

**COMMUNALISM IN MODERN INDIA:  
AN ANALYSIS OF HISTORICO-CULTURAL MOORINGS**

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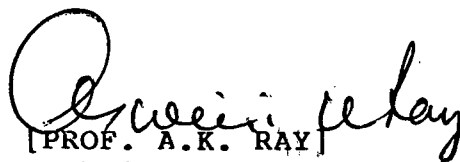


CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES  
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This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "COMMUNALISM IN MODERN INDIA : AN ANALYSIS OF HISTORICO-CULTURAL MOORINGS" submitted by KIRAN M. for the award of Master of Philosophy is an original work and has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University.

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TO MY PARENTS

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[ K I R A N . M ]

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## INTRODUCTION

The rise in caste and communal violence day by day, with the loss of hundreds and thousands of human lives in the riots, torture and gang rape of women and destruction of property, are all received with callous indifference. From the pages of newspapers, these barbaric news is lost in tiny columns of centre pages. The participation of law enforces and protectors in these bloody riots or at times turning nelson eye, is casually admitted as just a partisan role. Accepting these violent news insensitively, looks more dangerous than the riots. Though these developments do not show any immediate threat to the state, the nation is getting divided, communalised and criminalised.

### Scope of the Study

The main focus here is on the study of Hindu communalism. With the participation of coercive state apparatus in communal riots, Muslim community has been

pushed to the walls. Their communalism have become more defensive. This study is made in the background of the emergence of ethnic movements and Hindu communalism coming as a powerful force to overwhelm these movements.

The emergence of Sikh communalism, Kashmiri issue, linguistic nationalities, ethnic and tribal movements in addition to the dominant Hindu and Muslim communalism, the situation is getting more messy. Within the different brands of communalism the dominant communalism is ambiguously recognised as nationalism. Instead of trying to understand these perplexing developments and widening the horizons of knowledge the social scientist have taken up the role of an administrator to determine, who is a national? Who is a communal? Who is a secular? Who is a secessionist? and how to control communal riots.

But there is unanimity among the scholars that till 1947 everything was right, nationalism was

progressive, it accommodated aspirations of minorities and it was secular. Communalism was understood as antithetical to secular nationalism, trying to impute religion based cultural nationalism. Redefining the meaning of nationalism in terms of the history and culture of the majority, assimilating leaders who were critical of the majority religion, and Indian nationalism being identified more and more with Hindu chauvinism, dharmikta, homogenising ideology and statusquoist politics are post 1947 developments. The distortions of post 1947 nationalism of organising politics around common religious belief, drawing heavily from the past, realising an ancient truth as an ideal and coercing subalteran cultures are to be removed. Once this is achieved, it is presumed that Indian nationalism is put back to its original form.

The efforts of writers to see a break in 1947, is to camouflange the real nature of Indian nationalism. The study of communalism is basically ahistorical. Seeing the emergence of ethnic movements



as parochial, divisive, secessionist and hence anti-national which is also the position of communalist, is an ideological explanation. The pre-independent nationalist discourse too, submerged all subaltern cultures and rallied the forces around the dominant ideology of the majority community with traditional idioms expressed in terms of nationalism, as anti-imperialist struggle. So the attempts of BJP to camouflage all the identities of the masses with dominant Hindu identity is not a new phenomena. Many writers have pent up their courage to brand BJP communalism or Hindu nationalism as Brahminical.

Since this accusation is made ahistorically, this dissertation attempts to trace the roots, development and consolidation of Brahminical culture in modern politics and tries to see the post independent communal politics as the continuation of pre-independent national politics.

## Methodology

This study is basically a historico-cultural analysis based on secondary sources. The issues related to the present study is viewed historically rather than purely empirically. Books and articles published in the journals would constitute the secondary source materials for the purpose of the study.

## Outline of the Chapters

In the first chapter it is argued that the cultural unification got strengthened with political unification under colonialism and all the benefits of colonial modernity was appropriated by the upper castes. It is shown that entrenched against foreign onslaughts, the social fabric of Hinduism had its stronghold in caste system which is its corner stone. Brahminism was the guiding principle of organising Hindu civil society where the cosmic harmony was

expressed in each individual's caste guided by the Dharmasastras.

Under the colonial rule Brahminism was strengthened further. The socio-economic changes that took place under the British increased the cleavages in the society. Divide and rule policy was followed by the British from the beginning. Brahmins were used to terrorise the opponents into submission. English education was reserved for the Brahmins and they were recruited into the local administration. The sacred books of Brahmins were unearthed, translated, codified and implemented with vigour. In the economic plane to the changes benefited the upper castes. Brahmins who earlier looked at trade as inferior, now took up modern business. They also had interest in the agricultural land. Capitalism emerged on feudal extraction, caste recruitments and untouchability was practised in industries.

With the political unification, the secular subsumed the tradition. The social domination was

transformed into political domination. The old rule through brahminical ideology was continued by the English educated Brahmins through bureaucracy. Social mobility was relaxed only to the twice born castes. They got homogenized through English education, transport and communication, newspapers and modern industries. The social reform movement led by upper castes was only to remove the irritants in accepting modern institutions. The controversies generated by social reform and missionary attack on Hinduism helped to develop national consciousness.

In the second chapter, the emergence of nationalism is seen in the conflict between the upper orders of Hindu society and the British. The proselytizing activities of missionaries and their denunciation of Hinduism, discrimination of the upper castes and constant alienation of Brahman community arose their conscious to fight against the British. The formation of local political groups on the controversies generated by social reforms and attack on

religion, and their eventual transition to national community took place in the capitulation over the question of changing the status quo.

Religion was the rallying force in the growth of nationalism. Nationalism was articulated not only as anti-imperial struggle but also to attain the golden age of vedas. The intellectual past time of early Bengalis comparing Indian tradition as superior to western tradition was revived from time to time by Congress nationalist. Aurobindo to Tilak to Gandhi justified caste system in one way or the other. More prolific of all nationalist was Gandhi who justified caste system and camouflaged his reactionary ideas in his saintliness.

Culture, understood by different nationalist were not the same. Aurobindo's articulation of cultural nationalism was limited to Bengal and Tilak to Maratha culture. The use of religious symbols by them was limited to their province. For Gandhi national

culture would mean the cow-belt culture. But nationalism did not embody the aspirations of the lower castes and never took into considerations the diverse culture within Hinduism. Instead it built two large identities of Muslim and Hindu. The Hindu identity was built around the Brahminical culture. So nationalism as anti-British was to hide the anti-lower caste and anti-nation features of Congress nationalism.

In the third chapter it is shown that the post independent communalism is the continuation of pre-independent nationalism. The formation of State in 1947 was by killing the aspirations of the lower castes. The upper castes got themselves diversified into different colours of Marxist, democrats, secularist, anti-secularist etc. Unlike Pakistan which declared itself as Islamic State, India called itself as a secular state. There is nothing substantial in this secularism. Without calling itself Hindurastra, they could have the cake and at the same time eat it too. The Mandal Commission, the emergence of the question of

caste, regional and ethnic movement, all, of course in distorted forms, have exposed the hollowness of the secularism and the communal character of the Indian state. The emergence of the subaltern cultural movements is more due to the failure of pre-independent nationalism to answer these questions and building politics on two pan-Indian identities of Hindu and Muslim. So BJP's attempt is seen as the continuation of pre-independent Congress politics in general and Gandhi's politics in particular. The quarrel of different political parties is the quarrel of Hindu undivided family. The question of caste and nationalities are pushed to background as it was done during the national movement.

\* \* \*

**GENESIS OF  
COMMUNAL CONSCIOUSNESS**



The efforts that one witness to frame the political discourse in accordance with a supposed struggle between secular nationalist forces and fascist communal forces requires an analysis which sees the struggle as a pretensions one and the discourse itself being intrinsic to the nature of political structure. In keeping with this line, the Hindutva oriented political activity of the BJP and the so called secular oriented politics of Congress and Left Parties cannot be seen as merely as a continuation of Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj, and as having been effectively countered by the secular nationalism of the Indian National Congress during the pre-independence period. A deeper enquiry into politics of Indian National Congress, Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj is necessary.

Most analysis on the history of communalism in India are conducted by posing two opposing categories: nationalism as absolute, unified, secular, true consciousness, hence progressive, and communalism as parochial, disintegrative, religion oriented and hence reactionary. These categories are then injected into different organisations to determine their

national or communal or progressive or reactionary nature. The success or failure attributed to the different organisations are linked to the contrived distinction between nationalism and communalism. The Indian National Congress which succeeded in replacing the British by creating an anti-imperialist fervour is seen as the true embodiment of nationalism. On the other hand, Muslim League which pressed for the creation of a separate state, Pakistan, on the basis of religious community, and the Hindu Mahasabha with its religion oriented politics that directly antagonised Muslims are seen as the torch bearers of communalism. This way of analysing communalism, by contrasting different political organisation on the basis of an equation which characterizes nationalism as anti-communal and communalism as a Hindu-Muslim problem, has more things to hide than reveal.

An assumption that nationalism and communalism dichotomy is a conceited contrivation which is instrumental for the consolidation of a particular political structure and for defining an appropriately restrictive discourse can facilitate a proper and full

understanding of communalism in India. For this purpose further dichotomies and oppositions, obscured by this contrived dichotomy should be brought out and shown as being related to the purport of communalism.

The BJP, VHP and RSS combine attempt at creating a pan-Indian Hindu identity and achieving political mobilisation through anti-Muslim rhetoric may be linked to the pressures building in the socio-political system after the decision to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations. Since the Hindu community is not a homogeneous one with a common language, culture or race, and caste still being a vital to the religion, BJP's attempt at national awakening may be seen as having dangerous portants for the Muslim community directly and also indirectly resisting the expansion of the social base for the benefit of the deprived castes, and destroying the linguistic and cultural identities of various tribes and other minority groups.

Similarly, Congress nationalism had meant for the Muslims, the domination of the Hindus. For the

lower castes, it had meant the continued domination of  
the upper castes.<sup>2</sup> Therefore anti-colonial fervour is  
insufficient to judge the secular character of the  
Congress. "Anti-colonial nationalism", as Breuilly  
says, "is closely related to the collaborator system  
established under the modern colonial State. It  
cannot, therefore be seen in simple nationalist terms  
of colonial society against imperial power. The  
cultural identities to which it appeals are functions  
of the forms taken by opposition politics. As there is  
never unity among the various language and other  
cultural groups which are identified in nationalist  
ideology, one can hardly see such identities as the  
ultimate source of the nationalist movement".<sup>3</sup> He  
suggests that the division between nationalist and  
non-nationalist could be traced back to low-caste  
groups co-operating with the Raj in a common opposition  
to high caste Brahmins with western education and  
nationalist sentiments.<sup>4</sup>

For instance, when a call was given by the  
Congress to boycott foreign cloth in protest against  
the partition of Bengal in 1905, the Namasudras, an

untouchable caste in Bengal together with the Muslims<sup>5</sup> did not respond in support of the movement. When Gandhi called for a boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India in 1922, lower caste crowds thronged to see him shouting, 'Hail the Prince', 'Let me see the Prince'.<sup>6</sup> During the 1921 non-co-operation movement Congress failed to get support from the untouchable caste. The Secretary of the Congress urged them to support the movement and tried to assure them that their grievance about drawing water from public wells would be remedied gradually. One young man from the crowd got up and said --"our trouble from which we are suffering from centuries must wait solution, but the laddu of Swarajya must go into your mouth at once! We shall see how you get Swarajya immediately".<sup>7</sup>

That a few organisations existed which explicitly conducted its politics on communal lines would not automatically bring to the congress party the merit of being secular and truly nationalist. The emancipatory, liberal ideas that legitimise nationalism must be crucially oriented to the deprived sections of the community, and in this case the politics of the

Congress party should be judged with primary reference to its response to the grievances and aspirations of the lower castes and other marginalised groups. It is in knowing how the Congress related to aspirations of the lower castes generated in the context of the influx of modernity that one can ascertain its true character. With this orientation the nature of Congress nationalism will be subject to a detailed analysis to understand the problems, purposes and portents of communalism. In this direction the main issues that will be addressed are: (a) the nature of the unifying principle of Indian society; (b) the Constitution of the educated middle class and their grounds for their struggles against British; (c) the basis of political mobilisation by Congress and the reforms undertaken under colonial rule.

#### Brahminical Unification

The structural and institutional changes brought about by the British by unifying India through an administrative machinery networks and by establishing representative institutions, judiciary and communication, drew different groups into contestations

of power in the urban areas. These groups constituted mainly by upper caste Hindus sparly by Muslims and other minorities and lesser still by lower caste Hindus. The lower castes and Muslims took refuge under the British bureaucracy for their historical backwardness and competed for power and position as distinct groups. In this contestation of power the upper castes had everything at stake. Whereas the lower castes had nothing to loose but everything to gain. For many groups that competed in the power struggle the Congress party posed itself as the most dominant organisation and claimed of having members from different parts of India. Neither the organisations representing Muslims, atleast till the Khilafat issue was taken as part of national struggle, nor those representing lower castes claimed of this character. The lower caste movements largely remained a regional movement. Why the Congress movement alone remained national movement and lower caste movements remained regional and came to be branded as castiest is the question to be answered.

Anil Seal, a Cambridge historian, has pointed out that the English educated professionals drawn from the three provinces of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay, for various reasons at different times constituted the level of all India? Though there were local rivalries and glaring national differences between south, north and west, "there was still a level at which the elites of Bengal, Bombay and Madras could work together and this was the level of all-India".<sup>10</sup> This characterization is inadequate because there were Muslims practising different professions who kept a distance from the Congress. Since the English educated class was basically drawn from the literate caste, the question of all caste groups joining the Congress does not arise. So we have to find what fundamental unifying principle of Indian society was, which gave the Congress quintessence of the unifying feature.

Characterizing Indian society with reference to Hindus and Muslims as constituting two homogenous communities is to hide the heterogeneity that exists, within. The traditional society was replete with distinct castes like Brahman, Rajput, Namboodiri,



Nayars, Vaishnavikas, Lingayat, Chamar, Chandal or Bhangi. Even the Muslim were identified as members of particular social class, involvement in which defined to a large extent the parameters of social life'.<sup>11</sup> The broad categories of Hindus and Muslims were imposed by the British.

In India men were born into different castes graded by Dharma to be strictly followed by the member of each caste. The Dharmarastras offered a system of law and organisation for the establishment of the Hindu State and social structure.<sup>12</sup> The social stratification based in a heirarchy of castes with birth determining the social status, justified by Hindu religious and upheld by priestly class, was not disturbed even after two long rule of non-Hindus, Muslims and British. Though there were overt differences of region and language, yet there was an underlying principle of unity. The underlying fundamental unity is ideological, the Brahminical tradition. Caste, the place of Brahmins, the cow, the sacred texts were all elements of Hinduism, the Brahminical ideology was powerful force in maintaining

the integrity of Hindu society. The ideology that gave cosmic harmony as well as unity and continuity can be traced to literary traditions common to all Brahmans and accepted by all twice born castes. Reciting Gayatri Mantra, Upanayana ceremony or sacred thread ceremony, sacredness of cow, vedas and upanishads were common to all the Brahmans from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. As M.N. Srinivas says, a Brahmin in Uttar Pradesh does not share in the same regional culture as a local chamar, but he (also) shares some cultural forms with  
13  
Brahmins everywhere in India from Kashmir to Camorin.

Many scholars have discussed Brahminical ideology constituting the fundamental unity of India  
14  
and organisation of Hindu society. Most of the nationalists who refuted the British denial of existence of (a uniform entity called) India and emphasised on regional identities, derived their strength from the Brahminical tradition. It is with reference to the ideology of Brahminism that national figures from Bankimchandra, Vivekananda, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo to Bipin Chandra Pal spoke of the unity of India as a continued importance. 'The meeting of the

Indian National Congress in 1885 is a great symbol of this' says Embree. <sup>15</sup> So the Hindu communalism of Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha for its emphasis on vedic religion and Hindu nationalism of Congress as perceived by Muslim are one and the same. The Brahminical culture of Brahmins and accepted by other twice-born caste, who were spread all over India got homogenised through English education and unified through bureaucracy, transport and communication. Congress was the quintessence of this colonial impact.

