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INVENTED TRADITIONS AND REGIONAL IDENTITIES—A STUDY OF THE CULTURAL FORMATIONS OF SOUTH INDIA--1856-1990s

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ABSTRACT

INVENTED TRADITIONS AND REGIONAL IDENTITIES—A STUDY OF THE CULTURAL FORMATIONS OF SOUTH INDIA--1856-1990s

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This dissertation explores the cultural formations of South India in colonial and postcolonial Indian history. It argues that the constructions of a regional South reveal a decentered nationalist history in India. However, the idea of a "Dravidian South" is contested along the axes of nation, religion, caste, and gender. In situating South India as a site of understanding of the regional formations in India, this interdisciplinary study moves across plural discourses such as the colonial Orientalist writings on India (1856-1900), socio-political writings of the Dravidian movements in South India (1925-1960's), and post-colonial Indian literature in English alongside translations of works in South Indian languages.

The second chapter discusses the nineteenth-century Orientalist constructions of India. Inflecting Eric Hobsbawm's formulations of the invented traditions, it demonstrates that the quests for antiquity in India were mediated by colonial knowledges. The nineteenth-century nationalists were influenced by European Orientalists like Monier Monier-Williams, and Friedrich Max Muller. The colonial ethnographer, Robert Caldwell's, work inspired the formation of a lower caste Dravidian identity in the twentieth century.

The second chapter focuses on the writings of the Self-respect movement in twentieth-century Tamilnadu. These writings interrupt the nationalist formulations of religion, caste, and gender by constructing Dravidianism in anti-Aryan and anti-

Brahminical terms. This chapter also recovers the Self-respect history in the writings of the women Self-respecters.

The fourth chapter argues that the idea of a Dravidian South is contested in post-colonial Indian literature. While Indo-Anglian writers like Jawaharlal Nehru, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, and even Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, cast South India in a relationship of supplementarity, or subsume it within the idea of a pervasive Indianness, women writers like Arundhati Roy, Geetha Hariharan, or vernacular writers of South India like U.R. Ananthamurthy, Chandrashekhar Kambar, Jeyakantan, and Lalithambika Antarjanam construct a local and divided Southern space.

The Conclusion highlights the tensions between the nationalist and regional politics in India. My study demonstrates that the regional formations of South India intervene in the narratives of a uniform Hindu Indian tradition.

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Chapter I

Introduction

My dissertation is a study of the relatively unexplored area of the cultural formations of South Indian regionalism in colonial and postcolonial Indian history. In arguing that the constructions of a regional South point to a "decentered" nationalist history in India in the past two centuries, this interdisciplinary project traverses plural discourses ranging from nineteenth-century colonial Orientalist and ethnographic narratives on India (1856-1900), journalistic writings and political pamphlets of the twentieth-century native Dravidian movements in South India (1925-1960's), and post-colonial Indian literature in English alongside translations of works in the vernacular languages of South India such as Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.[1] This critical conversation provides new and illuminating perspectives on the intersections of the notions of the nation and region by situating South India as a site of understanding of the history of regional cultural formations in the subcontinent. In addition, it rethinks the manner in which such regional formations as the "Dravidian South" reveal themselves to be deeply contested discourses. Moreover, even as they resist the dominant discourses of the nation, they are often imbricated in colonial structures of power.

After all, the critical category of the "nation" has figured as a central concern in the work of many cultural historians, such as, for instance, Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, in the last few decades. The contemporary Indian postcolonial critic, Partha

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[1] John Zavos, Andrew Wyatt, and Vernon Hewitt argue against the idea that the fragmentation in the nationalist discourse is a "post-modern phenomenon." They maintain that "anti-colonial" nationalism in postcolonial nations is "*always already fragmented*" and show that in the Indian context the emergence of the forms of local identity politics over the last few decades "cannot be attributed so directly to processes of globalization; it must be located within the framework of a variegated, decentered nationalist history" (Zavos, Wyatt, & Hewitt 8).

Chatterjee, has famously questioned Anderson's rather univocal theorizing of the nation formation and charged him with a Eurocentrism that "colonizes" the imaginings of the nation in the Third World countries ("Whose Imagined" 216). Chatterjee argues that Anderson leaves out the crucial issue of colonialism in this account. He also takes exception to Anderson's view that the idea of the nation in postcolonial countries was "derived" from "modular" European forms ("Whose Imagined" 216). As against this, he shows that the nineteenth-century nationalists of the Bengal Reform movement in India negotiated innovatively with colonial modernity in forming their notions of a Hindu nationhood by pointing out that "the most powerful and the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia [. . .] are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the 'modular' forms of national society propagated by the West" ("Whose Imagined" 216). However, Chatterjee also observes that this nationalist discourse, even as it resisted colonial power, often excluded non-Hindu and minority cultures.

In complicating Chatterjee's study of the nineteenth-century imaginings of the nation, postcolonial gender historians such as Kum Kum Sangari, Suresh Vaid, Uma Chakravarti, and Lata Mani have highlighted further levels of fragmentation in the notion of this Indian nation. They claim that such hegemonic forms of Hindu nationalism marginalized, and continue to marginalize, both women and minorities. My study adds to the depth and scope of postcolonial categories, given that, with the exception of a few Dravidian historians like V.Geetha, C.S.Lakshmi and others, or the contemporary anthropologist, Nicholas Dirks, Indian postcolonial critics seem to have neglected the other crucial issue of South Indian regionalism which intervenes in the idea of a homogenous Hindu India. It brings the above cultural and historical research into

conversation with post-colonial literature in India in adding to the scope and depth of the postcolonial categories of the nation and region.

In historicizing the idea of the "region," a contemporary sociologist, James Overton, has called attention to the fact that regional cultures and local identities are products of historically constructed narratives. They are formed within diverse socio-political discourses (Overton 97).[2] These communities do not simply emerge from "'objective' cultural differences," but certain kinds of difference become "politicized" and get deployed in establishing, maintaining, and marking off their boundaries (Overton 98). Although, in a somewhat different context, the postcolonial critic, Arjun Appadurai, also perceives group identities as predicated on the mobilization of the ideas of cultural difference (Appadurai 12-14).[3] Appadurai's work on local formations focuses mainly, on how global processes intersect with local formations. However, his definitions of group identity and locality are useful in understanding the modalities of the construction of regional communities. Frequently, regional and local communities are based on an ideological consciousness of cultural difference.

In this instance, it is pertinent to remember how Louis Althusser, even as he puts forth a "theory of ideology *in general*" also suggests that we must look at "particular ideologies" (Althusser 33). Such "particular" ideologies, Althusser points out, are based on "religious, ethical, legal, and political" historical formations, though in general, he maintains that ideology will "always express *class 'positions'*" (Althusser 33). In

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[2] James Overton's article is basically a sociological study. The context of Overton's analysis of regional formations is a critique of Ralph Matthews work on regionalism in Canada. However, it is a useful study , which rearticulates the category of "region."

[3] See also Appadurai 14, 15.

focusing on such histories of the "particular" ideologies within which the notions of the nation and region are constructed in India, I argue that not only class positions, but also the positionalities of caste and gender become important. In fact, the contestations within this idea of "South Indianness" leads to ruptures along the multiple axes of nation, colonialism, religion, caste, and gender.

Overall, the idea of South India figures as a highly contentious discourse, when we examine the history of its formations in the last two centuries in India. In exploring such dissonant conceptions of South Indianness, my dissertation follows three main movements. After this introductory first chapter, in the second, I begin with the discussion of the turn of the century Orientalist and nationalist formations in India. Then, I move into Caldwell's ethnographic studies in South India and his identification of the ancient Dravidian tradition in the South. The third chapter traces the discursive formations of region and caste in the writings of the Self-respect movements (1925) in twentieth-century Tamilnadu. In the fourth and the last chapter, I focus on the post-independence literary representations of South Indianness and argue that the earlier Dravidianist conflation of South Indianness with the lower caste cultures is deeply contested in this literary discourse. A brief Conclusion points to the new perspectives that my work opens up in contemporary Indian postcolonial studies.

Appadurai shows local communities as "relational and contextual" (Appadurai 178). In my second chapter I situate such early ideas of Dravidianism in the nineteenth-century Orientalist and nationalist discourses in colonial India. Dirks, in his work on caste and colonialism in India, historicizes how the dominant notions of caste, religion, and tradition in India were established within the colonial collaborations between the

British and the native elite. He argues, "British colonialism played a critical role in both the identification and the production of Indian 'tradition'" (Dirks 9). The Raj officials often turned to the ancient Sanskrit scriptures interpreted by Brahmins in determining native customs and legal practices. In doing so, they reinforced the Orientalist valorization of the Brahmanic texts as authentic sources on religion, caste, and tradition in India (Dirks 13, 14).

The turn of the century European Orientalists, major among whom are William Jones (1746-1794), Monier Monier-Williams (1819-1899), and Friedrich Max Mueller (1832-1900), established the idea of an ancient Aryan and Hindu Golden Age in India. Within the colonial politics of constructing the "identity-and-difference" between the East and West, they formed the grand myth of a "common Aryan past" which linked Europe with India. However, even as they unearthed this hoary Aryan heritage, they were also quick to point out that contemporary India had fallen from this past glory. Besides, in casting India as the "spiritual" other of the West, they constructed this colonized land as a stagnant and apolitical space (which buttressed the colonial justifications of controlling it).

Besides, this European Orientalist project also participated importantly in the colonial agendas of legitimizing Indian traditions. Following from their fascination with the Sanskrit texts, the Orientalist scholars located the pristine form of Indian tradition in Brahmin culture. They saw in the Vedas, Upanishads, and the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharatha, the very essence of a uniform Indian religious tradition. Such Brahmanic texts "provided transregional and metahistorical modes of understanding Indian society" (Dirks 14). Moreover, in countering the prevalent Utilitarian criticism that India's

civilizational backwardness was a direct result of its oppressive caste system and ritualistic religion, the Orientalists tried to project Hinduism as a World religion (James Mill's History of India provides a glaring example of this Utilitarian discourse. Though in rather different terms, the missionary rhetoric had also demonized the Hindu caste system).[4]

However, it was not only the European Orientalists and colonial administrators who invented the idea of an ancient Hindu tradition. The nineteenth-century native elite also participated actively in constructing such ideas of Hinduism and the nation. Edward Said's theorizing of Orientalism often marginalizes native negotiations in the production of colonial knowledges, and assumes an all too easy passivity of the native subject. In fact, Homi Bhabha has questioned what he sees as the "unidirectionality" of Said's Oriantlist discourse (Bhabha 103). My study, however, builds on the work of Dirks and Chatterjee in highlighting the manner in which the turn of the century native leaders in India negotiated with colonial Orientalist knowledges. The leaders of the Bengal reform movement in India such as Rajaram Mohan Roy (1774-1833), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and others found in the Orientalist discovery of a Hindu "Golden age," the very framework to build their mythos of a superior Hindu civilization.

Besides, as Eric Hobsbawm has argued, invented traditions are responses to modern political and cultural contexts. The Indian reformers constructed their notions of the nation even within the colonial domination. The transactions between the Orientalists and native reformers were often based on a shared veneration of the Sanskrit works and Vedic culture as representative of Indian tradition. However, while the Orientalists

[4] For a discussion of the Utilitarian resistance to the Orientalist fascination with Hinduism and James Mill's famous attack on caste and Brahmin dominance in Hinduism, see Javed Majeed's Ungoverned Imaginings.

relegated India's cultural glory to a static and pre-historic Hindu past and cast this spiritual India as an apolitical space (which also legitimized the political presence of the British in the subcontinent), the native nationalist elite overturned this colonial discourse of Hindu spirituality and made it the ground for shaping a new and unified national consciousness.

Chatterjee describes the spatialized imaginings of a spiritual India of these nationalists in the following manner. They traced an "inner" spiritual domain of Hindu cultural self-assertion, even as they negotiated with the "outer" world dominated by the British ("Whose Imagined" 220-23). In a manner of speaking, as the cultural historian, Gyan Prakash, says, "[the] nationalists transformed the object of knowledge--India--from passive to active, from inert to sovereign" (Gyan Prakash 338). Interestingly, there were also some highly salutary exchanges between these reform leaders and Orientalists like Muller. Thus, we see Muller praising the "great revival of religion [which] was inaugurated [by] Rajaram-Mohun Roy [and] Keshub Chunder Sen," and even seeing "an unbroken continuity [in the] Hindu thought, [for] more than three thousand years" (I Point 244).[5]

Even so, as Chatterjee shows, this turn of the century nationalist project was "built upon a system of exclusions," where the new nationalist patriarchy "culturally distinguished itself not only from the West but also from the mass of its own people" ("Nationalist Resolution," 251). Predictably, perhaps, there were "numerous fragmented resistances to that normalizing project" ("Whose Imagined" 224). In building upon

[5] See Nanda Mookherjee's I Point to India for accounts of Mueller's correspondence and interactions with the Brahma Samaj leaders and Bengal reformers like Keshub Chandra Sen and Raja Ram Mohun Roy, and the other leading Sanskrit scholars of the time.

Chatterjee's view, my study demonstrates that the idea of the Dravidian South figures as one such fragmentary resistance to the idea of an overarching Hindu national tradition.

I inflect Hobsbawm's claim that invented traditions establish legitimacy by linking themselves selectively to "suitable historical past[s]" by demonstrating that, ironically, such quests for antiquity in India were also mediated by colonial knowledges (Hobsbawm 1). Such native appropriations of colonial knowledges are palpable, for example, in the manner in which the nineteenth-century nationalists were inspired by the European Orientalist scholarship. Paradoxically, it was again the colonial ethnographic archive, which provided inspirations for the formation of a lower caste Dravidian tradition in the next century. A missionary in South India with deep interest in ethnography and philology, Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), took the Orientalist fascination with Indian religion on an entirely divergent track. Caldwell followed Muller's idea of a race divide between the Aryans and Dravidians, and ended up valorizing the latter. He established the idea of a pre-Aryan Dravidian past against the dominant Orientalist trend of glorifying Aryan culture. No doubt, Caldwell's missionary and ethnographic projects in South India were complicit with colonial interests. His missionary endeavors were largely focused on the lower caste groups in Tamilnadu. And the Brahmins, who had a privileged status within their own caste order, had often resisted these proselytizing projects. Be that as it may, Caldwell made his study of Dravidian languages the basis of his arguments on this ancient South Indian culture. He claimed that the lower caste people in South India were the original inhabitants of India, and the Brahmins were actually Aryan outsiders. In his study of the South Indian "shanars" (the low caste "toddy-tappers" among whom he was engaged in spreading the light of religion),

Caldwell disengages the Dravidians from North Indians, Aryans, and even South Indian Brahmins.

In his Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages (1856) Caldwell identifies Tamil as "the oldest and most highly cultivated" of South Indian languages (112, 4). Defining the racial and caste discord between the Aryans and Dravidians, he traces the Dravidians to "Scythian" origins (39).[6] He reinforces Muller's narrative of the Aryan colonization of South India, but this time around, casts the Dravidians as a culturally superior race. He links the origin of caste in South India to Aryan colonization and calls the Brahmins of the place, the "descendants" of Aryans. According to Caldwell, it was the Aryans who incorporated the Dravidians into their caste system as low caste sudras. In the end, he even asserts, "[Tamil language] has been cultivated and developed by native [low caste] Tamilians" and not the "Brahmins" of the South (110, 48, 3). This discovery had a powerful impact on the later native Dravidian movements in South India. Dirks points out, "Caldwell's articulation of the racial and historical basis of Aryan-Dravidian divide was [. . .] the first valorization of the Dravidian category" (Dirks 141).

The Dravidian movements, which became prominent in the early twentieth century in South India, look back to Caldwell's theory of a lower caste Dravidian culture in constructing their own regional and communal politics. My third chapter moves into the twentieth century to examine the journalistic writings of the Self-respect movement (1920's) started by the controversial Dravidian leader, Periyar Ramaswamy Naicker

[6] Basing his arguments on his studies in Comparative Linguistics, Caldwell asserts, "my own theory is that the Dravidian languages occupy a position [near to] Turanian or Scythian group" than to "Indo-European," or Sanskrit. He argues that the history of language "throws light upon all other [ethnological and anthropological] history," and traces the "pre-Aryan" Dravidians to the "Scythian stock" (Comparative Grammar ix, 64).

(1879-1973). This chapter also recovers the history of the movement from the perspectives of the women Self-respecters.

Much like Caldwell, the Dravidanists conflate the term "Dravidian" (a term which covers all of South India) with the lower caste groups, and exclude even the Brahmins of South India from the Dravidian community. They describe this community as emphatically, non-Aryan and non-Brahmin. Apart from engaging in such intriguing negotiations with colonial ethnographic knowledges, they also collaborate with the Raj in matters of lower caste reform. However, prominent leaders of the movement like Periyar Ramaswami Naicker (1879-1973), complicate the narrative of colonization by developing the idea of an internal colonization of South India by North Indians and Aryans. Periyar's writings even describe British domination as identical with the internal colonialism of "Brahminocracy." In fact, the Dravidianists also dissociated themselves from the nationalist movements since they saw them as invested in high caste interests.

Caste, thus, becomes central to the Dravidian cultural politics. Dirks has shown that the caste formations as we know them today are largely "product[s] of an historical encounter between India and Western colonial rule" (Dirks 5). Such colonial collaborations also become apparent in the manner in which the Dravidianists assert their caste affiliations. In defining their caste identities they not only appropriate Caldwell's theories, but also participate in the "classificatory" politics of the colonial government. As Dirks, and also the social theorist, Anil Seal, have argued, regional movements in India were often "organized in terms of categories devised by the British" (Seal 19). In their transactions with the Raj, and later, their opposition to the post-independence

Congress government, the Dravidian leaders often urged for lower caste representation in civil offices by underlining caste identities derived from the census categories.

This Dravidian engagement with caste is divided along more intricate caste lines. An early Dravidian movement, the Justice Party (1916), constructed a "non-Brahmin" identity in order to challenge the dominant presence of the Brahmins in colonial civil institutions. But Periyar's Self-respect movement shapes the idea of Dravidianism as a social and cultural project of resisting the "Aryan imperialism" over South India. Periyar even incorporates untouchables and women into this Dravidian fold. Moreover, he sees the marginality of class and caste as overlapping issues, and gathers a range of subaltern identities including untouchables, the poor, women and minorities in South India into the Self-respect struggle.

Incidentally, Periyar's work often interrogates the exclusion of the lower caste and Dravidian subjects from the nationalist history by reiterating Caldwell's idea of a pre-Aryan Dravidian presence in India. For example, in one of his speeches, Periyar argues: "historians and research scholars [. . .] are of the opinion that the Dravidians or the Tamils were the original inhabitants of [South] India. There is no historical evidence to prove that an Aryan had ever ruled the Tamils" (Dear Youths 14). In this instance, he calls for the unity and a sense of Dravidian nationality in breaking the enslavement to the "brahmins and the government" (Dear Youths 2).

As a consequence of their sense of marginalization within the dominant discourses of the Hindu nation, the Self-respecters distanced themselves from the freedom movement of the time. Dirks points out, "[Periyar] was always positioned on the margin-of the nationalist movement [. . .], and of the symbolic access to national pool

of ideological possibilities that were cultivated within colonial nationalism" (Dirks 264). Periyar declares his political stances by opposing Hindu religion, the Congress and Brahmins. The Self-respect writings often target what they see as the symbolic regime of Brahminism. In a strongly de-orientalizing turn of thought, Periyar denounces the Vedas and Aryan epics, Ramayana and Mahabharatha, as "romances" that the Aryans "designed to lure the Dravidas into their snare, to wipe off their self-respect, to blunt their discretionary faculty and to destroy their humanity" (Ramayana 1). In this instance, Periyar accentuates the idea of "self-respect" in cautioning the Dravidians against identifying themselves as Hindus.

The Self-respect engagement with such postcolonial battles of tradition and modernity is fraught with deep tensions. Even as their writings uphold the idea of a Dravidian antiquity, they also assume an anti-traditionalist stance. Periyar addresses this issue of tradition in a complex and often even contradictory manner. He sees Indian tradition as antithetical to Western modernity. In such constructions of tradition and modernity, he even replicates the colonial rhetoric of native "backwardness" and blames the caste-ridden condition of Hindu society on its tradition and religion. In contrast, he makes the Enlightenment ideal of rationalism central to the definition of a "modern" Dravidian consciousness. While he tries to undercut the nationalist rhetoric of the Hindu past of India by upholding the Dravidian modernity, this notion remains linked to the colonial civilizing project in a problematic manner. This appropriation of colonial modernity becomes more complicated when Periyar's brand of Dravidian Socialism leads

him to condemn the "Brahmins and Britons" as "world capitalists" even as he collaborates with the Raj in the matters of lower caste empowerment.[7]

It is the lower caste woman's body that frequently becomes the site on which the above Dravidian battles of tradition and modernity are fought. In understanding the histories of the Dravidian women's oppression and empowerment, I begin by unpacking the interactions between the colonial and indigenous patriarchies in the early twentieth century. After all, as Chandra Mohanty, referring to the the work of the postcolonial gender historians, Kum Kum Sangari and Suresh Vaid, emphasizes, there is a need to "establish a dynamic, necessary relation between understandings of class/caste and patriarchies under British rule" (Mohanty, "Introduction" 18).

Not only did the Self-respect movement provide a forum for the lower caste women to make their voices heard in the public space of the Dravidian struggle, but it also questioned the hegemonic molds of upper caste Hindu womanhood. The Self-respect approach to the issue of gender reform contrasts frequently with the prevalent ideas of the Tamil woman's liberation at the time. The well-known Dravidian historian, Lakshmi, shows that the nineteenth-century Hindu nationalist ideals of chastity, wifehood, or motherhood often resurface in the twentieth-century Tamil nationalist discourse (Lakshmi 2957). In contrast, the Self-respect women not only oppose such domestic Hindu gender ideologies, but also reject the "spiritual" ideal offered to the Tamil-Hindu woman. They even try to break away from the much-idealized mold of

[7] For a discussion of Periyar's association with the Communist movement in Tamilnadu, see Dirks (Dirks. 262-263). See also Anita Diehl's argument that "in his propaganda Periyar stood up for socialist-communist principles [however, he] did not propagate a worked-out economic programme to serve as an election manifesto" (Diehl 58). Diehl discusses Periyar's visit to Russia, and his subsequent upholding of Marxism. But she feels that Periyar "limits his Marxist indebtedness to suit the South Indian situation" (Diehl 79).

motherhood. Instead, they incorporate what they construct as the Western models of progressive womanhood in empowering themselves within the colonial civil space. No doubt, they seek the intervention of the colonial government in redressing the conditions of lower caste women. But at the same time, targeting both the colonial and Brahmin patriarchies, they also charge the colonial administrators of forming a nexus with the Brahmins and falling back upon obscure Sanskrit scriptures in deciding legal and social issues related to women. Sometimes, they also negotiate and contend with the male leadership of the movement. The women activists of this movement show an acute awareness of how caste inflects gender formations in their writings. Exploring the mode of gender reform in this movement, Geetha argues, "the progress or retardation of the women question in independent India cannot be grasped" by merely considering "the elite and subaltern versions of Indian nationalism" ("Periyar, Women" WS-9).

