off



Picture 10: Current students in Nov.2010



Picture 11: Study time after the meal

INDOSAN SOGENJI ZEN MONASTERY	
Osesshin sutra chanting	
✓ 1. Hannya Shingyo(English)般若心經 (prajnaparamita Hrdaya sutra)	
✓ 2. TeiDai Denpo Busso no Myo Go(Dhamma transmission lineage)蓮代伝法佛祖の名号	
✓ 3. Hannya Shingyo 般若心經 The Heart Sutra of Perfect wisdom Honzon Eko 本尊回向	
4. Daihishu 大悲しゅ	
Soshi Eko,Kaisan Eko 相師通回向, 開山通回向	
5. Hakuin Zenji Zazen Wasan 白隠禅師座禅 和讃 Zaiki Eko 在家回向	
6. Enmei Jikku kannon gyo(33Times)延命十句観音經	
7. Shuku Sei Gan 四弘誓願文 The Bodhisattva vows (English)	
Pali sutras パリ語經	
1. Trisaran 三帰戒	
2. Panchsheel 五戒	
3. Buddha,Dhamma,Sangha vandana 三宝經	
Meal Sutras 食事經	
1. Ten Buddha name (jyuu butsu myou) 十仏名	
2. Five reflections (Go kan mon) 五観文	
Discourse Sutras 提唱經	
1. Daihishu(3 Times)大悲しゅ	
2. kai kyou Ge 開經け	

Only 8 students were there when I visited recently, after a year, while 17 students were there in 2009. Usually the Zen-juku advertises the application through newspaper in June, however, for this time, Rev. Bodhi was absent as he had left for Japan. Rev. B. Prajna was also absent as he had taken examination of the college that he was enrolled in. These are the reason why they could not take care of the admission this year properly. About 20 students who got admission there in June had dropped out and decreased to 8 students when I visited there in October 2010, after 4 months.

Taking advantage of smaller number, I have conducted house visit to all students. The house of the 7 students are located nearby Zen-juku as I could visit by car, i.e., 2 students live within the distance of 15km from Bijapur city, 1 student 30km, 3 students 60km and 1 student 160km respectively. Except those only one of the student's house is located 300km from Bijapur city. It is difficult to return within a day by car. All the 8 students are Holaya, Kannada speaker as mother tongue but they understand the basic Hindi language. Besides they can use primary English as a foreign teacher had stayed with them to teach English for a while. Before or after the house visit, the gathering of Buddhist was held usually. Either Rev. Bodhi or Rev. B.Prajna normally informs them about their forthcoming visit to the area with a guest (namely myself), accordingly, the eminent person of the area or the member of IBYO arranged the function. The details of the function has been explained in 2-2 of this paper.

3-3. House visit to the Students of Zen-juku

No.1&2 Karuna Bodhi & Bodhi Daya

Place: Ukumanal Shed (10km south-east from Zen-juku)

Note: The whole community (100 house hold) shifted from sunken village to temporary housing where the *Gram Panchayat* had allocated them because of the flood case in 2006. The community is composed of SC, OBC and Muslim who are living separately within each lane. The new village has been established 2km away from the temporary housing. There is no toilet facility. 2.5mX2.5m space is allocated for each household. 6 persons including these students used to live together; father, mother, younger brother, younger sister and 2 brothers who are in Zen-juku now. The room of grand parents is also attached there in this temporary housing.

Enrollment of the Zen-juku: The father behaves violently with them because of which nobody goes to school under such condition. But to protect her children and their future, the mother admits them to Zen-juku. She was informed about the Zen-juku by one of her known person.



family	age	occupation	remarks
Father	49	Taxi driver	Drink liquor and conduct violence. Earns Rs. 120/day if he goes to work.
Mother	30	Wage labor	Husband is her relative. Earns Rs.100/day if she goes to work.
K.B	13	7 th class, student of the Zen-juku	Want to be a medical doctor to help others.
B.D	11	4 th class, student of the Zen-juku	Want to be a police (not traffic police but civil police).
Younger brother	6	Preschool	The mother wants to send him to the Zen-juku but the father opposes.
Younger sister	4	Preschool	————

No.3 Dhamma Kirti

Place: Valamgi Village, Gulbarga District (160km north-east of Bijapur city)

Note: His father went to work in Dubai in June 2010. In this village, there are many who have experience of job in Dubai.

Enrollment of the Zen-juku: His mother was introduced about the Zen-juku by her brother, who is an eminent person of the area. At the same time, his father was informed the Zen-juku by a driver, who is from same village and works for Rev. Bodhi in those days.



family	age	occupation	remarks
Father	30	Working in Dubai	The type of work is unknown. Dubai for 4 months, Rs.2000/month which is sent by bank transfer. He worked as Gram Panchayat writer before he went Dubai.
Mother	26	House wife	She is a sister of Mr. Ambarai, who is the President of BSP in Aland Talka
D.K.	11	5 th class, student of the Zen-juku	Want to be a teacher.
Younger sister	1	Preschool	—

No.4 Vinaya Bodhi

Place: Jai Bhim Nagar, Shindagi, Bijapur District (60km east-north-east of Bijapur city)

Note: Buddhists are 70/200 households. His father built the house through *Ashray Yojna* (one of the SC-support scheme by the government). There is a TV and a mobile for his father. There is no refrigerator.

Enrollment of the Zen-juku: His father's younger brother, who has coconut selling business, brought V.B to the Zen-juku.



family	age	occupation	remarks
Father	38	Water supplier at Hotel.	He became a Buddhist 10 years before when he had known Ambedkar. One time delivery gets Rs.15/6 pots.
Mother	32	Cleaning at Municipality	She became a Buddhist after marriage. Earns Rs.4000/month

Elder sister	15	10 th class	Want to study till B.A. level. Want to be either a medical doctor or a teacher.
V.B.	13	8 th class, student of the Zen-juku	Want to be a <i>Dalit Nayakar</i> (Dalit leader).
Younger sister	11	6 th class	She may go to Zen-juku if the admission for girls are introduced.
Younger brother	8	2 nd class	————

No.5 Prashant Bodhi

Place: Jai Bhim Nagar, Shindagi, Bijapur District (60km east-north-east of Bijapur city)

Note: Buddhists are 70/200 households. His family is not Buddhist but all of them know Ambedkar. This is a rented house of his grandmother since his father passed away and father's original place is Shalpur. His grandfather lives alone there. There is a TV but no refrigerator.

Enrollment of the Zen-juku: His grandfather's younger brother's son (V.B's father's younger brother), who has coconut selling business, brought Pst.B to the Zen-juku.



family	age	occupation	remarks
Grandmother	50-55	Cleaning at Municipality	Earns 4000Rs/month
Father	—	—	Passed away
Mother	37	Cleaning at Municipality Or Farm Working outside	Earns Rs.4000/month from municipal committee Or Farm Working outside Rs.1600/month (Sunday off) + widow's pension (Rs.400/month) ● She became a Buddhist after marriage. ● She does not wish his son to be a monk in future.
Elder sister	18	Cook at a hostel	She lives separately from her husband.
(Elder sister)	16	Married	She lives with her husband, 30km distance from here)
Pst.B.	13	8 th class, student of the Zen-juku	Want to be an engineer.
Younger brother	11	6 th class	Returned twice from Zen-juku although the mother had admitted him.

No.6 & 7 Dhamma Raja & Dhamma Gosh

Place: Kadani, Bijapur District (65km east-north-east of Bijapur city; 5km from Sindgi)

Note: His family is not Buddhist but all of them know Ambedkar. There is no TV.

Enrollment of the Zen-juku: His mother's sister lives in Bijapur and introduced the Zen-juku.



family	age	occupation	remarks
Father	35	Coolie/ Porter(Agriculture)	He went to work in Mumbai when he was late 20s and built the house in this place. Earns Rs.150/day (Sunday off)
Mother	32	Coolie/ Porter(Agriculture)	Earns Rs.80/day (no off) ● She was told by her sister, who introduced her about the Zen-juku, that there is a good school in Bijapur and made up her mind to send her sons to the school. ● She does not wish his son to be a monk in future.
D.R	13	8 th class, student of the Zen-juku	Want to be a monk.
D.G	11	6 th class, student of the Zen-juku	Want to be a leader.
Younger sister	9	4 th class	She may go to Zen-juku if the admission for girls are introduced.

No.8 Prasanna Bodhi

Place: Berula Village, Bidar District (300km north-east of Bijapur city; 15km from Bidar city)

Note: Buddhists are 47/50 households. His house is located to the nearest from the main road; in one sense, this is the most marginalized or vulnerable place of the village incase if somebody attacks the village. There is no electricity in the house.

Enrollment of the Zen-juku: After one year of his father's death, his mother was introduced about the Zen-juku by her friend, who lives in Bijapur and had used to send her son there.



family	age	occupation	remarks
Grandmother	75	Inoccupation	—
Father	—	—	Passed away in 2005
Mother	35	Coolie/Porter (labor) Or Cleaning at Municipality	Coolie is only for June – August Rs.60/day Or Earns Rs.4000/month from municipality ● She does not wish his son to be a monk in future.
Psnna.B.	14	9 th class, student of the Zen-juku	Want to be an engineer.
Younger brother	8	3 th class	—

The youngest is 11 years old and the eldest is 14 years old. All the families of them worship Ambedkar even though the original community is still Hindu. Therefore, some of their community had embraced Buddhism as whole village and some of the other live together with OBC, Muslim or Caste Hindus.

Except 1 student, who was 10 years of his age when he was enrolled to the Zen-juku, other 7 students had known Ambedkar before their admission there. However, all of them did not know Buddha and Buddhism.

Each and every household is economically very pathetic, therefore, they possess less electric equipment compared with others in the community. Nobody possesses mobile including bread-winner except 1 case; father of No.4V.B., who works as a porter of water. All families could not have been able to send their children to school if the Zen-juku had not been there.

3-4. Other Findings

Unbiased feeling after the completion of the house visit is that all of them are from economically poor family within the community. Compare with other households in the community, their houses are very pathetic and underprivileged. Even other members of the community take picture of us with a camera in-built mobile during our visit whereas the families of those students doesn't even possess mobile. Basically there is no electricity in their household although others have. Actual numbers visited was 6 families as 2 brothers are included, however, 2 families are purely 'fatherless', another 2 families are a kind of 'father-absence' family although the father is still alive; one father behaved violently with other family member and the other went to abroad to earn, and rest of the 2 families are 'healthy' as the father works as bread-winner. Even then the 'healthy' families are unstable wage labors. By the way, I could not observe, in this research that anyone does Holaya's traditional occupation.

Although all of them are categorized as weak in the community, they have relative, friend or known person as an eminent person in that community. And so, such eminent person gave the information of Zen-juku. Through this connection, they could send their children there although physical distance is few hundred kilometer away from their house. For all 8 students that had come to know the existence of Zen-juku is through neighboring network.

If there had not been the Zen-juku, those families cannot provide primary school education to their own child. Therefore, the parent(s) may not feed and educate them if they can not bear the suffering of the separation in both physically and emotionally. Receiving 12th standards in the

community is high enough. It may ensure minimum educational background to be a civil servant, engineer or medical doctor as a socially and economically stable occupation.

I asked whether the parent(s) wish their son to be a monk in future, everyone did not say yes. Some of them did not reply clearly while the other clearly said that they wish their son to find a job for assisting them. I quoted the example of Japanese or Tibetan society that a monk could be a teacher, medical doctor, lawyer, or social activist, however, it seems difficult for them to understand the fact that a monk can hardly contribute to the society as a layman can do while maintaining monkhood. They regard a Buddhist monk as the person who does not contribute anything other than doing only religious activities.

Most of the parent(s) recognize the Zen-juku as a boarding school, therefore, some of them did not know it is religious institution. Such parent(s) finds their son strangely and wearing monk's cloth very first time. They said that they do not have any objection as far as the son receive the education although it was quite surprising for them to see them in such costume. Only 1 student wish to be a monk in future, rest of them wish to be an engineer or a teacher and so on.

As mentioned above, although the Zen-juku has an ambition of 'the trial to train the youth who will be a future leader to the society with Buddhist mind-set', whereas in the actual situation, it could be an opportunity for the poor to allow their children to receive primary education as wells as food, cloth and shelter.

4. Conclusion and Further Assignment

4-1. Conclusion

Through this field work, I have come to know that the Zen-juku is a strong hold activities of Rev. Bodhi in South India and provides the platform where it encourages the people who does not know Ambedkar and Buddha well. At the same time, it calls foreigner and outsider who want to support financially or physically. In this meaning, it owes the role of knot among different worlds. For the most significant of the Zen-juku at present, it functions as safety-net for the poor.

Those poor families have relationship with eminent person of the community as a relative, friend or known person and were introduced about the Zen-juku by them. The eminent person knew the Zen-juku after they had come to know the activities by Rev. Bodhi. Most of them come to know Rev. Bodhi through VCD/DVD that has the recordings of the mass conversion in Bangalore in 2003. The conversion ceremony in 2003 had been led by result of enlightenment activities which Rev. Bodhi has conducted in South since late 1990s. It was 2003 when the Zen-juku was established.

Rev. B. Prajna who used to be one of the students in the Zen-juku became a manager and leads some of the part of Buddhist movement in Karnataka. Although it gradually processes, the future generation is surely trained. Also, some of the ex-student of the Zen-juku becomes a core member of IBYO although they are not yet influenced person in the area.

In this meaning, firstly the Zen-juku fulfills the demands of the people who want to perform the Buddhist rituals as a Buddhist or who have strong interest on Buddhism even though they are not at the moment. Secondly, it supports the children of poor families both educationally and financially. Thirdly, it functions as an institution to provide a platform with the outsider including foreigners.

In south India including such as Bijapur city, Karnataka, the statue of Ambedkar is everywhere. We can observe that there are Dalit masses in those areas through the presence of Ambedkar statue representing the downtrodden community. I have noticed that Rev. Bodhi

receives a donation in note when he is invited to a function and that many of the people gathered possess a mobile these days. Through this phenomena, I have witnessed the relatively upliftment of economical condition among the Buddhist or other Dalit community as a whole. However, as my field research showed that there are still those families who cannot access to safe water, electricity and toilet facilities if we focus on individual situation even though other family of the community can access. They do not even receive the support from the Government. They are ones who are left behind. In the social situation surrounding Buddhist, through my field research, the economical poverty is still a significant factor for them.

4-2. Further Assignment

Repeatedly said that the network of the students are arranged through the eminent person in the area as a relative, friend or known person. Having an eminent person in the community itself as a relative or close friend shows that his family could originally belong to a well-off group in that area. If the conditions allow such as if his father had been well or alive or so, his family might not become weak in the community. Or I have heard that the Holaya has 6 sub-caste within their whole society (by the way, the Mahar composes 12 and 1/2 sub-caste in it). In the series of my research on this point, I could not confirmed it yet. The possibility, which Holaya's hierarchy function as a filter to screen the certain group when the boy's family receives the basic information, cannot be denied. The power balance within the society can be examined by further studies.

This field research was conducted to clear the phenomena which happen at grassroot level in Bijapur, Karnataka. What I have come to know is that Rev. Bodhi has carried steadily the Buddhist movement forward through the communication with downtrodden community represented by the students and other related people. Although there is a hope of interface between micro and macro activities, however, the resolution of the whole system is not that much easy.

In the large scale framework, the study of contemporary India, the entire picture the ruffraff who holds the raft of trouble, has to be captured at primarily. And then, the challenge about the problem that the mechanism and the structure of the attempt can be formulated only through a certain movement or not, I will clarify the whole picture and challenge upon this subject in my further research.

4-3. Acknowledgement

This study was funded by BARC (Ryukoku University, the Institute of Buddhist Studies) and RINDAS (Center for the Study of Contemporary India, Ryukoku University). Although I do not quote each and every name of the person or institution, I really thankful for those who gave me meaningful advices and those Buddhist or Ambedkarite people who provided me their generous cooperation. Without your contribution, I never have achieved what I could earn today. Therefore, my deep felt gratitude goes to all these people.

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Attachment

Population in Maharashtra

Religious Composition	Population	%
Persons	4,067,637	
Males	2,105,314	
Females	1,962,323	
Rural	1,453,886	
Urban	2,613,751	
Scheduled Caste	696,461	17.12
Scheduled Tribe	4 44,441	10.93

Population in Karnataka

Religious Composition	Population	%
Persons	2,584,711	
Males	1,313,801	
Females	1,270,910	
Rural	2,077,509	
Urban	507,202	
Scheduled Caste	474,044	18.34
Scheduled Tribe	1 93,819	7.50

Scheduled Castes (Largest three) in Maharashtra

	Name of the Scheduled Caste	Population
1	Mahar etc.	547,077
2	Bhambi etc.	67,106
3	Mang etc.	32,129

Scheduled Castes (Largest three) in Karnataka

	Name of the Scheduled Caste	Population
1	Madiga	159,807
2	Adi Karnataka	111,569
3	Bhovi	66,678

(Source: Census of India 2001)

Scheduled Castes (Largest three) in Bijapur

	Name of the Scheduled Caste	Population
1	Banjara etc.	117,466
2	Holaya etc.	82,614
3	Bhambi etc.	62,248

Scheduled Castes (Largest three) in Gulbarga

	Name of the Scheduled Caste	Population
1	Holaya etc.	238,545
2	Banjara etc.	207,157
3	Madiga	147,990

Scheduled Castes (Largest three) in Bidar

	Name of the Scheduled Caste	Population
1	Holaya etc.	110,827
2	Madiga	65,186
3	Banjara etc.	47,022

Acupuncture and Moxibustion at an Indian Village: with Special Reference to Free Medical Camps Conducted by Local Buddhists

Kenji ADACHI

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present the actual status of the free medical camps of acupuncture and moxibustion participants with the author in South India. This report studies (1) the response of acupuncture and moxibustion therapy at an Indian village; and (2) the status of Buddhism at an Indian village.

Today many global healthcare teams using acupuncture and moxibustion are conducted around the world¹. But, the effectiveness of these healthcare teams has been poorly understood. Leveraging these teams more appropriately, further critical research is needed.

In South India, one Indian Buddhist leader Reverent Bodhi Dhamma has been conducting free medical camps using acupuncture and moxibustion since 2002 [IBYO on line:Manav.html]. A Japanese global healthcare team using acupuncture and moxibustion has been working there [ADACHI et al. 2009]. Therefore, examination of these medical camps may provide an insight into the understanding of the response of acupuncture and moxibustion therapy, and the effectiveness of this healthcare team in the area.

These medical camps have supported by local Buddhists. And, most the patients who came to these medical camps were Buddhist converts. Therefore, examinations of these medical camps also may provide an insight into the understanding of the actual status of local Buddhist missionary and the organization of local Buddhist members, and care seeking behavior of the Buddhist patients in the area.

1. Outline of the Free Medical Camps and Methods

1-1. The organizer

One Indian Buddhist monk Rev. Bodhi Dhamma has conducting a series of these medical camps. He has studied the Rinzai Sect lineage of Zen Buddhism in Sogenji Temple Okayama Japan since 1986². Nearly a decade ago, he returned to India, and now he has helped many poor people mainly in South India (DHAMMA 2006). He comes to Japan periodically and studies Zen Buddhism under Zen Master Venerable Shodo Harada, Roshi³.

1-2. Why medical camps?

Rev. Bodhi says, “Since 1998, I often go to Dalit village for my village pilgrimages, and talked to

1. For example, Swiss team named “Acupuncture without Borders” works mainly in West Africa and Central America [A.W.B. on line]. American team named “Acupuncturists without Borders” works in Central America [AWB on line]. Many Japanese team works in Latin America and Southeast Asia [INOUE 1998; HATA 2003; YAMAMOTO 2000; MEIMONKAI on line; JSS on line; TNF on line; YOMOGI NO KAI on line].

2. Sogenji is a Rinzai Zen temple in Okayama, Japan. This temple is famous for the family temple of Ikeda clan, the feudal lord of present-day Okayama Prefecture.

3. Harada, Roshi is the 83rd generation lineage holder in the Rinzai Zen Tradition in Japan.

many villagers. Villagers always shared their physical problems and related their experiences of fatigue, malaise, body aches, headaches and numerous additional maladies. Dalit villages were lacking proper and readily available medical and body-work treatment. They always put up with their daily physical problems. So, I think that I could somehow bring some relief to villagers who were suffering from pain without proper and readily available medical and body-work treatment. There are many medical volunteer works in India but only certain people receive the benefits of these medical events. I am Buddhist monk. So, based on Buddhist teaching, I must begin this medical charity program by offering free care to anyone who applied, irrespective of their status.”

1-3. Why acupuncture and moxibustion therapy?

Rev. Bodhi looked for Indian doctor, but he could not find them in India at that time. Then, during his yearly retreats in Okayama Japan 2001, he narrated the story of his experiences to some Japanese healthcare professionals.

First, Rev. Bodhi visited AMDA office. Association of Medical Doctors of Asia, in short AMDA, is an international organization dedicated to realize a peaceful world community through humanitarian efforts in medical health care sector [AMDA on line: [index.html](#)]. They have their headquarters in Okayama Japan. But, the person in charge of AMDA was not moved by hearing of Rev. Bodhi’s story and such great need of poor people in India. They refused to visit Indian village at that time.

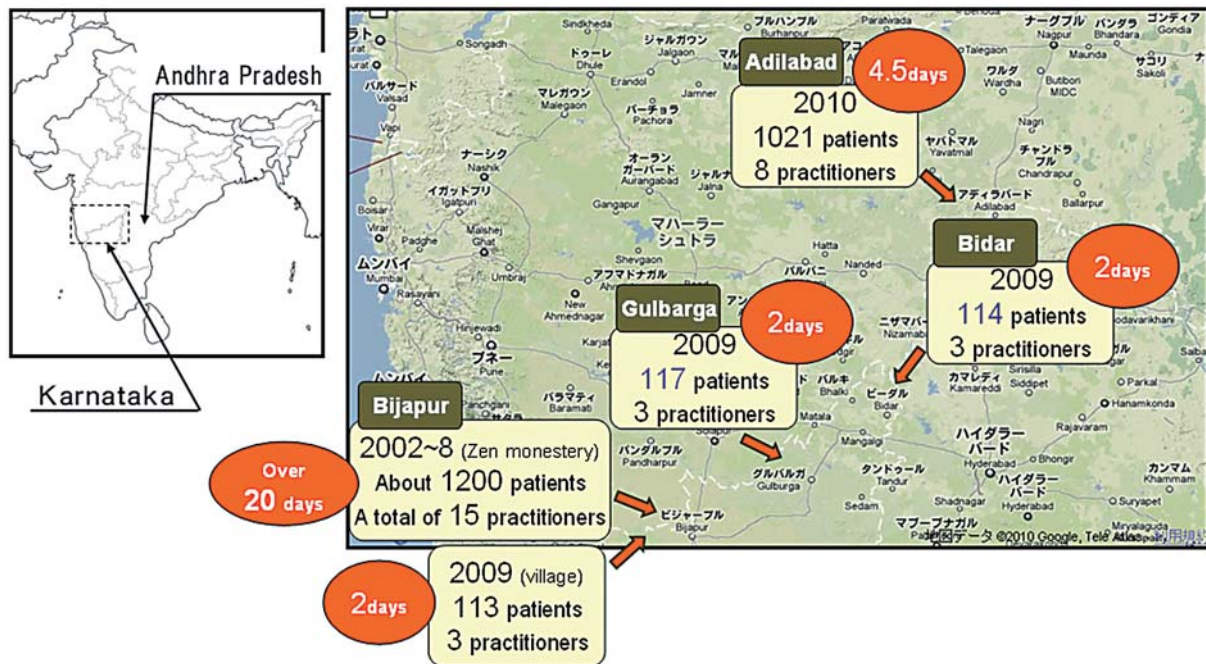
Second, Rev. Bodhi narrated the story of his experiences to some Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion practitioners. Japanese practitioners were very touched by hearing of such great need. And then they generously offered to provide their services as medical charity to the poor Dalit communities in South India. After that, each August the medical camps are conducted for one-week duration at Japanese practitioners convenience.

Acupuncture and Moxibustion are traditional medical practice in Japan. In acupuncture, needles are inserted into various traditionally determined points of the body ("acupuncture points"). Moxibustion is a hot therapy using moxa, or mugwort herb. In moxibustion, moxa are burned on various acupuncture points of the body. Only licensed physicians, licensed acupuncturists, and licensed moxibustionists may provide acupuncture and moxibustion treatment in Japan [JSAM on line: [Introduction_of_JSAM.pdf](#)]. Acupuncture and moxibustion mainly used to relieve pain in the world⁴.

4. There are significant differences between Japanese style acupuncture and Chinese acupuncture, but I make no further explanation of it in this report.

1-4. The action area and the patients

Figure 1: The action area and the patients



A series of free medical camps started at the Buddhist Zen Monastery in Bijapur, Karnataka State since 2002. International Buddhist Youth Organization (IBYO) supported these camps. For six years, from 2002 through 2008, the free medical camps were conducted at the Buddhist Zen Monastery in Bijapur. A total of 1200 patients have visited these medical camps (Figure 1).

At first many poor patients came to these medical camps, but a few years later gradually many wealthy people came to these camps. Rev. Bodhi talked to Japanese practitioners this fact. Japanese practitioners also noticed it. Japanese practitioners talked to Rev. Bodhi they want to provide their medical services for poor people.

In 2009, Rev. Bodhi invited the Japanese practitioners to visit places further afield in areas where really poor people could benefit from their compassionate care. Initially, three seminars were held in Bidar, Gulbarga and Bijapur city. 114 patients in Bidar, 117 patients in Gulbarga, and 113 patients in Bijapur have visited these medical camps (Figure 1). In this area, many Tribal and Dalit people have visited these medical camps [ADACHI et al. 2009].

In 2010, this medical camp was held in Adilabad. Adilabad is a town in the state of Andhra Pradesh. 1021 patients have visited this medical camp in Adilabad. Local Buddhists and Buddhist doctor's group supported this medical camp (Figure 1).

After all, Over 2500 patients have visited a series of medical camps (Figure 1).

By the way, Rev. Bodhi talked to Japanese practitioners, "Offering free care to anyone who applied, irrespective of their status, we must not ask their caste name and their religious composition." Therefore, Japanese practitioners judged the religious composition of the patients by their greeting word 'Jai Bhim'⁵ or their Islamic dress. Many people use 'Jai Bhim' in each area.

5. 'Jai Bhim' is a greeting phrase used by the Buddhist people in India. This word is based on the name of Bhimrao R. Ambedkar.

1-5. The Japanese practitioners

Many Japanese practitioners are teachers of acupuncture and moxibustion school. A total of 23 Japanese practitioners have visited these medical camps. I have involved in these medical camps since 2007.

1-6. Methods

To study (1) the response of acupuncture and moxibustion therapy at an Indian village; and (2) the status of Buddhism at an Indian village, the actual status of two medical camps conducted in 2009 and 2010 were examined from three different perspectives; (1) Care seeking behaviors of the patients. (2) The impacts of these camps on local Buddhists. (3) The motivation of the Japanese practitioners.

First, Medical records of 1365 patients of both sexes of all age groups presented to these camps in August 2009 and 2010 were examined. Second, the impact of these camps on local Buddhist was considered based on fieldwork done by the author. Third, the appeal of these camps for Japanese practitioners was examined based on the result of interview done by the author, and then the motivation of them was considered.

2. Results and Discussion

2-1. Care seeking behaviors of the patients

1) The number of patients

In 2009, of the 344 patients, approximately 34% (n=117) were male and 66% (n=227) were female (Table 1). In 2010, of the 1021 patients, approximately 49% (n=497) were male and 51% (n=524) were female (Table 1). The result of the number of patients clearly indicated that there were more females than males.

Table 1: The number of patients

Characteristics	Total		2009		2010	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender						
Male	614	45	117	34	497	49
Female	751	55	227	66	524	51

Rev. Bodhi always talked to Japanese practitioners, “Females are put in an vulnerable position.” Therefore, we think an active participation of the vulnerable female patients in these medical camps increased a reputation for Buddhists group (Picture 1; 2; 3).



(Left to Right)

Picture 1: Many female patients in Bidar 2009

Picture 2: Many female patients in Dalit village, Bijapur 2009

Picture 3: Many female patients in Adilabad 2010

2) Age groups

In 2009 and 2010, the dominant age groups of mail patients were around 31-60. But, the dominant age groups of female patients were around 21-60 (Fig 2).

What factor makes the difference? Female patients in this age group belong to the reproductive age group. A previous study in Japanese case suggests that several cultural and social factors - marriage, childbirth, raising children and housework - can lead to chronic health problems [MITSUFUJI 2003]. We think this may be true for those patients.

In 2009 and 2010, there was some difference between the age groups in male patients. And, there was also some difference between the age groups in female patients (Fig 2).

What factor makes the difference? Many male patients talked to Japanese practitioners, “I hate injection, so I am scared of acupuncture. If I have not severe pain, I do not come.” Up to early teens female patients also talked to Japanese practitioners, “I am scared of acupuncture.” But around 40 to 60 female patients talked to Japanese practitioners, “My mother doesn’t like needle. So, she doesn’t come. But I am not scared of acupuncture.” Therefore, we think choices depending on age groups preference towards medical systems differed.

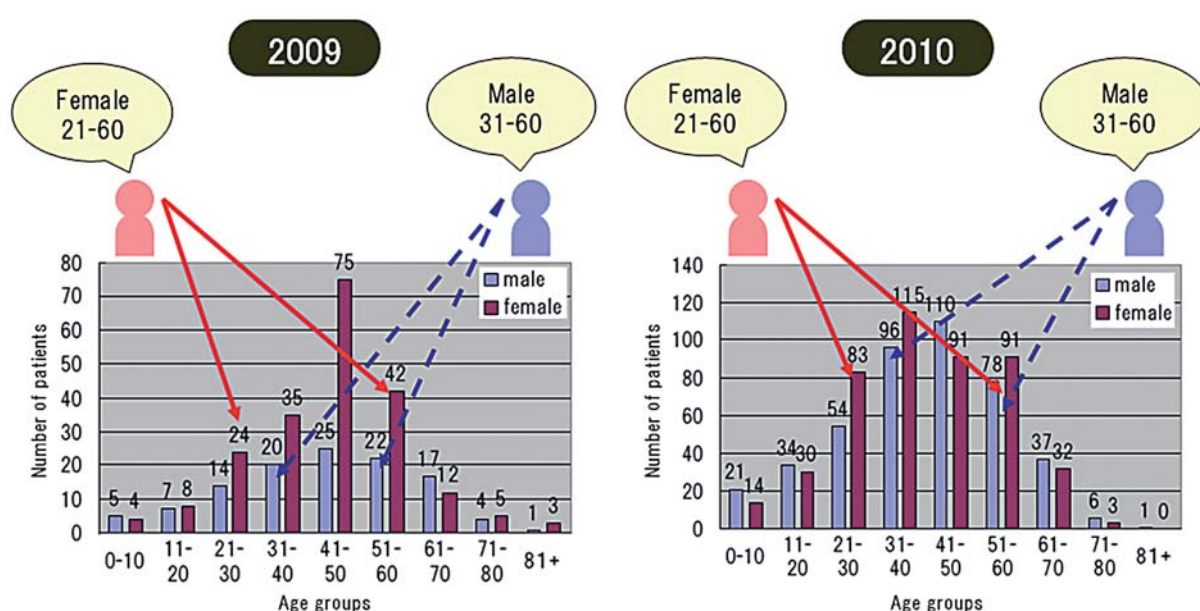


Figure 2: Age groups

3) Past medical history

In 2009, most of the patients with paralysis sought medical treatment (n=14, 63.6%). Around 5.9% (n=2) patients with headache sought medical treatment (Table 2). In 2010, most of the patients with paralysis sought medical treatment (n=68, 60.7%). Around 4.8% (n=2) patients with headache sought medical treatment (Table 2).

Table 2: Past medical history of headache and paralysis

Characteristics	Total		2009		2010	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Treatment of paralysis						
Yes	82	61.2	14	63.6	68	60.7
No/Uncertain	52	38.8	8	36.4	44	39.3
Treatment of headache						
Yes	4	5.3	2	5.9	2	4.8
No/Uncertain	72	94.7	32	94.1	40	95.2

Paralysis is a serious illness. Headache is a common illness. Past medical history indicated that most of the patients have consulted medical treatments in case of serious illness.

Some patients came to these medical camps with his medical certificate, X-ray images, MRI image, prescription records and diagnoses in case of serious illness (Picture 4; 5; 6). They said, “How difficult it was to get these images and analysis.” And said through Rev. Bodhi “Treatment in a private clinic is so expensive. Treatment in a public hospital is not reliable enough. Sometimes there are no doctors in hospital. When there are doctors, sometimes there are no nurses in there. We do not have proper available medical treatment.”

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OUT PATIENT CARD

Reg. No.: 114776
 Patient's Name: Mr. S. Javed
 Father/Husband Name: Mr. S. Javed
 Sex: Male
 Age: 40
 Marital Status: Married
 Nationality: Indian
 Religion: Muslim
 BL Group: B-
 Tel No.: 9849121022

CONSULTANT	DEPARTMENT	VALIDITY FROM	TO	VISITS
Dr. S. Javed	Rheum	12/05/10	12/05/10	1 2 3
"	"	19/05/10	19/05/10	1 2 3
"	"	14/06/10	14/06/10	1 2 3
"	"	20/06/10	20/06/10	1 2 3
"	"	14/06/10	14/06/10	1 2 3

Referring Doctor: Dr. S. Javed

INSTRUCTIONS: PLEASE BRING THIS CARD AT EACH VISIT. REGISTRATION IS VALID FOR ONE YEAR.

EUGENIKS
 GENETIC & RIA LABORATORY

Dr. VINAY K. TULE

NAME: Mr. S. Javed
 Age: 40
 Sex: Male
 Address: 114776, Minister Road, Secunderabad - 500 003 A.P.

Thank you very much.
 Chromosome profile of Mr. S. Javed indicates Trisomy 21, Down's syndrome. There is no structural abnormality.
 FOLLOWING TESTS MAY BE OFFERED:-
 1. Chromosome analysis of both the parents to rule out any balanced translocation.
 2. Perinatal diagnosis from Chorionic villus biopsy between 9 to 11 weeks during future pregnancy.
 3. Triple marker screening (Chorionic R, Alpha-fetoprotein, B-HCG & E3) between 14 to 16 weeks during future pregnancy.

If you have any query regarding report, kindly contact me.
 Checking you again.
 With personal regards,
 Yours Sincerely,
 Dr. VINAY K. TULE

Phone: 040-2772 5000, 2772 5001, 2772 5002, 2772 5003, 2772 5004, 2772 5005, 2772 5006, 2772 5007, 2772 5008, 2772 5009, 2772 5010, 2772 5011, 2772 5012, 2772 5013, 2772 5014, 2772 5015, 2772 5016, 2772 5017, 2772 5018, 2772 5019, 2772 5020, 2772 5021, 2772 5022, 2772 5023, 2772 5024, 2772 5025, 2772 5026, 2772 5027, 2772 5028, 2772 5029, 2772 5030, 2772 5031, 2772 5032, 2772 5033, 2772 5034, 2772 5035, 2772 5036, 2772 5037, 2772 5038, 2772 5039, 2772 5040, 2772 5041, 2772 5042, 2772 5043, 2772 5044, 2772 5045, 2772 5046, 2772 5047, 2772 5048, 2772 5049, 2772 5050, 2772 5051, 2772 5052, 2772 5053, 2772 5054, 2772 5055, 2772 5056, 2772 5057, 2772 5058, 2772 5059, 2772 5060, 2772 5061, 2772 5062, 2772 5063, 2772 5064, 2772 5065, 2772 5066, 2772 5067, 2772 5068, 2772 5069, 2772 5070, 2772 5071, 2772 5072, 2772 5073, 2772 5074, 2772 5075, 2772 5076, 2772 5077, 2772 5078, 2772 5079, 2772 5080, 2772 5081, 2772 5082, 2772 5083, 2772 5084, 2772 5085, 2772 5086, 2772 5087, 2772 5088, 2772 5089, 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(n=22) were paralysis and 9.9% (n=34) were headache (Table 3). In 2010, of the 1021 patients, 861 subjects (81.4%) had muscle pain, joint pain. Approximately 10.6% (n=112) were paralysis and 4.0% (n=42) were headache (Table 3). The analysis of the symptom showed that Japanese practitioners treated many patients with pain, and with paralysis.

Table 3: Symptom

Characteristics	Total		2009		2010	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Cold-like illness	2	0.1	0	0.0	2	0.2
Digestive symptom	9	0.6	0	0.0	9	0.9
Headache	76	5.4	34	9.9	42	4
Period pain	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.1
Internal manifestation, etc.	7	0.5	4	1.2	3	0.3
Bruise, sprain	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.1
Muscle pain, joint pain	1144	81.6	283	82.5	861	81.4
Eye, ear, skin problems etc.	27	1.9	0	0.0	27	2.6
Paralysis	134	9.6	22	6.4	112	10.6

Pain can cause all kinds of physical problems and pain also produces a variety of symptoms. Acupuncture and moxibustion used to relieve pain in the world. Therefore, we think acupuncture and moxibustion treatment meet patients need.

Paralysis is difficult to treat. Paralysis cause great suffering to the patient and the family. In acupuncture and moxibustion, there are some kinds of treatments for paralysis. Therefore, we think acupuncture and moxibustion treatment meet patients need.

In 2010, we saw animal bite injuries. (Picture 7). That was a scar from a mouse bite. But the patient did not want to treat this scar. He wanted to treat his low back pain. He said about this scar “No problem”. Therefore, we think patients are free to determine their health status, set their priorities, and control their own treatment.

In 2009 and 2010, we also saw many patients with some burn scar on their body (Picture 8; 9). This made by the hot therapy of folklore practice by quack practitioners.



Picture 7: Scar from a mouse bite (Adilabad 2010)



Picture 8: Burn scar (Adilabad 2010)



Picture 9: Burn scar (Bijapur 2009)

Some patients talked through an interpreter to Japanese practitioners, “When I have severe pain, first I try herbs or drugs. But herbs often offer little benefit. Drugs are always pretty expensive to continue. Then I try this. It hurts and I am scared. But, after this, I feel no pain about one week. The doctor of English medicine and the doctor of Ayurveda work in India. We are free to opt for treatment of medical system according to our wish. But their treatment is expensive or long waiting time or very crowded or it is so far from here. We do not have it so easy. We do not have proper and readily available medical and body-work treatment.”

Let me summarize the points so far discussed.

(1). The number of patients showed that there were more females than males.

(2). The dominant age groups of male patients were around 31-60. But, the dominant age groups of female patients were around 21-60. We suggest that several cultural and social factors and their preference toward medical systems make the difference.

(3). Past medical history indicated that most of the patients have consulted other systems of medical treatments in case of serious illness. And most of the patients try some home remedies and some medical treatment in case of minor illness.

(4). The examination of the symptom indicated that patients are free to determine their health status, set their priorities, and control their own treatment. Patients are also free to opt any medical system for treatment according to their wish. But it is not so easy to achieve their choices.

(5). The examination of the symptom also indicated that Japanese practitioners treated many patients with pain, and with paralysis. We think acupuncture and moxibustion treatment meet patients need.

2-2. The impacts on local Buddhists

1) The numbers of devotional ritual exercises

According to the interview with local Buddhists, usually most local Buddhist people pray once a week. But during the medical camps, they pray every day and study Buddhist teaching everyday, through voluntary works of these medical camps, meditation, and meetings. As a result, the numbers of devotional ritual exercises were increased in these medical camps.

2) The creation of a feeling of unity

We saw many local Buddhist people dressed in white clothes during these medical camps (Picture 10). Local Buddhist member talked to Japanese practitioners, “White is the color of Buddhist. We dress for this camp.”

About badge, we first noticed it in Adilabad 2010. We saw many local Buddhist people wore badge (Picture 10; 11). We think these behaviors created a feeling of unity in them.

In this way, during the medical camps, many local Buddhist created a feeling of unity by dressing in matching outfits, and by wearing badge.



Picture 10: White clothes and badge (Adilabad 2010)



Picture 11: Badge (Adilabad 2010)

3) The organization of Local Buddhists

During a series of these medical camps, we saw the banner of these medical camps (Picture 12; 13; 14; 15). We can see the title of each person in case of Adilabad.



(Left to Right)



We think the clarifications in the division of individual roles are gradually making progress among these medical camps. This shows consolidation of their commanding structure.

2-3. The motivation of the Japanese practitioners

During these medical camps, the patients actively sought medical treatment. According to the interview with Japanese practitioners, they were very attracted to patients demand.

2) The goal of these medical camps

The Japanese practitioners always described that the goal of these camps is to provide “free” medical care “for poor people”. According to the interview with Japanese practitioners, they were very attracted to this goal.

Why are Japanese practitioners being so determined about it? We think this is also because of their social position in Japan. Most of Japanese practitioners think that acupuncture and moxibustion are “Quasi-medical practice” under Japanese law. According to the past interview with Japanese practitioners, they dislike the word “Quasi”.

In general, the most popular ideal medical profession in Japan is AKAHIGE - Red Beard [KURODA 1998]. He is a fictional character in a charity hospital, a hard-bitten but honorable older doctor in the late Edo period (the 18th to the early 19th century). To provide “free” medical care “for poor people” fits the character of AKAHIGE’s medical practice [ADACHI 2010]. To provide AKAHIGE like medical practice, Japanese practitioners appealed to many people that they are the real medical professionals. Therefore, they often changed their action area for poor people.

Let me summarize the points so far discussed.

(1). The patients actively sought medical treatment. Japanese practitioners were very attracted to actual voice for medical help.

(2). The practitioners described that the goal of these camps is to provide “free” medical care “for poor people”, and they are being so determined about it. I think this goal indicate their hidden motivation for visiting India. Ambiguous legal and social status makes them to provide “free” medical care “for poor people”.

3. Conclusion

(1). Patients are free to determine their health status, set their priorities, and control their own treatment. Patients are also free to opt any medical system for treatment according to their wish. But it is not so easy to achieve their choices. Preference towards medical systems differed depending on age groups. Japanese practitioners considered that determinations and choices occur against the backdrop of several cultural and social factors.

After all Acupuncture and moxibustion treatment meet patients need. And, we think these medical camps create a new medical option for poor people in that area.

(2). These events contribute to solidify the local Buddhist organization.

(3). Japanese practitioners are attracted to treat the patients as the ideal medical professionals. This attraction occurs against the backdrop of ambiguous legal and social status of the practitioners in Japan.

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Ambedkar-Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh (1951-2001): An Analysis of Demographic, Social, Economic and Political Developments

Shiv Shankar DAS

Dr. Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), a vigorous advocate of Buddhism in modern India, triggered off a wave of the revival of Buddhism all over the country. He declared, while speaking in a Yeola conference (Nasik) in 1935, that he was born as a Hindu but would not die as a Hindu.¹ In October 1956, on the occasion of 2500th birth anniversary of Gautam Buddha, he fulfilled this promise by embracing Buddhism with his millions of followers in Nagpur (Maharashtra) in the ceremony called *Dhamma Deeksha*.² After studying all the religions of the world, he considered Buddhism as the best option for the emancipation of the depressed classes. Ultimately, the religious dilemma of the untouchables was solved with his resolution of 1956 by embracing Buddhism with additional twenty two vows. Ambedkar enlightened the depressed community by introducing them with India's glorious egalitarian past founded on the rich cultural history of Buddhism based on equality which was absolutely in contrast with the existing dynamics of brahminical social order based on hierarchical caste-system. On 24th May 1956, in his first public declaration in Bombay to embrace Buddhism in October 1956, he briefed the core difference of Buddhism from Hinduism on the subject of God, soul and caste-system. In his own words, "*Hinduism believes in God. Buddhism has no God. Hinduism believes in soul. According to Buddhism there is no soul. Hinduism believes in Chaturvarna and the caste system. Buddhism has no place for the Caste System and Chaturvarna.*"³

For him, a successful political system of India will be dependent on Buddhist principles of associated-life and caste-less and class-less society rather than merely a functional government. In his own words, "*The roots of democracy lie not in the form of Government, Parliamentary or otherwise. A democracy is more than a Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living. The roots of Democracy are to be searched in the social relationship, in the terms of associated life between the people who form a society*".⁴ Thus, he views democracy and Buddhism as complimentary to each other.⁵

With Ambedkar's conversion, all over the country there was an exodus of depressed castes

1. See Hari Narake, N. G. Kamble, Dr. M. L. Kasare, Ashok Godghate, ed., *BAWS*, Vol. 17(3), *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and His Egalitarian Revolution: Speeches*, by Dr. Ambedkar (Mumbai: Govt. of Maharashtra, 2003), 95. The similar willing is found in his undelivered speech 'Annihilation of Caste'(1937) which he was suppose to deliver in Arya Samaj's Jat-Pat-Todak-Mandal but could not permitted due to containing in it his 'voice' in favour of conversion.

2. Ambedkar's idea of Deeksha ceremony was mandatory aspect of conversion. As he said in one of his letter "*Everyone who wishes to be converted to Buddhism shall have to undergo through ceremony. Otherwise he will not be regarded as a Buddhist.*" See. Hari Narake, N. G. Kamble, Dr. M. L. Kasare, Ashok Godghate, ed., *BAWS*, Vol. 17(1), *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and His Egalitarian Revolution: Struggle for Human Rights*, by Dr. Ambedkar (Mumbai: Govt. of Maharashtra, 2003), p 430.

3. See Hari Narake, N. G. Kamble, Dr. M. L. Kasare, Ashok Godghate, ed., *BAWS*, Vol. 17(3), *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and His Egalitarian Revolution: Speeches*, (Mumbai: Govt. of Maharashtra, 2003), p 517.

4. See Hari Narake, N. G. Kamble, Dr. M. L. Kasare, Ashok Godghate, ed., *BAWS*, Vol. 17(3), *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and His Egalitarian Revolution: Speeches*, (Mumbai: Govt. of Maharashtra, 2003), p 519.

5. For details see *BAWS*, 17, 3, pp 406-409.

from Hinduism in a very large number and they started asserting Buddhism as their religion in the census data. A miraculous growth of 1671% of Buddhists in India over the figure of 1,80,823 as it rose to 32,50,227 in 1961 census has never been seen in the known history of any religion in the world.⁶ According to an eminent Buddhist scholar of modern India D. C. Ahir, the post 1956 period is the period of revival of Buddhism with intense activity which can aptly be called as “*Ambedkar Era of Indian Buddhism*”.⁷ It signifies that Buddhism without prefixing 'Ambedkar' cannot be studied in modern Indian sociologically.⁸ Yet, in the censuses it is mentioned only Buddhism and not as Ambedkar Buddhism or Neo-Buddhism so the category “Buddhism” is used here when dealing with census data.

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India and has a significant place in Indian polity. The population data of the world tells that out of 41 persons, one person belongs to Uttar Pradesh. According to 2001 census, with the population of 166197921, Uttar Pradesh is more than many countries of the world except the population of China, US, Indonesia, Brazil and Russian Republic.⁹ Out of this huge population the scheduled castes population constitutes 22% (Census 2001). Uttar Pradesh is also the second largest state-economy in India contributing 8.17% to India's total GDP Between 2004 and 2009.¹⁰ In Indian politics, religious conversion has always been a matter of importance, conflict and violence. The change of religious identities has triggered many political debates. The change in identity by a group adds or subtracts a community's number which is very important in democracy.

Traditionally, the scheduled caste (earlier treated as untouchables) community has been the most backward community of Uttar Pradesh in terms of social and economic conditions. To overcome this pathetic situation the community had in the history sometimes challenged the dominant Hindu social order. Kabir, Ravidas, Achhutanand etc. had been the symbols of voice of disadvantaged since centuries. In modern India the community was added with one more hero - Dr. Ambedkar who fought for their rights constitutionally, socially, culturally and politically. His ideals and vision are of much importance for the empowerment of socially neglected, politically subjugated, culturally destroyed and economically exploited community. As it is well known that one of the visions of Dr. Ambedkar was to empower the depressed castes and to transform India into *Prabudha Bharat* (Enlightened India), where the Buddhist values liberty, equality, fraternity and justice would prevail. The conversion drive to Buddhism in 1956 was certainly a move towards this goal. The respect for the philosophy of Ambedkar is very much evident in increasing number of Buddhist population. It seems that in U.P there is no politics possible without keeping Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhism in the front.

