

**POLITICS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DALIT MOVEMENT IN INDIA &  
THE INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT IN BOLIVIA**

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that the thesis entitled, "Politics of Social Movements: A Comparative Study of Dalit Movement in India & Indigenous Movement in Bolivia" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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**CERTIFICATE**

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*For Rohith Vemula*

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## *Preface*

This research, at the very beginning, was borne out of my amateur inclination of following the world politics in general and that of Latin America in particular. Like any other layperson, I too was and still very much am fascinated by the terrain of international diplomacy, cold war, imminent world war, coup d'état, conspiracy theories etc. It was out of this passion of a habit that I stumbled upon the political developments in Bolivia during 2005-06. I first read about these developments in a masterly essay titled '*Fire in the Mountain*' by Aijaz Ahmad.<sup>1</sup> This is the very time when Bolivia saw the rising tide of social movements led by the indigenous people against the growing socioeconomic inequalities which were the direct result of the policies adopted by the scores of neoliberal governments, one after another. The onset of the political movement of the indigenous people in the Andes<sup>2</sup> and that of their most significant voice, Evo Morales, as the first native constitutional head in Bolivia remains to be the most significant political occurrence in the recent history of this region and the impact that it brought to the country's politics, by now has indeed been proven far reaching. The reception that Morales received both within and outside Bolivia has been overwhelming but not without few mindful caveats, wherein apprehension of giving primacy to culture at the peril of 'real politics' was the major one. The detractors of this indigenous turn in Bolivia's polity, were and continue to be so, both among the conservatives as well as among the left.

Leaving aside the right, the left's guarded response to the indigenous political uprising stems from their history of lopsided understanding on the politics emanating from the assertion of ascriptive identities. While the left in India welcomed the success of *Movimiento Al Socialismo* (Movement for Socialism) – MAS – led by Evo Morales, they nevertheless saw the same through their own restricted world view of presumed steady rise in the global spread of the working class movement against the world hegemony of IMF-World Bank led neoliberalism. In their view, the then Latin America represented a new hope with Hugo Chavez (Venezuela), Morales and Lula (Brazil) at the helms against

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2701/stories/20100115270107600.htm>

<sup>2</sup>Andes or the Andean region in Latin America consists of vast plateaus on higher altitude. Also called *Altiplano* or high plane is also home to the birth place of Inca and Tiawanaku Empire.

the imperialist overreach of neoliberalism. Such a take, on behalf of the left, is their standard leitmotif, especially when it happens in a sphere other than one's (India's Left) immediate sociopolitical concern – wherein hoping the politics to achieve what couldn't be achieved at home – is a common practice.

Furthermore, I was more interested then, and I remain to be so even now, about the sociopolitical churning among the identities of the similar political persuasion at home. The identity of caste is one of the most prominently deployed identities in the Indian politics today – with its progressive and regressive variants both. However, it is particularly the dalit identity and its corresponding ideological moorings, which stand tall with vibrant social and political presence. Through the literature, music, art and numerous polemical writings available throughout the length and breadth of the country, dalit movement has made massive inroads in to the Indian polity in general and that among the members of the lower castes. However, with the increasing reification of its political canon, dalit movement and the aspects of its identitarian assertion, and the subsequent discourse on the 'anti-caste' struggle in particular has brought forth several problematic which requires a much more detail analysis.

A similar such question although seemingly innocuous, but extremely significant at that, is how does one go about the extirpation of caste hierarchies through the caste assertion on the behalf of dalits. This paradox of dalit movement has been very crucial one when it comes to their day to day struggles in a country where social equalities define everything. In other words, how do dalits, facing caste violence and ubiquitous social exclusion, could work towards 'annihilating caste' while asserting their own caste identity, which otherwise is absolutely central and necessary for their political organization, in the first place. This peculiar positioning of dalits on the broad political spectrum of India is very telling, as it happens that that the moment caste word appears, it is invariably the dalits who must respond to all the questions. Analogously, the very caste problematic seems to disappear when it questions, underlines and contests the privileges enjoyed by the upper castes in India. This leaves us to dalit's social and political movement as the *only* standalone entity which must then explain the pervasive caste hierarchies and the politics against the same. This of course might be true in its appearance but is a gross injustice to

the movement against caste, as the problem is not merely confined to dalits alone. On the contrary the problematic of the caste has its roots more in the unraveling of the caste privileges, than the assertion of the same for equality.

It is in this context that this research makes an attempt to study dalit movement and its political vision for a new and egalitarian ethics. Attempt is to locate the movement historically and then come up with a more contemporaneous analysis of the same. Henceforth, reading Bolivia's political turn of events as something more than otherwise celebrated, through simplistic understanding of the indigenous movement's politics as anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal – important nonetheless – this research focuses on the indigenous aspect of this incredible success of social movement of *Altiplano*. An attempt has been made to have a comparative understanding of these two distinct social movements in their respective sociocultural and geographical setting and how do they fair in similar political situations.

Few conceptual clarifications are essential before we go further in to the mainframe of this research. The very category 'indigenous' being used and politically deployed by the native Andeans should be seen understood as historically arrived upon, whereby the native has always been socially and politically excluded and marginalized. Though, the indigenous people do deploy the category as they being the 'first' people inhabiting the land mass, the very objective of the indigenous identity remains to be politically grounded where the case has been made to overcome their social exclusion through their cultural mobilization. The politics of social justice forms a very critical aspect of indigenous social movement and is very instrumental in shaping up this very indigenous identity. Therefore, the comparison with the protagonists of social justice politics elsewhere, and in this case dalit movement in India. Compared to the indigenous people of Bolivia, dalits in India do not harbor any 'indigenous' elements as such, but the politics thus espoused by them and their invocation of their *own* history brings them much closer to their counterparts in Bolivia, as will become further clear in the research. The binding commonality between indigenous people of Bolivia with dalit primarily rests with their past of social discrimination and humiliation met at the hands of dominant castes/classes in their respective societies. Thus, it is in the sphere of shared history of

social exclusion and political marginalization that this research further probes the commonality of the politics of social movement along with its commitment to social justice and ethics of a future political society.

Numerous people have helped me to see through this research. However, it is impossible to credit each and every person who has shaped my critical perspective on and beyond the subject under discussion. I think it is the years of interaction with scores of people we meet that eventually have its bearings on the way we think and use our critical faculty. That said, there are quite a number of indispensable personas, who patiently guided me through their assistance and insights and made it possible for this PhD work to see the light of the day.

My parents have been extremely patient with me during all these years which I took to complete this research. I dedicate this research work to my spirited father who along with my mother never fails to inspire me both through his vast political knowledge through his creative energy that he commands at an age when many of his contemporaries had thrown the towel and retire to a life of oblivion. This research is my kind contribution to their years of work which has gone in to the shaping of my critical mantle to begin with. Along with, and above all, I would like to extend my most humble and sincere gratitude to Prof Gopal Guru, my supervisor, also an extraordinary intellectual without whose indomitable mentorship, it would have been difficult to conceive the present frame of the research. Beside his ingenious scholarship and the guidance on the subject, I must also thank Prof Guru for being patient with me all this while in order to see this research coming to fruition.

Beside Prof Guru, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Ajay Gudavarthy and Harish Wankhede at the Center for Political Studies, JNU, who both have immensely aided me by providing their timely help. Ajay, thank you for providing the initial, albeit, a crucial contact which later went on to introduce me to a world of scholarship and beautiful people in Latin America. Harish, thank you for painstakingly going through the draft work and coming up with your valuable and vital inputs. Honestly speaking, the points you raised have enabled me a lot in putting the perspective framework of this research in its final shape.

Thanks are due also to some very significant help from Bolivia whose diligent assistance proved absolutely central to my understanding of the region's history and its politics. Ximena Soruco, thank you very much for being a thorough and a very kind person. My field research in Bolivia, I guess, wouldn't have been as enriching as it turns out eventually, thanks to your intellectual resources and hospitality. Sincere thanks are also warranted to Raul, Jorge, Oscar, Pedro, Rosalyn, Yeri Lopez, Rubin, Michele, Rachel, Tatha and Meghna for being my support system and home away from home in Bolivia.

Back home, I have been fortunate to have received timely discussions and useful insights from several close friends. There is no alternative to doggedness of friends when it comes to complete one's PhD work. At first, I would like to thank Divya Cherian, for securing some of the initial literature for this research from overseas. Your help has absolutely been a trigger to join the dots in the later years. Thank you. Srimi and Caesar are the two longstanding friends who have been following this work right since my early University days. Their inquisitive queries and random prodding has proven to be really efficient eventually. Thank you both. Beside them, I would like to extend my gratitude to Rajesh, Rahul, Vagesh, Mohammad, Sangeeta, Sachin, Inder, Twinkle, Prabodhan, Siddhartha, Raghu, Ambedkar, Kalai, Sirohi, Saeed, Rachna, Prachi. A special thanks is due to Rishika, Bhawani, Poulomi and Yana. I cannot thank enough to Ateya for the stimulating discussions, especially on the chapter III of this thesis. In this regard, I would also like to thank Vasundhara, with whom I share the mutual research interest in Latin America and the discussion with her too has helped me a lot.

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I must thank my colleagues at School of Development Studies, Ambedkar University, for their wholehearted support constant encouragement to finish this work in time.

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Lastly, it is needless to say that I own all the responsibility of the theoretical flaws and for the incongruity of ideas in the thesis, if any.

## Chapter I

### Introduction

*“There is an underside to every age about which history does not often speak, because history is written from the records left by the privileged.”*

*Howard Zinn*

The choice for Bolivia in order to comprehend the politics of social movements in comparison with its counterpart in India has been a deliberate one. The selection of this vast region of the global south is particularly also on purpose for its shared history of colonialism and for – according to many – the still persistent neo-colonialism. Naturally then, the present research undertakes a comparative study of the political process in the two countries, namely Bolivia and India. Within this frame of comparative study of the global south, our primary focus, here, is on the indigenous people of Bolivia and dalits in India – hitherto and continued to be some of the most discriminated and marginalized social groups in the world today. With the advent of neoliberalism since 1980s, both these social groups have resoundingly come across as the most assertive and original political voices in the recent history. The deployment of their history as their politics while brings dalit and indigenous people closer to their discriminatory past, the same also, simultaneously provides coherency to their respective social movement in contemporary times.

However, with the increasing collapse of dalit identity as its stand-alone politics has seemingly exhausted its emancipatory potential which otherwise has been at the center of dalit political world view. The potency of dalit identity has been reduced to just that – an identity. The moral world and the political ethics that undergirds this ideology have been reduced to the matter of opportunistic political alliance and the banal regurgitation of already exhausted political vocabulary. It is due to the complete neglect of an already available coherent set of principles guiding dalit politics that we see manifestation of dalit ideas embracing ‘capitalism’ as an emancipatory philosophy and as the development

system today.<sup>3</sup> There is a significant rise of Hindu right within the ranks and files of dalit communities, on which a serious work is yet to be undertaken. A clarification must be made here, though, that this research, however, is not an attempt to probe into the reasons for the saturation of dalit politics in India. Rather what this work humbly undertakes is to look into similar such movements of social standing with which we can draw some comparison, purely in order to strengthen our understanding on dalit politics, on how such movement which primarily invoke their past of social discrimination and exclusion, fare politically in current global scenario.

It is in this milieu, that Bolivia and the vibrant social movements there in, led by its indigenous majority comes up as an appropriate reference to draw in to comparison with the dalit movement at home. The two social groups at the center of this study – dalits and the indigenous people – further conjoin well due to the presence of socially structured inequalities in both the countries. While in India the structural hierarchies largely stem from the Hindu caste system, Bolivia too has its own distinct attributes of caste system. And it is precisely due to the presence of such similar – if not identical – social differences and its corresponding economic and political disparities that this researcher thought it appropriate to study the two countries in a comparative fashion with special attention to the movements for social justice, equality and dignity – common to the social and political movements of dalit and the indigenous people in their respective political geography.

Keeping the comparative aspects of the two distinct social movements drawn from two very different linguistic and cultural landscapes, this research consciously tread the obvious historical differences of the two regions under study. The emphasis, throughout the thesis then, has been on the social aspect of the two movements and their structural similarity when it comes to the culturally embedded inequalities which have given rise to them in the first place. The social movements led by dalits in India and that of indigenous people in Bolivia primary falls in this very frame of our understanding, where cultural

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<sup>3</sup> Chandra Bhan Prasad, *Markets and Manu: Economic Reforms and its Impact on Caste In India*, Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania. 2007; Devesh Kapur, Chandra Bhan Prasad, Lant Pritchett, D Shyam Babu, *Rethinking Inequality: Dalits in Uttar Pradesh in the Market Reform Era*, *Economic and Political weekly*, August 28, 2010. This theme is discussed in further detail in Chapter V of this thesis.

misrecognition or the deliberate socio-cultural exclusion of the two groups at the hands of the dominant social and political classes have mobilized the former to assert themselves politically. The principal objective of this research, therefore, is to study the marginalized voices from the global south engaged with the dominant culture in their respective geographical location and who have a very distinct and alternative world view for the greater world peace and harmony.

Outside India, Bolivia is perhaps another post-colonial nation state which resembles and shares very similar sociopolitical trajectory within the broader perspective of politics of recognition common to both the cultural politics of social movement led by the indigenous people and also to the sociopolitical movements of dalits in India. In this regard, we see that since 1990s, increased political mobilization by indigenous groups in Latin America through the aegis of social movements has seen phenomenal political participation of indigenous people in Latin America, who have gone on to form powerful political parties. It must be stated here though, that the process of forming political parties has not only been restricted to those nations where there is a substantial indigenous population but also to those countries too, which have rather smaller indigenous proportions of the overall population.<sup>4</sup> There are also, however, cases such as in Peru and Chile, where despite the presence of a significant indigenous population (38.39% and 7.06% respectively) attempts to form political parties have been unsuccessful.<sup>5</sup> Needless to say that Bolivia with its significant population of indigenous people (more than 60 % of total number of people being indigenous) have been far more striking in terms of the politics of indigenous social movement but not without its odds in place.

## **Methodology**

In order to pursue this comparative study of the aforementioned two social movements, the frame work has been kept mostly qualitative and analytical. Wherein an attempt has

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<sup>4</sup> Bolivia and Ecuador have proportionally large indigenous populations (62.05% and 24.85% respectively), while Colombia, Venezuela have 2.7% and 1.48% respectively; all these countries have powerful indigenous parties. For more detail, see Donna Lee Van Cott, "From Movements to Parties in Latin America", Cambridge University Press 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

been made to understand the two respective social strata and its political dynamics through extensive interviews and conversation with the people involved. This researcher has interviewed numerous persons drawn from academia, journalism, social activists, political actors, NGOs of sociopolitical significance and students in general. The aspects of indigenous movement in Bolivia in this research is mostly drawn from these interviews and conversations done during the two months stay in La Paz and Cochabamba, and plenty of writings available on indigenous movements (much of the available literature in Bolivia is in Spanish language). Most of the arguments made in favour of the objectives of indigenous social movement are studied through a critical lens and stress has been given to their immediate sociopolitical context.

Bolivia, a small country with its volatile politics of last two decades, has brought the very last people of the Latin American society and that of the world in general to the center of the political fulcrum of the planet. The language deployed by the indigenous people with deeper roots in the land mass they inhabit has left the world stunned and fascinated about the possibility of seeing the old problems in the fresh light through the new insights offered through indigenous sociopolitical perspective. The invocation of the language of rights within the indigenous lingua franca and the traditional knowledge was seen as not merely as a new perspective for the world – a world which has been conditioned over the years to think and move in a certain fashion – but it has been stirringly enabling experience to finally see that, that the sociopolitical crisis and capitalism converging as one and not in the way of commonly understood relationship of capitalism as the cause and the subsequent sociopolitical crisis as its effect. The indigenous world view especially on the concerns for environment conservation exposes and underlies the conformity of capitalism and the environment crisis as the obverse and reverse side of the same coin.

For instance indigenous invoking of special rights of mother nature, earth, air, water was not only just unheard of in the wider world engaged with the language of rights, but it was never even been conceived as that something which could possess a right of a political entity and that which must be recognized, as they have been under the new constitution of '*Plurinacional de Bolivia*'.

The manifestation of such radical ideas – which also, however, forms an important set of ideas on the body of post-development discourse<sup>6</sup> – in to the successful unfolding of the social movements led by the indigenous people, invoking cultural politics while keeping their political discourse firmly placed within larger framework of class politics at the same time, has certainly perplexed many a student's of politics, including this researcher. To understand this very process of socially arriving on class politics has been a personal motivation for carrying out this research work. Correspondingly, dalit movement in India, through various stages of its development as sociopolitical movements, has advanced the most resounding critique of Brahmanism and its influence in all the spheres. The distinct vantage point of seeing the 'mainstream' politics, away from the prism of well-established contours of class politics in India, which is completely bereft of any sense of politics of representation of the socially inferior and the politically excluded, forms the very axis of this research which connects dalit-indigenous politics emanating from the two different continent but converging on the issues of social justice and human dignity.

This research, inter alia, in the subsequent chapters after this introductory one, will be summarily reflecting upon the aspects of the shared colonial history of the regions and the subsequent unfolding of the much contemporary social movements led by the two aforementioned communities of people from the global south. The geographical space of the post-colonial south vis-à-vis imperial/neo-imperial north is essentially marked with many such similar people's struggles, manifesting itself in to coherent political project against the national elites within the post-colonial nation state and more recently also against the all-pervasive economic model of neoliberalism. Neoliberal economic model now peddled by the developed/capitalist/ northern world as the only model for the development for global south that has lagged behind, has been the primary reason for the current dynamism on the social movements under study here. Whether the global south has lagged behind in their course for 'development' and hence they must then 'catch up' with the west/north now, are the questions which though are being very significant, do not form the core of this research work. A much thorough going reading of the global

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<sup>6</sup>Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press 1995.

history and a careful analysis is required in this regard, which obviously is a matter of another full-fledged research altogether and hence is not pursued in this study.

Our primary focus and one of the principle objectives here, then, is to understand the historical roots of the politics pursued by the most oppressed and the socially discriminated classes in the region under study and how the same politics began to coalesce in to the larger body of contemporary social movements in practice. The overarching frame of reference for the social movements under study here stays within the broader normative discourse of social justice, equality and dignity of human beings. The very next chapter of this research work locates both dalit and the indigenous people in their hitherto ignored and neglected history of local struggles and then makes an attempt in chalking out the contours of their ideological moorings. The narrative and the analysis employed in this chapter helps us in understanding the thematic issues and the normative aspects of the dalit-indigenous social movements within the available scholarship on social movements. An effort has been made to contextualize the contemporary political churning by juxtaposing both the indigenous question & the caste injustice from their respective global quest for recognition and how this very politics of recognition complements their political struggle for the abolition of the very social classes, the nature of which excludes them from living a life of dignity and equality. However, nowhere in their struggles for achieving social justice and the life of equality and dignity has there been an instance when dalit-indigenous social movements' could ignore the centrality of class struggle – an understanding which has been addressed in the very last chapter of this research work.

## **Bolivia**

Plurinational State of Bolivia or the *Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia* (as it known in the Spanish language) is a multiethnic country with the population of around nine million, including 31% *Quecha*, 30 % *Mestizo*, 25 % *Aymara* and 14 % of the white, where the former three represents the major ethnic groups in the state. Two-thirds of the Bolivian population lives under what the World Bank defines as the poverty line and the

proportion goes up to 75 percent for the indigenous population.<sup>7</sup> Looking at the demographic composition of Bolivia at the turn of the nineteenth century, the population of creoles (*criollos*)<sup>8</sup> comprised of some 3.3 million of Spanish America's total population of 16.9 million. 'They were outnumbered by 7.5 million Indians, 5.3 million *mestizos*<sup>9</sup> and 776,000 blacks.'<sup>10</sup> Though there has been a quite a debate about who constitutes or qualifies to be a indigenous in Bolivia today, the very fact remains that the indigenous people of this Andean country arrived on the political landscape of Bolivia.

The overwhelming majority of the indigenous people while has enabled this small country to elect its first indigenous President of the state ever, it comes with its own contradictions where the indigenous people from the eastern region are of a very different political orientation as that from the indigenous groups residing in the west region.<sup>11</sup> There are scores of scholarly literature that makes an attempt to understand this very *Indigeneity* and the dynamics within the varied indigenous groups, one definitive thing and binding force among all have been the emphasis on their ancient culture and again and again invoking the community ethos and customs in to the politics. The arrival of Morales is the advent of the new era of indigenous movement which is inclusive in a sense that it has roots in the democracy, while the earlier insurrection led by *Tupac* (more on this in the later chapter) was for the exclusion of Spanish.

During the Spanish rule and after the foundation of the republic in 1952, indigenous peoples were not allowed to enter the center of the city, *La Paz*. They were literally on the margins of the 'civilized city'. During the 1952 revolution, government rigorously distributed the lands among the people, as a result of which, *Aymara* – an influential community of indigenous people of the *Andes*, became the principle owner of the land in the highlands and around *Quechua* which is nestled in the lowlands. Miguel Urste commenting upon the current unfolding of the *indigeneity* has told to this researcher, "*in the political history of Bolivia, the year 1952 was much more important than the current*

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<sup>7</sup> Linda Farthing and Benjamin Kohl, *Evo's Bolivia*. University of Texas Press, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Creoles or Criollos are white Spaniards settled in the colonies of Spanish Empire.

<sup>9</sup> Persons of mix race. Primarily the progenies of white Spaniards and Native American Indians.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Reid, *Forgotten Continent: The Battle for Latin America's Soul*. Yale University Press 2007. Pg 54.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Postero, *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia*. Stanford University Press 2007.

*scenario of social movement. Then the peasants were armed. It is not only the past decade, but the history goes much far back in time. This government might like to think that it starts with them. For them Evo (Morales) is turning point, which may not be entirely false as well. Morales never considered him as indigenous. Only when he was elected as the President of the state (2005), did he realize and discovered his indigenous identity and the subsequent political gains accrue to it.*<sup>12</sup>Uriste here clearly hints the eclecticism involved in the current politics of social movements, where indigenous people have found themselves at the center stage. Either way, this very particular assertion of their cultural moorings in modern day politics while manifests itself as the project of decolonization led by MAS (Movimiento Al Socialismo) or the Movement for Socialism – political party led by Evo Morales; it also reflects their urgency to finish what was left, as Young explains, ‘some unfinished business of anti-colonialism’.<sup>13</sup> In other words, in order to establish the equal moral worth of the long suppressed Andean culture, the politics imparted by indigenous people is absolutely central in framing and leading the social movements in the Andean country. And this indigenous assertion of their culture ofcourse does not limit itself in the sphere of ‘social movement’ alone, but also augment itself as a much more viable, innate and vibrant political alternative in today’s Bolivia.

The emergence and success of ethnic indigenous parties in Latin America must also then be studied and understood in the light of the tremendous changes in the regional environment since 1990s and the subsequent political unfolding of the indigenous parties at about the same time period. Notably, the decline of the organized Left has also contributed conversely to the rise of the indigenous political parties, who have spearheaded the anti-neoliberal resistance. Often this resistance has been achieved in collaboration with New Leftist forces (such as in Venezuela) or just by the successful transformation from powerful social movements to organized political parties (Bolivia, Ecuador) or in alliance with other popular movements (as in Colombia).<sup>14</sup> The decline of the Left or more appropriately, as it has been discussed in the later chapters, the

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<sup>12</sup> In a personal interview June 2011, La Paz, Bolivia.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pg 65

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

reorientation of the left politics through indigenous reckoning has also contributed to the rise and strengthening of the indigenous social movements, leading up to their own political formations like that of MAS – the political party actions of which installed Evo Morales as the first indigenous President in Bolivia.

Moreover, this putative decline or rather sidelining of the class based politics is attributed to the erosion of class based cleavages that were hitherto utilized by Leftist forces, and which have eroded as argued by Kenneth Roberts “*as neoliberal critical junctures produced an erosion of stratified cleavages along their structural, organizational and cultural dimensions in labor-mobilizing cases, while leaving the segmented cleavages of elitist systems relatively unscathed*”.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, increased politicization of ethnic cleavages has occurred simultaneously, as the citizenry driven through neoliberal reforms have challenged local autonomy, hitherto guaranteed to the indigenous groups, and has politicized ethnic identity, and catalyzed indigenous movements.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the above, other salient structural conditions such as inequality and poverty and the dispossession of the people in general in Bolivia have acted as triggers for the social movements to launch politically powerful campaigns, rallies, protests and invariably resulting in the formation of indigenous political parties, based on the permissiveness of institutional mechanisms in the country initiated under the neoliberal drive of decentralizing the governance processes.

The social movement led by the indigenous people in the Andean region of South America and the vibrant dalit movement in India, both present an exacting picture of movements which are conspicuous by its cultural politics along with the militant struggles seeking total or the actual decolonization – a process which is yet to be completed despite the decolonization of Latin America in the beginning of the previous century. What indigenous people comprehend through decolonization becomes the *de-brahmanisation* of social and political in India for dalits. It is important to bear in mind that unlike Asia and Africa, Latin America did achieve its independence from European

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<sup>15</sup> Kenneth M. Roberts, Social Inequalities without Class Cleavages in Latin America’s Neoliberal Era, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Winter 2002, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 3-33.

<sup>16</sup>DeborahYashar, “Democracy, Indigenous Movements, and the Post Liberal Challenge in Latin America”, *World Politics* 52.1 (1999) 76-104.

colonialism much before in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, despite the declaration of the independence from their imperial masters, the realization of economic and political sovereignty for the continent continued to be a distant dream. The decolonization, in this sense was never completed for the vast number of people who continued to be suppressed and discriminated under the acute socioeconomic and political exclusion at the hands of the ruling elites. The next few chapters trace the brief history of the formation of *creole-mestizaje* ruling classes and the cohesion of their socio-cultural politics which has left the indigenous people largely suffocated despite the national revolution of 1952.

## **India**

India however, presents a very complex picture in the sense that, that despite of its weathering almost two hundred years of British colonialism, the impact of the Raj on the 'native culture' and customs and other religious practices have almost been negligible. India is unique in this regard in the sense that both new and the old live side by side with constant confrontation which frequently turns in to a rather ugly quarrel between existing diverse cultures. While it is true that unlike the existing obvious racial inequality in Bolivia, the inequalities in India are of a very different nature owing primarily to the structural presence of the caste system, race or more appropriately racism too have a presence in the Indian subcontinent. This latter point of the presence of racial identity in India has its roots in the *Aryan-Dravida* debate and its corresponding influence on the interpretations of the history. And the same has been the subject matter of the scores of the oriental scholars in British India.<sup>17</sup> It is due to the discourse generated through such oriental scholarships that were deeply prejudiced by their own inclination to understand every society, and in this case India, through their racial glasses. It is through the painstaking efforts of such Oriental scholars that we in India too, have race-centric study of the Indian sociology, despite the fact that race do not define Indian sociology as it obviously defines the Western.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Susan Bayly, *Caste Society and Politics in India- From the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*. Cambridge University Press 1999.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* Chapter 3. Page 97 – 144.

It is considered that the people residing in the northern region in India constitute the 'easternmost branch of the Caucasoid race' and are the politically most dominant, as north India covers huge swath of land and naturally then sends greater number of the representatives in the Parliament of the country. Interestingly, it is the interpretation of north India Hindu right conservatives that also dominate the right wing politics in the country which is mostly Brahmanical (representing the interests of upper caste Hindu males) in the name of *Hindutva*. We also see that entire region of Himalaya right from its Northern reaches to the east is conspicuous by the presence of people from mongoloid race. Among the indigenous (tribal) population it is not very uncommon to see people of dark skin. However, in spite of all such existing racial differentiation in India, the dominant discourse is that of a Caste, crisscrossing across all racial diversity and that is something which has a very profound influence both in the pre and the post-colonial churning of this nation-state. Added to this, note should also be made of that the very word 'caste' has its origin in Portuguese/Spanish usage of the term '*Casta*'. Portuguese and Spanish imperial powers have ascribed this nomenclature to the Indians and their clans and lineages in the Americas, after the discovery of the 'new world' and the new people therein. The dynamics of the Iberian understanding of the caste system, as been found in Latin America and its equivalent found in Brahmanism of India is an interesting comparison which has been taken up briefly in the third chapter of this thesis.

Coming back to the question of decolonization and its actualization in India, it is a fact that the political scenario was not very enabling towards the end of the second half of the twentieth century. The political aspirations of the multitudes of the people were significantly absent in the formation of the new-post-colonial nation state, if not entirely sidelined. In the history of the global south, particularly stemming from their shared colonial past, we now hear and see those unheard and invisible voices present during the anti-colonial struggles in their respective locations, but somehow (and it's a big and a complex how!) got systematically marginalized. It is in this context of their shared colonial history and the systemic exploitation of dalits and indigenous people therein, that the global south presents itself as a rich archive facilitating the documentation of the hitherto invisible world and its history of political struggles.

The third chapter in this thesis makes an attempt in bringing the two social movements under study close on a historical and political terrain where the preceding chapter has left it at. While dalit movement which has had its distinct take on the colonial history and on the subsequent evolution of the whole politics of nationalism –nation of the upper castes in the mirror image of the colonial Europe – indigenous people too had very little to do with the designs of *creole-mestizaje* Bolivia as the emerging nation state. In his exhaustive work on Bolivia's sociopolitical history, Jeffery Webber sheds more light on this in his exacting words, “*the ideology of mestizaje introduced new forms of racial domination, predicated as it was on the assimilation of indigenous people into the dominant mestizo-culture, with the attendant abandonment of their own cultures and languages*”<sup>19</sup>. In the back drop of such similar cultural ostracization of both dalits and indigenous people, this chapter then continues to investigate a comparative understanding of the real politics behind the cultural *mestizaje* and Brahmanism, which not only controls and establishes an order catering to the privilege few, but the same also militates against the very idea of universal brotherhood and harmony. This relationship of the hegemony of the dominant class has been further explored within the established discourse of settlers vs. natives and that of dalits vs. Brahmans in the same section.

Bordering on the understanding that both dalits and indigenous gentry are deeply stigmatized communities, who are also economically poor and excluded for long from the corridors of political power, the chapter then investigates in to the comparative indicators of the two social movements which are largely symbolic in nature. The word stigma here is the key word which binds both the group in a comparative framework – a framework which is very central to this research work. Both these group while of course have been historically discriminated and excluded from the sociopolitical process, the premise of such exclusion is very distinct and has its roots in the very idea of the culture and society and the way it has evolved in both the countries. The chapter continues to explore the struggles of dalit-indigenous people against ‘internal colonialism’, whereby the indigenous native have been suppressed by the white settlers and thereafter subsequently at the hands of creoles and *mestizos*, while the upper castes in India have always been

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<sup>19</sup> See Jeffery R. Webber, Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia. Brill, 2011. Page 98.

indifferent to the caste question in India. The indescribable socio economic destitution of both the groups have been particularly conspicuous due to the poorer economy and slower economic growth, which ofcourse never has affected the upper strata of both the society, as it was due to the socially embedded nature of exploitation among dalits and indigenous people.

The net result of such an acute socioeconomic exploitation has culminated in to a situation of a permanent exclusion and invisibilization of the dalits and the native *indians* in their respective post-colonial nation state. In this chapter effort has been made to address the two correlated points. One is the significance of the postcolonial literature, discourse and its main arguments. And second is the positioning of both the indigenous people and dalits' discourse with respect to now available vast writings on post colonialism. An attempt is also made to understand different location and the relationship of both the indigenous and dalit movement with the state in the postcolonial world. Dalit understanding on colonialism, that is distinct from the mainstream understanding on the same, see colonialism as something which brought the 'languages of right' to the people who have no rights whatsoever. Although inadvertently on the part of the British Raj, the invocation of such language goes long in its role in shaping the then nascent dalit discourse of struggling to achieve their basic human dignity. In this light one must keep in the mind that the popular influence of Western liberal framework that still informs the larger democratic debate and is not something which is undesirable completely. And especially given the complex diversity of India, this very framework is an absolute necessity for the realization of an egalitarian world. The anti-colonial struggles in both the region has not been able to comprehend this aspect of modernity that arrived with colonialism and has been beneficial to dalits, although not that the British Raj desired it consciously. The available scholarship on colonial history and the anti-colonial struggles has extensively failed to understand this dynamics and has obviously then terribly failed to incorporate the same in the construction of the post-colonial nation state.

In this regard it is important to keep in our mind the intervention of the subaltern studies on the historiography of India in general and on underlining the marginalized voices there in particular. The subaltern project has a significant intervention on the Latin American

historiography too. Both the scholarships have been covered in the chapter currently under discussion and critical perspective has been offered on the same. However, to be fair to the subaltern project in India, it must be said that theirs was an attempt to carve out a third current of historiography as being both the critique and the alternative at once to the colonialist and the nationalist historiography. The colonial project was obviously in their eyes have been peddling what all was necessary and suitable to an administration completely immersed in the ideology of Occidentalism. While the nationalist project was maintained as an 'elitist' assertion of the 'native' land against the colonial domination, which eventually went on to mirror the colonial state and ethos nonetheless. Up to this point, one can sympathize and work to the cause of the postcolonial or the subaltern studies school – as they are popularly known in the Indian academia.

For them both these 'tendencies are committed to one, unitary domain of politics, integrated either by administration or by the intervention of elites – the nationalist elites'.<sup>20</sup> However, the ineptness of their own account of writing history of the colonial and the postcolonial India lies in their complete and abject oblivion to the problem posed by the caste. Not only, have they utterly failed to grasp the profound question of caste in India's political history – which is not confined to colonialism alone. Building on their deliberate aloofness of the caste perspective, they did not even deemed it fit to engage with both historical and the ongoing sociopolitical movement against Brahmanism masquerading as the Indian culture. This chapter and this whole research in general aids in interpreting the history that appraises us about the significance of the struggles against caste inequalities emanating from the Brahmanical caste system that in turn informs the crack between the colonial and national imagination and is actually not something as fragmentary and dissipated as the subalterns theories would have us understood. It is to this glossing over of an entirely different account of Indian historiography beyond the colonial as its center, that one finds the limitations of the subaltern scholarship and its eventual irrelevancy when one has to make an informed understanding on the relationship between India's history and the agency of dalit therein.

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<sup>20</sup>Shahid Amin, *Alternative Histories: A view from India*. Published by the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS) and the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC). Amsterdam/ Calcutta, 2002. Page 12.

The politics that informs the dalit movement also enables one to decode the voluminous works of subaltern scholars and shows its limitations in capturing the primary contradiction of the Indian society, i.e. caste. Shahid Amin, through his scholarly writings did mention about the importance of the political identity of dalits to be factored in to the putative history of India's 'wretched of the earth', the entire subaltern project completely fails to understand the importance of the State and its relationship to the dalit-bahujan's politics. Deliberations ensued during the constituent assembly debates and then the subsequent making of the India's constitution, the constitutional rights made available to the 'wretched of India' – are all part of the liberal project which becomes a difficult paradox for the subaltern school to resolve, given its obsession with the colonial modernity. Their pathological ignorance of the fruits of modernity – and yes it would have never arrived in India if not for colonialism – and its subsequent bearings on the emancipatory politics of dalits is completely bypassed in most of their work of any considerable repute.

Edward Said very presciently captures this subaltern contradiction in the following words, albeit in a different context, though very relevant for our analysis here, as "*what does need to be remembered is that narratives of emancipation and enlightenment in their strongest form were also narratives of integration not separation, the stories of people who had been excluded from the main group but who were not fighting for a place in it. And if the old and habitual ideas of the main group were not flexible or generous enough to admit new groups, then these ideas need changing – a far better thing to do than reject the emerging groups.*"<sup>21</sup> Commenting on the curious relationship between European imperialism and evolution of the concept of the nation-state, in turn an import from the land of imperialism, Said further remarks and again very succinctly, that "*Western imperialism and Third World nationalism feed off each other, but even at their worst they are neither monolithic nor deterministic. Besides, culture is not monolithic either, and is not the exclusive property of East or West, nor of small groups of men or women.*"<sup>22</sup> This inability to understand the voices of the marginalized due to the binders

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<sup>21</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture & Imperialism*. Vintage 1994. Page xxx.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Page xxvii.

imposed by the binary of colonialism and nationalism has been a singular failure which has consistently pushed the dalit-indigenous moral, ethical and the political world always at the brink of any possible radical interpretation of politics. Taken together, both chapters two and three dig deeper in to the above discussed dimension of colonialism, nationalism and the lost voices of dalits and indigenous people and the ‘nation’ of their imagination.

The fourth chapter of the thesis looks in to this very space between colonialism and nationalism and makes an effort to explain about how the alternative world view of forming a just society in the political schema of both dalits and indigenous get unfurled through social and political movements. This section makes an attempt to underline the fact that how the very idea of the constructing a new nation state has been conceptualized in the mirror image of the idea of the nation with its roots in Europe at the cost of the sociocultural ethos and valuesystem espoused by dalits and the indigenous people in their respective country. The political processes that began in the newly independent nation-state displayed deep level of insensitivity towards its minorities and other socially excluded groups (read mainly the untouchables and the native *indians*), thus resulting in no major sociopolitical changes in the lives of this socioeconomically disadvantage strata of society. This section of the research makes an attempt to establish a comprehensive understanding on the normative issues like justice, equality and dignity of human beings and how they began to come about as the integral features in the dalit-indigenous schema for the individuals to associate in order to form a political society which enables a life of freedom and dignity to the people inhabiting the same. The analysis presented strives to enquire and balance the two world views from the two different continents, which nonetheless hold on to very similar and a common socio political objectives for a just future society. The chapter draws on the necessity of a communal life in order to have a political society sensitive to issues of equality and justice. The realization of such an ethical structure is present in the very belief system of dalit-indigenous world view which balances a modern right bearing individual who is at once is in unison with its community as well – thus enabling an ethics which is central in the construction of a society sensitive to common good arrived upon through the deliberations done by the individuals conscious of their rights as well duties towards the

larger society. It is in this milieu that this chapter assess the rich legacy of the idea of *prabuddhbharat* as visualized by Ambedkar, which in a comparative frame is much closer to the indigenous world view of a possible just society working for good lives for its people through the development model of *vivir bien*..

The fifth chapter covers the contemporary global spread of neoliberalism and its impact on the dalit-indigenous lives. The horrendous trajectory of neoliberal economics and hazards it has brought to the environment and the whole notion of development as it is widely understood and further being imposed on the third world nations is discussed in detail. The chapter delineates the working of 'neo-colonialism' and assesses the relationship of contemporary metropolitans with the peripheries in the modern times. It goes without saying that the kind of havoc neoliberal policies brought in Latin America in general and that in Bolivia in particular is unparalleled in the history of colonial and neo-colonial loot. Hence it is to no one's surprise that the most ferocious resistance to the free market economics guided by an authoritarian state under the tutelage of United States of America was met in Bolivia under the umbrella of numerous indigenous mobilized groups engaged in social movements. The chapter underlines the importance of the struggles waged in Bolivia against the privatization of water and its other natural resources (hydrocarbons) and the enthusiastic and the militant support it enjoyed among the common masses.

Neoliberal era in Bolivia has been considered as the cul-de-sac moment of its old political world which has been stormed by the radical alternative of the indigenous multitudes. People who were at the brink and who suffered heavily because of the neoliberal loot has not only resisted with all their might but they also engaged and came up with alternative world view in the country. The development model of *vivir bien*, as discussed in the previous chapter and the subsequent alternative policy measures adopted in the country under the leadership of the indigenous president, Evo Morales is all testimony to the great struggle of the indigenous people of Bolivia. David Harvey succinctly captures this impact of neoliberalism in the following words, "*The redistributive tactics of neoliberalism are wide-ranging, sophisticated, frequently masked by ideological gambits, but devastating for the dignity and social well-being of*

*vulnerable populations and territories. The wave of creative destruction neoliberalization has visited across the globe is unparalleled in the history of capitalism. Understandably, it has spawned resistance and a search for viable alternatives.*"<sup>23</sup>

The resounding success of the social movements in Bolivia today owes as much as to the consolidation of masses against neoliberal governments, as much as they sprang from their socio-cultural moorings of protests and quest for social and political change. The political articulation against the global capital/ neoliberalism is very much a part of the indigenous politics in Bolivia and has been at the core of their social movements. The chapter carefully analyses its impact on the indigenous people and their response to the same, which as it turns out is not very simplistic. There have been cases of emerging, nascent indigenous entrepreneurship which has utilized the opening of the markets to its benefits. Similarly, while the ideological resistance against the neoliberal exploitation is very much part of the vibrant dalit discourse in India, their response to the same has striking parallels to that of Bolivia's indigenous people, if not completely identical.

It is interesting to note here that both the social movements have taken a very distinct recourse – while resisting the overall neoliberal project – in their response to the neoliberal ideology. The common theoretical premise underneath both the political movement is essentially couched in the politics of social justice, but the path that have distinctly arrived upon by the forces within the dalit-indigenous sociopolitical discourse are symptomatic of the formation of the tiny class of entrepreneurs who are ready to access and exploit the minimum possibilities available to them by the opening of the economic opportunities with the diversification of the market. Chapter demonstrates that the socioeconomic fate of dalits is very much similar to that of the indigenous groups engaged in market economy at the level of petty traders in Bolivia. The deficit of entrepreneurship among the dalits and indigenous people results from the social condition that has its roots in the structural discrimination present in both the societies. That their political struggle is partly or rather centrally tied up with their economic well-being is then becomes a very obvious social condition which of course need to be

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<sup>23</sup> David Harvey, Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction. The Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science. Vol. 610, NAFTA and Beyond: Alternative Perspectives in the Study of Global Trade and Development (Mar., 2007), pp. 22-44

countered both at the economic level through newer strategies and through emerging politics therein. And hence, solutions for the same then may not always be seen in the conventional politics where whatever goes in the name of the market must be opposed and fought with. The chapter makes a case for understanding this predicament of joining forces with the available positioning of the market economy by the sections among dalits and indigenous people in terms of extending their purview of political presence through market as well, however limited that might be. The politics of social justice seen in this way then began to involve the dalit-indigenous gesture of filling up of the economic space that has been unavailable to them historically. By utilizing such market opportunities dalit and indigenous politics makes a more effective case for their inclusion both in terms of representation and as well their recognition of as an entrepreneurial class.

