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Editorial

India down the ages has been a melting pot of many religions, races, castes, tribes, ethnic communities having different cultures, languages, scripts, customs, cuisine and living styles with very long historical traditions. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, animists and men and women of every religion, language, and belief have to a large extent lived together in exemplary harmony and tolerance. The composite culture of India owes its existence to a multiplicity of races, ethnicities and religious affiliations and is an intricate and integral collage of varied influences, ways of life that have been crafted by an intermingling of cultures and peoples over the years. Every Indian has multiple identities and therefore it is only a nationalism that accommodates these multiple identities that can sustain the Indian nation. The Partition of India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947 was based on the theory that Hindus and Muslims constituted separate nations. The assertion of religious identity over other identities as the basis of nationhood struck at the heart of the essence of a composite Indian identity. This resulted in the bloodiest religious riots in human history that led to the loss of over a million lives. The flaws of the idea of a nationalism based only on religious identity was revealed when East Pakistan asserted its cultural

Nationalism in a Pluralistic Society

and linguistic identity and emerged as a new nation, Bangladesh. The assertion of other ethnic identities, such as Balochistan, continue to threaten the idea of nationhood based on religious identity in Pakistan. India, on the other hand, rejected a nationalism based on religious identity and in spite of the large Hindu majority an attempt was made through the Constitution of India to ensure that the country remained a secular democracy committed to the recognition of cultural diversity and a pluralistic society. The pursuit of India's pluralist conception of post-colonial nation building has been a work in progress with a number of factors at play. First of all, Hinduism is a way of life which accommodates millions of faith traditions. Therefore, it is argued that the pluralistic ethos of India comes from respect for diversity, which is part of the Hindu tradition. Secondly, India's adoption of a pluralistic approach to manage its diversity has its historical roots. Before India emerged as a modern state, the Indian sub-continent consisted of several empires and regional kingdoms that favoured the accommodation of societal diversity. Indigenous and foreign rulers largely respected the internal rules and practices of social groups. Consequently, the leaders of India's freedom struggle, like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru emphasized that cultural diversity was India's distinguishing

civilizational trait and a source of strength as they built a broad coalition in favour of the Indian nation. Thirdly, the interaction of the commitment to pluralism with other hierarchies such as caste and gender is complex as though there are visible affirmations of some forms of difference, some forms of pluralism are more highly valued than others. The Constitution tried to address this by guaranteeing citizenship rights to every Indian and at the same time granting special rights to minorities and other vulnerable sections of society, such as Dalit and tribal groups. In a diverse and complex society, the virtue of respect for diversity is a necessity and the commitment to pluralism remains a living part of India's self-understanding as a post-colonial state shaping Indian national identity. In recent times, the India's secular nationalism that celebrates diversity and equates nationality with inclusive citizenship is gravely threatened by a strand of Hindu nationalism that seeks to unify India's diversities around a core of Hindu religion and culture and the Hindi language. The rise in incidents of violence against religious minorities that reminisces the Partition Riots is symptomatic of the resistance to an alien concept of Hindu nationalism from India's nationalism that celebrates diversity in a pluralistic Indian society. □

Denzil Fernandes

India is widely referred to as a *pluralistic society* which draws its lineages from different cultural and religious traditions. With its distinct character of accommodating different identities, India is appreciated globally for its incredible nature of (unity in) diversity. The political process and the importance of normative democratic principles are understood at times through the above mentioned diversity and pluralism. During the anti-colonial movement, the national movement in India advocated nation as community and materialized the idea of Indian *self* against the British *other*. With its promising secular public institutions and the celebrated discourse of diversity, India attracted many academicians who studied the reasons for the sustenance of a democratic State and society. Also the foundations of the project of nationalism always made a note of distinct pluralism of the country and different proponents of nationalism explicitly used (according to their own political project) that distinct character as a mode of mediation to reach to its own section of masses. For example, Hindu Nationalists aggressively propagates that *India is a Hindu nation* and advocates that every Hindu Indian should consistently fight in eliminating the foreign religions (according to the former, Christianity and Islam). By emphasizing on the greatness of Hindu Plurality, on one hand they claim to accept all the religious differences and on the other they show their intolerance

towards differences in dress style, and food pattern followed by other religions (especially of Muslims).