6. See D.C. Ahir, *Buddhism in India after Dr. Ambedkar (1956-2002)* (New Delhi: Blumoon Books, 2003), p 40.

7. Ibid.

8. In press conference on 13th October 1956 Ambedkar responding to one correspondent used the word *Navayana* to which he converted next day. Though the word *Navayana* is dubbed as Neo-Buddhism by some academicians which is a subject of the contestant among its followers objecting its prefix 'Neo'. See David Pandyan, *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Dynamics of Neo-Buddhism* (New Delhi: Gyan Pub. House, 1996), 201-202. The 'Neo' means, 'new', 'later', revived in modified form', and based upon. (See. Collins English Dictionary, 1998 Ed.) Here the purpose is not to discuss the linguistic problems in the words. Here the prefix 'Ambedkar' suits the clearer meaning which had been used by Timothy Fitzgerald in his writings (For example Ambedkar-Buddhism In Maharashtra, *Contribution to Indian Sociology*, July, 1997 (31) no.2. pp 225-251).

9. Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, Viewed on 26 December 2010. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uttar_Pradesh).

10. Ibid.

1. Demographic Development of Buddhist Community in Uttar Pradesh

According to the present boundary of Uttar Pradesh, in 1951 census the total Buddhist population was 2517. The twelve districts of Uttar Pradesh then had no Buddhist population, thirteen districts had less than two digit and nowhere four digit number was in total 46 districts. But, in every subsequent census there is a notable upsurge.

Table 1. Composition of Uttar Pradesh Population

Census Year	Total Population	Buddhists
1951	60693755	2517
1961	70640045	10478
1971	84539184	35056
1981	106016301	47573
1991	132061753	208583
2001	166197921	302031

Source: Census of India data on Uttar Pradesh 1951-2001.

Table 2. Buddhist Population Growth 1951-2001 Area-wise

Area/Division	1951-1961	1961-1971	1971-1981	1981-1991	1991-2001
Agra	4576	11343	17109	43044	60624
Allahabad	860	5130	4822	11915	23924
Banaras	553	580	1816	20358	34988
Faizabad	111	103	404	12594	23570
Gorakhpur	202	289	1302	37768	58724
Jhansi	188	1847	1919	12327	7568
Lucknow	350	1708	10139	37422	48512
Merrut	2464	11819	7365	17664	16448
Rohilkhand	1174	2327	2697	15491	27673
Total	10478	35146	47573	208583	302031

Sources: Census data on Uttar Pradesh 1951-2001.

As we know there are few changes in geographical boundary of Uttar Pradesh. For example, Uttaranchal has been carved out in 2000, so the population of that geographically area is deducted not only from 2000 onwards but since 1951 and only the existing geographically area is being taken into account which is presented and analysed. The available divisions in 1951 are kept as a base and later on created divisions are amalgamated within these. The detailed study of increasing Buddhist numbers can be studied census wise.

1.1 Census 1961

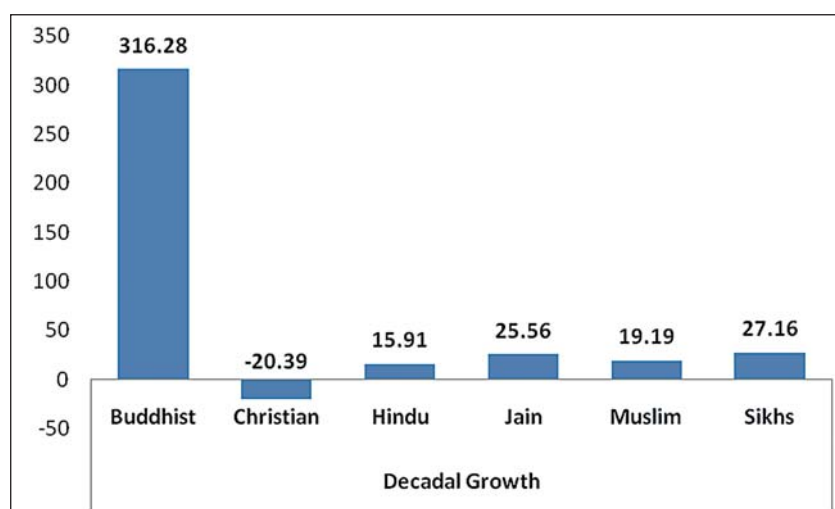
Uttar Pradesh has been the cradle of Buddhism in ancient Indian history. The religion of rulers and masses declined from the land of its birth, and was reduced to only 2517 people (0.004% of total population of state) in 1951. Before the strengthening of Buddhism in the decade of 1950's, it had become completely extinct in twelve of its prominent districts.¹¹

11. In the districts Gonda (Plus Balrampur), Sultanpur, Barabanki, Kheri, Sitapur, Unnao, Azamgarh, Basti (plus Siddharth Nagar and Sant Kabir Nagar), Mirzapur (plus Sonbhadra), Rampur, Pilibhit and Shahjahanpur is

The eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh which were once the main centres of Buddhism lost its charm due to some adverse situations like the removal of the political patronage since sixth century¹² and antagonism of Brahmanism. In the reign of Mauryas and Kaniskas the Buddhist art and culture was at its zenith which reduced to the lowest by 20th century. The documents of Chinese scholar Hiuen Tsang presents mesmerizing picture of Buddhism during his visit in the 5th century A.D. According to him there were 30 monasteries and many stupas of Buddhist art and architecture. Sarnath and Shravasti have been very reverent places not only for the Buddhists of Uttar Pradesh but also for the Buddhists across the world. The other Chinese pilgrim, Fa-hian who visited Uttar Pradesh in the 7th Century A.D. and Wu-Kung in eighth Century A.D demonstrates the Buddhist monuments during their ages.¹³

An upsurge, in the Buddhist population in large number is noted for the first time in 1961 census, especially in the western part of Uttar Pradesh like Agra, Meerut, Aligarh, Bareilly Bijnor and Pilibhit districts. The other important places of mass conversion are noted in Kanpur, Lucknow, and Mirzapur districts. Subsequently, the Buddhist population is recorded with a great leap in all parts of Uttar Pradesh. Eight of its twelve districts, where there was no representation in 1951 census, also recorded Buddhists population in large numbers in the later censuses. It shows that the dynamism of Buddhism is not confined to any specific area but its impact is everywhere.

Figure 1. Growth Rate of Religious Communities in U.P (Census 1961)



Sources: Census of India 1951 and 1961

In the census of 1961 the number of Buddhists multiplied fourfold and reached 10478 (0.014% of total population of U.P) with the splendid growth rate of 316.28% against overall growth rate of 16.38%. This splendid growth of Buddhists left behind all the religious communities like Christian (-20.39%), Hindu (15.91%), Jain (25.56%), Muslim (19.19%) and Sikhs (27.16%). The Hindu and Christian communities could not even manage average decadal growth rate (16.38%).

recorded no Buddhist population in 1951 census.

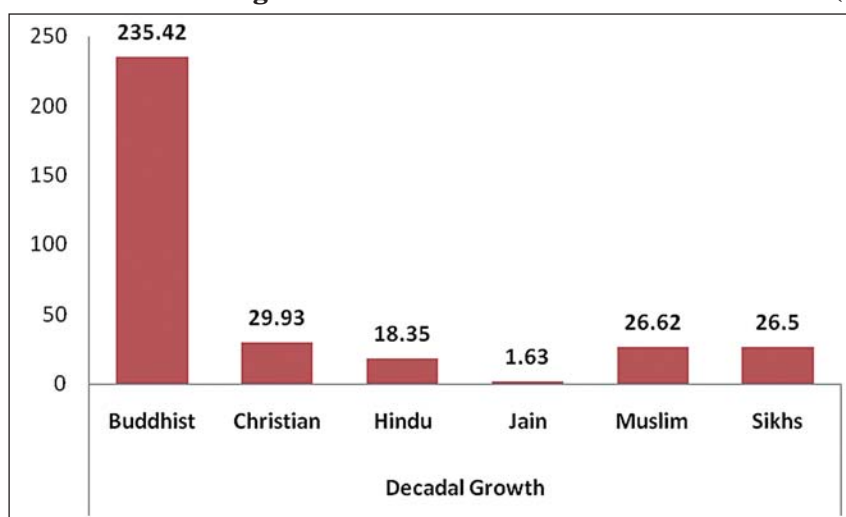
12. N. Dutt and K. D. Bajpai, *Development of Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh*, (Lucknow: Publication Bureau, Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1956), pp 308-326.

13. Ibid.

1.2 Census 1971

The 1971 census witnessed another great leap of Buddhism. In this decade the Buddhist population growth rate recorded was 235.42% against the total population growth rate of 19.64% only. The number of Buddhists jumped to 35,056 over the 10,478 in the previous census. One more noticeable thing in the development of Buddhism in 1971 census is increase in popularity and conversion to Buddhism in western and central part of Uttar Pradesh instead of eastern part which had been the centre of Buddhist teachings traditionally. The traditional prestigious centre of Buddhism such as Banaras, Kushinagar and Shravasti did not witness the wave of the revival in its splendid manner as happened in the western part of the state. The administrative divisions where the Buddhist population jumped miraculously in census of 1971 were Agra (11343), Meerut (11739), Allahabad (5130), Rohilkhand (2327) Jhansi (1847) and Lucknow (1708), while the Administrative divisions of eastern Uttar Pradesh such as Banaras (580), Gorakhpur (289) and Faizabad (103) could not even touch the thousand marks.

Figure 2. Growth Rate of Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh in % (Census 1971)

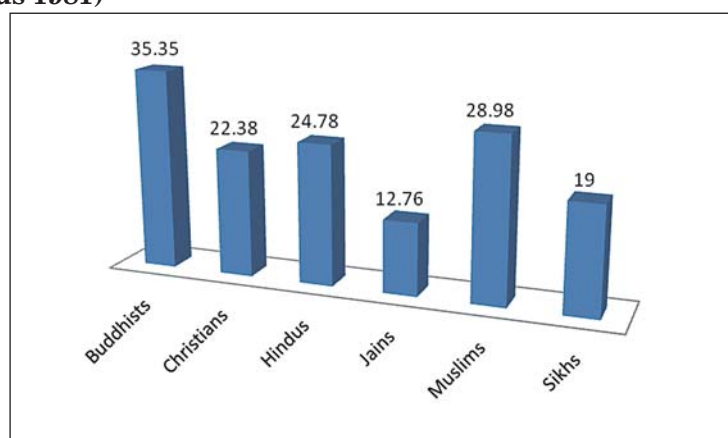


Sources: Census of India 1961 and 1971.

1.3 Census 1981

The census of 1981 showed the slowest growth rate of Buddhism (35.35%) since its revival in 1961 census. But even when compared to other religious communities, its growth rate surpassed all the other religious communities viz. Christian (22.38%), Hindu (24.78%), Jain (12.76%), Muslim (29.28%) and Sikh (19.00%).

**Figure 3. Growth Rate of Major Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh in %
(Census 1981)**



Sources: Census of India 1971 and 1981

The administrative divisions of eastern Uttar Pradesh where there was a slow progress in previous censuses recorded a remarkable jump in this decade. The divisions such as Banaras, Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Faizabad touched the new heights by reaching to 1816, 1302, 10139, and 404 respectively. The decadal growth rate of Banaras, Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Faizabad divisions is recorded as 213.10%, 350.51%, 493.61% and 292.23% respectively. The Agra division of western Uttar Pradesh only maintained a comparatively better growth rate in western Uttar Pradesh touching 50.83% against the overall Buddhist decadal growth rate of 35.35%. The administrative divisions where the growth rate of Buddhism was minimal are Rohilkhand (15.90%) and Jhansi (3.89%). The negative growth rate was recorded in Meerut and Allahabad with -37.26% and -6.00% respectively.

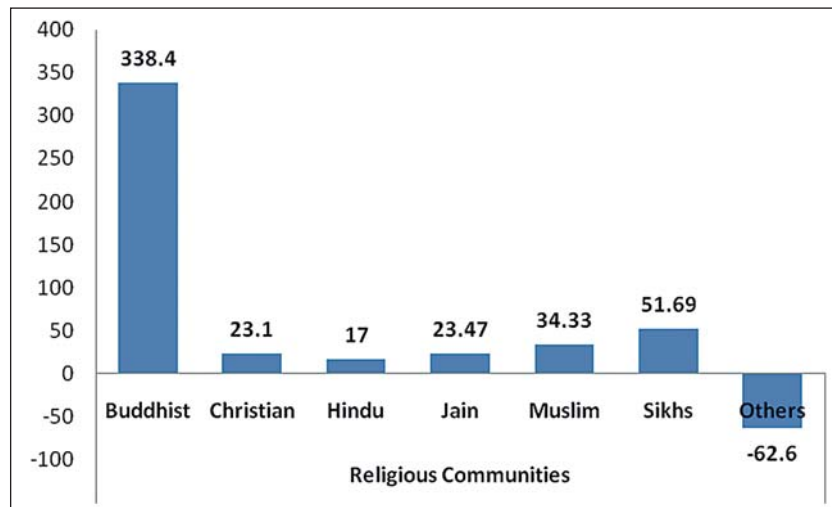
In the census of 1961 and 1971 Buddhism was seen taking new feet all over Uttar Pradesh. But the overall analysis of 1981 census is very important to know the causes for the slow progress of Buddhism in comparison with the previous censuses. A unique methodology was followed for during 1981 census. The figures of religion for 1961, 1971, 1991 and 2001 were based on the religion of every individual whereas the figures presented in 1981 were based on the religion of the head of the household. Thus, most probably, it seems that the slow growth rate of Buddhism was reported due to this factor. The argument behind this is that the conversion of untouchables is found mainly in new educated young people within a family and not by the chief of a household and their entire family.

1.4 Census 1991

In the census year of 1991 there was a splendid growth rate of Buddhist population. In the modern history of the revival of Buddhism, the census 1991 recorded the highest growth rate of Buddhists with 338.44%, while Hindu population growth rate was found at another nadir point with 17.03% against the overall population growth rate of 24.56%. The growth rate of Buddhists among all the divisions¹⁴ of U.P in descending order recorded was Faizabad 3017.32%, Gorakhpur 2800.76%, Benaras 1021.03%, Jhansi 542.36%, Rohilkhand 474.37%, Lucknow 269.08%, Agra 151.58%, Allahabad 147.09% and Meerut 139.83%.

14. Though after 1951 census, there is much changing and creation of new administrative divisions but here for the purpose of easiness to study only the existing divisions of 1951 are taken as a base.

Figure 4. Growth Rates of Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh (Census 1991)



Source: Census of India 1981 and 1991

Figure 4 clearly shows the splendid vertical growth rate of Buddhism (338%), has no match with all the other communities such as Hindu (17%), Muslim (34%), Jain (23%), and Christian (23%) and Sikhs (51%).

1.5 Census 2001

During the last decade of 20th century, the average population growth of Uttar Pradesh was observed to be 25.84%, while the Buddhist population observed the growth rate of 44.80% which is the highest among all the religious communities.

Figure 5. Decadal Growth Rate of Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh in% (Census 2001)



Sources: Census of India 1991 and 2001.

Though, it is true that the Buddhist growth rate was not observed as observed in the previous census but the number has definitely increased and established its importance in a splendid manner. The other communities in the decade which failed to touch even the average growth mark of 25.84% are Hindu 24.5%, Jain 22.9% and Christian 19.3%. The Allahabad division recorded the

highest growth rate of Buddhists with 100.78%, while the Hindu population grew only 24.5% here. The other divisions such as Faizabad, Rohilkhand, and Gorakhpur recorded Buddhist growth rate as 87.15%, 78.63% and 55.48% respectively. For details of the Buddhist population area wise, see table 2.

The divisions which recorded with less than overall percentage growth of Buddhists were Agra (40.84%), Lucknow (29.63%) and Meerut (6.88%). The negative Buddhist growth rate of -36.80% was recorded in Jhansi division. This was due to decrease of Buddhist population by 5447 in Jalaun district without any known reason till date. In Meerut division, Meerut District observed a fall in the population by 5012. Leaving these negatives it cannot be denied that the upsurge of Buddhist population in the Uttar Pradesh in 2001 census has touched its new zenith.

According to 2001 census the number of Buddhist population in Uttar Pradesh showed an unprecedented increase of 11899% over the 1951 figure of 2517 as it rose to 302031. The average growth rate of Buddhists between 1951-2001 noticed a whooping lead with 194.36% against very small average population growth rate of 22.37%.¹⁵ The average growth rate of Buddhists during these fifty years surpassed all the religious communities with a huge margin Hindus 61.92%, Muslims 71.56%, Christians 48.31%, Jains 54.82% and Sikhs 77.79%. The trend of whooping growth rate shows that Buddhism is a matter of great public importance, and in democratic politics it is impossible to be missed out this phenomenon.

2. Social Indicators of the Buddhist Community in Uttar Pradesh

The census of India 2001 illustrates specific aspects like sex ratios and literacy of the religious communities. In literacy the Buddhist community is at the lowest except Muslims among all the religious communities, but is ahead than scheduled castes. The other aspects such as the participation of Buddhists in higher education are not available in census data or National Sample Survey Organisation etc. The other significant data that can be helpful is of National Family Health Survey but that too is not available at the state level. Being so tight handed we can only highlight the most important aspect of the Buddhists i.e. Literacy which is available in 2001 Census.

Literacy: It is for the first time in independent India that the census office has released data on literacy by religion in 2001. Literacy is an important indicator of social and human development which directly affects fertility as well as mortality, especially child mortality (sex ratios). As Buddhism is the largest growing religion with the conversion of scheduled castes on a large scale, the literacy rate of Buddhists is much better than the scheduled castes. When compared with the scheduled castes, Buddhists are in a little better position but if compared with other religious communities, it is lagging behind. The table 3 and figure 6 makes the point clear.

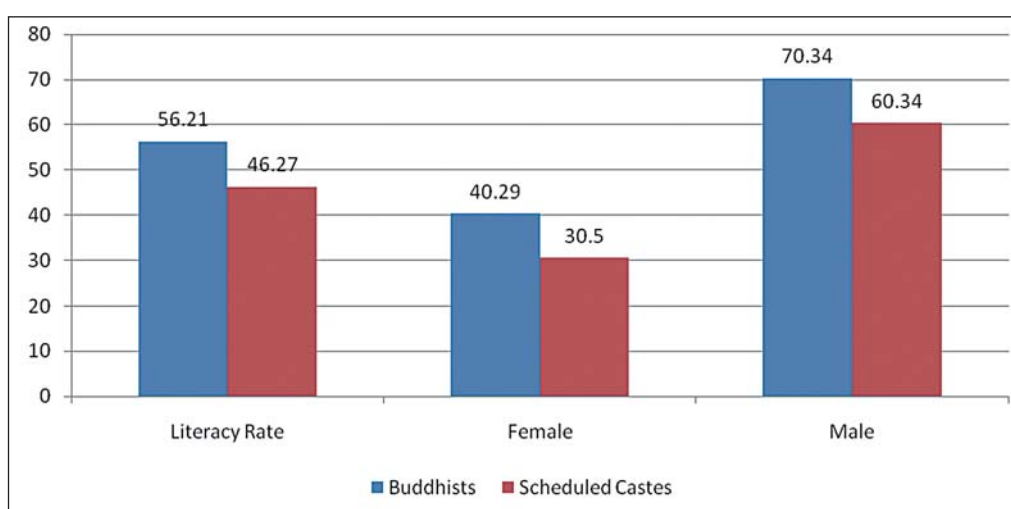
15. The data is calculated according to present boundary of Uttar Pradesh from 1951-2001 derived from the various census reports of Uttar Pradesh.

Table 3. Literacy Rate of the Religious Communities of U.P in %

Religious Communities	% Literacy
Buddhists	56.2
Christians	72.8
Hindus	58.0
Jains	93.2
Muslims	47.8
Sikhs	71.9
All	56.3

Source: Census of India 2001

Figure 6. Literacy Rate of Buddhists and Scheduled Castes of Uttar Pradesh in %



Source: Census of India 2001

From the table 3, it is clear that the literacy rate of Buddhists (56.2%) is better than Muslims only (47.8%) while other communities are noticed with high literacy rates like Jains (93.2%), Christians (72.8%), Sikhs (71.9%), and Hindus (58.00%). Figure 6 shows that the literacy rate of the scheduled castes is 46.27% while Buddhists are recorded with a better literacy rate of 56.21%.

3. Economic Condition of Buddhist Community in Uttar Pradesh

Economic condition is one of the most important variables for human survival. A community with sound economic base always has an upper hand in fields like politics and higher education. The economic characteristics of a particular community is calculated on the basis of the sector of economy they are engaged in, the nature of work they perform, employment status as to whether they are employers, employees, or independent workers and the status of their earning. In this regard, to know the economic status of Buddhist community in comparison with others we can take following element.

Workers' Activity Pattern: The workers activity is mainly divided into three sectors as primary, secondary and tertiary sector. On the basis of this classification we can analyze the extent of specialization and diversification of labour of a particular community. This is used as an indicator

of economic progress by the economists. The 2001 census provides with the data of workers on the basis of divisions such as Cultivators, Agricultural Labourers, Household Workers and Other Workers, on the basis of religion which is given in the table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Category of Workers by Religious Communities of Uttar Pradesh in%

Category	Buddhist	Christian	Hindu	Jain	Muslim	Sikhs
CL	41.0	14.8	44.2	5.0	25.7	51.3
AL	35.4	13.1	25.6	1.9	21.6	9.1
HHI	3.1	5.0	4.4	5.9	11.9	3.4
Others	20.5	67.1	25.9	87.2	40.7	36.2

Source: The First Report on Religion Data- Abstract, Census of India, 2001.

Abbreviations:

CL = Cultivators, engaged in cultivation of land owned or held from government, private or any institution.

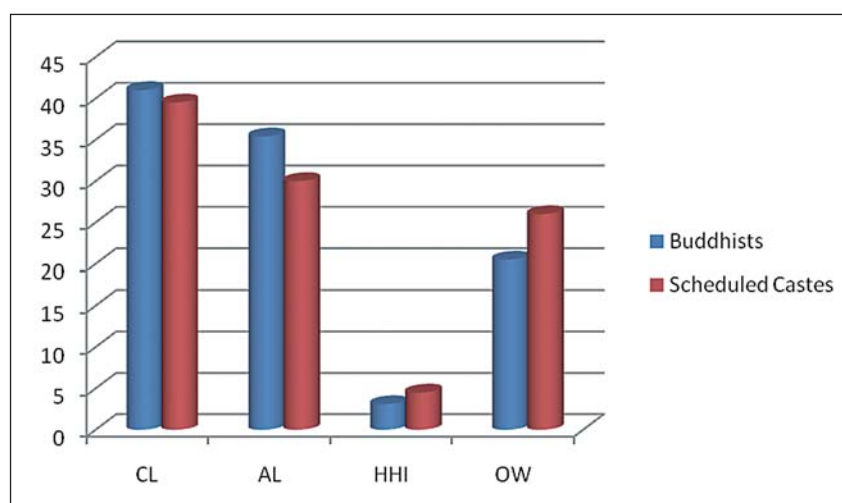
AL = Agricultural Labourers, who works on another person's land for wages in money or kind.

HHI = Household Industry Workers, industry run by one or more members of the household at home or within village in rural area.

OW = Other Workers, who have been engage in some economic activity during the last one year like workers engaged in government servants, mining, construction, social and political work, teaching, trade and commerce etc.

The table 4 shows that the workers of the Buddhist community are largely involved as cultivator labourers (41.00%), Agricultural labourers (35.4%), and other workers (20.5%). One noticeable thing shown by the above table is that the Buddhist workers engaged in agricultural works (35%) are highest among all other religious communities; viz. Hindus (25.6%), Muslims (21.6%), Christians (13.1%), Sikhs (9.1%) and Christians (1.9%). Thus we can say that their participation in the primary sector is the highest.

Figure 7. Categories of Workers- Scheduled Castes and Buddhists in Census 2001



Source: State Primary Census Abstract for Individual Scheduled Caste and the First Report on Religion Data Abstract, Census of India, 2001

The other reasonable comparison of Buddhists with other communities can be with the SCs because most of the Buddhists are from this background. The figure 7 shows that total workers in Buddhist community are largely cultivating labourers (41%), and agricultural labourers (35.4%). The percentage share of scheduled castes in cultivating labourers is (39.5%), and in agricultural labourers it is (30%). In the other two sectors, HHI and others, SCs are ahead in comparison to

Buddhists. Whereas SCs workers' share in HHI and OW is 4.5% and 26%, Buddhists account for 3.1% and 20.5% respectively. The Buddhist community is largely based in primary sector especially in cultivating (41%), marginally ahead of SCs (39.5%). In this comparative study we find that the Buddhist community has upper hand in the field of cultivation and agricultural labouring, while it is lagging behind in household industry and other services.

4. Contributing Factors in Emerging Buddhist Community

4.1 Conversion of Outcastes

One thing which proves that there is surely a large conversion to Buddhism is its immense growth percentage. Table 5 highlights that whereas the total population growth rate in the five censuses has been 16.3, 19.6, 25.4, 24.5, and 25.8% respectively; Buddhist population growth rate was recorded 316.2, 235.4, 35.3, 338.4, and 44.8%. Such a high growth rate of Buddhists cannot be its internal growth rate which is calculated on the basis of high birth-rate and low mortality rate. No community is recorded in the history with such a high growth rate naturally. It is absolutely due to mass conversion drive, especially among the outcastes/scheduled castes.

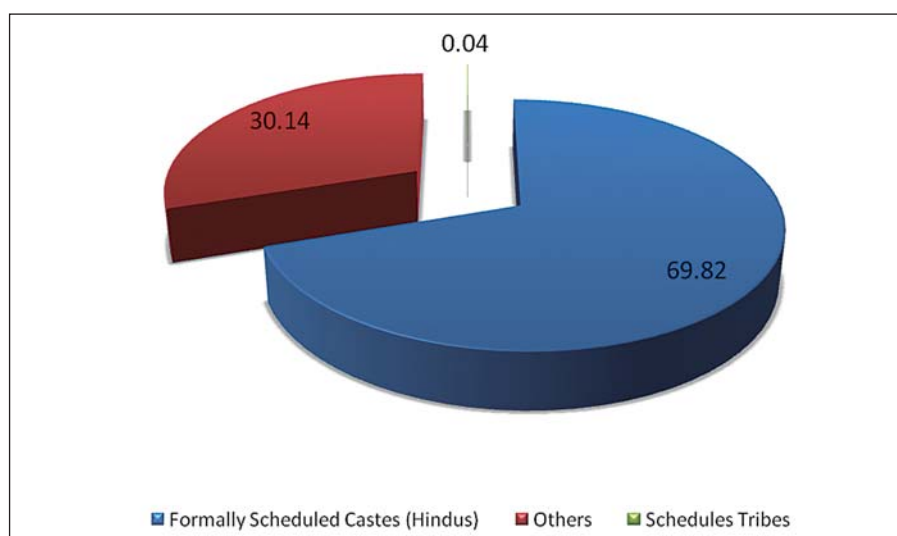
Table 5. Decadal Population Growth Rate of Uttar Pradesh in % (1961-2001)

Growth in %	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Buddhists	316.28	235.42	35.35	338.4	44.80
SCs	—	—	—	—	25.23 ¹⁶
Total Population	16.38	19.67	25.40	24.56	25.84

Sources: Census of India 1951-2001

The second thing which approves the conversion as the most important factor in the highest growth rate of Buddhist community is the social composition of Buddhist demography depicted in census report of 2001. According to the Census 2001, the number of scheduled castes who follow Buddhism is 210890 out of 302031, which constitutes 69.82% population of total Buddhists of the state.

16. It is based on the Scheduled Caste population of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand jointly.

Figure 8. Social Composition of Buddhists Demography in Uttar Pradesh in % (Census 2001)

Total Number of Buddhists (UP) 2001	Buddhists formerly Hindu SCs	Other Buddhists in 2001	Scheduled Tribes
302031	210890 (69.82%) of total Buddhists	91034 (30.14%) of total Buddhists ¹⁷	107 (0.04%) of total Buddhists

Sources: Uttar Pradesh The Data Highlights: Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Census of India 2001.

The figure 8 endorses the point that the outcastes/SCs have the biggest share in Buddhist population.¹⁸ The data is evident of the most attractive religion amongst scheduled castes for the conversion which constitutes 0.6% of total scheduled caste population and 3.74% total Buddhist population of India.

The general report on 1961 census also mentions the conversion of scheduled castes into Buddhism as the most viable factor in its jumping growth. The report says, “The most important factor which contributed to the enhancement of the Buddhist population of the state with the stipulated growth rate of 316.28% has been phenomenal on account of a large scale conversion especially from amongst the scheduled castes of Hindus.”¹⁹ Thus, the cause of conversion of outcastes is the most important aspect in the revival of Buddhism.

4.2 The Scope of Ambedkar

The conversion call, given by Ambedkar in 1956, greatly impressed the outcastes of Uttar Pradesh, especially the Jatavs which is the largest scheduled caste community in state. The Jatavs welcomed the historic move of conversion by accepting Ambedkar as their cultural hero, and consequently organized many conversion ceremonies.

4.2.1 Culture Hero: There are several reasons for the overwhelming support to Ambedkar, in

17. 0.1% of UP Scheduled Tribes’ total population or 107 persons belong to Buddhists community. See “Uttar Pradesh Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes”, Census of India 2001. According to Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalit>, accessed on 01/01/2011), the 61st Round Survey of the NSSO found that the total SCs/STs population in India’s Buddhist community is 89.5% and 7.4% respectively.

18. This is first time in the census of Uttar Pradesh that the figure of converted Buddhists of scheduled caste background is provided. Though this figure is not given in detailed district wise format; but overall this is a breakthrough in itself.

19. See “General Report on the Census”; census of India, Vol. XV, Uttar Pradesh, Part I-A (ii), p 128

which the first is cultural. By cultural component Lynch (1969) meant a heritage of literature, myths, art, symbols and values of Jatavs. The outcastes of Agra responded to Ambedkar's mass conversion drive in 1957 and removed the Hindu deities from 22 temples and converted them into Buddhist temples.²⁰ In Lucknow, Bhante Pragyanand, the successor of Bodhanand, organized several Buddhist conversion ceremonies in 1957.²¹

Initially, the Hindu untouchable community of many districts of western Uttar Pradesh (Agra, Aligarh, Meerut and Pilibhit) claimed themselves as Buddhists and began to assert Dr. Ambedkar as their cultural hero. They embraced him as their hero and that came to many as a surprise because he did not belong to the Jatav caste but was born in Mahar caste in Maharashtra state. Even though he was outsider, he was received as their 'own' hero. This thing for some sociologist is a unique incident in history of India where primordial loyalties play an important role, but in the case of Ambedkar all these things became secondary and he was accepted widely. As, Lynch (1969) describes,

He has become the culture hero of the Jatavs, and the attention he receives borders on worship. This is at first surprising because Ambedkar was not a Jatav from Uttar Pradesh; he was, on the contrary, a Mahar from the state of Maharashtra. These two facts, different caste and different regional affiliation, might ordinarily disqualify a man for leadership in India where such primordial loyalties run deep and sharply separate one group from another.²²

4.2.2 Commonality of Experiences: The above description of Lynch makes point more clear how Ambedkar, who is different from the U.P.'s Jatav community in terms of caste and region, has been accepted. Why did Jatavs accept Ambedkar as their ideal? The answer is 'commonality of experiences' which was the main thread connecting Ambedkar to Jatav community. Both were victims of caste hierarchy and untouchability, so they admired his ideas and methods to change their life. Lynch argues,

Much of the impetus to the Jatavs' unusual selection of Ambedkar as their leader lies in the similarities of their life histories with his. Ambedkar's life epitomises the painful realities, knotty problems, and radical solutions which has been part of their own lives; it was, thus, easy to transcend narrower loyalties of caste and region by identifying with him... The Jatavs feel that Ambedkar's experiences and their own are identical. Because of this they follow him and adopt his methods and ideas for overcoming their own problems.²³

As Lynch further writes, "the outstanding reverence to Dr. Ambedkar among the Jatavs had some reasons which helped in the wide acceptance of Ambedkar as their unquestionable hero and his interpretation of Buddhism as a substantive scope for an alternative identity."²⁴ Buddhism gave them a ray of hope, a set of fundamental values and an ideal model of society. And as Lynch argues, "to make these a reality Jatavs have taken to political action."²⁵ The Jatavs initially contacted Ambedkar and sent many telegrams supporting him over Gandhi in 1930-31 during the second round table conference in which a bitter dispute arose between Gandhi and Ambedkar. The Jatavs felt Ambedkar's position was correct.

The other reason lies in Ambedkar's structural position. He was a revolutionary which has one

20. Owen M. Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability, Social Mobility and Change in a City of India* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), 149.

21. Personal interview on 31 July, 2010 at Risaldar Park Baudh Vihar, Lucknow.

22. Lynch 1969, pp 130-131.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid, pp 127-128.

commonality with the Jatavs i.e. both were untouchables under the codified structure of society in Hinduism. This commonality strengthened the feelings that “he is one of our men” one who could really understand their problems and feelings as an insider and attained status of great prestige, power, and responsibility in India. The fourth reason of overwhelming support for Ambedkar by Jatavs is symbolic importance of Ambedkar. The charismatic image of Ambedkar which emerged from his glorifying deeds had a prominent influence on the Jatavs.

4.2.3 Commonality of Traditions: For Lynch (1972 & 1969), there are two prominent north Indian traditions of Jatavs- (a) religious tradition of Kabir and Ravi Das, and (b) heroic tradition of Alha and Udal. Both the traditions have fought against Hinduism and untouchability. In the struggle of religious tradition Kabir and Ravi Das rejected caste dimensions of Hinduism and their teachings are very much similar to Ambedkar’s message. Both the figures of religious tradition rejected Hinduism and preached equality. Ambedkar fits in both the traditions. He continued first traditions of Kabir and Ravidas by his vehement opposition to Hinduism and caste system. He regarded Kabir as one of his Gurus along with Jyotirao Phule and Gautam Buddha. Thus as a religious reformer, like Kabir, he was easily accepted by the Jatavs. The heroic sense of similarity between Ambedkar and Jatavs is attempted to establish by the heroic work of Alha and Udal (supposedly as untouchables) who by heroic deeds helped King Parmal in his war against Prithviraj and proved that untouchables are great warriors in *heart*, *word*, and *deed*. In the same way Jatavs believe that the work of Ambedkar against untouchability, his fight for education and his role as the father of Indian Constitution is similar to their traditional heroes, Alha and Udal.²⁶

4.3 The Role of Socio-Political Organisations

The continuous increasing Buddhist population and its popularity among outcastes show the relevance of ‘Ambedkar-Buddhism’ for them. The credit of carrying the message of Ambedkar-Buddhism after Ambedkar goes to the organizations established by him like The Buddhist Society of India (Bhartiya Baudh Mahasabha or BSI) and the Republican Party of India (RPI). The BSI was registered by Dr. Ambedkar on 4th May 1955 in the office of the Registrar of Companies, Mumbai. It was very active all over India and in UP. Agra was a main city of its activities.²⁷ The leaders of these organizations actively participated in the conversion drive and by their efforts convinced the outcastes to embrace Ambedkar-Buddhism as their ray of hope to overcome the age-old social and mental slavery which Ambedkar hoped would come to an end after conversion.

The role of outcaste-Buddhists led political outfit, Republican Party of India (RPI), was immense in making Ambedkar-Buddhist movement widely accepted at that time. RPI demanded the extension of ‘reservation facilities’ to Ambedkar-Buddhists (who converted from SCs/STs) in 1960s and later on, and its leaders actively promoted outcastes to convert to Buddhism.²⁸ RPI is an example of the combination of dalit politics and Buddhism. Thus, the role of socio-political organisations in the promotion of Buddhists is immense. In 1980s the Dalit Panther has been a vibrant force to campaign for outcastes and Ambedkar-Buddhism through literature and public meetings.²⁹

26. Lynch, O. (1972). “Dr. B. R. Ambedkar- Myth and Charisma”. in J. M. Mahar (Ed.), *The Untouchables in Contemporary India*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press. p107 and, Lynch 1969, pp 140-141.

27. See Fiske, A. (1972). “Scheduled Caste Buddhist Organisations”. in J. M. Mahar (Ed.), *The Untouchables in Contemporary India* (pp 112-142). Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, p 118.

28. Republican Party of India since a very long time was struggling for its demand for quotas for outcaste-Buddhists. See. Lynch 1969, p 104.

29. Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp, 2007, p. 2181, *EPW*.

The decade of 1990s has been of great contradictions in the field of social and political stability. On one hand the Hindutva forces like Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal etc. tried to establish the social and political norms based on the Hindu ideology, while on the other hand dalit backwards led political groups such as Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP) came as strong representatives of dalits and other backwards. Bellwinkel (2007) argues that the political discourse instigated by Sangh Parivar – the Hindu fundamentalist organisation did not have any impact and was rejected vehemently by the Ambedkar-Buddhists.

An important event in social and political history of Uttar Pradesh is the emergence of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), a political party led by scheduled caste leaders. Ilaiyah (1994) argues that the goal of BSP was to break the caste system and introduce social transformation.³⁰ Pai (2002) argues, “BSP had a significant role in making dalits conscious towards the social change/transformation though unsuccessful in achieving it. She argues “It (BSP) has constructed a strong Dalit movement, based upon identity and consciousness, while on the other hand despite considerable politicization of Dalits in U.P in the 1980s, and 1990s, the BSP has failed in its avowed goal of displacing *manuvadi* (representing upper caste) forces and introducing social change.”³¹ Thus for her, there is only politicisation of dalits without any social change by the BSP.

4.4 Tibetan Migration

According to general reports on 1961 census,³² other than conversion, the immigration of a large number of Tibetan Buddhists in 1959 when the Dalai Lama sought political asylum in India after the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese. This immigration was one of the most viable reasons for the emergence of Buddhist demography. Later on the migration might have continued but in the general reports of the censuses this reason is not stated. In addition to this no census reveals the number of immigrant Buddhists. The 2001 census brings out that 70% (approx.) of total number of Buddhists in Uttar Pradesh consists of outcasts. It hints that the remaining 30% (approx.) consists of Buddhists from other castes including Tibetan immigrants.

4.5 Extension of Reservation Facility

After 1991 one of the reasons for conversion to Buddhism is the extension of reservation facilities to the neo-converts as it was only for scheduled castes before conversion. The above point is vindicated by Mahendra K. Premi, as he argues, “There have been changes in the Acts on “religion” by the Parliament at various points of time; for example, ***exceptional growth of Buddhists in some states was due to many scheduled castes people converting themselves to Buddhism*** and continuing to get benefits applicable to the scheduled castes.”³³ The ‘extension of reservation’ for Buddhists in 1991 may be a boosting factor for conversion but it is not a sole factor because the figures of previous censuses also have shown a significant increase in the number of Buddhists. If reservation is the only factor then there would not have been so high growth in Buddhism before 1991. In addition to the above reason the ideological inspirations of Ambedkar had been the main motivating factor in all the decades for the growth of Buddhism.

30. See Ilaiyah (1994), BSP and Caste as Ideology. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29(12), p 668.

31. See Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh - Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge* Vol. 3, (New Delhi: Sage, 2002), p.1.

32. See “General Report on the Census”; census of India, Vol. XV, Uttar Pradesh, Part I-A (ii), p 128.

33. See Premi Mahendra K. *Population of India, In the Millennium: Census 2001*. (New Delhi: NBT. 2006). p 167.

5. The Political Implications of Buddhists' Community

One of the available indicators of social status i.e literacy of Buddhists indicates that the community is a little ahead in terms of literacy as compared to the SCs but at the bottom among all the religious communities except Muslims. In economic field their share largely is in cultivating and agricultural labouring little ahead of SCs while SCs are much ahead in household industry, government services, mining, construction, teaching and trades etc. In-fact, there are not sufficient data available to examine their socio-economic conditions. In terms of politics the Buddhists assertion is on a high after 1990.

Table 6: Buddhists Contestants in Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections 1991-2007

Year	Total Seats	Total Contestants	Average	Buddhist Contestants			% of Buddhist Contestants
				Male	Female	Total	
1991	419	7851	—	10	03	13	0.16
1993	422	9726	23	24	01	25	0.25
1996	424	1029	02	08	00	08	0.77
2002	403	5533	14	11	03	14	0.25
2007	403	6086	15	19	04	23	0.37

Sources: Statistical Reports on General Election, 1991 - 2007 to the Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

Note: The identity of Buddhist contestants is derived on the basis of their surnames/last-names. Most of the Buddhists have their surnames/last names either as *Gautam* or *Baudh*. In reality, this number may be higher than this because many Buddhists have not changed their names. In Bahujan Samaj Party many Buddhist leaders contest elections without changing their names.³⁴

The table above shows the participation and assertion of Buddhists in politics. Before 1991 there were hardly a couple of Buddhist contestants which grew very fast in the last decade of the 20th century. The above data speaks only about post 1990 developments because before this their participation was negligible.

The statistical reports on state assembly elections of UP does not reveal any data on religious lines though it mentions about the scheduled castes. As it is known that most of Buddhists are of scheduled caste background and even Government of India includes them within scheduled castes.

The inference drawn from the above table is following—

The percentage of Buddhist contestants increased to 0.37% in 2007 as compared to 0.16% in the year 1991. There was a sharp rise in the year 1996 and the percentage went up to 0.77. Most of the contestants are seen as independent candidates. In the 2007 election except independent candidates (09), BSP has the largest contestants (05).³⁵ The possible reason of this emerging number of Buddhists in political fray goes to the extension of scheduled castes reservation facility to Buddhists also.

In the contemporary BSP ruled state many Ambedkar-Buddhists are appointed as ministers. The policies and programme of the government are highly influenced by them. The emerging demography highly appeals BSP because most of the Buddhists are from the dalit background, the core vote bank of the party. The trend of whooping increase in Buddhist population somewhere

34. Swami Prasad Maurya, Paras Nath Maurya and Daddu Prasad are its example. Who have not added Gautam or baudh in their names. Even BSP president Mayawati do lots of rites in a Buddhist way. She performed the BSP founder Kanshiram's last funeral herself according to Buddhist rites.

35. See Statistical Reports on General Election 2007, the Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

seems to have an impact on the BSP government programmes. In the name of Sakyamuni Buddha, Mayawati government has initiated lots of project. Among those the most important is Gautam Budha University in Gautam Buddha Nagar and International Buddhist Reserach Institute (IBRI) and Baud Vihar Shanti Upvan in Lucknow. In IBRI, the language of Buddhists i.e.Pali would be taught.³⁶ The library of the institute is situated in the ground floor of Baudh Vihar Shanti Upvan, Lucknow and the first floor has a magnificent Buddhist meditation centre. The library is established with a collection many rare Buddhist books with the help of many southeast Buddhist countries.³⁷

6. Conclusion

The above study, based on the available census data, reveals that the Buddhist community is the fastest growing religious community in uttar pradesh. The conversion among outcastes (scheduled castes) is the main reason for such a high growth. The most crucial factor in this growth is Ambedkar's ideological influence on dalits through many socio-political groups and some other reasons such as extension of reservation facility to neo-Buddhists. The response to this phenomenon from dalit led political parties is unavoidable.³⁸ Currently, the most powerful political group BSP shows highly concerned and respondent to this group. Even the BSP leaders from backward castes seem to be very positive about Ambedkar-Buddhism as we can observe Ambedkar-Buddhist iconography in their houses and offices.³⁹ Though, the emerging Buddhist community in the census is a small phenomenon but it has much larger appeal and implications.

The positive social indicator of Buddhists in terms of literacy in comparison with other communities is also important aspect but is not sufficient to know the real social situation of Buddhists. Their status in other fields such as higher education and health etc also needs to be known. The available socio-economic indicators also hint at the deprivation of this community in many fields in comparison of other religions. The available economic indicators are also insufficient to arrive at any conclusion and require proper study in order to end their deprivation and inequity. To know the economic condition of this community some other crucial indicators such as per capita consumption, employment rate and availability of basic amenities are also needed.

Though, in uttar pradesh the Buddhists are expanding their appeals in political sphere but at the level of central government their appeal does not seem very strong. The role of central government seems indifferent towards this minority community which is visible in the following instances. First, the government agencies are not carrying out a study on this community. In 2005 the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) gave the data regarding socio-economic status of many religious communities such as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Hindus but did not spell anything about the Buddhists. The Ambedkar Foundation, which is an independent body associated with the ministry of social justice and empowerment, government of India created with the purpose of carrying forward the ideology of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar also has no programme for this community. It is not sufficient to facilitate this community like the scheduled castes

36. Personal interview with Bhikku Chandima, the Chairperson of International Buddhist Research Institute, Lucknow on 6th December, 2010 at Baudh Vihar Shanti Upvan, Lucknow.

37. Ibid.

38. Besides BSP there are many political groups such as Republican Party of India, Indian Justice Party and Ambedkar Samaj Party etc. Since the beginning RPI leaders have been involved in conversion and Buddhism. The founder president of IJP has converted himself as a Buddhist.

39. Personally I have observed Ambedkar-Buddhists icons in the houses and offices of many backward castes leaders.

because it has a different notion of its history and culture. Secondly, there are two bases of minority in India- religious and linguistic. The language of Buddhist scriptures and inscriptions is Pali but at the central government level they could not make a great force to compel the State to promote Pali language in the country.

In bahujan samaj politics of uttar pradesh, the community occupies a deep attention. There are many people who claims themselves as Buddhists and are think-tank of the BSP, have important role in policy and programme of the government.⁴⁰ Keeping cultural demand of this community in view we can see that the BSP government has developed an Ambedkar-Buddhist iconography across the state and has opened some institutions to promote Pali and Buddhist education.⁴¹

Overall, the community really requires much more considerations in terms of study and data to understand their developments and underdevelopments in the field of socio-economic, political and cultural fields to make policies and programmes to promote equity. Subsequently, the vibrant development of this community will facilitate in making India a real democracy and nation.

40. Many leaders of the BSP are waiting for the appropriate call of the top-most leadership for the *deeksha*. According to Mayawati's proclamation in 2003 and 2006, she will take *deeksha* with her millions of followers only after achieving the power at the centre, while all the programmes of her government will be held as per Buddhist rites. Interestingly, though she could not take *deeksha* but she has stood herself alongwith her mentor Kanshiram in the Buddhist Vihar of Lucknow, which clearly symbolizes her claim as a Buddhist.

41. In a personal interview with Prof. Mahavir Singh, Dean School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Gautam Buddha University, NOIDA on 21 July 2010, informed that all the university students will study a course on Buddhist education.

Session 2

Religious Minorities and Majorities in South Asia

Religion Islam in Social and Political Transformation: The Bangladesh Perspective

Harun-or-RASHID

Introduction

Religion and majority-minority issue have always been an integral part in South Asian societies and politics. The followers of four major world religions - Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity- inhabit in South Asia in varying numbers. Deeper influence of these religions resonates in shaping society, politics and economy.

The region of South Asia had been under the British colonial power for about two hundred years. It came to be divided into pieces and religion was one of the key factors in the fragmentation. That legacy of use of religion in politics still continues. Use of religion in politics was prohibited in Bangladesh at independence in 1971. However, at present, Islam is the 'state religion'. In South Asian politics the dominance of religious majority over the religious minority is evident with the resultant identification of the state with the majority community.

The present paper is an attempt to explore the role of religion Islam in social and political transformation of Bangladesh. The paper is divided into three sections. In the first section, an historical overview has been taken to understand the use of religion in politics leading to the Indian partition 1947. The second section would reflect on the role of religion in politics during the Pakistan period (1947-1971). The third section presents an in-depth analysis of the role of religion in social and political transformation of the post-independence Bangladesh. Historical analytical method has been used in writing the paper.

1. Fear of domination of religious majority and the growth of Muslim separatism in pre-partition India

The Hindus and Muslims of India used to live side by side in complete harmony for centuries. Under the Muslim rule especially that of the Swadhin Nawabi period (1707-1757) of Bengal, Hindus shared high offices and ranks with the Muslim (Ahamed and Rashid 2007: 65-66). In course of the British colonial rule (1757-1947), the pre-Palashi Hindu-Muslim amity ended, one falling apart from the other.

The policy of non-cooperation pursued by the Muslims towards the British for over a period of one hundred year from the battle of Palashi, their non acceptance of English education as a vehicle of modern life and opportunities, distrust of Muslims by the rulers following the 1857-58 Sepoy uprising on the one hand, and the Hindu control of land, the main source of economy and influence, and their adaptability to the changed situation on the other hand, created a condition for uneven development of the two communities. Slowly and gradually changes occurred in the attitude of the Muslim community in the second half of the nineteenth century in favour of cooperation with the

British.

