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Somewhere that is nowhere, is Begumpura: the city without sorrow. There is no class or caste there, no taxation, no oppression. It is a place without masters or peripheries, built upon natural reason, equality, and joy. An anarchist's utopia? Perhaps. This one was described by the fifteenth-century bhakti poet Ravidas, considered a forerunner of contemporary anti-caste poetics and politics. How then might an anarchist understand the struggle against caste? This is a question imperative to ponder.

In previous work, I've suggested that a spectrum of anti-colonialist discourses in the global south shares a certain deep logic structure with the anarchist tradition in the global north, demonstrating a comparable range of responses to conditions produced by modernization.[1] (In the colonial context, however, this process was experienced through a violent disruption by external forces and thus freighted with an extra burden of racialized alienation.)[2] Correspondingly, I suggested that if decolonization could be defined as the most comprehensive possible degree of emancipation and autotrans-formation on all levels, from the largest socioeconomic structures to the most intimate dynamics of gender and psychology, this could also be compared to an anarchist ideal of collective liberation encompassing all axes of domination, oppression, and exploitation. In the South Asian context, caste lies at the intersection of all these axes; confronting it is by definition a battle against the purest social hierarchy. Decolonization in anarchist terms, then, is incomplete without dismantling caste.

Yet ironically, caste can all too easily slip from sharp focus via the same analytical lenses I had been using with precisely the intent to counteract the premises that South Asia by default refers to India, that Indian society is fundamentally Hindu, and that the culture known as Hinduism

[1] Maia Ramnath, Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle (Oakland: AK Press, 2012); and Ramnath, "In Dialogue: Anarchism and Postcolonialism," in Carl Levy and Saul Newman, eds., The Anarchist Imagination (London: Routledge, 2015).

[2] The fact that this was never a matter of a dynamic force acting upon an inert mass, but of complicities between particular external and internal actors, confronted by a spectrum of subalterns and dissidents, facilitated the continuities between "classical" and "neo" colonialisms, including "domestic" varieties proceeding from the independent Indian state's takeover of the British governmental apparatus, which it has since utilized in a precisely colonial fashion against those in economically, socially, or geographically marginalized but resource-rich areas of the territory it claims.

is essentially defined by a totalizing hierarchy. Meanwhile, anti-caste interventions historically have most often called upon, not opposed, modern state mechanisms. In stark contrast to Gandhi, who opposed the modern state while advocating a nation framed in a Hindu cultural language in which all were theoretically included but on an unequal footing, B.R. Ambedkar, the exemplary figure of caste abolitionism, held Hinduism to be fundamentally inegalitarian, and looked to the modern liberal state as universal guarantor of freedom, equality, and rights. Of course, such a solution to injustice is precisely the kind that anarchist thought avoids—indeed, cannot even see. Moreover, to the logic of an internationalist inquiry oriented toward to nonor anti-state movements, such interventions are less obviously legible. But, as with race in the United States, the denial of a principle's validity does not eliminate the material realities, entrenched practices, and pervasive structures of feeling based upon it.

So, then, to repeat the question: what is a useful anarchist approach to caste?

Although previously I flagged the (patriarchal, militaristic, xenophobic, homogenizing) dangers of the nation, even while acknowledging its historical uses by colonized populations, in indicting nationalism I was primarily blaming the state for tautologically legitimizing a community as a nation by equipping it with governmental, disciplinary, violencemonopolizing, and revenue-collecting mechanisms, which its minorities and discontents experience as irredeemably repressive. Now I needed to continue problematizing the nation, not in the abstract but specifically *as it was produced* in India: notably in the dominant Hindu version countered by radical anti-caste discourse, among other modes of subjugated knowledge.

But subjugated on what basis? Does caste function as an ideological shroud for class relations,[3] or as a mode of oppression that precedes and exceeds class? Was it a way of formalizing relations with an earlier colonized population? Does it name an internal or external relationship? Two modes of decolonial consciousness that weave through radical anti-caste discourse, sometimes in tandem and sometimes in tension, are indigeneity and race. Might we answer the question of how anarchism could relate

[3] On class analysis: see S.K. Thorat and R.S. Deshpande, "Caste System and Economic Inequality: Economic Theory and Evidence," in Ghanshyam Shah, ed., Dalit Identity and Politics (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 44–70; K. Balagopal, Ear to the Ground: Writings on Caste and Class (New Delhi: Navayana Publishing, 2011).



and the material conditions, privations, and power imbalances of caste or race? The former may be a construct, but the latter are very real. Does denying the former before the latter is dismantled simply leave the latter intact? Perhaps the key is to deny its legitimacy, but not its existence. That way, it's possible to hold both in one's head at the same time (koan-like, though that's a different branch of Buddhism than Ambedkar's). This is not quite the same thing as strategic essentialism—more like a distinction between what does exist and what should, could, and must exist, while trying to move actively from one to the other.

7) Can an anarchist navigate a route to Begumpura?

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to be egalitarian or emancipatory. A litany of ugly newspaper stories illustrates how khap panchayats have been primarily a vehicle for punitive caste and gender violence. Form without content, structural devolution without a shift in values, is not enough.

3) Omvedt has characterized the new social movements since the 1980s as linking cultural and socio-economic critique—a trait she associates with the spread of a "Dalit consciousness"[125]—along with their increasing opposition to centralization.[126] Could these strands (including those focused on the environment, gender and sexuality, as well as peasant, worker and student concerns) as be unified into a "total liberatory theory," as Omvedt hopes?[127] Pandey too, echoing Ilaiah and Pantawane, suggests that the Dalit liberation paradigm of egalitarian emancipation offers a future to all people, not just Dalits. In other words, might a political vision based in radical Dalitbahujan thought, if enhanced by a stringent critique of political forms, be the foundation of a movement based on intersectional (anti-oppression, anticapitalist) grassroots (anti-statist, anti-authoritarian) logic? And might it magnify decolonizing solidarities with anti-authoritarian, intersectionally minded activists with anarchist affinities elsewhere in the world?

4) If colonial encounters in India are a palimpsest, not a simple polarity, what opportunities for solidarity appear where multiple colonialities converge?

5) Is it only relative power calculus—a quantitative measure—that determines whether a newly introduced element is a threat, a vulnerable guest, or an assimilable additive, as in the Parsi story of sugar sprinkled into milk? How can we also evaluate the qualitative? After all, one could just as easily sprinkle the milk with salt, or cyanide. What political work is done by distinguishing the need to restore what was lost as a benefit to all because of its intrinsic (e.g., egalitarian or ecologically sustainable) character, from the condemnation of conquest on principle, regardless of the character of the conquered society?

6) Finally, some object to mobilizing caste (or race) as a political identity on the grounds that doing so reinforces and perpetuates the logic on which it is based. Can you reject the epistemology of caste (or race),

[125] Omvedt, Understanding Caste, 81.

[126] Ibid., xii.

[127] Ibid., 87–88.



to caste by examining how anarchism could relate to either indigenous or anti-racist struggles? If so, grappling with caste requires the anarchist anti-colonialist to sharpen her understanding of both race and indigeneity, as they intersect with unique historical and cultural formations, since other elements of radical anti-caste discourse reinterpret elements of liberalism, Marxism, and most innovatively, Buddhism,[4] as a rational ethical philosophy and indigenous challenger to Brahmanism.

Furthermore, an anti-caste intellectual history makes it clear that the story of colonization and decolonization in South Asia is not a simple binary clash of the British Raj versus the national liberation struggle, but rather a palimpsest.[5] Multiple waves of migration, settlement, synthesis, subjugation, dispossession, and incorporation have created interference patterns over thousands of years. To see oneself as anti-colonial in India then has not in all times and circumstances been to see oneself as antiBritish: radical Dalit rhetoric locates the moment of foreign subjugation not by the East India Company in the eighteenth century CE, but by Vedic Aryans in the second millennium BCE.

Since the 1990s, however, several of these colonial timelines seem to be converging so that the once-distinct forces of Hindutva, neoliberal capitalism and the Indian state are now working synergistically with each other in relation to the prevailing structure of global empire. Accordingly, it may be that the dynamics of each wave form, including the counterforces they unleash, now have unprecedented possibilities to augment each other rather than cancel each other out. This may in turn create new opportunities for those borne upon any of those waves to learn from and act in concert with each other. These are the conjunctures to be explored here.

[4] Gary Snyder, Robert Aitken, Hozan Alan Senauke, Joshua Stephens, and others have linked contemporary, social change-focused "Engaged" Buddhism to anarchism, while others, such as Peter Marshall in his omnibus history Demanding the Impossible, locate Buddhism as one of the philosophical traditions that preceded and prefigured anarchism, counter to the modern Western dominant paradigm of instrumental rationalism, hierarchical binarism, and domination. (Of course this pertains only to certain iterations of anarchism and Buddhism.) For a Buddhist anarchist attempt to grapple with caste and class, follow thread at `http:// www.dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=42&t=12046&hilit=anarchism`. A fuller exploration of anarchism in dialogue with a specifically Ambedkarite Buddhism would be valuable, but well beyond the scope of this paper.

[5] After writing this, I realized with chagrin that the "palimpsest" was Nehru's famous formulation of subcontinental history and culture in his Discovery of India (1946).

## Opening Check-In

But first, in the spirit of "relentless self-interrogation"[6] required for accountable scholarship, it seems worthwhile to note a few things about methodological and locational biases. (Those impatient with such matters can skip ahead to the next section.)

As a logical extension of my initial questions about the practice of antisystemic solidarities, I had originally explored historical connections between Western anarchists and Indian anti-colonialists from the transnational standpoint, from which what comes most into focus is imperialism as a world system, the continuity of classical colonialism and neocolonialism in the form of expanding global capitalism, and the insatiable incorporation of land, labor, and resources into that system. It is perhaps harder to see other aspects of struggle that are urgent for activist agendas and research questions embedded in the Indian local context. Of course, world systems and localized oppressions are connected; but according to positioning, angles and priorities may change. So, in privileging global systemic analysis over nationalist narrative, "South Asia" over Indo-centrism, intersection with the Islamic world over Hindu cultural hegemony, history over ethnography, English, Hindi, and Urdu materials over those in languages such as Tamil or Marathi, what might a diasporic anarchist scholar pursuing interests springing from her location be inadvertently neglecting?

Moving from self-criticism to criticism: for anyone taking up the subject of caste—or neglecting to take it up—the likelihood of attack is approximately 99.99 percent. Some probable firing lines can be predicted: Indian Marxists may call me a right-wing reactionary for airing critiques of instrumental rationalism and industrial development. Hindu nationalists may accuse me of anti-Hindu hate speech, surely a symptom of either pathological guilt or cultural contamination. These I would refute, and the refutations are central to the alternatives I'm trying to highlight.