It should also be noted that Brahminical ideology constituting the underlying principle of unity and organisation of society, was based on exploitation. As Dharma Theertha says, 'Brahmanism is a system of social-religious domination and exploitation of the Hindus based on caste, priestcraft and false philosophy--caste representing a scheme of domination, priestcraft the means of exploitation and false philosophy on justification of both castes and priestcraft'. <sup>16</sup> Ashok Rudra has argued that exploitation of one class by another unlike in the west which was maintained by violence, was maintained by ideology in

India. 'The Sudra was indoctrinated to accept without protest the 'Sudra Dharma' and the Chandala lived his life according to the canons applicable to his station. Dharma put the highest premium on the acceptance of one's station in life and the existing social order and precluded any idea of rebellion.

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It is also to be taken note of that 'Brahminical ideology', as Embree says, 'cannot be confined to one group, but rather a set of values, indeed, concepts, practices and myths that are identifiable in the literary tradition and social institution.' For example Gandhi was a bania, not a Brahmin, but his ideas confirm to the basic thrust of Brahminical tradition. To Gandhi:

"a Hindu is anyone who, born in a Hindu family in India, accepts the vedas, the Upanishads and Puranas as Holy books, who has faith in the five Yamas of truth, non-violence etc. and practices them to the best of his ability; who believes in the existence of the atman (self) and the parmatman (Supreme self) and believes, further, that the atman is never born and never dies but, through incarnation in the body, passes from existence to existence and is capable of attaining moksha; who believes that moksha is the supreme end of human striving and believes in Varnashram and cow protection." (19)

Today Brahminism has percolated downwards and thousands of castes have emerged each deriving a satisfaction that below them there are some castes.

Under colonialism Brahminism was strengthened further. Divide and rule policy was not a twentieth century phenomenon. The British had followed the policy of strengthening, from time to time, those social groups which were conducive to their rule. The first beneficiary of this policy were Brahmins. After dislodging Muslims and French, the British continued the policy of the predecessors. The Mohamedans too had patronised temples as they yielded income.<sup>20</sup> The British as they annexed new territories pledged to the continuation of all rights, privileges and immunities enjoyed by the temple priests under the former Hindu or Muslim ruler and participated in the religious festivals.<sup>21</sup> They not only renovated many old temples, but also maintained it at enormous cost.<sup>22</sup> When pressure was built to withdraw from the management of temples only in 1833 the British severed the management of temples in 1863 after handing over them to local trustees and committees constituting only Brahmins who

were never the owners.<sup>23</sup> Moreover the British codified the laws of Hindu according to Brahminical doctrines and made Brahmins as the final<sup>24</sup> interpretations of Hindu law. To coerce the opponents into submission, British used the caste courts presided over by the Brahmins, where any<sup>25</sup> adverse judgment meant social death. The Brahminic law was extended to all those who were not Mohamedans and Christians, by which hundreds of castes and tribes who never believed in Hindu customs and belief were encompassed into Hindu fold. Moreover, the Sanskrit scriptures and Sastras were translated and elevated to the status of authoritative books. The early British administrators and judges more looked like Manu's Kshatriya who come to protect Brahmins and preserve Brahminism. The non-interference in religion meant defencing,<sup>26</sup> preserving and fostering Brahminical Hinduism.

### Transformation in the Traditional order

One of the most critical process in the transformation of tradition pertains to changes in the

traditional social hierarchy and accommodation of the principle of a new system of hierarchy. If the consolidation of British strengthened Brahminism, their economic reforms benefitted upper castes further, and brought further miseries to the masses.

The most important reform brought by the British which changed the land relations was the introduction of Permanent Settlement. The purpose of introducing this legislation was to give the land to the thrifty class, who after paying fixed revenue, would improve the land, protect the cultivators and improve the general property of their countrymen. As a consequence of implementing Permanent Settlement, the zamindars who were only revenue collectors under the Mughul period was declared as permanent owners. In fact earlier land had belonged to peasantry who enjoyed hereditary occupancy rights. <sup>27</sup> The new owners of land were banias, inferior zamindars and taluqdars who had no interest in the land nor the welfare of the cultivators. They preferred to lease portions of their properties to others who in turn played the role of rentiers so that with a short span of time, as many as

four or five layers of parasitic intermediaries stood between a great zamindars, who tendered account to British government for an estate bequathed to him in perpetuity, and the humble tenant in the village, who cultivated a few acres to the barest of subsistence for himself and his dependents.<sup>28</sup>

Initially the zamindars had to pay nine-tenth of the revenue and keep one tenth. Defaulting zamindar's land were auctioned for highest bidder and thus replaced by new zamindars. Invariably the auctioned land went to upper castes like Brahmins, Mahajans or urban money lenders says Dhanagere.<sup>29</sup> Krishnakanta Nandi, Ganga, Govinda Sinha and the Tagores were some of the new zamindars who had amassed fortunes by serving the raj and its representatives.<sup>30</sup>

The colonisation of the economy increased scope for the many upper caste Hindus to start modern business which was unknown to them. Apart from Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaishyas of Bengal were first beneficiaries of the colonial expansion.<sup>31</sup> As the British went on expanding by defeating local Kings and



chieftains the Indian merchants thrived by being brokers or banians. The banians not only benefitted by collaborating with the Company but also by serving in other ways. Gokul Ghoshal was banian to Governor Verclat, Krishnakant Nandi to Warren Hastings and Sykes. Bernosi Ghosh was dewan to the collector of Calcutta and lent money to the Company's servants for their private trade. <sup>32</sup> Jamesiti Jiji Bhai, the first Indian baronet who owned ships and big ship building dock, and invested in newspapers and joint-stock banks was the confidential adviser to many Governors of Bombay. <sup>33</sup> The Parsis became rich being contractors for British, supplying grain and other commodities to their cantonments and lending money to their soldiers and officers. After the advent British in the east the Marwaris of Maharashtra moved to Assam. <sup>34</sup>

Most of the banian invested in land and founded big zamindari families. <sup>35</sup> In Bengal professional and commercial interests were introwoven with economic interest in land and this class proved to be more oppressive than old zamindars. In Bombay and Madras Presidencies the old literary classes held

considerable interest in land. In North-Western Province the Rajputs, with some Brahmans constituted the bulk of under proprietors, including proprietors of Mahals.<sup>36</sup> This professional and commercial classes in the cities were the great driving force which sought to create a new unity, a nationalist unity, among different sectors of society in the sub-continent. In their attempt to forge this unity, Ravinder Kumar says that the professional and commercial classes used their linkages with rural society to great effect.<sup>37</sup>

Marx and Engles wrote in Communist manifesto: 'the bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relationship'.<sup>38</sup> But in India the capitalist did not emerge by struggling against feudal forces, instead derived strength from it and sustained by depending on feudal lords and princes. One of the chief sources of capital for industries came from feudal princes like Gwalior, Mysore, Baroda, Indore and Travancore, and from big landlords like Maharajas of Darbhanga and Bardhman.<sup>39</sup> The Indian big bourgeoisie itself was involved in feudal land ownership and

extractions of rent. Many of them have been big  
40  
landlords and usurers.

The capitalist class basically drawn from superior castes did not change the traditional consciousness. Speaking the language of modernity and practising modern business, the emerging bourgeoisie had sacred ideas about caste system and the traditional caste practices. The Indian managing houses such as the Birlas, the Tatas, the Dalmias and the Thapars appointed directors and managers, secretaries and  
41  
engineers from their region and caste. G.D. Birla said that he thought 'caste is what holds this country together. Abolish caste and India is in trouble'. His brother B.M. Birla wrote to Vallabhai Patel on 5th June, 1947 (immediately after the plan for transfer of power was adopted): "Is it not time that we should consider Hindustan as a Hindu state with Hinduism as  
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the State Religion". Moreover untouchability was practised in industries. The 1886-87 memorandum of Jones pointed out that 'the general run of hands will not work with lower castes, and latter have to be kept in certain parts of room to themselves and in some

cases in a separate buliding'. Though lower castes made a representation to Bombay government complaining against high caste Hindus and appealed for government employment in public service, the government refused because the caste Hindu officials would neither associate with them nor allow others to work with them.<sup>43</sup> The lower castes were not only depressed socially but also economically.

These economic changes did not evolve directly through the existing socio-economic system. It was in the nature of consignment that was imposed and eagerly appropriated by the upper castes. The appropriation fluxed social domination with economic domination. More importantly, the political unification of India which was unknown to Brahminism enabled the secular to subsume the sacred. The successful diarming of princes and local chieftains and their substitution with bureaucracy meant the end of rule by sword and the beginning of rule by pen. This bridged the gap between the state and civil society. The impact of the political unity was the transformation of social dominance into political dominance.

The expanding bureaucracy required educated men who could be employed. 'From ancient times the higher castes of India had been the administrators of literati of their communities. Since higher education under the British was to offer employment which was traditionally theirs, the new elites moved<sup>44</sup> unansweringly down these avenues of advancement.'

The British policy was also conducive to the upper caste interest. Elphinstone who inspired the foundation of the college at Bombay favoured the preservation of Brahminical heritage of the Marathas since he feared the widespread education among the lower caste would bring disaffection among the upper<sup>45</sup> castes, the ruling forces of the society. The new educated class basically drawn from the literate caste moved into professional jobs like journalism, medicine, teaching and law. The early supporters of Congress were the members of legal professionals and<sup>46</sup> their clients.

With decline in the prosperity in land arising from division of land, many priestly and literate caste thronged to English high schools to get

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just enough education to fit them for clerical jobs. This class the British called 'the professional agitators' sprang from among the 'hungry' but educated 'mal contents' whose numbers swelled annually.<sup>47</sup> Other than getting into bureaucracy educated class was neither interested in mass education or economic development.<sup>48</sup> Moreover the brown bureaucracy largely remained Brahminical, dominated by upper caste.<sup>49</sup> Its influence however was limited to certain big cities and large towns. The rural area which constituted 80% of the population did not experience any impact of the bureaucracy. Since India's tradition of caste authoritarianism fitted in well with the imperial scheme of things, Indian bureaucrats who usually belong to higher castes, were quick to step into the shoes of British who left India.<sup>50</sup>

All these socio-economic and political changes took place without any social change. Unlike in the west where political changes rose on the crumbling of old feudal order, in India the political changes empowered those who wielded social power. The new order was the continuation of the old order. This

newly emerged educated, commercial and professional classes are put in the category of 'middle-class' by B.B. Misra.<sup>51</sup> To designate this emerging group as middle class is to 'sacrifice social reality for sociological elegance'.<sup>52</sup> To understand their nature of the middle class one has to understand their religion, caste, linguistic and economic situation. What impact did the emerging classes have due to the changes brought by the British? How did these classes react to the legislation which would have changed the statusquo is to be known.

The educated, professional, commercial and industrial classes were primarily drawn from upper caste. Their higher status in social hierarchy gave them a better position to appropriate the advantages in secular avenues. They not only practised untouchability in industries but also prevented lower castes in getting education.<sup>53</sup> Blocking social mobility for the lower castes forced them to struggle for establishing their superior status within the hierarchy of caste system. As long as statusquo was maintained there were no complaints. But the upper

castes were quick to organise to prevent any attempt by the British to bring change which threatened their position. The cancellation of Permanent Settlement and resumption of rent free lands agitated the zamindars mind. Together with non-official British community the English educated Indians in Calcutta organised a protest and called it 'the Black Act'.<sup>54</sup> But what alarmed the Hindu community and reinforced their traditional social and cultural bonds was government's attempt to alter the traditional Hindu law of inheritance. The Lexi Loci Act of 1845 proposed to make certain changes in the Hindu law of inheritance so as to enable Hindu converts to Christianity to have a share in the ancestral property. No sooner the draft was published the Hindus of Madras and Bengal submitted memorials against it in which they alleged that the proposed law would seriously interfere with their ancient usages and customs, in violation of the earlier government's assurance of non-interference.<sup>55</sup> In the fight against the Lexi Loci Act, the orthodox Dharma Sabha which fought against ban of Sati, the Brahma Samaj which defended the ban of Sati, conservative Tattva Bodhini Sabha, the liberal and



reformer, gross idolator and pure vedantist, all were  
56  
united.

The interest of the landed class was also protected by the Congress. In 1899 the Punjab Land Alienation Bill was introduced in the Central Legislative Council which was to restrict the mortgage of lands in Punjab, so that money lenders might not easily have them transferred to their decree'. The Congress opposed the passage of the bill 57 and thus protected the interest of of Hindu trading castes, money lenders, officials, businessman and professionals. All had found their investment in land checked; and lawyers suffered a serious diminution of income from the decline in litigation. 58 This statusquoist interest was portent in Brahminical revivalism and orthodox bodies.

#### Political Awakening and Social Reform

In a society contaminated by evil practices of \*ntouchability, the lower castes being denied basic rights like use of public roads, public wells and

colonial modernity like English education and employment in bureaucracy not perculating downwards, social or religious reform do not mean the same thing. For a lower caste getting education, which is denied for centuries, is not reform, but political revolt. So political awareness as becoming conscious of rights which is denied because of birth has to be seen in the lower castes. But it is generally said to begin with the renaissance of Raja Ram Mohan Roy who worked for the abolition of Sati with the help of British. As a matter of fact, long before Roy took up the cause of Sati, in 1802 the Ezhavas and other unapproachable caste women of Kerala revolted against the upper castes<sup>59</sup> by covering their breasts which was prohibited. Jotiba Phule in later half of the nineteenth century<sup>60</sup> started schools for girls and untouchables. So it is preposterous to see the first signs of political awakening in Raja Ram Mohan Roy's crusade.

Since the pioneering social reformers were upper castes, issues taken up by them is projectd as national problems. For instance Sati was an issue which concerned only upper caste Hindus, is seen as a

national evil. Therefore any analysis of social reforms has to be looked in the light of the question of caste. What were the issues taken up by the social reformers? How did the educated class defy the orthodoxy? And whom did it benefit?

Like Roy who established Brahmo Samaj few other educated Indians took up certain issues which they thought as important, which antagonised the Brahmin orthodoxy. To counter the abolition of Sati the orthodox had formed a conservative body called  
61  
Dharma Sabha. Although its original purpose was defeated it continued to exist and discussed religious and social questions and also directed its attention to  
62  
the promotion of Sanskrit in Bengal.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar pleaded for remarriage of widows and abolition of polygamy which  
63  
was more prominent among Kulin Brahmins of Bengal. Though not intended widow remarriage movement became the first social reform to get a national character. Under the inspiration of Vidyasagar Vishnusastrī Pandit with other young reformers like Krishnasarti

Chiplunkar, Lokahitwadi, R.G. Bhandarkar and M.G. Ranade founded Vidhavavivahothyaka Sabha (society for promoting widow remarriage) in Bombay. Unlike Vidyasagar who wanted to legalise the remarriage of widows through legislation, Vishnusastry wanted the<sup>64</sup> validations from the religious authority. The orthodox was quick to respond and founded Vithoba Anna Daftardar of Poona to resist the influence of widow remarriage association. In Madras Presidency Virasalingam Pantulu founded the Rajahmundry Social Reforms Association in 1878 and began his crusade against enforced widowhood. Soon thereafter in northern India the newly established Arya Samaj<sup>65</sup> advocated remarriage of widows. Keshav Chandra Sen an outspoken social reformer of Brahma Samaj who broke away from Debendranath Tagore and started Adi Brahma Samaj advocated the rise of the age of marriage for girls to sixteen and propogated a simplified version of the marriage ceremony.