Finally, the present study of the social movements then effectively makes two modest points in its totality. First that the agencies of both dalits and their indigenous counterpart in Bolivia both have a very rich history of struggles against the very sources of their subjugation and that they have been constantly striving for change in their social and political condition. The language of rights as brought about by forces of European enlightenment has enabled them to the extent where they have been able to their old struggling agency with the vigour of modern parliamentary politics. However, the seeds of redeeming themselves in to a much more humane and just society was and continues to be the axis of their politics all along. Secondly, the characteristic feature of dalit-indigenous politics, and this flows from the first understanding, is that both dalit and the indigenous people have over the course of their long drawn battle against their respective dominant classes have developed a very distinct alternative vision of the new society whose goal is to provide for justice, equality and decent life – away from all kinds of humiliation suffered by them – to all its habitants. It is for this second postulate that we see the significance of dalit-indigenous world view on the issues of climate change, on the crisis that has been brought about by the world capitalism and on the need for general peace and harmony in the society.

## Chapter II

### **Dalits & Pueblos Originarios: Politics of Social Movement**

*Identity is a new thing. Before, it was all class. This identity never died, actually! It was in hiding.*

**Xavier Albo**<sup>24</sup>

When Aristotle made that rather oft quoted statement – ‘Man by very nature of its being is a political animal’ – what he had on his mind was the relationship between Man and the State, as for him an ideal state is the acme of a given polity. It was implicit also that Man can only flourish in such State and will certainly perish outside of it, and that he shall never opt for the latter as he commands reason and language (unlike the animals of the wild) which of course would naturally be utilized in the realm of politics in order to actualize an ideal state. However, after almost two thousand years or so and many more influential political philosophers in between, politics has obviously moved beyond Aristotle’s Man. The politics in today’s world – besides being a man’s world – is also understood in relation with women alongside the many other sexual and gender based identities, long neglected from any political processes so far. The sociopolitical churning of last three hundred years or so has extended the ever widening political net to many other such acquired and ascriptive identities, so far condemned to remain on the margins of politics. The arrival of the modern state and its continuous – if not consistent – maturity in the light of ever deepening democracy has given rise to aforementioned new identities and their subsequent political representation. The impact and the reach of the modern state with its roots in the liberal ideas of enlightenment era have brought together people from all across the globe for a common political and social objective in differential sociopolitical setting. Although it is true that the colonial quest of Imperial Europe is largely responsible for this ‘new’ political agency of the people as citizens of what we now know as nation states, the politics thus followed indeed go beyond the nationalist framework of the colonial times and its political legacy. And it is this precise

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<sup>24</sup> As told to this researcher during an interview. Xavier Albo is one of the senior most and an eminent social scientist based in Bolivia. See the full interview in the Appendix

association of people, firming up common political goals in a given society, constantly struggling and striving for better lives, that is broadly read and understood through the study of social movements and is the subject matter of this chapter.

This brings us straight to the issue at hand of the social movements and its politics in the world today, where rarely can one ignore – let alone a student of comparative politics – the unfolding of the same, both on the streets and its corresponding influence on a country's polity in general. That is not to say that the social movements as a medium to impress upon state and the government are something which is the product of modern age alone. On the contrary, pre-modern history is replete with the accounts of the people's force been deployed through organized movement in order to change the society. Modernity with its diverse meaning and interpretations, is not only the product of esoteric expression of the European intelligentsia, but is also been shaped by the people coming together, as was seen during the French and American revolution followed by the native resistance against the colonial powers. One can also add here, the civil rights movement for Blacks and the significant role played by the Dalit movement along with the Women for their rights in the so called men's world to the ongoing evolution of the modern pedigree of politics. Ideological moorings for all the aforementioned sociopolitical movements goes back to their own distant past with their own canon of protest and change which of course got further boosted with the availability of the modern state in the context of the ever expanding enlightenment values.<sup>25</sup>

In the contemporary studies on social movement, we see that there are as diverse analyses available as there are diverse and complex movements themselves. According to some scholars, social movements unfold itself in a cyclical fashion (both ideologically and socioeconomically) and also that their emergence occurs almost in tandem with the larger socioeconomic crisis in a given country.<sup>26</sup> In the light of this insight it become easy to understand the social setting and political reasoning behind the numerous important

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<sup>25</sup> The legacy of African communitarian traditions of brother hood and distinct cultural understanding than the whites is remarkable in the civil rights movements for the Blacks. Similarly, Dalits too have a rich and glorious past of anti-caste movement which goes all the way back to the Buddhist egalitarian traditions followed by the Bhakti movement in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century up until the present Ambedkarite movement for equality and representation.

<sup>26</sup> Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes, *Nine Theses of Social Movements*, Thesis Eleven 1987; 18-19; 143

movements like Arab Uprising in West Asia, Occupy Wall Street in the USA and of course the indigenous movement in Latin America. All of them are the product of the global economic crisis but some of them are not just solely confined against the same. For example gay/lesbian rights, rights for people with disabilities, movement for gender just sociopolitical environment, animal rights, religious freedom, question of the overseas migrant labour, problem of the refugees, human rights; and the movements against poverty, terrorism, world's burgeoning nuclear arsenals, along with the call for democratization of institutions and so on and so forth, do not necessarily bound themselves to the fight against global neoliberalism alone. Besides the exploitative economy, social movements could also be seen as directed against prevailing social norms which lead to the persistence of social inequalities among people causing their eventual political ostracism in a given society.

The work of Sydney Tarrow, provides a good example of how the connections between political science, economics and sociology can help us to better understand how, and why, it is that the social movements begins. Tarrow combines some of the insights of economics with the macro-structural focus of political science to propose a theory that accounts for the cyclical nature of social protest activity and its origins.<sup>27</sup> With this understanding of social movements as a cyclical process and as the harbinger of transformational change in people's lives, if not a complete paradigmatic shift in a country's polity, we must also take stock of to its relationship with the democracy and other constitutional mechanisms of the modern state. Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes in their essay '*Nine Theses on Social Movements*', talks about the two important element of a social movement in the theses number six and seven, respectively.<sup>28</sup> Commenting on certain aspects of social movement, they defined them as 'agents of social transformation' acting upon to delink the society from 'contemporary capitalism' and thus enabling its 'transition to socialism'.

In this background it is important, if not only appropriate; to discuss the everlasting impact of Marxism and the theoretical perspective it generated in order to understand the

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<sup>27</sup> Sidney Tarrow's *Power In Movement* 1994.

<sup>28</sup> Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes, *Nine Theses of Social Movements*, Thesis Eleven 1987; 18-19; 143.

class mobilization in various social movements. Thanks to the enormous impact of Marxist ideas, the idea of working class movement was the only window available to understand the social movements so far. In the post industrial world, especially in the western world, class was considered as the primary contradiction in the global politics, following which it was seen as the primary category that could galvanize and mobilize people against the socio economic oppression under a capitalist economy. However, after the decline in socialist politics world over, there has been an upsurge in the body of scholarly work that goes beyond the binaries of the mode of productions and its corresponding class conflict.<sup>29</sup> It is needless to say that if somebody has really underscored the urgency of people rising up against the exploitation with a collective spirit through the agency of the industrial proletariat, is undoubtedly Karl Marx and the battery of intellectuals after him who has of course added to his profound philosophical work. Marx's understanding of the collective action rooted in the class consciousness of the working class remains to be one of the most systematic and reflective philosophy, coached in terms of ever increasing class conflict in a capitalist set up. Marxism, after Marx has not only developed but flourished, both in theory and praxis. From Lenin till Gramsci to Althusser, it has been a continuous train of powerful critique of the state and its economy along with the social relations there in.

However, the deployment of the Marxist categories significantly limits our understanding when it comes to a theoretical analysis and understanding of the new social movements where beside class, other identities also plays out prominently. The role which such movements attribute to identities, other than class, is a very significant ones. As rightly pointed out by the proponents of 'radical democracy' that only if we are to 'renounce' the privileging of 'universal class' as a political category, can then we fully understand the viability of the Marxist categories in the present context.<sup>30</sup> As Kymlicka points out that 'one of the major distinctive features of Marxism is its preoccupation with labour'<sup>31</sup>, as it is the workers who are identified as the main agents of social change. But what if

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<sup>29</sup> In this regard work by Laclau, Mouffe, Negri, Hardt, are the most significant. See Cohen 1985; Habermas 1981; Laclau 1981, 1983; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Melucci 1980, 1984, 1985, 1989; Mouffe 1979, 1984, 1988; Offe 1985; Touraine 1981, 1985, 1988.

<sup>30</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Verso. 1985.

<sup>31</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, OUP 2002, pg 199.

injustice or the exploitation is not immediately rooted in production relations and are external to it? What if, the exploitation or injustice does not involve a worker and the ostensible capitalist binary and is further more complicated due to certain distinctive exploitative traits of a society not necessarily exhibited in its economic dimension. What if, the individual concerned do not have any kind of work in the first place, not that he do not need a work but in some society he just simply cannot have a work which can restore his lost human dignity.<sup>32</sup> Well, this and more such questions do not get an honest attention in Marxist schema which hinges upon the increasing polarization of working class and capitalists, whereby workers will eventually usher in socialism after overthrowing the capitalism. Marxists then believes that the state is itself an active player in bringing down tones of injustice upon the working class, and hence they not only overlook the constructive role of a welfare state but they also risk ignoring other aspects of society which affects an individual - rooted in his/her respective caste, gender, race and ethnicity – more brazenly than what couldn't get exhausted in the binary of working class struggle against capitalism. In the changed global scenario where people are asserting in multiple ways for their livelihood and decent living and for recognition of themselves as equals, the assertion of the traditional Marxist view about the centrality of labor to progressive politics is an extremely self-limiting idea, which actually makes the realization of genuine progressive politics unattainable at times.

Social movements can also be right centric or may be galvanized around demanding more policy level outcome from the welfare state, the availability of a democratic state plays a very important part for any future role of such movements in nation's polity. Charles Tilly described social movements as collective organized action with some rational purpose to it.<sup>33</sup>With this definition, social movement's analysis is done based on the cost and benefits it may bring to a society through the collective action. Even if there is lack of fertile soil of democracy for such social movements, there have been instances that they do sprout and continues to be an important engine of the process of

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<sup>32</sup> Dalits in India have historically been denied any access to any meaning full work except the menial jobs which are religiously sanctioned and imposed on them for its being their 'caste occupation'. Up till date, despite the legal prohibition the manual scavenging is practiced and done only by dalits.

<sup>33</sup>Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. 1978.

democratization nonetheless – people rising against Hosni Mubarak regime at Tahrir Square in Egypt is one recent example in this regard.

However, in order to be fair to the ‘social’ aspect of the social movements, it can be stated that it is not always the ‘structure of political opportunities’ which triggers social movements in the first place, but more often than not it has been driven by an strong impulse to change the existing sociopolitical condition for better.<sup>34</sup> In other words the availability of political opportunities through electoral reforms or new constitutional rights may enhance peoples’ participation in the political processes, but it may not necessary lead to any transformative changes in their lives. Hence, social movements via democratic upsurge are of an utmost importance to this current research, as seen through this perspective the dynamics of social movements becomes a possibility owing to the minimum availability of democratic ethos in their immediate sociopolitical structure, which then actually works towards a greater democratization of the State and its institutions.

On the other hand there has been this understanding of immense importance which establishes that any proper ‘doing’ of ‘social movement analysis’ entails looking at all those heterogeneous protest initiatives against neoliberalism which may not necessarily be connected with each other.<sup>35</sup> Diani and Porta maintains that to organize an study of ‘global justice movement’ will be misleading if not completely erroneous, as the same will give the global protests movement a façade of homogeneity while it actually is very heterogeneous in nature with its distinct demands and actions, however united in their cause against neoliberal globalization they might be. The focus, while studying the global justice movement, must be at the opposition met to ‘neoliberal control of global transformations’<sup>36</sup> and it is due to this aspect of anti-neoliberalism, that we see global platforms like ‘World Social Forum’ became a possibility in the twenty first century. Such forums rightly called as ‘movement of movements’ have been widely organized in

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<sup>34</sup> Sidney Tarrow’s Power In Movement 1994.

<sup>35</sup> Dona Tella Porta & Mario Diani, Social Movements: An Introduction. Blackwell Publishing. 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Pg 3.

the global south, at cities like Porte Alegre (Brazil), Mumbai (India) and such an exercise also led to the formation of ‘African Social Forum’, Mali, in January 2002.<sup>37</sup>

Both the dalit movement and the indigenous social movements from Latin America are the crucial components of such global network for the movements of social change and justice. There is ample literature on the role of dalit activists on the inclusion of caste as category of discrimination at the international level during the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa in September 2001.<sup>38</sup> Similarly there is vast amount of literature that has documented the indigenous people interventions at the global level in order to get their legal and political identity status, now enjoyed by the indigenous and aboriginal people world over.

However, social movement due to its very nomenclature must be located in their social setting and then should be read and understood as something which not only challenges the prevailing notions of power in the society but also as a process that leads to the transformation of the same in order to redefine the societal relations and thereby, politics too. We will see in the later pages that how both dalit movement and the indigenous movements’ objectives have been for this greater transformation in the social relations of their respective society, enabling them so that they can lay their just claim to a dignified and good life, hitherto unavailable to them. In the similar vein, their invocation of cultural signifiers or the notion of an ascriptive identity in order to transform the existing social ties should be seen and understood as their collective action to redefine the way politics been conducted so far. It is this transformative aspect of the social movement which forms the common language of both the people involved in their struggle in Bolivia and India which forms the core of this chapter.

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<sup>37</sup> Mario Pianta, *Parallel Summits of Global Civil Society*. In H. Anheier, M. Glasius, and M. Kaldor (eds.), *Global Civil Society 2001*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001

<sup>38</sup> Sukhdeo Thorat and Umakant, *Caste, Race and Discrimination: Discourses in International Context*, IIDS publications 2004. Also see, Sukhdeo Thorat, *Caste, Race and United Nation’s Perspective on Discrimination: Coping with Challenges from Asia and Africa*, paper presented at an international Seminar on “Beyond Durban: Caste and Race Dialogues” at South Asia Institute, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, USA, October 4 – 6, 2002.

Now, there can be multitudes of social conditions which give rise to corresponding social movements to change the same. If we look at India's case, a place where if anything is in abundance, it is such social conditions which makes it a fertile ground to study social movements. Before we delve further on India's social and political scenario of how the movements being organized, it is pertinent to understand the commonalities of framework involved, which prodded this researcher to undertake the comparative study of Dalit movement in India and the Indigenous movement in Bolivia. It must also be underlined here that the primary reason to explore social movements in the two countries has been to study the sociopolitical churning among the historically marginalized people on the lines of castes and differences of similar ascriptive persuasion in their respective polities and how they organized themselves politically and to ascertain their political world view thus constructed..

The historical roots to their respective system of societal hierarchy has of course been different and have very distinct features but both have produced the same effect – leaving millions of people dehumanized and bereft of any political representation let alone their basic rights. Hence, in order to actualize their objective of changing the existing social relations in to more egalitarian one, what became pertinent for both dalits and indigenous people is not only to struggle against all structural injustices but also to ensure that these voices should be recognized and forms a political society of equals.

The problem of dalits and indigenous people are further compounded by the abject humiliation<sup>39</sup> met to them at the hands of dominant classes in their respective location, which has not only robbed them off their very human dignity but has also been able to confine them in a continuous complex of perceiving themselves as a social inferior. Their customs, traditions and practices have been looked down upon, both by the white elites and the members of upper castes in Bolivia and India, respectively. This continuous suppression of their very basic human agency among both the marginalized groups through enforced segregation, triggered by their specific caste systems has caused years

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<sup>39</sup> Humiliation in the context of the social experience of both dalits and indigenous people must be understood as the rejection of their very presence in the society. It is the feeling, as explained by AvishaiMargalit, of an injury to one's self-respect. For an excellent study of the same, see AvishaiMargalit, *The Decent Society*, Harvard University press. 1996.

of subjugation and humiliation, which obviously now has led to very different demands in their movement, central to which has been the claim for human dignity, self-respect and social equality.

If seen in the above light what follows is that the social movements of both the indigenous people and dalits have an umbilical relationship with democracy. Both movements of the historically marginalized people are essentially democratic in nature and have contributed a lot in extending the existing contours of liberal democracy informed through their own harsh lived experiences. And it is this commonality which has interested this researcher to further explore the dynamism of their movements in the context of asserting themselves for achieving their lost human dignity and basic human rights.

### **A brief history of Bolivia and its indigenous struggles**

The tumultuous years from 1985 till 1991 have witnessed the two most important political processes of global importance and consequences. The first being the dissolution of Soviet Russia causing a general decline in the politics of Socialism world over, particularly in Europe, and second being the extensive and rigorous push for the new economic policies especially in the third world. Bolivia obviously saw both these process unfolding itself and the repercussion of the same on its polity, leading to decisive changes in its political landscape. The general decline of left politics and the grip of neoliberalism in this Andean country were near complete by the beginning of 1990. The neoliberal restructuring of the Bolivian economy was to be continued till the year 2000, until the same met vibrant and organized resistance of indigenous social movements which retains its left character nonetheless. Now both the political process: the decline of left politics which could be described more appropriately as the rejuvenation of the same through democratic means via vibrant indigenous social movements and the unfolding of the neoliberal era, requires our careful contextual consideration.

For the students of Bolivia's history, it is more than evident that the politics in this land locked nation state has always been portrayed and played out in terms of class alliances and conflicts. However, the class conflict has always been the glossy veneer on the

surface of racially segregated society akin to caste like hierarchy in India. After the liberation of colony from the Spanish empire in early nineteenth century, the new Republic restored by the creole elite could be described at best as just 'new' in its nomenclature, as foreign rulers were replaced by the local white elites. This newly won self-determination at the hands of tiny white elites was conspicuous by not accommodating the other social entities in the role of any meaningful consequences in the new republic and has, thus, left the repugnant colonial structure of social hierarchy largely untouched. The rule of military *caudillos* or the strongmen in the republican era resulted in huge amassing of wealth and the concentration of corresponding political power in the hands of creole elites.<sup>40</sup> Whereby, the *indios*, *mulattos*, blacks and natives in general were excluded from any sort of 'new' political process and from the so called making of the new nation state. In this new republic the overwhelming majority of the native *indios* was confined to the mining work and was mostly poor peasants.

Henceforth, the sociopolitical hegemony exercised by the whites during the colonial period continued its dominance and would later gradually metamorphose in to a strong oligarchy. The same oligarchical system has yet to wait for the onset of radical social movement and the leadership of Evo Morales to meet its most completing political opposition. In this way it is due to the emergence of social movements of wider sociopolitical reach in the contemporary times that has changed the politics of Bolivia and made it a unique democratic experience in the entire Latin America, parallel to which can be seen in another Andean nations that of Peru and Ecuador and to some extent in Mexico, Guatemala, Columbia and Brazil.

However in order to understand the unfolding of the process of social and political change in Bolivia through the recent churning of indigenous social movements, we must locate the same in its contemporary history and particularly certain major turning points which has brought a paradigmatic shift in Bolivian politics. In the post republic period, native *indians* did not experience any real power shift that would have emancipated them. On the contrary, the scale of their exploitation through mining economy, albeit sluggish,

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Reid, *Forgotten Continent: The Battle for Latin America's Soul*. Yale University Press. 2007. Pg 62-3.

was as brutal as it was during the colonial period. The majorities of them was still working and living on the *comunidades* (free Indian communities) and were peasants or land less laborers. By the beginning of 1850s, Bolivia was ‘in worse condition than it had been at the beginning of its republican life’ and it is only by 1880s that Bolivia formally entered to civilian rule after ending the highly exploitative military *caudillo* rule.<sup>41</sup>

In order to be exacting for the objectives of this research, we can divide Bolivia’s history in to three phases: namely the time of national revolution of 1952, the push of neoliberal policies and the political reforms in 1993 and the upsurge of indigenous social movements up till the installation of MAS government led by Evo Morales in 2006. We shall take all the above three tumultuous phases of Bolivia’s history one by one and shall see the dialects of the state’s coercion with that to the impressive growth in the political mobilization of the indigenous people.

The national revolution of April 1952, to use Miguel Uristoe’s words<sup>42</sup>, was much more important than the present movements led by the indigenous people, as peasants for the first time coalesced in to class in the post revolution period as the direct consequence of the agrarian reforms then brought in by the MNR government. The time period preceding the revolution was marked by the vast socio economic inequalities resulting from the slowdown in the world economy in general and particularly due to the abysmal status of the then Bolivian economy. The revolution brought together miners, disenchanted and disillusioned sections of the middle class professionals and other sections of working classes, who took up arms against highly inaccessible political system favorable to the creole elites. The political party called *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, MNR) led the revolution and formed the government with Victor Paz Estenssoro as its head. The new government enjoyed the mandate of a multi class support base encompassing *campesinos* (peasants), miners and other sections of the urban middle class and immediately ushered in to rigorous sociopolitical reforms of significant reach and results.

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<sup>41</sup> Herbert S. Klein, *The Crisis of The State, 1841 – 1880*, in *A Concise History of Bolivia*. Cambridge University Press. 2011. Page 118 -143.

<sup>42</sup> Personal interview with Miguel Uristoe, member of the Bolivian Congress from the year 1977 – 1997 in June 2011, La Paz, Bolivia He currently heads the *Movimiento Bolivia Libre* (Movement for the liberation of Bolivia).

Although, the revolution of 1952 was led by the white people leading MNR, the *Aymaran campesinos* too identified with the revolution and supported the same completely. The political vision that leaders like Estenssoro worked out was to build the country from the framework and vantage perspective of the *mestizos* (mixed people of different race). This *mestizaje* national view was native-blind and had an understanding of nation consisting of the people from intermixing of creole and other ethnicities. Implicit to this understanding was the downplaying of indigenous customs and traditions and their sociopolitical world view. In sum, they tried building the new country without recognizing the ethnic divisions of the society that has long existed right from colonial days.

However, even though before the republican revolution indigenous peoples were not allowed to get education, education sector was universalized in the postcolonial republic of 1952 and hence first time education was made available to the vast indigenous populace of the country. The political churning of 1952 brought a sea change in the forms of social mobilization, wherein the state allowed the peasants to feel that they are also part of the new nation and have their say in the formation of 'new country'. But this entire political roiling was devoid of any ethnic understanding of the Bolivian society and was broadly derived from quasi class perspective along with the *mestizaje* outlook of the then revolutionary politics. The agrarian reforms then implemented by the MNR government has brought the *campesino* (peasant) to the center stage but never recognized and rather downplayed the indigenous identity which was to wait for another four decades to unfold and realize its full political potential.<sup>43</sup>

While it is true that the *campesinos* in general benefitted in the post revolution period and have received major benefits from the government policies which were absent in the previous regime, it was mainly the miners, who, since they were the most organized class, led the revolution from the front and won it too. Even before the revolution, the important mining centers in Bolivia are witness to the militant strikes and struggles by the miners for their basic rights. An important step in the radical evolution of working class movement in Bolivia and among the miners in particular is due to the foundation of

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<sup>43</sup> John Crabtree and Ann Chaplin, *Bolivia: Process of Change*. Zed Books London/New York. 2013.

*Federacion Sinidical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia* (FSTMB)/ Trade Union Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers in 1944. It must be underlined here that it was the mining sector which was the chief source of the revenue for imperial Spain and in many ways, the same along with the vast reserves of hydrocarbons continues to be a resource of national significance for the state even now.

The mining of the important metals like Zinc, Copper, Tin and Silver in Bolivian mines and the revenue generated thereby, has played a crucial role in further strengthening the imperial hold of the Spaniards and has enabled them to maintain their hegemony not only in Latin America but also in the geopolitics of the then Europe of seventeenth and eighteenth century. However, this harnessing of the metal wealth from the Bolivian mines did not of course bring any material benefits to its natives.<sup>44</sup> The opulence of the Imperial Spain from the Bolivian mines was directly proportional to the pauperization of the natives, as many miners were forced to perform free labor (*mita* labor system) in these mines and in the process risked their lives in the extreme working conditions.<sup>45</sup>

Naturally then, it has been primarily the miners in Bolivia who have been very militant and proactive in radical political actions defending their basic rights. These very miners were and continue to be the militant Indians of the bygone imperial era whose legendary intervention was witnessed in the Gas Wars during 2003 in El Alto city in Bolivia. It must be stated here that the indigenous people in Bolivia (who forms the overwhelming numbers of miners as well) have historically revolted against *conquistadores* during the colonial period.<sup>46</sup> Hence, this political sense of them being excluded from their own land and the added severe suppression and exploitation at the hands of their colonial masters was always a dominant undercurrent simmering among the indigenous people.<sup>47</sup> Henceforth, both the peasants and miners have hugely invested in the national revolution of 1952 and made it a massive political success.

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<sup>44</sup> James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins. Rebellion in the Veins: Political Struggle in Bolivia, 1952–1982*,

London: Verso. 1984. Also see Herbert Klein Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2011.

<sup>45</sup> June Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us*, Second Edition, New York: Columbia University Press. 1993. Also for a historical perspective see Herbert Klein, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Sinclair Thomson, *We Alone Will Rule: Native Andean Politics in the Age of Insurgency*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 2002.

<sup>47</sup> In this context the mentioning of Tupac Katari is very relevant who has sieged the La Paz City for months causing one of the greatest insurrections against the imperial empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The agrarian reforms initiated in August 1953 dismantled the system of the privately owned *haciendas* (large landholdings) and steered the rural economy in to a system of what is called *minifundios* (system of small land holdings).<sup>48</sup> The emphasis was always on the identity of *campesino* (peasant) and not that of the indigenous people while most of the campesinos were drawn from the indigenous community. The alignment of the political forces against the ruling elites was mostly drawn on the lines of class politics at the expense of the indigenous identity – an identity which always was passively present among the native *indians*. Xavier Albo on this softening of the indigenous identity on the part of the revolutionary state, succinctly notes that the ‘identity (indigenous) never died, actually’ and that the native identity was always downplayed in the formation of the ‘new and the modern state’. While in reality, the national revolution of 1952 was indeed the resultant effect of the long standing indigenous struggle which were coterminous with the increasingly radicalized class struggle in the post republican Bolivia. However, the political expansion of the latter at the expense of the former could not brought the revolution to its logical course and naturally then met its untimely death due to the growing sharp divisions between workers and the peasants.<sup>49</sup>

Consequently the revolutionary period was brief but it left a long lasting impact on the future politics of Bolivia. One of the important successes of the current social movement led by MAS and beyond is the coming together of *campesinos* and *pueblos originarios* leading to a new and a comprehensive political recognition and the subsequent new political agency of both the groups.<sup>50</sup> The disparaging of the indigenous question, growing social inequalities and the extreme deprivation among the common people, and the status quo on the cultural hegemony of ruling *creole-mestizaje* elites from the colonial era led to the failure of the revolutionary project by the end of 1964 and entered the phase of several military coups for which Bolivia is so very infamous.

By the middle of the 1960s the then state factors have accelerated a very different kind of political exigency in Bolivia by opening a chapter of a prolonged military rule. The

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<sup>48</sup>John Crabtree and Ann Chaplin. 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Jeffery R. Webber, *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggle in Modern Bolivia*. Brill. 2011.

<sup>50</sup>Douglas Hertzler 2005, ‘Campesinos and Originarios! Class and Ethnicity in Rural Movements in the Bolivian Lowlands’, *Journal of Latin-American Anthropology*, 10, 1: 45–71.

Triangular Plan implemented by Paz Estenssoro's government in 1961, led to the massive unrest among the mining workers as it involved huge retrenchment of the workers.<sup>51</sup> The strike enforced by Miners in retaliation to the Triangular Plan led to the major disruption in the core support base of the MNR and the violence thus ensued resulted in an extremely volatile turn in Bolivia's polity. The subsequent unfolding of political events made the ground for General Rene Barrientos's coup in 1964 an invariable eventuality, consequences of which was seen throughout the middle of 1960s till the 1980s, when the country was marred with one after another military coups and the ruling establishment was conspicuous by its closeness to the United States government and followed closely at its heels with close links to the IMF and World Bank economic interests.

Repression of the working classes (miners) and that of the peasants reached to the hilt during the rule of differentiated military junta over a period of time. The growing state repression against any form of resistance led to the massive decline in basic civil liberties and the national economy too took an enormous toll during the reign of the junta in Bolivia. This situation was soon overcome by the swelling popular struggle of the populace against the then regime of Hugo Banzer (1971 – 8) which included both the peasantry and the working classes and thus started the process of restoration of democracy in Bolivia.<sup>52</sup> From Barrientos strategy of making a pact with the peasants<sup>53</sup> in order to keep the radicalized working classes in check to Banzer's brazen pro imperialist regime, the military rule was marked with the total state's control of the domestic economy favoring both local and foreign capitalists and the worsening lives of working classes and the peasants.<sup>54</sup> Naturally then and due to apparent deteriorating political scenario by the end of 1970s, both the peasantry and working classes came together for the restoration of democracy in Bolivia. The democracy in Bolivia then did make a

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<sup>51</sup> Jeffery R. Webber in *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggle in Modern Bolivia*. Brill. 2011. Page 72 – 76.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* Page 78.

<sup>53</sup> Pacto Military-Campesino (PMC) was the pact initiated by General Rene Barrientos in the year 1966 was done in order to consolidate the support base of the regime against the working classes and in order to weaken the left. For more detail analysis, see James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins. Rebellion in the Veins: Political Struggle in Bolivia, 1952–1982*, London: Verso. 1984

<sup>54</sup> James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins. Rebellion in the Veins: Political Struggle in Bolivia, 1952–1982*, London: Verso. 1984 and Jeffery R. Webber in *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggle in Modern Bolivia*. Brill. 2011.

comeback in the 1980s but again the leaders were drawn from the very same ruling classes who had been ruling the nation so far with their own class interests.

Hence the 1980s phase was more like a counter to the politics initiated in Bolivia during the revolution of 1952 and this prepared the ground for the social movements with indigenous centric politics which not only contributed in strengthening the democracy but also became an important catalyst for the wider social change in the Andean society. One of the important political gains of the revolutionary era in Bolivia has been the political consolidation of the miners as a radical class, conscious of its rights and the corresponding wellbeing of the society as a whole. Added to this class consciousness of the miners was their strong attachment with their cultural ethos deeply rooted in the *Aymara-Quechua* indigenous traditions. Such beliefs and the identity so constructed enabled the miners to ‘generate a sense of self that reject(ed) subordination and repression’.<sup>55</sup>

This formation of strong indigenous identity, rising against their subjugation as natives since the colonial period, coupled with their acquired class consciousness in the revolutionary era plays a pivotal role in the making of an indigenous Bolivia in the years to follow. Politics of the social movement as it has unfolded in Bolivia, has certainly led to the reworking of the contours and ideology of the party politics as well. Van Cott describes the emergence of ethnic political parties in Latin America, as not just like any other routine political body engaged in negotiating political power but they constitute social movements as electoral vehicles.<sup>56</sup> The very possibility of such ethnic political parties owes its existence to the emergence of powerful social movements in Bolivia since 1990s. Such movements based primarily on indigenous identity, has put forth a much more inclusive political agenda which is deliberative and participatory in nature and by doing so, they have very much redefined the parameters of democracy.

The period starting from 1990s is important also in the sense, as it marks the unfolding of the neoliberal chapter in Bolivia wherein the state rigorously executed the privatization of natural resources along with the opening of the domestic markets for the big

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<sup>55</sup> Jeffery R. Webber in *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggle in Modern Bolivia*. Brill. 2011. Page 70.

<sup>56</sup> Donna Lee Van Cott, “From Movements to Parties in Latin America”, Cambridge University Press 2005

multinational companies and wider following IMF-World Bank led economic globalization in general. Evidently this process of globalization and privatization unleashed world over, led to a threatening situation for people's livelihood and the resistance to the same in Andean region of Latin America which has then triggered the emergence of vibrant indigenous social movements for the protection of natives territory, cultural identities and the dignity.

The arrival of new economic policies or in short, neoliberalism<sup>57</sup> has led to the rise of an equally pertinent, if not well organized, universal opposition to the same, whereby the social movement's actors have now developed 'transnational activist networks' involved in similar movement elsewhere.<sup>58</sup> Deborah Yashar suggests that neoliberal inspired citizenship-reforms have challenged the local autonomy, hitherto guaranteed to indigenous groups, and has politicized ethnic identity, and catalyzed indigenous movements.<sup>59</sup> The widening social movement net in Bolivia explains the emergence and establishment of indigenous parties competing in the political mainstream of the country, along with the diffusion of erstwhile Leftist activists into the indigenous movements, and the reasons for the indigenous movements to go beyond mere identity based politics.<sup>60</sup> That is to say that the social movements led by the indigenous people in Bolivia has not only brought the native/indigenous culture and identity in to the center of the country's polity, but has redefined the class politics in locating the 'class' in social relationship and in the history of the conflicting claims of differential social class. Through this perspective, the social movements in Bolivia emphasizes both on the centrality of class struggle and the indigenous resistance to their social marginalization.

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<sup>57</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, OUP 2005. Harvey defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade."

<sup>58</sup> Marc Edelman, *Social Movements: Changing Paradigms and Forms of Politics*, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30: 285 – 317.

<sup>59</sup> Yashar, Deborah, "Democracy, Indigenous Movements, and the Post Liberal Challenge in Latin America", *World Politics* 52.1 (1999) 76-104.

<sup>60</sup> On the relationship between identity based politics with regard to caste ties see, Kanchan Chandra, 2004. "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India". New York: Cambridge University Press.

In the light of above understanding, the decline of the organized left and its contribution to the converse rise of the indigenous parties – spearheading the anti-neoliberal resistance – is actually the remodeling of Bolivia’s left politics with indigenous world view at its core. Moving beyond the ‘objective domain’ of class based politics, the bottom line for movements sprang from indigenous soil has been the invocation of issues of social justice and giving fierce resistance to global economic powers through the force of their ‘cultural location’. As a result, we see a culture which is not entirely neutral when it comes to politics and politics too is not completely oblivious to the realm of culture.<sup>61</sup> However, it must be said that this intermingling of culture and politics has its own problematic, especially when politics began proscribing the culture of the majority at the cost of other existing cultural values and their world view. It is through this act of imposing hegemonic cultural values, as we shall see in the next chapter in the case of Brahmanism in India that the cultural hegemony of one group eventually becomes the reason for the total marginalization of numerous communities.

Keeping this perceptive fear of a culture turning in to a sort of hegemonic discourse at the expense of other identities at the margins, indigenous social movement have been quite successful in bringing the native culture and identity in the center of Bolivia’s polity. It has also led to the redefining of the class politics in terms of locating ‘class’ in social relationships and in the history of conflicting claims of different social classes. When seen in this perspective social movements led by the indigenous people in Bolivia are the struggle for the abolition of social classes, for a life of dignity and equality and for social justice with the centrality of class struggle. However, social movement also did get a fillip with the limited constitutional reforms introduced by the neoliberal government in order to initiate the idea of decentralization of the state administration. An inadvertent effect of which has been the rise on the political conscious of the indigenous people who deployed these reforms, albeit limited, to further their already mobilized politics.

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<sup>61</sup> The struggle against neoliberal hegemony from the indigenous cultural location is not understood here in the sense as being defined and explained by postcolonial theory, whereby an authentic cultural east/ south is pitted against the colonial west/ north. I explore this point in more detail in the next chapter.

## Indigenous question and the neoliberal reforms

The arrival of neoliberalism in Bolivia has interestingly been coterminous with the rise of politically resurgent native *indians*. Along with the initiation of neoliberal measures, the process of decentralization of government's work too began with the aim to provide more cushion to the functioning of big the corporates. The constitutional reforms thus initiated besides other legal reforms in this pursuit, though inadvertently, enabled the vast majority of Bolivia's indigenous masses to assert their political identity in the new institutional set up. Social inequalities and poverty coupled with the restructuring of economy in the favor of global private players further led to the formation of indigenous politics, actualization of which was also made possible due the permissiveness of such new institutional mechanisms in the country. What exactly are these 'permissive' mechanisms in Bolivia's polity? Answer to this lies in the history of neoliberal reforms and in the unfolding of subsequent politics in Bolivia since 1990s.

Prior to the beginning of neoliberal era, the stage was set for the ethnicisation of political protests in Bolivia due to the complete neglect of the problems of the indigenous people, emanating from their very being native *indian*. We have discussed how the political development during the post revolution in Bolivia led to a complete disillusionment among the peasants as well as among the sections of working classes who came to see their social and political exclusion rooted primarily in the racially segregated caste society of Bolivia. Other than the agency of disgruntled working class and the campesinos (and not primarily as native *indians*), what acted as a catalyst to the indigenous social movements post 1990s and especially post 2000 was the imposition of the cultural assimilation of the native population in Bolivia in to the *Mestizaje*<sup>62</sup> nation. The problem of cultural *mestizaje* is akin to the project of cultural *Hindutva* back home, fuelled by RashtriyaSwayamSevakSangh<sup>63</sup> (RSS) along with its political front –

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<sup>62</sup> Mestizaje, the official ideology of the MNR government, literally means the mixed population, was introduced along with the universal suffrage, land reforms and education in order to assimilate the indigenous people in to the dominant mestizo-culture at the cost of their own culture and languages. That is not to say that the post revolution MNR government did not have any role in the dismantling of other extremely feudal and oligarchic models of racism in Bolivian society.

<sup>63</sup>RashtriyaSwayamSevakSangh (RSS), is putatively an cultural organization led and formed by the upper castes Brahmins, whose idea of India is based on one religion (Hindusim), one language and one land mass. Needless to say that in this conception of Hindu nation, there is no space for dalits, adivasis, women and

Bhartiya Janta Party<sup>64</sup> (BJP) in India. There are other uncanny similarities to the project *mestizaje* that exists in India too, but more on this in the later pages. However, it must be mentioned here that the notion of cultural *mestizaje* by its very definition is a hegemonic one and negates the very existence of indigenous people of Bolivia.

There is much to the native assertion that has undergone during the years preceding the militant and vibrant social movements in Bolivia and naturally then we must factor in the undercurrents of native protests before we began to understand the similar dynamics against neoliberal onslaught in the contemporary times. If we look from the indigenous perspective, there have been ‘two independence wars’ in Bolivia.<sup>65</sup> The first has been the ‘Indian Uprising’ of 1781 and then we have the independence won by the creoles in 1825. The agrarian reform of 1953 which followed the revolution of 1952 did trigger an agrarian revolution which has awakened the peasantry about its identity and the militant legacy of its revolutionary ancestors, *Túpac Katari*, *Túpac Amaru*, and *Zárate Willka*, enabling Bolivia’s native and poor peoples’ claims to land and dignity.<sup>66</sup>

Approaching the more recent build up to the mobilization of the indigenous people, we find the clearest pronouncement of indigenous emergence and their political assertion began to take shape during the ‘March for Territory and Dignity’ in 1990. The massive mobilization of the indigenous people had an uncanny similarity with that of 1781 siege of La Paz city by *Tupac Katari* and brought an immense influence on both the elites and the indigenous people themselves.<sup>67</sup> The march was successful in its attempt as it was well received by the national and international media. It brought the question of indigenous groups’ territorial rights at the centre stage of national politics. The political

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members of other religion and cultural minorities. These latter community could be part of the Hindu nation by only being subservient to the ‘majority’ Hindu community, who are actually in minority, as upper castes Hindu are in reality a pitiable minority.

<sup>64</sup>Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) is currently the ruling party in India and it completely adhere to the cultural project of RSS. BJP is also seen as the political front for the RSS.

<sup>65</sup>Xavier Albo, *From MNRistas to Kataristas to Katari, in Resistance, Rebellion and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant world. 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.* Edited by Steve J. Stern. The University of Wisconsin Press. 1987.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Albro, “Indigenous in the Plural in Bolivian Oppositional Politics.” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 2005, 24 (4): 433–453. Also see Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson 2007 *Revolutionary Horizons, Past and Present in Bolivian Politics.* London: Verso.

<sup>67</sup>Xavier Albo, ‘And From Kataristas to MNRistas’ in ‘Indigenous Peoples and Democracy in Latin America. Edited by Donna Lee Van Cott.. St. Martin’s Press. New York..

objectives of the indigenous groups were presented as that to defending the environment from hazardous neoliberal policies, and thus protecting the natural resources which belonged to the people in general.<sup>68</sup> This positioning of indigenous rights along with protecting the environment and natural resources enabled the indigenous identity a far weightier moral authority in the changed political dynamics neoliberal loot. And it is in this milieu of growing indigenous assertion for territorial rights and self-respect, combined with the international recognition of the indigenous rights, that neoliberal regime decided to make certain mechanism which would then give vent to the upcoming indigenous political assertion.

These are the permissive mechanisms which accompanied the neoliberal reforms designed in order to assuage and contain the indigenous crave for socio-political change in the first place. However, it is these legislative measures which later turned out to be instrumental in bringing the indigenous group, albeit in a limited way, in to the domain of political system for the first time. The Constitutional Reforms thus initiated in 1994 were the fine blend of ‘pro-indigenous’ and the ‘liberal tenets’ which included *Reforms Educativa*(1994), *Ley de Participacion Popular* (1994), *Ley Instituto Nacional de Reforms Agraria*, INRA (1996) – Bilingual Education Law, Popular participation and the Land Law, respectively. Constitutional Reforms in 1994 has been a watershed year for the indigenous people of Bolivia in many ways. For once these laws brought a major change in terms of the distribution of the political power to the municipal level in Bolivia.

Consequently, the decentralization that followed eventually led to the unprecedented change in the political structure as per as the representation of the indigenous people was concerned. The implementation of Popular Participation Law led to the representation of indigenous actors in municipal elections in a big way making their political presence felt by all and sundry. With the introduction of such decentralization, around three hundred and eleven local municipalities were created which actually incorporated the indigenous communities in the local government in a very big way. At the end of the 1990 the

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<sup>68</sup> Andrew Canessa, ‘Todossomos indigenas: Towards a New Language of National Political Identity’. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 241–263, 2006

percentage of the elected officials in the municipalities was close to 29, a remarkable feat which was a huge investment for the future of indigenous politics.<sup>69</sup>

Van Cott, attributes the success of the ‘ethnic party formation’ to the securing of the constitutional rights accompanied with the neoliberal reforms in the 1990s and as per her, it has added to their performance in the elections, which obviously have been a significant milestone for the future of a more confrontationist politics on the behalf indigenous people in Bolivia.<sup>70</sup> However, the dynamics of the indigenous politics is more than simply be attributed to the constitutional rights provided by the neoliberal governance. While reforms have effectively provided the peasants a constitutional set up to assert themselves prompting MAS to utilize and capitalize on the politics of indigenous people, the path was not accepted analogously among others in the indigenous communities. Felipe Quispe (also known as ‘the *Mallku*), an important *Aymara* leader from the Andean highlands, rejected these reforms as piecemeal doles by the government and took a much more militant path than what MAS adopted in national politics.

