

Colonial Approach to Hindutva and Caste

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The ideas and concepts relating to Hinduism, Varna, Caste, Santana dharma etc. that are popular among the informed citizens seem to have been influenced by the writings and documents prepared by the East India Company and British India colonial elite. It is time that one should look at the source and the purpose of such material in the context of attempts of internationalising certain ideas that are against the identity of Native Indians. We are aware that the Native Indians were conquered by different bands of alien uncivilised groups or races in the process of their searching for settled life here in the past. It is perhaps due to the fact that India is strategically and geographically located in the Southern hemisphere in such a manner that the most diversified and naturally sustainable resources are available here both in temperate and cold climates to sustain any form of life. This is unique in the world that perhaps has attracted human immigration from different areas of the ancient world. However, the scholars and experts have been concentrating only on those who had migrated from the Mediterranean region and central Asia basically I think, for two reasons. One, most of the experts including those who were trained by them has come from the so called Indo-European background. Secondly, among the groups who have migrated in to the country, the bands that have come from the West are notorious and ruthless in morals and also in their modes of cruel repression of enemies (It is still displayed in the cruelty of Taliban). Therefore, the aliens who are called as Aryans had developed the competence and connection continuously have been arriving in to the country from the time of *panchajanas* (Yadus, Turvasus, Anus, Dhruvus, and Purus), down to *keushans*, Europeans and now Americans (European Anglo-Saxon origin). It appears that the aliens have been invited with open hands by those who settled here considering them as their long lost kin. Unfortunately the so called Native Indians do not have any friendly contacts outside the country like that of the Maya and Inca people. The Africans had the advantage of colour and compose to easily connect with their brethren in any part of the World while the dark and brown Native Indians are shy of such contacts. It is increasingly believed that none of the alien faiths mostly Aryan or Indo-European did protect either physical extinction or social or cultural alienation of NI. It is under this background I feel that we are all meeting here to review our past and work out our future course of action. But, now we have literate and enlightened people to take the caravan forward unlike in the days of Babasaheb Ambedkar when the literacy rate was just 0.53 per cent and it now stands at 66 per cent. The conditions have changed from the time of Babasaheb who was supported by two princely states of Baroda and Kolhapur and now no one is uttering about the upliftment if not amelioration of the poor Native Indians. It means that the amount of time and energy used by Dr. Ambedkar would not be matching if all the literate and forward sections of the society are united now to take on the adversary. The reason being that dalits have developed a 15 per cent reservation syndrome of infighting among themselves for the crumbs of reservation forgetting the democratic right of getting proportional representation in every aspect of public and private endeavours in the country. I am happy that an organisation like

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has been maintaining the tradition of keeping the Native Indian flock together to draw up strategies to fight the mighty enemy who is more powerful now than before as he has compromised with Capital and Culture to maintain their hegemony.

The notion of Hindutva or Hinduism seems to be a colonial discovery as the term did not exist either in the puranas or in the Vedic corpus as per some scholars. Noted historians like Romila Thapar have analysed that the term was manufactured by the pundits in the 19th century based on the missionary presence in India (probably during 1891 Census). She is now attacked with a clarion call by Harvard returned Hindu intellectuals to burn her writings and also those of others who subscribed to Nehruvian values of scientific temper. In fact, the so called Boston Brahmin, Anand Coomarswamy (defender of Suttee) has explained in his "Dance of Siva" that 'Indian Philosophy is essentially the creation of the two upper classes of society, the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas' p4. Radhakrishnan has ardently lived to this description through his colossal rewriting of Indian philosophy under the benevolent guidance of his missionary teachers. There is perfect understanding among the votaries of both the religions that there is a hidden Vedanta in Christianity and hidden Christ in Hinduism. This is basically the opinion of the colonial masters who under the influence of their missionaries developed a sceptical view of Indian philosophy and Religion. But, they have not done any sympathetic study of the Native Indian belief systems and have considered all the religious practices of natives (and not the Brahminical component) as superstitious and black magic etc. Some of the missionaries have studied the belief systems of the lower caste people and untouchables and considered all of their beliefs not only irrational but barbaric to be condemned by a civilized society. Henry Whitehead one of the missionaries who had published on 'Village Gods of South India' categorically called the belief systems of the lower castes as archaic and uncivilised and wanted that the believers are to be relieved of this with Christian faith. In some of their writings and reports it is found that their ultimate aim was to create space for conversion and this would be possible once their small gods and goblins, mostly village goddesses are considered as trivial so that spiritual space would be created for the Abrahamic pantheon to enter. The materialistic world view and practices of Loakyata, Ajivakas, Tantrics etc are dissented as local and heretical. It seems the same kind of opinion was held by some of the Muslim scholars who consider that the lower castes did not possess any tangible faith and were longing for a spiritual solace that was provided by Islam. The lower castes of East Bengal mostly animists joined Islam not out of coercion but by their own volition to relish equality. Thus the NI is deprived of any spiritual or materialist identity of their own as if they are barbarians then and even now?