The prolific and versatile Self-respect women's writings in the journals Kudi Arasu and Kumaran (I use Srilata's English translations in this discussion) and Revolt help us in understanding the history of the movement through the eyes of the subaltern low caste women Self-respecters. They bring the concerns with the rights of lower caste women, their mobilization within the movement, and their empowerment to the forefront. While many writings focus on lower caste women's causes, intriguingly enough, these journals also become a platform for some oppressed Brahmin women to voice their anger with the Brahmin patriarchy. For example, a prominent Self-respecter, Neelavati, urges the mobilization of women in the movement ("Womenfolk and Self-Respect Principles" Kumaran, 9,1, July-August 1930; Srilata 32-36). Another story, "What is in Store for Us?" by a Brahmin woman called Kamalakshi describes how "the brahmins also oppress

their own kind." Kamalakshi decides to "speak out" in order to "enlighten" her "fellow" women (Kumaran, 9, 2; August-September 1930; Srilata 23). In contrast, "The Skies Wont Bring the Rain" is a satirical piece that challenges the restriction on women to use umbrellas. The writer urges these lower caste women to take their inspiration from their Western counter parts and use umbrellas just like the white women (Janaki, Kumaran, 9, 5, November-December 1930; Srilata 54-55). In short, the Self-respect women's writings reveal how they construct themselves as "active historical agents, making and remaking their history" in their everyday lives ("Periyar and the Logic" 388).

However, such anti-hegemonic discourses of Dravidianism, which interrupt the nationalist formulations of caste and gender, are sharply contested in post-independence literary writings in India. South Indianness reveals itself as a discordant discourse in these writings. In fact, a majority of the early writers in English (who often identified with privileged caste and class backgrounds, and were also the recipients of colonial English education) seem to re-inscribe the dominant notions of caste and nation, all the while claiming to uphold the liberal Western ideals of nationhood. Very often, their writings construct South India in a relationship of supplementarity to the nation.

What is more intriguing, even many writers of this time, who locate themselves in South India, or write about South India as a specific region, reveal a strong preoccupation with asserting a pan-national identity. However, in contrast, contemporary women writers like Arundhati Roy, Geetha Hariharan, and many vernacular writers of South India resist this undifferentiated idea of India. Instead, they often provide visibility to their various silenced South Indian worlds. In studying the works of some representative Indo-Anglian as well as vernacular writers in South India, who are located at different

literary and political moments, I argue that their dissonant perceptions of the South are crucially linked to their positionalities in terms of caste, place, language, and gender.

Of late, cultural historians like Aijaz Ahmed have questioned the manner in which postcolonial literature has become synonymous with writings in English. Ahmed expresses alarm at the way in which "the definition of new literatures is the definition of things written in the English language" (Ahmed 54). My study departs from an exclusive preoccupation with Indian writing in English. Instead, alongside Indo-Anglian writings it also brings the work of South Indian vernacular writers, who are unfamiliar to Anglophone readership, centrally into its examination of postcolonial Indian literature.

In many early post-independence Indo-Anglian literary works, South India figures only on the margins of the national imaginary and on the margins of these texts. Writings of disparate literary figures such as Jawaharlal Nehru, V.S. Naipaul, and even writers like Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayan, who identify themselves with the South, South India is cast as the "other" of the nation, or becomes subsumed within the idea of an all-encompassing Indianness. The national nostalgias of the freedom movement, the celebration of a singular Hindu tradition, or the impact of freedom leaders like Gandhi and Nehru, figure repeatedly in the works of these canonical writers of the South.

A landmark work in Indian literature, which participates in the euphoria of the making of the Indian nation, Jawaharlal Nehru's Discovery of India (1946), sets out to celebrate Indian history and, what Nehru claims to be its composite cultural tradition. Nevertheless, this textual discourse submerges the so-called Dravidian element and often highlights the Aryan and Hindu ethos. On the other hand, the notions of the civilizational inferiority of the South are compounded with the ideas of the "biological backwardness"

of the Dravidian body in V.S. Naipaul's early work The Area of Darkness (1964). Naipaul replicates the colonial gaze on the racialized native bodies in figuring this abject South Indian body (Area 53, 230). But in his later work, India: A Million Mutinies (1990), Naipaul claims to revise his view of India as a predominantly Aryan land. He wishes to provide greater visibility to marginal communities such as the Dravidian South. At the end, however, even this narrative portrays the Dravidian movement as leading to a cultural erosion in Tamilnadu. In imagining this degeneration from the Brahmin high culture in South India, Naipaul declares that the Dravidian movement was impelled by mere "passion, [but not] logic and regard for historical correctness" (India: A Million Mutinees 210, 226).

Perhaps, Nehru's celebration of a universal India, nuanced as it is in terms of positing a diverse Indian culture, still reveals an essentializing tendency. However, intriguingly, even some postmodern writing excludes the lower caste South from its representations of India, even as it "fashionably" fragments this national notion. While Salman Rushdie's Midnight Children (1980) figures the national body in terms of dismembered forms and chaotic images of "chutnification," South India occupies only a peripheral space in this narrative (3,189). In the fleeting references to Amina's dark "skin of a South Indian fisherwoman," or the "divisive" sensibility of the "Madrasi" (Rushdie, here, mocks the idea of a monolithic South in the North Indian imagination) South India becomes an ambivalent signifier (58, 125). Above all, Rushdie even entertains his reader with the glimpse of "a [South Indian] fisherwoman whose sari [is] as tight as her morals [are loose" (198). Eventually, not only does this text end up depicting the South in the stereotypical terms of linguistic incomprehensibility and cultural

difference, but, in the image of this fisherwoman, it also genders and sexualizes the lower caste South.

While the above Indo-Anglian consiousness tends to push South India to the periphery of its imaginings of India, early writers of the South like Raja Rao and Narayan, even as they trace their specific geo-cultural South, largely associate themselves with the Brahminical worlds. Simultaneously, they are also invested in constructing their essential Indianness. Playing upon the post-war modernist interest of the West in a "spiritual" East, Raja Rao reworks the Orientalist notions of a glorious Hindu past in South India. In the Serpent and the Rope (1960), he rejects the idea of a distinct Dravidian tradition in the South. He declares, "Dravidian tradition [is indistinguishable] from the Aryan tradition," and argues, "Aryan wisdom [has] found a permanent place in South India" (Serpent 139). Despite their strong geocultural identifications with the South, both Narayan and Raja Rao (in Kanthapura [1938], for example) locate their South in the Brahmin worlds in this part of India. Narayan often distances himself from the low caste cultures in his writings. For instance, in My Days (1974), he relives the fear and fascination of a Brahmin child toward the exoticized lower caste otherworlds. In another short story, "Fellow Feeling," he depicts a Brahmin and non-Brahmin encounter where he demonizes the latter as an odious bully.

However, in the works of some contemporary women writers, who associate themselves with South Indian places, the above contestations of caste, nation, and region take on a different aspect. Arundhati Roy, and Gita Hariharan address the local and regional ramifications of caste in constructing their notions of a fragmented Southern space. Roy's The God of Small Things (1997) makes the theme of the sexual union

across caste lines a locus of her politics of the local, "the small things." However, in her construction of Ayemenum, a rural South Indian place, she reveals that it is also imbricated in the larger national and global political economies. But she marks a private space of love and sexuality as a locus of resistance to the status quo caste and gender hierarchies in such local places. Hariharan, on the other hand, questions the hegemonic and homogenous construction of a Hindu history in the subcontinent by recovering the subaltern history of the anti-caste Veerashaiva movement in 12th century Karnataka.

Many major writers in the regional languages of the South identify with their local and regional worlds. The Kannada writer Ananthamurthy and the Tamil writer Jeyakanthan, explore the conflicts of tradition and modernity in the Brahmin communities in different parts of South India. But Chandrashekhar Kambar, who locates himself in a lower caste community in Karnataka, focuses on exploring this marginalized world.

Ananthamurthy's early controversial novel Samskara (1966) engages the postcolonial tensions of tradition and modernity in South India. This writer from Karnataka attempts to translate the familiar paradigm of the modernist angst into South Indian Brahmin contexts in constructing the existentialist quest of his Brahmin protagonist. However, the novel ends in a subtle re-inscription of the unequal relationships of caste and gender. Ananthamurthy's agendas of social change lead to problematic resolutions, where the Brahmin males in this novel make low caste female bodies instrumental in their self-search. Somewhat differently, Jeyakanthan, who writes in the post-Periyar era in Tamilnadu, critiques the hypocrisy, repressions, and exploitation of women's bodies in the middle class Tamil Brahmin society.

While the above writers focus on the social changes in the Brahmin worlds of the South, a writer like Kambar draws from the rural local lower caste lore in depicting the oppressed community in which he locates himself. The Kannada critic, D.R.Nagaraj remarks that the Dalit movement in Karnataka is acutely conscious of how the project of modernity in post-independence India reinforces the repression of the untouchable societies.[8] Rejecting the mode of realism, many writers like Kambar choose to uncover the submerged and fragmented histories of their repressed communities by employing folk modes of writing.

In contrast to the above writers, the work of the earlier South Indian woman writer, Lalithambika Antarjanam (1919-1987), interrogates the nexus of caste and gender within the changing contexts of the upper caste woman's marginalization in Kerala. Antarjanam not only depicts the repressed lives of the Brahmin women within the namboodiri "illams" (houses), but also shows their resistance to this Brahmin patriarchy. Her feminism is influenced by the reform ideologies of the freedom movement. However, while she declares that there is only one "caste" called woman, her work does not engage the issue of lower caste women's oppression.

In addition, the idea of South Indianness also breaks up along the lines of gender. While the earlier Dravidian movements tried to recover the muted voices of lower caste South Indian women, contemporary Indo-Anglian women writers like Roy, or even the vernacular writer, Antarjanam, turn their attention to the oppression of upper caste women in South India. However, their work questions the constructions of a predominantly male South Indian subjectivity, and also resists the particular form of

[8] For a detailed study of the Dalit movement in India and the manner in which this subaltern movement weaves in the notions of caste and class into its revolt, see D.R.Nagaraj's The Flaming Feet.

Brahminization of the South found in early Indo-Anglian writers like Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan.

In sum, my project covers new ground in literary and cultural studies by examining the South Indian cultural formations in the complex interplay of nation, region, caste, gender. It recovers the subaltern voices from disparate and marginal South Indian worlds in deconstructing the unitary nationalist history of a Hindu and Aryan India. In doing so, it argues that the regional and local formations of a "Dravidian South" interrupt the colonial and postcolonial narratives of a uniform Hindu national tradition, which, in the last two centuries, has often claimed to represent all of India. Instead, my study reveals this idea of South India as a conflictual and contested space of resistance. The heterogeneous constructions of South Indianness over two centuries that I have explored here are crucial for our understanding of the making of the post-independence Indian nation. Moreover, my work is particularly relevant in the contemporary Indian contexts of the ascendant "Hindutva" ideologies and the rise of the caste-based regional cultural politics in South India in the form of the Dravidian parties that rose as offshoots of Periyar's movement.[9]

[9]Andrew Wyatt's brilliant discussion of the post-independence political struggles between the Hindu Right in India and the Dravidian Parties in Tamilnadu explores the strong competitions for cultural symbolism among the nationalist Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, which has a national base), and local parties like DK (Dravida Kazhagam), and DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) in the post-Periyar political scenarios in Tamilnadu. See Wyatt 234-257.

Chapter II

Orientalist Legacies, Colonial Ethnography, and the Problematic of Indian "Tradition": Inventions of the Hindu India and Dravidian South

Addressing the candidates for the Indian Civil Services at Cambridge in 1882, the well-known nineteenth-century Orientalist scholar, Friedrich Max Muller (1823-1900), declared:

> If I were to be asked under what sky the human mind [. . .] has mostly deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which will deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans [. . .] may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life [. . .] more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India (India What it Can Teach Us 6)

In making an impressive case for Europe's need for Indian knowledges and in constructing the idea of a rich cultural heritage of the colonized subcontinent, Muller urges the future officials of the Raj to familiarize themselves with India's literature, language, and philosophy as a vital part of their training in colonial governance. For Muller, as for the other major Orientalists of the time such as for instance, William Jones and Monier- Williams, the language and literature that quintessentially represented Indian

tradition was Sanskrit.[10] Following from their fascination with a Sanskritic culture, these Orientalists discovered a unified Hindu tradition in India that they defined as primarily philosophical and "spiritual." It is hardly surprising, therefore, that within this nineteenth-century European Orientalist discourse inhabited by figures such as the early Orientalist, William Jones, and the later Orientalists like Muller and Monier-Williams among others, the terms "India," "Aryan" and "Hindu" circulate as overlapping signifiers of the subcontinent. What is more, in their strong preoccupation with Sanskrit and Brahminical texts, the Orientalists conflated the idea of the Hindu tradition with a predominantly Brahmanic tradition. "India" in their imaginings became a static and singular term. Their essentialist visions of universal nduism often erased the plural and diverse cultural ethos, regional variations, and religious differences in the subcontinent.

In tracing this colonial Orientalist history this chapter engages the cultural historian, Eric Hobsbawm's, ideas of "invented" traditions, and argues that the invention

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[10] Friedrich Max Muller (1823-1900): German philologist and Orientalist. As a scholar engaged in the study of comparative religion, he worked extensively on Indian religion and philosophy. His works include the edition of the Rig-Veda with a commentary (1849-73). Mueller edited the Sacred Books of the East, which are translations of Eastern religious works.

William Jones (1746-94): English philologist and a Sanskrit scholar. He was the Supreme court judge in Bengal. He advanced Sanskrit studies, and founded the Asiatic society of Bengal in Calcutta. Jones translated the Sanskrit legal texts Manu Dharma Sastras, and literary works such as the famous play Sakuntala. For a study of William Jones's life and career in India see, Cannon, Garland's works, Oriental Jones and also The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones.

Monier-Williams (1819-1899): Monier-Williams was "one of the most important British students of Hinduism in the latter part of the nineteenth-century. [. . .] Professor of Sanskrit, Persian, and Hindustani in Haileybury, the training school for East India Company 'executives" [later succeeded] H.H.Wilson at Oxford, where he founded an important Indian Institute in 1883." (Inden, 99). Among Monier-Williams's major contributions to India is the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary.*

Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837) Orientalist and Sanskrit scholar. He published the Remarks on the Husbandry and Commerce of Bengal in 1795 advocating free trade between Britain and India. He was asked to translate Jones's unfinished Hindu Laws. He translated the two works Mitacshara of Vijnaneshwara and the Dayabhaga of Jimutavahana, under the title Law of Inheritance. "He was sent to Nagpur in 1799 on a special mission, and on his return was made a judge of the new court of appeal, over which he afterwards presided" He was appointed the professor of Hindu law and Sanskrit at the college of Fort William. He wrote Sanskrit Grammar (1805), some papers on the religious ceremonies of the Hindus, and Essay on the Vedas (1805). He was made director of the Royal Asiatic Society. See, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Thomas_Colebrooke>

of the Dravidian tradition was a response to such systematic erasures of South Indian lower caste cultures from the colonial and nationalist narratives of the Indian nation.[11] The Orientalist tendencies of marginalizing the lower caste South, were often replicated in the native nationalist discourses. What is more, even the nationalist movements in the twentieth century frequently exhibit such tendencies. However, the lower caste Dravidian leaders and the South Indian literati in the past two centuries of colonial and postcolonial history have repeatedly challenged this Indo-European idea of a Hindu national culture. My next chapter addresses regional and caste politics of the Dravidian movements, which became prominent in the twentieth-century. In exploring these discursive formations of Dravidianism, I trace how, somewhat like the nineteenth-century native Hindu nationalists of the Bengal Reform movement (who were influenced by the colonial Orientalist notion of a universal Hindu tradition), the Dravidianists in the twentieth century also negotiated with colonial knowledges.[12] In this chapter, I focus on the paradoxical instance of how the initial resistance to the Orientalist idea of an overarching Hindu tradition came from Robert Caldwell, a late nineteenth-century

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[11] The Dravidian movements in Tamilnadu such as the Justice Party (1939-1944), and the Self-Respect movement started by Periyar E.V.Ramaswami Naicker (1879-1973) incorporated the notions of a lower caste Dravidian tradition and resisted the idea of a Hindu India. My next chapter discusses these movements in depth.

[12] The Bengal Reform movement was a religious-cultural movement that started in colonial India in the state of Bengal during the turn of the century. The key figures of this movement were Rajarammohun Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, and others. Swami Dayananda Saraswati, who was born in Gujarat, (he started the Arya Samaj in Bombay) is also another important reformer of the time. The Brahmo Samaj started by Roy in 1828, and the Arya Samaj founded by Saraswati in 1875 promoted a monotheistic, and reformed version of Hinduism constructed largely in the model of Christianity. The reformers, in their program for the uplift of the Hindu woman focused on issues such as women's education, eradication of sati, and widow remarriage. They opposed idolatory and animal sacrifice.

Arya Samaj was a reformist movement that believed in regenerating ancient Hindu religion. It was founded by Swami Dayananda in 1875. He upheld the Vedas, and "advocated the doctrine of karma and reincarnation, and emphasised the ideals of brahmacharya (chastity) and sanyasa (renunciation)." See, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arya_samaj>

colonial ethnographer in South India (1814-1891).[13] Caldwell's work on South India, even as it was deeply embedded in the colonial administrative and missionary imperatives, went against the grain of the dominant Orientalist views on Indian culture.

In this instance, we can begin by looking at how the nineteenth-century Orientalist project in India was also implicated in colonial governmentality. Many Orientalists, starting from Jones, who was a Supreme Court Judge in Bengal, Colebrooke, or even Monier-Williams, who had taught at the East India Company College, were associated with the East India Company. In fact, Nicholas Dirks, in his study on colonialism and caste formations in India, probes the overdetermined relationships between the Orientalists and the Raj officials and shows that such interactions led to establishing the idea of an "authentic" and singular Hindu tradition in India. Claiming to espouse a "sympathetic" attitude towards native traditions, the British sought to know more and more about the ramifications of Indian caste and religion. In so far as this knowledge about Indian culture came to the Orientalists and Raj officials refracted through the Brahmin interpreters of the Sanskrit texts, it is no wonder that they began to see a largely Brahmin-centered Indian culture. In due course, within this colonial discourse a particular brand of Brahminical Hinduism was legitimized as the authentic form of Indian tradition.

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[13] "Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814 -1891) was an orientalist who pioneered the study of the Dravidian languages with his influential work *Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages* (1856; revised edition 1875). He was the first European to propose that the South Indian languages of Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada formed a Dravidian language family, affirming their antiquity and literary history, and their independence from Sanskrit and the Indo-Aryan languages. He speculated that speakers of the proto-Dravidian language entered India from the northwest. He served as the Bishop of Tinnevelly [. . .] and did a lot of original research work on the history of Tinnevelly" See, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Caldwell>

However, what is also crucial in this discussion of the nineteenth-century Hindu formations in colonial India is how the bourgeoning national consciousness of this time became intimately interlocked with the European Orientalist scholarship. The native leaders of the Bengal Reform movement, which began in the latter part of the nineteenth century, were greatly influenced by the European Orientalists in forming their anticolonial visions of a Hindu India. Reformers such as Rajaram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), Keshab Chandra Sen(1838-1884), Swami Vivekananda(1863-1902), and Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), to name a few, saw in the Orientalist discovery of universal Hinduism a means of upholding the superiority of Indian culture over that of their colonizers.[14] These leaders believed that it was only by reviving the glorious Hindu past (which they identified with the Sanskritic and Aryan culture) that they could rebuild a new India which would stand up against colonial domination. Unfortunately, however, the negative side effects of these universalizing Hindu impulses were the marginalization of many regional and lower caste

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[14] Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) was an intellectual and religious reformer. He believed in the idea of a universal religion. He started the Brahmo Sabha, which led to the movement of Brahmo Samaj. "In later life, he established a syncretic school of spiritualism, called the *Nabo Bidhan* or 'New Dispensation', which he intended to amalgamate the best principles of Christianity and of the western spiritual tradition with Hinduism." He is well known for his campaign against sati and the promotion of widow remarriage. See, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keshub_Chandra_Sen>

Rajaram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) "was the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, one of the first Indian socio-religious reform movements. His remarkable influence was apparent in the fields of politics, public administration and education as well as religion. He is most known for his efforts to abolish the practice of sati, a Hindu funeral custom in which the widow sacrifices herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Brahmo Samaj is a social and religious movement started in the Bengal Reform movement in 1928. It means "the society of worshippers of One True God." Rajarammohun Roy and his friends began the Brahma Sabha in 1830 which led to this reform movement. See,
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raja_Ram_Mohan_Roy>

Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905). Leading nineteenth-century Bengali intellectual and reformer. Spiritual leader, and associate of Brahmo Samaj. Father of Rabindranath Tagore.

Swami Vivekananda (1817-1905): A famous spiritual leader, monk, reformer, and patriot. He worked for the regeneration of Hinduism and set upon a mission of popularizing Vedanta in the West. He was a disciple of sage Ramakrishna Parama hamsa. He began the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897. His participation in the Parliament of World Religions in 1893 led to the popularity of Hinduism and Vedanta in the United States where he started many Ramakrishna centers. The order is committed to spreading spirituality and social work.

cultures. More often than not, these Hindu nationalists also demonized the minority traditions like Islam. Besides, the Orientalists as well as the native nationalist reformers alike seemed to neglect the lower caste traditions in South India.[15]

Intriguing as it seems, it was the work of the nineteenth-century colonial ethnographer, missionary, and linguist, Robert Caldwell, which broke away from this monolithic idea of India cast in the Brahminical mold. Caldwell opposed the Orientalist constructions of a Hindu tradition by discovering, in turn, an ancient Dravidian tradition. He described this Dravidian tradition as non-Hindu, and non-Aryan. His discordant voice in the Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages (1856) casts the Brahmins as Aryans, who originated from North India and not at all indigenous to South India. Later, in the twentieth-century, Caldwell's ideas of this non-Aryan Dravidian tradition influenced the lower caste leaders in forming their notions of a Dravidian community in the South. My second chapter shows how the twentieth-century Dravidian movements formed their ideologies of a regional South by characterizing it as Tamil, lower caste, and anti-Aryan.