All the reform that were undertaken by educated Hindus and the controversy it generated had no reference to the problems of the lower castes. Moreover

defying orthodoxy for many educated Hindus meant drinking excessively, eating beef and embracing Christianity which were confined to individual protest and mostly carried out secretly. The Parahansa Mandali founded in 1849 at Bombay Elphinstone College, dedicated itself to the destruction of polytheism and caste system, required to eat food cooked by untouchables or Christians and dine regardless of caste, tribes, but held its meeting secretly.<sup>66</sup> Though reformers opposed caste theoretically, every bit of it was practised by them. The father of Indian renaissance Raja Ram Mohan Roy who said that 'distinction of caste, introducing innumerable division and sub-division among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling',<sup>67</sup> did not eat with other castes or religious communities and the Brahmin sacred thread adorned his neck till the end of his life.<sup>68</sup> Whatever reforms were undertaken, the reformer themselves never followed it. The radical Keshav Chandra Sen who propogated the rise in age for marriage of girls and simple marriage ceremony, married his daughter who was not yet thirteen to a boy who was not yet sixteen with orthodox ceremonies.<sup>69</sup> Ranade who propogated widow remarriage

did not marry a widow, but married a 11 year old girl when his first wife died and did prayaschita (penance) for taking tea from Christian missionaries.<sup>70</sup>

The reformers attempts to eradicate social evils was meant to fortify Brahminism and not weaken it. This is quite clear in the emphasis on removal of evil institutions like sati, child marriage, polygamy and widow re-marriage which were customs and practices of upper caste. Removing these social evils meant strengthening them and not the lower castes. This is also quite evident from Raja Ram Mohan Roy's own statement. He said: "the ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brahminism, but to a preservation of it; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practices of their ancestry and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey".<sup>71</sup> The ideals of reforms was defined by educated men and "social reform" did not ordinarily mean a reorganisation of the social structure at large, but for the benefit of lower castes, instead it meant the infusion into the existing social structure of new

the infusion into the existing social structure of new ways of life and thought, the society would be preserved, while its members would be transformed' observes Heimsath.

72

The element of progressiveness in these social reforms was of no help to the lower castes. But the controversies it generated helped the upper castes to communicate all over India. Transport and communication, and news papers were effectively used to propagate different views. This helped to create all India consciousness. As K.N. Panikkar observes:

"During the course of nineteenth century the intellectuals were brought together, either in opposition or in unity, in a series of struggles over socio-cultural issues. Between the debate over the abolition of Sati in Bengal in the early part of the nineteenth century and national controversy over the Age of Consent Bill during the closing decades a number of public questions became their common concern. The anti-conversion Petition, the Anti-Idolatry Memorial, the Lexi Loci Act, the Widow Marriage Act and the Civil Marriage Act are to mention a few. The formation of local and regional intellectual communities and their eventual transition to a national community can be deserved during the course of agitation over these issues." (73)

So central to the national awakening was the quest for reinforcing the traditional culture. The colonial conquest strengthened the traditional order. All the benefits of colonial modernity were appropriated by the higher orders of the Hindu society. When the appropriation was getting diminished due to more competition from the lower orders of the society, the national awakening emerged with anti-British agenda. This awakening was a communal awakening.

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1. Bipin Chandra, Communalism in Modern India, (New Delhi: Vikas 1984); Prabha Dixit, Communalism - A Struggle for Power, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974)
2. The end of the British rule seemed to cause some apprehensions in the minds of the lower caste leaders. The Madras Social Reform Advocate wrote: "if today the direct of the Englishman ceased in our land, in a few years the nightmare of our past would settle down again, and providence will have to select a new instrument, a new race of conquerors, for our redemption." in John R. McLane, The Political Awakening in India, (New Jersey: Prentice - Hall, 1970), p.147.
3. John Breuilly, Nationalism and the State, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), p.164.
4. Ibid., p.150
5. Guruchand one of the leaders of Namasudra movement emphasised that those nationalist leaders who were now trying to secure their support for the Swadeshi movement, had not uttered a single word in the past against zamindari oppression or against the inhuman treatment meted out towards them by the Brahmins and the Kayasthas. For a long time, the Namasudras had been outcastes of the society. So only when they were given a place of honour, would they come forward with full vigour to serve the country. Hence, if the nationalist really wanted the Namasudras to support their political movement, they should first wage a battle to obliterate social inequalities, which they were not prepared to do. See Sheker Bandyopadhyaya, 'Social Protest or Politics of Backwardness? The Namasudra movement in Bengal, 1872-1911', in Basudesh Chattopadhyaya and others edit, Dissent and Consensus: Social Protest in Pre-Industrial Societies, (Calcutta: K.P.Bagchi and Co., 1989), p.198, also see pp.193-94.

6. Katherene Mayo, Mother India, (London: Jonatha Cape), pp.160-164.
7. Swami Shraddhanand, Inside Congress, (Bombay: Phoenix Publications, 1946), pp.133-34.
8. The Namasudra movement was confined to Bengal, Ramaswamy Naicker's non-Brahmin movement to Tamil Nadu, Phule's Satyashodak Samaj and Ambedkar's Mahar movement to Maharashtra and Sri Narayana Guru's Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana movement to Kerala. There was no integration of lower caste movements in general as we see in the Congress.
9. The lower caste who were denied education and temple entry, organising themselves to get education and asserting their right to enter temples is seen as the emergence of caste consciousness. See for eg., Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, (Madras: Macmillan India Limited, 1983), pp.55-58.
10. Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism. Competetion and Collaboration in Later Ninteenth Century, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp.112-113.
11. Ainslie T.Embree, India's Search for National Identity, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1972), p.18.
12. D. Mackenzie Brown, The White Umbrella. Indian Political Thought from Manu to Gandhi, (Berkely: University of California Press, 1958), p.10.
13. M.N. Srinivas, Caste in Modern India and other Essays, (Vombay: Media Promoters and Publishers, 1962), p.98.
14. Ainslie T.Emree, Imaging India: Essays in Indian History, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.9-27; Ahok Rudra, 'Against Feudalism', in Economic and Political Weekly, 26 December, 1981, pp.2133-46; Swami Dharma Theertha, The Menace of

Hindu Imperealism, (Lahore: Happy Home Publication, 1946); Valentine Chirol, India, (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1926), pp.32-33; S.C.Mookerjee says, 'from Kashmir to Comorin, from Jallalabad to Chittagong and beyond, the civilization is still Brahmanic even in the decay, a matter which should be of no ordinary pride in us" in The Decline and fall of the Hindus, (Calcutta: Indian Rationalist Society, 1919), p.7; K.M.Panniker in his book 'The State and the Citizen' referred to the Sanskrit language as constituting the cultural unity of India. He wrote: 'the basis of our cultural unity is Sanskrit. It is this literature that is embodied in the great language that provides us all over India with the background of our culture. It is to the classics of that language that our tradition are to be traced. Without the continuous cultivation of Sanskrit by the intelligentsia of the country, the cultural unity of India will suffer", p.90, in Donald E.Smith, India as a Secular State, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp.387-88.

15. Ibid., p.11; It was a meeting of the Brahmins. "A three-day show! There were caste-wise dinners. To the Tamil delegates even the sight of others while they were dining, meant pollution. Nobody mind the starch and dirt". See Dhananjay Keer, Mahatma Gandhi: Political Saint and Armed Prophet. (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1973), p.70.
16. Swami Dharma Theertha, n.14, p.7.
17. Ashok Rudra, n.14, p.2144.
18. Ainslie T.Embree, n.14, p.10.
19. Gandhi, CWG, Vol.XIX, p.327, Quotation in Keer, n.15, p.382.
20. Theertha, n.14, p.165.

21. Also the British participated in religious festivals much as traditions dictated. Government officials were present to inaugurate annual festivals, troops and artillery were used to make each occasion as splendid as possible. In the Military salute which ushered in Ramzan, in the official breaking of coconuts at the commencement of the monsoon, and in the employment of Brahmans to involve propitious weather, the Government was careful to enact its time honoured role to perfection. See Donald E. Smith, n.14, p.75.
22. See Ibid., pp.73-74; Theertha, n.4, pp.166-168.
23. Donald E. Smith, n.14, pp.76-78.
24. Theertha, n.14, p.170; Suniti Kumar Ghosh, The Indian Big Bourgeoisie: Its Genesis, Growth and Character, (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1985), pp.140-41.
25. One of the charges against Warren Hastings was that he used the caste to terrorise the opponents into submission. Theertha, n.14, p.169.
26. Swami Dharma Theertha has enumerated the gradual stages by which Brahminism was strengthened by British and permanently imposed upon the submissive people of India. Firstly, they (British) raised the Brahmans to the highest posts of power, profit and confidence. Secondly, they chivalrously championed the cause of the decaying temples, idolatrous festivals, and charming dancing girls with the hearty patronage and protection of the Company's Government, to the mutual advantage and recreation of the Company and the priests. Thirdly, they established the caste Kutcheries, the most dreaded tribunal of the Hindus. Fourthly, they unearthed from oblivion Manu Shashtra and other spurious texts, which the vast majority of the Hindus had never heard of, and elevated them to the status of authoritative works of Hindu Law. Fifthly, they handed over the temples to the control of trustees, and thus

facilitated the aggrandisement of Brahminism and deprivation of the rights of lower orders. Sixthly, through judicial decision and administrative classification and even by legal enactments, the so called Hindu law has been applied to all Indians who are not Christians or Muhammadans. Seventhly, they gave caste distinction royal recognition, state protection, enhanced dignity, positive value and significance, and even political importance. Eighthly they blasted the hopes of reformers and teachers by making it impossible for them to alter the status-quo by any practicable means. Ninthly, in the name of non-interference, they have actively strengthened and perpetuated the evils of society. Lastly, christian antiquarians have added insult to injury by flattering the non-British castes and unchristians idolatry as meritorious cultural achievements to be preserved for the dedication of humanity. Ibid., pp.176-177.

27. D.N.Dhanagere, Peasant Movements in India, 1920-50 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.27-31.
28. Ravinder Kumar, Essays in Social History of Modern India, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.4.
29. Dhanagere, n.27, pp.32-34; Rajat and Ratna Ray, "Zamindars and Jotedars: a study of Rural Politics in Bengal", Modern Asian Studies, 9, 1 (1975), p.84.
30. S.K.Ghosh, n.24, p.116.
31. The literary castes taking up business which was considered inferior occupation earlier is seen by B.B.Misra as 'radical departure from Indian tradition.' He points out that the traditional gulf between learning and trade had begun to narrow because earlier the merchant castes did not get education and literary castes did not take up trade. This is an eroneous conclusion because the radical departure was blending of social dominance

with economic dominance which strengthened upper castes further. See, 'The Indian Middle Class, Their Growth in Modern Times, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp.106-107.

32. S.K.Gosh, n.24, p.128.
33. He was knighted in 1842 and when it handed over to him, he said: 'I shall hand down this medal to my children's children with pride and reverence..... They shall be taught that fidelity to the British crown is their first duty - loyalty the first virtue! Ibid., p.131.
34. Ibid., pp.132-133.
35. Ibid., p.129.
36. B.B.Misra, n.31, p.276.
37. Ravinder Kumar, n.28, p.13.
38. Karl Marx and Fredrick Engles, Communist Manifesto, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p.44.
39. S.K.Ghosh, n.24, p.153.
40. Ibid., p.282
41. Misra, n.31, p.287.
42. Cited in S.K.Ghosh, n.24, p.287.
43. B.B. Misra, The Indian Political Parties. An Historical Analysis of Political behaviour upto 1947, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976), p.78.
44. Anil Seal, n.10, p.115.
45. Misra, n.31, p.158.

46. Total of 13,839 delegates attended annual session between 1892-1909, 5442 (40%) were from legal profession. Rest were journalists, doctors and teachers and small number representing other profession. Ibid., p.353.
47. Ibid., p.348.
48. The anti-mandal agitation is the reflection of the thrive for bureaucratic position. Contempt for unorganised sector and craze for government job is not a new phenomena. Holding a government job has become morally equivalent to wearing sacred thread.
49. Indian Public Service Commission reported in 1887 that of 1,866 Hindu Members of the judicial or executive services, as many as 904 were brahmins and 454 were Kayasth. The number of Kh-shatriyas or Rajputh were 147, Vaishyas 113, Shudras 146 and others 102. The Brahmins were especially very dominant in Madras with 202 of a total of 297 and in Bombay 211 of 328. The 1901 census reported that the Brahmins were dominant inspite of their small percentage in population. The Brahmins though forming less than one-thirteenth of the total number of Hindus, hold 8 appointments out of 11 and the Prabhus, Baniyas and Sindhi Hindus constituted 3 of the remainder. Misra, n.31, pp.322-323; This situation has not changed much. The Mandal Commission Report lists as many as 3,743 communities as 'backward', a figure that amounts to 52% of India's total population. Their representation in Government employment in the Class I, Class II and III - IV categories stands at 4.69%, 10.63% and 24.40%. Shri ameshwar Choudhury, 'Reservations for OBCs: Hardly An Abrupt Decision', Economic and Political Weekly XXV, 35-6 (1-8 September, 1990), p.1930.
50. Misra, n.31, p.340.
51. Ibid., pp.12-13.

52. Seal, n.10, p.110; Raymond Williams says, "the essential history of the introduction of class, as a word which would supersede older names for social divisions relates to the increasing consciousness that social position is made rather than merely inherited. All other words, with their essential metaphors of standing, stepping and arranging in rows, belong to a society in which position was determined by birth." Keywords, A vocabulary of Culture and Society, (Newyork: Oxford University Press, 1976) p.52.
53. Dufferin in a letter to North Brook: ".....on the education question the Brahmins would do everything they could do to prevent the lower castes sharing in its advantage..." Misra, n.31, p.340.
54. S.R. Mehrotra, The Emergence of Indian National Congress, (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1971), p.6.
55. Ibid., pp.37-39, 47-50.
56. Ibid., p.38.
57. Misra, n.31, p.355.
58. Prabha Dixit, Hindu Nationalism, Seminar, August, 1977, p.32.
59. M.S.A. Rao, Social Movement and Social Transformation, (Delhi: Manohar, 1984) pp
60. Charles H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, (Bombay: Oxford University Press 1964) p.102; Phule in his writings asserted that God had sent the English to India to 'lift the ban on education which the Brahmins imposed on the Shudras and anti-Shudras (untouchables to educate them and made them wise! cited'. Cited in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, ed, Dominance and State Power in India: Decline of a Social Order, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 19 ) p.488



61. S.R. Mehrotra, n.54, p.4
62. Ibid., p.5
63. Kulin Brahmins were the most superior Brahmins, who were prohibited Brahmin girls of inferior class. So those Brahmins who had amassed wealth under the company, for the sake of social prestige married their daughters to Kulin Brahmin by paying dowry for the paltry gains the Kulin Brahmins married innumerable times, never to see the Bride again. See, Misra, n.31, pp.368-370.
64. A nine day debate went on between the opponents and the reformers under the auspices of Shankaracharya where the final decision went against the reformers. See, Richard Tucker, 'Hindu Traditionalism and Nationalist Ideologies in Nineteenth century Maharashtra', Modern Asian Studies, Vol.10, 3 Part I 1976, pp340-1; Heimsath, n.60, p.87.
65. Heimsath, Ibid.
66. Tucker, n.64, p.325.
67. Qt. in Heimsath, n.60, p.5.
68. M Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India, (New Delhi: Orient Publishers, 1967) p.33; Ghose, 24, pp.137-138.
69. Heimsath, n.60, p.96.
70. Ibid, pp.184-185
71. Jogender C. Ghosh, Ed, The English Works of Ram Mohan Ro, Vol.I, pp.80-81, Qt in T.K. Ravindran, Again and Social Revolution, (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1972) pp.XCIII-XCIV; Nc Lane, n.2, p.11.
72. Heimsath, n.60, p.5.

73. K.N. Panikkar, 'Culture and Ideology, Contradictions in Intellectual Transformation of colonial Society' in India, EPKL, December 5, 1987, P.2115; Particularly 'the battle over age of consent roused orthodox leaders throughout British India to a conscious of its actual weakness and potential power of their position .....the cry of religion in danger had awakened a responsive choired in millions who othorwise took no note of public affairs". See Stanley A. olpert, Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reforms in the Makers of Modern India. (Los Angels: University of California Press, 1962), p.62.