Radical Dalit activists and intellectuals may say that I should not presume to speak, due to lack of organic connection to Dalit movements and a middleclass/upper-caste background; or that I am taking up space better left to others. Native American activists and intellectuals may chide

[6] I am here recontextualizing a term for which I am indebted to several conversations with Skanda Kadirgamar.



insufficient (or inimical) to combat caste, does anarchism have anything to offer to this struggle?

2) Regardless of one's own biases, is it possible for people in a given situation—in this case, Dalits in post-independence India—to conceive of reform within an existing system as revolutionary, or is reform always counterrevolutionary? What if the establishment of that system itself was considered revolutionary, or at least the result of revolutionary intentions? In other words, when, if ever, do incremental changes that make use of official channels, even highly problematic ones, move things in a direction that creates conditions of possibility for revolutionary change, and when do they shore up the status quo? For example, one might argue that ensuring the conditions basic for survival and humane living when these have previously been denied is, in addition to being an ethical imperative, a prerequisite for anyone to have the capacity, time, and energy to organize toward revolutionary futures. These questions have also been discussed within Western anarchist discourse: Colin Ward, Murray Bookchin, and others have proposed pragmatic coexistence with or even strategic utilization of existing institutions.[123]

On the other hand, caste radicals seeking constitutional redress may need to consider whether or not top-down changes in state policy are sufficient— even assuming they are consistently enforced—when in truth what's needed is a profound and pervasive change in social attitudes and cultural norms, which cannot be legislated.[124] As the saying goes, when the mores are sufficient, the law is unnecessary; when the mores are insufficient, the law is ineffective. But the same applies from the bottom up. Decentralized organization, if it is informed by patriarchal Brahmanism in village councils, for example, is by no means guaranteed

[123] While this has sparked accusations of halfhearted reformism, it also obliges us at least to consider the obscured routes by which we might navigate from the society in which we actually live to that in which we would like to live I'm not taking a stance here, merely puzzling it out. For a taste of these discussions, see, for example, Colin Ward, Anarchy in Action (London: Freedom Press, 1973) and Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction (London: Oxford University Press, 2004); Howard Ehrlich, ed., Reinventing Anarchy, Again (San Francisco: AK Press, 1996); and Murray Bookchin, Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm (Oakland: AK Press, 2001).

[124] Even in the 1970s and '80s, prior to the emergent symbiosis of Hindutva and neoliberalism, and aside from the state's active collusion in caste oppression, a turn to electoral politics itself was seen as a neutralizer of social movements, sapping energy from more radical transformations and diluting constituencies for the sake of mass appeal. See Adi Dalit pamphlet.

established left parties, which extend their suspicion to the notion of decentralized organization and village-scaled economies. But after the experience of the Emergency in the 1970s (in which Indira Gandhi suspended civil liberties and constitutional government for two years, brutally crushing dissent with military rule), and the transition from quasi-socialism to economic liberalization in the 1990s, many social movements are more likely now than during the first decades after independence to view the state as a force of repression inimical to human rights and civil liberties. It has repeatedly claimed internal (usually Naxalite), external (usually Islamist), and separatist threats (in which case the internality or externality is the crux of the conflict, as in the Northeast or Kashmir) as a pretext to intensify its special military and policing powers.[121]

In Debjani Ganguly's meta-account of caste logic, drawing upon the formulation introduced by Hegel and embraced by Mill, the state is the historical embodiment of rationality and freedom in its most advanced/ advancing form. Mill's liberalism (and therefore canonical social science) defined Indian society as the opposite of this: India was defined by the absence of the state, and thus by its negations, hierarchy and despotism. Much Indian social and political thought internalized that notion, which outlived the colonial politics that had produced it. But the anarchist's definition of the state is the opposite: if the state is by its very structure and function a producer of hierarchy and despotism, the negation of the state would promote freedom.

Since both pre- and post-colonial states have been used to institutionalize and enforce caste through uppercaste domination of symbolic and material economies, control of resources, and monopoly of coercion, was the colonial state then an exception, from the perspective of Dalit emancipation?[122] If, in the current configuration, state-based mechanisms are

[121] Here I am not talking about the post-liberalization trope that the state must retreat before the markets—this is not reality. The state is equally big, or even bigger, just reoriented to serve markets and the interests of global capital and the emergent layer of Indians who identify with it, rather than the interests of redistribution and social welfare. Kanchan Chandra, "The New Indian State," lecture, February 16, 2013, Fifth Annual Global South Asia Conference, New York University; Rupal Oza, The Making of Neoliberal India: Nationalism, Gender, and the Paradoxes of Globalization (London: Routledge, 2006).

[122] Precolonial examples include the Maharashtrian peshwai state described by Chakravarti, 105–13; and the classical Gupta state in which the Dharmashastras were made normative. The early postcolonial Ambedkarite/ Nehruvian years could also be included within the period of a pro-Dalit state that I'm suggesting was anomalous.



me for not sufficiently foregrounding and problematizing the location of my writing, on Lenni Lenape land. Lacking immediate solutions, I can only acknowledge these contradictions, while striving for what Taiaiake Alfred calls a clear head and a good heart to guide awareness during an endless process.[7] My overriding conviction is that if any headway is ever to be made toward the goals of dismantling oppression and exploitation while building freedom and equality, then avoiding talking about it is far worse than trying to talk about it, attempting to open dialogue (not to represent!), whoever and wherever we are, in however flawed a way.[8]

Finally, North American anarchists may feel (and have implied) that this topic is irrelevant, inaccessible, and less exciting than what they were expecting to hear: where are the itinerant revolutionists on whom to project their fantasies, meeting in clandestine, cosmopolitan locations? Where are the South Asian syndicalists and guerrillas they had anticipated adding to a rainbow coalition of familiar types? What such anarchists must realize is that the failure to think about caste in the past has doomed the revolutionary aspirations of those with whom they sensed affinity. So then let's think about it.

## A Very Brief and Partial Account of Dalitbahujan Thought

"Dalit" is the preferred term for those previously marked as "untouchable," designating a transformation from a condition of subjugation and dehumanization to one of resistance and emancipatory struggle.[9] "Bahu-

[7] Taiaiake Alfred, Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[8] Wallace Shawn's 1985 essay "Morality," Essays (Chicago: Haymarket, 2010) inspires me here; more directly relevant are debates on Arundhati Roy's foreward to a new edition of Ambedkar's Annihilation of Caste (Navayana, 2014). For a sampling, see http://scroll.in/article/658279/WhyDalit-radicals-don't-want-Arundhati-Roy-to-write-abou ; http:// roundtableindia.co.in/index.php? option=comcontent&view=article&id=7312:preface ; and http:// roundtableindia.co.in/index.php? option=comcontent&view=article&id=7283:an-

[9] In what follows I'm being slightly anachronistic in using the term "Dalit" throughout. It was introduced in common usage in 1931, and popularized more broadly in the 1970s. For a history of the terminology see Gopal Guru, "The Language of Dalit-Bahujan Political Discourse" in Shah, Dalit Identity and Politics, Vol. 2, 96–107. For a much more comprehensive introduction to the history and political theory of caste than space here allows, see, for example, Susan Bayly, Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth

jan" is the term for the literal numeric majority, the vast base supporting the social pyramid. The term "Dalit" sometimes refers to the bahujan samaj of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, all categories assigned by the 1935 Government of India act for the allotment of representation to socioeconomically marginalized communities, and later incorporated into the 1950 Indian Constitution. Other times it refers specifically to those designated avarna, outside caste society's four grades (as opposed to either savarna—within the four—or tribal).[10]

If dominant "Indic" civilization has been constructed as synonymous with Brahmanism—defined as Vedic/Aryan, northern, Hindi-speaking, patriarchal and hierarchical—then its submerged counter-discourses may correspond to non-Brahmin, Dravidian (southern), Tamilian, feminist, or Dalit locations. This multivalence opens up the possibility of principled alliances (or unstable situational coalitions) among critics of any facet of the dominant project. Dalitbahujan thought provides an alternate Indian intellectual tradition based on egalitarianism along the axes of both caste and gender.[11]

Century to the Modern Age (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Gail Omvedt, Understanding Caste: From Buddha to Ambedkar and Beyond (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2011), Dalits and the Democratic Revolution (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994), and many others; Anupama Rao, The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Valerian Rodrigues, "Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India," in V.R. Mehta and Thomas Pantham, eds., Political Ideas in Modern India: Thematic Explorations, Volume X, Part 7 (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006); Eleanor Zelliot, From Untouchable to Dalit (Manohar Press, 1992); S.M. Michael, ed., Untouchable: Dalits in Modern India (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

[10] See introduction to Dev Nathan, ed., From Tribe to Caste (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1997), 1–30.

[11] I do not have space to accord Dalit feminism its due here, although anti-patriarchy is central to radical anti-Brahmanism. Phule's work was paralleled by that of his partner, Savitribai Phule, and contemporaries, Pandita Ramabai (1858–1922) and Tarabai Shinde (1850–1910). Unusual for the time, both women attained high levels of education while rejecting Hinduism on the grounds that its practices of caste hierarchy and patriarchy were not aberrational but intrinsic. Shinde, the daughter of a Satyashodhak Samaj member, was known for her fierce writings on women's rights. Ramabai dedicated herself to the service of (by definition disenfranchised) widows, and later founded an autonomous community made up of women of all castes living together. I am barely scratching the surface here but would rather cede the floor to those better equipped than myself to address it broadly and deeply, such as Uma Chakravarti, Gendering Caste through a Feminist Lens (Calcutta: Stree, 2003) and Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai (New Delhi: Zubaan Books, 2014); Sharmila Rege, Writing Caste, Writing Gender (New Delhi: Zubaan Books, 2013);



atomized monads of the kind imagined by classical liberal theory, but interdependent components of society. Emancipation thus must be achieved systemically and symphonically, through—and here is Bakunin—a "restructuring of society from below, according to the principle of free association and federation."[117] This restructuring occurs both positively, in the development of social potentialities through education and material well-being for all, and negatively, in the revolt against "all forms of transcendental authority" whether human or divine, including both nation and state (Bakunin having denounced nationalism, long before Benedict Anderson, as a "new form of political theology").[118] Crucially though, such revolt opposes not only the transcendent but the immanent, not only sovereign but governmental power: namely the "tyranny of the society" that is "exercise[d] through customs, traditions, sentiments, prejudices, images and habits, on both our material and intellectual life."[119]

While Ambedkar repeatedly invoked the revolutionary republican principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, he left no ambiguity about equality's preeminence. In fact, from the anti-caste perspective, liberation itself could be defined as the attainment of equality. Similarly, for anarchists, liberty and equality are reciprocally generated. But whereas for anarchists that condition requires the elimination of the state, Ambedkar sought to use the state as tool of emancipation against social tyranny. For Bakunin or Malatesta such a strategy was inconceivable.