This chapter highlights the irony of how indigenous traditions in India such as the Hindu-Aryan and the Dravidian traditions were, in fact invented within the complex interactions between the native leaders of the nineteenth-century and the colonial Orientalists and ethnographers. Both the nineteenth-century Hindu nationalists, and the twentieth-century Dravidian leaders (as I argue in my next chapter) shape their national and regional ideas by mobilizing the discourses of tradition and culture. Such inventions

[15] Unlike Caldwell, Orientalists like Monier-Williams saw the infusion of the Dravidian religious elements such as polytheism and idolatry in Aryan religion as detrimental to Hinduism. See, Monier-Williams 84-85. And see also Muller's 1857 report in Caldwell.

of the indigenous Hindu and Dravidian traditions began even within colonial domination.[16] While both the Orientalists and the nationalists saw India as unified by Hindu religion, Caldwell, and later, the twentieth-century Dravidianists maintained that India was fundamentally fragmented along the axes of region, religion and caste. This chapter relates the development of the notions of the nation and region in India to colonial history.

There are two parts in this chapter. In Part 1, I begin with a study of the nineteenth-century Orientalist formations of Hinduism and argue that the native reformers of the time appropriated and reworked such Orientalist ideas of a unified Hindu tradition in imagining the Indian nation. Part 2 engages colonial ethnographic studies on South India, which had become popular toward the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It focuses particularly on the path breaking work of Caldwell on South Indian local lower caste traditions, and his resistance to the prevalent Orientalist glorification of a Hindu-Brahminical tradition in his time. The significance of Caldwell's work becomes more obvious when we note how Muller, by this time, had already put in place the notions of the racial and cultural divide between the "Aryan" North and the "Dravidian" South.[17] However, Muller and Monier-Williams had also argued that the superior Aryan races of the North had colonized and civilized the Dravidians of the South. In contrast, Caldwell upheld the Dravidian tradition over the Aryan culture.

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[16] See Partha Chatterjee, "anti-colonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power" (Whose Imagined," 215).

[17] See Note # 15

Theoretical Framework

Invented Traditions: Eric Hobsbawm defines "invented traditions" as involving a self-conscious linking to "a suitable historical past" (Hobsbawm 1). But in actuality these traditions are only constructed as responses to their immediate political-historical contexts (Hobsbawm 2). The nineteenth-century European Orientalists tried to "invent" an authentic Hindu past that represented all of India. While the native reformers of the time drew from such Orientalist ideas, they also reconstituted this Hindu past and tradition in highly innovative ways. In doing so, they evoked the myth of the Hindu origin of India as a part of their strategy of resisting the colonizer. Postcolonial critics such as Partha Chatterjee and Uma Chakravarti, have argued that the Bengal reformers claimed authenticity by tracing their lineage to an ancient Hindu Golden Age in India.

On the other hand, Caldwell formulated the idea of a Dravidian past by tracing it to a more ancient and pre-Aryan Tamil tradition. The Dravidianists in the twentieth-century rejected the idea of a pan-national Hindu culture. They were inspired by Caldwell's work in their search for an "originary" Dravidian tradition in South India.

Colonialism and Indian Traditions: In demonstrating the degree to which the above two movements were imbricated in colonialism, I engage with Chatterjee's discussion of the nineteenth-century Hindu movements.[18] Chatterjee critiques Benedict Anderson's well-known formulation of the nation as an imagined community. According to Anderson national communities are "distinguished [not] by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 6). Chatterjee defines the nation in largely in cultural terms. In showing how the idea of the Hindu nation in the nineteenth-

[18] See Chatterjee, Note # 16

century mobilized the discourses of culture and religion, he rejects Anderson's claim that anticolonial nationhood in postcolonial nations was derived from "modular" European forms that were already in place at this time ("Whose Imagined" 216). Chatterjee explores the colonial interactions of the nineteenth-century nationalists (he questions Anderson's neglect of the part played by colonialism in the formations of national consciousness in Third World nations such as India). What is of particular interest to Part 1 of my chapter (my discussion of the turn of the century Hindu nationalist formations) is how he refigures native agency into this anticolonial project, which, in an ironic way, was mediated by colonialism. He shows that the idea of the sovereign Hindu-India of the nationalist imagination was formed even within the tensions and crosscurrents of colonial domination ("Whose Imagined" 217). What is more, it involved complex negotiations, appropriations, and reconstructions of the Orientalist view of Hinduism.

In further complicating the discussion of the interactions among the Orientalists, ethnographers, and the British administrators in colonial India, Nicholas Dirks argues that the notions of caste, religion, and tradition became more and more established in nineteenth century colonial India. Dirks points out that the nexus between the upper caste Hindus, Orientalist scholars, and British administrators resulted in establishing the idea of an all-encompassing Hindu religious tradition in India. In addition, the Orientalists and the Raj officials alike conflated Hinduism with Sanskrit and Brahmin ethos. The case of an early Orientalist like Jones best exemplifies how the British officials also participated in the Orientalist fascination with the Brahminical tradition. Jones not only translated the ancient Sanskrit work, Manu Dharma Sastras, but also

established this Brahmin scripture as the authoritative text on native law.[19] In fact, his work "encapsulated British attempts to codify not just law but also social relations [in India] in a single orthodox 'Hindu'-and therefore necessarily 'Brahmanic'–register" (Dirks 3). Thus, the British took it upon themselves to "delineate proper Hindu traditions," a project that was also consonant with the interests of the Raj (Dirks 171). In the first part of this chapter I highlight the various ways in which this Orientalist project was largely complicit with colonial power.

Part 1. Orientalist Visions: The Invention of the Hindu-Indian Tradition

Edward Said has shown in his classic work on Orientalism that the discourse of Orientalism actually draws its authority from colonialism. While the European Orientalist scholarship in India advanced extensive studies in comparative religion, linguistics, and philology, it was also invested in the colonial agenda of discovering and legitimizing Indian traditions. It associated the authentic Indian tradition with Sanskrit language and Brahmin culture.[20] After all, as the contemporary Indologist, Ronald Inden, following Said, has pointed out, "imperial formations are constituted by imperial knowledges" (Inden 36). The European Orientalists, who were busily engaged in finding the ahistoric essences of the East/Indian traditions, not only imagined a monolithic Aryan

[19] In turning to the ancient Sanskrit scriptures, interpreted by the Brahmin pundits for determining native customs and legal practices, the colonial government often reinforced the Orientalist privileging of Brahmanic texts as the authentic sources on caste and tradition in India. In Sanskrit the text is called Manavadharmasastra or Manusmriti. Jones's translation was titled "*Institutes of Hindu Law, or the Ordinances of Menu According to the Gloss of Calcutta, Comprising the Indian System of Duties, Religious and Civil* (Calcutta 1794)." See Dirks 321-22. See also (Dirks's Note # 53 on pages 321-22).

[20] The Aryan theory of race, based [. . .] on William Jones's well-known 'discovery' of the Indo-Aryan family of languages, had been developed by German comparative philologists in the 1840's and 1850's, but was articulated for the first time as a specifically racial theory by Max Mueller, who maintained that the speakers of Indo-European languages in India, Persia, and Europe were of the same culture and race," and Mueller suggested, "the Brahmans were the representatives of the Aryan race who moved South" and engaged in the "peaceful colonization" of the Dravidian races (Dirks 142).

and Hindu India, but also cast it as the "spiritual" Other of the West. Besides, in painting this picture of a predominantly philosophical and "inward" India, the Orientalists also dissociated it from the outer public world of politics (which, of course, was the domain of the British).

The writings of Jones, Monier-Williams, Colebrooke, and Muller show how they envision India as an "Aryan-Hindu" land in establishing a grand myth of their "common Aryan past." Defining the "identity-and-difference" between the East and West, these scholars forge the idea of the common linguistic, cultural, and racial origins of Europe and India. This search starts with the exploration of "the historical development of the human race" (India, What it can 30). For instance, Muller sees in India the "recollections of childhood" of Europe's infancy, it becomes in his words "the port where [European civilization] started" (India, What it can 35). Similarly, Monier Williams, describes India as the "primeval home" of European civilization (Monier-Williams 21). What also becomes clear from this Orientalist narrative of the evolution of a world historical consciousness is how these scholars represent India as the Other of Europe. Idealized as it is, the Hindu India of these Orientalists is forever fixed in a prehistoric past that is properly distanced from European modernity. As Kamakshi Murti argues in her study of German Orientalism, the Orientalist depiction of a prehistoric India points to how "the Indian is necessary for the self-representation of the human, that is [the modern] Western man" (Murti 41).

Despite their dominant posture of a disinterested pursuit of knowledge, even the German Orientalists were engaged in tracing their originary racial links with an Aryan

India.[21] Therefore, Murti is rightly critical of the commonly held view that these scholars sought knowledge about India since they were "solely interested in the originary connections" with India, and that this was indeed an apolitical quest (Murti 7). She observes that the work of the German scholars often aided in "obfuscat[ing] the "immediate enterprise of colonialism" (Murti 7). Taking exception to Said's view that "the lack of colonies made German colonialist discourse more abstract, scholarly, and by implication, less powerful," she maintains that German Orientalism not only shared "intellectual authority" with English and French Orientalism, but also supported imperialism in India (Said 19: Murti 7).

Thus, quite apart from their endless fascination with the metaphysical excellences of Hindu culture, the nineteenth-century German scholars were convinced that in stark contrast to its glorious past, contemporary Indian society had degenerated and was badly in need of proper governance in the form of colonial rule.[22] They also believed that it was only the British who could give the Indians a sense of their glorious past. Muller, for instance, declares, "England and Germany [as] kindred nations [since] no colonists can work so heartily together as Germans and Englishmen" (qtd in Murti 36: Muller, Chips 1894 vol I, 121).[23] Thus, the nineteenth-century Orientalist enterprise helped in giving a

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[21] Kamakshi Murti argues that the Aryan myth, the idea of a common heritage between India and Germany, "once located had to be kept in the past" and "such a prehistorical positioning of India would confirm Europe's own advanced and developing pace in a progressive linear history" (Murti 4).

[22] The discussion in the earlier paragraph also draws from Murti. See Murti 2-5, 4.

[23] For the Muller quote, see Murti, 36.

"'philosophical meaning'" to the European colonizer's "agenda of territorial aggrandizement" (Murti 2).

Textualization

In the early days of Orientalism in India, Jones had advanced Indological research by starting The Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784).[24] The scholars of the society, who had devoted themselves to Sanskrit studies, began to think of the Brahmin scriptures such as Vedas, Upanishads, and the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharatha, as containing the very essence of Hinduism. This textual bias soon led to important elisions between Brahminical religion and what was constructed as proper Hinduism. The fascination with Sanskrit texts also led to a frenzied activity of translations into English, a trend that continued even into the later stages of Orientalist scholarship.

Translation is, in fact, a crucial site where we see the functioning of colonial power. As the postcolonial critic, Tejaswini Niranjana, argues in her work, Siting Translation, translation in "the colonial context" forms a "conceptual" field for representing the colonized world and the colonized subject in certain ways that are consonant with colonial ideologies (Niranjana 2). The idea of translation, which was conventionally seen as the unproblematic and apolitical mode of transferring essential and already-established textual meanings across languages and cultures, is being increasingly questioned today. Niranjana observes, "translation is [in fact] deployed in different kinds of discourses –philosophy, historiography, education, missionary –

[24] The Asiatic Society was founded by William Jones in 1784 in Calcutta. This Society sought to encourage Oriental scholarship and research. It was earlier named "The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal"

writings, travel writing—to renew and perpetuate colonial domination" (Niranjana 3). Often, these discourses "bring into being hegemonic versions of the non-Western other" (Niranjana 3-4). Moreover, colonial translation also involves the interpretation of native texts in particular ideological ways. The image of India that emerged in this textual discourse was actually paradoxical because, on the one hand the Orientalists glorified a changeless Indian past, but on the other, they saw contemporary Indian society as having become degraded (Niranjana 15). Thus, for instance, Jones's work:

> contributes to a historicist, teleological model of civilization that, coupled with a notion of translation presupposing transparency of representation, helps construct a powerful version of the "Hindu" that later writers of different philosophical and political persuasions incorporated into their texts in an almost seamless fashion (Niranjana 13).

In constructing this textualized India, the Orientalists saw the Vedas and Upanishads as symbolizing ancient Indian knowledge. It is no wonder that Muller calls Vedanta "the highest of religion, and the oldest name of the oldest system of philosophy in India" (India What it can 244). So also, in seeing Sanskrit as the unifying thread that runs through all the diverse strands of Indian cultural and religious traditions, Monier-Williams says:

> India, though it has, as we have seen, more than five hundred spoken dialects, has only one sacred language and only one sacred literature, accepted and revered by all adherents of Hinduism alike, however diverse in race, dialect, rank, and creed. That language is Sanskrit, and that literature is Sanskrit literature—the only

> repository of the Veda or 'knowledge' in its widest sense; the only vehicle of Hindu theology, philosophy, law, and mythology; the only mirror in which all the creeds opinions, customs, and usages of the Hindus are reflected (Monier-Williams 13-14)

The Brahmanic texts "provided transregional and metahistorical modes of understanding Indian society that clearly appealed to British colonial interests and attitudes" (Dirks 14). And as Richard King has also argued in his brilliant work on the Orientalist construction of a "mystic India," the European scholars "constructed uniform texts and a homogenized written canon through the imposition of Western philological standards and presuppositions onto Indian materials" (King 101).

In addition, in this Orientalist history, it was all the while the Brahmin elite who acted as the gatekeepers of Indian knowledges. They acted as interpreters, mediators, and translators not only to the Orientalists, but also to the British officials who were trying to determine authentic forms of native law and administration. Predictably, in this instance, they often provided visibility only to Brahminical traditions. Commenting on how the information on Indian culture came filtered through the Brahmin pundits, King observes, "the high social, economic,[. . .] and political status of the *brahmana* castes [. . .] contributed to the elision between brahmanical forms of religion and 'Hinduism'" (King 102). Considering this predominant Brahmin involvement in the colonial production of cultural knowledges on India, it is hardly surprising to find Mueller being overjoyed about the Brahmin approval of his translation of the Rig-Veda. He remarks:

> At present the Brahmans themselves have spoken, and the reception they have accorded to my edition of the Rig-Veda [and]

> the zeal with which they have themselves taken up the study of Vedic literature [points to the] earnestness with which [they] are still discussing the proper use that should be made of their ancient religious writings (I Point 143).[25]

What also comes through in these words of Muller is how he sees himself (and the other Orientalists) as giving the Indians a sense of their own past and cultural heritage. This Orientalist view of the Brahminical texts as representing all of India resulted in their neglect of the diverse vernacular languages and regional cultures in the subcontinent. Thus, Chakravarti points out about Muller: "[Muller] had concentrated exclusively on the Aryans" and "treated Hindus, Brahmins, Aryans and Indians as synonymous" (Chakravarti 42). Orientalists like Jones and Muller became instrumental in producing a markedly Sanskritic and textualized India for the consumption of the West.

Neo-Vedanta

Another important aspect of European Orientalism was how it reworked the newly discovered Hindu tradition in an unmistakably Western and Christian language to form what Richard King terms the "neo-Vedanta" (King 67, 69). In constructing an authentic form of Hinduism properly sanitized from the "primitive" practices of polytheism, idolatry, ritual sacrifices (practices to which they traced India's tragic fall from the Hindu Golden Age), these Orientalists presumed an implicit monotheism in Indian religion, much in the mold of Christianity. Such anxious attempts to reform

[25] See Nanda Mookherjee's I Point to India.

Hinduism must be understood in the context of the Utilitarian attacks on Hinduism, which squarely blamed India's civilizational backwardness on its caste system and ritualistic religion (exemplified in James Mill's History of India, and much of the missionary rhetoric was also along similar lines) (Mill 131). In response to this Utilitarian rhetoric, the Orientalists tried to upgrade Hinduism as a World religion. Retaliating against Mill's bitter criticism of the Orientalists and their "Orient," Mueller declares, "[one of] the greatest misfortunes that have happened to India, is Mill's History of British India" (India What it can 42).[26]

What is also particularly interesting in Muller's defense of the Orientalists is how he figures the Orientalist mission in terms of a conquest, where he employs an evidently "militaristic" language. His words bring to a sharp focus the nexus between Orientalism and colonial power (Murti 38). Thus, Muller upholds "the safe *conquests* (emphasis mine) of the glorious campaign, which was opened by Sir William Jones, Colebrooke, Sylvestre de Sacy, Champillion" (qtd in Murthi 38, Muller 1894, Vol I Chips 82f).[27] Paradoxically, both the Utilitarians and Orientalists, despite their serious differences of opinion on the matter of Indian civilization, shared a common concern with maintaining British power over India. What Utilitarians like Mill actually objected to were only the "ungoverned imaginings" of the Orientalists who saw a wondrous Indian culture, while they themselves could only find in Hinduism the unmistakable proofs of its caste-based

[26] For discussions of the Utilitarian resistance to the Orientalist fascination with Hinduism and James Mill's famous attack on caste and Brahmin dominance, see Majeed.
[27] See Murti 38.

and oppressive religious system (which made it imperative for the British not only to reform, but also to exercise control over this retrogressive society).[28]

The Orientalist reworking of Hinduism involved interpreting it in ways that made it consonant with Christian and monotheistic beliefs. Both King and Inden have argued that in forming this updated form of Hinduism, the Orientalists cast the philosopher of monism," Sankara, as the new "hero" of Hindu spiritual thought (Inden 106).[29] By figuring the universal "Brahman" (Supreme Soul) of Sankara's "advaitha" in monotheistic terms, they tried to repress the disturbing issues of polytheism and image worship in Indian religion (sometimes, linked to the Dravidian influences on Aryan religion in this Orientalist thinking).[30] Isolating such strands of Brahminical metaphysics as Sankara's "Advaitha" from among the plurality of Indian religious and philosophical traditions, they established it as the authentic form of Hinduism. In emphasizing the mystical strains of Vedic religion, they depicted Hindu culture as mainly "spiritual" in nature. Thus, when Muller has to define the Hindu essences, he says, "if I were asked to indicate by one word the distinguishing feature of the Indian character [. . .] I should say it was 'transcendent'" (India: What it can 105).

Interestingly, however, at this point of time, it was not only the European Orientalists who were preoccupied with celebrating the glorious tradition of the Hindus. Many largely upper caste native elite, who had not only become aware of the Orientalist writings, but had also become recently exposed to the liberal-humanist Enlightenment

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[28] See Majeed

[29] Sankara (or Shankara) Acharya (788-820). His non-dualistic "advaitha" philosophy was popular with the Orientalists and the Nineteenth century reformers. As Inden points out, it was the "culmination of Brahminism" for these reform leaders (Inden 105-08).

Monism. The followers of Advaitha believe in a universal Soul, or Brahman.

[30] See Monier-Williams 84, 85.

ideals of the West, were thinking of this Hindu past. In addition, they thought intensely of colonial domination and how it had resulted in the current degradation of their land. In effect, the rise of the nineteenth-century nationalist consiousness in India is intimately connected with the discourse of Orientalism.

Native Negotiations

Said's theorizing of Orientalism often underplays native collaborations and negotiations in the production of colonial knowledges. Said frequently assumes the passivity of the native subject in such interactions. While I argue in this section that the nineteenth-century nationalists were influenced by the Orientalists, I also make visible how within their complex and often problematic negotiations with the Oriental scholarship, these native subjects were trying to reinvent a Hindu tradition with a markedly different emphasis. Among other things, the native visions of Hinduism had a strong nationalistic aspect. The native reformers subvert the Orientalist notion of an otherworldly (and apolitical) Indian spirituality. They make this very spirituality the primary impulse of their anticolonial struggle.

In this regard, Homi Bhabha's criticism of the Saidian model of Orientalism becomes relevant. Bhabha has critiqued Said's unitary conception of power relations in the colonial discourse, and rejected what he sees as Said's notion of the "unidirectionality of colonial power" (Bhabha 103). While Bhabha undercuts this "unidirectionality" of Said's colonial discourse by bringing in the issue of the colonizer's psychic anxieties of the "return of the repressed," my focus, instead, is on showing how the native subject subverts the colonial power relations (Bhabha 104).

At this point, we must go back to Said's account of the textual bias of the Orientalists to find out how, in his view these scholars produced the Orient "by making statements about it, settling it, ruling over it." In this unholy nexus of knowledge and power, "knowledge is what gets passed on [. . .] from one [Orientalist] text to another" (Said 116). The Orientalist writings not only reinforce each other, but also become foundational for other colonial cultural productions. Thus, the "texts generated by indologists, anthropologists, philosophers, literary critics, fiction writers, travelers, and missionaries create a discursive net" which forms the colonial repertoire of cultural knowledges about the East which is always-already available for the Western writer/reader (Said 116). But, in a paradoxical manner, the very Orientalist works, which tried to envision a prehistoric and static Hindu past, often modulated the ways in which the colonized elite began to perceive themselves in India. This native agency is visible not only in how even as the reformers draw from the Orientalist discourses, they contest colonial subordination, but also in the manner in which they begin to imagine an anticolonial Hindu nation by reworking the Orientalist ideas of a Hindu past and its essential "spirituality" (an ideal which in the colonial discourse was often associated with the passive, feminized, and apolitical figure of the Hindu male).

The key figures of the nineteenth-century reform movements in Bengal and other parts of Northern India such as Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Keshab Chandra Sen, Debendranath Tagore, and Swami Dayananda Saraswati (who was born in Gujarat and started the "Arya Samaj" in Bombay), among others, represent the reformist consiousness of the time. In fact, the Orientalist discovery of India's ancient past "also secured for Indians pride of place in a civilizational lexicon of cultural reconstitution, reaffirmation

and resistance" (Dirks 14). Among other things, these reformers drew particularly from the Orientalist imaginings of a spiritual Hinduism, and posed it in opposition to what they cast in negative terms as the "materialistic" West.[31] Such Orientalist influences are noticeable, for instance, in how one of the foremost reform leaders, Roy (well-known for the role he played in the abolition of sati) pays his respects to William Jones. In his essay on the Brahmin scripture, "Gayatri," Roy acknowledges Jones as one of his sources and says, "while translating this essay on Gayatri, I deemed it proper to refer to the meaning of the text as given by Sir William Jones, whose talents, acquisitions, virtuous life, and impartial research, have rendered his memory an object of love and veneration to all" (English Works part II 80).

Another aspect in which the native reformers resembled the Orientalists was in their preoccupation with Sanskrit texts (however, Roy and Saraswati were engaged in translating Sanskrit works into vernacular languages like Bengali and Hindi, respectively). By and large, the reform writings venerate the ancient Sanskrit scriptures, Vedas and Upanishads (Vedanta). Such tendencies are central to the writings of Roy, Swami Vivekananda and Sarawati. While Swami Vivekananda is rhapsodic in hailing the "high spiritual flights of the Vedanta" (Vivekananda, Hinduism1), Saraswati sees in "Vedic Sanskrit" the "Ur-language" of the Orientalist imagination that linked Sanskrit with European languages (King 119).