**COMMUNL MOORINGS**  
**IN**  
**INDIAN NATIONALISM**

The British imperial order and the introduction of modernity through colonialism generated forces of national unity. The educated class of the twice born castes got homogenised through English education. This helped in removing linguistic barriers between regions. As long as imperial order of things went with the interests of the beneficiaries of modernity, there were no conflicts. As Prabha Dixit puts it :

"Until the display of racial arrogance was confined to the lower orders, e.g., coolies in the tea plantation, domestic servants, etc. , did not prick the conscience or bruise the ego of the educated Hindus. But when it was extended to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Bipin Chandra Pal, Surendra Nath Banerjee, or Aurobindo Ghosh, an insult to the national honour was suddenly discovered."<sup>1</sup>

The early manifestation of confrontation appeared in Bengal with the resumption of rent-free lands. The Lexi Loci Act and the Punjab Land Alienation Bill had made the landlords to organise and maintain economic statusquo. At the cultural level, the aggressive missionary activities<sup>2</sup> of proselytising, denouncing Hinduism, establishment of English education and spread of Christianity which

influenced few educated Hindus to do away with some customs and practices forced many orthodox Hindus to defend the existing social customs and practices. Stray cases of conversion created a lot of excitement and alarm among the upper caste Hindus. The natives wanted the benefits of English rule, but not their interference in the religion. Rival associations had emerged to counter the reforms organisations. To check the influence of Brahma Sabha, Dharma Sabha was found by conservative Hindus but more importantly the denunciation of Hinduism by Christian missionaries and the renunciation of ancestral faith by many educated Indians, united both the liberal and orthodox Hindus. To check the inroads made by Christian Missionaries they found many organizations. Some liberal Hindus under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore started a society called Thattwabodhini Sabha whose object was to propagate an ancient, dignified and intellectual form of Hinduism and thereby 'put a bar to the spread of athiesm and of Christianity'. The Sanatan Dharma Rakshini Sabha (society for the defence of eternal religion) founded in Calcutta 1873 and the Dharmam Mahamandali (Great Religious Association) established

two decades later were two vital orthodox bodies. <sup>6</sup> Raj Narain Bose an old student of Hindu college claimed the superiority of Hindu religion and established 'Society for the promotion of National Feeling among the educated Natives of Bengal' to resist imitation of west and revive the old ideas, tradition and customs in every walk of life. <sup>7</sup> In Maharashtra Gangadharsastri Phadke, in 1852, published an article called Hindudharmatattva (the principle of Hindudharma) where he defended the existing beliefs and practices of Hinduism. Another weighty Sastri, Krishnasastri Sathe insisted that it is not by the abolition of caste but by industry, courage, desire that political supremacy is to be recovered. He expressed fear that Government policies were encouraging the lower caste to desert their traditional social rules, their only proper and satisfying position in ordained order of things. <sup>8</sup>

The uncritical defence of Brahminism by many orthodox Hindus justifying the evil practices and return to Varnashram Dharma put them in a more vulnerable position against foreign religion. For many liberal and orthodox Hindus, defence of Hinduism

against the onslaught of missionaries became the defence of the existing exploitative social order. With challenges posed to the Hindu social order due to the political awakening of the lower castes who took up education and sought protective discrimination, caste could not be justifiable in religious terms alone. Brahminical revivalism was another attempt to justify caste system. The revivalist justified caste, not by religion but by rationality.

One of the most important revivalist was Dayanand Saraswati who reformed certain abuses of orthodoxy, but at the same time remaining close to orthodoxy made Hinduism more defensible against foreign religion. Dayananda behelded people from taking bath from Ganga in times of festivals, condemned the Shraddha ceremonies for the dead and said that service<sup>9</sup> and loving care should go rather to the living. He criticised the practice of preparing horoscopes and advocated the marriage of virgin widows, but not other who are given niyoga as a substitute form of temporary marriage.<sup>10</sup> One of the important issues among the upper castes was the ex-communication of those who went

abroad. Dayananda ridiculed the practice of ex-communication and wrote that those who went abroad became fearless and bold, and attained great power and prosperity by studiously imbibing the good qualities and adopting the good customs and manners of the foreigners and rejecting their faults, evil habits and  
11  
bad manners.

Like Roy, Dayanand too continued the tradition of upper caste social reforms. Most important among all the reforms of was his ideas of caste system which was echoed by many nationalists. Though Dayananda rejected the current basis of caste system, he adhered to the vedic notion of four Varnas of Brahmin, Kshatriya Vaishya and Shudras. Though he did not propose the abolition of caste system, but found flexibility in the Vedic concept of caste. According to Dayananda, in the eyes of God man was not born into any Varna but was identified according to the life he  
12  
led. This notwithstanding Dayananda Saraswathi rejected inter-dining as well as inter-marriage. He found harm in taking food from lower castes, for these bodies are not so pure and free from impurity, stench



or other kinds of daint..... the body of the low caste is full of atoms and stench and other noxious matter. <sup>13</sup> Regarding marriage he wrote, 'marriage should take place in their own Varna, i.e. a Brahmin man should be married to a Brahmin women; a Kshatriya to a Kshatriya, a Vaishya to a Vaishya and a Sudra to a Sudra. This will maintain the integrity of each Varna <sup>14</sup> as well as good relations'.

Unlike other reformers who discarded everything Indian, Dayananda Saraswati made Vedas as the centre of his discourse. He elevated the Vedas into an authoritative source of Hinduism and considered it superior to Quran and Bible. He concluded that "those who failed to accept his ideal visions or who fail to acknowledge the Veda alone as the original complete and true source of revealed system and national knowledge were either hypocritical or <sup>15</sup> thoroughly of a low character" (anarya). Also Dayananda was the first to take up seriously of bringing back converted Hindus, but his 'shuddi' of bringing back converts was nothing to do with the reform of caste system. It was taken in the context of

Christian converts (about 4000 by 1881) in Punjab where the fear of Christian threat was engendered in their mind.  
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Crystallising Hinduism around Brahminical tradition, making Vedas as an authoritative text, removing irritants in higher caste ascent to secular spheres and claiming caste system as superior form of social organisation over European social order, Dayananda Saraswati made Hindu religion more defensive against foreign religion.  
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Cultural order is the reflection of the natural order. At the cultural level caste system was raised to the spiritual form of social organisation which was against the interest of the lower caste. If nationalism is the ideology of masses representing social change, how did Indian national movement attempted to resolve the question of disparities and conflicts between regional and caste movements? What was the attitude of the nationalist leaders towards social reforms? What were their opinions about caste system? And how did they mobilise the masses against imperialism, are some of the issues which will be discussed here.

## Congress and Social Reforms

When the educated class of the Madras, Bombay and Calcutta provinces joined to form Congress, the question of gender and caste were the two questions that had gained preponderance. Both the questions of liberating women and lower castes were inter-linked because the same set of values which had kept the lower castes subjugated also kept women degraded. Both had only duties, no rights.

In 1884 William Wedderburn's proposal to start a high school for girls created a controversy. He recognised education for women as one of the prerequisite of thorough going reforms. Tilak who represented orthodox's point of view expressed that the duty of the girl was 'to look after the house'. By offering girls and boys equality of educational opportunities, he argued in Kesari, society would merely suffer because in this world the spheres of duty of women are different, from those of men.

The Congress did not take up any social issues, but confined itself to political reforms. Daddabhai Naoroji in his presidential address at second Congress made it clear that, the National Congress must confine itself to questions in which the entire nation has a direct participation, and it must leave the adjustment of Social Reforms, and other class questions, to class congress.<sup>19</sup> It was National Social Conference, created or an adjunct to National Congress, took up social issues. Social Conference, an upper caste social reform organisation, for the first time questioned the organisation of Hindu society on caste lines. The Social Conference in 1895 passed a resolution favouring the uplift of pariahs and succeeding conferences reaffirmed the motion.<sup>20</sup> R.G. Bhandarkar in his presidential address despaired of seeing a united nation so long as caste distinction prevailed; "the rigid system of caste" he said, "which has eroded the vitals of this country, will ever act as a heavy drag on one race towards a brighter future". He observed that, 'caste feeling is of the same kind as national feeling, but its mischievous consist in its being confined to a small community.....'<sup>21</sup> But Ranade

who represented the sentiments and fears of the majority of the Conference did not take a strong stand against caste organisation of society. For most of the reformers 'the line of least resistance' the doctrine of K.T. Telang defined the direction in which social change should proceed as well as its method and pace.<sup>22</sup>

Tilak who shared similar views with Naoroji and other Congress leaders regarding social reform being incompatible with nationalism held that the Congress should not only ignore social reform but also adopt open hostility to Social Conference. Malbari's campaign for the raising of age of marriage gave Tilak the opportunity to launch crusade against social reformers. The 'Hinduism in danger' cry found the backbone of most of the opposition arguments. Tilak led an unscrupulous attack on the supporters of the bill. His newspaper set the tone of orthodoxy outraged and nationalism insulted by the threats of Government<sup>23</sup> intervention in Hindu social practices.

In 1895, two years after Tilak started Ganapati festivals to strengthen Hindus, gave him courage to challenge the use of National Congress meeting facilities by National Conference at Poona Session. Though majority favoured the use of the pavilion by the Conference, Ranade succumbed to the anti-reform faction led by Tilak as well as to the pressures within the Congress to avert a split in the  
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Congress.

To counter Anil Seal's argument that the Congress was composed of English educated and professional men drawn from the three provinces of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, few Indian historians point out that the Congress represented a much wider range of interest and social composition and, political aims were heterogeneous and anti-imperialism was both  
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at the elitist level as well as populist level. Though one can notice differences of opinion among nationalist and different factions of moderates and extremists, reformers and anti-reformists, heterogeneity of language and region, different political interest which created a lot of heat and controversy generated

by different factions, still they were all united on one question: "social revolution preceding political reforms".<sup>26</sup> "the unwritten customary law of the Congress proclaimed", says Surendranath Banerjee, "no matter what differences of opinion may exist amongst us as regards religious believes or social usage, they shall be no bar to our acting together in Congress -- they shall not be permitted to interrupt the cordiality of our relation as Congressmen."<sup>27</sup> For most of the nationalist, social reform and political reform were incompatible. Moreover Tilak's standing on the foundation of anti-social reform, popularised religious festivals to articulate political nationalism which we shall see later. So this unity among the nationalist by not taking up issues which threatened their position exposed the cleavages in society, gave them a confidence to show a vague sense of unity and homogeneity. This politics derived its legitimacy in articulating Brahminical revivalism in political process by the nationalist.

Many nationalist articulated the ideology of nationalism as attainment of grandeur vedic golden age.

Aurobindo wrote that, "Hindu civilization being spiritual based its institutions on spiritual and moral foundations and subordinated the material elements and material considerations. Caste therefore was not an institution which ought to be immune from the cheap second-hand denunciations so long in fashion, but a supreme necessity without which Hindu Civilisation could not have developed its distinctive character as worked out in its unique mission." <sup>28</sup> Therefore, 'the aim of the nationalist', according to Aurobindo, 'is to restore the spiritual greatness of a nation by the <sup>29</sup> essential preliminary of its political generation.'

Vivekananda, another Bengali revivalist, found India's salvation in religion. For him 'politics never formed a necessity of life, but religion and spirituality have been the condition upon which it lived and thrived, and has got to live in future' <sup>30</sup>. The valuable contributions made by the caste system to the preservation of Hindu religion and society in the medieval past were lauded, and it was pointed out that although castes existed in every country of the world 'but nowhere in their plan and purpose so glorious as



here'. Hence, levelling of caste was undesirable for the growth of Hindu society. The Hindu social order was the reflection of natural order--inequality was the law of nature. <sup>31</sup> In his ideal a Chandala could raise and assimilate to the culture of the Brahman by learning Sanskrit, but have to retain the Sudra status until he acquires the characteristics of Vaishya and Kshatriya. Since the temperament and character of Sudras were inferior to other high castes, 'the Sudras as rule are either mainly servile, licking like dogs the feet of the higher class, or otherwise are as inhuman as brute beasts.' <sup>32</sup>

Vivekananda showed great concern that large sections of Indian society left their ancestral religion. He favoured the idea of receiving them back. He said, "we shall otherwise decrease in numbers". He recommended giving the reconverted freedom to choose their own form of religious belief, but within the framework of caste system (even a creation of a new separate one) in order to facilitate their assimilation <sup>33</sup> 'into the great body of Hinduism'.

If caste system was found superior form of social organisation by Bengalee revivalist, Tilak saw caste distinctions being originally planned on the principle of division of labour and not the present system of discrimination, and compared it to the guild system of Europe. <sup>34</sup> Though he declared at a conference of the Depressed Classes that, 'if God was to tolerate untouchability, I would not recognise him as God at all', refused to sign a memorandum for the removal of untouchability. <sup>35</sup> Tilak believed that issue of self-government should not be harnessed to the goal of abolition of caste which would take centuries to achieve it because Buddhist had attempted to root out the system in ancient times, but had failed. <sup>36</sup>

Hinduising politics by Aurobindo, Bipin Chandra Pal and Tilak was more regional oriented. Thier cultural nationalism was more concentrated in the provinces of Bengal and Bombay. All-India, only had a vague reference in their political articulation. Articulating politics exclusively through religious idioms was to undermine the revolutionary potentialities of the masses. For Congress

nationlaist, nationalism and social reforms was incompatible as it exposed the cleavages in the society. Also the Congress avoided 'horizontal mobilisation' on economic discontents because it set one class against another and community against community. To prevent such disharmony and exposing social cleavages Congress marshalled political support through 'vertical mobilisation' using religion. 37

A movement which refuses to touch social as well as economic question and harps on religion to marshall political support, the question to be examined is the purpose and use it serves in a stratified society. Though British attempted to bring few land legislations, missionary denunciations of Hinduism and their proselytising activities had created anti-British feelings, it was Tilak who first recruited Hindu dieties for political purposes. Inserting politics into religious festivals by Tilak was an attempt to bring Brahman and non-Brahman, Congress and the traditional masses together. 38

Enlarging the scope of religious festivals had an element of anti-British propoganda, but the constant alienation of Brahman community by the British is more important.<sup>39</sup> 'Behind the rhetoric of politicisation and dissemination of nationalism was the more immediate and practical concern of protesting the alleged government partiality of Muslims or conversly against the non-recognition of Brahman of the Deccan' observes Richard I. Cashman.<sup>40</sup> Ganapathi's political elevation itself is closely linked with rising political stock of the Chitapavan community in modern times. As G.S. Ghurye says, that the titular diety of the Peshawas and important Chitapavan families, such as the Patvardhanas, Ganapathi benefitted from the improved circumstances of the Chitapavan community in the eighteenth and ninteenth centuries. He continued to attract greatest allegiance in Poona and in the Chitapavan villages and towns of the Konkan and the<sup>41</sup> Desh.

