THE PERSISTENCE OF CASTE

Painting by Savi Sawarkar

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Why a Journal on Caste?

Part 1. An Introduction to the Journal: Laurence Simon

Our journal is founded on the straightforward principle that social exclusion should not be a consequence of one's birth or ancestry. Caste, in its simplest definition, encompasses all hereditary systems and derived cultures that constrain the fullest human development, acceptance and recognition of equal rights for each and every individual. Yet history is rife with 'natural' hierarchies that have their own, often religious, justifications for quasi-biological groupings based on inherited privilege or stigma. Rawls considers this backdrop to modern theories of justice.

> Thus, in a feudal or in a caste system each person is believed to have his allotted station in the natural order of things. His comparisons are presumably confined within his own estate or caste, these ranks becoming in effect so many non-comparing groups established independently of human control and sanctioned by religion and theology. Men resign themselves to their position should it ever occur to them to question it; and since all may view themselves as assigned their vocation, everyone is held to be equally fated and equally noble in the eyes of providence.[1]

In the West, these archaic notions of a fixed and ordained society were derived in part from the Ptolemaic conception of the universe with the earth, man, kings, and aristocracy as the center of God's creation. These were eventually challenged by the emergence of science and rational inquiry. Even in the modern era illusions of superiority were common among early settlers to the Americas. The indigenous peoples of North and South America were eliminated through genocide with their survivors marched through the trail of tears. The English word caste derives from the Latin *castus* denoting being cut off or separated, and the Portuguese *casta* carried that further into purity of lineage, race, or breed thus separating the colonial Portuguese from the indigenous and mixed races of Brazil.

This concept of purity can poison cultures and create pseudospeciation, a term first used by the American psychologist Eric Ericson to describe marginalized groups considered so inferior that they have become in the eyes of the oppressor distinct and subpar species. We only have to think of the Europeans' exploitation of the African slave, or blacks in apartheid states of Africa, or the Jews of Imperial Russia who were confined to the Pale of Settlement, limited to Jewish quotas for education and suffering the collective violence of pogroms against their communities. Western history is littered with such dehumanization and their legacies are still palpable in contemporary societies.

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[1] John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971) p. 547.

Asia was the cradle of some of the world's major faiths yet, today in the name of those religions, pogroms are led against religious outsiders in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, and in India. This tragedy of a moral and spiritual corruption has sustained the oldest form of prejudice in the world today: the division of society into rigid, birth-based graded hierarchy of caste. While progress toward social equality has been made, the birth-based caste system has survived millennia and continues to hinder the lives of millions of low-caste and tribal citizens. It remains a leading cause of horrendous acts of violence, including gang rape and lynching, or honor killings for inter-caste romances. It results in suicides on Indian campuses, bias in employment and housing, and a staggering waste of human potential. Despite reformist movements and affirmative action policies, and even after legal protections, the stigma of untouchability still exists in a culture derived from ancient scriptures.

Our journal then intends to encourage and publish scholarship on both the broader experience of caste throughout the world and on the ancient caste system as it still thrives in South Asia. Our articles are carefully peer-reviewed and submitted by scholars from all disciplines in the academy. I heard someone at a conference recently say that scholarship does not matter, that social action does. Yet universities are enormously influential in much of the world and their teachings through curricula expand or constrain the reasoning and reflections of future generations. At heart J-CASTE is a journal about ethics and about moral philosophy. These are the purposeful underpinnings of our perspective. This perspective is deeply rooted at Brandeis, a top-tier research university founded on the principle of social inclusion, and which has recently become perhaps the first in the United States to incorporate caste into its non-discrimination policy.

Part 2. An Introduction to Caste: Sukhadeo Thorat

This being the first issue of J-CASTE, we think it appropriate to introduce the caste system to readers. It is an ancient organisation of the Hindu that involves the division of the Hindu society into five groups called castes. The origin of caste system goes back to around second century BCE when it was legally codified in *Manusmruti.*[2] The system laid down a legal and normative framework to govern all aspects of the society: cultural, economic, religious, spiritual, and political. The moral and legal framework assigned right to property, occupation, education and civil and religious right among the castes. But the assignment and entailment to rights was made in a graded and unequal manner. The caste at the top of hierarchy had most rights and privileges that kept on reducing gradually in descending order of the caste. Further, rights of each of the five castes were fixed in advance and made hereditary by birth. An equally important feature is that each caste is isolated and separated through the rule of endogamy (or marriage within one's caste). Endogamy enforced isolation and social separation of castes from each other and restricted social relations between them. The caste at the bottom of the hierarchy was regarded as 'impure and polluting,' thus 'untouchable' or unfit for any social interaction except among them. Also, they were assigned all the menial tasks of cleaning, scavenging, skinning carcasses, and so on – a stigma associated with them to this day. Traditionally, this caste has had no right

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[2]An ancient Hindu scripture in which social laws were codified.

to property, education, and civic rights, except obligatory services to the four castes above them. Thus, the 'untouchables,' or *atishudras in Sanskrit,* suffer forced isolation and segregation in virtually all spheres of life. The denial of basic rights, fundamental for the social growth of a human being has had a crippling effect on their psyche from which they have not recovered for many centuries. Thus, caste as a social organisation is governed by the unequal assignment or entitlement of rights, lack of individual freedom, and fraternity: the very antithesis of a fair and just system of governance. This has resulted in deep inter-caste inequalities in all aspects of life.

Constitution, Laws and Policies

The Indian State at the time of framing Constitution in 1950 recognised the problem arising out of its social organisation of caste system. It made social justice (social, economic and political), liberty, equality, and fraternity the governing principles of the society, overturning the principles on which caste system was founded. The Constitution promises equal rights to all citizens as fundamental rights. Article 14 assures equality before the law and equal protection of law. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of caste, religion, race, sex, or place of birth, by the State and in use of services supplied by private individual for public use, and /or facilities maintained wholly or partly out of State funds and dedicated to the use of the general public. Article 16 refers to equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, and states that there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment under the State, and no discrimination in employment or office under the State.

Article 17 abolishes untouchability and its practice in any form is forbidden and made punishable in law. Moreover, the Constitution in Article 46, namely Directive Principles of State Policy, makes it obligatory for the State to enact laws and frame policies to enable the citizens to use these (fundamental) rights in practice thus: 'The State is required to protect the Scheduled Caste (ex-untouchables) and Scheduled Tribes (indigenous people) from social injustices and all forms of exploitation.' In the case of scheduled caste, among other things it means protection in law from caste discrimination and untouchability.

The Indian Government, in 1955, enacted the Untouchability (Offences) Act on May 8, 1955 (enforced on June 1, 1955). It was renamed 'Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act, 1979. Thirty-four years later, another law namely 'The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, was enacted in 1989. The Indian Government also enacted an affirmative action policy to ensure fair share to the scheduled castes/scheduled tribes in legislature, public employment and educational institutions.

Similar constitutional, legal provisions and policies were framed in Nepal after the adoption of its new Constitution. Selective policies to secure protection to social minorities, particularly, the scavenger caste have also been adopted in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In UK, after a report on the caste discrimination faced by the Dalits or the scheduled caste in India, the British Government tabled a bill for legal safeguards against caste discrimination, which is pending final approval.

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Persistence of Caste Discrimination and Inequalities

Over a period of time, there has been substantial erosion in the institution of Caste. The situation of the scheduled caste has improved considerably. However, although the caste system has weakened in several spheres, it continues to retain some of its worst features even today. Reference to selected indicators of human development like per capita income, poverty, malnutrition, education, and assets ownership highlight the persisting inter caste inequalities and practice of caste discrimination.

In 2012, the average per capita income (in terms of monthly per capita consumption expenditure at current prices) was Rs 1645 at the all India level. However, it was Rs 2413 for high caste, Rs 1531 for other backward caste or OBC (a lower but not 'ex-untouchable caste), and Rs 1294 for scheduled castes. The per capita income declines as we move from high caste to other backward castes and to the scheduled caste, indicating the persistence of graded inequality in income.

Similar inequality is observed for incidence of poverty, which increases in descending order of caste hierarchy. As against the poverty ratio of 22 per cent at all India level in 2012, only nine per cent among the high caste are poor, as compared to 20 per cent poor among OBC and 30 per cent for SC. Poverty affects nutrition and health status of the people at the bottom of the caste pyramid. In 2015/16 about 36 per cent of children under the age of five were underweight. The ratio was high with 39 percent for SC, 36 per cent for OBCs and 29 per cent for high caste. Similar graded inequality persists in educational attainment too. In 2014, about 78 per cent of students entered secondary /higher secondary level at the all India level. The enrolment rate was 97 per cent for high caste, followed by 80 per cent for OBC and 73 per cent for SC. The enrolment rate for higher education was 43 per cent for high caste, 29 per cent for backward caste and 20 per cent for SC.

Thus, in case of all indicators of human development, namely per capita consumption expenditure, percentage of poor people, malnutrition, and educational attainment the graded inequality still persists. The low human development of the SC is primarily due to their low ownership of income earning assets, low education and employment, and also due to poor access to markets for employment and other things due to discrimination.

The ownership of wealth is heavily concentrated in the hands of high castes. In 2013, almost 45 per cent of the country's wealth was owned by high caste – almost twice their population share of 21 per cent. The OBCs owned about 31 per cent which is fairly close to their population share of 36 per cent. The SC on the other hand owned only seven per cent of the country's wealth share, much less than their population share of 17 per cent. The *average value of wealth at all India level is Rs 1.5million.* It is Rs 2.9 million for higher caste, followed by Rs 1.3 million for OBC, and just Rs six hundred thousand for SC. The scheduled caste average value of wealth is almost six times less than that of high caste and half of OBC.

Due to lack of access to income earning assets in 2011, about 44 per cent of scheduled caste workers in rural area depended on casual wage labour, compared to 26 per cent for OBC and 11 per cent of high caste dependent on casual labour.

In this discrimination plays its part. In 2011/12, of the total gap in per capita monthly consumption expenditure between the scheduled castes and high caste, about 60 per cent was due to differences in ownership of capital assets (land and enterprises), employment and education, but the rest 40 per cent was due to caste discrimination. The gap was mainly on account of discrimination in wages, employment and occupation. The exercise for 2011/12 indicated that in the wage gap between the SC and high caste about 28.5 per cent was due to discrimination. In case of employment, about 70 per cent was due to employment discrimination. The job discrimination is high in white-collar jobs, particularly in high paid administrative and professional jobs in the private sector.

Finding of a *primary survey* done in 2013 in villages of India, shows that the SC wage labour faces restrictions on hiring and wages, both in regular salaried and casual labour in selected works. The SC business persons engaged in grocery, restaurant/eatery and transport service face discrimination in which their goods on sale and transport services are less used by the high caste affecting their income and profitability. Farmers face discrimination in purchase of inputs. While the access to inputs and employment is fairly open to scheduled caste, they also experience discrimination in many spheres, if not all. This affects the income of the scheduled caste wage workers, farmers, and business persons, resulting in high incidence of poverty among them. While this is the situation in case of economic opportunities, the civil rights sphere is not free from discrimination either despite legal safeguards. The Protection of Civil Right 1955 and Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989 allow the scheduled caste to register a legal complaint for denial of civil rights. However, during the period between 2001 to 2016, a total of 2,57,961 cases of atrocities against the SC were registered, which comes to a yearly average of 16,123 incidences of violation per year.

This very brief account of the status of the scheduled vis-à-vis the higher caste, shows that although there has been some improvement in the condition of SC, yet the caste system has remained a relatively stubborn institution. Although it has weakened in several spheres, it continues to retain some of its worst features.

Caste also shows its presence in other South Asian countries, particularly in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. It is also seen as carry forward effects in the Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom, the United States, East Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean among descendants of Indian migrant populations

Caste relations persist in modified forms with negative consequences particularly for the lower castes that have not been able to shed the stigma in spite of conversions to other religions or integration in foreign societies and cultures. Today, caste system is a global issue.

Part 3. About Vol. 1., No. 1: The Editors

The first issue of this journal includes papers by scholars from many academic and professional disciplines who have worked on the issue of exclusion and discrimination. It comprises two sets of papers:

The first set comprises contributions by eminent scholars across the globe. These articles cover two types of issues; one related to access to basic needs such as food,

health and housing, and the second related to caste-based atrocities and violence. The article by Nakkeeran et al. is an ethnographic enquiry into the pre-school Supplementary Nutrition Programme in India and attempts to understand the institutional barriers and sociological processes that led to the exclusion of families and children in accessing these essential services. The paper by Sanghmitra Acharya endeavours to understand the determinants of disparity among population groups across countries which influence access to health care with special reference to India. The paper by Vinod Kumar Mishra explores the nature, form, and pattern of discrimination faced by the scheduled castes or ex-untouchables, Muslims, and people from the Northeastern states while seeking rental accommodation in urban India. The exclusionary practices of landlords and brokers expose the dark underbelly of the urban rental housing market and its discouraging impact on the groups which are at the receiving end.

The article by Kalinga Tudor Silva examines how the rival Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms in Sri Lanka have contributed to 'caste blindness', a deliberate neglect of caste discrimination in public policies, while responding to the problem of long-term internally displaced people (IDP) in Jaffna Peninsula more than a decade after the end of war between the Government and separatists of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The paper by G. C. Pal is based on empirical research on 'mapping caste-based violence' in the contemporary Indian society. The paper sheds light on the diverse consequences of real or perceived violence, emanating from 'caste'. His analysis reveals that the consequences of caste violence are manifested in social, economic, psychological, and moral terms. The paper by Rajesh Sampath, attempts a critical commentary of Ambedkar's posthumously published, incomplete manuscript 'Philosophy of Hinduism'. Sampath attempts to draw out the profound implications of one of Ambedkar's last studies prior to his death, and argues for the centrality of both philosophy, and the philosophy of religion in Ambedkar studies in general.

The second set has articles written by emerging young researchers who have won the prestigious Bluestone Rising Scholars award 2019. There are six papers in this section (including two winners and four honorary mentions). Maya Pramod, winner of the Bluestone award, focuses on the rereading of the social history in Kerala of 'caste colonies', with focus especially on Dalit women. As a member of the oppressed community herself, she finds how the caste colonies serve as the index of their inferior social status, and far from empowering the Dalits, have led to their ghettoisation. The second article by Vivek V. Narayan, winner also of the Bluestone award, analyzes the genealogies of the human in colonial-era Travancore by focusing on three scenes exemplifying performative egalitarianisms: soulful enlightenment, repurposed *Advaita*, and radical *Siddha Saiva*. Both papers are based on Kerala but in different time and context.

The article by Mark E. Balmforth focuses on the underexplored aspect of the interrelationship between caste and slavery in South Asia, and underlines the value of considering South Asian slave narratives as source material into historiography and archivally obscured aspects of dominant caste identity. The paper by Sanober Umar addresses the interrelated connections between the production of Muslims as 'foreign' and the simultaneous relegation of Muslim 'indigenous' histories of conversion (from Dalit and lower caste backgrounds) to the periphery under ahistoric, demeaning, and monolith stereotypes of the 'backward Musalmaan.' The article by Subro Saha, explores the contingencies and paradoxes shaping the idealism/materialism separation in absolutist terms and analyzes the problems of such separatist tendencies in dealing

with the question of caste. The article by Sunaina Arya seeks to initiate a theoretical rethinking of feminist as well as Dalit scholarship, with employment of analytical, hermeneutical, and critical methods by exposing flaws about 'dalit patriarchy'—including a detailed discussion on the empirical, theoretical, and logical shortcomings.

The Forum of the issue has been contributed by eminent economist Jean Drèze who argues that the recent rise of Hindu nationalism in India can be seen as a revolt of the upper castes against the egalitarian demands of democracy. The first issue also incorporated three book reviews on recently published research on caste and social exclusion. And finally, we are honoured to have blessings and best wishes from His Holiness the Dalai Lama who in praising the launch of our journal says that caste "is a vestige of feudalism" and that the journal "can promote a sense of the oneness of the seven billion human beings."

The Dalai Lama

When I meet people, I don't think about being different from them, about being a Tibetan, a Buddhist or even the Dalai Lama. I only think about being a human being. At the fundamental level we are the same, whether rich or poor, easterner or westerner. We all share the same potential for positive and negative emotions.

I am therefore pleased to know that this journal, CASTE: A Global Journal on Social Exclusion, of Brandeis University is being launched to advance the study of caste and social policies. The caste system, from what I know of its prevalence in any place is really outdated; I feel it is a vestige of feudalism. Through education, as your journal aspires to do, we can promote a sense of the oneness of the seven billion human beings.

With my prayers and good wishes,

22 February 2019

Re-Casting Food: Ethnographic Enquiry into the Pre-school Supplementary Nutrition Programme, Gujarat, India

Nakkeeran N.[1], Jadhav S.[2], Bhattacharya A.[3], Gamit S.[1], Mehta C.[1], Purohit P.[1], Patel R.[1] and Doshi M.[12]

Abstract

This study is an ethnographic enquiry into the pre-school Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP), in India's western Gujarat state. The broad objective was aimed at understanding the institutional barriers and sociological process that had led to the exclusion of families and children under the age of six from the SNP. This study was undertaken because despite enthusiastic State investment in human resources and food funding, the uptake of SNP was poor. The study method involved multi-sited ethnographies conducted in four rural villages of Gujarat. The research concluded that caste and religious identities shaped dominance and control, restriction of social interactions, and food commensality. The authors situate these compelling findings within the broader discourse of food as a process of 'othering,' and stigmatised identities as they relate to consumption of 'polluting' food, the symbolic role of food when coupled with caste, and association of religion with food. Observations of SNP delivery sites suggest that spatial and moral dimension of societal caste conflicts directly influence local 'biologies' by reproducing and amplifying such tensions in the *Anganwadi*[1] health centres. Crucial symbolic and cultural markers of food, nutrition, distribution, and consumption are rendered invisible to official health providers resulting in failure of the SNP programme. Current research on global health advocating 'scaling up of models' is an ethical violation if it glosses local ecologies that shape poor uptake of SNP by the affected communities.

[1]Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar, Ahmadabad, Gujarat, India
[2]Division of Psychiatry, University College London, London, United Kingdom
[3]Indian Institute of Public Health Delhi, Delhi NCR, Gurgaon, New Delhi, India

Corresponding Author:
Jadhav S.
Email: s.jadhav@ucl.ac.uk

Introduction

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is the principal State-sponsored programme in India that addresses the issues around child development, malnutrition, and pre-school education. A package of services – including the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP), pre-school education, immunisation, health check-ups, referral services, and nutrition and health education – are provided through an Anganwadi Centre (AWC) with an Anganwadi Worker (AWW) and an Anganwadi Helper (AWH) for roughly every one thousand people.

From the mid-1990s, there have been successive efforts on the part of the Central (federal) Government to universalise ICDS, and there has been a multi-fold increase in the funds allocated to this programme between the 8th Five-Year Plan (1992–93 and 1996–97) and the 12th Five-Year Plan (2012–17) (Sinha, 2006; Planning Commission, 2013). However, the utilisation of all services under ICDS continues to be grossly low. Close to 75 percent of children aged 0–71 months (up to six years of age) in the areas covered by AWCs did not receive any supplementary food from the centres, and less than 12 percent of children received supplementary food 'almost daily.' For children aged 36–71 months or 3-6 years this figure is 15.5 percent. More than 80 percent of children were not weighed at all (IIPS, 2007). It has been reported that children belonging to economically backward and socially marginalised families, including Dalit, tribal, and religious minorities, are excluded from utilising these services through unfavourable institutional rules and structural factors (Ramachandran, 2005; Kabeer, 2006; Thorat and Sadana, 2009; Saxena, 2008, Mandar and Kumaran, 2006; Borooah, Diwakar, and Sabharwal, 2014). Further, members of well-off families do not avail the services provided by AWCs – especially the SNP – for under-6 children (IIPS, 2007).

To identify the reasons behind poor utilisation of AWCs, especially the SNP services, a multi-sited ethnographic study was conducted in four villages in Gujarat. The study aimed to understand everyday experience of households around the SNP in rural settings. The ethnographic approach provided an opportunity to study AWCs as institutions embedded in the context of village cultural life. The authors hypothesise that a study focusing on AWCs could serve as an illustrative case to highlight challenges in implementing other entitlement-based programmes.

Methods

The study was carried out in four villages of Gujarat as short, focused, multi-sited ethnographies. Trained postgraduate researchers were placed in four villages for three months. The villages were selected from the Kutch, Bhavnagar, Dahod and Tapi (Fig 1 districts of Gujarat state). The villages represent regional differences, heterogeneity in population composition, and a familiarity of the researcher with the region, its dialects and local culture. The rural sites were deliberately chosen because, in Gujarat state, rural people are the largest users of ICDS services (IIPS, 2008).

Each ethnography was allowed to evolve independently. Yet, a certain degree of uniformity was maintained by prescribing certain essential domains of data collection

and by retaining the focus on the study's broad aim. These domains include both structural and functional dimensions of the SNP, its staff and potential beneficiaries. The minimum data collection prescribed consisted of a series of interviews with care givers of the children in the target age group from all community groups and settlements; interviews with AWWs and AWHs; observation of the functioning of AWCs; and village mapping. Data was collected through many modes: some as verbatim, and some in the form of field notes from informal and unstructured interviews and observations at field sites. Researchers were encouraged to maintain detailed notes in the form of field diaries and to periodically mail their notes and reflections to the lead investigators. Data was collated and organised by two coordinators, who were supervised by the lead investigators.

Feedback on these notes was provided via e-mail or telephone. In addition, researchers periodically met for de-brief meetings with the principal and co-investigators, in person or through video-conferencing facility. The multi-sited ethnographic method implicitly lent itself to both data and methodological triangulation. The investigator triangulation was achieved through regular Skype and e-mail interactions amongst the three lead investigators and the ethnographers, as well as random field visits by one of the lead investigators. This ensured an inductive and iterative process of supported and supervised fieldwork as well as a robust process of concurrent analysis. Periodically, summarised topical notes, short memos, case-lets, charts, and diagrams were made on selected topics which, shaped subsequent data collection, as well as facilitated progressive development of four separate ethnographies. In keeping with principles of ethnographic research, the researchers resided in the community. Data was collected over a period of three to four months after gradually gaining entry into – and acceptance within – community. The findings were collated and structured along the themes abstracted from the ethnographic findings.

This research was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of the Public Health Foundation of India (ID No: TRC-IEC-125/12).

Results

Caste, Religion and Ethnicity – Community Dynamics Across the Villages

All the four villages portrayed strong community dynamics along caste, ethnic, and religious lines. The villages in Kutch and Bhavnagar districts were typical multi-caste villages representing a wide spectrum of the caste hierarchy. For the purpose of convenience the terms 'upper' and 'lower' castes will be used in the remainder of this paper when referring to caste groups. The two terms are not synonymous with the conventional Hindu *Varna*[2] terminologies and relate more to the local social hierarchy of dominant and subordinate caste groups. In keeping with local categories, the term caste-Hindu will be used to refer to communities who belong to non-dalit, non-Brahmin castes at the study sites. The term ethnicity is used in the context of 'scheduled tribe' communities as they are not included as part of caste hierarchy in the strict sense.
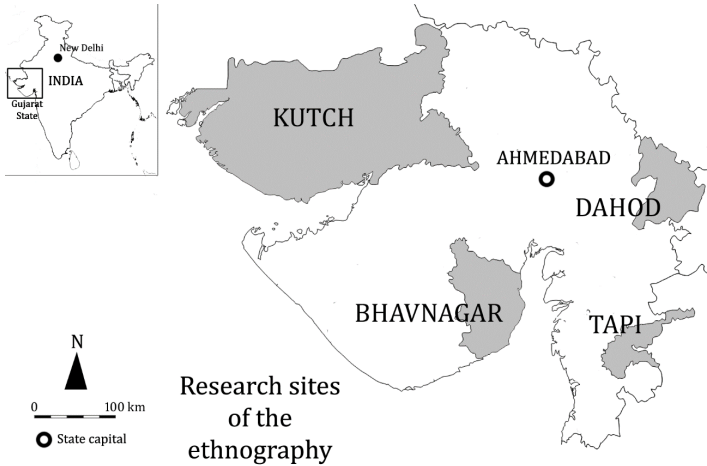
Fig 1. Research Sites of the Ethnography

The Kutch village had a numerical, social, economic, and political dominance of the Patel community. The lesser socially powerful Dalits and Kolis were other numerically large caste groups in the village. Brahmins and other Hindu caste (non-brahmins) groups such as Soni, Lohana, and Baniya, were each represented by a handful of households. Samma (an 800-member community that migrated from Banni region), Notiyar, and Sumra, and a few Pathan households represented the Muslim population in the village.

In the Bhavnagar village, Aahirs, Kolis and Kharaks dominate numerically, economically, and politically. Aahirs owned the bulk of the cattle population while the Kharaks owned most of the agricultural land in the village. The Brahmins were numerically few but occupied an influential position in politics and representation in government-run agencies in the village. Dalits, Devipujaks, and Tai Muslims were other groups with numerical significance. Bharwad, Jogi, and Mali communities were represented by a few households. As in any other caste-based village, in these two villages discrimination in social interaction and commensality operated at every level of the social hierarchy. The Muslim communities were loosely positioned somewhere at the lower end of this hierarchy, just above the Dalit communities.

In the Dahod village, Kolis and Bhils (a 'scheduled tribe' community) dominated numerically. In addition, there were a handful of other caste-Hindus (artisans) and Dalit households. In the recent past, the entire Muslim population of the village had migrated elsewhere after an episode of communal clashes. The village was spread over a wide area with clusters of houses scattered along the roads and inside agricultural lands. Most households owned small pieces of land and ownership was higher among Kolis and Bhils. A sizeable number of households seasonally migrate for wage labour. Caste discrimination was relatively less articulated as compared to the Kutch and Bhavnagar villages but not completely absent. The Koli community claimed ritual superiority over the rest. The priest of one of the important temples in the village belonged to this community.

In the Tapi village, Gamit and Chowdhary (both 'scheduled tribe' communities) dominated numerically and economically. The third largest group was another 'scheduled tribe' called Kotwadia. Socially and economically it was the most backward

community in the village. Almost all families were landless, depending exclusively on agricultural wage labour and bamboo craft work. The vast majority of this community resided on the outskirts of the village and were perceived to be marginal as far as community affairs were concerned. Other caste-Hindu households were very few. Many families had converted to Christianity.

Dominance and Control

In all the four selected villages, households from economically and politically dominant groups had wrested and exercised control over AWC (*Anganwadi* centres), associated resources, and their functioning.

The selection of AWWs and AWHs was fraught with politicking at the village level. Though these appointments are made by the ICDS department, names of potential candidates are recommended by the local *panchayat.* The local elite had a strong say in the final selection of AWWs and AWHs. This meant that either a woman from a relatively dominant community or family, or a woman with the blessings of the local leader got selected. The AWW is the face of the programme in the village and has first-hand access to all the resources around the AWC. However, being a woman often obliged to the local political elite for help she received from them in gaining her position (such as a recommendation), the access to the resources did not necessarily translate into control over all of those resources. Her community background and the power enjoyed by the community in the village also determined the control and influence that she could enjoy in the village and in discharging her duties.

Similarly, decisions on the identification of space for a new AWC, or the renting of a premise for an AWC were made largely with the involvement of the local elite. The location of AWCs was decided on the basis of where the government was able to procure the required land. This was either given away by an affluent villager, or an existing public space was utilised. When no government-built structure was available, an AWC was run from a rented premise. Whatever may have been the situation, the final location of an AWC was decided by convenience mediated by political consideration. This translated into convenience for some groups at the expense of others.

In the Bhavnagar village, the Brahmin community was a numerical minority, and the deputy *sarpanch* (village head)[3] of the village was from this community. His wife and sister-in-law were two of the four AWWs in the village while his cousin was one of the AWHs. His wife helped all the other AWWs in keeping records and financial accounts and wielded strong influence and power among all other AWWs, AWHs, and generally in the village. She had been influential enough to mobilise local resources to furnish her AWC building with a perimeter wall, a small garden, chairs for the children, and painted walls. This was in stark contrast to the AWC intended for Dalit children, which was located in a room rented out by her husband from which he ran a fertilizer business. This showed that this extended family had a strong grip over the functioning of all four AWCs in the village. A young dalit woman commented thus:

> "Tuition classes run in the evening and the Deputy Sarpanch and his father-in-law run their fertilizer business from the same room. When the panchayat and the AWC people who come for inspection are not bothered about it, what can a few people do?"
>
> (Young dalit woman, Bhavnagar village)

In the Dahod village, one of the six AWCs was located adjacent to a politically influential Koli household whose head was a former *sarpanch* of the village. Land for that AWC was donated by the family. It was observed that the main sitting space in the AWC was occupied by a cot that was being used regularly by this family. For a major part of the duration of the field work, this room was filled with harvested corn ears or other agricultural produce. A water tap meant for the AWC was built midway between the AWC and the former *sarpanch's* house, facing the house.

In the Tapi village, two AWCs had approximately equal representation from Gamit and Chowdhary communities. Both groups were landed 'schedule tribe' communities who enjoyed more or less equal status and political dominance in the village. AWWs and AWHs of both AWCs belonging to these communities were located amidst a cluster of settlements of these communities. The third group, Kotwadia community had no say on location and representation of AWCs.

Although the AWH, also known as *tedagar,* had to bring the children to AWC and take them back, she was selective about collecting children. While she was able to offer this service to children living nearby or along the road, children from far-off households were left behind. In the Kutch village, of the three AWCs only one had an AWH. In the Tapi village, members of households located far from the two AWCs often complained that the helper did not come to fetch their children:

> "No one is coming to fetch our kids. They come to houses near the AWCs but are not interested in coming to houses that are far away and so sometimes parents are not interested in sending the children"
>
> (A Gamit woman, Tapi village)

> "No one comes to take the children; it (AWC) is far from my house …. It is difficult to walk to the AWC therefore I do not want to send the kids."
>
> (A Kotwadia woman, Tapi village)

The walls and surroundings of AWCs were often dumping areas for farm produce, fertilizers, fuel wood, and cow-dung cakes; animals are tethered there by households living near the AWC. By default, this privilege was for those groups that had managed to secure an AWC in their settlement. Further, only landed households or those with animals had the need to encroach AWC space, unlike households without assets.

Groups also competed for a range of resources associated with supplies such as flour, rice, pulses, and packed take-home rations received from government agencies.. These competing groups also had a say in procurement of items such as fresh fruits, vegetables and spices that were locally bought.

In all the four villages, members from different communities expressed views over such supplies getting embezzled by AWWs or people associated with them. Either the AWWs diverted the supplies for their personal use or exchanged them for other benefits. Another very common complaint was that supplies, including take home rations, were diverted to commercial and farm use. In response to enquiries about such uneven resource allocation, one mother commented:

> "All kinds of mischief went on in this AWC as there was no one to question."
>
> (A Samma woman, Kutch village).

Community members might have given an exaggerated picture of the extent of siphoning off of supplies. Nevertheless, based on interviews it was clear that misappropriation of varying degrees did happen in selected AWCs in all villages. This took place in connivance with the local political elite in exchange for personal favours. Though this may appear to be an insignificant aspect in the larger scheme of things, within the village such political leverage assumed a great significance.

It is ironic that groups which controlled the resources often did not feel the need for AWC services – they sent their children to social welfare crèches (SWC) or private nursery schools. Food supplied from the AWCs was found unfit to feed the children:

> "The upma packets were not good and I used to feed it to the cattle we had at my father's home."
>
> (An Aahir woman, Bhavnagar Village)

> "If no one eats, we give it to the animals or sometimes throw it away."
>
> (A Gamit woman, Tapi village)

> "AWW does not cook and whatever she does is not nice. It is raw and tasteless and so children do not like to eat… most often it was 'sheera', 'thepla' or sometimes 'khichdi'
>
> (Young mother, 19 years, married outside her community to a Samma widower, Kutch village)

On the other hand, for others who had little control over working of the AWCs, the food provided was an essential component to ensure and secure their household food security:

> "We live in poverty. (We) have only one member with regular income and many children to feed and hence we have no option but to send the children, young as well as old, to AWC."
>
> (A Young Koli man, Bhavnagar village)

> "Children from Muslim families coming to the AWC ran with their own bowls. Even older girls from Muslim families came to take snacks."
>
> (A Young Koli woman, Bhavnagar village)

To sum up, the resources that were up for grabs included: recruitment of personnel, infrastructure, supplies and procurement; amenities like cooking gas and water connections; and control over the day-to-day functioning of the Anganwadi centre.

If one group controlled merely the selection of AWWs and the location of AWCs, it largely completed the process of seizing control. The rest followed as a corollary. Beyond all these, and perhaps most importantly, the AWC being a state-run facility, control over its functioning at the village level gave recognition and legitimacy to the dominance of certain groups over others.

Restrictions on Social Integration

The AWCs usually enrolled children based on the principle of neighbourhood: children from all the households residing in the area were expected to enrol in the nearest AWC.

Families usually preferred to send their children to the nearest AWC. However, it was observed that this was not always the case. An overriding factor was the caste composition of the rest of the children as well as that of the staff in the AWC. Based on the spatial distribution of different communities and the social backgrounds of the AWWs and AWHs, the communities willingly or unwillingly reached an arrangement whereby children from groups sharing roughly equivalent status get assigned to AWCs in a manner that complied with the caste norms which prohibit social interactions. Situations where such an acceptable arrangement was not possible would lead to discord between communities: children would be sent to distant AWCs, removed from the register, or withdrawn. Additionally, relationship between the AWW or AWH and the households turned sour.

For instance, in the Bhavnagar village, the general pattern of the four AWCs was as follows: one largely meant for Dalit children, one for Muslims, one for the dominant Aahir community, and one for the relatively 'upper' caste groups. Although this was not a water-tight division, it was observed to be an overall pattern. For example, within the same village, Devipujak (*wagri*) children came to the AWC which was largely attended by Muslim children; these families did not want to send their children to an AWC that was largely meant for Dalit children. On the other hand, Devipujak children were not welcomed in the other two AWCs meant for Aahir, Bharwad, and Brahmin children.

The AWC devoted largely to Dalit children was located within a non-Dalit settlement in a rented building owned by the deputy *sarpanch* belonging to a Brahmin household (Fig 2). It had an AWW of Dalit caste. It also had on its roll a small number of children belonging to the caste-Hindu groups. Dalit and non-Dalit children huddled separately and non-Dalit children were observed to have restricted interactions with Dalit children. A few households residing in this area sent their children to other AWCs in the village, with the convenient arrangement that an AWH of another AWC, who happened to live in the area, would escort their children, each morning, on her way to the AWC.

Fig 2. AWCs for 'Upper' Caste (Top Row) and Dalit (Bottom Row) Children Respectively

In the Kutch village, the pattern of the three AWCs was as follows. One was earmarked as the AWC for Dalit and Muslim children. Although almost the entire 'upper' caste Hindu families resided in that area, they preferred to send their children to the village Social Welfare Centre (SWC). The second AWC was being run especially for children of the migrant Samma community. The third AWC was meant for Muslim, Koli and other 'lower' caste Hindu families. Here too there were a few Patel and Lohana families who sent their children to the SWC. A number of Muslim families sent their children to an AWC across a main road, falling under another village where a sizeable number of Muslim children attended.

Interestingly, the SWCs were run by a non-governmental organization (NGO) but funded by the Department of Women and Child Development, the same department that funds AWCs. They also catered to the same age groups of children as AWCs. Unlike AWCs, these centres collected a nominal monthly fee and were more focused on day-care and pre-primary education than on the distribution of food or other health care services. This was an example of a State supported two-tier service – one tier for the elite and another for the rest– with an NGO serving as the conduit. The caste composition and the hierarchy within the NGO were not studied in this research.

In the Kutch village, Muslim households mentioned that they were never informed or called to attend educational sessions by the AWWs. One AWW reportedly said that "they are arrogant, either they don't listen to what is being said or even if they listen they forget whatever they are told, hence it is a waste of time." This AWC was located well inside the Kutch village settlement, hence the AWW had apprehensions and reluctance to serve these families.

> One of the mothers in this community said that the "AWW scolded the children, saying that they were dirty. Only if she taught them, would they know how to keep clean."
>
> (A Young Samma woman, Kutch village)

In the Tapi village, an entire settlement of about fifty households belonging to the Kotwadia community refused to send their children to the existing AWCs. They had long been demanding a separate AWC in their own settlement.

In the Dahod village, a handful of households belonging to 'Chamara,' a Dalit community, lived along the main road but far from the AWC. None of them sent their children to the AWC that is located in the settlement largely inhabited by the Koli community.

In all the four villages it was observed that for a section of affluent households, belonging to the dominant communities, the AWC was completely irrelevant as far as providing services for their children was concerned, although some of these households held a strong control over the resources associated with AWCs. In the Tapi village, households belonging to the Chowdhary community and owning large pieces of land sent their children to a private nursery school located a few kilometres away. In one of the Kutch villages, all the households belonging to the Patel community sent their children either to a SWC in the village or to private nursery schools outside it. In this village, entry into the SWC is strongly regulated. It was largely meant for the children of Patel, Lohana, and a handful of other 'upper' caste-Hindu households. There was a token presence of one or two Muslim and non-Dalit 'lower' caste-Hindu families who managed to push their way either through recommendations from influential people or

by being strongly vocal. Members from some of these households expressed a sense of contempt for the idea of sending their children to AWCs, as they were perceived to be meant for the poor. This was a benchmark that was progressively emulated by increasing number of households from all sections.

> "There was no one to drop her and bring her back home. Once the child is three years, I will put her in Social Welfare Centre as that was the only place in the village."
>
> (A Young Dalit woman, Kutch village)

To sum up, the composition of each AWC is more or less a microcosm of the village divided along caste and community lines. Across the different AWCs in a village, groups manoeuvre to retain the boundaries of social interaction as per the prevailing caste norms. This not only preserved and reproduced the established social differentiation and hierarchy; it also facilitated the dominant groups to maintain exclusivity for a privileged position in terms of greater access to better-run AWCs – with staff from the same or an acceptable community background– than the 'lower' or minority groups. Alternatively, dominant affluent groups may even create or access institutions parallel to AWCs – state-funded or private – to maintain their distinct caste identities.

Restrictions on Commensality

Restrictions in inter-dining and exchange of food constituted a defining element of caste system. SNP being a food based programme it naturally gets enmeshed with issues around restrictions in commensality in multi-caste village settings. This element has a strong overlap with the previous two aspects that were identified. Nevertheless, it merits a separate consideration not only because food is the central element of the SNP but also because food and exchange of food symbolise and powerfully reflect the ideological and material contradictions in the social life of these villages.

In two multi-caste villages, with the presence of communities that could be located along a much wider spectrum of the ritual scale, ranging from Brahmin-Patel communities to Dalit/Muslim groups, such practices were more pronounced and articulated. Many of the Patel households in the Kutch village were staunch followers of a particular sect within Hinduism which prescribed observation of stiff norms related to ritual purity and commensality.

Restrictions on commensality ran from the top to the bottom rung of the caste hierarchy. The 'upper' caste Hindu communities accepted raw vegetables, fruits, grains, milk, curds, buttermilk, and food that did not need cooking from other caste communities. In the middle of the caste hierarchy there was a tradition of 'upper' caste households giving buttermilk to 'lower' caste households free of cost. In Bhavnagar village the Kharak, Aahir, Mali, and Koli families practised this tradition between them, but not with other caste groups below them. None of these groups accepted any form of food or water from 'lower' caste groups like Devipujak, Dalit, and Muslim households. Even at the bottom, the Rawal-Jogis, Devipujaks and dalits observed restrictions in commensality. Similarly in the Kutch village the Samma enjoyed an equal relationship with other Muslim communities in the village but they did not share food or water with the Koli or Dalit communities.

On the other hand, in the two villages with predominant 'scheduled tribe' populations, such practices did not dominantly occupy the social life of the village. In the Dahod village all households partook food in a temple festival that involved the sharing of food items. Similarly, in the Tapi village the Kotwadia community members get invited to the family functions of the Gamit and Chowdhary households. However, one noted a spatial segregation of the most backward 'scheduled tribe' community or the few Dalit households in these two villages.

Most Dalit families, a few other 'lower' caste Hindu families, all Muslim families and most 'scheduled tribes' across the four villages consumed eggs and meat. Individual families from other caste groups may consume these foods too. This becomes an additional reason to justify restrictions in food commensality across groups, although it does not fully explain the practice.

It is often not the binary arrangement of accepting or not accepting food, but a hierarchy of food types with different degrees of pollution (or purity) accorded to the act of receiving it from a 'lower' caste. For instance, it is less polluting to receive uncooked food grains from the hands of a 'lower' caste compared to receiving a cooked meal from the same person.

Zimmerman observes that the arrival of vegetarianism emplaces 'a new type of opposition between … pure and the impure and a hierarchy of castes' replacing the opposition based on the "alimentary violence" between the strong and the weak, the predator and his prey' (Zimmerman, 1999, p.1-2) Similarly, here too different food categories, even devoid of human touch, are arranged in a ritual scale of social value – ghee, milk and water at the one end and meat of certain animals at the other. This ritual hierarchy of food gets overlaid on groups which consume or avoid the respective groups of food items. The food here, thus, serves as a potential marker of social identities constructed around consuming and sharing food.

The practice of restriction in food commensality effortlessly subsumes the process associated with preparation and distribution of SNP food in the AWC. Likewise, these practices influence the decisions households make regarding choosing and sending their children to specific AWCs. A seemingly innocuous food distribution programme implemented through the AWCs effectively, thus, becomes a marker of social privileges and discrimination across the dimensions of caste, religion, and ethnicity, and it affects the utilisation of this service.

Two key but closely related aspects that shape a number of variations in AWC food distribution processes are (a) that AWWs or AWHs belonging to the Dalit community are not allowed to provide cooked food to children from caste-Hindu families, and (b) that families of the 'upper' caste do not want their children to have food alongside children of Dalit or other 'lower' groups. As a result, families belonging to different communities adopt different strategies to manoeuvre these conditions of restriction within the given material conditions like resource, distance, and time.

Affluent families of 'upper' caste groups completely withdraw their children from the AWCs and send their children to relatively more exclusive private schools or to a SWC. Communities manage to secure for their children an SWC that practices a great degree of exclusivity. Many families handled the situation by successfully locating one or more AWC within their settlement or far from settlements of 'lower' sections. It was also managed by working through the enrolment process wherein children from 'lower' sections were assigned different or far-off centres. Another form of exclusion that happens more subtly is the differential behaviour of AWWs and AWHs towards children from 'lower' vis-à-vis 'upper' caste groups.

However, not all families were able to cope 'successfully' with this situation. There were households that practised restrictions in commensality with Dalits but sent their children to AWCs attended by Dalit children as well. These situations get addressed through a variety of strategies as follows:

a. For one of the Koli families in the Bhavnagar village, food prepared by a Dalit AWH was acceptable if it was cooked in AWC utensils in the AWC, and not in the Dalit AWH's own utensils in her home.

b. Families accepted a Dalit AWW or AWH giving a snack purchased from a local shop to their children instead of food cooked by her.

c. Some children were allowed to consume food prepared from the ready-to-eat packets by the AWW but not freshly prepared food.

d. Some families sent food and water from home in containers which their children consumed sitting in the AWCs.

e. Water was maintained separately; children carry their own water or avoid drinking water in the AWC.

f. Children did not eat from plates that were in the AWC (or in schools). Instead, they brought their own plates or containers.

g. Some families sent their children to the AWC for a few hours but these children did not consume anything on the AWC premises.

h. A few mothers or old women had also stated that they do not believe in such discriminatory practices or that given their economic situation, they could not afford to observe such practices.

"There are Dalit and Muslim children coming to AWC and we avoid touching Dalit or Muslim people. We do not share food or water with them and hence I prefer my children carrying water from home even to SWC."
(Mother from caste-Hindu community in Kutch village)

It was also observed that AWC-related aspects spill outside its boundaries to inflict humiliation on 'lower' sections. In the Bhavnagar village some caste-Hindus expressed the view that Dalit women visited the AWC only to eat. Referring to Dalit women approaching the AWC, a caste-Hindu woman commented, "*see these Dhedh women have come to eat.*" On the other hand, in the Kutch village one of the AWWs belonging to the caste-Hindu community had alleged that the "*Samma members 'steal' things; they are to be feared/ not trusted. One should not come here alone.*" Similarly, in the Tapi village one of the AWWs had repeatedly mentioned that "*members of Kotwadia community keep demanding more food and even adults come to collect*" food that was meant for children. Such comments further reinforced the devalued and stigmatised identity placed on these groups. This process further impacted their fuller participation in everyday village life beyond the sphere of food. With select communities self-excluding from using these services or by securing exclusive AWCs or SWCs for themselves, the AWCs as a collective institution and their activities got discredited progressively.

Discussion

In keeping with findings in sociological literature in India, all the four villages embody wider community dynamics along traditional dimensions of caste, ethnicity and religion (Navsarjan.., 2014; Perez, 2004; Berman, 1974; Tambs-Lynche, 2010).

The AWC-based services were not only perceived as an entitlement by some, but the associated resources were also part of village-level politicking for others. Equally, food and the sharing of food still operated as an important marker of identities and boundaries – and the SNP exemplifies this social process.

Though the SNP is a state-run programme and its stated mode of implementation presumes an apolitical and non-partisan nature, in reality it acquires the characteristic features of the social life of the society in which it is implemented. Like any other institution, the AWCs and SNP operate within the contours shaped by existing ideological and material contradictions in the society (Aloysius, 2005). Dominant social institutions such as caste and gender inscribe their characteristics on to the programme and subvert its functioning in favour of select groups.

Certain groups were able to stay unaffected and indifferent to this programme, some appropriated it, and some were deprived of it. This occurred along the lines of caste, religion, and ethnicity. These social identities operated as an important determinant of access to power and resources surrounding AWCs. This has a major impact on perception, utilization, provision, exclusion and self-exclusion from the SNP, composition of individual AWCs, people who get recruited as AWWs or AWHs, and those whose houses are rented out for the AWC. In summary, the differentials in access to the programme incorporate and reflect the prevalent social hierarchy and social exclusion faced by select communities in the villages.

Sharing of food is an expressive act permeated with meaning (Douglas, 1972, 1966; Fraser, 1996; Freed, 1970) conveying degrees of familiarity and 'personal feelings' (Freeman, 2003), as well as the social status of the groups involved (Zimmerman, 1999). The practices surrounding commensality are an important way through which social hierarchies, power and dominance are expressed and understood in these villages. Food and the exchange of food across households of different communities were found to be strongly associated with community dynamics, either as symbolic of, or as a substantive component of, politicking. Welfare programmes involving the distribution of food reflected these issues. This relates to what Fraser refers to as the 'misrecognition effects of redistributive policies': any redistributive proposal, which is often in the form of a welfare scheme, will have 'intended or unintended, explicit or implicit, overt or subliminal' recognition effects. The welfare and the actions around it have an 'irreducible dimension of expression' that 'institutionalise cultural norms around the entitlements and construct distinct, often unequally valued, subject positions or identities' of beneficiaries and the rest, the former stigmatized and the later valorised (Fraser, 1996). A public food distribution programme such as the SNP would qualify as one such entitlement, the social imagery around which stigmatises and violates the autonomy of the beneficiaries to restrict their full and equal participation in social life.

Despite the stated intent and design of a programme like the SNP, its success will finally depend to a great extent on the strategies of delivery at the local level. In reality, however, these strategies become occasions for power struggles. As a result they get circumscribed and co-opted by, local social and political configurations, strengthening existing power relations.

This study did not examine how gender and patriarchy mediate and intersect with caste-based discrimination and mark its importance on the way AWC-based programmes function as a marker and producer of social disadvantages. Additionally, the issues around promoting exclusive breastfeeding till the sixth month of infancy and subsequent introduction of complementary feeding and home visits by an AWW remain unaddressed.

Conclusion

This ethnographic study revealed critical elements of caste-based organisations of social life which permeate the structure and function of the AWC/SNP.

Caste divides communities into groups arranged hierarchically in terms of social status, privilege, and honour. It simultaneously permits some groups to wrest control over material and symbolic resources while actively excluding others from accessing these resources. This extends seamlessly in the way AWC functions. Politically or ritually dominant caste groups exercise a strong control over the AWC as an institution and reconfigure it to their advantage, at the expense of other groups.

Caste identities shape and regulate degrees of social interaction across communities. This is replicated in the domain of the AWC/SNP by the dominant groups' control over enrolment of children into different AWCs.

Practices surrounding food commensality are an important way in which social hierarchy is expressed and understood in a society configured along caste. Thus, SNP, a seemingly innocuous food distribution programme, assumes the status of a symbolic marker of identities and boundaries of caste.

The authors argue that the SNP and AWCs are not simply a case study of nutritional intervention or food distribution, but a case study of control over resources too. Controlling a state-run facility like an AWC gives recognition and legitimacy to the dominant groups over the rest, giving them the ability to display real or putative access to state machinery. This display may well lead to accrual of political benefits within and outside the village. The SNP fails because the groups that have the greatest need for its services have the least representation in almost every aspect of the programme. These tragic issues are not limited to nutritional programmes alone. The authors argue that current research and charismatic 'Movement for Global Mental Health' advocating 'scaling up of models' especially in the Global South is an ethical violation if they gloss over local psychological and cultural ecologies that shape poor uptake of both physical and mental health programmes by the affected communities (Patel et al., 2008, Jadhav et al., 2015).

Acknowledgement

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Notes

1. Anganwadi or 'courtyard shelters' are mother and young children (0-6 years) care centres established by the government in 1975 under the Integrated Child Development Programme to combat child hunger and malnutrition.
2. Varna is any one of the four traditional social classes in India, viz. Brahmins (Priests), khsatriyas (warriors), Vaisyas (traders), and Shudras (farmers and unskilled labourers such as sweepers, cleaners, tanners, etc. The latter are also called ati-shudras, officially called Scheduled Caste or Dalits)
3. Sarpanch is the head decision maker of the village-level constitutional local governance body called gram sabha. He/she along with other decision makers (panchs) are elected by the villagers directly.

A Commentary on Ambedkar's Posthumously Published "Philosophy of Hinduism"

Rajesh Sampath[1]

Abstract

This paper attempts a critical commentary of Ambedkar's posthumously published, incomplete manuscript, "Philosophy of Hinduism," which was discovered shortly after his death. Initially we look at how Ambedkar lays down certain conditions to think about the relation between philosophy and religion, let alone what a 'philosophy of religion' even means. We follow Ambedkar's thinking on why philosophy serves an important function when it enables critical judgement on what constitutes a religion. Ultimately, Ambedkar argues for the criteria of 'utility' and 'justice' to inform such a judgement after canvassing the history of religion itself. He concludes with a negative judgement: that in so far as the 'philosophy of Hinduism' continues to promote and perpetuate the seemingly indestructible social order of caste, or descent-based hierarchy in the Indian context, it fails to meet those two criteria. Therefore, Hinduism is not a religion in the way Ambedkar understands the process of world history and the discontinuous evolution of the concept of religion itself. From a standpoint of social justice, this paper attempts to draw out the profound implications of one of Ambedkar's last studies prior to his death, and argues for the centrality of both philosophy and the philosophy of religion in Ambedkar studies in general.

Introduction

In 2014, The Dr. Ambedkar Foundation within the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of the Government of India reprinted Vol. 3 in the collected works titled *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*.[1] At the time of his death in 1956, numerous unpublished papers of Ambedkar were transferred to the High Court of Delhi and then given to the Administrator General of the State of Maharashtra and have been held under their guardianship since.[2] Vol. 3

[1]Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Justice, Rights, and Social Change,
Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA
E-mail: rsampath@brandeis.edu

contains a number of important writings that focus specifically on the philosophy and history of religion in Ambedkar's vast, polymath corpus.[3] These collected volumes are an incredible testament to his genius in that Ambedkar was able to cover so many different fields spanning law to economics to political and social theory. To imagine the vigor, energy, and dynamism of this unique social leader who laid the constitutional foundations for the post-colonial Independent secular democratic India would be difficult. Asking how so much could be accomplished in a single lifetime is one thing; asking how one person could contribute to so much across so many different scholarly fields while being one of the greatest social movement leaders of the twentieth century is another. Both are staggering facts that are seemingly impossible to fathom, even in contrast to other great social leaders of his time, and not just in the South Asian context. Perhaps more astonishing is that his incredible insights on his historical context of the early to the mid-twentieth century contain enormous value that surpasses his time and affects our historical present. In short the legacy of Ambedkar continues, and perhaps his unfinished project of the reformation of Indian society bereft of the caste system is something still to come.

Having acknowledged his influence in the fields of law, economics, politics, history, and sociology in his South Asian context, perhaps what is most interesting, however, is that worldwide Ambedkar scholarship has a great opportunity to probe the depths of his life-long study of philosophy and the philosophy of religion in particular.[4] It is there we can probe what his deepest concerns may have been in his own lived struggle and existential quest. We know that for Ambedkar, life and thought fused in complex ways informing what both meant for his enduring and indomitable will to reform the Hindu social order based on the democratic principles of 'equality, liberty, and fraternity.'[5]

In this paper we pay brief homage to Ambedkar's contributions to not only philosophy but the specific sub-field of the 'philosophy of religion.' The philosophy of religion is not just a sub-field of philosophy, nor one of many fields within the multi- and interdisciplinary field of religious studies. Rather, one of our assumptions is that the very *relation* between philosophy and religion has to be investigated. We can do so through Ambedkar's writings on Hinduism. Our aim is to explore his critical and evaluative approach as to whether Hinduism even constitutes a 'religion'; that is if the presupposition of most world religions in general is a minimum commitment to justice, mercy, compassion, in order to inform the values of underpinning secular democratic principles of 'equality, liberty, and fraternity.' It is possible that some religions do not have a specific rootedness in explicit principles of justice but aim for detachment from all worldly and human presuppositions. But Ambedkar does not probe other worldly religions. Rather, he puts Hinduism to the test in that regard while he probes what a 'philosophy of religion' is as an academic field; but his ultimate aim is to critique caste as the basis of the Hindu social system and therefore imagine an alternative to that core structure that could actually realize true equality, liberty, justice, inclusion, and peaceful coexistence.

In the spirit of the inaugural volume of *Caste: A Global Journal on Social Exclusion* launched by the Center for Global Development and Sustainability at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management and published by the Brandeis University Library, we want to be mindful of its theme on the 'Persistence of Caste.' We stand firm in our conviction that beyond philosophy in general on the one hand and religious studies on the other that rely on a number of other disciplines outside of

philosophy, say literature, classical languages, history, sociology, and anthropology, there lies an enigmatic, seemingly unnoticeable space called the 'philosophy of religion.' Unlike most scholarly discourse and knowledge production, it does not seem visible or accessible to most human perception or intuition, be they scholars or the non-academically curious. In other words, one has to go deep.

Something about the philosophy of religion raises key ethical questions about the validity of both philosophy and religion, their interrelations, and ultimately the philosophical-critical judgement of religion in so far as the "idea of society is the soul of religion" as Durkheim once said.[6] The Durkheimian statement is quite uncanny because our automatic intuition suggests that normally we would think religion as presenting the aspirational 'soul' or essence of a just society. But not the other way around. However, in the context of Ambedkar's long-standing critique of the Hindu social order of caste, the opposite is at stake: religion is indeed the soul of a society but one that is demonic. In short, we are intrigued by Ambedkar's initial explorations and puzzlement as to what the 'philosophy of religion' even means and what its purpose is when he focuses on Hinduism.

As we shall see in this commentary, he quickly realizes that by unpacking the very nature of what a 'philosophy of religion' is and what it should do relates to an unrelenting critical judgement of whether a religion must and should provide a moral basis for any society. And finally whether the world religion known as 'Hinduism' fulfills that criteria to be labeled a religion must become a question. We can say that at the outset of this commentary on Ambedkar studies of caste and social exclusion, for Ambedkar, it does not.[7] In asking what makes caste a self-perpetuating, malignant form of social exclusion, stratification, inequality, and injustice that persists within society through religion, we must embark on a journey into Ambedkar's investigations on the 'philosophy of religion.' His reflections show the traditional depth of Ambedkar's self-reflective attitude towards the fields and disciplines he discusses and situates himself within.[8]

This contribution to *Caste: A Global Journal on Social Exclusion* is organized in the following manner. First we will summarize key points from Ambedkar's extremely rich text – "Philosophy of Hinduism" -- which contain so many seeds ripe for further expansion. As the manuscript remained unfinished, perhaps a future paper can attempt a continuation of the project began in that essay.[9] In the commentary, we will attempt to expand on certain philosophical insights and deductions in Ambedkar's compelling study while leveraging resources in nineteenth and twentieth continental European philosophy, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century to which Ambedkar did not have access. Lastly, we will conclude with certain reflections on how the project begun by Ambedkar could be extended in the future. That would require a reckoning of our twenty-first century historical present.

In the opening moments of the "Philosophy of Hinduism," Ambedkar asks some key questions about philosophy and religion in general before he even gets to his analysis of the philosophy of the particular world religion known as Hinduism. At the onset of the analysis, Ambedkar says that it is impossible to know about a religion's 'content, aim, focus,' and original claims, for example the religion of Hinduism, if we do not ask what that religion is. The way philosophy can help is to inquire into what something is or what its nature or essence is.[10] At least in terms of some kind of Platonic distinction, we can formulate the following: we need to inquire into what the most essential thing is within the essence of a thing, and not any phenomenal

appearance or manifestation of what a thing appears to be, even the phenomenality or materiality of a presupposed essence. In other words, we have to keep searching. He also admits to the fact that he doesn't know if the philosophy of Hinduism and philosophy of religion are of the 'same nature.'[11] This is because he first has to ask about what a philosophy of religion is in general, which means defining first what he thinks philosophy is and religion is, let alone their relation. What he arrives at is an initial, even hostile, contrast between philosophy and religion.[12]

For Ambedkar, the two fields seem to be "adversaries" and "antagonists[13]" whereby theologians of religion accuse philosophers of being 'blind in searching for something that does not exist' (perhaps the truth of being or the meaning of life or the nature of truth itself). And then the philosopher rebuts by reprimanding the theologian of religion for doing the same thing: a blind act groping for something that does not exist but then dogmatically claiming that it does exist (perhaps that would be an invisible God or a universal, albeit unprovable, answer as to why we exist and suffer and what happens after we die). The asymmetry in the accusations of one to the other is quite revealing because it points to the differing intentionalities of both fields. Philosophy one can say is willing to live with the uncertainty of its own ground or reason to exist, which then becomes the very mystery as to why it occurs at all, say from an initial primordial doubt as Descartes experienced. This groundless ground, which leads to wonder then impassions us to question the nature of everything. Thereby yielding philosophical content that does not simply name truth, the truth of being or all that is (including the human inquiry to all that is) but also the being of truth—asking what truth is without arriving at a simple answer.[14] Philosophy in that case would be both the posing of a question about itself, its own nature, and suspending any simple answer about that question precisely as it activates itself in whatever it pursues, i.e. truth, being, meaning. Philosophy can live with its own abyssal nature, but that says something about the nature of everything in general. However for the theologian this could be futile because it is not just searching for something that doesn't exist but raises the question why one would even embark on such a journey knowing that is in fact what one is doing: pursuing something by assuming it exists without knowing if in fact one will ever find it, i.e. a holy grail.

Yet the philosopher's response to the theologian also raises certain questions about religion. The philosopher claims that the theologian is duplicating the very same effort of the philosopher, say the search for truth or meaning of everything or Being in general; but then the philosopher also claims that the theologian asserts dogmatically the existence of an entity that could provide an answer, say God, without being able to prove that such an entity exists. For a philosopher could ask 'what does that say about religion's ground?' Perhaps religion is willing to live with the uncertainty of the proof of the answer to the question of truth and meaning of everything because the answer (say God) provides solace, comfort, and peace through some kind of faith; this thereby takes the edge off the opacity of the question or pursuit by transferring the indefinite nature of existing without meaning to the certitude of a commitment to at least the proxy of answer that can provide definition and certitude: 'I exist because of God's will that I exist and do good.'

For Ambedkar, the issue at hand in this particular unpublished manuscript is not to resolve this fundamental difference or tension between religion and philosophy. Ultimately, he says if this tension exists, then certainly what does that say about any attempt to bring them into relation for example when we speak of a 'philosophy of

religion.' It could be this very "antagonism" between the two fields of philosophy and religion that makes the field known as the philosophy of religion exist in its "confusion" with regard to its exact definition and nature.[15] Ambedkar does not set out to solve this dilemma, which one can argue date back to both the origins of philosophy and religion around the world, West and East, in antiquity and the medieval periods of chronological historical time.

Instead, he decides to intervene in what a philosophy of religion must perform as a kind of duty, and that is to critically judge the moral viability of a religion to continue to justify its value for human existence. Philosophy can perform that task of critical judgement.[16] Throughout his scholarly and activist life, Ambedkar, obviously, had a core concern for social justice and liberation. More than a concern, he tried to enact a total social recreation. The philosophy of religion cannot just be "descriptive" or what something is but rather "normative" or what something should be.[17] This is not to say that even an attempt at an objective or factual description of what is, which the social sciences for example (sociology, anthropology, empirical history) may aspire to provide, or law for that matter in executing what justice is, does not mean that there are not normative implications even in the objective description of the nature of something. One can intend to describe the fact of something; but then its effect could be to induce in the very description a normative demand for justice and change.[18]

In any case, this move from the "descriptive" to the "normative" allows Ambedkar to get to his main concern, which is an interrogation of the "Philosophy of Hinduism," but not just for its own sake or idle speculation. Rather, he will embark on a critical judgement of what it fails to achieve, namely an Indian social order founded on justice, equality, liberty, and fraternity, one unburdened from its recent colonial past and distant pre-colonial origins. Before he gets to that ultimate judgement, he says "To be explicit I shall be putting Hinduism on its trial to assess its worth as a way of life."[19]

It is interesting to note that Ambedkar's critical endeavor at this juncture is not what one would normally think when it comes to assessing the moral value of most religions. Most attempts at moral philosophy and ethics try to probe what is good about a religion in so far as it examines the doctrines, precepts, texts, and heritage of a religion that speak about justice, mercy, compassion, how to live a good and decent life and how to treat others whether or not a particular religion promises salvation, redemption or continuation of life after death.[20] Studying religion means studying its moral validity to commit to justice. But this will not be the case for Ambedkar.[21]

Rather, he will introduce "three dimensions" to lay the 'ground' work in his philosophical analysis of Hinduism precisely to examine the social order it gave rise to, namely the indefatigable, seemingly eternal caste system. This historically contingent reality is founded on a profoundly unjust, unequal, hierarchically stratified social system, not only apathetic to human suffering but actively promotes antipathy to a common, universal, human fellowship.[22]

The first dimension is the very 'phenomenon' of religion even though it has always been unclear across time and history as to what it is.[23] This is so because no one world religion (although it may aspire to claim universal validity of its truth and therefore exclusion to all other religions' claims to their universal truths) can in fact speak to what 'religion' in general is as a philosophical object. For Ambedkar, there are 'natural' and 'revealed religions'. But he is not concerned with the content of religion and whether its claim to truth is valid on philosophical or theological grounds within any given religion.[24] That would be the work of a theologian, and even comparative

theologies and religions. But in utilizing the phrase, a 'philosophy of religion' (and therefore not just philosophy in general independent of any religion), Ambedkar is laser-focused on his primary task, namely exposing the inner-workings of Hinduism that allows it to substantiate, perpetuate, and concatenate an unjust and immoral scheme for society. Hence he needs to bring in a second dimension.

He calls that dimension "the ideal scheme for which a religion stands."[25] Many extant religions not only imagine a perfect or ideal world beyond this human earthly realm with all of its sin, suffering, finitude, death and catastrophe, say a heavenly abode beyond death or after the end of human history where the whole world will be redeemed and saved. But this apocalyptic closure to the long mystery as to why human beings came into existence is not what Ambedkar will set out to ask of the Hindu religion. Instead, religions, in their wishes to describe metaphysical realities beyond physical nature or this life in its time, end up producing assumptions that cohere into aspirational values of what *this world or life should be*. It is about this 'inner-worldly' realm to use a Weberian term that Ambedkar does not invoke that is at stake.[26]

The 'ideal scheme' one can say is how a religion's blind spot, say its propositions about transcendence to another world, surreptitiously shapes its ethical assumptions about what it means to exist in this world. The outer becomes not only the inner-expression of the outer but the essence of the inner itself in material form. Hinduism may have archaic roots in some supersensory ancient past. For example what people may speculate about regarding the distant, hallucinogenic Vedic origins and propositions about cosmic cycles of time, creation, and destruction in an unforeseen future that defy the laws of modern scientific physics. But for Ambedkar, the 'ideal scheme,' in the case of Hinduism, is what he thinks is a self-conscious heritage that is far more recent than that, namely the Manu Smirti. Those divine law codes tried to engineer, in the name of Hinduism's fundamental truths, a social order that is highly stratified, unequal, and supremely unfair. And they succeeded in doing so.

This legal-'ethical'-system that ascribes roles and duties forms what is more 'permanent, fixed and enduring' in the real historical, social and material realms. For Ambedkar, this "ideal scheme of divine governance"[27] ultimately shapes society down to its core to the point of installing something permanent. For the purpose of critical judgement, Ambedkar needs to get to what is most 'essential' about not only a religion's nature or 'phenomenon,' but the task at hand—what does it actually do and how does it impact real life. In that regard, the how the Manu Smriti, or law codes, informs the conduct of all Hindu life is paramount and serves as the 'ideal scheme.' He states in describing its essence, he states:

> A divine Code which lays down the rules which govern the religious, ritualistic and social life of the Hindus in minute detail and which must be regarded as the Bible of the Hindus and containing the philosophy of Hinduism.[28]

Although the text of Ambedkar's "Philosophy of Hinduism" provides in great detail many passages from various Hindu epics and texts throughout Indian history, the bulk of its critique is focused and concentrated on the 'divine code' that Ambedkar calls the 'Bible' of the Hindus and that which contains its 'philosophy' of Hinduism. One can say that ideal scheme is not just what a society strives to be in terms of its highest ethical conduct and the deep philosophical reasons that define why such virtuous action is necessary. Rather, it is an admixture of divine justification for repeated

ritualistic conduct, which then forms the very fabric and essence of social life. It is whereby the very distinction between an individual life from birth to death is absorbed in a paranoid sequence of repeated actions enacting a divine code. The code if you will literally brings the motive force alive in the string of moments where each moment takes on life of hysterical ritualistic worship. This may sound interesting to outsiders who do not know what it means to live in Indian society, past or present. But the real enigma here is how the divine code literally traces the entire historical and social existence of a people down to the imperceptibly 'minute details' whereby life itself becomes a perpetual ritual.

What justifies this primordial intentionality of the distention of all human life being programmed so to speak by the divine code, however, is a stratified system of inequality and perpetuation of mistrust, envy, and hate in different directions from some groups to others. The 'Bible' of this system, which contains its essential 'philosophy,' that gives meaning to this type of existence and guarantees it from external threat, say atheism or other world religions, is really a total system for governance and hegemony over every aspect of life to death in the minutiae of ritualistic infinitude.[29] And this has nothing to do with the separation of the secular and religious in most constitutional, legal democracies, including post-British colonial India.

Although there is more to theorize about the relation between the 'ideal scheme, divine governance' and the amoral and immoral processes of ritualistic self-discipline and discipline of others' bodies and spaces in contrast to other types of mythological formations and their power effects on societies, we have to move on.[30] The culminating third dimension that will *ground* Ambedkar's philosophical analysis of religion is the most difficult to determine. That is the question of what philosophical criteria we can use to judge a religion, which means questioning the value of an 'ideal scheme of governance,' as Nietzsche would do to Christianity; that is put the value of its religious values into question and be the first to do so.[31] Once again Ambedkar invokes the notion of a "trial."[32] The difficulty is not one of moral justification as to the task of such a trial; as to why Ambedkar would take it upon himself like others did in history with regard to other religions, Nietzsche or the French Enlightenment for example on Christianity and its life-denying myths that stymie the liberatory potential of human beings to create new values. Rather, the question, for Ambedkar, is methodological— what justifies the criteria of philosophical judgement.

He answers this question on method by resolving himself to go back to the history of religion in general to see what 'revolutions' it underwent.[33] He also affirms that there is no universal philosophy of a religion because each religion has its own philosophy.[34] One can deduce that this may be due to a logical impossibility: for there is no one universal world religion with one universal world philosophy, despite religiously and morally informed transversal instruments such as the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed that great bedrock for humanity drew from several religions, cultures, and civilizations. Or it could be due to the respect of each religion's boundary in peaceful coexistence with right of other religions to exist on an international scale: no religion should encroach upon another to judge its content or validity or use its truth claim of revelation or divinity to supplant that of another. It is like a principle of spiritual non-interference in the international realm of cosmic-religious relations. Ambedkar wants to respect these boundaries, but he is also searching for extra-religious philosophical criteria through the history of religions generally speaking so he can judge one and only one particular religion from which he emerged, and not all

others. And that is Hinduism. It will turn out that two major revolutions in the history of religion in general will finally deliver the criteria Ambedkar will need to perform his radical, and for him novel, critique of one single religion, namely Hinduism and its philosophy.

We will conclude the first part of our commentary on Ambedkar's "The Philosophy of Hinduism" by exploring his discussions on method that will underpin his actual analysis of the philosophy of Hinduism, which commences in the second part of his text. Ambedkar himself said that a "long detour" was necessary before he could begin an actual examination of the contents of Hinduism and its most sacred texts.[35] We too feel justified in spending a careful amount of time in the first section of his short but bountifully wise, the "Philosophy of Hinduism," to really open up problems on the philosophy of religion as a phenomenon and its methodological self-justification. This way we can gain better insights into Ambedkar's deepest motivations to undertake his life-long critique and activism against the Hindu social order of caste and what he argued regarding its fundamental injustice and inequality. In a future second part to our commentary, we will slowly read the second section of Ambedkar's text to deploy certain resources in modern continental European philosophy and the philosophy of religion in particular.[36]

Let us turn to Ambedkar's theories on 'revolution' in the history of religions and why that relates to the imperative for radical social change and reformation in the pursuit of a universally, inclusive social justice. It would appear that at this moment in Ambedkar's text, an extremely important and interesting intervention is being made in problems in the philosophy of history, or the nature of epochal change and shifts of historical time, and even the nature of historical time itself. But it's not just an inquiry for the self-enclosed worlds of history, historiography, historical reason, etc. in light of problems in the philosophy of history, i.e. for empirically-motivated historians and archaeologists working with datable, chronological time. Rather, as part of this 'detour,' the philosophy of history opens up certain problems specific to the history of religions in general. And this will allow Ambedkar to justify his methodological approach to the philosophical criteria he will eventually use to judge a very specific religion, namely Hinduism, and its core philosophy encoded in a divine text.

Such a text has a supersensory relation paradoxically to the inner-core of what propels history but maintains a substratum: one that only perpetuates a type of malignancy that should otherwise pass with the vicissitudes of historical time, like everything else seems to have done in other civilizations' histories and world history in general. In other civilizations and their histories, nothing remains of the barbarism of past paganist religions that supported the draconian empires of antiquity, at least for Hegel when he thinks of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia for example.[37] Regardless of Hegel's views, the point is nothing of ancient pagan mass slavery for example and god-like imperial power exists in today's world religions. At least as far as we can tell.

But with India and its unique invention of Hinduism it is different. The substrate from millennia ago that continues to govern a system of enormous, unfathomable, yet undetectable (at least for those outside it) oppression, cruelty, and inequality, namely the caste system, persists. Furthermore, it's the nature of this persistence that befuddles the philosopher of history as much as the content of Hinduism the religion perplexes

the philosopher of religion, namely Ambedkar. It will turn out that in the second part of Ambedkar's essay, the two criteria he will arrive at for his judgement are 'utility' and 'justice' and how Hinduism fails to achieve the latter.[38]

At this juncture of our commentary the issue is not what justice and utility mean in terms of their philosophical complexity; although that will be important down the road in future investigations. Rather, the questions that appear here have to do with the philosophy of history in relation to the history of religion and therefore the philosophical criteria to judge a religion by way of revolutions. Then we can better understand the thought processes and deductions that allow Ambedkar to arrive at his criteria of 'utility and justice'.For those criteria enable his philosophical judgement about Hinduism in general and why he will ultimately conclude that in fact it is not a religion at all. It is something entirely other.

References

Narake, Hari, ed. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* Vol. 3. 2nd Edition. New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundations, 2014.

Thorat, Sukhadeo and Kumar, Narender eds. *B.R. Ambedkar: Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Endnotes

1. The First Edition was published by the Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra: 14 April, 1987. See *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* Vol. 3, ed. Hari Narake, 2nd Edition (New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundations, 2014).
2. Ibid., xi.
3. Ibid. In addition to the "Philosophy of Hinduism," Vol. 3 contains the short and enigmatic text that Ambedkar was working on at the time of his death, namely "Buddha or Karl Marx," to which we will turn our attention to in a future paper, particularly on the theory of social revolution within a global South context like India while leveraging Western continental European philosophical theories.
4. For Ambedkar's impact on law and the social sciences, see Sukhadeo Thorat and Narender Kumar, eds., *B.R. Ambedkar: Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). On law specifically, see Mohammad Shabir, *Ambedkar on Law, Constitution, and Social Justice* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005). On economics and politics, see Sukhadeo Thorat and Aryarma, eds., *Ambedkar in Retrospect: Essays on Economics, Politics, and Society* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2007). Finally on history, see Narayan Das, *Ambedkar on Indian History* (New Delhi: Centrum Press, 2017).
5. *Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* Vol. 3, xi.
6. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,* trans. Joseph Ward Swann (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 466.
7. In the concluding sentences to the "Philosophy of Hinduism" Ambedkar states: "The only answer is that Hinduism is overwhelmed with the fear of pollution. It has not got the power to purify. It has not the impulse to serve and that is because

by its very nature it is unhuman and unmoral. It is a misnomer to call it religion. Its philosophy is opposed to very thing for which religion stands." See *Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* Vol. 3, 92.