Around this time there was a marked change in British policy, too. The colonial rulers saw it politically expedient in view of the growing strength of the Hindu community as a potential source of nationalist challenge. W.W. Hunter's oft-quoted work, *The Indian Musalmans* came out (1870) making a profound impact on Muslim mind instantaneously, as it stated:

A hundred and seventy years ago, it was almost impossible for a well-born Musalman in Bengal to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich (Hunter 1999: 141).

The question of Muslim education received special attention from the government; educational institutions including hostels were established; more grants were made; stipends and scholarships were increased; Muslim teachers were appointed. Slowly a Western educated class among the Muslims to be engaged in legal profession, print media, and in politics was emerging.

In the process of British withdrawal from India, the Muslim League, based on the Two Nations theory, raised the demand for a separate homeland for Indian Muslims to be established in the two Muslim-majority zones as stipulated in the 1940 Lahore Resolution (also known as the Pakistan Resolution) (Pirzada 1970: 341). It posed a genuine threat to the idea of an undivided independent India as a homeland of peoples of all religious persuasions that the Indian National Congress stood for. Congress being a secular body, at least in nomenclature, had the potential to become a true nationalist platform representing all sections of the Indian population. Unfortunately it failed to accommodate the feelings and interests of the Muslim community. Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, did not have recourse to a separatist path until 1940 or even later¹. Meanwhile, he sought time and again to reach an understanding with Congress about Indian constitutional impasse. Any good gesture on the part of Congress might have made thing different. However, Congress chose to take a strong position at negotiations by not agreeing to concede more seats to the Muslims than their number warranted. Congress leaderships always thought of Muslim League as a body of Muslim knights and nawabs without any mass support. It is true that, organisationally the League was in a moribund condition at the time of the 1937 assembly elections. The forward march of the League was taking place immediately after the 1937 elections with the installation of Congress governments in seven out of eleven Indian provinces.

The adoption by the League of the 1940 Lahore Resolution, thus, giving it a positive political programme (Pakistan) made the League's bandwagon further irresistible. Stipulated in the British Cabinet Mission Plan (1946), a three-tier loose federal structure, known as the A, B, C Formula, in a framework of undivided India could have been the best solution for India at large including the Hindu-Muslim question. Again, the Plan did not materialize because of Congress non-acceptance (Rashid 2003: 240).

In short, Hindu revivalism and the use of Hindu symbols, asymmetric development between Hindu

1. Ayesha Jalal holds the view that Pakistan was Jinnah's bargaining counter and he did not fix his mind finally in favour of partition until 1946. She cites Jinnah's acceptance of one India solution in a very loose federal structure as stipulated in the British Cabinet Mission Plan in favour of her argument. Jalal, Ayesha, *The Sole Spokesman, Jinnah the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge 1985.

and Muslim communities, pressure on job, progressive introduction of representative government, British 'divide and rule' policy, the foundation of the All-India Muslim League in Dhaka in 1906 as an exclusive Muslim body, separate electorates and reservation of seats for the Muslims since 1909 onwards, anti-partition agitation (1905-1911) by the Hindus and Congress forcing the British government to unsettle 'the settled fact', failure of Congress to accommodate the genuine Muslim demand and sentiment, the economic divide in Bengal society taking on communal line, Muslims constituting majority in some regions of India (North-East and North-West; internally, in East Bengal), and the fear of perpetual Hindu majority domination over the Muslim minority among the Muslim community in undivided India may account for the growth of separatism among the Muslims of pre-partition India (Rashid 2007: 75). It may be recalled that Bengal played the role of a vanguard in the anti-British nationalist movement. Proud of its culture and sensitive to its territorial indivisibility, the Bengal Hindus forced the colonial rulers to unsettle their once declared 'settled fact' of 1905

Bengal partition. Ironically, the same land was divided into two halves - East Bengal and West Bengal, along communal line on their insistence under the banner of the Hindu Mahasabha, a hard core communal organisation, at the time of British withdrawal from India in 1947. This suggested an irrevocable communalisation of Indian politics preceding partition.

2. Religion in Pakistan politics (1947-1970): An instrument for domination

The 1947 partition marked the success of Jinnah in defining a political ideology based on religion, which led to the establishment of Pakistan. However the failure of that ideology to sustain the state was attributable to the distinct identity of the Bangalis as well as to the structure of the state itself.

As it is widely known, the Bengal Muslims played a vitally important role in the establishment of Pakistan. That without the kind of support and sacrifice they had made, perhaps there would have been no Pakistan state. To their utter surprise, they found their position relegated to a second class citizen in the state since its inception. Pakistan presented a rare example where the majority (Bangalis) had been placed under the domination of West Pakistani minority.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Bangali Muslims emerged as the majority community in the province. However their appalling backwardness relative to most Hindus extended over all important aspects of life. Another distinguishing feature was that, while the large majority of cultivators were Muslims, the *Zamindars* and *Mahajans* (money-lenders) were mainly Hindus. The interests of the backward Muslim community were in conflict not only with those of the minority Hindu community, but also with those of the non-Bengali Muslims, particularly the privileged minority Muslims of Uttar Pradesh, who were at the helm of the Muslim League and Pakistan movement. Their immediate preference was to emancipate themselves from exploitation by the Hindu *Zamindars* and *Mahajans*. Pakistan provided them with that opportunity. However, the statehood ideal of a section of Bangali Muslim leadership headed by A.K. Fazlul Huq, H.S. Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim was different from that of Jinnah. In course of the Pakistan movement many among these leaders remained alive to the distinct identity and interests of the Bangali Muslims including language and culture vis-à-vis the non-Bangali Muslims outside Bengal. They understood the 1940 Lahore Resolution, also known as the Pakistan Resolution, in terms of establishing two, and not one, independent states in two Muslim-majority zones of India

(Rashid 1994: 59-68; 2003: 33, 170-174). For them again, Jinnah's so-called Two Nations theory was not an article of faith as an ideological basis of *Akhand* Pakistan, rather a strategic framework for the united struggle of the diverse Indian Muslims against their common principal enemy, Congress or Hindus. Such an understanding led H. S. Suhrawardy, the last Chief Minister of undivided Bengal, to initiate the last ditch move for a United Independent Bengal outside India and Pakistan as a third dominion preceding partition (Rashid 2003: 257-322). The failure of the move brought the Bangali Muslims into Jinnah's Pakistan.

Pakistan was like a 'double country' with two wings being separated by more than a thousand mile of Indian territories. The Bangali Muslims had little in common with their counter part in West Pakistan except a common religion (Islam) and a shared fear of Hindu domination in a united India. So, the major challenge before the Pakistani political elites was the accommodation of the Bangali national variation. The policies pursued by the rulers only exacerbated the process of alienation among the Bangalis.

The state of Pakistan offered the Bangalis nothing more than an imagined nationalism based on religion. The ethnocentric West Pakistani rulers regarded the Bangla language and Bangali culture not to be in full conformity with the tenets of Islam. This notion became manifest when the rulers resolved to make Urdu, a language spoken by a minority immigrant community, as the national language dismissing their just and legitimate demand for Bangla to be adopted as one of the state languages of Pakistan along with Urdu. The West Pakistani political elites made attempts to impress upon the Bangalis to be 'true Muslims' in line with religion Islam as they perceived it. For them, Islam as a political ideology ('Islamic Republic'), separate electorates and Urdu as the national language were the cornerstones of Pakistani nationhood (Pattanaik 2005: 362). Though Bangla was finally adopted as one of the state languages of Pakistan in the aftermath of the 1952 February killing (language martyrdom) and a joint electorate system was introduced (1957) in accordance with the demands of the Bangalis, the Ayub regime embarked upon fresh onslaughts on the Bangla language and culture in the sixties. In a bid to free the Bangali Muslims from the so-called influence of Hindus, the regime opted in vain for Islamisation of their language and literature by changing the script and incorporating more Urdu and Arabic words. Ban was imposed on the songs of the great Bangali poet, Rabindranath Thakur on Radio and Television. Imports of Bangla books and films from west Bengal were prohibited (Rashid 1989: 175-189).

In Pakistan, while the control of the state covering all spheres was in the hands of the west Pakistanis, Bangalis were favoured only by numbers (56 percent of the total population). In order to turn their numbers into political power, they persistently demanded for a parliamentary form of government based on the principle of 'one man one vote'. Intended to curbing the political power of the majority Bangalis, the West Pakistani power elites arbitrarily established parity in representation in the National Assembly (Parliament) between the two wings. Further they forged unity of the four West Pakistan provinces into 'one unit' (1955) in order to present a united stand vis-à-vis Bangalis. To protect the ideological foundation of the state and of the interests of the immigrant Urdu speaking elites followed by the Punjabis, the ruling elites raised 'the "fear of Indian threat, communist incursions and Hindu phobia", thereby trying to consolidate an Islamic identity that necessarily impinged upon the secular demands of the Bangalis' (Pattanaik 2005: 364). The genuine demands of the Bangalis were trampled under 'the rubric of state security and were given a separatist and conspiratorial color by the state.' The Bangalis considered all the measures

of the regimes including Islamisation in utter disregard to their democratic rights and cultural autonomy as instruments of domination and exploitation over them.

Against this backdrop, the Awami League's Six-point programme (Rashid 2003: 356-357), presented by its Chief Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (hereafter Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) in 1966, came as the Charter of Rights and Self-preservation for the Bangalis after the fashion of the historic Lahore Resolution (1940), arousing the same amount of enthusiasm among them as the Pakistan cry for independence did in the 1940s. Striking at the roots of internal colonialism, the programme took everybody by surprise, causing a revolution in the minds of the Bangalis. While in pre-Pakistan days the Bangali Muslims were united against the Hindu domination, this time they- both Muslims and Hindus- were united against West Pakistani domination under the organisational leadership of the Awami League, which by then emerged as their nationalist platform. It must be remembered that this kind of togetherness among the Bangalis irrespective of religions started with the language movement in 1948-52.

The most crucial development for both Bangalis and the Pakistani regime was the 1970 elections in which the Awami League headed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman secured an overwhelming victory. Through these elections being the first ever, the Bangalis, who constituted majority among the population, saw for the first time a chance of ruling Pakistan, consistently denied to them in the past. This time also the (West) Pakistani power elites (military, bureaucratic, political) were extremely unwilling to allow the Bangalis to rule Pakistan. Instead of handing over power to the majority Awami League and its chief, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the military rulers, headed by General Yahya Khan, resolved to have recourse to suppression of the people's verdict by brute military force, which triggered off the demise of the country. The military crackdown on the unarmed Bangalis in the dreadful night of March 25, 1971 in the name of Pakistan's unity only confirmed this.

3. Religion in Independent Bangladesh

The emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 through a successful War of Liberation was considered to be a very significant event in contemporary South Asian history. It dealt a death blow to some of the political structures and arrangements that the British Raj had effected at the time of withdrawal from India, only 24 years ago. It was the first modern break away state in the post-colonial era founded upon the ideals of secularism and ethno-nationalism linked with one predominant linguistic group, Bangalis. With Bangladesh the very basis of partition-religion or the so-called Two Nations theory-came under direct challenge. The new state under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was believed to be free from politics of religious communalism once and for all. However, very soon use of religion in public matters, rise of Islamism being the religion of the dominant majority community and communalisation marked a pronounced manifestation. This development can be better understood by identifying three distinct eras of political rule. First, the Mujib era (1972-1975) that was characterized by the prohibition of use of religion in politics. The second era (1976-1990) dominated by military rulers (General Zia , Ershad) saw the re-emergence of political Islam within the arena of mainstream politics. The third era under democratic rule (1991 to date) can be identified as a period marked by the emergence of militant Islamist groups with potential political threat.

Religion under Mujib Era (1971-1975): A journey to secularism

Under the leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a constitution was provided within a period of ten months from liberation for the newly born Bangladesh state, which is regarded as one of the best of the world. Bangladesh becomes a Republic with all powers vested in the hands of the people (Article 7).The new Republic came to be founded upon the four fundamental principles as national ideology, namely (Bangali) Nationalism , Socialism, Democracy and Secularism, developed in course of long struggle for national emancipation including the 1971 War of Liberation.

The Mujib government had declared its firm commitment to the principle of secularism. In view of the Pakistani experience regarding the use of religion Islam in politics, it was quite understandable that secularism would be one of the guiding principles of the new Republic. The 1972 Constitution not only declared secularism as one of the fundamental principles of state policy but also prescribed certain measures for its implementation. These included elimination of communalism in all its forms; no political recognition of any religion by the state; no use of religion for political purposes; and no discrimination or persecution on religious grounds (Article 12).

Perhaps the most important step of the Mujib government in regard to dissociating politics from religion was the constitutional prohibition of forming any religion –based communal organisation with ‘ a political purpose’ (Article 38).This instrument was applied in the case of pro-political Islam pro-communal parties like the Jamaat-i-Islami, Muslim League and other political Islam variants, who in their opposition to the creation of Bangladesh sided with the Pakistan occupation army during the War of Liberation further with direct involvement in their genocidal killing through specially organised privates , such as, *Razakar*, *Al-Badr*, *Al-Shams*. They remained as outlawed entities throughout the Mujib rule. Amongst them, the most organised and politically potential Jamaat-i-Islami remained particularly stigmatised in the eyes of people for their involvement in the killing of dozens of very noted secular-minded intellectuals including Dhaka University Professors immediately before the surrender of Pakistan occupation army.

The Bangla term of secularism, *dharmaniropekshata*, literally means ‘religious neutrality’, which is different in meaning from its use in the West. Due to widespread misperception of the term and fear of ordinary Muslim people believed to have been fomented by clandestine pro-political Islam groups together with a generally growing feeling that the survival of their religion was at stake in the hands of the secularist government, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib had to assure the public many a time, that his brand of secularism was akin to ‘religious neutrality’ or ‘ non-communalism’ and ,hence, not a threat to Islam or any other religion. As he once explained:

Secularism does not mean the absence of religion. The 75 million people of Bengal [Bangladesh] will have the right to religion. We do not want to ban religion by law....Muslims will observe their religion....Hindus will observe their religion....Buddhists and Christians will observe their respective religions...Our only objection is that nobody will be allowed to use religion as a political weapon(Quoted in Maniruzzaman 1994: 9).

Mujib had to deal with a most difficult time. Reconstruction of a war ravaged country from scratch, restoration of law and order by recovering arms from civilians given during 1971 in resistance to Pakistan occupation army, rehabilitation of ten million Bangali refugees returned from India, long

drought (1972), flood and devastating cyclone (1973), adverse effects of price hike of oil on economy caused by Arab-Israel war (1973), cold war situation, continued hostility of Pakistan and its allies, non-cooperation from the Muslim countries and threats of takeover by leftist groups are some of the challenges to mention. However, the most formidable challenge came from the radical lefts including the newly founded Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal [National Socialist Party], who considered the Bangladesh War of Liberation as an “unfinished revolution”.

So, the Mujib government faced a kind of two-pronged situation in its relation with radical lefts and clandestine pro-political Islam forces. Against such background, Mujib made some initiatives to appease pro-Islam critics. The measures included, among other things, increase in budgetary allocation for *Madrassa* (Islamic religious schools) education, establishment of Islamic Foundation (1975) to work for the propagation of the values and ideals of Islam in society, amnesty for a good number of pro-Islam prisoners not found guilty of war crimes or crimes against humanity, doing away with trial of 195 top Pakistani prisoners of war on charge of genocide (Simla Pact, 1973), observance of special religious events at the state level and starting of some programmes on religion Islam in state-owned radio and television (Kabir 2006: p.30; Murshid 1996). Indeed in private Mujib was a religious-minded person.

However, open challenges to Bangladesh’s founding ideals of secularism and Bangali ethno-nationalism within just a few years from independence caught many observers by surprise.

Islamisation under Zia and Ershad military rule (1976-1990): Re-emergence of political Islam and a funeral of Secularism

With the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the fall of his government in the bloody August 15 (1975) incident, a counter revolution occurred in Bangladesh politics returning the country back to the Pakistan era. The secular, democratic ideals of the War of Liberation were abandoned in favour of political Islam as a national ideology. This was effected principally by General Ziaur Rahman during his five-year rule to be followed by the next military regime headed by General Ershad. It must be remembered that Saudi Arabia’s recognition of Bangladesh came just a day after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Coming into power in the wake of coups and counter coups, General Zia took several steps which considerably changed the secular nature of the Bangladesh state. The Constitution was manipulated by inserting “*Bismillahir-Rahman ir-Rahim*” (In the Name of Allah, the Beneficial, the Merciful) in the Preamble. Article 8(1), which originally incorporated ‘secularism’ as one of the fundamental principles of state policy, was replaced by “absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah.” Article 12, which contained the mechanisms for implementation of the principle of secularism, was deleted. Further a new clause was added to Article 25, declaring the intention of the state “to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity.” Article 38, which prohibited formation of any organisation based on religion with a political aim, was revoked, paving the way for the revival of pro-Islam parties hitherto remained outlawed. The principle of ‘Bangalee nationalism’, as based on language, territory and secular culture (Article 9), was obliterated from the Constitution. Instead General Zia came up with the idea of “Bangladeshi nationalism”² to be based on political Islam, language,

2. Though not formally incorporated into the Constitution, the Zia regime understood nationalism in this term and continued to propagate this. For details, Shireen Hasan Osmany, *Bangladeshi Nationalism: History of Dialectics and*

territory and anti-Indian feelings as a new national ideology.

Apart from the above changes to the constitution, the Zia regime adopted several other measures towards Islamisation. These included public displays of Quranic verses, decorations of roads and other public places with festoons saying *Eid-Mubarak* (*special greetings*) in celebration of two *Eids* (greatest religious festivals of Muslims), messages by the heads of the state and of the government on special religious occasions, compulsory broadcast of *Azan* (call to prayer) on radio and television in five times a day, a new Division of Religious Affairs under a full minister and establishment of an Islamic University (Ahamed 2006: 316). In Zia's personal style, an Islamic overture came to be reflected. He began to make his public speeches with '*Bismillahir-Rahman ir-Rahim*'. His pro-Islam foreign policy gave him fame among the Muslim countries. Bangladesh became an influential member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) under his leadership (Ahamed 2006:316-317; Rahman 2010: 72-83).

In an attempt to give his military rule a civilian face, in 1978 General Zia founded a political party under the name of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which included a variety of political elements ranging from rightist pro-Islam to disgruntled leftist forces. However, the political ideology of the party, 'Bangladeshi nationalism', claimed to provide a comprehensive identity for all the citizens of Bangladesh, failed to incorporate the minorities, particularly the ethnic minorities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts region.

Indeed the increased use of religion Islam and its symbols created an exclusionary atmosphere for the minorities, both ethnic and religious, living in Bangladesh.

Following the assassination of General Zia in an abortive coup in 1981, General Ershad came to power in the aftermath of Justice Abdus Sattar Interregnum(30 May 1981-24 March 1982). Like Zia, he followed the same ideology of 'Bangladeshi nationalism.' In an attempt to civilianise his regime, at one stage he also founded a party (1986) under the name of Jatiyo Party (JP) upon the same principle. Throughout his rule he remained enthusiastic about continuing the process of Islamisation as initiated by Zia. His personal style, frequent visits to shrines and mosques, liberal grants to Islamic institutions, *pirs* (holy men) and *imams* (religious leaders) adornment, Bangladesh's further close relations with the Muslim world, establishment of zakat fund (Islamic charity fund) headed by the President bore a testimony to his apparent devotion to Islam. However, in person Ershad seemed not to be a strong believer. During his long rule spanning over 9 years (1982-1990), the regime remained volatile suffering from legitimacy crisis. This might have prompted him to declare Islam as 'the State Religion' on June 7, 1988 (Eighth Amendment to the Constitution) purported to win popular support for the regime. This provoked an immediate reaction from the religious minorities leading to the formation of Hindu-Buddha- Christian Okkiya Parishad (United Council) to protect their rights and interests. Two years later Ershad regime was ousted from power through a mass democratic movement .

Islam under democratic governments (1991-2010): Moderate versus Radical faces

With the fall of General Ershad, Bangladesh entered into the democratic era after 1975. The BNP headed by Begum Khaleda Zia, the widow of General Zia, came to power through the democratic

elections held in February 1991. Khaleda Zia was ready to make electoral alliance with the Jammāt-i-Islami, a potentially vital pro-Islam party being engaged in anti-Ershad movement side by side with others, in order to secure necessary parliamentary seats to form the government. Equally understanding the importance of this pro-Islam party, the secular Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of the Father of the Nation, also attracted its support to their anti-government movement during 1995-96. Thus, for the first time in Bangladesh's political history, Jamaat-i-Islami, the party that was opposed to the creation of Bangladesh, got the opportunity to play a vital role in power politics, further gaining much needed political legitimacy for itself.

It needs to be mentioned that Bangladeshi *mujahidins*, who went to Afghanistan in the 1980s, began to return home in the early 1990s, some of them playing a role in organizing pro-Islam militant organizations in later years. That militant Islamism was yet to become a threat to the security of Bangladesh.

The period 1991-1996 under the BNP government witnessed some other incidents signaling that Bangladesh was becoming more and more intolerant toward secular ideals and multiculturalism. A female writer named Taslima Nasreen was declared a heretic by some clerics because of her work titled *Lajja* (Shame). Pressure was mounting on the government to arrest her. The writer had to seek refuge in other country. *Fatwas* (religious ruling) were also issued against the activities of NGOs engaged in poverty alleviation programs and the empowerment of rural women. Several prominent secular minded writers including poets and university professors were threatened with their lives and were declared heretic. A newly founded cleric pro-Islam organisation called *Ahle-Hadith* launched a violent campaign against a tiny minority sect of Ahmadiyya, who are regarded as non-Muslim by the *Ulemas*. There was remarkable expansion of *Madrasa* education system (religious education) in this period with state support. The growing number of unskilled Bangladeshi workers in the Middle Eastern countries made Bangladesh's economy increasingly dependent on foreign remittances. At the same time various Islamic NGOs based on Saudi funding began to operate in Bangladesh.

Under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, the coming into power of Awami League, the party that stood for separation of religion from politics and led the Bangali nationalist movement to independence, after 21 years through general elections (June 1996) was a significant event in Bangladesh politics that halted the course of state patronage to pro-Islamist groups. Nevertheless Sheikh Hasina was seen to use Islamic symbols during the election campaigning preceded by her frequent visits to Saudi Arabia intending to project herself as a good Muslim (in private life she is indeed) and that her party was not a threat to Islam. This shows a general change in the mind and attitudes of common Muslim people towards religion Islam over the years. During her government (1996-2001) the militant Islamist operatives caused several deadly incidents in different parts of the country including threats upon her life.

In the 2001 elections, the BNP-Jamaat-i-Islami combine came to power in the name of 4-party alliance, this time with two top leaders of Jamaat, namely Matiur Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Muzahid,³ being included in the Ministry formed under Begum Khaleda Zia. The

3. Now in custody facing trial on charge of crimes against humanity perpetrated in 1971.

period of BNP–Jamaat government (2001-2006) witnessed an unprecedented support for Islamization by the state. Soon after the elections, a reign of terror was unleashed upon the Hindu minorities in different parts of the country for their alleged support towards the Awami League, leading many of them to flee to India for fear of persecution. Mostly supported by non-educated rural poor people, the rise of a host of internationally linked pro-Islam terrorist organizations, such as, Jam’atul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami (HUJI) became a matter of serious concern for this period (Riaz 2004; Rashid 2005:744-746;Ali 2006). Islamism in Bangladesh acquired a new dimension through the emergence of a trans-national Islamist group called Hizb-ut-Tahrir in the late 1990s that stands for the creation of the *Khilafat* i.e. Islamic rule. Headed by a Dhaka University Professor, this organisation is essentially based on the supports of the educated youths. In 2004 and 2005, these Islamist militants were believed to have caused two very serious incidents in the country giving a kind of red alert to impending danger. First, on 21 August (2004) a grenade attack was made on the public meeting of Sheikh Hasina, then leader of opposition, in the capital Dhaka with a clear target of her, leaving 24 people dead on the spot and some hundreds wounded. Though slightly hurt, Sheikh Hasina escaped the attack miraculously. The second one occurred just a year later (21 August) and that was a serialized blasting of as many as over 450 bombs in 63 out of 64 Bangladesh’s administrative districts, mainly intended to assert the capabilities of the attackers. This kind of occurrence was almost unimaginable without some coverage from the government. It may be mentioned that, in April 2004 during the rule of the BNP-Jamaat government ten trucks loaded with different types of weapons and ammunition believed to be collected for smuggling out to ULFA guerrillas in Eastern India were recovered from a jetty of the Chittagong port.

As a result of increased international pressure as well as strong public opinion in the country, the government finally moved on to take action. During the last caretaker government (2007-2008) most of the top leaderships of JMB were executed following a court verdict .

In the last general elections held in December 2008, the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina pledged in its manifesto to ban ‘militancy’ and ‘use of religion and communalism’ in politics and to safeguard ‘security and rights of religious and ethnic minorities’ of the country⁴. The new government formed by Sheikh Hasina after grand election victory has already started taking actions in order to curb Islamist extremism in Bangladesh.. In October 2009, Hizb-ut-Tahrir was banned for its alleged subversive activities. Most importantly, the four top leaders of Jamaat-i-Islami including its president and secretary general have been arrested for trial in special court on charge of ‘crimes against humanity’ perpetrated during 1971 in aid of Pakistan occupation army. Sheikh Hasina has also proposed to fight terrorism in South Asia on regional basis by sharing intelligence and other means.

Another landmark development is the recent verdict (1 February 2010) of the Appellate Division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court declaring all proclamations, Martial Law Regulations and orders repugnant to the fundamental character and structure of the state being made during the period from 15 August 1975 to 9 April 1979 illegal and void⁵. This historic judgment of the court has provided the scope and opportunity to usher in a new journey to secularism through restoration of

4. Bangladesh Awami League, *Election Manifesto 2008*, p. 9.

5. *Bangladesh Constitution (Fifth Amendment)*, Appellate Division Full Judgement, August 2010.

the original principle of the Constitution. The government has already formed a 15-member special parliamentary committee including representatives from other parties in the parliament for suggestions regarding implementation of the verdict.

An overview

Religion is an important factor of identity formation along with others, such as, language, territory, ethnicity, shared history, values and culture and demographic configuration in term of number (majority vs. minority) in any society. It is also true in respect of social change and political development. As it appears from the foregoing discussion, role of religion can be both inclusive and exclusive. Intertwined with demography, it gains further strength as a driving force. The movement for Pakistan resulting in the partition of India (1947) and its subsequent break up leading to the emergence of Bangladesh (1971) provides a living example of contrasting roles of religion to be depended on political manipulation in either way by leaderships. In the case of the former, religion Islam forged unity, though temporary, among the diverse Indian Muslim community in their struggle for economic and political emancipation from the hands of the dominant Hindu majority. In the case of the latter, it became counterproductive as a result of its political manipulation as an instrument of domination and exploitation by the Pakistan power elites in favour of the West Pakistani minority (44%) against the Bangali majority(56%). Founded upon the principle of secularism, the reemergence of religion Islam as an element of identity formation in Bangladesh soon after the initial years marked a shift in the paradigm, which further suggests that identity formation is changeable in a changed situation.

The quick rise of political Islam in Bangladesh may be attributed to the debates over secularism, ethnic vs. religious nationalism, gap between aspiration and performance, inherent tendency among the majority community (religious, ethnic) to gain domineering position at the state level, politics of alliance building among the power contenders, role of traditional *Ulema* (religious leaders), the increasing influence of *madrassa* (religious school) education , large poverty, high unemployment, low literacy rate, Bangladesh's increased dependence on the Middle Eastern countries for man power exports, the Afghan war, the demise of the former Soviet Union as an alternative global ideology, impact of internationalization of political Islam and a new sense of domination among the Bangladeshis by neighbouring India.

Among the population of Bangladesh, the Muslims constitute the largest majority (89.4%) followed by the Hindus (9.6%).The remainder are Buddhists (0.70%) and Christians (0.30%).Very few Bengal Muslim families had descended from outside. The dominant majority were sons of the soil converted over times mainly from low caste Hindus(Ahmed 1988). In Bengal under British India, the Hindus and Muslims were almost equal in number. Muslims constituted 52% as against 48% Hindus. The Muslims came to gain a slight edge over the Hindus by the end of the nineteenth century. Further unlike other parts or places, Islam was spread in Bengal not by the sword but by the tolerant, humanitarian *Sufi* saints coming from outside India (Ahmed 2010;Robinson 2009; Eaton 1993). They had followers among Hindus, too. The great teachings of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) and of humanism of Lord Buddha and his religion, Buddhism, course of enlightenment, and patronage to knowledge and learning associated with the 400 year of the Pala Buddhist rule in Bengal from mid-eighth century to around the middle of twelfth century had a profound moderating influence on the Bengal society and culture (Barua & Ando 2002). Sri Chaittanya's

(1483-1530) *Vaishnavism or Bakhti* cult also left an imprint of moderation on the mind of the people (Tarafder 1965:169-178). However, a process of Islamisation, both as a faith as well as a political ideology (Nandy 2008: 321-544), prompted by *Ulemas* and pro-peasants religious reformist movement leaders, largely contributed towards the construction of a separate Muslim community identity. The Faraidi movement (1820-1857) headed by Haji Shariatullah and Dudu Mian and the Wahabi movement (1827-1831) under Titumir are examples of the latter (Khan 1984; Choudhury 2001:37-63). In any event, Bengal's (now Bangladesh) syncretistic culture (Roy 1983) developed over ages encompassing the interfaith values of mutual love, tolerance, humanity and justice at the bottom remained fundamentally unchanged. Because of this inherent strength and character of Bengal/Bangladesh society and culture, there is hardly any prospect for 'Islamist Revolution', as Eliza Griswold of *New York Times*⁶ was once apprehending.

Islamic militancy that Bangladesh witnessed in the recent past was more of a sporadic phenomenon than of a regular feature. It can be held that the society and politics of Bangladesh would go along course of moderation in accord with inherent tenet of its culture and tradition.

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Hindu Muslim Relations in a Sainly Cult in Bangladesh: Religious Minority and Coexistence

Masahiko TOGAWA

This paper considers a relationship between religious minority and majority through the analysis of the saintly cult among the Hindus and Muslims in South Asia. The mausoleum of Manamohan Datta (1877–1909) is situated at the present-day eastern Bangladesh. The neighboring people both Hindu and Muslim participate in the various rituals held at the mausoleum together. The author discusses the social and cultural background that explains the reasons for the sharing of similar rituals and beliefs among the people. In particular, the usage of ‘word correspondences’ in religious vocabulary enables the mutual acceptance of different cultural forms and norms among the people. The author also examines the critical discourses regarding syncretistic situations around the mausoleum in the context of contemporary Bangladesh. Finally, the author reconsiders the relationship between religious minority and majority through social and cultural context of South Asia, wherein religious pluralism and multiple discourses may possibly exist.

Identity & Politics

Among the Scheduled Castes of Contemporary India

Some Critical Reflections

G. ALOYSIUS

1.1. The previous two decades have witnessed the rise to public-political focus, the plight, & struggle of those who have been governmentally categorized as Scheduled Castes and their moral and legal claims. While this is largely the achievement of these relegated and frustrated castes themselves, the reactive interventions of the Governmental agencies in the process also could not be ignored. The mobilization of the various organizations in Bhopal for a formal declaration, implementation of the Mandal Commission, which though intended for the 'backward castes' much too belatedly brought out the need for the actual implementation of reservations for the 'Scheduled Castes,' the rise to power in the North of the Bahujan Samaj Party led by a woman, the internationalization of the deprivation of Human Rights of the 'dalits' in Durban, the centenary celebrations of the country's tallest leader Ambedkar, the proliferation of autobiographical writings as testimonials, the extension of separate political representation to the Panchayat level and the setting up of centres for the study of social exclusion, dalits and human rights are but only some of the signs of this new emergence at the very top and political levels. This new emergence is characterized by two factors, one is the aggressiveness and assertiveness of the people concerned based on feelings of moral legitimacy, time-worn neglect and repeated frustrations; and the second is certain degree of piqued, collective self-isolation or projection of their separateness, as sought to be expressed in the term 'dalit.' It is to be noted however, as explained below, that both these characteristics are mostly visible only at the level of the minuscule of intelligentsia, political as well as academic, in negotiation with the political sphere and the State institutions.

1.2. The articulate and concerned sections of the academics here have been quick to seize, label and elaborate this 'apparently new phenomenon' as an instance of what has come to be known as 'identity-politics.' Books, mostly edited and articles, mostly ethnographic in nature, dealing with and delineating the collective life-patterns, cultural practices and political activities of the Scheduled Castes have proliferated in recent times, almost invariably with the word 'identity' in their titles. Most of these writings on the 'dalits' and their 'identities' are appreciative and celebrative of the new efforts and trajectory of these social groups. And again, it is with relative ease and comfort that the subject, which hitherto had been rather recalcitrant, is being handled now. One could almost note a hint of triumphalism when it is asserted that 'identity has trumped hierarchy.' Most such writings are descriptive in detail of the minute and differentiating practices, beliefs and other customs, both social and political, of the hitherto relegated castes and foreground them in positive light. The differentiated present and the separatist existent of these groups are highlighted and almost valorized. The main thrust of these writings, not clearly stated or explained in most cases, but very much present through inference, insinuation and implication is that the dalit politics of today has taken a different turn, it is now identity-politics. This means that *it is no more hierarchy-conscious, discrimination-sensitive, interest/ideology-based or change-oriented*. It is not basically a *critique* anymore. But on the other hand, it seeks and is limited to the gaining of

recognition of its *difference* and to the achieving of its own share within the existing framework of socio-political relations. It is also ascriptive, atavistic and cultural politics in contrast to the other forms of politics supposedly prevalent here. In other words, the 'dalit-politics' of today is supposed to have confirmed what these articulate and influential academicians have been telling us all along, that caste is not at all about a singular and Brahminical hierarchy as Dumont had claimed. And as there are any number and many kinds of hierarchies abound in the ground, speaking of hierarchy itself has become meaningless or irrelevant and that what obtains are *horizontal entities with differences jostling and competing among themselves for their share within the social polity*; that caste is basically about culture or ethnicity and the recent initiatives of the dalits is an instance of multiculturalism. It has also been stated plainly to remove all ambiguity that *Varnavyavastha* itself could be construed as a more nuanced and indigenous form of multiculturalism. While not all those who speak of 'dalit identity' would subscribe to the above position, it is those who do so are determining the nature of discourse within academics, and it is with them is the proposed engagement here.

1.3. Secondly, labeling the new dalit collective initiatives as identity-politics is to cast it in the same mould as that of the Western identity-politics of the feminist and Black political discourses. The identity-reading of the dalit struggles through this association, is expected to acquire the required theoretical and academic legitimacy and respectability. The dalit politics here, are explicitly or implicitly clubbed with the 'identity movements' of the West. The post-modernist movements of the West are supposed to move away from the mindlessly homogenizing inclusive and singular identity under the pretext of egalitarianism, and assert the more realistic plurality of identities as less oppressive and hence desirable. The struggle there is seen as primarily addressing the question of 'difference' and 'recognition' of women, Blacks, lesbians, gays and similar other ascriptive groups as expressed through the term – identity. Similarly, it is suggested, more often it is only suggested, that asserting oneself or themselves as dalits, the individual or the group is saying that the group *perceives/recognizes itself as dalits and that it wants the others to see and treat them in this way*. It is a clear indication, it is suggested again, that the dalits as a group expect to continue their collective life indefinitely with such a difference and recognition. Whether acknowledged explicitly or not, on every occasion the dalit movement is labeled as identity-politics or politics of recognition, this is clearly implied.

1.4. This short and tentative intervention is concerned only with what is being talked about in India as the 'Dalit-Identity Politics.' Negotiating with the key thinkers of 'identity' and 'identity politics,' – Charles Taylor, Nancy Fraser and Dudley Jenkins, and also in perennial dialogue with the thinkers, activists and ordinary people of the dalit communities, this intervention is arguing the following points. First of all, *it is not accurate or fair to describe the recent collective efforts of some of the Scheduled Castes as identity politics*. Secondly, *as there exist crucial differences between the politics of recognition of the West and the so-called identity politics of the dalits in India, the two cannot be clubbed together either in theory or in practice*. Thirdly, *description of the collective efforts of these groups in terms of identity and identity-politics, gives the entrenched castes enormous, but illegitimate ideological purchase*. Fourthly, *the use of the term identity in the concrete context of dalit struggles, is not dissimilar to the uncritical use of other terms like secularism, civil society, nation, modernity etc to explain the specific Indian situation*. The point that is being made here is that mechanical deployment of Western categories to the Indian context, instead of clarifying reality serves only the ideological function of camouflaging it in the interests of the entrenched

caste-clusters.

2.1. The basic position taken here is that in modern times, *'identity'* is not about an *essential* or natural characteristic of an individual or a group but an *existential* question of ever-changing *identification* by self and the other. It is otherwise known as *construction* and not *given*. This much has been clear within the academic discourses. In this context, it is important to note what Professor Taylor (1994) has to say on this point of identification in modernity. The Professor makes this crucial distinction between *self-recognition* and *other-recognition* and suggests that the term identity 'designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being.' He again suggests that such self-recognition in order to gain the exalted appellation of identity could only be done as a mode of *self-realization in authenticity*. In other words, a *movement away* from the other-recognition as a case of *mis-recognition* and followed by an assertion of what one considers *genuine self-recognition* are implied.

It is our argument here that despite appearances and even sporadic assertions to the contrary, the term 'dalit,' meaning broken or pulverized, separated and degraded, based on the State-categorisation of Scheduled Castes, when used as identity, is neither self-perceived, self-chosen or self-determined by the groups themselves, not to speak of in authenticity. It is on the contrary, the result clearly of the perception and labeling or branding by the significant/dominant other, in other words, it is 'other-determined,' in this case, by the State. Professor Dudley Jenkins (2003) has demonstrated how in contemporary India identities are shaped and reshaped, in short determined through the plethora policies and practices of the pervasive State. The different sections of the populace which cannot escape interacting and reacting to these are constrained to reinforce the categorizations of the State and consider them for all practical and day-to-day purposes as their 'identity.' Such categorizations by the Indian State takes place on two related axis – caste and religion. In the public sphere of India today it is inescapable that one is of a particular religion or/and of a specific caste. In addition, one has also to fall within the mega, presumably welfare categories of the State – forward, backward and scheduled. If this is true of all sections of the people, it is doubly true in the case of those whom the State has chosen to pick, club together and categorize as Scheduled Castes, again presumably for 'preferential treatment.' Ever since the Census of 1931, official mentioning, enumerating or categorizing castes has become a taboo. However, those who have come to be known as the Scheduled Castes are a clear exception. They have been separated from the others on the basis of their untouchable status within the Brahminical order, categorised and recognized as the Scheduled Castes. They could be and are in fact mentioned by this label repeatedly for the official purposes, thereby reinforcing their such recognition by the others. This, also in the course of time being internalized by these castes themselves. They are in short are the Constitutional castes separated from the others for preferential treatment. One is expected to take all these on its face value as a process of democracy and empowerment. The life of these elevated/degraded, according to the perspective, social groups is then tightly linked with the policies and practices of the State presumably for their own protection and welfare. However, inclusion of groups in this State-category clearly comes with certain ideological depictions and behavioural conditions which these groups are to accept and internalize as applicable to themselves and abide by the overt and covert conditionalities. It is a question of not only the State recognizing them for what it thinks they are, but also the State effectively expecting and forcing them to accept, internalize and abide by such recognition if they are to 'benefit' from this 'preferential treatment.' One such obvious conditionality which is in

perennial focus in recent times is that they are to look upon themselves and behave as 'Hindus.' From this *regime of categorization* there is no easy exit particularly for these communities. Life of all Indians, but specially of these social groups collective life tends to revolve around such fragmented regimentation. For, the State in India is indeed a surveillance and intrusive State albeit in the name of welfare and upliftment.

Secondly, Nancy Fraser (2009) makes an important distinction in the ameliorative policies of States in the context of maintenance or abolition of group identities – *affirmative action* and *transformative action*. The former *affirms*, that is reinforces the group status and recognition, while the latter *transforms* the very conditions of such recognition and seeks to change/abolish them. Despite the lot of fanfare and controversy that surround the Indian policies of reservations for the Scheduled Castes, it cannot be said that they lead to even a semblance of transformation, but on the other hand, clearly designed to affirm the status quo and recognition of the groups concerned. For example, for these castes alone 'population-proportion' has been imposed as the ideal, that is the maximum one could aspire for. It is the reproduction of the status-quo that is being aimed at as the ideal. The policies and practices are not devised to move them out of such categories. If they have been unfairly treated on account of their birth, what fairness could there be in policies and practices which reinforces such recognition of their ascriptive status? *For the groups and individuals are expected to recognize and project themselves and also struggle for such categorized labels if they are to appropriate the benefits. The grant of benefits are conditioned upon the individual or the group's acceptance and internalization of the governmentally imposed status.* It is not surprising that newer groups are also struggling for such State-imposed recognition.

Thirdly, the hard reality however is, that even such *promissory provisions are not fulfilled by the State in the normal course of its ruling*. They are left, by and large as matter to be struggled for through education, organization, and agitation by the groups themselves. That is, the policy will not be consensually or non-problematically be implemented, but implementation will start only when the groups engage in bitter, protracted and often enough frustrating and humiliating struggle both at the individual and collective levels. This certainly involves in their becoming conscious of their separate public-Constitutional status, unite among themselves in separatist fashion and struggle against the dominant other in State and Society. Needless to say that all these are sub-processes of internalization of their Governmentally imposed distinction. In other words, the arena, nature, necessity and the course of the struggle to be engaged in by these groups have all been laid out in clear cut terms by the State. The agency of the people is limited to meekly following the lead of the State. Legal-categorical exclusion from others, imposing a semblance of unity among themselves and difference from others, thus becomes the unavoidable template of their organization. In the course of such organization and struggle, the deprived groups cannot but reinforce their collective exclusion from the larger society and also highlight the State-determined nature of their presumed internal unity. For, the organization and struggle, of necessity are conducted willy-nilly in the very name, category and depictions chosen and determined by the State. *Thus the State-categorisation, nature of affirmative-action, fact of the groups having to organize themselves and struggle even for these meager benefits, all these and much more go into the construction and maintenance of this so-called identity.*

2.2. What Professor Jenkins has not gone into, is as to how and why the State itself was compelled to so categorise/label and isolate certain groups in a modern democracy for this so-called

‘preferential treatment.’ Therefore, the human agency and its ideology at the moment of the formation of the State therefore, requires to be identified and brought in for questioning. It has been explained elsewhere that *the leading groups staking their claim to constitute the modern nation-state here as against the existing colonial one, had also this contradictory but insistent ideological thrust of maintaining the non-egalitarian social order locally known as Brahminical-Varnavyavastha. If anti-colonialism was the projected external face of the Indian nationalism, its internal ideological face has unambiguously been characterized by this proclivity for the re-imposition of the hierarchical varna social order.* This can clearly be seen in all the writings of the ‘nationalists’ and the consistent position they took in all the crucial and democratising issues of the time. However, the academics for reason best known to itself, has failed to problematize, as to how this discriminatory social order, through the nationalist intervention, has become the most salient aspect of the modern Indian dominant Ideology. The non-problematic setting up of the modern institutions also, presumably operating on principles of individuation and egalitarianism has pushed this problem under the carpet. In other words, *the leading class when it was faced with the dilemma of the revalorized non-egalitarian social order having to accept the modern institutions, dug in its heels and opted for the perpetuation of social hierarchy and then distribute ameliorative and ‘affirmative’ doles for the different excluded, ‘identifiable’ groups rather than take the normal course of abolishing ascriptive social hierarchies, through ‘transformative action’ and pave the way for common power-homogenised citizenship.* The State which emerged from such an ideological situation, became the main agency for the perpetration of the Brahminical social order in which those who were not even allowed to have a *varna* – the untouchables – became clearly identified, isolated and demarcated as Scheduled Castes and on condition that they remain so, also became the object of *affirmative* doles by the State. From the Brahminical *recognition* of the Untouchables, despite all Constitutional abolitions, through the State legitimated nomenclature of Scheduled Castes, to the recent Dalit Identity, the line is more or less straight and there is no substantial rupture. .

The point that is being argued in these two sections, is that the ‘dalit identity politics’ that is being elaborated in academics is the result substantially and pre-dominantly of the imposition of the State operating on behalf of the entrenched caste-clusters better described as the Brahminical and Brahminised. *Dalit meaning Scheduled Castes is not a self-chosen label or the result of self-identification of the groups themselves in authenticity.* For the Dalit identity refers to all and only to those who were earlier identified by the Brahminical as Untouchables until recently and categorized today by the State as Scheduled Castes. No one has been allowed to forget this identification in the sense of *mis-recognition by the dominant Brahminical*, despite all democratic politics for more than half a century.

2.3. It could certainly be conceded, that there still remains *some element of self-definition in the term ‘dalit’ when applied to the Scheduled Castes.* We are told that the term ‘dalit’ is self-chosen and it is not to be conflated with the governmental category of Scheduled Castes. However, the point is that this element is marginal and clearly insufficient both in quantitative and qualitative terms to justify this term ‘dalit’ as genuine identity of the most exploited communities. While there has been some inclusiveness attributed to the term earlier, that ‘dalit’ refers to the exploited people in general or that it includes the tribes also, more recently however, one is confronted with a definite closure as applicable to all and only the categorized former Untouchables. *The term dalit is increasingly and assertively taken up by the categorized groups in order to negotiate with the State*

for its promised benefits. It is a term of mobilization and self-projection, increasingly within the protected sphere of negotiation with the State for the appropriation of the already promised privileges and benefits. It is only in the process of negotiation with the State that Dalit-Identity is being highlighted and valorized. However, such an opportunity occurs in the life of only the microscopic minority of the dalit people. And from this to generalize to the entire population of dalits or to the entirety of the movement is certainly unwarranted. In other words, it is only those who have something to do with the State – either implicated already as a beneficiary on account of their ascriptivity, or hoping to get so implicated in sometime in the future – who could highlight, valorize and celebrate their ‘dalit’ identity. For the rest of the mass of overwhelming majority, the luxury of this state-protected and State-abetted identity is not available.

Secondly, more important than this, even for those who have risen up to the level of negotiation with the State on the basis of their categorized circumstances of their birth, this ‘identity’ is not without serious problems. That is it does not embrace the totality of their life-experiences without ambiguities and dilemmas. That is, *it is only as long as this minuscule group remains in the negotiating mode – momentarily – that ‘dalit identity’ is fore grounded and celebrated.* The collective and relational life of the people who have been categorized as Scheduled Castes however, goes far beyond the limited domain of negotiation with the State. In those spheres, this ‘dalit identity’ is clearly back-grounded by this very same group. Whenever the individuals and groups move away from the State-negotiation mode, they invariably tend to *reject this dalit identity* as the other-given, therefore clearly *mis-given*. In these other spheres they would rather be known by their linguistic, territorial or occupational identity. Numerous examples from the day-to-day life of the dalit people themselves could be cited, indicating their desire to be identified otherwise. There are several areas of life and contexts in which even this small section of the articulators positively and vigorously reject the very same identity used for negotiations with the State in public.