To popularise the Ganapathi festivals Tilak made a number of innovations. Large public images of the God were installed in mandaps, introduced singing

parties attached to each public Ganapathis and inserted political songs in the melas. Copying certain aspects of Muharram like the formation of groups attached to public image, the 1894 Ganapati festival was promoted as a counterpart to the Muharram festival by which the organisers hoped to wean away those Hindu artisans, musicians and dancers who had freely participated in the Muharram festival in previous years. Many of the verses sung by the melas of 1894 took an anti-Muslim stand. A typical verse was

Oh! Why have you abandoned today the Hindu religion?  
How have you forgotten Ganapati, Shiva and Maruti?  
What have gained by worshipping the tabuts?  
What boon has Allah conferred upon you  
That you have become Mussalman today?  
Do not be friendly to a religion which is alien  
Do not give up your religion and be fallen.  
Do not at all venerate the tabuts.  
The cow is our mother, do not forget her. (42)

The original idea of Tilak was to draw Brahmins and the non-Brahmins to make the affair broad based which could be done only by creating the 'other' and demarcate 'us' because there was no common socio-economic interest between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. Since the Brahman and non-Brahman lived in separate wards, the melas were formed on caste or

community basis. Though the non Brahmins melas remained exclusively religious in orientation the Brahmin melas sang verses encouraging the Hindu to boycott the Muharram and in favour of temperance, swadeshi and the programme of the extremist party.<sup>44</sup>

It is euphemistic to say that the blending of Hinduism with nationalism was not communal as Bipin Chandra has attempted to point out.<sup>45</sup> It was not national but highly communal. Inserting religion into politics by Tilak not only disturbed the cordial relations that had existed between Muslims and Hindus but was also used to attack the social reformers and for maintaining statusquo in the society. More than politicising the masses, it only benefitted Tilak who used it as 'a stepping stone to a bright political career'.<sup>46</sup>

The use of Ganapati by Tilak did not have any impact outside the Bombay Province. Goddess Kali had greater attraction in Bengal. As the political elevation of Ganasha was linked to the rise of Chitapavan community, 'the upper castes in Bengal were

generally followers of the Sakta cult of Kali worship, the masses were Muslims or followers of Hindu Vaishnava cult of Radha Krishna.<sup>47</sup> Like Tilak, Aurebindo too used religious symbols to mobilise political support. His politics is related to the fear that Muslims will inherit the future because of the decline of upper caste Hindus. He thought in terms that Hindus in the towns in government service and the professions should ally with the rural landed upper castes, so that the urban elites do not lose the leadership of the rural masses.<sup>48</sup> The terrorist groups in Bengal which became active during anti-partition movement utilised the Sakta cult of Kali for mobilisation. There was no attempt by Bengali terrorist to use lower castes Radha Krishna cult for political purpose.<sup>49</sup> Unlike in Bombay, where the use of religious festival was able to wean away the Hindus from participating in Muslim festivals and thus construct a weak vertical Hindu community; in Bengal the lower caste and the Muslims joined together in opposition to upper castes. This is due to 'the gulf between the landed gendry of Bengal, which was largely drawn from the upper castes of Hindu society and the cultivating classes which comprised low

caste Hindus and Muslims was too wide to permit the latter to forge an alliance with former in movement against the British government'.<sup>50</sup>

Though the political mobilisation through religious symbols alienated Muslims and never touched the question of caste, still Congress functioned as interest groups drawn from different provinces. Communalism had never become a national phenomena because Muslims did not have pan-Indian identity like Hindus. Their power struggle was localised. Politics as power sharing was realised by Tilak in his later years. The 1916 Lucknow Pact, where Tilak played a major role, was moving in the directions of power sharing. But it could not be realised fully because of Gandhi's advent who took Khilafat issue and made it a major platform for Hindu-Muslim unity. Under Gandhian leadership, profound changes took place in the national politics which continues even today. What are the changes that took place under Gandhian leadership? What was his conception about caste system? and how did he approach communal problem? are some of the questions to be analysed here.



## Gandhi and the National Movement

Unlike his predecessors, Gandhi was a great champion of caste system. He wrote in 1916 that caste was 'a perfectly natural institutions..... invested with religious meaning. These being my views I am opposed to the movement which are being carried on for the destruction of the system'.<sup>51</sup> Gandhi had the most eloquent views about Varnashram Dharma. He considered caste system as a healthy division of birth and one must continue the hereditary occupation if not, it will create confusion. '...What I mean is' Gandhi said, 'one born as scavenger must earn his livelihood by being a scavenger, and then do whatever he likes. For a scavenger is as worthy of his heir as a lower or your President. That according to him is Hinduism. That a person creates confusion of caste when he leaves his hereditary calling is obvious. When a Brahmin begins to earn his bread by, say, following the profession of a barber or engineer, he does create confusion of caste, as much as when a barber or an engineer begins to impart religious instructions as means of livelihood'.<sup>52</sup> The degeneration of the system

should not be reason for destroying caste. In Harijan he wrote, 'it is wrong to destroy caste because of the outcaste, as it would destroy a body because of an ugly growth in it, or of a crop because of the weeds,'<sup>53</sup> Gandhi's anti-untouchability meant that the untouchables will be classed as Shudras instead of classed as Ati-Shudras.<sup>54</sup> To the emergence of infinite castes Gandhi's remedy was that 'small caste should fuse themselves into one big caste. There should be four such big castes so that we may produce the old system of four Varnas'.<sup>55</sup>

In short, like other revivalist, Gandhi upheld the old Varna system. He was also against inter-dining and inter-marriage.<sup>56</sup> He compared taking food to answering the call of nature. 'Just as we perform the act of answering the call of nature in seclusion so also the act of taking food must also be done in seclusion' said Gandhi.<sup>57</sup> Interdining or inter marriage was not necessary for promoting national unity.<sup>58</sup> It was a superstition borrowed from the west. He justified it on the ground that "if friendly relations depended on eating together and inter

marriage, the German and the British would not be fighting against each other. The Rajputs of Kathiawad did sit together at meals and marry among themselves but have no end of interne strife and fighting. Of course these caste restrictions have something of value in them". He even advised the inmates of his ashram 'to subsist on fruits if they cannot cook their own food' whenever they go out of the ashram.

Gandhi's economic and political ideas too corroborate to his social ideals. He severly condemned modern civilisation and viewed 'western civilisation as the creation of satan'. This ideal of eliminating class war is by improving the relationship between employers and employees and between landlords and tenants. 'The Kisan movement' Gandhi wrote, 'must be confined to the improvement of status of the kisans and the betterment of the relations between the zamindars and them. The kisans must be advised scrupulously to abide by the terms of their agreement with the zamindars, whether such is written or inferred from custom'. For Gandhi, the landlords need not give up their property, but only have to declare themselves

Trustees for the poor.

Ramarajya was Gandhi's political ideal. He called the English Parliament a 'sterile women and a prostitute'<sup>63</sup> because ministers were changed frequently. So to Gandhi rulers also had to be hereditary. In short, caste system, trusteeship and Ramarajya formed the social, economic and political ideals of Gandhi. His philosophy possessed all the ingredients required to maintain statusquo. As Ambedkar says, 'Gandhi has outdone the most orthodox of orthodox Hindus.'<sup>64</sup> The lower caste had no aspirations according to Gandhi. He wrote, 'he Shudra who only serves (the higher caste) as a matter of religious duty, and who will never own any property, who indeed has not even the ambitions to own anything, is deserving thousand obeisance..... The very Gods will shower down flowers on him.'<sup>65</sup> So Gandhi's philosophy was anti-lower caste, anti masses and anti-nation.

Gandhi's political movement was precisely moving in the direction of his ideals. He held that Brahmins were the finest flower of Hinduism and

humanity and that he would not have the non-Brahmins to rise on the ruins of Brahmins.<sup>66</sup> His approach to political problem was a religious approach. The two vital problems, the question of communalism and the question of lower castes were not political problems for Gandhi, but religious problem. Whether Hindu or Muslim, religious identity constituted the primary identity for him. He said, 'I hold my religion dearer than my country and ..... therefore I am a Hindu first and nationalist after.'<sup>67</sup> Again speaking to the Mussalmans of India he said that, 'brave (Ali) Brothers are staunch lovers of their country, but they are Mussalmans first and everything else afterwards.<sup>68</sup> It must be so with every religious minded man.'

Ravinder Kumar has pointed out that Gandhi drew Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities into nationalist politics as communities, which widened instead of narrowing religious and communitarian cleavages in Indian society.<sup>69</sup> To understand Gandhi's approach to communal and lower caste problem, it is better to understand Khilafat and Vaikom Satyagrah agitation with which he was closely associated.

Gandhi's approach to communal problem was to construct political communities of Hindus and Muslims and fuse them with an anti British agenda. Their common political participation and expression would unit them. One such attempt was taking up the Khilafat issue. Khilafat was an ephemeral issue taken up by Gandhi to build an anti-colonial alliance by which he believed to bring Hindus and Muslims together. But Gail Minault says that 'the Khilafat movement was primarily a campaign by a particular group of Indian Muslim leaders to unite their community politically by means of religion and cultural symbols meaningful to all strata of that community. As such it can be viewed as a quest for pan-Indian Islam'.<sup>70</sup>

There was no homogeneity among Indian Muslims and they were divided by regional, language, class or sectarian basis. But the common factor among Indian Muslims was Islam, with it a symbol of solidarity: the community of believers, the Ummah; its symbolic head the Khalif, its central place of pilgrimage, Mecca; its scripture, the Quran; its sacred law, the Shari'a; and its local reference point, the mosque.<sup>71</sup> Their common

set of symbols offered political leaders to mobilise Indian Muslims for pan-Indian constitution with pan-Islamic ideology. The westernised products of Aligarh such as Muhammed Ali, Maulana Abdul Basi of Firangi Mahal, Maulana al-Hasan of Deoband and their alliance with Gandhi and Congress gave them recognition as the spokesmen for Muslim community. As part of propagating Khilafat issue two all India bodies were formed: Khilafat Committee and Jamait of Ulema. Though Jamait of Ulema remained anti-British, their emphasis remained the religious guidance for Muslims and their promotion of solidarity and self-consciousness as a community.<sup>72</sup> Ulema and Sufis were the chief messengers of the movement in predominantly Muslim areas. The Khilafatists support to non co-operation was made a religious duty. Fatwas were issued stating that co-operation with enemies of Islam as religiously unlawful.<sup>73</sup> Non co-operation was defined as Jihad by Maulana Qutubuddin in Khilafat conference in Lucknow<sup>74</sup> 1921.

The religious appeals helped to create a pan-Indian Muslim identity and the contribution of

Ulema was invaluable. More importantly the Ulemas participation in national politics gave them political legitimacy as heads of their religion. Instead of uniting Hindus and Muslims, it only heightened the consciousness of the Muslims that they were distinct from the Hindus. As Prabha Dixit says, 'the Khilafat propaganda did not result in the growth of any new sense of nationalism amongst the Muslims. On the contrary it only heightened the sense of Muslim identity which proved a great psychological asset for Muslim leaders in popularising their separatist ideology'.<sup>75</sup> So the outcome of Gandhi's adventure with Khilafat only helped in the creation of pan-Indian Muslim community. From then onwards Hindu Muslim communalism became an irreversible part of Indian politics.

Like Hindu-Muslim unity, the lower caste problem was also looked through religious spectacles by Gandhi. The most important movement Gandhi associated was Vaikom Satyagraha which was resorted to get the right to pass through public roads. Vaikom Satyagraha was not initiated by Gandhi; It was forced upon him by



T.K.Madhavan, the Ezhava leader of Travancore. The civil rights issue of passing through public roads, where dogs and pigs enjoyed as P. Palpu said, was made a religious issue by Gandhi. Over and above, he wanted to make that agitation purely a Hindu phenomenon. When leaders like Madhavan and K.P. Keshava Menon who were leading the movement were arrested, George Joseph continued the struggle. Gandhi took exception to his leadership and wrote in Young India, 'exception has been taken to Mr. Joseph - a Christian having been allowed to replace Mr. Menon as the leader and organiser. In my humble opinion the exception is perfectly valid.'

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According to T.K. Ravindran, Gandhi's contention that Satyagraha at Vaikom 'is a penance on the part of the caste Hindus' amounted to converting a major issue into a inconsequential one and his opinion that non-Hindus should disassociate themselves from Vaikom Satyagraha was responsible for reducing the issue into a cheap religious dispute. Gandhi never allowed non-Hindus to participate in upliftment of lower castes and the same he followed in respect to

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other religion. He never directly appealed to the Muslim masses. When he was at the height of his popularity he wrote, "during these days of great trial for me I have felt the gravest need of Moulana Shaukat Ali by my side. I can wield no influence over the Mussalmans except through a Mussalman." <sup>80</sup> Later he wrote, "..... to think of placating the Mussalmans without placating the (Ali) Brothers is to attempt to ignore Islam in India." <sup>81</sup> Gandhi's refusal to speak to the Muslim masses directly and only through the readers amounted to an expectation that Muslims too had to speak to Hindus only through him.

In a vertical mobilisation the Muslim elites had much to gain because they had the advantage of getting maximum both from the British as well as the Congress. But in a horizontal mobilisation the Muslims were always in a dilemma because they tend to fall with the lower castes. Their alliance would have amounted challenge to the upper caste dominated Congress. Perhaps Gandhi was well aware of it. When Ramsay Mac Donald announced 'Communal Award' Gandhi said that the separate 'electorate will create

division among Hindus..... untouchable hooligans will make common cause with Muslim hooligans and kill caste Hindus.<sup>82</sup>

Two more important changes that took place under the Gandhian leadership was the shifting of national politics to United Province<sup>83</sup> and the initiation of centralising agenda of the Congress party.<sup>84</sup> The pre-Gandhian politics was a coalition of provincial politics of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Gandhi's rise to power is closely associated with the support from Gujarat and United Province. According to Sasadhar Sinha Gandhi turned to the heart of Hindu India by nominating Jawaharlal Nehru in preference to himself to preside over Lahore Congress in 1929 and subsequently named Nehru as his heir.<sup>85</sup> This set the pattern of political power which remain unaltered to this day.<sup>86</sup>

The shifting of politics is closely linked to the centralising tendency of the Congress. The centralisation of power in United Province effectively submerged other linguistic and regional identities

like Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Marathi, Punjabi, Kannada, Assamese, etc. This is negation of democracy because centralisation of power went with the cow-belt culture. By submerging all the subaltern cultural identities Gandhi created two pan-Indian identities of Hindus and Muslims which is what communalism is. Congress lacking the concept of power sharing only created distrust among minorities. If Muslims demanded more and more, which was conceded by the British as well as by Congress, it should not be just seen as Muslim communalism but also as a legitimising process for the Hindu community by which it could camouflage the linguistic, castes and ethnic divisions. Thus Gandhi could effectively deny political power to the lower castes. His fragile Hindu Muslim unity was an attempt to build unity from the top.

K.N. Panikkar with regret writes that, 'the history of Indian national Movement, unfortunately, is also a history of the communalisation of Indian society. That the colonial rulers actively encouraged and aided this process is undoubtedly true, but it was essentially a result of the weakness and inadequacy of

secularism as conceived and practised during the anti-  
colonial struggle.<sup>89</sup> Nationalism instead of  
struggling against communal and obscurantist forces,  
was itself associated with the reactionary Hindu  
orthodoxy. 'The national leaders' says R.P. Dutt, 'in  
practice were the champions of social reaction and  
superstition of caste division and privilege, as the  
allies of the 'black forces' seeking to hold down the  
antiquated pre-British social and ideological fetters  
upon the people in the name of high flown mystical  
'national appeal.'<sup>90</sup>

Indian Nationalism was constructed around  
Brahminical idioms of the majority Hindu community.  
'Hindu identity was' also 'defined by those who were  
part of this national consciousness and drew on their  
idealised image of themselves resulting in an upper  
caste, Brahmana-dominated identity' says Romila  
Thapar.<sup>91</sup> As such, Indian nationalism was a genuine  
transformation of Brahminism to Hindu nationalism, a  
rhetorical vision of unified Hindu society whose  
ultimate purpose was to serve fundamental social  
values of Hinduism.

Congress's lack of response to democratic  
ideals,<sup>92</sup> insensitiveness to the aspirations of the  
lower castes, and the justification of caste system,  
the anti-colonial nationalism of Congress was more to  
arrest the forces of social change. It stood for  
anti-social change. As Suniti Kumar Ghosh says, 'the  
Indian national struggle has to be anti-imperialist as  
well as anti-feudal. It was to frustrate and forestall  
such anti-imperialist, anti-feudal national struggle  
that organisation called Indian National Congress was  
founded in 1885.'<sup>93</sup> So Indian nationalism was  
antithetically oriented to the aspirations of lower  
castes but tried to overwhelm the purpose of freeing  
India from British. A method had been found here to  
reinforce caste based division and domination of  
Brahminical culture over all the subalteran cultures by  
constructing an overwhelming category of 'us' and  
opposed category of 'other'. Seen in this way BJP's  
communal politics seems to be inspired continuation of  
pre-independence Congress politics.