Morales, who has been working with the *cocaleros*’ (coca growers’) union was well exposed to the ideas of socialism and Marxism as a political activist and gradually he deployed the imagery of the coca leaf as the symbol of Bolivia’s resistance against the United States hegemonic and all well known unilateral ‘war on drugs’<sup>71</sup>. Morales successfully mobilized the coca growers in the lowlands near La Paz against this imperialist agenda of USA which was an attack on their very livelihood and culture. Later on he worked closely with the social movements formulating the new politics of dignity and justice for the indigenous people in Bolivia. And through this new political firmament augmented by the social movements in Bolivia, we see the push for, on the one hand against neocolonialism where by indigenous people face ever pervasive social

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<sup>69</sup> Xavier Albo (2002) ‘Bolivia: From Indian and Campesino Leaders to Councillors and Parliamentary Deputies’, in *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy*. Edited by R. Sieder. Palgrave: New York, 74–102.

<sup>70</sup> Donna Lee Van Cott, “From Movements to Parties in Latin America”, Cambridge University Press 2005. Page 22.

<sup>71</sup> The growing of coca and its consumption is the part of the Andean culture. The leaves of coca are consumed as in the making of tea, or simply by chewing it. It is popular among the working class, as it provides a mild stimulant and controls hunger.

exclusion and on the other hand making ways for the politics of social justice and restoring the lost dignity to the natives of the country.<sup>72</sup>

While Law of the Popular Participation has certainly extended the representation of the indigenous people in the local body politic, it did not affect the centuries of white and *mestizos* hegemony over the political system. The social inequality and all pervasive language of discrimination was less likely to be changed by the mere concession given by the state, as it rather required a more concerted language of struggle – later organized by MAS. Two important turning point in the history of social movement vis a vis the neoliberal phase must be briefly discussed, whereby first is the Cochabamba Water-War of 2000 and the second, the Gas-War of 2003. During both the struggle for water in the Cochabamba city and for the supply of natural gas in city of El Alto and La Paz – both the natural resources being privatized by then government –, the political temper of the people reflected the growing frustration and anger against the consequences of the government policies accruing to the practiced neoliberalism. The popular discontent against this naked exploitation of the country's natural resources reached its peak by the turn of the century and saw a massive mobilization of people from both the rural and urban sphere. It is in this specific milieu of ever increasing poverty and social inequality further fuelled by the indiscriminate sell out of the Bolivia's natural resources, that has brought the entire country up against the neoliberal state challenging its legitimacy and thus opening a new, albeit, a militant chapter in Bolivian polity.

*La Guerra del Agua* (Cochabamba Water-War) in 2000 challenged the neoliberal state with the strong network and a social base among the people who were asking for the change, social justice and harmonious relationship with nature and a complete elimination of privatization.<sup>73</sup> The selling out of the water to foreign corporations like Bechtel and others, have left people completely off guard and to the mercy of the exorbitant tariff hiked by the same corporations. The protests during the 'water war' saw the upsurge of a multi class alliance of the peasants, students, residents and members of

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<sup>72</sup> Jeffery R. Webber in *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggle in Modern Bolivia*. Brill.2011; Donna Lee Van Cott, "From Movements to Parties in Latin America", Cambridge University Press 2005.

<sup>73</sup>Based on the personal interview with Oscar Olivera, an important leader of the protests against water privatization in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

the working classes coming together on the street and subsequently pitched battle was fought between them and the state for their rights to have their own water. The militant protests thus ensued forced the main corporation, Bechtel to back off and leave the ground to the people's demand of constituting public waters work system in its stead.<sup>74</sup> The message that went out was clear that people do not want the government to sell out the natural resources of the country like mines, water and natural gasses, as shown, few years later in the Gas-War in El Alto and La Paz. The commodification of water which happen to be the most essential of the public goods and selling out the same to the MNCs at the expense of its domestic usage, illustrates the existence of imperialism through neoliberalism – what David Harvey would call ‘the accumulation through dispossession’ of the people.<sup>75</sup>

The Water-War was followed by the Gas-War of 2003 in the *altiplano* region of El Alto and La Paz. The massive demonstration which ensued against the sellout of the country's natural gas reserves to be exported to United States through pipe line via ports of Chile have shaken the Lozada government from top to bottom. The uprising against privatization of the natural reserves of the hydrocarbons was the culmination of the chain of events that began when the state oil company, *Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales de Bolivia* (YPFB) was privatized in 1996. The government buckled under people's organized force protesting on the streets for six weeks and the President eventually resigned, eventually making the way for the fresh elections in 2005.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the overtly indigenous nomenclature and mobilization of the social movements, the demands it made to the state were mostly within the domain of the citizens' rights. The language deployed by the indigenous people did invoke the symbols of ethnic dimension but it was an inclusive language making claims on the behalf Bolivian people who asserted their ownership on the country's natural resources. They saw their respective ruling dispensation from 1985 onwards as a class who, as rightly noted by

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<sup>74</sup> Nancy Postero ‘The Struggle to Create a Radical Democracy in Bolivia, Latin American Research Review. Special Edition: Actually Existing Democracies.

<sup>75</sup> David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*. Oxford University Press. 2003.

<sup>76</sup> Nancy Postero ‘The Struggle to Create a Radical Democracy in Bolivia, Latin American Research Review. Special Edition: Actually Existing Democracies; Jeffery R. Webber in *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggle in Modern Bolivia*. Brill. 2011; See also, Benjamin Dangl, *The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia*. AK Press. 2007.

Silvia Rivera, ‘felt itself the owner of a country it despised’.<sup>77</sup>The invocation of *indigenismo* through the social movements was more to make people aware about whom the country belong to and in order to save the country and *panchamama* (Mother Earth), the people must come together against the neoliberal government and create a much more inclusive nation. The making of such nation will then involve in rethinking and reimagining the republic in the light of the indigenous values cultivated in postcolonial period through the insurrectionary politics of the indigenous people themselves.

### **Social Movements in India and the Dalit Question**

The ‘Indian ideology’<sup>78</sup> behind the build up to the independence from the British Raj in 1947 and till the subsequent founding of the new republic in 1952 has been that of a particular variance of nationalism as defined by the upper castes in India. In short, this variant of nationalism and the accepted norms of the same has been that of an established hegemony of Brahmanism in the country. This seemingly homogenous terminology, i.e. the ‘Indian Ideology’, borrowed from Perry Anderson’s rather ‘infamous’ work of the same name while captures the running undercurrent of a Brahmanical nation on one hand, it also highlights the absence of differentiated voices of India’s multitudes in the making of such an ‘ideology’. Although, to an outsider the primary contradiction of the politics in India could be summed up as that of religiosity which indeed is in the bones of its populace, the obvious contradiction and the primary one at that, remains to be that of caste, which under the banner of India’s struggle for independence, consistently determines the functioning of the dominant discourse through the hegemonic discourse of Brahmanism.

On studying social movements in India, we must then be cautious of the fact that the Brahmanism as an ideology not only is aggressively pursued by the Hindu right wing political forces manifested in RSS and BJP and their sister organizations, but it is an unchallenged discourse which still have acceptance among the wider community in the country. Hence, it is only natural then, that among the various social movements

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<sup>77</sup> Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *The Roots of the Rebellion: Reclaiming the Nation*, in *Dispatches from Latin America – Experiments Against Neoliberalism*. Edited by TeoBallve and Vijay Prashad. Page 173 -182.

<sup>78</sup> Perry Anderson, *Indian Ideology*. Three Essays Collective. 2012.

unfolded in India – namely peasants struggle, labour movement, students’ movement, women’s movement – it is only the anti-caste struggles broadly understood as dalit movement for the dignity and self-respect for dalits which could be studied in comparison with that of the indigenous struggles in Bolivia. For its part, Latin America got liberated from the Spanish imperial rule some two hundred years before India could even see Gandhi and Ambedkar coming to its political horizon – both with their own distinct politics of course. While Gandhi was conspicuous in employing innovating political concepts like *Ahinsa* (nonviolence), *Satyagraha* (protest as seeking truth), *Swarajya*(self-rule); Ambedkar devoted his intellectual and political energy in organizing untouchables in their struggles for basic human rights along with taking recourse to the legal and constitutional battle for their rights both before and after the British Raj. The expanse of the diminishing and not so diminishing colonial vestiges in Bolivia had more time to evolve itself as compared to India, where democracy is barely 70 years old at the time of writing. The comparative indicators of indigenous and dalit struggles despite the time lag in their respective inception and evolution remains to be that of constitutional in nature. Both the movements have adopted constitutional democracy focusing on their long neglected political representation and justice for equality.

Dalit movement as conceptualized by Ambedkar and rooted in the legacy of Phule and the larger non-Brahmin movement in India embrace and advocate both the reformative and revolutionary features of social movements. Hence, one can comprehend the ample shreds of ‘indigenous radicalism’ infused with the notion of Phule’s *shudraatishudra* (Dalits and Backward classes) combined with the constitutional principles of republican politics as the foundation features of the movement.<sup>79</sup> While Gandhi professed the practice of untouchability by the caste Hindus as deep moral problem, he never considered the Hindu caste system – which triggers the entire gamut of social exclusion – as something to be challenged. Rather, he continued to have faith in the perfect arrangement of social hierarchy based on caste. Nehru on the other hand focused solely on the question of poverty and push toward a modern industrial state along with the shaping of a secular politics which interestingly remain to be caste neutral.

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<sup>79</sup> Gail Omvedt Ambedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in India in Social Movements and the State, edited by Ghanshyam Shah. Sage publications 2002. Page 295.

Seeing issues of political importance with caste blindness is an idea which remains very close to the communist movement in the country as well, where it was held that once the modernization and industrialization of state begins, the 'pre-modern categories' like caste which is seen as a relic of past will be inconsequential to Indian politics. It was only Ambedkar then, who saw things completely different from the dominant national discourse on Indian politics. For him, the economic deprivation of Indian masses was umbilically tied to the distinct social system in India, marred by the caste hierarchy, and designed to benefit the upper castes. For Ambedkar, economic growth was naturally contingent upon the addressing the pervasive structural inequalities in the society which eventually determines people's socioeconomic status in India, in the first place.<sup>80</sup> This differential focus on alleviating the acute deprivation among the masses of India through varying political perspectives has also been mirrored in the studies on the social movements in India. Let's briefly discuss some of the important works from the social movement's studies done in the country.

M.S.Rao in his discussion of the impact of the social movements in India understands them in to three neat categories as defined by their resultant structural changes in the society at large. These three types of social movement are – reformist, transformative and revolutionary.<sup>81</sup> While avoiding the lengthy and nuance discussion on the reason for such classification, we could consider the aforementioned classification of the social movements and can state that the same corresponds perfectly well with the three chief currents of the political movement in the country, namely Gandhian, Dalit and the Marxist. T.K.Oommen, in agreement with Rao's distinct classification for reasons discussed at length in his work published in two volumes, subscribes to a more normative understanding on the same. He lays down the three characteristics feature which in turn informs the respective ideal movement, namely – ideological, organizational and

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<sup>80</sup>Gopal Guru and AnuradhaChakravarty, 'Who are the country's poor? Social Movement Politics and Dalit Poverty', in *Social Movements In India*, Edited by Raka Ray and Mary FainsodKatzenstein. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. 2005. Page 135 – 160.

<sup>81</sup> T.K. Oommen, *Social Movements I – Issues of Identity*. OUP. 2010. Page 12.

charismatic.<sup>82</sup> Needless to say, that this ideal classification of the movement does find its place in India's political terrain and continues to shape the ongoing political movements.

However, there is a general consensus among the scholars on one foundational understanding of social movement and that is that such movements by and large contribute to the social change and 'aim to bring about an egalitarian and just society'.<sup>83</sup> Now this craving for a just society which could see the erasure of the existing social exclusion is the dream dalits in India strive for. Infact formation of such an egalitarian political society is one of the central objectives of the dalit movement. Dalit movement has been the studied by various sociologists, political scientist, and other scholars of social movement in India and concepts like 'social mobility', 'reference group', 'relative deprivation' has been and remain to be dominant in the writing of these scholars, prominent names among them includes Barbara Joshi, Harold Issac, Owen Lynch, James Silverberg, Sachidanand, Anil Bhatt, Singer and Cohen, Nanduram and Patwardhan.<sup>84</sup>

However, there is certainly much more to the study of social movement in India, in which an attempt must be made to look in to the concrete material and social condition which triggers the more contemporary identity based movements among the dalits, *adivasis*, religious minorities and women along with the political struggles of sexual minorities. It is in this backdrop of many struggling political voices that we must then focus our enquiry to the land of this complex social conundrum, in order to grapple with the issues of caste, linguistic, religious, regional, and cultural and other ethnic identities and its corresponding material problems. In contemporary times and particularly in the global context of renewed resistance and protest by people against rising socioeconomic inequalities and for democracy, it is all the more important to keep our ears to the ground for such socioeconomic determinants asserting themselves in new social movements.

Such movements or the social movements thus formed forges a collective identity of the people, and translate itself in to a political force that influences the politics of its time and

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. Page 13

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Gopal Guru in Dalit Movement in Mainstream Sociology, Dalit Movement today, ed. Sandeep Pendse. Vikas Adhyayan Kendra Bombay, 1994.

also get influenced in turn nonetheless. And it is this 'collectivity' of the people, where they come together wielding common identities with common objectives which forms the 'social' aspect of social movement which has been at the heart of the scholars of social movement world over, where identity not merely plays an important part in mobilizing peoples' support but it also shapes up the nature of the corresponding class politics.<sup>85</sup> Social movements based on identity catapults the new questions in the political arena which has been neglected and been set aside by the 'superstructure' bracket so far. Social movements driven primarily by identity and which are not necessarily averse to class politics, in this researchers' opinion, has not only been able to successfully change the contours of class politics but has also been able to bring in the progressive change in terms of democratizing the democracy a further notch up. And the movement launched by dalits is one such movement, which on the one hand articulate and asserts its aspirations and demands from their lived experience; while on the other the movements' core philosophy enables them to make bridges with other groups who have been facing similar discrimination and social exclusion historically, in India or elsewhere.

The deep seated social ties of archaic and pernicious cast system in India are so profound and pervasive, that even after almost close to 70 years of India's independence and 64 years of the enactment of the constitutional safeguards for dalits, the change in their socio-economic status is paltry. Despite all the changes that took place in the field of industrial and agricultural economy and government run public sector at large and some good impact of the policies of constitutionally guaranteed affirmative action, the Brahmanical hegemony in terms of caste hierarchy remains completely intact and get itself further entrenched as class hierarchies as well.<sup>86</sup> Thereby the transition from 'caste' to 'class' stills remains a problematic and an unfinished socio- political and economic feat. Ambedkar has underlined this overlapping process of Caste and Class in the Indian society. To quote him,

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<sup>85</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movement, Collective action and Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

<sup>86</sup> Peter Robb Edited *Dalit Movements And Meaning Of Labor In India*, Oxford University Press, 1993. pg 67.

*“..The caste system is not merely a division of labourers which is quite different from division of labour – it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other. In no other country is the division of labour accompanied by this gradation of labourers..This division of labour is not spontaneous; it is not based on natural aptitudes. Social and individual efficiency requires us to develop the capacity of an individual to the point of competency to choose and to make his own career. This principle is violated in the caste system in so far as it involves an attempt to appoint tasks to individuals in advance, selected not on the basis of trained original capacities, but on that of the social status of the parents.”<sup>87</sup>*

Hence, one can understand how deep is the economic malaise set in India and which is further bolstered by the politics of vested interests operating and benefitting the all-pervasive caste hierarchy. Thus at a very fundamental level, the caste system in India with all its manifestations undercut the very logic of ‘economic efficiency’ – almost a euphoria in contemporary times – of the Indian society. The caste system has produced the worst possible consequences for dalits and other weaker sections with in it, as they were divested of all possible resources of economic mobility. Further analysis of the caste system from the view point of the income distribution<sup>88</sup> indicates that since the caste operates on the governing principle of inequality, it is bound to produce corresponding economic disparities of significant magnitude. However, it is also obvious that all castes do not suffer equally from the iniquitous functioning of the caste system.

Social movements demanding equality and social acceptability as equal have been there in the recent and distant past of India. Some such movements have been recorded as the historical legacy of India’s dissent culture e.g. Struggle of 1857, Bengal Renaissance, India’s struggle for Independence etc., which are all undoubtedly the events of major historical and political importance. On the other hand, certain other movements of protests have been denied the very existence of their being called as movement, let alone their being regarded as protest. The very inception and evolution of Dalit movement being one such, less acknowledged a movement is an apt occurrence to consider here.

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<sup>87</sup> BAWS, Higher Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Volume I – 1979.

<sup>88</sup> S.k. Thorat, Marginalized Groups and the Common Minimum Programme, Social Scientist 2004

The complex sociological process behind the inception of dalit movement must be in turn studied in the ancient, albeit historical legacy of the movements of protest and change by the *Charvaka*, *Siddh* and the *Nath* traditions, *bhakti* movement in recent history and the anti- caste movements rooted in the teachings and actions of JyotibaPhule, Periyar and Ambedkar. All such social movements which had the common current of anti-caste struggles to it, can be categorized and explained as the one which were in constant state of struggle for their acceptance as the movement in the first place.

The fact that certain movements of social and political importance are being historically acknowledged and narrated by the historians and while some others not – which is not something under probe here, for the obvious reasons – but is something that must be said nonetheless. Because it is by saying and highlighting the obvious again and again, can one see the complex ways of the functioning of the hegemony, which in case of India is all entrenched Brahmanism.

In sum, the space for protest and dissent was not something naturally available to the leaders of the social movements of the oppressed people. Rather, such space was achieved through the course of long and consistent struggle which ultimately has givenbirth to an assertive and politically conscious dalits in contemporary times. This history of such constant confrontation on the part of the protagonists of the anti- caste movement, underlines the evolution of dalit's political agency. With such deep evolutionary roots of unflinching progressive ethos, dalit movement in the last 150 years has strived to secure a respectable humane existence for the erstwhile untouchables and the other weaker and marginalized sections in an essentially caste- ridden Indian society. The movement has been nurtured and developed by the tireless leadership of luminaries like Gopal Baba Walangkar, Sahuji Maharaj, Swami Achutanand, Narayan Guru and Periyar Ramaswami Naikar. It later got its theoretical and philosophical foundation under the indomitable leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the relentless struggles launched by him against Brahmanism and Capitalism as the two prime enemies of oppressed classes.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India*. Sage Publications 1994. Page 223 – 259. Also see Ambedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in

Eleanor Zelliot in her work *Ambedkar's World: The making of Babasaheb and the Dalit movement*, writes about four main currents of Maharashtra history which made a huge impact on the sociopolitical advancement among the *Mahars* – an untouchable community from Maharashtra. Among these four currents, the British Rule (the other three being the *Bhakti* cult, the *Maratha* expansion and the Non - Brahman movement)<sup>90</sup> can be said to bring the maximum change in the social and political status of dalits in India. The other three current also has equally an important role to play in their political advancement which enabled them to make sense of their own community. The *bhakti* movement for one draws its legacy from the older social and religious traditions working against Brahmanical hegemony. With their almost four centuries or more such period of presence, the bhakti cult is very much part of the language, culture and politics among the lower castes.<sup>91</sup>The Bhakti movement and many such assorted social movements like *Adi- Dharam* in Punjab, *Adi- Hindu* in Uttar Pradesh, *Adi- Andhra*, and *Adi- Karnataka* – all claiming to be original inhabitants, worked mainly within the four walls of Hinduism. In north India such movements could not succeed because they were interested in some 'positional changes' in the same Hindu system dominated by Brahmanism and not for any larger structural changes in terms of overturning the Brahmanical edifice of the Hindu religion.

The above mentioned currents are reflective of such claims made by *Mahars* as the 'the claim of being Pre- Aryan' who have now become lowly untouchables suppressed by their conquerors – the *Aryans*. In the similar vein, there are 'claim of (belonging) to *Kshatriya* status – *Kshatriya* being a warrior caste in the Hindu Caste system – for the lowly untouchables in the present; and the claim to be 'of religious worth' in *Bhakti* movement of the 14th and 15th century.<sup>92</sup> The basic thrust of such movements through

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India by Gail Omvedt in *Social Movements and the State*, edited by Ghanshyam Shah. Sage publications 2002. Page 293 – 309.

<sup>90</sup> Eleanor Zelliot's *Ambedkar's World: The making of Babasaheb and the Dalit movement* (2013). Pg 24.

<sup>91</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer's *Religion as Social Vision: The Movement against Untouchability in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Punjab*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press. 1982.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* pg 44. However, it must be underlined here that Ambedkar very conclusively rejected all such claims of seeking certain glories that are embedded in past histories. Ambedkar's project has singularly remained to be that of a modern project of defining a new and inclusive India and the meaning that he extended to community and religion, must also be seen within this overarching frame of modern ethos of his politics.

the invoking of the 'glorious past' of untouchables was mainly reformist in nature and they deeply believed in spiritual conformity at par with the upper castes. As long as dalits could assert differently but religiously they were not in confrontation with the Brahmanism, but rather they unwillingly operated within the four walls of the same.

As a consequence, gradually, this particular social movement of untouchables took the form of religious revivalism and apparently remains confined to the arena of social reforms, and their successes to infuse an anti-caste thrust among the downtrodden of the society have rather been quite limited. Such movements could not succeed because they were interested in some 'positional changes' within the same Hindu system – the very system which attributes a socially inferior status to untouchables in the caste order and hence can never and has not yet treated them as equals.

In Maharashtra, a province in India, Jyotiba Phule (1827- 1890) and Savitribai Phule (1831- 1897), played a pioneering role in awakening the lower classes and other Non-Brahman castes in bringing them into the anti-caste movement with the idea of justice and fairness, of equality between man and woman being at the core of their politics. Phule through *Satya Shodhak Samaj* – an organization he founded in 1875 – strived to organize all the exploited and marginalized sections of the Hindu caste system who were by and large *Shudras* (non-brahmin) and *Ati-Shudras* (dalits) in a collective class of *Shudraatishudra*. He argued and compared their subordination with that of the native Indians in America and to the black people.<sup>93</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, maintains that Jyotiba Phule was one such leader from the ranks of the lower castes who steered his politics to avoid 'the traps of Sanskritisation by undoing the low caste with an alternative value system. For the first time... they were presented as 'ethnic groups' which had inherited the legacy of an antiquarian golden age and whose culture was therefore distinct from that of the wider Hindu society..<sup>94</sup> Phule today is regarded as a founding figure of Maharashtra not only by those who are consistently fighting caste but also by others, among whom farmers, women and rural-based environmental movements are

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<sup>93</sup>Gail Omvedt, *Dalit Visions*, Orient Longman 2006, pg 61.

<sup>94</sup>Christophe Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, published by Permanent Black 2003, pg.155.

conspicuous with their presence. In effect, Phule was India's first radical who articulated the political viewpoints of the downtrodden.

In its political journey, the movement for the liberation of untouchables acquired a definite political coherency under the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Being an eminent economist, a lawyer of no small repute and a profound intellectual, Ambedkar played an immensely important role in framing the grounding principles of dalit politics. In the course of his struggle for the emancipation of untouchables lives, Ambedkar apart from making innumerable interventions in national polity has also addressed one important question i.e. the 'ought' question of dalit politics. Through his numerous newsletters which he brought out, he unambiguously highlighted the plight and the urgency of the struggles of workers and peasants against 'capitalists and landlords' as well as the fights of Dalits against caste atrocities.

*'There are in my view two enemies which the workers of this country have to deal with. The two enemies are Brahmanism and Capitalism.... By Brahmanism I do not mean the power, privileges and interests of the Brahmins as a community. By Brahmanism I mean the negation of the spirit of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. In that sense, it is rampant in all classes and is not confined to the Brahmins alone though they have been the originators of it (reported in The Times of India, 14 February 1938).'*<sup>95</sup>

For Ambedkar, to have an organized 'united working- class', eradication of caste and Untouchability was an indispensable precondition. This tryst of Ambedkar with Marxism and the Socialist politics in his own sociopolitical time and context, eventually reflected in the writing of 'States and Minorities', a text proposed to be a draft section of the Constitution. Here, Ambedkar gave a severe critique of capitalism and called for the nationalization of land and basic industries, explicitly calling this as 'state socialism'.<sup>96</sup> This contradiction was well recognized and acknowledged by Ambedkar as

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<sup>95</sup> Ambedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in India by Gail Omvedt in Social Movements and the State, edited by Ghanshyam Shah. Sage publications 2002. Page 293 – 309.

<sup>96</sup> State and Minorities: What are their rights and how to secure them in the Constitution of Free India – Memorandum on the Safeguards for the Scheduled Castes submitted on behalf of All India Scheduled Caste Federation, published in 1947.

he suggested that the ‘immediate problems of landless labourers must be solved by taking over the uncultivated lands for cultivation and giving them to the landless labourers.’<sup>97</sup>

That the landless labour generally belonged to the lowest in the caste hierarchy and acutely suffered from both economic and social oppression is a known fact. Ambedkar was the ‘first legislator in India to introduce a bill for the abolition of the Serfdom of agricultural tenants’<sup>98</sup> Ambedkar suggested and proposed a bill to abolish the *watan*<sup>99</sup> system in Bombay legislative council to amend the Bombay Hereditary Offices Act, 1874, on 19 March 1928.<sup>100</sup> He introduced another bill to abolish the *khoti* system<sup>101</sup> in the Bombay legislative Council on 7 September 1937. This obvious overlap of class and caste, whereby dalit is a poverty stricken individual, remains to be the defining socioeconomic characteristics of the member of lower castes in India. However, the same obvious contradiction has failed to exhibit itself in to the politics of the contemporary dalit movement, where the issues of class has been completely neglected and the caste assertion has been in the fore front – many a times at the cost of economic exclusion of them.

### **Dalit movement and politics**

While engaging with the perpetual problem of landlessness among dalits which reflects on their severe economic deprivation along with the social exclusion they face, Ambedkar was clear in his mind about the nexus between capitalism and Brahmanism in India. He knew how the upper castes adopt to the ways of capitalist economy without shedding their feudal caste interests reminiscent of Brahmanical hegemony. Hence, for

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<sup>97</sup> Ambedkar’s economic thought in W N Kuber: Ambedkar- A Critical Study, Peoples Publishing House 1973.pg.254.

<sup>98</sup> Dhananjay Keer, Ambedkar: Life and Mission, pg.286.

<sup>99</sup> ‘According to the Hereditary Offices Act, the Mahars, the holders of the posts, were required to work all day and night, and in the absence of a Mahar servant, his father or any other member of his family was impressed into the government service. For this hard work they got each a piece of land as watan. The result of the watan was that the Mahars lost self- respect; their ambition and ability were tied down to these trifling menial jobs.’ As quoted in W N Kuber: Ambedkar- A Critical Study, Peoples Publishing House 1973.pg.251.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Under the khoti system the, one of the minor land tenures in the former Bombay Presidency, was the epitome of ‘the exploitation and pauperization of the peasantry’. Unlike the Ryotwari system wherein government collects the revenue directly from the occupant of the land, in the Khoti system government does it by employing the services of Khoti for the purpose of collecting revenue. For details, see *ibid*.

him the struggle for equality was invariably tied up with the concept of fraternity – the very concept which is antithetical to Brahmanism. As there can be no solidarity across the castes, such a possibility exists only within a caste and as long as we do not have fraternal feeling among the citizens it is impossible to achieve equality. This brings us to Ambedkar’s call for the ‘Annihilation of Caste’ and its urgency in the Indian society. Any meaningful democracy and the possibility of active citizenry as rights bearing individual is contingent to the complete annihilation of the graded caste structure in the country. However, such a political approach of waging class struggle in order to overcome caste inequalities is rarity in the dalit movement today. Though, we have seen the nature of the indigenous struggles which remain to be essentially inclusive along with its being fundamentally anti-imperialist, the similar cannot be said about the way dalit politics evolved in India. However, one should be careful here in not mixing the politics and the movements of dalits together, as both have a very distinct nature due to its separate time and space. While dalit movement remains to one all-encompassing stream which includes literature, culture, music, theatre, academia, students, and other numerous voices articulating dalit voices, dalit politics have a very distinctly charted path and which remain confined to the ways to achieve political power within a constitutional frame for dalit emancipation.

Drawing from the rich legacy of the philosophical roots of the movement, dalits today have been generally very assertive and conscious of their self-respect which they were perpetually deprived of.<sup>102</sup> This aspect is further evident from their increased participation in elections where they openly come in support of a dalit political party which to them is their own party – BSP (*Bahujan Samaj Party*). This ‘societal’ mobility of dalits is the direct result of politics propagated by BSP and the ‘political’ awakening thus brought among them. However, today’s dalit - politics which is broadly recognized to be represented by *Bahujan Samaj Party* – has not been very successful in further enriching dalit politics by incorporating numerous other issues which are indispensable for dalits’ socioeconomic empowerment. BSP has been successful in building a ‘political’ dalit identity but an all-out socially mobile dalit community is yet to take

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<sup>102</sup>Vivek Kumar, *India’s Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion and New Horizons*, Gagandeep Publications 2006, pg.193.

shape. Over the years, we see that dalit politics has virtually deviated from its objectivity of liberating oppressed classes from socio- economic inequalities and its leaders are busy in designing the *SarvajanSamaj*.<sup>103</sup>

So now we do not see a neatly organized dalit politics along the rich ideological heritage of its movement. As a consequence to this, there is no visible political struggle on their part against the socio-economic exploitation of dalits. They do not challenge and interrogate anymore, the dominance of upper castes/classes against whom the very idea of dalit ideology and philosophy was conceptualized; let alone any endeavor to provide constructive vision for the empowerment of these socio- economic subordinated castes.

Ironically, BSP, the so-called party of dalits, has virtually no program for these large mass of dalit agricultural laborers and poor peasantry which otherwise is absolutely central for the enrichment and strengthening of their politics. What we have been seeing so far is an alliance – politics based on consensus and compromises and not the ideological thrust of confrontation and opposition. Dalit politics today in general is devoid of or rather has done away with any such concepts such as exploitation, discrimination, domination, equality, and social justice. There is no visible movement at a political level that could mobilize masses in order to liberate them from the yolk of socio- economic disparity and exploitation.<sup>104</sup> There is virtually no continuity of events as per as genesis of dalit sociopolitical philosophy is concerned ; rather it is a disjuncture between what we are witnessing as the politics for dalits today and its empowering political philosophy grounded in the works of Ambedkar and the experiences of Non-Brahmin movement.

However, one must acknowledge that BSP has definitely made a mark in Indian polity from becoming a crucial player in politics in north India which has provided political visibility and assertion to dalits by giving India its first dalit woman chief minister (Ms.

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<sup>103</sup>The SarvajanSamaj ("a society for all") was the political innovation that brought the BSP to power in full majority in Uttar Pradesh assembly Elections, 2007.

<sup>104</sup>Ghanshyam Shah, Politics of Dalit Movement: From Direct Action to Pressure Group?, in PERSPECTIVES/1 At Cross- Roads, DALIT MOVEMENT TODAY, Edited by SandeepPendse, VikasAdhyayan Kendra, Bombay, August 1994.pg 11.Also see, SudhaPai Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh, Sage Publications 2002. And KanwalBharti's Dalit Vimarsh Ki Bhoomika, Itihaas Bodh Prakashan 2002 and Mayawati Aur Dalit Aandolan, Published by Ramnika Foundation 2004.

Mayawati). But when we see the trajectory of BSP, which nonetheless draw legacy from rich history of dalit movement, it has all along been propagating a petty bourgeois utopia. A utopia whereby the members of the lower castes should strive to become independent petty commodity producers, cut off from the larger societal change and radical transformation in socio- economic relations for the betterment of their own lives. Whereby, the dream which is given to the masses of dalits is not one of the struggles against the unequal land relations but to become well educated civil servants. The whole approach of the party as it evident from their ongoing politics is not the one for any larger social change or social transformation but it is to devise ways and tactics to remain within the confines of existing capitalist property relations and to avail to whatever those minimum constitutional incentives available to them. Thus, the main objective of the *Bahujan Samaj Party* remains to carve out a better position for lower castes within the existing structures of society, divided on caste and increasingly divided on class lines.

This whole phenomena depicts the failure of that vision for the entire dalit led anti-caste movement, whose ideological thrust has all along been the Annihilation of the Caste, the determining factor of which lies in *Bahujan Samaj Party's* inability to define a class agenda that no democratic revolution could possibly avoid today. Added to all this is the slow but pernicious effect of neo-liberalism that has ravaged the project of equity in this country. As withdrawal of the state from its welfare role deepens and the vagaries of market throws the multitudes in a life of further economic misery aggravated by the presence of vast social inequalities, the increased distances between the haves and have-nots and lopsided development across federal regions would have their effects on the polity bringing out new variables that could affect party formation, sustenance and fragmentation. How these variables will pan out would require further study.

Today what we have been witnessing is the increasing political visibility of dalits paralleled by increasing pauperization of the same as a class due to the new economic policies adopted by the government. What is more frustrating in this is that despite of this political visibility of dalits, there is no serious intervention on their part as what is their understanding of the process of globalization, liberalization and privatization. How this

aspect of increasing political visibility and increasing socio- economic miseries of dalits goes hand in hand, requires a much more in- depth analysis.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have discussed at length the socio political churning from the second half of the twentieth century both in India and Bolivia. How the evolving politics in their respective location has eventually shaped the trajectory of the dalit and indigenous movement is at the core of this chapter. We have discussed about how the question of dignity, self-respect, social equality and remedies against humiliation at the hands of the dominant classes is at the center of both dalit and indigenous politics. We shall be dealing with their distinct and though very similar world view in another chapter of the thesis, but an attempt here has been made to see the historical necessity of similar methods and language adopted by both, the *pueblos originarios* and dalits. Another significant comparative indicator is that both the movement in their respective geographical location has grown tremendously at the turn of 1990, which also marks the beginning of aggressive neoliberal government in both the countries. Dalit and indigenous movement stand tall today with their members and supporters and sympathizers working in collaboration at international scale today. United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, in 2001 is an important pointer in this direction, especially for highlighting the caste at the global scale.

An attempt has been made in this chapter to understand the historicity of both the movements and the ideological discourse which has prompted their respective politics henceforth. An important factor which binds both the movement together in their very definition is their embrace of modernity as oppose to feudalism and capitalism in general. It is from their conviction for modern notions of politics going back to the ideas generated in European Enlightenment traditions, that dalit and indigenous movement make liberty, equality and fraternity/community the very axis of their social and political struggles. Both the country coming out of the yolk of colonial imperialism has come a long way in their efforts of decolonizing the past.

The centrality of modernity to their political language would be explored in further detail in the next chapter. However, the process of decolonization per se has never been the dominant perspective ever since India had its first independent government in place, perhaps the reason for the same are due to the difference in nature of the colonial past of the two countries – whereby Bolivia remains to be a settler country, while colonialism in India was mostly about the administrative plunder. Despite this, the sections of bourgeoisie in India, which includes both the regional and national elites, have been reluctant to change the state apparatus which till date remains the same as it was in the colonial period, barring certain new institutional and legal changes.

The idea of India that coalesced post-independence was broadly on the idea of nationalism as the ‘derivative of Europe’. However, even this derivative has been cloned in the image of Brahmanism and still continues to absorb the other voices in its own imaginary of ‘Mother India’. The only real challenge to such a strand of rabid upper caste nationalism came from Ambedkar and his philosophy of *Prabuddha Bharat* (enlightened India) brought on the street and in to the national discourse through the working of dalit movement.<sup>105</sup> And it is this idea of India and the subsequent meddling of politics around the same that is been explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>105</sup>Gopal Guru, The Idea of India: ‘Derivative, Desi and Beyond’, September 10, 2011. Vol XLVI. No. 37.

## CHAPTER – III

### Postcolonial World: Native vs. Settlers and Brahman vs. Dalit

*“Socialism (does) ultimately (exist) in the American tradition. Incan civilization was the most advanced primitive communist organization that history has known.. We certainly do not wish socialism in America to be a copy and imitation. It must be a heroic creation. We must give life to an Indo – American socialism reflecting our own reality and in our own language.”*<sup>106</sup>

#### Jose Carlos Mariategui (1894 – 1930)

Nothing can best capture Latin American resistance to colonialism other than the revolutionary ideas of Peruvian socialist Jose Carlos Mariategui (1894 – 1930). It is chiefly to Mariategui's credit that the Socialist-Marxists movement in Latin America carved their own path of anti-imperialist struggles and steered clear from the shadow of Communist International.<sup>107</sup> In one of his important work 'Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality'<sup>108</sup> (1927), Mariategui underlines the urge for emancipatory Marxism and its urgency for the indigenous question in Andean land, reflections of which could be seen in the text quoted above – a call for *indigenismo*<sup>109</sup> movement with socialism at its heart. The fact that there is a native assertion of making sense of their own history in path to installing socialist state of their own understanding is something very remarkable and can be gleaned from the writings of Ambedkar and many such other scholars of the same persuasion in the contemporary India. In order to understand this comparison more concretely, it is important have a basic understanding of the historical location of both dalits and indigenous people.

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<sup>106</sup>Seven interpretive essays on Peruvian reality.University of Texas Press. 1971.Available on <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mariateg/works/1928/>

<sup>107</sup> Robert J.C. Young, Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction. Blackwell Publishers. 2001. Pg – 197 – 201.

<sup>108</sup> <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mariateg/works/7-interpretive-essays/index.htm>

<sup>109</sup> The idea of indigenismo is a historical one and is derived or translated from 'indigenism'. However, there are significant distinctions between the two concepts. While indigenism is more a contemporary sociopolitical development; indigenismo is more 'a twentieth-century intellectual and artistic movement that sought to valorise indigenous culture.' For more detail, see Andrew Canessa, *Todossomosindígenas: Towards a new language of national political identity*. Bulletin of Latin American Research 25.2 (2006): 241-263.

From our discussion on various aspects of social movements and its politics in the previous chapter, it can be assuredly stated that these movements have their distinct journey and at no point can they be summarized as something completely isolated from the post-colonial theoretical currents. These movements, and particularly indigenous social movements in Bolivia, did invoke the specificity of their cultural location, their centuries old colonial subjugation and the political and economic hegemony of the western powers. However, the political trajectory which both these movements kept up to; the language which they adopted in the course of their struggles, and most importantly the discourse of Rights put forth by them cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be described as a postcolonial construct. As opposed to the available framework of postcolonial literature, the political movement led by both dalits and indigenous people began to develop in their course of struggle a profound critique of the ongoing 'national reconstruction' posed as Hindu (Brahmin) nation and that of *Mestizaje* nation. Both the political movement led has deployed the language of modernity towards their specific sociopolitical goals – the very language which remains to be the antithesis of the postcolonial project and by that very virtue against the hegemonic *mestizaje* and the Brahmanical project in their respective geography.

In India, the question of caste which was long latent in the 'national struggle for independence' against British colonialism came up most vociferously after decolonization, while the native identity in Bolivia manifested itself as radical indigenous movement after almost more than 150 years of its independence from Spanish Colonialism. What brings these two exclusive movements from two different continents together is the sense of their political exclusion, economic exploitation, and social degradation in their respective society. The combined history of humiliation and discrimination met both to dalits and the indigenous people, informs the underpinnings and the core politics of their respective sociopolitical movement. The movement thus unleashed on their part, was and continues to be aimed at achieving a society of socioeconomic equals, who could exercise his political rights against the dominant classes in order to have any meaningful democracy and decent society to live with.

The birth of both the dalit movement and the indigenous mobilization, in effect, is the very negation of the dominance enjoyed by the Whites and the Brahmans in their respective geographical location. This dominance or the hegemony enjoyed by them was not merely confined to economic sphere or remains to be only political in nature, but it emanates from the historical process of dehumanizing both dalits and indigenous people of Latin America. If not for their historically wretched status, the modern democratic world may not have come to grapple with the whole question of identity as it does today – both at the level of theory and praxis. In the same vein in order to further strengthen our understanding of dalit and indigenous struggles, they must be located in their respective history and in the context of the arrival of modernity in terms of legal equality and other constitutional safeguards (both in colonial and post-colonial times), which has enabled them to assert themselves furthermore effectively in their sociopolitical location. Be it Bolivia or India, the attainment of the rights guaranteed through the process of forming constituent assembly, and then the new constitution which rejects the ongoing dehumanizing trajectory of social, economic and political exclusion of Dalits and indigenous people – remains the single most important achievement of modernity in the post-colonial times.

It is this dynamics, what we shall make an attempt to understand in the following chapter, that to trace the unfolding of sociocultural and political gains of European enlightenment and its subsequent impact on both the societies during the colonial and post-colonial times. We shall also be delving in to certain postcolonial writings available both from India and Bolivia, pertaining to the above mentioned question at hand and would then try to address the putative tension between ‘modernity’ and the ‘eastern’ specificity.<sup>110</sup> We shall then, as the chapter progresses, see that the notion of modernity, as always considered from a postcolonial perspective, as merely a derivative of European enlightenment neglecting its native historicity, is not tantamount to the famed Colonial cultural supremacy, as the postcolonial theorist would have us understand.

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<sup>110</sup>Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (Navyana Publishing Private Ltd. 2013). For further detail study of the same, see Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993.

The role of enlightenment traditions from Europe in the post-colonial society, especially for the movements for self-respect and dignity of an individual human life, has been enormous and remains to be the project of a separate research altogether. Also, it must be noted here that both India and Bolivia have their own native rich heritage of enlightenment traditions which has been deployed by their respective political movements in the course of their struggles. This is a point on which I shall come back later in the dissertation. For now, an attempt has been made here for the understanding that modern values and concepts or the notions of modernity - drawn from European enlightenment - is all the more relevant today in the struggle for justice and it is certainly not a reflection of western hegemony as the postcolonial scholarship would like us to believe. These notions stands for something very opposite – a normative value to which even the western world today is accused of not providing to its own people – Justice. The west today is as badly marred by the crisis of capitalism in its neoliberal form as is the rest of the world. The struggles to achieve Justice, liberty and equality are as relevant to the northern world as it is for the global south today. We are all tied in the same seamless web of history with the same kind of fissures and exclusions affecting people living on the margins.