Anti-statist political thought in India is mainly associated with (some would say tainted by) the Gandhian tradition and the sarvodaya movement, leading toward various branches of environmentalism that in turn influenced key adivasi-based mobilizations, including the Chipko movement.[120] These lineages are for the most part viewed askance by the

tici, "Black and Red: The Freedom of Equals," in Bottici, Jacob Blumenfeld, and Simon Critchley, eds., The Anarchist Turn (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 16.

[117] Bakunin, "Stateless Socialism." `http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bakunin/stateless.html`.

[118] Bakunin, "God and the State." `http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/AnarchistArchives/bakunin/godandstate/godandstatech1.html`.

[119] Quoted in Bottici, 17.

[120] Chipko was a movement initiated by Himalayan tribal groups in the 1970s, whose activists were famous for using their bodies to protect trees from being logged after the Forest Department awarded lumber contracts to a sporting goods company; the tactic was part of a larger mobilization in defense of local sovereignty, ecological sustainability, and traditional rights of access to and use of forest resources. See sources cited in note 70.

ing to hold onto a capacious reference point that could encompass many examples of anti-colonial struggle; to come to terms with primary resistance to conquest, and assertions of survival, from the Americas to Africa to Asia to Australia.

But every context is particular, layering critiques upon a hypothesis in the process of testing it for relevance. This is fine; the point of such a hypothesis is not to defend it against challenge and gain ideological points, but to dialogically carry forward usable, actionable understandings of real conditions. Anyone listening tends to apply these propositions to their own specific location, though in reality there is no ideal type against which to specify qualifications and exceptions. What becomes clear is that it is inaccurate to draw conclusions in the abstract, outside of a context. The terms we plug into "let x equal ..." change the graph of the function in historically and politically significant ways.

Attempting to test such terms, I conclude, inconclusively, with questions.

## Closing Check-in

It is easy to see the struggles of forest-dwelling tribal communities against land appropriation and enclosure of the commons as direct continuations of anti-colonial resistance, unbroken across British and Indian regimes.[115] The ways in which a radical anti-caste political/philosophical framework crosshatches an anarchist/anti-colonialist one are slightly more complicated.

1) Annihilating caste is, in India, the ultimate struggle of equality against hierarchy. How can anarchism, classical or contemporary, enter into meaningful dialogue with anti-caste thought and praxis? Here is Malatesta on the articulation of freedom and equality: "No man can achieve his own emancipation without at the same time working for the emancipation of all men around him."[116] This is true if individuals are not

[115] Much of the content of colonial Indian Forest Acts (1865, 1878, 1927) was incorporated into postcolonial land rights and tribal land use legislation. For comparative global perspectives, see Alexander Reid Ross, ed.. Grabbing Back: Essays Against the Global Land Grab (Oakland: AK Press, 2014).

[116] Errico Malatesta, "Notes on Anarchist Social Organization," referenced on February 19, 2014 at International Institute for Organization Research, `http://www.anarchy.no/malat1.html`. Also quoted in the context of Chiara Bot-



The accepted genealogy of modern anti-caste radicalism starts with Jotiba Phule (1826–1890), introducer of its central themes: the importance of dignity and self-respect; valorizing productive labor as ennobling, not defiling; the overdetermination of cultural/ideological and material/economic structures of domination; and a consistent linkage between caste oppression and the oppression of women. These issues defined the confrontation with Brahmanism, understood as an all-pervading ideology fundamentally based on inequality.

Phule was born in Maharashtra in a relatively affluent family categorized as Shudra by the reigning social taxonomy.[12] His message was aimed not just at those condemned to untouchability but to all non-Brahmins: the bahujan samaj. Phule described caste as equivalent to slavery (gulamgiri), comparing the particular oppression of Dalits in India to that of blacks and Native Americans in the United States. His logical framework for this lay in the two races or Aryan invasion theory, according to which the (dark) Dravidian original inhabitants of the subcontinent were overrun by (light) Indo-European invaders. The newer Vedic culture was said to have destroyed the glories of the ancient Indus Valley civilization and enslaved its creators, leaving upper and lower castes as two distinct racial strata.

In 1873 Phule founded the Satyashodhak Samaj (Self-Respect Society). Political theorist Valerian Rodrigues writes, "If self-respect is the fundamental striving of this [Dalit] constituency, then Brahminism is its principal opponent... militating against self-respect by its tendency of ranking, which makes some inferior and others superior, irrespective of their merit and effort; for not relating desert[s] to effort; ... [and] breed[ing] dependence and subservience."[13] Phule later launched the Sarvajanik Satya Dharma as a "religious alternative" to Brahminical Hinduism: a "nobleminded, equalitarian theism, which also projects a strong male-female equality."[14] His rejection of Hinduism was total, with no hope

B.R. Ambedkar, Against the Madness of Manu (New Delhi: Navayana Publications, 2013); Anupama Rao, ed., Gender and Caste (London: Zed Books, 2005). See also the current work of the All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch, which may be accessed at http://www.ncdhr.org.in/aidmam/ and http://allindiadalitmahilaadhikarmanch.blogspot.com.

[12] Shudras were low in the hierarchy, but still within the system (savarna), not excluded from society as untouchables (avarna). Technically then they would fall within the category of bahujan, but not Dalit.

[13] Rodriques, "Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India," 49.

[14] Omvedt, Understanding Caste, 27.

of reinterpretation or recuperation; other intellectual traditions native to the subcontinent might allow for more egalitarian, emancipatory social views. He favored knowledge, education, and science as tools of freedom, equality, and economic progress, while identifying patriarchy as a primary form of social oppression and promoting women's equality and education.

During his lifetime, Phule was little known beyond his own western region. There were other, more broadly influential movements in the south, where Iyothee Thass (1845–1914), drawing upon a vision of subcontinent-wide, pre-Aryan Dravidian civilization, pioneered a mode of Dalit Buddhism that was an important entry point for caste activists the early twentieth century. From this matrix, Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy (1879–1973) forged a new mass movement in the 1920s. Periyar cited three things that needed to be destroyed in order to attain freedom: the Indian National Congress, Hinduism, and Brahmin domination. (Note that British rule is not on this list.) Through his Self-Respect League, founded in 1926, he called for both caste abolition and women's liberation; the following year he contested Gandhi's defense of varnashramadharma.[15] Unlike Phule, Periyar favored atheism over religion—making him a proponent of, in essence, a world with no gods, no masters, and no Brahmins.

Thass's Dravidan/Dalit reading of Buddhism also initiated the intellectual path of Chettiar Singaravelu (1860–1946). Part of India's first Marxist generation, Singaravelu contributed articles on socialism and historical materialism to Periyar's journal *Kudi Arasu*, and in 1932 Periyar and Singaravelu proposed a new program for the Self-Respect League: a form of socialism they called samadharma. But this sundered the more conservative non- or anti-Brahmins from the leftists, whose ranks otherwise tended to skew toward upper castes. In 1935 the anti-Brahmin faction formed the Justice Party while the leftists were absorbed into the Congress Socialist Party. This had the unfortunate effect of splitting a radical left movement that was now upper-caste by default and association, from a more conservative emergent regional/linguistic nationalism. As Periyar's antiBrahmanism flowed into this channel, the Justice Party begat both the Dravidar Kazhagam, which still promoted his ideals of self-respect, antiBrahmanism, and women's rights, and the less progressive regionalist Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Thus Ramaswamy's more

[15] This term refers to the fourfold division of society into the "traditional" functions of brahmin, kshatriya, vaisya, and shudra (priests, warriors, merchants, laborers/artisans).



war,' 'guerilla zone,' 'liberated area' and so on fits the profile of an 'enemy' that the state wishes to have" in order to justify its militarization.[109]

On the other hand, given the negative impact of neoliberalism on the disadvantaged, *both* "Dalits and adivasis have been attracted in large numbers to the naxalite movement, and, by and large, constitute its combat force."[110] Because of this demographic, the state's crackdown on Naxalism through special laws and paramilitary forces "directly precipitates antidalit and antiadivasi atrocities."[111] SCs and OBCs, Dalits, and adivasis are the most frequent "encounter deaths."[112] But just because such instances of state violence fall under the rubric of anti-Naxalism doesn't mean they shouldn't also be viewed as caste atrocity, Teltumbde argues. The use of anti-Naxalism as cover for cracking down on the protests that followed the multiple murders of a Dalit family in Khairlanji in 2006 is central to his story.[113]

So it seems the rubric of Naxalism can mask caste relations in both directions: just as those killed as Naxalites are disproportionally Dalit or adivasi, people attacked for their caste (or people defending those people) are liable to be tagged as Naxalites—a blanket excuse to criminalize activists, rights workers, or gadflies, just as select tribes were interpellated as criminals in the late nineteenth century.[114] In this way the state, capital, and caste elites have achieved a new collusion of interests. Can anti-state, anti-capitalist, and anti-caste radicals do the same?

## In Lieu of Conclusion: Questions and Observations

Indigenist discourse makes "nation" a possibly recuperable idea, conceivable within nonstate forms of sovereignty. By contrast, Dalitbahujan thought asserts the possibility of a recuperable state deployed against a dangerous nation. Previously, when I suggested (somewhat provocatively, I admit) the possibility of liberating the nation from the state, I was try-

[109] Teltumbde, The Persistence of Caste, 156.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 163.
[113] Ibid., 156.
[114] Ibid., 164–66.

caste prejudices prevail.[106] But is this really such a new phenomenon? Those prejudices are very old. Teltumbde links the rise of atrocities since the 1980s to a combination of factors: the weakening of the anti-caste movement, the new impacts of capitalism, and the resultant shifts in the economic fortunes of different groups. The combination of old prejudice and late capitalist precarity makes a toxic mix.