In the same manner, Roy declares that his focus is on "the principle chapters of the Vedas as being of unquestionable authority amongst all Hindoos" (English Works

[31] Swami Vivekananda believed that Indian "spirituality" was an antidote to the materialistc "science" of West. In opposing Indian spirituality to Western Science, he argues that the "sciences [. . .] can give us only bread and clothes and power over our fellowmen" he argued, but India made "spirituality" its national characteristic (Swami Vivekananda, Hinduism 42).

part II. 13). He sees them as the origin of all Hindu literature: "the Veda from which all Hindoo literature is derived, is, in the opinion of the Hindoos, an inspired work, coeval with the existence of the world," and underlines, "the whole body of the Hindoo Theology, Law, and Literature, is contained in the Vedas" (English Works part II. 59). Moreover, he invokes the name of the advaita philosopher, Sankara, in making clear that his translation was done strictly "in conformity to the Comments of the great Sankar-Acharya" (English Works part II. 41). In Roy's opinion the Vedanta is the "*Resolution of all the Vedas*" (English Works part II. 59). He is critical of the Brahmins who shut off the Vedic knowledge to others. According to him, it is precisely the inaccessibility of Sanskrit language to everybody other than a Brahmin which results in the Vedanta "being concealed within the dark curtain of the Sanskrit language, and the Brahmins permitting themselves alone to interpret, or even touch any book of the kind, the Vedanta, although perpetually quoted, is little known to the public" (English Works part II. 59). Roy's reformist rhetoric shows a veneration of the Sanskrit scriptures fused with a modern egalitarian impulse to make the Vedas accessible to all.

Although, much in the manner of the Orientalists, the reformers also felt that the contemporary Indian society had degenerated (a sad state of affairs that they often traced to the ravages of Islamic invasions) they were convinced that by recovering the "sanatana" (ancient) Hindu past it was still possible to reinvigorate the nation. As a part of this movement, they started new native religious and cultural institutions such as the Brahma Samaj (1828: Calcutta) started by Keshub Chandra Sen and Roy, Arya Samaj of Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1875: Bombay) and the Ramakrishna Order of Swami

Vivekananda (1897: Calcutta).[32] These institutions upheld a non- ritualistic, and largely monotheistic Hindu tradition. In addition, they also saw this reformed Hindu tradition as basically egalitarian in terms of caste and gender relations, and argued that the position of women in the Vedic society was, in fact equal to that of men. They cast practices such as ritualism, animal sacrifices, polytheism, and idolatry (issues that had been the prime targets of missionary and Utilitarian attacks on Indian civilization) as later aberrations of a pristine Hindu tradition corrupted by the priest-class.

The following lines of Roy, where he maintains that the Vedas give the message of monotheism, demonstrate how the reformers invented a monotheistic Hindu religion:

> An attentive perusal of this [Roy is referring to his translation of the Mundaka-Upanishad] as well as of the remaining books of the Vedanta will, I trust convince every unprejudiced mind, that they, with great consistency, inculcate the unity of God; instructing men, at the same time, in the pure mode of adoring him in spirit. It will also appear evident that the Vedas, although they tolerate idolatry as the last provision for those who are totally incapable of raising their minds to the contemplation of the invisible God of nature, yet repeatedly urge the relinquishment of the rites of idol-worship, and the adoption of a purer system of religion (English Works part II. "Introduction").

The above lines bring many reformist concerns to a sharp focus. Roy not only establishes the Upanishads as the authoritative sources on Hindu religion, but also interprets them as consonant with European modernity, where rationalism becomes wedded to spirituality. Thus, in his reading, the Vedas and Vedanta "inculcate" an

[32] See Note # 14

"unprejudiced" mind. They form a part of the "pure" system of the universal Hindu religion. In demonizing idolatry Roy shows it up as an aberration in Hinduism. Similarly, in another context, figuring Hinduism as a world religion, he links it with the European religions (mainly Christianity) and argues, "amongst foreigners, those Europeans who believe God to be in every sense One, and worship Him alone in spirit [. . .], should be regarded by us with affection, on the ground of the object of their worship being the same as ours" (English Works part II. 200).

Saraswati is a crucial example of a later nineteenth-century reformer who employs the notions of Aryanism, in this case also strongly "associated with vitality, spirituality, and high mindedness" (Chakravarti 54). Saraswati used the term "Arya" instead of "Hindu" because he was wary of the prevalent colonial stereotypes of passivity and effeminacy associated with the latter term (Chakravarti 55). He not only sees Aryan culture as superior to the Western culture, but also proclaims that India, or "Aryavartha" as he prefers to call it, is the ancient source of "all the sciences and arts and religions that are now found in the whole world" (Saraswati 282). Besides, in reiterating the frequent reformist criticism of the priest-class, Saraswati, even as he upholds Vedic religion, condemns Brahminical corruption. Interestingly, he overturns the colonial demonization of the Brahmins by comparing the priestly Brahmins to the "European Popes" who arrogate the supreme power of holding a "license to heaven," and mislead the gullible masses (Saraswati 284-85). According to Saraswati, "none can be a Brahmin on the ground of his parents being Brahmins [because a] man is called a Brahmin from his merit, character, deeds, and benevolence" (Saraswati 284). In this novel view of Brahminism, he breaks the notion of a rigid and biological caste model and offers in its

place, a model formed on the basis of meritocracy into which he also writes the ideas of freedom and choice.

The nineteenth-century reform discourse gathers the ideas of the nation and religion together. After all, as Hobsbawm shows, an invented tradition is often "an alloy of religious and patriotic elements" (Hobsbawm 7). The contemporary historian, Sunil Khilnani, in the context of his discussion of the nineteenth-century reform ideologies, underlines Hobsbwam's view that religion often forms the basis of national traditions. Khilnani observes, "in [the nationalist] search for an internal principle of unity to the past, religion was given a foundational position by both orthodox and reformist Brahmin intellectuals" (Khilnani 159). When the Indian reformers embraced the new episteme of Hinduism, or the neo-Vedanta of the Orientalists, they saw the subcontinent as "unite[d] [. . .] under the flag of a single religious tradition" (King 105). No doubt, they invented this Hindu-Indian tradition by recuperating it from the colonial Orientalist texts. Nevertheless, they believed, unlike the Orientalists, that they could not only recover their glorified religious past (although in a "reformed" and somewhat modernized form), but also make it the basis of a new national community. They deployed "the very [Orientalist] discourse that succeeded in alienating, subordinating and controlling India" and made this "a religious clarion call for the Indian people to unite under the banner of a universalistic and all-embracing Hinduism" (King 93).

In reworking the Orientalist Hindu tradition, Roy, Swami Vivekananda and others were "rereading [the] representations of the Advaitha Vedanta of Sankaracarya as a powerful cultural symbolic for the development of an inclusivistic and nationalist ideology for uniting Hindus in their struggle for independence from British rule" (King

134, 135). Another postcolonial historian, Gyan Prakash, also points out that the "sympathetic" views of the Orientalists "became objective and authoritative statements that affirmed India's great past," however, the "nationalists transformed the object of knowledge—India--from passive to active, from inert to sovereign, capable of relating to History and Reason" (Gyan Prakash 388). What is common in the views of the above cultural historians is the idea that the nineteenth-century reformers were not by any means the passive recipients of Orientalist knowledges. In fact, they actively altered and reconstituted such colonial knowledges. Moreover, they also negotiated with colonial modernity in reforming Hindu tradition so that it could conform to the Western ideals of progress and social change.

What is more, it can hardly be said that the reform-Orientalist interactions were unidirectional. On their part, even as the work of Orientalists such as Muller was tied to the colonial interests, they often showed support for the native reformers. It was indeed Muller who had influenced the reformers greatly with his "approval of Vedic civilization" (Dirks 39). Nanda Nukherjee in I Point to India gives a detailed account of the correspondence and interactions between Muller and reformers such as Roy, Swami Vivekananda, and others. Muller praises the reformers for trying to develop a Vedic and spiritual culture in India and declares: "that great revival of religion which was inaugurated some fifty years ago by Rajaram-Mohun Roy, [. . .] known as the Brahma-Samaj, under the leadership of my noble friend Keshub Chunder Sen, was chiefly founded on the Upanishads, and was Vedantic in spirit" (India What it Can 249). When he looks at the work of the reformers, he is led to believe that there is "an unbroken

continuity" in the "Hindu thought, [for] more than three thousand years" (India What it Can 249).

In this reform search for Hindu antiquity the discourses of tradition and nation are closely intertwined. Hobsbawm has argued that invented national traditions seek legitimacy by "restructuring [. . .] images of the past," which are employed for "new national purposes" (Hobsbawm 12, 13, 6). In this case, they establish their "continuity" with a selective past (Hobsbawm 1). The reform elite found in this Hindu national tradition that they invented an impetus for their anticolonial struggles. Therefore, as Chakravarthi argues:

> the new self-image fulfilled a growing need of the emerging [nationalist elite] since it enabled them to contend with the "burden" of the present, especially with the loss of self-esteem following the British conquest of India. [And] what was gradually and carefully constituted [. . .], in the interaction between colonialism and nationalism [the ideas about the Hindu past] have assumed the status of revealed truths (Chakravarti 28).

Acutely conscious of their subordination to the colonial power, the reformers tried to prove to their colonizers that they not only possessed a great civilization in the past, but were also capable of rebuilding the nation. In forming this new India, the Orientalist idea of Hindu "spirituality" acquired a different meaning and valency.

Spiritual nationhood

In discussing the nineteenth-century reform preoccupation with spirituality, I will begin by referring to Chatterjee's discussion of the reformist imaginings of Indian nationhood. Chatterjee argues, "anticolonial nationalism [in India] creates its own domain of sovereignty [by tracing a free and inner spiritual space] within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power" ("Whose Imagined" 217). In his now well-known formulation of the "dichotomized" domains of the "spiritual and material" spheres within the Hindu reformist consciousness (which, according to Chatterjee, correspond to the spaces of the inner/outer and home/world), he describes how the reform leaders saw the inner "spiritual" sphere as a "sovereign" territory, where they "refuse[d]" the intervention of the "colonial power" and declared themselves to be "already sovereign" ("Whose Imagined" 217). This reformist self-fashioning leads Chatterjee to declare, "the most creative results of the nationalist imagination" in nineteenth-century India as "posited [. . .] on a *difference* with the 'modular' forms of nationalism of the West" ("Whose Imagined" 216).

Thus, the reform elite singled out "spirituality" as the defining trait of Indian national culture, and set it in stark opposition to what they demonized as Western "materialism." We can understand the reformist notions of an anticolonial Indian tradition in the light of Hobsbawm's definition of invented traditions as immediate responses to political-historical contexts. In the case of the nineteenth-century elite, this immediate political-historical context was colonial domination. While they were ready to acknowledge the superiority of the colonizer in the "outer" sphere of the "world," that is, in terms of its science, technology and statecraft, they maintained that India always

excelled in its "inner" spiritual sphere. Nevertheless, even as they invented this spiritual Hindu tradition as a mode of dealing with Western modernity, which was tied to the colonial power, they also selectively incorporated this modernity into their own anticolonial project (Chatterjee, "Nationalist Resolution" 237-40).

In illuminating the above idea, we can look at how Roy promotes European settlement in India on the grounds that "European settlers in India [would promote] the diffusion of a knowledge of European arts and sciences," and help Indians in "deliver[ing] their minds from the superstitions" (English Works part III. 82). Added to this, they "would establish schools and other seminaries of education for the cultivation of English language" (English Works part III. 82). It is by such scientific and cultural exchanges beginning from the art of agricultural cultivation, law, governance, revenue system, religion, to manners, literature, and language that Roy hopes Indians could benefit from Western education and knowledge (English Works, part III. 81-83).[33]

However, in building their new India the reformers found it imperative to go back to the Hindu past. Therefore, while they promoted colonial education in sciences and technology, they were convinced that this modern education could never replace a spiritual education essential for the ideal Hindu national subject. Swami Vivekananda argues, "all that England can do is to help India to work out her own salvation. All progress at the dictation of another, whose hand is at India's throat, is valueless" (India and Her Problems 37). Thus, in his words, "what we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, *brahmacharya* [celibacy]as the guiding motto" (India 51). While he

[33]All the quotes in this paragraph are from The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy. See the discussion on pages 81-83.

welcomes "English language and Western science; [since, after all] we need technical education and all else which may develop industries," he still believes that one should draw lessons from the Hindu past because "a nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune" (India 59, 41). Thus, despite their responsiveness to colonial modernity, the reformers placed Hindu spirituality at the center of their patriotic imaginings.

Moreover, as Swami Vivekananda maintains, the nationalist project of education should be deeply concerned with "man-making" (India 48). In breaking away from the colonial stereotypes of effeminacy, passivity, and slothful "unmanliness" of the Hindu male the reformers began to uphold the images of the "kshatriya" (warrior) Hindu along with those of the Brahmin spiritual seeker. This new Hindu identity departed from the Orientalist constructions of a purely contemplative and Brahminical Hindu subject. Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda reread the lessons of the Vedic past in developing an aggressive form of Hindu nationalism. Thus, "the Aryan was an important element in the nationalist construction of a sense of identity for its association with vigour, conquest, and expansion: in other words, for its connotations of political and cultural achievement" (Chakravarti 47). Chakravarti also observes, "the aggressiveness of the new cultural nationalism marked a sharp break from the universalism of the earlier phase associated with Rammohun Roy and a section of the Brahmo Samaj" (Chakravarti 49). The reformers found Hinduism to be "everything related to Aryan and Kshatriya values" and

did not see the anticolonial struggle as antithetical to Brahminical renunciatory ideals (Chakravarti 49).[34]

Thus, for reformers like Swami Vivekananda patriotism was not at all discordant with their spiritual quests. In fact, Vivekananda makes it a part of his spiritualizing mission. Himself a monk, he defends his nationalistic fervor by figuring India as a symbol of spirituality. He proclaims: "if there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *punya bhumi* (holy land), [. . .] the land to which every soul that is wending its way God-ward must come to attain its last home [. . .] the land of introspection and of spirituality,--it is India" (India 1). He even takes up the mission of spiritualizing the "materialistic" West, arguing that the "great contribution to the sum-total of the world's progress from India is the greatest, the noblest, the sublimest theme that can occupy the mind of man—it is philosophy and spirituality" (Vivekanada, Hinduism 41). Spirituality was a national "mission" of India. As a result, the Ramakrishna Mission founded by him set out to spread the message of Vedanta to the world and even opened many of its centers in the United States.[35]

What comes through strongly in Swami Vivekananda's rhetoric is a fusion of the language of militarism with that of an inward spiritual quest. Thus, in his characteristic style he weds spirituality to physical culture and informs the youth of the nation: "you will be nearer to Heaven through football, than through the study of the Gita. You will understand Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger" (India 26). Besides, in Swami Vivekananda's (and also Saraswati's) reform agendas there is always

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[34] Chakravarti traces the shift from the contemplative Hindu figure to that of the warrior- Aryan. The ideal Aryan figure is a combination of the Brahmin and Kshtriya virtues in this reformist vision (47-49)

[35]See Note # 14

a strong emphasis on the body, an insistence on the cultivation of physical power. Such images of Kshtriya power in this reformist discourse are also highly gendered. The Swami makes a problematic connection between the idea of manhood and the often feminized notion of spirituality in the following lines, "what I want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which dwells a mind of the same material as that of which the thunderbolt is made. Strength, manhood, *Kshtra-virya* plus *Brahma-teja*" (India 27).

Overall, the nineteenth-century reformers made the Orientalist celebration of Indian spirituality central to their self-fashioning. This tendency of identifying India with spirituality continued even into the twentieth-century nationalistic discourses in India. Thus, the "Orientalist presuppositions about the 'spirituality' of India [. . .] were used by reformers such as Rammohun Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and [later, by the twentieth-century leaders of the freedom movement such as] Mohandas K. Gandhi in the development of an anti-colonial Hindu nationalism" (King 86) (Gandhi, however, developed a counter-model of non-aggressive Hinduism). In short, the slippages between the terms "nation" and "Hindu" in the reform imagination, as Chatterjee observes, do not point to a "pre-modern" religious ideology but, in fact, to a "modern, rationalist, and historicist idea" (Nation and its Fragments 110).

However, innovative as this Hindu reformist discourse was, it was still deeply invested in patriarchal ideologies. To begin with, Chatterjee has shown this reformist nationalist consciousness to be strongly gendered. The "outer" social sphere of this nationalist consiousness was the domain of the males, who transacted with the colonizer's modernity and technological progress. But their essential Indianness was to be sustained by the "inner" core, which was the inviolate space of Indian cultural self-

assertion symbolized by the Hindu woman (Chatterjee "Nationalist Resolution" 243, 249). The reformers cast this "pure" and "spiritual" Hindu woman as the sign of the Indian tradition. Moreover, they also tended to overlook regional, lower caste, and minority traditions in imagining this homogeneous India.

Marginalization

Uma Chakravarti observes about the Orientalists that they "did not particularly react to the specific forms of inequality of caste, class, and gender prevailing in India" (Chakravarti 30). Although, the native reformers were more conscious of such social inequalities, their belief in a monolithic Hinduism led them to marginalize many regional traditions such as the lower caste South Indian traditions. While Chatterjee does not specifically address the issue of the marginalizations along the lines of region, his view that the "formation of a hegemonic 'national culture' was *necessarily* built upon a system of exclusions," points to the sidelining of the lower caste and class groups in this discourse ("Nationalist Resolution" 251). In fact, the "new patriarchy which the nationalist discourse set up as a hegemonic construct culturally distinguished itself not only from the West but also from the mass of its own people" ("Nationalist Resolution" 251). In this context, the middleclass and largely upper caste reform leaders are in a "position of subordination in one relation [with the colonizer] and a position of dominance in another [in relation to the marginalized caste and class groups]" (Nation and its Fragments 36). Consequently, the Hindu movement impelled "numerous fragmented resistances to that normalizing project" ("Whose Imagined" 224). However, Chatterjee only focuses on the marginalizations along the axes of class and gender.

But I will proceed to show how the nationalist discourses often pushed the Dravidian lower caste groups to the periphery of such nationalist imaginings. In the next chapter, I focus on how the twentieth-century Dravidian counter-movements which started in South India were a response to such marginalizations along caste and regional lines through two centuries of nationalist history. Such exclusions of the South in the reformist rhetoric of a universal India are obvious, for example, in the following cartographic imaginings of Saraswati. In marking the boundaries of the "Aryavartha" (India), he simply excludes the Deccan (South) India beyond the Vindhya mountains. He even suggests that the inhabitants of the Deccan are "barbarians" (Saraswati 568). Thus, in Saraswati's description, "India is called Aryavarta, because the Aryan branch of the human race has dwelt there since creation. It is bounded on the south by the Vindhya (the barrier of the barbarians)" (Saraswati 568).

In discussing this idea of a hegemonic Hindu national community, I find it useful to link my discussion to the views of another important critic of the nation, Anne McClintock. McClintok discusses the intersections of gender, race and nationalism to show that nations are "contested systems of cultural representation" (McClintok 89). While the subjects might imagine a shared sense of "extended community," these national communities are, in fact, "historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed" (McClintok 89). As such, all national communities are contested entities. No wonder, therefore, that the lower caste leaders of the twentieth-century Dravidian movements in South India contested the idea of a pan-national Hindu community from which they felt increasingly alienated. Interestingly, however, almost a century before these native South Indian leaders began their protest against hegemonic

forms of Hindu nationalism, the colonial ethnographer, Robert Caldwell, contested the Orientalist idea of a universal Hindu tradition in India and laid the ground for the later Dravidian protests.

Part 2: The Ethnographic Archive and the Dravidian Difference

While the nineteenth-century Orientalists often saw the issue of caste only as tangential to their grand preoccupations with the mystical religious tradition of the Hindus, ethnography, which occupied the center stage of colonial politics in the later part of the century (especially, after the traumatic 1857 mutiny which is supposed to have erupted in response to an outrage to native religious and caste sentiments) became strongly interested in this issue.[36] The privileging of ethnography over other forms of "imperial knowledges" in the second half of the nineteenth century was impelled by "the belief that India could be ruled using anthropological knowledge to understand and control its subjects and to represent and legitimate it on mission" (Dirks 44).

Moreover, unlike the Orientalists, who were interested in a universal religious tradition in India, the ethnographers focused on local customs, regional differences, and the divisions of caste. The ethnographic activity in South India at this time mostly revolved around anthropological studies of the "primitive" castes and tribes. Incited and funded by the Raj, such studies were closely tied to colonial governmental interests of strengthening its control over the localities and provinces. These studies often became

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[36] Especially after the Mutiny of 1857 (which is supposed to have erupted over the anxiety of religious and caste pollution), such studies assumed a primacy in colonial politics. Caste in this ethnographic archive was also racialized, where the earlier Orientalist theories of the racial divide between the Aryan North and the Dravidian South were harnessed into the classificatory studies in constructing the idea of the inferiority of the lower caste Dravidian populations. See Note# 37

the basis of classificatory projects such as the Census.[37] At this point of time, Orientalists like Monier-Williams and Muller had already formed the notion of the racial difference between the Aryans of the North and the Dravidians of the South. They held the belief that the indigenous and primitive Dravidian races of the South were civilized by Aryan colonization. Muller popularized the notion of the Aryan colonization of the South (which Caldwell appropriates into his different agendas). This Orientalist inferiorizing of the Dravidian South comes through strongly in the rhetoric of Monier-Williams. Monier-Williams argues that the Dravidians of the South must be distinguished from the "aboriginals" of India (Monier-Williams 3). He concedes that they had "attained independent civilization," but goes on to attribute their cultural excellence directly to Aryan influences: "[the Dravidians] having become Hinduized in religion, manners, and usages" became different from the Kolarian aborigines who remained "uncivilized" (Monier-Williams 7).[38] However, according to him, the downside of the intermingling of these two races, which helped in civilizing the Dravidians, was the fact that, in the reverse, the inherent barbarism of the Dravidian races affected their Aryan civilizers.

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[37] "With the memory of the 'Mutiny' still lively, concerns about revenue gave way to a preoccupation with social order and the maintenance of rule" (Dirks, Castes, 44). The Mutiny itself is said to have started when the British introduced a new Enfield rifle, whose cartridges were believed to be packed with beef and lard. These cartridges had to be clipped off by the mouth before loading. This produced the anxiety of pollution both among Hindus for whom the cow is sacred, and Muslims for whom pork is unclean. Also, such "fears of pollution were heightened," since "it was widely assumed that pollution would be used [by the Christian missionaries] as a technique" of conversion (Dirks 127).