Babasaheb Ambedkar repeatedly mentioned in his writings that nation as community should possess the feeling of *oneness* and this *social amalgamation* is never created due to the fraudulent and barbaric caste system. India, as many sub-subaltern scholars view, has 'nations within the nation' and thus there is no homogenous 'idea of India.' In present times, the discourse of nationalism took a different shape where it subsumed the concerns of plurality and tolerance. With the electoral win of BJP in 2014 general election, the organs of Sangh Parivar via many mediations are moving ahead in fulfilling their agenda of establishing Hindu Rashtra.

As mentioned above, by subsuming and making the issues of plurality and tolerance irrelevant, they also are destroying the very idea of equality. Scholars refer to the nature of pluralism in India as existed in the past as segmented/hierarchical pluralism where the accommodation of diversity took place within the structure of hierarchy and inequality. So can we really say that so-called modern India (keeping the fascist tendencies prevalent here in mind) has challenged that old hierarchical pluralism despite being multi-cultural? Can we really say that the discourse of nationalism in India have helped the oppressed communities in ameliorating their social conditions? Who are all and

in what manner benefit from the idea of nationalism? Can the idea of nationalism and pluralism meet at a common point in creating/protecting the nation as one? If the social foundation of the nation is on inegalitarian principles how then the so-called celebration of the 'unity in diversity' is practically realized? Can we forget the idea of equality and social justice by only prioritizing nationalism in this country? Lastly, how can we understand the hullabaloo over nationalism when India hasn't become 'a nation' yet?

In a society where there is *an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt* (in the words of Babasaheb Ambedkar) mere talking and celebrating the idea of *abstract* diversity and equality will not actualize the substantive form of democracy. Indian Nationalism (any form of it) from the beginning was never inclusive in nature and the Sanatan Brahmanic world view has prevented the country in *becoming a nation* as such.

To conclude, the project of nationalism in India never took social distinctions seriously and thus the idea of plurality was made to be selective in nature. Every sort of difference (of every oppressed and different minorities) needs to be *accepted, recognized* and *respected* in order to create the feeling of belonging (as one nation). Let pluralism truly exist in society which further helps the idea of nationalism to become more inclusive. Finally through this exercise let the *existence of every oppressed be tolerated.* □

Manaf Kottakkunnummal

The interpretation of Indian nationalism from the perspective of women, Dalits, tribals and oppressed groups in general spills over beyond the binaries of Bharat and India that is emphasized by economists for understanding inequality. The creation of collective conscience happens through nationalist rituals. Broadly, while politicians legitimise their authority, the Hindu-Muslim conflict emerges as the major theme which subsume crony capitalist interests, linguistic problems, geographical factors causing separatism and exploitation of the poor underneath as subthemes in a way leading to wars with Pakistan. In fact, nationalism reinterprets territory through the prism of Mother India that results in forging imagined communities in which diaspora too participate.

Current political assertions informing cultural homogeneity are devoid of any national relevance because it is not same as spiritual and secular ideologies which shaped the essence of India as a pluralistic society. Democracy evolves through critically debating ideas such as revolution (*kranti*), reconstructing devotional spaces (*shanti*), and problematizing business mantras of growth (*ache din aanewale hain*). There are regular expressions like love (*pyar*, or *sneham*), and philosophical canons of liberty, equality and fraternity that also define the way people associate with nation in daily life perhaps without giving a thought on coercion linked to the State.

Well, let us ask if the above stated notions are adequate enough to critically document exclusive nationalism as manifested during the events of collective effervescence such as through cricket games? How to broaden political sphere to incorporate the heritage of diverse communities cohabiting amidst violence, fanaticism, honour killings, and politics of misrecognition to contribute to economic development

is a major challenge.