All these threads—state repression, global capitalism, accelerated encroachment on resource-rich forest and agricultural lands—converge upon a reinvigorated militant left movement that has primarily mobilized adivasi communities, but in some regions (according to Teltumbde) can also be significantly characterized as a Dalit phenomenon: Naxalism.[107] The movement originated in 1967 with a tribal youth, and tribal peasants killed in an "encounter" over the cultivation of contested land near Naxalbari in West Bengal. But its branch in Bihar centered on a Dalit teacher named "Master" Jagdish Mahto, who was first the Ambedkarite publisher of the Harijanistan newspaper, and then a Marxist after 1968. He and others established Bhojpur as a Naxalite hub by 1975. The upshot was that Naxalism in Bihar was, in effect, "caste politics in a different guise."[108]

This may be even truer in the twenty-first-century form, wherein the interference patterns are visible yet again, if indeed neoliberal interests and global ambitions stand behind the Indian state's policies toward those it identifies as security threats. In other words, if the U.S.-led imperialist "war on terror" is a rhetorical cover justifying the annihilation of obstacles to the expansion of a neoliberal regime, post-Cold War India is its aspiring partner in that project. Thus, Teltumbde accuses, as the "war on teror" has "justified demonizing every other Muslim as a potential terrorist, India's Hinduistic state has taken the US model even further, invoking the label 'naxalite' for Dalits and adivasis to violently suppress any kind of dissent on their part. The naxalite rhetoric of 'armed struggle,' 'people's

[106] Ibid., 87. On the good intentions of the law, see 78–79. Note again this blurring or conflation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, including in the UPA government's Common Minimum Program of 2004.

[107] Ibid., 158.

[108] Ibid., 161, drawing on Mendelsohn and Vicziany, The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 59. Teltumbde, The Persistence of Caste, 204. He identifies Dalits as central also to the Telangana uprising of 1947, marked as precursor to Naxalbari, 159.



expansive vision— not territorially bound, and capable of encompassing a plurality of identities —gave way to a more restrictive nationalistic logic.[16]

Nevertheless the 1920s and 1930s were a high point of Dalit mobilization linking caste radicalism to broader movements for national and class liberation through mass strikes, tax boycotts, worker and peasant formations, as well as more caste-specific agitations for access to public spaces such as temples and water tanks, from which they were excluded. The recurrent (and recurrently fractured) dream of linking caste and class politics has remained one of the most potent hopes of profound social transformation. Yet the failures of communist organizers to adequately acknowledge caste issues, or to accord them primary importance, inflicted lasting damage on the growth of intersectional movements.

If Phule had introduced the main themes of Dalitbahujan thought, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956) brought them to fullest articulation.[17] Also Maharashtrian, Ambedkar came from a family of the Mahar caste. Defying the discrimination barring untouchables from education, he proved a brilliant scholar who went abroad to earn multiple doctorates in law and economics at Columbia University and the London School of Economics, taking the bar at Gray's Inn. After returning to India he rose to political prominence in the late 1920s. In 1932 he clashed with Gandhi on the place of Dalits in electoral politics. Gandhi wanted Dalits to be included within an undifferentiated Hindu constituency, whereas Ambedkar wanted a separate electorate in which Dalits would vote for their own slate of representatives. In the face of a Gandhian fast, he had little choice but reluctantly to accede to the mahatma's wishes, yielding the Pune Pact compromise in which Dalits, though remaining part of the Hindu electorate, would be allotted a certain number of reserved seats.

Ambedkar then founded the Independent Labour Party in 1936, as a Maharashtra-based leftist worker-peasant party linking anti-capitalist

[16] This observation comes from the Pondicherry Group of Tamil Dalit intellectuals, described by M.S.S. Pandian in "Stepping Outside History? New Dalit Writings from Tamil Nadu," in Partha Chatterjee, ed., Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State (Delhi: Oxford, 1998), 294– 98.

[17] Scholars such as Anupama Rao, Debjani Ganguly, and others make a strong case that Indian modernity cannot be understood without the category of the Dalit. In Caste, Coloniality, and Counter-Modernity (London: Routledge, 2009), Ganguly argues that in fact it is not only generated by but constitutive of Indian modernity, as opposed to a premodern remnant indicative of incomplete modernization, to disappear once that project is complete.

and anti-landlord agitations with resistance to caste oppression. At this period he identified a "dual-systems theory"[18] of capitalism and Brahmanism as the greatest enemies of the working class, criticizing the Left for recognizing only capitalism's but not Brahmanism's role as "negation" of his highest ideal, "the spirit of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity."[19] During the 1920s and '30s Ambedkar was influenced by Marxism, and considered the "destruction of caste ... a prerequisite to economic equality (socialism)," though his thinking evolved toward a more instrumental developmental state socialism, and later an emphasis on cultural issues and electoral politics.[20] The ILP morphed into the All-India Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942, and after his death into the Republican Party, named for the (American) party of Lincoln as emancipator of slaves.

Ambedkar played influential roles in government: labour minister under the British regime, law minister under Nehru. Above all he is remembered as the chief drafter of the Indian constitution. For Ambedkar at this stage, a crucial tool of social transformation was the modern state, as "the agency par excellence for safeguarding rights, when values deeply inimical to rights rule the roost in the domain of civil society."[21] Rule of law, and equality before the law, were paramount, even though existing inequities would first need to be adjusted through reservations in political, educational, and professional spheres. [22] Civic republicanism was the ideal, based in organized deliberative bodies undergirding a "self-governing political community in which citizens participate as equals to realize the good of both the individual [and] the collective."[22] Indeed, there could be "no meaning to self-rule without representation and participation,"[23] which is why issues of formal democracy, as at Pune, became so controversial. In *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables* (1946),

[18] However, he didn't really articulate connections between the two, according to Omvedt, "Ambedkar and the Dalit Cultural Movement in Maharashtra," in Shah, Dalit Identity and Politics, Vol. 2, 146–47.

[19] Gail Omvedt, Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004), 82. For a more extensive elaboration of his definition of these three principles, see Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste (1936), section 14, `http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/index.html`.

[20] Economically he favored state socialism, though after independence he moved further right, toward pragmatic developmentalism including strategic nationalization of land and key industries.

[21] Rodrigues, "Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India," 65.

[22] Rodrigues, "Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India," 62.

[23] Ibid., 63.



caste aside. It brings indebtedness to rural areas, job loss to small scale industries, and the withdrawal of state subsidies and protections. Thus neocolonialism in the form of globalization has had the effect of strengthening caste inequities.[101] It also appears that the rise of capitalism has reinforced the class-like aspect of caste. According to Teltumbde, as Dalits engaged collectively in class struggle only to face brutal collective punishment, anti-communist reprisals have manifested as caste-based atrocities and vice versa.[102]

Another new twist within conditions of late capitalism is that due to economic competition, the rising OBCs, with rising anxieties matching rising ambitions, are perhaps even more hostile to Dalit aspirations in many localities than higher caste groups.[103] This has led to a shocking increase in incidents of caste-based violence, often with the tacit or open complicity of police and legal systems.[104] "It is commonplace Dalit experience that state/ police intervention does not help them combat the perpetrators of caste violence; on the contrary, the state emboldens nonDalits" by both its omissions and commissions. Beyond the biased application of justice (with leniency fostering the general perception of tolerance of atrocities, thus encouraging more boldness in their perpetration), the police have even been known to join in the mayhem. Thus the "state machinery" has played an active role in caste atrocities.[105]

Under the 1989 Prevention of Atrocities Act, the state is supposed to guarantee the protection of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and punish perpetrators of hate crimes, but it seldom works that way in practice. Here too it is suggested that implementation is the real problem, not the law itself, because the interface of the population with the law—that is, of society with the state—primarily occurs at the local level, where

[101] Ibid., 154–56.

[102] Ibid., 60–61.

[103] Even so, the Mandal agitations of 1990 too could be seen in part as reaction to fear by upper caste people of limited economic means at losing their own precarious access to educational opportunity to reservations.

[104] Teltumbde offers an exhaustive account of this in relation to the Khairlanji killings of 2006, in which government involvement ranged from tolerance of the violence (90–112) to actual complicity in caste atrocities (116–35). A similar dynamic applied to the Gujarat massacres of Muslims in 2002.

[105] Atrocities are defined as "the violent manifestation of social prejudice against dalits." Teltumbde, The Persistence of Caste, 154–55.

of their violent and discriminatory uses of the Aryan/Dravidian binary. In this way opposition to British colonialism and to Brahmanism could be connected.

Here is the interference pattern at work.

The development of mainstream nationalism empowered an elite who identified it with themselves and their own interests. This was also a nationalism more acceptable to the colonial regime, which saw therein "a possibility of manipulation of institutions, parties and organizations" in order to shape the character of post-independence India in accordance with its own mentality and class interests, foreclosing its revolutionary possibilities. "Therefore they helped these [elite] forces to play the double role of articulating the national interest, and opposing colonialism in a limited form" conducive to preservation of the social status quo. This meant, in effect, favoring upper castes, landowners, industrialists, and the right over lower castes, peasants, workers, and the Left. "If the colonial authority had wanted to create a strong, anti-brahminical social base," Ilaiah declares, "it could have done so very easily," yielding quite a different sort of postcolonial society.[98] Nevertheless radical caste activists sometimes appealed to the British at the height of the anti-colonial struggle, when new political arrangements and proportional representation mechanisms were being hammered out, as being more likely to safeguard their interests than the dominant Hindus.

From 1950, when Ambedkar's constitution was instituted, to the 1980s, Dalits placed emancipatory hopes in the ideal of the post-colonial democratic republic. Even now, after much disenchantment with the emancipatory potential of the Indian state, given its failure to deliver on the promise of egalitarian redistribution, challenges are most often aimed not at the law's core principles, but at abuses or inconsistencies of implementation. Nevertheless the 1990s reversal of principles, as commitment to the market superseded commitment to welfare as the state's guiding ethos, meant that it could be challenged on the basis of its successes and not just on its failings.[99]

What now is the condition of "caste in a globalizing India"?[100] Neoliberalism, Teltumbde notes, is merciless to the poor and disadvantaged,

[98] Ilaiah, Why I Am Not a Hindu, 49.

[99] Teltumbde, The Persistence of Caste, 62.

[100] Ibid., 31.



Ambedkar laid out his definition of Brahmanism: "graded inequality between the different classes" was its "official doctrine," entailing systematic disempowerment of Shudras and Untouchables—including the systematic denial of access to education, property rights, and officeholding—plus the "complete subjugation and suppression of women."[24] In a sense, the insistence on separate representation called liberalism's bluff on its claim to be blind to difference.