Thirdly, on the other hand, the mass of Scheduled Caste people in contemporary India are not brought within the ambit of State-privileges. They are expected to fend for themselves and most part of their lives in negotiation with the market and the larger society in general. Whether it is the mass of unskilled labour, or skilled craftsmen or even professionals with university degrees, these people cannot afford to and in actual fact do not celebrate their present and their-birth-circumstances in the course of their move to get on with their lives. Highlighting of any identity based on primordiality or ascriptivity seriously disadvantages them. Their aspiration is to be considered like anybody else *in terms of their achievement rather than ascriptivity*. Identity becomes *stigma* in their case. The very *raison d’etre* of their moving towards urban centres from the historical times onwards is to get away from the hated and degrading other-imposed identity. It is an expression of their need and desire for *anonymity*. In the context then, *the search of these masses even today is certainly not for identity but anonymity, universality and equality.*

2.4. Such ambivalent positioning by the deprived castes is not entirely new. *Historically speaking, beginning at least with Colonialism and nationalism, there has been a strong and continuous double-pronged thrust among the anti-caste movements of the Brahminically considered lower, particularly untouchable castes.* Right from Jothiba Phuley through Iyothee Thassar, Narayana Guru, Mangooram, Guru Chand, Swami Achchutananda, E V Ramasamy Periyar, Ambedkar and several other lesser known ideologues, all of them *imagined and articulated on the one hand a universalist ideology/vision of caste-less society and at the same time were engaged in the*

particularist emancipatory endeavors for the 'depressed classes.' It was as it were, their vision was castelessness, but mission the particularist emancipation of their castes through caste-based organizations. Their articulations of anti-casteism and castelessness were indeed an open invitation for the others to join the struggle. *Similarly, their various self-identifications were constructed, open-ended and based on contemporary socio-political choice such as Buddhist, Dravidan/Adi-Dravidan, Adi-Hindu etc. Invariably, these self-identifications were explained as non or anti-casteist.* The context was the stern and unambiguous refusal of the entrenched and Colonially empowered Brahminical castes to come forward, merge, cooperate and take forward this caste-less vision and reality. By and large, they had to carry on the struggle on their own, which willy-nilly tended to reinforce their separateness. *The so-called separatism and distinctiveness of these communities, therefore, could only be read as the dominant-other-imposed and not as self-chosen by the victim communities.* During the entire period of entire modern history, even non-professionals could observe this swinging back and forth between universalism and particularism by these classes. Their pursuit of their other-imposed sectarian uplift did not deter them from setting up of universal and open-ended identities based on ideology and choice. Today, it is this double thrust of the movement which has translated and expresses itself into the *dilemma-ridden position of simultaneous valorization of 'dalit identity' and its equally swift rejection.* Today, if it appears that particularism and difference are emphasized within the movement, it is because, every occasion of joint action with others in history has failed to deliver the goods for them. The dalit-dilemma has its roots here – how to get out of the Brahminically imposed identity. Would it have to be through its valorization for the State-recognition or negation for getting on with the larger society?

2.5. In the world of real politics, we see, what has been considered as 'dalit-identity-politics,' has already run out of fuel. Dalit politics began its carrier with plural definitions of the term. One of the important strands was to view 'dalit' as a general term of exploitation and the Scheduled Castes as the most exploited group within it. However, this strand disappeared fast giving way to a closed definition based on the Brahminical ascription of untouchability, and legitimated by the governmental categorization. But the ascendance of this strand could not hold for long. Those who achieved marginal empowerment through this kind of politics, went after greener and larger pastures especially in the realm of electoral politics. Those on the other hand, who failed to make any dent went fragmented to ply 'jati-identities,' mostly against the homogenized politics of dalit-identity itself. The fragile dalit-unity seems to have collapsed everywhere except in academic discourses. Today 'dalit-identity-politics' is alive mostly in the class rooms and seminars of universities and other academic institutions. This academic discourse mostly speaks to itself perpetuating and promoting the minuscule vested interests surrounding it without significant relations with the real world outside.

2.6. Ambedkar, long ago in the course of his negotiation with the receding colonial powers, did speak of the Untouchables as a separate element of the Hindu society. But he did this for various reasons: First, the nationalists, staking their claim to monopoly power, were not willing to give up their, colonially re-valorised sectarian identity based on ascription, they were indeed comfortable in their own elitist insulation and insisted that the masses too should similarly keep their Brahminically ascribed identities. The language of particularism was the only one recognized and sanctioned by the then receding as well as emerging dominance. Second, he did this clearly for the concrete goal of achieving 'participatory parity' within the newly centralized power-pool. Third, the

time-frame, he added for such recognition unambiguously indicates that the distinctness he was advocating was indeed a *temporary strategy* to move out of the situation and not an identity for celebration and perpetuation.

2.7. We have argued somewhat cumulatively that it cannot be said that today the Scheduled Castes have non-problematically taken to 'identity-politics of the academic description or that they have moved away from their earlier thrust of achieving caste-lessness. More realistically, the so-called 'dalit identity' is sought to be projected today as a *strategy*, in order to make the best out of a bad situation, so that they could sometime in the future overcome that very identity. What the dalits today are doing is this: *they are holding up their Brahminically labeled and degraded position to the world in order to shame the establishment through highlighting its anomalous character within a much-trumpeted democracy; the hope is that the contradiction involved in the situation could be solved and their degraded status removed. Also realizing that all organized politics in the country are basically the same despite the difference in their labels, they are entering the arena in order to make calculated alliances. Neither this social nor political strategy of the dalits would warrant the academic reading of identity into it and the claim that difference, not discrimination is their target.* As James Scott has explained that the weapons of the weak are many, they are subtle and that their real import could be understood only through close and sympathetic reading.

Secondly, this is the crucial difference between the assertion by the Scheduled Castes of their dalit identity today and the elaboration of the politics of recognition by of the feminists, blacks and others of the new social movements. *While the former seeks to move out of the temporarily and tactically constructed identity, the latter are busy elaborating the positive dimensions and socio-political implications of their newly valorized identities. While the former is uneasy and in constant tension concerning its 'identity,' the latter is comfortable and finds ever newer dimensions within and allies for its identity. The former its self-liquidating but the latter is ever-expanding. This is primarily because the deprivation of the former is substantially that of power, while that of the latter is culture.* For this reason, dalit politics of today cannot be read along with the identity politics of the West.

2.8. What has been argued above in this section could be summarily re-stated thus. Ever since the Brahminical Varna ideology came up on the social scenario of the sub-continent, particularly since its rediscovery and recovery by Orientalism and the subsequent empowerment by Colonialism of the forces behind it and its near apotheosis by the nationalist ideologues, all the local social – occupational, ecological, cult – groups have come to acquire this hierarchical/discriminatory ranking. Today caste, be it understood as *varna* or *jati* cannot escape this hierarchical-Brahminical branding as well as differential/discriminatory allocations. Caste-appellations and caste-apportioning are still to the significant extent Brahminically determined. Within the Taylorian framework then, it is a clear case of *misrecognition*, being *other-recognition*, involving damage, deprivation, discrimination and distortion of those so recognized. It is not a case of *self-recognition in authenticity*. The term 'dalit' even when projected as identity by the victims themselves, does not take away from or add anything new to this fact. The term merely highlights the plight and anomaly of the governmentally categorized sections in their distinctness, separation and isolation in a modern democracy. It is so highlighted in order to remind the State that the dalits are also human beings, in the *same* way and are entitled to the *same* privileges as the others, that they

should be enabled to achieve *equalization* or ‘participatory parity’ (Phrase borrowed from Nancy Fraser) in public-political life and thus become *indistinguishable* from the others. Their thrust is towards anonymity. The State initiated amelioration also, is at least overtly intended apparently for overcoming this plight and moving away from the anomaly so that this ‘identity as stigma’ disappears. It is another matter that this self-same intended amelioration is conditioned upon the internalization and reinforcement of these Brahminical-hierarchical identities. As such a dilemma is not faced by the groups engaged in the identity-struggles elsewhere, there is a basic difference between the two. The modern history of caste-subaltern struggles and their contemporary socio-political ambiguities and anxieties do confirm this.

3.1. Moving away from the exalted realms of self-recognition in authenticity or self-realization and taking off from concrete politics, it is also said that identity-politics is different from individuated politics based on programs, manifestoes, ideologies or party affiliations. It is on the other hand, rooted in the belief and claim that the interest and welfare of those who share certain ascriptive characteristics are unified and same. In other words, ascriptive characteristics are indicative of the internal unity and cohesion of the group and such a group’s social and political interests are also unified. And it is said that the dalits today have taken to such a closed and ascriptive politics.

3.2. If one goes by such a definition of ‘identity-politics,’ then substantially speaking, we find, *all politics of the sub-continent in modern times have not moved much away beyond identity politics, despite the proliferations of parties, ideologies and manifestoes.* Elsewhere, it has been argued in detail how in the wake of Colonial modernity, the Brahminical-ascriptive hierarchy was retrieved, revived and re-empowered; and again how the nationalist politics here was conducted on this very template and varna-prescription particularly for the masses, became the internal face of Indian nationalism and the same subsequently, the modern dominant ideology. Within such a scenario of re-valorised *varna*-tradition, all politics despite appearances to the contrary could only be ascriptive-group based. People in general are in politics not as individuals but as groups. *However, the academic discourse of identity has come into play only when the politics of the subalternised classes are discussed.* Professor Pandian reminds us time and again as to how caste and caste-interests tend to ‘transcode’ themselves in multiple ways, into something else, more universalized and inclusive-appearing categories. In other words, *the entrenched caste-clusters could have it in both ways – conduct casteist but known as modern ideological politics. On the other hand, the deprived castes, however much they may aspire to move out of caste, would, through the operations of the dominant ideology be locked in, read and also branded as casteist!* If dalit politics is overtly caste-identity politics then all brands of elite politics here are also caste-identity politics but covertly. Though this point has been recognized and occasionally hinted at in academics, it is never elaborated or highlighted as in the case of the dalit-subalterns.

3.3. Celebratory academic reading of dalit politics as ‘identity politics’ delivers enormous ideological advantage to the entrenched classes of the subcontinent. *First of all*, it serves to distinguish it from the supposedly programmatic and ideology-differentiated politics of the entrenched classes. Earlier, it could be remembered that the anti-caste thrust and struggles of these communities were read mostly as ‘caste movements.’ The not-so subtle denigration involved in this seemingly appreciative reading of the dalit politics as ascriptive and atavistic and the corresponding positive evaluation of their own are clear enough. This is no small gain. *Secondly*, in a backhanded way it also legitimizes the covert and overt ways in which the ascriptive politics of

the dominance is perpetuated and promoted. If the dalit could have their ascriptive politics, the Brahminical castes cannot be blamed for indulging in the same. For, don't we all live in an egalitarian society? *Thirdly*, it serves to essentialise and naturalise through generalization, the discriminatory and hierarchical categories in popular as well as academic discourses. It has become an acceptable practice to use untouchables, backwards and forwards as though these are normal and natural ways of referring to social groupings. But an Untouchable is an untouchable only within the Brahminical Varna system. The 'backwards' is a government category for the mass of Shudras. They are backwards only in reference to the so-called Brahminically considered 'forwards.' In this way the discriminatory Brahminical categorization has been inscribed into the very heart of this society and nation and legitimized in such a way that the source and the root are not anymore visible and the masses have been persuaded to take them as natural. The source of dominance and power thus becoming invisible is made acceptable and also continually reproduced. The act of celebratory reading of dalit politics by the academics is not devoid of its power-nexus in the vital process of knowledge-production.

4. This intervention could conclude with two general comments, one, on the emergence of micro identities and two, on the deployment of Western Social Science concepts to non-Western situations. Spurious identities, such as the dalit identity here, tend to crop up in contexts in which the national identity is weak, inadequate or ill-formed. The case of India is indeed an extreme one. The near-total failure of the emergence of national identity here is well-known, but less talked about and least theorized. *The culture which was constructed to receive power within the new nation-state here was basically Brahminical-exclusivist. This is clearly an indication of monopoly power appropriation.* It is the consequence of this sectarian culturalism leading to monopoly power-appropriation, is what plagues the society here today in the form or eruption of scores of 'identities.'. In this context, group-identities particularly of the subaltern variety, which are Brahminically imposed, are set up primarily for the purpose of *re-distribution* and not for *recognition*. *The call is for homogenization of power and not for fragmented recognition of culture.* It is a protest against the multiple, differentiated and hierarchical power realizations. Certain cultural aspects of the problem are no doubt fore-grounded, but this does not warrant their reading as demands for recognition or assertions of identities.

The second point is concerning the consequences of mechanically deploying social science concepts from a particular context to another. Despite the crucial difference between the dalit situation here and the identity-politics of the West, the academia has chosen to club the two together and as we have pointed out above, derives enormous ideological advantage in the process. This is not a unique case. For, loaded concepts such as 'civil society,' 'modernity,' secularism etc are non-problematically deployed to describe the socio-political contexts of the subcontinent. However, in the context of effective *social regression* that the society here has gone under Colonialism-nationalism, the mechanical deployment of these concepts only serves the ideological function of camouflaging the real situation. The concepts are emptied out of their critical component and they only describe seemingly similar situations. Just as we have 'our own secularism' and 'our own modernity,' now we have our own brand of identity politics. It is time that the critically minded minority of academicians take note of this.

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Negotiating Minority/Majority Religious Identity: Exploring the Social Location of a Transnational Religious Organisation in Britain and India¹

John ZAVOS

Introduction:

In this paper, I want to explore the ways in which one particular Hindu religious organization, the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (or BAPS), has negotiated its position and status in relation to national discourses of belonging in two country contexts, the UK and India. The case is interesting for the way in which this sophisticated transnational organization situates itself in relation to a Hindu identity which is, on the one hand, marked as minority ethnic, and on the other, as culturally and/or communally majoritarian. In particular, an examination of this case may enable us to explore the different ways that religious identity relates to notions of citizenship and the nation in these two contexts, and the comparative resonance of religion when it is framed either as a minority or a majority identity.

The transnational profile of BAPS is appropriate to such concerns not just because it has a fairly prominent profile in both these country contexts as a result, but also because this condition of transnationality appears to present a challenge to the way in which nations themselves are imagined, and represented through developing modes of citizenship. In her exploration of what she calls 'flexible citizenship' (1999), Aihwa Ong notes that the response to this challenge has not simply been defensive. Flexible citizenship relates not just to the mobility of postcolonial elites, but also to the enduring capacity of the nation state to adapt to rapidly developing conditions. There are, Ong says, 'diverse forms of interdependencies and entanglements between transnational phenomena and the nation-states – relations that link displaced persons with citizens, integrate the unstructured into the structured, and bring some kind of order to the disorderliness of transnationalism' (1999: 15-16). The paper seeks to demonstrate how such interdependence and entanglement plays out, as it explores the flow of citizenship-related ideas between states, organizations and communities, and the attempts made by both states and organizations to negotiate this transnational disorderliness. A central contention is that religion can operate as an ordering discourse in this process of negotiation, enabling transnational organizations to perform citizenship identities, and so enhance their sense of belonging in relation to national social and political arenas. As we shall see, however, the way in which this discourse is deployed in our two country contexts provides evidence of some interesting differences.

This argument is predicated on the understanding that religion is a discourse with a specific (if complex) history. The idea of religion as a stable cross-cultural and trans-historical phenomenon has been subverted by the deconstruction of the world religions paradigm in recent accounts (for example, see Asad, 1993; Fitzgerald, 2000; Flood, 1999; Hirst and Zavos, 2005). Theorists such as Kim Knott argue that religion rather needs to be conceptualised as 'a dynamic and engaged part of

1. Parts of this paper are reproduced from Zavos 2011.

a complex social environment or habitat, which is itself criss-crossed with wider communications and power relations' (2005: 119). Implicit here is the idea that particular manifestations of religion are always already intertwined with a variety of discourses constituted in different social fields. This study then is based not so much on the premise that religious organisations may or may not operate in particular ways in relation to state formations and notions of citizenship (a premise which would demand comparative work between different religious organisations, and perhaps even between different 'religions'), but rather on examining possible ways in which religion as a discourse may be deployed by different agents in order to mediate the development of notions of belonging associated with citizenship in the dynamic, shifting context of late modern state-subject relations. Although it rejects the idea of religion as a stable universal phenomenon, however, such an approach does not preclude the operation of dominant discourses of religion. Indeed, the world religions paradigm noted above is just such a dominant discourse, but in this paper I want to recognize a movement in this discursive formation. In certain national and transnational arenas, we see a subtle shift towards the identification and articulation of common religious values underpinning the normative plurality of the world religions - values such as peace, environmental responsibility, respect for human (and religious) diversity, which are commonly projected as 'spiritual' or 'faith' values – in a manner which frequently marginalizes the subversive potential of religious world views.² In the current context we will note the presence of this discursive development, as different agents seek to fashion orderly notions of belonging in the context of transnationalism.

Examining BAPS in these inter-related contexts will, I hope, provide a significant example of what Ong refers to as the 'diverse forms of interdependencies and entanglements between transnational phenomena and the nation-states', which produce different models of flexible citizenship. In each case, I will focus first on the State's development of new forms of citizenship in response to the 'disorderliness' of transnationalism, before exploring the ways in which BAPS works with these developments in its efforts to establish a sense of belonging premised on the centrality of 'religion'.

Citizenship, ethnicity and religion in the UK

The notion of British citizenship has been developed in the framework of the British Empire. The road from subject to citizen has been bound up first with imperial notions of belonging, and then with post-Imperial anxieties about who does and who does not belong. In particular, this anxiety is associated with the presence in the motherland of migrants from the erstwhile colonies. Although it has expressed itself primarily in terms of defensive strategies designed to limit the influx of these migrants, in the nineteen seventies and eighties, the British State gradually developed inclusionary policies loosely termed 'multiculturalist' as a means of mediating the social pluralism which nevertheless had developed. Multiculturalism, in as much as it was a coherent policy strategy, was predicated on the principle of equal respect for difference, and an attempt to embrace cultural diversity as a valid factor in the imagining of British identity; what Kymlicka and Norman identify as an acceptance that 'ethnocultural identities matter to citizens, will endure over time, and must be recognized and accommodated within...common institutions' (Kymlicka and Norman: 14).

2. For an elaboration of this argument, see Zavos 2008

A range of factors during the 1990s and beyond have destabilized the multiculturalist approach as it has developed in Britain. In particular, the year 2001 witnessed a series of scenes of violent unrest in northern English towns with large South Asian Muslim populations, closely followed by the events of 11th September. In the wake of these events, the government moved increasingly to embrace the idea of community cohesion, an approach to pluralism which criticized previously pursued policies of multiculturalism for encouraging segregation and differentiated values. In a move which owed a good deal to the theorization of social capital in the United States (Putnam, 2000, 2007), community cohesion advocated a new approach to pluralism in which respect for difference was predicated on the recognition of common core values. The then Home Secretary David Blunkett signaled the new focus by explaining that ‘citizenship means finding a common place for diverse cultures and beliefs, consistent with our core values’ (*Guardian* 14/12/01). As illustrated here, the ideological shift to community cohesion is often expressed explicitly in terms of citizenship, and this link was only emphasised by the introduction of citizenship tests in 2004, through which new migrants are required to answer questions designed to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of aspects of British life, culture, institutions and governance.

The role of religion in this ideological shift is explained by Tony Blair in a speech to the Christian Socialist Movement in 2001; ‘Our major faith traditions – all of them more historic and deeply rooted than any political party or ideology – play a fundamental role in supporting and propagating values which bind us together as a nation’ (see Furbey and Macey, 2005: 97). Here, the role of religion or more specifically ‘faith’ emerges as a key means of identifying those core values at the heart of community cohesion. In fact the state had for some time before this been cultivating connections with religious organizations as a means of managing diversity. From the early 1990s, for example, the Inner Cities Religious Council looked to represent the views of different religious communities in the context first of inner city regeneration, and increasingly in relation to the government’s overall approach to the mediation of pluralism. Critically, the Council was to operate on the basis of what its first Chair Robin Squire MP called ‘some of the common values which people of faith share – the intrinsic value of people; the importance of nurturing communities; respect for the environment; the importance of love and justice in society’ (see Taylor, 2002: 217). In invoking this commonality, Squire was drawing on that increasingly prominent understanding of the location of religion in global terms referred to in the introduction, through which a common ‘discourse of faith’ is identified as informing the plurality of religious traditions (Zavos 2008). This kind of approach dovetailed neatly with the trajectory of community cohesion in the early 21st century to produce what some commentators have termed a ‘faith relations industry’ in Britain (McLoughlin, 2005: 58); that is, a set of emerging state institutions and attitudes that implicitly read ethnic difference in terms of religious identity. This development is matched by a strong desire amongst some South Asian communities in particular to articulate their identity in Britain in religious terms, rather than in terms of the catch-all ‘Asian’ identity which had for so long distinguished South Asians from Afro-Caribbean migrants. ‘Don’t call me Asian’ has become a familiar refrain, particularly amongst groups representing Hindus and Sikhs in Britain in a post 9/11 context.

The idea of religious identity as ethnic identity, then, is becoming increasingly significant in the politics of ethnicity in Britain, and a variety of religious organizations and organizations claiming to represent religious communities have become prominent collaborators with the government (Zavos 2009). Some of these groups, such as the Hindu Forum of Britain, are clearly in the political

field; they seek to represent an ethnic community defined first and foremost in terms of religious identity, and they have responded eagerly to the community cohesion agenda. As the President of the Hindu Forum stated at the launch event of the organization in 2004, 'it is incumbent upon us all, that we strive as a collective, rejoice in our diversity and work towards community cohesion' (*Asian Voice* 27/3/04). Others are less overtly political, yet nevertheless strongly project the idea of the 'ethnic minority citizen' as marked out by the community cohesion agenda, through social action and the arrangement of social space. By practicing what Kymlicka and Norman describe as 'civic virtue' (2000: 6), these organisations acquire valuable social capital not just for their own institutions but for the ethnic/religious identities they have come to represent.

BAPS as 'Cosmopolitan Hinduism'

BAPS, I argue, is an example of this type of organization. It represents one specific grouping of the Swaminarayan *sampradaya*, a devotional Hindu movement which developed initially in Gujarat in the 19th Century. It is now a global movement with a formidable organization of temples, centres and devotional groups as well as development and educational programmes. It is primarily popular amongst Gujarati communities, and it has a particularly powerful presence in the United States and in Britain, as well as Gujarat itself and some other areas of India.

Steven Vertovec has described BAPS as a form of 'cosmopolitan Hinduism', reflecting a capacity to mould its practice to multiple environments and acknowledge the play of multiple identities amongst its modern devotees (Vertovec, 2000: 164). In fact, in offering this model, Vertovec draws on the work of Peter van der Veer, who has argued that contemporary theories of cosmopolitanism need to take more account of the historical development of this idea in contexts of colonialism (van der Veer, 2002). Acknowledging such 'historical entanglements' (ibid: 178) enables a clearer understanding of 'alternative cosmopolitanisms' to those framed by a post-Enlightenment vision of secular engagement,³ in which, for example, transnational Hindu and Muslim organizations may be 'creatively developing new religious understandings of their predicament, entailing an encounter with the multiplicity of Others and with global conditions on their own terms' (van der Veer, 2004: 16). Van der Veer argues that these terms may well be articulated in a framework of traditionalism, but 'this traditionalism requires immense ideological work that transforms previous discursive practices substantially' (ibid: 12).

It is in this sense of 'creative traditionalism', then, that we may speak of BAPS as 'cosmopolitan Hinduism'. In fact, van der Veer's work on the colonial genealogies of cosmopolitanism are again pertinent, as he identifies the emergence of a discourse of Indian spirituality in the 19th century as a kind of anti-colonialist cosmopolitan project, fashioned through the flow of ideas between Euro-American theosophists and emerging representations of Hinduism in colonial civil society. 'Western discourse on "Eastern spirituality"', he argues,

is reappropriated by the Indian religious movements of this period... . Spirituality is a comparative, polemical term used against Christian colonialism. As in Britain itself, it contests the very colonial domination of scientific knowledge by showing that there are either earlier or alternative forms of science available in Hinduism' (2002: 176).

It is this kind of 'comparative, polemical' Indian spirituality which was taken by Swami

3. Such as those 'cosmopolitan norms' explored, for example, in Benhabib 2007.

Vivekananda to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Here, he contested the space of modern religion with other parliamentarians, arguing that what he presented as the spiritual essence of Hinduism⁴ provided a model of tolerant, rational and universal religion which neatly encompassed (whilst continuing, in the spirit of tolerance, to respect fully) the other, less ancient religious traditions (Brekke 2002: 25). Although normally in somewhat less combative forms, this model has been very influential in the development of modern notions of cosmopolitan Hinduism such as that propagated by BAPS; it also resonates strongly with the emerging global discourse of faith we have noted as congruent with the idea of community cohesion in the UK.

It is no coincidence that Vivekananda was also very influential in developing a modern notion of *seva* as a feature of his spiritual approach. *Seva* in its broadest sense means any kind of devotional service. It is often related to *bhakti* devotionism in Hindu traditions, framing forms of worship and modelling the guru-disciple relationship. In establishing the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, however, Vivekananda fashioned *seva* more particularly as the obligatory delivery of social service or service to humanity (see Beckerlegge, 2006). Vivekananda's notion of *seva* as social service articulates it as a selfless act – indeed, its selflessness is an indicator of its legitimacy as a form of devotion (see also Warriar, 2005: 59). The idea of *seva* has become a central feature of virtually all modern Hindu organizations as they have developed during the 20th century (see for example McKean, 1996 on the Divine Life Society). As a guiding philosophy for full-time disciples in modern Hindu movements, *seva* provides the motivation for the full range of management and practical activities associated with particular movements (Warriar, 2005: 59-60; Williams, 1998: 853-4). For devotees, it provides similar motivation for a range of voluntary activities. As I will demonstrate, in multiple social contexts it also provides a critical religious framing in the performance of civic virtue; for the Swaminarayan Sanstha, this is enacted on multiple levels, including that configured by the British state's articulation of community cohesion.

BAPS and ethnic minority citizenship in Britain

Since 1995 the focal point of the Sanstha in Britain has been its temple complex in Neasden, North London. As its website proudly states, this mandir is recognized by Guinness World Records as the largest Hindu stone built mandir outside India. Opposite the temple is a private school run by the Sanstha, catering for children from the age of two up to 18. These institutions create a powerful presence for the Sanstha in London. The mandir is recognized as a major tourist site (again as the website tells us, *Time Out* magazine listed it in 2007 as one of the 'seven wonders of London'). But the complex is also a deeply civic site, in which the civic virtue of BAPS, and by extension the Hindu community, is reiterated in a number of ways.

Firstly, the spatial arrangement of the mandir expresses a powerful sense of order. It is a spectacular site, a white marble, intricately carved building standing heterotopically in the suburban sprawl of north west London, close to the North Circular, a major road route in the city, and to large retail outlets such as the Swedish furniture manufacturer IKEA.⁵ Entering the

4. Vivekananda's particular brand of Hinduism was an interpretation of Vedantic philosophy developed through a variety of 19th century thinkers and sometimes known as 'neo-Vedanta' (see Halbfass 1990), combined with the promotion of 'yoga as the Indian science of supraconsciousness' (van der Veer 2002: 177)

5. See Johnson 2006 on different uses of the term 'heterotopia'. My use of this term is based neither on the idea of heterotopic space as liberatory, as disturbing nor as utopic. Rather, I am interested in the sense of difference or

mandir grounds means leaving these concerns behind, as the carefully manicured lawns and immaculately clean spaces both inside and outside reflect the care and attention of the volunteers who are always in attendance. The orderly nature of the site stretches to physical movement, as visitors are encouraged to follow set routes from area to area (in this sense, providing a strong sense of heterotopia, as this managed movement seems to echo the forms of movement encouraged in the nearby IKEA store⁶). These features seek to configure Hindu sacred space as calm and serene, drawing deeply on the dominant discourse of religion as faith, and the associated notion of cosmopolitan Hinduism.⁷ The main managed route at the mandir leads the visitor to the entrance of a permanent exhibition called 'Understanding Hinduism', in which the 'glory and greatness of Hinduism and the significant contributions by India in all fields' is represented (<http://www.mandir.org/exhibition/index.htm>). The exhibition provides further strong indications of the values underpinning Hinduism as a globally significant religion (and, at the heart of Hinduism in this representation, the importance of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in propagating these values).

A proportion of the exhibition including a film is given over to explaining the building of the mandir itself. The key thrust of this part of the exhibition is to demonstrate the devotion and sacrifice of satsangis who contributed to the project. The mandir was built entirely through private donations and the community also offered voluntary labour as a form of *seva*. This idea of an organised, selfless community working together for a common goal is a resonant image, which slides outwards from the context of the Sanstha to the wider communities in which it is situated. It is reproduced through elements of the mandir website, and through activities of the Sanstha and the School in the local community. As the School's website comments,

in line with the Hindu ethos with which The Swaminarayan School operates, the School sees its role not only as a participator within the local community but also as a contributor. Hence the School has been involved in several charity drives in recent years. As a result, the children are taught with important character-building values such as giving, sharing, treating each other as equals, and helping those less fortunate than themselves.

(<http://www.swaminarayan.brent.sch.uk/charity-work.html>)

The School, then, contributes to the community both through charitable work and by developing the civic virtue of its students. The combination of this attitude of selfless service with the representations of orderly Hinduism at the temple site produces a kind of moral tableau which acts as a metaphor for the model status of Hindus as 'ethnic minority citizens' in Britain. The Neasden complex projects core values as Hindu values (including *seva*) which chime very clearly with the idea of community cohesion and the associated notion of ethnic minority citizenship.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the site has emerged as iconic in terms of Britain's multicultural profile, and is frequently visited by prominent politicians and other figures of the

'specialness' of this space, without it being entirely removed from the parameters of quotidian reality. This sense of familiar difference provides an appropriate kind of context for paradigmatic values which are nevertheless applicable in everyday life, throwing them, as it were, into sharper relief.

6. I am grateful to Dr Rohit Barot for drawing this similarity to my attention some years ago.

7. The link to van der Veer's anti-colonial cosmopolitan Hinduism is again evident here, as this representation of Hinduism in a serene, spiritualist key is developed in contradistinction to the classic colonialist stereotype of this religion as a kind of riot of disorderly divinities, beliefs and practices. See, for example, the commentary of ICS officer Alfred Lyall in the 1880s, as explored in Metcalf 1995. Lyall describes contemporary devotional Hinduism as 'a mere troubled sea, without shore or visible horizon, driven to and fro by the winds of boundless credulity and grotesque invention' (Metcalf 1995: 136).

state. The Mandir's website features comment from such figures as Tony Blair, the Prince of Wales, the late Diana Spencer, and the MP William Hague. The tone of this comment is remarkably consistent, focusing on one or both of the two issues explored here: first, the peace and tranquility of the space, and second, the selfless commitment of the community which its building represents. This latter point is emphasised by the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown in a message sent to the Sanstha at the time of its centenary celebration in 2007. Mr Brown states that the devotees 'espouse ideals of community and voluntary service which are an example to us all', hence locating BAPS as exemplary in the performance of community cohesion.

During 2009, both the temple and the school featured prominently on the personal website of the Prince of Wales, as he and his wife visited to celebrate the Holi festival. The video recording this visit features a visit to a classroom, where young children are making chains of daffodils in celebration of another festival that falls in the spring, St David's Day. This scene appears to invoke the commitment of the Swaminarayan movement to community cohesion, as the diversity of Welsh and Hindu festivals is brought together in the context of the royal visit to the school, as is represented by the image in figure 1 of the Prince with a tilaka and a traditional Hindu welcome garland, only made of Welsh daffodils. The hybrid is fashioned in the context of the religion as faith discourse, which recognizes the underlying commonality of these diversely framed festivals, hence reinforcing the idea that BAPS is ideally positioned to operate within the context of the UK's strategy of community cohesion.



Figure 1

In this way, then, the activities, statements and even the spaces fashioned by BAPS exemplify the role of the Hindu citizen as a model minority with a great deal to offer the civic life of the UK from a specifically religious point of view.

My interest now is to see how such strategies are translated into the context of India. Before looking more specifically at BAPS, however, I want to explore the way in which notions of Indian citizenship have developed in recent years. Interestingly, some of the same migrant communities perceived as so influential in developing different notions of citizenship in Britain, are also critically important here.

From PIO to OCI: transnational citizenship and the Indian diaspora

"As a young kid in Britain people would look at me and ask me where I was from. I'd say, 'Scotland', and they'd say, 'yes, but where are you really from?' Somewhere at the back of your mind you're wondering about this country that your parents came from and wondering if maybe you belong there."

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/5290494.stm)

This statement features in a BBC news report posted in 2006, entitled 'Indians head home in brain gain'. Attributed to a young South Asian woman born in Glasgow who was by that time living in Mumbai, it expresses reasons for her migration to India. Although she was partly driven by new opportunities fashioned in the context of India's booming twenty-first century economy, this informant, as with others in the article, expressed an emotional attachment to the land of her parents, a sense of belonging, as a key factor in her decision to migrate. The persistence of this affective relationship between the Indian diaspora and the 'homeland', even amongst the 2nd and 3rd generation, is also something which is recognized by the Indian Government.

In 2000 the Indian Ministry of External Affairs appointed a High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora. Although the Committee saw its brief primarily in terms of the potential for inward investment, the significance of the diaspora was also recognized in social and cultural terms. For example, the Committee's website explains that

'The Diaspora is very special to India. Residing in distant lands, its members have ... retained their emotional, cultural and spiritual links with the country of their origin. This strikes a reciprocal chord in the hearts of people of India.'

(<http://www.indiandiaspora.nic.in/>)

The Committee envisaged an opportunity to build on these attachments in terms of India's development and geo-political status, and as a result, a range of initiatives designed to strengthen the relationship between the Indian state and the diaspora were recommended by the Committee in its Report submitted in December 2001.

One key area of recommendation was in relation to citizenship. The Committee concluded that 'the grant of dual citizenship to certain members of the Indian Diaspora *with appropriate safeguards* would facilitate the contribution of the Diaspora to India's social, economic and technological transformation and national development' (High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, 2001: xxxvi, emphasis in original). A mode of citizenship did emerge from this recommendation, although not necessarily in the manner anticipated by many eager members of the diaspora. In 2005 the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) scheme was introduced. This scheme allowed people with a descent connection to India⁸ to gain unrestricted rights of entry, residence and work in India, plus certain restricted investment rights. It did not allow any political rights (such as the right to vote or hold political office), nor the right to hold an Indian passport. In this sense, despite the use of the term 'citizen', the OCI scheme falls short of granting citizenship rights, something which has led to a degree of confusion amongst diaspora Indians, and a welter of clarificatory statements on consular websites around the world. As the Delhi US embassy notes, 'a person who holds an OCI Card in

8. To be eligible for OCI status, an individual should be 'a foreign national, who was eligible to become citizen of India on 26.01.1950 or was a citizen of India on or at anytime after 26.01.1950 or belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15.08.1947 and his/her children and grand children' (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Overseas Citizen of India Brochure, see <http://mha.nic.in/pdfs/oci-brochure.pdf>).

reality is granted an Indian visa, not Indian citizenship’ (<http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/acsdualnation.html>, accessed 27/4/09). In effect, the OCI scheme is little more than an extension of a measure introduced in 1999 called the Person of Indian Origin (PIO) card scheme, which granted similar entitlements to OCI, but for the more limited period of 15 years and with a requirement for registration for stays beyond 180 days.

Deploying the language of citizenship is significant, however, because of the way in which it invokes the idea of belonging through culture and ethnicity. This is represented by the transition from PIO to OCI.⁹ In the earlier formalisation of the relationship between India and its diaspora, the emphasis is, in a sense, on the detached-ness of diaspora Indians from the land of India. They are persons of Indian origin – that is, they originated from India and so have a connection, but are nevertheless contemporaneously ‘other’. Time and space conspire to demonstrate their separation. The Overseas Citizen of India, on the other hand, is a kind of extension of the idea of India itself, outwards towards its diaspora. Belonging is not indexed by space and time in the same way; it is indexed primarily by the power of ethnicity, which seems to confirm a close association regardless of geographical distance or even attachment to another state. The symbolic nature of this connection is represented by the OCI registration card, which self-consciously echoes the form of an Indian passport, whilst, as the US Embassy site indicates, it is ‘in reality’ an Indian visa (see fig 2).¹⁰



Figure 2

In keeping with the emphasis on ethnicity and identity, the Committee envisages overseas citizenship in terms of a profound cultural connection. The Report notes that ‘deep commitment to their cultural identity has manifested itself in every component of the Indian Diaspora. The members of the Diaspora are, together with Indians, equally the inheritors of the traditions of the world’s oldest continuous civilization’ (xxvii). Indeed, the Report goes on to imply that it is this deep commitment and the ‘value systems’ it engenders which has enabled Indian diaspora communities to be successful and live harmoniously in their multiple diasporic contexts (their ability to present as a ‘model minority’). The maintenance of this connection and the values it

9. It is worth noting here that although both the High Level Committee and the PIO scheme were initiatives taken by the BJP dominated National Democratic Alliance Government which held power between 1998 and 2004, the OCI scheme was sanctioned by the Congress dominated United Progressive Alliance government which came into power after 2004.

10. The PIO card is also marked by a similarity to the Indian passport, although its resemblance is mediated by a markedly different colour (light grey), whereas the OCI card’s dark blue brings it closer to the black of the full passport.

enshrines is perceived as a key element in the continued success of the diaspora and in the strengthening of the relationship with the homeland. As an arena in which symbolism and representation reside, then, culture emerges as a fertile ground through which to express the kind of ethnic citizenship projected by the OCI scheme.

As part of its projection of the diaspora as a repository of Indian culture, the Committee's report makes reference to the role of religious organizations. In particular, the report identifies organizations like the Chinmaya Mission and the Ramakrishna Mission as carriers of Indian culture in diasporic contexts, and as such they should be 'provided assistance' (xxviii) by the Indian government. There is no detail as to what form such assistance should take, but clearly there is a role recognized by the government for religious organizations in preserving and transmitting the values which have enabled the success of the Indian diaspora. Although the report does not mention the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha explicitly, we have already noted the ways in which the Sanstha reflects citizenship values in London. In the next section I want to explore the ways in which such values are reproduced in the context of the Indian capital, Delhi.

Transnational Sanstha in the nation: the Delhi Akshardham and the values of Indian-ness

Although BAPS is a movement rooted in Gujarat, its most high profile physical presence in India is in New Delhi. Situated on the east bank of the Yamuna at Nizamuddin Bridge, the New Delhi Akshardham monument is an enormous, and enormously impressive complex. It houses a Shikharbaddha mandir like the one in Neasden, as well as a range of exhibitions and other attractions associated with Hinduism and the movement, a management complex and large accommodation block, ornate gardens and the vast monument which forms the centerpiece of the site. This site was opened in 2005 amid some controversy, as it is sited in an ecologically sensitive area next to the river. Recently it has been much in evidence on television screens around the world, as it is sited adjacent to the 2010 Commonwealth Games village. During this period it has been projected liberally as an iconic image of Indian culture.

The Akshardham site is, much like the Neasden mandir, a deeply ordered space. Security is tight, but beyond this, the space is marked by its cleanliness and the efficiency with which large numbers of visitors are directed from one to another sector by impeccably dressed volunteers. This sense of order and cleanliness is, it goes without saying, in marked contrast to the general bustle of the busy city beyond the walls of the complex. A sense of heterotopia, similar to that mentioned earlier in relation to the Neasden mandir, is evident at the Akshardham. Entering the complex, one is entering a space which is different, although recognizably familiar. This sense of familiar difference provides the context for the articulation of civic values which again is reminiscent of Neasden. At the Delhi site, however, there is a stronger emphasis on the nation in this transmission of values. The exhibits include a boat ride which travels through '10 000 years of India's heritage'; the Hall of Values in which the 'timeless messages of Indian culture' are delivered through an animatronic telling of the life of Bhagwan Swaminarayan; the Garden of India is populated by 'exquisite bronze statues of India's child gems, valorous warriors, national figures and great women personalities' which 'inspire visitors with values and national pride'. There is then, in these extensive exhibits, a very strong sense of the values of Indian-ness which is delivered in spectacular style by this transnational organization.

As in Neasden, *seva* is again a key part of this space, and of the narratives associated with the presence of BAPS in the capital and beyond. It appears not only in the exhibits and through the presence of the volunteers, but also on the website, where local, national and global activities are highlighted. One such *seva* activity is Aap ki Rasoi, a mid-day meal provision project for homeless people initiated by the Delhi government. It is interesting, then, because it is also part of the local politics of Delhi. Launched in 2008 by the Chief Minister of Delhi Sheila Dikshit, it is a feature of the Congress administration's political programme in the Capital Territory. As such, the scheme had a profile in the press and it indicates the collaboration of the Sanstha with the local administration. In this sense it may be said to represent a kind of interface to political and civil society, through which the Sanstha is able to demonstrate its particular values. In fact, although the scheme provides the opportunity for publicity, my own experience of the Sanstha's daily operation was that it was relatively low profile. The kitchens of the Akshardham, which provide food for the many visitors to the complex through its extensive canteen, provides meals each day at a site in Nizamuddin, close to Akshardham, which is primarily occupied by Bengali Muslim migrants living in makeshift shelters. The meals are delivered by satsangis from the back of a van to about a hundred people each mid-day. Perhaps the only real sign of the influence of the Sanstha, apart from the uniforms of the satsangis, is the orderly queues, which are controlled regularly by a municipal worker in charge of a nearby public toilet, who made an agreement with the Satsangis to take on this role in return for food.

Seva, in this example, is carried out effectively and without any flamboyance. Indeed, this lack of flamboyance may be seen as an indicator of the selflessness of the act, which, as indicated earlier, is critical to its legitimisation as *seva*. This point was reiterated by the two Swaminarayan Sadhus who accompanied me on my visit to the scheme. At the same time, the presentation of *seva* activities such as this forms a major element of the global Sanstha's self-image, its representation of itself on its websites and in its literature. This is understandable, given the charitable nature of these activities and the need to fund them through donations.¹¹ But it is striking that I first learned of the Aap ki Rasoi scheme by reading the Annual Review of the UK Sanstha (BAPS. n.d.), rather than through information associated with Akshardham. Such globalised *seva* activities chime very strongly with community cohesion values elaborated in the UK. In India, their profile is less pronounced. The civic values of the Sanstha as articulated here appear to be more forcefully imbricated with a discourse of nationalism, or perhaps more precisely, a discourse focused on the global significance of Indian civilisation.

Ong notes the development of a civilisational discourse in a South East Asian context, where governments have conflated Islamic ideals with notions of regional distinctiveness to fashion a kind of 'Asian Renaissance' in response to the West. She quotes the then deputy prime minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, to demonstrate this point:

The Renaissance of Asia entails the growth, development and flowering of Asian societies based on a certain vision of perfection; societies imbued with truth and the love of learning, justice and compassion, mutual respect and forbearance, and freedom and responsibility. It is the transformation of its cultures and societies from its capitulation to Atlantic powers to the position of self-confidence and its reflowering at the dawn of a new millennium. (Ong, 1999:

11. The Sanstha's charitable activities are now co-ordinated by BAPS Charities, which was registered as a charity in the US in 2000. – see www.bapscharities.org

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In an Indian context, this passage is interesting for the resonance that it has with the assertive spirituality discourse we noted earlier in 19th and early 20th century approaches to Hinduism in the context of colonialism. As a feature of 'cosmopolitan Hinduism', this idea has developed a strong presence also in postcolonial representations of this religion, associating it with some projected universal values of ancient Indian civilisation. The High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora recognised this connection, as it specifically referred to transnational Hindu organisations as valuable carriers of Indian culture.

The exhibits at the Akshardham certainly draw deeply on this civilisational discourse, projecting it not just as a kind of pride in India's past, but as an inspiration for what can be achieved now. As the BJP politician LK Advani comments: 'Just until now, people who come to India, who are visitors, who are keen to see what are the marvels of India, they invariably go to Agra, to Taj Mahal, to several other places, where they get a glimpse of India's architectural achievements and a glimpse of history as well. But if they come to Akshardham in Delhi, they would see how spiritualism has flowered in India -- how India has become a spiritual giant in the world' (<http://www.akshardham.com/opinions/national.htm>). Advani's comment projects the idea of a vital role for the 'spiritualism' of Indian/Vedic civilisation as represented by Akshardham in the modern world. As with Ibrahim's 'Renaissant Asia', this spiritualism is implicitly offered as an antidote to the materialism (rapacity?) of 'Atlantic powers', providing an indication of the new role which Asian civilisations can play in the development of global culture, global values (the very same kind of values as are extant in the development of a global 'discourse of faith').

Ong goes on to argue that the civilisational discourse deployed in South East Asia operates as a kind of weapon of exclusion and suppression wielded by governments; it 'lends spiritual authority to the practices of individual regimes in managing and suppressing profane others, who are excluded by such discourses' (1999: 231). Advani's dismissive reference to the Taj Mahal is a possible indication of the way in which an Indian civilisational discourse could also be deployed in this manner. To a certain extent, this kind of approach is reflected in the Swaminarayan representation of Indian civilisation. It is no surprise, for example, that Islamic India and even to a certain extent low caste India are elided in the Akshardham's exhibits. It is notable, for example, that the statues of national figures in the Garden of India do not include B.R. Ambedkar.

This emphasis on ancient Vedic civilisation is also evident in Neasden, but certainly in the majoritarian context of India it is presented more forcefully, and also more exclusively. Seva is also part of this space – it appears in the exhibits, and in the provision of welfare activities, sometimes in collaboration with the local state – but its presence is less prominent. This point is demonstrated by information on the building of Akshardham provided at the site and on the associated website; in contrast to Neasden's emphasis on community service, the emphasis here is more clearly on the wishes and action of the guru, and the ritual steps taken towards completion.

The balance of civilisational/spiritual and welfare discourses at the Akshardham, then, provides us with an interesting insight into the way that an ethnically-configured transnational Indian identity is constructed in India. The context of a projected majoritarian culture in which ancient civilisation is emphasised, in the manner of the High Level Committee, invokes and enables the elaboration of Indian spirituality and Vedic achievement as universally significant. These elements

are also evident in Neasden (they are, after all, universally significant, in the context of a universal discourse of faith), but at the Akshardham they appear more forcefully, framed also by a civilisational discourse which is significant in the projection of India as a 21st century power.

So in conclusion, let me briefly sum up. We have in the first half of this paper seen how the moral vision of the Sanstha, building on a global discourse of religion as community value, is able to work with the community cohesion agenda in the UK to populate the idea of ethnic minority citizenship being developed in that context. The analysis in the second half has shown how this transnational organisation has also been able to work with visions of Indian culture being developed in the context of a state keen to engage a transnational citizenry across the globe. As they are translated in the context of Akshardham, these visions appear to lay emphasis on a kind of ancient Vedic civilisation, affirming a particular notion of Indian culture which chimes with discourses of majoritarian nationalism in India. BAPS is able to deploy its infrastructure and its approaches to society in a way which sits comfortably in both environments. It produces, in particular, hybrid concepts of civic virtue/seva and narratives of Hindu/Indian civilisation which flow between these sites, being constructed in different but connected ways according to context, and persistently framed by a globally resonant discourse of religion. The Sanstha in this sense operates as a resource of order and coherence, making sense of the disorderliness of transnationalism for these two very different nation-states in overlapping, interconnected ways. To return to a notion drawn from Ong in the introduction, this situation demonstrates some of the ‘interdependencies and entanglements between transnational phenomena and the nation-states’, through which concepts of citizenship and belonging associated with minority and majority identities flow between contemporary Europe and Asia.

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Session 3

Minority and Majority Making in Indian Politics

Religion, Capitalism, and Bahujan Samaj Discourse

Timothy FITZGERALD

“Democracy is another name for equality. Parliamentary democracy developed a passion for liberty. It never made even a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to realize the significance of equality and did not even endeavour to strike a balance between liberty and equality, with the result that liberty swallowed equality and has made democracy a name and a farce.” Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, “Labour and Parliamentary Democracy” in Bhagwan Das, Thus Spoke Ambedkar, Vol.1, p41/2.

In this paper I am not presenting new facts about religion and politics in South Asia, nor about Dr. Ambedkar or the Buddhists and Dalits¹. I am concerned with the categories ‘religion’ and ‘politics’ themselves, within which any such research must to some extent be framed. These in turn are inseparable from ‘economics’. It seems to me that the most significant and arguably destructive aspect of modernity is capitalism. On the other hand, many believe capitalism to be liberating. At the ideological level Capitalism is many things, and one of those things is a *soteriology* – a doctrine of salvation. Capitalism, open markets, and the opportunities of individual self-realization through entrepreneurship are imagined to offer us all liberation from the village hut, from the arbitrary oppression of hereditary hierarchies, and from the superstitions of religion and tradition. The development of wage labour opens up an escape from the face-to-face exploitation of village caste relations. Some Dalits have even been able to become successful and wealthy through the new entrepreneurial freedoms. It could be argued that Dr. Ambedkar himself appreciated these aspects of capitalism, and he almost certainly would have understood the desire to escape from the closed subordination of backward village life to the relative freedom which the wider horizons of the modern industrial metropolis seemed to offer the individual.

The doctrine of salvation inherent in the theorizations of political economy form part of a comprehensive metaphysics and psychology of faith which looks suspiciously like a religion. I want to start by proposing that we classify capitalism, and especially the tradition of liberal economics, as a religion or world religion. I propose this for methodological reasons: to lead us to look at our Anglophone representations in an unusual and, for many people, a counter-intuitive way.