As of now, in the existing literature there is a differentiation between Hinduism as a religion, and cultural nationalism namely *Hindutva*. The false conscious associated with latter is preventing us from taking action against incumbent power. We worship politicians as if they supposedly speak for the subalterns. How to cultivate a garden culture of nationalism beyond superfluously showing concern towards Dalits, passively listening to the voices of resistance from tribal belts, and merely promising to protect women and children by law is worth exploring to turn Indian cities into a melting pot. Organic relationship between people (*insaniyat*) will only enrich our quest for political liberation whereas using stereotypes and rumours for propaganda will bring misery in the age of mechanical reification.

Globally there are transformations. The spectres of divine rulers do not haunt us anymore. Gone are the times of pastoral power creating dependent subjects. By contrast, there are trends of political representation becoming a fetishized commodity due to the habit of professionalization that brings severe competition resultantly leaving the scope for praxis to a few experts rather than common folk. Yet, our nation moved on from draining colonial domination to an advanced postcolonial situation, even escaping from the crippling straight jacket of socialism, to cherish ethos of inclusive liberal democracy where communication is possible: transgender people, peasants, immigrants, sex workers, traders and financial experts occupy equal relevance in a coffee-table book on public sphere. Simultaneously, civil society is the repository of shared knowledge on how by hierarchy party leaders stand as our masters, and diktats of caste groups

ruin the opportunities to realise the decentralisation of power for bringing change. Moreover, people are aware of the issues of corruption, role of crooked Brahmin ideologues in hindering progress, dominant castes' influence in local politics, use of the structure of party villages to win elections, and deployment of violence by maintaining well-trained foot soldiers again even as the youth go astray.

Shashi Tharoor in 'Why I am a Hindu' (2018) presents a commentary on majoritarian politics from the Hindu perspective. He argues that Hinduism incorporates atheism, paganism, monotheism, and various magico-religious rituals and thus political sphere in India becomes a collage of plural networks. Using vignettes of experience, and referring to history and holy texts he illuminates cultural specificity of Hinduism: it is *sui generis*.

Can Hinduism stand as a strong alternative to Western universal values of democracy? Well, answer lies in customs in common that will contribute to forge a counter culture to the degenerated politics. The precondition here is the reality sense on being a non-super power; and a highly populated country. Political economic issues are grave: even in the urban spaces, clerical staff feel alienated due to deskilling of work after automation, there is rolling back of the welfare state, there are issues of gender discrimination, and high level of inflation is affecting people.

To conclude, an inclusive political culture will draw from the shared customs, and will strive towards society in which women will vocalize concerns of their private lives, elites will hunt for controversies, tribals will fish out the benefits of pluri-religious culture, Dalits will criticise the caste Hindus, and racial, religious and linguistic minorities could demand for avenues to represent themselves. □

Nationalism: A thought

Shreya Jessica Dhan

Rabindranath Tagore once said that “India has never had a real sense of nationalism”. Nationalist thought, as we all know, is an embattled body of ideas. What nationalist thought cannot resolve successfully is the very national question itself. Another important question is whether you are interrogating what constitutes nation actually? Indian nationalism was born out of the gigantic clash between the imperialism of the British and the reactions of the Indians against it. Besides imperialism perpetuated by the West, one of the dominant themes during nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was that of nationalism in the colonials especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Well, the doctrine of nationalism originated in modern Europe and then later spread to other parts of the world in different periods.

Any form of autonomous thought is not possible in a multi-cultural country. In Europe, the emergence of nationalism aimed at establishing modern sovereign States based on the notion of one-nation---one state, by contrast, in the multi-cultural postcolonial countries nationalism was conceived differently in different contexts. At the macro-level, nationalism was seen as an anti-colonial political consciousness striving to liberate the country from foreign rule and establish a sovereign State. At the regional level it was perceived as a form of cultural consciousness seeking to protect distinct cultural communities in their traditional homelands. This dual notion of nationalism provided sovereignty, citizenship, and legal administrative system at the political level and cultural homogeneity and shared history and language at the regional level. Hence, it results in a multiple cultural nations co-existing under common sovereign political