The analysis of the belief systems of the natives by the company officials seem to had the support of the local clergy who were their translators and contrived to make their beliefs and faith were distinctly different and superior from the natives and untouchables. Though the so called Sanatana dharma was in existence as per Vedic scholars, it did not speak about the local and native systems of faith or socio-religious practices. If there were any references to such phenomenon, it was deliberated out of contempt. Sanatana as endless or *Anadi* refers to something that is alien to Aryan and therefore is not part of the dvija categories that were according to some adherents, the main inhabitants of the country. This was true even at the time of Muslim and European onslaughts. Interestingly none of the so called Hindu critiques have pointed out any

contradictions in their metaphysics and practices. No one has ever raised how an animal could be despised at one stage and became an Avatar at another. How the names of places, Gods like Agni, Indra Varuna, etc keep changing from time to time and place to place and the pundits interpret as per their convenience to make the gullible to worship in the name of puranas and get rewarded. They never thought that there was no unanimity among the Shaivas, Vaishnavas, Advaitas, Dvaitas and Visista Advaitas and try to bridge the gap under the garb of abstract reasoning and overwhelm with state support. Interestingly all of them parade in tandem and remain pious and twice born despite of several inconsistencies in their behaviour and paradoxes in their dharma sastras. There is no uniformity even in the dharma sastras as there is a difference between North and East, South and West. It is precisely for this reason and to bring standardization, Macaulay a Tory was brought to India. Yet, the hegemony of the Brahmin pundit continued as if they alone preserved the values of Vedic religion or what is called way of life. It was not Hinduism or Hindutva as depicted by some scholars now but it was alleged to be pure Brahminism (not Brahmanism). Hinduism as propagated by a section of the militant Hindu organisations today consist of several practices assimilating from the natives while the converted natives and their missionaries disowning the foundations. That is why the devout Brahmin as well as the convert despises the practices of the Native Indian beliefs as superstition but do not dare to question the contradictions in Hinduism. Jyothi Rao Phuley started the denigration of the conspiracy and questioned the prima facie of the Bhats and simultaneously indicating the sacrifices of native Indians like Bali Raja in 19th century, while Ambedkar critiqued Rama and Krishna. Very few of the mainstream scholars of Indology or South Asian studies seemed to have observed the distinction between Brahminism and Hinduism in the first phase and Hindutva in the later stages. The recent language jingoism in the name of Hindusthani or Hindi as the only language of India originated from Sanskrit that should be promoted as a national language if not official language is another aspect of so called Indo-European project. It is said that there was no language like Hindi before 16th century except Persian or Urdu with Indo-European connection and the British have promoted Khariboli of North East of Delhi as Hindusthani in public affairs. Therefore, the fundamentalists wanted only Hindi to be promoted even in states like Maharashtra where Marathi is hardly found in their communication. The so called Maratha pride is never seen using the people's language and only observed in a cursory manner at the time of taking oath of office of government (in recent period due to identity politics some inclination is found). It is alleged that Hindi as an offshoot of Sanskrit is being used as a symbol of hegemony by few groups who continue to practice a language full of Sanskrit even in the South. There is no contradiction between English and Hindi as many of them know the virtue and Varchus are the same and lend their support even from the opposition camp to protect the hegemony.