Unlike other Dalitbahujan thinkers, he put no stock in the two races theory.[25] Rejecting both class and race as the bases of social division, he turned to culture and ideology, sketching a historical narrative for caste wherein he framed Brahmanism and Buddhism as the poles of primary contradiction within Indian civilization.[26] In Ambedkar's historiography, the Buddhist "revolutionary" period (circa 500 BCE-300 CE) was a golden age suppressed by a Brahmanist "counterrevolution" that imposed patriarchy, parasitic priesthoods, and social stratification, while appropriating from Buddhism whatever beneficent ideas and practices were later associated with Hinduism.

Though a thorough modernist, Ambedkar embraced those (non-Brahmanist) elements of tradition that could be deemed reasonable and salutary, thus effectively giving an ancient indigenous genealogy to principles generally considered modern and Western. Ambedkar presents "the Buddha's teachings and practices... as the very embodiment of reason, to which he found the Brahminical tradition of hierarchy, ritual-

[24] Ibid., 49.

[25] To quote from Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste: "Some have dug a biological trench in defence of the Caste System. It is said that the object of Caste was to preserve purity of race and purity of blood. Now ethnologists are of the opinion that men of pure race exist nowhere and that there has been a mixture of all races in all parts of the world. Especially is this the case with the people of India.... The Caste system cannot be said to have grown as a means of preventing the admixture of races, or as a means of maintaining purity of blood. As a matter of fact [the] Caste system came into being long after the different races of India had commingled in blood and culture. To hold that distinctions of castes are really distinctions of race, and to treat different castes as though they were so many different races, is a gross perversion of facts.... [The] Caste system is a social division of people of the same race. Assuming it, however, to be a case of racial divisions, one may ask: What harm could there be if a mixture of races and of blood was permitted to take place in India by intermarriages between different castes?" See The Annihilation of Caste, section 5, `http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/index.html`.

[26] This is discussed in several of his books including Ambedkar, Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables (1948), accessible at `http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/39A.Untouchables%20who%20were%20they_why%20they%20became%2`

ism, superstitions, priestcraft, deceit and cunning to be in opposition." Significantly, though, this approach to reason is not, stresses Rodrigues, the utilitarian cost-benefit analysis of an atomized and context-free Descartean individual, but rather something "embodied in lived ways" that "locate ... intersubjectively and in the communitarian context... the capacity to discern what is good and right, together with others."[27]

Ultimately Ambedkar's proposed redress for caste was twofold: politically, the legislative and juridical mechanisms of the liberal democratic-republican state, and culturally, a line of flight from Hinduism back to a South Asianorigin philosophy of rationalism, egalitarianism, atheism, and restorative morality: an autochthonous Enlightenment heritage in all senses of the term. This interpretation took the form of a liberation philosophy identifying *dukkha* with oppression and *dhamma* with social and economic justice.[28] Ambedkarite Buddhism thus made Dalits the agents of "opening the road to a society of equality and liberation" and the "carriers of... the liberatory message of Indian tradition."[29] Near the end of his life, he led a mass conversion of five hundred thousand to this form of Buddhism.[30] This was a "quest for collective emancipation" above "individual salvation"; a call to "increase political participation so as to bring social transformation leading to an egalitarian social order."[31] In Omvedt's assessment, "[Ambedkar] had fought for a correlated but different freedom struggle," alongside Indian nationalism, "one for the liberation of the most oppressed sections of Indian society. This was a

[27] Rodrigues, "Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India," 56

[28] See Ambedkar, The Buddha and His Dhamma (1957), accessible at `http://www.ambedkar.org/buddhism/BAHD/45A.Buddha%20and%20His%20Dhamma%20PART%20I.htm`. In Buddhist terminology dukkha represented the world's sorrow and suffering, from which liberation was sought; dhamma was the way of right thought and action for achieving it.

[29] Omvedt, "Ambedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in India," in Shah, Dalit Identity and Politics, Vol. 2., 149.

[30] Conversion to Christianity or Islam was seen as providing a comparable state of equality, but, it was claimed, at the cost of exile from one's own cultural heritage, unlike conversion to Buddhism, an indigenous philosophy. See Yoginder Sikand, Islam, Caste, and Dalit-Muslim Relations in India (New Delhi: Global Medial Publications, 2004); Abdul Malik Mujahid, Conversion to Islam: Untouchables' Strategy for Protest in India (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Books, 1989); Gauri Vishwanathan, Outside the Fold (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[31] Shah, Dalit Identity and Politics, Vol. 2., 34.



with the concomitant growth of urban areas, resulted in greater social mobility.[93]

Yet Dalitbahujan writings also concede that British colonialism reinforced Brahminical hegemony.[94] Rodrigues weighs the duality: "On the one hand [British rule] introduce[d] newer and more intense forms of exploitation; on the other it create[d] the conditions and resources to undermine not merely colonial exploitation but also other forms of oppression."[95] According to the familiar subalternist reading, the subordinated were caught between two mirrored elite narratives: the colonial and the nationalist, both equally guilty of erasing their agency and colluding in the task of Orientalist knowledge production. What became the dominant national paradigm was largely a cocreation of eighteenth-century European Indologist scholars and (Brahmin) clerical elites who were able to position themselves self-servingly as "expert" native informants, establishing the textually authoritative version of a misleadingly monolithic Indian tradition.[96] Precolonial Brahminical patriarchy was therefore reinforced, though not invented, by the colonial regime.[97]

Recalling this historiography modifies the sense in which opposition to the Aryan invasion is an anti-colonial stance: instead of taking sides within the narrative (of conquerors vs. indigenes, whichever side one chooses to designate as savage or civil), it's possible to object to the creation of the narrative itself. That is to say, opposing not just the Aryan invasion but "the Aryan invasion theory" shifts the anti-colonial emphasis from an anti-Hindu to an anti-British resistance, and from a mythic to a historical episteme, without acquitting Hindutva ideologues

[93] Teltumbde, The Persistence of Caste, 21–22

[94] Ilaiah, Why I Am Not a Hindu, 9; Rodrigues, "Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India," 57.

[95] Rodrigues, "Dalit-Bahujan Discourse in Modern India," 58.

[96] On this process see Nicholas Dirks, Castes of Mind (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Thomas Metcalf, Ideologies of the Raj (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Bernard Cohn, An Anthropologist Among the Historians (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[97] Another aspect of this reinforcement via the colonial juridical system can be hypothesized through the designation of certain areas as "personal" as opposed to civil law, as a zone of colonial non-interference relegated to the control of Hindu and Muslim authorities, in order to avoid social destabilization potentially leading to insurgency. Instantiated as they were through strict endogamy and interdining practices, caste and gender structures could be cemented under the umbrella of culture and religion rather than coming into the domain of politics, public space, or civil rights.

interference patterns with each other. I also hinted that some of these factors may now be converging, whereas in earlier periods they were arrayed at conflicting angles to imperial formations and to each other. For example, whereas Dalits perceived British and Mughal rule as mitigating the effects of Brahmanism, it now appears that postcolonial capitalism has reinforced the control of upper castes over Indian society and production,[89] in contrast to the earlier portrayal of British-introduced social and economic changes as providing opportunities for modern mobility. Indeed, the destruction of "Dalitbahujan productive structures, culture, economy and ... positive political institutions," in Ilaiah's words, has proliferated in post-independence India.[90]

Yet was the earlier period really so good—for Dalits, if not for adivasis? The British Raj utterly reconfigured the *conditions in which* all narratives of conquest and conflict were deployed, even if *textually external* to accounts of Dravidian versus Aryan, or Hindu versus Muslim. Economically, British intervention drove South Asian incorporation into the circuits of global capitalism (liberalization since the 1990s has driven a second round). Politically, British control introduced the notion of paramountcy, a unified governmental jurisdiction replacing more decentralized forms of segmented power relations. This consolidation removed many matters from adjudication by the "village-level caste bodies" (panchayats) which had previously "functioned as local governments."[91] In this way, contemporary anti-caste thinkers argue that the modern state and capitalism mitigated the traditional oppression of Dalits.[92] According to Teltumbde, British colonialism, "in addition to creating an enabling environment through its institutional regime ... made two direct contributions to the emerging anticaste ethos": by opening up opportunities to untouchables for education and economic betterment, including employment with the military or infrastructure projects, all of which, along

[89] Ilaiah, Why I Am Not a Hindu, 113–14.

[90] Ibid., 113.

[91] Teltumbde, The Persistence of Caste, 20–21. How selective is Teltumbde being in noting laws which undermined caste? Were there other laws which reinforced it? One thinks for example of the Criminal Castes and Tribes Act, and of course the decennial censuses. Perhaps it's fair to say that the categories were produced and strengthened, but the material condition of the people in some of those categories may have improved, or at least been afforded pathways toward improvement?

[92] See Shah, Dalit Identity and Politics, Vol. 2, 19, 39.



liberation movement wider and deeper than that of fighting colonialism, focusing on the kind of new nation that was to be built."[32]

While Ambedkar rejected racial categories, the Dalit Panthers, roaring onto the scene in 1972 from the slums of Bombay, explicitly linked caste to race and race to colonization as part of an international third world revolutionary movement. Representing an urban demographic with newly widening access to education, they fell within the ambit of a global wave of New Left militance. As their name indicates, they took inspiration from the Black Panthers in the United States, whose commitment to community selfdefense, self-respect, and anti-capitalism they shared. Another stimulus was disillusionment with the bureaucratic cooptation of Ambedkar's Republican Party, and indeed with all political party and governmental solutions, amid a general atmosphere of corruption and a foundering economy. Like their Dalitbahujan predecessors, the Panthers were notable for their emphasis on the cultural dimensions of oppression, and harkening back to Ravidas and Tukaram, produced a literary flowering of radical poetry, memoir, and polemic.[33] They were also known for their political theater, offering "entertainment in the service of... mass education."[34]

In a compilation of Dalit literature put out by the Minority Human Rights Group on Untouchables, editor Barbara Joshi emphasizes the importance of culture and psychology as aspects of Dalit liberation: "underlying [a wide range of activist] tactics is the conviction that the most important struggles are those within the minds of both the oppressed and their oppressors.... The result is direct and immediate Dalit confrontation with the world of the mind and the institutions that feed the mind." Therefore, "concurrent with efforts to mobilize against overt oppression and exploitation there have been efforts to repossess culture and self,"[35] equally important when one's humanity has been systematically denied.

In a famous essay of 1983, Marathi scholar and Dalit intellectual Gangadhar Pantawane spoke of redefining the word:

[32] Omvedt, Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India, 157.