unit, thereby allowing two notions of identity, a dual level of loyalty, a dual conception of nationality and finally a double interpretation of nationalism. It is observed that people in such countries have both civil-political and cultural-primeval ties. In such cases they wish to cling to their civil-political identity without shedding or tampering their specific cultural identity and hence the notions of ancestral ‘homeland’. Plural society like India where different folk culture exists, social inequalities leads to cultural differences among the subject population resulting in nationality conflicts. Therefore, nationalism is also the greatest and single site of conflict seen today. The feeling of nationality is plausible and attractive, but needs far more elaborate demonstration. In fact, the problem of transition as such, in the setting of concrete societies, is not really dealt with, along with the detailed process of constructing the new cultural identity. In such case, the only thing that could lead to national unity is political sympathy which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism spreads when people begin to believe that they are all part of the same nation when they discover some unity that binds them together. The united struggles for independence helped in building the sense of collective belonging. The independence struggle was a very successful anti-colonial movement, but it did not create a unifying sense of nationalism amongst its citizens. It was precisely the absence of a cohesive, all-encompassing nationalist ideal that led to the division of the country along religious lines. Shaken by the surge of religious nationalism that saw the creation of Pakistan, the post-independence leaders of India tried to forge a sense

of civic nationalism. This was based on freedom of speech, religious tolerance, equality, and individual rights: An ideal made for a country deeply divided along religious, cultural, linguistic, regional, and ethnic lines. These noble aims won the Indian State a certain degree of legitimacy, but they didn’t necessarily win over the masses from the shackles of their primary identities, which remain mostly religious, ethnic, and linguistic rather than national identity. Looking into recent events to turn India into a Hindu nation, the mainstream political groups have not hesitated to sow the seeds of a religious majoritarian nationalism. It can be seen that whenever India’s divided communities feel that the State’s civic nationalist project is somehow falling short, they pour out into the streets to defy the State or challenge it, all the while voicing their own specific ideas of how and what India should be.

One cannot stay with one thought to generate the national feeling. In a pluralistic society, a shared culture meaning particularly a shared language and respect for one another becomes a State-wide necessity. Culture plays an important role in nationalism because it has become a new organising principle as it is symbolic, functional and expressive. But cultural change alone will not create social cohesion and it cannot alone provide nationalist feeling. Therefore nationalist thought should be more broadened and should be based on universal culture. In other words, seeing nationalist ideology more as a rationalizing process is not possible. It should hold shared culture or societal dimension over political culture which had once provided each man with his identity, dignity and security. □

“Deliberative Democracy vs Authoritarian Statism: Traite sur la tolerance - Dialogue, Dissent, and Civic Virtue” by Upendra Baxi

Indian Social Institute (ISI) organized the Sixth Memorial Lecture in fond memory of late Fr. Paul G on “Deliberative Democracy vs Authoritarian Statism: Traite sur la tolerance- Dialogue, Dissent, and Civic Virtue” by Prof. Upendra Baxi on January 25, 2018. ‘Deliberative democracy’ and ‘authoritarian Statism’ are two contradictory forces so that they cannot exist in harmony remarked Dr. Baxi, who is a renowned legal scholar, professor of law and former Vice Chancellor of Universities of Delhi and South Gujarat. Speaking before a distinguished audience of academicians and social activists he recalled that for Fr. Paul G the grassroot realities of the people, their struggles and quest for right were central to policy making and development.

While enumerating the various traits of tolerance, Dr. Baxi pointed out that ‘one must understand, and be with, social suffering which builds and sustains ‘pyramids of sacrifice’ to power; but that is probably what also animates the dream of converting ‘swords into ploughshares’. He highlighted that for spreading tolerance one must confront the pessimism of the will



by optimism of the intellect. The speaker who is also a Padma Shri recipient emphasized that toleration is not a religious or social virtue but it is a virtue which is political in nature. Put differently, the political or the governing elite owe an ethical and constitutional obligation to convert governance into a programme of zero-sum tolerance of tendencies in civil society towards violent intolerant practices, whether these are based on religion, caste, creed, colour, gender, or history, and geography. Toleration is an instrument of governance. It is a secular and civic virtue of individuals and it is also a relational virtue, meaning thereby, the self needs the other and the other needs the self. In today’s India,

toleration is very necessary to attain democratic pluralism. Speaking about the importance of the virtue of toleration, Dr. Baxi stressed that the dark side of tolerance is violence and referring to Gandhiji, he pointed out that a true ‘satyagrahi’ will initially stress on his or her duties as are enunciated in the Constitution of India and would not engage in violence. Dr. Usha Ramanathan, an internationally recognized expert on law, chaired the function. Dr. Denzil Fernandes, Executive Director, ISI, extended a warm welcome to all the distinguished dignitaries and highlighted the key contributions of Fr. Paul G for the growth of ISI as well as for the society at large. □