Geertz famously defined religion as

“[1] a system of symbols which acts to [2] establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations...by [3] formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and [4] clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that [5] the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic”.

This definition seems to cover capitalism quite well – though it would probably be relevant for any

1. I should make it clear from the start that, apart from 3 weeks in Delhi and UP in July-August 2010, my research on Ambedkar, Buddhists and Dalits was in the mid-80's and early 90's, and consequently I am not offering any new empirical ethnographic knowledge.

dominant ideology, including, for example, Marxist-Leninism as it was institutionalized in the Soviet Socialist Republic.

If experimentally we shift our perception on this issue and include liberal capitalism as a world religion, then what wider implications for our understanding of contemporary global processes would result? There are compelling reasons for thinking that the science of economics is analogous to a theology of capital. In the theorization of capital dating approximately since Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations (1776) many of the fundamental beliefs and practices associated with economic theory derived more or less directly from current debates within Christian moral theology². Capital, private property, markets and the circulation of money may appear to us as common sense realities, yet they apparently require acts of faith in non-observable metaphysical imaginaries, and their single-minded pursuit amounts to religious devotion. Among devotees of capitalism and its values, there are the equivalent of high priests, preachers, evangelists, fundamentalists and heretics. The imaginary enchantments of capital accumulation are experienced as real, for once a myth of empowerment has established itself in the minds of a specific interest group (a class), then they will act as if the myth is true, and in that way it infiltrates the whole population and, eventually, all institutions become shaped and reshaped by the pervasive narrative, for example the liberating joys of consumerism. The pursuit of personal liberation through producing, exchanging, consuming, and investing in markets represented as natural phenomena has become the touchstone of rational living and the dominant feature of our global age.

It will of course be objected that there is very little support for seeing capitalism as a religion. Very few people think of the practices of capitalism as 'religious'. For many, the beliefs and practices that have been powerfully changing the world constitute *an escape* from religion, from blind belief in the supernatural and metaphysical to scientific belief in the natural and the empirical. The logic of the markets puts the individual in touch with objective values and constitutes a definitive stage in the rise from lower to higher stages of self-realization. We have freed ourselves from the backwardness of the village hut and the superstitions of the village magician or priest, and the arbitrary will of a hereditary dominant class. We are self-maximizers who find our human freedom when pursuing our own interests in markets; we find our real selves in the entrepreneurial experience. Though some 'traditional cultures' have steadfastly resisted global markets, the sheer logic and self-evident rationality of modernity erodes such resistance. Even hospitals and universities must succumb to the universal truths of the market economy: scholars and doctors are expected to free themselves from the cozy and protected tenure of low productivity, and to subject their scholarship and their expert ministrations to the markets which measure real value.

By classifying capitalism as a religion we unsettle our 'normal' perceptions. Why, the reader might ask, *should* we see capitalism as a religion? But we can put the question the other way round, viz. why, considering the many obvious similarities, do we find it so *difficult* to see capitalism as a globalizing, proselytizing faith? What are the specific rhetorical techniques which have transformed a faith-system based on blind belief in one contingent view of the world into the manifestation of natural reason and common sense normality? Why should a historically-specific ideology appear as the final realization of natural reason? For in the histories of peoples around

2. Waterman (2008) has shown how the belief of liberal economists in self-stabilizing markets and rational self-maximisers have entered directly from debates in moral theology concerning the problem of cupidity and God's Providence. See also Robert Nelson, Economics as Religion, 2007.

the world, there have been many ideologies which have appeared to those who have subscribed to them as Final Truth³.

By seriously contemplating capitalism as a religion, the paradoxes and confusions around 'religion' become more clearly evident. How do we distinguish a religious from a nonreligious ideology? Most people would accept that, despite the huge cultural and linguistic diversity of Muslim societies around the world, that Islam is a *religious* ideology with global ambitions. Just as many people would find it counter-intuitive to call liberal capitalism a religion, many would find it equally counter-intuitive to say that Islam is *not* a religion. Yet there are powerful voices within Islam who say that! Of course, there are many individual Muslims who live in secular societies and accept the juridical status of Islam as a religion. But there are also many who do not accept this⁴.

Many Muslim people see capitalism and the secular state as problematic, and at least some authoritative representations of Islam hold that secularism divides what Islam encompasses and unifies. T. N. Madan points out that at least some powerful and authoritative representations of Islam explicitly reject the dichotomous division into religious and secular domains. Madan points out that in the twentieth century Muhammad Iqbal – who rejected the secularist programme of Atatürk – occupies “a very special place” as an interpreter of Islam in South Asia. Madan quotes Iqbal: “In Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains...In Islam it is the same reality, which appears as Church looked at from one point of view and State from another...All is holy ground.” Madan comments that “[a]n autonomous ideology of secularism is ruled out.” (306) And he goes on to quote Fazlur Rahman: “Secularism destroys the sanctity and universality (transcendence) of all moral values.” (Madan, 306)

In India, Brahmanical ideology – profoundly different from both Islam and modern capitalism – has historically provided a totalizing world view based on hierarchy and caste rank. A central category such as *varnasramadharma* encompasses every level of the cosmology. The frequent translation of 'religion' as 'dharma' is highly problematic because there is no place for a non-dharmic state of being to act as the equivalent of the modern 'secular'. There are, it is true, things which go against dharma (a-dharma) and there are things which are relatively profane, but even untouchability is apparently in accordance with dharma. Today, from the standpoint of the secular state and secular social science, this dominant ideology has been transformed into 'a religion' Hinduism. This transformation has occurred as part of the same historical process which produced the domain of the secular state. But the Constitutional separation of religion and state cannot adequately deal with the more ancient law of Manu and the continued reality of caste. Despite the best efforts of the courts to decide consistently what does and what does not constitute a religious as distinct from a secular practice or institution, the decisions in the final analysis are arbitrary and inconsistent⁵.

3. This, of course, is no exaggeration. One famous example that articulated what many of the ruling elites were thinking after the fall of USSR in 1989 was Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, who argued that now that socialism has been proved a failure, then liberal capitalism reveals itself as the final realization of human rationality.

4. Abdulkader Ismail Tayob (in Fitzgerald ed. 2007) has analyzed the different attempts by Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani to reinterpret Islam for modernity in terms of the category 'religion'

5. See Smith, D. E. and Marc Galanter in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.) *Secularism and its Critics*, OUP, 1998, (8th impression 2009).

Something analogous has occurred in the case of Christianity. Few people in medieval and early modern Europe would have thought of Christianity as ‘a religion’. In medieval and early modern Europe (and this may be generally true for most of Europe up until the 1st World War) the texture of mythical narratives, doctrinal beliefs, liturgical and everyday practices which we essentialize retrospectively as ‘religion’ or ‘Christianity’ constituted the individual’s lived experience and knowledge of the world. Christian church-states provided a totalizing worldview. Religion – understood as Christian Truth - was not something which one signed up to by choice, but the reality one was born into.

If the pursuit of capital, profit and self-maximization in the marketplace can be seen as religious practices, then where can we find the non-religious secular? If economics can be classified as religious, then why not politics? By raising such questions, we problematize the distinction between religious and secular domains. This has implications for powerful Anglophone discourses in India, including Nehruvian secularism, the tradition of Indian socialism, Nationalist discourses of Congress or BJP, and the discourse on social justice of Dalits and Bahujan samaj party. It also has implications for written Constitutions, including the one that Dr. Babsaheb Ambedkar helped to produce for the Republic of India.

In modern Anglophone discourse ‘religion’ and ‘politics’ are imagined as distinct domains which, if mixed, result in a dangerously volatile condition. Leaders as various as Dr. Ambedkar, the Dalai Lama and Muslim imams have been accused of ‘using religion for political ends’, as though these are mutually exclusive areas of life which ought not to be confused. In the UK, the Archbishop of Canterbury must be careful not to be seen as entering politics, despite the automatic and unelected presence of Bishops in the House of Lords where they participate in the legislative process. The media police the boundary between moral advice and political interference.

It is commonly said that religion in its pure essence has nothing to do with power or wealth, which are secular domains from which religion should keep separate. Religion is concerned with the other world, with what happens to the soul after this life. Politics and economics are concerned with the real world. Religion is a private matter of personal salvation and should not be confused with public matters of the State which is secular and nonreligious. A further dichotomy is made between religion and science, which are deemed to have different objects, aims and epistemological status. On these simplistic dichotomies, science produces empirical knowledge of the real world in contrast to religion which is based on faith in nonempirical things such as gods and goddesses.

This set of binary oppositions is, in its simplest form, an opposition between religion and the nonreligious secular which inscribes the assumption that secular reason is the rational ground from which all matters including religion can be assessed, judged, controlled, and determined. Yet it is largely arbitrary what actually goes into each category. If, however, we can question and subvert that distinction, what would be the outcome? If, instead of framing ideologies as either religious or secular, we saw them all as competing religions, how would this affect our perceptions? It is in this context that Buddha dhamma appears as an interesting case, for it seems to fit both the religious and the nonreligious secular sides of the binary. Epistemologically one could say that Buddha dhamma challenges the whole binary construction.

The problem with religion and the problem with secularism is not only an Indian problem, even

though it takes a distinct and complex pattern in India; it is a global problem. The problem with the conceptualization of religion and secularism is caused by the ideological illusion that they are two separate categories not one

. When we see religion-secular as one single category, they appear as mirror images of each other, two sides of the same coin, a mutually parasitic binary. The binary separation between religion and secular domains such as the state, politics and economics is itself an ideological process which, arguably, emerged from colonialism and today is continuously promoted by neo-colonial forces⁶. This discourse of separation propagates the assumption that ‘religion’ on the one hand, and political economy and the State on the other (or secular domains generally) are ontologically distinct, have different ends, purposes, structures, and epistemologies, and that the main problem is the relations between these domains. This discourse on separation today appears as an intuitive assumption about reality which is difficult to question. Yet it has a historical genesis and emergence in the late 17th century in English language as a result of a conflict of interests in relation to governance and control of colonies.

I argue that the discursive reproduction of both categories whether in Europe, North America, India, or Japan (or indeed anywhere else) has been symbiotic and joined at the hip. There is no modern category of religion without the modern category of the secular, and the reverse is also true. None of these terms has any essential content, and what constitutes a religious practice, experience or institution, and what constitutes a non-religious practice, experience or institution is a largely arbitrary decision of powerful elites and agencies in academia, the media, the courts and other government agencies and non-governmental lobbies. The instability of these categories is well understood by many writers, especially in India, and one only has to look at the history of court decisions, public debates, and the descriptive and analytical problems which arise in research to be aware of this instability – for example -whether or not caste or untouchability is a religious institution or a secular one, or whether or not Brahmin priests have a right under the freedom of religion laws to deny temple-entry to low castes, or whether or not Buddhism or Islam or Hinduism are religions or cultures or ways of life, and so on.

Dr. Babsaheb Ambedkar and Bahujan Samaj

I will go on to show that Dr. Ambedkar himself used the term religion in at least 4 different ways, and while these different and sometimes contradictory concepts of religion partly reflect the complexity of the Indian situation, they are also typical more widely.

Most saliently, as the chairman of the Constitutional drafting committee Dr. Ambedkar was partly responsible for formalizing the separation of religion from the non-religious secular state, and consequently contributing to the invention of reifications such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Yet his final book Buddha and His Dharma makes Buddhism difficult to distinguish from secular science or from the ideological basis of social democracy. Thus while the Constitution separates religion and politics, Buddha dhamma as a system of egalitarian values and social democracy tends to

6. I do not necessarily mean by ‘neo-colonial forces’ a situation where one nation subdues and controls another in order to protect its own capitalist interests, but also the growth of a global capitalist class which subdues and controls the vast majority in all countries who are without property or capital and who produce surplus value for that global class. Here the nation state is a guardian and manager of the interests of capital.

problematize and even subvert the distinction.

There is a similar ambiguity in the discourse of bahujan samaj iconography and architecture in Lucknow. While the BSP is constitutionally a secular political party its iconographic myth-making evokes a Buddhist government apparatus, for example in the financing of the Mahavihara in Lucknow, the appointment of the senior bikkshu, and the promotion of Buddhist values and practices.

Bahujan discourse is, as Valerian Rodrigues has argued, a distinct and valid body of ideas:

“...dalit bahujan thought...advanced a coherent and wholesome body of political ideas which while engaging centrally with the nature and purpose of public life, markedly differed from mainstream political discourse.” (p3).

This is a lucid proposal with which one might well want to agree. My problem is not with the coherence or validity of bahujan thought but with the use of the term ‘political’. It is certainly about power; but the political domain in modern rhetoric and discourse is conceived as non-religious. Can one separate the religious domain and the non-religious political domain in the first place? It seems to me that one cannot do this in any universally agreed way and I am not sure that Buddhists in power want to do this. It is perhaps a strategic distinction rather than a neutral analytical one.

The rhetorical construction of an essential distinction between religion and politics or religion and economics is not only an Indian problem, though in India the issues have been very much debated. Though the US is a very different country with a different history than India, similar attempts by the US Courts to distinguish between religious and secular practices according to the US Constitution have been fraught with problems⁷. The cases might typically be different – for example, does the use of cannabis by Rastafarians constitute a crime punishable by secular law courts, or a religious practice which is legal under the freedom of religion clause; does Pueblo American Indian dancing have a right to protection as a religious practice; issues of abortion, the teaching of creationism in schools, and the symbolic presence of Christianity in secular courts presumably provide other examples.

The UK has its own problems of separating religion and politics. The present Queen is Head of Church and Head of State, and at her coronation service was anointed with holy oil on the Old Testament precedent, and thus symbolically is both priest and queen. Secular courts, which themselves arguably share many practices and procedures that in a different context are usually attributed to religious institutions, are not only classified constitutionally as secular, but have the responsibility of making decisions about what constitutes a distinctively religious group or practice. And ultimate devotion to the secular nation, whether in UK or any other country, is difficult to distinguish from what we frequently refer to as religion.

My point here is that there are so many indications that religion and the state or religion and politics cannot be clearly distinguished that the wonder is that we continue to rely on these

7. See for example the historical discussions by scholars such as Michael J. Sandel, D. E. Smith, and Marc Galanter in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.) *Secularism and its Critics*, OUP, 1998, (8th impression 2009).

categories for our own descriptions and analyses of our own and others data. Many writers who are well aware of the instability of religion as a category and its distinction from secular domains continue to recycle the problematic categories in their own texts.

The debate between Zaheer Baber, in his Secularism, Communalism and the Intellectuals (2006) and writers such as T.N. Madan, Ashish Nandy and Veena Das is caught in this circular problem. Baber criticizes Madan, Nandy and Das because they attack secularism and secularists on the grounds that the secular is an import from Christian colonization and, while the distinction between religion and secular (or as they sometimes put it sacred and secular⁸) fits Christian countries, it is bad for a traditionally 'religious' country like India. In response, Baber argues that it is only through secular sociology that one can trace with sufficient subtlety the complex relations between religion and secularism. The idea that secularism is itself a cause of conflict is wrong. Baber does not argue that 'religion' is the sole cause of the problem in any mono-causal generalization. He does however, like the scholars he critiques, maintain the circular terms of the debate throughout. By finding the answer to communal conflict in 'religion' or alternatively finding it in 'secularity', the dichotomy, which itself needs deconstructing, is constantly reproduced in a way that beggars a solution.

In contrast to both sides of that debate, I suggest we need to look at the history of these powerful categories and the way they have been transformed in meaning or, in the case of politics and economics, virtually invented in the modern period. That means problematizing the dichotomy itself.

Baber's reliance on the work of Mark Juergensmeyer (47) to support his arguments in fact is part of the problem. Juergensmeyer's work is often cited by IR specialists who have recently been propagating the myth that 'religion' is an irrational and barbaric agent with a tendency to malice and violence which, especially since 9/11, has been intentionally acting to destabilise the rational, peace-loving and only reluctantly violent secular state⁹. Baber accepts uncritically from Juergensmeyer such ideas as the rise of the 'new religious state', and the resurgence of 'religious nationalism' as distinguished from 'secular nationalism', and the claim that religion has a special relation to terrorism¹⁰. He says in the beginning summary of his on-line article "Is Religion the Problem?" (2004)¹¹

"In the rubble following the collapse of the World Trade Center towers in the violent assault of September 11 lies the tawdry remnants of religion's innocence. In those brief horrifying moments our images of religion came of age. Religion was found in bed with terrorism. Whatever bucolic and tranquil notions we may have had were rudely replaced by those that were tough, political, and sometimes violent. Is this the fault of religion? Has its mask been ripped off and its murky side exposed—or has its innocence been abused? Is religion the

8. I have argued elsewhere that it is a mistake to simply identify 'sacred' with 'religion'. Many institutions deemed to be secular are also treated as sacred.

9. see William T. Cavanaugh, 2007, 2009

10. Juergensmeyer's titles include "From Bhindranwale to Bin Laden: The Rise of Religious Violence" (2004); Gandhi's Way: A Handbook of Conflict Resolution, (2002); Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence (2002); The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State, (1994); Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World, (1992)

11.

problem or the victim?”

From Juergensmeyer’s own summary and from the title itself, we can immediately notice a number of tropes which have been widely picked up and repeated by religious studies scholars, social scientists and International Relations experts. There is an unmistakable tendency to talk about religion as though it is a thing or even an agent with an essentially different nature from politics. Is religion a problem or a victim? Religion is innocent and tranquil (or so we imagined it ought to be); religion was found in bed with terrorism; religion wears a mask; behind its mask religion is really not religion at all, but something quite different: it is tough, political and violent; religion has a murky side.

A popular idea among IR experts is that ‘religion’ was sent into exile by the Treaty of Westphalia [1648] but is now returning from exile. We thought religion was dead or dying but it seems to have come back to life. The inescapable impression that is conveyed by these expressions is that religion is something we encounter in the world, something that acts in the world, something with its own autonomous nature, and while we may be mistaken about its real identity, there seems to be no doubt that it has one.

The historical struggle to break or modify the hegemony of the Christian church-state by marginalizing personal piety as *private* religion gave a new meaning to the term ‘religion’. But the same process led simultaneously to the invention of the *non-religious* state and politics. This process may have begun in England and its North American colonies in the late 17th century and I have given arguments for this hypothesis based on reading a range of significant English historical texts and looking for the way these categories have been used at different times¹². This discursive separation is not the separation of already existing domains or institutions because there was no already-existing idea of the non-religious state or politics in England (probably the whole of Christendom) and nor was there a valid idea of multiple ‘religions’ existing in the world. The idea that Christianity is ‘a religion’ (e.g. one among many) would have been difficult to think before the 18th century, and the idea that there exist other non-Christian religions was highly problematic, almost contradictory, and almost always ironic and parodic (see, for example, my analysis of Samuel Purchas [1613]¹³. We are not only talking about the invention of Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam as ‘religions’, but also of Christianity.

Baber, criticizing Madan, says

“...T. N. Madan characterizes secularism as a ‘gift of Christianity’ to argue that while it makes sense in Protestant societies, it simply will not work in presumably religious societies like India. This is apparently so because the ‘Hindu tradition does not provide us with a dualistic view of the kind which Christianity does’ because ‘the Christian distinction between the sacred and secular domains...[has] contributed to the success of the modern ideology [of secularism] in the West” (Baber, 65)

This short passage indicates some of the problems with both sides of this argument. The idea that

12. I do not mean to say that this binary was not invented first elsewhere. This is a matter of evidence.

13. Fitzgerald, Discourse on Civility and Barbarity, OUP, 2007

something as vague as ‘Christianity’ makes an inherent distinction between ‘religion’ and ‘secular’ is in my view a fallacy, and though it makes more sense in the context of Protestantism, this would only be true of those forms of Protestantism which have contributed to the ideological valorization of secular reason.

In his influential article “Secularism in its Place”, Madan gives a short summary of the history of the terms ‘secular’, ‘secularization’, and ‘secularism’:

“The word ‘secularization’ was first used in 1648, at the end of the Thirty Years’ War in Europe, to refer to the transfer of church properties to the exclusive control of the princes. What was a matter-of-fact statement then became later, after the French Revolution, a value statement as well: on 2 November 1789, Talleyrand announced to the French National Assembly that all ecclesiastical goods were at the disposal of the nation, as indeed they should have been. Still later, when Georg Jacob Holyoake coined the term ‘secularism’ in 1851 and led a rationalist movement of protest in England, secularization was built into the ideology of progress.” (Madan in Bhargava 1998:297/8)

There is some truth in this summary of a complex history; however, in the context of his argument as a whole there are some slippages which are widely typical and which have a cumulatively distorting effect. For example, the transfer of church properties to the Princes was not a transfer from the religious to the non-religious in the modern sense of ‘secular’. It was a transfer from one Christian institution to another. If it is true that the Prince was the secular authority, the same term ‘secular’ was widely and primarily used for the Catholic priesthood. This is hardly ‘non-religious’. If the Prince was secular (more usually ‘civil authority’ or magistrate) he was also Christian (Catholic or Lutheran) and presumably could not have been considered non-religious in the modern sense.

Madan insightfully points out that

“...secularism as an ideology has emerged from the dialectic of modern science and Protestantism, not from a simple repudiation of religion and the rise of rationalism...Models of modernization, however, prescribe the transfer of secularism to non-western societies without regard for the character of their religious traditions or for the gifts that these might have to offer.” (308)

From my perspective the problem with this claim is that the classification of traditions as ‘religious’ was the *result* of this process, and consequently we cannot *presupposed* them to have been ‘religious’ traditions. Whether we are talking about Christian Europe or Hindu India, the habit of classifying traditional institutions and practices as ‘religious’ (and thus transforming them into ‘religions’) is itself part of the same ideological development as the idea that nation states and economic markets are non-religious. This binary opposition emerged as the same historical movement.

According to Madan, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam are the main ‘religions’ of south and south east Asia. But this ignores the point (and there is a growing literature on this) that these

essentialized entities are themselves modern inventions¹⁴ which have been imagined by specific classes of people such as Orientalists, colonial administrators, missionaries, and Anglophone Brahminical elites. Since the establishment of the science of religion by Max Muller and others in the mid-19th century the definition of religion has proved increasingly contentious. To see the point one only has to consider the divergence of approaches between, say, Edward Tylor with his emphasis on belief in spirits, Tillich with his definition based on ‘ultimacy’, and Emile Durkheim’s theorization of religion as collective representations. Madan says

“I will not raise here the issue of the definition of religion: suffice it to say that for these people (the peoples of south Asia) their religion establishes their place in society and bestows meaning on their life, more than any other social or cultural factor.” (299)

We may not be able to define ‘religion’, Madan seems to be saying, but we can be sure that the peoples of south Asia have it. How, though, does Madan propose to distinguish between a religious and a nonreligious “social or cultural factor”?

All of these terms have been subject to radical contestation and have become transformed in meaning through historical processes. These processes are also characterized by colonialism, the emergence of capitalism, new concepts of property, global markets, national states, and the ideology of Individualism. My argument here is that all these ideological categories have emerged and been transformed in complex dialectical inter-relation. The master binary is the grand dichotomy between religious and nonreligious institutions and practices.

Part of the problem lies in the idea that secularism derives from something called ‘Christianity’. Arguably, ‘Christianity’ is another modern essentialization on a par with the invention of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, etc. It is itself a retrospective ideological reconstruction and essentialization of the past which in turn consolidates the myth of modernity. Christianity, like other so called religions, are the inventions which make the non-religious secular possible. The non-religious secular appears as the ground of natural reason, of common sense, from which neutral and objective basis the world can be properly ordered. By constituting religions as essentially distinct and different from secular practices and institutions, the secular emerges as the master view of natural reason.

I suggest that the most important of the ideological functions of this binary discourse is to enshrine capital and its liberal and neoliberal theorization in secular reason, and thus, by rhetorically constructing economics and markets as ‘in the nature of things’, to draw attention away from the religion of capital accumulation and the magical enchantment of private property.

When we look at the current conditions of exploitation and poverty that prevail for billions of people around the world, not least the Dalits and Buddhists in India, we can judge how successful this modern myth has been. This does not mean that poverty and exploitation are new for the Dalits. It means that the form of exploitation in Brahminical ideology has been subjected to a long period of transformation, such that traditional exploitative relations within the context of agricultural villages has been giving way to colonial forms of land ownership and the creation of a

14. For one example, Tomoko Masuzawa, The Invention of World Religions (2009)

vast pool of cheap labour for capital¹⁵.

If like me the reader views the religion-secular binary as a necessary part of the ideology of global capitalism, of which the widening gap between rich and poor in most countries is one result, then it cannot do much harm to question it from both sides of the dichotomy. The only solution is to deconstruct these terms in historical context and ask who is using what with which purpose in the pursuit of which interests and what is he or she contesting.

There is a tacit theory of meaning behind my position. Meaning does not derive from the correspondence of individual categories such as 'religion' to something that exists independently in the world. The meanings of these categories is in their use as elements in a total configuration of categories, especially their use by powerful controlling agencies in the constitutions, judicial systems, university faculties, media, and the rhetoric of politicians and business leaders. Binaries such as religion and politics, religion and the state, religion and economics, etc form a mutually parasitic, interdependent discursive system. The distinction between religion and politics has no objective content in nature, and requires hermeneutical agencies like universities and law courts to determine their content.

The question that needs to be asked is, not what is religion? nor what is the secular? but what is the power function of the religion-secular binary imaginary? Why did it get proposed historically in the first place? Why was it represented by a minority of non-Conformists as part of Christian Truth betrayed by the Catholic Church-state? How did it move from being the project of a small minority of late 17th century educated English gentry with interests in Virginia or Pennsylvania or the East India Company to becoming the common sense of everyone today? What sustained the development of this initial idea and its codification in the US and French Constitutions, and later the Indian, Turkish, Japanese and many others; and what is its ideological function in the naturalization of modern institutions and power formations such as capitalism and the nation state?

I accept Edward Said's equation of knowledge with power in his analysis of orientalism¹⁶ but would suggest what he did not seem to notice, which is that the distinction between religion and secular domains is itself fundamental to the construction of orientalist knowledge. The emergence of the nonreligious secular domain in the imagination of specific interest groups since around 1680 in England was as much of a challenge to the English status quo of the time, and through the 18th and well into the 19th centuries, as it has been to the dominant conservative ruling groups in India.

In India there exists a historically long and complex theoretical debate about the proper analysis of Brahmanism as an ideology, the provenance of caste and untouchability, the relation to Congress and nationalist movements, the formation of the Indian State, the Constitution, and so on. Dr. Ambedkar, the Mahar-Buddhists, the history of the Republican party of India, and the flourishing of bahujan samaj discourse in UP today, are all part of that complex modern debate. My own project is concerned not solely with the complex local processes of dominance and exploitation in India but also with the global dimensions of capitalist ideology and the way it intersects and intermeshes (usually in very messy and indeterminate ways) with the Indian and other cases

15. Professor G. Aloysius has powerfully argued this point in Nationalism Without a Nation in India.

16. Edward Said, Orientalism

globally. It could after all be argued that one of the purposes of nationalism and the formation of nation states has been to disguise and divide the common interests of wage labour everywhere, which serves the interests of the small global class who control capital.

Following G. Aloysius¹⁷ I identify Brahmin dominance not as a new invention of colonialism, but as a transformation in its methods and articulation through its dialectical relation with the conditions introduced through colonialism. In both its earlier and modern forms, Brahminism as a dominant ideology has appeared - even to those subject to its power - as inevitable and inherent in the nature of reality. I do not understand the contemporary Brahminical elite in narrow terms as those only who belong strictly-speaking to Brahmin castes, but as a generally high-caste elite who have or are more likely to have a significant relation to capital, private property and the exploitation of wage labour. Brahminism as a class ideology is embraced more widely, even by many who appear to be exploited by it. This Brahminical elite are part of the hegemonic capitalist class who control the world¹⁸ and, arguably, what we mean by colonial or neo-colonial power can no longer anachronistically be analysed as simply the dominance of one country by another, but the growth of a global class of property owners, bankers, industrialists, hedge fund managers, and other elites who control international capital more or less regardless of whether their main residence is in Delhi, Mumbai, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, New York, London, Toronto or Frankfurt.

My interest is to connect the dominant ideological configurations in colonial and postcolonial India to the globalization of Anglo-American capitalist ideology in order to develop a wider lens view. It seems to me that we cannot understand the form of these Indian discursive configurations – whether we refer to Brahmanism, the Congress party movement, Nehru’s secularism, Gandhi’s own form of ideological power, the Hindu nationalism of RSS/BJP/VHP, the social democratic aspirations of Ambedkar and his understanding of Buddha Dhamma, or the longer term trajectory of bahujan samaj - without clarifying their relationship to global capital, though always in dialectical relation to the internal Indian factors.¹⁹

The conditions of the emergence of capitalist markets in Europe, North America and India, while they have different contingent historical circumstances, also share many features which need to be recognised. The process of colonization of India and the transformation of pre-colonial hierarchies into contemporary forms of class exploitation; the process of primitive accumulation and the up-rooting of peasants from the land and subsistence; the development of nationalism; the mystification of private property and control over capital; the widening gap between rich and poor; the assaults – often internationally coordinated - on local solidarities and moral communities²⁰; all these processes in India are global and are historically analogous to the transformation of Europe. The differences are important; but it is also important not to get distracted from a global process

17. G. Aloysius, *Nationalism without a Nation in India*, OUP, 1997

18. For a well-documented appraisal of the exploitation by global capital of millions of disenfranchised men, women and children in fascistic conditions which often are difficult to distinguish from slavery see John Pilger, *The New Rulers of the World*. There was a campaign against bonded labour in parts of Marathawada when I was there in the early 1990’s.

19. Mahesh Gavaskar, in “Colonialism Within Colonialism: Phule’s Critique of Brahmin Power” (in S. M. Michael, 1999), and Gail Omvedt in “Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society” (1976; also Michael, 1999) have also done important work on these connections.

20. For a well-referenced account of the state supported interventions of the “Chicago Boys”, see Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, Penguin, 2007.

which systematically dissolves all social solidarities and moral communities which stand in the way of 'markets' and capital interest.

The modern discourse on religion and secular domains, such as the rhetorical separation of religion and politics or religion and the secular state, cannot be separated from the globalization of capitalist ideology. Arguments about what constitutes a religious as distinct from a secular practice are important features of the arguments of theorists of Congress, Hindutva and Dr. Ambedkar. The very real contestations of power in India over the form and constitution of the modern nation state, the causes of communal conflict and its solution, the collective identity of the Indian people, have often been characterized by disagreements on the meaning of religion and secular. These terms and their deployment represent conflicting power interests, drawing attention to their rhetorical production rather than their correspondence with independently existing facts. 'Religion', like other modern imaginaries such as the secular state or self-equilibrating markets, is not derived from empirical observation of objectively existing phenomena but is a powerful myth, a rhetorical construct, an ideological invention. Why not call it a globalizing missionary religion?

MARX AND PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

The conceptual separation of religion and secular domains such as politics and economics is a necessary ideological basis for modern global capitalism and its various myths, such as the general progress and liberation of human kind through technology, private property and material consumption. This utopian future goal of generalized prosperity through the 'discovery' of global markets requires what Marx referred to as primitive accumulation.

It is generally known that Adam Smith shared with many intellectuals of his time – and many still today – a belief in the natural and inevitable progress of human rationality through stages of development (Smith, 1776). As societies develop to a higher stage of production and complexity, then people begin to enter the market as 'free' agents who maximize their own rational interests. But this raises a problem of historical transition from the earlier Feudal stage of inherited rights over land – a stage which also included variable degrees of independent self-subsistence - to the 'higher' stage of free and rational participation in capitalist markets. James M. Buchanan, who was awarded the 1986 Nobel Prize in economics, expresses the view that markets are "spontaneous" and as such they are "discovered":

"The great scientific discovery of the eighteenth century was that of the spontaneous coordination properties of the market economy. If persons are left to act in their own interests, whatever these may be, within a legal framework of private property and contract... the wealth of a nation will be maximally enhanced, if this wealth is defined in terms of the evaluations that individuals, themselves, place on goods and services. The market economy is, in this sense, "efficient," but more importantly, because the market, in its totally decentralized fashion, carries out the allocative-distributive function, any need for collectivized or politicized management of the economy is obviated. The "natural" proclivity of the scientifically uninformed is to think that, in the absence of management, chaos must result. The task of economic science, or more appropriately, of political economy, became, and remains after more than two centuries, one of conveying the general understanding of the coordinating properties of markets in increasingly complex institutional reality.

“This central idea of "order without design," or consequences that are not within the intent or choices of any person or group, was indeed a discovery of momentous proportion, and, in retrospect, we should be able to appreciate the genuine excitement that was shared by the classical political economists” (Buchanan, 1986²¹)

The idea of the ‘scientific discovery of markets’ is part of the myth which naturalizes markets and rhetorically obscures their origins. It is an attribute of the art of rhetoric to forget historical origins of contested ideas and practices and to re-represent them as natural, in the order of common sense and natural reason, or in the eternal order of things, and thus as unchallengeable. In this way acts of faith in metaphysical entities such as self-regulating markets and self-maximizing individuals appear like common sense inductions from everyday experience. Yet it has been argued by W. C. Waterman²² and others that the idea of ‘order without design’ and ‘spontaneous coordination’ were derived from debates within Christian moral theology: how, given all the myriad individual acts of cupidity which should tear society apart, does the providential ordering of the world survive? That is, order without apparent design, yet God’s providence acts as ‘the hidden hand’ to bring things to equilibrium and ‘spontaneous coordination’. In the so-called science of economics the hidden hand has been attributed to Nature rather than God.

The notion that markets have spontaneous properties which were ‘discovered’ may turn out to be a rather over-simplified and perhaps even mystified view of the origins of modern capitalism. For one thing, it seems to ignore the violence which has accompanied the propagation of the doctrine of free markets. One of the key ideas in Marx’s critique of political economy concerned the processes of primitive accumulation, which was necessary for the creation of wage labour and surplus profit. According to the Marxist economist Michael Perelman²³, Marx argued that the origins of ‘free markets’ was not ‘free’ at all but required the intervention, often violent and deliberate, of a sustained series of measures that benefited powerful groups and individuals at the expense of vulnerable people. Perelman has argued that

“To make sure that people accepted wage labor, the classical political economists actively advocated measures to deprive people of their traditional means of support. The brutal acts associated with the process of stripping the majority of the people of the means of producing for themselves might seem far removed from the laissez-faire reputation of classical political economy. In reality, the dispossession of the majority of small-scale producers and the construction of laissez-faire are closely connected, so much so that Marx, or at least his translators, labeled this expropriation of the masses as "primitive accumulation.”” (Perelman, 2000, p1).

Perelman produces considerable evidence that most of the early classical political economists

“...strongly advocated policies that furthered the process of primitive accumulation, often through subterfuge. While energetically promoting their laissez-faire ideology, they championed time and time again policies that flew in the face of their laissez-faire principles,

21. Buchanan, 1986

22. W. C. Waterman, 2008

23. Michael Perelman, 2001.

especially their analysis of the role of small-scale, rural producers... (T)he underlying development strategy of the classical political economists was consistent with a crude proto-Marxian model of primitive accumulation, which concluded that nonmarket forces might be required to speed up the process of capitalist assimilation in the countryside. This model also explains why most of the classical political economists expressed positions diametrically opposed to the theories usually credited to them...classical political economy advocated restricting the viability of traditional occupations in the countryside to coerce people to work for wages.” (p2/3)

The classical political economists showed a “keen interest in driving rural workers from the countryside and into factories, compelling workers to do the bidding of those who would like to employ them, and eradicating any sign of sloth.”

Perelman’s argument is supported by David Harvey, an expert on Marx’s *Capital*²⁴. Harvey, like Perelman, also argues that primitive accumulation, which put simply is the on-going expropriation of the people’s means of subsistence through the forced abolition of traditional rights to land-use or the practice of a traditional craft, whereby they are forcibly transformed into wage labour, should not be thought of only as the initial phase for the establishment of capital markets which, once established, then tend to proceed according to their own logic. Primitive accumulation is an on-going process occurring continually throughout the world. Hegemonic global capital establishes itself through colonialism and neo-colonialism. Apologists for capitalism appeal to mythical constructs such as rational self-maximizing individuals and self-regulating markets as though these are natural truths about the world in line with secular scientific reason. Everything else is primitive irrationality or, more politely, religion or tradition, which need to be removed into a separate classificatory basket so that supposedly natural realities like unrestricted markets and ‘free trade’ can flourish. This legitimates the rhetorical and constitutional separation of religious and secular domains. The poor, landless peasants of India, freed from the ‘irrational’ ties of village hierarchy and traditional or pre-modern modes of production, are ‘liberated’ to provide one vast supply of wage labour for global capital.

There is no doubt that Dalits increasingly and rightly seek liberation from village servility and the hardships of self-subsistence. Dr. Ambedkar expressed his hatred of traditional village life. “What pride can one feel in them?” he asks referring to the traditional village communities

“That they have survived through all vicissitudes is a fact. But mere survival has no value. The question is on what plane they have survived. Surely on a low, on a selfish plane. I hold that these village republics have been the ruination of India...What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism?” (“On Draft Constitution” in Bhagwan Das, 2002:173)

As Gail Omvedt rightly argues, there is nothing romantic about such apparently eco-friendly lifestyle²⁵. It seems difficult to avoid the logic of accepting the positive, liberationist aspects of capitalism and at the same time organizing and agitating for a social democratic parliamentary

24. David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx’s Capital*, (Verso, 2010)

25. Gail Omvedt, “Liberty, Equality, Community: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s Vision of a New Social Order”, in Nandu Ram (ed.) *Ambedkar, Dalits and Buddhism*, New Delhi: Manak Publications, pp79-105.

system and protective social security systems. Dr. Ambedkar strongly defended parliamentary style of democracy. On the other hand Dr. Ambedkar clearly saw the limitations of parliamentary democracy when it is not underwritten by economic democracy. Putting his critical finger on “the idea of freedom of contract” Ambedkar says

“...in general terms...the discontent against parliamentary democracy is due to the realization that it has failed to assure the masses the right to liberty, property or the pursuit of happiness...Of the erroneous ideologies which have been responsible for the failure of parliamentary democracy, I have no doubt that the idea of freedom of contract is one of them...The second wrong ideology which has vitiated parliamentary democracy is the failure to realize that political democracy cannot succeed where there is no social and economic democracy.” (in Nandu Ram, p39)

My own purpose is to argue that the logic of capital, especially as it is theorized in neoliberalism, inevitably strips away the security systems whereby left-of-centre governments in social democracies have attempted to ameliorate the worst aspects of wage labour. Neoliberalism directly and aggressively tries to destroy all unionized collective resistance to the interests of capital. While transition from village exploitation to commodified wage labour may have advantages, the logic of capital accumulation is pursued globally with a zeal which would put all previous doctrines of rational enlightenment in the dark.

My argument is that the invention of ‘religions’ has the ideological function of inscribing this rapacious ideology as natural reason and secular scientific commonsense, as though one should accept it as one would accept any other force of nature. In this way the close similarity between capitalism and ‘religious’ movements is disguised, lending an appearance of natural inevitability to the primacy of economic interests.

I am concerned with Ambedkar’s positioning in this regard, and the degree to which his understanding of Buddha Dhamma and the subsequent bahunjan samaj discourse developed by Kanshi Ram and Ms Mayawati represent a challenge, not only to brahmanical ideology, but to the ideology of the binary itself and its contribution to the processes of exploitation by global capital.

Is the inscription of the Brahminical in the Indian body politic (to borrow the title of G. Aloysius’s book²⁶) also the inscription of globalizing capitalist ideology in the Indian body-politic? Can we see brahminism as the specific Indian bridgehead for the naturalization and mystification of global capital? This in turn forms part of a larger issue concerning the relation between Indian colonization and capitalism. I am not merely arguing that the establishment of capitalist markets and the policing of the corresponding class divisions has depended on the historical processes of colonization, though in general this is surely true.

Valerian Rodrigues is surely right to insist on the distinctiveness of bahunjan thought. I do not intend to conflate Ambedkar’s liberationist writings on social democracy with other different positions as represented by Congress, by the Communists, or by the Hindu nationalists. However, Ambedkar’s own formulations have been inscribed in the body-politic at the level of the

26. G. Aloysius, The Brahminical in the Indian body-politic

Constitution, as well as through the wide influence of his writings, his personal courage and leadership, and the power of the various movements which attest to his name. Is not Ambedkar's liberation philosophy in many ways a demand for a kind of social democracy which always at best represented a compromise with capitalism, much like British Labour, but which has been under sustained attack from neoliberalism since the 1970's? A modern nation state with a written Constitution, a social democracy with a mixed economy of entrepreneurial individuals, nationalization of key industries, a large middle class, workers' rights, representative democracy, and a social security system? And isn't his interpretation of Buddha dhamma quite highly consistent with modern scientific materialism?

Professor Aloysius, (1997; 2010) has argued that Brahmanism is a dominant ideology that has been constructed through the processes of colonial power from older elements of hierarchical ideology first into an orientalist essentialization of varna and jati and beyond into a modern legitimation of class exploitation. This distinctively modern discourse on Brahmanism is one which permeates and mystifies the society well beyond the Brahmin castes, as one would expect of a dominant ideology, and thus acts to mystify those who are vulnerable to exploitation as well those who stand to gain.

THE CATEGORY 'RELIGION' IN DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S WRITINGS

In Annihilation of Caste Ambedkar identified Brahmanism as a form of consciousness which he referred to as the Religion of Rules as distinct from what he called the Religion of Principles. By 'religion of rules' he meant caste hierarchy and the ideology of Brahminism. By 'religion of principles' he referred most directly to the values of equality, liberty and fraternity which we associate especially with the French revolution. Ambedkar also referred to the latter as "true religion". He thus seems to valorize secular faith (the religion of principles) over religious faith (the religion of rules). Principles and values which underlie democracy are universal and typically classified as secular rather than religious, yet at the same time they are sacred - as sacred to those who hold them, live by them and die for them, as the sacred values underlying the Manu Smriti have been to the Brahminical castes. True religion is the religion of the individual in cooperation with his or her fellow men and women to liberate their communities from exploitation and to subvert and destroy the religion of rules i.e. Brahmanism. Ambedkar seems to be deliberately destabilizing these categories. The religion of principles is the only just basis for civil government, and entails a commitment to social justice and democracy. In the Constitution democracy and civil society are defined as secular. Is the religion of principles different from a religion of secularity?

Near the end of Annihilation of Caste in a footnote, Ambedkar suggested that the values of true religion can be found in the Upanishads with the renouncer, though he doesn't pursue this suggestion there. But this identification seems to give us an additional use of 'religion' which does not fit either the religion of rules (caste) or the religion of principles (which today widely define the secular). It does, however, suggest his search for an indigenous Indian system of democracy that bears witness to universal values. After all, if liberty, equality and fraternity are universal values, then why should they only turn up in Europe or North America?

If the true religion of the principles of social justice are the basis for civil society, and the freedom of the individual from the coercions of Brahminical ideology is a constitutive principle, then this implies the freedom to choose one's religion. This seems logical but strange or ironic: that freedom of religion is itself a religious principle, that is, integral to the religion of principles. True religion

(defined by commitment to such values of equality, liberty and fraternity) makes possible a secular society in which religion becomes a matter of personal commitment and choice.

The category 'religion' is operating here in strange ways. In this latter idea of religion as personal choice we have yet another concept of religion and religions. Religions are multiple, reified, distinct bundles of attributes and we can choose the one we feel most committed to, as in a consumer market. This idea that there are multiple religions available to choose from freely is expressed in The Buddha and the Future of His Religion (1950), where he does a comparative analysis of the rationality and ethical principles of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Buddhism comes out as the best religion ironically because it is the most scientifically rational, as well as the most concerned with compassion and release from the prison of Brahmanism. Yet the principle of individual choice in a free society between different religions guaranteed by a secular Constitution is itself the most fundamental *religious* principle. Presumably this is the thinking that lies behind the Republican Constitution and its problematic separation of religion and the secular Indian state. We could surely say that the Constitution and the Indian nation state are sacred. But is such devotion a case of secular or religious devotion? Could we say that secular courts of law, in their interpretations of the Constitution, are not essentially different from priests and theologians interpreting the Bible, or Brahmins interpreting the Laws of Manu, or economists reading the signs of market behaviour [rather as astrologers read the planets]?

It seems to me that a lot of the confusions generated by this recycling of problematic and unclear categories could be avoided by removing them from one's text except in the sense that one is questioning their provenance and their discursive deployment. If Babasaheb Ambedkar (if all of us) were to offer a choice, not between different religions, or between religion and secular politics, but between different competing ideologies, value systems and practices, then he (and we) would have had to rethink the whole purpose of Constitutions and the construction of a nation state. Ambedkar's position was not that of the disengaged academic, even though he was himself a brilliant academic, but of the leader of a vast number of people who lived and still live in poverty and exploitation. He was compelled to action. However, if corporate capitalism is the global source of wealth and prestige for the ruling classes of all states today, and if – as I am claiming – the modern invention of the religion-secular binary was a significant part of the ideological machinery for making capitalist markets seem in tune with natural reason (thus anything that stands in the way can be classified as irrational religion or tradition); then the Indian Constitution appears not only as a charter of rights (which of course it is) but also (unintentionally) as part of globalizing liberal capitalist ideology.

If the principles enunciated in Annihilation of Caste as the basis for social justice and democracy were derived in the first place from the French Revolution, we can see the ambiguity of the distinction between religion and the non-religious secular in the observations of Alexis de Tocqueville that the French Revolution had “many aspects of a religious revolution” and his characterization of secular nationalism as the “strange religion” that has “overrun the world with its apostles, militants, and martyrs” (quoted in Baber p48).

It seems that right at the heart of the modernization process of which the French Revolution was such a significant part there lies this instability of categories. How much more likely that ancient theorised practices such as Buddha Dhamma will resist this reification as a religion as distinct

from politics and other modern secular domains²⁷. Buddha, like Marx and Ambedkar himself, took the concrete facts of suffering and oppression as his starting point. Arguably Buddha's philosophy implies a radical epistemological challenge to the objectification of knowledge typical of positivism and modernity.

There is thus an apparent paradox. In Ambedkar's writing Buddhism becomes identical with sacred principles underlying a rational, moral, democratic India; and at the same time becomes the most rational personal commitment of the individual guaranteed by the Constitutional provision of religious freedom. D. C. Ahir, Eleanor Zelliot and others have shown that as early as 1935 Dr. Ambedkar had indicated an interest in converting to Buddhism²⁸, but as is well-known he finally took *diksha* in 1956 after he had finished his work on the Constitution and had retired as India's first Law Minister. In his posthumously published *The Buddha and his Dhamma* (1957) liberation (*mukti*, *moksha*) is not merely an individual enlightenment, but in the first place a collective liberation from institutionalized oppression. It is in modern jargon both religious and political, and the goal of a rational movement for social justice will require various objectives, including mass rallies, political parties, representative democracy, perhaps separate electorates, schools and universities open to all, and various practices connected to temples such as puja, meditation, women's groups, before the freedom of the individual from caste exploitation can be achieved. Dr. Ambedkar transforms the attainment of *nirvana* and *prajna* into the realization of scientific rationality and social democracy. *Karuna* means the love of fellow humans and the work for social justice; a *bhikshu* should not be merely an ascetic striving for personal enlightenment but a social worker dedicated to the betterment of human welfare.

In earlier papers published in the 1990's I argued that Dr. Ambedkar's usages of the category religion cover so much as to make it problematic as a descriptive and analytical category. So many things are describable as religion or religious that it is difficult to find any clear and distinctive meaning for the term. If Buddhism is a religion, and if Buddha dhamma is essentially scientific, then we cannot easily distinguish between religion and science. And why should we? Scientists pursue truth in their own way with religious attention to detail. Is science therefore a religion? The notion that science is a religion has been explored in various books with titles that deliberately appeal to the counter-intuitive such as Robert Nelson, *Economics as Religion*; Mary Midgeley, *Evolution as religion*; andthe *Religion of Technology*. If faith in evolutionary biology, in technology, or in the science of economics is (as these authors would seem to argue) not *essentially* different from 'religious' faith, then can we identify any truly secular non-religious practices? We might also consider further cases: Why should we classify yoga and meditation in the same

27. I think there is a crucially ambiguous point here which affects how we understand Dr. Ambedkar himself and how we understand practitioners of 'buddha dharma' more widely. See for example, Joseph Loss, "Buddha-Dhamma in Israel: Explicit Non-Religious and Implicit Non-Secular Localization of Religion" in *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Volume 13, Issue 4, 84–105, 2010. Israeli practitioners of Buddha Dhamma explicitly distinguish 'buddha dhamma' from the 'Buddhist religion'. Of the groups which he researched Loss says "Those who say that they practice Dhamma distinguish between Buddhism as a religion and Dhamma as not religious. Those who say they practice Buddhism refer to Buddhism as not religious." (p85). This chimes with what many Asian 'Buddhists' have told me over the years, that 'Buddhism is not a religion but a way of life'. Also relevant here is an interview conducted by the journal *Buddha Dharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly* (Spring issue, 2003) with Goenka, the famous teacher of Vipassana meditation, on why he is not a Buddhist, even though he attributes the meditation to Gotama Buddha, and why meditation is a science of observation. See

http://www.thebuddhadharma.com/issues/2003/spring/goenka_pure_attention.html

28. For instance D. C. Ahir, *Buddhism in Modern India*, Sri Sat Guru Publications, Delhi, 1991; Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on Ambedkar Movement*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1992.