8. See Thorat and Kumar's introduction to *B.R. Ambedkar: Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies.*

9. The editors of Vol. 3 state that at the time of its discovery, the text was a self-contained chapter of a much larger work that was incomplete. See *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* Vol. 3., 1. This only points to the need for worldwide scholarship to continue to build out a global research platform that can fructify works on Ambedkar's thought, philosophy and religion, and the philosophy of religion. Works such as "Riddles of Hinduism" in volume IV, *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (a last major work that was also published posthumously)*,* and "Buddha or Karl Marx" in Vol. 3 are central for that endeavor. See Aakash Singh Rathore and Ajay Verma, eds., *B.R. Ambedkar: The Buddha and His Dhamma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

10. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* Vol. 3., 3.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid. parentheses are my additions.

14. Any historian of Western philosophy knows that this very impulse has driven the greatest minds of antiquity starting with Plato and Aristotle to pre-modernity and the birth of reason and rationality in Hobbes, Locke, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz to Hume, Kant, and Hegel to the last two great critics of the Western philosophical tradition, Nietzsche and Heidegger.

15. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* Vol. 3., 1

16. Ibid., 5. At some point it would be interesting to bring Ambedkar in to dialogue with Kant's corpus as a whole but particularly what he says philosophy is in relation to morality and duty with regard to its own exercise. What is known as the second critique or the *Critique of Practical Reason* and *The Metaphysical Foundations of Morals* come to mind. We defer this to future research.

17. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* Vol. 3., 1

18. Marx intended to produce a purely 'scientific' (albeit with his novel notions of historical and dialectical materialism) exposition of the nature of capitalism that previous classical political-economists (Smith, Ricardo) failed to do. So one can say Marx was really trying to discover the truth of what capitalism is (by defining all its categories such as 'value, use-value, exchange value, commodity, labor, labor power, labor time, relative and equivalent value, money, price, surplus labor value, production, capital' etc.), which means how capitalism functions based on a series of bewildering contradictions and multiplication of mobile relations between intertwining terms. Given his complication of the dialectical method, there is no static or isolated atomistic term existing in a vacuum, but always in an ever increasing multiplication of relations of identities and differences between and within terms. Hegel's influence was indeed profound. But even the beginner of *Capital*, Vol. 1 can see the satirical tone, the disgust and anger, the wit and literary flair in Marx's genius. The rest is history. Marx was not an indifferent thinker but a revolutionary whose ideas would only come to fruition later in the communist revolutions of the twentieth century that tried to destroy capitalism

and replace it with another social and economic order. See Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Classics, 1990).

19. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 5.

20. It is uncontroversial as a fact that all extant world religions- Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism to name the most well-known- make that claim about themselves.

21. Later in his text, Ambedkar attempts a critique of Nietzsche's valorization of the Manu Smritis, or law codes, that laid down and continue to validate the hierarchical caste system even though we all know Nietzsche as one of the first great critics of the immoral nature of historical and institutional Christianity. But that's a separate matter as Ambedkar is not interested in Nietzsche's critique of Christianity. He is interested in a critical evaluation of Hinduism in its failure to meet even the minimal standards to even be called a 'religion.' A future work could compare Nietzsche's critique of Christianity with Ambedkar's critique of Hinduism. See Rajesh Sampath, "Developing a Nietzschean Genealogical Critique of the Metaphysical and Moral Underpinnings of the Hindu Caste System," *Spec. Issue of Indian Philosophical Quarterly: Rethinking Ambedkar in the 21st Century* 42, no. 1-4 (2015): 81-108.

22. See B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste,* ed. S. Anand (London: Verso Press, 2014).

23. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 6.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. A future work could compare Ambedkar's writings with Weber's writings and not only from his famous *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) that examines Protestant Christianity in particular; but also his general writings in the sociology of religion, the sections on religion in his incomplete treatise *Economy and Society,* Two Volumes, and his specific works on specific religions, including a work on the sociology of Hinduism. See in particular his *The Religion of India*, trans. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharial Publishers, 2000). We will defer that research to a future work.

27. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 3*, 6.

28. Ibid., 7.

29. One could examine the Hindu social order and its emanation in religious life, not only through great past figures that founded sociology like Weber and Durkheim. But closer to our historical present, the works of the later Michel Foucault on knowledge, power, 'disciplinary technologies of the body,' and 'governmentality' exceed the space of the juridical, the state, and the political. They relate to processes of the normalization of existence, the body, and self-governance through extremely complex, finite, and non-dialectical relations of knowledge and power and their positive effects on constituting subjects and social life. His works can be very useful to unpack some of Ambedkar's insights about the philosophy of religion and governance that surpass anything in Western political history from Hobbes to the present that try to justify law, sovereignty, and the social contract. For more on Foucault, see Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

30. A very interesting project would be to explore the works of the philosopher of history, Hans Blumenberg, on various epochal shifts on the Copernican

revolution, the nature of myth, and the birth of modern Western rationality, with the Ambedkarite context on the mystery of Hindu myth and its real effects of power on the social body that is caste. See in particular Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985).

31. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).

32. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 3*, 8.

33. Ibid. 8.

34. Ibid., 8.

35. Ibid., 22.

36. Our goal is to publish that second part in a subsequent issue of volume 1 of the journal.

37. See G.W.F. Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, trans. J.B. Sibree (The Colonial Press, 1899). One must put Hegel back in to his early nineteenth century historical context to expose his narrow Eurocentrism. From today's vantage point, one could easily see Hegel's condescending attitude towards anything he thought was non-Western (meaning non-Greco-Roman), for example Egypt, Babylon, and Persia but also Africa, China, and India. In fact he labeled those civilizations as part of 'pre-history.' Today scholars would question both the temporal and geographically boundaries of what constitute the 'origins' of ancient Western Europe to include what Hegel in his time might have seen as part of the non-West; that in fact Greece and Rome may have been derivative of something deeper than the self-justifying Western historical record reveals. See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Vol. 1: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece* 1785-1985 (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2020); M.L. West, *The East Fast of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999); Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution; Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). And needless to say since the birth of primordial Christianity in Greece and parts of what would constitute today's Turkey, Egypt, Israel/Palestine, and Syria, Orthodox Christianity in its Greek foundations are more aligned with Eastern Orthodoxy extending to Russia, then they would with 'Western' Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity. See Stephen Morris, *The Early Eastern Orthodox Church: A History, AD 60-1453* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2018).

38. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 3, 22. In a future work, it would be very interesting to explore how Ambedkar arrives at these two criteria of 'utility and justice' and compare and contrast his ideas with the enormously influential philosophy of justice in the Anglo-American world, namely that of John Rawls. Bringing in the Rawlsian framework into the study of the philosophy of religion in a non-Western, colonial and decolonial context, such as Ambedkar's Hindu-dominated India of the early to mid-twentieth century, raises tantalizing possibilities for future scholarship. For a summary of John Rawls's life-long quest to philosophize about justice, see his *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

Population-Poverty Linkages and Health Consequences: Understanding Global Social Group Inequalities

Sanghmitra Sheel Acharya[1]

Abstract

Population dynamics and determinants of poverty are associated in a way that affects access to resources which influence health. The popular belief often is that population growth causes problems including poverty. Scientific arguments, however, have fairy well established that it is the nature of development, which is important to ensure availability, access and utilization of resources, services and opportunities for different population groups. Population growth is an insufficient explanation for denial of access to resources because development disparities across the globe render different populations exposed to vulnerabilities of varied kinds. Disparities in health between different social groups are the function of the unequal way in which the determinants of health are distributed in society. Beyond its effects on health, inequality has far reaching consequences on social trust and cohesion affecting social institutions; and also on mortality and health outcomes. Factors such as income, employment status, housing, education, social position, and social exclusion have direct and indirect bearings on health over lifetimes. In many countries there is evidence of a social gradient in health, with those in more advantaged positions enjoying generally better health and lower mortality. In India, caste is an important axis on which discrimination and denial occur causing poor health outcomes. In terms of income and social indicators, India is one of the most unequal countries in the world. The present paper endeavours to understand the determinants of disparity among population groups across countries which influence access to health care with special reference to India.

Keywords

Health care, poverty, discrimination and health, disparity in access to resources, caste

[1]Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, School of Social Sciences,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
E-mail: sanghmitra.acharya@gmail.com

Introduction

The relationship between population and poverty is entwined with the dynamics and composition of the former; nature and degree of the latter; and resource distribution. Population size is determined by its growth, while poverty is a function of access and utilization of resources, services, and opportunities. Population and poverty therefore need to be seen in the light of inclusive development and human rights. Population growth itself remains an insufficient explanation of the inverse relationship between population and access to resources. There are many trajectories extending explanations which have moved away from the original Malthusian elucidation of population checks (Sen, 1995; Srinivasan and Mohanty, 2008). Population growth rates and average family size worldwide have fallen by roughly half over the past four decades as modern contraception became more accessible and popular. While the change is more visible among those with access to resources, the deprived do not respond to the lowered family size as mortality among them is high and survivorship low.

The doomsday neo-Malthusian 'limits to growth' ideas reached the pinnacle in works such as *Silent spring* by Rachel Carson (1962) and *Population bomb* by Paul Ehrlich ((1968). A critical counter-tradition was created by Julian Simon and Herman Kahn through their works *The ultimate resource*(1981, 1996) and *The resourceful earth* (1984) in which they argued that population growth does not necessarily lead to resource depletion, certainly not when it happens among the deprived groups. Their growth, in contrast, contributes to the pool of workers ready for exploitation by the rich and the possessed. Simon and Kahn (1984) propounded that human innovation can solve many problems. The water and air quality have improved over time, despite increasing populations. Poverty and misery have also reduced globally as scientific innovations shaped. In this improvement, however, something notable is the persistent gap in access to resources between the vulnerable and the non-vulnerable populations across the globe.

The two most populous countries of the world, China and India with population size 1,365,480,000 and 1,246,420,000 respectively on July 9, 2014 as per their population clock, are home to 36.4 percent (China, 19 percent and India, 17.4 percent) of world's total population, and have most of the world's poor despite the fact that poverty is on decline globally. In 1990, there was 36 percent population living below poverty line which reduced to 18 percent in 2010 (World Bank Report, 2010). The Expert Group of the World Bank acknowledged that the goal set to reduce extreme poverty to nine percent by 2020 will require more than just economic growth. The need to develop policies that allocate resources to people living in poverty was emphasised, thereby the need for creating an enabling environment for opportunities to access resources and services. Thus, inclusive growth was seen as a mechanism to address poverty by improving sanitation, developing irrigation facilities, and water systems for farming and expanding health coverage for the underserved people till universal health care could be put in place (Planning Commission of India, 2011).

Disparity in Wealth Ownership

Unlike the popular belief that population growth is the root cause of all problems including poverty; scientific arguments have fairy well established that it is the nature of development, inclusive or otherwise, which ensure availability, access and

utilization of resources, services and opportunities for different population groups. Had population growth been the reason, then neither would have China emerged as an economic competitor to the U.S. nor Singapore would have ruled the trade in the East Asian territories. In India, the mega cities would not have commanded the supremacy and Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh would have been the most developed regions in the country. While the Dependency Theory lends an explanation to the interrelationship between the depressed and developed regions (So, 1990), income and social factors through the lens of social identity explain differentials that affect access (Das, 2013; Sharma 2015). Often the latter becomes more rigid in governing access (Thorat and Atwell, 2007; Mosse, 2019[1]). Inequality hinders access at global, national, regional, local as well as household and individual level. The poorest forty percent of the world's population accounts for five percent of the world's income, while the richest twenty percent accounts for three-fourths of world income. About 0.13 percent of the world's population controlled a quarter of world's assets in 2006. It is noteworthy that the richest ten percent control varying proportions of wealth across the globe. The share of national wealth controlled by the top ten percent of the population suggests that India along with Brazil is second only to Middle East and Sub Saharan Africa (sixty-one percent each) with fifty five percent of national income being garnered by the top ten percent rich (refer Figure 1).
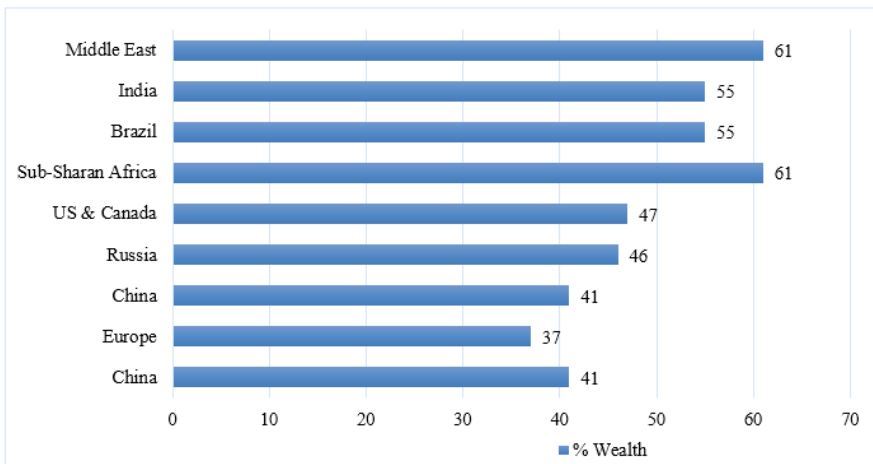
Fig 1. Percent Wealth Owned by Richest 10 % Population, 2016

Source: World Inequlity Report 2018

In terms of income and social indicators, India is one of the most unequal countries in the world. It ranks 147 among about 200 countries (WIR, 2018),and a lowly 97 among 118 developing countries on the Global Hunger Index (GHI). In comparison to other countries, maternal mortality in India is 174 per 100,000 live births as compared to Middle East (six per 100000 live births) and Canada (seven per 100000 live births). Median wealth per adult in India at1289 USD, is less than half of Sri Lanka (2415) and Middle East (2426) and Gini's co-efficient for wealth is 35.6 (Table 1). But the commitment to reduce inequality is fairly low.

Table 1. Indicators of Health, Wealth and Inequality

Countries	MMR*	CRI@	Median Wealth per adult	WB Gini's Co-efficient#
China	27	81	16333	38.6 (2015)
USA	14	23	61667	41.5 (2016)
Canada	7	18	106827	34.0 (2013)
Sub Saharan Africa	693	97	332	42.1 (2012)
Brazil	44	39	24263	46.9 (2017)
India	174	147	1289	35.7 (2011)
Middle East	6	98	2426	40.7 (2007)
Sri Lanka	33	102	2415	39.8 (2016)

Note: The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is the annual number of female deaths per 100,000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes). The MMR includes deaths during pregnancy, childbirth, or within forty two days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, for a specified year.

Source: CIA World Factbook 2018*; Development Finance International and Oxfam Report October 2018. The Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index 2018@; Credit Suisse's *Global Wealth Databook.* World Bank Gini's Co-efficient.# Accessed on 30 November 2017

Unemployment rate has grown from 6.8 percent in 2001 to 9.6 percent in 2011 and further to 8.4 percent in August 2019. Unemployment grew faster for illiterates than for literates (CMIE, 2019). There are more illiterate among poor, SC and ST than non-poor, non-SC and non ST (RGI, 2011). About 28 percent SC and 50 (percent ST are in the lowest wealth quintile as against less than 10 percent of the high caste Hindus (IIPS and ICF, 2017).

Determinants of Disparities in Health

Disparities in health between different ethnic groups are the function of unequal way in which the determinants of health are distributed in society (Robson 2004; Whitehead, 2007). Beyond its effects on health, inequality has far reaching consequences on social trust and cohesion affecting social institutions (Kawachi and Berkman 2000; Kawachi et al. 1997). The growing inequality has influenced not only mortality, but a range of health outcomes, as well as social and political phenomena (Wilkinson, 1994; Kawachi et al. 1997; Nayar, 2007). These factors include such determinants as income, employment status, housing, education, social position, and social exclusion which have direct and indirect bearings on health over lifetimes (Siegrist, J and M Marmot, 2006). In many countries there is evidence of a social gradient in health, with those in more advantaged positions enjoying generally better health and lower mortality (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003; WIR, 2018). To illustrate, in Aotearoa, New Zealand, there is differential distribution of social, environmental, economic, and political determinants of health for Màori and non-Màori people. In 2005, 49percent of Māori secondary school students left school without completion, compared to

22 percent of non-Māori. Only nine percent of Māori students left school with a completion certificate allowing them to enter university, compared to thirty fourpercent of non-Māori students (Ministry of Education, Government of New Zealand, 2006). Similarly, the socio-economic disparities in life expectancy have widened among non-Latino whites in the USA (Vega and Amaro, 1994; Olshansky et al. 2012; Sasson 2016). In India too, a gap is evident in the differential access to care services among the scheduled communities -castes and tribes, as compared to the non-scheduled (Acharya, 2010; Baru, et al., 2010; Acharya, 2013; Acharya, Mukherjee, and Kumar, 2015; Acharya, 2018). While social factors like taking permission to visit a facility, finding someone to accompany, and the concern for the availability of female provider show little gap across different population groups, infrastructure and location factors like distance and possession of money to access care, show a comparatively larger gap between the groups (Refer Figure 2).
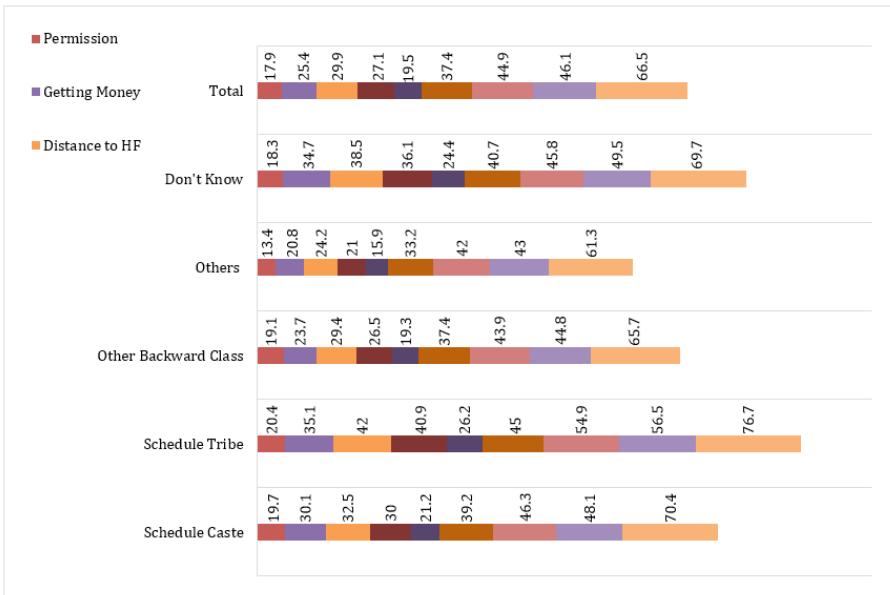
Fig 2. Problems in Accessing Health 2015-16

Source: Table 11.21, NFHS 4

Underlying and Proximate Determinants of Health

Internationally, there is increasing recognition of the role that various social, economic, environmental, and political factors play in determining health experiences and outcomes for individuals and social groups (Howden-Chapman and Tobias 2000; Wilkinson & Marmot 2003).

Age and Marital Status

Men and women across social groups suffer from different types of diseases at different ages. An important determinant of health is physical access to health facilities. Better

access to health facilities results in less time consumed to access healthcare and often it increases demand. Similarly, marital status also affects health. Single people have a greater tendency to use more medical care as compared to married and with children (Chetty et al. 2016; Bosworth, Burtless, and Zhang 2016).

Education and Income

Education is known to influence health outcomes including reproductive health (Mason, 1984; Caldwell, 1994; Desai, 2000) and emotional connects with it (Basu, 2006). It encourages preventive care. However, low education levels are linked with poor health, more stress, and low self-confidence (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003)**.** This affects the propensity for improved incomes. Higher incomes create conducive environment for higher expenditures for health; and create demand for newer and expensive healthcare. It is evident that the percentage spent on health declines as income increases. Income and social status are directly associated and are linked to better health. The greater the gap between the richest and poorest people the greater the differences in health (Bunker, et al., 1989; Deaton, 1999; Nayar, 2007; Baru, et al., 2010).

   In general, lower incomes are associated with higher morbidity and mortality for many illnesses and injuries. It is evident among Māori and non-Māori, death rates of those on high incomes declined more sharply in recent years than those of people with low or middle incomes (Blakely et al., 2000, 2001, 2007; Subramanian et al., 2003, 2006; Subramanian, 2008; Subramanian and Kawachi, 2004). The income gap between Māori and non-Māori remains substantial. The median annual income for Māori adults (those aged 15 years and over) in 2006 was $20,900, compared with $24,400 for the total population. The median annual income was $25,900 for Māori males and $17,800 for Māori females. The average weekly income (from all sources) for Māori was $471 for the June 2005 quarter, compared with $ 637 for European/ Pākehā, $ 412 for Pacific peoples and $ 415 for other ethnic groups (Ministry of Health, New Zealand and University of Otago, 2006). The living standards for Māori in 2004 were lower than the total population, a pattern also evident in the 2000 Living Standards Survey (Jensen et al., 2006). There was slight change in average living standards for Māori between 2000 and 2004, but there was an increase in the proportion of Māori experiencing 'severe hardship' from seven percent in 2000 to seventeen percent in 2004. Forty percent of Māori families as compared to nineteen percent of European families were living in hardship in 2004 (Wagstaff and Doorslaer, 2000; Jensen et al., 2006).

   Similarly, the reindeer-herding indigenous Sami men had lower income than Swedish men. The Sami people are the indigenous ethnic group of northern Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula (Tynes and Haldorsen, 2007).The differences in income increased slightly over the past decades due to declining profitability of reindeer husbandry. It has been shown that the increase in income has been similar among Sami and non-Sami between 1970 and 2000, except for the reindeer-herding men who show a significantly lower income and slower increase in income compared with non-Sami men (Tynes and Haldorsen, 2007; Sjolander, 2011).

Access to Resources

Access and use of resources which prevent or treat disease influence health. Underlying and proximate determinants of health also include household size. Generally, the greater

the household size the greater the demand for health services, but is equipoised by the effects of income. Health Insurance makes health a 'cheaper' commodity for those utilizing healthcare. It affects the demand for healthcare in two ways- lowers effective rates and increases the use rates; and it increases the utilization of more expensive services (Feldstein, 2011). Social support from families, friends and communities is linked to better health. The culture milieu in which customs, traditions, and the beliefs of the family and community are embedded, they all affect health (Banerji, 1982; Baraik and Kulkarni, 2006).

The Persistent Gap

These determinants work in favour of the non-vulnerable populations. More often than not the vulnerable are located in areas which are distant from facilities. Educational attainment is poor among them causing lower employability and income levels. Access to health services, health insurance is also low. Often, lifestyle habits of the vulnerable populations are associated with incomes and working conditions, and are detrimental to health. Their living conditions are often inhuman- crowded, congested and insanitary. Work and working conditions are equally difficult. Household size is large and low incomes prevent choice of care. Social and familial support may be available minus economic support. Certain cultural taboos may be observed with rigidity, often to camouflage the economic distress.

Illustrations from Different Geographical Settings

Different countries have formulated affirmative policies and programmes to support their vulnerable populations in various ways at different points of time. Affirmative action, known as 'employment equity' in Canada, 'reservation in India,' 'positive discrimination' in the UK, 'equal opportunity' in New Zealand, and 'quota' in Scandinavian countries, is the policy of favouring members of a disadvantaged group who currently suffer, or have historically suffered from discrimination in access to education, employment, or housing. The nature of affirmative action policies varies from region to region. Some countries use a quota system, whereby a certain percentage of government jobs, political positions, and school vacancies must be reserved for members of a certain group; an example of this is *the reservation system in India.* In some countries quotas are not used, but disadvantaged groups are given preference or special consideration in selection processes. The term 'affirmative action' was first used in the United States in 1961, which included a provision to 'take *affirmative action* so as to ensure that in providing employment, no one discriminated on the basis of race, creed, colour, or national origin' (Bergmann, 1999; Sowell, 2004). However, despite such efforts from countries, the differentials between social groups- the privileged and the discriminated--- still prevails. Reflections from some regions support this.

The affirmative action policies in Canada have addressed the concern for employment, education, and housing among the First Nations. Paula Arriagada and Darcy Hango (2016) of Statistics Canada, examined the essential literacy and numeracy skills of the off-reserve First Nations and Métis adults for education and employment outcomes by profiling the literacy and numeracy skills of off-reserve First Nations, Métis and non-Indigenous non-immigrant populations. The analysis was based on Canadian data from the 2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). The results suggest that, while for all groups, literacy and

numeracy skills levels increase with education; and employment outcomes rise with skill; this relationship is significantly stronger for the non-indigenous than indigenous populations. The off-reserve First Nations and Métis adults have lower literacy and numeracy scores than non-aboriginal adults. For example, just over one-third (35 percent) of off-reserve First Nations people and 50percent of Métis aged 25 to 65 had higher literacy scores, compared with 57 percent among non-aboriginal adults. Among those with a university degree, however, the proportion of off-reserve First Nations adults with higher skills remained lower than that of non-aboriginal adults. As regards employment outcomes, the off-reserve First Nations adults with higher literacy and numeracy skills were less likely to be employed than non-indigenous adults aged 25 to 54, even if they had lower skill levels, and even after accounting for other factors that can affect the probability of employment. Among those who had higher literacy skills, off-reserve First Nations adults aged 25 to 54 had a 75 percent probability of being employed, compared with 87 percent of Métis adults and 91percent of non-indigenous adults at similar skill levels.

Unemployment is known to be associated with poor health outcomes (Keefe and ACSW 2010; Blakely et al 2002). This association is closely related to public policies. In New Zealand, Māori work opportunities and work conditions were differentially impacted by economic and social policies of the 1980s and 1990s. The differential position of Māori in the labour market accounted for the widening gaps in mortality rates between Māori and non-Māori people during the 1980s and 1990s (Ministry of Health, New Zealand & University of Otago, 2006). It is noteworthy that unemployment rates for Māori have decreased from 13.0percent in 2001 to 7.6 percent in June 2007 but remain three times higher than that of Pākehā and similar to that of the Pacific population (7.8 percent) (Ministry of Health, New Zealand & University of Otago, 2006). There are also differences in the occupational distribution of Māori and non-Māori populations. In 2006, Māori were most likely to be employed in service industries (16.7 percent), and as plant/machine operators and assemblers (16.4 percent) (Department of Labour, 2006). There is evidence that Māori face discrimination in the labour market – in getting a job, in the type of job obtained, and the wages paid for a particular type of work (Deaton, 1995; Das, 2013).

Morbidity, Mortality and Life Expectancy

To understand the differentials in life expectancy and specific causes of death among the reindeer-herding and non-reindeer-herding Swedish Sami, the Swedish Causes of Death Register over the period 1961–2000 was used. No difference in life expectancy was observed between the Sami and the non-Sami population. The incidence of specific causes of death was also quite similar among Sami and non-Sami (Soininen and Pukkala, 2008). These results are basically in agreement with mortality studies conducted in the Norwegian and the Finnish Sami populations (Sjolander, 2011). In a recent study on some lifestyle habits, it was found that, although the level of consumption of alcohol was similar, subgroups among reindeer-herding Sami men have more hazardous drinking pattern compared with non-Sami in Sweden, Norway and Finland (Wiklund, Holm, Eklund, 1991).

The robustness of the relationships between primary care, income inequality, and population health was tested in weighted multivariate regressions, income inequality measures such as Gini coefficient, Robin Hood Index) and were found to be significantly associated with mortality. Primary care physician-to-population ratios

were significantly associated with lower mortality. Specialty care was associated with higher mortality. Family medicine, however, was consistently associated with lower mortality. Thus, enhancing primary care, particularly family medicine, even in states with high levels of income inequality, could lead to lower mortality in those states (Shi, Macinko, Starfield, Wulu, Regan, Politzer, 2003). The gradient in the relationship between SES and health shows that each level of the hierarchy exhibits less morbidity and mortality than lower levels (Adler et.al., 1993, 1994; Marmot et. al., 1991). Studies document that the gradient is characterized by a threshold, usually around the median for income, where additional increases in SES have a diminished effect in reducing morbidity and mortality rates (Kitagawa and Hauser, 1973; Pappas et al., 1993; McDonough et al., 1997; Wilkinson, 1986; Williams, 1990).

A growing body of research also reveals that even though overall mortality rates have been declining, socioeconomic differentials in mortality have been widening in recent decades. Comparing data from the 1960s to those for the late 1970s and 1980s, U.S. studies reveal that income and educational differentials have widened over time (Duleep, 1989; Pappas et al., 1993; Williams and Collins, 1995). Similarly, widening socioeconomic differentials in mortality have been observed in England, Wales, France, Finland, Norway, and the Netherlands (Department of Health and Social Security, 1980; Kunst and Mackenbach, 1994; Mackenbach et al., 1989).

In India, there has been a steady decline in decadal growth of population from 24.80 percent in 1971 to 17.64 percent in 2011. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has declined from 165 per 1000 live births in 1950-55 to 53 in 2005-2010. Crude Birth Rate has almost halved from 43.3 during the same years to 23.1 during 2005-2010. Crude Death Rates (CDR) dropped from 25.5 to 8.3 during the same period. Fertility too, declined from 5.9 to 2.73. So has the early childhood mortality reduced, even across social groups, but the gap between the SCs/STs and others continues (refer Figure 3).
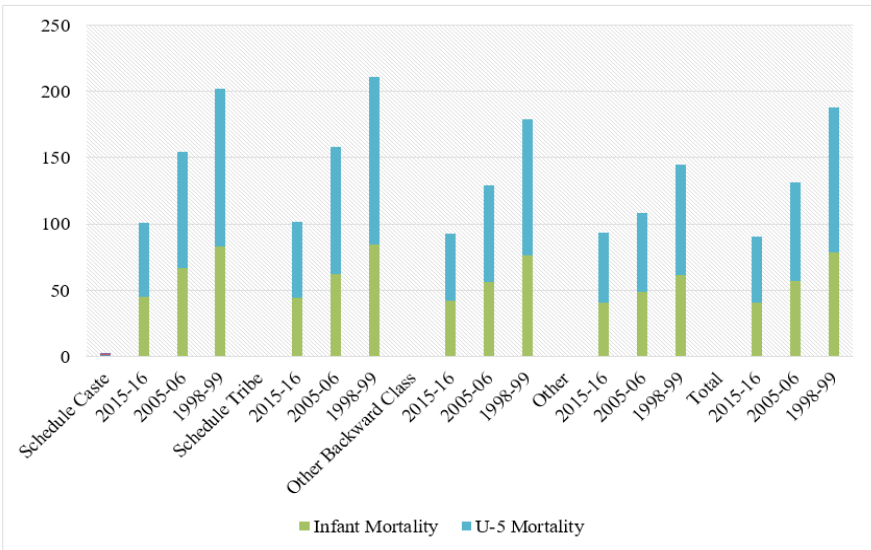
Fig 3. Early Childhood Morality Across Social Groups in India

Source: IIPS and ICF, 2017

Similar is the case with literacy which has also improved for both SCs and STs in last six decades (RGI, 2011). For the scheduled caste population the literacy level improved almost six times from 10.27 percent in 1961 to 66.1 percent in 2011. Similarly for the scheduled tribe population it increased from 8.53 percent in 1961 to 59.0 percent in 2011. The gap between SC and the non-SC/ST in 1961 was 17.64 percentage points, which reduced to 10 percentage points in 2011, while the gap between ST and non-SC/ST was 19.38 percentage points in 1961 which reduced to 17.1 in 2011. While the reduction in gap was more than seven percentage points for SCs from 1961 to 2011, the same was less than two percentage points for STs. Thus, despite the improvement in literacy levels, the gap among the marginalised and non-marginalised groups has remained (Figure 4). The gap between the vulnerable populations- SCs and STs; and the others is well marked and is evident from the time series data of the National Family Health Surveys 1-4. While affirmative action policy is likely to be the supporting factor for this improvement, the persistent gap is a consequence of prejudices and biases which create barriers in access to resources.
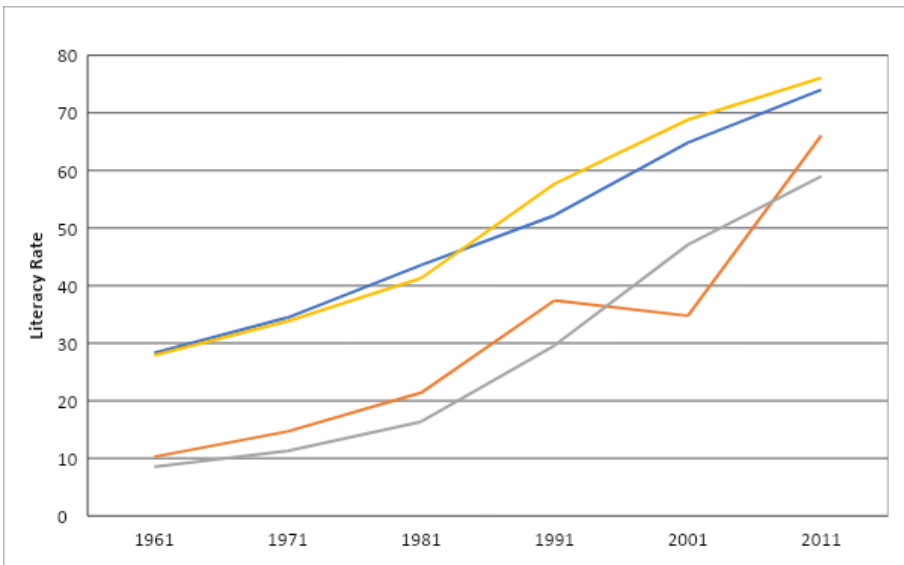
Fig 4. Trends in Literacy rate in india (1961–2011)

Source: RGI, 2011

Inequality Related Discrimination

Differentials and inequalities are known to cause discrimination and exclusion. The European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) revealed that the immigrants, their descendants and ethnic minorities face widespread discrimination across the European Union (Teivainen, 2017). The survey revealed that ethnic discrimination and hatred was prevalent; and the laws and policies remain inadequate for protecting people against discrimination while job-seeking.

"With every act of discrimination and hate, we erode social cohesion and create inequalities that blight generations fueling the alienation that may ultimately have devastating consequences," (O'Flaherty, 2017).

In Finland, people of immigrant and ethnic minority background are more likely to experience discrimination than almost anywhere else in the European Union. Discrimination against people of Sub-Saharan African descent is particularly common in Finland. Almost a half (45 percent) of the respondents reported that they have experienced discrimination over the past year and well over a half (60 percent) that they have experienced discrimination over the past five years while accessing public and private services, such as employment, health care and hospitality services. Despite anti-discrimination policies, reporting discrimination is still restricted. The willingness and ability to report discrimination, varies substantially between EU states. For example, nearly a third (30percent) of respondents of Sub-Saharan African descent in Finland said they reported or filed a complaint about the latest incident of discrimination; in Austria, Italy and Portugal, fewer than a tenth of respondents of similar background said they did so (Teivainen, 2017; Singer and Ryff, 1997, 2001; Williams and Collins, 1995; Williams, et.al., 1999).

Denial of Access and Consequences on Health

It is fairly well established that health and wealth are closely related (Wilkinson, 1986, 1997), and economically disadvantaged populations experience worse health status on multiple indicators of physical and mental health. Inequality has important consequences for the health of individuals and groups. Better understanding of the mechanisms involved suggests concrete ways to improve the health of vulnerable individuals and population subgroups.Health is related to social change. Social environments that are less divisive, less undermining of self-confidence, less productive of social antagonism, and more supportive of developing skills and abilities are likely to contribute to the overall health and welfare of the population (Mackenbach, Stronks, Kunst, 1989; Singer and Ryff, 1997, 2001). Inverse associations between socioeconomic hierarchies and morbidity and mortality is well documented (Sorokin, 1927; Antonovsky, 1967; Bunker et al., 1989; Williams, 1990; Baru, et al., 2010). These hierarchies have usually been defined by household income, years of education, and occupational status or position. Persons of higher socioeconomic status (SES) live longer and have lower rates of morbidity than their less favored counterparts (Behm, 1980; Department of Health and Social Security, 1980; Grosse and Auffrey, 1989).

Differences in equality with which income is distributed is related to variations in health between and within countries. There was a significant correlation (r=0-62) between the proportion of total household income received by the less well-off 50percent of households and variation between states in death rates for the United States (Kaplan, Pamuk, Lynch, Cohen, Balfour, 1996). Income inequality is associated with health outcomes and with investments in human and social capital. Economic policies that increase income inequality are also known to have a detrimental effect on population health (Wilkinson, 1986, 1997; Lynch et al., 1998). In an ecological

study, the associations between state-level income inequality and pregnancy-related mortality among non-Hispanic (NH) black and NH white populations across the US was examined. In addition, income inequality was found to be associated with racial inequities in pregnancy-related mortality. These findings highlight the persistent racial inequity in maternal death in the US (Vilda, Wallace, Dyer, Harville, Theall, 2019). Health outcome variance is greater at the bottom of these hierarchies for low levels of education and income, than at the upper end (Bunker et al., 1989; Wilkinson, 1986, 1997).

Improvements in the health of rich compared to non-rich have increased health disparities. For some health conditions, however, there has been no change in health or worsening health status over time for economically disadvantaged populations (Williams and Collins, 1995). Differences between SES groups in access, utilization, and the quality of medical care are important in the widening health inequality (Makenbach et al., 1989), increases in income and wealth inequality in both the United States and Western Europe (Danziger and Gottschalk, 1993) appear to be the driving force behind the widening health disparities (Williams and Collins, 1995).

Poverty Social Exclusion and Ill-Health

Poverty and social exclusion are often taken for granted while considering ill-health effects (Nayar, 2007). Social exclusion refers to the complete denial of access to resources and services, such as the refusal of being treated at a hospital. In the Indian context it is practiced on the basis of caste and untouchability due to which some groups and individuals are denied the rights and opportunities which the others enjoy. Marginalisation of certain groups occurs in most societies including developed countries. It is more pronounced in underdeveloped countries. In India, caste is the unique feature lending itself as an axis for exclusion and marginalization. Caste is synonymous with low socio-economic status and poverty. In the identification of the poor, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes and in some cases the other backward castes may be considered as socially disadvantaged groups who have a higher probability of living under adverse conditions and are thus prone to ill-health. The health status and utilization patterns of such groups give an indication of their social exclusion as well as an idea of the linkages between poverty and health (Banerji, 1982, Nayar, 2007). Caste, income, and regional inequalities determine health (Baru et al., 2010). The scheduled tribes and schedule castes in poor wealth quintile are at a greater disadvantage in all indicators of health as compared to other groups (Jungari and Chauhan, 2017). Among these marginalised populations, poverty is higher in rural areas as compared to urban despite the fact that there has been a decline in poverty across social groups. In case of poverty ratio too, like literacy, the gap between the vulnerable and the non-vulnerable continues to persist (Table 2).

Table 2. Poverty Ratio Among the Social Groups (Percent)

Place of Residence	Poverty Ratio Among The Social Groups				
	1993-94	2004-05	Percent Change	2011-12	Percent Change
Rural					
SC	62.4	53.5	-8.9	31.5	-22.0
OBC	--	39.8	--	22.6	-17.2
ST	65.9	62.3	-3.6	45.3	-17.0
Others		27.1		15.5	-11.6
All	50.1	41.8	-8.3	25.7	-16.7
Urban					
SC	51.7	40.6	-11.1	21.7	-18.9
OBC	--	30.6	--	15.4	-15.2
ST	41.1	35.5	-5.6	24.1	-11.4
Others	--	16.1	--	8.2	-7.9
All	31.8	25.7	-6.1	13.7	-12.0

Source: Planning Commission, 2012

Consequences of socioeconomic disparities and discrimination on health Socio-economic disparities and discrimination are usually measured in terms of education, income, wealth and unemployment (Glei, Goldman, and Weinstein, 2018). Although there is a large literature on subjective social status (the 'social ladder') and its effects on health (Ren et.al., 1999; Pak et. al., 1991; Shi, 2003; Adler et al. 1994), yet few studies have incorporated subjective measures of economic distress. Both constructs are subjective. Perceived 'economic distress' is based on the respondents' evaluations of their financial and employment circumstances; the 'social ladder' notes respondents ranking themselves relative to others.

To quantify socioeconomic disparities based on perceived economic distress, another measure - relative socioeconomic status (relative SES), is often constructed using education, income, assets, and occupation to assign a percentile rank denoting the respondent's position within the overall distribution. It is distinct from the 'social ladder' in that the relative ranking is derived completely from objective criteria rather than from respondents' own evaluations of their social positions. Economic distress is seen to vary with social ladder. Disparities in perceived economic distress change because people's perceptions are influenced by a broad set of factors. These perceptions also vary across age due to employability and work opportunities. These opportunities also vary across social ladder and shape the view on economic well-being. These perceptions are defined by their perceived position on social ladder and as well as relative SES (Case and Deaton, 2015, 2017). Thus, the cohort specific social ladder and relative SES are required to be seen in the light of equity in opportunities.

Effect of Caste on Under-nutrition among Children

There are evidences of socio-economic and demographic factors influencing health and nutritional status (Gopalan, et al., 1978; Sukhatme, 1961; Suryanarayana, 1997). Caste is one of the most important social determinants which affect health

and nutrition of children due to present as well as historical discrimination (Nayar, 2007). Most studies tend to argue that these differentials in nutritional status cannot be attributed to caste. They are due to socio-economic factors like education of mother and wealth of the households, etc. Therefore, a logistic regression analysis was done after controlling the effect of other factors to understand the net effect of caste (based discrimination) on nutritional status of children. Predicted probability was calculated to know the percent differences in under nutrition of children belonging to different social groups due to discrimination. To understand the caste difference three categories of social groups such as scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and others were taken. The other backward class (OBC) was merged with others because, after independence OBC emerged as a separate category on the basis of class, not caste; and they have never been discriminated in the access to resources unlike the scheduled castes who have been historically denied access due to social identity induced prejudices. It is evident from literature that more children belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are poor in health and nutritional status than children belonging to Othersor non-SC/ST groups (Ram, Pathak and Annamma, 1997; Roy, Kulkarni and Vaidehi, 2004; Baraik and Kulkarni, 2006). The status of under nutrition among children belonging to different social groups reflects on disparity.

The results reveals that there are around forty eight and fifty five percent of children belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe respectively are undernourished as compared to thirty nine percent belonging to Others. Around 3.9 percent SC children and 5.9 percent ST children are more malnourished compared to children of 'Others'. This difference may be attributed to discrimination. The net relative risk of being malnourished among children belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe are 1.12 and 1.15 times higher as compared to children belonging to 'Others'. Though the relative risk of being malnourished has declined after controlling other factors, but considerable difference due to discrimination persists. Around 8.5 percent SC children and sixteen percent ST children are more malnourished compared to children of 'Others'. (Table-3).

Table 3. Children Across Social Groups-Observed and Predicted Undernourishment

Percent of Undernourished Children Belonging to Different Social Groups			Predicted Percent of Undernourished Children Belonging to Different Caste		
Caste/ Ethnicity	Under-nutrition	Relative Risk	Under-nutrition (net effect of caste) *	Net difference (due to discrimination)	Net Relative Risk
SC	47.9	1.23	44.8	3.9	1.12
ST	55.4	1.41	46.7	5.9	1.15
Others®	39.4		40.9		
Total	42.7				

Source: Computed from unit level data of National Family Health Survey-4
Note: * indicates the net differences due to discrimination was calculated controlling other factors such as wealth index, mother's education, sex of the child, religion, place of residence, antenatal care, TT injection, place of delivery, vitamin-A supplement and presence of ICDS centres in the village. Here the dependent variable is under-weight and it is dichotomous i.e underweight-1 and normal-0. From the logistic regression result, the predicted percent (predicted probability) was calculated.

® indicates reference category

In other words, the risk of being malnourished for SC and ST children is 1.23 and 1.41 times higher respectively as compared to children belonging to 'Others'. After controlling the effect of other factors, the net differences in under nutrition of children belonging to different social groups has declined. This difference in under nutrition among children belonging to different social groups is due to discrimination. The net effect of social group shows that forty six and forty eight percent children belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes respectively are undernourished as compared to forty one percent of children belonging to 'Others' (Table-4).

Table 4. Logistic Regression-net Effect of Background Factors on undernourished children

Background Factors	B	S.E	Sig.	Exp (B)	Predicted Probability
Caste					
SC					45.8
ST	.160	.031	0.000	1.174	47.7
Others	.239	.043	0.000	1.270	40.9
Mother's Education					
Illiterate					
Primary	-0.167	0.036	0.000	0.846	
Secondary	-0.287	0.033	0.000	0.751	
Higher	-0.797	0.076	0.000	0.451	
Sex of the Child					
Male					
Female	-0.018	0.024	0.461	0.983	
Wealth Index					
Poorest					
Poorer	-0.176	0.035	0.000	0.838	
Middle	-0.413	0.038	0.000	0.662	
Richer	-0.620	0.043	0.000	0.538	
Richest	-1.108	0.057	0.000	0.330	
Religion					
Hindu					
Muslim	-0.047	0.036	0.190	0.954	
Others	-0.243	0.061	0.000	0.784	
Place of Residence					
Urban					
Rural	-0.133	0.036	0.000	0.876	
Antenatal care					
Not taken					
Taken	-0.350	0.035	0.000	0.705	
TT injection					
Didn't take					
Take	-0.015	0.039	0.706	0.985	
Institutional delivery					
No					
Yes	-0.205	0.026	0.000	0.815	
Vitamin A received					
No					
Yes	0.191	0.026	0.000	1.210	
Presence of ICDS centers					
No	-0.046	0.035	0.184	0.955	
Yes					
	N= 29052; -2 Log l= 40573.9; R2= 0.109				

Source: National Family Health Survey-4

The inclusive growth models propose to incorporate the excluded, disadvantaged, and discriminated populations. Among those who are poor, majority also belong to socially disadvantaged groups. Therefore, national or global, inequality and disparity related discrimination affects poor and the vulnerable more than others. It is this realm of resources allocation and access that determines the level of poverty. Inequality over geographical space poses a health hazard. Countries with the smallest spread of incomes and the smallest proportion of the population in relative poverty have the longest life expectancies (Wilkinson, 1994). Evidence from multiple sources suggests that the greater the concentration of income at the upper end of the income distribution, the higher the mortality and morbidity rates (Wilkinson, 1994, 1997; Kaplan et al., 1996; Lynch et al., 1998). Socioeconomic inequality also affects health in more complex ways. It is widely recognized that health is negatively correlated to income inequality (Deaton, 1999; Case and Deaton, 2015).

The role of the government in influencing population health is not limited within the health sector but also by various outside the health systems. The constitution of India makes health in India the responsibility of state governments. It makes every state responsible for 'raising the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and improvement of public health as among its primary duties.' The National Health Policy was endorsed by the Parliament of India in 1983, updated in 2002, and further in 2017. But these documents often reflect an oversight in addressing the inequities in health. In addition to poverty, given the social hierarchy in which Indians are embedded, caste identity becomes important because it has excluded the SCs and the STs from a dignified right to life. They have remained backward in education, livelihoods, access to services, schemes and opportunities to live a life with dignity. They are not free and allowed to select occupations of their choice. This has affected their health and well-being due to consequential stress and also low paying and less dignified occupational engagement.

There is considerable variation in health outcomes at all levels of socioeconomic hierarchies. Health outcome difference is greater at the bottom of these hierarchies— for low levels of education and income—than at the upper end. However, while there is evident change in social determinants of health and public policy research, government interest in promoting equity in health policies is not so evident. These issues remain to be brought into the governments' policy agendas. Using a policy analysis lens to identify why healthy public policies are not being adopted to understand and address health equity is the need of the day.

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Endnotes

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Nationalism, Caste-Blindness, and the Continuing Problems of War-Displaced Panchamars in Post-War Jaffna Society

Kalinga Tudor Silva[1]

Abstract

More than a decade after the end of the 26-year old LTTE—led civil war in Sri Lanka, a particular section of the Jaffna society continues to stay as Internally Displaced People (IDP). This paper tries to unravel why some low caste groups have failed to end their displacement and move out of the camps while everybody else has moved on to become a settled population regardless of the limitations they experience in the post-war era. Using both quantitative and qualitative data from the affected communities the paper argues that ethnic-biases and 'caste-blindness' of state policies, as well as Sinhala and Tamil politicians largely informed by rival nationalist perspectives are among the underlying causes of the prolonged IDP problem in the Jaffna Peninsula. In search of an appropriate solution to the intractable IDP problem, the author calls for an increased participation of these subaltern caste groups in political decision making and policy dialogues, release of land in high security zones for the affected IDPs wherever possible, and provision of adequate incentives for remaining people to move to alternative locations arranged by the state in consultation with IDPs themselves and members of neighbouring communities where they cannot be relocated at their original sites.

Keywords

Caste, caste-blindness, ethnicity, nationalism, social class, IDPs, Panchamars, Sri Lanka

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[1]Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
E-mail: kalingatudorsilva@gmail.com

Introduction

In caste-divided societies development of nationalism may be hampered because 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail ……a nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship' (Anderson,1983, p. 50).[1] So in theory, caste and nation as well as casteism and nationalism are antagonistic to each other even though in reality they may coexist in various ways. While casteism privileges the hereditary caste order in ways that legitimise ranking of castes and unequal relations among castes, nationalist imagination can undermine caste loyalties and caste-based distinctions and disparities as it calls for the formation of a deep horizontal comradeship and a resulting sense of overall equality overriding hereditary ranking. Anderson was clear that nation is an imagined community that contradicts the actual inequalities in terms of class, caste, and gender. He further asserted that '"u"ltimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imagining' (Anderson, 1983, p. 50). This indicates that in spite of it being a sheer imagination, nationalism is a powerful force that actually drives the politics of those converted to nationalist thinking.

In the light of the anti-colonial nationalist struggle in India, Partha Chatterjee (1986) contested the view that nation is a purely imagined community. In *Nation and its fragments* (1993) Chatterjee argued that nation as well as its fragments, including caste formations, are sites of struggles against colonial as well as other forms of oppression. He too, however, recognised that nationalist struggles and caste struggles operate at different levels with caste and religion as the core of the private domain outside the sphere of influence of colonial intervention per se. In other words, under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi Indian nationalism tended to safeguard caste hierarchy against colonial incursions and spiritually refine it as a form of organic solidarity devoid of exploitation, thereby contributing to human progress and mutual concern rather than rejecting it altogether as an oppressive structure. In this formulation, nationalism and caste need not be antagonistic to each other in so far as the Hindu nation encompasses castes as interdependent units needed by each other as a matter of mutual co-existence and survival. This is, of course, a view contested by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who rejected both colonialism and oppressive caste structures recognising them as harmful to liberation and human welfare. He clearly wanted to ensure that the Indian nation state had inbuilt mechanisms to eliminate or at least curtail caste inequality.

As a populist political philosophy, nationalism can also produce a utopian notion of a classless or casteless society which is an ideal that serves to hide rather than recognise existing inequalities and, thereby, silence any public discourse on class or caste inequalities. This is because nationalism seeks to both homogenise and equalise society in the name of a unified nation without actually confronting structural inequalities in society. In caste societies this can lead to what is called 'caste-blindness' in public policies. 'Caste blindness' can be defined as a deliberate neglect of caste discrimination in public policy; such policies being driven by the privileged layer of society who do not recognise or deliberately disregard caste discrimination simply because they benefit from and identify with hereditary privileges generated by the system. This is exactly what Dr. Ambedkar wanted to avoid and what prompted him to legislate against caste discrimination and go in for reservations in order to remedy the historical legacy of inequities. The term 'caste blindness' was first used in an

assessment of tsunamic response in Tamil Nadu, India where it was argued that 'caste-blindness' in tsunami response actually increased the vulnerability of tsunami-victims, many of whom were from a Dalit background. 'The government and NGOs were very slow to react to the caste discrimination, and in many cases have not yet acted to ensure equality of relief for all victims of the disaster. Many prefer to pretend there is no caste discrimination, and simply give their assistance to the fishermen because it is easy and provides good publicity.' (Gill, 2006, p. 16).

Against this background, this paper examines how rival Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms in Sri Lanka have contributed to 'caste blindness' while responding to the problem of long-term internally displaced people (IDPs) in Jaffna Peninsula several years after the end of war between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Even though the war in northern and eastern Sri Lanka displaced all civilians irrespective of caste and class, the privileged layer of society managed to escape the worst of war impacts by moving out of the war-affected areas and to safer destinations in Sri Lanka and abroad. Many of those internally displaced by the war have been resettled by the state in their original villages or alternative sites. Others have moved elsewhere on their own. The last groups of IDP, however, continue to remain in IDP camps or live with their relatives many years after the war ended. Most of them happen to be from Panchamar caste backgrounds, elaborated later in this essay. The research question is why this particular segment of Jaffna society remains IDP years after the end of the war while everybody else has moved on to become a settled population regardless of whatever limitations they experience in the post-war era. The argument being developed in this essay is that this remaining group of IDP is a collateral victim of discrimination based on caste, class, and ethnicity with caste-blind policies of the State and Tamil political leadership in particular, contributing to their prolonged displacement and inability to achieve their resettlement and post-war recovery. The historical and structural context of this continuing IDP problem is explored through an analysis of the caste structure in Jaffna society, history of caste struggles, and the impact of nationalist struggles on promoting caste blindness and enhancing the vulnerability of those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy.

As for the methodology employed, the paper primarily relies on available literature and secondary data supplemented by rapid ethnographic research in a selected IDP camp and a resettlement in the Jaffna peninsula. Using available secondary data with government agencies a quantitative profile of remaining IDPs is provided. As the caste identities of the remaining IDPs are not available with the relevant government authorities, key informant interviews were conducted with knowledgeable persons within and outside the communities to establish caste identities of the remaining IDP in different locations. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in an IDP camp and a new settlement in order to understand the reasons why the people have failed to move out of IDP camps in spite of the pathetic living conditions, stigma associated with life in IDP camps *(muham)* and the declared state policy of facilitating the resettlement of all war-affected people and restoring their rights including land rights, and identify the difficulties experienced by former IDP when they moved into new neighbourhoods because of their caste backgrounds. Key informant interviews with the officials in the relevant government and non-government agencies were conducted in order to explore how they recognise and interpret the current situation as a development problem and a social welfare issue.

Caste Research in Jaffna Society

Partly because of its proximity to South India, heavy Saivite Hindu presence, and relative isolation from the rest of Sri Lanka, Jaffna has been an important site of caste research in Sri Lanka during the period 1950 to 1970. Michael Bank (1960) and Kenneth David (1976) conducted ethnographic research in selected villages with a view to understanding the structure of inter-caste relations within a structural functional framework. They both pointed to the importance of the Vellalar caste as the dominant caste in Jaffna society and as the main recipient of services by other castes in the local areas. Further, their studies revealed the religious foundation of the Hindu caste system and how religiously sanctioned notions of purity and pollution guided the hierarchy, inter-caste relations, and positioning within the religious belief system and rituals. The picture presented was a fairly harmonious model of inter-caste relations that recognised hereditary inequalities and differential dignity and honour but operated within a patron-client or allegiance framework.

Some theoretically grounded social science research on caste in Jaffna society was implemented in the subsequent decades. These included studies by Pfaffenberger (1981, 1982, 1990, 1994), Perinbanayagam (1982) and Hellmann-Rajanayakam, (1994a, 1994b). Also influenced by Louis Dumont's structuralist rendering of Hindu caste system in India, the work by Perinbanayagam (1982) and early work by Pfaffenberger (1981 and 1982), reinforced the religious and cultural foundation of caste in Jaffna with religious ideas as well as Ayurveda notions underpinning the caste system at the ideological level. Using earlier historical research by Arasaratnam (1978, 1982), Pfaffnberger (1990) found that the caste structure in Jaffna had been mediated by the establishment of tobacco farming in the Dutch period under the leadership of Vellalar commercial farmers with the backing of the colonial regime. Further he noted that the contemporary Jaffna caste system was grounded in unequal power relations rather than in Hindu belief system per se.

> On the surface, one sees a 'premodern' caste system and an 'ancient' temple tradition in conflict with 'modern'' values and social change. Looking beneath the surface, however, one finds that this 'premodern' caste system is actually a grotesque relic of a colonial plantation economy, a fundamentally unstable system that could be maintained only by the regular application of force. (Pfaffenberger, 1990, p. 93)

The early signs of rupture in the caste system were evident in the temple entry struggles by Panchamars in the 1960s analyzed in detail by Pfaffenberger (1990). How caste related to the Tamil nationalist struggle of the LTTE was examined by Hellmann-Rajanayakam (1993). Slowly but surely these studies also suggested that a purely cultural explanation of caste was problematic and a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between economic and political structures and the caste hierarchy was necessary in light of emerging developments in Jaffna society.

With the unfolding of the Tamil nationalist struggle, caste research was discouraged if not altogether suppressed in the 1990s. This is because certain militant advocates of the Tamil nationalist struggle saw caste as a divisive force that could potentially undermine the Tamil nationalist struggle against the Sinhala state. Cheran, who wrote about Tamil nationalism, for instance, noted the following:

> There has been a general reluctance to discuss caste issues in public. The tendency is to assert that caste was a thing of the past and Tamil Eelam will be caste-free. Any open discussion on caste is seen as bringing the old divisiveness back and therefore not healthy for the Tamil liberation struggle. On the other hand, there is a tendency among western scholars to view Tamil nationalism and the rise of the Tigers purely as a caste phenomenon. These two extremes do not reflect the complex relationship and changing caste-nation interactions among Tamils. (Cheran, 2001, p.7)

In spite of this censorship on caste as a subject of research three seminal publications on caste in Jaffna society came up during and after the war. The first is *Ritual and recovery in post-conflict Sri Lanka* by Jane Derges, a British anthropologist who did ethnographic research in Jaffna as part of her doctoral research. Even though caste was not the primary subject matter of this study, it pointed to the emergence of body piercing ritual of *thukkukavadi* among Hindu devotees in post-war Sri Lanka as a ritualistic assertion of a new Tamil Hindu identity crosscutting caste and other divisions (2013). The two other studies are by local scholars who directly encountered the censorship on caste within Jaffna society but managed to strategically overcome it by refocusing their studies. In her doctoral research on *Caste and nation building: constructing Vellalar identity in Jaffna*, Bahirathy Jeeweshwara Räsänen (2015) demonstrated how early rendering of Tamil nationalism from the 1950s onwards was mediated by Vellalar leadership in ways that legitimised their position in Tamil society and politics and how this was transformed by the LTTE led by middle-level castes in the Hindu caste hierarchy in ways that problematise the Vellalar leadership and legitimise the LTTE struggle against Sinhala domination on the one hand and Vellalar monopoly in Tamil society on the other. Focusing specifically on the subaltern layer of Jaffna society, Thanges and Silva (2009) identified Panchamars as lasting and continuing victims of the war as some of them continued to be stuck in IDP camps following the end of war while the other Tamil IDP have long been resettled with government and donor support. Continuing this line of research, the current paper further examines how caste-blind policies of the state and nationalist politics in general have aggravated the vulnerability and existential insecurities of oppressed-caste IDP many years after the end of war.

Caste Structure in Jaffna Peninsula

The caste structure in Jaffna Peninsula evolved over a long period of time with shifts caused by the establishment of commercial agriculture in the Peninsula during the Dutch colonial regime solidifying the caste hierarchy in important ways. More recently the war and related population movements have had a major impact on caste composition in the region. As no caste censuses have been conducted by the government or any other agency, no reliable information about the caste composition in the region is currently available. Bank's (1960) original estimate as amended by Pfaffenberger (1982) and Sivathamby (1995) can be used as a baseline for the analysis.

Table 1. Castes in Jaffna Peninsula, 1982

Caste Name in Tamil	English Rendering	Caste occupation	As a % of total Tamil population
Piraman	Brahman	Temple Priest	0.7
Saiva Kurukkal	Saiva Priest	Priests in Non-Brahman temples	
Vellalar	Land owning caste	Landlord, farmer	50
Pantaram	Garland maker	Temple helper	
Sipacari	Craftsman	Temple sculptor	
Koviar		Domestic worker for Vellalar	7
Thattar		Goldsmith	0.6
Karaiyar		Deep sea fisherman	10
Thachchar	Carpenter	Wood work, Roof maker	2
Kollar	Iron work	Blacksmith	
Nattuvar	Musician	Auspicious music	
Kalkular	Weaver		
Cantar	Oil maker	Sesame oil maker	
Kukkuvar	Potter	Potter	
Mukkuvar		Lagoon fisher	
PANCHAMAR	CATEGORY		
Vannar	Dhoby		1.5
Ampattar	Barber		0.9
Pallar	Manual worker	Bonded labour	9
Nalavar	Toddy tapper	Toddy tapper and farm worker	9
Paraiyar	Drummer	Funeral Drummer	2.7

Source: Adapted from Thanges and Silva (2009).

Note: Gaps in demographic data are due to non-recognition of the relevant caste groups in the original estimate. The size of the relevant case groups, however, may be too small to alter the overall pattern indicated by the estimates given.

The caste structure of Jaffna society consists of roughly twenty castes with Vellalar caste historically accounting for nearly 50 percent of the total Tamil population in the region as the undisputed dominant caste controlling land ownership, agriculture, leadership positions and white collar employment in colonial and post-colonial settings (Table 1). Brahmins and Saiva Kurukkals are ritually superior to Vellalars but they are often employed by Vellalar temple trustees making them economically subordinate to the dominant caste. With the exception of Karaiyars, Mukkuvars, and possibly Kukkuvars who were largely self-employed and economically independent, all the other castes historically served hereditary patron families of the dominant caste (Refer Table 1). The Panchamar castes were identical to dalits in the Indian context as they were considered untouchable and outside the touchable caste category and hence the fifth caste following the Indian model. Except in a few instances, the word 'dalit,' however, was not used for self-identification or as an analytical category in caste research in Jaffna or anywhere else in Sri Lanka. In addition to the term Panchamar, the terms 'depressed castes,' 'depressed classes' or 'minority Tamils' have been used to refer to them in the literature and mass media.

One important feature of the caste system in Jaffna that has so far received inadequate attention is the close correspondence between caste and social class in Jaffna society. Vellalars are not only the dominant caste in society but also the social and political elite in society with property ownership, high levels of education, professional employment, control over temples, and Tamil politics prior to and since the end of the war. They also had a tight grip over the Panchamars in terms of securing their hereditary caste services, including ritual duties and agricultural labour in farming activities. As elaborated by Chatterjee (1993) in respect of West Bengal the shape of class relations in Jaffna society was clearly overlaid by caste identities and responsibilities giving them the character of bonded labour particularly in the farm sector. This also indicates that the effort by Louis Dumont to reduce caste to hierarchy identified as a purely ritual order determined by the dichotomy between purity and pollution is problematic in Jaffna society at least from eighteenth century onwards. Jaffna caste system also resembles graded inequality characterised by Thorat and Madheswaran in their work on India (2018) in the sense that poverty and lack of assets are characteristic of the lower end of the caste hierarchy.

History of Caste Struggles

The history of caste struggles in Jaffna actually started long before caste struggles became a regular feature even in Indian society. Thus, instead of treating the caste system as sacred and immutable, rumblings against caste in Jaffna started way back in the 1920s.Why they did not progress in the way they did in India itself is important from the angle of a comparative analysis of caste dynamics in South Asia. Another important issue is how caste struggles in Jaffna gradually gave way to a violent Tamil ethno-nationalist struggle with ethnicity gradually replacing caste as the primary basis of social identity and the platform for social and political agitations. As these two developments are centrally important for the argument of this paper, the researchers focuses on them in the current and the following section.

Ravikumar (2002), a political actor representing the oppressed caste groups in Jaffna, has documented the popular history of Dalit (Panchamar) struggles in Jaffna society, he being one of the few commentators opting to identify the Panchamars in Jaffna as Dalits. Using the famous chauvinistic quote from Arumuga Navalar, the nineteenth century founder of Tamil Hindu nationalism that 'Parai drum,[2] women and Panchamar are all born to get beaten,' Ravikumar argued that casteism is built into Tamil nationalism from its very beginning.

Long before the Tamil nationalism got established in Jaffna in the 1940s, caste struggles had started with the formation of the Forum for Depressed Class Tamil Labourers in 1927. In the following year this forum launched an agitation for 'equality in seating, equality in eating' in protest against caste discrimination in schools where Dalit children were barred from sitting and eating with other children. Two years of continuous struggle led to an administrative order on grant-aided schools that low-caste children should be allowed to sit on benches side by side with other children. In retaliation, caste Hindu Tamils burnt down 13 schools that implemented the new regulations. And by way of political follow-up, the Vellalar elite petitioned the government in 1930 to withdraw the equal-seating directive, which, however, was not successful.

The next important milestone in caste struggles in Sri Lanka was grating of universal franchise by the Donoughmore Commission in 1931. Under the leadership of Vellalar politicians like S. Natesan, the caste Hindus protested against the granting of franchise to Panchamars. According to Ravikumar (2002, p.3) 'caste Hindus were ready to give up their own voting rights to prevent the dalits from getting theirs.' As they could not obstruct the granting of franchise to the Panchamars, the caste Hindus imposed a new set of prohibitions on the oppressed groups particularly targeting women and children in order to emphasise their subordination to Vellalars. These retaliations, however, were short-lived and they did not deter Dalit activism. The Conference of Oppressed Tamils in Jaffna was held in August 1943. It resulted in the formation of the Northern Sri Lankan Minority Tamil Mahasabha for the purpose of campaigning against caste injustices.

When Soulbury Commission conducted public hearings about constitutional reform in Sri Lanka from December 1944 to April 1945, the Northern Sri Lankan Minority Tamil Mahasabha made representation independently of the Tamil Congress led by G. G. Ponnambalam representing the Vellalar interests. The Mahasabha, however, could not secure separate concessions for them in the new constitution due to constant pressure from the Tamil Congress for legal provisions for Tamil rights in general. During the first national elections held in independent Sri Lanka in 1947 the Mahasabha opted to support the Communist Party instead of the Tamil Congress which refused to field any Panchamar candidates in their party nominations. This alignment with the Communist Party at the national level was interesting in light of the correspondence between working class and Panchamar interests in Jaffna society. A Tamil political party willing to accommodate Panchamar interests, however, was formed as Tamil Arasu Party in the 1950s. As this party agreed to promote Panchamar candidates as well, a section of Mahasabha joined the Tamil Arasu Party while another section continued to support the Communist Party during this period. This political split within the Panchamar community served to weaken their struggle against the caste system. The grievances among Panchamars, however, remained high well into the next decade. The passing of Prevention of Social Disabilities Act of 1957 was an important achievement for minority Tamils in this period. This Act identified any prohibitions or restrictions imposed by the dominant caste against traditionally oppressed castes in matters such as dress code, education, admission to public places, and use of public facilities as illegal. Framed and formulated by Sinhala political parties in the South with the intention of dividing up the Tamils and weakening their demand for federalism at the time, this Act did not have much effect in reality except for its rhetorical value.

The temple entry struggles by Pallar and Nalavar activists in 1968 targeting the famous Maviddapuram Hindu temple controlled by Brahmins was an important caste struggle in Jaffna. As in other Hindu temples controlled by Vellalars and their priests, Pallars and Nalavars were not allowed to enter Maviddapuram temple claiming that their entry would pollute its sacred space. Led by a member of the Communist Party and reportedly backed by Sinhala politicians from the South, activists from these castes considered it a violation of their rights and demanded that they be allowed to enter the temple. This in turn produced retaliatory physical attacks on the protestors by Vellalar and Koviar thugs leading to a cycle of violent

attacks and counter attacks in a number of places in Jaffna. The Federal Party led by the dominant caste tried to diffuse the situation by publicising symbolic gestures of opening the gates of some temples for representatives of the two oppressed castes but no effort was made to actually resolve the issue by bringing about a negotiated settlement between the rival parties.

In his detailed study of these agitations, Pfaffenberger (1990) noted that the temple entry struggles produced an important turning point in Tamil politics in Sri Lanka in general. It was a turning point in the sense that it marked a transition from divisive caste struggles within Jaffna society itself to the ethnic politics of a unified Tamil struggle against the Sinhala-controlled state in southern Sri Lanka. According to Pfaffenberger, Tamil political leadership sought to unify all Sri Lankan Tamils within the framework of a 'defensive' Tamil nationalism in order to avert volatile internal struggles triggered by internecine caste struggles. In Pfaffenberger's (1990, p. 93) own words:

> In creating a politics of electoral unity, Tamil politicians had to navigate a contradictory and dangerous mine field. They succeeded, but only by deflecting the Tamil community's attention away from the peninsula and toward the broken promises and discriminatory actions of the Sinhalese-dominated government. This was a politics that tiptoed quietly away from issues that would divide Tamils; it created electoral unity around the program of defensive nationalism but without really devoting any attention to the fundamental issues of social and economic inequality within the Tamil community itself.

What Pfaffenberger charaterised as 'defensive Tamil nationalism' served not so much to remedy caste resentments as to deflect them to an external enemy posing a greater threat. This helped the protagonists of defensive nationalism to direct their violence outward and attribute all their problems to hostilities by an ethnic other. This in turn suggests that as an ideology nationalism serves to de-emphasise internal problems and over emphasise external threats stemming from a perceived ethnic other. In confronting the problem of suffering and existential insecurities, nationalisms have a tendency to soft-peddle certain issues, suppress others and project the ethnic other as the sole explanation of one's problems.

Eelam Struggle and the Problem of Caste in Jaffna Society

The twin objectives of the Eelam struggle were to achieve autonomy from the Sinhala state and establish a casteless society in the Eelam state. Tamil nationalism's aim of abolishing caste is not new. Way back in 1976 the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) adopted the goal of eliminating caste as part of the famous Vadukkoddai Resolution (Rasanen, 2015, p. 164). Elaborating the political agenda of the LTTE, Hellmann-Rajanayagam (1993) argued that the LTTE fought two separate battles, one against the external enemy, the Sinhala state and other against the caste system in Jaffna society. The caste struggle, however, was delicately poised as the LTTE did not want to antagonise the Vellalars comprising the largest and the dominant caste in Jaffna and pursue a divisive policy that would weaken the Tamil liberation struggle against the Sinhala state. With the formation of LTTE, leadership of Tamil politics shifted from Vellalar elite to Karaiyar and middle level castes in Jaffna society. In response there was

a selective outmigration of Vellalars during the war altering the existing demographic profile in the peninsula (Silva, 2018). The percentage of Vellalars in the population perhaps dropped from 50 to 30 and there was a proportionate increase in the non-Vellalars including the Panchamars up to about 30 percent of the population by 2005. The LTTE cadres came from all castes and diverse social class backgrounds but the Panchamars perhaps made up the bulk of the cadres as noted by Ravikumar in 2002. The approach of the LTTE was not to openly talk about caste or address grievances openly. Instead the LTTE imposed strict penalties including imprisonment for those practising caste discrimination. Any discussion on caste in day-to-day conversation, including mentioning of caste identities of people, was completely prohibited. The assumption was that this would lead to a gradual abandonment of caste as a principle of social organisation in the Eelam state (Thanges, 2015).

The LTTE, however, did not have a clearly formulated policy for dealing with caste. Inter-caste marriages were encouraged and practised by the LTTE leadership as a model for the society at large. The LTTE did not want to introduce any radical measures for confronting the caste order perhaps due to the fear of losing support from caste Hindus in the process. On the other hand, several pragmatic interventions were made in order to accommodate minority Tamil interests. They may also be seen as a way of adjusting to the changing caste demography and to facilitate recruitment drives in the wake of outmigration, population displacement, and overall depopulation of certain regions. The author summarises these pragmatic interventions as follows:

1. Some of the key leaders were from the bottom layer of society. For instance, Thamil Chelvam from barber caste rose to the top level in the political wing of the LTTE .
2. As a pragmatic intervention based on current demographic realities, the LTTE recruitment drive targeted some Panchamar villages where poverty, lack of options, and feeling of social exclusion encouraged the youth to join the movement.
3. The LTTE cadres who sacrificed their lives for the struggle became war heroes (*maveerar*) irrespective of their caste background and the maveerar families were entitled to special welfare assistance from the LTTE.
4. Some of the land and houses abandoned by the caste Hindus who moved out during the war were distributed among maveerar families including those from Panchamar background.
5. The LTTE used certain Panchamar communities as their bases and places of refuge when needed for their political activities and even intelligence operations. This of course made these communities vulnerable for surveillance and arrests by security forces. However, the LTTE also undertook special efforts to help stabilise these communities and provide services when necessary.
6. In the LTTE camps members of different castes intermingled with each other without any restrictions. They often addressed each other using kinship terms with LTTE supremo Prabaharan usually referred to as Annai (older brother). In the camps they ate together and worked together disregarding caste differences.
7. The LTTE encouraged certain castes like barbers and washers to stop visiting high caste homes for their services and to establish and provide their services through barber saloons and laundries respectively in an effort to convert them from hereditary caste services to commercial transactions with no caste identities and hereditary modes of transactions implicated.

8. The dead martyrs were buried in LTTE cemeteries side by side irrespective of their caste which went against the customary practice of separate cemeteries for different castes.