However, that is not to say that the West has never had any hegemonic past. But that however, could be separated from the west's drive to capitalism both at the domestic and the international level. There indeed is a long historical account of western hegemony imposed on multitudes of population through colonialism, capitalism and in many ways this hegemony still thrives through the contemporary neoliberal world order. However, this same hegemony operates on the marginalized sections of the people in the western countries in exactly the similar way as it exploits the populace at large in the east. The crisis of European economy and of Greece in particular is apt example to corroborate the same. The people residing in Europe and North America have the same livelihood issues as their counterpart in the Asia, Africa or Latin America. The scale of course is different between the two populace of East and the West, given the history of social welfare measures adopted by the government in Europe for their citizens when they struggled for the same. European citizenry do not by themselves came to realize the welfare state as it

exists today (albeit, that too is receding now), but there have been working class struggles against the state asking for the expansion of their socioeconomic rights.

The point here is that even in the west, the modicum of welfare measures given to members of the working class and the steps taken by the state in the field of education and health is not due to the capitalist charity, but the same welfare measures were the product of long drawn struggles on the behalf of the subaltern classes against the same capitalist state.<sup>111</sup> At the turn of the century, various governments in the Europe and later in the USA were compelled to meet this demand by the struggles waged by the grieving people.<sup>112</sup> And it is this site of the struggle which binds all of the excluded lot world over – of all hue and color – together and it is this aspect of shared history common to the people globally, that informs their politics and actions both temporally and spatially. And it to this effect, that we must situate both Bolivia and India in their colonial history and the subsequent national churning alongside, in order to grasp the dynamism that indigenous and dalit politics have brought to their respective polity.

### **Postcolonial World: Bolivia & India**

Postcolonial theory or postcolonialism forms a vast array of literature today. As is evident from the very nomenclature, it is claimed to be the idea of and from the societies which were erstwhile European colonies. In other words postcolonial ideas or simply put as postcolonialism, putatively manifest itself in all such writings and protest movements which came about after ‘decolonization’ in the erstwhile colonies of the European powers. With its grounding in anti-colonialism, postcolonialism presents itself as sort of transnational forum<sup>113</sup> - of ideas and movement both – where the marginalized voices can make a common socio-political cause. However, just as any domain of thought has multiple sides and interpretation to it, similar is the case with the scholarly work on postcolonialism. There is ample scholarly work in the global south today that is being categorized under postcolonial theories. While most such theoretical work carries the

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<sup>111</sup> Vivek Chibber, Chapter Four: Dominance without Hegemony – The Argument in Context, in *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (Navyana Publishing Private Ltd. 2013). Pg 80 – 90.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Robert J.C. Young, Ideologies of the postcolonial, in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. Volume 1, Issue 1, 1998.

undercurrent of anti-colonial thrust, several other such literatures have indeed taken a very firm cultural bending.<sup>114</sup> But that is not the singularity with which we are at concern here, rather what I intend to explore in the light of the two social movements in this study is that, that how superficially postcolonial framework engages with the history and its grandstanding on ‘the third world’ politics, which denies any internal differentiation within the third world politics and project it as a single cohesive unit oppose to the Colonial west.<sup>115</sup>

However, I do not in any whichever way intend to debunk the project of postcolonialism altogether. Despite of its many a time arcane and esoteric interpretations, postcolonialism, in its transnational and transcontinental avatar opens up the window to explore new possibilities in the realm of social and political. Robert Young in his exhaustive work, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, draws heavily from the Tricontinental Conference happened in 1966 in Havana. This tricontinentalism ‘unlike colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism is essentially as Robert explains is ‘committed to the political ideals of transnational social justice’.<sup>116</sup> He further explains that in such a frame postcolonialism not only attacks the ‘hegemonic economic imperialism’ but at the same time it engages with ‘positive political positions and new forms of political identity’ similar to that of Marxism and Feminism.<sup>117</sup> This ‘tricontinental’ aspect certainly gives postcolonialism its ‘universality’ defined not by any eastern theoretical vantage but from it’s being rooted in peoples movement, particularly to the people who are committed to both – the anti-imperialist sentiment of the colonial past, as well as to the cherished ‘modern’ ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity. And it is this universality which the movement led by both the indigenous people of Bolivia and Dalits in India, that binds them together in their political world view. Dalits and indigenous peoples’ engagement with the legal and political reforms of the post-colonial state actually embodies this sentiment most aptly. It is in this socio-

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<sup>114</sup> For better understanding on the literary and cultural front, see Aijaz Ahmad, *In theory: Classes, Nations, Literature*. (OUP 1992).

<sup>115</sup> This point of existing different political trajectories within the third world has been discussed at length by Aijaz Ahmad, *In theory: Classes, Nations, Literature*. Chapter 8, *Three World Theory: End of Debate* (OUP 1992). Pg 287 – 318.

<sup>116</sup> Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2001. Pg 58.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*.

political milieu that we must then situate Bolivian and Indian postcolonial churning in a comparative perspective.

Going by the popular notion of postcolonialism, it can be naturally seen and understood that it draws primarily, but not limited to, from the works and deeds of both the anti-colonial national leaders and thinkers simultaneously. Consequently, while we can trace its theoretical underpinnings in the works of Fanon, Sartre, Said and many such other significant contributors to its theoretical forte, we can also see the praxis of the same nature, if not entirely oppose to it, in the actions and writings of the important nation state leaders like Nehru, Nasser, Tito, Ho Chi Minh and numerous others like them. All such leaders of actions, not limited to names mentioned above, have defined their own version of 'decolonization' and never completely gave up on the 'modern project', which is by and large remains to be a Eurocentric thing for the postcolonials and especially to its Indian variant – the Subaltern Studies School. As for the subaltern studies scholars modernity is largely perceived as being tied to the political and intellectual churning of enlightenment traditions of Europe and henceforth is quite a contesting terrain in the post-colony where the presence of the modernity is quite conspicuous by its impact and reach. A scholar of such ilk conceives modernity (which is Eurocentric because of its European enlightenment roots) as something procedural and conceptual both at the same time and that which continues to keep the post-colony in the firm grip of the 'western hegemony'. To put it more precisely in the language of Walter Mignolo, modernity is considered as the 'darker side of the Renaissance' and that darker shade basically refers to the face of colonialism.<sup>118</sup>

The conclusion hence drawn from such borrowed categories (reason, rationality, equality, rights), emanating from modernity on the problems of the east cannot be deployed to firm up 'an understanding of the east' as the same extends the hegemony of the west in post-colonial times and which has a colonial past, where such ideas were imposed by the colonizers.<sup>119</sup> Postcolonials/ Subaltern Studies Scholars then recommends that the east

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<sup>118</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, University of Michigan. 1995.

<sup>119</sup> Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (Navyana Publishing Private Ltd. 2013), pg 17. For further details, see Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative*

which has its own cultural specificity must come out of this colonial hegemony masqueraded as modernity and invent/ retrieve its own categories to understand the Indian historiography and thus create a new albeit authentic theoretical paradigm which can then be deployed to accentuate the authentic east's intervention and to break past the west's hegemony.

The Subaltern Studies' theory which aims to offer and build such an authentic/ 'native' critique of Colonialism/West's hegemony have ofcourse gained a huge currency among the scholars from global south and forms a very influential body of work with its adherents both at home and abroad today.<sup>120</sup>The Subaltern StudiesSchool has been quite a resounding intellectual force in the early 1990s, to the extent,that we also witness a substantial influence of the same on the postcolonial work from Latin America. The influence was quite remarkable and it led to the launch of Latin American chapter of Subaltern Studies Group in the year 1992.<sup>121</sup>In the very opening sentences of the founding statement, the Latin American Subaltern Studies Groupmentions the inspiration to their initiative which they unequivocally owe to the writings of RanajitGuha.<sup>122</sup> Invoking Guha's inaugural article in the subaltern studies series volume I, LASSG underlines its objectives as questioning the 'master paradigm' hitherto employed to understand the colonial and postcolonial societies and which in turn triggers both the 'cultural practices of hegemony' of the elites and manifestation of the same in the available humanities and social sciences texts and discourses.<sup>123</sup> Now what this master paradigm connotes here is clearly something that remains at the heart of Guha's and after him among the key scholars of Subaltern Studies from India. This talked about 'master paradigm' in theirview, is the manifestation of the theories (liberalism with all its variants

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Discourse? Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993. Also from the same author, *The Nation and its Fragments*. Delhi: OUP, 1994; DipeshChakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press.2000.

<sup>120</sup>DipeshChakrabarty, *Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography*, *Nepantla: Views from South* 1:1, Duke University Press 2000.

<sup>121</sup> Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, 'Founding Statement', *boundary 2*, Vol.20, No. 3, *The Postmodern Debate in Latin America* (Autumn 1993), pg110-121. Also see, Ileana Rodriguez edited, *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, Duke University Press, Durham and London. 2001.

<sup>122</sup> 'Founding Statement', *boundary 2*, Vol.20, No. 3, *The Postmodern Debate in Latin America* (Autumn 1993), pg110.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.* pg 111.

along with Marxism) which took root in the west and gave the dominant categories like reason, rights, class, liberty, equality and justice and so on and so forth.

The East then, according to them, not only is incapable of utilizing these 'grand narratives' in order to theorize their own lived experience but is rather overburdened and dominated by the above mentioned categories and in this sense shaped by the discourse solely attributed to the west. The need then, is to break off from this Western hegemonic discourse of theorizing the postcolonial development (otherwise, the East will continue to remain a prisoner of colonial discourse sculpted by the western categories), and steer to build a native theory based on the cultural specificity, abundantly available in the East and which is conspicuous by its absence in the West. And until this is done, the intellectual subjugation of the east will continue at the hands of the 'spiritually impoverished' West.

Further in the founding statement, LASS group whose main emphasis remains to be on retrieving the subaltern in the literary texts and with the same renewed focus they spell out their plan to undertake the new research in the field of social and cultural studies. Before this they trace the changing dimension of the 'subaltern' through three major phases from the 1960s till 1990 which includes Mexican, Cuban and Nicaraguan Revolutions along with the assassination of Che Guevara in Bolivia, the emergence of *Unidad-Popular* (Popular Unity) party of Allende in Chile till the emergence of the telecommunication technology in Latin America.<sup>124</sup> With this informed understanding of sociopolitical changes, mostly at the level of texts, the group then aims itself to problematize the concept of nation, nationalism/nationhood, which remains to be an ideology invented by the 'national bourgeoisie and/or the colonial administration'<sup>125</sup>. As to them the concept of the nationhood is deeply tied up with the creole<sup>126</sup> elites and such an understanding rooted in the ideas of the elites leaves little chance for them to understand and theorize their own 'lived experience'.

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<sup>124</sup>'Founding Statement', boundary 2, Vol.20, No. 3, The Postmodern Debate in Latin America (Autumn 1993).

<sup>125</sup>Ibid – 117.

<sup>126</sup> Creoles or Criollos are white Spaniards settled in the colonies of Spanish Empire.

In their statement they underscored that the existing sociopolitical world articulated by *criollo-mestizo* elite is nothing but the offshoot of the long gone colonialism. Hence in order to have their subaltern agency they must problematize the ideology of 'nationhood' emanating from these elites, who in turn are the representatives of the last vestiges of Colonialism and who continue to dominate mulattos, blacks and the Indians in the nation state, which is otherwise defined and comprised by them in the first place. LASS members are extremely cautious to not to overlook the different kinds of national liberation movements which were popular and have long lasting impact in Latin American history, a point which Aijaz Ahmad also elucidate in his celebrated work, *In theory*.

In the concluding remarks, the statement aims to give shape to the already 'larger emergent field of Latin American Cultural Studies' and taking it further upon themselves to what can be called as a group engaged in studying the texts and retrieving the emergent subaltern agency therein. Besides the members of LASSG other notable scholars of the postcolonial theory are John Beverley and Ileana Rodriguez along with numerous others who may not neatly fit in to postcolonialism but certainly share the cultural and critical perspectives with the same. Gradually a clear picture is emerged in Latin America within the frame of postcolonial theory which is in turn influenced by Subaltern Studies, and which seemingly has its footprints all over on the recent, notwithstanding a particular style of historiographical works from India and Bolivia. As per their understanding the existing modern project – defined and designed by the national elites – is not a robust critique of colonialism or of the colonial modernity, rather it is in fact the extension of same and continue to bind us to the neo-imperial interests of the west.

Reminiscing Ranjit Guha's thoughts during the summit of South Asian Scholars with Latin American Subaltern Studies Group in 1996 Houston, Walter D. Mignolo – an eminent postcolonial scholar from Argentina – says that such dialogue which was taking place as he speaks, could not have happened earlier due to the existing 'historical structure of

modernity/ coloniality and the geopolitics of knowledge'.<sup>127</sup> Mignolo here is clearly underlining the only reference point putatively available to both the scholars, the point that lies in Europe and which has been apparent to them as a pretty formidable intellectual blockage in order to further any such synonymous learning process in the post-colony. According to him the very availability of subaltern discourse enabled now by the dialogue between the scholars from India and Latin America of the same persuasion was so far totally eclipsed by the 'epistemic tradition of western modernity'.<sup>128</sup> However, Subaltern Studies perspective being a major theoretical breakthrough in recent times and hence the efficacy of the aforementioned ongoing dialogue, Mignolo is hopeful for achieving an 'epistemic diversity' through the responses from two 'colonial histories' from India and Latin America.

While defining the subalternity with the coming together of South Asian Subaltern Studies and the Latin American Scholars, Mignolo agrees with Guha and Anibal Quijano a significant Peruvian Sociologist, that it 'is not only a question of social groups being dominated by another social groups, but of subalternity in the global order'.<sup>129</sup> This pedagogical effort for overcoming the historical internal differentiation in a given country by the postcolonial scholars is simply preposterous, and I shall come back to this point a bit later in the chapter on how such an attempt undermines and pushes the 'subaltern' agency further deep in to the theoretical skulduggery in order to fit an already agreed perspective instead of being able to strike any real solidarity of global subalternity, but before that let's briefly consider Walter Mignolo's idea of Latin American postcoloniality.

Drawing from Anibal Quijano, Mignolo argues that while there has indeed been a churning in the west of a certain 'humanistic scholarship for human emancipation', Renaissance or for that matter European Enlightenment traditions remains to have a 'darker side' to themselves.<sup>130</sup> And this darker side, he argues is something which

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<sup>127</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *Coloniality of Power and Subalternity*, in *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, Edited by Ileana Rodriguez. Duke University Press. Durham and London 2001. Pg 425

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid pg 441.

<sup>130</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, University of Michigan. 1995.

coexists with Renaissance like a shadow of its own self - manifested as 'coloniality'. Hence, while modernity can be traced to its European enlightenment lineage, it comes with a darker side to it in terms of Colonialism. In his other work, 'the Idea of Latin America', Mignolo further asserts that modernity and coloniality are not two separate frameworks for pedagogical interests, rather, they are the obverse and reverse side of the same coin – as he underlines that '(one) cannot be modern without being colonial'.<sup>131</sup>The broader assessment which follows from such theoretical underpinnings is that anything which has something to do with modernity is tantamount to being under the colonial influence and clearly, as one can comparatively witness, is a binary brought from Indian the Subaltern scholarship taut court.

Evidently, the Latin American postcolonial voices similar to their subaltern counterparts in India sees, the western world primarily as a Eurocentric one and modernity as a tool or model which further enhances the colonial project in the post-colonies. This skepticism to Modernity for the reason discussed above remains to be the core of postcolonial (specially the subaltern discourse) writings and has certainly attracted vast amount of criticism in their specific spatial setting. It is this skeptical approach painting the west as primarily 'colonial' site which leads to the total confusion of locating the postcolonial, as in some of the key work in this regard has been done in the Universities situated in the 'colonial west'. What follows consequently, is a very convoluted method adopted by postcolonial academics and writers, due to which it becomes very difficult to pin down the theoretical contours of postcolonialism in the increasingly globalized world and that certainly acts as an impediment to understand and actualize any meaningful alliance with the marginalized people who have no other option but to be understood in and reduced to an ostensible cultural origin. An origin, which must be located in the politics of the country and only then one can see the 'politics' of giving primacy to culture over politics which is not only dangerous and leads to supremacy of an majoritarian culture, but is also antithetical to the idea of retrieving a genuine subaltern agency. The logical outcome of an 'authentic east' can only be summarily described in the form of present rejuvenation

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<sup>131</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, Blackwell Manifestos. Wiley, 2005. Pg 6-7. Also see for similar argument for coloniality and modernity going hand in hand, Irene Silverblatt's *Modern Inquisitions: Peru and the Colonial Origins of the Civilized World*, Durham 2004.

of the conservative politics of *Hindutva* in India. It will not be entirely misplaced to a 'subaltern eye' to term this rabid communal politics of the Hindu right as the authentic presentation of east as opposed to the west, while conveniently overlooking the fact that such politics is actually the product of elite-upper caste Brahmanical culture, far removed from any subaltern terrain.

This multiple positioning and choice interpretations resting solely on to the postcolonial scholars' fancy have obviously attracted quite a resounding criticism. Ella Shohat while reflecting on such 'dizzying multiplicities of positionalities' of postcolonial theory reflects on its changing contours, which obviously leads to a lot many schematic confusions along with the theoretical ambiguities. She raises an important point by bringing in the question of the immigrants workers in the West (the Colonial) who are struggling for their very survival in pathetic and dismal life conditions and are waging a hard battle for their very basic and justified rights. Correspondingly the work conditions and the issues of livelihood are not any better, as a matter of fact, in the 'postcolony' either. In such global context where capitalism is operating in nexus with both the colonized and the erstwhile colonizers in their exploitation of the working classes, how far is it appropriate to term the postcolonial a 'universalizingcategory' wherein both the ex-colonizer and the ex-colonized shares the same 'post-colonial epoch'.<sup>132</sup>

This ambiguity is precisely what remains to be the singularly most profound contradiction in the postcolonial theory. Where the 'post' intends to mark 'after' the colonial period and gives a window into all that goes in the now decolonized states, while the theory continues to treat the west as 'colonial' - negating the total impact of capitalism all over the globe including the west. This warped understanding of the working of the capital in the increasingly globalized world, blinds one to not to see that the working classes/ peasant/ unorganized labor class/ and all the other exploited and oppressed identities (particularly dalits and indigenous people) – inhabiting the world of ex-colonizer (Europe/ USA) – are themselves in struggle against the state for the protection of their own rights. Because if the west was a colonizing power over east, it has the same dominance over its own citizens too, instead in reality the working class in

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<sup>132</sup> Ella Shohat, Notes on the 'Post – Colonial', *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), pp. 99 – 113.

the west as well, has struggled for their rights from the state. If the west has something to offer at the level of ideas which has an empowering philosophy, it has certainly brought the same in their erstwhile colonies which triggered the similar movements if not the identical ones in the east.<sup>133</sup>

The point which gets obfuscated in the postcolonial binary of east vs. west is the internal differentiation within the east and west. The total exclusion of the marginalized in the near total cycle of capitalism does not get adequately addressed in the postcolonial scholarship. What doesn't get highlighted is the primordial basis of superiority and inferiority among the people within the east, which continues to be the defining feature of both Bolivian and Indian society with its deep rooted structural discrimination against indigenous people and dalits. The fight against colonialism is of course a central aspect of the history of both the society, but is certainly do not form the nucleus of the history of the politically marginalized and socially excluded in whose lives the internal colonialism acts as the primary contradiction in their struggle for a decent life.

Mary Pratt while commenting on postcolonial obsession with everything Eurocentric further states that 'postcolonial project requires some decolonizing of its own' as what this entire project does at its very best is that it ties up every possible discourse in the post colony to that to Europe and in that sense, it itself becomes a prisoner of Colonialism.<sup>134</sup> She further distinguishes Colonialism into two types, first, the settlers which was deployed in Americas, Australia and South Africa, and second, the Administrative Colonialism, which was in force both in Asia and large parts of Africa. According to her both these distinct forms of colonial system brought two very distinct colonial histories and hence cannot be clubbed together in 'postcolonialism' as such.<sup>135</sup> What became of the settlers (creole elites) economy in America – after the defeat of Colonialism – continued to dominate the native/indigenous population and can be summarized as 'neocolonialism' as opposed to the pervasive colonialism which they had

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<sup>133</sup> The reform movement launched by Raja Rammohun Roy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Mahadev Govind Ranade and numerous other such social reformers in the nineteenth century India is clearly the case in point here, which was triggered by the modern education under the aegis of British Raj.

<sup>134</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *In the Neocolony: Destiny, Destination, and the Traffic in Meaning*, in *Coloniality at Large*, edited by Mabel Morana, Enrique Dussel and Carlos A. Jauregui. Duke University Press. Durham and London 2008. Pg 460.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* pg 462.

suffered right from the fifteenth century. Unlike Latin America India never had Europeans settling in the subcontinent after it became free from colonialism and it can be stated, for the benefit of larger argument, that the newly independent country came to be completely in the hands of the 'natives'. However, barring the *adivasis*<sup>136</sup> of India, no one can actually be termed as the native in constitutional terms. Hence the projected nativity in the post-independence period is not a homogenous category claim to be uniformly present all over the landscape of India. 'Natives' in India are highly differentiated on multiple lines, caste being the chief among them.

Hence, it will be a total folly to assume that there was no internal differentiation among the Indian masses, just as it will be absolutely erroneous to assume that the ruling classes comprising creole elites in Latin America were by and large serving the interests of their white brethren of European ruling classes. As Pratt rightly maintains that there is a 'remarkable disinterest' among the postcolonial scholars to study such convergences of the colonial history especially of Asia and Latin America.<sup>137</sup> The bigger point being, that despite so much of an emphasis given by the postcolonial scholars to ascertain an epistemological break from the 'dominant' theory; their attempt at subsuming these two distinct colonial histories under 'postcolonialism' only indicates the intellectual rush to link up the two accounts for the sake of postcolonial solidarity against the colonial west. While this 'solidarity' continues to enjoy the fable status in postcolonial writings, it nonetheless occludes the specific historical experience of the natives/ indigenous population against the settlers in Bolivia and that of dalits vis a vis Brahmanism in India.

The hold of Brahmanism over the Caste Hindus mind is so very complete that it affects the lives of dalits residing in the countries other than India. In the recently concluded general elections in England for instance, dalit struggles against caste discrimination had such a resounding effect that Caste Hindushave not only compelled the Tories to not toexcept the demands of dalits but they have rather cheered the English conservatives all the way, right from their election campaign to the installation of the same dispensation

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<sup>136</sup> Adivasis are the indigenous people in India comprised of various ethnic groups, officially protected as 'scheduled tribes' under the constitution of India.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

for the sake of their ‘glorious Indic culture’.<sup>138</sup> Yes, the very same culture which is at the heart of postcolonial theory and armed with the authenticity of the subaltern discourse have taken the entire western world to task. Now if they are to understand this phenomena in the postcolonial language, it will sound something like this that that the east has resorted to the support of west in order to defeat the east with in the west. Does that make sense! Of course not and it will never, until the futility of purported east and west cultural distinction gets socially exposed and politically addressed.

The postcolonials in their quest for the distinct Indian culture, considered themselves ‘spiritually superior’ and something which stand diametrically opposed to the west. It will be relevant here to recall Valerian Rodrigues’ rejoinder to Dipesh Chakrabarty’s idea of ‘filth in Indian Bazaar’ – a projection of anti-imperialist sentiments in Chakrabarty’s eye. Let me elaborate a bit upon it by referring to Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Habitations of Modernity*, where he equates the cleanliness, hygiene, and concerns for good health as the colonial project and which has been adopted verbatim by the nationalist too in the postcolonial India. The idea as common as public health and public hygiene – which the upper castes had never have to confront before, as cleaning both the public and the private sphere is the task attributed to the lower castes – has been construed as colonial and must then be rejected. Hence, in the name of anti-imperialism this language of modernist nationalist must be challenged which has already been rejected by the Indian masses who happily live and celebrate dirt and garbage.<sup>139</sup> The problem posed by Chakrabarty is of manifold nature in this essay. For one, he equates the modernity with the bourgeoisie and their ‘concern for cleanliness’ and second and much more problematic is his conceptualization of sphere of inside (home)/outside (bazaar) in India. Chakrabarty conveniently forgets that, ‘bazaar has a natural insurgency towards

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<sup>138</sup> ‘Hindu Organisation in UK under scrutiny for asking Hindus to vote for Conservative party’. Full article here <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/uk/Hindu-organisation-in-UK-under-scrutiny-for-asking-Hindus-to-vote-for-Conservative-party/articleshow/47178419.cms>. Also See, ‘Hindus and Indians put Cameron back into 10 Downing Street’, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/Hindus-and-Indians-put-Cameron-back-into-10-Downing-Street/articleshow/47419494.cms>. For further reporting, see ‘Is it one rule for the Hindus and another for the Muslims?’ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2015/may/15/one-rule-for-hindus-another-for-muslims>

<sup>139</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity – Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*. University of Chicago. 2002. Page 65-79.

equality'.<sup>140</sup> Dalits are always at the margins of these bazaars as they are at the margins of villages in India. They are also the people who are responsible with the cleaning of all the social spaces like the one here mentioned as bazaar. To quote Rodrigues, "*(T)he impurity associated with the bazaar, which marks an occasional visitor, can be washed, both physically and ritually, but those who are part of the dirt have to live with it.*"<sup>141</sup> This obfuscating or rather completely ignoring the problem of caste by discussing the binary of modernity (representing the concern for public hygiene) and the nationalist drive for the same, completely and deliberately overlooks the gains and impact of modernity for the dalit and indigenous movement.

With such an understanding they actually attempts to obliterate their own darker side of pervasive caste inequalities and various other customs and practices which continues to dehumanize dalits, women and other marginalized sections in India. Drawing from Said's *Orientalism* but unlike him, Subaltern Studies invokes this authentic nature of Indian 'culture' without mentioning the internal contradiction there in. For if the same 'Culture' would have been worked upon by them, they would have found Brahmanical values and ideology practiced and propagated in Indian society, and would have then, actually resisted in celebrating the same in the name of the multitudes of India, as they would have us to understand in their wont. Hence, this entire theoretical charade of east vs. west is misguided in the first place and distracts us from the real questions facing the world today. It is completely erroneous to pit the 'cultural' east against the 'modern' west, as the people on both the sides have very much in common as they share the same universal history in their quest for founding a peaceful and just society.

In the similar vein, Chibber correctly defends this universalism and explains the same through his analogy of 'two universalism' where one universe belongs to the maddening drive of Capitalism and can now be traced to global neoliberalism in contemporary times. And the other universe belongs to the world of 'labor' and their 'unceasing struggles'

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<sup>140</sup> Valerian Rodrigues, *Untouchability, Filth, and the Public Domain*, in *Humiliation: Claims and Context*, edited by Gopal Guru. Page 115.

<sup>141</sup> Valerian Rodrigues, *Untouchability, Filth, and the Public Domain*, in *Humiliation: Claims and Context*, edited by Gopal Guru. Page 117.

against the capitalist onslaught.<sup>142</sup> The experiences of Bolivia and India, if not for anything more, shall help us in understanding the mechanism of this ‘twin universe’ in a better and coherent way. Thereby, both countries under study here shall not only be assessed in their shared anti-colonial past but they must also be seen in their quest for modernity which of course has an umbilical cord relationship with the former. This is all the more important given the hegemonic definition of culture and the subsequent domination of the same in postcolonial writings, because, if the politics of culture left in the hands of a postcolonial overdrive and subsequent interpretation, it begins to write a very different history – a history which is certainly not written from below.

### **Native vs. Settlers & Brahman vs. Dalits**

Mahmood Mamdani in his insightful essay<sup>143</sup> exposes the hypocrisy of the most western philosophers, particularly that of Michael Walzer<sup>144</sup>, where they maintain the American society as an ‘immigrant’ society as oppose to that of Europe, which is by and large remain to be a territory of ‘an anciently established majority’. In their drive of defining America as distinctly non feudal as in with no historical record of feudalism in practice, unlike Europe where feudalism thrived, they present an image of America which is not only a historical but is also an outright intellectual falsity but actually underlines the hollowness of the term called American Democracy. With this warped understanding, the American society then becomes an society of people coming from all over the world for work and in that milieu forging a new ‘multicultural nation’ based on equality and the European society came to be a nationalistic one, drawing heavily from its cultural history and remain to be within the framework attributed to Colonial empire. Mamdani, very aptly calls this intellectual bluff and like others sets the record straight by calling

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<sup>142</sup>Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (Navyana Publishing Private Ltd. 2013), pg 208.

<sup>143</sup>Mahmood Mamdani, *Settler Colonialism: Then and Now*. *Critical Inquiry*, Spring 2015. Volume 41, Number 3. Pg. 596 – 614.

<sup>144</sup> Here in this essay Mamdani began with strong critical scrutiny of the previous essay by Walzer (*What it means to Be an American: Essays on American Experience*. New York. 1996) and extend his criticism to other scholars of the same persuasion who hold this partisan view which completely ignores the native Indian question embedded in the American history.

America a society of settlers which has been raised on the ashes of native Indian culture just like many other settler society elsewhere.<sup>145</sup>

This negation of native history and their contribution to formation of modern society is not only rampant but it adds further injury to an ongoing saga of a perpetual insult and humiliation to indigenous people world over. Seen in this light, the native in Bolivia and dalits form a certain sociopolitical axis which influences and shapes their modern political world. A world where fight against social inequality takes the center stage and all that has gone in the name of anti-colonial struggles and national march pasts gets a distinct spin which is not a very well received one – if not completely rejected – among the prevalent understanding of the history on the same.

If we give a cursory look to the history of both dalits and indigenous social movements, it is fair to state that both India and Bolivia share a deep historical tie in the sense of their mutual exploitation and suppression by Spanish and British colonialism, respectively. That both the nation has suffered long at the hand of their colonial masters is now part of a well researched and documented history. It is the resistance to their respective colonialism and the political unfolding of the internal differentiation after the foundation of new republic, which requires a bit of prod. After decolonization, most of the intellectual energies of the Marxist and the nationalists have gone in understanding the complexities of the political economy of the post-colony. In this vein they have not been able to capture what effect colonialism might have brought to the emerging political identities, otherwise misrepresented or totally neglected by the overwhelming presence of nationalist thought.

Mamdani correctly underscores the problem and suggests for exploring in to the relationship between ensuing political identities and colonialism and to what extent did the colonial institution shape the agency of the former.<sup>146</sup> While it is true that in the formation of postcolonial state one cannot overlook the role of the ‘native culture’, it is seldom been rigorously analyzed in the sense that what constitute this very culture and

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<sup>145</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York 2006. Also see, *Peoples' History of America* by Howard Zinn...

<sup>146</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 43, No. 4. (Oct., 2001), pp. 651-664.

how come it is considered as the repository of an entire country, particularly in case of India with the overarching presence of caste as the primary fault line. Caste being a significant social contradiction shows the entrenched hierarchical relations in India and thereby punctures the very argument of the nation possessing a definite culture which in reality, actually gets articulated by Brahmanism and then represent itself as ‘the cultural paradigm’ in India. This very problematic of subsuming the existing cultures and traditions, hitherto marginalized, in to the dominant one representing the entire post-colony, undermines the conflicting world view of the settler’s sociopolitical design in Bolivia on the one hand and the historicity of the resistance against Brahmanism in India on the other.

And as with any socio-political resistance – both dalit and the indigenous movement are protracted ones and contain within themselves the contradictions of their own times which might belie the picture as has been expressed and taught in University campuses but is very much alive in their respective nation’s body politics. That is to say that struggles against colonialism, as what history (and not just the oriental history) preaches us, is actually not as inclusive as it appears to be.

It is the crack between colonialism and nationalism, where we find the marginalized voices, hidden but not silent, enabling the making of the modern nation state. Dalits and indigenous people, both are confined to such orifices of the history, where more often than not, they are shown as mute followers incapable of representing and leading themselves while completely ignoring their crucial historical role in the same. However, the full role and the stakes involve of the indigenous people in their struggle for Bolivia’s ‘decolonization’ are now coming to the fore, propelled obviously by vibrant social movement led by the indigenous people.<sup>147</sup>The similar churning is also noticeable in India due the impact of the dalit movement in country’s polity, may not be at the same scale as of Bolivia though.

As has been mentioned before that there is a gap of an almost 150 years between Bolivia and India’s political independence from their respective colonial masters. However, there

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<sup>147</sup> Linda Farthing, Ben Kohl; June Nash, (make proper reference here)

is little dissimilarity if we study the structural exclusion and marginalization of the natives in Bolivia and the same for the untouchables in India. The indescribable socioeconomic destitution of both the groups have been particularly conspicuous due to poor economy and slower economic growth, which never of course affected the upper strata of both the society, as it owes the same to structurally embedded exploitation of dalits and indigenous people. While Bolivia, since the Spanish conquest in sixteenth century, has been a capitalist – class society wherein indigenous groups have since been exploited, primarily as miner workers<sup>148</sup> – India is besotted with the abject feudalism till its recent dedication to neoliberalism (after a brief spell of a proactive state) in the late 1980s similar to the economic churning in many third world nations including Bolivia. Just as India has its degrading Caste system perpetuating inequality ad infinitum, Bolivia too has the same hierarchical structure imposed by Spanish Colonialism to maintain the ‘racial purity’ between whites and the native Indians. This ‘racially determined Caste system’ has Whites at the top, and then comes the people of mixed European or Indian ancestry called *mestizos* and *mulattos* respectively. And at the bottom most resides the Native Indians and the Black people.<sup>149</sup>

However there has been more research on the question of *casta* in Latin America which brings the ‘racial hierarchy’ more close to home in terms of its being rooted in social hierarchy and should be seen as a ‘social construct’ instead of its being considered racial in its origin.<sup>150</sup> There are ample studies done on the ‘race’ question in Latin America which sees the race and the ethnicity belonging to colonial and pre-colonial times, respectively. That race as a category is something attributed to Spanish colonialism, while ethnic distinction and division were existent in pre-colonial times. In this context, David Cahill in an interesting work contends that it were these ethnic distinctions which acted as the ‘precursor of the caste system’ later established by the Spaniards.<sup>151</sup> He further emphasized that these ethnic differences from pre-colonial Inca times were then

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<sup>148</sup> Herbert S. Klein-A Concise History of Bolivia (Cambridge Concise Histories) -Cambridge University Press (2011).

<sup>149</sup> Rutilio Martinez and VishIyer, Latin America’s Racial Caste System: Salient Marketing Implications. International Business & Economics Research Journal – November 2008, Volume 7, Number 11.

<sup>150</sup> Ruth Hill, Hierarchy, Commerce, and Fraud in Bourbon Spanish America: A Postal Inspector’s Expose. Vanderbilt University Press. Nashville. 2005.

<sup>151</sup> Davis Cahill, Colour by Numbers: Racial and Ethnic Categories in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1532 – 1824. Journal of Latin American Studies, Vol. 26, No. 2. (May, 1994), pp 325 – 346.

‘subsumed’ in to the imported categories of ‘race, class and estate’ to suit the Spanish colonial design.<sup>152</sup> However, not many such ethnic identities collapsed in to this colonial design and are now manifesting themselves in the social movements as *pubelos originarios*. That is not to say that race as a political category is nonexistent, which would be equivalent to saying that caste is no factor to the social and political life in India.

Unlike what the postcolonials would have us believe by pinning the caste system in Latin America to the culture and culture alone, Ruth Hill correctly locate the entire process to the history and unfolding of the same with all its complexities. He underlines the fact that any such texts which authenticate and provide legitimacy to the social hierarchy in the pre-colonial times cannot be factored into an assessment in the modern sense unless it highlights the guiding principle of such hierarchy. For him the foundational features of the social hierarchy in Latin America remains to be not found in genetics or biology or by the similar logic in ‘race’ but like any hierarchy, it was also rooted in a certain defining ‘principle’ – a principle which was continuously negotiated through the ebbs and flow of history all along. As he writes,

*“the principle of that hierarchy (and ) howthey were negotiated in particular, or local, situations by the Crown, church,and individuals who lived that hierarchy as a material reality. Local hierarchies inthe parts of Viceregal Spanish America under examination were constituted fromthe intersecting principles of casta, estado, and limpieza(de sangreandde oficio).Although all of these hierarchical principles had their own discursive realities, none was materially biological or genetic; none was what would become knownin the nineteenth century as race.”*<sup>153</sup>

In his painstaking research, Hill elaborates the race as an attribute of nineteenth century while emphatically refusing any biological and genetic moorings of Latin America’s *castas*. His focus remains to be on locating the caste system through *Casta, Limpieza* (cleanliness or purity of blood or official designation) and *estado* (status) and in rejecting

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ruth Hill, *Hierarchy, Commerce, and Fraud in Bourbon Spanish America: A Postal Inspector’s Expose*. Vanderbilt University Press. Nashville. 2005.Pg 4.

the prevailing discourse which connects the same to the dominant understanding of a racial hierarchy. In doing so, Hill has not only highlighted the unfolding of the complex process of functioning and assigning of caste status in Latin American society, but he has also brought the whole caste question to where it actually belongs – in the socio political domain of the history.

Now let's take a pause here and try to make sense of the implications of Ruth Hill's reasoning, who appreciates and draws from Luis Dumont's work 'Homo Hierarchicus'<sup>154</sup>, and correctly points out the element of the 'principal' in social hierarchy in Latin American history. This principal he traces to the *modo de vivir* (way of life) and connects it to the 'religious purity' as religion was the way of life and was 'embedded in the social hierarchy'.<sup>155</sup> Hill conclusively explains that the race was not out there as already existent entity as many scholars from Latin America understand in modern times. But this happened through a gradual transition through a traditional set up to a modern one which brought the caste hierarchy to the now commonly understood racial hierarchy of today.

Hence Latin American caste system seen as the racial one now is a later edition imposed by the Spaniards in order to maintain their political and cultural superiority in the new world under their imperial tutelage. Lest, we not forget that in Bolivia, when the white settlers took over the rein of power from their colonial Masters and founded the new republic after the very name of their liberator Simon Bolivar, it indeed was the politics of self-determination which compelled the settlers to declare their sovereignty. However, one cannot have an assessment that it brought some parity on the socioeconomic indicators between the natives and the settlers. On the contrary there were hardly any changes from the colonial times which could have said to bring any dent on the caste

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<sup>154</sup>Luis Dumont in his classic work, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implication*. University of Chicago Press.1980, comments upon the organizing principle of Indian Caste system and the hierarchical ideology governing the same. He maintained that caste cannot be understood if divorced from this underlying governing principle which has its root in the religion (Hindu) and religious scriptures in particular. In other words caste doesn't get define in itself but its gets meaning and hierarchical location in relation to the larger ideology behind it which has vested interest in maintaining the social hierarchy by assigning the purity and pollution to the castes in the same set up.

<sup>155</sup>*Ibid.* pg. 202.

system.<sup>156</sup> And the subsequent segregation of Latin American society in general and the that of Bolivia in particular continues to carry this historical hierarchical baggage, where the white settlers (creoles) automatically became dominant in their relationship with the rest of the population in the republic days, leaving the natives as a sociopolitical outcaste. And it is this native/indigenous – the outcaste, who has now returned with full vigor, locating its politics in the history and can be seen asserting its communitarian traditions and working for building a modern nation. Through their social movements, the natives have not only retrieved their native identity but have also redefined the native territory under their own political leadership.

The fact that such racial hierarchy imposed by the caste system has survived in Bolivia even after 190 years of the apparent decolonization has a striking similarity to the functioning of caste system in India today. Caste System in India draws its legitimacy and authority from the religious scriptures and texts of Hinduism. The caste system, or the *Jati Vyavastha*, also known as *Varna Vyavastha* (based on color) thus, comprised of four different classes with *Brahmans* (priestly class) on the top, followed by *Kshatriya* (warrior class), the *Vaishyas* (trading class) with *Shudras* (classes involved in serving the above three classes but unlike dalits are touchable) at the lowest pedestal. This Hindu social system is unique in the sense that these different classes based on inequality takes the priority over any community life in general. In effect the idea of a singular community despite of taking in account the religious diversity in India is a nonexistent. This very hierarchical community divide defined by caste inequality then obviously lead to inequality between individuals too. Dalits of today forms the *panchamvarana* or the fifth class who are considered untouchables and falls outside the caste system. In all their holy texts, Hindu proudly claim this human segregation based on birth as their *Sanathan Dharma*. It is important to mention here certain dictums from *Manusmriti*<sup>157</sup>, which will

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<sup>156</sup> Herbert S. Klein-A Concise History of Bolivia (Cambridge Concise Histories) -Cambridge University Press (2011). For a more detailed analysis read Larson Brooke, Cochabamba 1550-1900: Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia. Duke University Press. 1998. Also Mariategui, Jose Carlos, Seven interpretive essays on Peruvian reality. University of Texas Press. 1971. Available on <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mariategui/works/1928/>

<sup>157</sup> Manusmriti is literally the book by Manu, where Manu is this ancient sage who codified different rules for different castes in the Caste System and punishment for violating the same. These very codes written by

give us an idea about the significance of caste and the role attributed to the lower castes in Hinduism:

“[50] These (castes) should live near mounds, trees, and cremation-grounds, in mountains and in groves, recognizable and making a living by their own innate activities..

[51] But the dwellings of ‘Fierce’ Untouchables and ‘Dog-cookers’ should be outside the village; they must use discarded bowls, and dogs and donkeys should be their wealth.

[52] Their clothing should be the clothes of the dead, and their food should be in broken dishes; their ornaments should be made of black iron, and they should wander constantly....

[54] Their food, dependent upon others, should be given to them in a broken dish, and they should not walk about in villages and cities at night.

[55] They may move about by day to do their work, recognizable by distinctive marks..

[56]..They should execute those condemned to death...and they should take for themselves the clothing, beds, and ornaments of those condemned to death.”<sup>158</sup>

If we follow the above codes from *Manusmiriti*, it is not difficult to surmise the socio political reasons for the historically marginalized status of dalits in the Indian subcontinent. The reason for excluding dalits from all fields of intellectual activity and prohibiting them to enter into the sphere of art and literature have their base in the codified language of *Manusmiriti* and the influence of the same on the Caste Hindu society. Hence, one can glean the very obvious fact that from the aspect of the structural suppression and social exclusion, the caste system in India is not very far from the point of its genesis in Bolivia.

The only difference, and that remains to be a significant one, is the principle of graded inequality, whereby castes are arranged in an order where each caste group are placed

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Manu are the embodiment of the existing Brahmanism in India and still finds acceptability in the Hindu religion.