The so called Indo-European term for Sanskrit was coined by Thomas Young in 1813 was most likely influenced by the local Linguists and William Jones. But Linguists in general say that Afro-Asiatic languages are ancient followed by Pre-Anatolian and Proto-Indic in the form of Vedic Sanskrit. It seems the technique of sruta tradition / oral recitation to inherit the language without leakages for thousands of years with the introduction of Grammar first time in history to codify it around 4th century BC is unique. But its relation with Avestan lingua and its European origin is being now confirmed by Genetic studies. If we look at the Indo-European language speakers in .

retrospect, it would indicate how they were very brainy in foreseeing the importance of language and had operated through grammar to regulate the culture in their own terms. It is brilliant of Dignaga the fourth century AD Buddhist Philosopher to critique the discovery of Grammar as a method to control thought process of common people. It is still the same in India as none of the local dialects/languages were promoted and some appropriated. Interestingly a particular social group and their adherents are the only ones who defend the Hindutva and Hindi in various forums including the horrid social network/internet. This has exposed the one side view or egocentric elucidations of the defenders of fundamentalism. The media that had been under the authority of traditional literati class from time immemorial is inconspicuous by its absence on these issues.

There seem to be some kind of a craving for the esoteric India in the past that was perhaps built by bands of vagrants in their travelogues who explored the mysteries of the unique country from time immemorial. It is due to the biodiversity in its geography and passive nature of the inhabitants who never bothered about outlandish invasions of any kind. It seems they have given way for aliens to enter without much resistance and with accommodative spirit. We do not have yet a comprehensive history and pre-history of the country recording the developments at the grassroots. Though the Indus-Harappa civilisation was brought in to focus only in the 20th century by colonial explorers/archaeologists, no finality is reached. We do not know what is holding the assertion to declare that Sanskritised Hinduism was alien or Indo-European like the genetic studies on hap lop group R1a1a establishing ANI as Caucasus /European. There seem to be an anxiety among the Indo-Europeans that once the Indus-Harappa or Saraswati civilisation is popularised, the ancient Egypt, Greek, Iran and Mesopotamia either would become unimportant or parallel which perhaps they do not wish to happen. This is also convenient for the fundamentalist apologetics of India who try to link the native Indian culture and civilisation with their alien cultural pedigrees. It is at this stage History has become once again a force to reckon with both in academics and in public life

The colonial rulers including William Jones were not interested to confront the onslaught of Vedic or so called Brahminical Hinduism of the few with whom they had transacted in the process of governance. They seem were not interested in converting them as long as they served their purpose and were interested in proselytization among the poor untouchables and artisans. Some had alleged, wanted them as servants and menials in the household .Those who had embraced them for purposes of sharing power and prestige (mostly dwijas) of a ruling class were hugged, assimilated and perhaps became Anglicans. They sailed together and the question of alien faith did not isolate them and in fact colonial officers helped to collect and translate the ancient texts in to English. We have today prestigious universities in the West offering courses on Hinduism with chairs mostly seized by dvijas. It is reported that USA alone has 500 Hindu places of worship with billions of dollars' worth of properties and lobbies in the senate and white House. In other words, the apparently open conflict between Hindu fundamentalism and Christian faith depicted by a section of the media is not coming in the way of capitalist expansion. It is open invitation now with direct command of the policies by the few *chenchas* of MNCs but pose Christian baiting to divert attention of the public . There seem to be a similar understanding with the Muslim bhadrakal taking

part in active politics of the right. This is happening perhaps due to the internal differentiation of each religious group divided on the basis of the origin of their caste alignments. This was deliberately promoted by the Colonial powers or at least one could see that they knew it and kept inconspicuous.