These measures indicate that the LTTE was 'caste sensitive' rather than 'caste blind.' In spite of these remedial measures, the policy of the LTTE was to not recognise caste for any official purposes of the organization. While these 'unofficial' interventions were in the nature of affirmative action for the benefit of those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, there was no officially accepted procedure for identifying victims of caste discrimination or perpetrators of caste injustices. These interventions were by no means radical in terms of altering the existing caste hierarchy or tipping the power balance in favour of those at the lower end of the caste hierarchy. They were, however, seen with suspicion by the Vellalars and interpreted as evidence of the LTTE favouring the underdogs as evident in an ethnographic study by Rasanen on a Vellalar community (2015). She recognised an important distinction between a more hegemonic Tamil nationalism mediated by the conservative Vellalars since the 1940s and the LTTE mediated Tamil nationalism designed to create opportunities for the subordinate caste groups evolving in the 1990s. Capturing the mainstream Vellalar view about the LTTE, she reported the following (2015, p.166).

> In the local elite understanding, the Vellalah who mastered the pen were replaced by those who mastered martial skills – the fishing castes and depressed castes. It left a feeling of animosity among Vellalah on the whole; it was particularly intense among local and national Vellalah elites who were educated and disempowered socially and politically.

On the whole the LTTE assumed that, over the years, caste would have a natural death in Tamil eelam because of intermingling of IDP from different castes in IDP camps, officially imposed public silence about caste in the communities, strategic but subterranean interventions by the LTTE targeting victims of caste discrimination, and increase in inter-caste marriages due to social necessities, and the hidden LTTE policy of encouraging such marriages.

Caste Background and the Problems of Remaining IDP in Jaffna Peninsula

The war between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the LTTE from 1983 to 2009 uprooted nearly all Tamil inhabitants in the Jaffna Peninsula irrespective of their social class, caste and gender. The total number displaced persons by the brutal war is estimated to be around 1.5 million. Some 750,000 people moved to foreign destinations in Europe, North America, and elsewhere as refugees or as legal migrants. The remaining 750,000 were internally displaced within Sri Lanka in IDP camps, among relatives of the displaced, and in various other arrangements. Ten years after the end of the war, most of the IDP resulting from the war had been resettled by the GOSL in either their original villages or in new settlements. The GOSL has

declared its policy of resettlement of IDP successful in terms of housing, infrastructure development, livelihood restoration, recovery and reintegration of IDP. However, as of early 2016, the resettlement of IDP remained an unfinished business and the last set of IDP yet to be resettled remained an intractable problem as they appeared to be collateral victims of the war as well as continuing processes of ethnic, class, and caste oppression.

As of January 2016, approximately 38,000 people (11,000 families) were identified by the state as remaining IDP in Jaffna peninsula. The veritable 'wretched of the earth' among them were some 3,970 war-displaced persons (1,100 families) who lived in a total of 31 IDP camps located across six administrative divisions in the Jaffna Peninsula. Many of these IDP have been living in the camps ('welfare centres' in government terminology) for well over two decades and others were born in these camps. The relief and subsidies provided to these IDP by the state and NGOs was discontinued in 2011 but that did not encourage them to move out. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Raad Al Hussain, who visited selected IDP camps in Jaffna in February 2016, referred to them as a 'lingering sore' in post-war recovery in Sri Lanka (Sunday Times February 26, 2016).

Prior research by Thanges and Silva (2009), Thanges (2013, 2015) and Rasanen (2015) found that many of these long term IDP belong to the Panchamar category. While the war displaced most Tamil inhabitants in the Jaffna Peninsula irrespective of their caste and class, the largely overlapping categories of upper class and the high castes in Jaffna (see Pfaffenberger 1982, 1990) were able to move out to safety from the IDP camps using their social networks, market skills and financial resources at their disposal. On the other hand, the displacement of depressed Panchmars was prolonged due to a complex web of factors. The post-war IDP count in Jaffna presents a few surprises (Refer Table 2). Most importantly among these long-term IDP still living in the camps the Vellalars, who continue to be largest caste in Jaffna society in spite of a significant drop in their numbers due to selective outmigration during the war, are conspicuous by their absence. While there still may be some Vellalar IDP living among their relatives and not in the camps, that itself shows that camps have become caste uniform over the years with a sorting out of the population along caste lines. Thus among the remaining IDP in Jaffna Peninsula as of January 2016, two Panchamar castes, namely Nalavar (toddy tappers and fishers) and Pallar (manual workers and hereditary farm workers for Vellalar landlords) comprise over seventy five per cent of the remaining IDP leaving aside IDP camps with people from two different castes. In four of the six Divisional Secretary Divisions (DSDs) where IDP camps continued to exist in 2016, all the remaining IDPs belonged to these two subaltern caste groups. A total of four IDP camps had mixed populations drawn from Nalavar and Pallar castes. In Point Pedro and Karaveddy Divisional Secretary Divisions most remaining IDP belonged to Karaiyar caste, considered to be a middle level caste in Jaffna society. In one IDP camp in Point Pedro, Karaiyar and Pallar lived side by side. Irrespective of their caste background, most long-term IDP had been displaced from the fertile northern coastal stretch in the Peninsular also with some of the best fishing grounds in the country acquired by the military to establish high security zones (HSZs) for strategic security considerations. The caste configurations among the surviving IDP reflect a spatial segregation along caste lines as well as a clear tendency among IDP to stay with fellow caste members.

Table 2. Number of People in IDP Camps in the Jaffna District by Caste Background of IDP and by DS Division, January 2016

DSD	Pallar	Nalavar	Pallar and Nalavar	Karaiyar	Pallar and Karaiyar	Total
Telippalai	30	1,051	60	0	0	1,141
Sandilipai	0	85	0	0	0	85
Uduvil	39	1,116	212	0	0	1,367
Koapai	650	0	0	0	0	650
Point Pedro and Karaveddy	0	0	9	559	151	710
Total	719	2,252	272	559	151	3,953

Source: Jaffna District Secretariat, Resettlement Division

Note: IDP numbers were secured from the resettlement division of the Jaffna Kachcheri. Caste identities were established through key informant interviews and cross checking with different KIs.

The continuation of caste-based residential pattern among the long-term IDP points to the failure of the long history of caste struggles as also the failure of the LTTE approach of subterranean interventions to dissolve caste ties in Jaffna society. They also indicate that ethnically filtered and 'caste blind' policies and politics of Sinhala and Tamil political parties may fail to resolve the long-term IDP problem in Jaffna society satisfactorily. Even though the LTTE sought to dissolve caste identities in favour of a unified Tamil eelam, caste identities are resurfacing and new inter-caste formations emerging particularly among subaltern groups in postwar Jaffna Peninsula.

In one such mobilisation, some leaders of IDP communities established a Welfare Centres Management Committee (WCMC) representing the interests of all IDP camps vis-à-vis the government in 2015. Led by a dynamic person named Anthony Quinn, this organisation sought to unify the residents of all IDP camps in a broad-based alliance to negotiate with the government authorities regarding their problems. While this was an IDP organisation representing the needs and grievances of long-term IDP in Jaffna Peninsula, because of the caste backgrounds of these victims of the war and caste oppression in society it was also a mobilization of subaltern castes facing new challenges in postwar Jaffna society. As the leader of Sapapathipillai camp identified with the Nalavar caste, Anthony Quinn himself came from an ethnically and religiously mixed Karaiyar-Nalavar and Hindu-Catholic background, he was able to bring all IDP camps representing Nalavars and Pallars in Tellipalai, Sandilipai, Uuduvil, and Kopai divisions under the umbrella of this new organisation. However, Karaiyar IDP camps in Point Pedro and Karveddy refused to join his organisation claiming that the new alliance did not represent their interests. According to the leaders of WCMC, this action motivated largely by caste considerations of Karaiyar IDP in Velvetithurai ,seen as a Karaiyar stronghold and their refusal to treat lower caste IDP as their equals let alone partners in a common struggle, served to dampen their struggle for winning their rights as IDP. While Nalavar and Pallar IDP coming together for joint action may be seen as an important new development in the light of their shared plight, the refusal of Karaiyar IDP to join WCMC points to the continuing social gap between Panchamars and those above them in the caste hierarchy even when they have a common interest as long-term IDP.

The Government has not been able to resettle these long-term IDP due to a combination of factors, including the forcible acquisition of their land by the predominantly Sinhalese military for establishing high security zones (HSZs) and the refusal by the security forces to release the acquired land for IDP resettlement on the grounds of security for military installations, complete landlessness of some of the IDPs, and the dogged refusal of many to move to alternative sites and accept the package of incentives proposed by the government. This had resulted in a deadlock in government plans to complete the resettlement process and proceed with the post-war recovery in Sri Lanka.

Why Have the Long-term IDP Failed to Move Out of IDP Camps?

If the war affected everyone in Jaffna society irrespective of caste, class and gender, how do we explain the particular social and demographic configuration in the remaining IDP camp population in Jaffna Peninsula? One possible explanation is that the war did not impact the civilian population indiscriminately; the rich and the powerful were able to move to safety using their contacts and economic and human resources leaving behind the poorer and the underprivileged to bear the brunt of the 25-years long armed conflict (Silva 2017). While this explanation has considerable merit in clarifying the current demographic profile in Jaffna Peninsula (Silva 2018), it completely takes away the agency of the socially marginalised and their possible engagement in violent and non-violent collective action in order to advance their common interests and assert their rights. Also, it indicates the failure of both caste-blind policies of the State and nationalist politics in general, and the caste-sensitive interventions by the LTTE at the subterranean level to create a level playing field in postwar Sri Lanka.

The failure of the Sri Lankan state to bring a closure to the IDP problem in Jaffna ten years after its military victory over the LTTE in spite of the efforts by the new political regime which emerged in the centre in 2015, to release some of the land under HSZs for their original owners can be attributed to a complex set of factors, including divergent pressures on the Sri Lankan State, the nature of centre-periphery relations and the limited influence the IDPs have over central and provincial governments. The disproportionate[3] Panchamar presence in the remaining IDP camps must be seen as a further complication resulting from the continuing barriers and exclusions they encounter in joining the social mainstream in post-war scenario. These barriers perhaps stemmed from their greater vulnerability to long-term displacement during the war, their specific role and engagement in the armed struggle, over dependence on the LTTE as their sole benefactor during the war and helplessness they experience following the demise of LTTE, lack of representation within the political forces in post-war Sri Lanka and their inherited disadvantages in the local land market.

First, the subaltern caste groups with fragile land rights in interstitial spaces in-between Vellallar and Karaiyar settlements were probably more vulnerable to displacement during the war also because the Sri Lankan security forces often acquired these spaces to establish high security zones. The lowest castes owned limited extents of land, compelling them to work for Vellalar landlords who gave them house sites on edges of their land free of charge (Pfaffenberger 1982, Räsänen 2015). Further the Thesavalamai customary law outlawed the transfer of land from Vellalars to non-Vellalars, interfering with the establishment of a free land market. As is well

documented in the literature on disasters (Silva 2015, Gill 2007), occupants of these marginal spaces are more vulnerable to disasters, natural or human-made.

Second, as noted earlier, the Panchamar castes often constituted the foot soldiers of the LTTE. The subterranean interventions of LTTE had the effect of consolidating Panchamar communities with the result that they may have been the targets of anti-LTTE operations during and after the war. These communities were more likely to stay together even after the war ended. Unlike the richer Vellalars who were displaced and who used their own resources and contacts in order to move to safety out of the war zone, with limited resources at their disposal the lowest castes relied on their own communities in order to cope with their problems. In some cases, the LTTE land grants to these communities became untenable after the LTTE regime ended. For instance, the lands on which the Sapapathy, Kanaki and Periya Mathadevi camps in Uduvil DSD were located were reportedly cotnrolled by LTTE having acquired them from the previous owners who had migrated overseas during the war. The owners, who did not demand their land when the LTTE was active, reclaimed it once the war ended thus preventing the onsite resettlement of the IDP living there even after the end of the war (Rajasingham, 2014). The limited land resources owned by the IDP were mostly in HSZs some of which was returned to the people by the security forces since 2015 on a scattered basis. Further, unlike the upper caste IDP who moved out to other areas, and overseas destinations individually using their existing social contacts, the subaltern IDP who were left behind in the camps sought to move back to their original villages as a community, perhaps as a collective means of dealing with social rejection and discrimination by the privileged castes.

Third, the Panchamar IDP had become victims of a power struggle between Tamil political parties and the GOSL. For Tamil political parties they are victims of discrimination by the Sinhala State to be showcased as victims of ethnic discrimination. In none of their campaign documents the long-term IDP are identified as Panchamars who experience multiple discrimination due to caste, class and ethnicity. On the other hand, caste blind and ethnically biased policies of the State have failed to understand the nuances of the situation. In spite of the demographic shifts in the Tamil population in the Peninsula, the non-Vellalars do not seem to have adequate representation in these parties and in elected representation in the central government, Provincial Councils and even in Pradeshiya Sabas largely controlled by Vellalar-affiliated Tamil National Alliance (TNA). In many ways the conventional Tamil political leadership in post-war Sri Lanka remains rather aloof to the needs of the underprivileged caste groups as had been the case in the pre-war era. Simultaneously, the remaining IDP camps are a useful platform for the Tamil political leadership to demonstrate to the rest of the world that the central government has failed to complete the resettlement of IDPs, demand the dismantling of high security zones in the peninsula and campaign for greater political autonomy for the minorities. On the other hand, the Sri Lankan State and the security forces are hesitant to release land in the remaining HSZs and seem to be completely unaware that the remaining HSZs prevent the bottom layer of Jaffna society from going back to their original homelands.

Finally, the Panchmar IDP do not have the resources to break the vicious cycle of poverty and displacement and move to some alternative sites on their own also due to the disadvantages they experience in the local land market heavily controlled by the Vellalar land owners. Even though the absentee Vellalar landlords had allowed some Panchamar families to occupy their vacant houses particularly in islands off

the Peninsula, transfer of land ownership across the caste divide has been rare and considered morally unjustified by Vellalar landlords (Silva, 2017, Thanges 2015, Rasanen 2015). This is a classic example where ethnic prejudices and class and caste inequalities reinforce each other in ways that make the IDP collateral victims of multiple forms of oppression and discrimination many years after the end of war.

The Living Conditions of Remaining IDP

The remaining IDP camps in Jaffna Peninsula are characterised by poor housing, congestion, underserved conditions in relation to water and sanitation, and vulnerability to natural and social hazards, including infections.

     The one or two room housing units are made of tin sheets, wooden planks and cadjan. During the hot summer there is unbearable heat inside these houses. During monsoon, roofs leak and the entire camps get flooded because of their low-lying character. The camps are overcrowded with lots of shelters occupying a limited space. For instance, in 2016 in the adjoining Sapapathy and Kannaki camps in Uduvil DSD, 932 people from 250 families were huddled together in a land area of eight acres.

     The provision of water and sanitation to the IDP communities remains extremely poor. Most camps had no running water.[4] There are one or two wells which often dry up during the periods of drought. The Vellalar communities in nearby villages are not willing to share their water sources, including wells, with people from the IDP camps (*muham*) due to continuing ideas about pollution and contamination. In one camp about 400 people shared a total of seven common toilets with one toilet being shared by nearly fifty-eight people. The long waiting time to use toilets was part of the daily routine in the IDP camps.

     The dry rations issued to IDP by the Government of Sri Lanka with support from UN agencies was discontinued in 2011 reportedly due to the desire of the Rajapaksa regime at the time to impress upon the international community that the resettlement of war-induced IDP had been completed. On the other hand, the dry rations were not replaced with the state-run Samurdhi Programme targeting the poor, reportedly because they were not permanent settlers of the relevant administrative divisions. Thus the remaining IDP in the peninsula received neither the dry ration meant for IDP nor *Samurdhi* benefits meant for the poor. They were also disqualified from housing assistance for resettling IDP provided under World Bank and Indian Government assistance as they did not have title to any buildable land. In some ways they were double victims of 'caste blind' and exclusionary ethnic policies of the State and international donors. In a curious reflection of ethnic filters and caste blindness in many of these agencies, the complexities of the problem of remaining IDP have not surfaced in policy discussions in any of these organisations.

     The educational services were poor. Some IDP camps had primary schools with minimum facilities. According to one newspaper report, for IDP children 'it was just a case of sitting in a makeshift classroom for a few hours, sometimes learning and at other times chatting.' If the IDP children wanted to go beyond primary education, they had to be transferred to better schools outside the community, where IDP children experienced a range of discrimination from fellow students and from teachers hailing from higher caste backgrounds. In spite of these obstacles, a few bright children from these communities did manage to do well in studies and enter the university system. In

summary, most IDP children ended up with limited capabilities that merely prepared them for casual wage labour opportunities in the labour market.

For the most part, the IDP camps had become sources of cheap labour for commercial farmers and labour contractors in the surrounding areas. Having being completely displaced from self-employment as farmers or fishers, the camp residents were reduced to daily wage labour as their primary livelihood. Thus these communities were not only caste uniform but also class uniform as wage earners. The daily wage for men and women were around Rs. 1000-1200 and Rs. 500 to 600 respectively. Often, they were not entitled to any fringe benefits like free food from the employers signifying an almost irreversible end of traditional patron-client relations in the labour market. Employment was available in commercial farms, construction sites, quarrying and informal sector, food preparation and vending, and rarely in the formal sector. In many places the workers from the camps were treated badly by the employers due to their caste as well as muham background.

A new settlement called Nallinakkpuram (literally meaning 'reconciliation village') established by the Ministry of Rehabilitation headed by a UNP Tamil minister from Colombo for selection of IDP was ceremonially opened in Valikamam North DSD in December 2016 for a total of 100 IDP families recruited from a number of IDP camps in selected DSDs. This is considered a relocation since the settlement was established in vacant crown land situated close to KKS beach. The houses were built by the military with funds from the Rehabilitation Ministry. The Tamil political leadership of TNA did not like this project because of the military involvement and also because the project was resented by Vellalar settlements and a number of Hindu kovils in the area. The residents of the new settlement felt that they were not welcome in the area dominated by the Vellalar communities because of their Panchamar caste background. A primary school was newly established in Nallinakkapuram but the older children experienced some difficulty in getting admission to existing secondary schools and a common playground in a nearby village was reportedly covered by a fence in order to prevent the children from the new settlement using it.

Many of the new settlers were keen to start fishing, their traditional occupation, in the nearby sea but they were prevented from doing so as the area was considered a sacred site (*punithabhumi*) by trustees of nearby Hindu kovils who were essentially Vellalar. A local Tamil politician protested against the project claiming that part of the housing scheme is actually established on private land owned by his family. The new settlers were happy that they were able to get a decent house of their own, but they were complaining that they were not yet granted title to the land even though it was promised by government authorities. Further, they experienced a number of caste-based social rejections and opposition to the commencement of their traditional livelihood of fishing even though the fishing grounds are within their reach. Nallinakkapuram clearly points to the kind of difficulties that these subaltern castes encounter when they move to new areas dominated by Vellalars. Clearly the central government and military engagement were instrumental in opening this new settlement for landless IDP. However, it is quite clear that this state intervention was not informed by a sound understanding of caste dynamics affecting the remaining IDP in Jaffna society.

Conclusion

Neither the political process guided by rival nationalisms, nor State policies shaped by ethnic filters and caste blindness help us fully understand why the IDP problem in Jaffna has persisted in the post-war era. A nuanced understanding of this problem must recognise intricate interactions among ethnicity, social class and caste in contemporary Sri Lanka society. The failure of the Sri Lanka State to satisfactorily conclude the resettlement process and end the suffering of the remaining IDP in Jaffna Peninsula indicates either its lack of understanding about the problem, or its remoteness, or lack of concern about the plight of the residual war victims. On the other hand, the Tamil electoral politics is equally insensitive and merely seeking to perpetuate the problem for its own propaganda purposes also reflecting that Panchamars are poorly represented in the political process at all levels. During their heyday, the LTTE may have empowered the Panchamars to some extent, but clearly the subterranean interventions of the LTTE failed to mobilise them in such a way that they could assert themselves so as to influence public policies that affect them. WCMC may be seen as an important initiative from the angle of mobilisation of Panchamars as war victims, victims of caste and class discrimination as well as victims of poorly informed state policies relating to the resettlement of IDP, but it has a long way to go in terms of liberating this subaltern group in Jaffna society.

Policy Options Available

The Tamil political elite has been lobbying for closure of HSZs in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, removal of military bases and progressive reduction of the military presence in these areas as a precondition for restoration of civilian life in the region. On the other hand, the government security forces have been pushing for a payment of compensation to IDP for the land lost to HSZs and providing additional support to the IDP to move to alternative sites or resettle in the existing sites. Neither party is willing to reach a compromise that would end the prolonged suffering of these last cohorts of socially marginalised IDP. Interestingly both the GOSL and the Tamil political elite purely approach the problem from an ethnic or political angle and in a 'caste blind' manner. The Tamil leadership explicitly campaigns for their resettlement in their original villages that are currently under HSZs. While closure of HSZs may be necessary in the long run, this, however, may not be a pragmatic solution for all remaining IDP as some of them reportedly do not own any land in HSZs or anywhere else. Thus, it's only a compromise solution, acceptable to IDP, GOSL and the Tamil political leadership, that can put an end to the long-term suffering of the IDP. This may be one instance, where the conventional ethnically biased and caste-blind policies pursued by the Sri Lankan State must be revisited in order to enable the remaining IDP to overcome possible discrimination they face in the land market, education system and the job markets other than casual wage labour. Their successful reintegration in the society depends not only on whether they as citizens of Sri Lanka will receive their due share of land and other assistance from the Sri Lankan welfare state, but also whether or not they will be further subjected to discrimination on the part of the society at large, including their fellow citizens in Tamil society. Empowerment of the IDP through their collective mobilisation vis-à-vis ethnic, class and caste discrimination and enhancing their collective capacity to identify, resist and overcome such discrimination may be a prerequisite for enabling them to join the social mainstream.

On the whole, this study illustrates how the war affected people differently depending on their particular social positioning in respect of ethnicity, social class, caste and gender. Far from being a social equaliser, wars accentuate and reinforce vertical and horizontal social inequalities in multiple ways. Well informed social policies that respond to complex social realities are clearly needed to reverse these trends and facilitate the process of post-war recovery in this island nation.

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Endnotes

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2. Parai drum is often used as a symbol of Paraiyar caste and Panchamar identity in general.
3. The estimated size of Panchamar population in pre-war Jaffna society ranges from 20 to 30 percent of the total population (Silva, Sivapragasam and Thanges 2009). Their relative strength in the population in the Peninsula reportedly increased during the war due to the large scale outmigration of Vellalar and members of middle level castes. Some authors have estimated that they comprise roughly about 50 percent of post-war population in Jaffna (Ravikumar, 2002).
4. A similar situation has been reported for a non IDP Panchamar community in Jaffna by Aftab Lall (2015)

Caste, Religion and Ethnicity: Role of Social Determinants in Accessing Rental Housing

Vinod Kumar Mishra[1]

Abstract

The article aims to examine the nature, form and pattern of discrimination in urban rental housing market; to analyse the consequences of discrimination in urban rental housing market and to suggest policy measures to reduce discrimination in rental housing and ensure inclusive urban housing. The study is based on both secondary and primary data sources. The study uses audit methodology to measure the discriminatory practices in rental housing market for the marginalised social groups. The study indicates that social stigma and prejudices against marginalised social groups scheduled caste, Muslims and ethnic minorities are so deep that they have also affected the housing market transactions and outcomes. The study also discusses the unpleasant outcome of discrimination in rental housing market against scheduled caste, Muslims and ethnic minorities. The empirical findings of the paper indicate that social identities such as caste, religion, ethnicity, and poor socio-economic vulnerabilities are major factors leading to discrimination in the urban housing rental market.

Introduction

Housing is one of the most essential needs after the food and clothing. However, it is also one of the most expensive among all basic needs. Due to its cost intensive nature, access to housing is one of the most important challenges in addressing housing poverty in most developing and under-developed countries. Housing is also the manifestation of socio-economic condition of the society and the households comprising it. Deprivation in access to housing is not only determined by the in-sufficient supply of affordable housing but also the outcome of prevailing poverty.

[1]Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, D-II/I, Road No-4, Andrewsganj,
New Delhi, India
E-mail: vinodcsrd217@gmail.com

India has been witnessing fast changing demographic changes since independence. A substantial proportion of urban population in India does not have adequate housing. The number of people living in poverty and squalor settlements has grown rapidly in the last few decades manifesting the in-ability and failure of the housing market to provide affordable housing to all. Unaffordable housing is largely caused by higher production cost of houses compared to the income of the households. Housing shortage and poor housing conditions are witnessed in both rural as well as urban areas. However, urban households facing housing deprivation are more vulnerable due to environmental and social vulnerability (Moser, Gatehous, and Garcia, 1996). Households facing insecurity of tenure status are more deprived and vulnerable in urban areas than in rural areas.

The tenure status of the house determines the right of its occupants to use and develop the house and also the right to inherit or transfer. Thus, security of tenure provides protection to the households against evictions. Tenure status of the households in urban areas is often associated with the stage of migration and household income. Tenure status of the housing structure often affects the quality of housing and access to basic amenities among low income households and slum dwellers. Many low-income households wish to invest in improvement of their housing condition if they do not have the fear of eviction. Due to high cost of housing units, large proportion of urban households especially migrants depend upon rental housing which constitute crucial component in catering the housing needs in urban areas.

Dynamics of urban rental housing market is complex as it not only depends upon economic transactions such as demand and supply of housing units, but social processes play equally important role in determining the outcome of rental housing. However, the impact of social processes such as social identity-based stigma and prejudices has been less explored especially in Indian context. Various theoretical models attempt to explain the role of social stigma and prejudices in the functioning of rental housing market. The prejudice theory suggests that the behaviour of house owners and brokers are often affected by pre-conceived notions or prejudices which they develop towards certain social groups. In this process they reject some of the potential customers, and are ready to lose part of their profit (Becker, 1957). To compensate the loss and maximize their profit, often house-owners, brokers, and real estate agents practice price discrimination by charging higher rent for the similar housing units (Glaster and Constantine, 1991). Various empirical studies suggest that social identities such as colour, ethnicity, race, religion, caste, culture, and poor socio-economic vulnerabilities are major factors leading to discrimination in the urban housing rental market (Kain& Quigley 1972; King and Mieszkowski 1973; Yinger 1976; Thorat et al. 2015). The majority of studies on housing discrimination define discrimination as less favourable treatment against a particular community or group because they belong to a particular group, class, or community. Various studies have already been conducted across the globe especially in the USA and European countries to document the nature and form of discrimination in the rental housing market. However, discrimination in the rental housing market is a less explored sphere in India. Only a few pioneering works like Thorat et al. (2015) and Datta & Pathania (2016) have attempted to document

the discriminatory practices in the Indian urban housing market. Rental housing constitutes a very important section of housing in Indian cities. However, most of the rental housing market in India operates informally. Systematic studies related to exclusionary practices in rental housing market in India have been ignored. Housing market in India has been facing twin challenges- while on one hand housing shortage has increased especially for the marginalised social groups on other hand the number of vacant housing units has also gone up during the last few decades. Analysing the social dynamics of residential segregation, Dupont (2004) narrates the role of caste as an important factor for residential segregation in Delhi that causes social ostracism. Thorat et.al (2015) provide the first systematic and comprehensive analysis of nature and pattern of discrimination against marginalised social groups in urban areas. The study uses audit methodology to measure the discriminatory practices in rental housing market for the marginalised social groups. Similarly, a study undertaken by Pathania and Dutta (2016) used audit experiment method through websites to measure the pattern of discrimination against the scheduled castes and Muslims in rental housing market. The study indicates that in comparison to scheduled caste and upper caste, Muslim households are less advantaged while accessing house on rent.

The social exclusion framework in rental housing market can be explained through discriminatory behaviour by different agencies operating in the rental housing market. Tenants are excluded/denied access to housing because of their social group identities. Even if they are given access to housing, it is often on unequal or differential terms and conditions which are often discriminatory in nature. Unlike the general assumption that the market operates solely on economic terms and that social biases and prejudices have no place in market transactions, decisions taken by various stakeholders in the market are significantly influenced by social identities. Often marginalized social groups have to pay more for the similar amenities such as housing in comparison to non-excluded social groups. Thus, discriminatory practices in the housing market often forces discriminated groups to pay *'social tax'* (extra payment in comparison to non- discriminated groups) due to their social group identity. This not only causes loss of income and equal opportunity but also causes loss of self-esteem due to discrimination.

Brokers play a crucial role in the housing market transactions particularly in the rental housing market. Often, they are the first agency who potential tenants encounter when they enter rental housing. Normally, the response of the broker depends upon their two types of customers- linked with the demand and supply side of the housing market. The supply side is constituted by house owners while the demand side comprises potential tenants. Since profit maximization is the sole motive of brokers; they try to maintain a fine balance between the demand and supply side customers. Now the question arises why certain brokers practise discriminatory behaviour while interacting with potential tenants. Discriminatory behaviour of brokers may not be necessarily the result of their prejudices and biases towards certain social groups; but they are the mirror of preferences of house owners and often reflect the prejudices and biases of the house owners and other potential customers.

Various scholars have attempted to explain the nature and forms of discrimination practised by brokers and real estate agents in the rental housing market. Ondrich, Stricker and Yinger (1998) have explained the processes leading to discrimination by brokers. They explained that the discriminatory behaviour of brokers may be the result of prejudices and biases they have towards certain social groups. Thus, they discriminate due to their personal biases towards the potential tenants from certain social groups. In this process, the social group identity of the brokers and real estate agents plays a crucial role in determining their response in the rental housing market. The discriminatory behaviour of the brokers is also determined by the prejudices and biases of the customers they primarily cater to in the urban rental housing market. A broker who mainly caters to social groups having prejudices for marginalised social groups may deny housing to tenants from marginalised social groups as he would not like to displease the potential customers from dominant social groups. Another crucial process through which the brokers practice discriminatory behaviour in the rental housing market is *social steering way*. Through this process, the brokers attempt to provide housing to tenants in certain localities in which they perceive the potential tenants would like to settle. The tenants from socially excluded groups are often pursued by the brokers to see housing in localities where socially excluded groups are already living. Tenants from marginalised social groups are often discouraged by brokers to look for housing in localities inhabited by dominant social groups. The discriminatory behaviour of the broker is also determined by various factors such as his/her perception about the preferred housing locality of certain social groups and preferences and discriminatory behaviour of the house owners of the advertised housing unit.

In the present article, attempt has been made to examine the nature, form and pattern of discrimination in urban rental housing market; to analyse the consequences of discrimination in urban rental housing market and to suggest policy measures to reduce discrimination in rental housing and ensure inclusive urban housing.

Methodology and Sample Design

The present research has been designed as mixed-method study combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to undertake the primary empirical research. The study is based on both secondary and primary data sources. The secondary data source – NSSO 69th round have been used to analyse the quality of housing across social groups. Primary data has been collected through field work in the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

Audit method or Fair Housing Audit methodology has been applied to measure the nature, extent, and pattern of discrimination in the urban rental housing market. In the present article, audit methodology is instrumental to measure the discrimination from the supply side of the urban rental housing market. Apart from audit method, in-depth interviews have also been conducted for households living in rented

accommodations. Purposive sampling and snow-ball techniques have been applied to select the households for in-depth interviews. This has provided information for issues and challenges faced by demand side in the urban rental housing market. Apart from this, empirical findings from focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and key informant interviews have been included to analyses the qualitative data. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected from the field work have been triangulated to measure the nature, form, and extent of discrimination in the urban rental housing market. The present study is based on a robust sample size - 1600 telephonic audits and 300 in-depth interviews. The field work has been conducted in all the districts of National Capital Territory of Delhi (table 1). Various statistical techniques have been used for quantitative data analysis- Chi-square test, and Logistic Regression models.

Table 1. Sample Size

Sr. No.	Phase	Upper Caste		SC		Muslims		North East Migrants		Total
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
1.	Telephonic Audit	400	25%	400	25%	400	25%	400	25%	1600
2.	House Visit Audit	80	25%	80	25%	80	25%	80	25%	320
3.	Brokers audit	50	25%	50	25%	50	25%	50	25%	200
4.	Tenants Interview	75	25%	75	25%	75	25%	75	25%	300

Source: Primary Survey, 2016–17

Analysis

Condition of housing for different social groups indicate that marginalised social groups have lower access to quality housing in comparison to other social groups. It is evident from Table 2 that the proportion of households living in good housing structure is the highest for dominant (non-SC/ST/ and OBC) social groups. The proportion of households living in unsatisfactory or 'bad' housing condition is highest for scheduled caste. For instance, less than half of the proportion scheduled caste households living in the urban areas and only one-fourth of the households living in the rural areas are living in the good housing condition. Similarly, nearly one fourth of the scheduled caste households living in rural areas and 15.2 percent of the scheduled caste in urban areas are living in the 'bad' housing conditions. Among all social groups, 'others' or high caste households have the highest proportion of households living in 'good' housing condition.

Table 2. Housing Condition by Social Groups in India (per cent)

Social Group	Rural				Urban				Total			
	Good	Satisfactory	Bad	Total	Good	Satisfactory	Bad	Total	Good	Satisfactory	Bad	Total
ST	24.9	53.6	21.5	100	54.5	35.8	9.7	100	28.7	51.3	20.0	100
SC	26.8	48.9	24.3	100	45.5	39.3	15.2	100	31.3	46.6	22.1	100
OBC	31.6	47.6	20.7	100	58.3	33.6	8.1	100	39.6	43.4	17.0	100
Others	38.2	42.7	19.1	100	62.2	29.7	8.1	100	49.0	36.9	14.2	100
Total	31.4	47.4	21.2	100	58.0	32.9	9.2	100	39.8	42.8	17.4	100

Source: NSSO 69th round, 2013

Probability of Getting Good House on Rent in India: Analysis by Social and Religious Groups

Access to good housing on rent has been analysed in the present section. Statistical significance of the social groups has been tested through the logistic regression model. This section attempts to examine the probability of getting good house on rent for different social groups in India and in the NCT Delhi. The random effect logistic regression model has been used for the analysis. If we analyse the probability of getting good house on rent in urban areas in India by social groups, the result of the logistic model given in Table 4 clearly indicates that odds of getting good house on rent is 31 percent lower for scheduled tribe and 25 percent lower for OBCs in comparison to other social groups. The table also shows that odds of getting good house on rent for scheduled caste is 53 per cent lower in comparison to other social groups. Thus, the analysis shows that the access to good housing on rent is determined by the social identity of the tenants. The result of the logit regression model is highly significant.

Table 3. Model Filling Information for India and Delhi

Region		Log likelihood	LR chi²(3)	Prob> chi²	Pseudo R2	Number of Observation
Delhi	Social Groups	-417.55768	44.47	0.0000	0.0506	695
	Religious Groups	-420.36805	30.56	0.0000	0.0506	695
India	Social Groups	-9925.0105	215.94	0.0000	0.0108	14,489
	Religious Groups	-9979.3896	105.72	0.0053	0.0000	14,448

Source: Author's calculations from NSSO 69th Round, 2013

Table 4. Logistic Regression Model for Social Groups in India

	Odds Ratio	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Others*				
STs	0.6999	0.000	.6189441	.7914453
SCs	0.4698	0.000	.4231108	.5217895
OBCs	0.7489	0.000	.6953226	.8066622
Constant	1.3746	0.000	1.304414	1.44875

Note: * Reference group
Source: Author's calculations from NSSO 69th Round, 2013

Similarly, if we analyse the probability of getting good house on rent for different religious groups, the results of the logit regression model given in Table 5 clearly indicate that odds of getting good house on rent is 38 percent lower for Muslims than Hindu tenants. The odds of getting good house are higher for Christian and Sikhs households in urban India. Odds of getting house on rent are three percent higher for Christians and 39 percent higher for Sikhs households in comparison to Hindu households.

Table 5. Logistic Regression Model for Religious Groups in India

Social Group	Odds Ratio	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Hindu*				
Muslim	.6215124	0.000	.5614611	.687986
Christian	1.035249	0.637	.8965102	1.195459
Sikhs	1.392514	0.121	.9159886	2.116943
Constant	1.137032	0.000	1.096099	1.179494

Note: * Reference Group
Source: Author's calculations from NSSO 69th Round, 2013

The result of the logit regression model is highly significant for Muslims.

Similarly, if we analyse the probability of getting good house on rent in Delhi, the logistic regression model shown in Table 6 clearly indicate that odds of getting good house on rent is 18 per cent lower for scheduled tribe in comparison to upper caste. Similarly, odds of getting good house on rent is 72 percent less for scheduled caste and 48 percent less for OBCs households. Thus, the odds of getting good house on rent are lowest for scheduled caste in Delhi. The result of the logit regression model is highly significant for scheduled caste and OBC households.

Table 6. Logistic regression model for social groups in Delhi

Social Group	Odds Ratio	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Others*				
STs	.829111	0.684	.3360172	2.045803
SCs	.289743	0.000	.1717544	.4887855
OBCs	.526919	0.000	.2127063	.5024603
Constant	0.74222	0.004	0.6075649	0.9067242

Note: * Reference group
Source: Author's calculations from NSSO 69th Round, 2013

Similarly, if we analyse the probability of getting good house on rent for different religious groups in Delhi, the logit regression model given in Table 7 clearly indicate that the odds of getting a good house on rent are 78 percent lower for Muslims in comparison to Hindu households. Similarly, the odds of getting a good house on rent are 28 percent lower for Christians. It is interesting to note from the logistic regression model that odds of getting good house on rent is two times higher for Sikhs in Delhi. The result of the logit regression model is highly significant for Muslims in Delhi.

Table 7. Logistic Regression Model for Religious Groups in Delhi

Social Group	Odds Ratio	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Hindu*				
Muslim	.2214066	0.000	.112374	.4362297
Christian	.7262136	0.704	.1396622	3.776156
Sikhs	3.177184	0.068	.9192552	10.98117
Constant	.5508021	0.000	0.4646662	.6529052

Note: * Reference group
Source: Author's calculations from NSSO 69th Round, 2013

Thus, the analysis of the logistic regression reveals that the probability of getting good house on rent is lower for scheduled caste and Muslims in India in comparison with upper caste and Hindu households. A similar pattern is observed in the logistic regression model with respect to Delhi. The probability of getting a good house on rent is also lower for scheduled caste and Muslim households in the national capital.

Discrimination in Access to Rental Housing Market

Analysis in the previous section indicates that there is inequality in access to housing and basic amenities. It is an important feature of urban landscape in India. It is perceived that the social group identity of people living in urban areas does not influence their access to various services in urban areas. However, various research studies have indicated that even in urban areas, socially marginalised communities face discrimination and social exclusion in accessing various services such as housing, basic amenities, and livelihood opportunities. This section attempts to explore the nature and form of discrimination pertaining to housing experienced by socially marginalised groups in India such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Muslims and migrants from the north-eastern states of India living in Delhi. To identify the nature and forms of discrimination experienced by these marginalised groups in urban setting, primary data has been collected through audit surveys- telephonic as well as tenants' interviews.

In the urban housing market, there are two significant players- house owner and real estate agent/broker. Therefore, it is imperative to analyse the differential responses given by the house-owners and the brokers. Table 8 shows the aggregate response by house- owners and brokers. As indicated in the Table, the proportion of positive responses is higher for the brokers than the house-owners. In comparison to house-owners, who are often specific to the choice of the tenants, profit maximization is the prime motive of brokers. Therefore, they are ready to provide house on rent. Table 8 also indicates that at the aggregate level, around one fourth house owners or landlords in Delhi refused to give house on rent while the corresponding proportion for the broker/agent is less than 10 percent. Often brokers reflect the choices and preferences of the concerned house owner or landlord. Subtle or indirect refusal by the house owner and brokers is around 10 percent and eight percent respectively. The difference in responses by house owners and brokers is statistically significant.

Table 8. Total Response to Auditors in Delhi by House Providers (Telephonic)

Sr. No.	Response	House Owner		Broker/Agent	
		Number	Percentages	Number	Percentages
1.	Ready to give house	435	58.2	528	62.0
2.	Direct refusal***	175	23.4	81	9.5
3.	Refused in-directly*	80	10.7	68	8.0
4.	Ready with certain condition	48	6.4	91	10.7
5.	Different locality	10	1.3	84	9.9
	Total	748	100.0	852	100.0

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2016-17
Note: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, *significant at 10%

Nature of Response by Income Group Locality

The article also attempts to explore the difference in the response category by income group of the locality. The aggregate responses have been classified into high income, middle income and low-income localities. The responses have been tabulated as per the income locality of the advertised unit. The responses given in Table 9 clearly indicate that the proportion of house providers ready to give house on rent is highest for low income, and lowest for high income group locality.

The nature of response given to home seekers differs for various social groups. Table 9 portrays the response received by house seekers from various social groups in the high, medium, and low-income localities. Table 9 clearly indicates that in the high-income locality, positive response i.e. ready to give house on rent is highest for the upper caste home seekers and lowest for home seekers with Muslim identity. More than 90 percent of home seekers from upper caste received positive responses while only one fourth of Muslim home seekers were welcomed for housing on rent in high income localities in NCT Delhi.

Similarly, SC home seekers and those from the north-east migrant communities have received lower positive response in the high -income group locality. Table 9 also indicates that the social group wise difference in the response for home seekers in high income group category is statistically significant. If we analyse the direct refusal by social groups in the high-income locality, it is clear from the table that while upper caste home seekers have not received any direct denial; it is higher for home seekers with Muslim, north-east migrants and SC identities. The direct refusal to housing on rent is highest for Muslim home seekers followed by SCs and North- east migrants. The difference is also statistically significant. As far as subtle refusal or indirect refusals are concerned, the response is highest for home seekers from north-east migrants and lower for SCs and Muslims. The difference is also statistically significant. Similarly, offering house in the different locality is higher for Muslim home seekers than other social groups.

In the middle-income group locality, positive response is higher for all social groups in comparison to high income group locality. However, the positive response is highest for upper caste home seekers and lowest for Muslim home seekers. It is significant to note that around one fourth of the total Muslim home seekers have received direct refusal while accessing house on rent in the middle-income locality. Direct refusal response is lower (around eight percent) for SC home seeker. The difference is also statistically significant. The findings show that the response in the low-income group locality is less discriminatory in comparison to high- and middle-income group localities. The proportion of home seekers who have received positive response is higher in the low-income group than the high- and middle-income group localities. Thus, analysis clearly indicates that nature of response in the rental housing market varies with the social identity of the home seekers. The response for various social groups also depends upon the income group of the housing localities. The home seekers from marginalised social groups experience higher discriminatory responses in high income locality in comparison to lower income localities. These results show a statistically significant difference.

Table 9. Response by Social Group and Income Group of Locality (Telephonic)

Sr. gr.	Income Group of Locality		Response			
			Upper Caste	SCs	Muslims	North- east Migrants
1.	High Income Locality	Ready to give house***	92.7	42.1	26.3	31.6
		Direct refusal***	0.0	34.7	44.2	30.5
		Refused in-directly***	1.1	10.5	11.6	20.0
		Ready with certain condition	6.3	6.3	7.4	11.6
		Different locality**	0.0	6.3	10.5	6.3
		Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
2.	Middle Income Locality	Ready to give house***	92.0	65.6	40.4	46.8
		Direct Refusal***	0.4	8.8	26.8	22.0
		Refused in-directly***	0.4	9.2	14.8	11.2
		Ready with Certain condition	7.2	11.6	8.4	10.8
		Different locality***	0.0	4.8	9.6	9.2
		Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
3.	Low Income Locality	Ready to give house	89.1	81.8	65.5	69.1
		Direct refusal**	0.0	0.0	9.1	3.6
		Refused In-directly*	1.8	5.5	12.7	12.7
		Ready with certain condition	9.1	5.5	5.5	5.5
		Different locality	0.0	7.3	7.3	9.1
		Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2016-17
Note: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, *significant at 10%

Logistic Regression Model

Descriptive statistics of the response of the telephonic audit in the previous sections clearly indicate that the socially marginalised groups in the urban areas, such as Delhi, face discrimination while accessing house on rent. In this section, the statistical significance of the social groups has been tested through the Logistic regression model. The result of the Logit model supports the findings of the descriptive statistics

explained in the previous sections. It may be mentioned that the home seekers from socially excluded communities such as SCs, Muslims and north-east migrants face discriminatory behaviour while accessing the rental housing market. The endeavour is to quantify ease and probability of getting house on rent by the various marginalised social groups in comparison to upper caste home seekers.

Table 10. Model Filling Information for Rental Housing in Delhi

Log Likelihood	LR chi²(3)	Prob> chi²	Pseudo R2	Number of Observation
-925.19167	300.80	0.0000	0.1398	1,600

Source: Author's calculations from NSSO 69th Round, 2013

Table 11. Logistic Regression Model

	Odds Ratio	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Upper Caste*				
SCs	6.74	0.000	4.47734	10.15783
Muslims	16.34	0.000	10.86129	24.57801
N.E. Migrants	12.92	0.000	8.604721	19.41337
Constant	0.09	0.000	0.62973	0.1283931

Note: * Reference group
Source: Author's calculations from primary data

The results of the logit model (Table 11) reveal that social group identities significantly affect the rental housing market outcomes. The findings of the regressions model show that the odds of not getting a house on rent is 6.74 times higher for an SC home seeker as compared to upper caste home seekers. Similarly, the odds of not getting a house on rent are 16.34 times higher for Muslim home seekers than home seekers from the upper caste. For the NE migrant home seekers, the odds of not getting house on rent become 12.92 times higher as compared to home seekers from the upper caste. Thus, the above model reveals that the home seekers from SCs, Muslims and North East social groups are very much less likely to receive positive response from home providers in Delhi as compared to home seekers from the upper caste due to their group identity. The result of the logit regression model is highly significant.

Pattern of Discrimination in the Rental Housing Market: Demand Side Perspective

The outcome of interaction in the rental housing market depends upon the stigma and prejudices experienced by tenants from socially marginalised communities. Due to discrimination based on the social identity, tenants of various social groups receive differential treatment in the rental housing market. In this section, the nature and pattern of discrimination faced by socially marginalised communities in the process of accessing housing on rent have been analysed. The analysis is based on the empirical findings from the primary data collected from tenants living in rented accommodation in NCT Delhi. The primary data has been collected from tenants from socially marginalised communities such as SC, Muslims, and migrants from north-

eastern states of India. The section is arranged into three sections such as experiences in access to rental housing market, discriminatory treatment in the previous rented accommodation, and consequences of discrimination in the rental housing market. Mixed method approach has been applied and findings from quantitative and qualitative data have been triangulated to analyse the nature and process of discrimination in the rental housing market.

Experiences in Access to Rental Housing

In this section, we explore the nature and forms of difficulties experienced by socially disadvantages communities while searching a rented accommodation. Though, it is expected that like other market transactions, processes and outcome of rental housing market should also be governed by demand and supply, analysis in this section highlights the discriminatory practices based on social identity in the rental housing market. Nature of difficulties faced during search of rental housing has been given in Table 12. Data given in the table clearly indicates that the proportion of those who responded having faced difficulties in searching housing on rent is higher for socially marginalised communities. In comparison to one fourth tenants from upper caste, nearly half of the SCs, three fourth Muslims, and nearly two third tenants of migrants from north-east states living in Delhi have experienced difficulties in searching accommodation on rent. If we further analyse the type of difficulties faced by tenants from different social groups, data given in Table clearly indicate that more than half of the tenants from all social groups except the upper caste have faced financial difficulties in searching rented accommodation. Analysis clearly indicates that while all social groups have faced financial difficulties, discriminatory behaviour is primarily experienced by only marginalised social groups. However, among all social groups, tenants from SCs and Muslims reported to have had experienced most difficulties during their interaction in the rental housing market.

Table 12. Nature of Difficulties in Rental Housing Market

Sr. No.	Difficulty	Upper Caste	SC	Muslims	North East Migrants
1.	Faced difficulty in searching house on rent in Delhi (Yes response)**	25.3	53.3	72.0	64.0
If Yes, type of difficulty faced					
1.	Financial difficulty	57.9	75.0	72.2	54.2
2.	Discriminatory behaviour by house- owner	5.3	42.5	53.7	64.6
3.	Discriminatory behaviour by broker/ agent*	5.3	22.5	35.2	31.2
4.	House not vacant in my choice of locality*	36.8	17.5	14.8	10.4

Source: Primary Field Survey 2016-17
Note: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, *significant at 10%

The data given in Table 12 also shows discrimination faced by tenants in accessing the rental housing market. Analysis of the findings indicates that two main players of rental housing market i.e. house owners and brokers practise discriminatory behaviour towards marginalised social groups while accessing rental housing. As far as discriminatory behaviour by house owner is concerned, more than two third tenants among north-east migrants and nearly half of Muslims tenants reported that they have faced discriminatory behaviour from house owners during their search for a house on rent. As far as SC tenants are concerned, nearly 42 percent of tenants reported to have faced discriminatory behaviour from the house owner. In comparison to tenants from the afore-mentioned social groups, upper caste tenants have faced very less difficulties due to their social identity. Unavailability of house in the preferred or first choice locality is another important difficulty while searching a house. However, higher proportion of upper cast tenants reported that they had faced this difficulty in comparison to other social groups.

Nature of Discriminatory Behaviour by House Owners

As discussed earlier, tenants from marginalised social groups faced discriminatory practices from house owners and brokers while searching rented accommodation. In this section, the nature of discriminatory behaviour by the house owners has been analysed. The responses received by tenants from the house owner have been shown in figure 1. One of the major responses given to tenants from socially marginalised communities is on prejudices against their social identities. Nearly three fourth Muslims tenants reported that as soon as the house owners came to know during initial interaction that they were Muslims, their behaviour towards them changed immediately. Similarly, nearly 40 per cent of the SC tenants reported that the behaviour of the house owner changed as soon as their social identity was known to them through their names. The figure 1 also clearly indicate that nearly one third SC tenants, more than half of Muslims tenants, and nearly half of tenants among north east migrants were denied house by the owners as soon their social group was known to them.
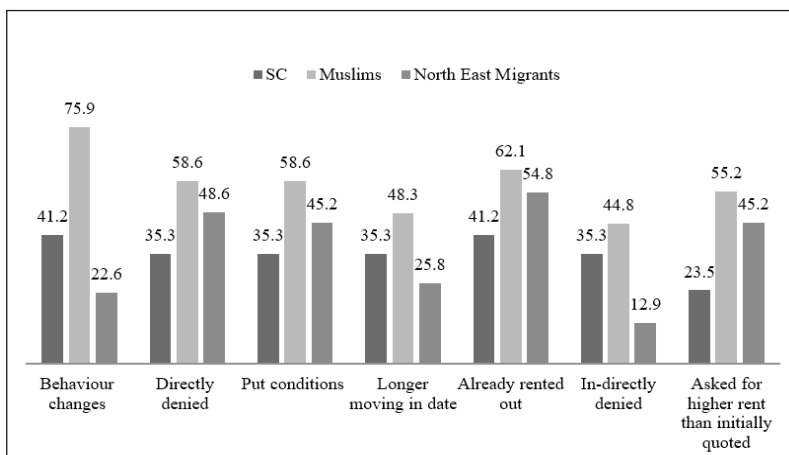
Fig 1. Nature of Response by House Owner

Source: Primary Field Survey 2016-17

Conditional access to rental housing is another response which tenants are reported to have received from the house owners. The conditional access to rental house was reported highest from Muslim tenants as more than half of them responded to having received conditional access to rented accommodation. The nature of condition put by the house owner has been explained in the later section. Another common response received by the tenants is longer moving in date i.e. house will be available very late. The respondents informed that often the landlords do not directly say no to them but deliberately give a longer moving date so that they are discouraged from taking the house. Often tenants from socially excluded communities such as SCs and Muslims are not denied house directly but they are told that the housing units have been already rented out. Another excuse used by the owner for denying rental housing to marginalised communities is that they will discuss with the family members' only to refuse later. Similarly, often the rent of the housing unit is hiked to keep SCs and Muslims tenants away. Analysis of the findings of this section clearly indicate that often house owners and brokers engaged in discriminatory behaviour resort to various pretexts instead of direct denial. Price discrimination i.e. asking for higher rent is prominent way for pushing away marginalised social groups from rental housing market for instance one home seeker reported that '*Instead of directly refusing the house, the house owner asked me to deposit three months security advance instead of one which is practically impossible.*'

Reasons/Pretexts for Denying House

House owners and brokers or property dealers/agents often directly deny renting their property to tenants from scheduled castes, Muslims and north-east migrants groups. The comparative analysis of different social groups shows that price discrimination is highest for Muslims followed by north-east migrants and scheduled caste tenants. The direct denial citing social identity is highest for Muslims followed by north-east migrants. Direct denial due to social identity is lower for SCs in comparison to Muslims and north-east migrants. Nearly 70 percent of Muslim respondents informed that they were directly denied house on rent due to their religious affiliation.
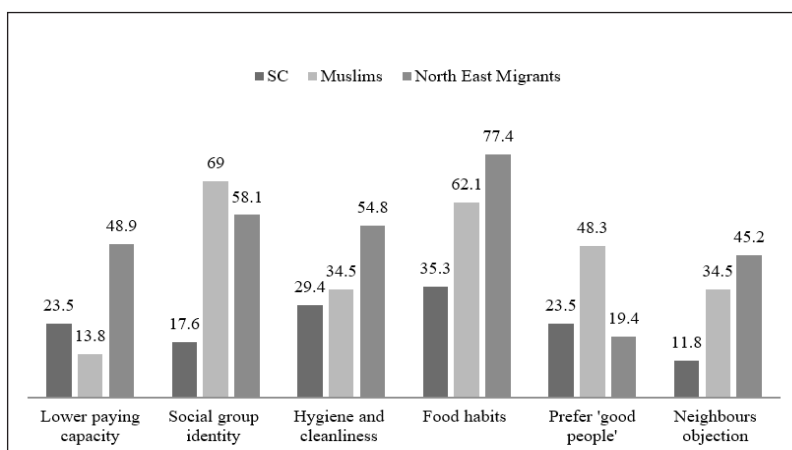
Fig 2. Reasons for Denial of House (Stated by House Owner)

Source: Primary Field Survey 2016-17

Other major responses received by the respondents during their house search related to food habits, hygiene, and cleanliness issues raised by house owners during their interaction with prospective tenants as a pretext to refuse house on rent. Nearly one third SCs, more than 60 per cent Muslims and nearly three fourth of the north east migrant respondents faced denial of rental housing due to their non-vegetarian food habit.

Prejudices and perceptions about certain social groups regarding their economic condition and paying capacities also play role in deciding rental housing market outcomes. The analysis shows that often tenants from the North-east are denied rental housing citing their irregular nature of employment and paying capacities. However, qualitative data analysis shows that despite regular employment and good paying capacities, tenants from north-east are denied house on rent. Nearly half of respondents from north-east migrants and one fourth tenants from scheduled caste faced denial citing less paying capacity. Often, the life style of the tenants is also given as pretext for denial of housing to socially marginalised groups.

Qualitative data findings show that house providers give discriminatory response on various pretexts such as restriction on the cooking on non-vegetarian food, cleaning and hygiene, asking for higher amount of rent than actual, early and summery evictions of the house without notice. Home seekers from scheduled caste reported that initially at times the house owners are not aware of the social groups of the tenants. They keep on asking about the social groups and once they come to the social groups, they straightway or on some pretext deny for renting to scheduled caste tenants. Tenants from marginalised social groups have to go for endless effort to finalise the deal for renting the accommodation. Analysis of the pattern of behaviours of house owners towards scheduled caste home seekers reveals that in the beginning of the negotiation of the deal for renting house, the behaviour of house owner is good and often profession but in many cases their behaviour is suddenly changed and negotiation is abruptly ended on some pretext such as house is already rented out or they would discuss the matter with family members and revert which they never did.

Another striking response received by tenants from the house owners is that they prefer 'good' tenants. The qualitative data analysis explains that often 'good people' is not defined and is used as excuse to deny house on rent. One of the respondents from north-east reported that '*The house owners deliberately put such terms and conditions which make it practically impossible to take house on rent. Instead of directly denying, they put such conditions such as very high rent and security deposit. Restrictions on food are always there no matter what*.' Another responded from north-east reported that '*The brokers and house owners often treat us like foreigners. They misbehave with us as if we are homeless refugees in Delhi. It is very frustrating*.'

Conditional Access to Rental Housing

In this section, conditions put by the house owner to give house on rent have been analysed. The responses received by different social groups are shown in figure 3 which clearly indicate that restriction on food habits is one of the major conditions put by house owners to tenants. It is noteworthy that these conditions were put only to the socially marginalised groups while the upper caste tenants were not given any conditions related to the type of food being cooked at home. Nearly one third SCs, more than half of Muslims, and nearly two third north-east respondents were asked by house owners not to cook non-vegetarian food when they are given house on rent.

Also, there are restrictions put on visitors with almost one third Muslim and 60 per cent NE migrant tenants being told not to have lots of visitors.
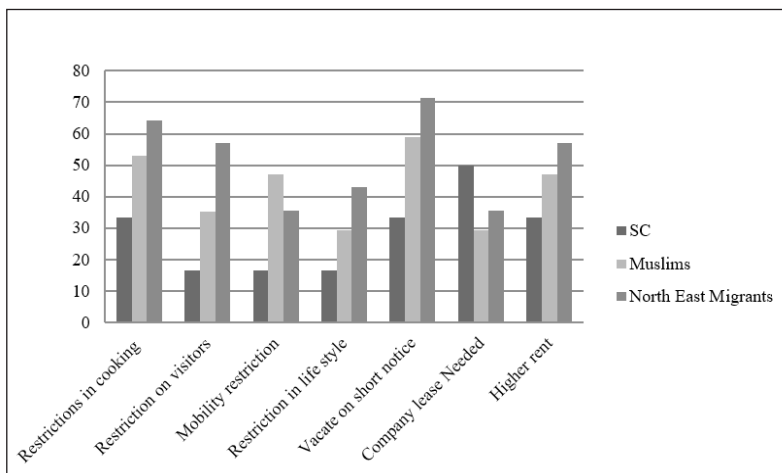
Fig 3. Conditions for Giving House on Rent

Source: Primary Field Survey 2016-17

Restriction on number of guests visiting the house and mobility restrictions such as 'not allowed to come late at home,' etc. have also been cited as the major conditions for offering house on rent. Restriction on number of visitors was reported highest for north-east tenants while restrictions in mobility was highest for Muslims. Furthermore, tenants from these groups are clearly subjected to discriminatory conditions like 'being ready to vacate at short notice' while upper caste tenants are hardly given any such conditions. Similarly, nearly one third SC respondents, more than half of Muslim respondents and more than 70 percent respondents from north-east migrants reported that vacating on short notice was major condition put by the land lords. They said often it works as a deterrent and excuse for keeping the socially marginalised communities away from the rental housing market as vacating house on short notice is cost-intensive and unaffordable for many tenants. Higher rent is also reported as one of the major conditions for getting house on rent. Tenants are often asked to pay higher rent than the market rate. The players in the rental housing market particularly brokers and house owners are aware that tenants from socially marginalised groups are denied house due to their social identity. Due to this, availability of housing options is limited for them. Therefore, they try to maximise their profit by asking higher rent from these tenants.

Nature of Discriminatory Behaviour by the Brokers

As discussed in the previous section, brokers and real estate agents play a crucial role in the rental housing market transactions. In the present section, nature and form of behaviour experienced by tenants from the broker or real-estate agents have been analysed. Similar to the responses given by house owners, the respondents from socially marginalised communities also reported that the behaviour of the broker changes as soon as the social group identity is disclosed to them. Nearly one third SC tenants and more than two third Muslims reported that the behaviour of the broker

suddenly changed as soon as they came to know their social group identity. The proportion of respondents from north-east migrants is lower in comparison to SC and Muslims as brokers easily identify social groups. Direct refusal to show any house is another response given by brokers. More than half respondents from among north-east migrants and more than 40 percent Muslim respondents reported to have received refusal from the brokers (figure 4). Apart from the direct refusal, brokers are often not willing to show all housing units citing reasons about selectiveness of owners of available units and that not all vacant housing units are available to tenants from some social groups. The qualitative data analysis indicates that as soon as social identity is revealed to the brokers, they reduce the number of housing options available. Thus, the number of housing units available for rent not only depends upon the demand, supply or the affordability of the prospective tenants, but also upon the social identity of the actors involved in the housing market transactions. Price discrimination is also often practised by brokers. The respondents from socially excluded communities reported that often brokers attempt to escalate the rent of the housing units by showing that there are limited options available for these social groups.

Often brokers do not provide full information for available housing unit. They hide the details so that they could escalate the price of the rented housing accommodation. The data also reveal that instead of direct refusal to home seekers, brokers also indulge in delaying tactics. Nearly one third of the SC home seekers reported that brokers attempted to delay showing houses citing that house is not vacant despite initially reporting the availability of housing units.

The brokers often had to work on the direction of the house owners for instance during field work one broker reported that '*In most of the cases, landlords generally inform their choice of tenants at the outset. In my locality, it is very difficult to arrange house on rent for Muslims. But there are few landlords who give house on rent to Muslims but they generally charge high.*' The brokers narrated that most of the time house owners clearly inform in the beginning for their choice of tenants and the brokers have to work accordingly.
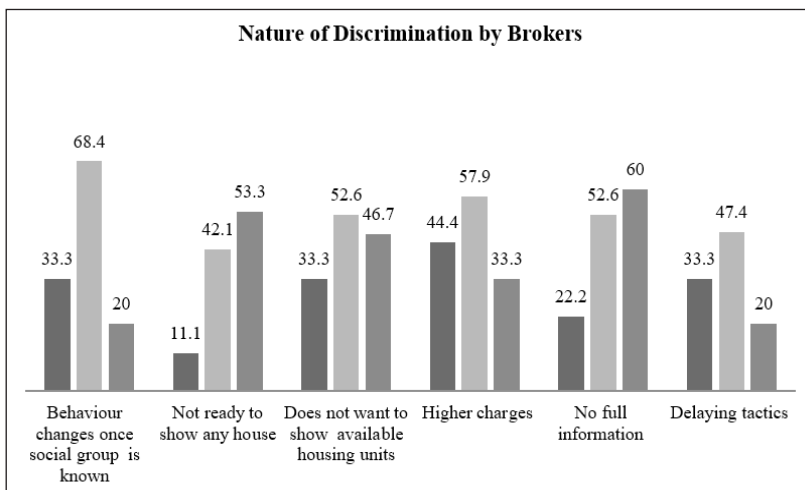
Fig 4. Nature of Discrimination by Brokers

Source: Primary Field Survey 2016-17

Qualitative data analysis shows that brokers try to shift the blame to house owners about their discriminatory behaviour. The brokers reported that they personally do not discriminate based on the social identity but are compelled to follow the preferences of house owners.

Social Steering Away by Brokers

Brokers and real estate agents also practise diversionary tactics by manipulating the choices of tenants by social steering. Brokers often work as per the demand of the house owners. They are aware of the choices of the house owners and as well as of the prospective tenants. Through the process of social steering away, brokers and real estate agents attempt to divert the choice of the housing locality of the prospective tenants. Factors affecting the social steering away depend on availability of housing units, preference of social identity of tenants, and stigmas and prejudices against certain social groups by house owners and brokers. Through the process of social steering away, prospective home seekers are persuaded and offered housing units in localities mainly inhabited by households of the same social groups. The process of social steering away invariably causes residential segregation based on socio-religious and ethnic identities of the households. In this section, process of social steering away by brokers has been analysed.

The findings of the present study clearly indicate the practice of social steering away. The data in Table13 clearly indicate that nearly one third of the SC respondents, two third of the Muslim respondents and nearly half of respondents from north east migrants reported that during their interactions with agents and brokers, they were suggested and persuaded by the brokers to take up houses in some other localities preferably ones predominantly inhabited by their social groups. Not furnishing full information about the availability of housing units is the most important step in the process of social steering away. Through this process, brokers attempt to convince the prospective tenants from discriminated social groups that there are very limited housing options for them. The data in Table 13 reveals that more than half of the proportion of tenants from north-east migrants and Muslims reported that brokers often do not provide full information on availability of housing units.

Table 13. Social Steering Away by Brokers

Sr. No.	Conditions	SC	Muslims	North East Migrants
1.	Did not provide full information on available housing units	22.2	52.6	60.0
2.	Suggested me to see house in some other locality	33.3	68.4	53.3
3.	Suggested me to see house in the locality inhabited by my social group	11.1	57.9	40.0
4.	Ready to provide house in some other buildings in the same locality	33.3	26.3	13.3
5.	Ready to provide house in some other locality	44.4	63.2	46.7

Source: Primary Field Survey 2016-17

Analysis of the qualitative data indicates the complexities of social steering away. Residential segregation is one of the major outcomes of social steering away apart from unpleasant experiences for the discriminated tenants. In the segregated localities also, not all house owners are willing to rent out their houses to socially excluded communities. One of the major excuses given by brokers for social steering away certain social groups is that house owners are not willing to rent their houses to these social groups for instance one broker informed during the field work *'we know that some landlords will ultimately deny the house to Muslims, so we do not want to waste our time by taking Muslims to a Hindu dominated locality or to a landlord who never prefers Muslim tenants. So, we help Muslims tenants take house in the locality where it is easily available. In this way we try to save time and inconvenience.'* Another broker informed that *'many times, I confirm the identity of the tenants before fixing the meeting with land lords.'*

Consequences of Discrimination

Discrimination in the rental housing market often causes unpleasant outcomes for the socially excluded communities. In this section, consequences of discrimination experienced by excluded communities have been analysed. Frequent change in the accommodation is one of the major consequences which tenants are forced to do due to discriminatory behaviour. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of this section explains the nature and type of consequences experienced by tenants.
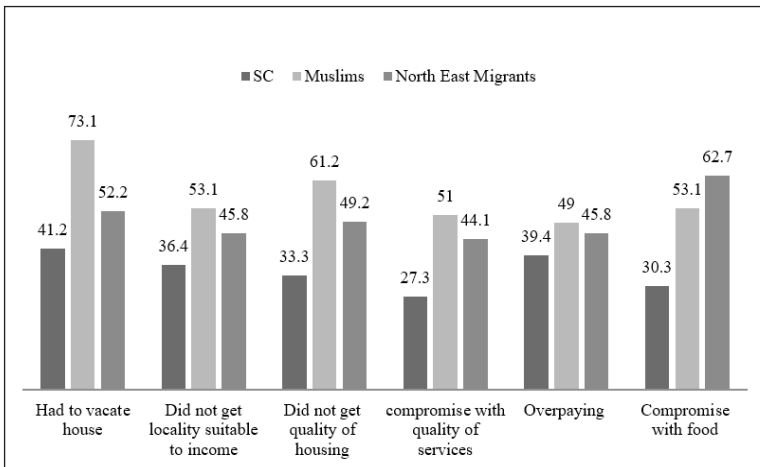
Fig 5. Consequences for Housing and Amenities

Source: Primary Field Survey 2016-17

The figure 5 shows the proportion of respondents who had to vacate their previous rented accommodation due to discrimination. The analysis shows that more than half of the respondents among north-east migrants, more than 70 percent Muslims, and more than 40 percent SC respondents had to vacate their houses due in discriminatory behaviour. Apart from the problem of frequently vacating the house, tenants also face other consequences. The tenants from socially excluded groups often have to make several compromises due to denial and discrimination faced in the rental housing market.

These respondents have not only made compromises in terms of denial of choice of locality, quality of housing and services etc., but also higher payment for the housing and amenities and their food habits as a result discrimination in the rental housing market.

The proportion of tenants having faced difficulties is higher for Muslims and north east migrants than tenants from SC and upper caste. Due to social steering away and consequent residential segregation and denial of housing in the choice of locality, often they have to travel longer distance. Education of the children also suffers due sudden change of accommodation.
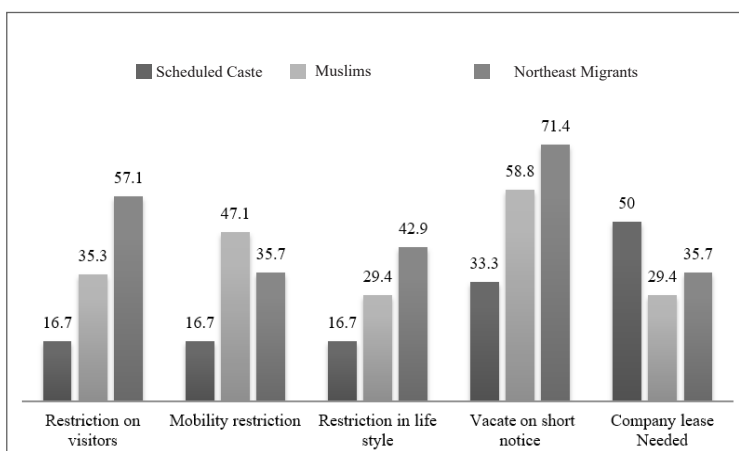
Fig 6. Consequences of Discrimination

Source: Primary Field Survey 2016-17

Longer search caused due to denial of housing coupled with discrimination also causes loss of time and money for the tenants from socially excluded groups. Constant denial and discrimination also caused mental stress to the tenants which affect their well-being. Nearly one third SC respondents and two third Muslims reported that they felt stressed due to constant denial and discrimination in the rental housing market.

Conclusions and Policy Suggestions

Discrimination in accessing house in the urban rental market has been analysed through both supply side and demand side. Analysis of the primary data clearly indicates that social exclusion and discrimination play a significant role in the rental housing market outcomes. Socially marginalised and vulnerable communities face unequal outcomes in the urban rental housing market. The analysis of the primary data clearly indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the social identity and rental housing market outcome. The logistic regression model for the study indicates that home seekers from the marginalised social groups were on an average significantly less likely to get a positive response than equivalent home seekers with dominant social group identity. The findings of the study reflect that quite a high proportion of home seekers from scheduled caste, Muslims and migrants from the North-East face discriminatory practices such as direct refusal, subtle refusal, and outright discriminatory terms and conditions. The analysis of the pattern of discrimination shows that house owners, real estate brokers and agent practice discrimination

based on biases and prejudices about certain social groups. The real estate agents and brokers practice unfavourable treatment towards marginalised social groups and provide less information about the available housing units. They not only demand higher rent and security deposits but also provide housing in the low-income localities with poor quality of housing. Often, brokers and agents refer and provide housing in the locality where same (home seeker's) social group is living. Marginalised social groups not only face direct refusal but also price discrimination in the urban rental housing market. Analysis of the demand side of the rental market indicates that home seekers from vulnerable social groups face discriminatory treatment in the urban rental housing market. The regression results of the study confirm that socially excluded groups such as SCs, Muslims, and migrants from the North-East are more vulnerable to discrimination when accessing the rental housing market. Similarly, significant chi-square values indicate social group differentials in terms of responses to these social groups. The difference in the responses given by the type of house providers, house owners and brokers, and the income group of localities indicate that positive response of the house owners is highest for low income locality and lowest for high income locality. The social group wise difference in the response for home seekers in high income group category is statistically significant. The direct refusal to housing on rent is highest for Muslim home seekers followed by SC and north-east migrants. The difference is also statistically significant. SC home seekers were offered rental housing in locality other than their preferred locality. The study also discusses the unpleasant outcome of discrimination in rental housing market. Socially excluded groups have to make various compromises such as living in poor quality of housing, long commuting distance to workplace, loss of time and income during long and frequent search for housing. They also undergo immense embarrassment due to stigma and prejudices associated with their social identity, are compelled to change residence due to discrimination and harassment, pay higher rents for similar facilities, and end up living in same caste/group localities resulting in residential segregation. Thus, the present study provides comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of the exclusionary and discriminatory practices in urban rental housing, causes of discrimination and its consequences on socially excluded groups.

The analysis in the article provides various policy suggestions for inclusive rental housing policy. The draft rental housing policy 2015 sought to promote social rental housing with focus on affordability for the most vulnerable sections of urban population. Although the draft rental housing policy provides a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach to promote the rental housing market in the country, yet it has failed to address some critical issues and is silent about the processes operating in the rental housing market. The Rental housing policy should be integrated with *Housing for All* programme of the government. Fragmented and separate rental housing would not be viable and practical in implementation. The idea of social rental housing should be integrated with low income households and *in-situ* development of slums under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Also, the draft policy provides the macro policy framework for rental housing but a comprehensive road map to achieve the targets is missing in the policy document. Further, keeping in mind that rental housing market still operates informally in India and that most landlords rent out property privately without any registration or rental agreement, the disbursement of the proposed *rental housing vouchers* should be linked with the compulsory registration. In the absence of safeguards to protect tenants from malpractices, rental housing often turns into a bitter

experience for many tenants. Therefore, rental housing policy should make provisions for safeguarding the socially excluded households. Legal and administrative measures should be introduced to safeguard tenants from discriminatory and exclusionary practices in the market and make the policy more inclusive in nature.

The findings of the article provide evidences about the discriminatory practices in the housing market transactions which require further investigations. The question arises why house owners, brokers and other agencies operating in the housing market discriminate towards social, ethnic and regional identities rather than focusing on profit maximisation. Social stigma and prejudices against marginalised social groups are so deep that they have also affected the housing market transactions and outcomes. Rental housing constitutes an important instrument in reducing housing shortage. It is the major house provider for low income households. It also has a huge potential for meeting the growing housing need in cities and reducing the housing shortage in urban areas. However, a major proportion of the rental housing market is operating informally and only a small proportion of it is functioning formally. Informal nature of rental housing has posed difficulty in regulating the rental housing. To promote the growth of rental housing sector and make it socially inclusive, it is imperative to formulate a comprehensive rental housing policy.