<sup>158</sup> The laws of Manu, with an introduction and notes; translated by Wendy Doniger with Brian K. Smith, Penguin Classics, 1991; pp-242.

one over other and enjoys a social status greater than the one placed lower to it. Alongside the resembling social hierarchy, the hierarchical principle working behind it and the historical economic and political exclusion of Dalits and indigenous people, there is another most fundamental aspect to both the groups, which brings them a lot more closely as the social movement struggling for equality. And that foundational feature is their mutual history of humiliation met at the hands of the members of the dominant classes/ castes. Even before Dumont, it was the classic and profound work by Ambedkar which thus defined Caste system in India, rooted in religious scriptures of Hinduism.<sup>159</sup> The governing principle or the ideology oiling this social hierarchy was historically laid and worked out to the socioeconomic benefits and political interests of the Brahmans, the very caste situated at the top of the caste hierarchy in India. This very ideology or Brahmanism as it is better known, is at the heart of social differentiation in India and unfortunately becomes the hegemonic force when one began to talk about an authentic culture in a postcolonial India.

If we try to see and analyze an untouchable/ dalit agency in its struggles against British imperialism and as well as against Brahmanism, lot more need to be done in documenting such struggles against the ‘twin enemy’ of the people in India in general and of dalits in particular. While enough has been written which documents dalit’s struggle against Brahmanism, their significant role in anti-colonial movement needs a lot more mention than have been given otherwise. One of the most significant work done on these lines remains to be written by Ambedkar himself. In *The Untouchables and the Pax Britannica*, Ambedkar makes a ruthless scrutiny of such ostensible impact, if any, of British government policies on untouchables lives in the field of ‘Public Service, Education and Social Reform’ and he conclusively shows that there was none.<sup>160</sup> In this work, while Ambedkar on one hand justifiably questions the governing ethos and legitimacy of the British government when it comes to any material elevation in the Untouchable lives, he thoroughly exposes the Upper caste hypocrisy in garnering favors by the Raj and the hegemony of the Brahmans. As being himself well exposed to the

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<sup>159</sup> BAWS, Vol. I. Caste in India. Also should be read ‘Annihilation of Caste’ in the same Volume in order to have an firm understanding on the organizing and functioning of the Caste System in India.

<sup>160</sup>BAWS Vol. XII.Education Department, Government of Maharashtra. 1993.

available oriental writings in his times, Ambedkar employs them to foreground his resounding critique of British colonial history and India's economic exploitation at the hands of imperialists.<sup>161</sup> Lambasting the British Raj for not shouldering the responsibility for the welfare of untouchables and passing the socioeconomic backwardness and the general low status of untouchables, as something internal to Hinduism and hence must be left to addressed by the upper castes themselves, Ambedkar wrote,

*“Leaving the problem to be solved by the quickening of the consciences of the Hindus, the British Government just neglected the Untouchables and believed that as a Government they were not called upon to do anything to help to improve the lot of the Untouchables. How did the British justify this neglect of so helpless and so downtrodden a class of their subjects as the Untouchables? The answer is very clear. They did it by taking the view that the evil of Untouchability was not of their making. They argued that if they did not deal with the evil of untouchability, they are not to be blamed for it because the system (practice of untouchability) did not originate with them...”*<sup>162</sup>

However, despite the outrageous absence of any concrete welfare measure for the betterment of the untouchables on the part of British, Ambedkar nonetheless saw the most significant contribution of the empire in terms of bringing untouchables as the legal equivalent to the Caste Hindus, as he further writes,

*“What good has British conquest done to the Untouchables? In education, nothing; in service, nothing; in status, nothing. There is one thing in which they have gained and that is equality in the eye of the law. There is of course nothing special in it because equality before law is common to all. With all this, the principle of equality before law has been of special benefit to the Untouchables for the simple reason that they never had it before the days of the British. The Law of Manu did not recognize the principle of equality. Inequality was the soul of the Law of Manu. It pervaded all walks of life, all social relationships and all departments of state. It had fouled the air and the Untouchables were simply smothered. The principle of equality before law has served*

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<sup>161</sup>India on the Eve of Crown Government in Babsaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches Volume 12, pg 53 – 72.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid. pg. 139.

*as a great disinfectant. It has cleansed the air and the Untouchable is permitted to breathe the air of freedom. This is a real gain to the Untouchables and having regard to the ancient past it is no small gain.”*<sup>163</sup>

This ‘real gain’ of legal equality as underlined by Ambedkar, remains to be the most important idea which went in to the making of modern day dalit and their anti-caste movement against the deeply entrenched socioeconomic inequalities in India. However, western liberal framework still informs the larger democratic debate and is not something which is undesirable completely, given the complex diversity of India. It must be kept in mind that for dalits, the arrival of the British colonialism was not a defeat, let alone any less subjugation of them (after all how does one suppresses the most suppressed ); it was at best can be described as an opportunity. It was an opportunity which opened up the sphere of education, state employment and for the first time ever, gave them the recognition through political representation in state legislatures, though in a very limited sense.<sup>164</sup>

The caste system has produced the worst possible consequences for dalits and other weaker sections with in it, as they were divested of all possible resources of economic mobility. Further analysis of the caste system from the view point of the income distribution<sup>165</sup> indicates that since the caste operates on the governing principle of inequality, it is bound to produce corresponding economic disparities of significant magnitude. However, it is also obvious that all castes do not suffer equally from the iniquitous functioning of the caste system.

### **Enlightenment and the (unfinished) project of modernity**

Ella Shohat writing on the ‘slippery political significations’ of postcolonial framework underlines that this putative ‘postcolonial epoch’ ‘leaves no space’ for the ‘struggles of

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<sup>163</sup>Ibid. pg 146 -7.

<sup>164</sup> For a detail study of the earlier development of Dalit consciousness and the impact of British Raj, read Eleanor Zelliot’s Ambedkar’s World: The making of Babasaheb and the Dalit movement (2013), From Untouchable to Dalit (1996); Also see Christophe Jaffrelot’s Dr Ambedkar and Untouchability – Analysing and Fighting Caste. (2004).

<sup>165</sup>S.k. Thorat, Marginalized Groups and the Common Minimum Programme, Social Scientist 2004

aboriginals in Australia and indigenous people throughout the Americas'.<sup>166</sup> In the same vein it is very evident that this epoch is unable to locate the struggles and politics of the dalits and other marginalized identities against the upper castes and classes within the post-colony/ India. In its overenthusiasm of clubbing everything emanating from modernity as the humiliating march of the colonial west, postcolonialism overlooks the emancipatory project of the European enlightenment which has been quite successfully deployed both by the indigenous people and dalits in their respective sociopolitical movement. The modern ideals drawing from the legacy of European enlightenment and the subsequent rise of indigenous assertion for the native cultural politics in Bolivia, corresponds fairly well with the Dalit politics of demanding right to equality and an end to caste based discrimination. Both dalit movement and the indigenous social movements besides drawing from the canon of European enlightenment also root their politics in their respective history with a certain communitarian world view.<sup>167</sup>

For instance, dalits' quest for equality, liberty and freedom is central to their politics and their struggles against the dominance of Brahmanism, establishing their own world view of an egalitarian society through the teachings of Buddha are also the crucial components of Dalit movement.<sup>168</sup> Asserting on the historical significance of the anti-caste movement's legacy, the path Dalits chose to follow in their socioeconomic and political struggles remains to be one derived from the legacy of European enlightenment. Both dalit and indigenous people have deployed liberal language of rights, equality, freedom and liberty in their quest for dignity, self-respect and political representation. Both the social movements have in the course of their respective struggles have redefined the available liberal concepts through their lived experience and through their own rich historical past of protests seeking social change. And it is in this constant tension with liberal values shaped through their distinct social movements that we arrive upon a

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<sup>166</sup> Ella Shohat, Notes on the 'Post – Colonial', Social Text 31/32 (1992), pp. 99 – 113.

<sup>167</sup> While the indigenous people invoke their own native gods panchamama (mother earth) and other communitarian concepts in their quest for equality, dalits locate themselves in the Buddhist enlightenment ethics of karuna (compassion), maitreyi (friendship) in order to build on to their modern egalitarian project. This aspect of their communitarian rootedness will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>168</sup> Ambedkar put forth the cultural and religious world view of Dalits in Buddhism. This Buddhism as represented in his classic work 'The Buddha and his Dhamma is the very antithesis of Brahmanical Hinduism and espouses the values of universal brotherhood.

genuine enlightenment, viable both temporally and spatially to their respective cultural location.

Even if we look at the liberal discourse, one can infer that there is this perpetual state of political tension within the liberal philosophy between the two normative concepts, namely, Rights of an individual and the Tolerance exercised by the individuals in a given liberal society. While the former, being the core of the central tenets of liberalism, does define the very face of modern day politics in the democratic world; it does not, however by the same token leads to a society tolerant to different ethnicity, caste, race, gender and so on and so forth. This tension between rights and exercising tolerance is not something which is confined to the backward lands of these called 'third world' or the 'fourth world'. The very crisis of the developed and supposedly liberal country can today be seen in the rising intolerance against the immigrant populace who forms the bed rock of the unorganized economy of these countries. The animosity against the immigrants' social and cultural customs is at such an acute level that it has become the favorite punching bag of the conservatives in every election. Recent Charlie Hebdo terror attack and the subsequent political atmosphere on the Muslim question in France, the political crisis in Scandinavia on the same, the vitriolic speeches made by the Republicans and others of their ilk in USA, all points to the same phenomena – the notion of Rights coming to a head on collision with the ethos of Tolerance.

The impact of social movements led by the indigenous people in Bolivia has, however inadvertently, attempts to address this tension between Rights and Tolerance. Drawing from their own rich communitarian traditions and customs, indigenous people knows the importance and the necessity of tolerance in society. While it is true that their sense of political rights can be expressed and articulated within the four walls of liberal philosophy, it nonetheless has their distinct socio cultural and communitarian essence to it which informs and defines their political world view. And it is this foregrounding of rights in the native communitarian philosophy, and not in the settlers' notion of 'liberty', which enables and makes the Bolivian society a tolerant one. The possibility of such tolerance is premised and firmly placed on the foundation of Justice and the correspondingly with the end of the practices and the politics that leads to the conditions

of injustices, as one cannot have an unjust society and expect it to be a tolerant one as well. It is through ensuring justice to the hitherto socially excluded and politically marginalized groups that the indigenous movement aims at making a peaceful and inclusive political society.

This Indian journey from their native location of submission to the settlers to the indigenous assertion and thereby making a decisive sociopolitical intervention is akin to the journey of lower castes in India from their locus point of being humiliated and socially exiled untouchable group of people to that being a Dalit – an equivalent of political agency which embraces the cause of social justice and makes it the precondition to conceive any possible egalitarian world order. Their quest for self-respect in terms of past revival of the kind where there have been demands and claims been made for the lost glory of the untouchables has its striking parallel to social assertiveness of indigenous people's politics. While indigenous people in Bolivia historically and culturally represents themselves, and rightly so, as the original inhabitants – the Political Native of the land vis a vis the Spanish conquistadores; dalits in India have largely been expressing their politics through the radical political legacy of Ambedkar against both Brahmanism and Capitalism in the post-independence era with the commencement of the new Republic and the new constitution. By invoking constitution in their political struggles for the equal rights and dignity, dalit movement have been reflective of the fact that the liberal project gives primacy to the individual and its human dignity, which is something that was denied to them through thousands of years of subjugation.

It must also be noted that struggles waged by dalits for their betterment were not always embedded in enlightenment values of liberalism. This turn in their politics by invoking the language of the rights coincides more with Ambedkar's advent on the Indian political scene while it obviously has roots in the movement and awareness brought by the action of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and several other socio-religious reformers in the late nineteenth century Maharashtra.<sup>169</sup> It is through Ambedkar's intervention for safeguarding the political interests of untouchables that one can find the radical shift in their political assertion and their gradual metamorphosis in to a political dalit. The impact

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

of Ambedkar's ideas on dalit politics can be seen from the language of dalit movement where concepts of Rights, Reason, Rationality and Equality, are conspicuous by their presence. The very premise of Ambedkar's role in dalit politics and his corresponding contribution to dalit movement has been to actualize the unfinished project of enlightenment, and by the same token establishing a self-reflective modern ethos in India.

While it is true that the arrival of certain tenets' of European enlightenment through liberal education during the period of Raj has led to the beginning of numerous socio-religious reforms which has in turn facilitated the start of a sociopolitical change promising dignity to lower classes/castes in India, the story of Indian enlightenment is incomplete without the native history of continuous struggle against the supremacy of Brahmanism. In one of his seminal essays Ambedkar traces this fight for modernity not to the European enlightenment, which definitely is the triggering point of the same, but in the origins of Buddhism as an anti-Brahmanism force in the ancient history.<sup>170</sup> In the same writing Ambedkar explains on how the entire Indian history right from the ancient period can be described as one constant and consistent struggle between the obscurantist forces represented by Brahmanism on the one hand and the forces of progressivism and enlightenment represented by *Charvaks*, *Buddhism*, *Bhakti* movement on the other. He calls it the struggle between revolutionary and counter revolutionary forces, respectively.<sup>171</sup> In summation, what Dalits have been struggling at the very basic level, today is their political struggle to established modernity as opposed to deeply entrenched Brahmanism in India. This modernity is the kind of modernity that has been proscribed in the constitution of India, promulgated immediately after its independence from British colonialism but somehow remains far from its own actualization. Hence, it can be stated that at a very fundamental level dalits are fighting for their rights enshrined in constitution and also defending the same against the prevailing Brahmanical currents.

The postcolonial and the subaltern discourse exhibits an extremely parochial understanding of the European enlightenment and its impact on the third world and lacks the very vocabulary of politics, if any, among themselves which could help in explaining

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<sup>170</sup> The Decline and Fall of Buddhism, BAWS, Vol. III.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

the importance of the same for the social movements of dalits and indigenous people. Both the groups – the indigenous in Bolivia and the Dalits in India – makes a big claim on the necessity and the importance of modernity, their positioning in the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial times cannot be adequately be explained by the binary of postcolonial theory which obviously pins down all political actions with Colonialism as the main referent.

It is important to note in this regard that when Ambedkar returns to India after his completion of study in the US, and takes up his already contracted work at Baroda, he was subjected to abject humiliation at the hands of Caste Hindus and almost made to feel worthless despite him being a person with stellar academic credentials. While in USA, despite the fact that Ambedkar, being a brown man – ‘inferior’ to whites – came to experience a feeling of equality and dignity during his days spent in Columbia University. He then immersed himself in to serious study of politics and economics with the sense of a certain freedom which is absolutely essential for any intellectual exercise. Even after his return to India, he continued to wear the western clothes – and not the western/white culture – as a political statement against Caste Hindus. This very act of Ambedkar, wearing suit, was the bitter reminder to then *dhoti*<sup>172</sup> clad national leaders of their hypocrisy and their dual character when it comes to the question of dalits rights and their liberation. While anywhere during the postcolonial struggle, imitating and assimilating the western/white etiquettes are seen as the manifestation of the colonized minds, India is peculiar case where dalits were fighting at two level – one against the British colonialism and second (and more importantly) against the Brahmanical hegemony. What Ambedkar had to experience and which reflects in his subsequent political methods cannot be summarily described as what HomiBhabha would call the ‘mimicking’<sup>173</sup> the colonial, for not only it limits the historical understanding of Ambedkar’s world, but such simplification of dalit ideology further adds to their suffering and humiliating past. This concept of mimicking or imitating the colonial

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<sup>172</sup> Native dress wore in some parts of India.

<sup>173</sup> HomiBhabha’s work Location of Culture, wherein he explains that the colonized often tends to mimic the habits and actions of the Colonizer, in order bring his supposedly inferior culture to that to the alleged superior one of the West.

masters, central to the tenets of the postcolonials, is nothing but a certain caste blinker oblivious of dalit conditions and dynamism that colonial modernity brought in India.

The project of modernity in Bolivia, on the other hand is not a teleological one in the sense that it is not something which is given and will eventually arrive on its own, once followed to a certain path. Rather the dynamism of social movements in Bolivia exhibits that this modernity is one that has to be collectively strive for and must be achieved and imbibed in to the given social practices and customs. In this way, indigenous people have shown that the 'modern' lies in the day to day struggles and engagement of an *indios'* agency through politics. Hence, modernity gets defined and redefined through the social movements and through the subsequent politics thus constructed. In the native terrain of the social movement in Bolivia, the legacy of the European enlightenment is the original position which must share the native ethics before it adds to the politics thus ensued. Hence, just like the case of dalits in India, indigenous struggle is not located in the negation of modernity that one witnesses in Bolivia's social and political sphere, but the push toward a certain Habermasian kind of an 'unfinished project of modernity', which could bring a fresh political perspective in renewed sociopolitical setting. Modernity thus defined is then a continuous struggle of dalits and indigenous people for their right to have rights in the first place. Through their action both dalits and indigenous have given a new meaning to democracy in the third world nations and ultimately questioned the prevailing power distribution in the society. And this very act – questioning the unequal past – of establishing them as equals is ultimately the actual modernity.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to map the postcolonial churning and the location of both dalits and indigenous people in the same during their struggle against colonialism and also about their sociopolitical agency in the phase of decolonization. Tracing the postcolonial debate in both the countries, we have seen how the question of cultural significance overlooks the marginalized identities and the same has been invoked by the marginalized through their politics in India and Bolivia, respectively. While social movement launched in Bolivia became a major catalyst in changing the political language and the landscape, dalit question has taken such a center stage today that not

even political parties representing Hindu Right (Brahmanism) can ignore their political voice and are compelled to factor in dalit representation to their right wing politics. The enormity of the dalit and indigenous political world is as such, that while the erstwhile settlers in Bolivia cannot ignore the symbols and language adopted by the natives, seldom one sees an upper caste in India, of any political significance, using the age old language of humiliation and condescension against dalits. It has been clearly the victory of dalits and indigenous people in their respective political setting to make the very language of the nation's polity conducive and sensitive to their claims and rights. Although, how this agency met its political success and other associated questions will be discussed in the next chapter, we have been able to establish here that how the positionalities of dalits and indigenous people against colonial subjugation is not tantamount to their rejection of the process of modernity. On the contrary, it has been contended here that the building of the modernity, which enables them to avail an egalitarian world, has become the core of their worldview in general and politics in particular. That it is to say that both dalits and indigenous groups have redefined the process of nation building through their respective political movement where the language of legal rights, constitutionalism and the presence of law in general has been enormously enabling in their actions and thoughts.

A basic question which naturally arises is that, that how come the indigenous people despite of their being the native can be compared to Dalits, who rather chose to not pursue the path of being *moolnivasi*<sup>174</sup> (original inhabitants) and chose to follow the liberal democratic frame work, which was also followed by the native of Bolivia nonetheless? The answer to this lies in Dalits' struggles against the sociopolitical hegemony of Brahmans in India. Unlike the natives whose opponent was somebody external to their land in a cultural sense and hence to their world view, the modern day dalit and the ex-untouchables were always been on the margins of India's history, irrespective of their colonial history. Suppressed and cornered by the ever present

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<sup>174</sup>A section of dalit bahujan politics, however, argues from the vantage point of them being the *moolnivasi* (original inhabitant) of India. Such politics accuses the Brahmans of invading the country in the past as they were part of community of invading Aryans who have subjugated and exploited the *moolnivasi*.

Brahmanism, the real challenge facing dalit politics has been and continues to be to confront the dominant interpretation of India's past by Brahmanism.

While it is true that India as a whole has been exploited at the hands of British colonialism, dalits were the victims of an 'internal colonialism' guided by the codes of *manusmiriti* at the hands of Caste Hindus. This 'living past', as Ambedkar has coined for summarizing the impact of Manu's code on Indian society, continues to treat dalits as degraded human beings and results in many a times, violent attacks on them even today. If such remains the situation even today in India, then the questions which obviously emerges are as why do the subaltern scholars/ postcolonialism doubts the modernity so much, while it has been cherished by the broken down people world over. What problems do they really have with the categories like Law, reason, rationality, liberty, rights etc, when these are exactly the concepts which have enabled a vibrant democracies giving way to the politics of dalits and the indigenous people.

The answers to these and many such other questions remain to be the single most tragedy of Indian politics and for that matter Bolivia too. The not so discreet dominance of Brahmanism is so very pervasive in India, that it has become a self – appointed gatekeeper of the 'east' and its cultural location. And from where it obviously draws its socio political hegemony as well. Brahmanism, in fact, feel completely browbeaten by the western categories (from European enlightenment), as they stand miserably failed at every step by the intellectual commons sense guided by reason and rationality. This failure is so complete today, that even if they have to assert their cultural supremacy; they do it relying on the language of sciences. For instance, in India today religious right invokes Vedas to make claim of the 'scientific discoveries' in the ancient past, so on and so forth.

Both Bolivia and India in a way have suffered long from the spell of such dominance where they have made to feel below human or what Fanon would call as the 'wretched of the earth'. This hegemonic process where an entire community was exploited because of the very similarly imposed degraded meaning to them as *indios* and untouchables, is essentially akin to their outright subjugation at the hands of 'internal colonialism'. While in Bolivia the white settlers continued their domination both in the social and cultural

sphere, till they were recently countered by the historic indigenous assertion through social movements – India’s case is an ongoing one where dalits are yet to translate themselves in a coherent and organized political force. The caste consciousness among the dalits and deployment of the same to their sociopolitical assertion has definitely helped them in challenging the might of Brahmanical hegemony, though it has led to an ideological deviation from the path of social transformation in order to build a larger egalitarian social order. The ‘post-Ambedkar Dalit movement’, ironically has been reduced to an end in itself as Gail Omvedt says, ‘challenging some of the deepest aspects of oppression and exploitation, but failing to show the way to transformation.’<sup>175</sup> This lacunae in one of the most powerful and promising socio- political movement in Indian society has made a profound setback to the radical politics of socio- economic transformation and would be explored further in next chapters. Also will be explored the proximity of both dalit and indigenous people’s deployment of their distinct ethical world view. The moral compass which their perspective offers is not only symptomatic of their respective political aspirations of a new Bolivia and India but also works as an guideline for the future of a peaceful and more egalitarian world order.

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<sup>175</sup> Ambedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in India by Gail Omvedt in Social Movements and the State, edited by Ghanshyam Shah. Sage publications 2002. Page 293 – 309.

## CHAPTER IV

### **Integrating Vivir Bien and Dalit Dignity: A Manifesto for an Egalitarian World**

*“De-humanisation is, perhaps, the simplest method of dealing with all that is culturally unfamiliar.”*

**Anthony Pagden.**

The experiences from the politics of social movements in Bolivia and that of the dalit movement, informs us the ways of addressing the problem emanating from the colonial repression of the multitude without forfeiting the value gains of the European enlightenment. Through their resistance to the capitalist drive of colonialism and holding to their own historical-social moorings and by not succumbing to the nationalist frenzy of the dominant elites, indigenous people and dalits have conceptualized their own concrete value system and an ideological apparatus to see an egalitarian world system. It is from this crack that lies in between the colonialism and nationalism, as defined by the dominant social classes, emerges the indigenous and dalit world view of a just society of equals – voiced through *vivir bien*<sup>176</sup> and prioritizing of the dalit dignity and self-respect. The equality of the human life thus defined is not merely an extension to an already existing and much debated liberal world view, but, is the product of the years of dalit-indigenous struggle against their total subjugation and the humiliation suffered at the hands of the oppressors in their respective geographical location.

Conscious of the fact that the greed ridden capitalist path which has led to the severe devastation in the global climate today, the dalit-indigenous world view aims to make this world a more democratic and environment friendly place to live. Theirs’ is the idea of a world where the basic tenets of the enlightenment are respected and people collectively strive for making society a more decent, just and egalitarian. The conceptual values like justice, equality and dignity of human beings are the integral features in the dalit-

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<sup>176</sup>Vivir Bien, which would roughly mean ‘well-being’ or ‘living well’ in English, is at the center of indigenous communitarian world view which under the leadership of Evo Morales aims to bring a decent and good life for all the people, as opposed to the western - liberal ‘pursuit of happiness’ which is considered by the indigenous people as individualistic and selfish in nature.

indigenous schema for the individuals to associate in order to form a political society which enables a life of freedom and dignity to the people inhabiting the same. This chapter will make an attempt to enquire and balance the two world views from the two different countries, which nonetheless hold on to very similar socio political objectives for a future society.

AvishaiMargalit in the opening lines of her work 'The Decent Society' writes that a society is decent, when the institutions therein 'do not humiliate people'.<sup>177</sup> Margalit further differentiates between a civilized society and a decent one, whereby the former is a society whose members do not humiliate their fellows and the latter is the one where the institutions do not indulge in humiliating the people at large. However, this distinction between civilized and a decent society do not hold much ground, when it comes to a country like India, where both the public and the private sphere are jinxed with an unwritten code of Brahmanism – a system constantly working to perpetuate caste hierarchy and preserving its corresponding socio political caste interests. Brahmanism is so well entrenched in India, that it is the writ of the caste which runs at large despite the country being a democracy governed by a constitutional government. The discourse which emanates from the age old Hindu caste system and the unabashed defense of the same give rise to violence, discrimination and to the social conditions which further perpetuates the ongoing history of humiliation of dalits. It must also be stated here that such humiliating and discriminatory behavioral patterns of Indian society against dalits is analogous to the treatment met to the women. The social attitude against women is absolutely similar, if not identical to that to dalits. The discrimination suffered by women of India is undoubtedly manifold, if one factors the caste, class and gender in their day to day lived experience and so is their struggle against the Brahmanical patriarchy. But that is a different subject altogether, though not completely divorced from the emancipatory project of the dalit movement in India. The sociopolitical discourse generated through dalit movement resembles the indigenous people's perspective, as they both through the course of their struggle, visualizes a society where justice and equality will be of no substantive outcome, unless it treats the women on equal footing as an equal human being.

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<sup>177</sup> See AvishaiMargalit, *The Decent Society*, Harvard University Press. 1996.

As discussed previously, the history of Bolivia informs us about the enforced marginalization of the indigenous people and their consistent struggle against the same has now culminated in to organized and vibrant social movements. The indigenous struggle against their cultural assimilation in to the *mestizaje* nation and their assertion for political autonomy puts forth an entirely different political paradigm for the reorganization of Bolivian society. The sociopolitical perspective which saw the anti-colonial upsurge and the republican churning in the late eighteenth and in the middle of the twentieth century, respectively, has now translated itself in to a coherent ideology. The set of values which has always been at the center of the native world view has made its resounding presence through more than three decades of the social movement led by indigenous people. Right from the pre-colonial era to the colonization of the natives and till the present government under the first indigenous President Evo Morales, the political trajectory of Bolivia has been an ongoing history of retrieving and restoring the lost dignity of *pueblos indigenas* – which has come to a full circle now.

The contributing factors to the almost similar and complementary framework of both dalit and indigenous politics are embedded in the very sociology of the two countries which is conspicuous by the presence of the structured inequality in both the societies. While in Bolivia, indigenous people were historically excluded from all the political processes and were always kept at the margins of the society; dalits were met to the similar sociopolitical fate in the India since ancient times. Racial and cultural hierarchy in Bolivian society and the graded inequality established through Hindu caste system in India are both deeply ingrained in the very social structure which defines the everyday lives of the people in both the respective lands. In this light, dalit-indigenous lives are seemingly aligned at the same social plane in terms of their shared past of social exclusion, humiliation and discrimination. Subsequently then, both the community have deployed their renewed political identity, that is in turn, has been acquired through their years of struggles against their respective hegemonic structures of social inequalities.

The idea of dalit-indigenous identity has taken its shape through the invocation of their historical sufferings and social exclusion, and hence it will be very simplistic to understand the same within the four walls of ‘identity politics’. Seen through their

perspective, identity reflects a concern for self- image and self- recognition of an individual or a community that have been historically, socially excluded and diminished by the dominant classes of the society. As Charles Taylor observes that ‘identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others [...i.e.] a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.’<sup>178</sup>In the formation of such an astute and historically rooted political identity, oppressed classes then aim to assert their self-respect, dignity and their relative diminished status in the society by contesting and confronting their demeaning picture as projected by the dominant classes. In essence, identity formation engages with questions such as who are we? –a question entwined with their quest for equality and each being treated ‘as equals’ in a given society.

Within the myriad assertion for dignity and equal moral worth of an individual being, inherent is the quest of one’s own history and a legacy which actually remains in constant struggle against the dominant. Because it is only after erasing the dominant<sup>179</sup> that such discourses against the dominance can be treated ‘as equals’ and thereby can take a concrete shape and its rightful place in the history. Hence contrary to the myopic world of Identity politics as commonly understood, identity of both dalits and indigenous people should be seen embedded in their respective historical experiences engaging both the ‘colonial’ and the ‘national’ historiography and thereby universalizing their lived experience at the same time . Evidently then, one witnesses that both dalits and indigenous politics not only challenge their respective hierarchical and hegemonic social order and its respective ideological moorings, they also offer an alternative set of principles for a society working to achieve social justice along with an inbuilt critique of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy.

As explained previously, that the dalit-indigenous thinking do not necessarily give up on the discourse of modernity – seen to be driven from colonial modernity – and rather builds its own political discourse which is critical of colonialism and in the due course of

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<sup>178</sup> Charles Taylor’s *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition*, Princeton University Press 1992.

<sup>179</sup> Dominant here is been alluded to the discourse, which excludes people from the below. Here in this case the ‘dominant’ refers to Brahmanism in India in the case of Dalits and Settlers against Natives in the case of indigenous people of Bolivia and elsewhere.

their struggle disentangle the modern from the colonial. The dalit movement in India, especially, began to work out both a critique of colonial practices and at the same time locate their own historical agency unfolding within the colonial modernity.<sup>180</sup> It is interesting to see how dalit-indigenous thinking retrieves the modernity arrived along with colonialism while thoroughly exposing the naked exploitation and suppression of the colonized. The ideas like liberty, equality, fraternity and theories of justice, then, were not seen as something alien to their own philosophy (and this is a certain trait common to both dalits and indigenous groups), rather they have increasingly imbibed these concepts in order to build their own social and political ethics for a modern society capable of bringing justice and unity of the people.

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui,<sup>181</sup> commenting on the history and politics of the social movements in Bolivia gave a very clear picture of the aims and objectives of the indigenous churning since 1990. Besides the socio political nuances, what is strikingly significant is her emphasis on the role of the French slogan ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité’ embedded in the European enlightenment and has a huge importance for the indigenous program of *vivir bien*. She underlined that the project of modernity as bequeathed to us by the European enlightenment is not contradictory to the indigenous project of establishing a society espousing *vivir bien* and in fact it is rather more complimentary for the successful completion of the unfinished decolonization of Bolivia. As per Silvia’s foregrounding of ‘Indianness’ (referring to the nativity of the Indians in the Andes) of Bolivia’s indigenous movement, it is this aspect of bringing together such modern values like language of rights, individual liberty and equality before law, along with the native communitarian discourse, that forms the foundation of today’s Bolivian polity.

After hearing her view as mentioned above and the subsequent perspective that came through the conversation, it brought us very close to the home on the vibrant political discourse among the dalits in India – firmly placed in the modern and radical project of Ambedkar. Just as the indigenous people, while embracing the modern values, remain

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<sup>180</sup> It is interesting to see the noteworthy work done by Ambedkar in this regard, in B.R. Ambedkar, *The Untouchables and the Pax Britannica*. Writings and Speeches 12: 145.

<sup>181</sup> Professor Silvia Rivera is a distinguished scholar of Bolivian society and has been previously associated with the government on several policy making programs. As told to this researcher in a personal interview.

focus to their communitarian politics in order to achieve *vivir bien*/living well for all, dalits too put forth a vision of '*PrabuddhBharat*' (enlightened India) drawing from the rich legacy of anti-Brahman movement all the way from the days of Buddha. The vision of modern India with a moral compass for a society rooted in a strong bond of fraternal love for their fellow citizen is indispensable for Ambedkar's vision of a modern nation governed by a state committed to socialism. Thus, the ethics and moral norms embedded in the political discourse of dalit and indigenous people draws from their own singularly rich historical legacy of forming an enlightened and morally cogent society with the value of justice at its core, while the concepts drawn from colonial modernity remain to be instrumental and on the periphery to achieve the same. The instrumentality of democracy, thus understood by dalit-indigenous people is not then couched merely as the west sees – whereby the individual agency is supreme and paramount – but it becomes a vehicle to document their suppressed and humiliating past denied by all the hitherto political processes.

### **Barbarians (Native Indian) and the *Mlecchas*<sup>182</sup> (Dalits)**

An important step with regard to unpacking the dalit-indigenous philosophical world view would be first to understand the reasons behind the politics of their history being considered as unworthy of any 'civilized notions'. In other words, the enquiry in to the ongoing prejudices against them shall expound on why were they called Barbaric (for the native Indian) and Mlecchas (for dalits). It is in the history of dalit-indigenous' years of social exclusion that we find a self-sufficient and flourishing society came to be regarded as a dehumanized lot and thus excluded from all the political process leading to their abject subjugation, albeit with consistent protest and resistance on the behalf of the suppressed. In this regard we must then first turn to colonial history of both the country. While in the case of dalits one must dig further back in the past, much before the British colonialism or even the Muslim rule set foot on the Indian subcontinent. Considering the history of Spanish imperialism in Americas, even a cursory glance on the commentaries of various chroniclers, royal commentators, theologians and missionaries in the 'new

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<sup>182</sup>Mlecch is term from vedic times and is use to denote 'impure or inferior' people. Wikipedia entry mentions, that..it was commonly used for "outer barbarians of whatever race or colour", and was also applied by the ancient Indian kingdoms to foreigners..<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mleccha>

world' inform us about the enormous impact of Christian theology and more importantly the impression of Aristotle philosophy.<sup>183</sup> Commenting on this Christian influence, Professor Anthony Pagden in his work on Indians in Americas explains that, that the putatively imperial claim of the Spanish empire was actually not due to its rights as a colonial power but the assertion stem from a much more deeper understanding and commitment to their 'Christian duty' of making the world 'civilized' in *theireyes* and as *they* define the civilization. Naturally then, the indigenous world seen through this perspective, by design became an uncivilized barbaric world – a world devoid of any ethical or moral resources of its own. *Conquistadores* who felt the need to classify the new people whom they felt alien to their own culture summarily labeled them as 'barbarians'. In this manner people outside Europe discovered through imperial exploration and who were not describable in the then available European vocabulary, were classified as people who have no 'moral' or 'civic' values. Needless to say that they 'lack' such ostensible civic morality as defined by the Europeans in the first place.

Aristotelian influence in this precisely belongs to this moral sphere which defines man as a political animal, commanding reason and language and hence lives in the polis. People outside of this polis are animalistic in their nature with no distinct features of 'civilized' humans and hence are termed as simply animals who are lacking in the moral resources to live in a political society and hence we have 'savages' and 'barbarians'. This Aristotelian influence combined with Christian missionary zeal of the 'civilizing' drive of imperialism, collectively informs the European psyche and then tend to define peoples' lives and manners distinctly different from them as unfit to be called 'civic' by any (European) standards. Interestingly, this attempt to give the indigenous people a meaning, a definition, a moral valence by the conquistadores have striking resemblance with the same efforts of Brahmins vis a vis dalits and other larger group of people (*Shudras*), who too are members of the lower strata of the Caste system in India. What became

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<sup>183</sup> Anthony Pagden, *The fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*. Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies. Cambridge University Press. 1982. Also See Herbert S. Klein-A *Concise History of Bolivia* (Cambridge Concise Histories) Cambridge University Press (2011) and Ruth Hill, *Hierarchy, Commerce, and Fraud in Bourbon Spanish America: A Postal Inspector's Expose*. Vanderbilt University Press. Nashville. 2005. For further detailed analysis of the Spanish imperial era, see Davis Cahill, *Colour by Numbers: Racial and Ethnic Categories in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1532 – 1824*. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2. (May, 1994), pp 325 – 346.

‘barbarian’ or ‘uncivilized’ for the natives of Americas came to be called as *maleccha* in the Indian subcontinent. It must be noted here that that much before the arrival of the ‘Christian White Man’s burden’ among the British colonizing the third world in order to ‘civilize’ its natives (who are not a homogenous lot, as explained in the previous chapter), the dalits and the *Shudra* community were already considered as barbaric, uncivilized – malechhas for the upper castes Hindus and as well among the other religious minorities in India. Hence, to no one’s surprise the cultural interests of the white supremacist in India, mirrored exactly as to those of the Brahmin elites and led to the similar documentation of history which if not negates, the same completely downplays the problems of all, other than what the Brahmanical version of India as a nation was portrayed in the nationalist movement against the British Raj.

And as one would expect, such contradiction, especially that is present among the people of India, cannot be addressed through the binary of the Colonized and the Colonizer as the standalone frame and the nuances of which are there in the Bolivian society as well. The commonly held view about the indigenous life being more a traditional set up of a commune, isolated and very far removed from the apparatus of colonial administration and hence oblivious to imperialism are many such misconceptions prevalent against dalits too. Both the social groups have faced severe colonial repression and were not the kind of people who bore the repression lying low. That indigenous voice and dalit voice is rather absent in the written history on their respective struggle against colonialism is not innocent but an outright deliberate political crime by design. In this chapter, I will make an attempt to address this misgiving or rather more appropriately the belittling sneering depiction of the lives and struggles of both the suppressed groups.

When dealing with a vast subject like that of the history of India, one can barely distinguish the myth from the popular narratives. Whereby, Hindu mythology is rampant with instances of haloed, fair looking pious *Devtas* (Gods) who are in constant battle with the dark, evil and barbaric *Asuras* (Demons), where Brahmins are represented by the former and Dalit and *Bahujans*<sup>184</sup> by the latter.<sup>185</sup> The commonly believed myth here is

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<sup>184</sup> Bahujan literally means the ‘many people’ or the masses in English. It connotes to the multitudes of the middle castes in Indian society, also referred to as the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The OBCs, who mostly comprise of the Shudravarna in the Hindu caste system, forms the majority of the Indian population

the ongoing conflict between the ‘Aryans’ (a nomadic race which putatively travelled to the land mass now known as India from the ‘outside’) and the ‘Dravidians’ (‘natives’). However, the history of structural discrimination and hence, the subsequent growth of social inequalities in Indian society is not as neat and tidy that it could be summarized and presented as the ongoing conflict between Aryans and Dravidians. Because neither the Brahmins are a homogenous group, even today, and nor are the Dravidians considered (whose forms the core of the today’s south India political world view) a single group of people. However, one of the most striking difference between the Outsider/Native narrative from both the countries has been, and it is the most important one at that, that while the European settlers had this drive of ‘civilizing’ the colony for the inhabitants; the settlers remain tethered to their belief of accepting the natives (post ‘civilizing’) as son of one God – vital component of the upcoming Christendom. Brahmanism, on the other hand, had no such desire of involving or integrating the *malecchas* in their ‘fold’, as one does not and cannot create a Brahmin; you are born one. Hinduism and its philosophy, irrespective of it not being the subject of inquiry here, continue to be the most divisive religion in practice. To put it more appropriately, it is a code book for the functioning of mutually exclusive different castes. It is this principle of exclusivity among the Brahmins which persist, though not unchallenged, even today and consistently work for preserving their caste/class interests.

This rather nuance but an important difference between the settlers and natives must be kept in mind before we begin to make sense of their alternative sociopolitical perspective for a new society in their respective geographical location. It is due to this distinct historical positioning of both dalit and indigenous people that we witness a counter to the continuation of colonial power structures which privileges creoles and mestizaje elites in Bolivia, just as it had brought privileges to the Brahmins and other upper castes in India and met to its sociopolitical resistance by the dalit movement.

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and the members of the same were the prominent leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement in India. Taken together, dalit-bahujan represents the majority of the Indian masses who have been exploited and suppressed by the Brahmanism and hence make cause in their social and political struggles.

<sup>185</sup> Alexandra George, *Social Ferment In India*. Orient Longman. 1986.

The continuation of the social inequalities in the post-colonial setting and the subsequent sociopolitical exclusion of dalits and indigenous people not only has triggered their organized political resistance, but the same has also compelled them to configure their own belief system which they both found indispensable for the formation of the new republic based on the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity. The caste system in India and its striking parallel with the similar nature of social hierarchy in Bolivia exhibits the complexity of their struggles and how much deep seated are the social prejudices which give rise to such social inequalities and to an equally vigorous social movement in its resistance. The lives of dalit-indigenous people are the running testimony of years of their humiliating lived experience, which not only becomes self-assertive in the modern political sense, but more importantly puts forth an alternate world view of how to build a just and a decent society of social equals.

Coming to the subject matter of the dalit-indigenous vision for a futuristic political society, the central of their worldview remain to based on the founding principle of human dignity, that has been denied to them in their current social and political milieu. In this regard, it is pertinent to note Ambedkar's words from his conversation with the British Broadcasting Corporation in the year 1956. Ambedkar articulated his decision for adapting to the teachings of Buddhism which is central to any possible form of a good life in India which is impossible to achieve unless the depressed classes (dalits) have the sense of them being treated as social equals and to that end retrieving their lost dignity by going back to Buddhism is indispensable. Elaborating on his reasons, he said,

*"I prefer Buddhism because it gives three principles in combination which no other religion does. Buddhism teaches prajna (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), karuna (love), and samta (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life..."*<sup>186</sup>

Ambedkar's own interpretation to the world of Buddha and his teachings and which came to be known as the most significant work of philosophy of Buddhism for dalits, was written by him as *'The Buddha and His Dhamma'*.<sup>187</sup> This very text expounds on the

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<sup>186</sup> See Dhananjay Keer, Dr. Ambedkar Life and Mission. Popular Prakashan, Bombay. 1962. Pg 487.

<sup>187</sup> See BAWVS VOL 11, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra. October 1992.

reasons for the need of fraternal relations between humans and the indispensability of Buddhism in achieving the same. On the other hand the philosophical understanding behind *vivir bien* is unique in the sense that it is set to formulate the new ethics and morals of the modern society from an indigenous perspective. And in order actualize such a society, it set itself out through the mundane necessities in the real lives of the people and not in the supernatural as most other such projected world view tend to be. In a similar vein, though in a very different context, Karl Marx while deliberating on the Jews emancipation in '*On the Jewish Question*' too has succinctly underlined the importance of an individual's connection to the society she inhabits. To quote him,

*“Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed in to himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a species-being; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers (forces propres) as social powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as political power.”*<sup>188</sup>

Human emancipation thus seen is fundamentally embedded in the individual's association with each other, and on the precondition of they all being social equals – achieved through politics. In the dalit-indigenous world view on the social and the political, the very possibility of the construction of their lost dignity can only happen after erasing the all previous and present account of the dominant historical discourse that relishes in exhibiting their respective humiliating past. And it is in this very political milieu that the significance of indigenous discourse on *vivir bien* and the restoration of social dignity to dalits becomes not only complementary but they do mirror each other in their respective political struggles. Thus achieving the human emancipation and building a new society, resting on the moral values and the ethics of a new politics, is something which bridges these world views across the continents.