-Archana Sinha



Dr. Adis Duderija from the Griffiths University, Australia delivered the 2nd Victor Courtois Memorial Lecture on “Islam and Gender: Gender Egalitarian

Interpretations of Islam” at Indian Social Institute on 3rd February, 2018. Mrs. Laxmi Menon Bhatia from Unity Earth was the chairperson for the programme. Fr. Victor Courtois SJ was a pioneer in Christian-Muslim Relations in India. It was a privilege for Indian Social Institute and Vidyajyoti Center for Christian-Muslim Relations to jointly organize a Lecture in Fr. Courtois’ memory

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by an international expert in Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations.

The main focus of this lecture was to identify and outline a number of interpretational mechanisms which can be employed in developing what Dr. Duderija calls gender egalitarian interpretations of the Qur’an and Sunna. Dr. Duderija gave a brief outline of the concept of gender egalitarian interpretations of Qur’an-Sunna, which is a body

of scholarship that advocates for gender-just and gender-symmetrical formulations of legal rights for Muslim women from within the Islamic interpretational and methodological framework. This body of scholarship systematically derives and justifies these rights on the basis of a particular conceptualization and interpretation of the Islamic tradition.

He then moved on to briefly discuss gender cosmologies in classical Islam: presuppositions pertaining to ‘inherent’ nature of masculinity and femininity and their respective sexualities. He pointed out the following presuppositions: Women are created of and for men; God made men superior to women; Women are defective in reason and faith; Femininity is overwhelmingly defined by women’s aggressive sexuality strongly associated with the concept of fitna (socio-moral

chaos) hence in constant need of very tight control while masculinity is constructed in relation to man’s ghira (unreasonable levels of sexual/family honour and jealousy).

In the main part of the lecture, he discussed interpretational principles which are supportive of gender egalitarian interpretations of Islam including : interpreter-centered interpretational approach which emphasizes the role of the interpreter in arriving at meaning of texts; interpretational recognition of what Dr. Duderija terms the intrinsic contextuality of the ethico-legal elements in the Qur’an and the sunna/hadith that makes an interpretational distinction between what the Qur’an and Sunna reflected as opposed to what they initiated; interpretational distinction between meaning and its significance; a thematico-holistic approach to

textual sources based on the principle of inductive-corroboration; a non-salafi based Weltanschauung that is not restricted by the interpretational and ethical confines within with classical and neo-classical Islamic law and ethics operate ; a purpose-based and rationalist interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna that interpretationally privileges the spirit or the moral trajectories of the normative texts over their literal meaning; a non hadith- dependent Sunna interpretational approach according to which the concept of Sunna is independent of the concept of sound hadith and is a broad, dynamic, ethico-behaviour and rational concept. The lecture was an eye opener to many as the lecture helped to identify the gender egalitarian interpretations of the main sources of Islam: the Quran and the Sunna. □ **-Victor Edwin**

International Women’s Day Commemoration March 8, 2018



The Department of Women’s Studies conducted a panel discussion on “Inequality and Invisibility of Women in a Changing World of Work” to commemorate International Women’s Day (IWD) on March 8th, 2018. Three eminent panellists discussed issues from different perspectives. Ms. Indrani Mazumdar from Centre for Women’s Development Studies (CWDS) spoke from the perspective of home-based

workers; Ms. Suneetha Eluri from International Labour Office (ILO) presented issues faced by women in the informal labour market; and Ms. Lata from Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) addressed issues of migrant construction workers, especially women workers. While addressing gaps in labour force participation rates that remain a key concern, the speakers emphasised on work to which women have

access. This year’s IWD theme places great emphasis on inequality and invisibility of women at work. Women contribute and participate in the home-based work and economy, in the domestic sphere, and at construction sites, and the benefits extend far beyond individual women but also to societies and economies as a whole. Addressing this issue is not just the right thing to do from a human rights perspective; there is also a need for raising labour participation rate of women. While addressing lower as well as declining rate of labour force participation, having decent, secure and productive work for women is important from a feminist perspective. Women are more likely to be over-represented in low paying, part-time, informal work.