‘religious’ category as the doctrine of the Trinity, Australian aboriginal Dreamtime, the Japanese tea ceremony, or Zande belief in witches and the predictive power of chicken entrails? What is the purpose of a category like ‘religion’ then? Arguably yoga and meditation are look-and-see practices, and though there are speculative metaphysical texts associated with those traditions, they may have more in common with empirical research. Yet concepts underlying the science of economics require faith in unobservable and unpredictable postulates that might bring that distinguished discipline closer conceptually to Zande magic. If religious values are held to encompass caste society in Brahminical ideology, then which aspects of such a society are non-religious? If the values of social democracy including the rights of individuals are true religious principles, then how can we identify the non-religious in a supposedly secular society?

These kinds of problems of conceptualizing ‘religion’ in a meaningful way are all implicated by the globalizing family of Anglophone discourses on religion, religions and secular state and politics, and their institution in national Constitutions in many countries.

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Minorities and Social Exclusion in Asia: Reflection on Problems and Solution in a Comparative Framework

Sukhadeo THORAT

Introduction

Inter-social group's disparities associated with group identity such as race, religion, ethnicity, gender and national or social origins prevails in many nations under diverse social, economic, and political systems. Inter- social groups disparities, among other reasons, are attributed to social exclusion and discrimination from which these communities suffers. Governments in these countries recognized the adverse consequences of social exclusion and discrimination on the human development of these excluded communities. In order to correct the imbalances in access to income earning assets, employment, education and civil rights between sub-groups in their populations, countries have developed legal safeguards against discrimination and also affirmative action policies for their economic and social development and equal participation in governance. The special policies have been used for communities and groups suffered from exclusion in various countries in Asia which include India, Japan, China, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Philippines, to name a few.

These papers discusses the problems of the social groups and communities which suffered from social exclusion in one form or another and suffered from low human development in selected countries in Asia. The Indian Institute of Dalit, Delhi had undertaken research projects in the ten countries, namely India, Japan, China, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Philippines. This paper is based on the finding of these country studies. The problem of the social groups in each of these countries varies in some respect, but also there are similarities among them. There is a common thread that runs through these groups in two respects. First is that they suffered from low achievement in human development compared with rest of the majority group. Secondly beside many other reasons, social exclusion and discrimination associated with their group identity (such as social origin /cultural/ethnic /religious /language/ indigenous origin), also caused low human development among them.

Based on the findings of these ten country studies we discuss the problem of social groups in these countries, and discussed the policies. Before we do this we first discuss the theoretical framework in which the problem of these social groups could be placed. In this context we discuss the concept of social exclusion, their consequences and remedies against discrimination and inequalities, drawing mainly from the current theoretical literature on this theme.

Concept of Social Exclusion - Unfair Exclusion and Unfair Inclusion

Developments in social science literature enable us to understand the meanings and manifestations of the concept of social exclusion, and its applicability to various groups in Asian countries. Social Exclusion is defined as social process which involved denial of rights and

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opportunities to certain social groups, which other enjoys, resulting in to inability of individuals from excluded groups to participate in basic political, economic and social functioning of the society, resulting in to high human poverty and deprivation among them. The concept of social exclusion is essentially group concept. Sen brought more clarity on the general concept of social exclusion by drawing distinction between “unfair exclusion” and “unfair inclusion”. Sens’ concept of unfair exclusion and unfair inclusion implies that not all exclusions are unfair or not all inclusion fair.

At a theoretical level it is possible to argue that, all exclusions may not be unfair in nature. It is only those exclusions which exclude certain groups from having an access and entitlement that are not based on the recognized and accepted principles, rules, norms of fairness can be considered as “unfair exclusion. Similarly not all inclusion are unfair – only those inclusions which provide access and entitlement to persons from certain social groups but on different terms and condition – different from that of the accepted principles, rules, norms of fair inclusion (as well as different than used for other persons) may be of unfair type. Sens’ concept of unfair inclusion is similar to the concept of discrimination which is used in the social sciences literature particularly in the discipline of economic in the form of market discrimination.

Two other dimensions involving the notion of exclusion needs to be recognized, that, it involve “societal institutions” of exclusion (which operate through inter relations) and their “outcome” in terms of deprivation. In order to understand the dimensions of exclusion, it is necessary to understand the societal relations and institutions which bring exclusion of certain groups in multiple spheres – civil, cultural, political and economic. Thus in dealing with the issue of social exclusion, insights into the societal processes (rules and customs governing social relations) is as important as the outcome in terms of deprivation for groups which faced exclusion.

Second points relates to distinctions between individual exclusion and group exclusion. The concept of social exclusion clearly draws distinction between group exclusion from that of exclusion of an individual (Thorat, 2009). In case of “group exclusion”, all persons belonging to a particular social/cultural group are excluded, due to their group identity and not due to their individual attributes. Exclusion of an “individual” is fundamentally different from that of exclusion of a “social group”. Individuals (both from excluded and non-excluded group) often get excluded from access to economic and social opportunities for various reasons specific to them (and not because of their group social /cultural identity). For instance, individuals may be excluded from employment due to lack of requisite education and skills. Individuals may face exclusion in access to education due to lack of minimum qualification and merit or their inability to pay for costly education. Individual may get excluded from access to input and consumer markets due to lack of income and purchasing power. On the other hand in case of the exclusion of a social group, variables associated with social and cultural identities such as social origin like caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, color and race become important, and results in to exclusion of all persons belonging to a specific social group, irrespective of their merit and individual economic status.

This feature of social exclusion has important implication, particularly for the purposes of developing policies against social exclusion and discrimination. While in the case of “individual exclusion”, pro-poor policies be necessarily focus on enhancement of individual capabilities and entitlement to sources of income, in case of “group exclusion”, the focus of policy measures will

have to be on the group as a whole, since the basis of exclusion is social/cultural group and not individual.

Mainstream economic literature throws more light on discrimination that works through markets and develops the concept of market discrimination with some analytical clarity (Baker Gary 1956). In the market discrimination framework, exclusion may operate through restrictions on entry into the market, and/or through “selective inclusion”, but with unequal treatment in market and non-market transactions (this is close to Sen’s concept of unfavorable inclusion).

Remedies against discrimination and inter-groups inequalities –Insights from theoretical literature

Reducing discrimination is essential because it is likely to reduce poverty and inequality between groups and also reduce the potential for conflict to which inequality between groups may give rise. Conclusions regarding the consequences of market discrimination on economic growth and income distribution are derived from the main stream economic theory. The same theory also predicts that, in highly competitive markets, discrimination will prove to be a transitory phenomenon as there are costs associated with market discrimination to the firm/employer which results in lowering the profits. Firms /employers, who indulge in discrimination, face the ultimate sanction imposed by the markets. This theoretical perspective thus sees the resulting erosion of profits as a self-correcting dimension of discrimination.

The free market solution is not however final and practical remedy as for number of reasons market discrimination particularly the labour market discrimination might persist over long periods with or without prevalence of free market situation. First, not all markets are highly competitive. The persistence over decades of labour market discrimination in high income countries attests to that. Indeed in developing countries, monopoly power is quite significant which enable them to indulge in market discrimination. Second even if competition in all markets exists it is not a sufficient condition for the elimination of discrimination. The market discrimination in competitive market situation will still prevail if all the employers are discriminators. Therefore, discrimination will still continue. Thirdly, the discriminated worker may not have an opportunity to prove their productivity potential and therefore discrimination will still persists.

The limitation of the competitive market as solution are summarized by Shulmen and Darity,

“The analytical stance of the main stream neo-classical economists is characterized as methodological individualism and it presumes that economic institutions are structured such that society-wide outcomes result from an aggregation of individual behaviours. It presumed that if individuals act on the basis of pecuniary self-interest then market dynamics dictate equal treatment for equal individuals regardless of inscriptive characteristics such as race. Consequently, observed group inequality is attributed to familial, educational, or other background differences among individuals who are unevenly distributed between social groups. The causes of a dissimilar distribution of individuals between social groups may be genetic, cultural, historical, or some combination thereof. The differences in cultural attributes include the value families and neighbourhoods place on education, attitudes, and work habits. The historical refers primarily to the impact of past discrimination on current inequality., In contrast, economists who may be classified as methodological structuralism do not accept this

interpretation. Structuralism as an analytical method holds that aggregate outcomes are not the result of a simple summation of individual behaviours, but rather arise from the constraints and incentives imposed by organizational and social hierarchies. In this view, individual behaviour achieves its importance within the context of group formation, cooperation, and conflict. Economic and political outcomes are thus a function of the hegemony exercised by dominant groups, the resistance offered by subordinate groups, and the institutions that mediate their relationship. Discrimination, in this view, is an inherent feature of economic system. Competition is either not powerful enough to offset the group dynamics of identity and interest, or it actually operates so as to sustain discriminatory behaviours. --- Discrimination is due to the dynamics of group identification, competition, and conflict rather than irrational, individual attitudes. Market mechanisms, far from being relied upon to eliminate discrimination of their own accord, must be scrutinized and pressured to further the goal of equality of opportunity”.

The policy implications of this view on persistence of discrimination are obvious. Since the markets will continue to operate in imperfect manner the discrimination will persist. It will also persist even if market forces are competitive in nature under certain condition mentioned above, it therefore call for intervention in the form of legal safeguard and fair/equal access affirmative action policies and other measures. The state interventions in the form of equal opportunity policy are required in various markets like land, labour, capital, produce, consumer and social services such as education, and housing as the discriminated groups face discrimination in exchange carried through market and non market channels.

Minorities Groups in Asian Context

In Asia, social and minorities are mainly identified on the basis of social origin such as caste, ethnicity, religion indigenouness and similar characteristics of the groups and the economic and social status. In India, Bangladesh, and Nepal, social groups are identified on the basis of social origin like caste and ethnic background, while in China, Japan, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, the criterion for identification is ethnicity. In China, the norms classify groups as ethnic minorities and in Malaysia and Sri Lanka they are classified as ethnic majorities. In Pakistan, however, two-sets of criterion used are ethnicity and regional backwardness. In countries like Pakistan territorial location or region remains the primary indicator for implementation of affirmative action policies. Religion as a factor is also considered in countries such as India for identification minorities for group focus policies. In China ethnicity also in some regions coincide with religious concentration.

Social Origin as the basis of Identification of discriminated groups

In Bangladesh and Nepal social groups are identified on the basis of social origin. In Bangladesh where Muslims represent 89.6 per cent majority and non-Muslims constitute the remaining 10.4 per cent of Bangladesh population (BBS Report on Sample Vital Registration System 2003 published in February 2006), Hindus are the dominant groups with a population of about 10 per cent and Buddhist and Christians constitute less than 1 per cent of the Bangladeshi population (Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 2001). Dalits in Bangladesh are largely identified with their traditional occupations such as fishermen, sweeper, barber, washer men, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, cobblers and oil-pressers irrespective of their religion. Though the estimation of numerical strength of Dalits in Bangladesh vary from one source to another; it is however approximated that 3.5

million (Daily Jugantor 24/4/2006), 5.5 million (with about 45 diverse forms) Dalit communities are associated with their professions and castes (IDSN, BDHR, 2006). Dalits in Bangladesh are largely identified with their traditional occupations such as fishermen, sweeper, barber, washer men, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, cobblers and oil-pressers. On the basis of the economic engagements of the people, the percentage of Dalits (fisher men, weaver, blacksmith, potters, and goldsmith) is 1.11 per cent (BBS 2003 published in February 2006). Noticeably, 1 per cent of the total population of Bangladesh is Harijons (Akhteruzzaman; Haque; and Bashfire 2006). The number of Bedays (Muslim river gypsy) as per the estimation is about 1.5 million (Maksud 2006) which it is argued is only 0.4 million (Rahnuma and Chowdhury 2003).

In Nepal, Dalit population comprises of 12.8 per cent of the total 22.3 million population of Nepal (Census 2001). In 1854 the National or Civil Code was formulated and issued by the Prime Minister, Junga Bahadur Rana which divided the Nepalese population into four-fold caste hierarchy: (1) Tagaddhari (Sacred thread wearing or Twice-born), including the Bahun-Chhetris; (2) Matawali (Liquor drinking, i.e. indigenous peoples); (3) Pani nachalne choi chhito halnu naparne (Castes from whom water is not acceptable and contact with whom does not require purification by sprinkling of water); and (4) Pani nachalne choi chito halnu parne (Castes from whom water is not acceptable and contact with whom requires purification by sprinkling of water), including Sarki, Damai, Kami, Gaine, Sunar, Badibhad, Cunara, Pode, Hurke and Cyamakhalak (Macdonald 1984:282). These distinctions categorized the communities according to social hierarchy that led to the practice of caste-based untouchability and discrimination against Dalits widely common on everyday basis.

Ethnicity as the basis of Identification of discriminated groups

In China, Japan, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, the criterion for identification is ethnicity.

In China, there are totally 56 nationalities, 55 of them are ethnic minorities (105 million). While the Han ethnic group has the largest population, the other 55 ethnic groups are relatively small, so they are customarily referred to as “ethnic minorities”. According to the fifth national census, conducted in 2000, the population of Han accounted 91.59% of the total population of China, and 8.41% for ethnic minorities. From the distribution of population, Han nationality mainly live together in Yellow River valley, Yangtze River valley, Pearl River valley, and Songliao Plain, while the ethnic minorities are mainly concentrated in the Western area of China, i.e., Northeast, Northwest, Southwest, and Southwest. Hui with a numerical strength of 8,602,978, is one of the largest ethnic minorities in population in China, is mainly concentrated in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, as well as Gansu, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Hebei, Henan, Yunnan, and Shandong.

In Japan, minorities are identified on the basis of social origin (Burakumin) and ethnicity (Ainu). In this paper we will review the minority group of Burakumin which is the largest minority group in Japan, estimated to number 3 million means ‘people of the hamlet’, and according to one popular theory of their origin, they were the outcasts under the feudal system during Tokugawa regime (1603-1867). This feudal system had five classes: the samurai (warriors), farmers, artisan-craftsmen, merchants and the outcasts-known as eta and hinin, now called burakumin. People could be relegated to the status of outcasts by committing a crime or violating society’s regulation. The *senmin* (humble people) who were called *eta* (extreme filth) and *hinin* (non-human) were placed at the bottom of this system. The eta were assigned duties such as disposing of dead cattle, leather production, being security guards and sweeping, while the hinin made their living as

executioners and performers. Another theory to explain the origins of the outcaste status is based on religious practice and occupations perceived as polluted. In the early Heian Period (794-1185) in Japan, the coexistence of Shinto and Buddhism caused their teachings to mix. Buddhist teaching of compassion for all living things led to the government decree prohibiting the slaughtering of animals and Shintoism placed emphasis on purity and cleanliness. Together these teachings gave religious impetus and justification for discrimination against people who were engaged in essential tasks of handling the deceased and disposing of animals. These people defined as 'outcasts' were considered polluted and they were prohibited from participating in religious rites. The word *burakumin* is used to describe descendants of outcaste communities in feudal Japan, most of them worked in occupations relating to death, such as executioners, undertakers or leather workers. Severe social stigma was attached to these occupations, influenced by Buddhist prohibitions against killing and Shinto notions of *kegare* ("taint"). The origin of their discrimination is unclear, with many explanations being offered ranging from assertions of social superiority to occupational characterization encouraged by religious beliefs. The Japanese government currently acknowledges only 1.2 million *buraku* residents living in 4,603 *buraku*.

In Malaysia, the typical representation of multi-ethnic society of Malaysia comprising three main ethnic groups are Malays, Chinese and Indians. In ethnic terms, the present Malaysian population consists of different communities, several of which lend themselves to other subdivisions. The *bumiputera* of Peninsular Malaysia consists almost entirely of Malays and *Orang Asli* (aboriginal communities), while the *bumiputera* of Sabah and Sarawak refer to the indigenous people of diverse ethnic communities. The ethnic composition of the population of Sabah and Sarawak and the composition of *bumiputera* communities in particular, is much more varied than that of Peninsular Malaysia. In the census of 1970, 38 ethnic groups were formerly enumerated separately and re-categorized into eight groups: Bajau, Chinese, Indonesian, Kadazan, Malay, Murut, other indigenous groups. According to 1970 census, the Kadazandusuns were the largest ethnic group forming just over 28 per cent of the Sabah population, followed by Chinese who comprised 21 per cent of the population. There are sizeable number of indigenous non-Malay Muslims in Sabah and Sarawak, Indian and Thai Muslims in Peninsular Malaysia and a small number of Muslim converts of other ethnic backgrounds. The four major ethnic groups in Malaya correspond approximately to four economic castes as that in India. The British were political rulers and controlled large businesses. The Chinese were essentially middle-class businessmen engaged in small trades. The Indians formed the bulk of labour population, though a large number of them engaged in plantation operation and commercial enterprises. The occupations of the Malays have always been rice cultivation, fishing, and hunting (Li 1982:170).

Although caste is in many respects less significant and less visible in Sri Lanka, compared to India, some 90 per cent of the population in Sri Lanka recognizes it for some purposes at least (Thorat and Shah, 2007). There are three parallel caste systems within Sinhala, Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil; the three ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. While there is no uniform notion of untouchability in these three caste systems, caste discrimination of some kind is found in each one. On the basis of limited data available, the study on social exclusion in Sri Lanka estimated that about 20 to 30 per cent people in Sri Lanka are **victims of CBD** of one kind or another (Silva, Sivapragasam & Thanges 2009). The proportion of people affected may be the highest among the Indian Tamils, a majority of whom belonging to the lowest strata of the Hindu caste hierarchy followed by Sri Lankan Tamils and Sinhalese. Unlike the Hindu caste system founded on religious

notions of purity and pollution, caste systems in Sri Lanka have relied more on a kind of secular ranking upheld by the state, plantation economy, land ownership and tenure, religious organizations and rituals, and firmly-rooted notions of inherent superiority and inferiority.

In the Philippines discriminated groups are the indigenous groups living in the uplands who are traditional, animist with some practicing Islam and who choose to maintain and preserve their cultural tradition and continue to inhabit their ancestral domain; and the Filipino Muslims because of their religion and cultural practices. On the other hand, the lowland majority and other entrepreneurial entities in their efforts to make economic gains have encroached into ancestral domains of the indigenous peoples, which led to their displacement and exclusion from government basic social service delivery.

The history of exclusion in the Philippines started upon the colonization of the Philippine archipelago by the Spanish and American governments, which introduced laws that denied the native inhabitants their customary precepts of land use and ownership, and stripped them of their ancestral rights to their lands through the “Regalian doctrine”, the concept that all lands belong to the king. Moreover, they also introduced the concept of exclusion by separating the indigenous people who were referred to as “cultural minority groups” from the lowland Christians, known as the “majority groups”. The latter were given better opportunities to access education and to participate in the political processes of governance.

In New Zealand, Maori are the indigenous group who arrived in New Zealand between 800 A.D and 1300 A.D via sea-going canoes from eastern Polynesia suggested by the Archaeological evidence. Their language is classified as Eastern Polynesian language and the Maori name of New Zealand is Aotearoa (Land of the long white cloud). The Maori way of life was based on a mixed economy: hunting, and gathering, fishing and cultivating kumara (a variety of sweet potato). The materials used for clothing, housing, ornaments, carvings, and weapons were bark, feathers, flax and greenstone; no metal was processed. The material culture showed high craftsmanship.

The first European adventurers and explorers reached New Zealand in the 17th century, but in the 18th century the visits were more frequent. The number of Europeans increased rapidly with settlers arriving in New Zealand and land transactions became frequent. In 1839 the New Zealand Company¹ bought large tracts of land in the North Island; some Maori chiefs started seeing land as a commodity and began selling it by ignoring the rights of their kin². The majority of Maori was critical of this and considered it in their own interest to have a central authority regulating commerce and land issues. The British too did not favor an uncontrolled and conflict prone settlement process. Humanitarian groups in the British government (who had successfully fought for the abolition of slavery in 1833) became increasingly anxious about the future of Maori, especially in view of the negative experience with settler colonies like Australia, where indigenous people were enslaved or simply killed. Maori interests and those of the British Crown merged and led to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) in 1840.³ The acceptance of the

1. The New Zealand Company was formed in 1839 in London to promote the "systematic" colonization of New Zealand. It was founded on the colonizing principles of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who envisaged the creation of a new model English society in the southern hemisphere.

2. According to traditional law land is a common and not alienable good. Rights to land are vested in the hapu.

3. The Treaty of 1840 had a forerunner. James Busby, the Official Resident, encouraged Māori chiefs to assert their sovereignty with the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1835. The document was acknowledged by King William IV. However, Busby was provided with neither legal authority nor military support and was thus ineffective

Treaty by Maori tribes was linked with the promise of the Crown to protect the tribal land. However, with the continuous influx of settlers, land demand increased as well as the pressure on Maori to sell their land. The New Zealand Land Claims Ordinance of 1841 guaranteed monopoly of land purchase and lease to the Crown. During his first governorship (1845-1853) George Grey succeeded to purchase 130,000 km² land from the Māori (NZ has an area of 270,000 km²). Though pre-emption rights protected Maori from uncontrolled private land acquisitions, it also prevented them from seeking more favorable terms of selling, thereby marginalising the tribes economically.

To sum up, in Asia, in Bangladesh and Nepal socially excluded groups are mainly identified on the basis of social origin. In China, Japan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Philippines the criterion for identification is ethnicity and indigenous – in China, the norms classify groups as ethnic minorities and in Malaysia and Sri Lanka they are classified as ethnic majorities. The origins of the reasons for discrimination and isolation in the Asian countries range from assertions of social superiority to occupational characterisation encouraged by religious beliefs. The section below will provide us information on the forms of discrimination faced by discriminated groups in economic and social spheres in the ten Asian countries reviewed.

Nature of discrimination and deprivation

In countries like Nepal and Bangladesh where social origin is the factor of exclusion the discrimination takes various forms in economic and social sphere. In Nepal, (Bhattachan, Sunar, Gauchan, 2009) one study revealed that existing practices of caste-based discrimination in Nepal are related to denial of entry of Dalits by higher caste into their houses, temples, hotels and restaurants, teashops, work places, food factories, dairy farms and milk collection centre, etc. Non-Dalits deny providing services related to milk, health, credit, training, religion and food and drink. High caste people deny Dalits the access to common resources including drinking water sources, community forests, and crematory. Also, high caste people do not enter into kinship and other relationships including inter-caste marriages. Dalits commonly face caste-based discrimination by high caste people on feasts, during festivals, marriage processions and funerals. Similarly, the study of social exclusion in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2009) found practices of discrimination in the form of lower wages received by Dalits in the rural labour market. In the social sphere, in Bangladesh, the Dalits of both Hindu and Muslim faced restrictions in entry by non-Dalits inside the temples/mosques, religious programmes, tea shops or restaurants, upper caste Hindu community and other community houses, playgrounds, movie theatres, burial grounds/graveyards, club/societies, social gatherings/wedding ceremonies, music concerts and cultural programmes in different forms.

In Japan, where social origin is the factor of discriminatory practices, Burakumin face the discrimination and segregation in the fields of marriage and employment. Inter-marriage between different castes is rarely accepted in Japan. They are subjected to investigations to determine the social status of their ancestors at times of marriage and job recruitment. Historical family and temple registers are used for investigation and for gathering background information. Further, the evidence in the literature suggests that burakumin are subjected to spatial isolation which is regulated through stringent imposition of boundary conditions. Many Buraku people are located in

in controlling the European population.

separate villages and there is a marked tendency to avoid the physical proximity to Buraku.

In Sri Lanka, caste system operates within ethnic groups and the underprivileged caste groups in minority ethnic groups are often the victims of “double discrimination” in so far as they may be victims of both ethnic and caste discrimination at one and the same time. Discrimination is experienced by underprivileged caste groups in the economic, religious and ritual spheres. In the economic sphere underprivileged caste groups experience discrimination in land market in the form of denial to secure land from high caste land owners in the area. In the religious and ritual sphere, discrimination is in the form of limited access to Kovils and Buddhist temples, mandatory services in religious institutions, denial of religious services and restrictions on “low-caste people” acquiring priesthood.

In China, Malaysia, Philippines, discrimination and isolation takes the form of uneven economic development of the areas inhabited by excluded ethnic groups. In Malaysia and Philippines, encroachment into ancestral domains of the indigenous peoples for large-scale plantations and mines was the main form of exclusion which led to wide socio-economic disparities among the various ethnic groups. In addition, low rate of expansion and agricultural technological development, less developed infra-structure in the places of residents (mainly rural) of excluded ethnic groups led to their displacement and exclusion from government basic social service delivery and exacerbated their level of human poverty.

In New Zealand (Martin Fuchs and Antje Linkenbach, 2009), since the 1840s, the Crown Policy in this country was governed by concepts of “amalgamation” and “assimilation”. Maori tribal people were expected to give up their traditional ways of life and successively merge with the white settler population. Cultural assimilation was inculcated through trade, Christian mission, English language and formal education. Although the New Zealand Constitution Act of 1852 provided for the establishment of Native districts (which would recognise Maori authority over their own affairs), the then Governor George Grey refused to declare such districts. The reduction of Maori autonomy and ownership over land and resources was another important means to endorse assimilation. Especially the decades following the 1950s saw a rapid urbanisation process (in 1999, 80 per cent of the Maori were living in cities). Although the post-war economic boom and state welfare programs⁴ offered some chances for Maori too, urbanisation resulted in further economic marginalisation. As formerly rural people depending on land and natural resources, Maori did not have adequate capabilities (e.g. education) to sustain themselves on the labour market and soon found themselves among the urban poor.

Thus, based on the results of the ten countries studies social group in the Asian countries suffer from various forms of exclusion in economic and social sphere. In Bangladesh, Nepal, Japan and Sri Lanka, exclusion takes the form of restriction in participation involving denial of economic and social opportunities for development. In addition, excluded groups in these countries also face restriction in entering temples and other religious spaces. In countries, where ethnicity and traditional cultures/practices is the factor of exclusion like Philippines and Malaysia, discriminated groups also suffer from living mode exclusion, which denies recognition and accommodation of life style that a group would choose to have. Living mode exclusion often overlaps and intertwines with social, economic and political exclusion through discrimination and disadvantages in access to resources, employment, housing, schooling and political representation.

4. The First Labour Government of New Zealand was in power from 1935 to 1949. It set the tone of New Zealand's economic and welfare policies until the 1980s, establishing a welfare state.

Remedies against discrimination and Inter-social group disparities

In so far as the social groups in these countries faced discrimination and restrictions in having same rights and entitlement which other enjoy, it has negative consequences on their economic and social development and their participation in the governance. The literature from the Asian countries indicates disparities between the social groups and the rest of the majority population in various human development indicators; such as ownership of income earning assets agricultural like land, capital and employment, social needs like education and housing. Empirical evidence provided by these studies indicates that the lower access of socially marginalized groups to resources and opportunities compared with the rest of the population. Recognizing the unequal development among various groups, the governments of the countries under review have implemented safeguards in their constitution against discrimination, as well general policies for their economic empowerment.

We discussed the country specific measures, policies, laws, and other practices that some countries have developed for the providing safeguards against discrimination and enhancing their economic development.

The Government in Japan enacted direct special measures that addressed the economic, social and living conditions of the buraku communities. The parliament framed the Law on Special Measures and, as part of this measure and from 1969, the Government began to provide subsidies towards improving the living conditions in Buraku areas. This law was time bound, being renewed every five years. This law was terminated in 2002. Along with these measures, the government ratified policies that would educate and promote measures for protection of human rights. The Special Measure Law helped to rebuild thousands of Dowa areas with financial outlays being channelized from national, prefectural, and local governments. Additional funds were utilized to subsidize housing, provide scholarships for the Burakumin youth, and underwrite other programs to reduce the financial burden on Burakumin families. In December 1996, the Japanese government enacted a law delineating the measures for the promotion of human rights protection of the Burakumin. To address the issues of social exclusion faced by Ainu, the government of Japan enacted the law No. 52 on May 14, 1997 and stipulated building a society in which the racial pride of the Ainu people was respected. It further incorporated respect for Ainu culture and traditions and held that they contribute diversity in Japan.

In China Since the days of Mao's revolution, the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) has had an ambitious program of affirmative action to promote the needs and interests of the minorities in China. The affirmative action policies for minorities include family planning preferences; educational preferences; hiring and promotion of minority cadres and leadership; and minority representation in representative bodies. Since the minorities are concentrated in specific regions in western part of China, these measures are supplemented by development of physical infrastructure and economic development of these regions.

In Malaysia, Article 8 (5 c, f) of the Federal Constitution stipulates special provisions for the advancement of the Malays; Article 8 (5 c) includes provisions for the protection, well-being and advancement of the aboriginal Malays (including reservation of land and employment in public

sector); and Article 8 (5 f) incorporates provisions restricting the enlistment of the Malays in the Malay Regiment.

Article 153 explicitly recognized the rights of the Malays and the Sarawak and the Sabah (indigenous people) to enable them to enter the modern sectors of the economy and designed special provisions for them to attain economic parity with the non-Malays. Again Clause 9 of Article 153 states that “nothing in this Article shall empower the Parliament to restrict business or trade solely for the purpose of reservations for the Malays”. Article 89 empowered State to reserve areas of land for the exclusive use by the Bhumiputras (in order to increase their ownership) provided that they were not already occupied by non-Bhumiputras.

Based on these provisions in the constitution, the government has developed policies that focus on the improving the ownership of agricultural land, and business and increased share in public and private employment and in education. The Sri Lankan government also took positive measures for the inclusion of the economically excluded Sinhalese majority community by introducing a language policy called the “Sinhala Only” in 1950s. This policy initiative included increased participation of the Sinhalese in public sector jobs;

In 1970, Sri Lanka introduced lower qualifying marks for students taking examinations in Sinhalese. This ensured a politically acceptable ratio of Tamil to Sinhalese students being admitted to sciences, engineering, and medical faculties of the University of Ceylon. This fundamental change in university admissions policy heralded the abandonment of the merit principle and introduced a system of affirmative action;

In 1976, the concept of ‘educationally underprivileged districts’ was introduced under which one-half of the seats were to be filled on district basis, that is, 15 per cent of the total number of seats was reserved for students from 10 districts classified as educationally underprivileged; and

In 1979, Sri Lanka decided that admissions should be on the basis of raw marks and that places available should be filled according to the following formula: (a) 30 per cent of the seats in each course were to be filled on an all island merit basis; (b) 55 per cent of the seats in each course were to be allocated to twenty four administrative districts in proportion to their respective populations and filled on district merit list; and (c) the remaining 15 per cent of the seats in each course were to be allocated in proportion to their respective population to twelve administrative districts deemed to be educationally underprivileged.

In Pakistan the policies have been developed to give due share in legislature to Sindhi’s and Baluchi’s.

New Zealand has developed comprehensive program for indigenous population of Maori. Under the the Strategies, Programmes, Fields of Action to Enhance Social Equity (since the 1990s), the Government of New Zealand has undertaken multiple efforts to improve the status of Maori in the country. The policies include measures for the “reduction of inequalities”, in employment, education (knowledge and skills) achievements, business, Maori language proficiency development and the participation in decision making of the government agencies, local government, and district health boards, school boards etc. The Maori has reservation in seat in parliament. The state of the social,

economic and cultural condition of Maori as well as the outcome of support and promotion programmes is monitored regularly by various NZ institutions and government bodies, which bring out special reports and surveys or include special sections on Maori in general reports. The Government of New Zealand also has Equal Employment Opportunity policy in employment which provides safeguards against discrimination at work place and fair share in employment. The Ministry of Maori Development Act 1991 established Te Puni Kokiri, Ministry of Maori Development, in 1992. “Currently, Te Puni Kokiri’s work focuses on providing high quality policy advice to Government and other agencies.”⁵

The Philippines enacted the Indigenous People Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997 which mandates that the State should create a policy to “recognise and promote the rights of indigenous peoples within the framework of national unity and development” (Philippine Constitution, Sec. 22, Act II) and to “protect the right of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral lands to ensure their economic, social and cultural well-being (Philippine Constitution, 1987, Sec. 5, Act XIII and Sec. 17, Act XIV). The law restores the rights of indigenous peoples over their ancestral lands and domains. The law further defines to pursue the range of the exercise of these rights: the right to pursue economic, social and cultural development; the right to use commonly accepted justice systems, conflict resolution strategies, peace-building process, and customary laws; to participate in decision-making; to maintain and develop indigenous political structures; to have mandatory representation in policy-making bodies; to determine their own priorities for development; to establish their tribal barangay (village); and to organise People’s Organisation (POs).

Case Study: India

The Indian society is stratified into various social groups called castes in which the social and economic rights of each individual caste are predetermined by birth. The assignment (or division) of these rights among castes is unequal and hierarchal. The unequal and hierarchal (graded) access to economic and social rights implies that every caste, except those at the top of the caste hierarchy suffers from unequal divisions of rights. The untouchables or schedule castes (SC) or Dalits who are placed at the bottom of caste hierarchy suffered most: they are excluded from access to property rights and social rights except labour or service to the castes above them. The disadvantages of low caste untouchables are so severe that they are also physically and socially segregated from the rest of the Hindu society through the institution of untouchability. This adds an additional dimension to the physical, social and economic exclusion of this social group. It is this multiple exclusion of the low castes untouchables which has a severe consequence on their poverty and deprivation.

Economic and Social Situation of the Schedule Castes

Thus, the caste involves exclusion of low caste untouchables (or scheduled castes) in multiple spheres, and high levels of economic deprivation and poverty. Based on official data, we present a brief sketch of the socio-economic condition of the SCs: with respect to occupation, ownership of agricultural land and non land capital assets access, education and health, employment and poverty. The Schedule Caste constitutes about 17 percent (equivalent to 138.2 million) of India’s

5. <http://www.tpk.govt.nz/about/default.asp>

population in 1991, (estimate for 2001 put this figures at 18%) 81% live in rural areas, spread all over the country.

Based on official data, we present a brief sketch of the socio-economic condition of the SCs: with respect to occupation, ownership of agricultural land and non-land capital assets access, education and health, employment and poverty. The Schedule Caste constitutes about 17 percent (equivalent to 138.2 million) of India's population in 1991, (estimate for 2001 put this figures at 18%) 81% live in rural areas, spread all over the country.

Occupation Pattern: Data on occupation pattern captures access of SC households to sources of income. The NSS provide data on economic activities or occupations in terms of proportion of self employed and wage labour households. While the former is a measure of access to capital assets like agricultural land and non-land capital assets (from which historically SCs have been debarred), the latter indicate continuing dependence on the traditional occupation of wage labour. In 2004-05, of the total SC household in rural area, about 20% pursued cultivation as an independent (self-employed) occupation. About 14% was employed in some kind of non-farm self-employment activities (or business). In rural areas thus, about 34% of SC households had acquired some access to fixed capital assets (agricultural land and non-land asset). This was still a very low in proportion compared with 61% for other households (non-scheduled caste/scheduled-tribes households). In urban area also as compared to other households (38.6%), access to capital assets to SC was low (29.4%). As we shall see later although close to one-third has acquired access to fixed capital assets, most of them are small and marginal farmers and petty business holders.

Inadequate access to fixed capital assets has lead to exceptionally high dependence of the SC household on manual wage labour. In 2004-05 the wage labour households account for 56 % of all SC households in rural area and 22% in urban area, compared to 23% and 6.20% for other households. In urban areas 41% of SC households also depend on regular wage and salaried jobs. Thus about 56% of the SC household in rural and 63% in urban area continue to depend on wage employment. Information on the ownership of agricultural land by the SC in rural area provides some insights on low proportion of self-employed cultivators among the SC households in rural area. In 2004-05, about 2.7 % of SC households were landless and 97% own some land. Among the latter (that is land owning household), about 55% owned less than one acre and 18% own less than half acre.

Employment/Unemployment: Since more than 60 per cent of the SC workers in rural and urban areas depend on wage employment, their earnings are determined by level of employment and wage earning, daily or regular. The SC worker seems to suffer from possible discrimination both in employment and wage earning in the labour market. The NSS data on employment for 2000⁶ indicate that the SC worker suffered from low employment. Differences emerge clearly for employment rate based on current daily status (CDS) which capture the underemployment of the employed workers. In 2000, the CDS employment rate in rural area was 46% for SC male workers, compared with 48.40% for other male worker. Similarly the CDS employment rate for SC workers in urban area was 45.8%, compared to 49.9% for other households. Disparities between the SC and

6. The analysis on employment-unemployment situation and wage earnings by social group is based on the 2000 data, as the data on Current Daily Status for employed and unemployed by social groups for the most recent survey of 2004-05 is not yet published by the National Sample Survey Organisation.

Others are reflected in the unemployment rate. Unemployment rates based on CDS for SC were about 5.0% as compared to about 3.5% for other worker in rural and urban area.

The NSS data on the wage earning revealed disparities between SC wage labour and other labour. For instance in 1999-2000, the average weekly wage earning of an SC worker (at 1993-94 prices) was Rs.174.50 compared to Rs.197.05 for other workers.

Poverty: With high incidence of wage labour associated with high rate of under-employment and low wage earning, the SC households suffer from low income, and high incidences of poverty. This is reflected in the proportion of persons falling below a critical minimum level of consumption expenditure, what is called the poverty line. In 2004—2005 about 36.8% of SC person were below the poverty line in rural areas as compared to 22.7% among others; in urban areas the gap was slightly larger 39.8% of SC and only 22.6% among others.

Access to Education: In addition to property rights SCs have been denied right to education. There are large gaps in literacy rate and level of education between them and others. High drop out in school, poor quality of education, discrimination in education, are some of the educational problems faced by SC. In 2001 (latest census year for which data are available) literacy rate among SCs was 58 % compared to 79% among the non Sc/St. School attendance is about 10% point less among SC boys than other boys, while the difference is about 5% among the girls.

Evidence on economic discrimination and exclusion

Preceding sections show the disparities in ownership of capital assets, employment, education and access to health services between the SC and other households. Although there has been some improvement in the ownership of capital assets still a large proportion of SC households continue to depend on the traditional occupation of wage labour. To what extent are the disparities and segregation into traditional occupations the legacy of the past exclusion and to what extent is it conditioned by continuing discrimination and exclusion in the market and non market transactions or both is an important question? The issue of economic discrimination, particularly the market exclusion and discrimination has been almost neglected in the Indian social science research.

Very few studies have empirically examined the nature and magnitude of economic discrimination. Limited evidence points towards the presence of discrimination against the Scheduled Caste in labour and other factor markets. Studies observed that high landlessness could be due to weak resource position but also due to the discriminatory working of the land market which reduce the access of SC to purchase and leasing of agricultural land. Studies also provide evidence that discriminatory working of the labour market may explain low employment rate and wage earning of the SC workers. Banergee and Knight observed that there is discrimination by caste, particularly job discrimination. In part Untouchables are disproportionately represented in poorly-paid and dead-end jobs” Even if discrimination is no longer practiced, the effects of past discrimination could carry over to the present. This may help to explain why discrimination is greatest in operative jobs, in which contracts are more important for recruitment, and not in white-collar jobs in which recruitment involves formal methods. The economic function which the system performs for favoured castes suggests discrimination is based on economic interest, so making prejudice more difficult to eradicate.

Beside land and labour markets some studies also found discrimination in occupation, credit and other market transactions. An Andhra Pradesh study observed social ostracism being used against SC in changes of occupation. In Karnataka, Khan revealed that nearly 85 per cent of the respondents continued with their traditional occupation and only 15 per cent could make a switch over. In the urban areas, however, 56 per cent had experienced a shift away from traditional occupation. An Orissa study by Tripathy observed discrimination in land lease, credit and labour markets in rural areas. Nearly 96 per cent of untouchable respondents in one village and all untouchable respondents in the second village were discriminated against in wage payment; 28 per cent in one village and 20 per cent in the other faced discrimination in the share of rent; and discrimination in interest rate charged by moneylenders was found in both villages. A Coimbatore study by Harriss, Kannan, and Rodger observed that caste contact played a major role in sources of information and means of access to first jobs.

Affirmative Action Policies by India

In India affirmative action or positive discrimination provisions are multifaceted and include within their ambit a set of policies and programmes. Some of the major interventions are:

The enactment of the Anti-untouchability Act, 1955 (renamed as the PCR Act, 1979). This Act declared the practice of untouchability and discrimination in public places and services as an offence;

The SC/ST POA Act, 1989 provides legal protection to the SC/STs against violence and atrocities of several kinds by the high caste Hindus;

Article 16 (4) empowers the state to make “any provision for the reservation in appointments, or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens”;

Article 16 (4 A) enables “the state to make provisions for reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts, in the services under the state in favour of the SCs and the STs”;

Article 335 states that “the claims of the members of the SCs and the STs shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments of services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a state”;

Article 15 (4) states that “nothing in this Article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the SCs and the STs”;

Various Articles contains the provisions for reservation of seats for the SC/STs in legislative bodies in proportion to their population, that is, in Central Legislative Assembly (Article 330), Legislative Assemblies of the states (Article 332), in Municipalities (Article 243 T), in various Panchayat bodies, namely, district, village, and block level (Article 243 D);

Not less than one-third (including the numbers of seats reserved for women belonging to the SC/STs) of the total numbers of seats in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat [Article 243 D (3)] and;

Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women [Article 243 D (4)]. Not less than one-third (including the numbers of seats reserved for women belonging to the SC/STs) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct elections in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3)]. Based on these provisions in the constitution and law the government has developed affirmation policy through which the seats are reserved in government employment, government educational institutions, and seats in the central parliament and provincial assemblies. Besides, there is a comprehensive program for economic, social and education development of Dalits in India. Recently the private sector has also taken initiative to and developed schemes for economic and educational development, including promotion of entrepreneurship among the dalits. Additionally, the government has developed administrative set up to deal with policy and program of dalit and this includes Commission for Schedule caste, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Schedule caste Economic Development Corporation and similar organization.

Concluding Observations

From the above discussion it is apparent that several countries in Asia have developed policies to provide legal safeguards against discrimination of some social groups and also policies for their economic, education development and political participation in governance to reduce inter-social disparities. Measures against discrimination and group inequalities however vary from country to country, although there are similarities between them in many respects. As lessons for us two aspects need to be mentioned. First is the type of the economic, social and political spheres that is included for equal opportunity policy and reducing group inequalities and second relates to the method of equal opportunity policy.

Firstly as regard the spheres, many countries have developed ant-discrimination policies for minorities for labor market and other markets including agricultural land and private domestic industrial and business sector. However, in some countries affirmative action policy are extended to social needs such as housing, education and various government contracts. Beside there are specific policies for providing due share in political governance, including the house of representative and government. Then there are measures to promote the language and culture of indigenous communities in some countries like New Zealand, India.

Secondly in these countries various methods, legal or non legal " have been used to provide protection and equal participation to social groups in various spheres. These measures include (a) Reparation or compensatory policies for the denial of property rights for long time in the past (b) legal provision against discrimination particularly in labor market in the form of "Equal Employment Opportunity Act". These acts prohibit any firm from discrimination of worker unrelated to productivity (c) Fair Access strategy to ensure equal participation of discriminated minorities in employment, described by various names like affirmative action policy, reservation policy, fair access or new economic policy, special measures etc – either by promoting balance in employment, with certain general bench mark without quotas or with fixed quotas in proportion of population of minority groups.

The difference in the purpose and mechanism of these methods however needs to be understood

clearly. The policy of “Reparation or Compensation” is applied to compensate for the denial of property rights to certain groups in the past. It is considered as compensatory payment for an acknowledged grievous or social injustice to a group. In history there are examples where compensation or reparations have been used. The second anti-discriminatory method is the enactment of “Equal Employment Opportunity Act” (EEOA). Such acts legally prohibit the discrimination of person in employment and other economic spheres and made it subject to legal action. Person from minority group could use this provision in the event of discrimination in hiring and other spheres.

The Equal Employment Opportunity acts however do not involve any positive or affirmative action or steps on the part of government to ensure equal participation of minority groups in employment and other economic spheres. Therefore several countries have taken an additional steps and made provision to give share to the member of minority groups in government and private employment, government contract and educational institute – public and private, housing and other. In such affirmative practices, certain bench marks are fixed without quota or with quota to give adequate representation to the discriminated groups. However ever country has developed the method of measuring the fair access-mostly in term of population share or labor force share.

Table 1, The Parameter for Identifying Discriminated Groups in Asian Countries

Continent	Country	Groups	Identifying Indicators
Asia	India	Dalits, Adiwasi	Caste, Ethnicity;
	Japan	Burakumin Okinawans, Ainu Japanese-born Koreans	Caste-based group; Indigenous groups; Minorities
	China	55 minorities nationalities	Ethnic Minorities
	Malaysia	Bumiputras	Ethnic Majorities
	Pakistan	Baluch, Pakhtun, Tribal	Regional Backwardness Ethnicity
	Sri Lanka	Tamil minority, Sinhalese	Ethnic (language) minorities and Majorities
	Nepal	Dalits and some Indigenous groups	Caste, Ethnicity
	New Zealand	Indeginous population groups	Race and ethnic



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Dalit Women and Political Space: Status and Issues related to their Participation

Nidhi Sadana SABHARWAL

1. Introduction

The Indian society is stratified into various social groups called castes in which the social and economic rights of each individual caste are predetermined by birth. The assignment (or division) of these rights among castes is unequal and hierarchal. The unequal and hierarchal (graded) access to economic and social rights implies that every caste, except those at the top of the caste hierarchy suffers from unequal divisions of rights. The untouchables or schedule castes (SC) or Dalits who are placed at the bottom of caste hierarchy suffered most: they are excluded from access to property rights and social rights except labour or service to the castes above them. The disadvantages of low caste untouchables are so severe that they are also physically and socially segregated from the rest of the Hindu society through the institution of untouchability. This adds an additional dimension to the physical, social and economic exclusion of this social group. It is this multiple exclusion of the low castes untouchables which has a severe consequence on their poverty and deprivation.

The Indian government has tried to address the problem of caste and untouchability. As a result the Indian Constitution carries certain safeguards for persons of certain castes listed in Article 341, in the Fundamental Rights of citizens and in the Directive Principles of State Policy. Subsequently, laws have been passed, aiming at removing discriminatory practices against the Scheduled Castes, and also for their social and economic empowerment. Anti-discriminatory measures for the Dalits include the enactment of the Untouchability Offence Act, 1955 (renamed as the Protection of Civil Rights Act in 1976), and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act (POA), 1989, which aims to prevent crimes stemming from discrimination and hatred towards Dalits. Notwithstanding the principle of equality of all citizens, the government reserves to itself the right to pass legislation designed to give special relief to the 'weaker sections' of the society. These include the scheduled-castes and scheduled-tribes, and also women and children. Permanent National Commissions have been set up both for scheduled-castes and scheduled-tribes and for women. There are also various economic schemes announced from time to time creating employment or granting welfare payments or other benefits to the 'weaker sections'. While the practice of 'untouchability' has been banned since Independence, in practice many of the associated behaviours, norms and values persist. This means that Dalits still often live in separate locations with poorer services, face discrimination when accessing services, are barred from many occupations, receive lower pay, and face discrimination in the market place.

All the provisions listed above apply to Dalit women as they belong to both the categories recognized as disadvantaged, namely SC's and women. Importantly, in addition to legal safeguards against discrimination, equal access and participation in politics and governance is ensured through reservation of some seats in Parliament and state legislatures for SC's and ST's; in the

elected bodies of local government, there are reserved seats for women also. At the national level, however, reservation in political participation is confined to the SC social group and not separately for Dalit women. We will see in the following pages that the different specific kinds of violence, humiliation, violation, exploitation and control which Dalit women are subjected to cannot be adequately understood as ‘double subjugation’ – or rather triple, since most Dalit women also belong to an economically deprived class—and hence cannot be removed merely by applying the above kinds of laws¹.