The rental housing market in India still operates informally. Most of the landlords are operating privately without any registration or rental agreement with tenants. Middle men such as real estate agents and brokers mostly control the private rental housing market transactions. Instead of making a separate provision for social rental housing, housing schemes and programmes should be made inclusionary. Each housing scheme should earmark a certain proportion of housing dedicated to rental housing for socially and economically vulnerable sections. Regarding the policies to eradicate discriminatory behaviour, it is often argued that it is difficult to regulate the rental housing market which is primarily operated by private people and decisions and behaviour of private house owners cannot be questioned. However, it is noteworthy that large proportion of rental housing in India particularly in urban areas is private housing as public/social rental market is not well developed in India. The decision to maintain the property of any individual is solely dependent on the property owner. Economic transactions should be regulated and governed by certain rules framed by the government. Since, private rental housing is also an economic transaction, it is essential to frame the rules to ensure the non-discriminatory and inclusive rental housing market- both private and public sector housing. Formulation of legal safeguards is needed for making rental housing market inclusive in nature. Discriminatory practices should be made a punishable offence. Legal safeguard is needed to protect the rights of tenants from the discriminatory behaviour practised by various stakeholders in the rental housing market. Private rental housing stock needs to be formalized through compulsory registration. This will enable the civic authorities to closely monitor the mal-practices in the rental housing market. The Rent Control Act should be restructured to safeguard the interest of tenants belonging to socially marginalised communities. Summary evictions and exorbitant hike in the rent and charges of the amenities should be regulated. There is need to formulate a tenant friendly *grievance redressal mechanism* wherein the tenants can directly inform about discriminatory behaviour against them. This mechanism should also incorporate a time bound response to complaints of discrimination. Real estate agents and brokers should be registered so that they come in the ambit of regulatory framework. Feedback

mechanism should be developed for rental housing. Each housing locality should have a web portal which the potential tenants can visit and see the condition of housing unit, behaviour of house owners, feedback given by previous tenants, etc. This mechanism could ensure transparency and reduce discriminatory practices in the rental housing market. RWAs must have or co-opt tenants in their associations and executive committees to promote harmony and eradicate discriminatory behaviour. This could serve as a platform to report discriminatory behaviour. Above all, every stakeholder should be sensitized against discrimination and social exclusion.

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Caste and Consequences:
Looking through the Lens of Violence

G. C. Pal[1]

Abstract

Caste, a social institution in India, has significant implications on social legislations, affirmative action, and group-specific development policies. In the modern society, the traditional caste structure continues to raise the unequal social interaction process among caste groups. This often translates into various forms of human rights violations against groups that are at the bottom of caste hierarchy. The key concern is that resistance to such violations often leads to 'caste-based violence' of different forms. Although a body of literature explains this caste phenomenon in the discourse of human rights and social justice, its larger consequences remain a neglected dimension. This paper, drawing evidence from a series of empirical researches on 'mapping caste-based violence' in contemporary Indian society, sheds light on the diverse consequences of real or perceived violence, emanating from 'caste'. The analysis reveals that consequences of caste violence are manifested in social, economic, psychological, and moral terms. The 'victims of violence' speak the language of suffering and deprivation in different spheres of life, having a bearing on the basic human needs of 'belongingness,' 'democratic honor' and 'sense of security.' The apathetic attitude and slow response of state machinery towards such violence often accentuate the social conditions, entrapping the victims and their communities into the vicious cycle of caste oppressions and poor human development.

Keywords

Introduction

In the Indian context, the social institution of 'caste', is based on some culturally accepted and valued notions. Its relational and hierarchical structures grade social

[1]Associate Professor and currently serves as Director, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi, India
E-mail: gcpal24@gmail.com

groups in a continuum with those at the higher levels of such structures enjoying most privileges at the expense of those born into the lower levels of the social hierarchy. Nonetheless, like other social institutions, the traditional structures of caste have also undergone a change for the better in the form of protective legislations, affirmative action, and group-specific development oriented policy initiatives. Specific institutional frameworks have been put in place to protect the rights particularly of subordinated caste groups who are at the risk of being exploited by the 'codes of caste' itself. Despite the legal and institutional mechanisms, the caste structure continues to remain powerful in perpetuating the discriminatory social interaction process in modern society. This often widens cleavages among a cross section of groups in India translating into various forms of human rights violations in social and economic life. In the process of asserting rights within legislative frameworks, incidents of caste-based violence remain at the foreground. As a result, there has been a greater engagement with 'caste' than other social identities in India particularly in the process of creating a socially cohesive society.

Over the years, there have been efforts to identify the structures and processes that generate various caste related issues. In the context of persistent caste inequalities and efforts towards inclusive development, while the role of caste-based discrimination and exclusion has been extensively studied, the manifestation of caste in the form of 'caste violence' and its consequences still remains a grey area in the discourse of human rights violations and social justice. Much has not crossed traditional disciplinary boundaries to consider the consequences of real or perceived violence. Any plan of intervention for bringing changes in the quality of life of the subordinated caste group, officially known as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and commonly known as 'dalits,' needs to be grounded on understanding of the larger consequences of caste-based violence in contemporary society.

This paper aims to shed light on how caste identity in the society expresses itself in effecting violence and in what ways it impacts on various facets of life? The paper considers two frameworks to examine interlinks within the caste system and its consequences: The first one focuses on the positive consequences of 'caste system' in domains of law, policy, and state institutional mechanisms to achieve a socially cohesive society and its implications in the socio-economic life of subordinate caste groups. The second portrays the manifestation of the continued unequal intergroup relations rooted in the traditional caste norms in terms of caste-violence despite protective measures; and the larger consequences of such violence at the individual, community, and societal levels.

Caste and Transformative Ideas: An Overview

Independent India has witnessed elaborate legal safeguards and administrative frameworks to protect human rights and undermine the traditional order of caste system. With the recognition of the need for providing social protection to the groups at the bottom of caste hierarchy, Article 15(1) of the constitution prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them. Article 17 prohibits any discrimination specifically based on caste in access to public resources. The constitution also provides affirmative action through reservations in political, economic, and educational spheres to ensure

equitable opportunities for development. To give effect to the provisions in the constitution related to equality and fundamental rights, the Indian State has enacted specific legislations. After five years of enforcing the constitution in 1950, Parliament enacted the Untouchability (Offences) Act in 1955 to curb discriminatory practices on the basis of caste, and to protect SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs) from human rights violations and undermining of human dignity. The Act was amended in 1976 and renamed as Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act. The PCR Act basically provides protection against the first regressive feature of the caste system, namely denial of equal rights, besides combating discrimination against SCs and STs.

After 20 years of the implementation of the PCR Act, it was again amended with the realization that the provisions under the Act were inadequate to check continuing indignities which had assumed new proportions in form of various kinds of violence and atrocities against SCs and STs. Thus, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) Act was enacted in 1989 with the aim to provide safeguards against the repressive feature of the caste system or crimes against SCs and STs in the name of caste by the groups at the higher levels of the hierarchical caste system. The PoA Act came into force in 1990 but the 'Rules' was notified by the government in 1995 for proper implementation of various provisions of the Act by the State administration.

However, in course of the implementation of the PoA Act over almost two decades, serious deviations were observed from the Rules. The overarching feeling was that there has been poor implementation of the Act for several reasons. There was adequate evidence to showcase that the Act was not fulfilling the protection needs of SCs and STs. As a consequence, there were reported cases of 'acts of violence' against SCs and STs on a large scale. This led to the amendment of the PoA Act 1989 in 2015. The key amendments were mainly around new provisions to address new offences against SCs/STs and strengthening the monitoring mechanisms of the criminal justice system.

The constitutional provisions have also shaped specific policies for the socio-economic development of the subordinate caste groups. Article 46 states that 'The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the SCs and STs…' The reservation policy was formulated in 1950 with the larger goal of restructuring the institutionalised social relationships on democratic lines through a fair share for the SCs and STs in the spheres of education, employment, and legislature. However, unlike many other laws and policies, the PoA Amendment Act and the reservation policy have been a matter of serious contestation in contemporary India. Some key questions are - 'Have the frameworks of social protection and affirmative action been successful in transforming the traditional caste structure and in bringing about the desired changes in the social and economic conditions of SCs in particular? What have been the responses of caste groups to the specific legal measures and policy (reservation) that do not serve their interests? What have been consequences of persistent caste-based violence in spite of special protective legislations? These questions are core to discussion in the following sections.

Although it is acknowledged that problems pertaining to caste system have their origins in age-old traditions, yet sociological and anthropological literature indicate that relational structures of caste have been changing. The changes have often attributed to the social movements against discriminatory caste-based practices and the general processes of social and economic changes. Research on rural economy and its social structure also reports steady disintegration of caste-based occupational ties and dependence. There are subordinate caste groups who are less beholden to other dominant castes with the state policy measures as well as increased self-supportive initiatives (Jodhka and Sirari, 2012). The reservation policy has brought positive changes in social and economic life (Dubey, 2016; Haq, 2012). Reservation in political spheres has led to the emergence of a new class of political leadership from the subordinate castes (Gupta, 2005); and they tend to articulate experiences of the subordinate caste communities, and to an extent have been successful in mobilising and motivating them to strive for equal rights (Jodhka, 2015). However, some sections of society argue that the reservation policy has achieved limited success on the ground that the SCs and STs continue to suffer from relatively lower socio-economic status despite the benefits of reservation policy for long time. Thorat, Tagade and Naik (2016), therefore observe that while looking into the 'impact of reservation', there is a need to understand 'limitations in reservation.' As a matter of fact, until 2000, there had not been any legal provision of 'checks' against those who willfully avoided the implementation of the policy, leading to lack of its implementation in true spirit over the years. Another issue is the relevance of reservation is in public sector. The increase in public-private divide in spheres of education and employment limits opportunities for development among socially disadvantaged groups.

Despite the illegality of the caste system in contemporary India, stories of degeneration in traditional social orders and observed changes in economic conditions of SCs and STs; a wide range of evidence shows that caste identity matters in multiple ways at individual, social, and institutional levels. The social order still remains robust and shapes many outcomes for those at the lower end of the caste system. It is even argued that the institutionalisation of caste through the State policy of caste-based reservations and politicisation of caste in the electoral process are important reasons for the continued survival of caste (Jodhka, 2015). Experiential exposition of caste in rural landscapes of traditional life also provides accounts of continuity of oppressive aspects of caste. Modi (2015) observes that 'caste contributes to the formation of attitude and there is no easy way out of this vicious cycle.' It is even argued that the caste system has degenerated, which makes people unduly conscious of their own castes, and causes a parochial feeling and continued suppression and repression of subordinate caste group (Nitisha, 2017).

Thus, the issues related to the 'caste code' are historically interlinked. But in the presence of protective and affirmative measures, there has been increasing resistance to any forms of caste dominance, often leading to caste-based violence. As a consequence, the relevance of caste is felt in present day society. The reservation policy, despite its

positive impact, has created a lot of antipathy and a feeling of 'otherness' against the subordinate castes. As the powerful laws around caste have its limitations in reforming the social structure, violations of human rights of subordinate caste are often enforced by oppressive tactics. The elements and processes which continue to induce caste violence and create social conditions for other disadvantages thus needs systematic exploration.

Methodology

Evidence is drawn from different sources. The national crime statistics provided by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) for various years has been used to reflect on the overall patterns of violence against SCs (termed as atrocities, which include major crimes as defined in the Indian Penal Code, and specific offences under the provisions of the Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) Act of 1989 against SCs and STs by people not belonging to these two communities). Given the limitations in this official data to understand the nature and causes of atrocities against SCs, micro level data has also been drawn from a series of empirical studies on 'mapping caste-based atrocities,' besides relevant literature projecting on the essentially degenerated 'caste system' and caste confrontations. Empirical studies largely draw on evidence from experiential accounts (narratives and case studies) of victims, fact finding reports of civil society organisations, media reportages, and perspectives of human rights activists. An attempt has thus been made to triangulate the data from various sources to address the specific objectives.

Analysis

Analysis primarily revolves around the patterns of caste violence over the years and its larger consequences. These are discussed in the following two broad sections.

Caste Violence in India: Changing Patterns

In the presence of protective and preventive laws, the key question is 'What has been the magnitude and patterns of caste violence?' The national crime statistics provided by the NCRB indicate that incidence of violence against SCs and STs is on the rise. The nature, pattern, and causes of violence however widely vary between SCs and STs (Pal, 2018a). Given that SCs are part of the mainstream society, hence, are more vulnerable to caste violence perpetrated by dominant caste members, this paper focuses on the SCs. The official data on overall crimes against SCs (Table 1) reveals that on an average, about 32,000 cases have been registered annually, between 1995 (the year when the PoA Act is implemented in actual effect) and 2015 (the latest amendments brought in the Act). The registered overall crimes increased from about 33000 in 1995 to 45000 in 2015. Of the total registered crimes, cases booked under the PoA Act (cases of atrocities), has been on an average, nearly 13000 annually, with an increase of about three times between 1995 and 2015. Both the registered overall crimes and atrocities increase significantly after 2012.

Table 1. Status of registered crimes and atrocities on scheduled castes in India, 1995-2015

Status of registered crimes and atrocities	Figure
Annual average of the total crimes	31939
Annual average of the PoA crimes (atrocities)	12928
Annual average rate of total crimes	6.2
Annual average rate of the PoA crimes (atrocities)	3.2
Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for all crimes	1.6
Compound annual growth (CAGR) rate for PoA crimes	5.2

Source: Based on data, Crimes in India, National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), Government of India.

A compound annual growth rate (CAGR) reveals a growth of 1.6 for overall crimes whereas 5.2 for atrocity cases. The rate of crimes (defined as the number of registered cases in a year per one hundred thousand SC population) indicates an increase of overall crimes from 3.6 per cent in 1995 to 22.3 per cent in 2015. The corresponding figures for the PoA crimes are found to be 1.5 per cent and 19.2. per cent. The increase in rate of incidence thus has been higher for PoA crimes as compared to overall crimes. The data also shows a substantial increase in the proportion of 'heinous' crimes like rape, kidnapping and abduction, murder and grievous hurt.

All these figures however cannot be taken at face value, may not reflect on the magnitude of caste violence in a realistic manner. In several instances, cases of crimes and atrocities against SCs do not get reported due to various reasons associated with state machinery (being non-cooperative and non-sensitive), perpetrators (ensuring age-old caste code prevails), victims (shame, social stigma, and fear of retaliation by dominant caste groups), and other actors in local society (involved in negotiation and compromise in course of registration).

Given the scenario of increase in the registered cases of caste-based violence, the question is 'What have been the responses of the State machinery?' An analysis of data on the disposal of cases by police and courts over the period of one and half decade (2001-2015) reveals that, on an average, more than 80 per cent of the total charge sheeted cases remain pending for trial in courts at the end of each year (Graph 1a), despite the provision of special courts under the PoA Act for the purpose of providing speedy trials. Similarly, despite the legal timeframe for completing investigation and filing chargesheet, on an average, nearly one-fourth of registered cases remain pending for investigation at the end of the year (Graph 1a). The most disappointing feature has been the low conviction rate of the charge-sheeted cases for which final trials are held (Graph 1b). Notably, the average conviction rate for the cases registered under the PoA Act has been extremely low, indicating that a large proportion of victims does not receive justice. Thus, macro level official data shows an increase in pendency, a steady decline in the cases that complete trial, and a fall in conviction rates.

Graph 1: Disposal of crimes in terms of pendency percentage at police station and Court **(Graph 1a),** and charge sheet and conviction rate by police and court **(Graph 1b),** 2001-2015
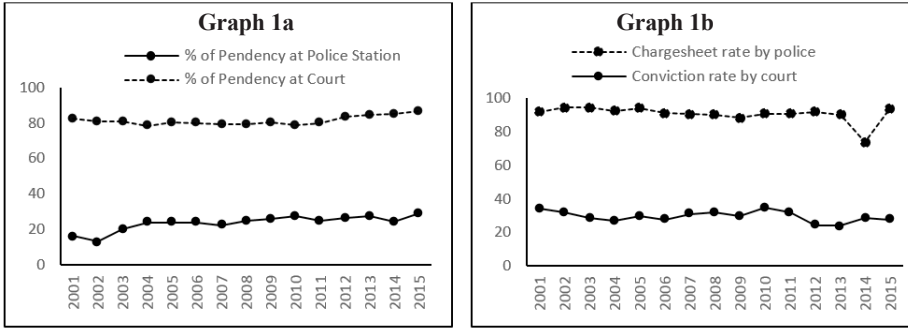
Source: Based on data, Crimes in India, National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), Government of India.

There are several explanations for the increased vulnerability of SCs to caste based violence? This section reflects on some major frameworks to provide insights into the dominant ideas on such caste phenomenon. The National Commission for SCs and STs (1986) states that in the 1980s, the increasing violence against SCs and STs was mainly attributed to unresolved disputes over allotment of land, tension over non-payment or underpayment of minimum wages, indebtedness; and backlash against increasing consciousness among SCs/STs of their rights and privileges under the constitution and other laws (Subramanian, 2009). Moreover, the SCs/STs are handicapped by poverty, illiteracy, economic dependence, and ignorance of the law; they remain highly vulnerable to violence at the hands of dominant caste in the context of land disputes. In 1990, the Commission's report based on case studies however, points to the gaps in implementation of social legislations. Consistently, the report of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2004) has attributed caste violence to the acts of omission and commission by law enforcement agencies. As pointed, the police machinery resorts to various machinations which dilute the seriousness of the offences, and often inflicts the violence itself. In recent times, a large number of empirical studies have identified the gaps in implementation of law (Krishnan, 2009; Pal, 2019a, 2019b; Report Card, 2010; Thorat, 2018). All these observations in fact have helped the government to strengthen the PoA Act through additional provisions.

Sociological literature asserts that 'power' and 'authority' in an unequally organised social structure are the key factors for caste violence. As the caste system functions along a top-down flow, dominant views are forced upon the lower strata of the social (caste) hierarchy to maintain the existing social order. Non-compliance with them invites 'acts of violence'. In contemporary society, the group identity processes is held responsible for caste violence (Pal, 2015, 2019c). The legitimate protection of rights by subordinate caste groups is often perceived by dominant castes as an attempt to undermine their social positions in existing social structure. The 'status lines' of dominant caste groups is sometimes perceived under constant threat. Any sort of protest or assertion by subordinate caste against unfair treatment often degenerates into violence. In order to strengthen the group identity and integral status relations in the social order; dominant caste members often use various forms of violent acts to

keep the subordinate caste group away from equal social relations. As a case in point, the animosity of dominant caste can be understood from the voices of the victims and accused in a case of caste violence (Pal, Sukumar and Lal, 2010). As some victims in a case of caste violence said: 'There is growing antipathy among dominant castes against SCs due to the intolerance of their socio-economic mobility. For ages, they have dominated us, but when some of us are prospering socially and economically, this upsets them.' The dominant caste accused in same case put it like this: 'Here all SCs are prospering. They raise voices against social order, and disrespect us. We cannot bear the humiliation. To teach a lesson, we target the key member in SC community, to keep others in the community quiet.' According to the human rights activists, among other factors, resentment, retaliation, and revenge-taking are found to be prominent causes of caste violence (Pal, 2012; Pal and Lal, 2010). Thus, caste system, as a stratifying factor, often provides structural social preconditions for caste violence. While mobility opportunities provided through various policy initiatives have helped subordinate castes to construct a sense of positive identity, at the same time, it has created a rejuvenated animosity among dominant castes, who always look for new avenues to uphold their social position; the acts of violence being the common ones. However, they often rationalise their actions in the name of cultural norms.

Caste Violence and Consequences: Emerging Issues

Psycho-social Consequences

The incidents of caste violence have numerous adverse consequences on the lives of both the victims as well as other members of their communities. These consequences are very often exacerbated by the indifference of the administration. Analysis of several case studies (Pal, 2012, 2015; Pal, et al., 2010) reveals that the sufferings of the victims often continue to persist in anticipation of further 'atrocity-producing situations' mainly due to the hostile social attitude of the dominant caste perpetrators. As some victims of a group violence (arson) expressed, 'There has been an emergence of a new violent society following the incident.' Similarly, in another case of a group violence incident they said, 'The fear of further violence and lack of confidence in the administrative and judiciary machineries forced several SC families to migrate to other localities, to avoid the cycle of violence.' The issuance of constant threats and strained relationships in the community induce social insecurity and helplessness (Pal 2015, 2019c). The shaky social and economic conditions of the victims often force the victims to remain 'silent sufferers' rather than confront powerful perpetrators and indifferent administration.

There are also negative social consequences in terms of deterioration of inter-community relationship, social ostracism, and enforcement of social boycotts on the victims' families and other community members. An analysis of the perspectives of human rights activists on caste violence (Pal and Lal, 2011) reveals that the most disturbing experience after the formal registration of cases is the feeling of social insecurity among victims' families and community members resulting from deterioration in inter-community relationships. In case of individual level violence, the relationships of dominant caste families with SC communities also often get strained. As a result, a social distance is inflicted upon the victim's family by own community members. Lower caste families which depend economically on dominant

caste groups, or, do not want to leave out people of higher social position with some sort of enticement, tend to isolate themselves from the victim's family. As members of one victim's family observe, 'Although there are no other conflicting situations after the incident, the 'we' feeling in our own community has weakened. Many community members feel that because of such incidents, their relationship with dominant castes has been affected and they face other problems in daily lives. This has strained the relationship between our family and community members; we feel alienated and live under constant pressure as they insist up on us to compromise the case.' (Pal, et al., 2010) This divide within the lower caste communities in fact serves the interests of dominant caste perpetrators.

In case of group violence, several mechanisms are used by the dominant caste perpetrators to impose and enforce social boycotts on victims' families, having wider consequences on their social life. An elderly victim observes, 'The government can provide compensation/relief as per provisions of the law, but what will we do when another community constantly threatens our livelihood and opposes our rights to live?' (Pal, et al., 2010). Social boycott sometimes leads to 'forced migration,' and 'symbolic migration' wherein victims' families or community members intend to migrate to rebuild lives elsewhere and live with dignity instead of living under constant threat and humiliation. The critical issue is that the laws have overlooked the challenges that victims of caste violence normally face and their increased vulnerability to social oppression in the aftermath of such incidents (Pal, 2015). This often creates conditions that lead victims and other community members into the cycle of caste oppression and poor well-being.

Caste, Social 'Coalition' and Impunity

A wide range of evidence indicates the presence of loopholes left by the police officials with 'willful negligence' of duties, very often leading to the high rate of acquittal.The term 'willful negligence' of officials at all levels- starting from the registration of complaint, and covering aspects of dereliction of duty is defined by listing specific transgressions of law under the PoA Amendment Act 2015. Evidence indicates how the officials resort to various machinations to discourage or exert undue pressure to restrain SC victims from registering the cases, delay in the filing FIRs or registering them in irrelevant sections to shield the accused from arrest and prosecution (Pal, 2012, 2019a; Report Card, 2010).

The question is 'what are the factors that operate at the local level to affect the response of state machinery and dilute the applicability of the law?' The Sixth Report of the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (2014-15) while examining the situation of caste violence against SCs and STs attributes the high acquittal to the biases and 'willful negligence' by officials involved in the investigations; and loopholes left by the investigating officials with a purpose of helping the accused of their social belonging. They often see the law on caste violence as an obstacle to social harmony, and also often succumb to pressures from their own caste peers in society. It is the identity constructions based on 'caste' as well as 'class' that continue to create the culture to make subordinate caste groups vulnerable. The 'interplay of caste and class identities' at societal as well as administrative levels remains one of the critical dimensions in delivering justice to the victims of violence (Pal, 2018b).

As caste relations are rooted in the social structure, caste traditions and the advent of modernity together produce a new 'coalition' between dominant caste perpetrators and the classes (powerful members from their caste groups in community and also from administration). The social status of the accused and its association with larger 'social class' plays a significant role in course of access to justice. Overwhelming caste loyalties and sentiments influence the decisions of the personnel in administration and judiciary. Moreover, the administration being represented majorly by the dominant caste members very often show apathy towards the complaints. In this regard, Ambedkar (1989) is of the view that: 'When law enforcement agency- the police and the judiciary, does not seem to be free from caste prejudice- since they are very much part of the same caste ridden society- expecting law to ensure justice to victims of caste crimes is rather an impractical solution to this perennial social problem.' That is why, he emphasises that the presence of elaborate legal provisions may not always guarantee rights to social justice, it necessarily depends upon the nature and character of the civil services who administer the principle…'If the civil services, by reason of its class bias, is in favour of the established social order in which the principle of equality had no place, the new order in the form of equal justice can never come into being' (ibid). He, therefore, affirms that 'caste violence has much stronger social anchorage wherein the class bias is likely to cause the denial of justice.' Consistent with this, a trial court observes, 'It is unfortunate that higher police officials themselves play into the hands of the accused rather than examine the case in an unbiased manner and strictly enforce the provisions of law' (Pal and Lal, 2010). Similarly, some victims of caste based violence share their experience saying, 'Beginning from the registration of case to the process of investigation, this case witnessed lack of eagerness to book the guilty before law. Police got influenced by the accused's family. In an attempt to divert the case, false cases were filed against the family members of victims, as a tool to mentally torture the complainant.' (Pal, et al., 2010).

Thus, various unlawful tactics are used by the accused in alliance with state functionaries as members of 'ingroup' (Pal, 2015, 2019c). These often make SC victims face insurmountable obstacles from village-level functionaries to other State functionaries. So, it is not simply a matter of caste background but social class defined by the caste hierarchy that often shapes the coalition between administration and accused from dominant caste. The wider networking based on strong caste based social capital makes it easier to mobilise influential people from own caste groups in the community as well as administration to their advantage, and influence the system. As a group of victim-survivors in a case of arson and killing shared: 'Regardless of the testimony of involvement of dominant caste members in the crimes; police did not arrest even a single person, never pressurised their families to make an appeal to surrender, and never attempted to visit the locality of the accused (Pal and Lal, 2010). Appeals of subordinate caste victims were put aside as false complaints. Moreover, the leaders of the local governance system infringed their legal jurisdiction to act as a traditional village court to force the victims to compromise and withdraw the case (ibid). Thus, when the police resorts to various machinations to shield the accused as part of 'in group' membership; it often inflicts the violence itself.

'Collective' and 'Composite' Violence

With the emergence of new coalitions, there has always been an increased number of organised and collective violence (Pal, 2012, 2014). The dominant caste perpetrators purposefully inflict collective violence to defeat opponents in course of investigation and court trials with the ultimate motive to keep subordinate caste groups under suppression, exhibit dominance, and strengthen the caste norms. An analysis of a large number of cases of caste violence reveals that more than two-third cases are collective and organised in nature wherein more than one accused are involved in committing violence against a single individual (ibid). This in a way indicates community level animosity of dominant caste against subordinate caste. The collective involvement of dominant caste members in perpetuating violence against the subordinate caste is much higher in case of heinous crimes like physical assault, murder, destruction of property, and even sexual assault (as evident from increased number of gang rape cases against SC women). This in fact remains the greatest challenge to the justice system in a civil society. In this context, the thought of Ambedkar is found quite relevant. As he puts it, 'Law is for individuals. It can punish them when they violate laws. But when the whole community is involved in violation, law bounds to fail.' (Thorat, 2018).

Associated with the collective violence, another unique feature of caste based violence is its 'composite' nature (Pal, 2012, 2014). There has been an increasing trend of violence involving several offences in one registered case. As observed, caste abuse and physical assault are the most common, and these are committed in combination with other heinous crimes like murder and arson. Murder is generally preceded by physical assault and caste abuse. Other combined forms of violence are rape and murder, abduction and murder, and outraging modesty of women and rape. These indicate the multi-dimensional nature of caste based violence. The 'collective' and 'composite' natures of violence have been sources of major concerns as they often complicate the process of justice delivery.

Intersectional Violence and Multifarious Consequences

It is quite evident from the official data that there has been a rising trend in violence against women from the subordinate caste community. The number of registered cases of rape, assault on the modesty of women and sexual harassment have seen a significant increase. The empirical evidence also confirms susceptibility of the women to all forms of violence (AIDMAM-NCDHR, 2018; Aloysius, et al., 2011; Pal, 2018c; PRIA, 2013). They are also more vulnerable to 'collective' and 'composite' forms of violence (Pal, 2012, 2018c). The common explanation is that vulnerability of SC women to violence is caused by the intersection of caste, class, and gender, i.e., their position at the bottom of the gender, caste and class hierarchy. But, psychologically, intersectional violence has an underlying motive. As observed, strategically, dominant caste often perpetrate targeted violence against either SC leadership, or influential community members, or assertive youth, or a particular family, even under spurious circumstances or under false cases (Pal, 2012; Pal and Lal, 2010). One sinister outcome of such motive is perpetrating violence against women and girls from subordinate caste groups. It is often aimed to manipulate fear to 'make' the subordinate caste 'learn' to live in silence rather than asserting their rights and challenging the dominance of higher caste, and in turn, maintaining social power relations in society (Pal, 2015; 2018c). As Aloysius, et al. (2011) observe that petty issues pertaining to the observance of caste norms or caste-based gender norms or the assertion of rights often trigger violence

against SC women; and this is systematically utilised to deny the entire SC community opportunities to raise their voices.

The consequences of such intersectional violence are found more pervasive and multifarious. Because incidence is often attached to the notion of moral character, dishonour, integrity and dignity of women victims (Aloysius, et al., 2011; Pal, 2018c). It is more likely to induce a sense of fear and subjugation in entire community as a matter of community honour and dignity. The feelings of 'helplessness' and low self-esteem associated with the feeling of shame, and social stigma are more frequent psychological consequences (Aloysius, et al., 2011). The victims at times face family ostracism through constant blaming and rejection, and also negative perceptions from members of own community; rendering them vulnerable to more exploitation.

The social consequences of intersectional violence are also highly conditioned around the incidence. These are primarily seen in terms of the disintegration of interpersonal relations within family and community, and freedom of movement of the victims and their families. Family members including children, especially girl children, are often tagged along with victims, it is often extended to other relatives and close associates making them all feel disgraced. Consequently, social mobility and social relationships get restricted, effecting more on future life of the children. Beyond the victims' families, it also generates a sense of insecurity in the community when it comes to providing protection to women and girls. These social consequences in fact get entrenched due to lack of adequate social protection from the law enforcement agencies, besides the weak protective structure within SC community. It is argued that the multiple consequences of intersectional violence also become the 'hidden cause of inflicting different forms of violence against women and girls, as 'soft targets' (Pal, 2015, 2016, 2018c).

The motives of the dominant caste perpetrators often get reinforced by the implicit protection of other actors in positions of power and authority at social levels, as a matter of 'caste-class-coalition'. As members of one victim's family narrate the statement of a powerful dominant caste landlord after physical assault of an SC woman and destroying her family home in a land dispute: 'If we do something to you, nothing will happen to us. We have got our people at every place. Who are with you? Nobody…'(Pal, et al., 2010). Similarly, in another case, the family members of a gang-rape victim describe the arrogance of one of the perpetrators: 'The police station is an extension of our home… Do you think you can harm us by going to the police?' The Hague Report (2006) clearly states that gender violence is often accompanied by a systemic pattern of impunity for the perpetrators. The intersectional violence thus, is highly structural and systemic in nature, and likely to expose the subordinate caste women to a greater risk of cyclic violence.

'Repelling' Effects: 'Silence on Violence'

There is a plethora of evidence to indicate a regression on 'access to justice' in the context of caste-based violence. A steady decline in conviction rate over the years suggests that the criminal justice system is futile for many victims. Several studies point to the loopholes left by police officials during implementation of laws as important factors for low conviction on procedural grounds. This clearly indicates the misuse of 'Rules' prescribed for the implementation of laws. But, the high acquittal or low conviction is very often allegedly linked to the 'misuse' of the law by the victims by filing 'false' cases. In recent time, India has witnessed lots of controversy over the

changes issued in the provisions of the PoA Act by the Apex Court in 2018 that would protect public servants and private individuals from arbitrary and immediate arrests under the Act, under the precedence of misuse of law by the victims. This was strongly condemned on the ground that it would further affect the access of 'victims of caste violence' to legal recourse and justice. It was later resolved with the passing of the Amendment Bill by the Parliament of India and restoring the stringent provision of the Act. However, the scars of frequent allegations of misuse of laws because of high acquittal, always put victims under a 'scanner of mistrust'.

Another issue that often puts the victims of caste violence under the intense pressure is the filing of false counter cases by the dominant caste accused often in collusion with the police administration. There has been an increase in filing of false counter cases in recent years. It's a coercive strategy that is used by the accused when the victim insists on getting the cases registered under the PoA Act despite the pressure for non-registration or compromise. As a result of the counter cases, 'victims of violence' are arrested and subjected to criminal litigation. The cases against the accused under the PoA Act, and its accompanying counter cases are tried in different courts. This makes it difficult to prove that the counter case is false, and contributes to creating conditions for high acquittal. But the fact is that, such tactics of the accused deter victims from pursuing cases, as many troubles are encountered during court trials of two different cases simultaneously.

Let us locate the extremely low 'access to justice' on caste-based violence in the wider context of the painful experiences and sufferings that the SC victims have to go through after the incidence and its larger consequences. These are- (i) The lackadaisical attitude and slow responses of local administration in registering cases of caste violence and acting on it; (ii) Threatening situations created by the powerful perpetrators in collusion with the administration, that too, often with counter cases; (iii) The most perilous experience of disgraceful situation specially in case of intersectional violence; (iv) The perpetrators acting with near impunity despite the protective and punitive laws to deal with caste violence; (v) The continued harassment, intimidation, torture, encountered by the victims in the course of registration, investigation, and court proceedings; (vi) The delay in court judgment exasperating the agony of incidence and escalating socio-economic cost; (vii) Often victims falling prey to 'unnatural justice' through 'negotiation and compromise' out of imposed compulsions; (viii) The ultimate outcome of case in the form of high acquittals after going through all sorts of agony and suffering–social, psychological, and economic in nature; (ix) Deprivation of compensation and rehabilitation benefits as per the provisions of law because of acquittals; (x) Perceptual shifting of the blame upon the victims for high acquittal, as a case of misuse of law, putting them under a 'scanner of mistrust'; and so on. All these often compel many victims to accept the exploitative system of dominance as natural. The acts of omissions and negligence by law enforcement agencies shake their faith in the rule of law and confidence in the justice system. All these cumulatively produce 'repelling effects' on many victims, which is often manifested in their' self-defeating behaviour' following the incidence of violence, with the anticipation of encountering situations as experienced by others in past. Not being in a position to take the risk of more troubles, many victims shy away from registering cases and striving for justice through the justice system. In this context, the role of human rights defenders and other actors in civil society remain critical in providing the support system to victims and encouraging them to assert their rights and seek justice.

Conclusions

In the Indian context, the term 'caste' is linked to a host of ideas. However, there are some dominant descriptions that come to forefront more frequently. These are 'caste code', 'caste tradition', 'caste hierarchy', 'caste relations', 'caste biases', 'caste practices', 'caste discrimination', 'caste oppressions', and so on. In recent times, the idea of 'caste consciousness' has pervaded every social group, each group asserting its rights. In this context, understanding manifestation of caste in the terms of 'caste confrontation' and 'caste consequences' remains critical. As the unequally organized caste structure continues to dominate the social interaction process among caste groups, it gives rise to human rights violations against groups that are at the bottom of caste hierarchy. Any resistance to it creates confronting situations. The expression of caste is seen in various forms of 'caste violence'. But the matter of concern is that such violence have larger consequences on the life of individual victims, their communities, and the society as a whole. While caste violence in India has drawn serious attention of the State and civil society organizations more than any other form of violence, its larger consequences still remain a neglected issue both from the points of view of legal and social measures. With the acknowledgement of the need to understand the consequences of caste-based violence in a holistic perspective, this paper is an attempt to build insights into the potential factors that cause caste violence with a specific focus on its larger consequences on victims in particular and civic society in general. It is evident that the consequences of caste violence are manifested in social, economic, psychological, and moral terms.

Social science literature on caste from human rights perspective indicates multifarious ill-effects of caste. The matter of concern is that the society has seen a continued increase in caste violence despite specific legislations to curb violation of human rights of the subordinated groups. The implications of such violence on the life of a large section of people in contemporary society, and conspicuously denial of justice to a large number of victims, remain critical issues. The paper argues that the persistence of caste violence, its consequences on various aspects of social life, and denial of justice to the victims are important pointers to the failure of legal provisions to capture the complexities of socio-cultural contexts, and of the state machinery to implement the laws in letter and spirit. With complex linkages between caste and social conditions in mainstream society, many 'unwritten laws' exist against subordinate caste groups. An alliance between callous law enforcement machinery and insensitive perpetrators makes living a life of dignity a challenging task for them. Unless the enforcement agencies change many 'unwritten caste laws' with 'written state laws,' the legal measures may not guarantee rights to social justice. This calls for a serious attention of the State and other social actors in a civil society.

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As a Dalit Woman:
My Life in a Caste-Ghetto of Kerala

Maya Pramod[1]

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Abstract

It is extremely significant to enquire how the lower caste Dalit people have read about the socio-economic and cultural aspects of Dalit colony life that have changed their life and society. I argue that these colonies serve as an index of their inferior social status. It serves more of their ghettoisation than for their empowerment. It further distances them from society and helps to appropriate their labour. This is the continuation of the age-old practice of caste discrimination and deprivation that kept them away from the mainstream while appropriating their labour for the general development of society. This paper focuses on the rereading of social norms which evolved through the author's probing of the social history of 'caste colony' as part of her research, especially on Dalit women.

Keywords

Introduction

It's the 125th year since Ayyankali[1] in 1891 drove his bullock cart was a historical ride against caste discrimination and for the freedom to walk in public spheres. It is the 125th year of this Bullock cart strikes and Kerala has completed 63 years as a democratic self freeing it from the clutches of feudalism in the year of 2019. In this ambience, one has to look into what caste ghettos in Kerala have given to the life of the Dalits. For the supreme power agencies or the government, dalit democratic development means caste colonies. I make here an ethnographic study of how the history of colony life and the Land Reformation Act have eluded accumulation of capital formation for dalits in terms of the socio-economic and cultural aspects. This study is about the Dalit colonies in Kerala and is linked to my experience in these colonies.

Being a research scholar at the Research Department of Christ College, Iringalakkuda, affiliated to the Calicut University, and my probing of the social history of 'caste colony' as part of my research, are not accidental at all. The

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[1]Ph.D Research Scholar, Christ College, University of Calicut, Irinjalakuda, Thrissur, India
E-mail: mayapramodp@gmail.com

research materialized out of my personal experiences of being born into and growing up in government wastelands/colonies/rented houses. I don't know if the mainstream society of Kerala cares to know that the 2011 census among the 9.1% population in Kerala Dalits and out of this 7.9% are living in the Dalit ghettos which are 2 or 3 cents of allotted land and houses . I was born in one such caste-colony. For the next twenty-one years, that colony was my home.

Till I was ten, I had lived in Perunna Naalppathi Colony in Changanasseri, and after that in a 'shack' in the fields in Until. As a child, I had started schooling with an '*asaattiyamma,*' a local teacher. To reach our classes, we would walk under the railway over-bridge and through the railway lines that lay close to the Naalppathi Colony. Beyond the railway over-bridge was the railway colony. In those times, Ezhavas, Muslims, and dalits lived together in those colonies. We played between the small houses, in the confined places that we had access to in the stifling three to four cents of land where the colonies stood. 'The sound of trains was a constant reminder of our witness to the horror of mangled bodies of the many who had chosen to end their lives under one of the passing trains, rather than continue to endure the suffering.' Every child raised in the railway colony would have those brutal childhood memories of witnessing severed bodies and chopped heads being patched and rolled up in 'pandan-leaf'[2] mats. The insecurity that we endured in the schools was a shared feeling too. I studied till the eighth standard with no electricity in my house. We went to school mainly for the lunch that was provided. A teacher of seventh standard, who I clearly recall, led me by my hand, from the front bench where I sat, to one of the back-benches, saying, it had 'your folk.' I was short in stature and had scoliosis, a physical condition of curving spine. It was difficult for me to see the blackboard from the back-bench. It was then that I introspectively confronted the facts about who 'my folk' really were. Were they also dark like me? It is under this assumption that I had chosen a girl who was a friend and had invited her to my place, which could hardly be referred as a house. But then she said: 'Maya if I come to your house in the colony where the scheduled caste people live, my father would rebuke me.' This led me to further introspection. How much would a girl of the seventh standard ponder over such questions? In my school days, the places for our recreation were the backyards of the houses where my mother used to work. From the clothes that they would give us, we would separate those that had not faded and would treasure them up in boxes. This could perhaps be why the children in these colonies, especially in the father-less homes, fancied colours.

Only when the results of the tenth standard board exams were awaited, I had to look up for my scores expectantly. I noticed that my house members and my region, far from being anxious about my result, were not even aware of the story. I had secretly gone to look up my result and had to double-check to confirm that it was my own score. With I have won the world by securing 290 marks in 600 for the SSLC examination , I had conquered the world. People in my house did not even believe it and my mother's eyes belied her feeling of doubt. The newspapers of the next day bore testimony. I had created history in school by having scored 47 marks out of 50 in social science. The words of my history teacher fueled my urge to learn and steer my life ahead. 'I had known and believed that you would get these marks and now you have repaid my faith with your success. You should never be a domestic servant like your mother. You should fly high to the world of education.' Someone had faith in me. And that was the fuel for all my onward journeys.

Later it is through the stipend system in the degree classes that I understood what it meant to be a resident of the 'caste colonies,' or, to belong to a scheduled caste community. This knowledge dawned through the popular assumptions and hearsay that the SC/STs were those who came to college to simply get the stipend money that the government gave and that they squandered and ate away the money. I was among the fifteen students of the class who lived through these contemptuous mockeries and who tried hard to hide it from the class. When the clerk would count Rs 6000 and hand it over, his jeering words would echo from the skies: 'Quite a sweep of easy money for the year, isn't it?' To avoid such jeering and to avoid the gaze of friends, half of us would stay away from classes for at least two weeks after the distribution of stipend. At the end of the degree course, there would be concerns and enquiries about being able to write the exams in Malayalam, because none of the Dalit students would have had English as the medium of instruction in school.

The present investigation tries to understand the (socio-economic) historical background of Dalits in Kerala. This is an exploratory study based on primary and secondary sources. It is intended to analyse the trends of the transformation of a Kudi[3] (hut dwellings) to the colony. The findings of the present study are based on the results of field investigation in the selected area of Kerala. The data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The major tools used by the investigator are the questionnaire and interview schedule. The questionnaire includes the social, economic, educational, political and cultural aspects of dalits in the colonies. Sometimes the use of the questionnaire as a tool would have been very difficult because of the illiteracy of people in the colonies. So, the investigator has used both structured and non-structured interview method for gathering data.

The secondary sources of data were reports and publications of various agencies, archival reports, information regarding the municipality on the socio-economic infrastructure that has been obtained from taluks,[4] village office. The secondary data about the study area was an important constraint. Based on fieldwork tools the study will critically analyze the pattern of such transformation in land and Dalit Colony.

Discussion

These challenges were not isolated events. In effect, while these fifteen to twenty dalit students -who might have reached colleges after immense struggle -were trying to achieve something through education, every bit of their effort was also being simultaneously quashed, either deliberately or through pressure. This was how the cultural and social capital recourse that we were trying to procure was being denied to us. Upper caste colonisation of the dalit communities always happened in India by the colonisation of the brains through language. What needs to be noted is not just that the chances of writing exams in Malayalam and reaching universities for higher studies were fewer for the dalit students but that very few from the 'caste colonies' could reach the universities in the existing scheme of things. I am noting this for a particular reason. During my undergraduation period, I lived in Palathra Chira Colony near my mother's place in Changanasseri. Just five of us from the colony had reached college for under graduation and post-graduation, and four of us went on to technical institutes like ITI. This was the plight of education in colonies.

To know what that life is in the caste colonies one needs to understand the intricate power relations between land and caste that have existed in Kerala. Only then can the

ghettoization of an entire populace brought about and institutionalized through the so-called 'welfare schemes' be understood.[5] If you look at the problem of land rights in Kerala you will clearly see how and when the dalits/*adivasis* and other backward classes got ousted from the exchanges of the symbolic capital. In every society, there are four types of capital: first is the social capital that is the services rendered by our fellow beings; second, economic capital that is income and assets one possesses; third; embedded capital that is emotions and memories that are aroused in terms of one's traditions and family pride; and fourth cultural capital, which is further of three types. These include i) academic benefits from school life, ii) the ancestral history of one's existence, and iii) the artistic and cultural life of individuals (Bourdieu, 1986). Among all these the cultural, social, and economic capitals can be acquired by anyone through their efforts, but embedded capital or symbolic capital is attributed by the society because it brings in the past power agency that one has in terms of caste. Thus many people are ostracised in terms of the symbolic and social capital in the society. Dalit, Adivasi (tribal), plantation workers, and fishermen communities are by and large the only communities that are still trapped into doing the work that has been forced on them through the dictates of caste. According to Government of Kerala statistics, there are 26,198 Dalit colonies, 8000 Adivasi colonies, 10000 'layas', and around 500 fishermen colonies (Parishid, 2006)all of which had only worsened the lives and sufferings of these local people and politically marginalized them into ghettoes. In 1969 the Land Reformation Act was introduced. According to this, the Government of Kerala under the EMS Ministry promised that the ‹Farmland belongs to the Farmer›. Nevertheless, many of the provisions of the Land Reformation Act had already been leaked before the execution of the Act. Therefore, a large number of high-caste communities who owned land had formed trustees and these lands were transferred under it. Then, the slogan that farmland belongs to farmers was changed to farmers should work in the farmland as tenants in the remaining forest land. Under the Act, these tenants who were working as farmers on the land became the landlord of the Agrarian Land Farmer. The Dalits, the original agricultural labourers, were taken to the settlement colonies of the floor two or three cents.Accordingly, every family in these colonies had rights to a paltry 2.34 to three cents of land. Majority of these dalit and adivasi colonies are constructed on the premise of caste. The entire inhabitants of such resettlement colonies were dalits and the tribal groups who are ostracised and made landless by the power agency. The actual statistics about the social divisions of per capita land ownership in Kerala speaks volumes about how caste discrimination persists through other means.

Whenever the question of Dalit / Adivasi land issues comes up for discussion, we need to consider the fact that land is not just an economic asset. Any way one looks into it, it talks about politics too. It was only after the enactment of the Land Reformation Act that land became a powerful resource with respect to political power. When the Land Reforms Act was implemented on January 1, 1970, there was a ceiling on how much land a family could own as per the provisions of the Act. (Varghese, 1970) The basic provision was to consider the rest of the land as surplus land, take it up and distribute it to the landless. However, the plantation (cash crop) sector was cleverly ring-fenced so it, avoided the ambit of the law because majority of the land belonged in the plantation sector. So, the land acquisition that happened in Kerala was not one in which the Brahmins and the Nairs became landless. And more importantly, what was the reality of the land that was taken over?

Actually, the land acquired included a few paddy fields in the west and some in the interiors of erstwhile *Idanadu* and some barren land belonging to the Nilambur King[6]. It is actually this sort of land acquisition to which one minister in power had recently claimed that had caused 'great tragedy for the Brahmins even after 50 years.' This is an example of the underlying culture that still plays a role in perpetuating within mainstream politics the retention of caste-based power relations. If one were to go through the statutory land ownership data in Kerala published by the Kerala Shastra Sahithya Parishath (KSSP).[7] While the per capita land holding of the upper caste is 105 cents, the Dalit community has only 2.7 cents of land. The community-based statistics of the land ownership in Kerala (in cents) goes like - upper caste 105, backward caste 63, Christians 126, Muslims 77, and Dalits 2.7. This survey report was published by the Kerala Shastra Sahithya Parishath. While the upper caste and the Christians share 231 cents of land, a Dalit's land is just 2.7 cents. And yet if there are poor people among the upper caste, then they definitely need a helping hand through the poultry - sheep development model of the much-acclaimed 'Janakeeyaasoothranam'. [8]

When the question of where is our land is raised by the landowners as also the landless, it is not just about the land, but also a question about the existing power structure and the resource structure of Kerala and the status quo maintained by it. Land is not just a form of the asset; instead it is symbolic of power and agency and the politics that one holds. Thus caste exists as a power relation because land provides authority in all socio-cultural and economic spheres. The colonies that were created after the Land Reforms Act: Lakshamveedu colonies, coastal habitats, plantation looms, and the wastelands -- all of these convey just one thing loud and clear 'how the mainstream society stigmatises a dalit, an adivasi, and a backward caste in the public sphere of Kerala's life and culture. The existence of half a million colonies is direct evidence of that.

The Pulayar [9], the Parayar, , the Kuravar, the Ulladans[10] and the adivasis who were living in their *kudis* (huts) under the feudal system got displaced and 'dumped' into three cents and four-cent colonies through false promises following the implementation of the Land Reforms Act. The tragic story of the *Thiyars* who cultivated agricultural lease lands has been tenderly portrayed by Cherukadu[11] in his novel *Manninte Maaril.* However, the fact is that the condition of the Pulaya, who cultivated in the same land was equivalent of an animal ploughing in the soil. The slogan of 'Nammalu koyyum vayalellam nammudethakum painkiliye' (the land that we reap will be ours, oh dear), which meant that the land will be for those who till the soil, went in vain as the beneficiaries of the land were Nambuthiris, Nairs, Ezhavas, and Christians who were cultivating on leased land. The Parayan and the Pulayan who tilled the soil were not allotted any land. Not just that, a condition was made as per Section seventy five of the Land Reforms Act, which said that any dalit or adivasi who owned land of three cents and above shall not be provided with any further land. While the other sections could possess 50 cents to one acre, dalits and adivasis owning mere three cents of land were denied land. Therein lied the contradiction: The dalits and adivasi families were denied of surplus land by this encumbrance act because they were made landowners of three cents and ostracised from the mainstream even as the power agencies could have more areas of land by converting it for cash crops. Thus, the life of the dalits and adivasis was made miserable through the Act.

Total per capita land ownership of upper caste in Kerala is 231 cents which includes 105 cents of upper caste Hindus and 126 cents of Christians, while the per capita land

owned by Dalit community is 2.7 cents. You can imagine how many multiples of 2.7 can 231 be! Almost 100 times more! This is the prevailing condition even six decades after the Land- Reform Act (Peruvattur, 1995). For the communities that had been historically marginalised from dominant politics and resource availability, to stake their claim on them is a question of fundamental social justice. The Kerala model development and Land Reform Act has tied down and ghettoized the dalits /adivasis/ and other backward classes to the caste colonies of three to four cents of 'land' in government wastelands. Land and land ownership not only remain the key socio-economic and cultural capital but more significantly, land also still remains a caste capital in the pockets of a few 'upper-caste' communities. In the entire political game toward the expulsion of the dalit/adivasi communities from the realm of capital, the last step is that of what is referred to as the 'developmental programmes' rendered in the form of cattle, poultry, auto-rickshaw, and other meagre means of sustenance that are offered to compensate for the huge proportions of existing inequalities. The real victims of these 'developmental aids' are the local dwellers of the land namely the dalit/adivasi communities. And today, from the 'development' of owning three cents of land we are being uprooted into the insecurity and abject landlessness of flats and apartments.

According to K. Panoor[12] just in the district of Wayanadu, there are about 7000 adivasi families that have been evacuated and denied land which they were promised under the law. It is a matter of great concern. It will have to be understood that the objective of Section seventy five was to prevent any resource mobilisation for the livelihood of the most backward sections, in a society where caste-based social conditions pretty much exist. The dalit and adivasi families had been given three cents of land for possession and denied any surplus land. Whereas the landlords were given fifteen acres of land and they could possess more land by converting it into plantation fields. Power and wealth, and ownership rights of public capital, which ideally should have been distributed to everyone equally and equitably, languished at the hands of those who lived under the privileged caste values.

It is against this injustice and the oppression that the dalits and adivasis have been subjected to for centuries, that the Reservation policy acts as a guarantee that the marginalised people will be part of a fair distribution of common capital and wealth. It is only a constitutional mechanism to draw power into the hands of people who have been oppressed for centuries and denied representation in the power structure (Mohan, 1996). A decision has been made to introduce reservation for the economically weaker section of the upper caste in the appointments made by the Devaswom Board. This is besides giving more than the existing ten percent reservations for the SC / STs. The Constitution clearly states that the sole purpose of reservation is to address the socially and educationally backward sections of the society. That is, if social backwardness is evident in a state, such socio-political, economic and cultural aspects are analysed quite accurately and the Supreme Court has taken a position in favour of reservation by considering all this into account. Dr B.R. Ambedkar has said that 'reservation is not a benefit, but it's a debt payback. A reservation only aims at equality in social justice. It does not eliminate merit but further convinces us that merit is merely a social construct. It is the social discrimination and the inequalities which the oppressed sections like the Dalits, Adivasis and the Bahujans face even today, that the reservation attempts to solve.'

Six decades after the state of Kerala came into being, the number of dalit colonies in Kerala is 26,198 as per the official data of the Government of Kerala in 2010 (Administration, 2010). Unofficial records say that there are more than half a million such colonies in Kerala. Around 3,44,193 Dalit families live in these colonies. Since they own only three to four cents of land, it is true that a generation lives there who only have their kitchens as a place to bury their dead bodies. Among these, there are about 1,41,078 people who are homeless, and. there are also the scattered lives in the wastelands, coastal regions, and in the plantation sector (Table 1).

Table 1. Basic Informations in SC Colonies

Colonies	More Than 50 Families In Colonies	Population Men/Woman	Own Land In SC	Won Land In Colonies	Land Givn By The Government	Right To Tenants	Surplus Land	Revenue -Land	Land Given By The Municipalities
26198	416	11.49 Lacks / 12.03 Lacks	59375	36085	1722	1878Acre	888Acre	413Acre	631 Acre

Land Given By The SC/ST Department	LandlessFamily	Own Land / HomlessFamily	Unoccupied Houses In Colonies	single room Houses In Colonies	Double Room Houses	Unfinished Houses	Education In HighSchool	Education In Higher Secondary	Degree/ Masters/ Diploma/ITI/ ITC
333Acre	25408	15984	45959	123871	132378	67911	1.12	0.5	0.30 / 0.19

Education In B.TEC	M B B S	B A M S	B H M S	Mentally/ Physically Disabled Persons In Colonies	Mentally Disabled Persons	Average Poverty Line (APL)	Below PovertyLine (BPL)	Families Without Ration Card	Families With Ration Cards
1968	212	34	12	17441	7704	1.68 Lacks	3.10Lacks	0.80	4.78 Lacks

This continuing situation has to be a matter of not just debates, but a political issue that the dalit /adivasi society should raise with respect to land. One thing to be noted here is that the ruling class has now come up with another scheme in the form of developing flats for these people when their real problem is that of land availability. The dalit /adivasi society must be cautious against this. Because this only puts the politics of apartment culture on the shoulder of a person who is trying to get out of his scattered life in his three cent colonies and destroys the actual opportunity of land as their means. Dalits and adivasis have to raise their voice louder than ever before as their necessity is agricultural land and rights on resources, and not any apartment or so.

The land struggles that have happened so far in Kerala have a great deal of relevance in the light of the above-mentioned land issues. The dalit /adivasi movements through their various campaigns have played a significant role in bringing up the issues of the right to access land and resources into the mainstream discourse. Kallara Sukumaran, a Dalit activist and writer put forward certain policies such as making atrocities against tribes as a national offence, giving land to the landless and to build a hostel for girls of scheduled tribes, and to make a law that provides land ownership of Dalits and Adhivasis , and to provide mid-day meals in schools. The dalit movements under his leadership following the 1950s and the tribal movements since the 1970s have been emphasizing that land is a political issue that needs to be settled, and also that problems created by the unequal land distribution are not merely political for the community. Muthanga, Aralam, Meppadi, Chengara and Arippa, all have been a result of those convictions. Muthanga in Wayanad, Aralam and Meppadi in Kannur, and Chengara in Pathanamthitta and Arippa in Kollam are places of land struggles led by the tribal and *adivasi* groups which turned futile because lands given to them were barren and useless. These agitators said to the society that they wanted land not just for their livelihood but also as an economic driver for the forward journey of their generation, as a right to resources, agriculture, and further transactions.

When the socio-political and economic issues of the dalits and the adivasis are discussed, it is important to understand that their decisive basis lies in capital formation and its distribution. Because simply put, capital formation is defined as resource mobilisation. It is by acquiring these resources and through their transactions that the upper caste secure their higher caste privileges in mainstream society; be it social, economic, cultural, or symbolic capital. However, a dalit and an adivasi have to constantly struggle against the society to acquire this capital and come forward (Bourdieu, 1986). Their caste becomes a negative capital for them. That is if he/she is an SC / ST, the stereotyping by mainstream communities is that the successes of the historically marginalised communities are due to the policy of 'reservation.' Renowned sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who developed the idea of social capital 1986), says that capital includes both economic and non- economic forms. Inequality and injustice are inevitable in a society having an unbalanced distribution of capital. It is exactly those unjustified acts that are taking place in Kerala and across India against the marginalised people. And it is such a Brahminical ideology, that encourages a minister in authority to state that 'Brahmins are the victims of the Land Reforms Act.' An interesting observation would be to ascertain how many Brahmins live in the three to four cents of land, or live Below Poverty Line, or how many Namboothiri's (an upper caste) are queued up in front of the Panchayats (village governing bodies) to avail benefits of welfare schemes such as poultry or cattle rearing or toilet construction schemes, under the Kerala Model Development that is boasted about by successive state governments.

At the time when the Land Act was enacted, by diluting its provisions, purposefully or not, what the Brahmin or Nair communities did was that they converted and registered their lands as Trusts and Plantations, to prevent its acquisition as surplus land. The ten per cent reservation given to upper caste in terms of their economically backward condition shows the wide disparity constituted by law and power agencies as it showcases the contradictions of caste groups. Since the Brahminical Polity, which raises the pitch for economic-based reservation every now and then, is not a fictional one, the purpose of the Forward Development Corporation, brought by the previous state government, must also be looked as to safeguard the interests of economic reservations. According to the constitution of India reservation is given to those communities of people who are socially and educationally backward in a state. It is the right of the state to allot reservations for the caste groups for their upliftment. This is the most important aspect of the constitution. Secondly, in order to include any caste groups for reservation, there should be adequate material evidence for their under-representation in the government sector or any other sectors. This suggests that the unrepresented should be given reservation. But this has been violated by giving reservation to the economically backward upper caste groups .The sole purpose of that move by the Left Front government was nothing but to strengthen the social position of a particular community. Here, the symbolic capital that Pierre Bordieu talks about in capital formation has a lot in play. Symbolic capital is something that is inseparable from one's historical and social background. It is something that later enables someone to acquire or grant contacts, positions, and influence by boasting about the contributions of their ancestors and the ranks acquired by it, through the narrative of mainstream history. Fortunately, the chairperson was able to ensure his cabinet rank and the position, but the chairperson of the Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribes Corporation is just a chairperson with no additional rank or power as he does not have any such thing to boast about.

What Kerala needs now is a new political discourse of the dalit, adivasi, backward class minorities for tackling these issues of right to land and resources. There is a struggle that is emerging in Kerala with the aligning of several castes and sub-caste organisations, for a new Kerala that tosses the existing Kerala Model and land reforms that were enacted upside down. The Dalit community of Kerala has a responsibility to provide all kinds of support and ideology to such activities. Such a movement that is gaining momentum will certainly be able to create a history which the coming generations could learn and talk about.

Caste Ghettoes and the Dalits

The history of 'colonies' as collective dwelling places begins with the Sachivothamapuram Colony in 1936 (Kochu, 2013). But Dalits were not the only inhabitants in this first settlement colony of Kerala. Ezhavas, Vilakkithala Nairs, and Viswakarmmajars also lived in this colony. It is after the formation of United Kerala, in 1959 when M K Krishnan was the Minister of Scheduled Caste Affairs, that the first colony for Dalits in Mukkada came up. After the Land Reform Act, from 1970 to 2010, most of the colonies that came up in Kerala were modelled as Scheduled Caste settlements. These caste ghettoes had houses of 600 square feet each. They were also geographically located in places like hilltops, wastelands, uncultivable fields, shores of canals, and other such uninhabitable places that were visibly away from the coveted

social structures of possession. I can cite a personal example here. In 2006, my family which was dwelling in a rented house for more than 28 years was granted some money for occupying land and constructing a house through the municipality as per the VAMBAY (Valmiki Ambedkar AwasYojna).[13] An amount of Rs 30,000 was given for land procurement. In our enquiries to find some land for that amount, the municipality officers led us to a 2.15 cent patch in a barren field in a place called Manjadikkara. As soon as we reached there, we found out that the land was marked with incomplete structures of at least twelve families who had started building foundations and walls for houses. In this way, any place where at least ten-odd Dalit families came to live became a Dalit dwelling and was inscribed as a 'Dalit Colony.' By the time we bought the land, filled it with soil, and laid the foundation, the money and our savings were exhausted. We also received the notice for confiscation in three years. That house thatched with sheets lies uninhabitable even in 2018.

It is from the 1970s that the concept called 'LakshamVeed' (houses constructed in a budget of Rs one hundred thousand) came up in Kerala. That was the initiative of M. N. Govindan Nair was the minister of the of fourth Kerala legislative assembly under the leadership of C. Achuthamenon.He was started the Laksham Veedu House Settlement Project 1977 for the resettlement of the landless Dalits and Adhivasis. This 'welfare' programme visibly marginalised the dalits from their natural rights to land and alienated them from other forms of development that happened in the society. Even drinking water is a burning issue in the dalit colonies. In Kerala, Palakkad district has the highest number of dalit colonies and Govindapuram is an example of water issue. It is a colony that has both Dalits and OBC (other backward caste) category. The OBCs restricted the dalits from taking water from the public pipe. The collector of the region resolved the issue by giving a huge tank with pipes on both sides under the condition that the Dalits should not cross the region of OBC. Another pressing problem is the lack of space during domestic occasions like death or marriage in the family. 'When deaths happen, the dwellers of these colonies have to demolish their kitchens or find narrow spaces between the houses in order to bury the dead. Every inhabitant of the colonies faces immense social and cultural injustice on a daily basis. If earlier the marriages were restricted within colonies, now marriages are happening across the colonies. The marriage restrictions are in fact reminiscent of the histories of Dalit struggles during feudalism. In olden times of feudal slavery, the lower caste families were violently dissipated in all the four directions by their feudal masters, as and when they deemed. The name of their respective 'illams'[14] was whispered into the ears of the siblings at the time of separation so that they could recognise each other later in the event of their coming together. Thus, the Pulaya caste had 44 illams while Paraya caste had 12 illams. Due to the belief that those belonging to the same illams were siblings and since sibling marriage was taboo, such restrictions on marriages came into place.

The political parties in Kerala have a vital role in the conditioning of the colonies and their status in society. The candidate of these colonies is the way through which the welfare schemes and programmes are implemented. Almost all the colonies have a strong political leaning toward CPM. With its cadre party system, the CPM has secured a strong vote base in the 50,000 odd colonies of Kerala. While the older generation consistently voted for the left, the new generation is closer to the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). This as far as I understand is also linked to the problems and questions of religion and faith. BJP has many associations linked to festivities like the Sabarimala season, the Ayyappan Vilakk donation camps, Karthika, Sreekrishna Jayanthi, and

several other temple-centred events. Women are also increasingly participating in these events now. Majority of these temple events are organised by the leaders of BJP or Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Even after 70 years of independence, to find a Dalit, the mainstream society, irrespective of its political creed, has to come to these colonies. In these ghettoes, they find innocent lives that are born into the torture of debts; who live, give birth, die, and get buried as debtors. They don't own any land, or business, or institutions. The leaders across the political spectrum from the Right to the Left, rich enough to buy high priests of religions, also go to the colonies of people who have nothing to lay their claim on. They then tell these people how E.M. Sankaran Namboothirippad or A.K. Gopalan or /Gandhi or Savarkar have been instrumental in changing their histories. The 1990s in the Dalit colonies witnessed a political thought that was upheld by Ayyankali and Ambedkar. The efforts of various political parties in bringing dalit leaders could only rejuvenate their early history and leaders. While listening to such assertions, in order to speak about powerful democratic interventions, Dalit politics can call back from memory many of those unsung heroes like Mahatma Ayyankali who famously rode a *Villuvandi* (bullock cart) and rewrote history, Poykayil Appachan who gave a new life to the slave communities by singing, 'Can't see a word on my ancestry, while I see scores of histories of others,' Kandankulathil Kumaran, Pampadi John Joseph, and most importantly, the hero from whom the Dalit unity now blossoms and spreads across; the father of modern India; Dr B R Ambedkar. These re-callings would certainly question the political idols that the mainstream society has hoisted on its pedestals and would create a stronger alternative space for politics in the future.

The Celebrated Flat-Residence Project Model

In the flats or apartments that are under construction in the proposed model under the housing project called 'LIFE' (Livelihood Inclusion and Financial Empowerment) by the Kerala state government, the area of a flat is 350 sq.ft. It includes a small hall, a room, a toilet and a cramped kitchen. The flats cannot be owned by the families for 15 years. Even after 15 years, they cannot sell or rent out these flats. That means that the residents may stay in these spaces as rented property but there is no commodity value for them. Almost all of the flats that have been built under this project have now become 'caste colonies.' There are people who have been living in these flats for more than ten years without any title-deeds or ownership rights over their space. In these cramped units, there is not even enough space for one family to sleep comfortably. During marriages, these families are forced to take other places on rent to live for two or three months. As soon as they are married the younger generation is compelled to move out due to the stifling limitation of space. The Pinarayi government has decided to build flats for the 4,72,000 odd people who are landless and homeless. As the first stage of this long-term plan, 2018-19 it has been decided to build homes for one hundred thousand families and budget allocations for this purpose have been set aside.

The flats each covering 350 sq. ft (discussions are on to make this 400 sq.ft) as the project claims, prioritise the landless and homeless people. This also means that the adivasis and dalits may not even get the funds for the three cents of land that they were allotted early. Even after their decades-long - struggle for the ownership of the

land that they rightfully deserved, if the dalit/adivasi communities are being denied land and are being pushed into the new generation 'caste colonies' in the form of flats and apartments, it is a clear indication that the landless are being deprived of each one of their rights for land as well as any form of socio-cultural capital. The ownership of the apartment vests with the governing agency and it is only after 12 years that the ownership would be transacted. But this system is bringing in a congested lifestyle, and the claim of having land is denied to them. Rajamanikyam the Ernakulam District Collector,who was appointed by the government of Kerala .His reports said that about 58%(around 5 lakh hectares of land) of revenue land was held illegally by short plantation companies like Harison- Tata. This report was submitted in 2014. The Rajamanikyam Report had suggested that plantation lands that are being 'unlawfully' held by companies like Tata-Harrison through false title-deeds, should be taken over by the government through parliamentary intervention and redistributed among the landless. However, that report has been completely rejected by the government.

Conclusions

The Dalit/Adivasi communities were always denied their lawful rights over land and resources due to the structural 'monstrosity' called caste and its power relations. It is due to this exclusion from land and resources that they always stood outside the socio-political spaces of privilege. And it is to counter this injustice that they have been seeking redistribution of land and resources time and again.. When each of their claims have been turned down and they are getting ruthlessly ghettoized further and further into 'caste colonies,' it becomes evident that even at the core of the government housing projects for building flats and residential conglomerates, nothing but the centuries-old caste consciousness still prevails in Kerala. . In fact, the un-inhabitable places were first isolated and then normalised as colonies and handed over to Dalits. The entire process is a picture-book replica of how every other form of discursive capital in institutionalized social structures segregated people in terms of caste and alienated them.

The status quo of the social structure influences human life and also determines the norms for the distribution of land and resources. The caste-ridden structure of Kerala society and the capitalist system that constitutes it are equally contributing to the callous ghettoization of dalit communities. Needless to say, property, in India, always had a communal and casteist form. It is from such political expulsions of mainstream idols that the dalit communities have always understood that what they need is not mere ownership of a piece of land, but the absolute socio-political and cultural acceptance that has long been denied them. It is from such revelations that all historical protests over land rights had sprung up in the past. I strongly believe that the production and distribution of capital has a significant role to play in the socio-economic and political plight of every dalit/adivasi of Kerala including me. When the caste ghettoes are getting 'upgraded' to the new housing projects and flats, the inevitable question of whether we need this, after all, should rise from us. For no colonies to come up further, we should demand the complete re-distribution of land. The caste colonies are the living form of the institutionalised caste system that thrives under every other elected government and marginalises communities in the garb of development.

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Endnotes

1. Mahatma Ayyankali was a social reformer who opened a democratic renaissance periods of Kerala through the movements for the downtrodden. Ayyankali fought for freedom to walk in public spheres, against slavery, for educational rights and conducted peasant strikes for the wages of their work which were never heard in our society at that time. From 1911 to a very long period he worked for the upliftment of untouchables, as a member of Sreemoolam Prajasabha.
2. A plant whose leaves are used as mats in Kerala
3. In the 19th century Dalit settlements were called, kudi' and they never had ownership over these Kudi. It belonged to the landlord to whom they were slaves
4. Administrative units at the rural level.
5. Welfare schemes are development projects being implemented in the state for the upliftment of dalits and tribal communities
6. When the Land Reformation Act was implemented in Kerala, the land acquired by the EMS government at that time was the land of Nilambur Dynasty, a small princely state of Travancore and the fallow lands of Kuttanad. Most of Kerala's land lies in the plantation sector and the plantation lands were excluded under the provisions of the Land Reformation Act
7. 19th century, the Subaltern movements had enabled the people of Kerala to initiate the movements. Thus, the movements in Kerela were not enabled by the Left Organisation however KSS is an organisation. They had conducted a census on land distribution in Kerala.
8. Kerala State Government introduced a complement legislation providing for Panchayats, Blocks ,Municipalities in the state.It is the people planning campaign held in 1996 in 9th five year plan.
9. Pulaiyar is the name of a caste that was a peasant slave in Kerala. Pulaiyan is the name used to refer to a person from that caste and they formed majority slaves in Kerala.

10. Pulayar, Parayar, Kuravar, Ulladans are dalits or lower castes that were involved in tilling the soil
11. Cherukad,a well known Malayalam language play writer,Novelist,Poet and political activist in Kerala
12. He is a journalist and the author of *Keralathile Africa*
13. A housing scheme of the central Government of India
14.   *Illam* is a Malayalee lineage system used for classification and identification of castes in *Kerala*.

Mirrors of the Soul

Performative Egalitarianisms and Genealogies of the Human in Colonial-era Travancore, 1854-1927

Vivek V. Narayan[1]

(Bluestone Rising Scholar 2019 Award)

for Pradeepan Pampirikunnu,
with gratitude and in loving memory of an all-too-brief conversation

Abstract

Scenes of *avarna* castes (slave and intermediate castes) pondering their reflections recur throughout the history of anti-caste struggle in the princely state of Travancore in colonial-era south India. These scenes represent what I will call *performative egalitarianisms*, which are repetitive enactments in the performance of everyday lives that embody claims to equality against the dehumanizing caste codes of colonial Travancore. In this paper, I will describe three scenes that represent distinct yet intertwined routes for the flows of egalitarian discourses in colonial Kerala. The concept of equality emerged in Travancore, first, via Enlightenment values of the British Protestant missionaries, or *soulful Enlightenment*; second, as non-dualistic equality of Narayana Guru, or *repurposed Advaita*; and third, through the discourses and practices of a Tamil religious cult called Ayya Vazhi, *or radical Siddha Saiva*. In viewing the flows of egalitarian discourse through the lens of performance, I demonstrate the method of *intellectual histories in the repertoire* which allows us to investigate how particular conceptual frameworks and discursive modes are transmitted, transformed, and embodied by people for whom these ideas are, quite literally, a matter of life and death. The intentional, productive, and empowering relationship between universals such as equality or humanity and the particular claims of anti-caste struggle in Kerala leads to a politics of practice that I describe as *repurposing universals*. The centrality of the notion of the human in the anti-caste politics of colonial-era Travancore leads me to refer to these flows of egalitarian discourses and the political struggles that they empowered as *genealogies of the human*. In sum, I analyze the genealogies of the human in colonial-era Travancore by focussing on three scenes exemplifying performative egalitarianisms: soulful Enlightenment, repurposed Advaita, and radical Siddha Saiva.

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Gandhinagar, India
E-mail: v.v.narayan@gmail.com

I

This paper reconstructs three scenes from colonial-era Travancore pertaining to the everyday lives of *avarna* (slave and intermediate) castes. In each of these scenes, the *avarna* castes gaze at their reflections, asserting interiority, reclaiming self-respect, repossessing dignity, and ultimately, recuperating their humanity. These scenes represent and document what I will call *performative egalitarianisms*, which are repetitive enactments rooted in the performance of everyday lives that embody claims to equality against the quotidian dehumanizations of caste codes. In colonial-era Travancore, as elsewhere in what is today Kerala, the caste codes of *jati maryada* (caste-based forms of respect, or caste-based rules and norms) governed all aspects of social behaviour.[1] By prescribing and enforcing minute details of everyday behaviour, *jati maryada* made castes legible, and ultimately, governable. Set against the historical backdrop of *jati maryada*, the three scenes I analyze in this paper help trace the flows of egalitarian discourses in colonial Travancore. They reveal not only the existence of egalitarian discourses but show that the *avarna* castes understood these discourses as such and took them up in ways that enacted, and inspired further enactments of, equality. In other words, not only do these scenes represent three routes for egalitarian discourse in colonial Travancore, but they also document the performances of everyday life through which we can discern the uptake of these concepts in the everyday lives of the *avarna* castes.