It is interesting to find that Sharad Patil a Marxist by training and bahun by persuasion with profound scholarship in ancient literature has continued the discourse by analysing the caste conflicts with in Brahmin domain in Maharashtra between Citpavan and Saraswat and Desasta to show how the debates were subjective. He said, "If the revivalism of non-citpavan brahmanans such as Bhandarkar led them to take anti-Brahminic and pro-Kshatriya stand on the problem of the origin and development of Indian philosophy, the revivalism of citpavan Brahmins such as Kane led them to take anti-Kshatriya and pro-Brahmanic stand on the same problem." The Upansads are known as up- ni- sad as secrete knowledge in the ancient past. This phenomenon could be construed as the covert technique of barrowing the knowledge systems of the native Indians by the aliens and cultured it as a thought in Sanskrit language that was guarded by the chosen few through rote memory (Sanskrit seems to be a code language that was kept on refined and reformed by select few as sanskarabhasa). It was thus, given a status by the mainstream society as it is now being paraded as Brahminical wisdom in a secure language. In the case of Lokayata or Charvaka philosophy as a rustic reaction to the alien and debasing schools of thought and practices as were current at that time, seemed to have been questioned by Jabali, Makkali Ghosal, Kapaalika, Ajitakesa Kambal and others in the epic tradition (some were from Brahmin group dissenters). The above formulation is supported by an authority on History of Indian philosophy, S.N.Dasgupta through his elucidations on the subject. He said that, 'it may therefore be presumed that a good number of Atharvanic hymns were current when most of the Rigvedic hymns were not yet composed. By the time, however, that the Atharvaveda was compiled in its present form, some new hymns were incorporated with it, the philosophic character of which does not tally with the outlook of the majority of the hymns'. This suggests that several ideas, notions, scientific practices were adopted from the native Indians. This was further supported by the studies of D.P Chattopadhyay, K.B.Krishna, Sharad Patil and others. It is disheartening to note that the kind of scholarship that we had in our country to make an objective analysis of the facts of the matter particularly with reference to philosophy is being slowly disappeared. It seems the post-modern scholars consider these issues petty and have not done much on the origin of the Indian thought rather they appear to be secure and comfortable with the European and Anglo-Saxon discourse studies. Further, some of the Indian scholars have accepted the damaging nomenclatures ascribed to the native Indian thought and practice as 'Little culture' by American social anthropologists with their limited field work knowledge in cities like Chennai. It is also accused that some of the anthropologists themselves were misguided by the same inherited Brahminical scholarship (with English education) that had called the native thought as useless and stupid. A section of the English educated enlightened Brahmins who carry democratic spirit in their enquiry seem to have started epitomizing Savarkar as a proponent of Hindutva. But, Savarkar who was under the regime of the British used the same colonial categories to elucidate his ideas of Hindutva with little credit to Native Indians. Commoners in the rural areas and illiterates in the urban bastis were never bothered

about what Vivekananda, Aurabindo, Dayanand and others thought about their gods or practices. It was for the educated and the political workers, Hindutva and the so called cultural Nationalism was a concern during elections. Therefore, it is alleged that no permanent or structured organisations has emerged from the so called left or secular organisations to encounter the organised robust Hindutva. However, the fundamentalist ideas are not very popular among the common people of Non-dvijas whose religious practices are sporadic till the advent of militant Hindu missionary work during the last half a century perhaps with tacit support of the ruling elite. It is irony that the shudras particularly the OBCs who were denounced as half animals and wretched by the priest class are now made to carry them on their heads. Yet, the democratization of education and the written word had enabled a minuscule number of scholars to protest against this adharm and recorded the significant contributions of the Native Indian thought. Their number is very small and insignificant as of now, need to be recognised and promoted for the benefit of posterity and diversity in India.