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1. Prabha Dixit, 'Hindu Nationalism', Seminar, August 1977, p.28.
2. East India Company had prevented the entry of missionaries and scrupulously maintained religious neutrality, which meant maintaining the supremacy of the upper castes. 'But in 1813 under the pressure from 'home' the Company had to open India to missionary enterprise and to establish an 'Indian Church'. They began to exert pressure on the government in order to secure the promotion of education, the legal protection of Christian converts, the suppression of inhuman rites such as Sati and infanticide and the disassociation of the State from the support temples and Hindu and Muslim religious festivals. S.R. Mehrotra, The Emergence of Indian National Congress, (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1971), p.33.
- 3.. In 1839 the baptism of two parsi boys and the court favouring missionaries forced the Hindus, Muslims and Parsis to withdraw their children from Schools taught by Christian Missionaries, Ibid., p.35.
4. The natives of Madras submitted a memorandum signed by 70,000 inhabitants requesting education as given in Bengal and Bombay, but without interfering in their religion. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Charles H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1964) p. 318.
7. R.C. Majumdar, 'The Growth of Nationalism in India, Indo-Asian Culture, 10 July, 1961, pp. 101-102.
8. Richard Tucker, 'Hindu Traditionalism and Nationalist Ideologies in Nineteenth Century Maharashtra', Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 10, 3 Part I, 1976, pp.325-327: Like Krishna Sastri

many others express concern that lower castes are deserting their traditional occupation. Girtikar an associate of Tilak in the crusade against reformers proposed Dharma Rakshini Sabha (Society for Preservation of Religion), which would function as 'a really sensible and honest orthodox parliament'. This organisation would serve the purpose of protecting, 'Our' society and our institutions and our civilisation from being crushed under the heels of .....so called nineteenth century civilisation'. See Stanley A. Wolpert, Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962) p.61; The Maharaja of Benaras dismissed democracy as a Western institution unsuited to Hinduism whose basis was Varna (Caste) system. "How would you care to have Kalvars and Mochis as our Legislators?" he asked. Cited in ohn R. McLane, Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977) p.108.

9. J. Reid Grahamk, 'The Arya Samaj as a Reformation in Hinduism with special reference to caste' (Ph.d. Thesis, Yale University, 1943), p.142.
10. Ibid., p.389.
11. To prove that foreign travel was not a new thing Dayananda declared that Vyasa and his son Shukla were living in America (Patala) and Sri Krishna and Arjun went to America. Ibid, p.346., Also see, Heimsath, n.6, p.121.
12. Heismath, n.6, p.120.
13. Satyaprakash, p.287, Qt. in Graham, n.9, p.339.
14. Christopher Jaffrelot, "Hindu Nationalism: Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building "Economic and Political Weekly, March, 20-27, 1993, p.518.
15. G.R. Thurbsy, Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India' (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975) p.12.



16. J.T.F., 'Reconversion to Hinduism: The Shuddi of the Arya Sama', in G.A. Oddic ed., Religion in South Asia, (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1991) p.218.
17. Bipin Chandra Pal has acknowledged the Contribution of Dayananda Saraswati and his organisation Arya Samaj. He says that Dayananda not only made Hinduism to accept the challenge of Islam and Christianity but also was able to 'remove numerous social disabilities under which the present day Hindu laboured; and 'also to claim a social order based upon the teachings of the Vedas which was from some points of view even superior to the advanced social idealism inspired by the dogma of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity of the French Illumination. India did not stand in need of going to Europe either for a purer, social order. This could be found in the ancient scriptures of the people themselves. This was really the beginning of the religious and social revival among the Hindus of India to which we owes so largely the birth of our national consciousness'. Bipin Chandra Pal, Beginning of Freedom Movement in Modern India, (Calcutta: Yugayantri Prakashak Ltd. (1954) p.46.
18. To bolster his arguments that education corrupted women, Tilak pointed to the case of Rakshambai, the educated daughter of Bombay physician who refused to go to the home of much older husband, Wolpert, n.8, p.35-37.
19. Heimsath, n.6, p.188.
20. Ibid., p.197.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p.198.
23. Ibid., p. 164.

24. Surendranath Banerjea applauded Rande's 'noble sacrifice' by not 'averting a crisis which might have proved disastrous to the best interest of the Congress'. Ibid., pp.210-214.
25. See Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, (Madras: Mac Millan India, 1983), p.11; Mushirul Hassan, Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1885-1930, (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1991) p.21.
26. Tagore wrote, '.....the Indian Congress had no real programme. They had a few grievances for redress by the authorities. They wanted larger representation in the Council House, and more freedom in Municipal government. They wanted scraps of things, but they had no constructive idea'. Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism, (Madras: Mac Millan, 1985) pp.67-68.
27. Heimsath, n.6, p.215.
28. Aurobindo, On Nationalism (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1965) p.21.
29. Ibid., p.28.
30. Prabha Dixit, "The Political and Sociological Dimension of Vivekananda's Ideology," IESHR, Vol.XII, No.3, P.299.
31. Prabha Dixit, n.1, p.30.
32. Prabha Dixit, n. 30, pp.304-305.
33. See Papiya Chakravarthy, Hindu Response to Nationalist Ferment (Bengal 1909-1935), (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1991), p.4.
34. Richard I. Cashman, The Myth of Lokamanya: Tilak and Mass Politics in Maharashtra, (London: University of California Press, 1975), pp.53-54.
35. Ibid., p.55.

36. Ibid., p.53.
37. The two concepts 'horizontal mobilisation' and 'vertical mobilisation' are taken from Rudolph and Rudolph's book, The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp.24-25.
38. Richard I. Cashman, n.34, p.75.
39. Ibid., pp.45-74.
40. Ibid., p.79.
41. G. Ghurge, Gods and Men (Bombay, 1962), pp.114-130; @t. in Ibid., p.76.
42. 43. Ibid., p.78.
43. Ibid., p.85.
44. Ibid., p.86.
45. Bipin Chandra, Communalism in Modern India, (New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House, 1984), pp.143-144.
46. Cashman, n.34, p.97.
47. Barbara Southard, 'The Political Strategy of Aurobindo Ghosh: The Utilisation of Hindu Religious Symbolism and the Problem of Political Mobilisation in Bengal, Modern Asian Studies, 14, 3, p.354.
48. Ibid., p.365.
49. Ibid., pp.367-369.
50. Ravinder Kumar, Essays in the Social History of Modern India, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.18.
51. Judith M. Brown, "The Mahatma and Modern India," Modern Asian Studies, III, 4(1969), p.329.

52. B.R. Ambedkar, Gandhi and Gandhism, (Jullandar: Bheem Patrika Publication, 1970), p.XXVII.
53. Dhananjaya Keer, Mahatma Gandhi: Political Saint and Unarmed Propher, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1973), p.580.
54. Ambedkar, "What Congress and Gandhi have done for the Untouchables," Vol.9 of the Collected Works, ed. by Wasant Moon, Government of Maharashtra, 1945, p.294.
55. Ibid., p.277.
56. His biographer Dhananay Keer says that Gandhi changed his views on interdining and intermarriage when his son had to marry Raagopalachari's daughter, a Brahmin. See n.53, p.582.
57. Ambedkar, n.54, p.276.
58. Ravinder Kumar, n.50, p.55; Gandhi was even against inter-religious marriage. He successfully prevented Viyalaxmi, Jawaharlal Nehru's sister (Later Viayalaxmi Pandit), from living with her lover, Syed Hussain. Vijyalaxmi had embraced Islam at the hands of Maulana Fajiz of Allahabad and performed Nikah with Syed Hussain. Gandhi protested against this and even threatened that the alliance would break the Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhi did not rest till this marriage was broken and after giving intensive "spiritual training" to her in his ashram got her married to S.K. Fundit and Syed Hussain migrated to USA. R.A. Jaferi, Hayat-e-Md. Ali Jinnah, Taj Office Book Depot, 1946) pp.702-7-3, cited in V.T. Rashekar, Why Godse killed Gandhi? (Bangalore: Dalit Sahitya Akademy, 1986) p.49.
59. Keer, n.53, p.358.
60. Ibid., p.224.

61. Ambedkar, n.54, p.279; Also see Gandhi, Hindu Swaraj, (Ahmedabad: Navaivan Press, 1938)
62. Ibid., p.281.
63. Gandhi, n.61, p.28.
64. Ambedkar, n.54, p.288.
65. Ibid., p.291; S. Ramanathan a Congress Minister of Madras said in 1943: "Gandhism has given rise to a worse evil than the Hindus and Muslim conflict. It has justified caste system and has given it a fresh lease of life..... Untouchability is but a feature of the caste system, and caste draws its nourishment from the pernicious doctrine of Varnashram which is vital part of Gandhism" Keer, n.53, p.619; Gandhi was against Harijans holding political power. When Dr. Khare, the premiere of CP, appointed an untouchable as his minister in his cabinet, Gandhi expressed his disapproval on the ground that it would raise "absurd ambition" in the Harijan mind. See, Prabha Dixit, Communalism - A Struggle for Power, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974), p.212.
66. Young India, 9 March 1925, Qt. in Keer, n.53, p.489.
67. Suniti Kumar Ghosh, India and the Raj 1919-1947. Glory, Shame and Bondage, (Calcutta: Prachi 1989) p.248.
68. Ibid.
69. Ravinder Kumar, n.50, p.29.
70. Gail Minault, The Khilafat Movement. Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilisation in India. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.2.
71. Ibid., p.3

72. Ibid., p.123
73. Ibid., p.121
74. Ibid., p.129
75. Prabha Dixit, n.65, p.69.
76. T.K. Ravindran, Vaikkam Satyagraha and Gandhi (Trichur: Sri Narayana Institute of Social and Cultural Development, 1975), p.6.
77. Ibid., p.5, Palpu was social revolutionary.
78. Ibid., p.68
79. Ibid., p.154, 160.
80. Suniti Kumar Ghosh, n.67, p.249.
81. Ibid.
82. Mahadev Desai, The Diary of Mahadev Desai, Translated by V.G. Desai, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan 1953), p.301.
83. Sasadhar Sinha, Indian Independence in Perspective, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964) pp.94-95; Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.348.
84. B.B. Mishra, The Indian Political Parties, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp.368-369.
85. Sasadhar Singh, n.83, pp.94-95.
86. Ibid., p.95.
87. At the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi tried to isolate and stifle Dr. Ambedkar. Although Gandhi told Ambedkar that he would agree to the demands of the Depressed classes if all others agreed, in private he tried to dissuade the

Muslim leaders from supporting Ambedkar. Though Ambedkar mentions the incident of Gandhi meeting Agha Khan, Keer says that, 'Gandhi went to Agha Khan with a copy of the holy Koran in his hand and asked the Muslim leader to withdraw his support to the Depressed classes, but Agha Khan refused to do so'. See. Dhananjay Keer, n.53, p.559.

88. See Bipan Chandra, Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979), pp.253-259.
89. K.N. Panikkar, ed., Communalism in India. History, Politics and Culture. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1991) p.8.
90. R.P. Dutt, India Today and Tomorrow, (Bombay, 1949), p.306, Qt. in Moin Shakir, Politics of Minorities, (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1980), p.7
91. Romila Thapar, 'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu identity', Modern Asian Studies, 23, 2 (1989), p.229.
92. Ramaswamy Naicker the leader of Justice Party in Madras province said : "our basic principle in politics is that there should be even handed justice, equal rights and equality of opportunity to all. I ask whether the Congress which is the extreme political party in this country has adopted this principle. If so how is it that in the Congress today Brahmins have the dominating position and all others only the right to lift up their hands in agreement whenever they are asked to do so". John R. Mclane, The Political Awakening in India, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), p.165.
93. Suniti Kumar ghosh, n.67, p.18.

**DISCOURSE**  
**ON**  
**COMMUNALISM**



The demolition of Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 by militant Hindu nationalist and the subsequent bloody riots gripping all over the country have regressed the Indian politics by hundred years. The revolt of 1857 concentrated at central province, later the emergence of congress nationalism as converging interest groups drawn from three provinces of Calcuttā, Bombay and Madras until Gandhi's advent, then under his leadership Congress nationalism gaining pan-Indian Hindu fervour shifting back to United province and in the post independent India the periphery nationality struggles and anti-caste struggles in the hinterland taking centre stage, have once again retrogressed to Uttar Pradesh with the Ayodhya issue. Whenever national politics takes centre-stage in Hindi-heartland the question of communalism as Hindu-Muslim conflict takes place primary importance. Whenever regional identities are strong communalism has a very marginal influence on Indian politics.

The shifting of politics from peripheries to the Hindu heartland negates the struggles of the people

for a decent living which manifests itself in various lower caste, tribals, nationalities and ethnic movements and causes disaster to minority muslim community. Besides desperate attempts by the eminent historians to gather historical facts to prove that temple had not existed on the site of the mosque,<sup>2</sup> intellectual discourse on communalism by academics not only failed to influence the law keepers to keep the medieval structure being razed to ground or dissuade the Hindu militants from pursuing the construction of temple, but also failed to see beyond the massive mobilization from different parts of the country. If the saffron wearing sadhus, trishul wielding saints and mobilising the masses through Ram Jyoti and collecting Ram inscribed bricks from each village to be taken to Ayodhya, was just to build the temple, then there was no necessity of so much contrivance. Temples are constructed all over India, but one cannot notice any mobilisation or bloody riots. Hence the political mobilisation in the name of Ram should be not only seen within the framework of communalism with anti-Muslim rhetoric, but also in the historical context of assertion of linguistic nationalities, tribal movements

and anti-caste struggles posing a challenge not only to hierarchical social order but also threatening to expose the supposed cultural unity of Hinduism.

We can understand the process of communalism in better way by examining some of the defects and ignored aspects of it in the existing studies on communalism.

Until recently social scientist theorising on communalism saw it purely as a anti-Muslim problem ignoring specifically its anti-dalit dimensions. This can be understood in the background of social origins of our social scientist who mostly come from the higher orders of Indian society. Only now hesitatingly accademicians grant that communalism is showing its ugly face where anti-caste struggles had taken place. Communalism is an attempt to maintain statusquo in society and not allow the kind of change which will accommodate the aspirations of those who are deprived of resources and status, namely, the lower castes and the lower classes. The recent revival and

intensification of Hindu communalism is also indirectly<sup>5</sup> linked with the politicisation of the Harijans and in the name of Hinduism, the RSS plans to revive the old feudal values, social discrimination and varna system and wants that those who resisted these values should surrender their independence and submit to old<sup>6</sup> Brahminical discriminatory varna system.

Besides the general debate and theorisations on communalism, it is basically understood as religious problem where religion being used as an instrument of political mobilisation. Within this parameters of religion influenced politics, one can notice different streams of analysis seeing communalism as ideology or emerging as a result of religious difference or class struggle. The most important advocate of communalism as essentially an ideology is Bipin Chandra. 'Simply put', he says, 'communalism is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion they have, as a result, common social, political and economic interest.'<sup>7</sup> According to this definition religious community becomes the fundamental social unit. Bipin Chandra maintains that communalism is an

ideology and politics is organised around that ideology. The rise of communal identity is due to the failure of the national movement to show that communal identity was a false one while the national and class identities were real because they reflected and served their social interest. So according to Bipin Chandra a strong dose of nationalism have to be injected to counter communalism because communalism is understood as false consciousness and nationalism as true consciousness.

Randhir Singh has strongly criticised Bipin Chandra's position. He points out an ideological error and methodological limitation in Bipin Chandra's work. Ideological error lies in understanding communalism from the standpoint of nationalism, which locates imperialism as the primary source of all our problems, including those relating to communalism, and thus obscures all the important distinction between the essentially indigenous creation of most of these problems and imperialism's contribution to and taking advantage of these for its own ends. At the methodo-

logical level, contemporary communalism is studied in an empiricist and often ahistorical manner which fails to see complex character of communalism and its underlying interconnections with the larger social reality.<sup>9</sup>

Prabha Dixit sees communalism as a political phenomena. It is basically a political doctrine which make use of religio-cultural differences to achieve political ends. She observes that communalism is not a natural outcome of religious and social-cultural differences; it arises out of the deliberate choice made by a people to use these differences to achieve some political end. This deliberate choice by community for political demands on the basis of religio-cultural differences that communal awareness turns into communalism in the form of political doctrine.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from seeing communalism arising out of religious differences, social scientist like Asghar Ali Engineer and Moin Shakir see it in terms of class

conflict. Communalism is fundamentally a political and socio-economic phenomena, religion being only an instrument of political and socio-economic interest, as and when it suits them.<sup>11</sup> The inequitous development according to Engineer, give importance to the primordial identity of caste, community and region lagging behind the race and they become more assertive through their primordial identity. The tension builds because the benefitted caste and community becomes more aggressive to protect their priveleges.<sup>12</sup> Moin Shakir also maintains that communal roots are in the socio-economic order. He says that 'if the economic and social policies of the system lead to concentration of power and deny equality of opportunity to overwhelming majority of the people, belonging to all communities, discord and disharmony are inevitable. In such a system ruling class has a vested interest in dividing the people along communal and religeous lines.<sup>13</sup>

If scholars like Bipin Chandra to Asghar Ali Engineer see a crucial role of religion in communalism, Ashish Nandy says the roots of intolerance and

communalism are inherent in the language of modernity in general and nation-state system in particular. He regards secularism as basically a western concept and comes in a larger package of progress, modernity and homogenising trend entrenched in the modern-state legitimised through nation security, development, modern science and technology.(14) Much of the fanaticism and violence associated with religion, according to Nandy, '.....comes from the sense of defeat of the believers, from their feeling of importance and from their free floating anger and self-hatred while facing a world which is secular and desacralized.'<sup>15</sup> He argues that ancient tradition was absolutely flawless, and is the symbol of human dignity, authenticity and sanctity of human life. Therefore defence of human dignity according to him<sup>16</sup> requires the defence of primordialism.