The first scene is drawn from archival records of an interview conducted by the missionary John Hawksworth (1855a, b) with slaves Cherrady and Thewatthan in 1854. This scene exemplifies the first route of egalitarian discourses emerging from Enlightenment universal values via British Protestant missionaries, which I call 'soulful Enlightenment.' The second scene depicts Sree Narayana Guru's installation of a mirror as an idol in a temple in Kalavankodam in 1927. This scene embodies Guru's reinterpretation of Advaita Vedanta as non-dualistic equality, or 'repurposed Advaita.' The final scene portrays one of the ritual practices of the Ayya Vazhi (the Way of the Father), in which followers salute themselves in the mirror before entering a temple of the Ayya Vaikundar cult[2] (1838 – present). This scene represents theological discourses and documents practices of worship of the Ayya Vazhi that drew upon older notions of universality and corporeality from the Tamil yogic practice of Saiva Siddhanta, which I call 'radical Siddha Saiva.'

I reconstruct these scenes from sources such as newspapers, missionary ethnographies, and oral historical accounts to identify distinct yet intertwined routes for the emergence of egalitarian discourses in Travancore. For each of these routes, I read archival records that show discursive articulation of egalitarian concepts alongside interpretations that reveal the uptake of these concepts in the repertoires of embodiment. What's important for me is, in short, not only showing that egalitarian ideas existed in the three discourses I trace, but equally, that they were understood and taken up as such in popular consciousness in ways that inspired further enactments of equality. My dramaturgical logic for assembling these three scenes depends, in large part, on their potential to reveal the enactments of equality in everyday life.

This hybrid method straddles the archive and the repertoire to seek clues that reveal the lived experience of the *avarna* castes in order to attempt an intellectual history in the repertoire of embodiment. The pathbreaking work of Sanal Mohan (2015) has guided my efforts, where, following his example, I have tried to seek

clues for the lived experience and intellectual formations of the *avarna* castes from colonial missionary ethnographies. Intellectual histories in the repertoire provide a way to understand the ideas of unlettered people; to ask how particular conceptual frameworks and discursive modes are transmitted, transformed, and embodied by people for whom these ideas are, quite literally, a matter of life and death.

Along with identifying three routes for the flows of egalitarian discourses in colonial Travancore, this paper demonstrates a method of doing intellectual history in the repertoires of embodiment. I show here that analysing discourse, representation, and performance, by accessing sources in the archive and the repertoire, leads us towards the genealogies of the human in colonial Kerala.

Central to these flows of egalitarian discourses is the notion of the soul. As a substance at once immanent and transcendent, the soul holds particular importance to these performative egalitarianisms by providing a conceptual language in which to assert the *a priori* humanity of the *avarna* castes, as well as to exercise their capacity for action and transformation. The discourse of the soul derives primarily from the Christian evangelical discourse of British Protestant missionaries. For the missionaries, the soul designated, first, that which was *a priori* human, or human interiority; second, that which enabled human beings to act intentionally, or human agency; and, third, that part of the human which could be transformed through the discourse of sin and repentance, redemption and salvation, or transformative self-possession. This notion of the soul suffused the newly constituted public sphere in colonial Travancore and made its way to non-Christian forms of worship such as the movements led by Narayana Guru and Ayya Vaikundar. The soul, with its multiple valences of interiority, agency, and mutability, conceptualised and articulated egalitarian discourses in the language of a universal humanity. By designating that which characterised a human being, the notion of the soul organised missionary abolitionist discourse in colonial Travancore around the figure of the human. The soul provides, therefore, a vivid marker through which to trace the suffusion of egalitarian discourses and the concomitant notion of the human in colonial Travancore.

These genealogies of the human are, like all genealogies, not a search for point of origin, but a delineation of paths of descent and emergence.[3] My argument here is not that egalitarian discourse had its origins in the Enlightenment values of British Protestant missionaries, but rather, that the Enlightenment provided one route of descent and emergence for the concept of equality that was repurposed with enthusiasm by the *avarna* castes. These routes are necessarily plural, appearing rarely, if ever, in singular form. Moreover, these genealogies of the human are also, invariably, compromised egalitarianisms: if soulful Enlightenment was qualified by its colonial context, both repurposed Advaita and radical *siddha saiva* exhibited an emerging sentiment of Hindu communal consolidation in response to conversions as well as a barely-concealed misogyny in discourse and practice. The heterogeneity of these genealogies and the acceptance of their compromised natures allow us to trace egalitarian discourse in the real and messy world that steers clear of the temptation to overemphasise such contradictions, or—worst of all—discredit the radical impulses of such historical movements by deconstructing their contradictions. Such a focus on the compromised egalitarianisms in everyday life can help us understand the contingent and always-imperfect processes of political struggle through intellectual histories in the repertoire.

Through intellectual histories in the repertoire, I attempt to trace here the ways in which universal values and particular contexts interact to empower anti-caste political struggle. I am interested here not only in the emancipatory possibilities of the imagination afforded by universals—the concepts of equality, and shared common humanity—but of the particular struggles that emerged through the situated and contingent practices of repurposing universals. The historical appropriation of a universal value such as equality or humanity to suit particular political contexts such as the struggle against caste in colonial Travancore is a double process that bends the universal claim to fit the particular issue, and expands the particular to universalistic proportions. Such practices of contingent and historical appropriation that articulate particular claims in universalistic language for strategic purposes I call 'repurposing universals.'

I will now turn to each of these three scenes to describe the genealogies of the human in colonial-era Travancore which reveal how the *avarna* castes repurposed universals to advance their particular political claims.

II

SCENE ONE

Soulful Enlightenment: Suffering Slaves and the Sufferance of Christ

The first scene depicts the slaves of Travancore seeing parallels between the body and suffering of Christ with their own person and experience. A rare published interview from 1854 (Hawksworth, 1855 a, 1855 b) exemplifies the numerous conversations between slaves and missionaries that affirmed the ordinary lives[4] of slaves and helped recuperate their humanity.

> Q. Can we see God? A. Yes. Q. How? With the heart. Q. Can we see Him with the eye? A. We cannot now. Q. Did not the disciples see Christ? A. Yes. Q. How was that? (He being God.) A. He came among us (men) and walked with us. Q. Had Christ hands and feet, &c., as we have? A. Yes. Q. What nature had He? A. He took ours.

This interview sets up a mirroring between the suffering of slaves and that of Christ, and, significantly the verisimilitude between their human natures. In other words, this interview not only witnesses slave suffering but also asserts their *a priori* humanity.

Missionary recognition of slave humanity makes their records replete with detailed reports of the lived experience of slaves—the imponderabilia of encasted everyday life[5]—which bear traces of deeply felt conversations.[6] Amongst these conversations, the interview by the colonial missionary John Hawksworth (1815–63) of the Church Mission Society (CMS) (and, in all probability, the native missionary George Matthan[7]) with the slaves Cherrady and Thewatthan, is rare for including a transcript of the conversation which affords us a glimpse of these everyday interactions. This interview—henceforth, Hawksworth, Cherrady, and Thewatthan—was originally published as 'Questions by a Missionary, and answers by Travancore slaves, taught in a school of the Church Missionary Society' in the *Madras Church Missionary Record*

of February 1854, (Mateer, 1883)[8] and subsequently reprinted as 'The Travancore Slaves' in the *Missionary Register* of November 1854 (Hawksworth, 1855 a), and as 'The Slaves of Travancore,' in *The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record* of January 1855 (Hawksworth, 1855 b). Hawksworth, Cherrady, and Thewatthan was intended to demonstrate, one version declared, that the 'gospel of Christ is restorative in its action.' The interview was specifically framed as evidence of how Christian faith can effect a transformation in 'the most degraded, the most apparently hopeless and deeply sunk and [raise] them up to that dignity of character' (Hawksworth, 1855 b) That is, the gospel would restore the degraded slaves—note the discourse of degradation with the implication of *a priori* humanity—to their full human selves characterised by self-respect and dignity.

'I should say,' prefaces Hawksworth in one version, that 'the manner in which these answers were given was most satisfactory, and interested me very much.' Hawksworth's notes on 'the manner' in which they spoke suggests the self-possession of Cherrady and Thewatthan who calmly recounted the travails of their everyday lives. As representatives of a section of humanity degraded by caste, Cherrady and Thewatthan demonstrated their humanity as speaking and suffering subjects. The act of prayer recuperated the inner worlds of the slave castes, and restored to them their humanity in full.

In the brief extract from Hawksworth, Cherrady, and Thewatthan above, we see the rhetorical operation of recognizing the first meaning of soul, which was to emphasize the inalienable interiority of the human. Cherrady and Thewatthan answer that we can see God with 'the heart.' That is, through the interiority that characterises the human soul, or that which makes us human. The following questions and answers underscore this relation between interiority and humanity. Christ, they say, 'came among us (men) and walked with us.' The humanity of slaves and the human form of Christ in Christian doctrine are equated here to argue again for the inclusion of slaves within the category of humanity. The elaboration of 'hands and feet, *etcetera*,' equates his 'nature' with that of the slaves to assert that Christ took the form of slaves. They assert later in the interview that we 'must pray with all our heart.' Once again, they were asserting in the language of the gospel, the inalienable interiority of their human souls.

Missionary discourse had it that the recuperation of their human souls was made possible through the gospel, which allowed them to come into their own as suffering subjects and articulate human agents. In fact, they demonstrated not only the worthiness and possibility of redeeming the souls of slaves but attested that such transformation was already well underway. They performed in other words, the collective suffering of the slave population in eloquent terms.

The notion of collective social suffering is significant to encasted subjectivities. Sanal Mohan (2015) argues that missionary abolitionist efforts drew upon 'Enlightenment ideas of equality and liberty and constructed slavery discursively' in order to critique it as 'a modern phenomenon.' Missionary efforts to engage slaves included, critically, collecting information on the lived experience of slave castes which, as Mohan points out, discursively 'constituted the suffering slave and helped evolve a language of resistance' irrespective of whether slaves converted to Protestantism or not (2015, 48-9). For Mohan, then, the recognition of slave suffering and its narration as a modern phenomenon paved the way to recuperate their humanity and articulate anti-caste politics.

Mohan is not alone in placing the experience and articulation of suffering at the centre of anti-caste politics. Suffering occupies the central conceptual and ethical category in BR Ambedkar's Navayana Buddhism, where he reinterprets the Buddhist doctrine to give it anti-caste political form. Here, *dukkha* becomes the equivalent of 'exploitation and poverty' caused by the 'exercise of power by one person or class over another.'[9] Indeed, *dukkha*, in this sense of social suffering is, Ananya Vajpeyi (2012) asserts, 'constitutive of the very identity of the Untouchables[.]' Social suffering is 'the modality in which they experience their being in the world—especially since society, from their perspective, is created by and for those with caste.' Ambedkar's *dukkha* is to be understood, cautions Vajpeyi, 'not as individual, karmic suffering, but as collective, social suffering.'

Social suffering, as theorised by Kleinman, Das, and Lock (1997), refers to the human experience of horrors and brutalities that the structures of social life enable and legitimize. This concept of social suffering 'brings into a single space an assemblage of human problems that have their origins and consequences in the devastating injuries that social force can inflict on human experience' (pp ix-x) Their understanding of social suffering explicitly refuses the dichotomies of the individual and the collective, and the local and the global; a fact of particular significance to encasted subjectivities.

Such an emphasis on suffering is always a double-edged phenomenon, argues Alexander Weheliye (2014) in the context of trans-Atlantic slavery: while discourses about the suffering slave recognised black humanity, they also 'subjugated black subjects in much more insidious and elaborate ways than de facto enslavement' (p 12). That is, if suffering recognised the human soul, this discourse also trapped suffering subjects into other modes of subjugation that denied their agency.

Yet, as Mohan (2015) points out, missionary recognition of the humanity of suffering slaves played a role in their transformation under colonial modernity. A careful parsing of these narratives of suffering also helps to identify the agency of the slave castes in ways that do not further subjugate them through historiography. This is what I'm attempting here: to unpack archival records that help us understand the social and political transformation in the *avarna* castes of Travancore through their encounter with egalitarian discourses. To narrate suffering was not to remain relegated to a suffering subjectivity, for social recognition led to political transformation.

For the slaves of colonial-era Travancore, the epistemology of sin and repentance provided an imaginative terrain in which to narrativize, and therefore begin to transform, suffering, and to conceptualize modern concepts of justice, equality, and autonomy. In missionary discourse, the figure of the 'Thief on the Cross' exemplifies the epistemology of sin and repentance, as well as the eventual reinstatement of justice. Hawksworth, Cherrady, and Thewatthan discuss the Thief on the Cross:

> Q. If a thief becomes afraid of God, and lessens his stealing, is it enough? A. No use—must obey God's commandments entirely. Q. If the thief, hearing this, gives up thieving, will he be saved? A. He must beg pardon. Q. Yet all cry for pardon at death? A. Should cry before. Q. But the thief on the cross cried then, and was saved: how was that? A. By faith. Q. Can we obey precisely? A. Only by God's grace. Q. Can we think holy desires without this? A. We cannot. Q. Who puts these holy desires into our minds? A. The Holy Spirit.

The first generic thief they discuss is a direct reference to the regular practice among the agrestic slaves of what we might call 'subsistence stealing.' Denied even adequate food upon which they could survive, slaves resorted to stealing grain, cattle, and other goods for subsistence. Their subsistence stealing was structurally necessitated by the far worse, socially-sanctioned structural stealing by *savarna* overlords. In other words, subsistence stealing was not a question of morality, but of survival (Mohan, 2015 p 96-7).

Although stealing contained a 'hidden transcript of everyday resistance practices' (Mohan, 2015; Scott, 1985), as a form of resistance, it remained below the radar, and could not accommodate any conception of transformation of the abjected situation of slaves. It is such hidden transcripts, represented by the generic thief, that missionary instruction encourages slaves to disavow in colonial Kerala.

The transformation they encourage is that of the biblical 'Thief on the Cross'—a repentant one who understands the doctrine of sin and wishes to mend his ways. The conversation makes it clear that such repentance ought not to be opportunistic by crying for pardon at the hour of death, but rather that it ought to be a performance of everyday life according to reformed principles. The doctrine of sin and practices of repentance held, for slave castes, a simultaneous acknowledgement of their interiority, agency, and capacity for transformation. This polyvalent recognition of the human souls of slaves is indicated through the shorthand of the Holy Ghost. In response to the question—'Who puts these holy desires into our minds?'—Cherrady and Thewatthan answer, 'The Holy Spirit.' That is, their interiority ('minds') are imbued with the agential desire for change ('holy desires') to realise their unnameable capacity for transformation ('the Holy Spirit'). The simultaneous acknowledgement of external influence, internal transformation, and self-possession acted as the context within which slaves conceptualised their agency—the key second meaning of 'soul' in missionary discourse. Facilitating the narration of transformative self-possession in everyday practices through biblical metaphors was one way in which missionary intervention acted as one route for egalitarian discourses in colonial Kerala.

This sense of transformative self-possession articulated in the language of sin and repentance stands in contrast to forms of worship that surrogated slave abjection. In another report from 1855, Hawksworth describes an idol of worship, which was in 'the image of a murdered slave' (Hawksworth, 1855a, 1856 p 92).

> A few weeks ago a slave brought an idol to the bungalow. He himself had worshipped it until he learned the religion of Christ. His story about the idol, which I have had confirmed from other quarters, is singular. The idol is the image of a murdered slave, and was made and set up by the murderer to appease the spirit of his victim. The shocking mutilation of the body, and other particulars, have been narrated, proving that several must have committed the crime. One of the suspected parties destroyed himself a short time ago. Perhaps nothing could be a clearer or more affecting proof of the moral degradation of the slaves, than the fact of their regarding as a deity what they believed to be the image of a murdered slave, and actually worshipping it.

We need not subscribe to the missionary's condemning attitude towards 'heathen' practices of worship, nor affirm his unshakeable faith in Christianity, to learn about the spiritual lives of slave castes before Christianity, and their transformation through

colonial modernity. Hawksworth reads the mutilated body represented in the idol as evidence of lynching, as opposed to random violence. He further notes that one of the perpetrators 'destroyed himself'—suicide, perhaps—suggesting that it was widely known who the perpetrators were, which would be entirely in keeping with the public and spectacular nature of lynching. Hawksworth ultimately notes that 'nothing could be a clearer or more affecting proof of the moral degradation of the slaves, than the fact of their regarding as a deity what they believed to be the image of a murdered slave, and actually worshipping it.' The performative violence of lynching, which constitutes the slave body as subject to terror and enfleshment, is surrogated here through the everyday act of worshipping of the idol.[10]. But for Hawksworth, such surrogation represents nothing more than moral degradation because he sees no evidence of transformative self-possession. Such worship remembers constitutive violence, but does not transcend it, or attempt to change the conditions for its existence. Moreover, the representation of 'shocking mutilation of the body' makes commonplace the encasted subjection of breaking slave bodies. Far from the transformative self-possession that informs the discourse of sin and repentance, such surrogation enacted, for Hawksworth, the naturalisation of encasted violence and, ultimately, perpetuated the cycle of encasted subjection (Hartman, 1997). In using the miraculous powers of the Gospel as shorthand for the work of individual and collective transformation and the everyday performance of self-possession it wrought, Hawksworth presents a valuable insight into both the self-evident biases of missionary discourse, and, far more importantly, the impact of missionary activity upon the everyday lives and imaginations of slave castes. The discourse of sin and repentance points to the third meaning of 'soul' in missionary discourse: that which can be transformed or redeemed in a human life.

Apart from such transformative self-possession, which missionary discourse presents, naturally, as evidence of the restorative power of the Gospel, and the understanding of the discourse of sin and repentance that articulated individual and collective transformation, what impressed Hawksworth was the lack of exaggeration and overstatement. His reassurances—which, presumably, addressed his British peers—attested to the veracity of these slave narratives. 'There was no attempt to represent things,' Hawksworth hastens to add, 'as worse than they actually are, but rather'—with the forgiveness that befits Christian charity—'to soften the case.' The act of forgiveness is the construction of a new self that elevates its spirit through recourse of spiritual values.[11]

When an unnamed slave declared, 'amid sobs and tears, the deep depravity of his own heart,' he was performing new selfhood rooted both in the eloquence of his suffering and the potential of his transformative agency (Hawksworth, 1855). Through these narratives, the slave castes not only began to make sense of their social suffering—their *dukkha*—but began to demonstrate the process of asserting transgressive agency by embodying individual and social transformation. The discourse of sin and redemption, while offering modalities to articulate individual and social transformation, also gave slave castes a language to assert their selfhood and agency. The emphasis upon forgiveness performed the renewal of slave selves, their spiritual ascension to a position of foregoing reactionary retribution and granting pardon.

In one version, Hawksworth ends the interview with a report of a redeemed soul. 'Last week, a slave woman—who, some months ago, was forsaken by her husband because she would attend the Sunday-school—died in peace. Her last words were, "I am entering heaven."' (1855 a, p 473). Hawksworth concludes, 'Such are some of the effects of the gospel among the slaves.'

The slave woman's fervent hope that she was entering heaven brings together the experiences of spiritual ascension and the redemption of slave humanity through religion. The slave woman's last words express the hope of what TM Yesudasan calls '*matharohanam*,' or religious ascension. In his important study of the relationship between Christianity and the anti-caste movement in Kerala—*Baliyadukalude Vamshavali*, or *A Genealogy of the Scapegoats*—Yesudasan refuses the term 'conversion' and offers instead his influential formulation of *matharohanam*, which I translate as 'religious ascension.' The term 'conversion,' points out Yesudasan, applies only to those who switch allegiance from one organised religion, say Hinduism, to another, such as Christianity, or Islam. In Yesudasan's view, given that slave castes in the nineteenth century were not considered to belong to Hinduism—or, indeed, any religion—their acceptance into the Protestant church can only be understood as an ascension into the realm of religion. Yesudasan's formulation of religious ascension reveals the origins of his conceptual framework in the Christian doctrine of ascension. But, this is not all *matharohanam* signifies: given the dehumanization and social death (Patterson, 2018) that marked the lives of humans-as-property, acceptance within the social and communal life of the church initiated their ascension into the realm of the human. For Yesudasan, then, the term *matharohanam* also denotes the ascension of the slave castes of nineteenth century Kerala from 'a completely unorganised and helpless situation' to one of relatively 'better circumstances.'[12] That is, it describes their admission into the social realm of the human from the sub-human or non-human.[13] If *matharohanam* is ascension into the realm of religion, it is also, equally, ascension into the realm of the human.

The testimonies of slave castes from the nineteenth century, when read through Yesudasan's theoretical contributions, suggest that there existed a growing common sense among the slave castes of *matharohanam*: theirs was not so much a switching of allegiances, but a simultaneous ascension into the spiritual realms of religion and humanity. It is in this sense that I have argued for Enlightenment universals via British Protestant missionaries to provide one genealogy of the human in colonial Travancore.

Cherrady and Thewatthan were enacting much else besides rote-learning of the Gospel teachings when they saw reflections of themselves and their experience in the body and suffering of Christ. This narrative mirror held for them a recognition not only of their suffering but of their inalienable human interiority and with it, the hope of transformation. This scene represents the flow of Enlightenment universal values via British Protestant missionaries and documents the performances of everyday life through which the slave castes repurposed those values to articulate their particular political claims.

SCENE TWO

Repurposed Advaita: Worshipping an Idol of the Self

In 1927, Narayana Guru (1855-1928) consecrated a temple at Kalavankodam, near Cherthala, with a mirror inscribed with 'Om'—signifying, quite simply, that the divine was to be found within the self. Every time Guru's followers worshipped the mirror at Kalavankodam, they performatively asserted that the fullness of a human being was worthy of adoration. Nearly a century after its consecration, this temple continues to be a popular destination for followers of Guru.

Fully appreciating the significance of the performative egalitarianism in the Kalavankodam mirror installation requires reading two of Guru's best-known works that led up to it: *Jati Nirnayam* [*A Critique of Caste*] of 1914, and the older, *Atmopadesha Satakam* [*One Hundred Verses of Self-instruction*; henceforth *AS*] of 1897. In *Jati Nirnayam*, Guru coined the phrase that has since become the de facto slogan for the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam[14] in particular, and the anti-caste movement in general: '*oru jati oru matham oru deivam manushyanu*' [one caste, one religion, one god for man].

Guru begins this short poem with a species-level argument: humanity marks a human being just as bovinity marks a cow. What does not make a human is 'Brahminhood and such.' Significantly, he uses the word '*jati*' to denote species. The second stanza is the famous slogan in which he repeats *jati*, using the insistent rhythmic drive of the bi-syllabic word interspersed with the staccato *oru* (one) to slide between his precise usage of *jati*-as-species, and the more commonly understood usage of *jati*-as-caste. The third stanza adds the critical argument that a species is that which can beget offspring. This is an argument Guru would return to in a later work, *Jati Lakshanam* [*A Syntax of Caste*] (c. 1921), giving it a greater emphasis on corporeality: 'Do not ever ask/ "Who you are (by caste)?"/ Because the body itself/ Tells you of that truth.'

In *Jati Nirnayam*, Guru continues the species-level argument in the thesis stanza: 'Of the human species/ Is a Brahmin born/ As is a Pariah too./ Where is the caste difference, then,/ Amongst the human species?' This is a familiar Advaitic trope: *maya* (illusion) occludes our perception, preventing us from separating the real rope from the imaginary serpent. The human species (*manushyatvam*) is the reality, articulated in the true category of *jati*-as-species, while caste differences are false appearances articulated as *jati*-as-caste.

The image of the human and animal unequally yoked together that haunts the history of caste in Kerala[15] certainly exerts its influence upon Guru's rhetoric, though this is not all that he articulates here. For Guru, the human-animal comparison allows him to elevate his arguments to universalistic proportions, and also allows him to return to the individual human self. The last two stanzas reveal this rhetorical maneuver in operation.

The penultimate stanza brings the weight of scriptural authority to bear on the issue. Guru points to the sage Parashara, the mythic author of the *Puranas*, as being 'Of a pariah woman/ was born the great sage.' Lines referring to Parashara's son, Ved Vyasa, the mythic author of the *Vedas* and the *Mahabharata*, and Vyasa's mother Satyavati, follow as if to illustrate the possibilities of greatness that lay within the realm of the human irrespective of caste. Guru says, '"even the sage who/ condensed the Vedic secrets/ into great aphorisms,/ was born of the daughter/ of a fisherman.'

These lines also self-reflexively refer to Guru himself, for he was born an Ezhava. If these great sages were born of pariah and fisher castes, and they are the authors of the *Puranas* and the *Vedas* respectively, then how can the caste distinctions be true to the scriptures?

Does Guru suggest then that all humans are the same? The final stanza ends on a note that provides an answer by asserting the primacy of the self.

> Species-wise, does one find,
> When considered,
> Any difference between man and man?
> Is it not that
> Difference exists apparently
> Only individual-wise?

Here, he raises two questions: the first rhetorically restates his central thesis, while the second, returns to the perceiving subject—the autonomous human self. The first being more or less self-explanatory, it is the second rhetorical question in the final verse of the poem that interests me. In it, Guru deploys three significant poetic devices. First, he appears to say, on the surface, that if humans are one species, as argued throughout the poem, then any differences whatsoever are at the level of the individual. Second, through this explicit thematic closure from the species-level argument in the first half of the poem to the individualistic argument in the final stanza, Guru effects a movement from the universal to the particular. At the beginning of the poem, he brings the weight of universals (species, humanity, *manushyatvam*) to bear on the particular (individual differences), while in the final stanza, he expands the particular (the individual self, the person) to universalistic proportions (the human). The concluding phrase in the last line '*vyakthibhagathillalle bhedamirunnidu*' (individual differences) establishes this rhetorical closure with the famous opening phrase of the first line '*manushyanam manushyatvam*' (Man's humanity). The conceptual unity between these two lines lies in the relationship between *vyakthi* (person, or individual) and *manushan* (the human): the autonomous self and the figure of the human. This return to the primacy of the self in the final stanza is a revealing example of the discursive and performative efforts to claim subjecthood and personhood that I am calling *genealogies of the human*.

Some two decades before *Jati Nirnayam* was published, and nearly thirty years before the Kalavankodam mirror installation, Guru had crystallized the central ideas of repurposed Advaita in his landmark work, the *AS*. This long philosophical poem of a hundred verses foregrounds its central themes in its first eleven verses: first, consciousness; second, ascendance of the individual self to universal human consciousness; third, images of spiritual depth; fourth, figures of transformation; fifth, transcendence of 'hell'; and finally, the articulation of particular historical claims in the language of repurposed Advaita. I will take up each of these themes in turn below to elaborate upon repurposed Advaita.

Consciousness is the underlying theme that unites *AS*, and indeed, all of Guru's works. Consciousness appears in a number of ways throughout *AS*. First, it appears as the transformative entity that is both within and without the human subject (1, 2). Here it denotes the transformation of the subject. Second, consciousness is the non-dualistic principle that unites the object known and the knowing subject (3). Here it compares to *karu*, a key concept of Narayana Guru's that I discuss below. Third, consciousness

appears in contrast to, on the one hand, sleep (5), and on the other, to mindless impulses (6). Consciousness here demands something more than wakefulness, and suggests intentional living with self-mastery. It is the 'one priceless lamp' that is 'never lit, nor ever blown out' (5). In verse 8, Guru expounds on this idea further: consciousness is the 'weapon of a radiant inner clarity/ That fills one's entire being' and it can shoot down the flighty senses.[16] Fourth, consciousness holds the promise of transcendence of 'hell': the man who 'subjects himself to *tapas* [penance]/ Never has to confront hell' (9). (The hell denotes here, as I will discuss later, the dehumanizations of caste-bound colonial Kerala.)

The second theme—the ascendance of the individual self to universal human consciousness—is encapsulated in the first verse of *AS*.

> Permeating the knowledge which brilliantly shines
> at once within and without the knower
> is the *karu*; to that, with the five senses withheld,
> prostrate again and again with devotion and chant.

Knowledge here is both immanent and transcendent: it permeates 'at once within and without' the knowing subject. The recuperation of the inner realm, the unfettering, so to speak, of the human spirit, is an abiding concern in Guru's work. For the perceiving subject here is not merely the knower (*ariyunnavan*) but 'one who transcends empirical knowledge,' or *arivilumeriyarinnitunnavan* (Yati and Guru, 2003) Such transcendence moves from an immanent empirical experience of the five senses to the universal consciousness or the indefinable *karu*. This concept, usually translated into English as the Core, lies at the heart of Guru's repurposed Advaita. The *karu* is the universal consciousness—'That alone,' in Guru's famous phrase (*AS* 4)—which unites the knower and knowledge of absolute reality. Such knowing is, the commentator Nitya Chaitanya Yati points out, 'not an interaction between the subject and the object, but a transformation of the subject' (Yati and Guru, 2003, p 1). Yati compares *karu* to the blacksmith's mould in which is poured molten metal: the mould of knowledge (*arivu*) is consciousness (Arivu) (Yati and Guru, 2003, p 3). The conceptual generalization of all these moulds called the *karu*, or the Core (Yati and Guru, 2003, p 2-4). The relationship between the absolute/ universal consciousness or knowledge (*arivu*) and the subjective/ particular knowledge (*arivu* or *thannarivu*) is the *karu*. In a later work, *Arivu* [*Knowledge/ Consciousness*] (c. 1887-97), Guru further demonstrates his non-dualistic conception of subjective knowledge and universal consciousness by using the same word for both: *arivu*. Thus, for Guru, the individual self is transformed through an encounter with the world, and subjective/ particular knowledge (*arivu* or *thannarivu*) melds into a universal consciousness (*arivu*).

The poem contains numerous images of depth—the third theme—which read as metaphorical representations of spirituality. These images of depth stand as metaphors for interiority and profundity.

Verse 3 exemplifies the images of depth in *AS*. External worldly phenomena such as the five elements of earth, fire, water, air, and ether, are, 'when contemplated/ […] like waves rising in rows,/ from the treasury of the watery deep, without any/ separate reality whatsoever" (3). This verse uses the oft-repeated Advaitic marine imagery of the waves and the depths to suggest the inextricable relationship between the subjective self and the universal consciousness.

This image metaphorically represents interiority, endurance, and profundity. The rows of waves are, obviously, a surface phenomena. Guru begins with the surface phenomena to show its relationship to the watery deep. The waves are, moreover, not merely surface phenomena, but are inextricably linked to the watery depths. 'The waves', which stands analogous to the subjective self, is inseparable from the depths of universal consciousness. Thus, the image first suggests interiority, which is inseparable for Guru from universal consciousness.

Moreover, the waves do not merely disappear but, in being possessed of inward depth, they endure. The theme of the subject enduring through consciousness of actions over time is the theme of verse 6, where he asks whether an individual caught in 'fleeting urges' can 'become enlightened as to the truth/ that is always immutable'? (6) Guru's rhetorical question here both establishes, and puts pressure on, the relationship of ephemeral actions and enduring consciousness of the self, or self-possession. The waves and the depths of verse 3 set up this non-dualistic relationship of ephemeral action (fleeting urges, or crashing waves) and enduring consciousness (immutable truth, or the treasure of the watery deep).

The relationship of interiority and endurance makes the ocean a 'treasury of the watery deep' (*jalanidhi*) for it suggests, according to Guru, the profundity of the human spirit. The human spirit is, Guru repeatedly points out in his writings, inseparable from the cosmic absolute reality, like the waves and depths. What makes the individual consciousness of the self a profound entity is its relationship with the absolute. The waves arise from the treasury of the watery depths.

Figures of transformation that appear frequently in *AS* make up its fourth major theme. Such transformation is a recurring motif in *AS*; indeed, it is, as the title indicates, the stated objective of the poem. The image of the waves I discussed above indicate one kind of transformation characterised by relentless change. Such 'fleeting urges' exist in a dialectic bond with the immutable truth (6) just as the waves and the ocean depths (3).

A second figure of transformation appears as a kind of merging of the self with the infinite, or the absolute. Verse 4 exemplifies this kind of transformation in its exhortation to bridge the distance between the knowing subject and known object by merging with the absolute, or to 'become That Alone.' Here, Guru suggests that self-possession begins and ends in universal consciousness of an infinite, absolute reality. This consciousness—the precious lamp that is neither lit nor extinguished (5)—is what Guru exhorts his readers to remain cognizant of as they 'go forward' (5). Consciousness of the absolute and transformation of the self exist, for Guru, in a relationship of continuous interiority and exteriority. Such a Möbius strip-like conception binds the individual self and universal consciousness, or the particular subject and the universal value, within a continuum of mutual causality.

Guru advocates a third figure of transformation: the meditating subject. In verse 8, the meditating figure masters external sensory phenomena with 'the weapon of a radiant inner clarity/ That fills one's entire being' (8). As noted in the present tense of 'fills one's entire being,' as well as its imagery of attaining fullness, the act of meditation represents, for Guru, the slow process of transformation of the self. Such transformation is critical, suggests Guru, because it saves the meditator from having to 'confront hell' (9).

Transcendence of 'hell,' the fifth major theme, presents the object of the transformative practice of meditation. Although Guru never explicitly defines what 'hell' might refer to, the following stanzas (reproduced in full) offer an explanation.

> "Tell me who are you sitting in darkness?" one asks.
> On hearing this, the other,
> In order to know, asks in return, "Who are you?"
> The answer to both these questions is the same.
> What is spoken of as 'I', 'I', by each
> When well-pondered upon,
> Is found to be not many but just one in true essence.
> The I-senses divergingly, of course, are many,
> And, therefore, in and through the sum total
> Of the many assuredly endures
> The one essential content of 'I'. (AS 10, 11; Guru, 2006, 237-8)

I read these two verses as representations of the caste 'hell' of colonial Kerala. Guru is concerned here with the closed world of subjection circumscribed by the caste codes of *jati maryada*. It was common practice, as I pointed out earlier,[17] for castes to shout out particular phrases that identified caste and therefore helped maintain the spatial codes of 'distance pollution.' The maintenance of spatial codes required that caste be made visible at a distance. The embodied codes of attire and accoutrement—a palm-leaf umbrella signaled a Namboodiris, for instance, while brass bangles and stone-bead necklaces indicated Pulayas—answered that need. This is the world of caste subjection that in verse 8 Guru characterises metaphorically and literally as being in the dark. The metaphorical darkness exists because caste-bound Kerala society denies, for Guru, the psychic non-dualistic unity of being. In literal darkness, Guru depicts two individuals asking each other to reveal their caste. We can surmise the answer Guru imagines from *Jati Nirnayam*: '*manushyanam manushyatvam*,' or a human characterised by humanity.

The following verse suggests that the 'I', 'I' (*aham aham*) that each answers in vain is 'not many' but 'just one in true essence'" (11). While this may appear to be a standard Advaitic discourse which depicts and denies externalities in order to assert an essential psychic and cosmic unity, Guru's rhetoric here achieves much more when one remembers the context of *jati maryadas*. The 'I', 'I' answer that Guru gives, uses a heavily Sanskritised Malayalam word, '*aham*,' that stands in weighty contrast to the more common '*njan*.' In a world where the slave castes referred to themselves as '*adiyen*' or 'this slave' through linguistic caste codes, and in which the ascending scale of caste reverence meant that even landowning Nairs referred to themselves as '*adiyen*' when speaking with Namboodiris, such assertion of self through the use of the weighty '*aham*' represents an astonishing claim to subjecthood. This is, ultimately, what makes *AS* so significant in the history of colonial Kerala: it exemplifies Guru's metaphysics of equality which I have called repurposed Advaita.

It was the same sense 'I', 'I' ('*aham aham*')—a self-conscious elevation of bodies abjected and degraded by *jati maryada* to a kind of dignified personhood that enabled them to experience the transformative effects of self-possession—that informed Guru's consecration of the mirror at Kalavankodam in 1927.

In his philosophical works and political actions, Guru drew upon the brahminical discourse of Advaita Vedanta to elevate the encasted individual subject to an anti-caste universal consciousness. He states his central philosophical principle in simpler terms in the *Darsana Mala* [*Garland of Visions*] of 1916: '*atmaiva brahma'* (*atman* is *brahman*) (8.4). Here, as everywhere in his work including the *AS*, Guru appears to say that the individual self is the absolute reality; the soul is the Godhead; and *this* human is all of humanity—*manushanam manushatvam*. This simultaneous process of, on the one hand, recuperating the human soul hitherto crushed under the dehumanization of *jati maryadas*, and, on the other, elevating it to the cosmic consciousness, is the greatest contribution of Narayana Guru's repurposed Advaita. In Guru's repurposed Advaita, which provided a second genealogy of the human in colonial Kerala, non-dualistic philosophy found an anti-caste edge that it never had before, and hasn't regained since.

SCENE THREE

Radical Siddha Saiva: Saluting the Dignified Self

The Ayya Vazhi (henceforth, AV), or the Way of the Father, which follows the teachings of Ayya Vaikundar a.k.a. Vaikunda Swamy (c. 1809-1851) prescribes a number of important rituals that continue to be practised by believers at sacred sites known as *Pathis* and at smaller shrines known as *Nizhal Thangals*. A notable characteristic of these rituals is the emphasis upon self-presentation: during acts of worship, men appear, even today, wearing a turban on their heads. (While women devotees of the AV are not easily distinguished today from non-devotees, as they were, in the early nineteenth century, among the first to adopt the blouse, or *kuppayam*.[18]) Such care in self-presentation, as performative acts asserting self-respect and dignity, is institutionalized in the AV through ritual. One such ritual provides the action in the following discussion of the third and final scene exemplifying the genealogies of the human in colonial-era Travancore.

Before entering the shrine in Swamithope—literally, the Swami's Grove, a town named after Vaikundar, which acts as headquarters for the AV—turbaned devotees view and salute their dignified selves in a mirror. As with repurposed Advaita, the AV too held that the divine was to be found within the self, and what was worthy of worship was the fullness of humanity.

Prior to ritually reaffirming their humanity, they also take a ritual bath known as the *tuvayal tavasu*—or the penance for self-purification (literally, the washing penance)—which included bathing in the sea thrice everyday and eating simple vegetarian meals of rice and green grams once a day (Ponniah, 2014; Patrick, 2017). This emphasis on purification of the individual body was part of the larger logic of Saiva Siddhanta. As Mohan points out, the discourse of hygiene in terms of bodily practices as well as food habits played a central role in both the ongoing exclusion of slave castes as well as in missionary reform. On the one hand, *savarna* castes justified the exclusion of slave castes from the church on the grounds that 'if not caste at least one should consider cleanliness as health sciences advice.'[19] Missionary reform, on the other hand, introduced modern medicine and hygiene whose positive impact upon the slave castes they often noted with satisfaction (Mohan 2015). Such missionary zeal in disciplining bodily practices resonated with *avarna* leaders: Mohan discusses Poykayil Yohannan's advocacy of personal hygiene and cleanliness in the early

twentieth century, while Chandramohan (2016, 132-135) points out Narayana Guru's frequent exhortations against the 'filthy' profession of toddy tapping and in favour of personal hygiene and cleanliness. In all cases, the discourse and practice of personal hygiene arose from the modern notions of self-respect and dignity that was profoundly attractive to the *avarna* castes. As a precursor to the anti-caste movements of Yohannan and Guru, the AV's emphasis on ritual acts of cleaning within its worship formed part of this sweeping discourse of self-respect and dignity that characterizes the genealogies of the human. Bodily cleanliness was, for Vaikundar—much like it was for the missionaries, Yohannan and Guru—an inseparable analogue of spiritual cleanliness.[20] Indeed, missionaries who saw Vaikundar's enterprise as a competitor in the conversion marketplace were forced to acknowledge, albeit somewhat begrudgingly, the superior hygiene of AV followers. 'It is true,' one missionary conceded, 'that their bodies and their houses are more cleanly [*sic*] than those of the rest.'[21]

A Society of Equals

The discourse of hygiene and body cleanliness became one way to assert shared common humanity amongst the slave castes, amidst other conceptions of modernity and equality. Religious movements in colonial Kerala—Protestant missionaries, Narayan Guru, Poykayil Yohannan, and Ayya Vaikundar, to name only a few—made concerted attempts to refashion the encasted bodies of slave and intermediate *avarna* castes. Such refashioning of the body was inseparable from asserting the dignity and self-respect central to modern notions of the human. And as Mohan (2015, 121) points out, any conception of modernity was, for the slave castes, inseparable from the discourse of equality.

In the AV, the discourse of hygiene led to the performance of what Vaikundar called the '*Samatva Samajam,*' or, the Society of Equals.[22] The usage of the word *samatva* in the name of the organization bears unpacking, for the term exists in similar form in many Indian languages. The intellectual historian Aishwary Kumar discusses the valences of '*samata*' in Ambedkar's discourse to point out that the term yields 'not "equality" as a passive condition,' which would be *samaanta*, but rather that it suggests 'the "equal-ness" of a living being grasped at the moment of its coming into the world.' This notion of equality—*samata*—is 'not a moral precept' but 'an equal-ness grounded in a person's inalienable right of being and becoming' (Kumar, 2015, pp 48). In other words, this understanding of *samata* suggests that it is best understood not as a universal condition—whether in a social, moral, legal, or constitutional sense— but as a political claim that seeks inclusion of particular lifeworlds within the ambit of the universal. Throughout, I understand equality in this sense of a situated claim to the universal rather than an actually existing universal condition; that is, as a repurposed universal that provides intellectual heft to particular political claims. In the case of *Samatva Samajam* too was making a similar claim to the universal, a situated claim against the dispossessions of caste and the subjugation of hierarchy, to argue that they too could belong as humans to a society of equals. By ritualizing its meetings[23], the *Samatva Samajam* pointed out that, in fact, they already did.

The flag of the AV—saffron with a white vertical mark (*naamam*) in the middle— today commemorates the memory of this society of equals, and interpellates all worshippers as members of this society of equals. The organising principle of this society of AV is universal love—or, in the words of one historian, 'indiscriminating

love'[24]—as evidenced by the name of the flag: *Anbu Kodi*, or the Flag of Love. The stated objective of *Samatva Samaja*m was to unite all humanity under the *Anbu Kodi*.

Other aspects of ritual worship in the AV included cooking food with water drawn from a communal well called the *Munthiri Kinaru*, or the 'well of sweet water'.[25] (Today, the ritual includes bathing in water from the well.) A communal well was rich in significance for an anti-caste movement given that colonial-era Travancore maintained separate wells for the castes as another mode to practice untouchability. In such a context, the name of the well—*Munthiri Kinaru*—could not have failed to promise the sweet dream of a society built on principles of equality. In caste-ridden colonial Travancore, the act of drawing water from the *Munthiri Kinaru* and washing and cooking with it would have performed the promise of equality.

This becomes especially true when considering that the act of dining too was ritualised in the AV. The communal act of interdining—jointly enjoying a communal meal irrespective of caste—was preceded by a ritual call: 'Ayya, *saappadalama*?' or, 'Ayya, can we eat?' The call was followed by a ritual response—'*Saappadalam*'(You may eat.) The significance of this ritual call-and-response is not lost on the ethnographer and religious studies scholar James Ponniah, who points out that such a practice ensures that 'everyone has been served,' which, in a hierarchical society, 'inculcates a sense of absolute equality among the human beings gathered at the table.'[26]

The Ordinary and the Metaphysical, or the Mundane and the Mythic

Be it the *tuvayal tavasu* (washing penance), or drawing water from the *Munthiri Kinaru* (well of sweet water)*,* or the communal dining with its call-and-response, the rituals of AV institutionalised everyday practices to enact individual self-respect and dignity as well as communal solidarity. These acts contested caste in the realm of the ordinary and the everyday, but caste—as we know well following Ambedkar's famous call to destroy the authority of the *shastras*[27]—is inseparable from the metaphysical realm. These ritualised everyday practices, which we might think of as codified ordinariness, had their scriptural analogues in the metaphysics of the AV. Like the repurposed Advaita of Narayana Guru, the AV too worked against caste simultaneously in the realms of the ordinary and the metaphysical.

The metaphysical thought of the AV—written, or compiled, by one of Vaikundar's senior disciples, Hari Gopalan Citar—are largely to be found in two canonical works: a primary scripture called the *Akilathirattu Ammanai*, or the World Collection of Ballads (henceforth, *Akilam*), and a secondary work, the *Arul Nool*, or the Book of Grace, which offers commentary on the *Akilam*. These texts compile myths that offer fantastical renditions of history that narrate the past, interpret the present, and conjure visions of a future. These myths provide not only an affective version of history—history, as Roland Barthes had it, turned to nature (2012, p. 254-6)—but they also provide an interpretive framework for lived experience that inspired further action. Myth formed, for followers of the AV, narratives about the past, present, and future that enabled them to understand and change their personal/individual and political/collective identities. Chief amongst these narratives was the unique *yuga* theory of AV, which substantially reworks and subverts the better-known brahminical version drawn from Sanskrit philosophy.

The brahminical *yuga* theory articulates what Romila Thapar (2013) calls 'cosmological time' since the time of the *Dharmashastras* and the *Mahabharata*,

which are dated approximately to the beginning of the Christian era. The *yuga* theory conceptualises time as a cycle called the *mahayuga* (or, the great age, or an eon). In this version, each *mahayuga* consists of four lesser *yugas* (ages or epochs), each of decreasing durations: Krita/ Satya (4800 years), Treta (3600 years), Dvapara (2400 years), and finally, Kali (1200 years)[28]. A characteristic of *yuga* theory is 'moral decline and a falling off of the rules of social behaviour from the first [Krita/ Satya] to the fourth [Kali].'" From its earliest articulations, *yuga* theory was, thus, inextricably tied to caste mobility: in the *Mahabharata*, God prophecies that 'all four social orders will adopt the same dress and the same ways' in the Kali Yuga (Pollock, 2006, p. 71). The linear moral decline of *yuga* theory imagines a 'downward slide' from a utopian past to a degraded present: with the tenth incarnation of Vishnu, Kalki, bringing about 'the end of lawlessness' and the 'usurpation of power by the low castes.' (Thapar, 2013, p. 203) As always, the codification of caste hinged upon policing the sexuality of women, so the vision of moral decline in the Kali Yuga included the violation of rules of conduct by women (Sarkar, 2002, p. 14)[29].

The presence of the *mlecchas*, Thapar points out[30], is an important reason for the decrease in the duration of each subsequent *yuga*. The *mleccha* was a catch-all term for those outside the four-fold brahminical imaginary of the *varna* system, and included forest-dwellers, untouchables, and—significantly, in the context of the *Kali Yuga* prophecy in the *Mahabharata*—nomadic conquering tribal chieftains and kings such as the Śakas, who consolidated their rule across the Gangetic plains beginning with c. 80 BCE. At the time of the composition of the Kali Yuga prophecy in the *Mahabharata*, the Śakas were well-established and the threat posed by *mleccha* kings to the *varna* social order was well-understood. The Kali Yuga prophecy in the *Mahabharata* decreed, 'The *mleccha* king […] will destroy the four social orders, recognising all those that had previously gone unrecognised… The Śakas will destroy the good conduct of his subjects and their devotion to their proper tasks' (Pollock, 2006, p. 71).

The particular vision of moral decline and social turmoil that the Kali Yuga prophecy narrated in its earliest articulations hinged upon caste mobility and the presence of powerful *mlecchas*. Both these plot devices—so to speak—would illuminate the vision of anti-caste politics in the *yuga* theory of AV mythology.

First, let's consider the vision of moral decline. The unique *yuga* theory of AV includes eight ages: Neetiya Yuga, Chatura Yuga, Nedu Yuga, Kretha[31] Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga, Kali Yuga, and Dharma Yuga (Ponniah, 2006). The first three and the last are unique to the AV, and have no correlates in brahminical *yuga* theory. Evil—or 'Kroni'—is present in all the *yugas* and its destruction in the first age by Vishnu did not lead to its annihilation, for parts of it were reborn in each subsequent age. In the Kali Yuga—also the age of Ayya Vaikundar—evil is born as Kalineesan. Kali takes over the hearts of all people and begins to rule the world from within. An oft-quoted verse from *Akilam* attests to the ubiquity of evil in Kali Yuga: '*kali enral eli allave, kanaiyali ventame,*' which translates to 'Kali is not a mouse and you do not need any hammer to kill it' (Ponniah, 2006, p. 70).

The moral decline in the eight-fold *yuga* theory of AV was not a linear progression. After the great evil of the Kali Yuga came the age of justice: the Dharma Yuga. This final *yuga* would be a utopian era of justice characterised by 'one religion and one caste' and would be 'free from crimes and vices.'[32] Fighting the evil within, or *kali*, gave mythic articulation to everyday practices of self-fashioning to assert dignity

and respect, while the figure of the Kalineesan—the embodiment of evil—cast the hereditary ruler of Travancore, Swati Thirunal (1813-1846), as a mythic villain. Publicly referring to the king as 'Kalineesan'—literally, the evil of Kali, or the Kali-oppressor—invited the state's attention, which imprisoned Vaikundar for over 110 days (Ponniah, 2016; Pandian, 1992). The Dharma Yuga followed the great churn of the Kali Yuga in AV's mythology, suggesting that *dharma* was not simply moral decline, but something to be struggled for and established by fighting the evil of Kali. AV's *yuga* theory thus gave mythic articulation to the egalitarian imagination that powered their mundane practices.

Caste mobility became for AV a *means* to resist moral decline, in contrast to brahminical yuga theory, which saw moral decline as a *consequence* of caste mobility. This distinction cannot be overemphasized: for brahminical *yuga* theory, *dharma* was lost due to caste mobility and had to be reinstated, while for the AV *yuga* theory, *dharma* was to be established by resisting the moral degradation of caste.

Let us now turn to the second plot device of the presence of *mlecchas.* Vaikundar appropriated this plot device too to advance his political agenda. The *mlecchas* of his time were, of course, the colonial officials and missionaries. Although his teachings drew upon Christianity and indeed benefitted immensely from the catalysing presence of the missionaries, Vaikundar referred to missionaries as *venneesan*, or the 'white evil/ oppressor.' The rule of the *mlecchas* was a time, like in the brahminical *yuga* theory, in which moral decline accelerated. Unlike brahminical *yuga* theory, however, in the AV, this was because the *mlecchas*—the white oppressor, or *venneesan*—worked hand in hand with the embodiment of evil, the Kalineesan, embodied by the king of Travancore, Swati Thirunal. The historian MSS Pandian (1992) points out that Vaikundar 'could accuse both the *neesan* (king) and the *venneesan* (colonizers) simultaneously.'

Vaikundar claimed to be the son of Vishnu, an *avatar* whose purpose is to defeat Kalineesan and 'wipe out the evil of *kali* from the people's minds' and instill 'thoughts of *dharma*' (Ponniah, 2014). While positioning himself as the son of God appropriates a noticeably Christian mythic trope, it also adopts the *avatar*, or incarnation, narrative, which has been a particularly efficient mythic mode of appropriating non-brahmin deities and narratives within the brahminical fold. The historian DD Kosambi characterises the *Dashavatar* myths of the ten incarnations of Vishnu as *mechanisms of assimilation*.[33]. The trope of incarnation allowed Vaikundar to assimilate the social turmoil born of anti-caste sentiment within the Kali Yuga myth, while simultaneously allowing him to claim to be the son of God: reconciling, in the paradoxical way that only myth can, both the desire for egalitarianism and a messianic exceptionalism into one popular movement.

Through particular renewals of these two plot devices—visions of moral decline, and presence of *mlecchas*—AV mythology subverted brahminical *yuga* theory and articulated new social imaginaries of an egalitarian society that inspired and sustained anti-caste political action. Such metaphysical conception of justice was inextricably linked to their everyday practices enacting self-respect and dignity, meshing together the mundane and the mythic in deeply empowering ways.

AV and Saiva Siddhanta

Although AV was decidedly syncretic in its discourse and practice, it demonstrates significant continuities with the traditions of Saiva Siddhanta. Saiva Siddhanta is a philosophical doctrine whose followers engage in the worship of Shiva through discourse and performance. The discursive aspects of Saiva Siddhanta are textualised in the scriptural works, the *Agamas* or the *Saivagamas*, and the Siddha canon that is still referred to as the Tamil Veda. The first of these—the *Agama* scriptures—are dated to the centuries between the Buddha and the beginning of the Common Era (5 BCE to 1 CE). Their antiquity forms one reason why Saiva practitioners consider the *Agamas* to be on par with the Vedas, which are typically dated to 1200-900 BCE. Another reason for the importance of the *Agamas* lies in their antipathy towards the brahminical social order. 'The Agamas do not emphasise the supremacy of Brahmins,' says the Indologist HW Schomerus (1879-1945) in his study of Saiva Siddhanta, 'so the Brahmins may well have opposed them, and certainly did see to it that they were not widely known' (1979, p 6). The *Agamas*, as a philosophical school whose antiquity is comparable to the Vedas and whose texts evince anti-caste sentiment, would find enthusiastic uptake in the anti-caste struggles of colonial south India.

The performative aspects of Saiva Siddhanta were equally important, and these ritual practices and corporeal techniques are referred to simply as Yoga or, more accurately, Siddha Yoga (Zvelebil, 1993). The Siddha Yoga shares its objectives with the better-known Hatha Yoga, namely, liberation from bondage through bodily practices. The Orientalist scholar of religion Mircea Eliade describes Siddhas, or adepts of the Saiva Siddha traditions, as those 'who understood liberation as the conquest of immortality.'[34] Such liberation from bondage is of critical importance to Saiva Siddhanta, and derives from a central tenet which organises the three modes of reality.

This central tenet is common to all Saiva Siddhanta thought and categorises reality in three modes: *Pati* (God), *pasu* (soul), and *pasam* (bondage). This three-fold conception of reality, popularly referred to as *Pati—pasu—pasam*, or *God—soul—bondage*, both defines the Saiva world of the transcendent divinity, immanent spirit, and mundane matter, and distinguishes it from the chief doctrinal rival: Advaita. As I described in the previous section on Narayana Guru, Advaita emphasises knowledge (*arivu*) of the absolute reality (*Karu*, or the singular unitive core of existence) through self-realization (*thannarivu*). In simple terms, the divine and the human entities were not separate, or reality is conceptualised non-dualistically, which gives the school its name: a-dvaita, literally, non-dualism. In contrast, Saiva Siddhanta has a determinedly dualistic conception of the divine (*Pati*) and the human (*pasu*), which it reconciles by putting into play the third term unique to it: *pasam*, or bondage. The relationship between *Pati* and *pasu* are forged through *pasam*: that is, the soul reaches out to God through various forms of bondages. These bondages are also impurities that keep the soul apart from the divine, and are also referred to as *mala*, or the impure. Saiva doctrine recognises three forms of *mala* that characterize *pasam*; namely, *anava mala*, *maya mala*, and *karma mala*.

The key point I want to foreground here is the philosophical claim of Saiva Siddhanta that the bondage of the soul with the divine is characterised by impurities, and that liberation of the soul by breaking free of these bonds requires purifying oneself. Saiva Siddhanta typically opposes seeking metaphysical and discursive knowledge

through purely speculative methods (Zvelebil, 1993). This was an approach in sharp contrast to the speculative and discursive mode of inquiry that Advaita favoured, and a major point of distinction. The *Saiva siddhantin* emphasis on the practical and the empirical would be especially important to the Ayya Vazhi, as well as other more overtly neo-Saivite[35] movements in colonial south India, for it provided them with a philosophical framework within which to articulate anti-caste ideas. Transgressing caste codes became, in part, a matter of seeking to elevate one's consciousness through practice: if AV intertwined bodily and spiritual cleanliness[36] in rituals such as the *tuvayal tavasu* (washing penance), then such practice had close affinities with the philosophical discourses of Saiva Siddhanta.

Thus the key point of liberation of the soul from bondage through removing impurities is a central idea in the discourses, rituals, and popular practices in Saiva Siddhanta. This trope became the philosophical cornerstone which provided the basis for radical *Siddha Saiva* to articulate anti-caste ideas, and eventually, emerge as a genealogy of the human. AV drew upon this three-fold conception of reality in Saiva Siddhanta, and sought liberation of the soul through the removal of impurities. In doing so, it finds a place within the emerging historical milieu of colonial south India in which Saiva Siddhanta was being positioned as a universal religion (Bergunder, 2011; Raman, 2009; Vaitheespara, 2011).

III

The three scenes I described and analyzed above— soulful Enlightenment, repurposed Advaita, and radical Siddha Saiva—represent the major routes of egalitarian discourse in colonial-era south India. The significance of identifying these discrete yet entangled routes of egalitarian discourse is two-fold: first, in pointing to multiple interrelated sources of the self that characterised colonial modernity and the explosive potential it held for the *avarna* castes, we can foreground the radical political agency of the *avarnas*. Out of the tumult of this period rose the radicalism of the *avarnas*, stealing fire, so to speak, from what heavens they could reach. Second, the hybrid methods adopted here demonstrate ways of doing intellectual histories in the repertoire that can help trace the ideas of unlettered people. The view of intellectual history here is anti-elitist and high-stakes: it is a politics of ideas forged in the rough and tumble of everyday organising in the real and messy world.

The dramaturgical and performance-centric reasoning that informs this work arises out of a conviction that selves are always performed—done, undone, and redone—in the repertoires of embodied action. Moreover, such a performance-centric reasoning does not pretend to schematise that which cannot be fully understood. For instance, I do not ponder what came first: a realisation of injustice, or an articulated notion of egalitarianism, or a performative reconstitution of the self? While the dominant mode of intellectual history seeks to identify these flows, the method of doing intellectual histories in the repertoire that I propose here focuses on identifying the scenario (historical background), the action (political agency), and the resultant altered scenario (political consequences).

Ultimately, intellectual histories in the repertoire oscillate between the universal and the particular in revealing ways. The three scenes I discuss represent the heterogeneity of the genealogies of the human in colonial Kerala, and accommodate their compromised natures. The compromised natures of egalitarianisms in everyday

life remind us of the contingent and always-imperfect processes of political struggle. In exploring the relationship between a universal claim such as equality and its particular political contexts such as that of anti-caste politics in colonial-era Travancore, intellectual histories in the repertoire elucidate not only the emancipatory possibilities of the imagination afforded by universals—the concepts of equality, and shared common humanity—but the particular struggles that emerged through the situated and contingent practices of repurposing universals. By oscillating between the universal and the particular, embodied intellectual histories do not relegate the agency of political actors *within* their context, but accommodate the fact that people think and act *out of their context*.[37] The historical appropriation of a universal value such as equality or humanity to suit particular political contexts such as the struggle against caste in colonial Travancore is a double process that bends the universal claim to fit the particular issue, and expands the particular to universalistic proportions. Such practices of contingent and historical appropriation that articulate particular claims in universalistic language for strategic purposes I have called *repurposing universals*. These three scenes of the *avarna* castes gazing at themselves in the mirror instantiate acts of repurposing universals. As repetitive actions that constitute new beings and worlds organised around equality, these acts exemplify performative egalitarianisms that lay claim to the right to have rights (Arendt, 1976 p. 277).

Central to the strategic acts of repurposing universals is notion of the human. As human beings thingified by caste, the slave castes found missionary discourse of soul—as a sign of *a priori* humanity, intentionality and agency, and worldly transformation—profoundly attractive. The language of the soul, with its potential to recuperate and reassert the humanity of slaves and *avarnas*, conjoins the notion of the human to the concept of equality. If the actions of performative egalitarianisms exemplify the routes of egalitarian discourses, then the notion of the soul stands as metonym for inalienable humanity. Together, egalitarian discourses and the concomitant notion of the human constitute what I have described here as genealogies of the human in colonial-era Travancore.

When the *avarna* castes gazed at their reflections, what they saw in the mirror was their human souls and, in the background, a society whose caste norms withheld recognition of their humanity. These performative egalitarianisms filled the hearts of the *avarna* castes with a desire for change that sought an egalitarian society.

Acknowledgements

look into Saiva Siddhanta as a possible third genealogy for egalitarian discourses. I left the brief meeting greatly inspired to learn more about Saiva Siddhanta, which, up until that time, I had barely heard of. I hoped to show Pradeepan Sir a draft with all three routes, but that was not to be—I heard, with great sadness, of his death due to a road accident in December 2016. I am grateful for his brilliance and generosity and for having fundamentally changed my research in one brief encounter. I thank him, above all, for his scholarship which continues to teach all of us who can no longer benefit from his presence.

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Endnotes

1. The caste codes of *jati maryada* governed all aspects of social behaviour, and can be organised broadly in three domains: spatial codes, which choreographed the exact distances to be maintained between castes; embodied codes, which made caste visible from a distance through attire and accoutrement; and linguistic codes, that enregistered speakers within the caste hierarchy through vocabulary, voice, and attitude.

2. Named after its messianic founder, Ayya Vaikundar (1809-1851), this cult continues to thrive as the Ayya Vazhi (or, the Way of the Father) in the Kanyakumari district of today's Tamil Nadu. Until 1956, this area was considered a part of the erstwhile princely state of Travancore. This cult and Vaikundar himself played a significant part in the historic Channar Lahala, or the Revolt of the Channars (1822-59) that are known in colonial records as the Breast-Cloth Controversy or the Upper-Cloth Disturbances. See Sheeju N.V. (2015) The Shanar Revolts, 1822-1899, *South Asia Research*, 35(3), 2015, pp. 298–317.

3. I am drawing upon Foucault's influential theorisation of genealogy here. See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, 76-100. See especially pp. 77-86.

4. I am echoing Charles Taylor's contention that modernity is characterized by the "affirmation of ordinary life," which distinguished the new epoch from previous ages. In agreeing with and echoing Taylor's pithy phrase, I do not mean to suggest that modernity is a European font in which the slaves of south India were baptized out of their servitude. Rather, I find it helpful to think with Taylor's description of the religious origins of modernity in Protestantism—what Michael Gillespie calls the "theological origins of modernity"—and to trace Protestant missions as one significant route through which modern conceptions of the self took hold in south India. An assumption I work from in this paper is that emancipatory ideals are not necessarily more or less attractive or effective should they be home-grown; rather, oppressed communities—slave and avarna castes here—pursue their emancipatory politics within actually existing historical conditions. These egalitarianisms are, always, compromised in the nature of much practical politics, but such heterogeneity should point not to the irreconcilability of ideals but to the ingenuity of the oppressed.

5. To repurpose Bronislaw Malinowski's famous phrase in which he identifies fieldwork as a method of "observing and recording [the] imponderabilia of actual life and of typical behaviour" (pp. 20, original emphasis). See Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, 1984 [1922]. Print.

6. We have any number of archival records of missionaries reporting with great feeling on their converts' fervor. They are typically framed as evidence of the power of the Gospel that miraculously appeared during routine transactions between the missionary shepherd and his flock of new believers. See, for example, Henry Baker, *The Hill Arrians of Travancore: and the progress of Christianity among them*. London: Wertheim, MacIntosh, & Hunt, 1862, pp. 26.

7.   Hawksworth notes in one version that the "two men who gave these answers came to me at my request, and answered in the presence of another native, who explained my words occasionally, when necessary." This unnamed interviewer was almost certainly the renowned native missionary George Matthan who held charge of the Mallappalli area and often worked alongside

8.   No extant copy available. Original cited in subsequent reprints, "The Travancore Slaves" *in the Missionary Register*, Nov 1854. 471-473, and "The Slaves of Travancore" in the *Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record*, January 1855. 22-24. Full citations below. Samuel Mateer cites the original version in his classic ethnography, *Native Life in Travancore*, 1883, pp. 302-3.

9.   For an insightful discussion of the political dimensions of Ambedkarite Buddhism, see Vidhu Verma's 'Reinterpreting Buddhism.' The two phrases I quote are from Verma, (2010 pp. 60), and she is, in turn, citing Ambedkar, (1987 pp. 184), in the first phrase, and Shabnum Tejani, (2007 pp. 63), in the second.

10. I am drawing upon the work of Veena Das (2018) in thinking of the performative aspects of violence and its ability to constitute subjectivity. Enfleshment refers to Alexander Weheliye's theoretical contribution in *Habeas Viscus*, where he points out that the assemblage of flesh (viscus) and person (habeas) is made visible through the process of "enfleshment," which adjudicates who counts as human and who doesn't (2014). Enfleshment refers to the transaction between racialized violence and the experience of suffering which shapes our definitions of humanity. Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead*   theorizes surrogation (1996), which refers to the transmission of cultural memory and the remaking of identity through the ongoing processes of substitution.

11. I am thinking here of Joram Haber's performative view of forgiveness, which emphasizes the performative act of overcoming resentment in the act of forgiveness. Sanal Mohan too makes a similar point in his analysis of the missionary Henry Baker's reports of slaves risking death to visit their former masters in order to seek, or grant, forgiveness. "[T]he equality of the master and the slave," writes Mohan, "was emphasized by the slave in the dungeon [where Baker reports he was imprisoned] as he prayed to God to forgive all his own sins and those of his master's too. A prayer like this is only possible if the slave felt himself to be the equal of his master, indeed better—in that he could seek forgiveness for the master." (Mohan 2015, 100, emphasis mine.)

12. See TM Yesudasan, *Baliyadukalude Vamsavali* [*A Genealogy of the Scapegoats*], pp. 3, my translations. Yesudasan goes on to define two kinds of *matharohanam*: transitive religious ascension, such as through acceptance into Protestant Christianity or Islam; and intransitive religious ascension, such as through the apparatuses of the ethnographic state or through those of modernist Hindu reform movements. Yesudasan borrows linguistic metaphors to distinguish between active or transitive *matharohanam (sakarmaka matharohanam)* and passive or intransitive *matharohanam (akarmaka matharohanam)*. Where transitive *matharohanam* emphasizes self-authored agential action, intransitive *matharohanam* denotes the passive condition of being acted-upon. He further identifies two sub-categories of intransitive *matharohanam*: those created by ethnographic state apparatuses (census, penal codes, proclamations, gazettes etc.), and coerced conversions, including reformist reclamation of converted slaves as Hindus. Elsewhere, Yesudasan makes a brilliant argument that interprets

Narayana Guru as precisely such a reformist movement. See TM Yesudasan, "Aruvippurathinte Marupuram" ["The Other Side of Aruvippuram"] in *Karutha Deivangalum Nagna Sathyangalum.* [*Black Gods and Naked Truths.*] 69-71. pp. 71.

13. It bears saying here that I am talking about the social construction of these categories of human, sub-human and non-human through caste. I am not questioning the humanity of slaves, however commodified, nor do I consider such a brutalizing system to be natural. It did, however, exist—and the social construction of this system is what I am referring to here through that three-fold distinction. The undeniable and resilient humanity of the slave-as-thingified-human is in fact, the overarching subject of the larger work—Stolen Fire—to which this paper belongs. My thinking on this subject is considerably informed by Alexander Weheliye's helpful theorization in *Habeas Viscus*.

14. The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), was founded in 1903 as a community organization that organized Ezhavas through the teachings of Narayana Guru. Its genesis lay in the Aruvippuram temple consecration by Guru, and an earlier avatar of the organization founded in the 1890s was called the Aruvippuram Temple Trust. In today's Kerala, the SNDP is a powerful organization that has considerable political and economic clout.

15. In the 19th century Travancore, it was common practice to yoke slave castes and cattle to a plough. Throughout the 19th century, British Protestant missionaries bore witness to the dehumanization enforced by *jati maryada*. Their gaze—colonizing and "civilizing" though it certainly was—performed two vital functions: first, it defamiliarized the everyday brutalities of caste; and second, it expresses disapproval, even outrage, based on their professed egalitarian cultural norms rooted in Enlightenment universal values. A story about Thomas Gajetan Ragland, a missionary who founded the CMS mission in Tinnevelly (today, Thirunelveli in southern Tamil Nadu), shows the operation of this defamiliarizing gaze. The missionary biographer Amy Carmichael writes that Ragland was "filled with compassion for the slaves, especially after seeing one of them unequally yoked with an ox pulling a plough." See Amy Carmichael, *Ragland, Pioneer*, Madras: S.P.C.K. Depository, 1922. pp. vi. See also "Memorial of the Rev. Thomas Gajetan Ragland, B.D." in *The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record,* Vol IX, Feb 1859, 25-28.

16. The logocentric rationale here where the senses present a threat that must be shot down with a gun is typical of the deep-seated misogyny in Guru's poetry. In fact, he deploys such phallic imagery as a form of mastery over the senses on more than one occasion. If I do not devote much attention to this irrefutable aspect of Guru's poetry, it is because my argument is trying to trace the flows of these compromised egalitarianisms rather than judge their purity of intention. Similarly, I do not pay particular attention to the racist assumptions that the missionaries often espoused. Ditto for the misogyny in the Ayya Vazhi. As I pointed out earlier, genealogies of the human are also always compromised egalitarianisms. My interest here, and elsewhere, is how exactly the slave castes repurposed these compromised egalitarianisms to further their political ends.

17. See footnote 1 on *jati maryada*.

18. The Channars a.k.a. Nadars, who make up the bulk of the Ayya Vazhi followers were early adopters of Christianity in the 19th century, amongst whom missionary influence included propagating a bodice fashioned as the kuppayam. When the third phase of the Channar Lahala broke out in the late 1850s, in fact, over the right to cover their breasts with a cloth draped over the *kuppayam*. See Sheeju NV. "The Shanar Revolts, 1822-1899." *South Asia Research*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2015, pp. 298–317.

19. From an early edition of *Deepika* in 1910; qtd. in Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, 32.

20. See the illuminating discussion about the PRDS and the discourse of hygiene in Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, 177.

21. LMS Report, 1892; qtd in Pandian, "Meanings of 'colonialism' and 'nationalism'," pp. 180. See MSS Pandian, "Meanings of 'colonialism' and 'nationalism': An essay on Vaikunda Swamy cult," *Studies in History*, 8,2, 1992 <https://doi.org/10.1177/025764309200800202>.

22. See Sarveswaran, "Sri Vaikunda Swamikal," 9-10; Pandian, "Meanings of 'colonialism' and 'nationalism'," 178-81; Selvanayagam, "Counter-Liberation and Cult-Formation," 249. Pandian terms the Society of Equals, *Samathuva Sangham*, which translates to Organization of Equality. I have used *Samatva Samajam* based on scholarly consensus.

23. In a fascinating ritual that points to the irreconcilable tension between egalitarian principles and the messianic origins of *Samatva Samajam*, a chair is ceremonially covered in a white cloth in a meeting of the society. This chair is thought to be Ayya Vaikundar's seat, and is referred to as the asana, or the seat, and his spirit is believed to attend these meetings. To point out the obvious: an egalitarian society cannot easily be reconciled with a spirit who presides over meetings in god-like fashion. But such are the always already compromised egalitarianisms of the real and messy world.

24. The phrase is Pandian's: see "Meanings of 'colonialism' and 'nationalism'," 181. I understand his usage to mean "non-discriminatory love" in the sense that it did not discriminate between human beings, as opposed to "indiscriminating" in the sense of lacking discernment. In any case, I prefer the less confusing usage of "universal love."

25. See Pandian, "Meanings of 'colonialism' and 'nationalism'," 181; Sarveswaran, "Sri Vaikunda Swamikal," 7. A literal translation of *Munthiri Kinaru* would be the Well of Sweet Grapes, but the South Indian idiomatic usage of grapes to mean sweet does not translate well into English. The Well of Sweet Water remains true to the spirit of the Tamil usage.

26. Ponniah, "Alternative Discourses of Kali Yuga in AV," 77. I do not believe values such as equality can ever be "absolute," nor are they simply "inculcated," as if it were merely a process of disciplining and rendering bodies docile. Those differences notwithstanding, I am broadly in agreement with the substance of Ponniah's claim.

27. For Ambedkar, the "real remedy" for caste is "intermarriage" (*Annihilation of Caste*, 285). However, caste is "a notion; it is a state of mind" which calls for "a notional change" (286). Given that caste has a "divine basis" (289), the only way to effect this notional change is "to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the shastras." "Not to question the authority of the shastras" is, for Ambedkar, "an incongruous way of carrying on social reform" (287). Ambedkar asserts that it

is impossible to destroy caste without also destroy the Hindu scriptures whose tenets espouse and legitimise the caste system, eventually concluding that the task at hand was to "destroy the sacredness and divinity with which caste has become invested. In the last analysis, this means you must destroy the authority of the shastras and the Vedas" (289). See Ambedkar, BR. *Annihilation of Caste: The Annotated Critical Edition*. Ed. S Anand. Introduction. Arundhati Roy. New Delhi: Navayana, 2014. Print.

28. These years are not human years, but a mythic construction of time rooted in what was believed to be a day in the life of Brahma. These years of all four yugas added up to 12,000, which constituted the mahayuga. A 1000 mahayugas made up one day in the life of Brahma. For an illuminating discussion, see Thapar, *The Past Before Us*, 201-3.

29. See Sumit Sarkar, "Colonial Times: Clocks and Kali-Yuga," *Beyond Nationalist Frames*, 10-37, pp. 14. My claim relating caste to the policing of women's sexuality is derived from the influential work of BR Ambedkar and Uma Chakravarti. See Ambedkar, B. R., and Sharmila Rege. *Against the Madness of Manu: B.R. Ambedkar's Writings on Brahmanical Patriarchy*. New Delhi: Navayana, 2013. Print. Also see Chakravarti, Uma. "Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 28.14 (1993): 579-85. *JSTOR*. Web.

30. It is important to point out here that Thapar, as well as the historian Sumit Sarkar and the linguist and literary historian Sheldon Pollock, have persuasively historicized and contextualized the yuga theory in ways that categorically refute the Orientalist overemphasis on cyclical time and what Orientalist scholarship saw as a lack of historical traditions. It was yuga theory in particular that led numerous Orientalist scholars such as Mircea Eliade to assert that the notion of time in South Asia is cyclical, or—worst of all—that South Asian cultures do not have a sense of history. Eliade's theory of the Eternal Return, in particular, was inspired by yuga theory. Thapar provides a magisterial argument against such Orientalist scholarship in her magnum opus, *The Past Before Us*.

31. Although the spelling differs slightly, this age corresponds to the Krita/ Satya Yuga in brahminical yuga theory. Note that the Kretha Yuga in AV has no connotations of a utopian past and is not, therefore, a Satya Yuga.