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<sup>188</sup>Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, in *Identities – Race, Class, Gender, and Nationality*. Edited by Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta. Blackwell Publishing, 2003. Pg. 28

## *On Vivir Bien*

Vivir Bien or living well is the political model adopted by the MAS government for the benefits and development of all. In the language of *Aymara* and *Quechua*, two significantly numerous indigenous communities in Bolivia, it is roughly translated as *suma qamana* and *sumaq kawsay* – the two main language of the indigenous Bolivia.<sup>189</sup>The focal point of the model discourse on *vivir bien* remain to be on the lived experience of indigenous people which is in harmony with the *panchamama* (mother earth) – an indispensable condition in their schema for conceptualizing any form of modern living. It must be noted here that the model of *Vivir Bien Comprehensive Development* has been the brainchild of Evo Morales government since it came to power in the year 2005. The vibrant social movement led by the indigenous people for the past three decades or so and its militant struggles especially post year 2000 culminating in to the installation of MAS government, which in turn remain to be an umbrella political organization giving voice to numerous social movements, played a pivotal role in bringing this indigenous thinking in to the model and the indigenous political vision. In other words, the very conception for *vivir bien* as indigenous mode of modern living in sync with the mother earth became a possibility due to the political struggles of the indigenous people in the first place. That is not to say that the philosophy underneath the discourse on *vivir bien* is something that has been conceptualized recently, but it was rather present all throughout the indigenous past of Bolivia. It is due to the rejuvenated politics of the *pueblo indigenas* that the project of *vivir bien* has now become central to the development model followed by the MAS government. In this regard it is important to extract a portion of Evo Morales speech in order to put things in current political perspective, i.e. the very philosophy behind this model for living well or well being of the people,

*“We need to construct a vision that is different from the western capitalist development model. We must move from the sustainable development paradigm to the Bien Vivir*

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<sup>189</sup>Melania Calestani, *An Anthropological Journey in to Well-Being – Insights From Bolivia*. Springer. 2013. Also see, Alex Tilley, Coordinator of the Bolivia Information Forum, ‘*Vivir bien (Living Well): a new model for development from Bolivia’s indigenous process of change*’, at [www.boliviainfoforum.org.uk/news-detail.asp?id=99](http://www.boliviainfoforum.org.uk/news-detail.asp?id=99)

*comprehensive development approach that seeks not only a balance among human beings, but also a balance and harmony with our Mother Earth. No development model can be sustainable if production destroys Mother Earth as a source of life and our own existence. No economy can be long lasting if it generates inequalities and exclusions. No progress is just and desirable if the well-being of some is at the expense of the exploitation and impoverishment of others. Vivir Bien Comprehensive Development means providing well-being for everyone, without exclusions. It means respect for the diversity of economies of our societies. It means respect for local knowledge. It means respect for Mother Earth and its biodiversity as a source of nurture for future generations..It means combining modern science with the age-old technological wisdom held by the indigenous, native and peasant peoples who interact respectfully with nature...*”<sup>190</sup>

Now we see that there are certain core tenets of *Vivir Bien Comprehensive Development Model*, which are pointedly marked by the President Morales in this speech, namely (a) It is against western capitalist development model, (b) It puts emphasis on the harmony with Mother Earth/Nature, i.e. a development approach with its roots in the indigenous way of living which has always been environment friendly in the first place, (c) Building an economy which must put a stop to rising inequalities and social exclusions, (d) Such a model must incorporate and put to good use the available ‘local knowledge’, and most importantly (e) an approach to combine modern science with the well-established known traditional wisdom of the indigenous people. Hence, the approach to promote *vivir bien* among the people, then, necessarily involves a creation of an economy under the state regulation and more importantly the same cannot be left to the vicissitudes of the free market.

The state must then work for ameliorating the socioeconomic inequalities through promoting the available indigenous knowhow – in harmony with the Mother Nature – in sync with the modern republican values, making it all the more modern in the light of ongoing global crisis of climate change. The sensitivity towards the nature in the wake of

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<sup>190</sup> From Evo’s speech during the Summit of the Group of 77 plus China, marking the alliance’s 50th anniversary, in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, on June 15, 2015 with the adoption of Declaration containing 242 articles, entitled “For a New World Order for Living Well.”

rising global climate change, a state regulated political economy committed to values of social justice and equality makes *vivir bien* a genuine alternative to the anti-nature capitalist path enforced by the west. Capitalism that is seen as a system deeply entrenched in the individual-centered world, bereft of any compassion for human living in a society and for the life affirming Mother Nature, meets its sound counterpart in the model of *vivir bien*. In its opposition to western capitalism (now neoliberalism) *vivir bien* offers an alternative set of principles guiding the political economy, not only in terms of something which might be described loosely as a socialist one, but it also lay down the required sensitivity towards an approach that is holistic in nature and entails a much more humane and a communitarian approach to life, something which is indispensable for the formation of a just and decent society. This is an approach that does require the desire for power and recognition of the identity but that nature of the subsequent political power is collective in nature and not individualistic. *Vivir bien* perspective for the reconstruction of a society helps in obliterating the earlier denial of the existence of native indigenous past and helps in resurrecting a dignified agency of the native which is both modern and at the same time is deeply rooted in the indigenous ethos of the society.

In its recent past where Bolivia has seen militant struggles waged by the social movements against the privatization of natural resources like water and hydrocarbons, promotion of *vivir bien* as an alternative model for the comprehensive development for all is a timely call for an inclusive development approach which brings indigenous people at the center for the creation of a new social order. Indigenous world view, through *vivir bien*, offers an alternative socio economic vision for the whole world which is continually been destroyed by the neoliberal greed for profit and luxury and that must be arrested immediately, as what lies at the receiving end is the Mother Earth whose natural resources belong to all and must not be thrown to be exploited and destroyed by the neoliberal capitalism.

While it is true that there is an element of romanticism attached with the conceptualization of *vivir bien*, as it put emphasis on indigenous mode of living which is largely rooted in the pervasive institutional structure of *ayllus*, which in itself is pre-

modern institution.<sup>191</sup> However, the implicit presence of achieving common good for the society therein, as a whole, cannot be ignored. Hence, what is aimed to achieve is a collective good of life with the common and shared history and ethical values as opposed to a self-atomized highly unequal society influenced by colonialism. The efficacy of the indigenous traditions, thus understood, far supersedes the banality of ‘liberal individualism’ and underlines the importance of all that is good in the collective belief system of the native thinking. While *vivir bien* as the model for the comprehensive development does offer an inward looking perspective on what all that is good in the indigenous past of Bolivia, it does not necessarily, in the similar fashion, undermine the modern institutions and its values.

On the contrary, the indigenous thinking highlights the enriching importance of certain liberal values among which, liberty, equality and fraternity came to form the nucleus around which they then weave the model *vivir bien*. It is like breaking down the ‘capitalist modernity’ into two separate coherent systems of capitalism and modernity, and then seeing modernity not necessarily as the baggage which comes with the capitalism but as the legacy of the European enlightenment which marks a significant break in the evolution of human freedom. The well-being of the people thus seen through the model of *vivir bien* makes the politics of the past complimentary to the ongoing politics in the present and hence accounts for a much more inclusive model of future society. The indigenous people have deployed both the discourse of universal equality for all citizens and taken recourse to their own particular identity of being referred to as *indios* – a derogatory term for the natives as imposed by the settlers in Spanish America.<sup>192</sup> This invocation of the status of *indios* to assert their political agency is akin to the invocation of *dalit* as the political identity referring to their history of humiliation and sufferings.

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<sup>191</sup>An Ayllu is the traditional form of community government operating at the local level in the Andean/altiplano region of Latin America, mostly found among the Aymara and Quechua natives of the region. It acted as the basic socioeconomic unit during the Inca period. In the present time too, ayllus mostly control some portion of land in common and act as the basic administrative unit for the indigenous society.

<sup>192</sup> Peter Wade, Identity, Ethnicity, and ‘Race’, in *A Companion to Latin American History*. Edited by Thomas H. Holloway. Blackwell Publishing. 2008. Page 480.

Contrary to being misinterpreted as something cocooned in the customs and ethos of its traditional past alone, *vivir bien* makes a break with both the colonial past and the capitalist hegemony and attempts to usher the society in to an egalitarian world comprising of the social equals. It is in the formation of such a society, that an individual agency is not completely lost, rather it actually began to define community's good through an assertive individual identity arrived upon by an equally assertive politics for achieving social dignity and equality – a political process very similar to the awakening of dalits in India.

On the question of the existence and intermingling of the cultures in Bolivia, Filemon Escobar, former Vice President of the country and still a politically active intellectual, mentions that '*in Bolivia there exist two civilizations. One is occidental and the other is eastern. They should complement each other rather than confronting each other*'.<sup>193</sup> Hence it is the complementarity of the politics generated through indigenous social movement that informs and shapes up the contours of the model discourse on *vivir bien*, making common cause with the gains of the liberal legacy of the European enlightenment. By locating *vivir bien* both in the legacy of the liberal enlightenment and the native indigenous past, social movement politics invents an all together a new country which will not adhere to any other framework for societal reconstruction at the cost of lived experience of multitudes of Bolivian people.

It is the philosophy of fostering fraternal values among the citizens and promoting individual dignity and indigenous mode of life as symbiotic of a life in harmony with the *panchamama*, that *vivir bien* puts forth an invariable perspective indispensable for the global peace and justice. In summary it is the urgency or '*the need for balance and harmony that informs vivir bien*'.<sup>194</sup> The 'need to balance' is required to address the apparent imbalances brought out in the world by the neoliberal and the capitalist mode of development. The imbalance has been thus caused by the increasing gap between the rich and poor living in the world today, where the mode of life experienced by the former is

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<sup>193</sup>Personal Interview in Cochabamba, Bolivia. August 2011.

<sup>194</sup>Alex Tilley, Coordinator of the Bolivia Information Forum, 'Vivir bien (Living Well): a new model for development from Bolivia's indigenous process of change', at [www.boliviainfoforum.org.uk/news-detail.asp?id=99](http://www.boliviainfoforum.org.uk/news-detail.asp?id=99)

affecting all at the cost of negating life as understood by the latter. It is the urgency of putting the maddening drive of free market capitalism at rest and replacing it with sustainable model of development that further informs the urgency and the apt necessity for promoting *vivir bien*, a significant contribution of indigenous Bolivia to the world community today. In the final analysis what remains to be the defining aspects of *vivir bien* is the centrality of the brotherhood and its symbiosis with the omnipresent, albeit under crisis, *panchamama* (Mother Nature) – a question where most of the liberal theories if not all, maintains a cryptic silence. In other words, what *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) aims at achieving with the *vivir bien* comprehensive model of development is the world of new political ethics – set of values that is in turn define through waging struggles for reformulating the ethic of politics.

### **Dalit Dignity**

As has been noted above that the discourse of dalit's dignity and its politics today came chiefly from the intellectual inputs of Dr. Ambedkar through his writings and political leadership. We have also discussed, previously, the gradual unfolding of dalit movement known through different nomenclatures from the latter half of the nineteenth century till the present time and its importance in establishing an assertive dalit-self which is central to the realization of their life of dignity and self-respect against the rampant Brahmanism in India. Restoring the dignity of dalits, i.e. of those million people condemned by the Hindu caste system (now seeped in to every religion practiced in the Indian subcontinent) is a project of retrieving dalits' own past, which has been long suppressed and ignored in the historiography penned by the dominant hindus in India. It is a project of self-awakening of an individual who after years of subjugation at the hands of upper castes, began to locate the currents of anti-Brahmanism right from Buddhism to the modern day Dalit politics. It is the project of reestablishing their moral worth as humans, long debased by Brahmanism and that by deploying their agony and humiliation as their political weapon in the quest for social equality and dignity. Hence what became their weapon in the struggles against Brahmanism is achieving a life of dignity and self-respect through social and political movements aimed to transform the caste ridden Indian society in to an egalitarian one.

Hence, recovering the dalit-self from the history of their humiliating past is of a supreme importance for dalit movement. It must be kept in mind that before the arrival of Ambedkar in Indian politics, there has been an ongoing attempt for the restoration of lost dignity of dalits through several social reform groups with similar objectives. Socio-reform movements like *Adi Dharma*, *Adi Hindu*, and *Dravidian movement* etc. along with the pan India Non-Brahman movement, preceding the days of independence from British colonialism, have all paved the way for the assertion of a political dalit-self. Henceforth, there were and continue to be many currents within the dalit movement who consider themselves as the ‘original inhabitants’ as against the ‘Aryans’ (the putative invaders to Indian subcontinent, now represented through Brahmanism) who are the actual indigenous people long enslaved by the outsiders.<sup>195</sup> Besides them being participants in the various social reform movement – a current attributed to the legacy of rich culture of *Bhakti* movement<sup>196</sup> in India – and being claimants to be the ‘original inhabitants’, dalits have always been completely marginalized and politically excluded.

Added to this current of socio-religious reform movement, there is this third stream of dalit assertion which is modern in its approach and do not necessarily seek reforms within the existing four walls of Brahmanism that dominates the Indian society. What they set out to achieve, then, is to change the whole societal structure down to the last vestige of its Brahmanical origins by deploying a radical politics of anti-caste movement. For a dalit world view of a society of social equals, Brahmanism must be dealt with at the very first priority as its very existence is based on the doctrine of inequalities.<sup>197</sup> Whereby, people are divided in the graded hierarchy in the Hindu caste system. This graded inequality enshrined in the caste system led to the false consciousness of people therein of believing that even if they are inferior to some; they are superior to others. Hence, it is pertinent and urgent that all such pervasive inequality must be confronted, though not only through politics but through a movement that seeks a total change in the societal apparatus of modern India. Dalit movement thus understood, then, through its

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<sup>195</sup> Indigenous People: Dalits – Dalit Issues in Today’s Theological Debate, Edited by James Massey. ISPCK, Delhi. 1994.

<sup>196</sup> The Bhakti movement has its origins in the seventh century devotional movement which was directed against the priestly hegemony of Brahmanism. From the South it spread to the northwards and has been by far the most vociferous critic of Brahmanism in India’s history.

<sup>197</sup> Valerian Rodrigues, The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar. OUP. 2002. Page 146.

transformative political world view lay down a coherent set of principles which are indispensable for conceptualizing an egalitarian India.

It is to this current of dalit movement – commonly called as Ambedkarite movement – that one finds the unpacking of a dalit category which underlines the intrinsic necessity of dalit dignity and self-respect, fundamental to the core ideology of dalit movement. The very idea of the giving primacy to dignity and notions of self-respect in the politics and linking it up with the notions of rights and justice bring the movement much closer to the traditions of European enlightenment, similar to the experiences of the indigenous social movement in Bolivia. This radical politics of the twentieth century dalit movement guided by Ambedkarite philosophy, does privilege individual liberty but at the same time it too, like the indigenous people from Bolivia, roots for strong communal ties. This is one very important aspect of both the social movement that defines a sociopolitical churning very much similar in their political objectives. Ambedkar, who had a vast, albeit, critical understanding of the functioning of the British Raj as well as different tradition of liberalism, long understood the immense importance of liberty and freedom of an individual agency – something which was not available to the members of the lower castes. Grasping the importance of such liberal values in the lives of dalits, Ambedkar launched his politics of social emancipation through the then available minimum respite to dalits (depressed classes) within the imperial jurisprudence.<sup>198</sup>

Henceforth, an astute lawyer himself, Ambedkar argued for the legal equality along with political representation for the members of depressed classes at par with the dominant Hindus in various legislative bodies in British Raj. This interventionist politics of Ambedkar though the procedural mechanism of liberal state within the British Raj serves as a contradiction to many historians and to the then national political actors, who simply refused to understand the problem of dalits external to the discourse of the politics of nationalism.<sup>199</sup> Ambedkar's intervention in the round table deliberations in London and eventually in the constituent assembly proceedings in India has been of far reaching political consequences with immense social bearings and that continues to inform and

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<sup>198</sup>B.R.Ambedkar, *The Untouchables and the Pax Britannica*. BAWS 12: 145.

<sup>199</sup> Gail Omvedt, *Reinventing revolution: New social movements and the socialist tradition in India*. ME Sharpe, 1993.

defend the progressive nature of the contemporary Indian polity.<sup>200</sup> The modernity thus conceived by Ambedkar, resting on the three principles of French revolution (liberty, equality and fraternity) did not stop him only to that and looked for the lost dignity of dalits in the troubled waters of Indian history – where dalits are conspicuous by their absence. This retrieving of the modernity from the history of oppressed is very much a trait found in the workings of the indigenous social movement as well.

Ambedkar was convinced that the only possible solvent of Brahmanism – equating some as superiors and others inferiors through caste hierarchy – could only be conceived through a complete reordering of the existing social order. And this restructuring of the society in Ambedkar's schema, requires a new moral and ethical code which promote equality and fraternity among its members. Hence a society thus conceived and which addresses the rising inequality and the corresponding social tension became inevitable in Ambedkar's idea of making a world conducive and sensitive to dalit (individual) dignity. It must be kept in mind that this construction of a society of social equals emanates from the very politics of social emancipation wherein ethics and morals of society feeding to Brahmanism must be rejected, so that to accommodate the politics of social justice by privileging the rights of the individual.

The politics of prejudice and hate implicit to the functioning of the Brahmanism in India cannot be purged unless one confronts the very structures and institutions which provide them the legitimacy and authority in the society. And it is in this milieu that we must see Ambedkar's adoption of Buddhism as the guiding force for such a moral social order which must then replace the heinous Brahmanism and its corresponding paradigm of castes in India. Hence it is the two pronged strategy of pursuing both the liberal-constitutional democracy – which became a possibility through the arrival of colonial modernity in the first place – and retrieving the rationalist and enlightenment history of Buddhism, that informed the overall dalit egalitarian world view. Seen through this perspective, a dalit self is both an individual and a constitutive of community at the same time. The community life get acknowledged and recognized only through assertive

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<sup>200</sup>Christophe Jaffrelot, *Dr Ambedkar and untouchability: analysing and fighting caste*. Orient Blackswan, 2006; Also see, Sukhdeo Thorat, and Narender Kumar. *BR Ambedkar: Perspectives on social exclusion and inclusive policies*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.

individual agency – that has overcome its Brahmanical past – which has fully realized the life of dignity and self-respect.

It is important to understand here the immediate context of the emergence of modernity from the structures of colonialism. It is certain set of modernized state of individual affairs, where the latter is seen as the beacon of the reason, rationality and a right bearing person. An individual liberty and freedom thus conceived then must give birth to a public sphere which is supposedly expected to function within the available universal liberal framework. However, in India due to its all-pervasive caste inequalities and the corresponding differentiated communitarian culture, the public sphere (where individual is a rational being with her political rights) thus emerged was obviously fragmented and further segregated on caste lines. And since such a sphere existed owing to the graded inequality of the caste structure, it further then give rise to ‘specific community public’, which naturally existed in isolation from the other existing culture/caste.<sup>201</sup> This coalescing of community publics, invariably then led to the further continuation of exclusionary history of India. This exclusionary nature of India’s political history dominated by the idea of nationalism – a western contribution to the India’s politics – rarely acknowledges the differentiation of the Indian society. The making of the India as a nation is actually then is the product of such a public sphere which is based on the very premise of the degraded inequality of caste hierarchy.

The nation thus forged through the Brahmanisation of Indian history, while seen as a universal one with its citizens enjoying equal rights, is nonetheless a highly exclusionary state acting to preserve the sociopolitical interests of the upper caste Hindus in India. This very closed ‘Hindu Public Sphere’ rooted in the very inception of the India as nation has always been peddling the idea of Brahmanical India and was never very accommodative to dalit rights.<sup>202</sup> Dalit’s claim to its citizenship rights finally came to fruition through the adoption and enforcement of the Constitution of India, which remains to be the first ever ‘social contract’ which conferred to dalits ‘universal and secular citizenship’.<sup>203</sup> Gopal

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<sup>201</sup>Neeladri Bhattacharya, ‘Notes Towards a Conception of the Colonial Public’, in *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Refeld. Sage Publications. 2005. Page 140.

<sup>202</sup>Gopal Guru, ‘Citizenship in Exile: A Dalit Case’, in *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Refeld. Sage Publications. 2005.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. Page 263.

Guru underlines that in the post republic phase of independent India, dalit agency met with a severe contradiction peculiar to the Indian society. This was the contradiction of having won an equal citizen status through the constitution of India, while the same was denied to them in the ‘realm of civil society’.<sup>204</sup>

The Ambedkarite politics of social emancipation must be then located in the context of dalits struggling to achieve the status of an equal citizen and at the same time prioritizing his own history of abject humiliation in order to make it as a weapon against the Brahman India. Hence, the constitutional frame of politics as perceived by Ambedkar was not merely a set of republican values and by that very extension a set of rules which an individual must follow in order to strengthen the republic. In addition to such republican values, the freedom of the individual, his rights and personal liberty in Ambedkar’s view are all fundamentally political and are an absolute necessity to have any viable democratic republic in the first place. It is the constitutional politics, contingent to the freedom and the rights exercised and then put to practice by an individual that becomes the precondition of a democratic and just society and not the vice versa. This two pronged political approach of deploying the constitutional democracy and adapting to Buddhist communitarian framework was conceived in order to construct a society which is enabling to dalits and must not be carrying the humiliation of the Brahman India in to the modern republic. It has been the signifier of the arrival of political dalit into the history and modernity.

### **Importance of *Dhamma*<sup>205</sup> (Buddhism)**

India has been the birth place of Buddha and the followers of his *Dhamma* which in its own times have been a social movement against the Brahmans and their idea of the

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Dhamma as described by Buddha is fundamentally different from what the modern society understands by Religion. While religion in this sense understood as something personal, despite of its being used as political tool for mobilizing masses; Dhamma is essentially a social concept and hence becomes indispensable for the functioning of the well beings in a given society. For more detail, see ‘Book IV-Religion and Dhamma’, in BAWS. Volume 11. 1992. Page 316. For more work on Buddhism in India, see, Ling Trevor, Buddhist Revival in India, London, MacMillan. 1980. Also See, Eleanor Zelliot, Indian Rediscovery of Buddhism (1855-1956), in Studies in Pali and Buddhism, edited by A.K. Narain. B.R. Publishing Corporation. Delhi. Page 389 – 406.

segregated society based on the caste system. Entire philosophy of Buddhism has taken birth in the very anti-Caste movement against the *Bramhanas*<sup>206</sup>- the holy grail of Brahmanic philosophy in India – the cornerstone of the now known Hindu caste system. The philosophy of *dhamma* militates against the *Chaturvarna*<sup>207</sup> philosophy of the *Bramhanas* and works towards an open and free society of social equals.<sup>208</sup> The center of Buddha's conception of *dhamma* as opposed to the ascriptive inequalities (religion) is man and the relation of man with another man during his life on earth – making its ethos more rational and social in nature. It is through enquiring in to the conditions of human lives on earth and the causes for their suffering that the *dhamma* attempts to make a life of dignity and peace.

Moreover, unlike Brahmanism, Buddha does not accord any role of central importance or divinity to himself in his conception of *dhamma* and considers himself as a mere *margdata*(someone who shows the way). His *dhamma* could be then described as what Aloysius calls the 'consciousness of oppression' adopted as the 'religion of the oppressed' which 'always manifest itself in the context of sociality and collectivity'.<sup>209</sup> Hence the emphasis of *dhamma* was more on the 'collectives' emancipation rather than individual's salvation – more common with the mundane understanding of the other existing theological discourses. And it is this sight of collectivity and social emancipation that influenced Ambedkar to the teachings of Buddha in general and his *dhamma* in particular. He has even contended that today's untouchables are the Buddhists of the ancient period, who have been gradually ostracized by the revival of Brahmanism in the

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<sup>206</sup> Bramhanas, along with the Vedas (the collection of hymns chanted by sages in the ancient period) are the religious books that acted as the fodder for the 'Bramhanic philosophy'. See, Part V- The Buddha and His Predecessors, BAWS. Volume 11. 1992. Page.87.

<sup>207</sup> Chaturvarna is the system of classifying the society in to four classes, namely, (1) Brahmins, (2) Kshatriyas, (3) Vaishyas, and (4) Shudras. In the chaturvarna all four mentioned classes are not equal to one another, but are bound by the principle of graded inequality – whereby Brahmins are superior to everyone; Kshatriyas are inferior to the Brahmins but are superior to the other three classes; Vaishyas are inferior to the Brahmins and Kshatriyas but are superior to the Shudras and the Shudras are the servile class supposed to serve all the above three.

<sup>208</sup> Part V- The Buddha and His Predecessors, in BAWS. Volume 11. 1992. Page 90.

<sup>209</sup> G. Aloysius, Religion as Emancipatory Identity – A Buddhist Movement among the Tamils under Colonialism. New Age International Publishers. 1998. Page 11.

country. Ambedkar calls the untouchables as ‘broken men’ who comprised of the majority of the Hindus, and were hated and dislike by the Brahmins.<sup>210</sup>

It is to Ambedkar’s credit that he saw Buddhist philosophy much conducive to the modern republican values of constitutional democracy where the language of rights becomes very important for the construction of any possible egalitarian society in the caste ridden India. As he makes a note of it, ‘*(T)he function of Religion is to reconstruct the world and to make it happy and not to explain its origin or its end*’.<sup>211</sup> It is through this image of Buddhism as a rational, creative, compassionate, anti-caste, and egalitarian religion, that we see the modern perspective of a dalit movement taking its philosophical grounding. Through the mass *diksha*(conversion) of dalits in 1956 in to Buddhism, Ambedkar has not only rejuvenated the ancient anti-Brahmin movement to then current dalit politics for restoring their dignity, it has also initiated the Indian Renaissance in the true spirits. It is to this beginning of this home grown Renaissance that dalit movement has been able to reclaim a glorious past long suppressed by the Brahmin hegemony. The politics of restoring dignity to dalits from their own rich historical account of struggle against Brahmanism began to forms that axis on which rests the modern day dalit movement.

It must be mentioned here, that it was not Ambedkar alone who established Buddhism as an emancipatory religion indispensable to future dalit politics, rather there have been others too who played a vital role in recovering the importance of the same from the prevailing dominance of the caste Hindus. In this regard the work done by *DharmanandKoshambi*, *IyotheeThaas*, *JagdipKashyap*, *Rahul Sankrityayan* and *AnandKausalyayan* are of seminal importance.<sup>212</sup> Influenced by the egalitarianism and rationality of Buddhism, all the above mentioned scholars – with numerous others too – helped in restoring the intellectual and morally superior status of Buddhism. However, Ambedkar’s exhaustive research on the Buddha’s *dhamma* and the linkages he draws between the untouchables’ own past with the rise and decline of the Buddhism is of

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<sup>210</sup> Valerian Rodrigues, *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*. OUP. 2002. Page 401. For more detailed analysis, see BAWS, Volume VII. Education Department, Government of Maharashtra. 1990.

<sup>211</sup> Valerian Rodrigues, *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*. OUP. 2002. Page 174.

<sup>212</sup> Eleanor Zelliott, *Indian Rediscovery of Buddhism (1855-1956)*, in *Studies in Pali and Buddhism*, edited by A.K. Narain. B.R. Publishing Corporation. Delhi. Page 389 – 406.

supreme importance to the dalit politics and to the modern day dalit movement. Writing about the significance of conversion among dalits in order to be free from the agony and hatred of Hinduism, he poses some very sharp questions which actually inform his own sociopolitical perspective of an egalitarian world. As he says,

*“Does Hinduism recognize their (untouchables) worth as human beings? Does it stand for their equality? Does it extend to them the benefit of liberty? Does it at least help to forge the bond of fraternity between them and the Hindus? Does it teach the Hindus that the Untouchables are their kindred? Does it say to the Hindus it is a sin to treat the Untouchables as neither man nor beast? Does it tell the Hindus to be righteous to the Untouchables? Does it preach to the Hindus to be just and humane to them? Does it inculcate upon the Hindus the virtue of being friendly to them? Does it tell the Hindus to love them, to respect them and to do them no wrong? In fine, does Hinduism universalize the value of life without distinction?”*<sup>213</sup>

One can infer from the above text that it is the values like equality, liberty, fraternity, kinship, friendship, love, respect and human dignity of life that makes a society livable and is something which untouchables were enforced to live away from, by the dictates of Hinduism. It is the kinship which is not available to untouchables and which is very central to maintain the harmony in any society. Ambedkar understood that the availability of kinship would only be possible through the conversion of untouchables to another religion of egalitarian and rational ethos, in order to end their abject isolation within the Hinduism. It is to this effect that the importance of Buddhism becomes all the more salient as it contains within the philosophy of *dhamma* the universal values of human dignity extending love, liberty and dignity to all – values which are indispensable for dalit emancipation. However, Ambedkar was very much aware of the nuances that come to interplay with the republican values along with communitarian ethos; hence he differentiated ‘*between a community and a society and between kinship and citizenship*’.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> BAWS, Volume V. Education Department Government of Maharashtra. 1989. Page 411 – 12.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. Page 416.

For Ambedkar 'body of kindred' constitutes a community which in turn along with other communities makes a society. It is the feeling of kinship that defines a community system, while the political unity among the communities in a given society is realized through the concept of citizenship, where the role of the state becomes central. Without a common bond of religion, the possibility of any existing kinship is very abysmal and the absence of which eventually leads to a very weak or rather thin notion of a community. Hence, it is through the notion of the religion that a common world view of shared beliefs and values came to take roots among the followers of the same. This shared belief system of common ethical and moral value is then becomes complimentary to the legal rights available to citizens. As in the context of untouchables in India, the civil, legal and political rights available through citizenship are not enough to realize the fruits of equality, fraternity and liberty. Their isolation, suffering and historical humiliation can indeed only then be put an end to, by embracing a different ethical and moral order which is diametrically opposed to the belief system of Hindus premised on Brahmanical hegemony.

The importance of Buddhism and its social message inscribed in the *dhamma* invokes the similar ethos for kinship and a moral order which promotes freedom and liberty and treats every individual as a socially equal. This alternative world view conceptualized by the dalit movement through embracing Buddhism should be seen as their attempt of reformulating the ethos and morals of the society in the course of their sociopolitical struggle.

### **The need for an alternative world view**

In the light of the above discussion, an innocuous question might be raised that why is there a need for an alternative socio political order, that has been put forth through dalit-indigenous political vision. Why after all, when they have been the beneficiary of new democratic struggle, would they think of a society that should be much more substantially sensitive to rights in general than the democracy and its associated institutions already available to them? What constitutes that dynamism which makes the liberal values like liberty, freedom, rights, justice and equality so very central to the politics of both the indigenous and dalits? And more importantly how do they eventually

balance modernity along with their communitarian ethical discourse, as outlined above, for a just society?

Let us take the last question first and state this in an absolutely unequivocal and unambiguous term that the discourse of western modernity that arrived in the third world does provide an emancipatory framework for the social movements to make a critique of the state and its discriminatory practices. It enables them to look self-critically to their own 'cultural' setting and evolve a politics that is both self-reflective and cosmopolitan in the sense that it builds bridges with the oppressed people of the world. However, in India, the upper caste nationalist discourse and as well as of that of the socialist one, was never as self-reflective to their own cultural (Brahmanical) supremacy as it pans out in the writings and actions of the discourse of *dalit-bahujan* politics. As a result modernity that arrived along with colonial paraphernalia was always seen by the cultural elites of India as a potential other which must be opposed in order to awaken their self-respect and honour rooted in their *own* glorious past. This othering of the modernity discourse by the cultural elites was completely oblivious to the humiliation and discrimination suffered by India's multitudes, isolated and excluded by the caste hierarchy – the very root of the India's so called culture which the cultural elites invoked against colonialism. The sociopolitical attitude of India's upper caste cultural elites towards their own people who were and continued to be the victims of caste order can be best described as internal colonialism, where the former were oppressor and the latter oppressed. The cultural elites of India deployed the same language of modernity, which they themselves were beneficiary of through the western education both in abroad and at home, against British colonialism, while at the same time completely negating their own role in enforcing the political subjugation of dalits, *adivasis*, women, and other religious-cultural minorities in India.

It is to this charlatan attitude of India's upper castes, that the dalit movement deployed the discourse of modernity in order to achieve both – their own self respect and dignity as a right bearing individual protected by legal laws and to further expose the colonial socio economic practices and policies, which have only further aggravated their subjugation and sufferings. In other words, the discourse of modernity far from being a cultural

antithesis to the third world politics in a postcolonial scenario, actually compliments the emancipatory political project of dalit and indigenous people. And it does so by prioritizing the individual as a right bearing person – an essential precondition to a functional and healthy republic. However, dalit-indigenous discourse of providing self-respect and dignity to the people as the precondition of any decent and just society goes beyond the accepted meaning of democracy. It is the fight for the democratization of democracy in the sense that it will be the people with no history or a subjugated past will now leads and redefines the democracy through their political struggles. Seen in this way, the republican values and the language of rights both provide and in turn receives its legitimacy from the emerging ethical discourse of the dalit-indigenous alternative viewing of the current world order. Habermas while highlighting the explicit eurocentrism in the discourse of modernity succinctly expounds on this above point as,

*“Western intellectuals should not confuse their discourse over their own Eurocentric biases with the debates in which members of other culture engage them. True, in the cross-cultural discourse we also encounter arguments that spokespersons of other cultures have borrowed from European critics in order to show the validity of human rights remains imprisoned, despite everything, in the original European context. But those non-Western critics, whose self-consciousness comes from their own traditions, certainly do not reject human rights lock, stock, and barrel. The reason, is that other cultures and world religions are now exposed to the challenges of socialmodernity, just as Europe was in its day, when it in some sense “discovered” or “invented” human rights and constitutional democracy.”*<sup>215</sup>

Hence, the language of rights which is coterminous with the arrival of modernity via colonialism became inadvertently crucial in articulating the moral arguments of self-respect, dignity, and justice on the behalf of both dalits and indigenous people. It is to eliminate the social conditions of their sufferings and humiliation arising from the structural inequality further accentuated by the colonial administration that became the axis of dalit-indigenous politics. However, it must be mentioned here that humiliation as

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<sup>215</sup>Jurgen Habermas, Remarks on Legitimation through Human Rights, in The Postnational Constellation – Political Essays. Translated, Edited, and with an introduction by Max Pensky. Polity Press. 2001. Page – 121.

a concept has indeed did receive the attention of liberal philosophy from the west and there have been influential philosophers like Kant and Hegel along with Adam Smith emphasizing on the importance of human dignity, self-respect and freedom.<sup>216</sup> Besides aforementioned liberal philosophers and several others, Karl Marx in his early scholarship, too has engaged with questions like alienation of human being (workers) which squarely does address the problem of humiliation in the nascent stage of European industrialization.

Thinkers from the west belonging to liberal tradition have most definitely underlined the importance of individual values like self-respect, dignity and also it's opposite, humiliation. The coming together of *vivir bien* in Bolivia and the centrality of *dalit dignity* through the concept of *dhamma* in their respective political movement owes its legitimacy to such line of liberal philosophy from the west. The limits of liberal democracy, i.e. confining itself in a distinct lingua franca of jurisprudence and other evolved universal rights of the individual which eventually fails to capture the moral aptitude of the same individual – who is in constant confrontation with the rising conditions of societal humiliation – serves as the background for envisioning of an alternative world order. Naturally then, the moral deficit of a liberal democratic order triggers a dalit-indigenous imagination which not only seeks a change from existing oppressive conditions of their humiliation and social inequalities, but furthermore, it offers a transformative framework of seeing a new world molded in their *own* history – a history where they are the leaders and they are the writers.

The constitution framework of liberal democracy available both in Bolivia and in India, certainly enables the indigenous people and dalits in their respective political struggles, however the procedural aspect of democracy do not necessarily compensate for their wrongs done in the history. What is required is something more substantive and more than mere procedures which are important nonetheless. A democracy that is run on much more substantial set of principles informing a just society could only be possible through the course of their sociopolitical struggles. And it is this commonality of prioritizing dignity of human life that brings together the social movements of both dalits and the

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<sup>216</sup>Gopal Guru, in the Introduction, Humiliation edited by Gopal Guru.OUP 2009.

indigenous people together for the same unified objective of a just and fair society, working to achieve social justice and build an apolitical economy sensitive to the historically marginalized. It is the commonality of such concern of taking pride in their own history – replete with their exploitation at the hands of the dominant social elites – that both dalit and indigenous people envision their own humble role in renewing and redefining the ethics of the ongoing politics. It is this concern for the renewed ethics of a politics equipped with compassion and love for fellow human beings that separates the dalit-indigenous alternative world view from the existing liberal order of constitutional democracy with its several variants. The following words summarize the passion and dynamism of dalit-indigenous world view much more precisely,

*“What we all have in common is that we all have to fight against many obstacles in order to live with dignity – that is to say, to live well. There are many obstacles, but they all have a family resemblance: capitalism among humans and between humans and nature, colonialism, patriarchy, fetishism of commodities, monocultures of knowledge, the linear time of progress, naturalized inequalities, the dominant scale, and the productivism of economic growth and capitalist development. The obstacles to life with dignity are very different, but they all have something in common: to wit, the infinite accumulation of unequal differences on the unjust behalf of very few. We are the dispossessed of the earth because of we are considered ignorant, inferior, local, particular, backward, unproductive, or lazy. The immensurable suffering we get from this and the waste of world experience it brings about are unjust, but they are not historical fatalities. We fight against them under the conviction that they can be eliminated. But our struggle depends less on our objectives than on the quality of our actions and emotions in striving to attain them.”*<sup>217</sup>

It is the uncoupling of dalit-indigenous lived experience with the persisting prejudices and hatred against them that forms the contours of their political world view. A society which continues to be plagued by the structural inequalities not only be not accepted anymore, but will be fought with the politics of social justice, is essentially the social

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<sup>217</sup>Boaventura De Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South – Justice against Epistemicide*. Paradigm Publishers. 2014. Page – 6.

message of both the indigenous Bolivia and dalit India. The emphatic political message that dalit-indigenous world view offers to the world is that that politics of self-respect, human dignity, and assertion for the equal rights, thus launched is not deficient in moral and ideological theory and the normative promises it offers. Moreover it constantly builds upon its own promises in the course of concrete political struggles. Such an alternative viewing of the world is much more universal and shares all the emancipatory normative credentials with any such political ideology, that genuinely believes and work for the oppressed multitudes.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up the above discussion, what has been delineated here is that both the dalit and indigenous movement from India and Bolivia are waging a political struggle, at the heart of which remains the reconstruction of a new society. Both the movements in their respective geography locate the agency of their movement in the discriminatory history of the humiliations of dalits and indigenous people. One important comparative similarity, which could not be explored in more detail due to the paucity of the scope of this chapter remains is that both the groups draw heavily from their rich glorious past of a formidable heritage. While indigenous people take pride in the pre-colonial Inca Empire, dalits invoke the magnificence and enlightenment of the Buddhist era and see themselves as the rightful inheritor of the same. It is from such affluent history where both dalits and indigenous people were not only seen as the prosperous lot but were the guiding forces behind the moral and ethical ordering of the society. And it is these principles that they now deploy in order to resurrect their new sociopolitical identity.

Only difference and that is an important difference that makes both the movement singularly distinct is that while the Inca Empire did enjoy the political and administrative control of huge swath of land in the Andes America, the same cannot be the completely true in case of the lower castes or the broken people from India. While there does exist a vast documentation of the civilization magnificence on the areas of Incan political influence, the history of broken people/dalits have been an continuous struggle against Brahmanical hegemony right from the days of the Buddha or perhaps even before that. To be fair, Buddhism did enjoy an intellectual and moral hegemony in the ancient India

for almost a thousand years, but eventually Brahmanism prevailed. The point here, however, is that it is in their past that both the social movement reinvent their political agency. It is in the past that both dalits and the indigenous people look for the guiding principles to find the new ethics of their present day politics. Hence, it is the agency of the past as the inventor of the present, which not only become very vital to their respective politics, but it also helps in apprehending the fact that the progressive ethos of the politics could also be found in the annals of the bygone era. That a new society, a new movement, a new politics shall always be found through the guiding force of the current times, do not always hold true, as is evident today in the politics of dalit-indigenous people. In the end, the politics of dalit-indigenous world is a complex mixture of both the politics of self-assertion and self-denigration – a constant invocation of the suffering of their past in tandem with the modes of representative democracy.

The promise of the politics thus offered, not only holds the future of the oppressed people from Bolivia and India but it also does extend an alternative discourse to the ongoing global socioeconomic crisis in the world today. The global economy which is increasingly fraught with the deprivation on the one hand and rising assets of the tiny minority of the capitalists is not the part of the moral world order as envisioned by the social movements under the study. The rising inequalities due to the global spread of neoliberalism, further accentuates the deprivation faced by the multitudes of the people in the world. While the processes of globalization and its socioeconomic impact could be discussed separately, neoliberalism has its own patterns of globalization which by now has its complete sway over an overwhelming number of developing and underdeveloped countries.

If there is something to gain from the political churning in Bolivia is the demonstrated invulnerability of neoliberalism. Experiences from Bolivia is not only a telling account of how does a social movement based primarily on indigenous assertion braces itself up against neoliberalism, but it also conclusively proves to their counterparts in India that the path to adapt to ‘Dalit Capitalism’ is sure footed recipe of further self-agony. A point to the latter shall be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Both the dalit and the indigenous social movements have responded to such reordering of the global economy which is only complimentary to the vision of the society defined through affirming the dalit-indigenous rights and their social dignity. It is important to note here that that the socioeconomic side of the alternative is a much more decisive and total than the cultural model espoused by the dalit-indigenous social movement. And it is through their responses to the ongoing neoliberal model of growth, in which we shall endeavor to see the furthering of the dalit-indigenous political world view.