Prakash Chandra Upadhyaya has criticised<sup>17</sup> Nandy's position as communal. He sees no difference between Nandy's position and RSS Hindu modernists like Balasaheb Deoras. Upadhyaya argues that, though Nandy



and Deoras have their differing standpoints, both are one in their dismissal of Indian state, secularism, the only difference being that whereas for Nandy, Indian state secularists are equally oppressive to all religious communities, Balasaheb holds them responsible for being essentially anti-Hindu. <sup>18</sup> 'One can argue that despite their differences with Hindu modernists like RSS, scholars such as Ashish Nandy provide them with a sophisticated intellectual justification' <sup>19</sup> observes Upadhyaya. He maintains that Indian secularism never divorced from majoritarian politics and is constructed around the traditionalist idioms of the majority Hindu community. <sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the important Marxist approach to the study of communalism is defined in Randhir Singh's "Theorising Communalism in India." According to him 'communalism in contemporary India as ideology and practice is above all an aspect of the politics of the ruling classes in a society with a massive feudal--colonial inheritance, deep religious divisions, and undergoing its own historically specific

form of capitalist development.<sup>21</sup> Critical of existing approaches and especially, those which juxtapose nationalism as an alternative to communalism, Randhir Singh views nationalism as a reactionary force in post-independent India.<sup>22</sup> Indian nationalism he argues is increasingly identified with Hindu chauvanism, dharmkta has become useful for the ruling classes, particularly Congress (I) as the major political formation of the ruling classes, to reinforce their hegmony and to accept the unjust and inequitious social order.<sup>23</sup>

Though one can notice different strands on communalism, the ongoing debate on communalism in post-independent India has not left its colonial hangover. This is because most of the studies on communalism are ahistorical and see a break in '1947' which unfortunately hides the major contradictions in Indian society relating to caste oppressions and make to the view communalism as anathema to nationalism. The real nature of Indian nationalism is never discussed. This has only helped the Hindu nationalist to co-opt historical figures for present day politics

when they do not fit in their politics. Moreover the analysis on communalism take for granted many things which is contrary to the social reality. The limitations in the theorisation of communalism and their deficiencies will be analysed below.

#### Communalism as Hindu-Muslim Problem

Communalism in its different manifestation in recurring communal riots, use of history for present day politics, political recruitment of Ram, so called secular parties succumbing and colluding with Hindu communalism, juxtaposing nationalism or secularism to communalism, are basically seen within the paradigm of Hindu Muslim conflict. To accept this framework of Hindu-Muslim dichotomy is not only to grant what the communalist are yet to achieve, the creation of homogenous Hindu community, but also to presume that there exist pan-Indian homogenous Hindu and Muslim communities based on religion unifying the masses cutting across caste, linguistic and ethnic, barriers which is an erroneous presumption.

The identity of Hindus and Muslims were actually devised by British for describing the communities entrenched within a geographical entity.<sup>25</sup> Lack of centralised political power coupled with regional and linguistic diversities in pre-colonial Indian society, had all potentialities of growing into different nationalities. These process were short circuited by colonialism.<sup>26</sup> The cultural unification which many scholars refer is limited to the twice born castes who got homogenised and nationalised during the colonial rule. The present day politics of BJP to propagate cultural nationalism<sup>27</sup> is to set pre-modern agenda of cultural homogenisation as against modern agenda of power homogenisation. Moreover, Hinduism was magnified through 'assimilative communalism'<sup>28</sup> pursued by the State and conservative Hindus by including scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and clubbing Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs as Hindus. "...It is wrong to think of Hindus as a majority" except that it is being thought like that of late and that is what causing the problem"<sup>29</sup> observes Rajni Kothari. Hindu community is internally highly structured, diverse and

pluralistic. Dalits, Tribals and ethnic groups constitute minorities against whom the state has let loose repression and denied basic civil rights. Not taking into account the linguistic diversities, atrocities committed on the lower orders of the Hindu community and presuming cultural unity have only strengthened the communal forces.

#### Ahistorical study

Most of the writings on communalism in post-independent India are ahistorical. Few historians who trace the rise of communalism inevitably look to the emergence of Hindu Mahasabha. It is an erroneous conclusion because the rise of Hindu sabhas in different parts of the country were in places where the Hindus were in minority and their position and privileges were fast eroding due to the British policies. The first Hindu Sabha founded in Punjab in 1906 was to check the introduction of Punjab Land Alienation Act which affected the trading castes, money-lenders, officials, businessmen and professionals of Punjab. The spread of Hindu sabhas to U.P. and

Bengal could also be linked to the minority status of the upper caste Hindus whose power equations especially in respect to Muslims was fast eroding.

The Mahasabha founded in 1915 at Hardwar was an amorphous and struggling organisation with a very loose all India structure. Urban in character and concentrated in large trading centres in North India, Hindu Mahasabha was a creation of the educated 'middle class' leaders of the cities of eastern U.P., the same men who had been the pioneer of the Congress.<sup>33</sup> The concession of separate electorate and increased representation to Muslims in U.P. Municipalities Act of 1916<sup>34</sup> posed a direct challenge to Hindu leadership.

When the Congress was dominated by Bengalee and Maharastrians, the interest of Punjab and U.P. received scant attention.<sup>35</sup> Once the Congress received its activities in Punjab and U.P. the Hindu Sabha lapsed into 'insignificance'. The pretensions of the Mahasabha as an all India organisations was limited generally to the Hindu unity movement in Northern India

and particularly confined to the provinces of Punjab, U.P. and Bengal. It received a vague semblance of unity by advocating the adoption of Hindi and Nagri, cow protection and Hindu uplift. Once congress took up the same issues and formed All India Cow Protection conference and one script and one language Conference, the support for Mahasabha received a set back.<sup>36</sup> Besides Mahasabha as a political body was paid 'scant regard by the British' and Muslims did not acknowledge its separate existence and looked upon it as an appendage to the Hindu Congress.<sup>37</sup> As such communalism of the Hindu Mahasabha could be seen as a provincial dissidence of upper caste Hindus who refused to accept their minority status in the fast changing power equation vis-a-vis Muslims.

#### Continuation of Congress politics

The genesis of communalism as a pan-Indian ideology amalgamating the social force of different provinces interested in maintaining status quo is the contribution of the Congress of pre-independent India in general and particularly the Gandhian phase. As

Ravinder Kumar observes: '....to a very large extent, the achievements and failures of nationalism in India are the achievements and failures of Gandhi. Indeed the Mahatma's achievements are no less than his failures continue to determine the structure of Indian politics in contemporary India.....'

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The triumph of congress in overthrowing British and stepping into their shoes in 1947 was a victory against the lower castes led by Ambedkar and others. In the earlier chapter one can see the ideology of Brahminism as a principle of cultural unity getting transformed into political unity and forming the ideology of nationalism. The defensive articulation of Brahminical culture in relation to the onslaught of Christian missionaries, was carried into political practice by Hindu nationalist. The cultural articulation by glorifying brahman tradition and the political process of it resulted in reactionary politics. The Indian National Congress the mouth piece of Hindu nationalism operating within the paradigm of brahminical cultural politics, not only curbed the



aspirations of the lower-castes but also submerged the regional identities by creating two pan-Indian vertical communities of Hindus and Muslims. More importantly, the construction of pan-Indian Hindu community by Gandhi, resisting social mobility, glorifying Varna system as a superior form of social organisation compared to western class, and centralising the national politics in U.P. got itself institutionalised in post independent Indian Constitution.

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The manifestation of Brahminical culture in the constructed pan-Indian state have further enhanced the anti-lower castes, anti-tribals, anti-linguistic and ethnic identity and anti-minority ethos of the ruling upper castes. The economic policies pursued for last four decades have further strengthened the upper castes and a small dosage of anti-feudal legislation have enable few intermediary castes to find a place in the exploitative system. Though the elites of Muslims as well as lower castes constitute part of the mainstream, Brahminism as a ruling class ideology reproducing pan-Indian identity as a unifying force to reinforce the inequities-social order is articulated

by upper castes who are well entrenched in the power structure.

As in the pre-independence period, Jyothirao Phule's critic of brahminical ideology and Ramaswamy Naiker and Ambedkar's challenge to the national movement led by Gandhi; the anti-caste - struggle in the hinter-land, the ethnic, tribal and nationality struggle in the periphery and the reservation issue in the urban areas have come into conflict with the pan-Indian - State in the post - independent India. The atrocities on the lower castes is committed in the climate of strengthened upper castes as well as the refusal of the lower castes to work under the age old caste relations. Refusing to accept the authoritarian behaviour of upper caste landlords and utilisation of little crumbs to climb economic ladder has only brought further atrocities on them. The violence is perpetuated by the village headmen in collusion with the State and its coercive apparatus .

These atrocities were legitimised by hailing

the 'anti-Mandal agitation by the press and the intelligentsia.' "That agitation was the first time after independence that the forward castes organised themselves across the nation in explicit caste terms without being branded communal, and on the contrary being hailed as principle fighters against narrow, castiest, vote-bloc politics. Those chickens have now come home to roost, in the form of the wide spread acceptance by the forward castes of slogans like 'long live unity of the forward castes,' 'those who beg every morsel of food should not be arrogant,' 'beggars should behave beggar like', etc., slogans which are the staple of the anti-dalit mobilisations....." observes Balgopal.<sup>41</sup>

The Mandal Commission Report not only exposed the fragile constructed cultural unity of Hinduism but also the hollowness in analysis of intellectuals. The entire forward community of upper castes of different shades, the marxists, liberals, communalist Gandhians and the different brands of political parties were all united in opposition to Mandal Commission.<sup>42</sup> If the

Congress and BJP were anti-Mandal implicitly if not explicitly, for the left parties like CPI(M) backward castes does not exist.<sup>43</sup> The left parties position agrees with eminent sociologist Andre Beteille conclusion "....., caste has no function today except in politics."<sup>44</sup> For others reservation only enshrined further castism. M.N.Srinivas writes, "with the reservation system we are fast moving from the egalitarian society which our constitution enshrined as an ideal and says Yogendra Singh; 'it will only ignite<sup>46</sup> dissension in this society and reinforce casteism.

If the anti-mandal agitation exposed the casteism and communal character of the ruling classes, the ethnic movements in North-East, Jharkhand and the nationalities struggle and its violent form in Punjab and Kashmir have shown the manipulative and hollowness of the dominant culture. The emergence of these subaltern struggles articulated in their subaltern primordialities has to be comprehended within the dominance of the ideology of the ruling classes. To reduce the struggles of the subjugated for change into

uneven development and underdevelopment is part of the ideology of ruling groups to maintain the status quo. As A.L.Raj shows the overwhelming nature of dominant ideology. He says:

"This dominant ideology forever tries to maintain its hegemony by strengthening its 'moral and intellectual dominance' over the rising and struggling subaltern ideology for change; the former opposes the latter by posing as a superior, more acceptable and universal ideology to be received by all sections of the society; the former blunts the militancy of the latter by a number of options open only to it; the former accommodates the latter when it is not possible to suppress it totally into its own discourse and idiom by conceding superficially and partially to the insurrectionist knowledge and ideology; and the former even takes up the cause of the latter naturally in a twisted and selfish manner to thwart the real aims and objectives of the movement." (47)

#### Quarrel of Hindu Undivided family

There is a conscious effort on the part of the ruling classes to deny the identity, value, history and independence of the ethnic cultures. The emergence of the oppressed nationalities is seen as a hinderance to the political integration and economic development. But it is important to note, as T.K.Oommen writes there ".... there is a big divide between the cultural

mainstream, the dominant nationality, which occupies the 'centre' and the dominated nationalities of the 'periphery.' The 'communalism' of the dominant collectivity is perceived, defined and legitimised by itself as 'nationalism.' It is the sole privilege of the peripheral communities to be stigmatised as  
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'communal.'

It is the responsibility of the peripheral activists to learn not to divide people on race, caste or ethnic lines. It is secessionism and communal to demand cultural autonomy. In turn, communalism is basically understood and associated with Hindu-Muslim religious communalism. Once this paradigm is accepted, denying other identities becomes easier for the ruling groups and to operate their status quoist politics. The weakening of the dichotomy, due to peripheral struggle, is resurrected through militant communalism. This can be noticed in the fact that soon after the implementation of Mandal Commission, which threatened to cut the Hindu community horizontally, L.K.Advani launched rath yatra to destroy Babri Masjid which was in fact to divert the furor Mandal Commission had

created. The thrust of the militant communalism therefore is to construct vertical communities of Hindus and Muslims overshadowing the caste as well as ethnic identities.

Once the militant communalism makes its presence in the Indian politics, it is the turn of the other political groups to play secular politics. A critique of communalism becomes a critique of BJP, RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Shiva Sena and ofcourse Akali Dal and Muslim League too. Vehment criticism of these organisations is a way of getting secular certificate. So one can notice elegant critique on these organisations comparing V.H.P. and BJP to German fascism exposing the use of primordial culture by BJP is Brahminical which is against the interests of the lower castes and refuting historical basis of Hindu community as well highlighting anti-Muslim, anti lower-caste writings of RSS leaders.

These criticisms of communalism are crippled and ideological. Since other political parties do

not openly advocate communalism, they are seen as less communal or secular. Hence they have a potential to fight communalism.<sup>53</sup> It has only helped to camouflage the politics of the Congress and Left parties. The worst communal and caste riots have taken place in Congress ruled States.<sup>54</sup> Yet the Left parties are ready to support the Congress provided they change their economic policies. As Randhir Singh observes; "the Left parties are trying to save its face, whatever Left face it is still left with, by invoking the essentially facical notion of economic critiria."<sup>55</sup>

The BJP proclaims that they are secular and other political parties are pseudo secular; the CPI(M) would proclaim that the practice of BJP is pseudo Hinduism and congress would argue for democratic secularism. As one author puts it, ".....a strata of ruling class is secular and another strata of the same ruling classes is communal as the Indian strata represents such contradictory tendencies, of class,<sup>56</sup> communities and castes. This discovery of ruling class of different shades and their different position



The centralising, homogenising tendency and denial of ethnic identity, which are inherent in the dominant Hindu ideology of brahminism, embodied in the pan-Indian state, is pregnant in the ethos of pan-Indian Hindu ruling classes combine, each delivering in different form. This ideology is most committed to the preservation of centralised pan-Indian state on the basis of inequality of caste, creed, ethnicity and gender. The paradox of the Indian situation is that power and culture goes hand in hand. The centralisation of power goes with the Brahminical culture which strengthens caste system further. The struggle for decentralisation of power goes with the subaltern cultures. When this universality of homogenising and centralising cultural power is challenged, Brahminism overtly represented by BJP reveals its amazing inventiveness and hegemonic ambitions. "....In the face of Mandal Commissions deconstructions of the brahminical ideal of merit, brahminism invoked an undifferentiated Hindu identity. Where this Hindu identity has been refused, as in Kashmir and Punjab, it resorted to the glib rhetoric of patriotism and where patriotism came up against its own

limits, as in Assam, it raised the battle cry, 'National unity versus seccessionism'. And today when the destruction of the Babri Masjid has served to reveal brahminism's extreme and ugly face, brahminism has sought to define a new ideal of secularism and identify it with the ruling party whose secular credentials, as well known, are more none too good." <sup>57</sup>

Therefore it would be naive to say a communal party causes a divide between Hindus and Muslims merely to acquire power. More than it is an effort to alter the basis of power. The expansion and modern means of transport and communication, reservation of jobs for candidates from the deprived castes and the importance gained by the lower castes in electoral politics is also significant development. The development of certain areas have coincided with underdevelopment of vast areas, letting loose the assertion of cultural identities in both areas. <sup>58</sup> Communalism or Hindutva politics gain strength when these subalteran identities have erupted posing a direct challenge to the pan-Indian identity, the economic or material sources of

power are acquiring a dominant disposition and lower castes are being accommodated in developmental projects.