This paper focuses on the challenges of Dalit² women in India and examines their level of political participation and representation, generally recognized as an instrument towards achieving positive policy outcomes representative of each group, in national and local government. The following sections first review the socio-economic status of scheduled caste social group in India vis-à-vis non-sc/st social group (section 2), how Dalit women differ from rest of the poor women in terms of additional discrimination which they face i. e. caste related which is clearly reflected in differential human development achievements of Dalit women (section 3), next evidence on denial of equal rights and its various forms which continues in sphere of employment and social needs is presented in section 4. This section provides evidence to the causes of relatively higher degree of deprivation and poverty of Dalit women which are closely linked with caste and untouchability. As a part of caste-based discrimination we separately look at the violence and atrocities suffered by the Dalit women as a low caste person. Within this framework of unique challenges faced by Dalit women, the level of political participation is analysed at national and local level in order to understand their representative strength and effectiveness in governance (section 5); finally, the policy direction is discussed and analysed (section 6) suggesting a dual solution to address multiple layers of deprivation of women from discriminated groups.

2. Socio-economic status of scheduled caste in India

Based on official data, we present a brief sketch of the socio-economic condition of the SCs: with respect to occupation, ownership of agricultural land and non-land capital assets access, education and health, employment and poverty. The Schedule Caste constitutes about 17 percent (equivalent to 138.2 million) of India’s population in 1991, (estimate for 2001 put this figures at 18%) 81% live in rural areas, spread all over the country.

Occupation Pattern: Data on occupation pattern captures access of SC households to sources of income. The NSS provide data on economic activities or occupations in terms of proportion of self employed and wage labour households. While the former is a measure of access to capital assets like agricultural land and non-land capital assets (from which historically SCs have been debarred), the latter indicate continuing dependence on the traditional occupation of wage labour. In 2004-05, of the total SC household in rural area, about 20% pursued cultivation as an independent (self-employed) occupation. About 14% was employed in some kind of non-farm self-employment activities (or business). In rural areas thus, about 34% of SC households had acquired some access to fixed capital assets (agricultural land and non-land asset). This was still a very low in proportion compared with 61% for other households (non-scheduled caste/scheduled-tribes

1. Sabharwal Sadana Nidhi, Sonalkar Wandana etal, 2010: Dalit Women Rights and Citizenship in India, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.

2. Literally translation of Dalits is ‘broken people’

households). In urban area also as compared to other households (38.6%), access to capital assets to SC was low (29.4%). As we shall see later although close to one-third has acquired access to fixed capital assets, most of them are small and marginal farmers and petty business holders.

Inadequate access to fixed capital assets has led to exceptionally high dependence of the SC household on manual wage labour. In 2004-05 the wage labour households account for 56 % of all SC households in rural area and 22% in urban area, compared to 23% and 6.20% for other households. In urban areas 41% of SC households also depend on regular wage and salaried jobs. Thus about 56% of the SC household in rural and 63% in urban area continue to depend on wage employment

Information on the ownership of agricultural land by the SC in rural area provides some insights on low proportion of self-employed cultivators among the SC households in rural area. In 2004-05, about 2.7 % of SC households were landless and 97% own some land. Among the latter (that is land owning household), about 55% owned less than one acre and 18% own less than half acre.

Employment/Unemployment: Since more than 60 per cent of the SC workers in rural and urban areas depend on wage employment, their earnings are determined by level of employment and wage earning, daily or regular. The SC worker seems to suffer from possible discrimination both in employment and wage earning in the labour market. The NSS data on employment for 2000³ indicate that the SC worker suffered from low employment. Differences emerge clearly for employment rate based on current daily status (CDS) which capture the underemployment of the employed workers. In 2000, the CDS employment rate in rural area was 46% for SC male workers, compared with 48.40% for other male worker. Similarly the CDS employment rate for SC workers in urban area was 45.8%, compared to 49.9% for other households. Disparities between the SC and Others are reflected in the unemployment rate. Unemployment rates based on CDS for SC were about 5.0% as compared to about 3.5% for other worker in rural and urban area.

The NSS data on the wage earning revealed disparities between SC wage labour and other labour. For instance in 1999-2000, the average weekly wage earning of an SC worker (at 1993-94 prices) was Rs.174.50 compared to Rs.197.05 for other workers.

Poverty: With high incidence of wage labour associated with high rate of under-employment and low wage earning, the SC households suffer from low income, and high incidences of poverty. This is reflected in the proportion of persons falling below a critical minimum level of consumption expenditure, what is called the poverty line. In 2004—2005 about 36.8% of SC person were below the poverty line in rural areas as compared to 22.7% among others; in urban areas the gap was slightly larger 39.8% of SC and only 22.6% among others.

Access to Education: In addition to property rights SCs have been denied right to education. There are large gaps in literacy rate and level of education between them and others. High drop out in school, poor quality of education, discrimination in education, are some of the educational problems faced by SC. In 2001 (latest census year for which data are available) literacy rate among SCs was

3. The analysis on employment-unemployment situation and wage earnings by social group is based on the 2000 data, as the data on Current Daily Status for employed and unemployed by social groups for the most recent survey of 2004-05 is not yet published by the National Sample Survey Organisation.

58 % compared to 79% among the non Sc/St. School attendance is about 10% point less among SC boys than other boys, while the difference is about 5% among the girls.

3. Socio-economic status of scheduled caste women in India

Scheduled caste women suffer similar discrimination, exclusion, poverty and even untouchability with their men. But like all women, Dalit women also suffer subordination resulting from patriarchy within the family, at places of work, and in society and like their poor non-sc/st sisters, they also suffer from lack of access to income earning assets, education and resultant high poverty. However, Dalit women differ from rest of the poor women in terms of additional discrimination which they face i.e. caste related. This is clearly reflected in the differential human development achievements of Dalit women. In all indicators of human development, Dalit women fair poorly as compared to non-Dalit women. Dalit women are also a victim of social and religious practice such as *Devdasi / Jogini* resulting in sexual exploitation of Dalit women in the name of religion⁴.

Disaggregate analysis provide some insight in to the nature of gender disparities across social groups. According to the 2001 census, scheduled-caste (SC), scheduled-tribes (ST), other backward classes and Muslims account close to about three-fourths of India's population. Half of them are women. Most scheduled-caste women lack access to income earning assets and depend mainly on wage labour. In early 2000, only 21 percent of SC women were cultivators as compared to 45 percent of non-sc/st women indicating that access to agricultural land is not equal within the category of women. As a result, about 49 percent of SC women workers worked as agricultural wage labour in rural areas as compared to 17 percent for non-sc/st. Further, a large number of SC women are engaged in so-called unclean and polluting occupations, such as scavenging.

Literacy rates also point to differences. In 2001, 41 percent of SC women in rural areas were literate as compared to 58 percent for non-SC/ST women. Limited education reduces employability and consequently, unemployment rates are higher. Unemployment based on current daily status in 2004-05 was 12.36 percent for SC, compared with 9 percent for non-sc/st women.

This combination of high incidence of wage labour, low educational attainment and high unemployment results in a high degree of deprivation and poverty among SC women. According to the 2005-06 National Family and Health Survey, about 58.3 percent of SC women suffered from anemia compared to 51.3 percent of non-sc/st women. Malnutrition of the mother impacts the health outcomes of children. About 21 percent of SC children under the age of four suffered from malnutrition compared to 13.80 percent of other's children respectively. Nearly 72 percent of children from SC suffer from anemia, compared to 63.8 percent of others. High levels of malnutrition among the SC result in higher morbidity and mortality. In 2005-06, the infant mortality rates for SC were 66.4 which is much higher than the 49 for non-sc/st categories of women.

4. Joginis are village Dalit girls who are married to a village deity by their parents. These girls are then sexually exploited by the upper caste landlords and rich men of the village. A Report of the Commissioner for SC/ST reported that, there were about 10,000 Joginis belonging to SC social group in Nizamabad district of Andhra Pradesh. By the end of 1990 the survey had identified 15,000 Jogins in twelve districts of Andhra Pradesh. Similar system of religious sexual exploitation is to be found in other parts of India like Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Orissa.

Dalit women differ from the rest of the women in so far as the causes of their relatively higher degree of deprivation and poverty of Dalit women are closely linked with caste and untouchability, social exclusion and discrimination. The women belonging to social grouping of low caste suffers from social exclusion and discrimination due to their caste identity, which rest of the women do not. It is this “exclusion – induced deprivation” which differentiates Dalit women problems from rest of the women. Low caste women faced denial of equal rights in the past, which continue in the present in some spheres, if not all and manifest in various forms. The section below talks about the specificity of Dalit women’s experience.

4. Evidence of gender and caste-based discrimination

In this section we provide evidence on gender and caste-based discrimination which Dalit women face in economic, social and political sphere.

Evidence on gender discrimination and violence faced by Dalit women

Limited evidence indicates that within the Dalit community itself, Dalit husbands often act out their own oppressed position through violence against their wives. The study sponsored by ADMAIM indicted that 43 per cent of 500 Dalit sample women suffered from domestic violence.⁵ This violence was in the form of verbal abuse of the women, accompanied by physical assault. In most cases where a Dalit husband is concerned, the violence takes on a strong patriarchal dimension: women are tortured within the home for not bringing enough dowry, for not bearing male children, for being ugly, or too beautiful, or allegedly unfaithful, for talking back to her husband, etc. Domestic violence resulted in some women being deserted by their husbands, or being forced to leave their marital home. For the majority of women, however, the social norms and pressures of married life and “duties” of wives to their husbands ensure that they continue to endure this violence.⁶ These are forms of violence which have a strong patriarchal dimension and results in physical, sexual or psychological harm. There are not many primary level studies which have been undertaken to examine the issues of patriarchy within Dalit community. Evidence from pilot studies indicated that nearly one in two of 500 Dalit sample women suffered from domestic violence. This violence was in the form of verbal abuse of the women, accompanied by physical assault.

The next sub-section presents studies which bring out instances of discrimination which have been faced by Dalit women in multiple spheres. As a part of caste-based discrimination we separately look at the violence and atrocities suffered by the Dalit women as a low caste person.

Evidence of caste-based discrimination in wage employment in rural areas

Women from the vulnerable groups face barriers and difficulties while seeking employment in the labour market due to their group identity. There are very few studies which have been conducted to analyse the nature and form of caste-based discrimination which Dalit women face in wage employment. Evidences from pilot studies in wage employment are presented in Panel 1.

A Micro level study (2005) of three villages across Haryana, Gujarat and Orissa undertaken by

5. Dalit Women Speak Out, Overview Report, p 3

6. Dalit Women Speak Out, Overview Report, p 5

Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, observed significant inter-social group differences in female employment. Higher caste females managed to get much higher employment in non-farm sector compared to female from SC groups. For instance, the yearly employment for this group varies from a minimum of 148 days for SC as compared to a very high level of 290 days for high caste women. In the non-farm sector as well, there were differences in the level of employment between SC and high caste female. The study found that, although all females suffered from lower level of participation in non-farm employment, females from different groups do not suffer in same degree; low caste female suffered more from lack of employment in non-farm sector.

Women from the vulnerable groups face barriers and difficulties while seeking employment in the labour market due to their group identity. Evidence from pilot studies indicates that Dalit women face discrimination and exclusion from participation in certain categories of job. Because of their association with their occupation (manual scavenging) Dalit woman face discrimination in social relation and also in employment. Woman belonging to sweeper community is hardly employed for cooking and other household job because of the notion of purity and pollution of occupations, perceived to be unclean occupations.⁷

Panel 1: Caste-based Discrimination in Wage Labour – Farm

Sphere of Exclusion Wage Labour - Farm	Nature & Form of Discrimination (Identifier)	Consequences of Discrimination
1. Hiring: Employment	Complete denial in hiring, exclusion of low caste from certain types of jobs, selective inclusion with unequal hiring terms and conditions with respect to hours of works and other terms, hiring for work which is outside the house, denied work inside the house, Compulsive and forced work governed by traditional caste related obligations involving loss of freedom,	Less employment days, loss of freedom leading to bondage, attachment of family and child labor, income loss, high poverty
2. Wages	Complete denial (wages not paid), Unfair Inclusion: unequal treatment reflected in lower wages (lower than market wages), irregular interval of payment	Low wages, inequality in wages, income loss, high poverty
3. Work Conditions (Employer-Labour/ Between labourers)	Discriminatory or differential behaviour towards scheduled caste in work place	Loss of dignity, human rights and high poverty

Source: Compiled by the author from various studies undertaken by IIDS

Panel 1 further indicates sphere where Dalit women face discrimination such as in hiring, in wages and in work relations.⁸ Scheduled caste women reported discrimination in hiring due to their caste background which is reflected in denial in employment. Further, discrimination in payment of wages was not as severe as in case of denial of certain tasks or being prone to harassment.

7. Shah G, Mander H, Thorat S, Deshpande S, Baviskar A. Untouchability in Rural India. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006

8. Thorat Sukhadeo, Mahamallik Motilal and Sadana Nidhi (2009), Caste System and Patterns of Discrimination in Thorat Sukhadeo and Newman Katherine S. (ed), 'Blocked by Caste: Economic discrimination in Modern India', Oxford, New Delhi

Discrimination through exclusion in certain types of work that women do, however, was reported to be quite prominent and wide spread. Denial of work inside the house of high caste was more widespread. The scheduled-caste women also face exclusion in work related to fetching of drinking water in high caste households.

These are the forms of discriminations which are not faced by high caste female and therefore they are likely to enjoy higher employment in household work. Thus, scheduled caste women besides facing exclusion due to the preferential treatment from non-sc/st's, their exclusion also occurs due to the continuing belief of higher castes in the notions of pollution. The Untouchability in Rural India study (2006) based on the information from about 550 villages in eleven states reported as well that SC women were rarely employed for cooking, cleaning of food grains and other eatables in Bihar, for instance. The same study also provided evidence on discrimination in the market place in the form of receiving lower price for their goods as sellers and as consumers, paying higher cost for their purchases.

Evidence on caste-based discrimination in access to social needs

Public Healthcare Services: We provide the experience and insights from primary level studies conducted by AIDMAM (All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch) and IIDS on caste related discriminations faced by Dalit women and children in accessing public health services in this section.

Evidence in Panel 2 is based on a study conducted in 17 districts of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh indicate discrimination faced by Dalit women in Health Services in Government Hospitals. Five hundred Dalit women were interviewed who were willing to speak about their experiences of discrimination in public sphere. Panel 2 captures discrimination in spheres and treatment of discrimination that Dalit women and their family received from doctors, nurses and village health nurses when they entered government hospital or when they contacted medical staff outside the medical premises. This panel also provides consequences of discriminatory treatment in access to health services on Dalit women and their families. It is evident that Dalit women face discriminatory treatment in form of rude verbal responses and refusal of medical treatment in public health services. This leads to their dependence on expensive private medical attention for which they have to take debt.

Panel 2: Spheres and indicators of caste-based discrimination faced by Dalit women in Public Health Services

Spheres of Discrimination	Identifiers of Discrimination	Consequences of Discrimination
Treatment at the time of ante-natal check-up	Face rude verbal response from Health Worker, without check up the nurse give medicines and send away.	Lack of care leading to requirement of private medical attention
Treatment by ANM for family planning operations	Indifferent verbal response and coerced into taking decisions, e.g. prospect of ration card being withdrawn if refused to have tubectomy, do not receive appropriate post-operative care.	Lack of post-operative care leading to requirement of private medical attention.
Treatment at the time of delivery	Ignored and kept waiting for long, the staff directs to go to a distant district headquarters hospital for the delivery	The delay complicates delivery leading to requirement to private medical attention. Take loan for delivery in private hospital.
Treatment after assault by men in authority (police and dominant caste landlord-employer)	Refusal of treatment by doctors in the local government hospital in order to avoid becoming involved in a police case.	Lack of care leading to requirement of private medical attention

Source: Compiled by the Author drawing from various health studies undertaken by IIDS, AIDMAM and NCDHR

Another study conducted by Indian Institute of Dalit Studies and UNICEF where two hundred Dalit and 65 non-Dalit children were interviewed from 12 selected villages in Gujarat and Rajasthan brings out the forms and nature of discrimination faced by scheduled-caste women and children in accessing health services from public institutions (Acharaya, 2006). The study found that the highest degree of discrimination was reported in the treatment during dispensing of medicine, followed by diagnostic visit to the doctor (in Rajasthan)/conduct of pathological tests (Gujarat) whereas; consulting care providers for referral treatment was reported as the area of least discrimination in a scale of 1 to 5. The most discriminating provider was the one at grass root level – namely ANM workers in the public health providers, and the traditional healer in the private health providers. The higher-order providers such as doctors were the least discriminating in their behaviour.

Evidence on caste-based discrimination in access to drinking water

Dalit women also face caste-based discrimination while accessing drinking water. The study in Gujarat⁹, conducted in 1971, is based on a survey of 69 villages. A repeat survey of these villages was done in 1996 to see changes in practice of untouchability. The study looked into the practice of untouchability in seventeen spheres of village life, which include the private and public domain. In 1971, 44 villages had separate water facility for SCs near their localities. Two villages had been added to this list in twenty-five years. Untouchability is not experienced in normal times, but when

9. Shah, G, 1998. 'Caste and Untouchability : Theory and Practice'. Paper presented in Seminar "Ambedkar in Retrospect", JNU, New Delhi, 1998

water is scarce, SCs experience difficulty and discrimination in taking water from high-caste localities. In the remaining 23 villages in which the untouchables take water from the common source, untouchability is practiced in 61 per cent of the villages. In most such villages SC women take water after the upper-caste women, or their tap or position on the well is separately marked. In seven villages (11 per cent of the sample villages) SC women are not allowed to fetch water from the well. They have to wait till the upper caste women pour water into their pots. The upper-caste women who shout at them constantly humiliate SC women: "Keep distance, do not pollute us!"

Evidence on atrocities and violence faced by Dalit women

Evidence on Atrocities and Crimes against Dalit Women from Official Sources: Sexual harassment also takes more violent form of physical molestation and rape. The incidence of recorded instances of atrocities on Dalit women is far higher than non-Dalit women. The position of Dalit women in the society is reflected by the nature and number of atrocities committed on her. Being a Dalit woman, abuse is used to remind her of her caste and keep her oppressed. On an average, about 1000 cases of sexual exploitation of SC women are reported annually and another 400 cases are reported for ST women.

The economic and political vulnerability exposes them to multiple levels of violence. During the period of 1999-2001, an average of 28,016 cases of discrimination and untouchability were registered annually by the 'untouchables' under the Anti-Untouchability Act of 1955 and Prevention of SC and ST Atrocities Act. This comes to about 3 cases per lakh population. The ratio of such cases was the highest in Rajasthan (9.3); followed by Madhya Pradesh (7.7), and Uttar Pradesh (4.9). The ratio was about 3 cases per lakh population in Orissa, Karnataka, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The break-up of crime against SCs for the year 2001 includes 763 cases of murder, 4547 of grievous hurt, 354 cases of arson and 1316 cases of sexual assault (rapes), and 12,200 cases of other offences. In the case of STs, an average of 4952 cases of crime was registered annually. Most of these cases were confined to Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The break-up was 167 cases of murder, 756 of hurt, 108 of arson and 573 of sexual assault (rape) and 2732 cases of other offences. Total atrocities (2001) against SCs were five times more than that for non-SC/STs and this is more or less true for different types of crimes also.

Evidence on atrocities against Dalit women from primary survey: A study in 2004 was initiated (Irudayam s.j, Mangubhai, Lee, NCDHR and AIDMAM), to examine the forms and manifestations of violence against Dalit women over the period 1999 to 2004. A total of 500 Dalit women were selected, based on information supplied by knowledgeable persons or organisations working with the Dalit community, from a sample of 32 panchayat unions/mandals/blocks falling within 17 districts of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu/Pondicherry and Uttar Pradesh. The wide-ranging experiences shared by the Dalit women in this study, when analysed, reveal the multiple layers of violence that pervade their lives. Dalit women endure violence in both the general community and in the family, from state and non-state actors of different genders, castes and socio-economic groupings.¹⁰

Forms and Frequency of Violence: Twelve major forms of violence constitute the basis of this study, nine being violence in the general community – physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment

10. http://www.idsn.org/uploads/media/Violence_against_Dalit_Woment.pdf

and assault, rape, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, kidnapping and abduction, forced incarceration and medical negligence – and three being violence in the family – female foeticide and infanticide, child sexual abuse and domestic violence from natal and marital family members. The majority of 500 Dalit women have faced several forms of violence over the past five years, either in one incident, or in a series of incidents of violence, in either or both the general community and the family. The more frequent forms of violence that are perpetrated against the majority of Dalit women are verbal abuse (62.4 per cent of total women), physical assault (54.8 per cent), sexual harassment and assault (46.8 per cent), domestic violence (43.0 per cent) and rape (23.2 per cent), in descending order. Although the remaining forms of violence are faced by relatively fewer Dalit women (less than 10 per cent of total women per form of violence), this does not discount their gravity, precisely because of the qualitative factor of force present in these forms of violence¹¹.

The evidence based on primary level study by Action Aid across 500 villages across India; indicate that across all states Dalit women are subjected to constant harassment and violence from non-Dalit. Harassment takes numerous forms: non-Dalits frequently use abusive and derogatory language while addressing Dalit women. They refer to Dalit women as prostitutes or use caste names. In their work place or in the market, non-Dalit supervisor or trader will often make sexual innuendoes to Dalit women.

There are some specific caste-related deprivations which have evolved through social customs and religious practices in Hindu society, which affect only Scheduled Caste women. These social and religious practices have lead to a high degree of sexual exploitation of SC women in selected parts of India. Some of these customs include the Devdasi, and Jogini systems, under which unfortunate village girls are married to a village god and then become the subject of sexual exploitation by the upper castes in the village. The primary survey by Organisation against *Jogini* estimated the number of Joginis in six districts of Andhra Pradesh at around 21,421. A similar practice exists in States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra, where they are designated as *Devdasis* (devotees of God).

We gave an overview of the gender and caste-based discrimination which Dalit women faced in economic and social sphere. Evidence from pilot studies indicated that nearly one in two of 500 Dalit sample women suffered from domestic violence. This violence was in the form of verbal abuse of the women, accompanied by physical assault. The caste-based discrimination in employment was found to be in the form of gender preference in hiring, denial of work in some type of work and in some places and work relations. Discrimination in access to drinking water takes the form of either complete denial where SC women are not allowed to fetch water from the well or access which is discriminatory in nature.

This evidence indicates that there are similarities and differences in the problems faced by women belonging to SC and rest of the women. Like all women these women also suffer subordination resulting from patriarchy within the family, at places of work, and in society. Like their poor counterparts in other female groups, they also suffer from lack of access to income earning assets, education and resultant high poverty. However, the SC women differ from rest of the women in so

11. *ibid*

far as their performance with regard to human development indicators is lower compared to other women. This heightened deprivation can be attributed to social exclusion.

Social exclusion and discrimination of these groups results from their cultural identity, which the rest of women do not face. It is this “exclusion –induced deprivation” which differentiates excluded women from the rest of the women. Within this framework of unique challenges faced by Dalit women, the section below analyses the level of political participation at national and local level in order to understand their representative strength and effectiveness in governance.

5. Political participation of Dalit women in India

Political participation is generally recognized as a representative instrument towards achieving positive policy outcomes for each group. In 2009, only 10.3% of the seats in both houses of parliament were held by women and only 10% were in ministerial positions placing India in 100th and 93rd positions globally, respectively, on these indicators¹². Democracy, by definition, must account for all its constituents; with women making up roughly half the country’s population, it seems absurd that they do not comprise anywhere near a similar composition in the national parliament in India.

It is now fairly well established that women in power are more likely to take up and prioritize women’s interest and needs¹³ and that an increased representation of women in governance would lead not only to inclusion of women’s issues on the political agenda, but once ‘critical mass’¹⁴ of women politicians has been reached, it would lead to a genuine representative democracy. Consequently, women’s rights advocates in India have been raising the demand for more seats for women in governance structures. The need for affirmative action in the form of reservation for women in Indian politics was first highlighted in 1975 when the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1971-74) noted increasing marginalization of women in the country’s economy, political class and society. Since then women’s groups have been demanding a reservation of seats in the Parliament for women. The Women’s Reservation Bill was born out of such activism. The Bill has a long history of debate and deliberation in the parliament and was finally cleared in the upper house in 2010 and it’s now awaiting clearance in the Lok Sabha.¹⁵

12. <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/IGGR09.pdf>

13. For e.g in the US, by the early 1970s, women serving in both chambers of the U.S. Congress helped focus more attention on the needs of women. Some of the significant pieces of legislation affecting women that were passed into law resulted in: Greater freedom in reproductive choice (1973); Prohibitions against discriminating in employment against pregnant women (1978); Tougher child support laws and protection of pension rights for widows and divorced women (1984); Provision of federal funds for child care (1990); Employment protection for workers needing extended time off to care for family members (1993); Protections against violence (1994). http://www.america.gov/st/diversity_english/2007/February/20070226171718ajesrom0.6366846.html

A recent global survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that women parliamentarians as a whole tend to emphasize issues such as childcare, equal pay, parental leave and pensions. They highlight reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence, human development, the alleviation of poverty and the delivery of services.

14. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), an important human rights document concerning women and female children, was approved at the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing, China attended by 150 countries and three-thousand NGO’s. The BfFA considers a target of 30 per cent, as a sufficient “critical mass” of women deemed necessary to bring about real changes in parliament.

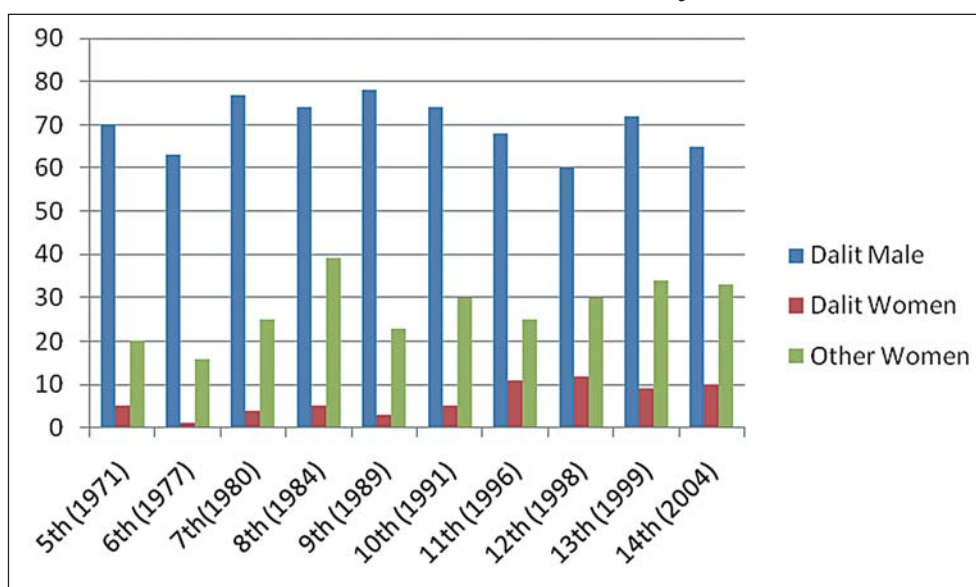
15. For detailed debates around the Bill, see Meena Dhanda edited, *Reservations for Women*, Women Unlimited 2008.

While Women's Reservation Bill is a commendable step forward for the Indian polity, it must be noted that not all women in India are born equal. There are wide disparities in human development indicators across social groups. For this legislation to make sense for Dalit women, it needs to recognise these differences for the women who are trapped in the additional burdens imposed by caste and poverty. The section below talks about the issue of political participation of SC women in two ways. There is some official data which gives the representation of SC women vis-à-vis non-SC women and vis-à-vis SC men in the parliament. We will study the unequal representation of SC women in parliament. Secondly, there are few studies which examine the nature of participation and the effectiveness of Dalit women in panchayats and other bodies. Based on the limited evidence, we will study how effective is the role of SC women in the political governance. We also look at issues related to participation in the political institutions with the help of primary studies.

Status of Dalit women in political participation as Member of Parliament

Based on the statistics of the national census 2001, India is home to more than 80 million Dalit women. Indian data on the trends in participation at the national level of governance show that participation of women in general and Dalit women in particular remains dismally low in India. Data on Lok Sabha from 1971-2004 reveals the dominance of SC men in the politics as compared to SC women. The 14th Lok Sabha had a total of 75 MP's from SC social group, of which 65 were men and 10 were women. When compared to 1971, more women parliamentarians have entered politics since 1971. There is slight improvement in the percentage share of the women parliamentarians from SC background although they continue to be underrepresented. They are under-represented when compared to SC men and non-SC/ST women.

Picture 1 - All India Members of Parliament by Caste and Gender



Source: IIDS data bank

The 1971 Lok Sabha had total of 26 women MPs, of which 5 belonged to SC group, 1 belonged to ST group and remaining 20 belonged to Non SC/ST groups. The data on Lok Sabha from 1971-2004 reveals the dominance of Non SC/ST women groups in the politics as compared to the women from

the Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribe background. The data indicates that the highest number of females from non SC/ST groups belonged to the 1984 Lok Sabha i.e. Congress dominated regime. The number of SC and ST women parliamentarians accounted to 5 and 2 in number constituting 10.87 and 4.35 per cent of the total membership (see Tables 18 and 19).

The highest numbers of SC women were in the 12th Lok Sabha which consisted of 12 SC women members and only two women MPs from ST background and 30 women MPs from non-SC/ST background. The data indicates that in terms of the membership of the women parliamentarians, the 1977 Janata government had had least number of women parliamentarians with only one SC female, one female from the Scheduled tribe background and 18 females from non SC/ST background. After 1984 Lok Sabha that had the highest number of the women parliamentarians, i.e., 46 in number; the percentage share of the women parliamentarians declined. Yet after this decline there has been considerable increase in the Indian National Congress of women parliamentarians since 1991. More women parliamentarians have entered politics since 1991. There is a slight improvement in the percentage share of the women parliamentarians from SC background; although they continue to be underrepresented.

Table 1: All India Members of Parliament by Caste and Gender

	SC			Other		
Lok Sabha	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
5th (1971)	70	5	75	420	20	440
6th (1977)	63	1	64	447	16	463
7th (1980)	77	4	81	428	25	453
8th (1984)	74	5	79	410	39	449
9th (1989)	78	3	81	390	23	413
10th (1991)	74	5	79	402	30	432
11th (1996)	68	11	79	403	25	428
12th (1998)	60	12	72	407	30	437
13th (1999)	72	9	81	411	34	445
14th (2004)	65	10	75	394	33	427

Source: www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

Table 2: All India Percentage Shares of the Members of Parliament by Caste and Gender

S.No.	SC				Others		
	Lok Sabha	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	5th (1971)	93.33	6.67	100	95.45	4.55	100
2	6th (1977)	98.44	1.56	100	96.54	3.46	100
3	7th (1980)	95.06	4.94	100	94.48	5.52	100
4	8th (1984)	93.67	6.33	100	91.31	8.69	100
5	9th (1989)	96.3	3.7	100	94.43	5.57	100
6	10th (1991)	93.67	6.33	100	93.06	6.94	100
7	11th (1996)	86.08	13.92	100	94.16	5.84	100
8	12th (1998)	83.33	16.67	100	93.14	6.86	100
9	13th (1999)	88.89	11.11	100	92.36	7.64	100
10	14th (2004)	86.67	13.33	100	92.27	7.73	100

Source: www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

Status of Dalit women as Panchayat leaders

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has created space for women in political participation and decision-making at the grass roots level by providing that 1/3 rd of the seats are reserved in all over the country.

Dalit women have also been separately granted 33 per cent reservation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Though there have been a lot of studies published to look into the status and the role played by women in PRIs after the 73rd amendment. However, these studies are general in nature looking at the functioning of women representatives as a whole and not focusing on the Dalit women.

There are a limited number of studies on the status and the role of Dalit women leaders. The study of Haryana (2005) points out that a majority of Dalit women were between thirty and fifty years of age and most of them were illiterate, staying in the joint families that forced them to perform multiple roles after being elected. Though they had to play the role of leaders but lack of education was a major hindrance that did not enable them to understand even the basics of PRIs. The majority of SC women were not aware of their roles and responsibilities as the Members and those who were aware did not assert their rights as representatives due to societal imposed inhibitions and disabilities. Another important handicap has been the proxy representation of the women by their male counterparts in the family. Though in majority of the cases, proxy representation is done by the husband but it is also the sons and the fathers-in-law who become defacto representatives. There are also some recorded instances of SC women elected representatives in the panchayat institutions being prevented from carrying out their duties owing to caste discrimination. At times they are not allowed to sit on a chair to preside over a meeting; there have been instances of SC women *sarpanches* not being allowed to conduct flag hoisting on Independence Day and Republic Day; often it is the male, non-SC deputy *sarpanch* who conducts all the business of the panchayat when the sarpanch is SC woman.

Effectiveness in political participation at the local level of governance

In the end we look at the discrimination faced by Dalit women in the course of performing their

roles in various bodies particularly village panchayat (village council). Although there are many incidents reported in newspapers focusing on the discrimination on Dalit Women in PRIs, the studies which deal with the constraints faced by Dalit women in performing their roles as representatives in the local governance are very few. Panel 3 captures the sphere, nature forms and consequences of gender and caste-based discrimination faced by dalit women leaders in the course of performing their role in the village panchayat.

Limited empirical evidence from primary studies suggests that Dalit women face constraints which are related to patriarchy and to their caste background. On the issue of patriarchy, the study on Haryana by Dhaka and Singh (2005), points out difficulties faced by Dalit women in performing their roles in the form of proxy representation of the women by their male counterparts in the family. Though in majority of the cases proxy representation is done by the husband but it is also the sons and the fathers-in-law who become defacto representatives. The study points out that at times women are compelled to contest elections so as to serve the interests of the idle or unemployed male members of the family.

Panel 3: Caste-based discrimination faced by Dalit women as Panchayat leaders

Spheres of Discrimination	Identifier of Discrimination	Consequence of Discrimination
In decision making process (Panchayat Meetings)	Not allowing to participate in decision making process, upper-caste discouraging women to take part in panchayat meetings,	Not able to utilize funds for schemes on poverty reduction, lack of information from the three tier structure
In performing duties	Discriminatory behavior in the offices of Panchayat, indicating lack of skill in Dalit women in performing duties.	Not able to complete developmental functions in the villages.
Fund Allocation for their Panchayat's	Lack of allocation of funds and neglect from the officials,	Lack of funds to implement schemes meant for women and their community,

Source: Information in this table is collated by the Author (Nidhi Sadana Sabharwal) from primary level studies on political participation mentioned in this section

The studies also point out that caste plays an important role in the functioning of the Panchayats. In one of the study (Haryana), one-third of the respondents (villagers) argued upper-castes discourage the women from taking part in Panchayat meetings. They argued that Dalit women were not aware of the developmental schemes and thus there was no question of their participation in the developmental process. It was felt that the family members and the local bureaucracy did not allow these women to function independently as PRIs representatives. The problem of proxy representation also has serious implications on the effectiveness of these representatives.

The perception of the bureaucracy was not much of difference on the role and performance of the Dalit women representatives. They argued that the lack of education made these women vulnerable to perform their roles and subsequently they did not have adequate skills to execute the developmental plans. A majority of them felt concerned about the proxy representation of the Dalit women; however at the same time they asserted that they discourage such proxy representation. Interestingly, officials perceived that the Dalit women representatives were much more confident

and had desire to learn and are sometimes able to display leadership qualities. In the study on Haryana, the representatives themselves opined that lack of coordination among the three tiers of the panchayats is a problem. And this lacked the information on the discrimination faced by them inside the panchayats.

The study of Tamil Nadu (Baghel 2009) pointed out that due to combination of Opponent Dalits and Dominant Castes or combination of Administration and Opponent Dalits, they faced hardships while carrying out the developmental functions in the villages. On the other hand, Bhawani Ilango of Pudukkotti District and Jesu Mary of Ramanathapuram district developed a collective strength and carry out the functions as representatives; successfully and point out that for all their successes, their opponents were responsible as the criticism helps to perform better and administer the schemes perfectly.

The studies also point out that despite these discriminatory practices, Dalit women representatives made four kinds of efforts to empower SC women (1) these women were made aware of their rights and the schemes meant for their betterment, (2) they were motivated to participate in the Gram Panchayat meetings, (3) they were motivated to pursue gainful economic activities, and (4) they attempted to provide loans to SC women, (5) a decline in violence on SC women and men, most importantly, (6) the number of disputes between SC and other communities were on decline as they were using public utility services like ponds and grazing grounds together. Dalit women representatives felt the improvement in their status after getting elected.

In summary, we can infer from the available literature that woman face constraints on effective participation in the panchayat. These constraints are: traditional and patriarchal prejudices against the women; economic dependence on husbands, sons or parents; illiteracy, lack of awareness of rights and duties. These are the constraints which maybe faced by SC women as well, although there are extremely limited numbers of studies focusing on the constraints faced by SC women in performing their responsibilities in panchayat institutions. SC women as panchayat leaders additionally, may also face discriminatory treatment in performing their duties which impact their effectiveness due to their caste background. There are again very few studies detailing these issues which have been presented in the section. Further research is required to understand the constraints faced by SC women leaders in performing their responsibilities, arising due to patriarchy and due their caste background.

6. Conclusion and policy implication

The Indian society is stratified into various social groups called castes. The scheduled castes have historically been placed at the bottom of the caste system, and have suffered exclusion in varying degree, in multiple spheres resulting in high degree of poverty and deprivation. The institution of caste works in a way that Dalits or Scheduled Castes are denied of equal citizenship rights and they even face untouchability.

Scheduled caste women suffer similar discrimination, exclusion, poverty and even untouchability with their men. But like all women, Dalit women also suffer subordination resulting from patriarchy within the family, at places of work, and in society and like their poor non-SC/ST sisters, they also suffer from lack of access to income earning assets, education and resultant high poverty.

However, Dalit women differ from rest of the poor women in terms of additional discrimination which they face i. e. caste related. This is clearly reflected in the differential human development achievements of Dalit women. In all indicators of human development, Dalit women fair poorly as compared to non-Dalit women. Dalit women are also a victim of social and religious practice such as *Devdasi/Jogini* resulting in sexual exploitation of Dalit women in the name of religion. Thus excluded women are not 'just like' the rest of the women. They are also disadvantaged by who they are. They suffer from social exclusion which deprives them of choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and denies them a voice to claim their rights.

A glance at political participation of SC women indicates unequal representation vis-à-vis non-SC women and vis-à-vis SC men in the parliament. The data and trends in participation at the national level of governance show that participation of women in general and Dalit women in particular remains dismally low in India. Moreover, there is evidence on caste-based discrimination faced by Dalit women in the course of performing their roles in various bodies particularly village panchayat which impacts their ability to materially affect policy and legislative decisions.

The Women's Reservation Bill which was finally cleared in the upper house in 2010 and it's now awaiting clearance in the Lok Sabha. The demand for reservation for women has raised some questions about the representation of women from various social groups through this measure of affirmative action. First, there is no guarantee that women from socially excluded groups will get due representation via this constitutional amendment. As argued above, a sizable section of women in India suffer from multiple forms of discrimination in various spheres in the society and may find it difficult to find representation in the parliament, despite this measure. It is the more affluent women from political families which will benefit from the reservation, unless a provision for proactive measure to ensure fair share and participation for women from discriminated groups is included in the reservation policy for women. Second, the women who do make it to the parliament on the strength of reservations may not be 'representative' enough, i.e., they may not be sensitized to the daily challenges faced by women from such socially-excluded groups. Third, SC/ST women face gender discrimination from within their communities that may additionally dissuade their participation in the political process.

Following Ambedkar, Dalit women argue that representing the interests of discriminated groups by others is not enough, their interests could be meaningfully ensured by their own representation and participation in decision-making process and monitoring along with the others at all levels. Therefore, the participation of discriminated groups in the democratic polity at all levels from legislation to execution of policies is necessary. Ambedkar proposed representation in proportion to population share of the discriminated groups in legislature and executive in the form of 'reservation policy'.¹⁶ This measure of affirmative action in political participation was accepted by the Indian Constitution to ensure fair share and participation in the parliament for discriminated groups.

Similar suggestions are being proposed by various agencies to address issue of representation of Dalit women in the parliament. Dalit women's rights activists, and Dalit and some non-Dalit academics are proposing that certain proportion of the seats should be reserved for Dalit women in

16. For details of representation in proportion to population share formula argument, see S Thorat, 2008.

the women's quota of reservation in the parliament. The mainstream women's movement does not accept this proposition of 'quotas within quotas'. They suggest that Dalit women should demand reservation from the already existing quotas in the parliament for the Schedule Caste social group. This is not acceptable to the political parties and the Schedule Caste social group. Some alternatives have also been proposed, such as the possibility of multiple seat constituencies i.e., one man and one woman from every constituency.

It is suggested in the literature, that policies for the discriminated groups require dual solution: a) a set of remedies for the historical denial of economic, social and economic rights (the consequences of which are carried forward and are visible today) and a compensation of that denial in the past; and b) a complimentary set of remedies to provide safeguards against continuing forms of discrimination in the present.¹⁷ Women from discriminated groups suffer from multiple layers of deprivation – gender, poverty and social exclusion. Therefore the problem requires dual solution – first, the policies against gender discrimination and poverty for all women and second, complimentary policy measure against social exclusion and discrimination for women who belong to excluded groups. While we have developed policies against gender discrimination and to further the economic, educational and political empowerment of women, the remedies against social exclusion of scheduled caste women in multiple spheres, such as exchanges in various markets and in supply of services through non-market agencies in education, health services, food security schemes and housing are severely lacking. This would indeed demand complimentary group-specific gender policies, in addition to the general policy of women's empowerment, to address the multiple layers of deprivation of women from excluded groups.

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17. These positions have been well articulated in Ambedkar 1947, Sukhadeo Thorat and Narender, 2008.

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Majority and Minority in Politics of Regionalism in Orissa

Osamu YOSHIDA

Orissa shows one of the most typical examples of regionalism in India and a dynamic politician, Biju Patnaik, is at the centre of this idea even after his passing away. The state political party with his name, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) played a decisive role in the new development of electoral politics in India by creating the first regional outfit out of the declining Janata Dal to align with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1998. This was the beginning of the coalition politics at the centre between the national and regional parties. And the decision by the BJD in 2009 to snap the tie with the BJP ended the hope for the latter to return to power after five years in opposition. In such ways Orissa has been able to pose itself as a consistent unit vis-à-vis the centre to play the games of centre-state politics. And here we should find the differences between Orissa and many other (probably non-South) states about the extent to which national or across-the-state elements affect the state politics. In other words this may mean that common elements of Indian politics like caste and other minorities are put aside in Orissa. Notables including the Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, still play the important roles in this state to represent the interest of Orissa. The stage of political development like this can conceal the differences of interest between the different segments of the people, and thus may obstruct the progress to modern democracy. This approach of regionalism, however, can be an alternative to the political development through identity politics which can be widely observed in India and in the north in particular. Keys to the success of this development include the sense of minorities not to develop too much to be controlled. Conditions for success have to be identified and the populist leaders with regional inclination and skills to connect the regional interest not just with the centre but also with the global interest will be among them.

Communal Riots and States: A Comparative Study of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh

Norio KONDO

Introduction

The Hindu 'nationalist' movement, at present, seems not to be so conspicuous, compared to that from the 1980s to the early part of this century at least superficially. From another point of view, it might be that the surge of Hindu nationalism in that period was rather an exceptional phenomenon on the basis of a specific combination of particular historical contingencies, which enabled the emergence of Hindu nationalism led by the so-called 'Sangh Parivar.' The contingencies include the political vacuum after the collapse of the one party dominant system under the Indian National Congress, which resulted in the emergence of Hindu-majoritarian discourse, the evolution of the Ayodhya problem as an issue utilised by Sangh Parivar and mobilising the Hindu masses, the repercussion to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) movement, especially the reservation issue. Besides these, there is another important factor explaining the surge of Hindu nationalism, that is, the large-scale 'communal riot.' A large-scale communal riot is most likely to widen the cleavage between the Hindu majority and the minorities, which strengthens the majoritarian sentiments for ascendancy over minorities. If the communal riot is an indispensable element for the creation of Hindu majoritarian 'nationalism,' the latter might be rather called Hindu 'communalism,' as it was usually described before the 1990s. Undoubtedly, the communal riots and violence and demonising image of the minorities have been playing an important part in expanding Hindu majoritarianism. So, it is important to study the process of communal riots. In this paper, I would like to look into the conditions leading to communal riots by comparing the two States, that is, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

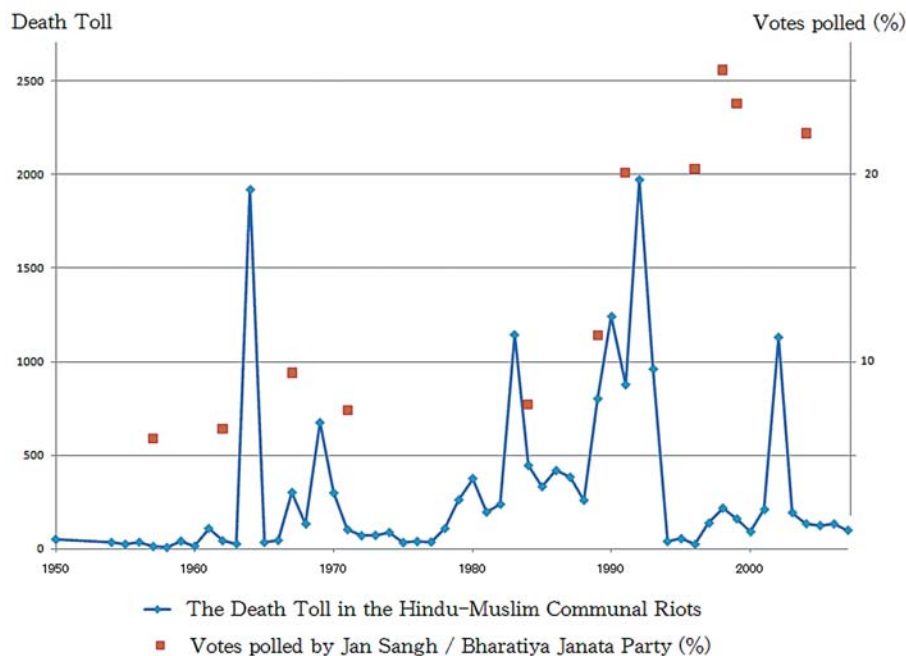
The structure of this paper is as follows. In the next section, the general situation of communal riots in India is to be explained briefly with a special reference to the two contrastive States, namely, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, which is to be followed by a concise review on the studies of Hindu communalism or nationalism, and communal riots. In the next two sections, the cases of the two States are detailed and analysed comparatively. In the conclusive section, the case of the two States is to be summarised and the condition leading to a large-scale communal riot is hypothetically submitted.