[38] "The indigenous non-Aryan races of India are divided into three great classes: Tibeto-Burmese, Kolarian, and Dravidian. Although generally regarded as aboriginal, the Kolarians are known to have entered Bengal by means of the northeastern passes: they encountered the Dravidians in central India, who broke up the Kolarians and pushed them towards the east and west. Thus when the Aryans entered India, the Kolarians again succumbed to the invaders and were still more scattered into smaller groups. There are nine principal languages of the Kolarian group of which the most important is Santali. It is not akin to the Sanskrit, nor does it employ the Devanagari alphabet" <http://www.experiencefestival.com/kolarian>

Thus, "Brahmanism [became corrupted and turned into] that complicated system of polytheistic doctrines and caste-usages which has gradually resulted out of the mixture of Brahmanism and [. . .] the non-Aryan creeds of Dravidians and aborigines" (Monier-Williams 84). Williams laments that Aryan religion "has adopted much of the Fetishism of the Negrito aborigines of India [. . .] borrowed from the various cults of the Dravidian races" to its detriment (Monier-Williams 85). In this narrative of race relations in India, the "Dravidian" and "aborigine" often become sliding terms. This Orientalist attitude continued into the later ethnographic archive, and especially, the Orientalist idea of the racial basis of caste became central to many ethnographic studies on South India such as those of Caldwell, H.H.Risley, and Edgar Thurston.[39] Colonial ethnography in India not only established the idea of caste as based on race, but also linked it to religion.

Caste

Interrogating the colonial ethnographic view of caste as the "sign" of Indian religious tradition and also the primary mode of socio-cultural organization in the subcontinent, Dirks argues, "[if] caste has become a central symbol for India" it is mainly because a "long history of writing" has "identified" it as definitive of "Indian tradition," and seen it as a "threat to modernity" (Dirks 3). While Dirks does not, of course, claim that caste was invented by the British, he shows that "caste [. . .] is a modern phenomenon, [. . .],

[39] Edgar Thurston (1855-1935) "began his ethnographic study in 1894" and was appointed the superintendent of the ethnographic project in Madras with Risley as director of ethnography for India. Risley and Thurston's "advocacy of anthropometry, and [Risley's] theories about the relation of race and caste, were [. . .] fundamental to the definition of the ethnographic project in turn-of-century colonial India" (Dirks, Castes, 184). Risley's important work includes Tribes and Castes of Bengal (1891), and People of India (1908). Thurston was the Superintendent for ethnography for Madras presidency. His work on Castes and Tribes of Southern India was done with the assistance of K. Rangachari and was published in 1909 and Ethnographic Notes in Southern India was published in 1907. See also Dirks 183-88.

the product of an historical encounter between India and Western colonial rule" (Dirks 5). The colonial government, in turning to ancient Sanskrit scriptures interpreted by the Brahmin pundits for determining native customs and legal practices, saw them as the authentic sources on the matters of religion, caste, and tradition in India. As a result of such colonial negotiations between the British administrators and the Brahmins, the four-fold "Varna" system, as described in the ancient legal text Manu Dharma Sastras that was translated by Jones, came to be seen as foundational in Indian society.[40] This 'classical' and 'hierarchical' model of caste with Brahmin at the top, followed by three non-brahmin castes, Kshtriya (warrior caste), Vysya (merchant), and Sudra (agriculturist, laborer) with the 'Panchamas', or the untouchables, seen as being beyond the pale of the caste structure, has had a long career in Indian sociology and Western anthropology even until the end of the twentieth century.

Ethnographic Studies and Caste in South India

It is the above Brahmin-dominated and hierarchical model of caste that is largely employed in the major nineteenth-century ethnographic work on South India. The studies of an early ethnographer like Abbe Dubois (1765-1848), and even the later ethnographers like Caldwell, refract the colonial interests of classifying and describing Indian caste system.[41] These ethnographers construct caste across both the racial (Aryan/Dravidian) and the regional (North/South) divides. Moreover, the ethnographic

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[40] See Dirks 14, 34.

[41] Jean-Antoine Dubois. "French missionary in India, b. in 1765 at St. Remèze (Ardèche); d. in Paris, 17 Feb., 1848. The Abbé Dubois was a director of the Seminary of the Foreign Missions, a member of the Royal Societies of Great Britain and Paris, and of the Literary Society of Madras" <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05178a.htm>

discourses of both ethnographers are linked to missionary imperatives. Kamakshi Murti, in her discussion of another ethnographer-missionary, Herman Gundert, who worked on Malayalam language and culture in South India, throws light on the missionary projects by arguing "hostile Brahmins [were] an inherent threat and need[ed] to be won over [or co-opted into the missionary enterprise] or humiliated in front of the other castes" (Murti 101).[42] The ethnographic archive on South India reveals how the missionary interests and colonial administrative concerns often come together in primitivizing the lower caste South Indian populations, even as many of these ethnographers are critical of Brahmins.

The early French missionary, Abbe Dubois, is perhaps, the most complex example of this anti-Brahminical tendency because even as he demonizes Brahmins, he defends the caste system. Praised by Muller for his "eye-witness" accounts and his capacity to "enter into the views of the natives" Dubois is indeed an important name among the early nineteenth-century colonial ethnographers (Muller, "Introduction" Hindu Manners vii). Initially, in his work, Dubois maintains a tone of respect toward the ancient Brahmins, who, according to him, preserved the purity of their customs and therefore, earned their "superior" position in the caste hierarchy: "it is chiefly to the scrupulous observance of such customs that the Brahmins owe the predominance of their illustrious order" (Dubois 23). In addition, his account of caste hierarchies in India also brings "region" into play. Marking the difference between the northern and the Southern Brahmins he points out, "[the] northern Brahmin considers himself nobler and of higher

[42] Hermann Gundert (1814 –1893): German missionary and linguist wrote the Malayalam grammar Malayalabhaasha Vyakaranam (1868). He compiled the first Malayalam-English dictionary (1872). He also translated the Bible into Malayalam. He worked on the Malabar coast, in Kerala. He was the grand father of the writer, Herman Hesse. See, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Gundert>

rank than his southern brother" since he has "originated closer to the cradle of his race" (Dubois 102).

However, while Dubois extols the ancient Brahmins for their sense of discipline and their preoccupation with "purity," he is highly critical of the Brahmins of the later day. Relapsing into the familiar colonial rhetoric of Brahmin degeneracy, especially, of the corrupt priest-class, Dubois soon begins to demonize Brahmins. He employs the prevalent missionary stereotypes of Brahmins and calls them "naturally cunning, wily, double-tongued, and servile," and says that the Brahmins "gain access" to the centers of power starting from the "courts of prices" to colonial "government offices" (Dubois 289, 291). In fact, in their anti-Brahminical campaigns, the leaders of the twentieth-century lower caste Dravidian movements often drew upon such colonial rhetoric of Brahmin duplicity. The dominant presence of Brahmins in colonial offices became the prime target of attack within these movements.[43] Dubois foreshadows this Dravidian resentment against the large scale employment of Brahmins in colonial administrative institutions, when he remarks that "the subordinate collectors of revenue, custom-house officers, writers, book-keepers, village school masters, and astronomers are [all] Brahmins" (Dubois 292).

If Dubois's picture of the Brahmins is in no way complimentary, his view of the lower castes and "pariahs" (outcastes) is harsher still. In his view, unlike the intelligent

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[43] The Justice Party formed in Madras in 1921 by the non-Brahmin elite started a campaign for the representation of the lower caste groups in colonial administrative institutions. When they came to power, they implemented a communal reservation policy. Periyar Ramaswami Naicker, the most influential leader of the Dravidian movement and the founder of the Self-respect Movement in Tamil Nadu was also involved with the Justice Party.

but "wily" Brahmins the "Sudras [who are the majority of the population in the Tamil region] are more credulous" (here he invokes the stereotype of the "child-like" native) (Dubois 289, 296). But the Sudras lack the intellectual refinement of the Brahmins (Dubois 296-97). Thus, his work reinforces the colonial ideas of the inferiority of the lower castes. In fact, it is in this instance that he feels compelled to defend the caste system which had all along been demonized not only by the nineteenth-century Utilitarians and missionaries, but also the Orientalists and early native reformers of the time. He is convinced that in the absence of the caste system the pariahs would "become worse than the hordes of cannibals who wander in the vast waste of Africa" (Dubois 24). Conjuring up anxious visions of the pariahs, who "checked by no moral restraint," would "abandon themselves to their natural propensities" he sees them falling quickly "into a condition of barbarism" if left to themselves (Dubois 29). Therefore, in commending the caste system as the best order for the Hindus, he holds it also responsible for their "arts and civilization" (Dubois 28).

In a similar vein, even at the beginning of the twentieth century, ethnographic studies such as those of Risley and Thurston largely perpetuate the dominant views of the lower caste South as culturally primitive. In marking the evolutionary hierarchies between the European man and the colonized other, Thurston's work shows a strong fascination with the "barbaric" and "violent" customs of South Indian tribes. Risley, who was appointed the census commissioner in 1901, is well-known not only for his racialization of caste, but also his notorious experiments in anthropometrics (an interest which Thurston also shared).[44] In Risley's account, the Dravidians figure as "the oldest of

[44] Dirks discusses Thurston's work Ethnographic Notes in Southern India to show how Thurston is fascinated with issues like deformity, torture, firewalking, and infanticide. Moreover, Dirks argues that not

the Indian races" (Risley 2). This "Dravidian type extend[s] from Ceylon to the valley of Ganges and pervad[es] the whole of Madras, Hyderabad and the Central provinces" (Risley 34). In projecting the inferiority of the Dravidian body type he employs the measure of the "nasal index." Thus, this colonial ethnographer's gaze focuses, in a particularly disapproving manner, on the "broad nose of a Negro [which is characteristic] of the typical Dravidian" (Risley 28). In conflating the Dravidian body with that of the African, he dissociates it from the Aryan body type. Finally, though overwhelmed by the confusing admixtures of Aryan and Dravidian races in India, he comes to the conclusion that it is the primitive Dravidian type that is "indigenous" to the subcontinent (Risley 276). Such ethnographic studies as those of Risley and Thurston show "[a] symbiosis between racial anxieties of imperial Britain and ritual anxieties of Brahmans," where, in this ethnographic discourse of racial biology, notions of race and caste are conflated in establishing the essential and Manichean differences between the colonizer-colonized, and Brahmin-low caste (Dirks 225).

Caldwell and the Notions of a Lower Caste Dravidian Tradition

While the earlier Orientalist ideas of the racial divide between the Aryans and the Dravidians are central to Caldwell's research on South Indian lower castes, he turns this discourse upside down by depicting the South Indian Dravidians as the more ancient and civilized people in India. As such, his writings mark an important departure from the

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only did such ethnographic concerns cast the lower castes and tribes in barbaric terms but also often led to the British exercising their control over native lower caste customs and rituals by abolishing them. He gives the example of how hook swinging was abolished by the British (Dirks 188-192)

earlier Orientalist and ethnographic work on South India, and to a large extent, resist the dominant Orientalist views on Dravidian culture.

In his History of Tinnevelly (Tinnevelly is a part of Tamilnadu), Caldwell begins by lamenting how "the Hindus, though fond of philosophy and poetry, of law, mathematics, and architecture, of music, and the drama, and especially of religious and theosophic speculations and disquisitions [have] never cared anything for history" (History1). In an act of colonial "rescue" he sets out to provide these Tamil people with their own history. Narrating the history of the "Tamil people, or as they are called in Sanskrit, the Dravidas," he goes on to establish their antiquity by tracing their lineage from great royal Kingdoms (History 12).[45] The ancient Tamilians figure as an enterprising race engaged in trade relations with other nations in Caldwell's account. He says: "I cannot quit the history of the mercantile intercourse of the Greeks with Southern India without mentioning a story illustrative of the [Tamil peoples'] courage and enterprise" (History 23). Full of praise for the daring and diasporic Tamil populations spread over "Pegu, Penang, Singapore," Mauritius, West Indian colonies, Sri Lanka, and all over Deccan India, he calls them the "Greeks or Scotch of the east" (Comparative 7). Moreover, what comes through in Caldwell's writing is his awareness of the diversity

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[45] Tamil people belonged to the stock, which according to Caldwell's account "[was] divided in ancient times into three great divisions, the Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyas." See A History of Tinnevelly 12.
Cheras: Cheras "were one of the ancient Tamil dynasties who ruled the southern India from ancient times until around the fifteenth century CE. The Early Cheras ruled over the Malabar Coast, Coimbatore, Karur and Salem Districts in South India, which now forms part of the modern day Kerala and Tamilnadu states of India. The other two major Tamil dynasties were the Cholas in the eastern Coromandel Coast and Pandyas in the south central peninsula. These dynasties began ruling before the Sangam era (100BCE - 200CE) during which the Tamil language, arts and literature flourished,"
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheras>

even amongst the Dravidian societies. He rejects the idea of a monolithic South and makes detailed comparisons between the Tamils and the other cultures in South India. More often than not, he finds the Tamils superior to the other South Indian groups. In Caldwell's opinion, the Tamils are "the least superstitious and most enterprising and persevering race of Hindus," while the Malayalis of Malabar (Kerala) are the "most superstitious" of the Dravidians (Comparative 7). In an observation that sharply reveals the patriarchal ideologies of the colonial mission, he informs his readers that the Malayalis are "peculiar" in their cultural practices, especially, because they practice matrilineal heritage (Comparative 13).[46]

However, ironically, Caldwell's interest in the discovery of Dravidian history and cultural traditions were not only linked to his passion for ethnography and Comparative Linguistics, but were also a part of the civilizing imperatives of his missionary zeal. In delinking the lower caste traditions from the Brahminical ones in the South, Caldwell sought to facilitate the proselytizing project in this part of India. Such colonial investments can be understood in the context of how, while the lower caste groups, marginalized within the native caste and class hierarchies, were more amenable to conversion, the strongest opposition to the missionary activities came from the privileged Brahmin elite. Such missionary concerns are glaringly obvious in Caldwell's earlier work on the Shanars of Tinnelvelly (whom he describes as "not of the Brahminical, but of the Tamil or aboriginal race" (Tinnelvelly Shanars 5). This work establishes the

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[46] Risley too refers to the "peculiar and characteristic feature" of Malabar Nayars pointing to the matriarchal polyandry in these groups, where "inheritance is traced through females." See Risley 209, 207.

importance of his ethnographic project to his missionary work. The following lines show how such missionary and ethnographic interests are brought together in the colonial desire to understand the customs of the South Indian lower caste groups:

> A sketch of the religious and moral condition of the heathen population, with special reference to those castes and classes to which the majority of our converts originally belonged, and amongst which we continue to have most influence; with observations on their social condition and mental characteristics, in so far as they affect their moral condition and prospects, may enable some persons to form a more distinct idea of the peculiarities of this sphere of missionary labour, and tend to excite them to a more practical interest in it (Tinnelvelly Shanars 3)

This controversial early work of Caldwell is replete with the colonial stereotypes of a primitive Shanar religion, where an ethnographer's fascination with the "dark" and barbaric customs of the local Shanar tribes (including vivid accounts of demonolatry, devil dances in the dark nights, and spirit calling) is offset by a missionary concern with civilizing and redeeming the souls of the "godless" Shanars (Tinnelvelly Shanars 34). In addition, the shanars are depicted as also characterized by an "intellectual dullness" and a woeful lack of moral and ethical sense (Tinnelvelly Shanars 35). In a fascinated narrative he describes how in the Shanar village "the stillness of the night is broken by the din of the drum and the harsh bray of the horn announcing the commencement of a devil dance in a neighbouring village" (Tinnelvelly Shanars 30).

Among other things, Caldwell is greatly concerned with the absence of the spiritual and metaphysical preoccupations in Shanar religion. Therefore, he concludes,

"it does not throw much light upon the Shanar religion to describe it as a form of Hinduism" and laments, "here in a polished and metaphysical India we find a civilization but little raised above that of the Negroes" of fetishism (Tinnelvelly Shanars 6, 29). In the same work, there is also a revealing description of the Shanars that points to a nexus between the ethnographic, missionary, and governmental concerns with these lower caste groups. Caldwell praises the Shanars for their subordination to the Raj and shows them up as model colonial subjects:

> The Shanars of Tinnelvelly have for nearly fifty years been our fellow-subjects; and during the whole of that period they have considered their subjection to the East India Company's Government and the introduction of the rudiments of English Law as priceless blessings. No insurrections, no riotous insubordination, no disloyalty, have ever been laid at their charge. Though taxed, like all Hindus, under all successive Governments, beyond their ability, more submissive tax payers are nowhere to be met with in the world (Tinnelvelly 72)

In the end, Caldwell's work on Shanar religion and culture caused a huge controversy because the educated and well-to-do Shanars took serious exception to his characterization of them as non-Hindu people.

Comparative Linguistics and the Dravidian Culture

At best, we can say that Caldwell's account of the Tinnelvelly Shanars is highly ambivalent in its tone and its overall assumptions about these lower caste groups. But

later we see a marked shift in his attitude toward Tamil language and tradition, which in fact, becomes nothing short of eulogistic in the Comparative Grammar (1856).

In Caldwell's work, language becomes a crucial area of assertion of the Dravidian difference from an Aryan North. It is pertinent in this instance to look at Niranjana's view (although her argument occurs in the context of discussing colonial translation). Niranjana points out, "the practices of subjection/subjectification implicit in the colonial enterprise operate not merely through the coercive machinery of the imperial state but also through the discourses of philosophy, history, anthropology, philology, linguistics, and literary interpretation," and the "colonial subject" is constructed "within multiple discourses and on multiple sites" (Niranjana 1-2). Often, language and culture become important markers for constructing the differences between the colonizer and colonized societies.

Muller had maintained that "all the living languages of India, both Aryan and Dravidian, draw their very life and soul from Sanskrit" (India What it can 82). This continued to be the dominant view in the philological and comparative linguistic studies of the nineteenth-century Orientalists. Caldwell is one of the first ethnographers to argue against the idea of a universal Sanskritic culture in India. As a linguist, his primary interest was in the study of Dravidian languages and not in Sanskrit. In making his important assertions about Tamil culture and a Dravidian tradition of antiquity, he bases his ideas largely on his perspectives from comparative linguistics. He defends his "comparative" methodology by arguing that since "language has a history of its own, [it] throw[s] light upon all other history, and render[s] ethnology and archeology possible" (History xii). However, unlike the Orientalists, Caldwell does not engage in a

comparative study of Sanskrit and Indo-European languages. He chooses, instead, to study the South Indian languages as a cluster of "Dravidian tongues," mainly because "much light might be thrown on Tamil by comparing it with Telugu, Canarese, and other sister idioms" rather than Sanskrit (Comparative viii). In effect, his major contribution to the study of Dravidian culture and languages was the break that he marked between Sanskrit and the Southern tongues.

Caldwell historicizes the term "Dravidian" by going back to the linguistic classifications of the ancient Sanskrit writers. According to him, "'Dravida' (a term that denotes the South in early Sanskrit works, and from which the term 'Dravidian' has been formed), though sometimes used in a 'restricted sense', as 'equivalent to Tamil' [is actually] better fitted, notwithstanding, for use as a generic term" (Comparative 6). Thus, even for Caldwell, despite his emphasis on the Tamil language, "Dravidian" remains a term that encompasses the entire South. But he does not see Tamil as originating from Sanskrit. Instead, he sets out to prove that Tamil has a "genealogical" relationship with the "Scythian group" of languages, and thus, must be traced to pre-Aryan times (Comparative x, ix).[47] The superiority of Tamil culture becomes evident in the manner in which the Dravidian languages have been "carried to [a] high point of refinement" (Comparative xi). He is full of praise for the "intellectual capacity of a people amongst whom so wonderful an organ of thought [as the Tamil language] has developed" (Comparative xii)

[47] Caldwell describes the Scythian as "that group of tongues which comprises the Finnish, the Turkish,, the Mongolian, and the Tunisian families." See Caldwell 61.

On the other hand, Sanskrit, in Caldwell's view, is only a later introduction into the Tamil country. He categorically states, "I have not met with, or heard of, a single Sanskrit inscription in the Tamil country which appears to be older than the fourteenth century A.D" (Comparative 86). Moreover, caste becomes a prime marker of South Indian identity in Caldwell's work. He not only identifies the term "Dravidian" with the South Indian lower castes, but also asserts that Tamil, which is the "oldest and most highly cultivated member" of the Dravidian languages, "has been cultivated and developed by native Tamilians [lower castes]" and not the "Brahmins" of the South (Comparative 48). No wonder that Caldwell's marked exclusion of the South Indian Brahmins from the Dravidian community became central to the anti-Brahmin campaigns of the twentieth-century native Dravidian movements.

In his zeal for the linguistic excellence of Tamil, Caldwell disapproves of the Sanskrit philologists who gave the name "Dravidian" to the set of languages in the South but also went on to demonize it as a "Paisachi" language (language of demons) (Comparative 5). He sets out to defend Tamil against the "contempt in which [it was] held by brahmin philologists" (Comparative 5). In this instance, he criticizes the uninformed assumptions of "the Northern Indian writers" who think that Dravidian denotes "only one tongue," and construct a monolithic Dravidian cultural entity (Comparative 5). In taking exception to "professor Max Muller [who] propose[s] to call all the non-Aryan languages of India [. . .] Nishada [tribal] languages," he prefers, instead, to use the "safest common appellation [which is] the negative one, non-Aryan, or non-Sanskritic" (Comparative 39). There is in Caldwell's work a strong rejection of not only the views of the "Sanskrit Pandits (who refer everything in India to a Brahminical

origin)," but also those of "the early European scholars, [who think] that the Dravidian languages," though glaringly different from the "North Indian languages," are "derived from Sanskrit" (Comparative 40, 41). Some Orientalists like Colebrooke, Carey, and Wilkins come under criticism for holding such erroneous opinions. In squarely charging them with ignorance in matters South Indian, he declares, "the orientalists referred to, though deeply learned in Sanskrit and well acquainted with North Indian" languages are quite unfamiliar with Dravidian tongues (Comparative 42). It is this lack of knowledge about South Indian cultures that led them to the fallacy of seeing the borrowed Sanskrit words in Tamil as unmistakable evidences of the Sanskrit origin of Dravidian languages (Comparative 42).

In Caldwell's comparative study of South Indian languages Tamil is given the pride of place precisely because it has resisted the infusion of Sanskrit. But while Tamil has retained its linguistic independence from Sanskrit, there is a predominant Sanskritic infusion into Malayalam. In linking such Sanskritic influences on Dravidian languages to the issue of religion, he finds it "remarkable that the Brahminization of [Malayalam] language and literature should now have become so complete. This process appears to have been carried on systematically only during the last two or three centuries" (Comparative 19). However, on the whole, the South Indian tongues are distinct from Sanskrit. Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, and Kannada even have separate "literary cultures" and scripts of their own (Comparative 40).

Such musings upon the linguistic changes in South Indian cultural history makes Caldwell think of how Tamil language has developed, though, of course, slowly "like everything else, changes in the East" (Comparative 81). He marks the specific areas

where Sanskritic infusions (read: Brahminization) can be found in Tamil language in order to show the influence of Brahminical religion on South Indian cultures (Comparative 81). An examination of the Sanskrit terms in Tamil leads him to unravel the history of the Aryan cultural colonization of the South.