The colonial inquiry in to the social structure of the country was recorded as they understood it when they first entered the country and perhaps translated in to their own culture of classes in the beginning. Later some anthropologists have tried to identify the groups with mistaken identity of Aryan origin of some of the dvijas as pronounced by William Jones as their long lost kin. But, they never looked at the folks, the untouchables, and artisans etc who were in distant contact in their everyday life. It was perhaps the missionaries who were searching for gaps in the spiritual life of the common man for an opportunity to proselytization got influenced by the upper caste accounts of the practices of the lower castes demonising them as barbarian. Why is it that they have not adopted similar attitude towards the contradictions in the Brahminical rituals? In fact they have eulogised the scriptures and traditions as the greatest contributions of human will and translated them in to European languages. The protagonists of Hindutva seem to have not been ashamed of or embarrassed to use the colonial epithets of Jones and Lord Curzon who had said that India was the original country of Indo-Europeans. Now the same rhetoric is repeated time and again both in India and elsewhere. But, Indologists like Spiegel, Muller, Weber and Muir. J contradicted the idea and has elaborated the common ancestry of Aryans (North West India), Persians, Greeks, Romans, Germans as one that might have originated in central India. In fact J Muir in his monumental 5 volume work on “Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the People of India, their Religion and Institutions” explained the systems with authentic citations from Vedic literature and published them in 1860. Dr B.R.Ambedkar has used extensively this work in his studies and cited him authoritatively. Therefore, it is not true that caste as per some sociologists was created by the colonial powers through census in 1881. In fact caste census was under taken in the greater India including the SAARC countries. But, there is no caste at least as it is used in India indicating that its presence is linked to a social group that perpetuates while it is almost decimated in Pakistan, Sri Lanka etc. In fact there have been always a section of the learned men who stood for truth and one among them is Kamalakaram Bhatt whose Sudrakamalakaram was compiled in the 19th century to indicate how castes are created in a Matrix form explaining the intermixing of varnas through anuloma and viloma forms of marriages. Interestingly the number of castes among the Dvijas have remained the same or reduced through caste consolidation whereas the number of lower castes multiplied through a process of subdivision and fragmentation of each social group.

. However, it is not uniform throughout the country. The number of castes is low in the North and North East and higher in number as one moves from North to South or the route through which the Aryan incursion of the South from Varanasi down Kanyakumari. Both the colonial masters and the modern scholars who rely on their source material as the British India documents speak about untouchables or scheduled castes when it comes to the question of social division in Hindu India, but not so much of other castes like the backward castes and castes in other faiths in India. This has limited the scope and depth of analysis of social transformation in India particularly after independence. The democratic process of first past post in electing leaders to govern people has strengthened the caste cleavages making caste as an important factor to consolidate power on the basis of unity among the ruling castes and division and despair among the lower castes to keep the traditional Varna system in order. It is interesting to notice that those who fought against the so called Brahminical Social Order have assimilated their values and ultimately succumbed to their charm and became their protectors by the end of 20th century. The trend reminds of a system that was perhaps in vogue in the past in keeping the majority under check through the process of division and subdivision among the masses the so called “divide and rule” a technique unique to India.

The issue now is how to annihilate caste and reduce caste-based discrimination in public and private life of Indians. How is it possible? The issues that Phuley, Ambedkar to some extent Lohia had encountered such conundrums were different from what is observed today. The economic system was not so strong and was dissipated as it was under the control of the state to manipulate for the benefit of the masses. Now the system is under the control of the few private players consisting of the dvija conglomerate with co-option of upper caste Shudras through bureaucratic and Media manipulation to herald Crony Capitalism. (They are reported to have emerged as the Viswaguru with command over the economic, political and cultural resources not only to sustain the Brhminical order but also to expand on a world scale like that of Hitler with compromises with Jews.) The dalits and backward castes who are entering in to the private sector lost their identity and the younger generation under the lure of western and market enchantments do not intend to link with their past.

It is under this background, we need to think about innovative ways of organising the Native Indians with ideas replicating our common adversary with our ancient roots in democracy, autonomy and brotherhood. It is necessary to look back and inside our own weaknesses to reorganise ourselves and the electronic media and the press controlled by caste and corporate interests do not bother about us even if we critically challenge them. It is strange to find a section of the NGOs or so called civil society groups claiming total ownership of the dalit issues with tacit support of dubious organisations have failed to protect them at the time of onslaught from fundamentalists. Therefore, you need to know what your strengths and weak points are so that you could develop your own strategies based on native intelligence and past history. It is necessary to reflect on our beliefs and faith including the conversions that take lot of our time to a subordinate level as private or family issues and bring forth our common concerns of discrimination, exclusion, cultural identity and the common origin, NI etc as matters of great importance. This naturally calls for democratic and secular approach to our thinking that was avowedly patronised by Phuley-Ambedkar and other leaders. This is

to be pursued within the parameters of Constitution that gave lot of scope for such moves .I hope those who are gathered here particularly the younger generation would get sufficient courage and conviction in carrying our common struggle to regain our lost glory.

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