32. Sarveswaran, "Sri Vaikunda Swamikal," 10. His summation is derived from Akilam, p4. P Thankiah Nadar, ed. *Ahila Thirattu Ammanai*, Nagercoil, 1935. [Sarveswaran transliterates *Akilathirattu Ammanai* as spelt in the title, but I prefer the now-standard spelling and its corresponding abbreviation, *Akilam*.]

33. While remaining true to Kosambi's intent, I have slightly modified the language from "mechanism of the assimilation" to "mechanisms of assimilation." (Kosambi, 1964, p. 170; also p. 205).

34. I cite Orientalist scholarship here to point out their understanding of Saiva traditions, and not, of course, to uncritically adopt their colonialist notions of civilizational difference.

35. It is important to bear in mind that the AV is a syncretic tradition with pronounced Vaishnavite doctrinal influence. However, its practices and theological discourses draw considerably from the neo-Saivite tradition of 19th century Tamil Nadu.

36. In a vivid parallel, Poykayil Yohannan of the Pratyaksha Raksha Deiva Sabha (PRDS) made similar claims, and the tradition of Protestant revivals and dream revelations that he came out of that gave him legitimacy. Once again, reason and ecstasy, and bodily cleanliness was an analog for spiritual purity. For a detailed and illuminating discussion, see Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*.

37. This claim of mine bears more than a little trace of Aishwary Kumar's thinking, which I wish to acknowledge here. His important book, *Radical Equality*, traces transnational flows that characterize the political thought of Gandhi and Ambedkar, and attempts "an archeology of the decisive and precarious turn in anticolonial thought toward the question of equality, an archeology that attempts to determine not merely the context but the order of conceptuality—the origins, structures, and modulations of concepts—within (and in excess of) which the contours of modern political thought were redrawn in twentieth-century colonial world" (2015, p. 30). While that is the closest he comes to stating outright his interest in tracing that which exceeds the limitations of context, he has, in a number of private conversations, made such claims in less ambiguous terms. In this talk, he says more directly that we "think not in a context but to grow out of it." Aishwary, Russell Berman, and Robert Harrison. "What is Intellectual History and Why Does it Matter?" Introductory remarks by Sojourner Ahébée. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyiE80QZR-w> See 00:38:00-00:42:00. A transcript of the relevant section: "If context is our only game in town, we will never actually unpack the true power of ideas, and their transformative promise. We think not in a context but to grow out it." (00:39:39-00:40:00)

In Nāki's Wake: Slavery and Caste Supremacy in the American Ceylon Mission

Mark E. Balmforth[1]

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Abstract

In 1832, a woman named Caṅkari Nāki died in Ceylon, and her descendants have been haunted by a curse ever since. One of the first converts of the American Ceylon Mission, Nāki was part of an enslaved caste community unique to the island, and one of the few oppressed-caste members of the mission. The circumstances of her death are unclear; the missionary archive is silent on an event that one can presume would have affected the small Christian community, while the family narrative passed through generations is that Nāki was murdered by members of the locally dominant Vellalar caste after marrying one of their own. In response to this archival erasure, this essay draws on historical methods developed by Saidiya Hartman and Gaiutra Bahadur to be accountable to enslaved and indentured lives and, in Hartman's words, to 'make visible the production of disposable lives.' These methods actively question what we can know from the archives of an oppressor and, for this essay, enable a reading of Nāki's life at the centre of a mission struggling over how to approach caste. Nāki's story, I argue, helps reveal an underexplored aspect of the interrelationship between caste and slavery in South Asia, and underlines the value of considering South Asian slave narratives as source material into historiographically- and archivally-obscured aspects of dominant caste identity.

Introduction

For nearly two centuries, a curse has haunted a family anchored to Sri Lanka's Jaffna Peninsula and flung out across the globe as part of the Tamil diaspora. 'This is one of the reasons my grandmother in Staten Island thinks my brother died as a baby,' Ponni Mann wrote to me by email (P. Mann, personal communication,

[1]Department of Religion, Columbia University, 80 Claremont Avenue, New York, USA
E-mail: meb2212@columbia.edu

May 10, 2013).[1] The family's sorrowful and hushed story-telling is the sole memorial to the 1832 death of one of the family's first two converts to Christianity, an event that, according to the family, initiated a curse that claims the life of an infant boy in each generation. Ponni's family believes the death was murder. 'The story,' Ponni continued, 'is that [Nāki] was beaten to death by other upper caste people in the community for aspiring to marry into a higher caste. For this there is a curse on the family.' Ponni's fourth-great grandmother, Caṅkari Nāki, was from an oppressed slave caste in Ceylon, and the reason the union caused social upheaval was that her husband was not. The family narrative states that members of Nāki's husband's dominant caste, the Veḷḷāḷar, were directly responsible for her death, a charge that archival evidence can neither dispute nor affirm. What we can say for certain, however, is that the death and the marriage are linked by an origin story entangled with Sri Lanka's relatively unknown history of caste and slavery, all found deep in the archive of an institution named the American Ceylon Mission (ACM).[2]

Direct details surrounding Nāki's life are few, and those we have were left by the white, male missionaries who—along with their missionary wives—crafted the environment in which Nāki lived for the majority of her life. As far as can be determined, none of her writings or other examples of her school labours, such as needlework, were preserved. The vast challenge that this archival silence represents—ethically, methodologically, and historiographically—is something Saidiya Hartman, Marisa Fuentes, Jennifer L. Morgan, and a group of interlocuters have spent a great deal of time considering. This group, along with several others, has led a re-imagining of how histories of slavery in the Atlantic world can be made accountable to enslaved lives by challenging dominant historical methodologies. The group has argued in various ways for writing a history of the present, a project described by Hartman as seeking 'to illuminate the intimacy of our experience with the lives of the dead, to write our now as it is interrupted by this past, and to imagine a free state … the anticipated future of this writing' (Hartman 2008, 13). That is to say, the group suggests both that histories of slavery in the Atlantic world cannot be disconnected from an ongoing American necropolitics, awash in racial violence and mass incarceration, and that they can assist in the imagining of alternative, free futures. Guided by a comparable project of imagining a caste-free state while remaining grounded in the intertwined historical genealogies of slavery, caste, and contemporary oppressions in South Asia, this article considers the life of Nāki, an enslaved and oppressed-caste, Ceylonese Tamil woman at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Her story, I argue, helps reveal an underexplored aspect of the relationship between caste and slavery in South Asia, and illustrates how new readings of South Asian slavery can transform the way we interpret nineteenth-century social life in the region.

While this article directly reflects and draws from the scholarly debates surrounding representation, archival limitations, and the value of poetics in the historical depiction of enslaved life noted above, my primary goal here is not to directly contribute to this theorization (e.g., Hartman, 2008, 2019; Fuentes, 2016; Morgan, 2016; and Smallwood, 2016). Rather, I am principally seeking to mobilise some of the techniques which Hartman and others are developing in order to continue thinking through the value of narratives surrounding enslavement for South Asian history. In so doing, I pick up a project that Anjali Arondekar (2016) has recently advanced that also runs through the work of Indrani Chatterjee and Richard Eaton (2006), and can be traced back to Dharma Kumar's *Land and Caste in South India* (1965), all of which consider the complexity of defining slavery in the context of South Asian history.

This complexity is especially important considering the dominant association of the word 'slavery' with the Caribbean plantation world and the antebellum American South, and the potential challenges associated with applying the word in other contexts. Arondekar, for instance, points to a problematic tendency to read slavery as a 'structural affiliation' beyond oceanic worlds that can collapse the vast heterogeneity of slavery in South Asian pasts (2016, 148). 'It is equally urgent' Arondekar cautions, 'that we not recuperate yet another stable history of slavery through its lost "Asiatic" form.' My reading of Nāki's life accords with Arondekar's point; enslavement varied considerably between slave communities in Jaffna (let alone across the Indian Ocean), and so we must be cautious about reading enslavement in South Asia as a kind of transnational or transoceanic affiliation.

By focusing on Nāki's life, this article seeks to underline an understudied link between slavery and caste in Sri Lanka's Jaffna Peninsula, particularly as it relates to the American Ceylon Mission, an institution of distinct significance for modern social life in the region. Despite having attracted previous scholarly interest, the ACM's connection to slavery and its impact on caste in Jaffna have never been cohesively discussed. Richard Fox Young and Subramaniam Jebanesan note the mission's overwhelming Veḷḷāḷar (dominant caste) character, but the two fail to show that the mission's Veḷḷāḷar affiliation was a deliberate choice, and thereby miss an opportunity to examine how American missionaries facilitated late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Veḷḷāḷar dominance over the peninsula's economic, social, and political life (1995, pp. 103–104). Apart from setting the mission's caste policy for more than a hundred years, it was this decision that directly contributed to the entrenchment of Jaffna's Veḷḷāḷars in the peninsula's thriving English-language education sector and the upward social mobility and economic stability it enabled. By exploring the links between the ACM, slavery, and caste, this essay underlines how the affiliation between the mission and Veḷḷāḷars was forged, with Nāki at the centre of the story.

In the next section, I briefly explain and provide an example of the method I use in this article to write about Nāki's life, in order to demonstrate its historical and critical value. Following a description of Nāki's life-world (as much as can be confidently described), the article then turns to the vigorous caste debate within the American Ceylon Mission and its conclusion in the 1830s, which later enabled the missionaries to proclaim 'the Vellalas are emphatically our people' (Meigs, Poor, Howland, 1853, p. 41). In considering Nāki's story alongside the story of a caste preference in the mission, this article demonstrates the value of considering South Asian slave and oppressed-caste narratives as source material into historiographically- and archivally-obscured aspects of dominant caste identity.

Methods

In response to archival silences similar to those that conceal Nāki, Saidiya Hartman (2008) and Gaiutra Bahadur (2014) have developed methods to actively question what we can know about precarious, enslaved, and endangered lives from the archives of the oppressor. Their methods open space for questions, for possibilities, for the unknown to become the imagined. 'Critical fabulation,' a strategy Hartman first developed in her groundbreaking essay 'Venus in Two Acts,' refers to the re-arrangement of events from multiple fragmentary narratives to 'displace the received or authorized account' of an event and thus reveal the fiction that history written from archival sources can

provide transparent access to past lives (2008, p. 36). Critical fabulation relies upon the subjunctive mood (e.g., 'she might have thought/done/seen/said') to consider possibilities surrounding the subject, while also emphasizing 'narrative restraint,' foreclosing on the perhaps attractive tendency to neatly resolve narratives by filling in gaps where there is no archival evidence. In response to related challenges in writing about South Asian indentured servitude in the Caribbean, Bahadur has strategically deployed expansive lists of questions that help us think through what we *would* ask the archival materials were they to exist or to document the oppressed subject's life in the same way they document white life. Following in the footsteps of these two scholars, this article combines critical fabulation with Bahadur's interrogative approach in an attempt, in Hartman's words, 'to make visible the production of disposable lives' (2008, 36).

To begin with an example of this method in action: what was the name of our eponymous protagonist? I have referred to her so far as Caṅkari Nāki, her Tamil name, which—like that of other members of the Kōviyar slave caste—records both her given name, Nāki, as well as her mother's given name, Caṅkari. But perhaps it would be more appropriate to call her by the scholarship name she was given soon after becoming one of the first boarding students of the American Ceylon Mission in 1818: 'Elizabeth Worcester.'[3] Without more information, we can only guess her attachment to her two names, let alone the two identity worlds they conveyed. Was her Tamil name the only one she ever identified with? Did she go by both names depending on context, as did so many of Jaffna's Protestants following her? Or might the missionary home where she lived, filled with lessons in a foreign gendered domesticity, have built for Nāki a sense of pride in her English name, stripped as it was of its caste connotation and reminiscent of the elite foreign names that had been common in the peninsula for two centuries? While some formulation of Nāki/Elizabeth—with its embedded recognition of a variegated, historically-located identity—would be most apt, I have used 'Nāki' here as shorthand for this complexity, erring on the side of the name that connected her with her birth mother. Despite this decision, her name should still be thought of as composite and multifaceted, as she too undoubtedly was.

Nāki's Lifeworld

Though we do not know the day of her birth, Nāki was likely born in 1811 in a small mud and palm-leaf dwelling near what is now the town of Tellippaḻai, a village in Jaffna's northwest. Tellippaḻai was, and continues to be, an agricultural community encircled by fields cyclically rotated between fruits and vegetables such as papaya and banana, onion, chili peppers, brinjal, okra, and cassava. Tobacco was also extensively cultivated in the area, especially where veins of deep red, iron-rich soil are found. In general, Jaffna's wealth at the turn of the nineteenth century was in its market gardens, and particularly in its tobacco fields, the vast majority of which were owned by the dominant Veḷḷāḷar caste (Arasaratnam, 1986, pp. 32–34). Nāki was born into one of Jaffna's three enslaved caste communities—later referred to as the Aṭimakaḷ, or slave people—on whom Jaffna's economy depended: the Kōviyar (Balmforth 2016; Wickramasinghe and Schrikker 2019). Unlike the Naḷavar and the Paḷḷar—the other enslaved castes, whose labour was agricultural—the Kōviyar were a domestic labouring community. Today, the community's origins are both unclear and contested, though consensus agrees that the Kōviyars are unique to Jaffna, in contrast to the

Naḷavar and the Paḷḷar, who are also found in other parts of Sri Lanka and South India.[4] Veḷḷāḷar voices have had overwhelming control over depictions of Jaffna's past since at least the eighteenth century, and so for this reason and others, very little is known about so-called Aṭimakaḷ lives.[5] Few writers, in Tamil or English, have incorporated representations originating from the community itself.[6] In the next paragraphs, I filter through the available resources to provide a partial view of Nāki's lifeworld prior to joining the American Ceylon Mission in 1818.

In 1811, the vast majority of Jaffna's enslaved population was corporately owned; that is, enslaved individuals owed their labour to multiple (primarily) Veḷḷāḷar families or individuals, as needed.[7] As Nāki was born into the Kōviyar caste, there is a good chance her mother worked in the homes of one or more Veḷḷāḷar families, cooking and cleaning, pounding rice, carrying water and fuel wood, and providing child care.[8] One of the most striking distinctions between Kōviyars and the other enslaved communities has to do with ritual pollution. Unlike the Naḷavar and Paḷḷar who were (and to some degree, still are) defined as ritually unclean, untouchable, and inadmissible to Veḷḷāḷar social spaces, Kōviyars were understood to share ritual parity with Veḷḷāḷars, and were therefore allowed into their homes (Banks, 1960, p. 67; Perinbanayagam, 1988, p. 27). Even into the latter part of the nineteenth century—well after the formal abolition of slavery on the island in 1844—Kōviyar families continued to live on land provided to them by the Veḷḷāḷar families to whom they owed labour, a relationship that undergirded Veḷḷāḷar authority.[9]

We know Nāki's mother, Caṅkari, was alive at the time of Nāki's 1818 acceptance into the family and homeschool of Susan and Daniel Poor, two of the first American missionaries to settle in Jaffna. What could the prospect of these two white foreigners taking her daughter into their home have meant?[10] Was this an incomparable opportunity that outweighed the dangers? When Caṅkari communicated with the Poors about the arrangement, their intention to teach Nāki to read and write was most likely at the centre of their argument for boarding her. Female literacy in Jaffna in 1818 was largely restricted to the European and Burgher communities, and the few literate Tamil women on the peninsula would have been the small number of *devadāsī*s connected to the larger Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples.[11] Elsewhere, I have pointed out that the American missionaries struggled against significant resistance to female literacy in this period, and had to resort to activities and favours recognised as valuable to the girls, such as teaching them to sew and giving gifts of gold necklaces, to compel the mission's first female students into the study of the written word (2018, pp. 72–73). Would literacy have seemed like something of value to Caṅkari?

In general, social and ritual restrictions according to caste and gender, as well as economic prohibitions, controlled who could access education in the region. In Jaffna, this meant that dominant caste boys were almost exclusively eligible for admission to and able to pay for access to the predominant Tamil educational space of the period, the *tiṇṇai paḷḷikkūṭam*, or veranda school.[12] Caṅkari would likely have known that these were the spaces where young Veḷḷāḷar boys were taught to memorise texts. But would she have associated Nāki's access to literacy with the sacred and temporal authority that marked literacy on the veranda school? Just as we cannot know what Caṅkari thought of the mission's literacy goals, we also cannot adequately judge her interpretation of the economics of allowing Nāki to live with the Poors. At a time when food insecurity posed a regular danger to Jaffna's enslaved communities, and cholera and small pox regularly swept through the villages of the peninsula, allowing her child

to be raised by two foreigners of considerable wealth might have been considered a great boon, a rare opportunity, a risk, or all three. That same year, 1818, Daniel Poor purchased and emancipated two Kōviyar boys: ten-year-old Vīrakatti and his nine-year-old brother Katirkāman (Poor 1821, p. 183).[13] Could Caṅkari have known about Vīrakatti and Katirkāman, and hoped Nāki might also be emancipated? We cannot know for certain, but it is possible Caṅkari thought the Poors represented the best chance Nāki had for a different future.

On April 13, 1822, four years after Nāki entered the homeschool, Daniel Poor recorded Caṅkari's death from cholera (1823, p. 210). Poor's entry also mentions that Caṅkari had for several years been attending church on Sundays and that she had expressed concern for her soul the night before her passing, when two of the Tellippaḻai Tamil mission staff, Nathaniel Niles and Onesimus, visited Caṅkari at her home near the mission. This type of narrative was common for a mission struggling to demonstrate the results of its labour to its funders back in the United States, so we cannot judge whether Poor's comment provides an insight into Caṅkari's opinion of the church and its teachings, or if attending church on Sundays was a rare opportunity to see Nāki. We do not know who informed ten-year-old Nāki of her mother's death, although it is possible it was the mission assistant Onesimus, or Vēlan, as he was known in Tamil. He was Nāki's cousin.

Though only little is known of Caṅkari, even less is known about Nāki's father. The legal structure that defined how slavery operated in Jaffna—Tēsavalamai (country, or customary code)—detailed how marriage between the enslaved was to occur and designated the ownership of children born of such unions. For instance, according to Tēsavalamai, enslaved persons needed the permission of their owners to marry (Mutukisna, 1862, p. 736). However, we cannot assume Caṅkari was ever married. One of the more complicated and disturbing aspects of Kōviyar-Veḷḷāḷar relations, with parallels to what Saidiya Hartman has described as 'the convergence of terror and pleasure in the libidinal economy of slavery,' was the frequency with which Veḷḷāḷar rights to Kōviyar labour included rights to bodies and sex (Hartman, 2008, p. 1; Perinbanayagam, 1988, p. 27). It is impossible to know what kind of control or choice Caṅkari had in her relationship to Nāki's biological father, or what his background was. The Tēsavalamai also stipulates that if a Veḷḷāḷar man has a child with his slave, the caste of the child always follows the mother's, and while the man may emancipate the child, such children are allowed to inherit no more than ten percent of their father's estate (Mutukisna, 1862, p. 736). The inheritance of caste and patrimony likely explains why the three communities of enslaved castes during the period all follow naming practices like Nāki's: her full name, Caṅkari Nāki, denoted her mother's given name followed by her own (female gendered) given name.[14]

At the age of about seven, Nāki was taken into Susan and Daniel Poor's home as one of the mission's first female students (Poor, 1823, p. 210). The home environment was a far cry from the one-room shelter with half-walls of mud and a low-hanging palmyra leaf roof where she would have lived with her mother. While we do not have a description of the Poor's house in Tellippaḻai where Nāki lived, we know quite a bit about the house in which American missionaries Harriet and Miron Winslow lived in the early 1820s, in nearby Uṭuvil. The Winslow house was a four-room, white-washed stone building roofed in palmyra leaves (later exchanged for tiles), with an extended veranda. The largest room had an unadorned but sturdy jackwood table surrounded by rattan-seated chairs for twelve, a small work table with Tamil and English bibles

on it, two globes on stands for the students, and two book cases for their small library with cupboards below for medicine and school records. The house also contained two bedrooms, and was largely unadorned and designed for practicality: 'I do not know that we have an article of furniture not useful or needed,' Harriet explained, 'or which is not as plain as could well be' (Winslow and Winslow, 1835, p. 304). The Winslows' austere approach to furnishing their home was a pattern followed by the American missionary families of the period, an aesthetic remnant of puritanism cultivated in the New England Congregationalist and Presbyterian communities from which the Poors and Winslows came. While the houses were not luxurious by their standards, they provided significantly more comfort and protection than the living arrangements of most of Jaffna's residents, especially its enslaved communities.

The early mission homeschools used several cross-pollinating educational models in concert.[15] Until deep into the nineteenth century, everything from the structure and schedule of study to the subjects taught was under constant experimentation and alteration. The one consistent thread was the presumed relationship between conversion and proximity to missionary ways of being. The principal goal of the mission homeschool was thus to remove children from what were seen as the corrupting influences of society in general, and the children's parents and family in particular. The most advanced educational techniques thus required boarding, such that the school children were completely immersed in a Western, Christian environment.

In these early years, the subjects studied by mission students were limited to the English and Tamil alphabets, and Christian teachings through Bible recitation; girls were introduced early on to a gendered domesticity based on an American Christian ideal that included cooking and an introduction to sewing (de Alwis, 1997; Balmforth, 2018). In 1821, arithmetic was added to the homeschool curriculum. Each day ran on a tight schedule, the basic structure which Miron Winslow described as:

> 5:00 am - Wake up at the first bell
> 6:00 am - Attend prayers
> 7:00 am - Breakfast
> 7:30 am to 11:30 am - Study English in the verandah
> 1:00 pm - Dinner
> 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm - Tamil study, dismissed with prayers
> 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm - Play or work
> 7:00 pm - Supper
> 8:00 pm - All assemble in the verandah for prayers
> The older boys study in the evening but the younger go to bed after prayers
> (Winslow, 1824, p. 206).

How did Nāki navigate the restrictions that were key to the homeschool system? We know Caṅkari, Nāki's mother, lived near the mission until she died when Nāki was about ten, but did they see each other more than on Sundays at church? In what ways were the two kept at a distance? How well did Nāki adapt to life with the Poors? And as she got older, did her learning, literacy, and new sense of Christian decorum increase the distance between her and the rest of her family? If so, how did she navigate that dislocation?

As her descendant Ponni tells the story, when the American Ceylon Mission learned of an extra-conjugal relationship between Nāki and a Veḷḷāḷar man named

Cyrus Mann (Tamil name: Irāmanātaṉ), the Mission compelled them to marry. As we will see below, archival evidence suggests Nāki had more agency in the choice than the family narrative implies, but the archival record otherwise accords with the family story that the two were married. Nāki was at the time the oldest student of marriageable age in the ACM's Oodooville (Uṭuvil) Girls' Boarding School, and Cyrus had recently graduated from Batticotta Seminary, the ACM's premier institution of higher education, and gained a prestigious position as a mission assistant.[16] Nāki and Cyrus' marriage lasted three years and five months before its end at Nāki's death. The date of death, listed in only one location by the mission, was recorded as February 4, 1832 (American Ceylon Mission, 1839, p. 4). In the otherwise meticulous journals kept at each of the ACM's mission stations, no entries are recorded for the days immediately leading to and following Nāki's death. There is no evidence her death was ever investigated by the British colonial state, and no court case resulted from the incident.

Before Nāki died, Ponni explained to me by email, she delivered a baby boy, but soon after losing his mother, 'the child was neglected and became very sick, getting bad sores all over his body. Then Cyrus married a second time, this time [to] an upper caste lady' (P. Mann, personal communication, May 10, 2013). According to the mission archive, Cyrus did indeed marry a Veḷḷāḷar student named Ann Bates (Tamil name: Pūtar Cītēvaṉ) on July 13, 1835 (American Ceylon Mission, 1839, p. 10). 'Apparently, the very next day after getting married,' Ponni continued, 'some well-meaning busybodies from the town came and told her that Cyrus had a child from his first marriage. But she seems like a nice lady, because she went and found the child and adopted him.' The baby was named Daniel Poor Mann, and went on to become one of the first Tamil allopathic medical graduates, studying under Samuel Fisk Green between 1856 and 1859 (Green, 1891, p. 454). Everything that we know about Cyrus' marriage to Ann Bates points to the social acceptance of the marriage, a fact that only underlines the rupture caused by his marriage to Nāki and the birth of their child. In order to understand the full context of Nāki's marriage to Cyrus and the implications of her death, I now turn to the American Ceylon Mission's unsteady relationship to caste.

Caste in the American Ceylon Mission, 1816–1853

In the previous section, I introduced the social and educational spaces that Nāki inhabited and the lifeworld in which she was raised, and eventually died. I also relayed the Mann family narrative that Nāki's life ended in fatal violence because her marriage crossed caste boundaries. This section provides background on how and why this highly unusual inter-caste marriage occurred, which I argue is directly tied to the American Ceylon Mission's shifting policies on caste in its schools and churches in the years following 1816.[17] As we will see, leaders in the mission moved from an initial tendency toward flexibility and the conciliation of caste to an openly hostile position in which Nāki became implicated, before eventually settling on an accommodation of caste that solely benefited Veḷḷāḷars. In order to understand how this came about, I begin where the American missionaries began, in a seminary in Andover, Massachusetts.

The missionaries that contributed to the ACM's approach to caste arrived in Ceylon with knowledge gleaned from the extensive missionary networks present in South Asia from the fifteenth century. Among the company, Miron Winslow's grasp of caste was probably the most sophisticated upon arrival. For his graduate studies at Andover Theological Seminary, Winslow had written a four hundred page dissertation on the history of Christian missions in which he cited a range of materials, including popular American histories of mission and Christianity in Asia that discuss Roberto Nobili's and Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg's varied methodological approaches to caste and their relative levels of success.[18] Based on more than a century of accumulated missionary knowledge, Winslow likely understood that the American Ceylon Mission's success hinged on the way it addressed caste.

In the years between the mission's establishment in 1816 and the 1823 founding of Batticotta Seminary, there was no settled approach to who the mission should train. Early on, the ideal students the mission homeschools intended to attract were from economically-precarious families or oppressed castes. In his journal of September 1818, Benjamin C. Meigs wrote that 'It has always been principally to the poor that the Gospel is preached. So it is among this people. It is from this class that we must look for boys to be supported and educated in our families' (1819, p. 228). In October of the same year, the mission was still under the impression that it was possible to successfully run schools composed entirely of the poor, that is, at least partially made up of oppressed caste students (1819, p. 230). However, during the same period, the mission also systematically allowed the operation of caste privileges demanded by the few Veḷḷāḷar members of its churches and schools, to ensure they remained. Examples of this are found in the missionary journals and reports of the period, such as Daniel Poor's willingness to allow some of the first students that lived with his family to abide by the dietary habits of their Tamil Śaiva relatives (Poor, 1820, p. 279).

By 1823, a shift occurred in the views of mission leaders, and caste accommodation was no longer approached with the same flexibility. While no clear single event appears to have provoked this turn, it should not come as a surprise as the zeitgeist of European mission itself was in transition, with a new generation of British and German missionaries zealously testing new methods in nearby India. D. Dennis Hudson (2000) has tracked a similar transition in the English-Halle mission at Tranquebar in the first decades of the nineteenth century, where a new guard of missionaries threw out the accumulated approaches to ceremony, music, decoration, and caste developed over a hundred years by their German predecessors. In particular, we know that C.T.E. Rhenius, one of these 'new' missionaries who exhibited a more rigid approach to caste in his South Indian congregation, was in correspondence with the American missionaries in Jaffna regarding his approaches to eradicating caste in his own mission.

From the early 1820s, the American Ceylon Mission leadership also began to note a flexibility in the operation of caste—which they had previously believed to be rigid—and as a result tested their own ways to 'break' caste among their students. For instance, shortly after the commencement of classes at Batticotta Seminary, the students collectively refused to eat on the mission premises due to its ritual impurity, and asked that a separate cook house be built on land next to the seminary owned by a

Śaiva Veḷḷāḷar (American Ceylon Mission, 1834, pp. 292–293). Immediately following the event, the following response was recorded in the Mission's meeting minutes:

_____Batticotta July 22, 1823_____

> After the opening of the Central School, the Brethren adjourned for business and the first subject discussed was the importance of using all proper means for the suppression of caste.
> After a long discussion (during most which Br. Knight was also present) it was Voted. That no boy refusing to eat on the premises on the ground of caste shall be allowed to remain in any of the Boarding Schools or in the School at Batticotta, also,
> Voted. That no distinction of caste be allowed in the School at Batticotta (*Minutes 1815–1844*, p. 48, underline in original).

Despite the rigid tone of the entry, reports indicate that the mission acquiesced to the students' demand, and for more than a year they were allowed to cook and eat their meals in the new location. By 1825 however, the cook house had been removed, and though several of the boys left the school in protest, most remained. The mission's leaders later explained that they interpreted such responses to caste challenges as malleability. From the leadership's perspective, this quality differentiated caste in Jaffna from its operation in India, a difference attributed to centuries of foreign colonial intervention in Jaffna's social life (Meigs et al., 1853). It appears that such experiences initially provoked a sense of optimism among the missionaries that the end of caste in the mission was in fact possible. By 1824, this strict approach was enforced by a stark new mission policy which stated that 'we know no distinction of caste at the Lord's table' (Minutes 1815–1844, p. 52).

In addition to the restriction of consumption practices and other types of caste-based privileges (such as preferential seating), several entries in the ACM's minute book for the period point to another experimental method of breaking caste, which brings Nāki back to the centre of our story:

_____February 1, 1826_____

> Brother Woodward was requested to redeem Elizabeth Worcester (   ) from slavery and also to endeavour to have her married to Sautio (*Minutes 1815–1844*, p. 74).

Henry Woodward was, at the time, stationed at Nāki's home village of Tellippaḷai. Though her mother had died four years earlier, the mission was likely aware of Nāki's owner, who would need to permit her emancipation.[19] For reasons that are not listed in the mission minutes or Woodward's journal, Nāki did not marry Sautio, though evidence suggests that she directly refused the match.[20] Two years would pass before, in August of 1828, Nāki accepted an offer to marry Cyrus Mann, a Veḷḷāḷar. As mentioned above, by the time of the wedding Cyrus had successfully completed his studies at Batticotta Seminary, had been hired by the mission as an assistant, and was well on his way to a stable and prosperous future. What then might this marriage have to do with the mission's attempts to break caste?

Between 1822 and February 4, 1832, the day of Nāki's death, there were a total of thirteen marriages in the mission. Of these, at least eight were inter-caste marriages.[21]

The actual number may be higher, but complete caste data for every mission member is unavailable, as the mission stopped maintaining caste records related to school and church membership from approximately 1825.[22] The mission's first inter-caste wedding, between Daniel Smead (Tamil name: Vīrakatti, a Veḷḷāḷar) and Miranda Safford (Tamil name: Cēllāttai, a Caṇṭāḷar), was recorded as a great success: 'This marriage has, for several reasons, produced considerable excitement among the people. The parties are of different casts [sic]. … According to the custom of the people an individual of one of these casts [sic] cannot marry nor even eat with an individual of the other. But at this time, prejudice and custom lost their influence and all united in partaking of a feast prepared for the occasion *on our premises*' (American Ceylon Mission, 1823, p. 7, emphasis in original). On October 13, 1830, Elias Cornelius (Tamil name: Vīrakatti)—a Kōviyar and one of the two boys Daniel Poor purchased and emancipated in 1818—was married to Elizabeth Appleton, a dominant caste Maṭaippaḷḷi (Winslow, 1831, p. 269). Following Nāki's death, however, the mission's direct attempts to break caste, through marriage or any other means, appear to have stopped. Not a single inter-caste marriage was pursued by the mission after her death.

What could Nāki's death have meant for the small Christian community of only about 250 people? Given the frequency of epidemics such as cholera and small pox, deaths in the ACM were not irregular occurrences.[23] Instances of mistreatment or harassment against church members were also not rare, but generally took the form of verbal abuse or thrown rocks and had never led to a death. We know that stories of such attacks against members of the mission churches became important content for the mission's writings. A significant aspect of the mission's effort to ensure its economic stability was to maintain a rapt audience back in America that was aware of the state of the mission and invested in its continuation, literally and figuratively. Persecution was a trope the missionaries could and did rely upon and monetize by appealing for funds to, for instance, repair buildings devastated by arson. Nāki's death should have precipitated a deluge of written documentation, especially if her death was caused by non-Christians. Martyrdom could very well have become a remembered narrative: the collected letters of Harriet Newell, the young American missionary who died on route to South Asia in 1812, were turned into a best-selling memoir that inspired generations of young American Christian women. Yet, for Nāki, there was no public memorialisation, and no surviving written documentation of the circumstances surrounding her death.

What could have caused the mission not to draw attention to her death? If she was killed by dominant caste members for attempting to be upwardly mobile, as the Mann family narrative indicates, is it possible the missionaries felt in some way responsible for the death? Would the thousands of American Christian readers who regularly followed the mission's progress have withheld their support if Nāki's death was interpreted as connected to the mission? It is worth noting that Nāki's death came at a time of great struggle for the ACM. For ten years, the mission had been partially suppressed by a British Governor who was suspicious of Americans and unwilling to grant the mission's requests to expand their size and establish a printing press. Might the mission have wanted to avoid any threat to its position on the island, which a scandal or embarrassment of this scale might have precipitated? Answers are not readily available, but we can say for certain that, in the wake of Nāki's death, the ACM gradually began to accept the operation of Veḷḷāḷar caste privilege. This slow transformation eventually became a vigorous stance for an exclusive affiliation with

the dominant caste community, at the expense of building a mixed-caste church, set of schools, and community.

One place where we see the maturation of this policy is in an extended response to dozens of questions sent to the mission in 1838 (American Ceylon Mission, 1838). In the questionnaire, a group of mission leaders provided blunt appraisals of their collective methods relating to caste in response to the question, 'If one caste must prevail [in the boarding school], which one is most desirable to get?' The replies by Daniel Poor and Levi Spaulding are striking:

I think we are right in this particular in Jaffna. We have to do chiefly with the higher castes [which] constitute the mass of society. Bro. Poor says [']The castes which prevails as a general thing. But high caste as far as possible, not to exclude the predominant caste of the country.['] Mr [C.T.E.] Rhenius Seminary was once entirely broken broken [sic] up on account of admitting [oppressed caste] Shanars. Afterwards one or two of his old scholars returned. The probability is that hereafter they will be generally low caste. I think Mr R made a great mistake. It is much easier working down than up. L Spaulding (American Ceylon Mission, 1838).

Here, Levi Spaulding echoes Roberto Nobili's famous contention that if one converts the dominant sections of a society, all others will follow, and describes C.T.E. Rhenius' experiments for breaking caste by educating oppressed caste students as 'a great mistake' (Županov, 1999, p. 30). Though by the mid-1830s this argument was circulating among mission leaders in Jaffna, the argument would not be made public in the United States until 1853, when three of the mission's leaders published an extended analysis of caste entitled *Caste, in the Island of Ceylon*.

By the time this treatise was written, the American Ceylon Mission was at the centre of a regional disagreement between Protestant missionaries over caste in the church in South Asia, pitted against what has been described as a nineteenth-century Indian missionary consensus against caste (Forrester, 1980).[24] In the process of their analysis, the ACM leadership produced the first extended foreign consideration of caste in Jaffna, a work that has influenced every subsequent scholarly analysis of caste among the Tamil population of Sri Lanka.[25] In addition to advancing an argument that caste is substantively different in Ceylon than in India and that the ACM's alliance with the Veḷḷāḷar was deeply productive, there are two key aspects of the treatise which bear on the interests of this article. First, while the ACM leaders agree with the larger missionary appraisal that caste 'is a great evil' and 'the very cement of Hindooism,' they emphasize that attempting to break caste had led to calamity: 'all compulsory means used for this purpose,' they note, '…are generally disastrous to the assailants and the assailed; to the Christian church, and to the heathen population at large' (Meigs, et al., 1853 pp. 20–21). Second, the authors argue that the 'appropriate' method for abolishing caste is 'light and love on the part of the missionaries, docility and growth in piety on the part of the native converts, together with the promised influences of the Holy Spirit' (Meigs, et al 1853 p. 21). These two arguments reveal the settled result of the mission's struggle to determine an approach to caste: trying to directly attack caste had failed and had been 'disastrous' in some notably unspecified way, and the most efficacious response should be patience and trust in God for a solution.

Though this policy can be dated at least to the 1830s, *Caste, in the Island of Ceylon* represents the public articulation of a position on caste from which the ACM would not alter over the course of the nineteenth century.[26] Accepting caste in the mission while attempting to attract the diversity of Jaffna's population had been found impracticable, especially as the majority of those interested in joining the mission schools had come from the dominant Veḷḷāḷar caste. When it was initially decided in 1824 that caste had become an obstacle incompatible with Christian theology, many attempts to stamp out its vestiges were made, from removing students unwilling to eat on mission land and requiring that church members of different castes sit together, to eventually marrying a group of students across caste lines. No detailed explanation is provided in the mission minutes or the missionary journals as to why breaking caste was determined to be a failed enterprise. And despite a thorough description of the mission's attempts to break caste in their pamphlet *Caste, in the Island of Ceylon*, references to inter-caste marriage are conspicuously absent. In my conclusion, I would like to suggest that the mission leadership's admission that the effort was 'generally disastrous to the assailants and the assailed,' should be taken seriously and literally, bringing Nāki's life to centre stage once again.

Conclusion

In the decade preceding Nāki's death, the ACM pursued the spread of Christianity by attempting to knock down the pillars on which they thought 'Hindooism' rested. Among these pillars, caste was considered the most important practice to undermine, and so to break caste the mission arranged a number of mixed-caste activities, from dining and seating, to schooling and marriage. We cannot affirm or deny the Mann family narrative that Nāki was murdered, but we can place her life, marriage, and death at the centre of an institution seeking to use every tool at its disposal to expand its community and spread its message.

In a macro sense, the ACM's decision to affiliate with the Veḷḷāḷar directly contributed to that group's social and economic control over Jaffna's oppressed communities. However, it also cannot be ignored that the American Christian project provided a temporary space for Nāki to rewrite certain aspects of her own lifeworld, from her cultivation of a foreign, Christian domesticity to her choice of a marital and sexual partner. In other words, while overall the ACM made life for Jaffna's enslaved communities more difficult by restricting means for social advancement solely to the dominant caste, it also allowed a limited number of opportunities to challenge caste hegemony. Nāki's story is a reminder of the ambiguous historical interaction between Christian mission, slavery, and caste in South Asia, one that could and did facilitate both oppressed-caste social mobility, as well as provide tools that could be leveraged as sophisticated weapons of oppression.

One result of this article is the demonstration of how the history of the American Ceylon Mission is inextricably linked to caste and slavery. The mission's determination to align with the slave-holding Veḷḷāḷar caste followed a decade-long attempt to compel a mixed-caste community through mixed seating, dining, and marriage that endeavoured to bind people from dominant, oppressed, and enslaved castes. The

ACM's Veḷḷāḷar affiliation had far-reaching effects that include the caste community's multi-generational control over English language education and its promise of social mobility. This control facilitated ongoing and durable caste divisions on the peninsula that can still be seen among some Jaffna Tamils. In other words, the story of how the American Ceylon Mission chose to identify with and support the Veḷḷāḷar, a decision made in the context of slavery and elucidated through a reading of Nāki's story, is central to the operation of caste in Jaffna's modern period.

Finally, at the opening of this article I pointed to Saidiya Hartman's method of critical fabulation and her goal 'to make visible the production of disposable lives' (2008, 36). I would argue that Nāki's story also helps us to think about human disposability in South Asia, how it came to be, how it is perpetuated, and how it has been concealed, archivally and otherwise. Had I relied solely upon the received colonial and missionary archives for the research from which this article is drawn, it is unlikely that the few direct references to Nāki would have provoked sustained consideration. Instead, my reading of those archives was utterly perhaps, altered? by my emotional and academic investment in and friendships with families connected to the American Ceylon Mission. It is through these relationships that I was allowed to learn of the haunting that the Mann family is still burdened with, and given permission to explore the narrative's significance for South Asian history. These lessons radically perhaps, altered? the way I interacted with the archival materials of the American Ceylon Mission, and offer the possibility for new ways to read and write South Asian history in Nāki's wake.

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

1. "Ponni Mann" is a pseudonym.
2. Scholars have only recently started to explore the connection between slavery and caste in Sri Lanka's past. E.g., Balmforth 2016; Wickramasinghe and Schrikker 2019.
3. The name "Elizabeth Worcester" was the result of a $20 donation from the Ladies' Association of Peacham, Vermont in 1820. Thousands of similar donations were given, each paying for the education, room, and board of an ACM mission student for one year. In the first seventeen years of the scholarship programme alone, more than $40,000 was donated, providing upwards of 2,000 funded years of education to several hundred young men and women. The programme continued until 1855 and resulted in dozens of Jaffna Tamil families with American surnames like Breckenridge, Mills, Tappan, and Mann.
4. The predominant explanation for the origin of the Kōviyar relies upon an etymological argument linking the community's name with the dominant Sinhalese cultivating caste, the Goyigama. This similarity is cited as evidence that at one

point the Kōviyar were Sinhalese Goyigamas captured in battle or purchased as slaves. M.D. Raghavan has an alternative approach that explains the Kōviyar's name based on a traditional occupation as cowherds linked to the monarchy. See Raghavan 1954. Unlike many members of the other two previously-enslaved communities, many Kōviyars continue to self-identify as such today. Thanks to Pathmanesan Sanmugeswaran for this detail.

5. The authors of foundational texts of Jaffna history, the Yāḻppāṇa Vaipavamālai (1736?) and the Kailāya Mālai, as well as the peninsula's subsequent modern historians have with one exception—Kārttikēcu Civattampi—been Veḷḷāḷar.

6. One valuable exception to this exists: Arasaratnam (1982) highlighted early eighteenth-century Cāṇār petitions to the Dutch governor that detail their origin story and its implications for taxation at odds with the taxation requirements required of them under the Dutch (pp. 377–92).

7. In 1818, corporate ownership of slaves on the island was abolished by order of the British colonial government. The same command ordered the creation of an island-wide registry for all slaves, and refusal to participate carried the punishment of the slave's emancipation. During periods of employment, slaves received a meagre payment in kind from their owners. When not working for an owner, slaves were required to provide for themselves.

8. Miron Winslow (1825) provided a small description of such labour in a published letter to his brother (p. 825).

9. Rupa Viswanath (2014) notes the use of land ownership and the threat of eviction as a principal method of landlords in South India to maintain positions of dominance over those in their employ and living on their land (p. 98).

10. Karen Valgårda (2009) has written about coercion in the encounter between oppressed-caste Tamil parents and the Danish missionaries seeking their children for boarding schools in the 1860s and 1870s South Arcot district.

11. For insight into the Sri Lankan *devadāsī* world, see Soneji 2010.

12. For more on the world of *tiṇṇai paḷḷikkūṭam* education, see Raman 2010 and Balmforth 2019.

13. Soon after joining the American mission, Vīrakatti was given the name Elias Cornelius and his brother Katirakāman was renamed Danvers. Vīrakatti and Katirkāman were supported by the Female Society for Educating Heathen Children of Salem, Massachusetts and the Masonic Jordan Lodge of Danvers, Massachusetts, respectively (Poor, 1821, p. 197).

14. This is an unheard-of practice in Jaffna today, where naming conventions for nearly all communities (except Protestant Christians) follow the pattern of a child's father's (or after marriage, husband's) given name followed by the child's gendered given name.

15. The models at work here are numerous, including the famous Bell-Lancastrian, Madras, or Monitorial system, the common Tamil *tiṇṇai paḷḷikkūṭam* model, Christoph Samuel John's pedagogical innovations as part of his work as a missionary at the Halle-Tranquebar mission in South India, and local Jaffna innovations produced by John's Tamil student and collaborator Christian David. For more on the ACM's pedagogical inheritance, see Balmforth 2019 and Balmforth 2020.

16. Levi Spaulding created a table tracking the graduates from Oodooville Girl's College and the professions of their husbands between 1824 and 1840 (Mission Letter for 1864, 1864). 'Missionary assistant' was described alongside 'lawyer,' 'Mudaliyar' (village headman), and 'writer in a government office.'

17. For a review of literature on caste in Jaffna, see Kuganathan 2014.

18. These histories included Lord (1813), Brown (1816), and Buchanan (1811).

19. In 1826, emancipation could be granted after the value of the slave was determined by several parties separately nominated by both the owner and slave. The amount was then paid to the owner, and a stamp tax was paid to the colonial state. No further reference to Nāki's enslavement is made in the minutes or Woodward's journal, and so we do not know how much was paid to Nāki's owner, if indeed such a payment was made. Nāki was never entered into the slave registry required by law from 1818, and so we do not even know if in fact a payment would have been required, since, at least legally, statutory emancipation resulted from an owner failing to register his or her slave.

20. Sautio was at the time employed in the house of Daniel Poor. It is not possible to determine his caste, as there are indications that he was from an oppressed caste—namely, he worked in a labouring position, he was never a student, and his name is frequently given simply as 'Sautio,' the simplicity of which could indicate he was oppressed caste—and also indications of dominant caste status. In another entry in the ACM minute book, Sautio is referred to as 'Sautiapillai.' In the second half of the nineteenth century, the suffix 'pillai' became a Veḷḷāḷar marker and was increasingly added to names. It is unclear whether this first effort to arrange a marriage for Nāki was to be an inter-caste marriage.

21. Of the thirteen marriages that took place within the mission between 1822 and Nāki's death on February 4, 1832, eight can be confirmed to be inter-caste, four were between parties of the same caste, and one cannot be identified. The following marriages can be identified as inter-caste: April 3, 1822 - Daniel Smead (Veḷḷāḷar) and Miranda Safford (Caṇṭāḷar), 1825 - Jordan Lodge (Ciṭṭiyar) and Susanna Hopkins (Veḷḷāḷar), June 19, 1828 - Asa McFarland (Maṭaippaḷḷi) and Fanny Hall (Veḷḷāḷar), August 27, 1828 - Cyrus Mann (Veḷḷāḷar) and Elizabeth Worcester (Nāki, Kōviyar), October 13, 1830 - Elias Cornelius (Vīrakatti, Kōviyar) and Elizabeth Appleton (Maṭaippaḷḷi), October 13, 1830 - Seth Payson (Ciṭṭiyar) and Louisa Hawes (Veḷḷāḷar), May 3, 1831 - Thomas Adams (Veḷḷāḷar) and Susan Huntington (Maṭaippaḷḷi), May 3, 1831 - Philip (Caraiyār) and Joanna Lathrup (Ciṭṭiyar). The following same caste marriages can be confirmed: March 13, 1824 - Ebenezer Porter (Veḷḷāḷar) and Mary Poor (Veḷḷāḷar), June 21, 1826 - Samuel Davis (Veḷḷāḷar) and Betsey C. Pomeroy (Veḷḷāḷar), September 2, 1830 - John B. Lawrence (Veḷḷāḷar) and Mary Sweetser (Veḷḷāḷar), November 8, 1831 - Cyrus Kingsbury (Veḷḷāḷar) and Mary Dayton (Veḷḷāḷar). The January 9, 1828 marriage of Samuel Ambrose (likely Veḷḷāḷar, Ciṭṭiyar, or Maṭaippaḷḷi) and Harriet Newell (Veḷḷāḷar) cannot be labeled as inter-caste or same caste because Samuel Ambrose's caste affiliation cannot be identified from available records.

22. No reason is given for this abrupt change, although given the general movement toward an entirely Veḷḷāḷar student body and an overwhelmingly Veḷḷāḷar church membership, it is perhaps not a surprising decision thanks to Richard Fox Young for this point. Excising the castes of church and school members had the added

benefit of not highlighting just how dramatically Veḷḷāḷar the American Ceylon Mission had become, a fact that readers in Boston might have questioned and that the mission might not have been ready to publicly address. The Veḷḷāḷar-ization of the mission would not be cohesively explained in any public format until 1853.

23. The ACM journals from the first half of the nineteenth century are filled with cyclical waves of epidemic, and in the years before the establishment of mission hospitals, community members of all types repeatedly turned to the missionaries for medical care. Over and over, adults and children from the nearby communities were brought to the mission stations with serious health emergencies, from bleeding compound fractures to starvation. E.g., Winslow, 1835, p. 207.

24. Rupa Viswanath (2014) has recently pushed against this cohesiveness by highlighting ways in which missionaries in South India accepted caste divisions when strategically convenient, a flexibility that accords with the ACM's activity in Jaffna.

25. Several Dutch descriptions of caste in Jaffna have survived, although they generally are limited to lists of castes, and none match the depth of analysis found in *Caste, in the Island of Ceylon*. In the work, Meigs, et al. (1853) provide an early proto-anthropological description of Jaffna's caste paradigm as dominated by a tripartite, monarchical model, headed by Veḷḷāḷar landowners who employ a set of artisan castes called Kuṭimakaḷ and own slaves (p. 17). This is the same model later described in Rasanayagam [1926] 1984 (p. 383) and Hocart 1968 (p. 7).

26. Even well into the twentieth century the ACM remained ambivalent regarding the plight of oppressed caste education. In 1915, Dr. J. L. Barton, then Secretary of the ABCFM, received the ACM's support for a plan to open a school specifically targeting 'the depressed classes' that, the mission admitted, had so long been ignored. The plan never came to fruition (American Ceylon Mission, 1914–1915).

The Identity of Language and the Language of Erasure: Urdu and the Racialized-Decastification of the "Backward Musalmaan" in India

Sanober Umar[1]
(Bluestone Rising Scholar Honorable Mention 2019)

Abstract

The decline of Urdu in post-colonial Uttar Pradesh has often been studied alongside the fall of Muslim representation in public services and the 'job market' in independent India. However, there remains a severe dearth in scholarship that intertwines the tropes surrounding Urdu as 'foreign' to India and the role that the racialization of the language played in insidiously collaborating with post-colonial governmentality which problematically 'decastified' and therefore circumscribed the production of 'Muslim minority' citizen identity. I argue that since the 1950s the polemics of Urdu and reasons cited for its lack of institutional recognition as a regional/linguistic minority language in Uttar Pradesh (until 1994) significantly informed the constitutional construction of 'the casteless Muslim' in the same stage setting era of the 1950s. These seemingly disparate sites of language and caste worked together to systematically deprive some of the most marginalised lower caste and Dalit Muslims access to affirmative action as their cultural-political economies witnessed a drastic fall in the early decades after Partition. This article addresses the connections between the production of Muslims as 'foreign' and the simultaneous relegation of Muslim 'indigenous' histories of conversion (from Dalit and lower caste backgrounds) to the periphery under ahistoric, demeaning, and monolith stereotypes of the 'backward Musalmaan.' Furthermore, this article contends that the north Indian 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan' hegemony as espoused by Hindu traditionalist Congress and Jan Sangh leaders during the 1950s determined the contours of "Indian Muslim identity" within and outside the diverse Muslim community, despite significant fractures between the Ashraf and non-Ashraf (Specifically Pasmanda) Muslim leadership over the years.

[1]PhD Scholar, Department of History, Queen's University, Canada
E-mail: s.umar@queensu.ca

Keywords

Urdu, Caste, Hindi, Ashraf Muslims, Pasmanda Muslims, Representation, Decastification, Backward, Racialization, Constitutional Debates, Minoritysm, Memory, Genealogies

Introduction

The long decade of the 1950s set an important precedence for the many 'contradictions' that came to stereotype Muslims in India, with dangerous consequences for the community institutionally, normatively, and in their gradual racialization as 'Indian Muslims,' despite fractions and diversity within the community. The structure of India's new liberal democratic order only allowed for elite minority interests to be represented, and competing or contesting interests within the Muslim community (particularly along the lines of class, caste, and gender) were often undermined in the problematic structures of representational politics (Hasan, 2009 p 165). Both nativist Hindu leadership of the Congress, whom Christopher Jaffrelot refers to as 'Hindu traditionalists,' and openly right wing Hindus from the Jan Sangh played a pivotal role during the 1950s in defining the characteristics of Muslim identity and citizenship which would dominate the community's national representation in India. These contours of Muslim identity and minoritization in India were further amplified by Ashraf Muslim leadership in North India that laid exclusive claim towards representing the community's 'voice,' despite being challenged from Pasmanda Muslim leaders.[1] Subsequently there were very real material consequences that accompanied the lack of representation for marginalised Muslims in mainstream politics. Against this background, I contend that the decline of Urdu must be studied in this context of post-colonial governmentality and normative tropes that came to surround the Muslim populace of India in this era. Much of the scholarship on Urdu has centred around Urdu literature as a site of 'Muslim self-fashioning' ranging from aristocratic Muslims mourning their declining privilege and/or bourgeois aspirations of Muslims under colonialism (Naqvi, 2008; Joshi, 2001), to the systematic attempts to end the language in post-colonial India (Farouqui, 1994; Pai, 2002; Sajjad, 2014). Other significant scholarly interventions have highlighted Urdu as a language of nationalist contestations and competing 'secular' visions (Datla, 2013), which framed minority identities in complex ways under late colonialism. Innovative works have also demonstrated the problems of characterising Urdu as a strictly Islamic language (due to the ignorance of regional histories of belonging, culture, and religion).[2] Departing from this scholarship, this article contends that the decline of Urdu must be studied in the context of a post-colonial governmentality that systematically erased caste from Muslim identity and normalised tropes of 'foreign (casteless) and backward Musalmaans' in the immediate aftermath of Partition. I argue that these seemingly disparate processes of language and caste constituted the terms for 'social reference' of Muslim minority citizenship along racialized lines.

    The fall of Urdu in Uttar Pradesh, specifically in Lucknow which some Urdu writers claim was the birthplace of the language, had consequences not just for representational politics within Lucknow or Uttar Pradesh, but beyond the city and the language in terms of Muslim representation in India at large. By focusing on the construction of the Muslim as a foreigner, as casteless, and as backward in official and

public discourses, this article argues that the politics of Urdu and constitutional erasure of caste among Muslims helped constitute the Muslim community as a minority in India through restrictive parameters that systematically targeted socio-economic prospects of the community while ahistoricising their presence in India through otherising racialized tropes. These developments on questions of language and caste recognition took place simultaneously during the 1950s and informed each other, subsequently impacting the diverse Muslim community's collective self-perception and socio-economic status as minority citizens in the decades to come.

Perhaps it is best to summarize what this article is *not* about, and then highlight what it seeks to do instead, finally surmising those strands together cohesively. This article is not on Urdu as a medium for self-fashioning elite Ashraf Muslims who lamented the 'death of the city' in *shahr-i-adab* (the city of high culture and noble manners) kind of literatures; instead it is about how Ashrafs came to be routinely portrayed by prominent leaders of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh as 'foreigners' since medieval times. This article is not about caste politics per se, rather how the trope of the foreigner was used as a way to otherize and prevent some of the most downtrodden Muslims from availing affirmative action policies, including the complex histories of how some lower caste and Dalit Muslim groups themselves tried to find liberation away from their stigmatized caste histories - unfortunately without success as conversion did not eclipse casteist tropes against them. This article is not just about the institutional history of the fall of Urdu in Uttar Pradesh, but it focuses on how Urdu was used to shape the minority citizen status of Muslims, and how it impacted their political economy and caste histories in Lucknow. The article deploys both written materials documenting these issues and oral history testimonies of Ashraf and Pasmanda Muslims in Lucknow. In the process, this article traces the contours that defined the production of Muslim minoritism in India, externally by post-colonial governmentality of the 1950s, and internally by Muslims themselves led by Ashraf leadership despite political and social fractures within the community. Lastly, this article dwells on how the popular trope of the 'backward Musalmaan' continues to ignore the histories and systematic oppression of Muslim marginalisation in India, whilst racializing a diverse community that has gradually self-homogenized in the face of demeaning stereotypes and increasing popularity of Hindu nationalist conceptions of their 'un-belonging.'

Making Muslims Foreigners

As Saadia Toor has observed, the declaration of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan stemmed from Muslim concerns almost half a century prior to the Partition when the Hindi movement in undivided India took off under the patronage of Hindu leaders, often from the Congress. Notes Toor, "For Muslim Nationalists in Pakistan, Urdu's fate in India also represented the precarious status of Indian Muslims in Independent India, retroactively justifying their fears of living under a Hindu majority, and solidifying the idea that Pakistan was Urdu's "home," where it could be protected and preserved as a repository of Indo-Muslim culture and history."

White borders were drawn and confusion prevailed on how to regulate them following the 1947 creation of Pakistan with notable contestations over Kashmiri lands between India and Pakistan,[3] many Muslims and non-Muslims were alarmed at the rushed attempts to strike off Urdu as a medium of instruction in schools around

Uttar Pradesh (Dayal, 1998).[4] In his detailed report on the decline of Urdu, Salauddin Usman, an English writing anti-colonial 'freedom fighter' wrote:

> In 1947, the U.P government had declared Hindi as the medium of instruction for high school and intermediate classes; and was in such a hurry to enforce it that it had not allowed the Urdu speaking students of classes X and XII to reply (answer) in Urdu in their examinations…. consequently whenever a demand was made for facilities for Urdu-speaking people, those demands were branded as (those by) 'communalists' and even as demands by 'Pakistani agents' within India, by one or the other spokesmen of Hindi.
>
> (Salahuddin Usman, 1992)

Yet, lovers of the Urdu language like Pandit Anand Narain Mulla pointed out that it was the duty of the State to safeguard Urdu because the Constitution had given these *guarantees to all linguistic and cultural minorities* [italics mine] in the country.[5]

Unfortunately for Urdu advocates across religion like Usman and Pandit Mulla, the strong association of the language with Pakistan (despite many non-Muslims being well versed in it given its prior history as one the official court and government languages) worked against their efforts to advocate for the language. When Muslims protested this measure of removing Urdu as a language medium for important school exams, in a speech in 1949 at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh's Congress leader and member of the *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan* (a national organisation for the advocacy of sanskritised Hindi), Purshottam Das Tandon forcefully argued as follows.

> The Muslim *must stop talking* [italics mine] about a culture and civilization *foreign to our culture* [italics mine] and genius. They should accept Indian culture. One culture and one language will pave the way for real unity. Urdu symbolises a foreign culture.
>
> (National Herald, 1948)

Tandon's rhetoric of Urdu and its 'place' in new India challenged Lucknow Muslim perceptions of their belonging to a diverse Indian body politic. Barely two years after the Partition, Urdu, a language that had flourished if not originated in Lucknow, was declared as 'foreign' by prominent leaders of the Congress. Furthermore, the discourse advocated (and eventually accepted) by Hindi Sahitya Samelan leaders in the Constituent Assembly sought to define *what it meant to be a good Indian citizen* [italics mine] and demanded from Muslims in India to 'stop talking' about their concerns for a language largely spoken by them if they were to accept the said vision of *Indian culture*; viewed as racially and culturally different from allegedly 'foreign' Muslim civilization(s) and centuries of syncretic interaction in local spheres between people of various faiths in the South Asian subcontinent.[6] Thus, Muslims in India were imaginatively constituted as 'foreign' to India while their local notions of land, belonging, and culture rendered as distinct from 'Indian culture.' Notably, Hindi Sahitya Samelan leaders like K.M Munshi and Purshottam Das Tandon were also opposed to the conversion of people from one faith to another, as they sought to racialise Muslim culture in India along ahistorical and statist conceptions as the country's 'foreign' other. For these 'Hindi advocates,' Urdu came to be understood not just as the official language of Pakistan, but notoriously as the language that did not

belong to India (Gould, 2002). Indeed, this bordering of Urdu replicated the 'outsider' and 'insider' precarity of Indian Muslim citizenship.[7] What was at stake was not just a language, but the association of Hindi with Hindu culture and subsequently, the normalisation of hegemonic upper caste 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan' governmentality in newly independent India.

In 1954, the State Reorganization Commission recommended that minority languages should be allowed as mediums of instruction where it was feasible, not just in letter but also in the wider spirit of protecting and preserving the interests of linguistic minorities.[8] But the Uttar Pradesh government persisted in not implementing Urdu as a medium of instruction in schools despite it being a highly feasible option because Congressmen like Chief Ministers G.B Pant followed by Sarvarsari Sampuranand in the years just after independence were at the forefront of advocating sanskiritised Hindi - conscientiously at the expense of Urdu in Uttar Pradesh. In 1951 under Uttar Pradesh's first Chief Minister, G.B Pant, Hindi was declared the official language of the state, with no guarantees for Urdu speakers.[9] Pant's successor, Sampuranand actively curbed instructions from the Union government to assign Urdu the status of a minority language between 1954 and 1958.

Sampuranand was a former member of the Hindu Mahasabha who had at a later stage joined the Congress. He had published several works claiming that upper caste Hindus were 'the original Aryans' whereas Muslims in India were 'foreign invaders' who had allegiances 'outside India' as detailed by historian William Gould (2002). Indeed, any study of the decline of Urdu in Uttar Pradesh cannot be divorced from tropes that declare Muslims as 'invaders' or 'outsiders' to India. Sampuranand also maintained a strategy of what can be termed as 'dichotomous contradictory discourses' that were built upon to further subordinate Muslim concerns through different, albeit often contradictory, tropes. Writing to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Sampuranand categorically stated that, 'We have no linguistic minorities in this State in the sense that Bengalis are linguistic minorities in Assam and Bihar, or Telugu speaking people in Andhra.' The letter further goes on to contentiously claim the following.

> Perhaps the intention of the Government of India is to get figures in respect of Muslims in this State who claim to have Urdu as their language. Urdu and Hindi are not two distinct languages. Urdu is only a variant of the State language, Hindi, its peculiarity lies in (the) adoption of its Persian and Arabic words.
>
> (U.P. State Archives, Lucknow).

Thus, Sampuranand deployed dualistic tropes in manipulative ways. On the one hand, as previously noted, Muslim culture and civilization was declared as that of a 'foreign invader' by Hindu traditionalist Congress leaders. Simultaneously, Urdu was characterised as unfit to be assigned the status of a minority language because it was apparently a variant of Hindi according to Hindi advocates, thereby implicitly acknowledging the roots of the language in India. In the process, Urdu was simultaneously rendered as 'foreign' because it incorporated some words from Arabic and Persian, but it also had 'indigenous' roots in Hindi/Hindu culture as it significantly incorporated words from Hindi, Purbi, and Panjabi. This led Sampuranand to claim that Hindi and Urdu 'were not distinct languages' while being acutely aware that the

question was concerned with maintaining the cultural rights of Muslims who in his words, questionably 'claimed' to have Urdu as their language.

The politics of refusing to grant Urdu the status of a 'linguistic minority' language or a 'second regional language' was embedded in the construction of Muslim identity in Uttar Pradesh with far reaching national implications.[10] Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of representatives in the Parliament in Delhi, whereby issues politicised in the demographically largest province in India acquired the status of national attention. Congress elected Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh such as G.B Pant, Sampuranand, C.B. Gupta, Sucheta Kripalani, and K. Tripathi in the early decades after Partition were men and women who upheld the belief that Muslims were 'medieval foreigners' to India and singularly blamed the community for the Partition.[11] By 1967, merely twenty years after the Partition, the Congress manifesto for elections in Uttar Pradesh did not even mention Urdu or Muslims in their political agenda, whereas the Jan Sangh, supposedly on the other end of the political spectrum with their openly espoused right-wing ideologies, explicitly refused to give Urdu the status of a second official language in Uttar Pradesh (Brass, 1974. p 257). Gyan Prakash has astutely observed (2007) that the 'crisis of secularism' in India since its inception was not a 'quarrel with secularism such as church-state separation,' but that the discourse centred on 'toleration of minority citizens,' especially Muslims. The discourse of "toleration" is problematic because it implies a polite distance at best and lack of wilful acceptance at worst for marginalized citizens. It privileges some groups as the norm, while rendering other groups as secondary to the national imagination. This discourse on how to 'tolerate' minority citizens would become the ground upon which Congress and the Hindu right of Jan Sangh/Bhartiya Janata Party would come to differ in their uncontested vision of the Hindu nation, even if India was not a theocratic nation-state (Brass, 1974). In sum, according to Hindu traditionalist Congress leaders and the Jan Sangh, India unquestionably belonged to the upper caste Hindus who had the power and privilege to define the new post-colonial political order. The space of minority Muslim citizens was dependent on this order's benevolence and acceptance, even if constitutionally all were apparently upheld as equal citizens.[12]

In response, Ashraf Muslims actively contested such anti-Muslim discourses via the advocacy of Urdu since the Partition and the assertion of their undeniable *Indianness*. Notably, prominent Muslim leaders as well as some sympathetic Hindu leaders advocated the cause of Urdu and rallied against Sampuranand' s claims regarding Urdu, insisted that Uttar Pradesh was the regional birthplace of the language. Against this background, Anjumman-e-Tariqqi-e-Urdu in Lucknow emerged as a prominent organisation campaigning for the cause of protecting Urdu. Although Anjumman Taraqqi-e-Urdu was formed in 1903, after Partition the organisation split in two parts in India and Pakistan, with the Indian centre of the organization focusing on promoting Urdu and popularizing its simpler and widely spoken form, *Hindustani*. In 1954, the organisation submitted a petition to then President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, with over four million signatures and submitted a memorandum to Maulana Azad, the then Minister of Education, for the official recognition of Urdu as a language of the substantial percentage of the population.[13]

Linguistic historian Jyotirindra Das Gupta (1970) and political scientist Paul Brass have noted that the mostly Muslim petitioners of Anjuman-Taraqqi-e-Urdu who wanted to safeguard the Urdu language expressed their disagreement with Hindi enthusiasts on primarily three grounds.[14] First, they highlighted the origins of the

language in India. Secondly, they refused to view it as simply a 'hybrid' of Hindi and Farsi. Lastly, they contested Hindi enthusiasts' claims that the language was 'alien' to India or 'an imposition from tyrannical Muslim rulers' on Hindus. These tactics would eventually lead Anjuman members to adopt pacifist policies instead of directly challenging the anti-Muslim rhetoric of Hindi enthusiasts, as they wanted to separate their concerns for the language from its association with Muslims. While it was true that many Hindus also spoke and wrote in Urdu, the demands for its continuation and preservation of the language overwhelmingly came from Muslims in Uttar Pradesh as they strongly linked it to their culture. But the Anjuman constantly asserted the role of Urdu in bringing communities across faith together and festering a syncretic and harmonious culture, or *Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb* in cities like Lucknow, Delhi, Aligarh, Varanasi, and Allahabad.

Unfortunately, Urdu advocates lost their cause when the Secretariat collaborated with the polemical claims of the *Upar Sachivalva* (or upper house of the State Legislature or Legislative Council)**,** asserting that 'no Linguistic Minority Officer was required' in Uttar Pradesh, despite the Union government's recommendation. The Uttar Pradesh government argued that, 'Persons who write in Persian script cannot be said to have a different mother tongue than those who write in Devnagri character because the spoken language of both is the same (UP State Archives).' What was fascinating about arguing the similarity of the two languages was that the Indian State refused to accept 'Hindustani' as the official new language of India, which would have incorporated words from Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi and could be easily comprehended by the thickly populated region of North India. Instead, the Indian Parliament rejected Hindustani as a feasible option, choosing to formalize sanskritised Hindi while relegating Urdu to the periphery in Uttar Pradesh where it was most widely spoken (Pai, 2002). Several 'anti communal' Congress leaders, including India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, were critical of the Hindu traditionalist dominance in the Constituent Assembly, who had endeavoured to advocate for Hindi by stigmatizing Urdu. In a passionate speech where Nehru made his disagreements with Hindu traditionalist Congress leaders of Uttar Pradesh clear, he presciently commented about the dangers of 'majority communalism' and the equation of Urdu and Muslims as foreign to India, saying:

> ...the communalism of the majority is far more dangerous than the communalism of the minority because it wears the garb of nationalism… the communal and caste weaknesses of the people had been deprecated repeatedly in numerous resolutions of the Congress Working Committee and the AICC. These resolutions were against these caste and communal tendencies. Yet, in our daily lives, we do not understand them fully.
> (The Times of India, 1958; Noorani 2003)

Nehru was aware of the schisms within democracy including faulty equation of the will of the majority being necessarily an ethical will of the masses. In his critique of ideologies stoked by leaders like Purshottam Das Tandon, C.B Gupta, and Sampuranand against Muslim minorities the Prime Minister further observed in the same speech,

> It is said, and I don't know why, that Urdu is the language of Muslims. I do not know what kind of brain and intelligence it is from which this idea stems. Was Urdu born with Islam? (laughter). Urdu is the language of India…Indian

Muslims are Indians. They have lived here for generations, for thousands of years. Only a handful of Muslims could be said to have come from outside long long ago. But they also became a part of Indian life. If anyone were to say that Muslims are outsiders now, he only betrays his utter primitiveness of thought.

(Quote taken from Noorani, 2003)

It is indicative of the politics of Nehru's time (1947-1964) that the first Prime Minister of India had to explain to the 'majority community' that Muslims had lived in the subcontinent for 'thousands of years.' Despite Nehru's well-intentioned liberal critique against stigmatizing Urdu and Muslims as 'outsiders to India,' the Constituent Assembly declared Hindi to be the national language of India in 1951, at the behest of Hindi enthusiasts (primarily Hindi Sahitya Sammelan' members) within the Congress. The pleas of Muslim members and Nehru to the Constituent Assembly to accommodate both Hindi and Urdu scripts under the ambit of Hindustani did not materialise, nor was Urdu recognised as one of the regional languages of Uttar Pradesh.[15] Whilst Nehru after the Partition may have been critical of the myopic historical distortions surrounding Muslims in India but the Congress was emerging as a national party that was comfortable adhering to the beliefs of Hindu traditionalist members as equivalent to 'nationalism' since it had professed to speak for all Indians since colonialism (B.D Graham, 1973). Although the Anjuman endeavoured to emphasize that Urdu was not a language that was exclusive to Muslims, and several Hindu writers and poets also wrote in the language, the language's association with Muslims was hardwired in mainstream imagination due to the colonial legacy of Hindi-Urdu controversies and associated communal politics. The Muslim League associated the language with the Muslim gentry and Hindu nationalists encouraged Hindus in Uttar Pradesh to dissociate from it as separate from Hindu cultural identity (Christopher King, 1994). Consequently in India during the 1950s, the anti-Muslim and anti-Urdu rhetoric of Jan Sangh and Hindu traditionalists within the Congress had begun to materialize institutionally in Uttar Pradesh.

Thus, Urdu was consistently denied the status of a linguistic minority language or regional language in Uttar Pradesh (until 1994) on heavily contested grounds that deemed 'Muslim culture' as either foreign to Indian culture, or Urdu as a language that was similar to Hindi even though Hindustani was rejected as the official language of the country by prominent Hindu traditionalist Congress leaders in U.P. This was not a new development, given that the racialization of Muslims as ethnically and culturally 'foreign' had been entrenched by the right-wing members of the Hindu Mahasabha since the 1920s under colonialism and several Congress leaders had also adopted that anti-Muslim racist stance.[16] Since Urdu became the official national language of Pakistan, it was reason enough for Hindu traditionalist Congress leaders in Uttar Pradesh to not accord it with any recognition in the province–to punish Muslims for their perceived wrongs of the Partition. Notably, alongside these developments of otherising all Muslims as 'medieval foreign invaders' in distorted historical narratives and using Urdu as a political site for leveraging that racialization of the community, the Indian State also deliberately obfuscated caste histories within the Muslim community in the same era of the 1950s. In the next section I point out that although most U.P. Muslims, especially from poor backgrounds did not migrate to Pakistan, the consequences to diminish the power of Urdu by the Uttar Pradesh government

were manifold and layered in other intersecting processes, most notably the erasure of marginalised caste histories among Muslims through legislative measures in the 1950s which significantly came to define the contours of Muslim identity and minoritism in India.

The 'De-Castifaction' of Muslims

Much like the dualistic tropes discussed in the previous section of the Muslim as a 'foreigner' and Urdu relegated as 'Hindi with a Persian script,' the erasure of caste recognition among Muslim communities was another seemingly contradictory project of constituting the Muslim as an 'outsider' to India normatively, while also institutionally denying lower caste and Dalit Muslims their 'indigenous' long durée histories of caste oppression, marginalisation and urban poverty. Critically, caste had been categorically restricted to Hindus through Article 341 of the constitution as the Constitutional Scheduled Caste Order in 1950 laid down four key clauses, in which Clause Three of the Scheduled Caste Order categorically went on to state, 'No person who professes a religion different from the Hindu religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste' (GOI, 1950).

Hence Clause 3 of Article 341 of the Indian Constitution explicitly removed any provisions of 'positive discrimination' for historical and cultural contingencies of injustice of non-Hindu Dalit and lower caste groups. Clause 3 highlighted how the national elites and liberal thinkers of the constitution were willing to engage in contextualised frameworks of historical injustices faced by certain groups, so long as they were Hindus. This was a departure from colonial understandings of caste for a Constitutional Order that continued with colonial conceptions of representation and affirmative policies in many senses. Colonial administrators had recognised 'lower caste' and 'untouchability' as broad categories with distinct practices in different regions of India, but largely as a phenomenon of minortysm for groups that failed to find political representation due to extreme socio-economic marginalisation. In his work on 'depressed castes' of Uttar Pradesh, a term that was replaced by the term 'Scheduled Castes' by the 1950s, Galanter (1984) noted that 'educational backwardness' contributed to the social (and spatial) segregation of lower caste and Dalit groups irrespective of their conversion to non-Hindu faiths. Yet the Constituent Assembly upheld 'lower caste' and 'untouchable' identity as not existing within the purview of religious conversion to Islam or Christianity wherein these groups were ritualistically liberated from *Brahminical* (the highest caste, associated with priests and scholars) ideas of 'polluted' or 'unclean' identity. This process of removing caste based affirmative action for Other Backward Caste/*Ajlaf*[17] and Dalit or '*Arjal*' Muslims[18] collectively known as *Pasmanda* (oppressed) *Muslims*[19] is a project of governmentality which I refer to as the 'decastification of Muslims.'[20]

Caste hierarchization and discrimination among the Muslim community was less rigid and stratified than Hindus as several scholars (Sabherwal, 2010; Lidholm, 2001) have demonstrated in their works.[21] However it remained a defining feature of intergenerational poverty and subsequent constraints on the mobility for lower caste Muslims too. Despite this the Government Order of 1950 relegated caste to be defined as a framework as applicable only in Hindu contexts. When Christians such as Professor P.J. Kurien challenged this categorisation by pointing out to caste discrimination within South Indian Christian communities, he failed to garner support for his cause

notably from Christians with Brahmin backgrounds (Fazal, 2017). Significantly, even Hinduised Dalit leaders in the Constituent Assembly such as P.R. Thakur, Muniswamy Pillai and most vocally, H.J. Khandekar opposed converts to non-Hindu religions from Dalit backgrounds from demanding the expansion of the scope of 'Scheduled caste.'