I Communal Riots in India: Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh

The contemporary majoritarian Hindu communalism was not automatically produced as a result of the 'natural' evolution of Hindu society, but is an artifact of social and political movement. It goes without saying that the most important socio-political organisations propelling the creation of Hindu communalism are the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its offshoots, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and Bajrang Dal. The movements of these Sangh Parivar organisations have corresponded to the social and political situation from time to

time, and, at the same time, trying to change the situation through politics, especially through electoral politics. So, if the communal riot is one of the important 'social and political situations,' there is a possibility of a correlation between the intensity of communal riots and the change of the electoral popularity of the BJP, which is seen in Figure 1. The votes polled by Jan Sangh (forerunner of the BJP) and the BJP in the Lok Sabha election show a remarkable rise from the end of the 1990s in the wake of the intensification of communal riots. The fact that there is a time-lag between the riots and the rise of popular votes of the BJP seems to suggest the possibility that the intensification of communal riots is a cause for the electoral rise of the BJP. But Figure 1 is based on the aggregate data on an all-India level, and therefore may merely be circumstantial evidence. So, it is important to go deep into more detailed analysis, at least into the State level, which is the main reason I chose the cases of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

Figure 1 The Death Toll in the Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots and the Votes Polled by Jan Sangh / Bharatiya Janata Party



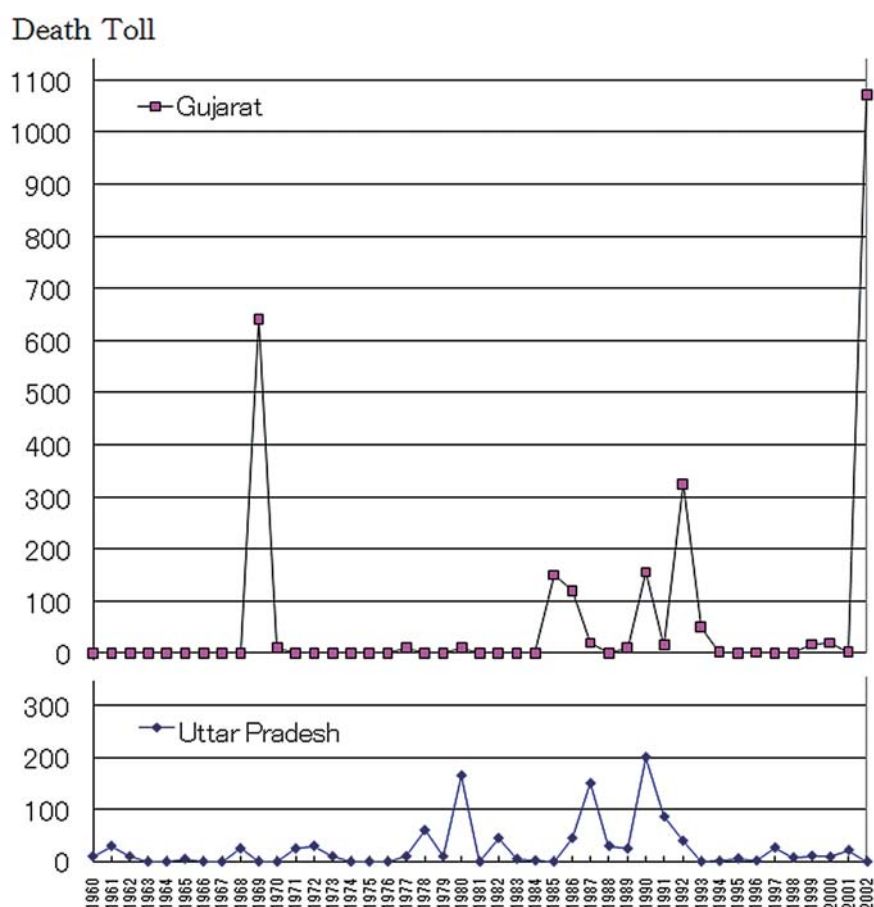
Source: Made by author from the following data sources: Rajya Sabha [2000], Lok Sabha [2004], Engineer [2004: 223-224] (for the years of 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000), Lok Sabha [2005], Ministry of Home Affairs (Govt. of India) [2007: 37]

(Notes) There are few data sources of communal riots. There are some differences in the figures among them due to the difference in method of counting the death toll. But the overall trends of the death toll are not so different among them.

These two States are, indeed, contrastive to each other in the recent evolution of Hindu communalism and communal riots. Although both the States have many elements precipitating communal riots, there is a marked difference in the frequency and scale of communal riots between the two States, as shown in Figure 2. Both the States experienced the rise of communal riots from the latter half of the 1980s to the early 1990s, mostly in accordance with the evolution of the Ayodhya problem and the heightened emotion between Hindus and Muslims. But the graph shows different figures in 1992 between the two States, when Babri Masjid was systematically demolished by militant Hindu forces. In Uttar Pradesh, the severe communal violence was, by and large, contained, in spite of the fact that Ayodhya is located in the State. Although the situation was tense and some communal disturbances were seen, the response of the central government,

which took over BJP State government through President's Rule immediately after the demolition, prevented large-scale communal clashes from spreading. In contrast, in Gujarat which was under the government led by Chimanbhai Patel, there occurred serious communal riots in the wake of the demolition. The riot in Surat was especially gruesome (Chandra [1993]). Additionally, in 2002, Gujarat saw one of the worst communal riots just after the Godhra incident. Contrastively, there has been no large-scale communal riot in Uttar Pradesh since the Ayodhya incident, in spite of sporadic communal tensions. The difference between the two States appears to be remarkable, which is a reason to make comparison of the two States.

Figure 2 The Death Tolls in the Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh



Source: Made by author based on the data in Engineer [2004: 228]

II Studies on Hindu Nationalism and Communal Riots

Before going into the study of each State, I would like to make a brief review of the studies of 'communal violence' in India, which is closely related with the evolution of 'Hindu nationalism.'

The movement propagated by Sangh Parivar to create a political community based on 'Hindutva' (Hinduness) (Savarkar [1989]) ideology can be called 'nationalism' in the sense that the political and the national unit should be congruent (Gellner [1983: 1]). But the creation of a nation in that sense will be a most difficult task in India, if taking into consideration the fact that India, being divided by religion, language, and caste, is the most pluralistic and complex society in the

world (Asia Development Bank [2006: 54]). In order to create a nation as a politically integrated unit, there must be a culturally 'homogenous majority' ruling that unit. And a convenient way for Sangh Parivar to create such a majority, in the historical context of India, is to create a concept of 'threatening others' (Jaffrelot [1996: 50]), that is, the minority who is considered to be 'others' threatening Hindu cultural integrity. Such 'threatening others' can be legitimately oppressed or excluded, with or without force, if their loyalty to the political unit to be created is questionable. Here, 'nationalism' can be mingled with communalism.

One thing must be noted: that is, the expansion of Hindu communalism/nationalism might not have been so rapid, if there had not been the decay or de-institutionalisation of Congress, which was analysed by Manor [1997] or Kohli [1990]. The decay or de-institutionalisation of Congress is, for example, considered to be a necessary condition for the BJP to expand in the electoral arena, which changed the quality of political discourse gradually in favour of Hindu majoritarianism. It seems that the concept of 'Hindu nationalism' began frequently to be used, interchangeably with Hindu communalism, around the end of the 1980s, in accordance with the decline of Congress on the one hand, and in accordance with the expansion of the Sangh Parivar's influence on the other. It is as if a communalism of the 'majority' could be equated with 'nationalism' (Basu, et al. (eds) [1993: 2]).

The studies on Hindu communalism or nationalism were not many until the 1980s, among which Baxter [1969] and Andersen and Damle [1987] were important ones analyzing the historical process of the growth of the RSS and BJP. It was after the 1980s that many excellent studies appeared, which was, perhaps, in accordance with the increase in large-scale communal riots as well as the expansion of the BJP. Bidwai et al. [1996] approached the religious and ideological aspects of Hindu nationalism. Malik and Singh [1994] and Ghosh [1999] were analyses of the Hindu nationalism vis-à-vis party politics. The latter was especially comprehensive in analysing the evolution of the BJP until the 1990s. It was Jaffrelot [1996] which appeared to give a most dynamic picture of the growth of Hindu nationalism. His argument that the strategy of Sangh Parivar to build an image of 'threatening others' against Hindus and utilise it to consolidate Hindu identity had contributed to the expansion of Hindu nationalism is one of the most excellent explanations of the growth of the phenomenon. And his study with Hansen et al. (Hansen and Jaffrelot (eds.) [1998]) showed the State-specific variety of Hindu nationalism in the main States. In addition, Hansen [1999] insightfully showed the relation between Hindu nationalism and social class.

In Japan also, the heightened interest in the rise of Hindu communalism or nationalism produced several important studies. Kotani [1993] discussed the entangled historical lineage of the Hindu revivalism, and Naito [1998] analysed the evolution of the Shiv Sena, which was the son-of-the-soil party propagating the interests of Maharashtrians and Hindus. The Mitsuhiro Kondo [2002] and Nakajima [2005] studies shed light on the religious and ideological aspects of the problems.

The studies mentioned above have a common focus in understanding the expansion of Hindu communalism or nationalism, that is, 'communal riots.' This is because a communal riot is an extreme form of dealing with 'threatening others' in the expansion of Hindu nationalism. Rajgopal [1987] tried to make a typology of communal riots on the basis of the statistical data of riots. McGuire, et al. (eds.) [1996] as well as Nandy, et al. [1997] revealed how the evolution of the Ayodhya movement was entangled with social tension and violence. Varshney [2002] tried to make clear the conditions on which communal riots occur frequently in cities. According to him, a communal riot was likely to break out in cases where the inter-community relation was weak and

the intra-community cohesion was strong. In relation to Varshney's argument, Kaur [2005] insisted also that the existence of a local social network was important to localise the expansion of communal riots. On the other hand, Wilkinson [2004] insisted, on the basis of statistical analysis, that the intensification of electoral politics tended to precipitate polarization leading to communal violence. And we can not discard the series of contributions by Engineer. Especially, Engineer [2004] was useful data collection of communal riots.

Among the studies on communal riots, Brass [2003] is especially relevant in this study. Brass insisted that a communal riot did not break out spontaneously, but it was 'planned and produced' by vested interests who gain some kind of benefit through the riot. Brass named such a structure the 'institutionalized riot system.' All the communal riots may not be explained by the theory of 'institutionalized riot systems.' There were some instances in which small communal clashes ignited communal riots. But it explains an essential part of the recent 'large-scale' communal riots, especially one which occurred in 2002 in Gujarat. The role of the Sangh Parivar was clear, as explained later, in enlarging the riot.

In a nutshell, it can be said, on the basis of these studies, that the decline or decay of the Congress party, due to the various factors including the failure of socio-economic development, the growth of OBCs politics, made room for Sangh Parivar's influence to expand. And the most convenient strategy for Sangh Parivar to realise their expansion was to mobilise the Hindu masses with Ayodhya being the focal symbol, which sometimes resulted in communal violence. The large-scale communal riot was mainly an urban phenomenon, and in many cases, vested interests were there to organise it and gain political benefits.

In the next section, we would like to look into the conditions leading to large-scale communal riots, or, contrarily, the conditions restraining riots, through comparing the cases of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. In order to go into this, it is important to investigate the process of the 'institutionalized riot system.' If it is a case of the 'institutionalized riot system,' we will have to understand who 'organized' the move leading to the riot, with what intention, as well as the role of the State government.

III Communal Riot in Gujarat in 2002: Tyranny of Hindu Majority

The communal riot which broke out in the State of Gujarat in 2002 was the worst one in India since independence. In Gujarat, large-scale communal riots occurred in 1969, 1985-86, 1990, and 1992 as are shown in Figure 2. In the case of the riot in 1969, a skirmish near the Jagannath temple in Ahmedabad resulted in large-scale violence (Government of Gujarat [1971]). In 1985, the mass movement in Ahmedabad opposing the government's policy expanding the reservation quota for OBCs erupted in communal violence (Shani [2007:80-88]). These riots appeared to have been more spontaneous than those after 1990.

The riots in 1990 and 1992 were different from the above riots, because they occurred in line with the Ayodhya movement, which Sangh Parivar spearheaded. The riot in 1990 occurred in the wake of the Rathyatra led by L. K. Advani, and that in 1992 broke out after the destruction of Babri Masjid. The sensitive nature of the Ayodhya movement in Gujarat can be seen in the fact that many karsevaks¹ from Gujarat had been participating in the demonstration demanding the construction of Ram temple (Concerned Citizens Tribunal – Gujarat: hereafter 'CCTG' I [2002:14]).

1. The "karseva" originally means "volunteering for a religious cause" and "karsevak" means "those who conducts "karseva".

The riot in 2002 in the wake of the Godhra incident was the same as the 1990 and 1992 riots in the sense that it was Sangh Parivar who played the decisive role. An important reason for the 2002 riot being so gruesome was that the State government was under the BJP. Before going into the analysis of the riot, I should describe the political context of the riot.

Decline of Congress and the Emergence of the BJP government

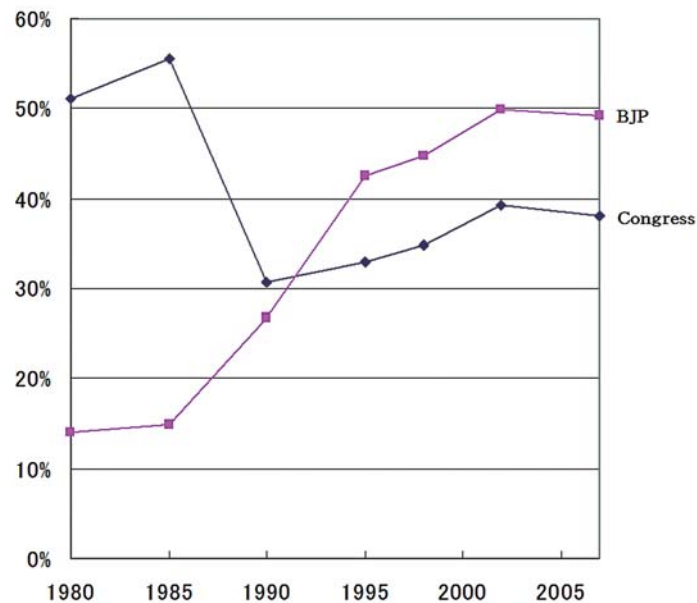
In Gujarat, Congress had been the ruling party until the 1980s, except for the brief Janata Party government periods of 1975 to 1976 and 1977 to 1980. In the 1970s, the support bases of the Congress party was often said to consist of a broad social stratum of the so-called KHAM. This is the combination of the initials of Kshatriyas, Harijans (=Scheduled Castes: SC), Adivasis (=Scheduled Tribes: ST), and Muslims put together. Such a broad alliance was a source of dissatisfaction for the upper stratum of society, such as the Patidar, a socially and politically very strong community in Gujarat. In addition, the corruption of the ruling Congress party and social disturbances such as the 1985 riot disappointed the people and eroded the foundation of the party in the State, as shown in Figure 3, which intensified factional fights and led to the split of the Gujarat Congress. As a result, the rebel faction led by Chimanbhai Patel took over the State government and ruled the State from 1990 to 1994.

In inverse proportion to the decline of the Congress, it was the BJP which expanded its support among a vast population, which in 1995 brought the victory for the BJP in the Assembly election for the first time in the State. The rapid expansion of the party meant the inclusion of heterogeneous elements inside the party and resulted in the split of the Gujarat BJP, which led to the formation of the Shankersinh Vaghela government in the next year. But this government was also short-lived, and the 1998 Assembly election saw the victory of the BJP led by Keshubhai Patel. These intensified political competitions between the parties or between the factions within the parties had further undermined the relatively stable relation between party and caste/community in Gujarat. This increased socio-political fluidity seems to be in the background of further communalisation of the State politics.

It was after the installation of the BJP governments that 'communalisation' of State politics became evident. For example, the State government removed the ban on the adoption to the State government of RSS members in 2000, and it was said the government removed some Muslim policemen from important posts (CCTG II [2002:89]). In the State, a lot of pamphlets which agitated for confrontation between Hindus and Muslims were scattered. But the removal of the ban on the recruitment of RSS members was exposed to strong criticism, and was withdrawn after.

The general socio-politically fluid electorate did not ensure the electoral popularity not only for Congress but also for the BJP. The panchayat election in 2001 revealed the declining popularity of the Keshubhai Patel government, which resulted in the decision by the BJP in the centre to send a fresh and strong leader to the State. Narendra Modi, who was and is a hard-liner of Hindu nationalism with an RSS background, became the new Chief Minister. The 2002 communal riot occurred under his government.

Figure 3 Votes Polled by Congress and BJP in Gujarat Assembly Elections (%)



Source: Made by author based on the following data source: <http://eci.nic.in/StatisticalReports/ElectionStatistics.asp> (Home Pages of Election Commission of India: Accessed on December 30th, 2008)

The Godhra Train Burning and Communal ‘Riot’

The ‘riot’ in 2002 was ignited by the train fire on February 27, 2002 in Godhra, which is located 110 km east from Ahmedabad. 58 karsevaks, including members of the VHP, who were coming back from karseva in Ayodhya, died. Upon the news of the incident reaching people the next day, the communal frenzy broke out in the major cities and 16 out of 24 districts. Muslim people became the main victims of the communal violence (CCTG I [2002:18-22]). The communal ‘riot’ occurred again in the middle of March and continued intermittently until June.

There are different understandings concerning the Godhra train fire incident, depending on the political slants. First of all, opinions are divided even between the central government and State government, as to whether the train fire was an ‘accident’ or ‘pre-planned crime.’

In the centre, the U.C. Banerjee Committee, which the Ministry of Railway of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government appointed in 2004, concluded in the final report submitted in 2006 that the train fire was an accident, though the Gujarat High Court ruled the formation of U.C. Banerjee committee ‘illegal’ and ‘unconstitutional’ in October, 2006.² On the other hand, the Nanavati Commission, which the BJP Gujarat State government established, supposed that the fire was plotted in the report submitted to the state government in September, 2008 (Nanavati and Mehta [2008]). Thus, considering the politically sensitive nature of the incident, a big difference may be borne to the understanding, depending on the materials to be used for analysis. In this article, my descriptive analysis is mainly based on the report of the ‘Concerned Citizens Tribunal - Gujarat 2002’ (CCTG) which was organized immediately after the riot by eminent journalists, retired Judges of the Supreme Court, and the staffs of human right organisations.

Immediately after the Godhra train fire on February 27, the VHP announced that it would conduct a bandh (general strike) to protest the incident. Chief Minister Modi, while visiting the spot, said the incident was pre-planned terrorism, and decided to carry out the State bandh. On the other hand, local Gujarati newspapers, such as Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar, reported the

2. The Interim Report of this committee was submitted in January, 2005 (Government of India [2004]).

incident sensationally, and instigated confrontation (Indian Social Institute [2002:108]). In the atmosphere of deteriorating communal tension, Sangh Parivar took the train fire for a Muslim's terrorism, and prepared to attack the Muslim community according to the CCTG (CCTG II [2002:18]). The features of the attack were as follows.

The most peculiar feature was that, in many cases, the acts of violence were basically "one-sided attacks" on Muslims by Hindu mobs agitated or led by Sangh Parivar, although the incident was called a "riot." According to the 2001 population census, the population ratio of Muslims was 14.2% in urban areas, 6.0% in rural areas, and 9.1% as a whole. This meant that Muslims were confronted with an overwhelming Hindu majority in the violence and, therefore, the casualties were far more in the Muslim community. Such tendency was further accelerated by the fact that, in many cases, the raids were organised by Sangh Parivar. In Ahmedabad, there were a few instances where thousands of Hindu mobs participated in the raids. The Muslims' residences and shops were targeted precisely and systematically. The targeting on them were said to be very precise, even in the areas where Hindu and Muslim residences or shops were mixed (CCTG I [2002: 84, 209, 222, 260]).

Another feature was that, although the violence was more intensive and gruesome in urban areas, especially in Ahmedabad, the attacks upon Muslims broke out extensively even in the villages where peaceful social relations had been maintained over generations (Communalism Combat [2002 March-April:100]). Such wide-spread and systematic attacks might not be imagined without instigation and instruction by Sangh Parivar. Besides, there seem to have been some cases where local Hindu influentials, such as the village Patidar sarpanches, led attacks (CCTG I [2002: 67, 83, 96]). There were some SC or ST sarpanches who spearheaded the raids. It was a recent phenomenon that SCs or STs took part in attacks on Muslims. It is said to have been in 1987 that STs first took part in an attack (CCTG I [2002: 84, 209, 211]). One of the important reasons behind such a phenomenon seems to be the influence of the VHP and RSS over the marginal communities in Hindu society.

Further, the most serious cause of the rapid spread of the communal attacks was the inertia of State law and order machinery, such as the police. Although Muslims asked the police for help during the attack in the initial period, the police responses were quite slow and sloppy as a whole (CCTG I [2002:247]). Furthermore, some police personnel were said to have participated on the side of the Hindu mob. The report of the CCTG alleged that the inertia of the police was due to directions from higher up in the State government. The deployment of the army was overdue by 2 days and started from March 1, which further increased the number of victims.

In view of the situation, the Modi government as well as BJP/VHP leaders insisted that the "riot" was a "spontaneous reaction" by Hindus to the Godhra incident, and tacitly justified the attack on Muslims (CCTG II [2002: 19, 37, 60, 76]). The central government under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the BJP also acquitted the Modi government of its responsibility.³

Thus, the systematic instigation of Sangh Parivar and the inertia and omission of State government and police, at least during a few days just after the outbreak of the communal violence, were main factors for the communal violence to spread in many districts including rural areas, and resulted in the heavy casualties among Muslims. According to the government announcement, the victims of the "riot" numbered 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus. The ratio of Muslims reached 76% of

3. See the article in "The Hindu": <http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2002/04/13/stories/2002041308430100.htm> (Accessed on April 16, 2002).

the whole.⁴

Assembly Elections and Politics after 'Riot'

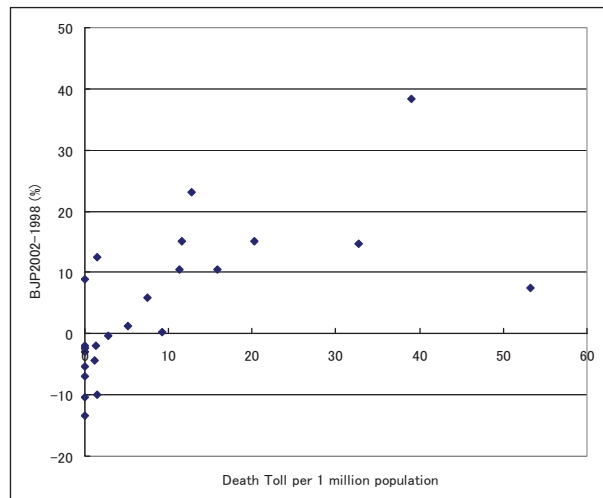
The influence of the "riot" was serious, and the social cleavage in Gujarat was deepened. And it was the posture of the BJP state government which worsened such cleavage. The Modi government was said to be taking a callous attitude in relief measures after the violence. It was only Muslim organizations and some NGOs which were active in the rescue and relief operation (CCTG II [2002:122]). One reason for such a callous attitude seems to be that the Modi government was anxious about the eyes of the Hindu majority as well as Sangh Parivar, especially at the time when the next Assembly election was just around the corner. In fact, the mood of the BJP was said to be for early elections "before the memory of their 'contribution to the nation building' disappears from the minds of the people" (Indian Social Institute [2002:3]). Here, "nation building" means the creation of Hindu majoritarian sentiment against Muslims, as well as the exclusion of those who were detrimental to such a "nation." The Assembly election was held under such a situation in December, 2002.

The two graphs of Figure 4 show the relation between two variables on the district level, one being the intensity of communal violence, and the other the change of votes polled by the BJP or Congress (%) from 1998 to 2002. There is a tendency that the BJP gained more votes in the district where there was severe violence. Table 1 is the regression analysis with the Muslim Population Ratio as a control variable. Although the number of samples is small, still, the same tendency as in Figure 4 can be observed. It is obvious that most Muslims would not vote for the BJP. So, what happened in seriously afflicted districts would be that more Hindus voted for the BJP in favour of Sangh Parivar's Hindu majoritarianism or in opposition to the "threatening other" whose image loomed large in the violence. On the other hand, there seems to be no clear impact on the Congress votes, though a subtle tendency can be seen that there were more Congress votes in the districts with no communal violence.

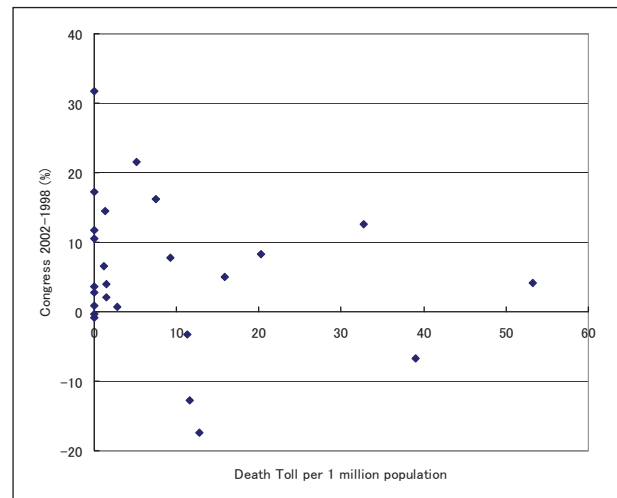
4. According to the BBC news on May 11, 2005, the Minister of State of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. Sriprakash Jaiswal, revealed the figures in Rajya Sabha. The figures include the victims in the Godhra incident. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4536199.stm (Accessed on January 16, 2009).

Figure 4 Communal Riot and Assembly Election in Gujarat: Death Toll and Change of Votes Polled by BJP and Congress between 1998 and 2002 (%)

BJP



Congress



Source: Made by author based on the following data:

- 1) Total population and Muslim population in the districts: Census of India 2001.
- 2) Gujarat Assembly Election data for the years 1998 and 2002, aggregated on the basis of district boundary: Lobo [2006: 210]
- 3) The death toll in the districts: Communalism Combat [2002: 100]

Table 1 Impact of the Communal Riot in 2002 on the Electoral Performance of the BJP in Assembly Elections from 1998 to 2002.

Dependent variable: Votes Polled by BJP in 2002 minus BJP votes in 1998 (%)

Independent variables	Coefficient	t value	Probability	Variance Inflation Factor
Muslim Population Ratio (%)	-0.2302	-0.36	0.724	1.03
Death Toll due to riot per 1 million Population	0.4288	2.41	0.031	1.03
Constant	4.582	0.65	0.526	—

Estimated on OLS.

- 1) No. of samples=16 (Only for sample with “Death Toll due to riot per 1 million Population” is more than zero)
- 2) $R^2=0.330$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.227$
- 3) White's heteroskedasticity test: $\chi^2(5) = 9.86$, Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.0794$: The problem of the heteroskedasticity is not significant at the level of 5%.
- 4) Variance Inflation Factor shows the no sign of multicollinearity.

Source: Calculated by author based on the data mentioned in Figure 4.

Concerning the community-wise impact of the communal violence on elections, the study by Ghanshyam Shah reveals the following important points (Shah [2007: 173]). In the three consecutive elections of the 1998 Assembly, the 1999 Lok Sabha and the 2002 Assembly, the support for the BJP was, by and large, at the same level among high castes. It had been very stable and high. The percentages of support were 77, 77, and 79, respectively. But the support level of OBCs had changed widely. Its percentages were 57, 38, and 59, respectively. OBCs consisting of many castes comprise a large portion of the population. So, it can be inferred that it was the OBCs which were more susceptible to the impact of Hindutva and communal violence, compared to other castes and communities. In the case of the SCs/STs and Muslims, especially the latter, the support

level simply decreased or stagnated. It has to be pointed out that the electoral support of Muslims for Congress were 62, 90, 69 percent in the respective elections according to the Shah's study, which means that, though there was a trend for Muslim support to come back to Congress from 1998 to 1999, Muslims' confidence in Congress decreased from 1999 to 2002 to quite an extent. The victims in the communal violence in 2002 were overwhelmingly Muslim, which seems to have resulted in the disappointment among Muslims for the existing political parties.

What kind of influence have these situations brought to the State politics? There is an interesting investigation about the consciousness of people after the communal violence. In the opinion poll conducted in March, 2004 for the whole State (n= 2961), a total of 64% respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the sentence that "Hindus are in majority so Hindus should rule," while 32% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Besides, concerning the sentence that "Activities of RSS should be supported by the government, as [they] promote patriotism," 57% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 31% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Ganguly et al.[2006: 65, 68]). That is to say, Hindu nationalism was justified by the "majority," which is considered to be a result of the long-term movement of Sangh Parivar and the impact of the unprecedented communal riot. The most remarkable consequence of such evolution is that the "Muslim problem" has been pushed back in the discourse of the party politics in the State.

In the 2007 Assembly election in the State, it was said that "development" became the most important issue. Even Congress, whose important support base was traditionally Muslim, could not grapple squarely with the Muslims' problems seriously in the discourse of electoral politics. This was because it might cause an overreaction by the Hindu majority and bring disadvantageous consequence to Congress in the electoral politics, even though Congress could gain some more votes from Muslims. It was true that the Congress election manifesto for the 2007 Assembly election took the issues on the speedy justice in the cases of the 2002 incident and consequent disturbance, prevention of communal venom, and several welfare programmes for Muslims, but it was the "development" problems which occupied the greatest part of the manifesto (Gujarat Pradesh Congress [2007]). On the other hand, in the BJP 2007 election manifesto, there was no reference to the 2002 incident or the welfare of minorities, that is, Muslims and other religious minorities. The "development" problems and good governance occupied the greater part of the manifesto, while the "Hindutva" plank disappeared (Bhartiya Janta Party (Gujarat Pradesh) [2007]). It was as if the "Muslim problems" were confined under the surface in the two party politics.

The case of Gujarat might be unique, and therefore difficult to generalise. In order to look into the point, I would like to examine comparatively the case of Uttar Pradesh, which was the originator of the Ayodhya problem.

IV Uttar Pradesh: Prevention of Communal Disturbances in the Balance of Party-Caste Nexus

Historically, the State of Uttar Pradesh was an important focus of the communal riots. There are several cities which have experienced severe communal riots, such as Meerut, Moradabad, Aligarh, and Kanpur. Figure 2 shows there were three big communal riots before 1990. Large-scale riots happened in Moradabad and Meerut in 1980 and 1987, respectively. In the former case, an accidental incident developed into a communal riot. In the latter case also, the beginning was an accidental incident, but the Ayodhya issue aggravated it into the riot (Engineer [2004: 51, 86]). Most of the victims were Muslim. In the case of the communal violence in Meerut, it was conspicuous that some SCs also joined in the raid on Muslims (Engineer, [1988:26-30]). These riots

broke out under the Congress State government, and the oppression of the Muslims by the Provincial Armed Constabulary under the State government spoiled the confidence of Muslims in the State government. In 1990, a riot happened in Bijinor under the influence of the Ayodhya movement.

In the period just after the destruction of Babri Masjid, that is, from the end of 1992 until 1993, the State witnessed some communal violence. But the scale of the communal violence was much smaller in spite of the fact that the Ayodhya is located in the very State. The riots were much smaller compared to the riot experienced in Gujarat in 2002.⁵ And there has been no large-scale communal riot since 1993. It is important to investigate the reasons which prevent the large-scale communal riot in Uttar Pradesh where there are many potential factors precipitating communal violence. The most important factor to be examined is the nature of the party system and State government.

After the destruction of Babri Masjid in December, 1992, the State was placed under the direct control of the central government through the President's Rule, because of which the rapid spread of the communal violence was avoided in the State. It was most important that the will of the State government, which was under the central government, was clear to contain the spread of the violence (Brass [2003]).

Hereafter, I will look at the transition of the State politics in and after 1993, when President's Rule was cancelled.

Nexus between Political Parties and Castes in Uttar Pradesh

In Uttar Pradesh, the Congress lost electoral support after the 1980s, the main reasons of which were its failure in socio-economy development, the rise of OBCs, and the spread of Hindu communalism or nationalism (Hasan [1998]). In the decline of Congress which was once able to accommodate a wide spectrum of castes and communities and, therefore, command a majority in the Assembly election, it was Janata Dal which with a wide OBC support base got near a majority with 208 out of the 425 seats in the 1989 Assembly election. But the Janata Dal collapsed due to factional fighting. Then emerged the BJP in the 1991 Assembly election, getting a majority of 221 seats in the heyday of the Ayodhya movement. The Ayodhya movement was successful in mobilising not only higher castes but also many other castes for the support of the BJP, which, however, did not last long. The percentages of votes polled by main parties are shown in Figure 5.

No party could command a majority of seats from 1993 to 2007, which resulted in unstable coalition governments in the State. In the process of the fragmentation of the party system and under an unstable coalition government, there emerged a tendency that each caste or community tried to have its "own" party in order to project its own interest in the party politics. The consequence of such process was the emergence of the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). The core support basis of the former were Yadav caste and Muslims, while in the case of the latter, they were SCs, which was obvious from many surveys (Yadav [2004]).

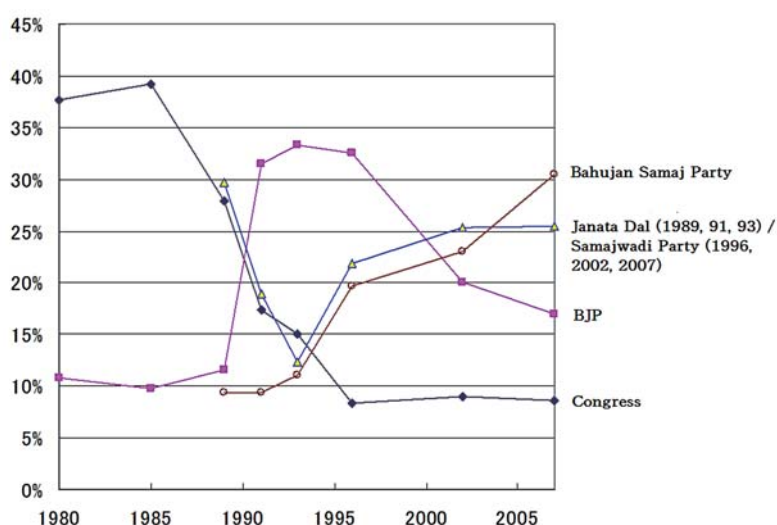
Such a nexus between a political party and castes/communities would be comparatively stable. The political party would surely gain the support of such castes/communities by representing their interests. And the castes/communities would vote for the party in the election, because they know only that party represents their interests and not other parties, whether the party is in the government or outside it (Chandra [2004]). So, this polarised fragmentation seems to be stable

5. They were also relatively smaller in comparison with the riots in Mumbai from 1992 to 1993 just after the destruction of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

unless there emerge a party which can be recognised by many castes/communities to represent their interest.

Because of the tendency toward the polarised fragmentation, it became difficult for a political party to command a majority independently in the election, which led to the series of unstable coalition governments, or if it failed, President's Rule, as in the periods of 1995-1997 and 2002. For example, the average term of office of the state Chief Minister from 1993 to 2007 was about 1.2 years. In the 2007 election, the BSP succeeded to command the independent majority of seats with about 30 percent of the votes. But the situation of polarised fragmentation does not seem to have changed a lot. It is this situation in which we must consider the political position of minority groups, such as Muslims. I will examine this point on the basis of the discourse in the election manifestos of the main political parties.

Figure 5 Votes Polled by Parties in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections



Source: Data on the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections in the Archive of the Election Commission of India: <http://eci.nic.in/StatisticalReports/ElectionStatistics.asp> (Accessed on December 30, 2008)

The Muslim Issue in Main Parties

We could see the typical political discourse of the party in the election manifesto. Conclusively speaking, the appeal to the Muslim community was obvious in the election manifesto of the 2007 Assembly election in every party, except for the BJP. The BJP hardly relied upon the support of Muslims because of its Hindutva agenda. But other parties were competing in quest of Muslim support.

Concerning the SP, it is difficult for the SP to win an election if it loses the support of either the Yadav caste or Muslims. Among them, although the Yadav is a stable support base, Muslim support is not as obvious as it seems to be. It is often said that the Muslims tend to vote strategically for the party which provides their safety and interests. The SP, therefore, could not but make more efforts to secure the support of Muslims. The SP election manifesto for the 2007 Assembly election made every effort to woo the support of the Muslim community. It insisted that there would be no major communal riots when it was in power, and the SP would be ready to provide governmental assistance to the Muslim community, including reservation, when it returned to power (Samajwadi Party [2007: 1, 5, 9, 10]). The appeal was more clear and intense than the SP's manifesto for the 2004 Lok Sabha election (Samajwadi Party [2004]).

The BSP, whose main support base is SCs, had been trying to extend its base to other communities after the second half of the 1990s. One of the important targets was Muslims. In its appeal to Muslims issued at the end of the 1990s, it criticized that it was high castes which had instigated the communal relations and brought about communal riots leading to the heightened enmity between SCs and Muslims. It also said that the reason the BSP cooperated with the BJP in the government formation in 1997 was to thwart the policies hostile to Muslims, or that it was under BSP State government that Muslims could feel at ease (Bahujan Samaj Party [n. d.a]). The BSP, however, needed more extensive support in addition to SCs and Muslims in order to gain a majority in the State Assembly. The BSP, therefore, began to try to remove the uneasiness of higher caste people against the BSP which had been speaking ill of those higher castes as having 'Manuwadi' mindsets. The appeal issued by the BSP around 2006, for example, said that although the BSP opposed an unequal society as depicted in the Manu Code, the BSP was not against the 'Savarna' people (castes belonging to three higher varna, i.e., Brahman, Kshatriya, and Vaishya) if they were not imbued with discriminatory thoughts, which was shown in the inclusion of the high caste people in the candidate list for the 2007 Assembly election (Bahujan Samaj Party [n. d. b]). It was the 2007 Assembly election which saw the success of such strategy. The BSP won a majority of seats.

Finally, it was and is clear that Congress need eagerly to court the support of Muslims. Muslims were once one of the stable support bases for Congress from independence until the 1980s. Although their support of Congress decreased in the 1980s, there has been a possibility for their support to return to Congress, because of which Congress has been trying repeatedly to regain Muslims' confidence. In the Assembly election in 2007, the Congress manifesto put up several points for minorities such as Muslims, which included generous treatment for minorities by the State administration and police, strengthening of the Human Rights Commission, strict punishment against the instigator of a communal riot, application of the reservation to Muslims, strengthening of the Urdu language, maintenance of Muslim Personal Law, and protection of household industries. (Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee [2007: 19-23]). This stand is completely different from the Gujarat Congress manifesto for the 2007 Assembly election.

Thus, the polarised fragmentation of nexuses of party-castes/communities has made parties compete with each other for the support of Muslims in electoral politics. In particular, the SP has been trying hard not to lose the support of Muslims. Such a situation is making it impossible for the main parties, except for the BJP, to disregard the demands of Muslims. The BJP has become a weak third party. This is because its support base has shrunk to the higher castes and a portion of OBCs in the process of the polarised fragmentation. Further, the situation of the polarised fragmentation has made the lower castes or communities more independent from the higher castes or socially powerful sections, which has reduced the possibility that the lower castes or communities would side with the Hindutva agenda propagated by Sangh Parivar.

Thus, in this system, the 'institutionalized riot system' could not emerge easily. The large-scale communal riot has not been seen since 1993.

V Conclusion

It is very difficult to generalise the cause of the large-scale communal riot because there are many factors for a large-scale communal riot to break out. But it can be said that the communal riots before the 1980s were more spontaneous, where a small incident related to a religious event or a skirmish of the organised gangs in the city triggered the riots. It seems to be that the large-

scale communal riots after the 1980s were more instigated and institutionalised rather than spontaneous. The important reason differentiating the riots before and after the 1980s might be the systematic movement of Sangh Parivar after the 1980s which utilised the Ayodhya problem as a symbol institutionalising the Hindu masses.

Comparing the two States after the 1990s, the case of the “institutionalized riot system” is more clearly applicable to Gujarat. The systematic instigation by Sangh Parivar and the inertia and omissions of the State government and police to prevent the violence from spreading were clearly evident. It was, for one thing, because the State organisation was penetrated by the influence of Sangh Parivar. The wide-spread rioting seems to have resulted in the increase in BJP votes in the 2002 Assembly election. Even the main opposition party, that is, Congress, seems not to have been serious enough to take up Muslim causes, including security. It was considered that a fluid relation between the parties and castes/communities was an important reason behind the situation.

On the contrary, there has been no large-scale communal riot since the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December, 1992, in Uttar Pradesh. The basic reason is considered to be such a situation where the main parties, except the BJP, have strong motive for getting Muslim support in order to come to power in a party system experiencing polarised fragmentation. In every election, these parties had been eagerly wooing Muslims. In the case of the BJP, its support base has shrunk to the higher castes and a portion of OBCs in the process of the polarised fragmentation. In addition, the polarised fragmentation is considered to make the lower castes or communities more independent from the higher castes or socially powerful sections, which has reduced the possibility of the lower castes or communities to side with the Hindutva cause.

The large-scale communal riot widened the social cleavage between the two communities, and deflected the Hindu public in the direction of Hindu communalism/nationalism, which resulted in the increase in Hindu support of the BJP. This was typical in the case of Gujarat. But the BJP, as a responsible governing party, cannot neglect law and order, which sets a limit for the BJP to rely upon the Hindutva and communal riots.

The comparative study of the two States shows us an important point concerning the large-scale communal riot. It is the party system of polarised fragmentation sensitive to the voice of Muslims that is most likely to prevent large-scale communal riots. If the ruling party is sensitive to the voice of Muslims, the State government cannot ignore their demands. And it is the State government that has all the resources to contain the communal riots, if it has firm political will. In Gujarat, the voices of Muslims do not reach the ruling or opposition parties, because the Muslim community is a minority, and even the main opposition party, that is, Congress, can not be eager to support clearly the cause of Muslims in the fluid party-castes/communities relation due to possible repercussions from the Hindu majority.

To what extent can the point raised in this paper be generalised in India? The government of Bihar under Laloo Prasad Yadav or his wife was considered to be a clear case of the party system of polarised fragmentation sensitive to the voice of Muslims.

But one thing must be added. The point derived in this article is a “necessary condition,” not a “sufficient condition,” to prevent large-scale communal riots. There can be other conditions to prevent it. One of the other important conditions might be the ideology of the leftist parties, which could explain the absence of large-scale communal riots in West Bengal or Kerala.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the effect of federalism is also important. There seem to be two points in relation to communal riots. First, federalism is likely to compartmentalise the communalism to the particular State. The 2002 riot in Gujarat was not contagious to the other

States, which theoretically provides a useful form of leverage to the central government to contain riots, depending on which party is in power in the centre. Secondly, the role of the central government is important vis-à-vis State government. For example, when the Babri Masjid was destroyed in December, 1992, by Sangh Parivar and other Hindu nationalists, the Congress government in the centre under Prime Minister Rao immediately introduced the President's Rule to the BJP State governments and tried to prevent communal riots from spreading. In the riot in the State of Gujarat in 2002, however, the BJP coalition government in the centre led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee did not take such a drastic measure. It was clearly due to the pressure from Sangh Parivar, which the Prime Minister belongs to.

Thus, there is a big difference in dealing with communal riots depending on the nature of the central government. It may not be so difficult to establish an “institutionalised riot-prevention mechanism” in the centre if the mechanism does not clash with the interests of the Hindu majority. But if it clash with the latter, it will be impossible to establish such a mechanism.

Note: This is the modified and improved version of the following Japanese paper written by author: Kondo Norio [2009] “Indo Minshushugitaisei niokeru Hindu Nationalism to Communal Bodo” in Norio Kondo ed., *Indo Minshushugitaisei no Yukue*, Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies (Japanese)

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Appendix

LIST OF PRESENTERS

Nobuko NAGASAKI

Director, Center for the Study of Contemporary India, Ryukoku University

Valerian RODRIGUES

Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Kenta FUNAHASHI

Researcher (Global COE), Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

Miki ENOKI

Project Formulation Advisor, Japan International Cooperation Agency

Kenji ADACHI

Shikoku Medical College

Shiv Shankar DAS

Ph.D. Research Fellow, Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Harun-or-RASHID

Professor, Department of Political Science and Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Masahiko TOGAWA

Associate Professor, Graduate School for the International Development and Cooperation, Hiroshima University

Gnanasigamony ALOYSIUS

Independent Writer, India

John ZAVOS

Lecturer, School of Arts, Histories and Culture, University of Manchester, U.K.

Timothy FITZGERALD

Reader in Religion, School of Languages, Cultures and Religions, University of Stirling, U.K.

Sukhadeo THORAT

Professor, Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Nidhi Sadana SABHARWAL

Principal Research Fellow, Gender and Social Exclusion, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi, India

Osamu YOSHIDA

Professor, Graduate School of Social Sciences and Graduate School for International Development and Cooperation, Hiroshima University

Norio KONDO

Director, South Asia Study Group, Area Studies Centre, Institute of Developing Economies

International Symposium on Voices for Equity: Minority and Majority in South Asia

Organized by
The Center for the Study of Contemporary India and
The Research Center for Buddhist Cultures in Asia,
Ryukoku University

22-23, January 2011
Grand Hall, Seiwakan, Omiya Campus, Ryukoku University, Kyoto JAPAN

22 January (Saturday)

- 12:30 Registration
13:00 Welcoming Address Dosho WAKAHARA (President of Ryukoku University)
Opening Address Akio TANABE (Convener of NIHU Program on Contemporary India Area
Studies, Kyoto University)
Introduction for the Symposium
Nobuko NAGASAKI (Director of the Center for the Study of
Contemporary India: Ryukoku University)

Session 1 : Dalit / Buddhist Communities in Contemporary India

Chaired by Shoryu KATSURA (Director of the Research Center for Buddhist Cultures in Asia: Ryukoku University) and Timothy FITZGERALD (University of Stirling, U.K.)

- 13:30-14:00 Valerian RODRIGUES (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India)
“Ambedkar on Modernity and Religion”
14:00-14:30 Kenta FUNAHASHI (Kyoto University)
“Negotiating with ‘Caste’: A Case of Buddhist-Dalits in Contemporary Uttar Pradesh”
14:30-15:00 Miki ENOKI (Japan International Corporation Agency)
“Role and Network of Buddhist Institution in Bijapur, Karnataka: Renaissance of Indian
Buddhist”
15:00-15:15 TEA
15:15-15:45 Kenji ADACHI (Shikoku Medical College)
“Acupuncture and Moxibustion at an Indian Village: with Special Reference to Free Medical
Camps Conducted by Local Buddhists”
15:45-16:15 Shiv Shankar DAS (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India)
“Ambedkar-Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh (1951-2001): An Analysis of Demographic, Social,
Economic and Political Developments”
16:15-16:20 Break
16:20-17:15 Discussion for Session 1
Discussants: Aya IKEGAME (National Museum of Ethnology)
Chisui SATOH (Ryukoku University)
17:30-18:45 Reception

23 January (Sunday)

Session 2 : Religious Minorities and Majorities in South Asia

Chaired by Yusho WAKAHARA (Ryukoku University) and Nobuko NAGASAKI

- 9:30-10:00 Harun-or-RASHID (University of Dhaka, Bangladesh)
“Religion Islam in Social and Political Transformation: The Bangladesh Perspective”
- 10:00-10:30 Masahiko TOGAWA (Hiroshima University)
“Hindu Muslim Relations in a Sainly Cult in Bangladesh: Religious Minority and Coexistence”
- 10:30-10:45 TEA
- 10:45-11:15 Gnanasigamony ALOYSIUS (Independent Writer, India)
“Identity & Politics among the Scheduled Castes in Contemporary India”
- 11:15-11:45 John ZAVOS (University of Manchester, U.K.)
“Negotiating Minority/Majority Religious Identity: Exploring the Social Location of a Transnational Religious Organisation in Britain and India”
- 11:45-11:50 Break
- 11:50-12:45 Discussion for Session 2
Discussants: Maqsooda SHIOTANI (Kashmir University, India)
Toshie AWAYA (Tokyo University for Foreign Studies)

Session 3 : Minority and Majority Making in Indian Politics

Chaired by Mitsuya DAKE (Ryukoku University) and Hisashi NAKAMURA (Ryukoku University)

- 13:30-14:00 Timothy FITZGERALD
“Religion, the Secular, and Bahujan Samaj Discourse”
- 14:00-14:30 Sukhadeo THORAT (Paper read by Nidhi Sadana Sabharwal)
“Minorities and Social Exclusion in Asia: Reflection on Problems and Solution in a Comparative Framework”
- 14:30-15:00 Nidhi Sadana SABHARWAL (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, India)
“Dalit Women and Political Space: Status and Issues related to their Participation”
- 15:00-15:15 TEA
- 15:15-15:45 Osamu YOSHIDA (Hiroshima University)
“Minority and Majority in Politics of Regionalism in Orissa”
- 15:45-16:15 Norio KONDO (Institute of Developing Economies)
“Communal Riots and States: A Comparative Study of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh”
- 16:15-17:15 Discussion for Session 3
Discussants: Hiroyuki KOTANI (Tokyo Metropolitan University)
Pauline KENT (Ryukoku University)
- 17:15-17:20 Break
- 17:20-18:15 General Discussion
Chaired by Hisashi NAKAMURA and Nobuko NAGASAKI
Discussion led by Akio TANABE, Hiroyuki KOTANI and Timothy FITZGERALD

Closing Address: Tesshin AKAMATSU (Dean, Faculty of Letters, Ryukoku University)

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