Caldwell puts his case in the following manner: since the borrowings from Sanskrit into Tamil are seen predominantly in the realm of abstract and religious matters, we can say that Hinduism is not indigenous to South India. For instance, tracing the etymology of the word "image" in Tamil, he argues that this word was "introduced into the Tamil country by the Brahmins, the puranic system of religion and the worship of idols" (Comparative 47). In a similar manner, "the majority of words expressive of religious ideas in actual use in modern Tamil are of Sanskrit origin" (Comparative 47). What is of great interest here is also how in dissociating Dravidian religion from a Brahminical one, Caldwell seeks to sanitize the issue of idolatry (particularly despised by colonial missionaries) from the Dravidian faith. Implicit in this maneuver is the desire to draw the lower caste populations of the region closer to his missionary objectives.

In the above instance, Caldwell also dismisses any Brahmin contribution to Tamil language; "in Tamil [. . .] few Brahmins have written anything worthy of preservation. The language has been cultivated [solely] by native Tamilians [lower castes]" (Comparative 48). To support his theory of a lower caste cultural heritage in the South he cites the example of Thiruvallur, who is believed to have been a pariah, but is, nevertheless, revered as a sage to this day (Thiruvalluvar wrote the famous ancient Tamil work Thirukural) (Comparative 48).[48] Moreover, in Caldwell's opinion, since "the

[48] Thiruvalluvar is an ancient Tamil poet known for his work on ethics called Thirukkural. He is supposed to have lived in the 1st millennium AD. "While most scholars place him between 100 and 300 AD, there

indigenous Dravidian languages" have "maintained their ground for more than two thousand years against Sanskrit, the language of a numerous, powerful, and venerated sacerdotal race, [they] may be expected successfully to resist the encroachments of every other tongue" (Comparative 3). In believing that this happy state of things will continue into the future, he declares, "[the] priority of the Tamil literary culture, as well as its national independence" are conclusive (Comparative 86).

What is also important in Caldwell's comparison of Sanskrit and Tamil is how he locates Sanskrit strictly in elite caste and class contexts, quite unlike the Orientalists who perceived it as representing all of India. In excluding Sanskrit not only from his visions of an authentic South Indian culture, but also from the lower caste populations in North India, he argues, "[Sanskrit] was never the actual speech of any portion of the Aryans of India at any period of their history [. . .] it was the language not of any race or district, but of a class-the class of bards and priests, the literary men of the first ages" (Comparative 78). As a matter of fact, it was only "understood, to some extent by the Brahmans-the descendants of those Brahminical colonists of early times to whom the Dravidians appear to have been indebted to some extent for the higher arts of life and a considerable portion of their literary culture" (Comparative 2). Even as he dissociates the Dravidian lower caste cultures from a Sanskritic culture, he firmly links the South Indian Brahmins to the North not only in terms of racial origins, but also in terms of their linguistic affinities with Sanskrit: "[the] Dravida Brahmins, Andhra brahmins, Karnataka brahmins etc [. . .] have become distinct castes; but they are all [. . .] descended from one and the same

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are a few who consider him to have lived around 600 A.D." He is believed to have been a low caste weaver. The Thirukkural has 1330 couplets with ethical messages embedded in them. See, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiruvalluvar>

stock, and Sanskrit [. . .] is properly the literary dialect of their ancestral tongue"(Comparative 2).

Caldwell opposed the Orientalist theory of the Sanskritic origin of Dravidian languages. According to him, the Dravidian languages are older than Sanskrit. In establishing this Dravidian antiquity, he traces the South Indian languages to timeless and primordial origins:

> The Indo-Europeanisms discoverable in the Dravidian languages [are not traceable to Sanskrit, but] carry us back to a period beyond all history, beyond all mythology, not only prior 'to the separation of the western branches of the Indo-European race from the eastern, but prior also to the separation of the yet undivided Indo-European race from that portion of the common stock which was afterwards styled Scythian (Comparative 74)

Thus, the prime objective of his study of Dravidian languages is to "adduce those records of the primitive Tamil mind, manners, and religion which the ancient vocabularies of the language, when freed from the admixture of Sanskrit, will [. . .] furnish" (Comparative 113).

Aryan Colonization

Caldwell employs the Orientalist idea of the racial divide between the Aryans and the Dravidians to construct a lower caste Dravidian South with a distinct and ancient tradition of its own. As Dirks describes it, "the Tamil soul had been defined by

Orientalist scholarship in terms of Brahminical Hinduism, which Caldwell took great care to dismantle" (Dirks 146).

Even in his early work on the South Indian "shanars" (the low caste groups of "toddy-tappers" who were the target population of his missionary activities), Caldwell had disengaged the Dravidians at once from the Northern Aryans and South Indian Brahmins. In delinking them from Aryan and Sanskritic origins, he had argued that "their connection with the brahminical systems of dogmas and observances, commonly described in the mass as Hinduism, is so small that they may be considered votaries of a different religion" (The Tinnelvely Shanars 7). Above all, he had established the shanars as the "original" Dravidians of the South. His imaginings of a pre-Aryan Dravidian past in the subcontinent are based not only on the linguistic differences between the North and the South, but also on other regional, racial and caste differences. Since the Dravidians came from the stock of "Scythians," they were clearly "non-Aryan" and "non-Sanskritic" people (Comparative 39).

Before Caldwell's time, the Orientalists had argued that with the coming of the Aryans, the inferior native Dravidian races (indigenous tribes spread all over the subcontinent) were subsumed as "Sudras" within the Aryan caste order, or the "Varnashrama" system. In contrast, Caldwell makes a careful distinction between the North Indian aboriginal tribes, who were subdued by the Aryans and incorporated into the Aryan varna system as Sudras, and the Dravidians of the Deccan:

> The arrival of the Dravidians in India must have been anterior to the arrival of the Aryans, but there is some difficulty in determining whether the Dravidians were identical with the aborigines whom the Aryans found

> in possession of the northern provinces [and were later] incorporated with the Aryan race as their serfs and dependants (Comparative106)

Alternatively, he concludes that the Dravidians might have been driven South, not by Aryans, but by the warrior-like races of pre-Aryans, since after all, the Dravidians pre-dated even these non-Aryans tribes, a fact which becomes obvious when we examine how the "Dravidian idioms belong to an older period of speech" (Comparative 106). In this narrative of the Dravidian origins of Indian civilization,

> the Dravidians, retaining their independence in Southern forests into which they were driven, and submitting eventually to the Aryans, not as conquerors, but as colonists and instructors, gradually rose in the social scale, and formed communities and states in the extreme South, rivaling those of the Aryans in the North (Comparative 108).

These Dravidians settled in their respective places in the South even before the "Aryan irruption" (Comparative 105). All this goes on to show that the Northern pre-Aryan tribes "a black, long –haired race of aborigines," who became Sudras as a result of the Aryan conquests, are just not of the same stock as the South Indian Dravidians (Comparative 109).

However, in another instance, Caldwell reverts to the Orientalist sources to show that the Dravidians were actually classed as "Kshatriyas" (warrior caste ranking next only to the Brahmins in the caste order). If Manu could categorize the Dravidians as Kshtriyas, Caldwell wonders how "the Brahmins who settled amongst the Dravidians and formed into castes, in imitation of the castes of the North, [never gave] the Dravidians [. . .] a higher title than that of Sudras [however] respectable their position" (Comparative

112). He tries to explain this anomaly by pointing out that in "Southern India" it was actually the "middle and higher classes of Dravidians" who were called "Sudras" (Comparative 112). The lower castes of the South, who were "analogous" to the Northern "Sudras" were actually "pallas" and "pareyars." Be that as it may, at least, the Southern Sudras, were not "reduced by the Brahmans to a dependant position" ("they were not slaves") (Comparative 112). In explaining how the proud and cultured Dravidians could have been turned into Sudras, Caldwell can only reiterate the colonial stereotypes of Brahmin treachery: "the brahmans, who came in 'peaceably, and obtained the kingdom by flatteries', may [. . .] have persuaded the Dravidians that in calling them Sudras they were conferring upon them a title of honour" (Comparative 112). This turned out to be a "successful policy" since the Dravidians failed to resent it (Comparative 113). In any case, Caldwell is firmly convinced that the Dravidians had the "elements of civilization, prior to the arrival amongst them of the Brahmans" (Comparative 113).

Making a distinction between the notions of an Aryan conquest and Aryan colonization, Caldwell argues, "the introduction of the Dravidians within the pale of Hinduism appears to have originated, not in conquest, but in the peaceable process of colonization and progressive civilization" (Comparative 111). In fact, there is "no tradition of the irruption of the Aryans into Southern India, or the forcible subjugation of the Dravidians" (Comparative 111). No record, or "remembrance" of such an event can be found in history (Comparative 111). In this story of Aryan colonization, "the Aryan immigrants to the South appear to have been [. . .] priests, instructors, rather than [. . .] soldiers" (Comparative, 111). Interestingly, Caldwell refers to Muller's "Report of

British association for 1847," which describes how "wholly different from the manner in which the brahminical people overtook the north of India, was the way they adopted of taking possession of and settling in the country South of the Vindhyas."[49] In this report, Muller argues that the Aryans "introduced Brahminical institutions, laws and religion" but did not "impose their language." Instead, they adopted the language of the "aboriginal people" and conveyed their "knowledge and instruction to the minds of the uncivilised tribes." In the end, Mueller concludes that there was a "favorable assimilation" where "the South of India became afterwards the last refuge of brahminical science" when threatened by the invasions of the "intolerant Mohammedans."

Even as Caldwell draws from Muller's account in tracing the origins of caste system in South India, where he agrees with the latter's view that "the introduction of the Dravidians within the pale of Hinduism" as low caste sudras "originated" in "colonization," he challenges the Orientalist depiction of the Dravidians as the inferior Sudra races (Comparative 110). In his rhetoric the Aryans are "colonists," and the Brahmins of the South are their descendants. Thus, Caldwell only uses Muller in order to advance his very different views on the antiquity and superiority of Dravidian culture and languages.

Dravidian Tradition

In Caldwell's representation "the primitive Dravidians" were never "a barbarous and degraded people" (Comparative 42, 112). Celebrating Tamil as "the oldest and most

[49] Caldwell footnotes Mueller's view from "Report of British Association for 1857". See Comparative Grammar 111. The subsequent quotes in the paragraph are also from the same page of the Comparative Grammar .

highly cultivated" of the South Indian languages, he provides a place for the Tamil people in the cultural history of the subcontinent (Comparative 4). In upholding Tamil antiquity and history, he traces "the civilization of the Tamil people [and] the literary cultivation of their langauge, [to the] sixth or seventh century B.C" (Comparative 105). When he establishes the idea of a "regional" South Indian Dravidian identity, he locates it, particularly, in Tamilnadu.

In an ironic turn of events, Caldwell's views on the rich "cultural inheritance of the south," became crucially influential in the formation of the notions of "Tamil cultural nationalism" within the native lower caste movements that started in the twentieth-century Tamilnadu (Dirks 146, 143). His notion of an ancient Tamil tradition influenced many native twentieth-century Dravidian leaders including Periyar. Dirks has rightly pointed out, "Caldwell's most influential, and radical, contribution to Tamil political culture" was his discovery of the "antiquity and autonomy of Dravidian culture" (Dirks 140). Thus, in his call to the Tamil youth to unite, Periyar draws upon Caldwell's ideas, and argues:

> Historians and research scholars have long ago established the time when the Aryans came to India. They are of the opinion that the Dravidians or the Tamils were the original inhabitants of India, particularly in the South. There is no historical evidence to prove that an Aryan had ever ruled the Tamils (Dear Youths, 14).

In continuing such preoccupations with an ancient "Dravidian tradition," a later Dravidianist, G. Palanithurai, also acknowledges the debt to Caldwell: "[Caldwell's] work set the ground conducive for starting movements to oppose the domination of

Sanskrit and Brahmins" (Palanithurai 5). Similarly, C.K.Menon, the well-known South Indian intellectual in his study of the "origins" of Dravidian civilization in India, reinforces Caldwell's claim that "Dravidian languages" were "older" than "Sanskrit," and argues, "long before Christian era, the Dravidian South had developed a considerable culture of its own" (Menon 6).

Not only do the Dravidian leaders of the twentieth-century identify themselves with this lower caste South constructed by Caldwell, but they also challenge what they see as the Brahmin dominance in Indian society by drawing upon his ideas of a non-Aryan Tamil tradition. In a manner reminiscent of Caldwell, they too exclude the South Indian Brahmins from their self-construction as Dravidians, and associate them, instead, with the Aryan colonizers. Moreover, in a Caldwellian fashion, they identify Dravidian culture with the regional Tamil ethos.

In sum, I have argued in this chapter that both the Hindu nationalist and the regional Dravidian traditions in India were invented within colonially mediated nineteenth-century Orientalist and ethnographic contexts. Bringing Hobsbawm's idea of invented traditions in a dialogue with Chatterjee's study of the nineteenth-century nationalist discourse in India, I have highlighted the paradox of how the native Indian literati through the past two centuries have often appropriated colonial knowledges in forming their notions of national and regional communities. The European Orientalists and the native reformers collaborated, to an extent, in inventing a homogenous Hindu tradition in the subcontinent.

As Dirks, King and others have argued, the Orientalists constructed a universal Hindu tradition within the colonial imperatives of identifying an authentic Indian

tradition. They cast this Hindu tradition in a largely Brahminical mold following from their fascination with textual studies of Sanskrit scriptures. Besides, even as they discovered a glorious Hindu past, they also depicted contemporary India as a static and inward-looking philosophical culture whose Golden Age was located in a long-ago and far away past. In such Orientalist representations, India became dissociated from the public world of colonial politics.

However, this very Orientalist discovery of the Golden age of the Hindu past impelled the native reformers to build their idea of a superior Hindu civilization. They employed this image of a glorious Hindu civilization in countering the colonizer's claims of cultural supremacy. Contemporary postcolonial critics such as Chakravarti, Gyan Prakash and others maintain that the native reformers were in no way merely passive recipients of colonial knowledges. Instead, they reconstructed this Orientalist Hindu tradition by drawing selectively upon Western Enlightenment knowledges. They saw this reformed Hindu tradition as conforming to modernity even as they firmly upheld the idea of the essential spirituality and antiquity of Indian culture. In fact, they overturned the Orientalist idea of a philosophical and apolitical Hindu culture. They saw in this idea of Hindu spirituality the very force that impelled their anticolonial struggle.

However, as critics of such different orientations as Ann McClintok and Partha Chatterjee have shown, all national communities are formed by marginalizing various groups of people often based on their race, gender, and class. In imagining a "one" and predominantly "Hindu" India, the nineteenth-century reformers marginalized various regional and lower caste cultures. The South Indian lower caste communities were often erased from this imagined Hindu national community.

Paradoxically, it was a nineteenth-century colonial ethnographer, Robert Caldwell, who first contested such hegemonic Orientalist and reformist imaginings of a pan-national Hindu tradition. While Caldwell's interest in the South Indian lower caste populations were complicit with colonial missionary imperatives, his work is still important for the way in which it questions the Orientalist formations of a homogenous Hindu tradition. Above all, Caldwell discovered an ancient lower caste Dravidian tradition in South India. He defined this Dravidian tradition in terms of its regional, religious, and caste-based differences from what he saw as a Hindu and Aryan North. His imaginings of a distinct lower caste South influenced the lower caste leaders of the Dravidian movements in the next century. These later Dravidian movements employ Caldwell's ideas of the differences between the North-South, and Aryan-Dravidian in constructing their protest against what they see as Hindu and Aryan dominance over the South. They bring the notions of the region, religion, and caste together in forming their idea of a Tamil-Dravidian identity. The next chapter studies these twentieth-century Dravidian movements. It argues that the formations of a Dravidian South intervene in the unitary discourse of Indianness.

Chapter III

The Politics of "Non-Brahminism": Dravidian Movements in the Twentieth Century and the Formation of the Lower caste South

The Dravidian movements, which emerged in twentieth-century South India, define "Dravidianism" in regional and local terms, mainly as a way of opposing the prevalent nationalist idea of a univocal, and predominantly Hindu India. While "Dravidian" is a term that refers to the entire South of India, the Dravidian leaders of this time went on to identify it specifically, with Tamilnadu and what they saw as its authentic South Indian culture. They made "caste" the basis of this Dravidian cultural politics, and located themselves self-consciously in the spaces of caste and regional marginality. This chapter explores the manner in which the Dravidian movements employ the interlocked discourses of the region, caste, and nation in inventing an "authentic" lower caste Dravidian community. They construct a geo-cultural South that they define as characteristically non-Aryan, non-Hindu, and "non-Brahmin" in nature.

After all, as Benedict Anderson has famously illustrated all national communities are prone to be "challenged by 'sub'nationalisms within their borders--nationalisms which, naturally, dream of shedding this sub-ness one happy day" (Anderson, "Introduction" 3). Nations are, thus, deeply contested entities. Dravidian regionalism resists the idea of a homogenous nationhood in India. In my last chapter, I have demonstrated that the nineteenth-century nationalists in the subcontinent drew upon the European Orientalist ideas of a paradigmatic Hindu national tradition in imagining their India. Intriguing as it seems, a nineteenth-century colonial ethnographer and missionary in South India, Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), first challenged such Orientalist notions of

a common Hindu tradition in India. The Dravidian movements in the twentieth-century look back to Caldwell's discovery of this ancient Dravidian tradition. This chapter also highlights how the native Dravidian leaders of this time not only appropriate Caldwell's theories of a lower caste Dravidian culture, but also negotiate with colonial modernity in forming their notions of a distinct regional South.

Even in the nineteenth-century Dravidianism and South Indianness had been contentious discourses. Caldwell appropriated the well-known Orientalist, Friedrich Muller's, idea of an Aryan colonization of the South, and stood it over its head by casting the Dravidians as the more ancient and civilized race in India.[50] While the reception of Caldwell's ideas within the Orientalist and ethnographic circles had at best been controversial in his time, his influence became perceptible on the lower caste native Tamil elite in the beginning of the next century. What started as a protest of these lower caste leaders against the dominant presence of Brahmins in the colonial administrative and educational institutions (the lower caste elite had felt increasingly sidelined by both the Raj and Brahmins), soon turned into a powerful anti-Brahminical movement in Tamilnadu. With the birth of the Justice Party (1916), formed mostly of the upper class sections of the Tamil non-Brahmin population, Caldwell's theories of a non-Brahmin South began to gain ground.[51] However, it was Periyar E. Ramaswami Naicker (1879-

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[50] Dirks points out that based on William Jones's "'discovery' of the Indo-Aryan family of languages," Muller had racialized the Aryan-Dravidian divide. Muller maintained "brahmans were the representatives of the Aryan race who moved south" (Dirks 142). According to Muller the Dravidians were absorbed into the Aryan caste system through "a process of peaceful colonization" (Dirks, 142).

Caldwell footnotes Muller's "Report of British Association for 1847" in theorizing the "relation that subsisted between the Aryans and the early Dravidians" and argues that the Aryan colonization of the south resulted in the establishing of the Brahmin and the sudra castes in the South (Comparative Grammar, 111)

[51] The South Indian Liberal Federation (1914), which was started to advance the interests of the non-Brahmin castes in Tamilnadu came to be known as the Justice Party. In 1916 "The Non-Brahmin

1973), the controversial Dravidian leader, who radically redefined the notion of Dravidianism. Periyar made it the basis of a cultural struggle of the lower caste groups against what he decried as the North Indian, and Aryan, cultural imperialism over South Indian people.

The Dravidianists interact with colonial knowledges in defining their "Dravidianness" and marking their essential differences from a Hindu and Aryan culture. They see Hindu nationalism as a form of internal colonialism over the lower caste and non-Aryan South. In demonstrating how they mark the boundaries of the Dravidian community by tracing the cultural, racial, regional, and religious distinctions between Dravidian-Aryan and North-South, I argue that such notions of cultural difference are constructed within specific socio-historical contexts. In this instance, Arjun Appadurai's, argument about group identity and culture is very illuminating. Appadurai, though in a somewhat different context, sees "culture [as] a marked term" (Appadurai 13). Besides, culture does not refer so much to the "possession of certain attributes (material, linguistic, or territorial) but the consciousness of those attributes and their naturalization as essential to group identity" (Appadurai 13). Notions of cultural difference are "mobilized to articulate the boundary of difference," and therefore, "as a boundary-maintenance question, culture [forms the basis of] group identity as constituted by some differences among others" (Appadurai 13). Such discourses of cultural difference are at the heart of the politics of Dravidian regionalism.

Manifesto" was issued. Robert Hardgrave argues that the Party was invested in the elite classes of the non-brahmin population and lacked "a mass base" and maintains, "its demands were formulated [. . .] to influence the official policy of the British in Madras Presidency"(Hardgrave 16). Dr.T.M.Nair, Dr.C. Natesa Mudaliar, and Sir P.Theagaroya Chetty were the founders. See Hardgrave for the political career of the Justice Party in Madras. "The Justice Party was re-organized in 1944 under the guidance of Naicker [Periyar] as the Dravida Kazagam" See also Hardgrave 13-24, 28.

This chapter explores the constructions of the Dravidian ideologies within the Self-respect movement (1925-1939) started by Periyar. A majority of Self-respect writings is critical of the predominantly high caste leadership of the freedom movement, Congress-style nationalism and even Gandhian ideals. Srilata, who has translated the Self-respect women's writings into English, rightly points out that this movement "quickly and efficiently created a print-media [and] drew public attention to the ways in which the lower castes [. . .] were systematically excluded from the Indian nation and constructed as the others of the Brahmins or the 'Aryans'" (Srilata, "Preface" xii). The writings in the journals Kudi Arasu (Tamil), and Revolt (English) are crucial documents, which provide insights into the Self-respect formations of an anti-Brahmin and anti-nationalist brand of South Indianness.[52]

Many Dravidian writers in the above journals construct the nationalist movements of their time as crucially linked to high caste Brahminical interests. Besides, they even reject the nationalist and Gandhian modes of lower caste upliftment, since they see them as tied to a Hindu (read: Brahminical) framework. Instead, they set out to deconstruct the ritual regime of Brahminism by satirizing the symbols of Hindu religion, myths, scriptures, and sacred epics. In this war against Brahmin dominance, they also charge the South Indian Brahmins of forming a nexus with the colonial government and cornering key positions in the colonial civil institutions. However, ironic as it seems, the Dravidianists themselves were often involved in an ambivalent relationship with the

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[52] In the period between 1925 and 1935, Periyar started a number of Journals;Kudi Arasu in 1925; Dravidan in 1927, Revolt in English in 1928; Puratchi in 1933; Pahuththarivu, as a weekly and daily in 1934 and Pahuththarivu as a monthly in 1935, to carry his message to the people. In 1937 he took over Viduthalai, a daily started by the Justice Party. See, <http://www.themronline.com/200108m19.html>

British government. On the one hand, they opposed the British rule but on the other, they actively sought colonial intervention in advancing lower caste interests. In consequence, these writings bristle with the tensions between their anti-colonialism, and their simultaneous critique of nationalism. Thus, the Dravidian politics must be related not only to the discourses of the nation, caste, and region, but also to colonialism.