## Chapter V

### The Problematic of ‘Good Life’: Dalit and the Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism

*..the crisis is not only financial but also social.*

*Francois Morin*

#### An Overview to the idea of Good Life

The construction of a good life or the well-being of people has been one of the most integral components of the politics of all times. Be the proponents of the welfare economics, pen pushers for the global free market or even those who are hardened Marxists – who can only conceive a possible good life after and *only* after the demise of capitalism – have all, but a common denomination of a bare minimum achievable conception of a good life with varying ideological differences, of course. There has been ample work from various strands of philosophy, economics and anthropology on similar theme which reflects on the promise of politics as an act to serve the objective of extending the fruits of good life or well-being to the larger public.<sup>218</sup> Even, during the wars – ancient, medieval or the modern warfare – one of the argument among warring factions would invariably be rescuing the ‘mankind’ from the so called threat to a certain ‘way of life’, which must then be eliminated to restore another idea of a good life. The entire goal of a desirable putative political society, hence forth, is in many ways are aimed at in achieving a life of fulfillment for its populaces which can then be termed as an ultimate exemplar for good life for all and sundry. This is the one trait in the formation of a political society which has been at the center of some of the most profound philosophical debates and questions exploring meaning of lives and its purpose. From Plato’s ‘ideal state’ to Aristotle’s ‘rule of law’, to the teachings of the enlightenment period, conservatives not excluded, till the trepidations for social justice in contemporary times, the concern and the ways for realizing a good life for ‘man’ has been implicit to the varying world of liberal political philosophy.

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<sup>218</sup>Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society*, Harvard University press.1996; George Akerlog, and Kranton, ‘Economics and identity.’ *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115.3 (2000): 715-753.; Adam Smith, *Smith, Adam. The theory of moral sentiments.* Penguin, 2010.

However, this professed construction of a political society promising good lives to its citizens/ people requires the building of a political economy conducive to accomplish such a life, in the first place. Consequently, economics plays an instrumental role in the assembling of such a political society that is enabling to the people's needs and requirements for having a better life. In other words, even before politics comes to have a go at it, the philosophical necessity that remains is what constitutes a good life? Or in more precise terms what economic foundation in a society will lead to such a life for its inhabitants. Are there some universal guiding principles for the realization of good life? Are ethics and morals of a given society important for the making of such a life for people? How much is the share of economics in the formation of such an economy that promises good lives? Is the liberty of life and property of an individual integral to such formulation or the construction of a good life must then negate everything that has the interests of an individual at its core? Essentially then, the central question which arises is that what form of economic foundation must a state lay in order to bring out about such accomplishment.

Discussing the similar question of what the good life is, though in a different setting of the world of genetic engineering and its corresponding ethical implications, Habermas contends that in the world of philosophy both the 'theories of justice' and 'morality' have seemingly taken to 'their own separate path today'.<sup>219</sup> He further explains that seen in the sense of 'right way to live' they both stand separate from the world of 'ethics'. Any possibility for 'morality' joining cause with the 'ethics' can only happen when 'an ethical self-understanding' informed through moral insights underlines the necessity of 'one's own well-being with the interest in justice'.<sup>220</sup> And it is here at this insight offered by Habermas that we must then locate the construction of a plausible political economy – a condition necessary to realize good life – in theories of justice and in the politics of social justice. Amartya Sen, in the similar vein, talks about the increased chasm between ethics and economics leading to deficiency in contemporary economic theory. For Sen any meaningful economic reorganization, both at the level of theory and practice, must

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<sup>219</sup>Jurgen Habermas, 'Are there Postmetaphysical Answers to the Question: What is the "Good Life"? in The Future of Human Nature. Polity Press 2003.Pg 1 – 16.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. page 4.

engage with the study of moral philosophy.<sup>221</sup> Building on Rawls predicament that happiness is not tantamount to one's well-being, whereby the former is simply a 'momentous achievement'<sup>222</sup>, Sen put forth the idea of going well beyond the 'self-interest' seeking definition of well-being rooted in individual capacity which is very much the shining emphasis of the promised 'high life' in neoliberal market economy. It is his push for bringing ethics and economics at 'closer contact' wherein lies his theoretical understanding of the idea for good life/ well-being of an individual, which as it follows in his work, is rooted in ethics as well as in the welfare economics. Evidently, two things become clear here, first that for such a probable society, offering well-being of its people, necessary is the role of the welfare state and secondly, any such likely political structure must then de-center the self-interest seeking individual from its political and economic schema. In other words, it becomes obligatory then to start looking for the 'common good' approach instead of merely thinking in the domain of 'rights' where an individual, albeit sovereign and supreme, self-limits the probable political possibilities of his own well being.

It is in the background of such a discourse trying to explore the idea and meaning of what constitutes good life and the economic contours of the same that we find that the missing link is the broader politics driving the same objective. It is through the politics directed towards well being of for the community of politically conscious individual that we may hope to arrive upon such a balanced political economy. Henceforth, it is through the politics of the social movement engaged in working on such alternative political economy which then bring us closer to desired understanding of the idea of good life. In the light of the discussion held in previous chapters, I shall be arguing that any possible construction of such a society facilitating good life for its inhabitants can only be negotiated through politics of social movement. For it is through politics alone can one negotiate its plausible constituents. The studies on and of social movements expounds on this much contested political terrain which has gone in to the making of hitherto human history. It is the politics of a given social movement which informs the ongoing peoples'

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<sup>221</sup> Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics*. Basil Blackwell 1987.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* page 60

demands, steering the formation of a political economy working to bring socioeconomic equality among the people.

This study of social movements and its politics, in the context of dalit-indigenous struggle for the life of liberty, equality and dignity informs the very infrastructure of a political process that can define the constituents of well-being for the people at large. Both indigenous thought and the political discourse among dalits give primacy to their notion of organizing a communal life, derived through their own rich cultural past which has been up till now left marginalized and unexplored in most of the standard academic work of political economy. Dalit-indigenous world view, which articulates a pattern of a society based on human dignity, rights, equality and social justice, have developed a rare understanding of their desired political economy through their responses to the issues crucial to their own and as well as for the well-being of all. Unfortunately, there is a very scant regard, if at all, given to the views on political economy harbored by dalit-indigenous people. The available rich corpus of the theoretical writings on the political economy of so called third world nations, mischievously conspicuous by the absence of the understanding imparted by such marginalized discourse on political economy as that of dalit-indigenous world view on the same. The comparative world view of *vivir-bien* and the egalitarian moral values of dalit discourse rooted in Buddha and his *dhamma*, as discussed in the preceding chapter, allows us to take a further foray in to the dalit-indigenous ideological frame and their conceptualization of such political economy enabling the good life for the people.

Hence in order to arrive at the dalit-indigenous response to the current economic crisis, in short to the era of neoliberalism, wherein, also lies the program for their socioeconomic liberation, we must then locate the same in the broader sequence of world system of capitalism and attempts to understand the process of unbridled growth of global capital that undercuts the very of idea of propagating a genuine good life for the residents of this planet. We must address in Michael Sandel's<sup>223</sup> words 'the moral limits of the market economy' which might give some answers to the crisis of our times triggered due to the pitfalls inbuilt in neoliberalism and bring back the 'social' in the focus of the politics

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<sup>223</sup>MichealSandel, What money can't buy: the moral limits of markets.Macmillan, 2012.

again. For the idea of good life conceived through the dalit-indigenous philosophical world view and understood through the politics of their respective social movement is far very different from what is being passed as, in the name of good life in the society ruled by the free market economy and the ethics of the same.

### **World Capitalism and the growth of Market Economy**

When Vladimir Ilyich Lenin analyzed and summed up the spread of imperialism in the early twentieth century as ‘the highest stage of Capitalism’, little did he know that his understanding of ‘monopoly capital’ and the ‘free trade’ would continue to flourish in the 21st century even after the debacle of imperial infrastructure of colonialism which he himself desired and worked to eradicate.<sup>224</sup> The hegemony of capital and its associated trade behavior has been at the center of five hundred years of the history of colonial plunder in Asia, Africa and particularly in South America where it all began with Columbus finding of the ‘new world’ in 1492..<sup>225</sup> One important aspect of colonialism in this light has been the continuous search by imperial west for finding new markets along with the quest for more natural resources to fuel the growth of the then ongoing industrialization back home. One obvious expectation after the decolonization of the colonies would be the closure or the withdrawal of global capital’s hold from the third world economy, as they no longer then were the masters of its economy. However, far from disappearing of the capital, the new ‘nation states’ or the post-colonies as they are now called in a postcolonial theoretical frame, were given the dream of certain ‘development path’ now widely known as neoliberalism.

This acknowledged development trajectory, outlined by the erstwhile imperial masters, was seen as a necessity for the socioeconomic growth of the periphery. However, the reality has always deluded many a scholars alike and economists have seldom been the worst sufferer of this delusion of ‘development economy’. It is for no reason then, that the economists world over have been of a particular bent of mind, bending only in favour of more freedom to market and less to zero government regulation on the same. The

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<sup>224</sup> <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>

<sup>225</sup> Eduardo Galleno, *Open Veins of Latin America – Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. Three Essays Collective 2010.

alternative economic model, mostly by socialist and welfarist economists were and continued to be an aberration in the world where economics as a discipline has been deliberately made to be studied and perceived in isolation from politics. Francois Morin, is correct in saying when he points out the need for bringing the economy in the realm of ‘political economy’ and the need for more political economist at work who could see the world of fraud and global scammers set out by the hegemony of free flowing finance capital.<sup>226</sup> Seen in this light, the development trajectory of the world and especially that of the postcolonial world, at the behest of global capital is now writing an altogether new script of capital’s hegemony also called the monopoly of global finance capital which has led to the meteoric rise in the wealth of the wealthy and has further push the toiling masses to the brink of starvation and to the status of a totally impoverished and dispossessed lot.<sup>227</sup>

The global reality today and especially that of the economy of the post-colonies have been anything but independent from the global capital, as many scholars have pointed out and have maintained that colonialism being long disappeared is nothing but a misnomer and have actually argued its continued presence in a new avatar altogether. What these scholars now see as the resultant of the imperial empire of the bygone days is neo-imperialism or neo-colonialism – a politico-economic process whereby erstwhile colonies may not be under the direct political control of the colonial powers but are in fact cripplingly predisposed to the economic and the strategic alliances with the same.<sup>228</sup> The proverbial iron hand of erstwhile colonialism has now been replaced by the ‘invisible hand’ of the free market and neo-imperialism has now succeeded the horrors of imperialism. In other words, it is the politico-economic interests of the ‘center’ again which dominates and steers the economy of the ‘periphery’ – a process which is now so complete that it rarely invites any rancor on behalf of the ‘economists’.

This is the era of neoliberalism or in other words the monopoly of finance capital. This era specially takes the front seat since 1980s at the global level and it is in this neoliberal

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<sup>226</sup> Francois Morin, *A World Without Wall Street?* Seagulls Books. 2013

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, *Colonialism and Neo colonialism* 1964; Noam Chomsky, *The Washington Connection and the Third World Fascism* 1979; Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, 1965.

setting, pervasive both in India and Bolivia that we now turn our eyes to, in order to understand and interpret the dalit-indigenous responses to the same. How does neoliberalism impact the promise of dalit-indigenous politics which not only seeks a change in their abysmal socioeconomic condition, but also the ethical and morals they assign to the economic planning? Before we set out to enquire the specific struggles of dalit-indigenous social movement on their idea of social and economic well-being, the same must be firmly placed in the larger evolution of the capital and its reach at the global scale today. The evolution of capital, the corresponding spread of the Western imperialism, the exploitation of the colonies/ periphery fueled by the industrial needs of the west/ center, anti-colonial struggles against the abject exploitation of the colonies and the subsequent formation of the sovereign independent government in the new nation-states is, but one seamless trajectory, wherein lies the dalit-indigenous voices trying to etch out a new world perspective from the misery of their long drawn exploitation both at the hands of colonial plundering and by the incessant social apathy of their ‘fellow natives’ in their respective geographical location.

The growing currency for the global market of free exchange with the least or (preferably) no state regulation got shot in its arm after the advent of Reagan era in United States and that of Margaret Thatcher in Britain. Subsequently, the inevitability of the free market seen as the most efficient way of organizing economy became the new norm not only at home of the capital but more importantly among the former colonies. A process which was succinctly highlighted by Charles Tilly as “the two independent master processes of the [modern] era: the creation of a system of national states and the formation of a worldwide Capitalist system”.<sup>229</sup> The birth of the nation state and the spread of global capitalism have been the both the obverse and the reverse side of the same coin, where world witness the emergence of the domestic bourgeoisie tethered to the economic interest of the metropolitan.

In other words the newly emergent nation state through its domestic bourgeoisie acted as an catalyst for the reach and the spread of global capital, as the former lacked the

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<sup>229</sup>Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, New York: Russell Sage 1984. Page 147.

infrastructure of ‘capital’ which continued to be centered at its home in the west – a point very well explained by the Peruvian social scientist AnibalQuijano.<sup>230</sup> Emergent bourgeoisie then in the post-colony ensured the trade relations with the west, which in turn established the ever growing network of the capital till its present form of free market economy driven by the finance capital; they also however ensured the establishment of a class which has its own economic interests at stake in preserving the same order. Latin America as discussed in previous chapters has been the first to delink itself from its imperial masters and declared independence in the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, its relationship with the coloniality<sup>231</sup> remains to be of one continuous struggle against the European and now North American socio economic interests dominating its land.<sup>232</sup> The pre-colonial and the post-colonial world as we see today would not have been possible but for the colonization of Americas, which is ‘the constitutive act of the modern world-system’.<sup>233</sup>

This new mode of operability of the capital at the global scale is also termed as the ‘financialization’ of the capital or as Giovanni Arrighi succinctly remark as the ‘finance capital as the latest and highest stage of world capitalism.’<sup>234</sup> Giovanni, however, building on an earlier classic and much celebrated Fernand Braudel’s work ‘*Capitalism and Civilization*’ underlined that this very aspect of financialization is not something that takes place as an aberration to Capital, but is very much an integral component of Capitalism. Braudel emphasizes that financial expansion which defines the global economy of today ‘is not a new phenomenon but a recurrent tendency of historical

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<sup>230</sup> AnibalQuijano, Imperialism, Social Classes, and the State in Peru, in ‘Theories of Development: Modes of Production or Dependency?’ Edited by Ronald H. Chilcote and Deale L. Johnson. Sage publications. 1983.

<sup>231</sup> Coloniality is defined as the ‘creation of set of states linked together within an interstate system in hierarchical layers’ in AnibalQuijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern World-System. ISSJ 1992. Page 550.

-It is further explained as something which continues even after the end of ‘formal colonial status’ and the hierarchy of the coloniality which is actually the extension of the colonial hierarchy between the Colonizer and the Colonized gets manifested in the socioeconomic and political realm which then in turn informs the world-system economy.

<sup>232</sup> AnibalQuijano, Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality, in ‘Globalization and the Decolonial Option’, edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar. Routledge 2010.

<sup>233</sup> AnibalQuijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern World-System. ISSJ 1992. Page 549 – 557.

<sup>234</sup> Giovanni Arrighi, The Long Twentieth Century – Money, Power and the Origins of our Times. Verso 2010

capitalism from its earlier beginnings.<sup>235</sup> He further explains that financial expansion of the global economy is not merely a recurring phenomenon to capitalism but the former also reorganizes the regime of capital accumulation. In other words capitalism resorts to finance capital in the time of its crisis, developed due to the factors internal to it, in order to further its hegemonic grip on the world economy.

This above dynamism of historical capitalism as narrated and explained by Giovanni in his comprehensive work gives us an introduction to the neoliberal world order of more contemporary times, as it is widely known now. However, capitalism improvising itself in a cyclical fashion in times of its crisis through financial expansion is not something which is our primary concern here, but how it affects the functioning of the state and its government policies' impact on the society needs our closer examination. The unfolding of the global neoliberal politics and the brutal price that masses are paying in the aftermath of the global economic crisis, triggered by the former is a very well documented discourse now. The field experience from both Bolivia and India along with the ample new research underlines the rising anger and frustration among the common masses against the economic order which has caused severe unemployment and acute agrarian crisis, especially in India. Keeping the alternate perspective offered from indigenous Bolivia against the hegemony of the world capitalist system and the churning among the dalits vis a vis neoliberalism, there is an attempt here to understand the under development faced by the global south on one hand and the subsequent political discourse generated to address the same in social movements in both the country. That the withdrawal of the state under the neoliberal regimes, while has given birth to fierce political protests world over, it has also brought to the fore distinct and differentiated political responses which needs our more careful attention as it has affected and have indeed shaped the two rather complimentary world view of indigenous people of Bolivia and dalits in India.

### **Decolonization and the Third World Nationalism**

The world history as we know today is witnessed to the tides of anti-colonial struggles swiftly followed by the decolonization of Asia and Africa, wherein the foundation of the new 'nation states' was laid in the mirror image of their respective colonial masters. The

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid. page 371.

decolonization of Latin America, as discussed previously, was completed under the strong and visionary leadership of Simon Bolivar in the first half of the nineteenth century, some about hundred fifty years ahead of the emergent decolonized states in Asia and Africa. However, despite creoles' struggle for the decolonization of the South America earlier, decolonization remains to a project unfinished. The very idea of purging the continent of its colonial vestige continues to be the part of political lingua franca in Latin America, especially of the indigenous social movements in Bolivia, today.<sup>236</sup>

In 1980, Willy Brandt – leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany from 1964 to 1987 who also served as Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1969 to 1974 – chaired a commission that came up with its report popularly called 'Brandt Report'.<sup>237</sup> The Brandt Report for the first time underlined the existing division of the world in to two economic spheres – the rich North and the poor South. In the post Bretton woods system which then was increasingly moving to its now established neoliberal regime, Brandt Report was more directed to the 'wealthy' to intervene for the welfare of 'impoverished'. Implying, of course, that 'social change comes from above' and not from the revolting politics of the 'below'.<sup>238</sup> That the politics of the socio-culturally and economically exploited South is the only solvent of the exploitative economic system pushed and pursued by the North was not the part of this benign world view of Willy Brandt and his cohorts on the commission. Neither had it reflected on the wealth with in the South and on the poverty in North. To put it simply, the North and the South division came up as class neutral within their own respective geo-political space, which of course is untrue. Neither the North is monolithic nor is the South homogenous. The class proclivities in both the society and as in consequence, the generated corresponding economic interests enabled the spread and the maintenance of the neoliberal hegemony, now enjoyed by the multinational corporations' world over today.

But that said, the postcolonial perspective – an important segment among the third world nationalism discourse – has lot more to say which goes against the very definition of the

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<sup>236</sup>Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Liberal democracy and ayllu democracy in Bolivia: The case of Northern Potosí." *The Journal of Development Studies* 26.4 (1990)

<sup>237</sup><http://www.stwr.org/information-centre/reports/brandt-report-summary><http://www.stwr.org/information-centre/reports/brandt-report-summary>

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

world conceptualized by the Brandt Report.<sup>239</sup> Postcolonial understanding on the global economy is deeply shaped by their interpretation of world culture which has in turn been framed in the colonial past – east defined and discovered by the west – in the sense that entire South has something in common as against the North. Following closely on the heels of neocolonial perspective rather than immersing in the postcolonial cultural juxtaposing of north and the south, it can be stated the countries from the South not only shares the colonial exploitative past but they continue to be dominated by the same western economic model and the system which has colonized them in the first place. Postcolonial scholarship too recognizes this process of dominant economic theory and model that came along with the political sovereignty in all the newly independent countries in the South.<sup>240</sup> Kwame Nkrumah's, an influential political leader from Ghana whom became its first prime minister, defines this process as neocolonialism - a process which should be seen in continuance or an extension to the old colonial system. The only difference is that it has got new meanings and a fresh economic model of preaching 'development' to the 'third world' through which it further exploits and dominate the former colonies which are now politically independent.<sup>241</sup> Henceforth, the scenario which emerges then is where the third world countries may not have to surrender their political sovereignty to the developed west, but they are exploited nonetheless with the near total economic hegemony of the global capitalism through the model of free market economy.

In spite of the momentous trajectory of decolonization in Asia and Africa and after the two great wars, the economic arrangement favoring the erstwhile colonial powers in furthering their imperial interests continues to be the order of the modern day world.<sup>242</sup> In the same pedigree of imperial hegemony, understood through the neocolonial perspective, we see now in operation the neoliberal hegemony of the west, which in a way questions both the course of decolonization and as well as the course of nationalism among the 'third world nation' today. The aggressive neoliberalism of past three decades, actually have raised more questions on the aspect of so called 'nationalist' churning in the third world, rather than engaging the sociopolitical movements leading to

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<sup>239</sup> For details, see Chapter III.

<sup>240</sup> Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. 2001. Pg 46-47.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, 1965.

decolonization. The legacy left by the anti-colonial movements especially in India, as much as in Bolivia, was claimed by the ruling elites on the promise of forming a new nation completely absolved of its colonial past. However, barring few honorable exceptions, the writ of colonial paraphernalia is written all over the postcolonial state. And this mirroring of the colonial structure was never as complete as it is in the restructuring the economy of the post-colonies, which has been designed to suit the economic interest of the developed rich countries of the global North.

Commenting on similar such theme, Slavoj Zizek calls this hegemony of the global capitalism as the 'Universalism of Capitalism' and states that in the contemporary times at the level of economy 'capitalism has triumphed worldwide'. For Zizek, 'the mask of cultural diversity today is sustained by the actual universalism of global capital'.<sup>243</sup> In other words the seemingly interrelated multicultural world or in short the globalized world today is nothing but a façade, behind which capitalism is in full force with all its glory. Zizek further elaborates and correctly points out that the process of Neoliberalism is something which is been asked to be implemented primarily in the third world countries on the promise of their 'development' in cahoots with the third world leadership in order to cater to the rising demand of the new markets for the declining western industry. The idea was and continued to be so, i.e. to open the new market for the big industrialists from the developed world. Conversely, it can be said that the developed world domestically do not operate in a neoliberal paradigm, as they strongly protect and defend their domestic industries and hence look for the new market elsewhere for the benefit of domestic bourgeoisie. And it is here wherein lies – mirroring the developed world – the new discourse of asking a neoliberal state to intervene in order to provide basic common goods like health, education and employment for the well-being of the people.<sup>244</sup>

The thing which is a miss in this narrative is the unbridle resources of the developed world which is then ably deployed to meet certain basic amenities (safe drinking water, urban infrastructure, education etc.) for the people. Such vast resources at the disposal of

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<sup>243</sup>Slavoj Zizek, *Living In The End Time* – Speech at London School of Economics, July 2010. Can be accessed here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DxzpPs1pF0>

<sup>244</sup>Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, *An uncertain glory: India and its contradictions*. Allen Lane 2013.

the developed world are harnessed through the success of the global capital in the first place.<sup>245</sup> Any idea of the post-colonial nation state intervening to provide material benefits to its habitants and at the same time working towards achieving the neoliberal dream of a ‘good life’ for its citizens is a plain, big oxymoron. The alternative economic model must be then worked out in the respective domestic setting of the developing world or in the global south which should be as divorced from the global capitalist outreach as much it is possible. For to conceive a proactive state working for providing basic welfare to its people while at the same time the same state protecting the interests of the multinational big corporations who are working to diminish the former is practically an improbable situation.

In fact, the very idea of a post-colonial state, the way it has evolved in the scholarly writings of subaltern school along with the postcolonial school of thought, has an umbilical cord relationship with the west in the sense that latter is their only reference point. This referencing of the development (west/north) for the new nation states (east/south) leads to a churning of a tautological discourse, where the post-colonial state continues to be seen situated in the colonial history alone. And hence the discourse thus generated is divorced from the vibrant political discourse which has been arguing for an alternative model of society, economy and the polity. This diversity of the ‘native’ and the political voices therein was never subject to the articulation of any conceivable nationalist discourse in the body structure of the postcolonial state.<sup>246</sup> The subsequent evolution of a post-colonial economy negotiated a twin approach – the spin of popular nationalism on one hand and struggle for their economic freedom from the global capital, on the other. And since the middle of 1980s, we see a decline in both the approaches on the behalf of ruling dispensations in the third world nation states. Not only the new economic policies pushed through ‘Washington Consensus’ found newer markets in the global south, the then current respective regimes fully implemented the neoliberal program favoring the domestic corporate lobbies at the altar of good old nationalism – favorite ally in their political consolidation in the aftermath of ‘decolonization’. Neoliberalism, seen in this light, besides being a hegemonic discourse wherein global

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<sup>245</sup> Francis Morin (2013)

<sup>246</sup> This line of argument has been discussed in detail in Chapter III of this dissertation.

capital now practically controls the world economy, has also been the catalyst for putting the genesis of nation states, if not nationalism, in its historical slot of imperial continuum. Conversely, the very discourse neoliberalism peddles, that the economy will be governed by the market and not by the government – a body accountable to people – actually upsets the historiography of both decolonization and the popular nationalist discourse.

### **Neoliberalism: India & Bolivia**

In the case of indigenous and dalit socioeconomic outlook, one parallel and the glaring aspect of both the corresponding Bolivian and India's economy has been the totalizing impact of the neoliberalism and at the same time, the inclination of the ruling classes to embrace the same, which actually corroborates the paradigm of neo-imperialism/neo-colonialism in both nation states. The functioning of the neoliberal state in both the country, to follow Harvey's analysis, works against the interest of labour and working class in general, while at the same time, it strongly promotes the 'restoration or formation of class power' mostly at the expense of the former.<sup>247</sup> In this milieu the promise of the politics thus offered through the social churning and the subsequent political movement among the dalit-indigenous people initiates an alternative discourse to the ongoing global socioeconomic crisis in the world today which is of course resisted by the neoliberal state in their respective geographical location, nonetheless. The current crisis of global economy and the crisis of neoliberalism as such, could not be better explained than the persuasive message which informs the politics of social movement in Latin America today. What the indigenous people of Bolivia have politically achieved in the contemporary period through their social movements is something of major significance in terms of it being the people's weapon against the dictates of the global capital. As succinctly put by Silvia Rivera, "This (Government of Evo Morales) is an umbrella against the acid rain of sabotaging Capitalism."<sup>248</sup> Indigenous peoples' government led by Morales indeed has been so far the most effective bulwark against the neoliberal push of the neo-imperial West.

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<sup>247</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. OUP 2005. Page 76.

<sup>248</sup> Silvia Rivera in a personal interview to this researcher.

However, let us begin from the established fact that the Capitalism as the ‘single world economic system’ has been under the control of the domestic economies in the postcolonial settlers’ nations ( like that of Bolivia) as well as has been dominating the economic policies in other nation states (like that of India). Both the nation state under study here, continued to remain under the ideological tutelage of global capitalism. What had defined the world economy in the colonial period through ‘accumulation’ from the colonies now preserve its hegemony through ‘appropriation’ or what David Harvey described as ‘accumulation through dispossession’.<sup>249</sup> This latter articulation of accumulation is very much the state of economy in Bolivia currently, also understood as ‘extractive economy’, where the primary source of state’s revenue come through the extraction of its natural resources.<sup>250</sup> However, this economy via extraction of natural resources, which while remains to be part of this one continuum of exploitative trajectory of global capitalism, has brought a huge change in the domestic economy of Bolivia under the Evo Morales’ presidency. True to its philosophical roots this very model of development came to be called by the Vice President Garcia Linera as ‘*Andean capitalism*’ as which reflects the country’s political economic reality where economy is nowhere close to an one organized so that it can be given a socialist mould.<sup>251</sup> Seeing their economic limitations and also more importantly due to its dependency on the extraction of natural resources, we see the emphasis indigenous social movement and that of Morales government on the politics of ‘*vivir-bien*’, as discussed in the previous chapter, rather than relying entirely on macroeconomic growth through the former model.

The agenda of neoliberalism in the underdeveloped and the developing world while on one hand has forced the withdrawal of the welfare state from people’s lives (for its being too very interventionist and thus an obvious economic hindrance), it has also been able to thrust upon a singular definition of good life for the general populace – a life ostensibly ‘free’ under the unbridled and unrestricted growth of market economy. The meaning and the way of living understood in this way is very crucial to neoliberalism and hence the

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<sup>249</sup> David Harvey, The ‘New’ Imperialism: Accumulation By Dispossession. Socialist Register, 2004. Page 63-87.

<sup>250</sup> Linda C. Farthing and Benjamin H. Kohl, *Evo's Bolivia: Continuity and change*. University of Texas Press, 2014.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.* page 87.

lives of the inhabitants of market economy was made contingent to the unbridled and unrestricted growth of the market and thus making the role of the state further reduced in formulating any meaning full policies for the well-being of its citizens. In this context it is important to note the definition of neoliberalism put forth by Prof Guru with reference of its impact on dalit lives in India,

*“Neo-liberalism could be defined in terms of what could be called the screening out of the essence of the state. Neo-liberalism seeks to empty the state of its essence, which gets facilitated through state intervention. To put it differently, neo-liberalism seeks to limit the state’s spheres of influence at its best, and make it surrogate at its worst. Neo-liberalism tends to expand the social basis of the surrogate state. It creates in dalits for the first time the desire to become a part of this surrogacy. Are not mobile dalit intellectuals and the NGOs contributing to the expansion of global capital helping the state? Neo-liberalism also affects rather adversely the idea of equality. Neo-liberalism intensifies an un-dissolvable paradox. On the one hand, it proposes only sectoral equality and not the generic idea of equality, and on the other, it also propagates abstract equality in the sense that it creates unified spheres of cultural consumption. It insists on the promotion of only the principle of equality of opportunity, and not equality of outcome. It discourages people from overburdening the state with the flow of demands. While it promotes the idea of a global civil society, at the same time it creates, at the social/cultural level, mutually insulated and indifferent spheres of social life, with the primacy of market- based equality”.*<sup>252</sup>

Naturally then, in the neoliberal scheme of the affairs, state was presumed to be more of an impediment or a hurdle on the path to freedom of individual in free market society. The ‘free’ aspect of the free market was seen not only as an essential part of the economy structure that hold promises for providing a good life, it was also considered an indispensable a quality which brings efficiency leading to astronomical growth in the domestic economy and by that very extension leads to better lives for the people. However, this designated path to achieve ‘better life’ is not tantamount to a ‘good life’

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<sup>252</sup>Gopal Guru, Rise of the ‘Dalit Millionaire’ A Low Intensity Spectacle, Economic and Political Weekly, December 15, 2012.

ipso facto. On the contrary, the economic recession in the year 2008 and the general status of the global economy subsequent to that and which even continues till today has variedly proven that the only unequivocal doing of neoliberalism has been the rising global inequalities and bringing socioeconomic miseries to the people all around the world.

However, like all the imposed miseries of the world, neoliberalism too did not go unchallenged. Considering the growth and the reaches of the neoliberal practices in the last three decades or so, one couldn't help, but is compelled to acknowledge the despair it brought and the resistance met to the same in the global south today. The resistance to neoliberal economic policies has been quite phenomenal in Latin America and was found to be particularly fierce and pervasive in Bolivia. The resounding success of the social movements in Bolivia today owes as much as to the consolidation of masses against neoliberal governments, as much as they sprang from their socio-cultural moorings of protests and quest for social and political change. The political articulation against the global capital/ neoliberalism is very much a part of the indigenous politics in Bolivia and has been at the core of their social movements. Its impact on the indigenous people and their response henceforth, needs our careful attention. Similarly, while the ideological resistance against the neoliberal exploitation is very much part of the vibrant dalit discourse in India, their response to the same has striking parallels to that of Bolivia's indigenous people, if not completely identical.

The situation of both dalit and indigenous people must be then seen in the sense of what David Harvey conceives as the socioeconomic questions of a given time and spaces and that are defined by the distinct 'socio-ecological and political-economic processes' in a given society.<sup>253</sup> It is to these distinctive patterns of processes in their respective social and political location that informs dalit-indigenous' understanding of what constitutes social and economic injustice and the politics subsequently evolved to remedy the same. Now juxtaposing both the dalit and indigenous movement with the above insight, we see that both the social movements under study here have taken a very distinct recourse – while resisting the overall neoliberal project – in their response to the ideological

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<sup>253</sup>David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Blackwell Publishing. 1996. Page 6.

paraphernalia of neoliberalism. The common theoretical premise underneath both the political movement is essentially couched in the politics of social justice, without which it is impossible to construct a society that can enable good lives to its inhabitants marred by pervasive social inequalities.

In short, the post-colonial politics of the new nation state that was set in motion led to the further privileging of the dominant classes both in India and Bolivia, as is evident from the political socio economic marginalization of both dalits and indigenous people. Their acute marginalization from the domestic economy of their respective country was also reflective of the fact that both the groups were absent from the political construction of the 'nation' which was conceived in the image of the upper castes and creole elites to begin with. While it will be unfair to call the entire postcolonial structuring of the two states as squarely against dalit-indigenous socio-political interests (discussed in previous chapters), the fact that both the groups continue to face acute socioeconomic discrimination cannot be overlooked. It is in this context, that we must then locate the evolution of the political economy of both the country and its corresponding impact on dalits and indigenous people.

### **Response of the Indigenous people**

While it is certainly a fact that the havoc caused by the neoliberal loot, particularly in Bolivia, has led to the militant protests of the people, it is also true that the resistance met to the same in Bolivia has no parallels in recent political history. This unfolding of the militant social movements of the indigenous people have not only brought back the history of native resistance right from the colonial period at the center of Bolivian politics, it also led to a paradigmatic change in the indigenous politics geared through social movements, eventually leading to the installation of the first indigenous government led by Evo Morales in 2005. However, it is not just the destruction brought about by the neoliberal restructuring of the domestic economy that has been behind the severe and acute marginalization of the indigenous people. The indigenous exclusion from the domestic economy was far more complete due to the negation of their very individual economic agency from the inception of the very idea of a possible political economy, ever conceived in the country in the first place. It is a historical fact that as

peasants, miners and petty workers engaged in Bolivia's unorganized economy (an economy that is always at the neglect of both the state and the market forces), have always faced the brunt of capitalist exploitation in the domestic economy. In short, their socioeconomic status have always remained more or less as miserable as it was in the colonial period if it has not changed to worse in the neoliberal phase of the economy.<sup>254</sup> The exploitation of the indigenous people was always at the heart of capitalist accumulation right from the beginning of the colonial times till the arrival of neoliberal era of selling out natural resources to foreign multinationals. The dye of the capitalist accumulation of indigenous Bolivia which was cast in the colonial period, carried on to its republican phase and bloom to its bursting hue in the times of neoliberalism.

The ruling elites of Bolivia – Mestizaje and the Creole whites – have always neglected and denied them any role in the indigenous planning – if any - and in the sociopolitical restructuring of the domestic economy.<sup>255</sup> The situation was of course not changed with the onset of neoliberal era that has in fact pushed the indigenous people and their livelihood further to the brink. The handful of those indigenous people who were involved in the unorganized economy of Bolivia in petty trades and mercantilism were further marginalized with their minimum access to formal education and due to their long exclusion from 'state bureaucracy, universities and professional associations' which might have otherwise enabled them in finding their own niche in the domestic political economy.<sup>256</sup> The wretched lives of Bolivia's indigenous populace was not merely due to the *mita* (free labor) in the colonial times and the subsequent continuation of their socioeconomic exploitation and the abject poverty that they have been facing ever since, but their woes has its roots in the total exclusion that they face from the all the avenues of

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<sup>254</sup> Herbert S. Klein, *The Crisis of The State, 1841 – 1880*, in *A Concise History of Bolivia*. Cambridge University Press.2011; James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins. Rebellion in the Veins: Political Struggle in Bolivia, 1952–1982*, London: Verso. 1984; June Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us*, Second Edition, New York: Columbia University Press. 1993 and also Jeffery R. Webber, *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggle in Modern Bolivia*. Brill. 2011.

<sup>255</sup> Herbert S. Klein-*A Concise History of Bolivia* (Cambridge Concise Histories) -Cambridge University Press (2011); Rutilio Martinez and Vishlyer, *Latin America's Racial Caste System: Salient Marketing Implications*. *International Business & Economics Research Journal* – November 2008, Volume 7, Number 11; Mariategui, Jose Carlos, *Seven interpretive essays on Peruvian reality*.University of Texas Press. 1971.Available on <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mariateg/works/1928/>

<sup>256</sup>NicoTassi, *The Native World-System – An Ethnography of Bolivian Aymara Traders in the Global Economy*. OUP, 2017.

the political economy which enables a person with choices. In other words the colonial exploitation of natives has further deprived them any meaningful economic choices which were totally excluded from any conceivable modern economic activity. And henceforth, such ‘free’ choices putatively now available in the free market economy continues to keep them at bay as the same were never available to them. Therefore, it is only but natural for them, then to look for the infrastructure and the support system for any economic activity within the traditional and social network of their own indigenous moorings. The indigenous social ties and traditional setting came to play an instrumental role in developing the entrepreneurial traits among *Aymara* traders of *altiplano* Bolivia.<sup>257</sup> This *indigenismo*<sup>258</sup> of sharing and cooperating through communal ties has been singularly more remarkable both in terms of indigenous political groupings as well in the development of their economic well-being.

However this indigenous way of organizing themselves economically has not been easy. In the contemporary neoliberal era, an indigenous petty trader is further crammed between the larger state apathy and the dynamism of free market economy which works in negating the rights of the weakest and in benefitting the already privileged classes. The plight of indigenous people – majority of whom continue to be depended on agriculture – became all the more crisis ridden under neoliberalism where neither the state and nor the infrastructure of global capital works in their favor.<sup>259</sup> Left in lurch with such total exclusion of severe economic consequences, the indigenous social movement in Bolivia has in its front two very clear immediate political objectives – to deal with the republican state, with its colonial vestiges intact and the neoliberal policies leading to acute displacement and dispossession of the natives.

The politics of social movement thus put together have not only confronted the neoliberal regimes but have successfully prodded an alternative world view encompassing *vivir bien*

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> The idea of *indigenismo* is a historical one and is derived or translated from ‘indigenism’. However, there are significant distinctions between the two concepts. While *indigenism* is more a contemporary sociopolitical development; *indigenismo* is more ‘a twentieth-century intellectual and artistic movement that sought to valorise indigenous culture.’ For more detail, see Andrew Canessa, *Todos somos indígenas: Towards a new language of national political identity*. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 25.2 (2006): 241-263.

<sup>259</sup> NicoTassi. 2017.

for all as against global capitalism which excludes all except few powerful. It is through their understanding of this very exclusionary nature of the global capital, that the indigenous people understood all the more importance of the infrastructure of their native economy and have been able to rescue the same in order to further their own, albeit limited economic activity. NicoTassi, in his exhaustive work on the ‘Bolivian Aymara traders in the global economy’, explains the response of indigenous *Ayamara* people vis a vis the local economy as ‘globalization from below’ or the emergence of social structure of local economy under the aegis of indigenous/local as ‘non-hegemonic world system’.<sup>260</sup> It is through such consolidation of ‘local power structures’ rooted in their socio-cultural norms, where no state ever reaches, let alone the depth of global capitalism, that *indigenismo* ensures the ‘access to the market on their own terms’.<sup>261</sup> The idea remains to make the local traders further enabling in the changed economic scenario of post liberalization polity, whereby they are ready to utilize all the possible resources at their disposal in order to capitalize more on their own socioeconomic status. Tassi writes, “*In a context where local traders were not interested in setting up subaltern economic partnerships with foreign entrepreneurs but rather sought to expand their own forms of institutionality and their independent businesses, such articulations of popular markets with global actors were viewed locally as possibilities for expanding their structure of power.*”<sup>262</sup>

It is due to this singularly novel approach that could perhaps be described as ‘indigenous accumulation’ or perhaps what Garcia Linera meant when he talked about ‘Andean capitalism’, within the larger frame of neoliberal economy, that we see how the indigenous traders, especially the *Aymaras* are redefining the power centers of Bolivia’s unorganized domestic economy. By clinging to their cultural ties and traditional set ups they have been able to create a market manifestly different from the existing mainstream individualistic understanding of economic practices. They have been particularly stressful in bringing the social at the center stage of economy as now conventionally understood – involving both the creation of an alternative and fighting the same politically. The

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid. page 10.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid. page

<sup>262</sup> NicoTassi, *The Native World-System – An Ethnography of Bolivian Aymara Traders in the Global Economy*. OUP, 2017. Page 56.

economic crisis emanating from the long colonial loot and the subsequent exclusion of the indigenous people that continued in the republican times and the revolutionary phase in the middle of the twentieth century has consequences other than the general predicament of the Bolivia as a state. This protracted history of exclusionary past – both in the social and the economic domain – has only strengthened the cultural identity among the Andean people, as it is their own immediate social surroundings within their cultural moorings that have kept them politically alive. Through their communitarian units like *ayllus*, indigenous people in Bolivia have been able to weather the enormous social and political exclusion they have faced over many years. And it is due to the strong social support units like *ayllus* combined with the larger social net of indigenous cultural ties and network that has enabled them today to carve out their own niche in the domestic economy, in spite of the ongoing neoliberalization.

For instance, the internationally well-known, electrical goods manufacturers like Samsung and Sony, obviously, as a result of the opening of the domestic markets to international trade and commerce, have come up with their authorized showrooms in the swanky areas of La Paz. However, their role in the larger market transactions is very restricted and confined only ‘to explain the technical features of the product’. The agreement between the local indigenous traders and the ‘authorized’ shops is such that, that the latter is barred from selling the merchandise and also from even discussing the prices of their products. The same commodities can only be ‘purchased from local retailers’.<sup>263</sup> This arrangement drawn between the pull and the pressure of neoliberalism and the indigenous commerce, albeit within the same market frame, is simply ingenious and would have been otherwise difficult to reach, if not for the availability of the local network of indigenous sociocultural ties and their very own distinct ways and forms of accumulation, which has enabled the existing and the emerging indigenous traders and small time entrepreneurs to access the market on their own conditions.<sup>264</sup>

These sorts of market intervention on the behalf of indigenous traders, however small numerically, serve two very important purposes. First by deploying their social and

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid page 57.

<sup>264</sup> <http://www.ipsnews.net/2008/12/bolivia-aymara-traders-mix-tradition-and-modern-day-savvy/>

cultural network in order to exploit the market to their benefit they have redefined the relationship between the market and the indigenous people as a whole for the benefit of the latter. The sizeable *Aymara* traders of La Paz and El Alto are no longer seen as the timid *indios*, who have always been living at the edge of whatever goes in the name of economic practices. On the contrary, they are very conscious of their newly acquired economic agency and the corresponding wealth thus accumulated and they therefore, leave no opportunity in flaunting the same.<sup>265</sup> Secondly, the political assertion of the native Indians through three decades or so of social movement has given them the agency to be as both, an informed market individual and as well as who is rooted in its immediate cultural moorings. This duality of an indigenous individual which has remarkable similarity with dalit agency in India as well – but more on this later – has enabled them to understand the politics rooted in empowering modernity and led them to mirror its ethos in their own surroundings, which effectively implies accepting both – the liberating values of the European enlightenment along with preserving their social character at the same time. In other words, asserting their individual citizen rights while holding on to their collective rights as well – an attribute to their social and cultural lives. This process is central to their understanding of outlining the very idea of a good life which is both social and individual at once and where an asserting individual becomes a political necessity in order to compliment and preserve the social rootedness – a quality must for a vibrant and secure life of the people living in a decent society.