[33] For an introduction, see Mulk Raj Anand and Eleanor Zelliot, eds., An Anthology of Dalit Literature (New Delhi: Gyan Pub. House, 1992); Arjun Dangle, Poisoned Bread (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2009).

[34] Barbara Joshi, ed. Untouchable! Voices of the Dalit Liberation Movement (London: Zed Books, 1986), 91. See also Omvedt, "Ambedkar and After" in Shah, Dalit Identity and Politics, Vol. 2., 151–54; Thorat and Deshpande in Shah, 48–49.

[35] Joshi, Untouchable!, 78.

> What is Dalit? To me, Dalit is not a caste. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution ... Dalitness is essentially a means towards achieving a sense of cultural identity.... Now Dalitness is a source of confrontation. This change has its essence in the desire for justice for all mankind. In this sense, Dalitness is a matter of appreciating the potential of one's total being.[36]

The Panthers' founding Manifesto had used a similar definition to draw battle lines:

> **Who is a Dalit?** Members of scheduled castes and tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion.
>
> **Who are our friends?**[37] Revolutionary parties set to break down the caste system and class rule. Left parties that are left in a true sense. All other sections of society that are suffering due to economic and political oppression.
>
> **Who are our enemies?** Power, wealth, price. Landlords, capitalists, moneylenders and their lackeys. Those parties who indulge in religious or casteist politics and the government which depends on them.[38]

Panther franchises formed in other regions too, and the Dalit Voice, a biweekly published in English and Tamil, achieved a nationwide reach by the early 1980s. Sharad Patil, originally a CPI (Marxist) organizer, formulated a "Marx-Phule-Ambedkar" ideology, by which to fuse resistance against classbased exploitation to abolition of religiously sanctioned caste oppression. Founder of the Satyashodhak Communist Party in 1978, Patil wanted to "universalize Dalit identity as proletarian exploitation."[39] But tensions developed between the Buddhist and Marxist tendencies, represented respectively by Raja Dhale and activist poet Namdev Dhasal, both of whom were prominent among the organization's founders. By

[36] Ibid., 80. Pantawane was founder of the main Dalit literary journal Asmitadarsh in 1967, serving as editor until the 1990s.

[37] "Our" here presumably refers to anyone included in the preceding paragraph.

[38] Joshi, Untouchable!, 145.

[39] Omvedt, Understanding Caste, 77.



Despite the occasional blurring of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, then, we might still distinguish adivasi and Dalit political projects, each facing distinct modes of internal colonization, although both may overlap and coexist. In the adivasi paradigm—if I may be schematically simplistic— oppression is visited upon those subhumanized as primitive, and exploitation is leveraged at the point of land and resources; key issues intersect around land rights, sovereignty, ecology, development, and militarized security. In the Dalit paradigm, oppression is visited upon those subhumanized as polluted, and exploitation is leveraged at the point of labor; key issues intersect around civil rights, poverty, discrimination, and sexual and social violence.

If indeed the most serviceable analogy for caste as a structure of oppression is a mode of race, then it still remains to identify the relationship between racism and colonialism—and an appropriate anarchist attitude to both. Perhaps we can formulate a three-sided comparison. Anarchist scholar Andrew Cornell has traced the intellectual genealogies of both the pacifist and militant traditions within contemporary American anarchism to pacifist and militant strands within American anti-racist movements, identifying anarchist heirs to both the King-Gandhian tradition, and the Malcolm XPanther tradition.[88] Anti-caste movements also link to both these traditions. We have noted the circuit of inspiration from Black to Dalit Panthers in the 1970s, in the context of postwar decolonization, while the influence of Ambedkar's great antagonist, Gandhi, on King and the Congress on Racial Equality is well-documented. What this suggests is that at any point within these three historical spectrums of activist discourse, there are points of correspondence with the other two. So only one leg of a double triangle is left to be imagined: a link between anarchism and anti-casteism, as there is for anarchism/anti-racism, and anti-racism/anti-casteism.

## Interference Patterns: Decolonizing Today?

Earlier I suggested that colonization in South Asia is an incompletely erased palimpsest, a field in which subsequent wave-forms have set up

[88] Andrew Cornell, "'White Skin, Black Masks': Marxist and Anti-racist Roots of Contemporary US Anarchism," in Dave Berry, Ruth Kinna, Saku Pinta, and Alex Prichard, eds., Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Black and Red (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

sovereign territory, as sought by Native Americans or South Asian Muslims (or Tamilians, Sikhs, Manipuris, Assamese, Mizo, Naga, etc.). But it seems to me that in groping to define some sort of special subcategory of the racialized as colonized, Pandey too may not be fully acknowledging the distinction between two historically specific types of subordination.

Kauanui and Saranillio remind us that just as neither race nor nation is synonymous with indigeneity, imperialism is not synonymous with settler colonialism. Settlement is a precise phenomenon, which imperialism *may* include among its goals or instruments.[85] It may be helpful here to utilize George Fredrickson's typology of administrative, plantation, mixed settlement, or pure settlement colonies. In the Indian case, the Vedic-Aryan arrival could be characterized as mixed settlement (in which indigenous populations are not exterminated but are incorporated into the complex racial and class stratifications of dominant settler culture, often including modes of exploitation through land or labor); and the British arrival as administrative (in which the goal is military and economic control of a region for politically strategic benefit, with foreign in-migration on a limited scale). By contrast, the mode most formative of the United States was a combination of plantation (with settlers relatively few in number but laying claim to massive land acreage, and importing enslaved or indentured laboring populations to produce monoculture crops) and pure settlement (in which the native population faces extermination, or removal and concentration).[86]

Andrea Smith's "Three Pillars of Heteropatriarchy" are also relevant here. Smith articulates three distinct modes of white supremacist racial logic applicable in the U.S. case, operative respectively toward Native Americans (the conquered, the savage), African Americans (the enslaved), and Asians/ Arabs/Muslims (the eternal other, the enemy).[87] In the Indian case, from the perspective of Brahmanist Aryan supremacy we could place adivasis, Dalits, and Muslims in these three positions.

[85] Talks given at American Studies Program Annual Conference, New York University, March 7, 2014. On the native-settler-slave triad see also Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.

[86] George M. Fredrickson, The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Race and Social Inequity (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 218–20.

[87] INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology (Boston: South End Press, 2006).



the 1980s the movement had fragmented, though mobilizations framed in terms of DalitMarxism, along with the radical practice of poetry, music, and theater activism, remain strong today.[40]

In the 1980s, Dalitbahujan mobilization ballooned in the form of electoral party politics,[41] but the 1990s produced some innovative articulations of Dalit political theory. Kancha Ilaiah (b. 1950) is a Dalit intellectual and activist, author of several books including the instant classic (and lightning rod for controversy) *Why I Am Not a Hindu* (1996). Like Pantawane, Ilaiah presents Dalitization as a qualitative, holistic transformation of Indian society, emphasizing that Dalitbahujan culture—beliefs, practices, kinship relations, economic relations, value systems, lifeways—is wholly distinct from Hinduism; and that in stark contrast to Hinduism, it is explicitly egalitarian and nonpatriarchal, and implicitly ecological. Based in valorization of labor and productivity, it organizes material and social life collectively, not individualistically.[42] It roots knowledge production in material practice, orality, intersubjectivity, nature, and experience, as opposed to textual abstraction. It is rich in technical ingenuity and practical expertise, and makes no split between mental and physical labor.[43] Nor is there a notional split between the public and private spheres.[44] Law comes from the community through participatory consultation, not from an authority outside and above. Thus the whole Brahminical value system is overturned: those once stigmatized for their work-function are from this perspective ennobled by it. That which had been proof of impurity is now the essence of productivity, hence value,

[40] For a spectacular recent document of this, see Anand Patwardhan's film Jai Bhim Comrade (2012). Anupama Rao's critical commentary of the documentary for India Seminar may be viewed at `http://www.indiaseminar.com/2012/633/633anupamarao.htm`.

[41] See, for example, the Bahujan Samaj Party founded by Kanshi Ram; his protegée Mayawati made history as a female Dalit chief minister of Uttar Pradesh four times between 1995 and 2012.

[42] Kancha Ilaiah, Why I Am Not a Hindu (Kolkata: Samya, 1996), 99, 114– 17, 124, 151–52, 155.

[43] Ibid., 120, 127, 150; see also Kancha Ilaiah, "Dalitism vs. Brahmanism" in Shah, Dalit Identity and Politics, Vol. 2., 108–28; Ilaiah, "Towards the Dalitization of the Nation," in Chatterjee, Wages of Freedom, 266–91.

[44] Ilaiah, Why I Am Not a Hindu, 39–40.

while that which had been guarded as purity is now revealed as parasitism.[45]

As portrayed by Ilaiah, then, the Dalitization of all society (in contrast to the historical trend of sanskritization) would usher in a more egalitarian order.[46] Actual (indigenous) alternatives to the Brahmanist dominant order were to be found in Buddhism, in tribal society, and in a possible future vision of "collective living and collective consciousness," in which the sharer would be "not only a collective being but also a secular social being... human relationships operate in a mode that has been sensitized to human needs.... Their social context is productive and distributive. Equality is its innate strength.... The material basis of the society is rooted not in wealth but in labor power."[47]

Dalitization, while reframing relations of production, went deeper than material class; it would require change in the whole culture, society, religion, philosophy, identity. Nevertheless, the caste-based producer/ parasite relationship easily mapped onto capitalism, with upper castes proving all too amenable to its globalized form.[48] "In every industry the working masses are Dalitbahujans ... whereas, the entrepreneurs and managers ... are Brahmin, Baniya or Neo-Kshatriya," Ilaiah points out. "As a result, there is a total cultural divide between the managerial class and the working class."[49] Given this overlay, Ilaiah too postulates a truly casteconscious Left as the great lost opportunity for true liberation.

But the nation constructed in the course of the liberation movement was botched. "While conducting the anti-colonial struggle, brahminical leaders and ideologues did not attempt to build an anti-caste egalitarian ideology,"[50] he says, lamenting not only that landowning aristocrats and urban bourgeoisie had been ensconced as the drivers of the national movement, but that Dalits had ceded even Marxism to the caste elites. "If only colonial rule in India had produced anti-Brahmin, organic, Dalitbahujan intellectuals who would have been the recipients of the revolutionary

[45] I would like to flag a critical concern, on both feminist and ableist grounds, about the implications of this theory of value, which skirts the risk of rating people in terms of the quantity of their productivity.

[46] Ilaiah, Why I Am Not a Hindu, 114.

[47] Ibid., 160–61; and in Chatterjee, 289.