The second part of this chapter recovers the voices of the Self-respect women, and some South Indian feminists of the time who wrote for the Self-respect journals. I will mainly address their writings in the English journal Revolt, but also look briefly at some translations of the Tamil writings in Kudi Arasu and Kumaran.[53] Such writings of the women activists of the movement refract their views on gender marginalization in South India. These Dravidian feminists interrogate the South Indian patriarchies by bringing up the thorny issues of caste, class, and colonialism. Moreover, they help us understand the Self-respect ideologies of gender reform from the point of view of the women associated with this movement. This study of the Self-respect women's writings is important since many Dravidian historians marginalize Self-respect women's histories in their tendency to focus exclusively on "Periyar's thought, work and vision" (Srilata, "Preface" xv).

Overview of the Theoretical Framework of this Chapter:

a) Caste: Nicholas's Dirks's study of caste and colonialism in India underpins my discussion of the problematic of caste within the Self-respect movement. While the Self-respecters demonize caste as a Brahmin-creation designed to oppress the low caste

[53] Srilata observes, "one of the most significant thrusts of the Dravidian movement, especially in its Self-Respect phase, was the creation of a specifically Dravidian Press as a counter to the upper-caste nationalist 'mainstream' press represented by newspapers such as Sudesamitran and The Hindu" (Srilata 20).

Dravidians, they also politicize it and deploy it as a sign of Dravidian identity. In the previous chapter, I have discussed Dirks's view that the turn of the century European Orientalist and ethnographic studies of caste were often complicit with the British administrative interests. In essence, Dirks argues that caste as we know today "is a modern phenomenon, [. . .], the product of an historical encounter between India and Western colonial rule" (Dirks 5). In designing the classificatory projects like the Census, the Raj administrators relied heavily on the ethnographic research. Based on this ethnographic work, they defined caste as a religious institution, and also the foundation upon which Indian society was organized (Dirks 5). Above all, they set out to establish and consolidate the caste stratifications in Indian society.

Dirks claims that the hierarchical caste model that was constructed within the collaborative projects of the colonial ethnographers, native Brahmin interpreters, and Raj officials continued to be influential in colonial Indian sociology and Western anthropology even in the twentieth century. Citing the classic case of Louis Dumont, Dirks argues that these fields of study recuperate Western Orientalist "nostalgia" (Dirks 5). Dumont brings the notion of "hierarchy" to the forefront in theorizing caste (Dirks 57). He sees caste as a pan-Indian institution, where notions of "purity" and "impurity" are central to its structure. In Dumont's opinion, the "politico-economical" bases of caste are only "secondary" since "it is religion which provides the view of the whole," and thus, he locates the strand of "unity" that holds the system together in the "traditional, higher, Sanskritic civilization" ("For a Sociology" 7-9).[54] Interestingly, the Dravidian writings, which critique caste, base their views of this institution on such notions of

[54] See Dirks for the discussion of Dumont's work, and the citation (Dirks 55; ref Dumont, Note# 35 on page 324) ["For a Sociology of India," 7, 9]. Also, see Dumont's Homo Heirarchicus xviii, 31, 37.

hierarchy and the Brahmin-centredness of the system. They also differ considerably in their approach to caste reform from the nationalist reformers. Until the mid-twentieth century, the nationalists had also fought against caste inequality. But while they saw caste as an aberration within Hinduism, the Dravidianists rejected Hindu religion as a whole, and in fact, held it responsible for the ongoing oppression of low castes. Moreover, in constructing their caste marginality, they also brought the category of region into play.

b) Regionalism: James Overton describes, although in the context of his discussion of Canadian regionalism, that local identities and regional cultures are based on historically constructed narratives. In other words, regional movements and local traditions do not simply spring from "'objective' cultural differences," but certain kinds of difference are "politicized" and made use of in establishing, maintaining, and marking the boundaries of such communities (Overton 97-98). Overton's formulations underpin my view that the notions of Dravidianism and South Indianness were invented in response to the rise of Hindu nationalism in colonial India.

Moreover, the Dravidianists, as also the high caste groups at this time, were leading players in the colonial politics. Here, I also refer to Anil Seal's work on regionalism in India. Seal argues that regional formations in India were imbricated in colonialism, and the regional movements drew their ideas of caste identities directly from colonial politics. Dirks has also shown that very frequently, these movements even use the language of numbers and percentages in describing caste (Dirks 198-227). In addition, they are often "organized in terms of categories devised by the British," and thus, with "[the] exploitation of the caste categories of the census" British "imperialism

built a system which interlocked its rule in locality, province and nation" (Seal 19, 20, 27). In Seal's view, the Dravidian formations resulted from such interactions between the South Indian elite and the colonial government.

While Seal's study is very illuminating, it seems to underplay the agency of the native Dravidian leaders in the formation of regional communities. Seal tends to see the regional formations as derived from colonial politics. In focusing on the active role played by the Dravidianists in regional politics in South India, my study questions Seal's formulations, even as it builds upon his views.

d) Gender: Postcolonial gender historians such as Kum Kum Sangari and Suresh Vaid have interrogated the role of the colonial, as well as indigenous patriarchies in the oppression of Indian women. Another, Indian sociologist, Leela Dube, sees gender as a crucial category the maintenance of caste hierarchies. However, it is the Dravidian historians of the South, Laxmi and Geetha, provide specific insights into the manner in which the women's question was addressed in the Self-respect movement. My work extends the research of these postcolonial and gender historians in arguing that the Dravidian women's voices resist the patriarchal ideologies of the nation and caste.

I probe the particular contexts of the Dravidian women's repression and resistance to the patriarchies in South India. It is important here to remember how Chandra Mohanty maintains in her influential critique of Western feminist practices that the "histories of feminism also document histories of domination and oppression" (Mohanty, "Introduction" 20). Mohanty brings gender in relation to colonialism, and figures the categories of race, class, caste and sexuality centrally into Third World feminist historiography (Mohanty "Introduction" 15). Criticizing Eurocentric feminist practices,

which see Third World women as being outside history, she urges, instead, for studies which probe the "effects of colonial institutions [. . .] in transforming indigenous patriarchies," and calls for the examination of the "rise of feminist politics and consciousness in this historical context within and against the framework of national liberation movements" (Mohanty, "Introduction" 15). Mohanty's insistence on "situated" feminist knowledges, and also the work of Sangari and Vaid, who focus on the manner in which colonialism shapes women's histories in the subcontinent, inform my discussion. I also I draw upon the specific research of Geetha and Lakshmi on the Self-respect formations of caste and gender.

Part 1: Periyar and the Politics of Dravidianism

Dravidianism manifests itself in multiple forms in twentieth-century South India. However, through all these varying notions of Dravidianism, we see a continual engagement with the categories of region, and caste. The Dravidianists often invent their distinct regional and lower caste South India by drawing upon the late nineteenth-century colonial ethnographer, Robert Caldwell's, formulations of a non-Hindu and non-Aryan Dravidian tradition in the South.

An early Dravidian movement in Tamilnadu, the Justice Party, had constructed the Dravidian protest, mainly as a "non-Brahmin" response (thus, clearly deploying caste identifications) to the Brahmin dominance in colonial administrative and civil offices. As Geetha historicizes, in this instance, "brahmins in the Tamil country came to attach themselves to the new [. . .] institutions of colonial India: schools, colleges, universities and the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy" after their vocations had been disrupted and often

devalued by the social changes brought about by colonialism ("Gender and Logic" 200, 199). It was also at this point of time that the Justicites made equal representation of lower castes the primary objective of their struggle. But when Periyar appeared on this scene in the 1920's, Dravidianism turned into a socio-cultural project of opposing what he saw as the North Indian and Brahmin domination over the South.

Periyar also questions the idea of a Hindu nation. Anxious that a Hindu India, dominated by high castes, would marginalize the lower caste groups, he dissociates himself from the nationalist movements in Tamilnadu. Seeing the Congress as an instrument for the propagation of a Brahminical culture, the Self-respect writings often reject Gandhi and the Congress as proponents of Hindu and Aryan values. Moreover, the Dravidianists also developed a problematic relationship with the British government. In understanding these Dravidian interactions with the Raj, I contextualize them within the nineteenth-century colonial history.

My last chapter discusses Dirks's view of the colonial interactions between the Raj, European Orientalists, and the nationalist Hindu patriarchy of the time. Influenced by the European Orientalist scholarship, the native Hindu intelligentsia celebrated a Sanskritic and Brahminical culture as the national culture of India. In undercutting this idea, the Dravidian movements raise the issue of the caste divisions to point to the fragmentations in Indian society. Instead, they seek to build a lower caste Dravidian nation that not only excludes the North Indians and Aryans, but also the Brahmins of the South. Besides, while they accused the Brahmins of collaborating with their colonial masters in acquiring privilege in the colonial institutions, they too looked for support from the colonial government for lower caste reform. This anomaly can best be

explained by pointing out that these South Indian leaders found in the British government an instrument to empower lower caste groups. It is in this sense that Geetha makes the following comment. She argues that the Self-respecters, who chose the "civil society" as their sphere of politics, "never shied away from the question of power, especially that embodied in the state and the laws. They have worked at ways and means of using, capturing and deploying that power" ("Periyar, Women" WS-9, 15).

At another level, Periyar's interactions with the British are also complicated by his Socialist commitments. Even as Periyar overtly embraces colonial modernity and the Enlightenment ideals of rationalism and progress, his engagement with this modernity becomes complicated, when we look at how, at the same time, he also negotiates with Caldwell's idea of a Dravidian tradition. Much like the other well-known anti-caste leader of his time, B.R.Ambedkar, Periyar often called for a dismantling of tradition in building a brand new Dravidian society.[55] In constructing the idea of this egalitarian and Socialist Dravidian community, Periyar moves away from the notion of the nation. As Geetha rightly points out, "freed from the burden of imagining a nation he came to construct alternate histories of the 'Hindu' past that sought to explain society in terms of its internal inconsistencies and contradictions" (Gender and Logic" 206).

All the above major political concerns of the Self-respect movement are gathered together in the following manifesto that appears in an early issue of Revolt in 1928.[56] This editorial illustrates how the movement defines and locates itself within the world

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[55] Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956) was an anti-caste leader. He wrote the Indian constitution. Born in an untouchable community he sought to eradicate caste system. He broke away from Gandhi's mode of Harijan reform which was linked to Hindu religion. D.R.Nagaraj discusses Ambedkar's anti-caste movement and hi quarrels with Gandhi. Nagaraj points out, "the Ambedkarite fascination towards the ideals of modernization and of centralization also has its roots in his confrontation with Gandhiji" (Nagaraj 57).

[56] Revolt No:1 (7 November 1928): 1-2.

historical contexts. The writer, presumably Ramanathan, who was an associate of Periyar and co-edited the paper, describes what Dravidianism means to the Self-respecters. Titled "Ourselves," the editorial situates the movement within the post-World War I ferment and argues, "the world war of 1914-18 gave a great impetus to the progress of human freedom [. . .] and a new passion of liberty and equality took possession of men's minds" (1). It was at this time that "the oppressed Nationalities all over the world awoke to the realisation of their rights" (1). Then, the writer locates the Self-respect movement in this larger political scenario of a burgeoning nationalist consciousness and the spirit of freedom in colonized countries like India. However, at the same time, he distinguishes it from the nationalist movements in India like the Home Rule and Congress:[57]

> The time spirit found expressions in India in two directions. The Home Rule and the Non-Brahmin movements were both started in Madras. The former had for its object the attainment of political freedom and the latter the realization of social equality. The former spread rapidly throughout the country when the latter confined its activities to the South. Having a common impetus these two movements, nevertheless, worked at cross purposes (1).

Thus, while the Congress and Home Rule had a pan-Indian spread, the Dravidian movement was committed to regional interests. The editor remarks that the above movements even differed in their political stances toward colonialism. While Periyar

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[57] "Several nationalist leaders banded together in 1916 under the leadership of Annie Besant to voice a demand for self-government, and to obtain the status of a Dominion within the British Empire[however,] its growth and activity were stalled by the rise of Mohandas Gandhi and his *Satyagraha* art of revolution: non-violent, but mass-based civil disobedience, aimed at complete independence" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_rule>.

For a discussion of the fall out between the Home Rule and the Justice Party during the Montague-Chelmsford reform enquiry in 1917, see also Hardgrave 18-19. See also Irschick. Irschick argues, "it was the Home Rule movement which allowed the Justice Party to dramatize the connection between Brahmanism and nationalist goals" (Irschick 58)

also engaged in anticolonial politics, he believed that the upper caste Congress leadership of the time (even local leaders like Annie Besant and C.Rajagopalachari are the prime targets of these Dravidian attacks) advanced only high caste interests.[58] He chose, instead to collaborate with the colonial government in promoting the cause of the lower castes.

In a remarkably candid manner, the editorial points out that such fundamental differences between the two movements led to "the Home Rule movement [being] absorbed by the Congress and the Non-brahmin movement [being] identified with the Government" (1). However, we see here the strong ambivalence that marks the Self-respect attitude toward the British. At some moments, the writer depicts nationalism and Self-respect as overlapping concerns. Bringing the two together, he even describes the Self-respect movement in terms of the "deliberate exercise by the Nation of its sense of self-respect and its ability for self-reliance" (1). The following lines accentuate such anti-colonial commitments: "we refused to cringe before our rulers with prayers and petitions, and determined on the manly course of attaining Swaraj by the exercise of national self-reliance, India with self-respect, with self-reliance, India though not yet free, was a fit competitor for the Nations of the world" (1). This blurring of the nationalist and Dravidian imperatives re-occurs when the writer asserts the anti-traditionalist stance of the Self-respect movement. The editorial assumes a particularly frenzied tone as it describes the state of social degeneration in India. The writer laments, "in unhappy

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[58] Annie Besant (1844-1933), Theosophist and founder of Home Rule in 1916. She was a part of the Indian National Congress. She worked in Madras actively for political and social causes between 1916 and 1933. C.Rajagopalachari (1878-1972) freedom fighter, Congress leader and writer. Also known fondly as Rajaji, he was a close associate and follower of Gandhi. He became the Chief Minister of Madras in the 1950's. His translation of Ramayana has won much acclaim. Periyar, who was an erstwhile associate of Rajagopalachari and a Congressman himself fell out with Rajaji. See E. Sa. Visswanathan 156. Periyar opposed Besant and Rajaji for their strong Hindu, and what he saw as Brahminical ideologies.

India" the "dead past is eating like a canker at the vitals of Nation" and "blind tradition holds undisputed sway" (1). In this marked emphasis on social reform and a call to destroy a repressive and caste-based Hindu religious tradition, he begins to disengage himself from the nationalists, who glorify Hinduism.

Besides, this editorial also reveals the tension between Dravidian anti-colonialism and their collaborative politics with the colonial government. At one point, however, the editor makes a confident declaration that the non-Brahmin movement has gained ground in Southern India and is no longer in need of colonial support:

> The Non-Brahmin party has outgrown the stage of dependence on government support and has come out among the people to work for the freedom from the social tyrannies and political monopolies. [. . .] Non-brahmins are already a live force in the Province of Bombay and are gaining supporters in Mysore and the Central provinces (2).

In this early editorial, the writer justifies why they started an English journal even though the movement was committed to the Tamil language. He points out that the Self-respect ideas were all along "finding expression through the columns of the Tamil weekly the 'Kudi Arasu'," but since the "adversaries" of the movement (the opponents referred to are obviously English-educated Brahmin groups) "would conduct their opposition in the foreign tongue" they saw the new need for expanding "the sphere of [their] operation and speaking the English language" (2). The Dravidianists opposed adopting Sanskrit, or even Hindi as a national language because they identified them with North Indian Aryan colonizers. But they found in English a language of empowerment and social mobility for low castes.

The Dravidian writings not only advance English over Sanskrit and Hindi, but they also uphold the Western Enlightenment ideals of rationality and social change. In contrast, they denounce Hindu religion as steeped in superstition. The editor cites an Adam Gowans Whyte, who writes for the "Rationalist Annual" (1928), as arguing, "Hinduism is a spiritual domination which condemns a whole population to ignorance, misery, cruelty and disease" (2). More interestingly, this editor even criticizes the British government for its policy of non-interference in native religious matters and says, "our charge against the British administration is not so much that it has drained the economic resources of the country but that it has connived at the perpetuation and accentuation of the religious thralldom of the people by adopting the policy of 'religious neutrality'" (2). Despite his problematic urging of colonial intervention in resolving religious and legal issues in Indian society, the editor is acutely aware of the economic exploitation of the land by the British. In this instance, it must be remembered that the Dravidianists frequently maintained that they collaborated with the colonial government as a strategy for safeguarding non-Brahmin interests. In fact, a press statement of Periyar in this same Revolt issue highlights another major objective of the movement, that of securing equal representation for lower caste groups in colonial civil institutions. Periyar declares, "communal representation in all matters is still the creed of the Non-brahmin party" (7).

In a later issue of the Revolt, a woman self-respecter, Miss Gnanam, rewrites the Self-respect manifesto.[59] This time, she brings the issue of gender to the forefront. In her reading of the Self-respect philosophy, she emphasizes the socialist and feminist commitments of the movement. This article is titled "The Political Philosophy of the

[59] Revolt No: 24 (17th April 1929): 187.

Self-Respect Movement." Unlike the nationalists, the Self-respecters reject religion as a whole. Instead, they embrace atheism. Miss Gnanam declares,

> The Self-respect movement stands for the social regeneration of the masses and the classes. It stands for the creation of an ideal society built upon the bedrock of equality and fraternity in all the spheres of life. It aims at complete equality between man and woman. Religion as a power to meddle with and shape society is completely ignored (187)

The writer brings the rift between the nationalists and Dravidianists to a sharp focus by proclaiming that the Self-respect movement "raises a standard of revolt against such socio-political parties whose cry of nationalism is but an election stunt. Nationalism with religion and social inequalities is but another name for gilded slavery" (187). She appropriates the nationalist rhetoric of freedom and rearticulates it in terms of social equality. Above all, she places caste reform over the freedom imperative. Apparently, by this time, nationalism has become increasingly demonized within the Dravidian movement. At the end, Gnanam also reiterates the Dravidian demand for lower caste representation in schools and administrative institutions and declares, "communal representation [. . .] is the immediate expediency in the political action of the Self-respectors [spelt with "o" in the original]" (187).

The above two manifestos mark the changing emphases of the Dravidian movement. The earlier editorial, even as it develops the idea of a regional South, also reveals a certain degree of sympathy with the nationalists and hopes that the independent India to come would be rid of the ills of caste and its debilitating religion. But the later article clearly disengages the Dravidian struggle from the nationalist movement. Instead,

it stresses social equality as the primary goal. Gnanam even accuses the nationalists of replicating the colonial domination in their interactions with the low caste people.

Nation and Tradition

The durable legacies of the turn of the century reform movement persist into the freedom movements in different parts of India in the next century. Periyar's writings often attack this nexus of the nation and religion in the subcontinent. He sees this form of Hindu nationhood as perpetuating social, religious, and caste inequalities in South India. In fact, he even demanded a separate "Dravidistan" at the time of the independence arguing that the low castes of the South would be left out of this Hindu nation.[60]

Often in the Dravidian writings British colonialism becomes a parallel image for the internal colonization of South India by the North. Thus, Dirks argues, "[the Dravidianists] substituted Brahmans for Britons, Aryanism for modernity, Sanskrit or Hindi for English, and northern India for Europe" in conflating the discourses of colonialism and nationalism (Dirks 145). Dirks describes Periyar's refusal to participate in the nationalist movement in the following terms,

> [Periyar] was as contemptuous of the religious fervor used to animate nationalist goals as he was convinced that the underlying interest for both religion and nationalism was Brahmanic privilege. Thus he never worried about being branded antinationalist and, despite his disinterest in the quasi-religious cult around the Tamil language, saw the Congress

[60] During the famous anti-Hindi protest (when Rajagopalachari tried to introduce Hindi as a mandatory language in 1937), Periyar made a demand for a separate "Dravidistan." As Diehl observes, "later on, he proclaimed the Independence Day (15th August 1947) and the Republic Day (26th January 1950) as days of mourning" (Diehl 17).

imposition of Hindi in government schools shortly after it came to power it 1937 as a further illustration of the oppressive character of nationalist ambition in India (Dirks 263).

The following article from the Revolt exposes the intimate relationship between religion and nation. It attacks the patriotism of the Swarajist Party: "the Swarajist vandalism, and the Congress hoodwinking are spent bullets, but the Swarajists brain is resourceful. 'Religion in Danger' is the slogan of Neo-nationalism" (194).[61] Moreover, the Congress leadership in Tamilnadu is often the prime target of satire in the Revolt. A striking example is an article, which rails against Rajagopalchari (C.R).[62] The writer begins by calling him "Chota Gandhi" (little-Gandhi) (409). Reporting CR's address at a recent conference, the writer observes that C.R. demonized the Self-respect movement and accused it of creating "artificial and imaginary difference[s]" between people (409). C.R is also supposed to have stated that this movement interrupted the nationalist dream of seeing a "homogeneous nation established in our land'" (409). If that is not enough provocation for the Self-respecters, CR also seems to have talked about the wisdom of the "forefathers." The Dravidian writer concludes, "this logic of Mr. C.R, plainly shows that he is a believer in the Law of the Varnashram" (410).[63] If C.R. upholds tradition, the

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[61] Revolt (24th April 1929): 193-94.
The Swaraj Party was formed by Indian politicians and members of the Indian National Congress who opposed Mahatma Gandhi's suspension of all civil resistance in 1922 in response to the Chauri Chaura tragedy, where policemen were killed by some protestors. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swaraj_Party. See also, Hardgrave for the political tussles between the Swarajists and the Justice Party in 1925 and 1926. See Hardgrave 21-23.

[62] Revolt No: 51 (3rd November 1929): 409-410.

[63] Varnashrama (caste system) is described as the "Brahmin-at-the top" model followed by the three non-brahmin castes Kshtriya, Vysya, and Shudra with the "Panchamas," or the untouchables pushed outside the caste order (William Jones's translation of the ancient Indian legal text Manu Dharma Sastras highlights this idea)

writer ironically asks, why the Brahmins are themselves giving up their traditional vocations and adapting to the changing social conditions under the Raj. He points out, "we are at a loss to know why the descendants of the Rishis are reduced to the necessity of keeping coffee hotels and laundries without indulging in divine communication with the Omnipotent God, as their forefathers are said to have done" (410).

Another article, "Leaders! What Have You Done" by Bhagat Ram follows Periyar's criticism of the Congress.[64] The writer questions what the "Congress [is] doing [. . .] for the depressed classes" (372). He finds that instead of bettering the condition of the lower caste pupils, schools under the Congress rule are actually "monopolized by the high caste people" (372). Arguing that the nationalist modes of reform are invested in Brahminical beliefs, Bhagat Ram asks,

> Some leaders would teach Namo Narain text [. . .] . Others would give sacred thread to the Shudras so as to convert them into Aryas [. . .]. What good does it do to the depressed classes to put the so-called sacred thread around their shoulders? For, as long as the law of Manu Smriti is enforced, caste evils will remain (372).