Though it realises the inevitability of the expansion of development and the accommodation of lower castes, it does so with a sense of assurance that culture if extended as the basis of power could still be an effective ploy. It gains vigour from the realisation that the thrust given by nationalism to a particular ideological force has not been sustained effectively and other forces are trying to dominate.

Nationalism in the pre-independence period sufficed with the equation of Brahmanic culture with national culture. However with the inevitable progress of development communalism comes to emphasise Brahmanic culture as the basis for identity formation of individuals from all castes within the Hindu fold. Simultaneously politics is unalterably set on a cultural basis. The stabilising of the standard for identity formation and the heavy import of culture in

politics seek to complement the effects of the expansion of development at both the individual and societal level. Hence the conduct of pre-independence nationalism was restrictive in its orientation to the aspiration of the lower castes and the conduct of communalism seems to recognise the inevitability of the benefits of development accruing to the lower castes and tries to cope with it through conceited accommodation. The upbeat is that Brahmanic culture is founded as the basis of life and politics.

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1. Asghar Ali Engineer Writes that, "an important ingredient of the theory of communalism is the hypothesis that where the sense of regional and cultural identity is strong, the communal conflict tends to be weaker." in 'Communalism and communal violence in India, (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1989), p.7.
2. For historical arguments that temple had not existed, See R.S. Sharma and others, Ramjanambhoomi Babri Masjid, A Historian's Report to the Nation, (New Delhi: People Publishing Home, 1991).
3. Tapan Basu, Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags. A Critique of the Hindu Rights. (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993), pp.10-11, and 87-92.
4. Romila Thapar, 'Communalism and the Historical Legacy: Some Facets'. in K.N. Pannikar ed. Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1991), p.18.
5. Prabha Dixit, Communalism -- A Struggle for Power. (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974), p.210.
6. Kiran Saxena, "The Hindu Rationale" in G.S. Bhalla ed., India Nation-State and Communalism. (New Delhi: Patriot Publications, 1989) p.63.
7. Bipin Chandra, Communalism in Modern India, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1984), p.1.
8. Ibid., p.124.
9. Randhir Singh, Of Marxism and Indian Politics, (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1990), pp.46-60.
10. Prabha Dixit, n.5, pp.1-2.
11. Asghar Ali Engineer, n.1, p.17.
12. Ibid., p.68.

13. Moin Shakir, "Notes on National Integration" in Asghar Ali Engineer and Moin Shakir ed., Communalism in India, (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1984) p.54. See also, Moin Shakir, "In the name of Islam" in G.S. Bhalla, n.6, pp.71-72.
14. Ashish Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," Alternatives XIII (1985), pp.185-192. Also see by the same author, 'The Political Culture of Indian State, Daedalus, Fall 1989, pp.1-26.
15. Ibid., (1985), p.185
16. See Ashish Nandy, "Culture, State and the Rediscovery of Indian Politics." Economic and Political Weekly (henceforth EPW), Vol. XIX, No.49, December 8, 1984, p.2087.
17. Prakash Chandra Upadhyaya, 'The Politics of Indian Secularism: Its practitioners, Defenders and Critics', Occasional Papers on Perspectives in Indian Development, XI, January, 1990, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.
18. Ibid., pp.28, 130.
19. Ibid., p.29.
20. Prakash Chandra Upadhyaya, "The Politics of Indian Secularism." Modern Asian Studies, 26, 4 (1992), p.815-853.
21. Randhir Singh, n.9, p.68.
22. Ibid., p.49, Randhir Singh Considers nationalism in Indian before 1947 as progressive 'as it aimed at resolving the basic structural contradiction of Indian Society, congealed in imperialism, whose resolution, against imperialism, alone could clear the path for Indian people's continuing struggle for a better future'. This is an ahistorical explanation. Nationalism as Anti-imperialism should be supplemented with anti-

feudalism. But in India nationalism before and after 1947 was & is never anti-feudal. It is a continuation.

23. Ibid. p.52.
24. For example Ambedkar who was a bitter critic of Gandhi and Brahmins is being systematically co-opted by Hindutwadi forces. See, Gopal Guru, "Hinduisation of Ambedkar in Maharashtra," Economic and Political Weekly, February 16, 1991, pp.339-341.
25. Ravinder Kumar, National Identity and Regionalism: The Canadian and Indian Experience. Occasional Papers in History and Society. NO. LV, March 1988, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p.3.. Ainslie T. Embree, India's search for National Identity, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p.18.
26. Moin Shakir, Politics of Minorities, (Delhi: Ajanta Publication, 1980) p.16. Suniti Kumar Ghosh, The Indian Big Bourgeoisie: Its genesis, Growth and Character, (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1985), pp.139-140.
27. See the Illustrated Weekly of India, March 6-12, 1993, pp.31-32.
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29. Rajani Kothari, "Cultural Context of Communalism in India" Economic and Political Weekly, January 14, 1989, p.82.
30. See, A.R. Desai, ed., Repression and Resistance in India. Violation of Democratic Rights of the Working Class, Rural Poor, Advasi and Dalits. (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1990).

31. Bipan Chandra, n.7, pp.78-121. Prabha Dixit, n.5, p.138- 164. Later she had changed her position. Shr maintains that post-independent Hindu nationalism is the continuation of Vivekananda, Savarkar and Gandhi, See "Hindu Nationalism", Seminar, August 1977, p.35.
32. Prabha Dixit, n. 31, (1977), pp.31-32.
33. Richard Gordon, "The Hindu Mahasabha and Indian National Congress--1915 to 1926". Modern Asian Studies, 9,1, (1975), pp.153-154.
34. Ibid., p. 157.
35. Ibid., p.158.
36. Ibid., p.161.
37. Prabha Dixit, n.5, p.165. B.B. Mishra writes that,by 1926 Congress and Hindu Mahasabha had become indistinguishable and in the latter's religious and cultural appeal it compared well with the Hindu Nationalist in the Congress. in The Indian Political Parties. An Historical Analysis of Political Behaviour upto 1947. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976). pp.164, 227.
38. Ravinder Kumar, Essays in the Social History of Modern India, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.30.
39. K.M.Pannikar in the 'Report of the States Re-organisation Commission Government of India, 1955, wrote a note of dissent. 'The consequence of the present imbalance caused by the denial of the federal principle of units, has been to create feelings of distrust and resentment in all the States outside Uttar Pradesh. Not only in the southern states but also in Punjab, Bengal and elsewhere the view was generally expressed before the Commission that the present structure of Government led to the dominance of Uttar Pradesh



in all India matters. The existence of this feeling will hardly be denied by anyone. That it will be a danger to our unity, if such are allowed to exist and remedies are not sought and found now, will also not be denied. p.245. Cited in Sasadhar Sinha, Indian Independence in Perspective, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p.117.

40. During Indira Gandhi's rule between 1966 and 1976 alone, 40,000 clear cases of atrocities on Harijans were recorded. In 1980 alone 13,745 cases of atrocities had been recorded. cited by A.R. Desai, "caste and communal violence in Post Partition Indian Unions," in Asghar Ali Engineer ed. Communal Riots in Post-Independence India. (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1984). p.12. Also see, K. Balagopal, "Post-Chundur and other Chundurs", EPW October 19, 1991, also by same author, 'Two Missing Women of Karimnagar', EPW, Feb. 2, 1991.
41. K. Balgopal, Post Chundur and other Chundur, n.42, p.2401.
42. K. Balgopal, This Anti-Mandal Mania, EPW October 6, 1990; Gail Omvett, "Twice-Born Riot against Democracy," EPW, Sept. 29, 1990.
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44. Andre Beterlle, "'Caste and Politics," in Times of India, September 11, 1990.

45. M.N. Srinivas, "End of Egotitarian Dream", Sunday Observer, August 12, 1990,; See also Times of India, September 6, 1990.
46. Indian Express, September 2, 1990.
47. A.L. Raj, "Ideology and Hegemony in Jharkhand Movement," EPW, Feb.1, 1990, p.200.
48. T.K. Omen, "Insiders and Outsiders in India: Primordial Collectivism and Cultural Pluralism in Nation-Building, International Socioloty," Vol.1, No.1, p.54.
49. K.N. Panikkar, n.4, p.8.
50. Sumit Sarkar, "The Fascism of the Sangh Parivar," EPW January 30, 1993, pp.163-167.
51. Gail Omvedt, "Hinduism and Politics," EPW, April 7, 1990, pp.725-727.
52. Tapan Basu and others, n.3. Romila Thapar, "Syndicated Moksha," Seminar, 313, September 1985, pp.14-22, Also by same author, "Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu identity," Modern Asian Studies, 23,2 (1989), pp.209-231, "Communalism and the Historical Legacy: Some Facets," in K.N. Pannikar ed. n. 4, pp.13-31, Sitaram Yachury, "What is Hindu Rashtra?" Frontline, March 12, 1993, pp.11-20.
53. Achin Vinaik remarks that after the demolition of the Mosque, Congress could create space for the secular forces. "Reflections on Communalism and Nationalism in India", New Left Review, No. 196, Nov-December 1992, p.62.
54. Bharat Dogra, "Communal Violence Spreads to Village," EPW Jan. 20, 1990, p.145. Asghar Ali Engineer, 'Grim Tragedy of Bhagalpur riots. Role of Police-Communal-Nexus,' EPW, Feb 10, 1990. pp.305-307.

55. Randhir Singh, "Reservation: A Different View," Mainstream, October 20, 1990. p.23. Jyoti Basu said, 'It will support (Congress) in fighting BJP, if economic policies are changed'. Sunday, March 21-27, 1993. p.18.
56. C.P.Bhambri, "State and Communalism in India," in K.N. Pannikar ed. n.4, p.129.
57. V. Geetha and S.V. Rajadurai, "Neo-Brahminism: An Intentional fallacy?" EPW, Jan. 16-23, 1993, p. 135.
58. Javed Alam, "Political Implications of Economic Contradictions in Punjab", Social Scientist, 161, 15, 10, October 1986, pp. 3-5.

## CONCLUSION

Communalism in India is intrinsically related to the existence of caste which is a concrete reality. The caste system being primarily a division of society based on birth and occupation, formed the criteria of hierarchy. In this sense it appears as a system of production relation. But resting with this description of caste would allow for conclusion that would contort the essential feature of the caste system. The practice of caste system was overlaid by an ideological system which prescribed the rules, norms and values of caste system. This system with all sacralizing elements formed the Hindu religion. The important method of maintaining the caste system was denying access to religion rigidly according to the caste status. This could be effective if religion was maintained as the dominant force in society and had complete hold on the people. Thus invincibility of the caste system ensured that a subtle equation was rendered in the traditional order which was subordinated to culture as the source of power. Added to this, it was a different form of power that operated in a society where culture or religion was the dominant

determinant of social organisation and simultaneously prescribed the station and life style of the people, different from that implied by economic inequality or political coercion.

Thus religion or culture was the main force that maintained the caste system. Further restriction of mobility, extreme economic deprivation of certain sections, and political non-interference proved effective. The crux of social organisation was the hard bond between caste and religion.

The transformation in the traditional social hierarchy and accommodation of the principle of a new system of hierarchy began with the consolidation of British rule. In the economic sphere the important changes that occurred were, diversification of trade, industrialisation and urbanisation. This disrupted the localised socio-economic system, but only in that its localised nature was to be broken. It was no massive dislocation because it was the beneficiaries of the traditional set up who eagerly appropriated the benefits from the new system. The rest were totally

excluded.

One important aspect of these changes in India was that it had not evolved directly through the existing socio-economic system. It was in the nature of consignment that was imposed and eagerly appropriated by the upper castes. This meant that the effects of the processes would initially concur with the traditional system. The effect on social relationship and the substantial benefits offered by the colonial changes reinforced the traditional order.

The unification of India under a single administrative set up was another important change that took place in India. This sort of unity had never been achieved before, but only at the level of Brahminic ideology. Apart from the various sacred texts one important indicator of the pan-Indian nature of Brahminic ideology was the Varna theory. Seemingly formulated to grant religious legitimation to the caste system there are three other aspects to it which ought to be recognised.

- (i) Its basic nature as an abstraction of various forms of caste divisions or as an ideal type.
- (ii) Its applicability all over India.
- (iii) The invariable correspondence of the Brahmin component with actual form of caste system all over India.

Thus the appropriation of the substantial benefits of colonial changes by the upper castes and the administrative unification of India shows the initial concurrence of modernity with tradition as being a tremendous boost to the Brahmins. However, the percolation of the benefits to the lower orders of the society, liberal ideas contained in it, political and judicial processes, and the extreme emphasis on economic forces brought about wide dislocation in the traditional social relations and drastic change in the source and nature of power.

In this context, nationalism, as then had erupted was to cope with these portents of changes. Limited social mobility due to the colonial modernity initiated the process of break up of older form of community especially those features to which religion had given symbolic expression. Nationalism was

primarily an ideology contained in these process of change embodying its absolutising spirit. However in India, it was to bear this utility for tradition. Though Brahmanic culture had a pan-Indian quality, its instrumentality in maintaining an unjust system was in completely denying access to it to majority of the people. But with the rise of national movement in India, the Brahmanic culture acquired the status of national culture. This was intrinsically tyrannical to vast sections of the population. Again it represented the effort to extend culture as the source of power over and against new forces. Hence it sought to curtail the aspirations of those sections that began to see hope in the changes of colonial modernity. The absolutising spirit of nationalism here bore utility not with regard to the general design of the expansion of the benefits but to the appropriatory and restrictive design of the upper castes of Indian society.

Since anti-caste movements had by necessity a regional basis and character, the centralising tendency of the national movement ensured that such movements



were scuttled. Backward classes movement could be effective and operate on an ideology churned out through the immediacies of the injustice of casteism at the regional level. A particular caste set up corresponded with a linguistic region. So in abstracting the ideology to the national level it became discrepant with the actual caste relations at the base. Movements having a regional character were then completely denied legitimacy or viciously abstracted to the national level. And needless to say, the movements were invariably jinxed. Hence, nationalism through diverse ways was an effective ploy against the aspirations of lower castes.

Another aspect of nationalism was that it bore great danger to local and linguistic cultures. To deny legitimacy to the subaltern cultures nationalism operated on an absolutised east-west or coloniser and colonised dichotomy. This dichotomy which went with the interest of the upper caste, was only the tension of adaptation, but when it came to the interest of the deprived castes, it acquired the character of a cultural confrontation. So such absolutised

dichotomies always carried the conceit of the dominant sections of society. It was thus the deep contradiction and potential conflicts within the traditional order, while being affected by colonial changes that was being coped with, through the absolutised idiom of nationalism. Nationalism succeeded in absolutising east-west dichotomy. Communalism tries to absolutise Hindu-Muslim Divide. The method and purpose are same.

Since the national movement operated against the interest of the masses, an historical opportunity to root out caste system was lost. Today communalism continues to play the role of nationalism in containing the emergence nationality question and the assertion of the lower castes. The centralising and homogenising politics of pre-independence nationalism was institutionalised in the Constitution of India. Uttar Pradesh gained dominance over all other states. Communal politics is only reinforcing this which is being threatened by the subalteran movements.

Given the complex political situation with a loss of a historical opportunity to get rid of caste, and the emergence of subaltern movements articulated through subaltern culture the next best thing would be to organise a polity based on homogeneous culture which could be based on linguistic nationalities. Decentralisation of power and culture, equal representation for the states in the federal set up should be national agenda and anti-caste agenda at the regional level.

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