[48] Ilaiah Why I Am Not a Hindu, 52.

[49] Ibid., 66.

[50] Ibid., 113.



Regarding this persistence, Omvedt writes:

> The crude version of... Dalit anti-Aryanism, as scholars are quick to point out, is fallacious as well as a form of inverted racism.... Yet the imagery survives and for good reasons. The continual privileging of an Aryan identity and a Vedic-Upanishadic-Sanskritic core by almost all upper-caste definers of Indian tradition, the pride in being "white" in opposition to "black," the continual assumptions of northern superiority, the continual if always veiled forms of upper-caste arrogance: all of these make it almost inevitable that the angry Dalit-shudra masses will throw back the weapon of racial and ethnic identity and ask again, "Who was the first invader? Who was the first outsider?"[83]

Putting it together: Historian Gyan Pandey, in his recent work comparing the structures of oppression facing African Americans and Dalits,[84] characterizes both as "internally colonized" groups. But he also notes that neither, dispersed throughout the social body and integral to its functioning, could be easily identified as a foreign entity to be allotted a separate

is the essence of Indic civilization. This renders it irredeemable. Narrow dogma is accepted epistemologically, though it may be accepted or rejected morally. Other anti-caste and feminist scholars take a revisionist approach to Indic civilization, in which the spectrum of Hindu culture, philosophy, and practice may be reclaimed as a polyvalent tradition incorporating composite elements over millennia. This view holds that to define it solely in terms of patriarchal Brahmanism is an artificial and drastic restriction of its meaning that impoverishes its heritage, diminishes its referents, and erases its many valid variants. See Wendy Doniger, The Hindus: An Alternate History (New York: Penguin Books, 2010) and On Hinduism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Paula Richman, ed., Many Ramayanas (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) and Questioning Ramayanas (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); A.K. Ramanujan, "Three Hundred Ramayanas in The Collected Essays of A.K. Ramanujan, ed. Vinay Dharwadker, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Romila Thapar, The Past Before Us (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History (London: Verso, 2005). The operative point, though, is that regardless of one's deep logic, or one's definition of "true" Indic civilization, the structures, institutions, practice, prejudices, sanctioned social relations (and resultant exploitations, exclusions, dehumanizations) of the narrowly brahminical version do exist now and must be opposed.

[83] Omvedt, Understanding Caste, 99.

[84] Gyanendra Pandey, A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste, and Difference in India and the United States (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 62. Equating Dalit liberation with conversion (to Buddhism, or to an alternative social ethic and political position), he links this choice in turn to the core of a decolonization process.

ican spectrum than the North American black/white binary. In any case the function of caste in a Brahmin-supremacist society is very similar to that of race in a white-supremacist society.

At the UN-sponsored World Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001, a Programme of Action was proposed in which caste was included as a form of racism. This proved controversial on both political and theoretical grounds. Politically, the Indian government was displeased, while other regimes too feared setting the precedent. Theoretically, sociologist of caste André Beteille argued that since race was a biological issue and caste a cultural one, there could be no equivalency.[79]

Yet segments of the Dalit movement had argued precisely that caste, too, was based in biological race.[80] And one can argue just as easily that race is a social/cultural construct, as that caste is not a biological fact. In other words the issue has more to do with whether race itself, as a social construct for organizing hierarchical difference, is to be defined as biological or cultural, than whether or not caste is analogous to race. In Visweswaran's reading—in the context of her framing question: what work does culture do, and when, where and how does it do the work of race?—the Durban debates implied "the reverse of asking whether caste is race. This question then asks when and how it has been productive to understand that race is caste—or more precisely, when the experience of casteism is seen to be the most compelling illustration of the experience of racism."[81]

Such a chain of logic, however, may leave intact the Aryan and Dravidian racial categories, long discredited by most historians as a slippage from the linguistic (cultural) to the biological register. Nevertheless that racial logic persists in underwriting both justifications for and indictments of the modern caste system; both racists and anti-racists can be racialist.[82]

[79] See, for example, André Beteille, "Race and Caste," The Hindu, March 10, 2001, accessible at http://www.thehindu.com/2001/03/10/stories/ 05102523.htm/ ; Shiv Visvanathan, "Durban and Dalit Discourse," Economic and Political Weekly 36, no. 27 (July 2001) and no. 33 (August 2001).

[80] Visweswaran, Un/Common Cultures, 150.

[81] Ibid., 163.

[82] In addition to the two-races theory, Hindu nationalism shares the premise with much radical anti-caste thought (not to mention the Indologist scholarship behind the once-conventional modes of history and anthropology) that brahminical Hinduism, as contained in authoritative readings of the Manusmriti, Dharmashastras, Ramayana and Mahabharata,



theory of Marxism, by now perhaps India would have undergone a Dalit-bahujan socialist revolution."[51] But unfortunately, "the most revolutionary theory... fell into the hands of the most reactionary social forces."[52] This, in effect, destroyed Marxism's emancipatory potential. Ilaiah concludes, "It is only a conscious Dalitbahujan movement which can, step by step, decasteize society, socialize the means of production, and finally create humanitarian socialism in India."[53]

Perhaps one such alternative vision could be that expressed by the Pondicherry Group of Tamil Dalit intellectuals, exemplified by the writings of Raj Gowthaman.[54] He proposes an alternative to Dravidian nationalism which, rather than replacing a northern/Hindi with a southern/Tamil placeholder within the same logic structure, calls for a rejection of nationalist logic, statist historiography, and all forms of power. By refusing to organize on the basis of nationality, an "oppositional culture" of Dalit liberation could "travel beyond any bounded territoriality and mobilize... Blacks and ... women in general... as well as tribals everywhere as the source of their new politics."[55]

As relayed by scholar M.S.S. Pandian, Gowthaman "identifies 'state, caste, religion, god, morals, justice, norms, regulated man-women relationship, ideology of family, literature'—all institutions that mark civilizational achievements—as institutions of discipline and power to be resisted."[56] Gowthaman knows, says Pandian, that caste elites will characterize "this cultural politics ... as that of anarchists and barbarians,"[57] and that Dalits themselves might downplay this counterculture lest they be stigmatized as "uncivilized." For Gowthaman, though, refusing that civ-

[51] Ibid., 50.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., 52. Does this argument not contradict another frequent assertion, that the introduction of capitalism under the British was beneficial for Dalits? Perhaps this is what distinguishes Dalit liberalism from a Dalit Left.

[54] Limited by language, I am reliant here upon the summarization of M.S.S. Pandian of what sound like remarkable Tamil texts by Gowthaman: Dalit Paarvayil Tamil Panpadu (Tamil Culture from a Dalit Perspective), 1994 and Dalit Panpadu (Dalit Culture), 1993. Pandian, "Stepping Outside of History? New Writings from Tamil Nadu," in Chatterjee, The Wages of Freedom, 302. See also Pandian, Brahmin and Non-Brahmin: Genealogies of the Tamil Political (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007).

[55] Pandian, "Stepping Outside of History?," 305; see also 306–8.

[56] Ibid. quoting Gowthaman, Dalit Panpadu, 1993, 18.

[57] Pandian, "Stepping Outside of History?," 306.

ilizational teleology marks the necessary "beginning of Dalit politics."[58] Summing up this critical intervention, Pandian asks, "Can there be a nation without history and power (read state)? Indeed, it cannot be. Perhaps it is fifty years of freedom within the nation which has taught the Pondicherry Group that freedom lies outside the construct of the nation."[59]

## Dalit Politics as Anti-colonial Thought: Indigeneity and Race

Let's return to the colonial palimpsest. Ambedkar names Hinduism "a form of imperialism."[60] Anand Teltumbde flags the "Dalit aboriginal identity" of "a highly civilized and peaceful people that was once dominant in the country but later subjugated and enslaved through Aryan conquest."[61] Movements based in the cluster of oppositional identities that define themselves through the prefix *adi*, designating original inhabitants (e.g., adivasi, adi-Dalit, ati-shudra, ad-dharm, adi-Dravida), claim allegiance to "a non- or even pre-Aryan Indian equalitarian tradition."[62] There is a double accusation here: the foundational violence of initial conquest, and the structural violence of a functioning system.[63]

There is also a double plaintiff in the categories of caste and tribe, frequently linked together by ethnography, law, and rhetoric. Yet it's necessary to distinguish between them as two historical locations and two modes of decolonizing thought. As J. Kehaulani Kauanui and Dean Saranillio remind us,[64] the two concepts of race and indigeneity, though

[58] Ibid., 305.

[59] Ibid., 309.

[60] Bayly, Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age, 261–62.

[61] Teltumbde, The Persistence of Caste, 23.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Conscious of the sharp ironies inherent in using a Hinduistic metaphor in this context, it strikes me that there are visible here violences of Brahma the creator, and Vishnu the preserver—in which case there remains only a violence of Shiva the destroyer. Would that mean genocide? Or could it suggest resistance, as in the case of the anti-caste dissident Virashaivite movement?

[64] Both made complementary points as part of a panel presented at the American Studies Program Annual Conference, "Circuits of Influence: U.S., Israel, Palestine," at New York University, March 7, 2014.



of indigeneity for this context, or does it mean that we require a different logic-lens?

A politics of race (Aryan and Dravidian): A century-long history links black freedom struggle in the United States with both Indian anti-colonialism and caste emancipation.[75] Indians arriving in North America and African American observers of India alike recognized the social functioning of caste as comparable to race as a mode of internal subjugation. Anthropologist Kamala Visweswaran notes that B.R. Ambedkar and W.E.B. Du Bois were Ivy League contemporaries, and that even prior to communicating with each other, Ambedkar was using race to think caste while Du Bois was using caste to think race.[76] This "translation" of race and caste proved an effective way for people in either context to make sense of the other (and enhance their insights about their own) while also opening opportunities for solidarity.[77] In a sense, then, the linkage of caste abolition and racial justice posed a simultaneous challenge to the self-definition of both (American and Indian) national projects, exposing their blind spots and demanding not just inclusion in but expansion of their concepts of freedom and justice.

Still, Dalitness is differently constructed than blackness in the United States, although the differences soften if we open the field to include the whole history of New World slavery.[78] For example, the religiously explained purity/contamination (curse of Ham) model that preceded the pseudoscientific biological or eugenic model for race in Europe sounds not unlike the concept of ritual purity as basis for caste. And the caste system's graded hierarchy is more like the intricately stratified Latin Amer-

[75] On the connections and cross-fertilizations between Pan-African and Indian anti-colonial and anti-racist movements, see, for example, Gerald Horne, The End of Empires (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009); Nico Slate, Colored Cosmopolitanism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Susan Pennybacker, From Scottsboro to Munich (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Minkah Makalani, In the Cause of Freedom (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[76] Kamala Visweswaran, Un/Common Cultures (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 12. Visweswaran identifies a "caste school of race relations" associated with the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1920s, interpreting race in the United States as, in effect, a caste structure. Un/ Common Cultures, 114, 163.