Khandekar was a Marathi Dalit leader, and strongly against the conversion of Dalits to other faiths, unlike Dalit head of Constitutional Drafting Committee Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Before joining the Congress, Khandekar was the Secretary of the *Tarun Mahar Sangh* which had famously 'reverted' 25 Mahar Dalit girls who had converted to Islam (Paswan and Jaideva, 2004). He strongly believed in the consolidation of the Hindu community, and emotionally appealed to the upper caste Hindus in the Constituent Assembly to extend affirmative action policies for Dalit Hindus for more than ten years as it was the patriotic duty of upper caste Hindus to raise the 'civilization of independent India'(Constitution of India, 1949). Although a friend of Ambedkar (Dalit Chairman of the Constitution Committee who had converted to Buddhism), Khandekar reprimanded Sardar Bhopinder Singh Mann and Sardar Hukam Singh who were pitching for affirmative action of lower caste Sikhs claiming that Dalits converted to 'casteless religions' for emancipation and did not require more provisions (ibid). Even the handful of Muslim parliamentarians such as Mohammed Ismail Sahib failed in demanding affirmative action provisions for Muslims and Christians from backward communities alongside Scheduled castes, despite noting that

> As a matter of fact, there are backward people amongst the non-majority people as well. The Christians are backward. As a matter of fact, they are not adequately represented in the services of the provinces. So are the Muslims, and also the Scheduled Castes. If any provision is made, it has to be made for all such really [sic] backward people.
>
> (Constituent Assembly Debates, 1948)

Ismail Sahib's appeals for extending affirmative action policies to the 'backward' Muslims and Christians, and the attempts to deny generations of caste induced marginalisation among non-Hindus persisted in the Constituent Assembly throughout the democratic set up years of the 1950s: even when there was evidence to the contrary. In 1955, the First Backward Classes Commission led by Chair Kaka Kalekar submitted its report to the Constituent Assembly, officially recognising the presence of 'backward communities' among Muslims. Despite Kalekar's observation that lower caste and Dalit Muslims were 'twice discriminated' by the community and the State, the Commission upheld that the absence of caste as a religious category in Islam meant that Muslims were not in need of reservations (Dasgupta, 2009). These developments were also telling of how India's post-colonial governmentality was premised on a Hindu public sphere with a nod for emancipation of discriminated Hindu and Hinduised lower caste and Dalit groups. This recognition arguably stemmed from the recognition of historical wrongs committed against those groups, especially by 'upper caste' Hindus. Yet Muslims who had the highest demography of lower caste and Dalit converts to the faith were not similarly categorised as they tried to escape the Hindu caste system.[22] Notably, Article 341 was later expanded, albeit with some contestations, to incorporate 'depressed castes' among Sikhs in 1956, and Buddhists in 1990 as the two faiths were seen as falling under the 'Hindu Law' constitutionally. But depressed castes among Muslims and Christians could not be incorporated as the case

was made that these faiths did not fall within the ambit of Hindu Law – thus making it evident that the Indian State was trying to bring all 'Indic' religions like Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism under its ambit unlike faiths that originated outside India such as Islam or Christianity. Tanweer Fazal (2017) notes that the Supreme Court of India upheld that if Muslims and Christians were to 'revert' to Hinduism, their marginalised caste status would be accepted by the government.[23] In short, consistent efforts were made to ensure the caste based affirmative actions were made tenable only for Hindus or those who fell under the ambit of Hindu Law, to the exclusion of Christians and Muslims unless they reverted to Hinduism to avail those benefits.

By constitutionally erasing caste among Muslims and Christians, faiths that Hindu nationalists have constantly defined as 'foreign to the Indian soil' since the British Raj (Islam, 2019), policies of emancipation and affirmative action for equity were denied to Muslims and Christians politically and economically. This rendered the most vulnerable Muslims and Christians even more precarious in post colonial India. Predictably, such a measure impacted lower caste and Dalit Muslims in Lucknow as the city transitioned economically in the years after the Partition. 'Traditional professions' that lower caste Muslims had practised in the *qasbas* (market oriented towns of the gentry/Nawabs) of Lucknow such as rickshaw pullers*, tongawallas* (carriage drivers), *ghasal*s (those who bathe dead bodies), *gorkuns* (undertakers) *pheriwalaas (*roaming vendors), brass band players, *kaanmailiya* (ear wax fixers), *malishiya* (massagers), weavers in traditional *zardozi* and *chikankari* handicrafts, leather tanners and even *hijras* (hermaphrodites/eunuchs) witnessed an accelerated decline in their professions as they lost their patronage as protected and recognised groups working for elite Muslim local cultural economies when the country transitioned from a colonial to a post-colonial economy (Hasnain, 2016). As noted, the constitution of post colonial India did not guarantee the increasingly marginalised urban poor Muslim groups avenues for protection and emancipation, while Lucknow's economy gradually changed to accommodate new business classes venturing into the city especially from the Hindu *baniya* (traders) community and Sikh refugee business classes (ibid). These transformations were similarly felt in everyday *mohalla* (locality) living too. The Town and Urban Planning Report (1951-1961) for the city of Lucknow consistently described Old Lucknow *mohallas* as 'filthy,' 'dull' and 'not good in appearance' and this process was casually explained as one that 'naturally leads well-to-do-families to move out' of these areas of old Lucknow.[24] This neglect of urban areas corresponded with growing urban poverty of Muslims too, including Muslims who had earlier had access to reservations in government jobs. Mohammed Arif, a Muslim man from the lower caste *Bishti* (water carrier) caste, recalled:

> Earlier my father and grandfather were able to get jobs as water carriers and gardeners in government sector. But with the removal of caste provisions for Muslims, people such as myself, my relatives and my children can no longer avail these opportunities as they go to only Hindu Bishtis.[25]

Thus, many lower caste Muslims such as *Bishtis* who previously sought working class and service sector government jobs despite converting to Islam lost their right to 'positive discrimination' due to post colonial governmentality's restrictive parameters on caste. In addition to economic sustenance, for some lower caste Muslims, particularly

women, there was pride in practising traditional arts and crafts for their elite patrons. Rabia Bano, an elderly woman from the Shia *julaha (*weaver) caste recalled:

> Prior to independence, *our elite* [italics mine] employed us in their households. My great grandmother, grandmother and mother worked in peace in their mansions. But after the Act, they [elite Muslims] were no longer as rich as before, and with that, people like me had to look for jobs elsewhere. I became a *chikankari worker* [local Lucknow intricate embroidery] for an exploitative Rastogi businesswoman, which was more hard work and less pay than what my mother received.[26]

Rabia Bano's testament was common among several women of the *julaha* community who had traditionally worked in the qasbas of Nawabs whom she refered to as 'our elites.' The extreme exploitation of Lucknow's overwhelmingly Muslim female weavers due to 'middle men (and women)' became a subject of attention in several transnational studies on exploitation in unorganised labour sectors.[27] Connected to these histories of growing poverty and economic exploitation was also a sentimentally invested cultural affiliation of Muslims across caste and sect in Lucknow. Muslims took pride in presenting themselves as practitioners of the city's 'cosmopolitan high culture,' known for its textiles, mannerisms, food, handicrafts, dance, music and Urdu.[28] Although urban and economic transformations were necessary in some cases as India paved the road towards becoming an independent colony by the 1950s, the impact of these transitions were far from equally felt, especially for the poor non-Hindu urban minority groups and their traditional sources of livelihoods, with their often accompanying histories of lower caste or Dalit convert backgrounds. The erasure of caste among Muslims did not end casteism among Muslims. However, many formerly elite and increasingly middle-class Ashraf Muslims sought to downplay that aspect on theological grounds of Islamic egalitarianism. Mohammed Shahabuddin Querishi, a resident of the severely neglected Ballochpura mohalla in Lucknow, populated by mostly Dalit-Muslims remembered:

> Unlike elite Muslims, the Partition was never an incentive for us to migrate to Pakistan as our local business [as butchers] was here, and we did not want the stigma of *muhajirs*[29] in addition to being lower caste Muslims there. Although we are a self-sustaining community of butchers, during my childhood, Ashrafs would treat us with disgust and not even touch our hands even though we are the ones who provided them meat. If we wanted to take money from them, we would have to cover our hands in cloth and lower our palms before them, as if we were begging.[30]

Many such accounts of discrimination against Pasmanda Muslims have been recorded by historians like Masood Alam Falahi, observing that Ashraf Muslims not only hid their casteist biases against poor and lower caste Muslims on the grounds of class (2007) but also dehumanised Dalit and lower caste Muslims, loosely calling them *Ajlafs* (commoners) and A*rzals* (despicable). Others like Mohammed Umar wrote prolifically in Urdu to raise the issue of casteism among Muslims, blaming Indian Hindu influences for it and beckoning Ashraf Muslims to supersede their casteism on Islamic grounds of equality of all races and by extension, caste (Umar, 1975; Ansari, 1960). Clearly, the logic of caste, which was the stratification of society along

hierarchical lines, was not exclusive to upper caste Hindus. Muslims who perceived their lineages to be 'superior,' ascribed to foreign ancestries often adapting similar casteist attitudes socially, similar to Brahmins who theologically believed the *varna* system to be a hierarchy based on so-called ritual purity (Falahi, 2007). Historians and Urdu writers such as Masood Alam Falahi have also pointed out the condescension of Ashraf Muslims towards lower caste and Dalit Muslims often masqueraded under conceptions of class and '*khandaani*' (family line) values among Muslims in Uttar Pradesh, besides the fact that had Indian Muslims been more vocal against casteism, an even larger percentage of Dalits migh have converted to Islam (Ahmed, 1978). Furthermore, lower caste Muslims like Ilyas Mansuri of the *Pasmanda Muslim Samaj* activist organization in Lucknow maintained that the Ashraf *ulema* (clergy) had actively benefited from not educating Muslims about 'true Islam – one where we are all equal, and don't need them in the first place to play mediators between us and God.'[31] Mansuri's critique of the clergy as 'mediators' can also be attributed to the *ulema's* (historical) investment in maintaining their status as influential power wielders in the Muslim community. Although in Islam clergies are not a class or group sanctioned by the organised faith, caste ideas of continuing with their father's professions pervaded into the religiosity of Indian Islam too according to Falahi (2007).

Shia Muslims particularly were often accused by Sunni Muslims for upholding casteist ideas of genealogies in their claims to being 'Syed' or those who traced their genealogy to Prophet Muhammad.[32] This is perhaps not an exaggerated claim, given the dominance of the surname 'Syed' and Persianized heritage of Shias in Lucknow. But many Sunnis too identified with 'powerful' lineages, although most Muslims who converted to Islam (from lower caste and Dalit backgrounds) through Sufi mystics usually belonged to the Sunni sect.[33] However, irrespective of sectarian differences, tracing these 'foreign' lineages was not exclusive to elite or upper middle-class Ashraf Muslims. As Pasmanda Muslim leader Ilyas Mansuri also acknowledged:

> Constructing genealogies that were not rooted in indigenous Indian histories was also a way that many Pasmanda Muslims had sought freedom from the stigma of being 'lower' caste or casteless/Dalit.[34]

Much like Ramnarayan Rawat's important work on how Dalit *chamars* in Lucknow produced their own genealogies which paved a resistance path for minorities to empower themselves beyond the gaze of the State, lower caste Muslims produced their own claims to trajectories that had nothing to do with stigmatised caste origins of Hindus. Significantly, Rawat (2011) has demonstrated that *Chamars* or Dalits in Lucknow were not just tied to leather-based occupations, and often produced their own genealogies for social mobility. Similarly, lower caste Muslims who converted to find liberation in what Charles Lindholm (2001) terms as Islam's 'radical theological equality before God' also sought to construct their genealogies in an Islamic time-space continuum that did not relegate their histories to stigma and servitude under upper caste people. It also remains equally important to assert, as Satish Saberwal notes, the stigma of caste within Muslims is notably less overtly discriminatory than within the Hindu community (2010). Saberwal has also pointed out that even lower caste scholars from prominent Muslim seminaries have histories of producing their own genealogies in an Islamic world history than a Hindu caste history.[35] Even Falahi has noted in his critique of Ashraf Muslims that theologically, Islam provided some

progressive clerics space to challenge casteism, a feature ironically also observed in the Constituent Assembly by those who contested against assigning caste based affirmative actions for marginalised Muslims due to theological grounds of equality of all castes and races in Islam - as noted with regards to the objections of Dalit leaders like H.J. Khandekar. However most significantly, the erasure of caste from the taxonomy of Muslims enabled the evasion of any responsibility for equity in parameters of caste set by the Indian State. And with a State that was unwilling to recognise Muslim histories of oppressed caste backgrounds for upliftment from stigma and poverty, lower caste Muslims, and Dalit Muslims often went on to produce their own genealogies to affirm a theology and history that sought agency and empowerment beyond the gaze of the Hindu dominated State and its language of caste.

Spurned by the State, with little avenues for institutional recognition of their continuing histories of oppression and extreme poverty (including the largely indifferent base of Ashraf Muslims), the weavers and artisans eventually took it upon themselves to construct their own genealogies, and eclipse caste as they had hoped for when they converted to Islam in Uttar Pradesh. Many Muslims from the *julaha* or weaver caste began to identify themselves as 'Ansaris,' the butchers as 'Quereshis' and the sanitation and *bishti* caste Muslims as 'Sheikhs' – a bid to construct lineages that were perpetually Islamic across time-space continuum. Even colonial census collection of caste was not free from constraints. Observes religion studies scholar Remy Delage (2014) on the problems of governmentality, 'Since many Hindus who converted to Islam took on the name Shaikh when they were required to register with colonial census officials, the entire community was dragged further down the social ladder, which shows the disjunction that sometimes exists between a group's theoretical level in the caste hierarchy and its social status.' Furthermore, even Muslims who knew their Dalit backgrounds sought to distance themselves from it for 'strategies of symbolic advancement.' Shabnam from the Dalit and Dalit-Muslim concentrated Lal Beg mohalla in Lucknow said:

> Nobody wants to be associated with untouchability. It brings shame and ridicule from *the arrogant ones* [italics mine] ……. and arrogance does not have a religion.[36]

Shabnam's explanation of constructing false or mythical genealogies despite her awareness of her caste history shows an imaginative leap where marginalised Muslims tried to emancipate their identities from stigma in conceptions of shared power and prestige with Ashraf Muslims. Complex as these 'constructed genealogies' surrounding caste may be among lower caste and Dalit Muslims, it nonetheless provided a sense of comfort, and even resilience to many Pasmanda Muslims. As noted by Kamran Bashir and Margo Wilson (2017):

"Despite enduring discourses about social hierarchy and socio-political activism, and a generalised have-not versus elite rhetoric that underlies assertions of community coherence and demands for amelioration, no established, homogeneous group appropriate for either scholarly investigation or policy planning can be identified. Rather, diversity, status ambiguity, and ongoing change processes provide the most cogent characterisation of Dalit Muslim communities in India today."[37] However, the casteist bias against Dalit Muslims and other Muslims in demonised caste occupations such as butchers, manual scavengers, and sanitation workers, has persisted despite their

efforts to distance themselves theologically from the stigma of casteism. This is due to the widespread prevalence of Brahmin ideas of cleanliness, purity, and vegetarianism in North Indian society. Afzal Qureshi, a butcher from the severely underdeveloped and neglected Kasaibadagh mohalla in the heart of Old Lucknow pointedly observed:

> When upper caste Hindus call butchers unhygienic, when they call us *janwar se bhi batar* (worse than animals), they are historicising us based on Brahmin notions of vegetarianism and social hygiene without outright calling us Dalits. But the language has strong undertones of caste.[38]

Unlike the Constituent Assembly's belief that conversion to Islam eclipsed the stigma of casteism, the oral history testimonies and material lived realities of Pasmanda Muslims presents another picture. Until 1993, no OBC or Dalit Muslims were given access to 'reservations' in jobs and education (Singh, 1996). When a small number of these disadvantaged Muslims were finally given recognition by the implementation of the B.P Mandal Commission, they had to compete with Hindu OBCs and Dalits in an already anti-Muslim atmosphere. Many Dalit Muslims complained that they were clubbed together with OBC Muslims despite the different needs of the community (Moinuddin, 2003). Others noted that several OBC Muslim groups were missing from the Mandal Commission list with no explanation (Ibid). In addition, often there were discrepancies between the central government's shorter list of recognised OBC Muslims compared to provincial government lists of OBC Muslims.[39]

Complicating these legacies of representation and misrepresentation lay the project of Muslim self-identification. Unlike Hinduised Dalits who tried to associate themselves with Hindu *Kshatriya* or warrior/ruling castes in their genealogical constructions of the Self (Rawat, 2011),[40] Muslim convert efforts to produce histories of genealogies outside India also had tragic implications as it played into Hindu Right narratives of casting all Muslims as 'outsiders.' In addition, historians such as Peter van der Veer (2004) and Christopher Jaffrelot (1993) have pointed out that upper caste Hindu notions of being 'Aryans' was not purely biological in Hindu Right discourses since they politically also strived to integrate 'Dravidian' Dalits into their conceptions of the varna dharma as a 'syncretic strategy' - so long as Dalits and Hindus were a unified front against the uniformly racialized Muslim Other.

Politically however, elite and middle-class Ashraf Muslims remained at the forefront of representation, often with the support of poor and lower caste Muslims given the former's access to social capital relative to them. The North Indian Muslim representation in politics was either led by a small fraction of leftist Muslims with Marxist persuasions (often journalists or 'progressive' writers from the intelligentsia) who had little support among the masses, or socially conservative Ashraf Muslims with a wider following - many of whom by the 1980s became members of the ulema leadership.[41] Pasmanda Muslims, with their own complicated self-identification histories and constructed genealogies often followed Ashraf leaders and ulema en masse in major cities including Lucknow. Subsequently in the 1990s, the handful of largely politically disempowered Pasmanda Muslim leaders who demanded affirmative action policies for 'backward' Muslims failed in harnessing popular opinion either among Muslims or lower caste and Dalit Hindus.[42]

The voices of Pasmanda Muslim leadership fell short both on the government ears and Ashraf leaders who would go on to demand reservations for Muslims

irrespective of caste but based on class. In 1994, Dr. Ejaz Ali, one of the founders of the *Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz* which began in the same year, from the adjacent province of Bihar launched the 'All India Backward Muslim Morcha (Protest),' noting the unique histories of Dalit and other backward caste Muslims and their need for affirmative action supports for the upliftment of the community. Dr. Ali slammed Ashraf Muslims for what he viewed as a singularly focus on the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 by Hindu militants (Sikand, 2002). Yet, it was a weaver caste Pasmanda Muslim gentleman from a humble background, Hashim Ansari, who had launched the first public interest litigation against the Hindu nationalist project of building a Ram Mandir on the premises of the historic Babri mosque.[43] Evidently, anti-Muslim racialization had impacted the wider Muslim community in India given the difficulties and ambiguities of tracing caste histories, and the systematic collective socio-economic deterioration of the community. Despite casteism within the Muslim community, many Pasmanda Muslims view their identities as overlapping with both caste and religion. On introspection, even Dr. Ejaz Ali conceded that despite he continuing existence of caste and casteism among Muslims, Islam was an important aspect of identification for most convertee indigenous Muslims as it provided them 'self respect and equality' (Sikand, 2002).

Hindu caste stratifications of ritual purity and hierarchization cannot be simplistically implanted on to Indic-Islamic identities, despite the widespread prevalence of casteist attitudes among so-called Ashraf Muslims. Complexities of memory, social constructions of genealogies, and the Indian State's attempts to deny caste and by extension, affirmative action for Muslims, has produced unique trajectories of lower caste and Dalit Muslim disfranchisement. Nonetheless, it is imperative to note that Ashraf hegemony in Indian Muslim politics focused on Hindu Nationalism, rather than prioritizing policy making and issues impacting poor and/or lower-caste and Dalit Muslims explicitly due to their class, caste and historical marginalization.[44] By the mid 1990s, the politics of affirmative action became even more complicated for the Muslim community, with class intersecting with caste and religious identity. Against the background of socio-economic deterioration within the Muslim community that began in 1947 with the systematic attack against Urdu in Uttar Pradesh, the once proud Ashraf Muslims too had to institutional discrimination in public services/government jobs and confront notions that were previously used exclusively for Dalits or poor Muslims as the community collectively faced demonisation, homogenization and caste loaded derogatory stereotypes. Noted veteran anti-communal activist of Lucknow, Professor Roop Rekha Verma observed:

> Tropes such as backward, dirty, unhygienic and *meltch* (meat eaters) – that were once derogatorily used by Brahmins and other elites towards exclusively Dalits – increasingly got used for the Muslim community in Lucknow by the 1980s.[45]

Verma's reflection of how casteist terms came to be unanimously applied to Muslims over time is of importance to note in scholarship, especially in terms of recognising how anti-Dalit tropes informs and constitutes Islamophobia in India. Tellingly, the institutional marginalisation of Muslims, including the material implications of the cultural genocide of Urdu in Uttar Pradesh was minimised in Hindu Right political discourses and Muslims often blamed Muslims for their own 'backwardness' – as if

it was a malicious symptom of the community by virtue of being Muslims and not due to concerted systematic efforts that were leveraged against them. In sum, external racialising impositions on the community were ignored, and internally for Muslims, it contributed to their growing self-homogenization as a vulnerable 'minority citizen' community with their language, rights, and caste histories denied. When regional Dalit and Other Backward Castes (OBC) political parties like Bahujan Samajwadi Party and Samajwadi Party in the 1990s tried to show solidarity with Muslims or address some of their concerns (mostly identarian), they would almost immediately be accused of 'minority appeasement' by the Hindu Right even though clearly the community was barely availing any socio-economic benefits as minorities.[46]

In 1995 prominent Muslim public figure, Syed Shahabuddin, started the first 'Conference for the Reservation of Muslims.' Shahabuddin asserted that any demands for reservations had to be made for Muslims based on class disadvantaged positionalities rather than caste.[47] As scholars such as Malvika Kasturi have also demonstrated, some Muslims with Mughal heritage may have had Central Asian or Persian ancestry centuries ago and access to socio-economic power at some points in history, however in colonial and today's post colonial India even former Muslim rulers witnessed a drastic decline in their wealth and status (2012). Some were even reduced to penury and several popular news articles have alleged that one of the direct descendants of the last Mughal Emperor is a washerwoman today.[48] The claims by Syed Shahabuddin on the overall marginalisation of Muslims are corroborated by the findings of the Sachar Committee Report that investigated the status of Muslims from 1947- 2005, noting that OBC Hindus in India had more political and governmental representation than Muslims, and the overall economical capital of the OBC Hindu community exceeded that of Muslims in India.[49] Furthermore, many OBC and Dalit Muslim activists had noted in the All India Backward Muslim Morcha conference that it was difficult for them to compete with other Dalit and OBC Hindus with limited reservations given the general anti-Muslim sentiment in the country, which often led them to also face bureaucratic hurdles in getting caste certificates (Moinuddin, 2003). Thus, the resistance to prevent Pasmanda Muslims from identifying with their caste due to both anti-Muslim and casteist bias of the Indian State, in addition to Ashraf Muslim demands for reservations of all Muslims facing economic marginalisation irrespective of caste histories, restricted the activist demands of Pasmanda Muslims such as Anwar Ali.[50] Yet, Pasmanda Muslim leaders resiliently struggle against caste based Islamophobia from savarna Hindus, and continue to challenge the hegemony of Ashraf Muslims as spokespersons for the entire Muslim community in India. It is vital to not silence caste marginalised histories of Muslims in India because as Ritty A. Lukose (2009) aptly observes "the production of caste and the production of religion by the Indian State," must be viewed as "intersecting if not analogous processes."

Conclusion

Because Urdu is the language of 'contestations' in post colonial India, it is also the site at which caste and religion overlap and demonstrates the complexity of Muslim identity in India; both in terms of diversity within the Muslim community and the consequences of their collective racialization due to the governmentality of the Indian State. The engineered decline of the Urdu language alienated the Muslim community from its roots; culturally and economically their prospects for growth were hampered

almost immediately after the Partition, with devastating consequences within decades after India's independence. It is also imperative to emphasize that none of these implications for the Muslim community - whether Ashraf, Ajlaf or Arjal - could have transpired without the impact of the constitutional erasure of caste among Muslims in the 1950s. Tanweer Fazal (2017) has persuasively argued in his important work on the 'debate' around caste in the Constituent Assembly in the 1950s and its outcome as espoused in Article 341 that, "The complicity of the Christian and Muslim elite and their discomfort with the idea of caste, the anxieties of the conservative nationalists regarding large-scale conversion out of the Hindu fold and the fear of inviting displeasure of existing [OBC and Dalit] beneficiaries [were] plausible reasons for the denial of entitlement to the low-caste followers of Islam and Christianity." In essence, Article 341 led to a denial of equity policies to uplift the marginalised of the Muslim community in public representation, jobs, development projects and educational-facilities with far reaching consequences that have lasted till today.

Furthermore, as I have illustrated, there was a direct relationship between the decline of Urdu and its impact on the sustainable livelihoods of Pasmanda Muslims in Lucknow. As noted, many lower caste professions depended on Urdu for their economic sustenance or the maintenance of Lucknow's cultural legacy (which was closely intertwined with Urdu) as a city of old Muslim arts and textiles. The polemics surrounding Urdu, especially framing it as "foreign" to India and its association with Pakistan led to the language's controversial systematic decline in Uttar Pradesh in the era almost immediately after the Partition, impacting the decastification of Muslims in significant ways too through multiple ways and at multiple sites. The politics of language, caste, belonging, and racialization of Muslims in the democratic stage setting era of the 1950s enabled the Indian State to precipitate seemingly confusing tropes of universalizing Muslims, their culture, religion, and language. The legislative framing of the Muslim minority citizen was one that essentially upheld the stereotype of 'medieval foreign invader,' who imposed language and culture on Hindus. Urdu became a critical site for Hindu extremists and Hinduized Dalit leaders like Khandeka to subordinate Muslim interests immediately after the Partition and enforce historically inaccurate (if not contradictory) discourses that racialized Muslim citizens as the 'other' in India. That some Sanskritised Hindi advocates of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan such as Purshottam Das Tandon were also constitutionally demanding that conversion from Hindu to non-Hindu faiths should be outlawed, significantly highlights that for such actors the project of racializing the Urdu language and decastifying Muslims was embedded and mutually informed by one another.

Ultimately, the processes (and events) of shaping, omitting, defining, and asserting some features over others to mark the contours of a 'Muslim minority citizenship' was a project defined by post Partition borders of racializing exclusions and animosity towards Muslims who had come to embody the border internally within India. Therefore both casteism and Islamophobia have informed the intersectional and oppressed everyday realities of being Muslim in India, despite the heterogeneous community striving to resist otherizing tropes. Multiple and entangling processes of systematic discrimination and ahistoric racialization of the vast minority Muslim community have gradually facilitated the stereotypical conception of the casteless and foreign 'backward Musalmaan.'

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Endnotes

1. I use the term Ashraf in this article to connote not just the formerly aristocratic and ruling Muslims classes of pre-colonial India, but also bourgeois "middle class" Muslims who emerged by the end of the 19th century under British colonialism.
2. Centering the crisis of Urdu's status in India had implications for downplaying the cultural, linguistic and regional diversities of Muslims in India, including other dialects of Urdu such as Dakhani Urdu. As Afsar Mohammed has noted in his work on Dakhani Urdu and Telgu, local and regional languages have historically played a formidable role in forming Islamic identities in the Indian subcontinent, even though the politics of Urdu has been used to racialize Muslims at a national level as this article explores. See lecture (May 2013) entitled, "Urdu beyond Manto" at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtL_trhFyCQ
3. Mona Bhan aptly observed in the Annual South Asian Studies Conference at Wisconsin Madison in 2018 that "border frameworks" do not apply to Kashmir where "lines are contested." Kashmiri histories of identity and culture are often problematically limited to merely South Asia (specifically India and Pakistan) to the exclusion Central Asian historical influences over the disputed territories.
4. Dayal, Rajeshwar. *A Life of Our Times*, Orient Longman, 1998, pp. 95-96. Also see conference organized by non-Muslim advocates of Urdu entitled, 'Yadgar Jarida All India Ghayr Muslim Urdu Musanifin Conference' that took place in Lucknow in 1973.
5. Usman, Salauddin, *Urdu in Uttar Pradesh Report (from 1947 to 1991)*, Part 1, pg 11. Please note that Usman's Report was published in "Mainstream," a self-proclaimed leftist magazine. However archival records of printed editions have been hard to locate despite contacting the present editor for a copy. I use a private collection of Usman's detailed report which was procured from his daughter in Lucknow.
6. As noted by Laura Brace, the idea of a "good citizen" is grounded in not merely legal status or should be simplistically viewed as equivalent to self-possession, but that it is "inextricably bound up with expectations and notions of dependence and

independence that inform our understanding of 'belonging.'" See: Brace, Laura. 'Reflections on the Good Citizen,' in Bridget Anderson and Vanessa Hughes (eds) *Citizenship and its Others*, Palgrave Macmillan Publications: London, 2015.

7.   In his upcoming book, *Dalits and the Making of Modern India*(Oxford University Press), Dalit scholar Chinniah Jangam observes that "contradiction" was a vital political tool in Post Colonial representative politics, noting, "Caste Hindu elites imagined a nation founded on contradictory ideals, an unequal society with inherited caste privileges intact alongside a liberal representative democracy."

8.   Report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minority Affairs, First Report, 1959. See: https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.104817/2015.104817.Report-Of-The-Commissioner-For-Linguistic-Minorities-First-Report_djvu.txt

9.   Usman, Salauddin, *Urdu in Uttar Pradesh Report (from 1947 to 1991).*

10. Unlike states such as Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra that had granted Urdu the status of a linguistic minority despite the percentage of Urdu speakers in these states being smaller than Uttar Pradesh. Another odd feature about Urdu getting recognized regionally is that in Jammu and Kashmir Urdu was accorded the status of a provincial official language, even though majority of Kashmiris (governed separately from the rest of India until recent times under Article 370) are not Urdu speakers.

11. Paul Brass's comprehensive work on language, religion and politics in North India details how Urdu was used to stigmatize Muslim minorities whilst not granting it regional recognition, along what I contend were clearly racialising lines.

12. See: Gauba, K.L. *Passive Voices: A Penetrating Study of Muslims in India*, Sterling Publications: New Delhi, 1973. In 1985, socialist advocate Ahmed Rafiq Sherwani from Lucknow complied statistics on the drastic decline of Muslims in civil services from 3percent in 1971 to a shocking 1 percent in 1981 - based on earlier calculations done by K.L Gauba and his own gathering of statistical information from government records. His findings were further validated by the research finds of Lucknow University and Aligarh Muslim University professors on Muslim representation in public services in 1986. See: 'Sarkaari Mulaazamato Main Aqileeyaton Ki Nomandagi Mein Khatarnaak Kaam'i (Alarming Drop in Minority Representation in Government Services), *Quami Awaaz,* 22nd February 1986.

13. 'Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu (Hind) Submits Memorandum to the President Seeking Due Recognition for Urdu,' *pamphlet published and circulated by Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu*, 1954. This memorandum is also available in A.G Noorani's collection of primary source materials and documents pertaining to the study of Muslims in India in *The Muslims of India: A Documentary Record*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2003, pg. 304.

14. See: Das Gupta, Jyotirindra. *Language, Conflict and National Development*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1970, pp. 127-196. Curiously enough, Das Gupta does not mention the controversy surrounding the census "data" collection of Urdu in Uttar Pradesh despite many Muslim advocates noting that census enumerators marked 'Hindi' as the mother tongue of many Urdu native speakers.

15. The signatories of advocating for Hindustani and/or the recognition of Urdu as the regional language of Uttar Pradesh included Nawab Ismail Khan, Nazi Ahmad, B. Pocker Sahib, A.H Ghaznavi and Z.H Lari. See Primary Source: *The Times of India, 20th August 1949* for the public petition in the Constituent Assembly.

16. Significantly, scholar Remy Delaje (2014) has noted that even the colonial census on caste among Muslims was not free from problems as often lower caste and Dalit Muslims recorded themselves as Ashrafs.

17. The term *Ajlaf* was often used by elite Muslim aristocrats for "commoners" irrespective of caste heritage, but today it is often used to describe Muslims from 'Other Backward Castes' (OBC) backgrounds.

18. *Arjal* is a polemical term which derogatorily implies someone who is despicable.

19. The term "Pasmanda" has had a resurgence since the early 2000s to include within its ambit the historical ambiguities surrounding the memory of caste for Muslims from marginalized caste convert backgrounds.

20. Surprisingly, there is no reference to the 'decastification' of Muslims in dominant literature, unlike the use of the term for 'Christian decastification.' See for example: Thottupuram (1981), Jebmalai (1999) and, Chatterjee, A. P.(2004).

21. For examples see: Saberwal, Satish. 'On the Making of Muslims in India Historically,' in Basant Rakesh and Shariff Abusaleh (eds) *Handbook of Muslims in India*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2010. AND Lidholm, Charles, 'Caste in Islam and the Problem of Deviant Systems: A Critique of Recent Theory,' in T.N Madan (ed) *Muslim Communities of South Asia: Culture, Society and Power*, Manohar Publications: New Delhi, 2001

22. Activists Ali Anwar and Ejaz Ali claim that some 75 per cent of Muslims are from Dalits and OBC backgrounds. Several historians have written about the conversions of Muslims from marginalised caste backgrounds since medieval times.(See, Ali, 2009; Eaton,1993).

23. Tanweer Fazal cites the case of *S. Rajagopal v. Arumnugam* where the Supreme Court held that the caste system prevailed only among Hindus or possibly in some religions closely allied to the Hindu religion like Sikhism. See: Fazal, Tanweer (2017)

24. Lucknow Town and Urban Planning Report (1951 -1995), pg 63-65.

25. Interview taken on 4th November 2015, Nakhaas, Old Lucknow.

26. Interview taken 4th October 2016, Nakhaas, Old Lucknow.

27. See for example: Papola, T.S, (1982). *Women workers in an urban labour market [microform]: A Study of Segregation and Discrimination in Employment in Lucknow (India)*, sponsored by International Labour Organisation, 1982. For recent works on the structural barriers faced by needle-workers in Lucknow, see Mohammed Usman's Conference Paper, *The Constraints in Accessing Micro-Credit and the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship: A study of the Work Dynamics of the Artisans of the Chikan Embroidery Industry of Lucknow*, at Istanbul University, 3rd January 2019.

28. Paul Brass has noted that weaver caste Muslims, from what was dubbed as "julaha" caste in Bihar led by the Mommin movement were also invested in the preservation of Urdu in their state although they were critical of Ashraf leadership. See: Brass, Paul. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge University Press: London, 1974, pp. 245-247.

29. A term with discriminatory implications, espoused by Punjabi Pakistanis for U.P and Bihari so-called "migrants" to Pakistan after the partition.

30. Interview taken on 3rd November 2016, Ballochpura Mohalla.

31. Interview taken in Pasmanda Muslim Samaj Office in Hazratganj (Lucknow), 28th February 2018. As per the booklet of the organization, "Mansuri Samaj ka Paigaam: Pasmanda Jagao-Desh Bacchao" (The Message of Mansuris: Save

Backward Muslims, Save the Country), the Pasmanda Muslim Samaj, (Society for Backward/Marginalized Muslims) was founded in 2011, an extension of earlier efforts to consolidate Muslims under the 'All India Mansuri Samaj.'

32. "Syeds" claim to descend from the tribe of Quraysh which Prophet Muhammed belonged to, and often Shia aristocratic families claim to trace their ancestry to the Prophet's nephew, Imam Ali. However, this phenomenon is not exclusive to Shias, with Sunnis also often "tracing" their lineage from the Quraysh tribe as well. This includes Dalit and lower caste Muslims who, as this article has highlighted, have complex histories of claiming different genealogies. [For reasons of maintaining Sunni-Shia peace between neighbours often living side-by-side in Muslim dominant Old Lucknow mohallas, the author has not cited the names or alluded to any references of those who held perspectives and accusations about casteism among certain sects.]

33. For an excellent historiography and academic discussions on the role played by Sufis in converting lower caste Hindus and Dalits to Islam, see: Aquil, Raziuddin (ed.) *Sufism and Society in Medieval India,* Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2010. For the transition of formerly aristocratic "Ashrafs" to bourgeois Muslims in the nineteenth century, see: Pernau, Margrit. *Ashraf into Middle Classes: Muslim in Nineteenth Century Delhi*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2013.

34. Interview taken on 28th February 2018, Pasmanda Muslim Samaj office, Hazratganj, Lucknow.

35. Most notably the weaver caste founders of the famous Darul Uloom Deoband Islamic seminary in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

36. Interview taken on 10th December 2016. See Joel Lee's article on the Dalit history of Lal Bagh mohalla entitled, "The Feast of Lal Beg: Dalit Religion 'Underground'" in Nadeem Hasnain's, *The Other Lucknow: An Ethnographic Portrait of a City of Undying Memories and Nostalgia*, Vani Prakashan Publications, 2016.

37. Sujatha Gidla's poignant memoir of growing up in 1960s India is a telling example of how conversion doesn't necessarily eclipse caste, although it provided Dalit Christians like Gidla and her family options for education in sought-after "English medium" Christian missionary schools. See: Gidla, Sujatha. *Ants among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India*, Farrar, Strous and Giroux: New York, 2017.F

38. Interview taken on 3rd November, 2016, Kasaibadagh Mohalla, Old Lucknow.

39. Ibid. Interestingly, the year after the Mandal Commission recognized certain oppressed and backward caste groups among "indigenous" Muslims, Urdu was implemented as a regional language in Uttar Pradesh in 1994 under OBC Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav. Yadav famously called Urdu, "the language of Uttar Pradesh."

40. As Rawat has demonstrated in his work about the close ties between *Adi Samaaj* run by Dalits and *Arya Samaj* dominated by upper caste Hindus in Lucknow. See: Rawat, Ramnarayan S. *Chamars and Dalit History in North India*, Indiana University Press: Blooming and Indianapolis, 2011, pg 37.

41. This issue of bourgeois Muslims (especially from Lucknow) representing the community's "needs" also stood true when it came to the status of Urdu. See: Brass, Paul. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge University Press: New York, 1974, pp.235-236.'

42. Despite scholar Irfan Ahmad's (2003) hopes that "the very grammar of Muslims politics in India" could veer for a "progressive agenda" with the rallying call of Pasmanda Muslim leaders.

43. Building upon Khalid Anis Ansari's important article entitled, 'A Tale of Two Mosques,' published in *Himal South Asia* (2016), it is important to observe that caste cannot be examined as the only lens to investigate Muslim representational politics without accounting for the role of anti-Muslim racialization that has impacted lower caste and Dalit Muslims too, even as so-called Ashraf Muslims try to stake their (controversial and often incompetent) claims as community leaders.

44. Arshad Alam (2009) notes that Pasmanda Muslim leaders have failed to challenge the religious articulations of Ashraf ulema members.

45. Interview taken in *Sanjhi Duniya* NGOheadquarters, 2nd October 2016.

46. The language of "minority appeasement" has often been deployed by the Hindu Right since the 1970s with regards to a range of issues from much needed educational and development facilities for the Muslim community to controversial laws that have upheld patriarchal personal laws among Muslims – making no distinction between what is required for the upliftment of the community and what actually subjugates some of its most marginalized members including women. Some scholars such as Kameshwar Choudhary have claimed that in development policies the Indian State should not follow a policy of communal development, particularly for Muslim minorities, lest they be accused by the Hindu Right of "minority appeasement." Others like Yamini Ayer contend that "secularism" itself has come to signify "Muslim minority appeasement" in Hindu Nationalist discourses and the two are understood as synonyms in common parlance. See: Choudhary, Kameshwar. Dilemma of secularism: State policy towards education of Muslims in India after independence, in J. B. G. Tilak (ed.) *Education, society and development: National and International Perspectives,* NIEPA: New Delhi, 2003, pp. 173-181. And Yamini Iyer and Meeto Malik, Minority rights, secularism and civil society, *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Vol 39*, Issue No. 43, 2009, pp. 4707-4711.

47. See: Syed Shahabuddin, 'Reservation for Muslims is Constitutional and Socially Necessary in National Context', *Milli Gazette*, 1-15 October 2004.

48. See: 'Mughal bahu languishes in a slum,' *Times of India*, 11th December 2005. In 2009, *The Hindustan Times* ran a story entitled, 'Mughal Emperor's poverty struck descendent to get a job,' 1st July 2009. In 2013 (updated 2016), *The Daily Mail* reported that Sultana Begum, the wife of the great grandson of the Last Mughal Emperor, received a pension of Rs. 6000/month (110 CAD) for the upkeep of her six children and herself. 'The slumdog princess: how the descendant of the Indian Mughal rulers who built the Taj Mahal now lives in desperate poverty,' 18th September 2013, *The Daily Mail*.

49. *Sachar Committee Report – Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India*, Prime Minister's High-Level Committee Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, November 2006, pp. 91-97.

50. Co-founder of Pasmanda Muslim Mahaj along with Dr. Ejaz Ali. Also see his book: Anwar, Ali. *Masawat ki Jung* ('The Struggle for Equality,' translated from Hindi to English by Mohammad Imran Ali and Zakia Jowher), Indian Social Institute: New Delhi, 2005.

Caste, Materiality and Embodiment: Questioning the Idealism/ Materialism Debate

Subro Saha[1]
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Abstract

Exploring the contingencies and paradoxes shaping the idealism/materialism separation in absolutist terms, this paper attempts to analyze the problems of such separatist tendencies in terms of dealing with the question of caste. Engaging with the problems of separating 'idea' and 'matter' in relation to the three dominant aspects that shape the conceptualisation of caste—origin(s), body, and society—the paper presents caste as an enmeshed idea-matter embrace that gains its circulation in practice through embodiment. Aiming to counter caste with its own logic and internal contradictions, the paper further proceeds to show that these three aspects that had otherwise been seen for a long time as shaping caste also contradict their own efficacy and logic. With such an approach the paper presents caste as a ghost that feeds on our embodied ideas. Further, bringing in the trope of (mis)reading, the paper tries to examine the intricacies haunting any attempt to deal with the ghost. The paper therefore, can be seen as a humble effort at reminding the necessity of reading the idea of caste in its spectralities and continuous figurations.

Keywords

Caste, idealism, materiality, touch, embodiment

Introduction

Despite all diverse attempts to get rid of caste, its persistence reminds us continuously of its haunting spectrality that even after so much beating refuses to die.[1] It haunts us like a ghost whose origin and functional modalities continue to baffle us with its shifting trajectories and (trans)formative capacities, and thus continuously challenges our approaches to exorcise it. Under such a situation, where neither the problem nor the solution is immediately identifiable, the question of approach acquires a central focus forcing us to reconsider the conceptual tools

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[1]PhD Fellow, Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Utrecht University, Netherlands
E-mail: subhro129@gmail.com

by which we have tried to solve the problem. One such area has always been the tendency to dissociate approaches marked otherwise in terms of theory and practice, idealism and materialism, imaginary and real. The elementary aspect within such differentiation remains the conceptual tendency to separate idea and matter. Since caste operates always as an idea-matter entanglement any such approach to dissociate theory and practice into clear cut absolute segments can, therefore, only produce newer forms of exclusion in some way or other, and separation of 'academia' and 'activism' has emerged as one such area in the recent years. With such tendencies when one turns at Ambedkar, how does one read him and his approaches: as an academic or activist, theoretical or practical, idealist or materialist? The question of approach, I submit, then remains always linked with one of reading: how one reads caste, how one reads Ambedkar, and how one reads the concept of reading itself. Reading is not just about printed letters, reading as an act(ion) also involves reading the world around us, reading behaviours, reading norms and so on; in other words, we continuously try to read the material world around us and as we try to read it in our attempts to access it we try to constitute it in our own terms. Reading, then, is always a constructive process and I call this the mattering of reading by which the idea (of the world, life, reality, etc) gets materialised as matter. However, since the matter that one attempts to read never remains available in its entirety for our reading, every singular attempt at the mattering of reading remains always already partial and contingent. Any attempt to think caste too remains an act of similar constructive yet contingent reading whereby the idea of caste gets materialized into its diverse forms of material practices. Exploring the question of approach in this case, therefore, remains always linked with those of embodiment, entanglements, corporeal figurations, and latent tendencies that enable caste to take newer directions. The paper, therefore, attempts to dig deep into the conceptual layers that enable the embodied eruptions of caste discriminations in continuously shifting trajectories, layers that often haunt our approaches of understanding itself. Such an approach, therefore, demands to examine the most elementary forms that enable the functional modalities of caste. Emphasising on the idea-matter embrace that shapes the circulation of caste, the paper, therefore, attempts to trace the internal contradictions characterising the diverse figurations of caste that operate in relation to three dominant aspects: origin(s), body, and society. The specific focus remains to read the internal contradictions haunting the elementary aspects of thinking caste: purity and touch.

Thinking the 'social' in relation to the question of caste always demands examining the embodied ideas that materialise sociability. The idea of 'social,' if it has to exist, cannot exist in any singular universal form, and in the Indian context, it seems to have been split into two registers often clashing with each other in terms of asserting its superiority: tradition and democracy. Tradition (which is often added to the question of religion) may be seen as one of the registers that one turns toward in order to justify the continuity of some ongoing practices. Tradition, carrying with it the weight of pastness, enables emphasis on the question of origin. The idea of tradition, when it gets coupled with a religious emphasis, gets transformed into a source of metaphysical assumptions by which the idea of caste and its religious character comes to acquire its normative force, thereby transforming caste into an unavoidable religious 'law.' This can be called the ideological (con)figuration of caste. Such linking of tradition with a religious character of caste may be marked by many as a process of idealism whereby the idea/l of caste comes to be embodied in the thinking of existence and 'social,' the traces of which can be traced as recently as in Narendra Modi's (the present prime minister of

India) assertions made in his book *Karmyog* wherein he compared manual scavenging by Dalits to a 'spiritual experience.' To counter such metaphysical justifications, often a specific brand of materialistic approach is invoked to assert the questions of democratic rights and economic equality. Thus, the cited example of Modi's embodied idea also faced severe beating on materialistic grounds, just as Gandhi's similar assertion about sweepers had faced from Ambedkar.[2] However, as stated already, has all such beating in all these decades enabled us to get rid of caste? Modi's such remarks make it clear too nakedly how the normative casteist thinking not only continues to travel through time but also tries to assert and legitimise itself under the umbrella of religion. The material conditions of Dalits and the continuous exploitation of Dalit labour are symptomatic of the continuity of such embodied ideas that enable and justify the material conditions of exploitation. As one small example, one may turn towards the 2007 Tehelka story wherein Siriyavan Anand brought shattering facts regarding the material conditions of Dalits who, forced to turn towards manual scavenging as the only available job, die in thousands every year without anyone's notice:

> At least 22,327 Dalits of a sub-community die doing sanitation work every year. Safai Kamgar Vikas Sangh, a body representing sanitation workers of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), sought data under the Right to Information Act in 2006, and found that 288 workers had died in 2004–05, 316 in 2003–04, and 320 in 2002–03, in just 14 of the 24 wards of the BMC. About 25 deaths every month. These figures do not include civic hospital workers, gutter cleaners, or sanitation workers on contract. *Compare this with the 5,100 soldiers—army, police, paramilitaries—who have died between 1990 and 2007 combating militancy in Jammu and Kashmir.* [emphasis added]
>
> <div align="right">(Anand 2007)</div>

Ranging from popular advertisements to everyday newspaper reports, one may find uncountable similar instances of caste discrimination every day.[3] The question still remains, what keeps caste alive even after so many attempts to get rid of it? Asserting from material grounds the question of injustice and protest is obviously necessary but it also demands a cautionary awareness of not falling into a similar discriminatory logic that it aims to fight against. The ghosts of the long continuing embodied religious misconceptions, the co-constitutive internalisation and circulation of which gives it its commonsensical assumptions, cannot be exorcized with the simple assertion of material conditions of exploitation but also must be addressed on the basis of ideas that shape the material practices of such thinking. Such an attempt demands engaging with two crucial aspects: exploring how ideas too have a historicity that is not simply hegemonic but also contingent, and how certain normative ideas constitute the dominant material relations shaping the general thinking of society that acquires its collective form as common-sense. Attempting to do the first in relation to tradition unavoidably forces one to re-turn to the question of originary moments of caste, while we keep engaging with the latter approach in relation to the question of democratic for the later sections.

Caste and its Pre-colonial Origin(s): Idealism or Materialism?

The question of origin has always haunted the various attempts to read caste. In its generality, any attempt at turning towards the origin remains always paradoxical since on the one hand such re-turning expects an attempt to read the 'truth' in its factic

emergence and becoming, while on the other hand, such re-turn operates as an attempt at conjuring that which is no longer available. In other words, such turn towards the originary remains always operative as part of a reading process that constitutes the materiality of a past by relying on specters. This remains the case applicable to any attempt at re-turning to the originary moments of caste as well. As emphasised already, reading 'caste' in its spectrality demands reading the entanglements that constitute the idea-matter embrace in myriad and contingent ways, and as such any singular approach labeled in terms of idealism or materialism cannot be considered as the universal solution. Idealism (emphasised usually and reductively under the umbrella of German idealism) as a concept comes to be labeled in a derogatory and generalised way only through comparative reading approaches where, by contrast, a specific brand of materialism comes to be emphasised. If one tries to assert similar materialistic approaches to caste, for example, modeled after a Marxist understanding of materialism (Srinivas 1962; Kosambi 1962; Omvedt 1994), then one also needs to be cautious of Marx's own orientalist ideas on India and caste.[4] Besides, one may find innumerable contradictions within Marx's own views on materialism, especially when one sees the wavering movements between early and later Marx, between his attacks and indebtedness to Hegel, between his advocacy of a materialistic methodology on the one hand and return to philosophy and poetry on the other .[5] To reflect on such contingent tendencies to read 'idea' and 'matter' as separate one may turn towards Engels as well, especially in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*.[6] One may also be reminded of the many internal contradictions that haunted the existing approaches to read caste through the Marxist lens, such as substituting the caste question with working class question, addressing the caste question by an approach dependent on the Cominternian cause and the Soviet Union, etc[7] (Nigam 1999, 41). In a discussion on caste one may therefore posit such western views of materialism as inadequate (a claim which obviously has its own validity) and assert the necessity of viewing the materiality of caste from Indian materialistic approaches. Such a demand for reading caste through Indian philosophical roots and not 'borrowed' Marxist views of materiality may be again reductively read as a nativist approach, but the topographical specificity that is assigned with caste also demands reading it in terms of its own specificity. All such issues remind us continuously not only of the necessity of reviewing our approaches but also of the aporia of re-turning. Since any attempt at reading the past remains always a form of constitution of the past (the is-ness of which is never available in its entirety for reading), attempts to read the origin of caste, I submit, also remains part of the same process. A reading that attempts to engage with the idea of caste with such awareness thus realises the futility of trying to read an idea in its absolute singularity. Every single act of reading continuously betrays the normative expectation of submitting to its own absolute singularity but remains always enabled by the assemblage of the multiple; in other words, every singular act of reading is always already entangled, by whatever term we decide to call it, materialism or idealism.

Exploring the question of originary moments of caste in relation to the idealism/materialism debate, I decide, therefore, to turn towards *lokayata* not simply to establish caste in some new (factic) historical light but to remind the contingencies that haunt any such attempt. The previous attempts to turn towards ancient philosophical approaches to caste (for example, Kosambi, 1962; Bhattacharya , 2008; Guru &

Sarukkai, 2012, among others) have always tried to read it in terms of some form of constructivism or other, and as such, even though their approach was materialistic it cannot detach itself entirely from some form of idealism. Trying to engage with the contingencies haunting the discussions of idealism/materialism in Indian philosophy, I therefore, turn towards an approach that is otherwise marked as materialistic but in an unreliable way. *Lokayata*, often labeled as a materialistic approach, has always been read in opposition to the Vedic approach which too has been marked as idealistic (Chattopadhyaya, 1959; Bhattacharya, 2011). However, without the availability of any original text of *Lokayata*, all such assertions turn into assumptions only. In other words, based on its treatment in other texts, or by other philosophical schools of thought, the reading of *Lokayata* as a specific type of materialism thus suffers from a certain form of constructivism that attempts to idealise a version of materialistic approach within the framework of *Lokayata*. To use Debiprasad's own words, the reader is a thinking being and as such he will have to read with a mind having a system of beliefs, and from a standpoint which he happens to occupy at the time of his reading activity, and thus the 'objective' reading is as much 'subjective' (Chattopadhyaya 1959, xi). Similarly, it remains applicable with any approach to turn towards the originary moments of caste, just as it remains the case with any approach to assert a certain version of materialism as the absolute truth. Turning towards *Lokayata* thus enables us to explore not only the pre-Vedic ideas on caste but also reminds us of their aporetic spectrality.

As asserted already, in the absence of any remaining material record of *Lokayata*, reading its origin and nature through its references in the later Buddhist and Upanisadic sources not only makes it pre-Buddhist and even pre-Upanisadic[8] but more importantly dependent on its various forms of re-presentation and therefore, always partial and conjectural. Besides, since all pro-Vedic schools of India, particularly *Vedānta*, *Mīmāṃsā* and *Nyāya* among the orthodox (āstika) systems and the Buddhist and the Jain among the heterodox (*nāstika*) ones tried their best to refute both the Pre-*Cārvāka* and the *Cārvāka/Lokāyata* views, it becomes also unreliable to read the origin and ideas of *Lokayata* through its references in their works (Bhattacharya 2011). Etymologically meaning 'that which is prevalent among the people' and also 'that which is essentially this-worldly' (Chattopadhyaya 1959, xvii), *Lokayata* refuses to subscribe to any singular grand-narrative or transcendental idea(l) as its originary centre but celebrates the body in all its multiplicity, irreducibility, and openness as the microcosmic reflector for the world. As such, *Lokayata* is also often associated with another term called '*dehavad*' because of it sole reliance upon the material human body (*deha*) for all outlook or conceptualisation of the world. In other words, such outlook reflects a form of practice that doesn't assert any allegiance to any universal order or common theory and even if it subscribes, because of its essential reliance on what is prevalent, such allegiance remains always momentary and shifting. This leads Ramkrishna Bhattacharya to assert that materialism in India had a 'popular' origin (Bhattacharya 2011, 27). Such shifting trajectories also make it impossible to assert that such outlook emerged as a dominant form of philosophical worldview that had a definite idea regarding how to practice a certain specific philosophy of *dehavad* (Chattopadhyaya 1959, xvii). Needless to say it separately, this is absolutely different from what will be later marked into closed and antagonistic terms as 'idealism' and 'materialism.' It is from a much later point onwards, specifically by reading it in contrast to what is later called spiritual idealism (namely '*vedanta*'), that *Lokayata* comes to be seen as materialistic philosophy opposing all forms of transcendental

idealism. In other words, what is often marked today as one of the earliest germs of proto-materialism in Indian philosophy was never a self-conscious approach, it's identification with a certain concept of materialism was a later product of comparative reading by which its significance was asserted always in opposition to a similarly constructed idea of idealism. Such attempts at comparative reading to assert a certain supremacy of one section, I submit, is not something immediately new and one can find such traces even in the early trends of reading *Lokayata*.

Since *Lokayata* was placed in opposition to transcendental ideas like *atma* (roughly translated as soul) and *dharma* (essential spiritual duty), it was quite obvious that they refused to accept any transcendental views on caste as well. To justify that often a famous passage is quoted from a later medieval compendium titled *The Sarva-Darsana-Samgraha*[9] *or Review of the Different Systems of Hindu Philosophy* by Madhava Acharya (that was later translated by E. B. Cowell and A. E. Gough in 1882 as part of the colonial reading). The point here is not to turn towards *Lokayata* in search of some messianic possibility to dismantle the presumed origins of caste; one can find innumerable traces of contradictions even within later Vedic views of caste (which I will discuss in the later sections on touch). The point rather is to emphasise that the tendency to divide idealism and materialism into absolutely detachable categories is a later product and in the earlier philosophical approaches the divisions are not available in such simple binaries. Even when one turns towards transcendental ideas[10] like *atma* (soul), *dharma* (spiritual duty), *moksha* (salvation), *paralok* (afterlife), etc. that are associated with Vedic literature, one needs to realise that even as ideas they cannot be established without any relation to the corporeality. Similarly, asserting a certain type of materialism as the only approach to engage with the real also remains a form of idea since neither the real nor the matter (we may use the same with 'truth' as well) is accessible to us in its entirety, just as we cannot ignore the fact that our assertion of the material world remains after all our ideas of the material world. Instead of fixing our focus on *Lokayata* as an instance of early materialistic approach to caste, I submit, it can offer us certain significant aspects to explore the obscure roots of caste (especially in relation to the question of tribal) without reducing it to the idealism/materialism division. Debiprasad reminds us that if one focuses on the essential characteristics that characterize the caste system it becomes extremely problematic to separate it from a tribal society since it too shares most of the similarities: both are endogamous, with numerous subdivisions; the members share a strong belief in common descent; the original ancestor is usually imagined to be a plant or an animal from which the clan borrows its name (therefore totemic identification and practising taboos); laws are strictly maintained by a council where expulsion and excommunication is the major punishment (Chattopadhyaya 1959, 203). Not only the confusion between caste and tribe makes it problematic to assert the originality of caste,[11] the assertion of the claimed superiority of the Brahman caste also remains obscure and arbitrary since such early times. Apart from its claimed lineage of divine origin, one of the common ways by which the comparative superiority of the Brahman caste is asserted is by placing the other castes involved in non-religious activities at a 'lower' position by a derogatory reading of the idea of tribal. In other words, the 'tribal' (and its associated works of manual labor) is placed as the 'other' of a constituted body of the 'civilized' Brahman (associated with the regulation of the 'sacred'). However, such views lose their legitimacy when one realises that even upper castes, as it is with the thinking of any modern 'civilized' society, stand upon structures which were once tribal. One may

turn in this regard to the system of '*gotras*' (subdivisions of a caste into smaller groups) that remains even today the basis of debate concerning the lineage and authenticity of one's caste identity:

> A Brahmana, for example, is supposed to belong to the Kasyapa gotra. The name of this gotra is derived from the tortoise. That is, all the members of the Kasyapa gotra are supposed to be the descendants of an original ancestor who was a tortoise. As belonging to this tortoise-group, he is supposed to live under two very strict taboos. First, he must never eat tortoise. Secondly, he must not marry any member of the same gotra, that is, of the tortoise-group. This obviously shows that this Kasyapa gotra is but a survival of the tortoise-clan in which his ancestors were living when they were still to outgrow the tribal stage of social organisation
>
> (Ibid, 207).

Such references not only show how the *gotras* of the higher castes were survivals of the clan-system of the tribal society but also reflect on the continuity of 'tribal' elements as the basis of what is otherwise differentiated as 'modern' civilized society. As such, the reading of *gotra* in its absolute singularity remains extremely problematic since it comes to be read as synonymous with multiple aspects like *santati* (lineage), *janana* (race), *kula* (family), *abhijana* (descent), *anvaya* (progeny), *vamsa* (race), *anvavaya* (lineage) and *santana* (family offspring) (Ibid, 208). The members of the various Brahmana *gotras* always prided themselves as having their origin from *rishis* or ancient sages which too remains quite obscure when one traces the confusions presented in the later religious texts. For example, while the *Matsya Purana* identifies the seven *rishis* or sages born from Brahma as Bhrigu, Angiras, Marichi, Atri, Pulaha, Pulastya and Visvamitra, the *Satapatha Brahmana* on the other hand provides us with the seven other names of *rishis* as the original ancestors which are Gautama, Bharadvaja, Visvamitra, Jamadagni, Vasistha, Kasyapa, and Atri. To this latter list even another name is added later, Agastya, thus making the number of *gotras* eight. The inconsistency in the number of *gotras* too remains a relevant issue to be found in such texts: the *Asvalayana Srauta Stttra* identifies the *gotras* to be 49, the *Kuladipika* mentions the gotras to be 40 though only names 32, and the *Gotra Pravara Nibandhana Kadambam* mentions the number to be even 73 (Ibid., 209). Not only the commonly held view of the origin of Brahman *gotras* from ancient *rishis* remains arbitrary and obscure but also shows its links with totemic animals and plants which is otherwise attached with 'savage' tribes, as in the case with Brahman *gotras* like *Vatsas* (calves), *Sunakas* (dogs), *Riksas* (bears), *Bharadvajas* (a species of birds), *Mudgalas* (a species of fish), *Kapis* (monkeys), *Ajas* (goats), *Renus* (pollens), *Venus* (bamboos), *Kasyapas* (tortoises), *Sandilas* (a species of birds), *Gotamas* (cows) etc. (Ibid., 210). The assertion of the essentially spiritual character of caste system draws mainly from the reading of Brahmanical literature like the *Dharma Sastras* and *The Laws of Manu*, however, and even if one decides to avoid the innumerable internal contradictions within such texts regarding the idea of caste, turning towards ancient approaches like *Lokayata* remind us continuously of the obscurities that constitute the originary roots of caste, its problematic linking with spirituality, and its confused claims of auto-generativity especially in relation to the continuation of tribal qualities within caste.

Turning towards *Lokayata* we may be reminded therefore not simply of the diverse materialities that constitute the emergence of caste as a 'system' but mainly of the exclusions, obscurities and arbitrariness that characterise the 'idea' of caste in its originary emergences. *Lokayata* reminds us of a society that takes the physical body as the only reality and therefore outside the politics of ideological regulations that enable caste discriminations. Debiprasad sums this in a very articulate way:

> ...so long as human consciousness retains its moorings in manual labour, it remains instinctively materialistic. For there is a sense of objective coercion about the labour process itself... This is negatively substantiated by the fact that the emergence of the idealistic outlook in the human consciousness presupposes a separation of thought from action—of mental labour from manual labour—along with a sense of degradation socially attached to the latter. The result is an exaltation of the spirit or consciousness—of pure thought or pure reason—to the status of a delusional omnipotence having, as it were, the power to dictate terms to reality. And this is the essence of the idealistic outlook... this idealistic outlook did emerge on the ruins of a primitive proto-materialism, representing the consciousness of the primitive pre-class society in which manual labour and mental labour were not dissociated from each other
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> (Ibid., xxii-xxiii).

Though identified today as primitive or proto-materialism, *Lokayata* reminds us of a materialistic worldview that refuses to submit to any theory (even adhering to a normative theory of practising materialism remains an essential paradox for the materialists),and rather takes the primacy of living body in all its multiplicity as the sole reality, a view that takes the human body and earth as co-responding, inter-acting and inter-dependent. In Debiprasad's words, with all its ignorance about nature as well as the human body, it thus marks a stage where human consciousness remains yet to be emancipated from the world and proceed to the formation of the spiritualistic or idealistic world-outlook (Ibid, xxi). It is also asserted that the *Lokayata* outlook believed the human body as entangled with nature in its four essential elements i.e., earth, air, fire and water, and thus refused to accept the later transcendental ideas of the Vedas, especially *Ṛgveda* that presented an ideal supreme person called *purusha* whose body parts were divided into four castes: Brāhaman or the priests (his mouth), Rājanyas or the warriors (his two arms), Vaiśya or agriculturists and traders (his two thighs), and Śūdra or (manual workers (his two feet) (Ibid, 5).

While all these may be used as factic signs of asserting some 'truth' about the arbitrary origins of caste and its inconsistent ideas, such a reading, though may be materialistic in a self-declared way, too participates in latent forms of idealism. In ancient times, these thoughts attributed to the *Lokayata* outlook were read with certain comparative negativities to construct the spiritual worldview proposed by the Vedas as essential and unavoidable, just as the *Lokayata* outlook to establish their views ridiculed the Vedas continuously (one may find a similar antagonistic situation between idealism and materialism as well). Under colonial governance reading such ancient views was an inextricable part of the colonial epistemological politics, while the rise of anti-colonial and nationalist ideologies found in such readings a way to assert India's spiritual difference against West's material prosperity. Similarly, in the contemporary times as well, re-turning to *Lokayata* remains always enabled by some form

constructive reading, be it to assert the ancient materialistic roots of Indian philosophy or to counter caste arguments. While such approaches like that of Debiprasad's has its own unavoidable significance in their attempts to critique ideological constructions from material vantage point still such materialistic approaches too always depend on some form idealism regarding their own embodied ideas on what they decide to consider as 'materialistic approach.'. In this respect, quite interestingly, without any definite textual or factic center to hold on to, *Lokayata* reminds us continuously of the contingencies of any attempt at constructivism, whether we re-turn to it with the aim of asserting a definite materialistic approach or to assert the originary roots of caste. This gets further emphasis when we realise that the ideas associated with *Lokayata* were also similar to many other schools of the both 'pre' and 'post' *lokayata* times. For example, many thinkers during the time of Buddha and Mahāvīra (sixth/fifth century BCE) and even after, had also asserted about the primacy of matter (consisting of five basic elements, namely, earth, air, fire, water and space) over consciousness, futility of performing sacrifices (yajña) and post-mortem rites (śrāddha), and offering gifts (dāna) to Brahmanas (Bhattacharya 2012, 1). Similarly, the problem also emerges from the identification of Brihaspati, since the name which is associated with *Lokayata* is also associated with other schools of thought which are not always exactly similar to that of *Lokayata*, and as such reading all these Brihaspatis as one may constitute a severe form of reductionism. All these reminds us that while every single attempt at reading *Lokayata* has its own significant contribution in (re)presenting this ancient outlook in its newer and shifting trajectories yet one cannot also ignore the latent forms of constructivism that always haunt any such attempt to return to it. My approach here is also not outside the boundaries of constructive reading since after all the main aim remains to connect the question of the materiality of caste with its originary idealism/materialism debates so as to trace the inconsistencies and obscurities characterising the idea of caste since its earliest emergences. These factors— emphasizing the originary roots of caste, and reading it with a tendency to separate idea and matter—remain two dominant registers even today to read caste, and as such turning towards *Lokayata* enables us to understand not only the internal contradictions haunting any attempt at conjuring an orignary past of caste but also to reflect on the acts of reading itself whereby such conjuring comes to be justified.

Practicing Un/touch-ability: Within the Body or Without?

After tracing briefly the obscure roots of caste and materialism in Indian philosophy let us turn towards two of the most elementary conceptual aspects of caste: body and touch. What happens when we touch bodies, do we really have access to the material bodies that can be touched in their entirety, or do we think that we have access to the material bodies and therefore we can in a self-conscious way practise touch? Any attempt at thinking 'touch' demands conceptualising it in its entirety, however, thinking 'untouch' on the other hand demands engaging with the impossible task of conceptualising that which is not-yet-touched and/or that which cannot be touched. This leads us, therefore, to an irreconcilable (non)position of conceptualising touch-in-itself. To elaborate it further I am turning towards an extract from one of my earlier papers:

> …before one can explore the question of untouch-ability one needs to first explore the thinking of touch-ability. Since touch always remains one of the crucial aspects of the various senses that help us to conceptualise and connect

with the material world, thinking the specificity of touch thus always already remains linked with thinking the specificity of the body. However, if touch remains always partial, then it also brings us back to a non-position and inability to conceptualise the body in its entirety. If a 'touch' of Dalit violates the body of the upper castes then the bodily composition of Dalit and other castes has to be different. If the touch is that which violates, then touch must be seen as carrying a transgressing potential beyond the body; in other words, the location of the touch cannot be within the body only. If the Dalit's touch violates the body of other castes then touch cannot be identified within the material body of the toucher only (then how can one project the Dalit's body as 'polluting'?), and if it remains always connected with the originating body then how can it affect other bodies? This brings us to an irreconcilable problem of locating touch: within the body or beyond it? If one is never able to locate touch, then how can one identify that touch as always already corrupting?"

<div align="right">(Saha 2019, 44-45)</div>

Since caste as a 'system' has always been associated with universality based on elementary understandings of creation, bodily compositions and functions, any attempt at exploring 'touch' also demands such necessity of engaging with the elementary forms of cognition that enable collective participation. Since we always conceptualise touch in relation to or in terms of other things, any attempt at thinking touch also remains dependent on other things. Not only in the early views of *Lokayata* outlook such metaphysical ideas on touch remains absolutely rejected, the later philosophical views since Vedic times also remains filled with innumerable contradictions regarding the idea of touch. Sarukkai, for example, tracing the diverse approaches to touch that can be found in the various Indian philosophical trends, reminds us of the necessity to conceptually differentiate "touch" (*sparśa*) and "contact" (*saṁyoga*):

> Each sense organ is composed exclusively of one of the five elements – smell of earth, taste of water, touch of air, sight of fire, hearing of ether… Touch is a *guna* – quality, like taste, smell and contact. It is a quality only for earth, water, fire and air whereas contact is a quality for all the nine substances including ākāśa, time, place, self, and internal organs. Furthermore, touch is perceived only through one sense organ but contact can be by two sense organs. Also, contact produces a variety of qualities including pleasure, pain, aversion, merit, and demerit. However, touch does not produce these which contact does…The notion of contact suggests something broader than touch: 'contact is a quality that is present in the 'toucher' and the 'touched'… If two bodies are in contact with each other, then that contact is a symmetrical relation – each body is in contact with the other. However, in the case of touch, there seems to be an asymmetry since the person who touches is at the same time not being touched by the object. So when I say I am touching a chair I do not at the same time say the chair is touching me (although Merleau-Ponty would disagree!). Touch in this sense is a specific human sense unlike contact which is a specific kind of relation between any two entities
>
> <div align="right">(Guru & Sarukkai 2012, 40).</div>

This further reminds us of the problematic question of materially locating untouchability: first, if the Brahmin touches the Shudra or vice versa then the *toucher* should remain

untouched; secondly, if the *touch* affects the *toucher* then the relation is rather of a mutual relationship of 'contact' between the toucher-touched; and thirdly, and most importantly, the untouchable is able to manifest a certain sense of 'untouch' within the person whereby the body itself becomes untouchable irrespective of whether or not the person comes in contact with another person (Ibid., 41). The body in different Indian philosophical traditions (for example, *The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*, *RgVeda*, *Buddhism,* etc) involves a relationality: between being and world, locatedness and transcendence, physical and metaphysical, material and ideal, internal and external, specificity and generality. As such, even in the attempts to engage with the material body like that in *Āyurveda,* we see Suśruta, the famous surgeon of ancient times, classifying the body into seven layers of skin (Ibid), thus exposing us to the unavoidable question: if skin is the organ of touch as we understand it now then which of these layers of skin are actually involved in the experience of touch? (Saha, 2019). Such irreducibility of the material body can be traced in other philosophical trends as well (for example, Sānkhya and Advaita Vedānta), thus reminding us again that even within the search for origins of material traces of caste one ends up with an irreducible and entangled past where certain forms of constructivism or other always haunt even the most materialistic approaches. Turning towards *Lokayata* we are reminded with one such small example to realise the contingencies that always haunt attempts to search for origins, whether we call it a search for origins of idealism or materialism in Indian philosophy.

Specters of Caste and the Betrayal of the Promise of Democracy

The projection of Dalits as untouchable bodies, I submit, always remains symptomatic of such long continuing circuits of misreading on which the ghost of untouchability feeds itself. While we continue to discriminate and attack each other in terms of our different approaches to fight casteism (idealism versus materialism, Savarna versus Dalit, theoretical versus practical, academic versus activist, etc), the ghost of caste that continues to paralyze us is continuously evolving ways. Ambedkar was aware of such haunting spectrality of caste and therefore was critical of any immediately available approaches to exorcise it:

> I may seem hard for Manu, but I am sure my force is not strong enough to kill his ghost. He lives, like a disembodied spirit and is appealed to, and I am afraid will yet live long.
>
> (Ambedkar 1917, 21).