Women are particularly concentrated in “invisible” activities, such as domestic labour and unpaid work or work in the informal sector

where there is no security and no coverage of labour laws as of today. In almost all sectors, women are more likely to engage in low-productive activities. They are also more likely to be in daily wage based or unpaid household work in the informal wage sector. These patterns in economic activities change with economic development but do not disappear

altogether. There are multiple deprivations and constraints that underlie inequality and thereby make women invisible amongst workers. The informal sector may promote women's labour force participation, but not necessarily their access to better quality jobs and just remuneration. The debate concluded with some potential and sustainable

solutions, such as women's access to remunerative work by systematically addressing legal and regulatory inequalities, addressing inequalities to enable women to become self-reliant, strengthening women's collective voice, and the need to address data and knowledge gaps. □

-Archana Sinha

Staff Programmes

The Staff forum Committee (SFC) of the Indian Social Institute (ISI) has been organizing many successful programmes since the last three months.

Staff Family Get-together

SFC organized the annual staff's family get-together on 6 January 2018 at ISI's premises. The Staff members and their children made the day's activity an action-packed one by participating in games. The day was full of entertainment, joy and fun. On this occasion, staff who had completed thirty years of service in ISI were honoured by the Executive Director (ED) by the gifting of a stole of ISI. This gesture brought happiness and closeness among staff and their families to ISI. □



Retirement of Mr. Paul Jacob

On the 15 January 2018, the SFC organized a farewell for Mr. Paul Jacob for his contribution to ISI in the Training Unit. He served ISI for 34 years and his contributions are noteworthy. The Institute will remember him for his remarkable service. On this occasion, the Management and Staff of ISI expressed their gratitude and gave their best wishes for his bright future. □

Staff Development Programme

The SFC also took the initiative to organize a programme on "healthy work culture" on 1st February 2018 conducted by Fr Norbert Menezes SJ. In this program, he explained how gossip and speculation damage the other's credibility because our mind is set to see negative things first and positive aspects later. He discussed how we can have a healthy work culture by focusing on work performed at one's best ability. He insisted that all work should be geared towards achievement of excellence. Developing positive thinking, positive attitude, positive relationship, positive professional growth, loving your work and commitment to excellence will create a healthy work culture. Broadly, this programme was very useful to staff at their personal and social level. □



Staff Picnic

The SFC organized the annual staff picnic to Okhla Bird Sanctuary that has over 300 bird species and to the Botanical Garden which is paradise for nature lovers, situated near Noida on 23 February 2018. The ISI staff and management visited Fr. Agnel School, Sector 62, Noida for having lunch which was followed by sports and games. In brief, The SFC efficiently and creatively organized the picnic to strengthen the bonds of love among the members of the staff. □

Farewell to Dr. Ranjit Tigga SJ

To appreciate and to recognize the contribution of Dr. Ranjit Tigga SJ to ISI, SFC organized a farewell program on 19th March 2018. All the staff members were present for the program. Appreciation letters of the Provincial of South Asia, Fr. George Pattery SJ and Executive Director (ED) of the Institute, were read out and handed over him. The members of the Department of Tribal Studies as well as other staff shared their sweet memories of working with him in the Institute. In turn, he met and greeted all with a cheerful and



smiling face. In the department and in the Institute as a whole, he emphasized on teamwork. Dr. Denzil Fernandes SJ, the Executive Director of the Institute appreciated his efforts in completing research studies, organising National Seminar and other programmes, uniting the tribals living in Delhi and promoting tribal culture. We all wish him a happy and successful future in his new assignment as Director of Xavier Institute of Development, Action and Studies (XIDAS).

Rufina Lawrence & Pascal Tirkey

BOOK POST

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