[77] Ibid., 152.

[78] For a magisterial overview see Robin Blackburn, The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800 (London: Verso, 2010); The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights (London: Verso, 2011); and The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848 (London: Verso, 2011).

trialization; resistance at the point of primary onset, as opposed to a struggle for seizure of the means of production once industrialization is complete (or, as some would put it, rejection of a whole mode of production as opposed to a more superficial change in relations of production and more equitable distribution within that mode); rejection of a unilinear teleological formula for progress and development, with capitalism and socialism representing the right and left expressions of post-Hegelian thought, sharing an assumption of limitless growth in productivity, as opposed to a more steady-state sustainable and renewable model prioritizing use-values and nonreified relationships.

But is a consciously indigenous perspective *by definition* an ecologically harmonious preindustrial worldview? Dalitbahujan thought has laid claim to an *anti-colonial indigeneity* that is *modern, rational and state-based.*[73] At the same time it legitimates this alternate Indian modernity as the culmination of an alternate Indian tradition, later subjugated by its upstart rival.[74] Does this mean that we need to rethink the meaning

Peter Waterman, eds., World Social Forum: Challenging Empires (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2009). Given the irrefutable ecological crisis conditions of the twenty-first century, even Marxist theory has come to incorporate ecology as central its critique of capitalism: see, for example, the work of John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clarke, and the index of journals such as Capitalism, Nature, Socialism.

[73] Ambedkar himself distinguished Dalits from adivasis in this way: one of his many critiques of Hindu society in The Annihilation of Caste is that due to its fixation on purity it excluded aboriginal tribal communities from the benefits of inclusion and the civilizing process. Section 8: "Apart from the question of whether their exclusion from the new Constitution is proper or improper, the fact still remains that these aborigines have remained in their primitive uncivilized state in a land which boasts of a civilization thousands of years old. Not only are they not civilized, but some of them follow pursuits which have led to their being classified as criminals. Thirteen millions of people living in the midst of civilization are still in a savage state, and are leading the life of hereditary criminals!!" (He seems to be taking for granted the taxonomy put in place by the Criminal Tribes Act.) Ambedkar, The Annihilation of Caste, section 8, `http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/index.html`.

[74] In Why I Am Not a Hindu, Ilaiah traces this to pre-Buddhist counterVedanta traditions of the rational/skeptical Lokayatas and Charvakas, 113; points to tribal republicanism, 116; and associates the dhamma with a social contract, 118, 119. For more on suppressed counter-traditions and alternate readings of traditional texts, see note 83. On ancient materialisms and rationalisms, see Amartya Sen, The Argumentative Indian (New York: FSG, 2005). As Chakravarti notes (103), it's important to be able to access the precolonial critiques of brahminical patriarchy, such as those within the bhakti and Buddhist traditions, so that feminist and Dalit mobilizations cannot be discredited [by right-wing nationalists] as foreign imports, alien to the "true" indigenous Indian culture.



related, do not function in the same way either structurally or analytically. In other words, each bears a different sort of relationship to, and names a different subjective experience of, colonialism/capitalism/imperialism; each tows behind it a different freight of symbolism.

A politics of indigeneity (Aryan invasion): The word "indigenous," in its neutral sense, denotes originally native to a place, as defined against newer arrivals. In many contexts "aboriginal" further implies not only native but "primitive," tribal, or nonmodern, as defined against urban/civic/modern populations. (Here is the line drawn between the anthropological and the sociological, or the colonizers and the colonized.)

According to one theory, the groups who were defeated and incorporated into Vedic society evolved into subordinate castes, whereas those who fled into hills and forests survived as autonomous tribes. Caste groups might then be assimilated along an incremental "civilizing" pathway of sanskritization, adopting the characteristics of Brahminical society. But several contributors to Dev Nathan's volume *From Tribe to Caste* challenge the notion that such a process was an improvement, asserting that it instead marked a devolution from an egalitarian, collective-property based condition to a more patriarchal, authoritarian, individual-property based one.[65] (What doesn't seem fully articulated in accounts of such a shift is a distinction between hierarchy among distinct groups, and hierarchy within a particular group.)

Nevertheless, whether or not tribes and castes shared an ancient origin, they have since experienced different timelines of conflict.[66] Always on the front lines of encroachment, tribals launched frequent uprisings throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, chafing against incursions by both British and South Asian interlopers on forest lands.[67]

[65] See Nathan, "Introduction"; K.S. Singh, "Tribe into Caste: A Colonial Paradigm(?)"; B.B. Chaudhuri, "Tribe-Caste Continuum? Some Perspectives from the Tribal History of Colonial Eastern India"; Shalini Mehta, "The Legend of Evolution from Homo Equalius to Homo Hierarchicus"; Saguna Pathy, "From Tribe to Caste: Domination Reaffirmed"; and Baidyanath Saraswati, "Tribe as Caste"; all in Dev Nathan, ed., From Tribe to Caste (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1997). Gowthaman would share this view: Pandian notes that his reasoning is similar to Ramaswamy's, but that he lacks Ramaswamy's "metanarrative of progress through reason and science" vis a vis a Tamil Dalit past of collectivistic, egalitarian "hill cultivators, hunters, fisherpeople, pastoralists and the like," 304.

[66] Teltumbde, The Persistence of Caste, 162.

[67] The literature on this is extensive within the Subaltern Studies volumes of 1982–87, and histories of criminality and insurgency in India. I would refer readers to the work of

In contrast, castes as such were not historically associated with militant rebellion, which might be interpreted as a difference between primary resistance and postsubjugation subversive behavior (though Teltumbde characterized Dalits as being more thoroughly beaten down). In other words, a tribal narrative is about being outside, on the frontier (vertical separation); a caste narrative is about being inside, down below (horizontal separation).

British colonial ethnographic practices worked to further fix and formalize these identity categories, ratifying them through decennial censuses from 1871 to 1931. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 linked the extraction of surplus, by means of establishing individualized, taxable land holdings, to a social engineering project by which tribal communities would be sedentarized as productive workers confined to heavily surveilled and disciplined villages, having been removed from traditional livelihoods centered upon more mobile shared land uses such as hunting, shifting cultivation, or harvesting of various forest plants and flowers. Criminality, tribal affiliation, landlessness, mobility, and "wild" places would now be conflated.[68] In this way the history of adivasi communities more closely resembles notions (and histories) of indigeneity familiar in the context of the Americas.[69]

Ranajit Guha, Ramachandra Guha, David Arnold, David Hardiman, Crispin Bates, Anand Yang, John McLane, Swapan Dasgupta, K.S. Singh. These uprisings included the famous Santhal Hool of 1855; Birsa Munda's millennarian movement in 1898; and histories of tribal groups such as the Bhils, Konds, and Doms, as well as the northeastern Bodos, Nagas, Ahom, Chittagong hill tribes, et al.

[68] On this process see Anand Yang, Crime and Criminality in British India (Association for Asian Studies, 1985); Sanjay Nigam, "Disciplining and Policing the 'Criminals by Birth,'" parts 1 and 2, Economic and Political Weekly 27, nos. 2 and 3 (1990); Henry Schwarz, Constructing the Criminal Tribe in Colonial India (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[69] See Ramachandra Guha, The Unquiet Woods: Expanded Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), Varieties of Environmentalism (London: Routledge, 1997), Social Ecology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Ajay Skaria, Hybrid Histories (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Amita Baviskar, In the Belly of the River (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), Contested Grounds (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008). This is also very much in the news. See cover story in Frontline 31, no. 3, February 21, 2014. (`http://www.frontline.in/magazine/? date=2014-02-18&magid=5656026`). A cluster of related features on tribal resistance to forest land acquisition in Chhattisgarh and mining operations in Orissa (among many other instances) detail how the Indian government takeover of land for use by multinational corporations leads to local communities' loss of livelihood and traditional access to resources.



Dispossession and violent conquest, of course, are to be categorically condemned. Still, we should be wary of the implications of legitimating rights claims only through invoking prior habitation. For one thing, the language of nativity, spiritually linking a land and its people, its blood and its soil, is easily appropriated by racialist ethnonationalism, including the Hindutva which is the antithesis of Dalit politics. Similarly, are newness, alienness, and oppressiveness being presented as synonymous? This too can be risky, depending who is using it. Is it possible to find arguments and logics that are usable only for emancipatory projects?

Kauanui emphatically distinguishes indigenism from a nativism that might shade into exclusionary ethnonationalism or fascistic populism. Beyond denoting native or aboriginal, a contemporary critical politics of indigeneity also implies a particular way of being in relation to place and its (human and nonhuman) inhabitants, in which land and resources cannot possibly be commodified, and social relations are by definition nonstatist and noncapitalist.[70] An indigenist concept of sovereignty then would recognize a region of interdependent, nonanthropocentric cohabitation, as opposed to a nationalist sovereignty defined as ownership, control, and exclusive claim to development of the extractable wealth of a mapped territory.[71]

As this description suggests, in many ways a nuanced indigenist critique not only of capitalist modernity but of the dominant modes of institutionalized twentieth-century socialism is echoed by many anarchist critiques.[72] These include skepticism of an uncritical embrace of indus-

[70] Note that this does not necessarily require them to be nonhierarchical or nonpatriarchal, nor always and everywhere the same.

[71] As Raymond Craib pointed out in a personal communication of January 5, 2014, "some might argue that the very notion of indigeneity as inherently pre-industrial and/or ecologically harmonious is a radically modernist notion." This can be seen as characteristic of particular indigenous societies (or the idealizations or aspirations thereof), rather than part of the universal definition of indigeneity itself. Again, this represents a discursive ideal type rather than a empirical sociology of contemporary individuals of indigenous heritage and their range of evolving relationships to urban, industrial conditions.

[72] For such indigenist critiques, see, for example, Glenn Coulthard, Red Skin, White Masks (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Blood on the Border (Boston: South End Press, 2005) and An Indigenous People's History of the United States (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014); Taiaiake Alfred, Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Vine Deloria Jr., Custer Died for Your Sins (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988). Jeff Corntassel, "Rethinking Self-Determination: Lessons from the IndigenousRights Discourse," in Jai Sen and