## **Dalit Response**

Notwithstanding the internal contradictions of colonial India – as discussed in the previous chapters – the formation of the new ‘nation’ couldn’t alter the reorganization of relations of production, determined by the continuous overarching presence of the global capital.<sup>266</sup> In fact India’s initial phase of development planning and the whole idea of development state has eventually been a major failure.<sup>267</sup> The enthusiasm which the

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<sup>265</sup>[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-bolivia-new-andean-architecture-applies-new-money-to-old-traditions/2014/10/27/7be3a532-1fa2-443c-895a-ec9f3572ee49\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-bolivia-new-andean-architecture-applies-new-money-to-old-traditions/2014/10/27/7be3a532-1fa2-443c-895a-ec9f3572ee49_story.html)

<sup>266</sup>PrabhatPatnaik, *The Retreat to Unfreedom: Essays on the Emerging World Order*. Tulika 2003.

<sup>267</sup>VivekChibber, *Locked in Place – State-Building and Late Industrialization in India*. Princeton University Press 2003.

development state brought in immediately after the decolonization, did indeed give socio-economic relief to the people in general and to dalits in particular. However, the whole gung-ho was eventually a short lived one.<sup>268</sup> Equipped with the constitutionally mandated policies for eradicating practices of untouchability among the caste Hindus in India (and not the caste system per se), the post-colonial state brought the first generation educated dalits in its fold and gave them a decent life in the newly established urban centers.<sup>269</sup> Nevertheless, despite being the ‘new nation state’ the arrival of a sovereign and independent country in the sense of making decisions for charting out its domestic economy, has been a perilous journey given the enormous influence of the global capital. The economic divide in India – triggered by the development in the policies of global capitalism – was to become wider in the days to come.<sup>270</sup>

The immediate post-colonial scenario in India, then, while was certainly of a political victory against British colonialism – marked by the onset of independent sovereign country – the emergent socio political discourse was out rightly defined by Brahmanism.<sup>271</sup> It continued to be so even now. The economic model adopted by the first independent post-colonial government (Nehru’s) was one of balancing both the capitalist model – favoring the assorted group of big corporate/domestic bourgeoisie and the landlords – along with active state regulation of the economy through installing government enabled various industries, popularly called the public sector units (PSUs). It was the model designed on the lines of ‘demand management’ to spur the economic growth determined by a welfare state, as was successfully implemented in the post war Europe from early 1950s till late 1970s termed as the ‘golden period’ of western capitalism.<sup>272</sup> An economic model which was in turn heavily influenced from the then popular Keynesian policies.

This particular phase of the economic planning of Indian economy is also called Nehruvian or the mixed economy. In its post-independence phase, India following

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<sup>268</sup>Mark Juergensmeyer, *The Lonely Modernity of Model Town*, in ‘Caste in History’, edited by Ishita Banerjee- Dube. OUP 2008. Page 266.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid. page 267.

<sup>270</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this point, see Amiya Kumar Bagchi’s *Perilous Passage – Mankind and the Global Ascendency of Capital*. OUP. 2005.

<sup>271</sup> Chapter II.

<sup>272</sup> Amiya Kumar Bagchi, *Perilous Passage – Mankind and the Global Ascendency of Capital*. OUP. 2005.

Nehruvian model started with a protected economy, keeping its focus on building infrastructure and more industries which came to be primarily owned and run by the State. Although modern in its inception, the Nehruvian model could not bring about any positive change in the Hindu society based on the principle of *chaturvarna*. Successive Union governments of the post-colonial state, have primarily worked in pandering the interests of upper caste India, which primarily means maintaining the Brahman-Baniya class/caste interests. Harish Damodaran in an extensive work on India's capitalist class highlights the working of this unique caste alchemy in India and how most of the organized domestic economy is tightly controlled and managed by the vast network of caste and kin.<sup>273</sup> He explains that in India, the 'national bourgeoisie' is group of people which is equivalent of the 'traditional business communities'. Explaining the omnipresence of this caste-community network in the Indian economy, Damodaran writes, "*Through their long-distance networks of trade and finance, these groups have inherited over the ages a wondrous propensity to nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, and establish connections everywhere*".<sup>274</sup>

Hence, seen in this way the state protectionism of the domestic economy has rather reinstated and made the existing hierarchy all the more entrenched instead of dismantling the same as mandated by the constitution of the newly independent republic. Chandra Bhan Prasad in a similar fashion expounds on the inefficacy of the state in bringing down the Caste order in Indian Society, as he explains that although state can definitely provide for public sector jobs and representation in legislature through the affirmative action policy and even perhaps yet to meet the demand for representation in the private sector, but it does not actually disrupt the caste order, let alone dismantling the same.<sup>275</sup> Prasad then in the most unusual of the manner in which dalit politics have evolved over the years argued for the view that market economy helps in dismantling the caste hierarchy based on blood and occupational purity – "market has the potential for neutralizing caste in India's public life and finally leading India into a caste-free zone".<sup>276</sup> Building on

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<sup>273</sup> Harish Damodaran, *India's New Capitalists – Caste, Business, and Industry in a Modern Nation*. Permanent Black. 2008.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid* page 9.

<sup>275</sup> Chandra Bhan Prasad, *Markets and Manu: Economic Reforms and its Impact on Caste In India*, Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania. 2007.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid* Page 16.

aforementioned understanding of the domestic economic scenario and the dwindling opportunities for dalits therein a discourse has been generated and pushed favoring reforms initiated in 1990 and strongly advocating neoliberalism model as the new frame work for Dalit's emancipation.<sup>277</sup> One must keep in mind that the reasoning behind espousing the free market among these scholars is not for the liberating opportunities available in neoliberal India, which of course is questionable, but this perceptive understanding emanates from the colossal failure of the state to reign in caste atrocities against dalits and in dismantling the upper caste social and economic hegemony.

However, the fact remains that in the aftermath of opening of Indian markets to all and sundry and sweeping reform of its economy since 1990s, the countries has been increasingly witnessed to an alarming level of rising inequalities.<sup>278</sup> Barring the services sector, all the other crucial and vital sectors, especially the manufacturing and the agriculture sector, has been facing a sluggish growth and in many cases a negative growth at that with almost negligible output to push the GDP rates. Among the most worst affected sector of the policies of the neoliberal economic reforms in the country has been that of agriculture. Due to complete stagnation in the agrarian economy and government's apathy, rising from their absolute and binding faith in neoliberalism, for ameliorating the rural distress, some around half a million farmers have committed suicide in the last three decades. This was the direct result of opening up the domestic market to all and sundry farming products by the farmers who have been heavily subsidized in their respective domestic economy. Following which Indian farmers could not compete both with the quality and the output in the international market and forcing them to take such drastic measure as to commit suicide – an extreme step which Indian farmers were compelled to take in the light of burgeoning loans that they have taken in order to cultivate their lands.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup>DeveshKapur, Chandra Bhan Prasad, Lant Pritchett, D ShyamBabu, Rethinking Inequality: Dalits in Uttar Pradesh in the Market Reform Era, Economic and Political weekly, August 28, 2010.

<sup>278</sup>Jean Drèze and AmartyaSen, An uncertain glory: India and its contradictions. Allen Lane 2013.

<sup>279</sup> P. Sainath, Everybody loves a good drought: stories from India's poorest districts. Penguin Books India, 1996; UtsaPatnaik, Neoliberalism and rural poverty in India. Economic and Political Weekly (2007): 3132-3150; and also from the same author - The republic of hunger and other essays. Three Essays Collective, 2007.

However, the story of India's economic growth is not completely a negative one. There have been voices who have pointed out that the postcolonial Indian democracy and its economic planning has not been a complete failure and has emphasized achievement made over the years due to the broadening of the democracy in the country.<sup>280</sup> Having said that, it is difficult to pronounce judgment on the abysmal failure of the liberalizing of market project in India in a definitive sense, as it has certainly given rise to an ever increasing middle class in the country today, albeit confined mostly to IT professionals and other services along with the finance sector. Jean Dreze and AmartyaSen outlines this topsy-turvy growth trajectory of the development project in India and also highlights on the need of what much could be done for the betterment of its most deprived sections among which dalits invariably makes a large presence.<sup>281</sup> However, both Sen and Dreze have a very distinct argument to make which do not necessarily counter the free economics model as such, but is more on the outcome aspect of the same and stress on the more proactive role of the state.

Comparing India's economy to that with Chinese economy in order to make their argument, they argue that how the income generated through the growth economy can be utilized to enhance the common public services considered essential for the well being of the people.<sup>282</sup> Similar arguments has been put forth by Deepak Nayyar where he underlines the importance of government regulation of the domestic economy which is absolutely central to the equitable distribution of the growth income among the populace.<sup>283</sup>

The basic tenets of such arguments in development economics are essentially driven to ensure the accountability of state and its role in the overall development of the country and its citizens. They do acknowledge the ravaging results of the neoliberal reforms – albeit with a tongue in cheek approach – their central aim, nonetheless, remains to ensure

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<sup>280</sup>AtulKohli, *The Success of India's Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. 2001. For a much detail and critical account of socio economic trajectory of Indian democracy and economic growth, also see Jean Dreze and AmartyaSen, *An Uncertain Glory- India and Its Contradictions*. Allen Lane, Penguin Books. 2013.

<sup>281</sup>Jean Dreze and AmartyaSen, *An Uncertain Glory- India and Its Contradictions*. Allen Lane, Penguin Books. 2013.

<sup>282</sup>Ibid.

<sup>283</sup>Nayyar, Deepak Nayyar, *Liberalization and development*. OUP (2012).

the State regulation of the economy in order to sustain the growth model located within the very framework of an economy which actually suffocates their very idea of 'equitable growth' in the first place. In other words, for a majority of such scholars like Sen, Dreze, Nayyar, Stiglitz, and numerous others, the fundamental rule for the success of the free and fair market economy remain to be not the withdrawal of the state from the same, but the indispensability of a much more efficient state regulation of the market. Seen in this way, their ultimate analysis for providing for the well-being of the people hinges on the fair and equitable distribution of the growth income generated through free market economy and provided for by the efficient management and regulation by the state institutions in the first place. The development of human being is at the center of their economic thought and it not mere a push for a human growth led by the market economy. The human agency has an important role to play in their scheme of development serving two important objectives, first in terms of state' accountability as a political task for the social movement and second as for the well-being of people as recipient of economic growth.

However, even before the start of the neoliberal phase of the Indian economy, the very idea of the development adopted in India was of an extremely insignificant consequence when it comes to the development of dalits, tribals and other religious minorities considered the most deprived and among the weakest section of the Indian society. The findings and the recommendations made in the Justice Sachar Committee Report released in the year 2006 bears a profound testimony to this total – sociopolitical and economic – exclusion of Muslims in India.<sup>284</sup> The socioeconomic status of Muslims was found to be an abysmally low and at many instances have been compared to dalits in India. In other words to deprivation and social exclusion faced by dalits is so very acute, that in India, their exiled status from the economy becomes the benchmark of the underdevelopment side of the development state. Dalits combined with other deprived sections who are at the margins of the India's development trajectory together forms the overwhelming majority of the country and their socioeconomic status then actually exposes the real face of the development state.

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<sup>284</sup> For further detail, see the Report available on the Ministry of Minority Affairs website.

The problem of caste or the ‘caste question’ – as it is been portrayed more in the academic parlance – forms one of the most crucial economic determinant in spite of the Indian economy no longer been categorized as an ‘underdeveloped’ one today. With years of development planning along with the legal and constitutional safeguards available to dalits in India, the state has not been able to address the problem of acute discrimination prevalent against the so called lower castes of Indian society. That majority of the landless agriculture labors, migrant workers, workers in the unorganized economy belongs to dalit community along with other discriminated groups, is a telling account of the India’s success story of its economic growth of how lop sided it has been and continue to be.

It is in this context of the abysmal neglect faced by dalits at the hands of the post-colonial development planning on one hand and finding themselves a total misfit in the newer economic domain in the neoliberal era as a competing ‘free individual’ in the free economy, that we now must turn our attention to the discourse that has been generated by Prasad and others which we discussed earlier. In doing so, we must not forget the horrors of capitalism that has been brought globally and in the post-colonial subcontinent in general and its financial phase of recent times which has brought havoc in the lives of millions of dalits and other poor sections of Indian society. Also, at the same time, we must not be closed to the newer debates now making their claim to the opportunities seemingly generated in the neoliberal economy. And in the course of our analysis of the same, we can then make some sense of the upcoming modern dalit agency negotiating her share in this new economy, very similar to their indigenous counterparts in Bolivia.

But even before that, we must bear in our minds (as discussed in previous chapters) that there are certain other larger sociopolitical changes which were the results of colonialism and the educational and technological changes that came along with it. This particular dialectical relationship with colonialism is very central and crucial to our understanding of the ever evolving agency of modern dalits. It is also important to understand and accentuate the dynamics brought about by the churning of global capital in the Indian subcontinent. It will be naïve to not to admit that in its course of two hundred years of history in South Asia, global capitalism has not made any contribution to the social

mobility of the populace in general, along with the breaking the old structure of exploitation and replacing it, of course, with the new ones of similar consequences. Moreover, in the course of this understanding of the operability of global capital bringing structural changes, one should not be to assume the caste society in India as a concept which is merely a ‘traditional institution’ – which could hence be evolved and changed over the years with ‘modernization and development’ – as opposed to the ‘modern West’ which is considered to be singularly unique and the paragon of the equality available in the world.<sup>285</sup> Because, not only will it be erroneous an understanding, it will also hamper our vision of making sense of how kinship, social ties and network functions among the domestic bourgeoisie, wherein caste plays a very dominant role. Hence no wonder, that the overwhelming domestic trade and commerce of India is managed and run by the vast network of influential business family drawn from the communities who are historically engaged with trade and mercantile activities. Most prominent among such communities in India are *Punjabi Khatri, Marwaris, Sindhis, Tamil Brahmins, Gaud Saraswat Brahmins* – basically a combination of Brahmin-Bania Capital.<sup>286</sup>

The available scholarship on dalits’ socioeconomic status and their positioning in the neoliberal economy has covered the various aspect of the dalit marginalization in all its earnest. Clarinda Still in her work raises the fundamental question of whether the neoliberal phase of Indian economy has brought any positive changes to dalit social mobility or has it led to the further marginalization among them.<sup>287</sup> Thorat and Newman in their joint essay, drawing upon the work of Mayra Buvinic – who has an extensive work on gender and social development and social inclusion – illustrates on the concept of social exclusion in the context of India. They underline that social exclusion ‘affects culturally defined groups’ and that it ‘is embedded in social relations between them, and results in deprivation or low income for those (who are) excluded’<sup>288</sup>. It can be understood with this insight that how dalits as a large social group who lies at the lowest pedestal of the caste system gets further excluded because of their social embeddedness. And this very social embeddedness of them also get mirrored in the so called

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<sup>285</sup> Surinder S. Jodhka, *Caste in Contemporary India*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 2015.

<sup>286</sup> Harish Damodaran, *India’s New Capitalists – Caste, Business, and Industry in a Modern Nation*. Permanent Black. 2008.

<sup>287</sup> Clarinda Still, *Dalits in Neoliberal India: Mobility or Marginalisation*. Routledge, New Delhi. 2014.

<sup>288</sup> Sukhdeo Thorat, Katherine S Newman, *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 13, 2007.

‘competitive labor market’ which is considered to be free under the now reigned neoliberal regime but is actually not and hence dalits continue to be on the receiving side. Dalits economic problems hence then are difficult to look at in a scenario which is divorced from their social status. It is due to this social taboo associated with their caste order, that the political response of dalits vis a vis neoliberalism is not actually on the lines of confirming to the neatness of freedom theory associated with the free market economy, but any such response has to factor in first and foremost their social freedom from the deep morass of graded caste inequalities running very deep in the Indian society. The discrimination thus faced by dalits in India have far reaching implications on the income distribution and more importantly it leads to the denial of equal opportunity in terms of their access to market opportunities. Highlighting this aspect of domestic economy, Prof Thorat explains that Market discrimination prevents “*the free mobility of human labour, land, capital and entrepreneurship, the caste system creates imperfect, segmented, and monopolistic divisions in factor markets.*”<sup>289</sup>

The effect of caste on the economy is more in terms of suppression of competition; in reality it speaks more about the unavailability of the equal opportunities and thereby inefficient allocation of labour, low profit, low wages. The predicament of dalits is then very much similar to that of the indigenous groups engaged in market economy at the level of petty traders in Bolivia. The entrepreneur deficit among the dalits and indigenous people then stems from much more profound depth of the structural discrimination available in both the societies. That their political struggle is partly or rather centrally tied up with their economic well-being is then a very obvious point. And hence, solutions for the same then may not always be seen in the ‘conventional’ politics where whatever goes in the name of the market must be opposed and fought with. And for the same reasons, we then witness the emergence of a very miniscule section of both dalits and indigenous people, in their respective political economy, trying to make sense of the market economy and making their presence with whatever minimum opportunity are available to them therein.

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

DeveshKapur, on the other hand with reference to dalits situation makes an interesting defense of market reforms and thereby, an equal endorsements of the singular ideological frame work of Neoliberalism.<sup>290</sup> Arguing in his study, he nonetheless has Sen's 'Capability approach' on his mind as well.<sup>291</sup> Kapur argues for consumerism – that has sky-rocketed ever since the neoliberal reforms in 1990s – as something which helps in breaking the traditional set up of inequality. Hence, Dalits by adopting new ways of life style are coming out of their old hierarchical set up and enabling themselves by adopting the new occupations, which in turn is facilitated by the new market reforms. The emphasis is on the consuming side and not on dalits being the producers in the same market economy. How far then, being a consumer helps in bringing substantial change in Dalit's lifestyle is a question which need to be probed further. However, one must examine whether new market reforms has brought any substantial change in the availability of the 'new opportunities' among dalits. 'Dalits can now buy and brandish them'<sup>292</sup>, speaks more about their rising political consciousness and assertion rather than its being a 'marker of prestige'<sup>293</sup> on a standalone basis.

Despite the initiation of two decades of economic reforms in India, market is not immune to existing social structure, as against the perspective of those who see the market as something which diminishes, if not completely mitigate, the caste structure of Indian Society. The neoliberal achievements, if any, have by far been exclusively in the favour of a class which has the necessary wherewithal to participate in the free market. Hence, to no one's surprise then that we see India too like the other parts of the global south is increasingly fraught with the deprivation on the one hand and the rising assets of the tiny minority of the capitalists class. And this hiatus between the rich and the poor is ever

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<sup>290</sup>DeveshKapur, Chandra Bhan Prasad, Lant Pritchett, D ShyamBabu, Rethinking Inequality: Dalits in Uttar Pradesh in the Market Reform Era, Economic and Political weekly, August 28, 2010.

<sup>291</sup> While Sen's emphasis on building capabilities among the downtrodden multitudes is undoubtedly one of the most of significant economic insights available in strengthening the well-being of people in general, it becomes too difficult to actualize within the broader frame of neoliberalism. This is because building capabilities among the lower caste will have to engage with the upper caste stonewalling at the grass root level and considering the hatred of the savarnas against dalits it is difficult to achieve even with the State directed policies aimed for the same. And it is precisely for this social tension which many a times involve upper caste violence against dalits in villages of India, Sen's dream of a 'capable' India will continue to remain a distant dream, unless intervened through social and political movements.

<sup>292</sup>DeveshKapur, Chandra Bhan Prasad, Lant Pritchett, D ShyamBabu, Rethinking Inequality: Dalits in Uttar Pradesh in the Market Reform Era, Economic and Political weekly, August 28, 2010.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

increasing. The well-being of tiny few at the cost of the majority, understood in the most mechanical way under neoliberalism then, is not the part of the moral world order as envisioned by the social movements under the present study. The rising inequality due to the global spread of neoliberalism accentuates the deprivation faced by the multitudes of the people in the world. While the processes of globalization and its socioeconomic impact could be discussed separately, neoliberalism has its own patterns of globalization which by now has its complete sway over an overwhelming number of developing and underdeveloped countries. And this pattern in effect give more prominence to the financial trade rather than the promotion of trade in general, let alone promoting the entrepreneurship among the newer classes.

The implicit understanding of the market economy, in the above mentioned few arguments, work as the leveler on the social identities which are otherwise exclusionary and discriminatory in nature. However, this process do not work by itself, as the market sphere in India is not as is generally presumed – caste or for that matter gender neutral – as correctly shown by the works of Thorat and Newman.<sup>294</sup> What the proponent of capitalism/neoliberalism confuses in the context of dalits emancipation is that, that it is not the growth of the capital or the modern market economy which has brought ‘significant changes’ to their lives. On the contrary, it is the progressive ethos of modern liberal politics guaranteed under the liberal constitution of the country which acts as the leveler and brings the quest for equality and liberty among the people, particularly dalits. Because without the availability of the rights, and hence the importance of the Indian Constitution, it is difficult to conceive a minimum equality of opportunities, crucial for any entrepreneurial activity.

What becomes important then is that one must read the contemporary discourse of free market economics with the evolution of the language of rights. Liberalism, as argued in the previous chapters, being the product of enlightenment has certainly helped in advancing the political movement of Dalits in the larger idea of the democracy in India. The language of rights, central to dalits’ political discourse, owes to liberalism and to

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<sup>294</sup>Sukhadeo Thorat and Katherine Newman. "Economic Discrimination, Concept, Consequences, and Remedies." Thorat, and Newman (ed.), *Blocked by Caste: Economic Discrimination in Modern India* (2010).

Ambedkar's adoption of the same in terms of 'State Socialism'. If not for the state guided affirmative action policy and the language of 'liberty, equality and fraternity', a vibrant dalit movement would have been a rare sight if not altogether impossible. The rights, thus ensured through a liberal – socialist constitution played an important role in shaping up India's politics in general and dalit politics in particular. This liberal politics which has helped in strengthening the politics of the voiceless stands diametrically opposed to the kind of a model that is being pushed and practiced by neo liberalism in India today. In this milieu, the work which advocates the free market economy for the larger welfare of Dalit not only ignores the havoc created by the free market in India, but it also puts forth an ill-conceived imagery of neoliberalism as a modern variant of liberalism. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The immediacy of 'dalit capitalism', as advocated by the likes of Chandra Bhan Prasad and others, then need to be placed in the history of political struggles that made the socioeconomic ground conducive for dalits and not to become an mere insignificant cog in to the exploitative gargantuan capitalist structure, but to be the entrepreneur working towards enhancing and restoring the dignity for the dalit lives.

It is further evident from the fact that the emergence of 'dalit millionaire' became a possibility primarily through the role of politics – whereby the patronage advanced, both by the State and political parties, provided the necessary material condition for such mobility for Dalit entrepreneurship. While, neoliberalism, on the other hand as is well known, sees individual as unencumbered entities capable of competing unrestricted in a sphere entirely free from the interventions of the state. Now here it becomes a problematic to grapple with. The Indian situation, to begin with, is deeply mired in the caste hierarchies along with the corresponding material benefits to the dominant castes and economic immobility among the lower castes. And it is precisely this equation which the supporter of neoliberalism wants to break off from. Given this scenario, it is but natural, that the only section that 'freely compete' in a free market economy of India going to be, invariably due to their position in the Hindu caste hierarchy, mostly the upper castes. How do we understand such a nature of free market competition which benefits the members of the dominant caste and leaves the marginalized groups on the vagaries of the markets, which do not have any system (state) in place to support the latter group in the first place? Hence the instrumentality of the state is absolutely significant in order to

actualize the possibility of dalit entrepreneurship, let alone the prospect of having ‘dalit millionaires’. We also comprehend that the social and material conditions are significantly different both in Bolivia and India, in spite of the structured hierarchies in both the countries. In other words, there is a sociocultural deficit among the dalits when it comes to the possibility of entrepreneurship among them; which is not exactly same as that for the indigenous groups in Bolivia, who have old social ties and a vibrant kinship network in place within their communities.

The status of dalits in India, far from being organized as a coherent and functioning community, is comparable to what Guru calls as the ‘walking carcasses’ of the Indian society.<sup>295</sup> Walking carrion or carcass is here a signifier of a body walking aimlessly, without any self-dignity, a body that is engaged in the most menial of the human works conceivable as imposed on them in the Hindu caste order. A part of the political goal and mainly the very objective which remains at the heart of dalit politics is then primarily remain to achieve the basic human dignity and self-respect for not to be regarded as walking carcasses.<sup>296</sup> However, the idea of entrepreneurship while is certainly an idea worth seen to be actualized, but even in that (among the sizeable sections of the upwardly mobile urban dalits) to break off the stigma attached with the caste is quite an uphill task even now. For example, economic mobility for a dalit does not make his/her social status disappear from the society he/she is living in. On the contrary, there have been ample studies which shows, that dalits often have to adapt to the pulls and pressures of upper castes in order to progress in their economic activity – opportunity for which became possible in the changed domestic scenario post neoliberalism.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>295</sup>Gopal Guru, Power of Touch. Frontline, Volume 23 – Issue 25. December 16-29, 2006.

<sup>296</sup> One of the most downgrading works assigned in the caste hierarchy for dalits is to do the scavenging work. It comprises of removing the dead cattle’s carcass from the villages and towns, skinning them for their hides. Cleaning dry latrines and even carrying human excreta on their head while doing the work of manual scavenger. The very idea of gut wrenching work assign to them as a caste group, brings the imagery of them being as good as corpse with no feelings and dignity available to their human selves.

<sup>297</sup>AseemPrakash, Caste and Capitalsim. Available at [www.india-seminar.com/2012/633/633\\_aseem\\_prakash.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2012/633/633_aseem_prakash.htm) ; Also, Dalit entrepreneurs in middle India, in ‘The Comparative Political Economy of Development: Africa and South Asia’, Edited by Barbara harriss-White and Judith heyer. Routledge, 2010. Page 291; See also, Barbara Harriss-White, ‘India Working: Essays on Society and Economy’. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

With institution like DICCI (Dalit Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) in place, dalits have still to overcome the very basic infrastructure of human kinship which is almost negligible among dalits. It is due to the non-availability of any such kinship network in the sphere of trade and mercantile affair, that the very idea of dalit utilizing the ‘market opportunities’ continues to be a distant thing if not the entirely misplaced one.

## **Conclusion**

So far we have discussed the near identical course of dalit-indigenous social and political struggle for restoring their moral worth as an equal human being and how both the movements have reposed their faith in the constitutional democracy in order to achieve the same. We have also discussed their distinctly assertive politics embedded in their social identity and how the western notion reflective in their newly gain language of the rights has been enormously helpful in furthering their battle against the politics which privileges the respective hegemonic discourse in both the country. Within this context both the social groups have their distinct take on the existent neoliberal economic policies in their respective sociocultural setting. Both the political discourse emphasize on the fact that any possible conception of a good life for the well-being of an individual is contingent upon a good or what AvishaiMargalit calls a ‘decent society’. In other words having a decent society where the rights of the fellow beings are not violated, is a minimum precondition for having a good life for its residents.

If the invocation of an suppress identity, here that of a dalit and an indigenous group, through constitutional democracy leads to an informed and a self-respecting dignified life, then the same cannot be completely altered through the dynamics of capitalism or through its modern day avatar of free market economy under neoliberalism. The danger of weakening of the rights of the marginalized people and thereby affecting their social movement is much more palpable in the latter kind of an economic arrangement. Furthermore, the limited participation of dalit-indigenous people –albeit restricted – in the prevalent neoliberal market economy is not premised upon the political embracing of the logic of the market. On the contrary, making sense of the market forces on the part of dalit-indigenous groups is the extension of their historical struggles against the

dominance of all kinds in the public sphere – market merely represents an aspect of such an exploitative public sphere. Through their enhanced and informed participation as the modern entrepreneur in neoliberal times, these socially ostracized groups are only making a statement towards extending their struggle for equality in every sphere including economic, however deeply discriminatory that be. In other words, the modicum of self-respect and a life of dignity achieved by the hitherto socially ostracized and politically isolated groups, who also happen to belong to an economically impoverished class, will continue to flag their hard identities, even if they do adapt to an economic scenario which is at loggerheads with their basic ideological position in the first place. The obvious contradictions therein, then could only be possibly resolved through the politics of their respective social movement alone.

In the end just before we conclude this discussion, let's go back to what Amartya Sen argued when he highlighted on the need for bringing the ethics and economics much closer than they are, so that that self-interest seeking individual driven market economy could be humanized in the face of burgeoning vast global inequalities today. Along the same line, various other philosophers, notably the communitarians have raised the similar issues and have underlined the need for looking beyond the right centric approach of individualism and have rather argued for making a shift to more collective and shared idea of common good of the society as a whole.<sup>298</sup> However, the experiences from both dalit and indigenous alternative discourse on and in their respective political economy move beyond such communitarian bracketing of good versus right or vice versa.

For dalit-indigenous politics, the commonality is that the community and the individual member of the same inform and complement each other both socially and politically. It is the right bearing individual which eventually leads to the creation of a politically assertive dalit identity and the same became possible with the advent of indigenous rights discourse for indigenous social movement. The idea is neither to give up the language of rights nor to debunk the moral economy of the shared beliefs of a community that has been politically attained and socially coalesced. Hence, their view on political economy, though unconventional, enables them to initiate in to a society where economic

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<sup>298</sup> Charles Taylor, Michael Sandel, Partha Chatterjee, 'Lineage of Political Society'

sustainability and political freedom could be self-determined and may not always have to be externally relied upon. This of course doesn't mean that they are unaware of the working of global capital. On the contrary, they are aware of the history of the global spread of capitalism and that it does indeed affect them, just as it does have an impact on the majority of the toiling masses world over. However, through their own distinct politics and socioeconomic take on the world system economy, dalit-indigenous people make an attempt to eke out a space which could be construed as an exemplar for the diminishing forces of socialism for the possibility of a better world ahead. We must also not forget that if there is something to be gained from the political churning of the social movements in Bolivia, it is the demonstrated invulnerability of neoliberalism. Experiences from Bolivia is not only a telling account of how a social movement based primarily on indigenous assertion braces itself up against the mammoth and powerful forces of neoliberalism, but it also conclusively proves to their counterparts in India that the path to adapt to 'Dalit Capitalism' is a sure footed recipe of further self-agony in the struggles for realizing the self-respect and human dignity.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion: The Question of Political Ethics

This research in its entirety covers four main themes in the back drop of the commonalities studied between the two social movements led by dalits and the indigenous people of Bolivia. That these commonalities are primarily rooted in the history of the colonial experiences along with the social exclusion suffered by both the communities is more than evident from the vast body of scholarly writings available on them. While it is true that this researcher could not come across a specific text comparing the two social groups of this study, postcolonial scholarship though has been able to make these bridges, albeit with a different focus, for almost more than two decades now. However, even in these writings the understanding of the caste has been extremely skewed and it overlooks the history. Samir Amin, for instance, while recognizes the persistence of caste system along with the ‘colonial inheritance’ as the two chief reasons for the ‘hindrance to progress’, goes on to claim ‘arrival of Dalit’ as the ‘product of Naxalism’ in India.<sup>299</sup> I need not delve further on this, as the reasons for such a superficial understanding on dalit movement, which is obviously bereft of its history, are discussed in detail in chapter III of this thesis.

The reason why it is important to underline such discrepancy on the part of the scholarship invested in the history of global south is not to underline the academic slippage and score brownie points, but to flag the understanding that the genuine solidarity in the region will only be possible, when we begin to make sense of the lost voices of the socially excluded in its history. I think this research is a modest attempt in the similar direction, where emphasis is given on the aspects of the shared experiences of social exclusion and the discrimination faced by dalits in India and the indigenous people in Bolivia. A clarification must be made here, though, that this research, however, is not in anyway, an attempt to probe in to the reasons for the saturation of dalit politics in India, as has been discussed and highlighted before in this research. Rather what this work humbly undertakes, is to look in to similar such movements of social standing with

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<sup>299</sup>Samir Amin, India, a Great Power? Monthly Review, Volume 56, Issue 09. February, 2005. <http://monthlyreview.org/2005/02/01/india-a-great-power>

which we can draw some comparative lessons, purely in order to strengthen our understanding on dalit politics and on how such movement which primarily invoke their past of social discrimination and exclusion, fare politically in the current global scenario.

With this objective, this research has focused on the following four themes in respective chapters:

- 1. Politics of Social Movement and Democracy**
- 2. Comparative analysis of settlers account of Bolivia's history with colonialism in India**
- 3. Comparative analysis of their ethical views as embedded in the dalit-indigenous world view, and lastly**
- 4. Understanding and locating both the dalits and indigenous people of Bolivia in the history of the global Capital.**

The very first theme, explores the two social movements bordering on the understanding that both dalits and indigenous gentry are two deeply stigmatized communities and who also are economically underprivileged and excluded for long from the corridors of political power. The research further investigates in to the comparative indicators of the two social movements who largely deploy symbols rooted in their cultural history to define their modern day politics. The attached stigma and the lived reality of native *Indian* lives along with the humiliation met to dalits in their everyday experience are central to the framework adopted here. The chapter discusses their lived experience and how the same translates in to their politics and informs the social movement led by them. In the end it exhibits and a conclusion is made that the fundamental premise of dalit and indigenous people's exclusion is very distinct and that the same has its roots in the very idea of the culture and the way their respective society has evolved. And it is this socially distinct terrain which is crucial to understand the two social movements under this study.

Both dalit movement and the indigenous social movement are redefining the 'social' through their politics, wherein, the social must take account of the people living on the margins of the history and politics. Following the insights from Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes's work the two social movement are the significant 'agents of social

transformation' in their respective society, whose primary goal remain to bring dalit-indigenous masses to live a life of dignity and self respect and to have a more robust democracy where state is accountable to its citizen. The promise of a democratic politics and its strength lies in ensuring and strengthening the livelihood issue of the most downtrodden of a given society. Both dalit and indigenous politics have evolved through the invocation of their distinct political identity, and this politics of their recognition has been complimented with equal emphasis on the economic issues giving rise to miserable life conditions among them. This coalescing of the politics of recognition and redistribution of resources while of course reminds us celebrated theoretical work of Prof Nancy Fraser<sup>300</sup>, however the same pans out very differently in both the countries.

Though, I firmly believe, that it is through the liberal values of the European enlightenment along with the subsequent evolution of the procedures for representative democracy – a framework for constitutional polity in brief – that the ruling elites primary work in order to firm up its own legitimacy as a benevolent sovereign sensitive to rights for the underprivileged. However, in the process this ruling elite tend to forget that the democratic aspirations thus unleashed have its own life and the inbuilt dialectics therein, which then consistently work towards broadening the objectives of the very philosophy that has triggered it in the first place. And the same process then takes a radical shift as, more often than not, the ruling elites do not conform to the democratization of its inherited space which they have themselves initiated in the beginning in order to gain political legitimacy to their rule. The impact of the constitutional democracy on the occurrence of social movements among dalits and indigenous people reflects this very similar process where the liberal benevolence of the ruling classes inadvertently becomes the source of the radical politics of the oppressed in the contemporary times.

And it is this precise nature of the history that has been overlooked and is investigated in chapter III of this research. This theme underlines the two defining characters of the colonial history world over, namely the settler colonialism and the colonialism through administrative state apparatus. Focusing then on the colonial history of Bolivia and India,

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<sup>300</sup> Nancy Frase, Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition, and participation. Culture and economy after the cultural turn (1999): 25-52.

the chapter arrives on an understanding of the different relationship of dalits and the indigenous with the category of 'native'. While the native as defined by the 'native *Indians*' in Latin America and Bolivia in particular forms the large demography of the indigenous people, thereby making their claim on the country under neo-colonialism and demanding the total decolonization, the 'natives' do not form a single coherent group of people and internally segregated and discriminates due to caste system. It has been argued that the kind of solidarity that postcolonial theory refers to, given the context of the shares colonial past of the global south, the notion nevertheless disregard the specificities of the historical experience of the natives/ indigenous population against the settlers in Bolivia and that of dalits against the all entrenched Brahmanism in India.

Drawing from the colonial history of the two nation state and the experiences of dalit-indigenous people, the chapter underlines the contradiction in the postcolonial perspective on the same. As opposed to the generalization of two histories of the global south under postcolonialism for the sake of postcolonial solidarity against the colonial west, the chapter maintains that these two distinct histories not necessarily follow the pattern of relationship with the west, as the postcolonial scholars would like us to understand. For instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty in his work of a considerable discussion and debate<sup>301</sup>, while presents a fragmentary and nonlinear progression of Indian national historiography, in the same breath he penned a static, constant and universal Europe which signifies Imperial power and *power* alone. Although, he clarifies that it is not his intention to call for rejection of 'modernity, liberal values, universals, science, reason, grand narratives, totalizing explanations, etc'<sup>302</sup>, the need for a much deeper engagement with these categories from a dalit-indigenous perspective is lacking in their theoretical understanding.

The postcolonial and the subaltern discourse fails to understand the positive impact of the European enlightenment on the third world and specially dalit lives in both pre and the post-colonial India. Both the groups – the indigenous in Bolivia and the Dalits in India – and their dialectical connection with modernity is something which cannot be adequately

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<sup>301</sup>DipeshChakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press.2000.

<sup>302</sup>Ibid.Pg 67.

be explained by the tropes postcolonial theory, as for them the only referent remain to be Colonialism or more precisely, the West. Another scholar, Frederick Cooper – interestingly from the postcolonial scholarship – makes an attempt to divorce this studying and struggling against imperialism within the rubric of postcolonial studies. Hence, while explaining the scope of postcolonial studies, he makes it amply clear that studying/doing history cannot be all about Imperialism and Colonialism. That by doing so one underplays the very process of the ‘study of history’ itself. To quote him, *‘the question is whether once can be satisfied with the simple naming of imperialism or colonialism as the dark side of universality, progress, or modernity, or whether we need to know something more about imperialism and colonialism.’*<sup>303</sup>

It has been contended that the deployment of the liberal language of rights, equality, freedom and liberty by the two social movements under study here for the life of dignity, self-respect and political representation is an extension of the modernity arrived through colonial discourse. And such a discourse is not been adopted in way how Homi Bhabha would call as ‘mimicry’, but dalit-indigenous movement have in the course of struggles redefined the available liberal concepts through their lived experience and their crave for wider social change. And it is in this constant tension with liberal values shaped through their distinct social movements that we arrive upon a genuine enlightenment, viable both temporally and spatially to their respective cultural location.

In the third theme the moral and ethical world view of dalit and indigenous social movement and their vision for a future political society has been studied. This chapter builds upon the compared understanding developed in the previous theme and underlines the moral world view embedded in the philosophy of dalit-indigenous social movements. Tracing both movements in their respective social history, the chapter maintains that the foundational idea behind the philosophy of dalit-indigenous ethics lies in the crack in between the colonialism and nationalism. That is to say that they arrived upon their political ethics through their own historical experiences and not in the ideas espoused by the dominant social classes of Bolivia and India. Both the social movements are

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<sup>303</sup>Frederick Cooper, ‘Postcolonial Studies and the Study of History’, in *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, edited by Stephen Howe. Routledge 2010. Pg 76.

conscious of the fact that the spread of neoliberalism which has led to the severe devastation of not only livelihood of the millions of people but that of the global climate as well, and hence their world view aims to make this world a more democratic and environment friendly place to live. It is for a such liberating view of the world in their image, that we find the necessity of the significance for the basic tenets of the enlightenment, where people collectively strive for making a more decent, just and egalitarian society. Seen in this light, it has been contended that the intangible ideas of justice, equality and dignity of human beings are the integral features in the dalit-indigenous schema for the individuals to associate in order to form a political society which enables a life of freedom and dignity to the people inhabiting the same. Such an understanding of the history of European enlightenment and their experiences of own historical struggles are then voiced through development model of *vivir bien* and prioritizing of the dalit dignity and self-respect. The very definition of equality and liberty seen through their lived experiences should not be seen as the token extension to an already existent western liberalism, but the same ethical understanding informing their political struggles in the contemporary times is their discursive reality – a reality deeply rooted in their subjugation and the humiliation suffered at the hands of the oppressors in their respective geographical location.

The final theme is more contemporary in the sense that it gives a sweeping view of the evolution of the global capital along with the birth of Imperialism up until the reorganization of the same in to the idea neoliberalism. The chapter delves in to the political roots of putative idea of ‘good life’, as contemplated in different times and through politics of all hue and colour, and discusses what form of an economic foundation must a state lay in order to provide a good life to its citizens. Following Habermasian perspective it has been underscored that the building of a political economy that could possibly facilitate good life to its citizens cannot be conceived in a situation where an ethical self understanding of a society is divorced from the issues of justice. It is then contended that the actualization of such a political society is preconditioned on the availability of the politics of social justice – an idea central to the political world view of dalit-indigenous social movement. The chapter highlights the differential responses of both the social groups under study to the market economy, whereby it is shown that

despite the ideological counter of their politics to neoliberalism, sections of dalit and indigenous people view things differently. The opportunities offered in the changed political scenario where market overwhelmingly dominates, they are willing to participate in the same for their representation – something which was never available to them due to their history of social exclusion.

The chapter takes an eclectic view and underlines the significance of the entrepreneurship possibility among the people who have been denied the same for ages. However, one must bear the social and difference both in Bolivia and India, and must take account of the structured hierarchies in both the countries. In other words, there is a sociocultural deficit among the dalits when it comes to the possibility of entrepreneurship among them; which is not exactly same as that for the indigenous groups in Bolivia, who have old social ties and a vibrant kinship network in place within their communities.

Finally, it must be stated that through this comparative study, what could be harnessed in times of rising global inequalities and the right wing politics world over, that the perspective of dalit-indigenous politics is all the more relevant now in order to disparage society of its deep seated prejudices and biases. Prejudices and specially caste prejudices in India are invariably political in nature and obviously then have an impact on organization of politics leading to pervasive social and political exclusion of the affected group – be it religious minorities, women, *Adivasis*, dalits and other persecuted communities. In the words of philosopher Hannah Arendt, prejudices ‘are judgment formed in the past’<sup>304</sup> and what else then can be a just politics to erase such prejudices other than the politics which is rooted in the history which contains the birth of them. The political world view thus offered through dalit-indigenous social movement holds the promise of framing the political ethics of disparaging such prejudices.

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<sup>304</sup> Hannah Arendt, ‘The promise of politics’, ed. J. Kohn. Schocken Books, New York. 2005.

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