For Ambedkar, caste was essentially undemocratic in character since it takes inequality and hierarchy as the governing principle and even forecloses the possibility to do away with it:

> One European solution was to respect the rights of others (because one thought one had rights; therefore, others too must have them), so that others respect our rights in turn; a certain reciprocity is assumed (never fully proved). This is where the problem crystallizes itself. This is about the so-called idea/l of democracy: We are all equal and therefore must be treated equally.
>
> (Ambedkar 1936 (2014), 172)

In the question of caste this idea/l of democracy too is not available in the thinking of a common society. Caste constitutes the thinking of society only in separatist terms. While the hegemonic forms of brahminical social organisation come to be internalised as the only access to think the social space, it also displaces the possibilities of other potential inter-acting social spaces that the other castes share within themselves. Besides, it also reminds us that attempts to radically overturn such an organisation of the social space may not get away with casteist social separation, and the recent exclusionary emphasis and hatred against what is identified as 'savarna' can be seen as symptoms of such reverse mechanism by which the discriminatory logic of caste continues to shape even counter politics. In a different register, this is a similar paradox that one may trace within proletarian revolution as well if the proletariat claims to overturn the class hierarchy which doesn't ensure getting rid of a discriminatory class-structure but rather continue as reconfigurations of it in newer and latent ways. Ambedkar was well aware of such possibilities of continuity of caste structure even within attempts to get rid of it, and thus for him a complete annihilation of it demanded a complete annihilation of the conceptual structures that enable its circulation, and the embodied ideas of Hinduism were one such breeding ground (Ibid). In his celebrated *Annihilation of Caste* when Ambedkar reminds us continuously that political and democratic reform cannot be asserted without social reform it becomes evident that he indirectly talks about the necessity of getting rid of the embodied ideas of caste in order to ensure their annihilation from material forms of practice: "…let political reformers turn in any direction they like, they will find that in the making of a constitution, they cannot ignore the problem arising out of the prevailing social order' (Ibid, 178). For Ambedkar caste forecloses the capacity to constitute collective community based on equality and fraternity, and practicing *a priori* discriminations based on identifying 'savarna' seems to continue in a paradoxical way the emphasis on 'varna.'[12] Ambedkar had repeatedly asserted that the assurance of democracy must be the assurance proceeding from a much deeper foundation—namely, the mental attitude of the compatriots towards one another in their spirit of equality and fraternity (Ibid, 183), and the question of 'savarna' versus 'dalit' seem to reflect a relation of antagonism (instead of brotherhood and equality) and therefore an inversion within counter-politics whereby caste and its reliance on '*varna*' discrimination continues to live. Ambedkar was perhaps aware of such possibilities when he asserted:

> The caste system prevents common activity… One caste enjoys singing a hymn of hate against another caste as much as the Germans enjoyed singing their hymn of hate against the English during the last war.
>
> (Ambedkar 1936 (2014), 191)

By keeping apart people of the same society into different irreconcilable segments caste therefore stands against what democracy stands for, and as such, for Ambedkar caste was by its essential nature 'anti-social.' Doing away caste demands doing away all its conceptual registers, and attempts of annihilating caste that continue to rely on the memories of an old order cannot think of an entirely caste-less future. Therefore, for Ambedkar, annihilating caste demanded an absolute overthrow of the conceptual structures (of Hinduism) on which caste breeds itself. In a similar way, among the most recent approaches, Jaaware too attempts to refuse caste its unavoidable essence which it has enjoyed for a long time and instead transfers all emphasis from caste to

touch as the principle register. This is what Jaaware calls 'oublierring' or 'deliberate forgetting' (Jaaware 2019, 13-15).Bringing in the subtle differences between western ideas of 'society' (derived from 'socius' which stands for companion, follower, etc.) and the Indian 'samaj' (which also stands for caste, clan, community, etc), Jaaware points at the innumerable contradictions that caste brings into the thinking of a common society: while caste is segmentalist (in the sense that it aims to cut apart), society aims at unifying all into one (Jaaware 2019, 171-189). However, this is an intimate cut that caste brings in within the thinking of a common *samaj*: 'We interact with but will not relate to that other samaj. The members of that samaj are not from ours' (Ibid., 171). Thus, at the unavailability of a common society (since to take the fourfold division as unavoidable 'law' also expects the constitution of four different societies), to identify oneself with a common society demands the invention of *an idea of a common society* that one may identify with, and this is what Jaaware decides to call sociability (Ibid., 172). With the persistence of caste, not only the idea/l of a common society remains a foreclosure, practising different forms of autonomous individual sociability also remains a prohibition. In other words, the persistence of the embodied idea of caste within a democratic system operates as mutually contradictory since neither the individual nor a common singular unity can survive under the caste structure; the latter must replace the former according its ways of hierarchical social organisation and as such equality remains an impossibility.

The specters of caste always operate with an inextricable idea-matter embrace, and not idea/matter separation, that enable the figurations of the idea of caste into everyday forms of practice. While turning towards *Lokayata* not only reminds us of the problematic roots of idealism/materialism separation in Indian philosophy, it also reflects on the various forms of constructivism that always haunt the approaches to caste, as it is with our conceptualization of idealism and materialism. Besides, it might also enable one to develop an immanent critique of caste that doesn't attempt to read caste through other registers like equality, society etc (which the limits of this paper prevent me from further elaborating). The point however that has been emphasised here by turning towards *Lokayata* is the obscure and contradictory origins of caste. It reminds us of the continuities in mis-reading since earliest times; a cautionary reminder that any attempt at getting rid of ideas that had *enabled* the embodiment of caste into practice for generations call for an attempt at exorcising a ghost whose origin, form(ation) and effect is continuously changing, and so must change our ways to approach it. Such continuous becoming, in the case of caste, thus involves a hauntological becoming[13], one that acquires its functional modalities by a simultaneous working of past and present, idea and matter, ontology and epistemology (Das 2010). However, this hauntological becoming of caste also exposes its own fissures and herein lies the paradox that even the ghost cannot escape: while the ghost cannot be conceptualised without being corporealised, on the other hand the performative corporeal body cannot stand entirely for the ghost, and through such fissures emerge the disruption within the ghost's own functionality. It is within such contingent becomings of the ghost that the possibilities of its own disruption lies, and an approach failing to realise such idea-matter embrace that characterises the ghost of caste thus fails in its initial conceptualisation of both the problem as well as the solution.

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Endnotes

1. Influenced by the rise of Marxism in India the caste question has often been seen in terms of class question (obviously not without contradictions), which, coupled with the embodied lens of colonial modernity, comes to see caste as only a pre-colonial, ignorant, irrational obstacle in the nation-making project. A similar tendency can be found in Srinivas' study as well, where he makes the famous assertion: "Caste is an institution of prodigious strength and it will take a lot of beating before it will die" (Srinivas 1962, 72).

2. To Gandhi's description of scavenging as "the noblest service to society" Ambedkar responded with question "How sacred is this work of cleanliness!": "To preach that poverty is good for the Shudra and for none else, to preach that scavenging is good for the untouchables and for none else and to make them accept these onerous impositions as voluntary purposes of life, by appeal to their failings is an outrage and a cruel joke on the helpless classes which none but Mr Gandhi can perpetuate with equanimity and impunity. In this connection one is reminded of the words of Voltaire ... 'Oh! mockery to say to people that the sufferings of some brings joy to others and works good to the whole. What solace is it to a dying man to know that from his decaying body a thousand worms will come into life'" (cited by Gatade 2015, 33)

3. The indifference of the upper-castes becomes too evident when one realizes that not only the suffering of Dalits (who are forced into manual scavenging) remains unaddressed but it becomes an object of fun and entertainment. Take for instance, a popular *Radio Mirchi* television commercial thatwas aired a few years ago for almost two years, wherein a man was heard (and not made visible in his body) inside a manhole gaily singing a song—— then, a man chewing betel alights from his car t wondering what keeps the man down in the manhole so happy. And the advertising tagline emerges: *Mirchi Sunnewaale… Always Khush!* (People listening to Radio Mirchi are always happy)The question to focus is obviously not simply the advertisement but the fact that it went on for many years without a murmur of protest from viewers or civil rights groups, and is still available on Youtube (https://youtu.be/6aSjcixHJI4; accessed on March 25, 2019). Similar stories of discrimination one can find almost every day in newspapers. For example, 'Dalit boy denied water from hand pump, drowns while drinking from well' (Hindustan Times. 2016-03-09. Retrieved 2018-11-14: https://www.hindustantimes.com/bhopal/dalit-boy-not-allowed-water-from-school-hand-pump-drowns-while-drinking-from-well/story-9KLdKKDT9BazWAPy56ZxDP.html), or 'Dalit girl attacked by priest for trying to draw water from temple well' (https://www.firstpost.com/india/dalit-girl-attacked-by-priest-in-uttar-pradesh-for-trying-to-draw-water-from-temple-well-2946630.html).

4. For further details, see Marx's "The British Rule in India" (1853) and "The Future Results of British Rule in India" (1853).

5. For further details on Marx's engagement with poetry, social structure and revolution, see "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte".

6. Here is one such section from the text: "The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of modern philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking and being. From the very early times when men…came to believe that their thinking and sensation were not activities of their bodies, but of a distinct soul which

inhabits the body and leaves it at death…The question of the position of thinking in relation to being, a question which, by the way, had played a great part also in the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, the question, which is primary, spirit or nature — that question, in relation to the Church was sharpened into this: 'Did God create the world or has the world been in existence?' The answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world creation in some form or other . . . comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism. These two expressions, idealism and materialism, primarily signify nothing more than this; and here also they are not used in any other sense.' (Engels 1886, 21)

7. Nigam cites how directly Mikhail Borodin's influence was on M. N. Roy's *Manifesto of the Indian Communist Party* that promised to free the emergent nation from its pre-colonial allegiances to caste that the Indian National Congress was not able to eradicate. Thus, though Roy realised that a typical two-class party model of orthodox Marxist approach was not effectively applicable in the Indian context, rather it demanded a multi-class party model, he was expelled from the Comintern for violating their one party, one class motif. It was also the same dependence on the Cominternian motif that led Muzaffar Ahmad in 1926 to change the name of Labour Swaraj Party to 'The Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party' (Nigam, 1999).

8. The earliest Buddhist sources repeatedly mentioned the *Lokayata*, and further, as already argued by Dasgupta and others, even the older Upanisads mentioned it—though under the name of the Asura-view—it is natural to presume therefore that the *Lokayata*, in its original form, must have been very ancient; however, it is certainly impossible to fix any singular date as to how very ancient it was. (Chattopadhyaya 1959)

9. Here are some excerpts from the most commonly cited section: "There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world,/Nor do the actions of the four castes, orders, &c., produce any real effect./…/If a beast slain in the Jyotishtoma rite will itself go to heaven,/Why then does not the sacrificer forthwith offer his own father?/…/While life remains let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs in debt;/When once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again?/If he who departs from the body goes to another world, How is it that he comes not back again, restless for love of his kindred?/Hence it is only as a means of livelihood that Brahmans have established here/All these ceremonies for the dead, there is no other fruit anywhere./The three authors of the Vedas were buffoons, knaves, and demons./All the well-known formulae of the pandits, jarphari, turphari, &c./And all the obscene rites for the queen commanded in the Aswamedha,/These were invented by buffoons, and so all the various kinds of presents to the priests,/While the eating of flesh was similarly commanded by night-prowling demons" (Cowell & Gough 1882, 10).

10. Being specifically linked with the cultural and linguistic history of India, these terms and their associated concepts remain always untranslatable if one tries to capture in English language their essence in entirety, just as it remains the case with translation of some culturally specific terms from French or German. As such, any attempt at translation of such concepts always remains partial. For further details,

see Barbara Cassin ed. *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004).

11. Ranging Manusmriti to Mahabharata the confusion between caste and tribe, especially in English translations remains a recurrent issue. Since the confusion between 'caste' and 'tribe' was never addressed properly, and since colonial epistemology was not always aware of the various complexities and intricacies of the native social organisation, it remains a recurring aspect also in the colonial readings of caste ranging from as early as Sherring's study in 1872, Russell and Hiralal's study in 1916, to as late as Crispin Bates' study in 1995. For further details, see Chattopadhyaya 1959, 202-203.

12. One may re-member here the words of Ambedkar: 'The first question I ask is: Will the proletariat of India combine to bring about this revolution? What will move men to such an action? It seems to me that, other things being equal, the only thing that will move one man to take such an action is the feeling that other men with whom he is acting are actuated by feelings of equality and fraternity and—above all—of justice. Men will not join in a revolution for the equalisation of property unless they know that after the revolution is achieved they will be treated equally, and that there will be no discrimination of caste and creed' (Ibid, 182).

13. I use this concept from Anirban Das' use of it in his book, where he writes: "This body, thus not only material, has the ghost's spectral corporeality. It haunts as it becomes. But what is the dynamic of the process through which idea is materialized and matter (of the body) gets haunted by the spirit? A structure of iterability is presupposed in this 'hauntology' of the body. A structure that gets displaced as it becomes. It gives place to the 'other' deep within it" (Das 2010, 04).

Dalit or Brahmanical Patriarchy?
Rethinking Indian Feminism

Sunaina Arya[1]
(Bluestone Rising Scholar Honorable Mention 2019)

Abstract

This paper argues that the conceptualisation of notions like 'dalit' or 'intra-caste' or 'multiple' patriarchies results from a misunderstanding of the concept brahmanical patriarchy. The category 'dalit patriarchy' is gaining popularity in academic and political discourse of contemporary India. It is introduced by Gopal Guru in his seminal essay 'Dalit Women Talk Differently' only to challenge patriarchal practices within 'lower' caste groups. But mainstream feminists of India attempted to propagate and proliferate this vague concept. They argue that dalit men, as a part of their exploitation by 'upper' caste, also face taunts regarding their masculinity which results in their aggressive behaviour towards dalit women; which has been termed as 'dalit patriarchy.' The paper argues that conceptualisation of such notions yields no advancement in our endeavours toward a gender-just society, rather it is misleading. Evaluating articulations in mainstream Indian feminism, we need to think through: What effect does this have on our feminist struggle? What is at stake? What possibly can be a resolution? Thus, by exposing flaws about 'dalit patriarchy'—including a detailed discussion on the empirical, theoretical, and logical shortcomings—this paper seeks to initiate a theoretical rethinking of feminist as well as dalit scholarship, with employment of analytical, hermeneutical, and critical methods.

Keywords

Dalit, feminism, brahmanical, patriarchy, Ambedkar, gender, caste, race, class, philosophy, women

Introduction

Contemporary writings in Indian feminism pose some difficulties towards theorising gender. This paper argues that a conception of notions like '*dalit* patriarchy' or 'intracaste' or 'multiple' patriarchies, is a consequence of a perfunctory understanding of the concept brahmanical patriarchy. Mulling around

[1]Senior Research Fellow, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
E-mail: sunainaarya9@gmail.com

both the ideas offers a conclusion that mainstream Indian feminists' approach toward gender justice is incomprehensive and uncommitted. Thus, it proposes to rethink Indian feminist discourse with specific focus on its socio-cultural difference from rest of the world. This implies that theorising from a dalit feminist standpoint is the only way to consummate feminist philosophy, specifically for the Indian subcontinent, and in general. Let us see, how.

While thinking through various aspects of dalit reality, political theorist Gopal Guru reflected upon the patriarchal control over dalit women within their caste group which he vaguely called 'dalit patriarchy' (Guru, 1995, p. 2549). He was critical of the patriarchal norms and practices prevalent within the dalit community, while having no intentions of creating a major hurdle for dalit feminists today. In recent times, mainstream Indian feminists have furthered the concept and attempted to popularise it as a separate form of patriarchy free from the umbrella of brahmanical patriarchy. They suggest that dalit men, as a part of their exploitation by 'upper'[1] caste, also face taunts regarding their masculinity which results in their aggressive behaviour on dalit women (Chakravarti, 2013 [2003], p. 86; Geetha, 2009, p. 108). This is discussed in detail in the first section of the paper.

The popularity of 'dalit patriarchy' is ever increasing in contemporary feminist scholarship. Lucinda Ramberg builds her perspective 'upon the feminist anti-caste scholarship of Anjali Arondekar, Charu Gupta, Gail Omvedt, Shailaja Paik, Sharmila Rege, and Anupama Rao, who have described 'untouchable' womanhood as unfolding within *two patriarchies—brahmanical and dalit' (*Ramberg, in Rao 2018). Kumkum Sangari titles her paper on religious diversity around 'multiple patriarchies' without any discussion or engagement with its meaning (1995 p. 3295). Not only mainstream Indian and western scholars but also dalit feminists are left unaffected by this category. Shailaja S. Paik recollects Ambedkar's feminist movement: by 'giving up caste-specific, stigmatised dressing styles and heavy jewellery, dalit women asserted against both Brahmanical (caste and gender codes) as well as intracaste patriarchies' (Paik, 2016; Tilak, 2018). Reviewing Dutt's memoir, *Coming Out as Dalit*, Dhanaraj mentions 'inter- and intra-caste patriarchies' (Dhanaraj, 2019; Dutt, 2019). This high granting of such terms to be true is counterproductive for our feminist emancipatory goals. What we require is to think carefully upon such interventions for a comprehensive picture of the mode of patriarchy at play.

We find two presumed phenomena related with the conceptualisation of dalit patriarchy. One, it is distinct from brahmanical patriarchy, and secondly, there exist multiple patriarchies. Chakravarti writes, 'as Ambedkar had pointed to caste as a system of graded inequalities, we should note that patriarchies in the subcontinent were contained within a larger system which was graded according to caste' (Chakravarti, 2013[2003], p. 83). Let us ponder upon the origin and definition of dalit patriarchy and observe whether it is actually 'graded according to caste'.

Dalit Patriarchy: What is it?

First Formulation

Gopal Guru, in his seminal essay 'Dalit Women Talk Differently,' formulates dalit patriarchy in the following context:

> Besides th[e] external factors, there are certain internal factors that have prompted dalit women to organise separately *vis-a-vis* dalit men. In the post-Ambedkar period, dalit leaders have always subordinated, and at times suppressed, an independent political expression of dalit women.... Dalit women rightly question why they are not considered for the top positions in dalit literary conferences and institutions. This dissent brings three things to the fore: (1) It is not only caste and class identity but also one's gender positioning that decides the validity of an event; (2) Dalit men are reproducing the same mechanisms against their women which their high caste adversaries had used to dominate them; (3) The experience of dalit women shows that local resistance within dalits is important. The whole situation compels us to defend the claim that dalit women talk differently (Guru, 1995, p. 2549).

In conceptualisation of dalit patriarchy, three things which Guru brings forth, in other words, are—gender is as important as caste and class in the struggle towards a just society; patriarchy is rooted in dalit men as casteism is in the 'high' caste people; it is experientially evident that 'local' resistance within dalits is necessary. It is clear that he conceived of this category against the patriarchal dominance which dalit women face, encouraging feminist resistance from within. But none of his implications justify that dalit men's patriarchy is more oppressive or unique from that of *savarna* men. Although his claim about dalit women talking differently is crucial, calling patriarchy as 'dalit patriarchy' does not help us towards our goal of an egalitarian society. Guru's 'internal' and 'external' markers are explicated in the reference of the next formulation.

Second Formulation

A well-known feminist historian Uma Chakravarti attempts to pluralise patriarchy by employing the terms 'graded patriarchies' and 'dalit patriarchy,' arguing that 'dalit women experience patriarchy in a unique way.' Citing a dalit poet in support of her claim, Chakravarti writes:

> It is not as if patriarchies do not exist among the dalit castes, or that dalit women do not have to struggle against the patriarchies within their own communities. In the words of Swaroopa Rani,
>
> > *When has my life been truly mine?*
> > *In the home male arrogance*
> > *Sets my cheek stinging,*
> > *While in the street caste arrogance*
> > *Splits the other cheek open.*
>
> Whatever might have been the differences between dalit women's experience of patriarchy and that of upper caste women, the process of Sanskritisation or 'jatikarana'—intensified castification—led to upper caste norms and upper caste patriarchal practices percolation into the lower caste ranks too.
> <div align="right">(Chakravarti, 2013 [2003], pp. 87-88)</div>

As it is established through survey reports and abundant literary and scholarly works (Rege, 2013, pp. 20-21. See Aloysius, Mangubhai and Lee, 2006; Gogu, 2012; Jogdand, 2013; Moon, 2001; Pawar and Moon, 2014; Rege, 2000,2013 [2006], Stephen, 2011;

Dutt, 2019), the claim above that dalit women experience patriarchy in a complex way is valid. But in the aforementioned piercing poem of Swaroopa Rani, the first line flags the struggles pertinent to dalit women's lives; the next two lines notify violence exhibiting patriarchy; and the last two lines denote brahmanical oppression.

Chakravarti argues that dalit life is not unaffected from the _savarna_ patriarchal norms, but her use of the word 'whatever' about the difference between dalit and _savarna_ women's experiences makes us wonder what is offered in justification of her exposition of 'dalit patriarchy.' As argued, dalit men behave in the same patriarchal manner as _savarna_ men do, but then how is their patriarchy different from _savarna_? Why do we need a different term for the same phenomenon? Thus, in the absence of an explanation, this attempt renders futile for the feminist enterprise.

Third Formulation

Similar to the second, the next understanding on 'dalit patriarchy' also comes from another mainstream feminist, V. Geetha. She writes,

> There have been attempts to think through caste and gender, notably the idea of 'dalit' patriarchy. There are two different arguments here: one notes that dalit men have as much a stake in masculinity as other men. A notable feature of the exploitation of dalits has been the humiliation of dalit men: in the course of the power that upper caste men exert over their labour, they also taunt them about their masculinity. They claim that dalit men can never hope to protect their women, who are considered 'easy prey' by upper caste men. Such symbolic 'emasculation' of dalit men results in their feeling beleaguered in specifically gendered ways, which results in their exerting prowess in their families. The second argument accepts the premises of the first, but notes that apart from remaining 'masculine' within, dalit men also seek to express their covert anger at the humiliation they are forced to endure by seeking to tease upper caste women.

Geetha's (2009) conception presents a slightly different picture, that the caste-based humiliation of dalit men makes them more patriarchal than other men. She refers to a study on masculine norms among dalit youth, but mistakes masculinity among them as something unique. This—including their desire of teasing upper caste women—is an empirical claim, but what do we get for a justification? In lack of evidence for a peculiarity of patriarchy as argued, such conception of dalit patriarchy is misleading.

What we have is the brahmanical oppression as the underlying reason for dalit men's behaving in a patriarchal manner; if proven, that dalit men behave 'in specifically gendered ways,' the underlying reason (as argued by both writers hitherto) is their caste-based exploitation by the _savarna_. Clearly, it is brahmanical patriarchy which women face. And, thinking 'through caste and gender' evidences 'brahmanical patriarchy' as unmasked by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, not any dalit patriarchy (2003, Vol. 17, part 3, pp. 150-51).

These three are the primary understanding for conceptualising and furthering the untenable category viz. dalit patriarchy. Originally, Guru formulated it as an _internal_ matter to be resolved locally within dalit groups. Secondly, Chakravarti pluralised patriarchy while historically locating dalit women's struggle in brahmanical Indian society. Lastly, Geetha extends dalit men's aggressive masculinity to a desire of teasing upper caste women. Let us critically evaluate these claims in the next section.

Dalit or Brahmanical Patriarchy?

From the above formulations of dalit patriarchy, we can derive the following claims: (1) Dalit women's experience of patriarchy is unique and more intense from upper caste or *savarna* women; (2) Dalit men face taunts regarding their masculinity concerning the protection of the 'honour' or *izzat* (women's chastity) of their community; (3) Because of brahmanical exploitation at the hands of upper caste people, dalit men behave aggressively and oppress 'their' women, who are most vulnerable in the caste-based social structure; (4) Dalit men's practices of patriarchy are not humble than that of the brahmin or other *savarna* men; (5) Outraged with brahmanical humiliation, dalit men seek to tease *savarna* women;(6) there exist brahmanical and dalit or intra-caste patriarchies. All of these claims are of empirical kind, where we know that only the first is objectively established. Hence, there are strong challenges against the conception of dalit patriarchy. Let us witness the common logical fallacies surrounding this spurious notion.

Fallacy of Begging the Question (Pretitio Principii)

The conclusion has been presumed to be true based on a speculated premise. In present context, it follows:

> All dalit men are brahmanically exploited by the upper castes.
> One of the instances of their exploitation is being mocked by symbolic 'emasculation.'
> Therefore, dalit men are more patriarchal.

The second premise of the argument is unestablished due to lack of empirical evidence, and the conclusion is claimed to be true. The flawed notion of dalit patriarchy is as dubious as the idea of 'dalit egalitarianism'. That is, the dalit men are not as oppressive as upper caste men because they are humble as for understanding the pain of oppression which results from their experience of caste-based exploitation (Rege, 2013). Both of these concepts are stark presumptions, and therefore counterproductive in our feminist endeavours.

Sharmila Rege, the pioneer of Ambedkarite feminism, argues that this fallacious linkage is drawn upon the presupposition about the sexual accessibility of dalit women because of their labouring outdoors. It is but, brahminism, which in turn 'locates this as the failure of lower-caste men to control the sexuality of their women and underlines this as a justification of their impurity' (Rege, 1998). Evidently, the social manifestation of brahminism is at the heart of misconceiving 'dalit patriarchy'.

Fallacy of Infinite Regress

As per Ambedkar's scholarship on Indian history, no caste is unaffected from the patriarchal essence of brahminism. Extending this further, not only dalit men but all men face such 'emasculation' by the people from each and every caste above theirs. If we name patriarchal practices of men belonging to a particular community by the name of their caste, there would be endless number of patriarchies viz. *shudra* patriarchy, *kayastha* patriarchy, *mahar* patriarchy, *kumhar* patriarchy...and so on.

Thus, this exercise of proliferating patriarchies only misdirects our feminist goals, leading to an infinite regress.

Fallacy of Slippery Slope

Following from invalid causal inferences, Geetha's conclusion that dalit men seek to tease upper caste women is a blunt presumption (as we have seen in the beginning of this section). The truthfulness of this argument depends upon the validity of all the previous premises. It is tenable to believe that dalit community suffers from patriarchal regulations as *savarna* community. As we know, Indian social structure is founded on graded inequality ensuring hierarchical value to its members based on caste firstly and then gender. It is embedded in the brahmanical system that each is oppressed by another upper to her—a brahmin woman by a brahmin man; a *kshatriya* man by both, a brahmin woman and a brahmin man; a kshatriya woman by three above her, a kshatriya man, a brahmin woman and a brahmin man; and so on. Even if the claim about dalit men's desire to tease *savarna* women is empirically established, the source of their patriarchal behaviour would only be brahminism, and not something originating from the dalit community itself. This would plausibly be termed as 'dalit manifestations of brahmanical patriarchy.' Similarly, women are also influenced by patriarchal norms. But how fruitful is it to name their patriarchal behaviour as ' women patiarchy'?!

Nevertheless, given historical assessment of patriarchy in the Indian subcontinent, that 'provisions were made for upper caste men's occasional or more regular relationships with lower caste women, the reverse was not even envisaged by the caste structure' (Chakravarti, 2013 [2003], p. 83). Sexual assault on dalit women is used as 'a common practice for undermining the manhood of the caste' (Rege, 1998, p. WS 43). Therefore, in the brahmanical social structure regulated by caste, dalit women are regarded as 'easy prey' for exploitation at the hands of *savarna* men, and never otherwise. This gets explicit in the next instance.

Fallacy of Faulty Analogy

The claim about existence of brahmanical and dalit patriarchies comes from a superficial understanding of the nature of brahmanical patriarchy. This conjunction presumes a distinction between the two, while misunderstanding the peculiarity of Indian social system. As argued earlier, dalit patriarchy has been misconceived referring to the patriarchal dominance within dalit community, but brahmanical patriarchy is never meant to signal the patriarchal practices and norms followed within the brahmin caste. Rather, it refers to the brahmanical form of patriarchy operating in India; that is, in order to maintain the numerical balance between the sexes of the society, inhumane rituals like the banned *sati pratha* (i.e., a religious ritual according to which a widow immolated herself in the funeral pyre of her husband), enforced widowhood, and child-marriage were perpetuated by the brahmins. Controlling women's sexuality is still a means to sustain caste system, and therefore, Ambedkar's analysis of patriarchy as the twin-sister of brahmanism is ever-relevant (Ambedkar, 2003 [1979], Vol. 1, p. 14). Brahmanical patriarchy is not patriarchy of, or by, the brahmins.

Brahmanical patriarchy includes in its very conceptualisation that all individuals are allotted a particular position of privilege and deprivation, and the resultant violence and discrimination to the lower caste groups. This form of patriarchy ensures slavery and exploitation of the lowest in the prescribed caste-strata, and not peculiar origination from within those regarded lowest. Rethinking through caste and gender

only establishes that dalit women face caste-based discrimination in the vertical structure of society and gender-based discrimination at the horizontal structure of society. The ambiguous conception of dalit patriarchy hence suffers from logical, empirical and theoretical shortcomings.

Thus, mistaking brahmanical patriarchy as brahmin patriarchy has led to coin dalit patriarchy. To persist towards a better society with justice, freedom, and equality, we need to keep our eyes fixed upon dismantling brahmanical patriarchy. Brahmanical patriarchy operates in a way that caste plays a determining role in 'the collective and public threat of rape, sexual assault, and physical violence at the workplace and in public' (Rege, 1998, p. WS43). Dalit women, being at the bottom of brahmanical hierarchy, suffer the most. Conceptualising dalit or intra-caste patriarchy is indicative of a certain irresponsibility of scholars who enjoy caste-class privilege and disregard dalit women's issues as not 'their' problem. What is at play is the vulnerability at the unique juncture of gender, class, and, majorly, caste.

The above four fallacies evidence an unfortunate disturbance created by the mainstream and *savarna* feminists of India. Due to misdirection of the above kind, what is at stake is the striving goal for a harmonious and humane society. Refusal of mainstream and *savarna* feminists to consider dalit women's issues as integral to feminism exhibits their lack of commitment for real gender justice. Thus, it is high time to rethink feminism in Indian context.

Rethinking Indian Feminism

We witness the failure of mainstream feminist rendition of patriarchy in Indian context, where they attempt to pluralise patriarchy, but, ironically, follow a single axis approach in the feminist enterprise. Since woman as a category does not stand alien to its socio-political and cultural situations, we must locate it in its complex relation to factual grounds. This is precisely why we must rethink feminism. Indian feminist discourse—dominated by *savarna* women, whose suppression of the caste question and overlooking of the non-brahmanic Ambedkarite feminist standpoints—demonstrates that only a dalit feminist thought can help us resolve patriarchal slavery of women in India. A dalit feminist standpoint will be discussed in the second part of this section. Let us see why is this necessary.

Caste as a Catalyst in Patriarchal Dominance

In reference to the 2006 Khairlanji massacre of a dalit family, where women were paraded naked before being murdered, Rege argues that due to lack of adequate focus on the caste-gender nexus, violence against dalit women tends to be marked in 'either-or' restriction—as 'either *caste atrocity* or *sexual atrocity*' (2003, p. 20). For the brahmanical nature of violence and exploitation of women, the issue of gender cannot be dealt in isolation, but only with an interaction with our social reality.

Indian society is predominantly structured around caste, which is evident through the example of honour killing.[2] Two reasons are commonly responsible for a couple's murder by their parents, guardians, or local authorities: one, they dare to pursue marriage unconventionally by their own; or secondly, more venturing, they chose their life-partner outside of their own caste. Defying caste norms are considered as an invitation to murder, rape, and such life-threatening risks in a casteist society like India's.

Because endogamy is the foundation for regulating and organising women's sexuality, Rege draws upon Ambedkar's theoretical vantage to argue that, 'caste determines the division of labour, sexual division of labour, and division of sexual labour' (Rege, 1995). We cannot separate caste from patriarchy. In order to dismantle patriarchy, we must understand that,

> Brahmanisation has been a two way process of acculturation and assimilation and through history there has been a brahmanical refusal to universalise a single patriarchal mode. Thus the existence of multiple patriarchies is a result of both brahmanical conspiracy and of the relation of the caste group to the means for production.
>
> (Rege, 1998, p. WS44)

Rege's analysis renders it clear that brahmanical patriarchy functions in a way that different caste people experience it differently because of the existing graded pattern of inequality. No politics committed to a caste-based society can overlook sexual politics. Contextually, a single axis framework bears no fruits; there is need to rethink both, dalit as well as feminist discourses.

Recollecting cases like Bhanwari Devi, Chanduru, Babri Masjid, and others from recent history of India, Rege advocates that in the absence of dalit critiques of class-based hetro-patriarchies, the political edge of sexual politics is lost (2000, p. 493). Mainstream feminists' denial of the dalit question compels us to think critically and carefully.[3] Singular approaches on gender or caste are determined to fail due to their limited engagement with the crosshatched embedding of caste with patriarchy.

A Dalit Feminist Resolve

Any idea of gender justice bears no meaning if it does not entail justice for *all*; therefore, pioneers of black feminism Kimberle Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, and others have democratised first-world feminism by adding 'difference' at its centre through intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Colloins, 1989). Originally, the difference has been conceived as a unique kind of discriminatory aspect which black women face due to their race-gender-class deprivations. Mainstream feminists of India accept this crucial concept of 'difference' and intersectionality, for their difference located in third-world and on race, but reject the same for internal differences within the subcontinent (Menon, 2015). Rege offers a critique of this difference from a dalit feminist standpoint position, arguing that it is incomplete without an addition of difference from the aspect of caste (Rege, 1998, p. WS39-WS46). Thus, it is evident that democratising Indian feminism demands theorising from a dalit perspective.

The difference, thus formulated, is the unique discriminatory aspect which dalit women face at the intersection of their caste-class-gender deprivations, which as the author calls 'dalit difference.' Placing dalit difference at the core of feminist thought helps us consummate feminist philosophy, as it does not contradict with the rights and interests of other, privileged people. Dalit feminism is not the feminism of the dalits, or for the dalits; it is simply a standpoint which regards the caste question at its heart, to address the brahmanical nature of patriarchy peculiar to India. There is abundant scholarship to help us develop a dalit feminist thought (Guru, 1995; Rege, 1998, 2000, 2013 [2006], 2013; Ambedkar, 2003; Rajan, 1999; Aloysius, Mangubhai and Lee, 2006; Jogdand, 2013; Patil, 2013; Rege et al, 2013; Pawar and Moon, 2014;

Gopal, 2015; John, 2015; Mahadevan, 2015; Paik, 2016). Importantly, it is required to be cognizant of, and overcome, some challenges.

Challenges for a Theory of Gender

Established critiques of Indian feminism call forth our attention to the questions of authenticity and representation. There is an anxious churning to interview, study, and translate dalit women's life-stories to produce literature to the credits of *savarna* women as representatives (Rege, 2013 [2006], pp.11-121). Mainstream Indian feminists have been exploiting dalit women's vulnerability to add to their own privileges, and such risks are indispensable in developing a theory of gender.

Julie Stephens argues that '[i]f anyone is actually 'speaking out', it is the interviewer, yet the feminist discourse repeatedly insists that it 'does not speak for' them (Stephens, 1994, p. 97). Rege mentions two models for the 'inclusion' of dalit women in any discipline's curricula—(i) 'feminist-as-tourist' suggesting 'add dalit women and stir'; and, (ii) 'feminist-as-explorer' to 'add dalit women as separate and equal' (Mohanty, 2003, 244). That is, the –tourist model performs a 'cognizant saviour feminist' enlightening the 'helpless dalit women'; the –explorer model pretends to treat them 'equally' while justifying their separation on cultural differences. This power-play is commonly observed in contemporary feminist writings in India, which we must discourage.

Nevertheless, Indian feminist literature exhibits constant attempts of denying agency of dalit women and disregarding dalit feminist scholarship—by calling them 'native narrators' who are objects of study and not subjects of feminist agenda; by alienating them with an 'us–them' dichotomy; by reducing dalit feminist discourse to 'works of poetry, short stories, and other forms of writing' as opposed to theoretical, intellectual, or academic scholarship; by separating dalit feminist activism with phrases viz. 'feminism and other forms of politics'; feminists and other subaltern forces; and so on (Tharu, 2014, p. 155; Chakravarti, 2012–2013, pp. 137, 143; Tharu and Niranjana, 1996, pp. 232-260, pp. 232). Such forms of othering and 'brahmanical superiority complex' are strong challenges while conceiving a feminist theory.

Conclusion

As we have discussed in the three sections, mainstream Indian feminism evidences a lack of commitment towards the gender justice for the most marginalised. We need to encourage the most marginalised to take up the lead for an authentic theory of gender. What is required is an active participation of dalit women unravelling the theory-experience hierarchy, and simultaneously, an active refraining from the differences of caste, class, region, language, culture, etc. barriers. The subject and the object of feminist research need to overlap. Dalit women's empowerment is required to enable theoretical articulation of the lived-experiences; and improvement of education and research is necessary for its smooth access to dalit women.

Nonetheless, an honest and egalitarian standpoint taken up by a non-dalit or non-woman is encouraged. The participation of the privileged in an emancipatory agenda plays a significant role, provided their sincere commitment to a goal in the given context. Dalit feminist theorisation by a non-dalit woman Sharmila Rege and by a dalit man Gopal Guru offers a possibility of collective progress towards an egalitarian society; while the non-committed articulation and brahmanical othering of dalit

feminism by many *savarna* and privileged writers flags to a greater risk in this journey. Aspiring emancipation of all, an indepth scrutiny is a necessity.

Feminist endeavours which strive to protect and encourage the rights of the most deprived are substantial. It is high time that the approaches which are misled by untenable concepts like dalit patriarchy should return to its real goals. We cannot hope to create a gender-just theory with the biases and irresponsibility which most of the privileged 'representatives' of feminism manifest. A dalit feminist standpoint, essentially the dalit difference—primarily dalit women's experience—is a must to develop an emancipatory feminist theory.

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Endnotes

1. Hierarchical terms like 'upper' or 'lower' is used in reference to a caste-stratified society, and not encouraged by the author
2. 'Honour killing' is a term used for murders when people believe that they are protecting their 'honour' by murdering those defying social norms preached by brahmanical system.
3. See Stephen, 2011.

The Revolt of the Upper Castes

Jean Drèze[1]

Abstract

This article argues that the recent rise of Hindu nationalism in India can be seen as a revolt of the upper castes against the egalitarian demands of democracy. By and large, the upper castes have managed to retain their power and privileges in the post-independence period. Nevertheless, democratic institutions have forced them to accept some sharing of power and privilege in important spheres of public life. Some economic changes have also undermined their dominant position, at least in rural areas. The Hindutva project is a lifeboat for the upper castes, in so far as it stands for the restoration of the Brahminical social order that places them at the top. Seen in this light, the recent growth of Hindu nationalism is a major setback for the movement to annihilate caste and bring about a more equal society in India.

Keywords

Introduction

The recent growth of Hindu nationalism in India is a huge setback for the movement to annihilate caste and bring about a more equal society. The setback is not an accident: the growth of Hindu nationalism can be seen as a revolt of the upper castes against the egalitarian demands of democracy.

Hindutva and Caste

The essential ideas of Hindu nationalism, also known as 'Hindutva,' are not difficult to understand. They were explained with great clarity by V.D. Savarkar in *Essentials of Hindutva* (Savarkar, 1923), and amplified by other early Hindutva thinkers such as M.S. Golwalkar. The basic idea is that India belongs to the 'Hindus,' broadly defined in cultural rather than strictly religious terms that include Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains but not Muslims and Christians (because the cradle of their

[1]Visiting Professor, Department of Economics, Ranchi University, Morabadi, Ranchi, India
E-mail: jaandaraz@gmail.com

religion is elsewhere). The ultimate goal of Hindutva is to unite the Hindus, revitalize Hindu society and turn India into a 'Hindu *rashtra.*'[1]

Incidentally, the arguments that were advanced to support these ideas involved startling departures from rational thinking, common sense, and scientific knowledge. Just to illustrate, consider Golwalkar's argument that all Hindus belong to one race, the Aryan race. Golwalkar did not have to contend, at that time, with the scientific evidence we have against that argument today, but he did grapple with an alleged discovery that Aryans came from somewhere north of India, in fact near the North Pole. He dealt with this claim by arguing that the North Pole itself used to be located in India:

> '… the North Pole is not stationary and quite long ago it was in that part of the world, which, we find, is called Bihar and Orissa at the present;… then it moved northeast and then by a sometimes westerly, sometimes northward movement, it came to its present position… we were all along here and the Arctic zone left us and moved away northwards in its zigzag march.'[2]

Golwalkar did not explain how the Aryans managed to stay in place during this 'zigzag march' of the North Pole. He used similarly contrived arguments to defend the odd claim that all Hindus share 'one language.'

The Hindutva project can also be seen as an attempt to restore the traditional social order associated with the common culture that allegedly binds all Hindus. The caste system, or at least the *Varna* system (the four-fold division of society), is an integral part of this social order. In *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, for instance, Golwalkar clearly says that the 'Hindu framework of society,' as he calls it, is 'characterized by *varnas* and ashrams' (Golwalkar 1939, p. 54). This is elaborated at some length in *Bunch of Thoughts* (one of the foundational texts of Hindutva), where Golwalkar praises the *Varna* system as the basis of a 'harmonious social order.'[3] Like many other apologists of caste, he claims that the *Varna* system is not meant to be hierarchical, but that does not cut much ice.

Golwalkar and other Hindutva ideologues tend to have no problem with caste. They have a problem with what some of them call 'casteism'. The word casteism, in the Hindutva lingo, is not a reference to caste discrimination (like 'racism' is a reference to race discrimination). Rather, it refers to situations such as Dalits asserting themselves, or demanding special safeguards like reservation. That is casteism, because it divides Hindu society.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the torch-bearer of Hindu nationalism today, has been remarkably faithful to these essential ideas. On caste, the standard line remains that caste is part of the 'genius of our country,' as the National General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Ram Madhav, put it recently in *Indian Express* (Madhav, 2017), and that the real problem is not caste but casteism?.[4]

An even more revealing statement was made by Yogi Adityanath, head of the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh, in an interview with NDTV two years ago. Much like Golwalkar, he explained that caste was a method for 'managing society in an orderly manner.' He said: 'Castes play the same role in Hindu society that furrows play in farms, and help in keeping it organised and orderly… Castes can be fine, but casteism is not…'[5]

To look at the issue from another angle, Hindutva ideologues face a basic problem: how does one 'unite' a society divided by caste? The answer is to project caste as a unifying rather than a divisive institution.[6] The idea, of course, is unlikely to appeal to the disadvantaged castes, and that is perhaps why it is rarely stated as openly as Yogi Adityanath did in this interview. Generally, Hindutva leaders tend to abstain from talking about the caste system, but there is a tacit acceptance of it in this silence. Few of them, at any rate, are known to have spoken against the caste system.

Sometimes Hindutva leaders create an impression that they oppose the caste system because they speak or act against untouchability. Savarkar himself was against untouchability, and even supported one of Dr. Ambedkar's early acts of civil disobedience against it, the Mahad satyagraha (Zelliott 2013, p.80). But opposing untouchability is not at all the same as opposing the caste system. There is a long tradition, among the upper castes, of defending the caste system along with opposing untouchability, often dismissed as a recent perversion of it. Gandhi himself argued that 'the moment untouchability goes, the caste system will be purified.'[7]

Uncertain Power

The ideology of Hindu nationalism plays into the hands of the upper castes, since it effectively stands for the restoration of the traditional social order that places them at the top. As one might expect, the RSS is particularly popular among the upper castes. Its founders, incidentally, were all Brahmins, as were all the RSS chiefs so far except one (Rajendra Singh, a Rajput), and many other leading figures of the Hindutva movement – Savarkar, Hedgewar, Golwalkar, Nathuram Godse, Syama Prasad Mukherjee, Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Mohan Bhagwat, Ram Madhav, to name a few. Over time, of course, the RSS has expanded its influence beyond the upper castes, but the upper castes remain their most loyal and reliable base.

In fact, Hindutva has become a kind of lifeboat for the upper castes, as their supremacy came under threat after India's independence. By and large, of course, the upper castes have managed to retain their power and privileges in the post-independence period. Just to illustrate, in a recent survey of the 'positions of power and influence' (POPI) (the university faculty, the bar association, the press club, the top police posts, trade-union leaders, NGO heads, and so on) in the city of Allahabad, we found that seventy-five per cent of the POPIs had been captured by members of the upper castes, whose share of the population in Uttar Pradesh is just sixteen per cent or so. Brahmins and Kayasthas alone accounted for about half of the POPIs. Interestingly, this imbalance was, if anything, more pronounced among civic institutions such as trade unions, NGOs, and the press club than in the government sector. Allahabad, of course, is just one city, but many other studies have brought out similar patterns of continued upper-caste dominance in a wide range of contexts – media houses, corporate boards, cricket teams, senior administrative positions, and so on.[8]

Nevertheless, the upper-caste ship has started leaking from many sides. Education, for instance, used to be a virtual monopoly of the upper castes – at the turn of the twentieth century, literacy was the norm among Brahmin men but virtually nil among Dalits.[9] Inequality and discrimination certainly persist in the education system today, but in government schools at least Dalit children can claim the same status as upper-caste children. Children of all castes even share the same midday meal, an initiative that did not go down well with many upper-caste parents (Drèze, 2017). The recent

introduction of eggs in midday meals in many states has also caused much agitation among upper-caste vegetarians.[10] Under their influence, most of the states with a BJP government have been resisting the inclusion of eggs in school meals to this day.

The schooling system is only one example of a sphere of public life where the upper castes have had to resign themselves to some sharing of power and privilege. The electoral system is another example, even if 'adult suffrage and frequent elections are no bar against [the] governing class reaching places of power and authority,' as Dr. Ambedkar put it.[11] The upper castes may be somewhat over-represented in the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament), but their share of it is a moderate twenty-nine per cent, in sharp contrast with the overwhelming upper-caste dominance of POPIs in society. At the local level, too, Panchayati Raj institutions and the reservation of seats for women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have weakened the grip of the upper castes on political affairs. Similarly, the judicial system restrains the arbitrary power of the upper castes from time to time (for instance in matters of land grab, bonded labour, and untouchability), even if the principle of equality before the law is still far from being realised.

Some economic changes have also undermined the dominant position of the upper castes, at least in rural areas. Many years ago, I had an opportunity to observe a striking example of this process in Palanpur, a village of Moradabad district in western Uttar Pradesh. When we asked Man Singh, a relatively educated resident of Palanpur, to write down his impressions of recent economic and social change in the village, here is what he wrote (in late 1983):

1. Lower castes are passing better life than upper castes. So there has been a great jealousy and hatefulness for lower castes in the hearts of upper caste people.
2. Ratio of education is increasing in low castes very rapidly.
3. On the whole, we can say that low castes are going up and upper castes are coming down; this is because the economic condition of lower castes seems better than higher castes people in the modern society.

I could not make sense of this until I understood that by 'lower castes,' Man Singh did not mean Dalits but his own caste, the *Muraos* (one of Uttar Pradesh's 'other backward classes'). With that clue, what he wrote made good sense, and indeed, it was consistent with our own findings: the Muraos, a farming caste, had prospered steadily after the abolition of *zamindari* and the onset of the Green Revolution – more so than the upper-caste *Thakurs*. Even as the Thakurs were struggling to keep the appearances of idle landlords (traditionally, they are not supposed to touch the plough), the Muraos were taking to multiple cropping with abandon, installing tubewells, buying more land and – as Man Singh hints – catching up with the Thakurs in matters of education. The Thakurs did not hide their resentment.

Palanpur is just one village, but it turns out that similar patterns have been observed in a good number of village studies.[12] I am not suggesting that the relative economic decline of the upper castes is a universal pattern in rural India in the post-independence period, but it seems to be a common pattern at least.

In short, even if the upper castes are still in firm control of many aspects of economic and social life, in some respects they are also losing ground, or in danger of losing ground. Even when the loss of privilege is relatively small, it may be perceived as a major loss.

Striking Back

Of all the ways upper-caste privilege has been challenged in recent decades, perhaps none is more acutely resented by the upper castes than the system of reservation in education and public employment. How far reservation policies have actually reduced education and employment opportunities for the upper castes is not clear – the reservation norms are far from being fully implemented, and they apply mainly in the public sector. What is not in doubt is that these policies have generated a common perception, among the upper castes, that 'their' jobs and degrees are being snatched by the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes (OBCs).[13]

As it happens, the revival of the BJP began soon after the V.P. Singh government committed itself to the implementation of the Mandal Commission report on reservation for OBCs, in 1990. This threatened not only to split Hindu society (the upper castes were enraged), but also to alienate OBCs - about forty per cent of India's population - from the BJP, opposed as it was to the Mandal Commission recommendations. L.K. Advani's *Rath Yatra* (chariot journey) to Ayodhya, and the events that followed (including the demolition of the Babri Masjid (mosque) on 6 December 1992), helped to avert this threat of 'casteism' and re-unite Hindus on an anti-Muslim platform, under the leadership of the BJP – and of the upper castes.

This is a striking example of Hindutva enabling the upper castes to counter a threat to their privileges and reassert their control over Hindu society. That, indeed, seems to be one of the main functions of the Hindutva movement today. The potential adversaries of this movement are not just Muslims but also Christians, Dalits, Adivasis, communists, secularists, rationalists, feminists, in short anyone who stands or might stand in the way of the restoration of the Brahminical social order. Though it is often called a majoritarian movement, Hindutva is perhaps better described as a movement of the oppressive minority.

One possible objection to this interpretation of the Hindutva movement (or rather, of its rapid growth in recent times) is that Dalits are supporting it in large numbers. This objection, however, is easy to counter. First, it is doubtful that many Dalits really support the RSS or Hindutva ideology. Many did vote for the BJP in recent elections, but that is not the same thing as supporting Hindutva – there are many possible reasons for voting for the BJP. Second, some aspects of the Hindutva movement may appeal to Dalits even if they do not subscribe to the Hindutva ideology. For instance, the RSS is known for its vast network of schools, and other kinds of social work, often focused on underprivileged groups. Third, the RSS has gone out of its way to win support among Dalits, not only through social work but also through propaganda, starting with the co-option of Dr. Ambedkar. Objectively speaking, there is no possible meeting ground between Hindutva and Dr. Ambedkar. Yet the RSS routinely claims him in one way or another.

Finally, it is arguable that even if Hindutva does not stand for the abolition of caste, its view – and practice – of caste is less oppressive than the caste system as it exists today. Some Dalits may feel that, all said and done, they are treated better in the

RSS than in the society at large. As one RSS sympathiser puts it: 'Hindutva and the promise of a common Hindu identity always appealed to a large Dalit and OBC castes [sic] as it promises to liberate them from the narrow identity of a weaker caste, and induct them into a powerful Hindu community' (Singh 2019).

As mentioned earlier, the rise of Hindu nationalism should not be confused with the recent electoral success of BJP. Nevertheless, the sweeping victory of the BJP in the 2019 parliamentary elections is also a big victory for the RSS. Most of the top posts in government (prime minister, president, vice-president, speaker of the Lok Sabha, key ministries, many governors, and so on) are now occupied by members or former members of the RSS, firmly committed to the ideology of Hindu nationalism. The quiet revolt of the upper castes against democracy is now taking the form of a more direct attack on democratic institutions, starting with the freedom of expression and dissent. The retreat of democracy and the persistence of caste are in danger of feeding on each other.

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Endnotes

1. The word '*rashtra*' in this expression is difficult to translate. It encompasses not only nation and state, but also the social order.
2. Golwalkar (1939), p. 8.
3. See Golwalkar (1966), pp. xxxi and 107-111. Golwalkar argues, inter alia, that the caste system continued "for thousands of years of our glorious national life. There is nowhere any instance of its having hampered the progress or disrupted the unity of society. It in fact served as a great bond of social cohesion' (p. 108).
4. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which leads the Indian government today, has a symbiotic relationship with the RSS. It can be considered as the political wing of the *Sangh Parivar*, a collection of organisations that are linked with the RSS and committed to Hindu nationalism.
5. Interview to NDTV, 5 March 2017 (available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE4RONcQIUA). K.S. Sudarshan, then *sarsanghachalak* (supreme leader) of the RSS, spoke in similar terms about the caste system being "like a fence around the farm" (quoted in Outlook, 27 January 2006; see https://www.outlookindia.com/newswire/story/caste-system-ensured-job-quota-for-every-caste-rss-chief/351330).
6. Another possible answer is abolitionism – advocating the abolition of the caste system. That, however, would have alienated the upper castes.
7. To be fair, the 'caste system' Gandhi envisages here is very different from the caste system as it exists today: 'The moment untouchability goes, the caste system will be purified, that is to say, according to my dream, it will resolve itself into the true Varnadharma, the four divisions of society, each complementary of the other and none inferior or superior to any other, each as necessary for the whole body of Hinduism as any other.' (Gandhi 1933, pp. 14-15). How the removal of untouchability would ensure this 'purification' of the caste system, however, remains a mystery.
8. See the literature cited in Aggarwal, Drèze and Gupta (2015), where the findings of the Allahabad study are also presented in greater detail.
9. See 1901 Census figures presented in Drèze and Sen (2013), chapter 8.

10. In fact, the state government's recent decision to add eggs in school meals is the subject of a major political battle in Chhattisgarh. BJP legislators, egged on by 'communities such as Kabir Panthi, Radha Soami, Gayatri Parivar, Jains and others,' are opposing the move in the State Assembly (India Today, 2019).

11. Ambedkar (1945), p. 208.

12. See Drèze, Lanjouw and Sharma (1998) on this literature, and also for a more detailed account of caste relations in Palanpur including the relative decline of the Thakurs.

13. This perception is well captured in a 1990 cartoon, mentioned by K. Balagopal (1990), where SC, ST and OBC students are standing on a ship and "grinning cruelly at the forward caste students who are sinking all round with their degree certificates held high". As Balagopal observes, 'it is difficult to imagine a more atrocious caricature of reality, which is almost exactly the opposite' (p. 2231).

Title: *Indian Political Theory: Laying the Groundwork for Svaraj*

Author: *Aakash Singh Rathore*

Publisher: *Routledge, London and New York, 2017*

Reviewer: *Cosimo Zene*
Professor Emeritus in the Study of Religions and World Philosophies, School of History, Religions and Philosophies, SOAS, University of London, United Kingdom
E-mail: zc@soas.ac.uk

In Indian Political Theory, Aakash Singh Rathore warns us about the unduly prolonged presence in India of theories which are totally foreign to its common people. In view of this, he suggests redirecting our attention towards the lived experience of Indian political life by proposing a 'return to tradition,' but with a caveat and a principle which would guide this return: 'the principle that any modification to be made must benefit the least advantaged and that those changes that do benefit the least advantaged are legitimate.' The 'return' would justify Rathore's plan to examine 'the inadequacy of transatlantic political theory.' This process makes it possible to lay the ground for the 'preconditions of *svaraj*,' as 'the activity of being oneself' through a 'look within' and an 'excavation downwards.' While a 'thick svaraj' insists on the 'nature and purity' of Indian tradition, a 'thin svaraj' points towards hybridity and pluralism. Singh considers Gandhi and Ambedkar as the most prominent representatives of these two positions. Would it be possible to reconcile their divergent views on *svaraj* (and those of their present-day followers), given the well-known antagonism between the two? Having examined Thomas Pantham's, Ramachandra Guha's, and Partha Chatterjee's attempt to resolve the tension between Gandhi and Ambedkar, Rathore concludes that he is 'quite sceptical about the validity of such attempts of reconciliation. Even Gandhi's and Ambedkar's mutual aim in wanting to abolish untouchability does not go far enough to match Ambedkar's determination to annihilate caste altogether.

Rathore provides a wealth of evidence to prove the 'irreconcilable differences' between Gandhi and Ambedkar, despite the fact that Gandhi 'moved closer to Ambedkar in the last years of his life' while Gandhi was against the 'sin' and the 'curse' of untouchability, no real action followed to address this. For instance, the Bardoli Programme (1922-23), designed for the benefit of untouchables – including their education – resulted in total failure. The 'satyagrahas' organised by Ambedkar and untouchables at Mahad and Nasik (1927/1930), to affirm the untouchables' right to use public water-tanks and temple-entry respectively,were opposed by Gandhi and Congress, thus failing to achieve any result. The major failure was perhaps when the demands made by Ambedkar at the *Round Table Conference* (1930-33) to allow 'adequate representation' for Dalits and a 'separate electorate for a period of ten years' were forfeited, as Ambedkar agreed to sign the 'Poona Pact' to make Gandhi break his 'fast unto death.' In this case, Gandhi's non-violent satyagraha against the British became an act of violence against the Dalits, while Ambedkar acted in a true non-violent manner towards Gandhi. Rathore welcomes, nonetheless, the rapprochement between Gandhi and Ambedkar as a 'strategic collaboration,' but suggests that to remain 'attuned to the fundamental, irresolvable differences between them,' while bringing them 'into a *constellation*' (a term borrowed from Adorno and Benjamin), implying 'something *less* than identification, less than reconciliation, but still overcoming the chasm of separation.'

This 'dialogue within difference' was the result of the irresolvable paradox of the double-bind that entrapped Ambedkar and the Dalits as 'Slaves of slaves.'Ambedkar had no doubts, as he made clear in the opening address at the Round Table Conference in London (1930), that '… nobody can remove our grievances as well as we can, and we cannot remove them unless we get political power in our own hands…" At roughly the same time (1934), in a fascist prison cell, Antonio Gramsci was writing: 'Subordinate groups always endure the initiative of the dominant groups, even when they rebel and arise: only a "permanent" victory breaks, and not immediately, their subordination'(1975, Q 25, § 2, 2283)[1]; a few lines into the discussion he adds: 'Subaltern classes are not, by definition, unified and cannot coalesce until they are able to become "State"' (Q 25, § 4, 2286). Both Gramsci and Ambedkar were fully aware of the dynamics behind subalternity, since both had researched into its causes within the history of their respective countries. That is why, in that same opening address Ambedkar could confirm: 'It is only in a Swaraj constitution that we stand any chance of getting political power into our own hands, without which we cannot bring salvation to our people.'

These very concepts have been translated by Rathore into the '*Dalit svaraj*,' which, in his theory, becomes also 'the precondition of Indian political theory,' since 'svaraj without Dalit svaraj is tantamount to liberty without equality.' In order to clarify 'Dalit svaraj,' Rathore adheres to Ambedkar's idea of svaraj: 'a Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, which is well beyond the promise of accepting social ameliorations for Dalits, since 'not bread but honour, is what they want.' British rule had not changed the situation of Dalits, and only 'Dalit svaraj, or free, equal, and agent-centred participation in the political sovereignty of a free sovereign nation works Ambedkar and the Dalits out of the double-bind that they had found themselves ensnared in for so long.' As we know, Ambedkar never managed to win a separate electorate for the Dalits and he opposed a 'Hindu svaraj' for the rest of his life, until, a few months before his death, he opted for conversion. For, 'Just as

Swaraj is necessary for India, so is also change of religion necessary for untouchables. The underlying motive in both the movements is the desire for freedom.'

I do agree with Rathore that India must find its own way for a sound and effective political theory rather than relying on political theories coming from 'the West.' I would, however, tend to take a more radical approach to the problem, and apply some caveats when discussing 'Eurocentrism,' Presumably, political theories are based and rest on a supporting philosophy. The problem we have been facing, for some centuries now, is that Anglo-European philosophy has been portraying itself as a 'universal philosophy' – the only 'philosophy,' rather than the historical or localised philosophy of Europe (see Zene, 2015). There is no doubt that the philosophy which motivated the expansion of European empires, with the acquisition of political, economic, and military power, imposed itself as the highest, if not the sole, 'way of thinking,' thus imposing also a 'colonisation of minds' or an intellectual subordination. My contention is that, although we can safely affirm that 'the history of European philosophy has been a history of "egology"'(Levinas 1979), there have been moments of sanity and self-reflexivity within this philosophy, despite its 'follies and mistakes' (Gramsci, Q 11 § 12), and that some philosophers have resisted the temptation to impose on to others the all-powerful, domineering western Logos.

On the other hand, we must also recognise that colonialism, subalternity, sexism and racism happened in Europe prior to being exported elsewhere. There is, however, a tentative way of 'provincialising Europe, by acknowledging and accepting that its philosophy is not universal, but regional and historically bound. In this way we can welcome Rathore's suggestion to 'open a window of opportunity for new or hitherto ignored conceptions to be brought into play,' thus provoking 'the thought, or at least the possibility, that some aspects of '"Eastern" thought may hold resources towards a more sustainable future.' I would venture to call this exchange 'inter-philosophical critical dialogue,' which takes place within the environment of world philosophies, thus recognising the presence of multiple philosophies and epistemologies, rather than one single philosophical tradition dictating the pace of reasoning to the whole world. This is not very dissimilar to the closeness Rathore finds between the concepts of *pratyahara* and decoloniality (see Walter Mignolo 2008; Miguel Quijano2007), as a central component of contemporary Latin American philosophy, and in particular the difference between postcolonial theory and decoloniality, 'that very inward turn of decoloniality, a turn toward indigeneity and alternative epistemologies, and a disavowal of futile attempts to elbow in to transatlantic institutional and academic discourses.' Indeed, as Rathore suggests 'a thin svarajist Indian political theory will find deep resonance with the fruit of decolonialist work, despite being grounded half a world away' (ibid.). As the Argentinian-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel suggests, there is 'the need to undertake and deepen permanent South–South dialogue, in order to define the agenda of the most urgent philosophical problems in Africa, Asia, Latin America, eastern Europe, etc., and discuss them together philosophically' (Dussel 2009: 511).

Despite many setbacks and being ignored by Indian academia in social sciences and humanities, Ambedkar still motivates Dalits to carry on their quest for a real Dalit svaraj, also as independent thinking. Gramsci would have certainly supported the idea of Dalit svaraj, as a democratic educational practice conducive to overcoming subalternity by becoming subaltern-citizens who are able 'to think, to study, to direct,

or to control those who direct' given that 'every "citizen" can become a "ruler" (Moreover, Gramsci and Ambedkar alike struggled to become 'collective thinkers' for the subalterns, for those excluded from 'thinking'; not an easy task. The clear positions and strong convictions of the two leaders rest on their ethical standing reflected in Gramsci's calling for 'intellectual and moral reform' and Ambedkar's pushing for a 'social and moral consciousness of society,' both very much in line with the principle announced by Rathore at the outset of his reflection: 'the principle that any modification to be made must benefit the least advantaged and that those changes that do benefit the least advantaged are legitimate.'

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Endnotes

1.   References to Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* follows the internationally established standard of notebook number (Q), number of note (§), and page number, according to the Italian critical edition, Gramsci 1975.

Title: *Gendering Caste:*
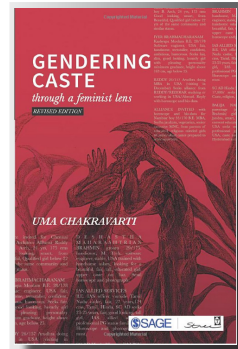*Through a Feminist Lens*

Author: *Uma Chakravarti*

Publisher: *Sage Publication: Year: 2018 (revised edition of 2003)*

Reviewer: *Indulata Prasad*
Assistant Professor,
School of Social Transformation, Arizona State University, USA
E-mail: iprasad@asu.edu

The anti-Mandal agitation of 'upper castes' and the suicide of Dalit student Rohith Vemula bookended the revised edition of historian Uma Chakravarti's widely read book, *Gendering caste: through a feminist lens*. The book also commemorates Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's work on caste as it reiterates his position on endogamy as being critical to the 'unbroken reproduction of caste' for centuries and the perpetuation of a unique form of inequality in India. The revised edition's after word examines some key incidents in India around caste since the first publication of this book in 2003. It argues that even as caste and patriarchy in India remaining a state of flux, they retain their salience in both rural and urban areas, in the new millennium, due to the 'social silence' around the 'inherited legacies of practicing inequality.'

The primary concerns of *Gendering Caste* are fourfold. First, the text categorically rejects the tenacious dominant sociological theorisation of caste and rejects outright its capacity to capture the complex social order. It argues that over-emphasising caste as an ideology and eliding the practice of caste from the purview of theorisation fails to grasp the complexity of the experience of caste-based oppression and obscures the privileged location in the hierarchical structure from where such theorisations take place. The text is among the first critical feminist interventions and push-backs on the dominant discourse of caste that views caste as a consensual rather than oppressive system that encompasses the economic, social, cultural, and political realm of Indian society, wherein 'caste ideology denies subjectivity to the Dalits by depriving them of dignity and personhood.' The text echoes marginalised theorisations of caste, as it demonstrates the necessity of

extending the purview of caste to indicate that 'caste is not merely the opposition between pure and impure but at a more fundamental level it incorporates other kinds of oppositions such as domination and subordination, exploitation and oppression, based on unequal access to material resources.'

Second, the text demonstrates that the additive and disjointed model of investigating caste and gender is untenable, as caste, and gender by extension remain conjoint, with women 'at the heart of the conflict as protagonists and as victims, and also as aggressors in the new moment of constitutionally protected/granted rights to all citizens equally.' The text therefore makes the shift from the dominant nationalist paradigm of the 'status of women' concerning primarily upper-caste women by supplanting it with substantive questions of women's subordination as well as an investigation of the structures that make such subordination plausible. Of critical importance is the delineation of the historical roots of 'Brahmanical patriarchy' to demonstrate that the linkages between male dominance and upper-caste dominance is not a casual one but one that is 'more deeply and structurally linked.' It deeply impacts other forms of patriarchies. The historical tracing through the early societies alongside the ancient Hindu texts renders visible the evolution of caste-based patriarchal codes that developed in relationship with the formation of agrarian societies and was backed by state power. The complicity, 'consent' and subservience of women was achieved by patrolling upper-caste women's sexuality by both the state and community through the practice of endogamy, framed as tradition and through a system of reward and selective punishment. In fact, women in all respects were viewed as appendages to men. They were denied control over productive resources and autonomy in law. These factors are/were critical to maintaining the patriarchal structure as well as the silos of caste. The rationale being that 'the purity of women ensured the purity of caste and thus of the social order itself, not just in the existing society but in the future too.'

The third consideration of the text is the role of violence and the widely endemic culture of impunity around caste and gender-based violence that permeates every aspect of Indian society, including the state apparatus and governance. It draws much needed attention to the fact that while 'the law maintained its monopoly to punish crimes it did not displace the monopoly of dominant caste to rape, parade, and kill Dalit women.' By carefully examining case studies, the text demonstrates how sexual violence or extreme violence has been integral to caste domination and yet the law and the State refuse to recognise it. Instead, we see the proffering of depoliticised renderings of caste that overlook the similarity in the patterns of retaliatory attacks and the court acquittals when Dalits seek to claim their constitutionally guaranteed rights.

Lastly, the text draws attention to the role of institutionally sanctioned 'erasures' within the state apparatus to deny the historical nature of Dalit marginalisation in Indian society. Despite the existence of legal safeguards in the form of the Prevention of Atrocities Act (1989), the book examines several key legal cases wherein sexual violence against Dalit women was either not recognised and omitted or recorded as a legitimate response of the dominant caste, resulting in acquittals. The courts failed to recognize that the 'dominant castes' attempt to retain monopoly of the law is a feature

of caste domination.' This demonstrates that even as the State continues to be an important site for realising constitutionally guaranteed rights for Dalits, it continues to fail Dalits by tendering these acts of violence as pertaining to conflict over resources, or stemming from personal or politically motivated reasons, among others.

Written for a wide audience, the book draws on vast and often diverse resources, ranging from historical and religious texts to sociological and anthropological literature. In tracing caste through the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras and into the new millennium, *Gendering Caste* is an excellent primer on caste and gender as bulwarks of Indian society and the role of the State in maintaining hierarchies. But above all, by critically analyzing key events in India, *Gendering Caste* drives home the importance of undertaking the intellectual task of unmasking popular tropes on caste to uncover it sentanglements with gender and sexuality. As Chakravarti notes, 'The task of unraveling the relationship between caste and gender—of gendering the caste system—is even more difficult than recognising their workings individually because the whole weight of domestic ideology is against such a recognition.'

Title: *The Empire of Disgust: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Policy in India and the US*

Author: *Z. Hasan, A. Huq, M. Nussbaum, & V. Verma, (Eds.) (2018)*
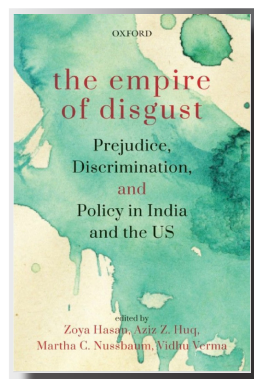
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Reviewer: *Rajesh Sampath*
Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Justice, Rights and Social Change, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA
E-mail: rsampath@brandeis.edu

This timely anthology of essays edited by Hasan, Huq, Nussbaum, and Verma breaks new ground for several reasons. For one, the rise of right-wing, authoritarian, majoritarian politics in Western and Eastern 'secular, constitutional, legal', democracies necessitates sensitive, nuanced multidisciplinary and multidimensional approaches in comparative studies. Understanding one social and national context could be helpful in illuminating unseen gaps or blind spots in another system. As the volume states from the outset all societies in one way or another 'exclude and stigmatize' minorities. Given this enduring dynamic in modern democratic societies, it behoves researchers, who examine questions of discrimination, marginalization, exclusion, stigmatization, and prejudice to create analytic and theoretical spaces whereby humanists, for example ethicists and philosophers of justice and rights, can collaborate with social scientists, legal scholars, and applied social policy analysts. The book achieves this great feat.

The current historical and political present in the U.S. and India reveals that over the last few years right-wing political parties' ascendance to power has meant the erosion of certain basic, liberal, democratic values such as equality and equal protection under the law. Minority groups of different intersectional identities have faced great repression and violence in everyday life; but this is compounded by subtle changes in law and policy that seem to justify their exclusion and

stigmatization. Having stated the obvious, for some the matter goes beyond current politics and the nature of authoritarian, right-wing populist appeal in electoral systems.

The text by illustrious scholars in India and the U.S. tries to introduce a novel and philosophically rich framework of analysis that reveals a 'rhetoric of disgust' to understand how in fact current social realities of exclusion and degradation of minorities operate. Some groups are castigated as 'animal-like' in which their 'full human' dignity is deprived. This critical addition of the category of 'disgust' sheds new light on traditional research in law and social policy to examine modalities of social exclusion and therefore, ways to craft sound recommendations to mitigate or eliminate them. In some senses we must go beyond the twentieth century theories of ideology and hegemony, which operate by traditional dichotomies of the ideal and material realms, or theory vs. practice. We need deeper investigations into the reasons why social dynamics result in material practices perpetuated by real mechanics of violence against minorities based on social-psychological bodily manifestations of the pure and the impure. Caste in India and race in the United States are two examples of this non-dialectical, synthetically complex phenomenon encapsulated in the term 'disgust.'

Great predecessors that examined this dominion of 'disgust' can open doors for future research, another great virtue of this collaborative, anthologized endeavour. The work as a whole is inspired by the legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the great Dalit (formerly known as 'untouchable') visionary leader who examined one of the most horrendous forms of exclusion, stigmatization, marginalization, oppression and therefore 'disgust,' namely the Hindu caste system in India and South Asia more broadly. One can say his unique achievement in the twentieth century context (compared to other national contexts of his time) was the attempt to inspire a social movement to eradicate such an internal, cultural, and civilizational system of tyrannical majoritarian 'disgust.' What makes Ambedkar stand out in his time was the fact that he pioneered his efforts during decolonization from an external imperial oppressor, in this case the British Empire. All the while, he chaired the drafting of a secular, legal, democratic constitution of a newly liberated Eastern society in the Global South, namely India, that attempted to take on its seemingly indestructible system of caste. In other words he was fighting two oppressions as the same time—one internal, the other external. The volume takes up his cause by venturing into realms he was not able to traverse.

Taking it one step further, a comparative analysis is needed to see how differing dynamics of stigma, exclusion, and 'disgust' occur in different contemporary and historical contexts. Therefore, we must see how differing remedies in law and policy recommendation will be required, perhaps experimentally, to tackle the complexity of minority control and degradation. The volume states from the beginning itself that it does not intend to be 'reductionist' whereby all phenomena of 'prejudice and discrimination' can be explained by an epiphenomenal category or meta-concept known as 'disgust.' In comparative studies, other factors such as 'imagined violence, competitive envy, and unconscious group bias' also have to be explored and from myriad perspectives to avoid the fallacy of attempting to discover one 'determinate emotional origin.' Different disciplines have to be marshalled, not just one, say

sociology on structures and actions, humanistic, critical, or post-modern theories on 'discourse' analysis, or social psychologists on group behaviours and mindsets. One gets the sense that new ground is being broken in trying to understand 'disgust' with empirical data with the aim of eradicating it, at least in the US and Indian contexts.

Martha Nussbaum, who is renowned for her pioneering works on justice, rights, and the capabilities approach, offers a framing orientation for the anthology. Drawing from the psychologist Rozin, Nussbaum starts off with the idea of 'primary disgust' in which all humans across societies and time are rooted not so much in outright fear of real danger but inherent discomfort that all humans have about other human body's excretions, smells, and ultimate decay. This seems obvious enough but then she takes it one step further with her own powerful notion of 'projective disgust.' Given this 'cultural universality' of human discomfort with human 'animality' in general and natural functions, say excretion and death, humans, unlike animals, go further. Majorities in societies create distinctions between themselves and some minority group which they have to characterize as 'quasi-animals,' minorities that are often 'powerless,' because those majorities cannot deal with the 'primary disgust' of their own 'animality.' And this happens in the heart of the allegedly most peaceful, secular, and liberally sound democracies.

Nussbaum's brilliant insight provides explanatory power to complement how others research and analyze various forms of marginalization, exclusion, discrimination, and prejudice when they occur in societies with majorities and minorities, such as the US and India. When majorities institute this distinction by 'projecting, irrationally, smelliness, hyper-animality, and hyper-sexuality' onto other minority groups, the majority creates an illusory distance from its own 'animality' and 'mortality.'

From this incredibly profound insight, comparative contexts begin to open up, such as antisemitism in twentieth century Europe, the plight of African-Americans from slavery to the present in the US, the millennial-long struggle of Dalits/outsiders in the Hindu caste system, and Muslims where they are minorities, for example in Europe, the US, and India. Every aspect of law and social policy, including voting, education, housing, and health access, is infected so to speak by the way majorities treat their minorities. Without going into further details about the conclusions of each contributor's chapter, this critical and timely volume is highly recommended for academics, practitioners, policymakers, activists, leaders of social movements, and elected officials. We must translate theory into practice to reform democracies with majoritarian systems that continue to demonize and therefore prejudicially discriminate against minority groups given the underlying phenomenon of 'disgust.'