In Bhagat Ram's view, such reform programs are just "empty shows" in the name of "national causes" (372). They are only engaged in the "aggrandizement of [Hindu] spirituality" (372). This article shows the Self-respect concern with the predominant presence of high castes in educational institutions, which is offset by an anxiety that education in South India is turning into a device for propagating Brahminical beliefs.

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[64] Revolt (29th September 1929): 372-373.

The writer is worried that schools and colleges have become places, where Hindu ideals are instilled into the vulnerable minds of lower caste pupils.

Even though the Dravidanists support the colonial government in bringing legislations for caste reform, they are also largely, opposed to foreign domination. Periyar's presidential address at the South Indian Social Reformers' Conference is rife with such tensions between his opposition to the colonial power and his wariness of the nationalistic rhetoric.[65] He observes, "our country has the monopoly of see-me-not isms and touch-me-not isms," and declares, "the only way to get rid of the scourge [caste] is by legislation and communal representation" (48). Posing a rhetorical question, "is it not shameful for such a country to aspire for Swaraj, Dominion Status or complete independence?" Periyar answers it himself, "politicians may say that untouchability will go if we get Swaraj. To them I say not merely Swaraj but Dharma Raj, Rama Raj, [. . .] and the Raj of the very gods [. . .] were responsible for originating and organizing the blot on humanity [called caste]" (48). He sees Hindu religion as fundamentally oppressive to women, lower castes, and untouchables. On this occasion, he denounces the Brahminized educational system as, in fact, supporting colonial interests: "the education that is now obtained in schools and Colleges is useful to produce slaves, who are helping the foreign domination" (48).

A particularly sharp attack on the Congress leaders of Tamilnadu, "North Indian patriots and South Indian Brahmins" argues, "it was Mrs. Besant at first, and later Mahatmaji who discovered the Madras Brahmin and 'boosted' him up in Indian politics"

[65] Revolt No: 7 (12th December 1928): 47- 48.

(258).[66] The writer P. Chidambaram Pillai is critical of Gandhi's attitude toward Madras non-Brahmins. He narrates,

> During his last tours in the South, [Gandhi] became a regularized Sankaracharya, [. . .]; his darsan was denied to Non-brahmins; it was a pontifical affair, ably stage managed by Brahmins; his head was in the clouds of Gita and Varnashrama Dharma. It is ever so with a Non-Brahmin when he achieves eminence (258).

This reference to Gandhi's non-Brahmin background is accompanied by an insinuation that Gandhi has betrayed the low caste cause. In the eyes of Pillai, Gandhi becomes an "old religious fossil—unprogressive, halting" (258). He also makes this an occasion to condemn Gandhi's "connection with Hindi propaganda in the South" (258). Gandhi is supposed to have said "if Madras does not take to Hindi, then Madras will be left alone in the Swaraj to come" (258). Pillai's tone takes on a biting sarcasm when he describes Gandhi as a defender of North-Indian and high caste interests. Often, in such Dravidian writings Hindi and Hindu become sliding terms.

The discourse of cultural difference often hinges on the matter of language. Pillai's article brings this contentious issue of the national language to the forefront. Bitter conflicts raged over the linguistic issue in Tamilnadu of the time. The Dravidianists were against the Congress promotion of Hindi as the national language of a future independent India. Instead, they upheld Tamil as the sign of Dravidian cultural pride. Therefore, when the Congress government under Rajagopalachari tried to introduce Hindi as a mandatory language of study in schools, they began an epic protest

[66] Revolt No:32 (23rd June 1929): 258-59.

opposing this measure.[67] Reports of this anti-Hindi protest in the Dravidian journals depict Rajagopalachari's move as an imposition of the North Indian colonizer's language on the Tamil people.

This politicization of the linguistic debate forms the core of Kirk's article.[68] Kirk sees Hindi as a successor of Sanskrit in dominating Tamil. In his view, "nationalism in Hindi is [. . .] a camouflage. It is a movement which ultimately aims at a cultural conquest of the South" (229). Kirk also attacks Gandhi's veneration of the Hindu epics, and especially his fondness for the famous Hindi version of the Ramayana written by saint Tulsidas.[69] Kirk finds Tulsidas's work to be replete with caste and gender prejudices, where this Hindi bard equates Sudras and women with beasts and even advocates their corporeal abuse. Citing what he sees as a striking example of such tendencies, Kirk points out: "in one of his 'choupayies', [Tulsidas] runs amok and cries out 'drums, beasts, shudras, women all these are entitled to be treated with the rod'" (230).

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[67] When Rajagopachari's government tried to introduce Hindi as a mandatory language in schools, the Self-respecters participated centrally in the anti-Hindi protests. Periyar was imprisoned for a time, which created a strong public response against it. Visswanathan says, "the mere proposal to introduce Hindi came in for criticism from all sections of the people: the politicians, the academics and the Tamil scholars. The Justicites, the Self-Respecters and the leaders of the Muslim League opposed the attempts to replace English by Hindi" since it was a North Indian "regional language." See Visswanathan 185, 187-232

[68] "Malaviyaji's Last Trump Card" Revolt No:29 (22nd May 1929): 228-230.

[69] Tulsidas (1532-1623) was a saint and a poet. He wrote the well-known Hindi work Ramacharita Manas.

The Self-respecters accused the nationalists of inventing a Hindi and Hindu India to the detriment of the Tamil people and Tamil language. On their part, the nationalists charged the Dravidianists of collaborating with their colonial masters and jockeying for power. This antagonism springs from their very divergent views on nationhood. If the India of the nationalist imagination is unified by its ancient Hindu tradition, Periyar counteres this rhetoric of tradition in highly innovative ways. At one level, he uses Caldwell's notions of a lower caste Dravidian tradition to stress the antiquity and unity of South Indian culture, on the other, he employs the rhetoric of modernity and progress.

Tradition and Modernity

Going back to Eric Hobsbawm, we see that the invented national traditions are formed by drawing from "not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but [from] what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized [. . .] by those whose function it is to do so" (Hobsbawm 13). The nationalists in India were influenced by the turn of the century Indo-European ideas of a Sanskritic and "spiritual" tradition that represented all of India. In contrast, the Dravidian movements reconstruct a pre-Aryan Tamil-Dravidian past. Periyar "use[s] the racial and linguistic theories" of Caldwell to establish "a new form of Dravidian national pride" (Dirks 261).

Despite such assertions of an originary Dravidian past, the Self-respect engagement with the discourse of tradition is highly contradictory in nature. While Periyar employs the idea of this Dravidian tradition to forge the unity of all the lower caste groups in South India, he opposes what he calls the "traditionalism" and "obscurantism" of Hindu religion. Therefore, the Self-respecters seek to create a modern,

and revolutionary Socialist Dravidian society. They reject tradition and religion as the prime causes of caste oppression. And they oppose the Gandhian "politics of piety," where nationalism becomes imbued with religious fervor (Geetha "Periyar, Women" WS-10). Thus, Periyar sometimes employs the idea of a unified Dravidian tradition and urges the creation of a Dravidian nation: "The Tamils should [. . .] assert themselves as one nation" (Dear Youths 4). But in other contexts, he questions even this Tamil tradition and finds it to be reactionary, especially in its treatment of women. Commenting on such contradictions in Periyar's attitude toward tradition, Geetha points out: "Periyar, sometimes, argued for a return to 'original' Dravidian rituals, at other times, he insisted that there were in fact no Dravidian rituals" ("Gender and Logic" 223).

This ambivalence toward tradition comes through vividly in the following article that deals with the politically sensitive issue of the untouchable entry into Hindu temples at the time. The Self-respecters were naturally involved in the matter right from the start. K.M.Balasubramaniam in his "Temple Entry in the Tamil Country" casts the Brahmins in the South as usurpers.[70] He invokes the idea of a glorious pre-Aryan Tamil past in challenging the orthodox Brahmins, who bar the untouchable entry into temples and says:

> We the Tamils are a glorious race of magnificent Temple-builders and it does not lie in the mouth of the few obscurantist Pandits to quote scriptures from the Vedas and Agamas and refuse entry to the millions of our co-religionists. Let the Tamil world remember that our ancient society

[70] Revolt No:33 (30th June 1929): 267-68.

was essentially democratic in the real sense of the term. We had not such rigid and rigorous caste-systems as in the North (267)

According to Balasubramaniam, untouchability is "purely a foreign weed that was sedulously imported and sown amidst the healthy plants of such a [Dravidian society]" (267). He claims that this ancient South Indian culture was not only superior to that of the North, but was also egalitarian and refreshingly caste-less. And it is this Dravidian tradition, which even conformed to the modern ideals of democracy, that the Aryans destroyed. The Aryans also introduced their pernicious caste system in South India. In this article, Balasubramaniam condemns the Brahmins and their religion as obscurantist. In contrast, portraying Dravidian culture as democratic (as against a hierarchal and feudal Aryan culture) he brings the ancient Dravidians closer to the modern Enlightenment ideals of democracy and equality. More often than not, we find such reconstructions of the Dravidian tradition in the Self-respect writings. Here, Caldwell's notions of Dravidian antiquity are wedded to the new visions of Dravidian modernity. This reinvented Dravidian tradition is imagined to be essentially rational, egalitarian, and progressive from its very origins.

Simultaneously, as the Self-respecters uphold this Dravidian tradition, they also critique the very idea of tradition. Periyar often ruptures the occasional rhetoric of a pristine Dravidian tradition in his writings. He promotes modernity and sets tradition as the polar opposite of progress. Questioning the nationalist celebration of spiritual Hinduism, Periyar's sees Dravidianness as constituted by rationalism. Thus, the following Revolt article titled "Rationalism in India" describes the Self-respect movement in characteristically, rationalist terms:

> [The Self-respect movement] may generally be called the rationalistic movement. It is a tendency, [. . .] to examine every social or religious belief or usage in the light pure of Reason and to reject every belief which is repugnant to the dictates of reason even if it be sanctioned by ancient texts and custom (422) (from Revolt issue dtd10th November 1929)

In making rationalism the core of the modern Dravidian consciousness, Periyar reiterates the familiar colonial critique of Indian tradition as the sign of its backwardness. He traces India's cultural backwardness to its caste and religion, and calls for a rational and scientific outlook among the South Indians. Geetha traces the influence of the major nineteenth-century Western thinkers on Periyar, and observes, "his atheistic and rationalistic ideas obviously derived from the late nineteenth century western tradition of empirical and logical thought best represented by Bertrand Russell [. . .] Robert Ingersoll and Charles Bradlaugh as well as by creative artists such as Bernard Shaw" ("Gender and Logic" 205).

However, this Self-respect engagement with European modernity is hardly an unproblematic form of colonial co-optation. The Self-respecters adopt the Enlightenment ideas of progress as a strategy for the advancement of lower castes in the colonial state. It is often through the access to the language of modernity, citizenship, and rights that the lower castes could challenge the native Brahmin elite. In this instance, we might recall how the Subaltern Studies historian, Dipesh Chakrabarthy, interrogates the project of modernity. Not only does Chakrabarthy see this form of modernity as Eurocentric, but also examines the "violence" that accompanies this project (Chakrabarthy 30-32). However, while he critiques the stereotypical colonialist oppositions between Western

rationalism and Indian religion, he still feels that "maintaining a critical position with respect to the legacies of the European Enlightenment does not, however, entail a wholesale rejection of [. . .] rationalism itself" (Chakrabarthy 21).

In the context of discussing the above problematic, Chakrabarthy also alludes to the manner in which revolutionary leaders like Ambedkar deployed the language of modernity and rationalism in fighting caste oppression. He argues, "the revolutionary modernist position—that of early Ambedkar, for instance, in his polemic against Gandhi about the (de)merits of caste" characterizes a "reformer [who] seeks to bring (a particular) history to nullity in order to build society up from scratch" (Chakrabarthy 39). We can look at Periyar's stance toward modernity in very similar terms, although, Periyar makes this idea more complicated by also strategically deploying the Caldwellian notion of a pre-Aryan Dravidian past. However, by and large, Periyar too made rationalism the basis of his revolutionary movement. He too advocated the dismantling of the Hindu tradition as a necessary step in caste reform.

In the light of such Self-respect ideologies of progress, it is only natural that an article like "The Awakening Gaint" by E.W.Flint defines the movement as based on the principles of rationality and anti-traditionalism.[71] Flint commends "the splendid movement which enlightened Indians have started for the emancipation of their country from the thralldom of superstition" (355). A strong preoccupation with issues of science and rationality characterize many Dravidian writings. For instance, "The Incubus of Belief" even employs scientific metaphors of "malady" and "medicine" in describing the

[71] Revolt No: 44 (15th September 1929): 355. A "special" contribution from New Zealand

effects of superstition on society.[72] Here, the writer figures superstition as a disease and declares, "belief was a mental disease. It came with the stealth of a *microbe*, and the sufferer had a sort of credulous diabetes. The races of mankind from China to Peru, have been scourged and tortured because men accepted belief as something indisputable" (299).

Such Dravidian notions of progress are often grounded in Socialism. The Self-respecters reject religion. Paradoxically, even as they collaborate with the British government in matters of social reform, their Socialist politics sometimes set them in opposition to this government. Forced to justify their dealings with the Raj, they often explain it as a maneuver to break away from their Brahmin colonizers. The following editorial is a glaring example of such clashes between Dravidian Socialism, their opposition to colonialism, and a simultaneous support of the Raj:[73]

> Unless we make use of the foreign Raj to establish a new order of things, conducive to the formation of a healthier society both mentally and physically, we are sure to be trodden underneath the iron heels of orthodoxy, when Swaraj, or the Raj of the "Suttee" [. . .] comes into being ("Religion in Danger" 226).

What is particularly significant here is how the Dravidianists construct themselves as agents, who consciously make use of the Raj in order to build a new South Indian society. The editor rejects traditionalism, "orthodoxy," and gender-related oppression such as the much-demonized "suttee." In addition, he also mocks the Brahmins for adapting to

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[72] Revolt No: 37 (28th July 1929): 299-300.

[73] Revolt No: 29 (22nd May 1929): 225-26.

modern colonial circumstances even as they uphold tradition. Thus, the Brahmins set up the cry of "Religion in Danger" only when their interests are stake:

> When it is a question of all people using temples, tanks, roads and other public resorts, or stopping all rites and ceremonials, or doing away with the caste system, then "religion is certainly in danger." But [. . .], if it is a matter of Brahmins sailing to foreign lands, or learning "mlecha" [foreign] tongue, or sending girls to schools and colleges, or serving under a "heathen" then there is no danger for religion. It is only a fashion of the times (226)

In imagining a South Indian society free from both the British and Brahmin domination, the Dravidianists make "caste," especially, the ideological category of "non-Brahminism," the ground of their resistance.

Caste in the Dravidian Movements

Looking back at the history of caste in colonial India, we see that in the nineteenth-century the native reformers had in fact, tried to sanitize Hinduism from the evil of caste. They were particularly worried about caste since the colonial missionaries and Utilitarians condemned it as the reason for India's lack of progress (much like the issue of the low status of the Hindu woman). They found it imperative to address caste as a part of cleansing and re-working Hinduism. Slowly, however, such preoccupations with caste became secondary to what they saw as the immediate concern of freeing India from foreign rule. This tendency is increasingly visible in the twentieth-century nationalist

movements (though in his very different way Gandhi always made caste reform the center of his nationalist struggle).

In stark contrast, for the Dravidian activists "caste provided the basis for 'lower caste' political mobilization" (Dirks 7). They used Caldwell's theory of a racial divide between the Aryans of the North and lower caste Dravidians of the South. In addition, they questioned the hierarchical caste order and challenged Brahmin dominance in the South by showing up caste as constructed and not at all integral to South Indian society. In their struggle against caste, they frequently replicate the colonial Indological view of religion as the basis of caste. They target religion as the evil that has perpetuated caste oppression and the consequent loss of the "self-respect" of the Dravidians. Periyar employs this idea of caste as linked to religion in the following lines:

> Though I have endeavored all along to abolish caste, as far as this country is concerned, this has meant I carry out propaganda for the abolition of god, religion, he shastras and brahmins. For caste will disappear only when these four disappear [. . .] because caste has been constructed out of these four.[74]

Such equations between caste and religion are also visible in P.Krishna Iyer's (interestingly, the surname suggests a Brahmin caste-affiliation) anti-caste piece, "Varnashrama Dharma Vivisected."[75] Iyer describes with a literary flourish, "every sane man knows that this Varnashrama Dharma is midsummer madness, but there is a method

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[74] "Ninety-third Birthday Souvenir," January 17, 1971 [Anaimuthu. 1974:1974]For this quote see Geetha, "Periyar, Women" WS-9. See also Geetha's Reference on WS-15. From Periyar. E.Ve Ra Sinthanaikal (Thoughts of Periyar)—Three volumes, Sinthanaiyalar Kazhagam, Turchirapalli, (translations from Tamil made by Geetha.

[75] Revolt No: 44 (15th September, 1929): 355-56.

in this madness" (355). He is angry that "South India seems to be a fertile place for every species of madness and quackery. And of the [. . .] mischievous insanities that abound here, Varnashrama Dharma is the [. . .] insanest" (355). Iyer also sees caste as a social aberration that is alien to South India.

Besides, Periyar explains why the Brahmins (even the Brahmins of the South) cannot be included in this community:

> We have used the term non-Brahmins to refer to us, [while it seems as if] we have segregated the Brahmins from us, [it is they who] have segregated us from them [by forcing us] into separate places [in] restaurants, coffee hotels, tanks, temples, schools and institutions for Vedic studies (On Religion 32).

In Periyar's opinion the nationalist attempts at caste reform are just another way of subsuming the lowercaste struggles within the overarching framework of Hinduism. Therefore, he opposes the Gandhian model of reform that tried to rework, rather than dismantle, Hindu caste structures. Bringing out the striking differences between Periyar and Gandhi's visions of caste reform, Geetha argues, "Gandhi imaged the socially conscious and active subject of history as a devout upper caste Hindu, essentially noble and pious, who, of his own volition, would surrender his privileges and usher in change" ("Periyar, Women" WS-11). But for Periyar, "the lowest of the low, in caste society, adidravidas and women, were the natural subjects of history" ("Periyar, Women" WS-11). Thus, we see Periyar rejecting the Gandhian mode of Harijan reform, and warning South Indian non-Brahmins, "by declaring ourselves Hindus we have been the slaves of

Brahmins for thousands of years" (On Religion 33). Instead, he urges the lower castes and "adiDravidas" (untouchables) to "drop out" of the Hindu fold (On Religion 33).

Similarly, another thoughtful editorial, "Why Preach Atheism" in Revolt ruminates on what went wrong with the nineteenth-century Hindu reform movement:[76]

> From the days of that illustrious reformer Ramanuja, down to Swami Vivekananda, [. . .], the task of reforming our society has been attempted, not with any signal success. It was due to what? [. . .] If these reformers have failed to produce any lasting effect on our society it is [because they only] laid the axe at the branch, instead of at the root [. . .]. There is no need to inform our correspondent that the real enemy of social reform is orthodoxy (305)

Overall, in this editor's opinion, Dravidians should first of all, give up Hinduism and then set out to produce free thinkers (306).

Kudi Arasu, and Revolt carry several articles that are militantly anti-Brahminical in spirit. One of the Revolt editorials cites "an eminent Tamil Scholar" as remarking "if the three stages of the British conquest are merchant, missionary and monarch, the three stages of the Aryan predominance are rishi, ritual and rupture [caste divisions]" (266).[77]

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[76] Revolt (4th August 1929): 305-06.

Ramanujacarya: 11the century Tamil philosopher, saint, and reformer. He propounded the "Vishishtadvaitha" philosophy of Hinduism. Ramanuja who belongs to the SriVaishnava tradition is supposed to have authored many scholarly philosophical works. Visswanathan reveals Periyar's attitudes toward the saint. Periyar is supposed to have felt that while Ramanuja tried to "upgrade the untouchables [. . .] by decorating them with the "namam" on their foreheads (the high caste mark)" he failed to bring about "equality in society" (Visswanathan 82).

For a discussion of Swami Vivekananda, see Chapter II of this study

[77] Revolt No: 33 (30th June 1929): 266-67.

The Self-respecters carried regular and popular campaigns against Hinduism. The caste wars in the South, especially in Tamilnadu, reveal how the Dravidian activists set out to deconstruct the symbols of Brahminical religion. More often than not this cultural warfare takes the form of public ridiculing of Hindu scriptures, epics, Brahmin priests, rituals, and places of worship. In fact, Revolt even ran a regular column devoted to satirizing the Sanskrit epics and exposing their unprogressive and "immoral" content.[78]

In his critique of the Hindu epic Ramayana, Periyar not only brings such anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindu concerns to the foreground but also gathers up the notions of Dravidian "self-respect," incidentally, a term that he chose to name his movement. He declares the Dravidian refusal to be absorbed into the Hindu society as inferior "sudras." Describing how the Aryan caste order has dehumanized lower caste South Indians and destroyed the rational outlook that was integral to Dravidian culture, he holds the mystificatory rhetoric of the Hindu epics responsible for this cultural enslavement of the Dravidian people. In his view, "Ramayana and Baradham [another Hindu epic] are the foremost of the manifold romances [of] the Aryans. They are designed to lure the Dravidas into their snare, to wipe off their self-respect, to blunt their discretionary faculty and to destroy their humanity" ("Introduction" Ramayana 1).

Following Periyar, S. Guruswami denounces Brahminical beliefs in the popular column called "Itihasaas." In one write up, Guruswami begins by developing a satirical

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[78] Geetha argues that, while overall, Periyar was extremely liberal in his views on women's sexuality, often when he "referred to the instances of promiscuity on the part of Puranic goddesses and heroines," he would be greatly "puritanical" (Geetha, "Gender and the Logic," 224). These puranic women in the Sanskrit epics became "indices of Aryan degeneracy" ("Gender and the Logic" 224).

For a detailed discussion of the Guruswami's column and the public outrage it produced owing to its treatment of epics like Ramayana, see Visswanathan 84.

analogy between the post offices and Brahmins in attempting to mock Brahminical death rites.[79] He questions these rituals, where the priests claim that they can deliver material things to the ancestral souls with the power of their chants. Here is the deliberately ridiculous picture that he draws of these rites: "the Director General is the Sankaracharya. The rules and regulations are contained in the Vedas and Smritis, and the working of the postal system is embodied in the system of Varnshrama Dharma" (203). This Brahmin post office can even conduct "heavy goods [which] are carried thousands of miles in a terrible speed" by way of "kusha" grass [used symbolically as a conduit for delivering goods to heaven] (203). Laughing at the idea of "the six inches grass carr[ying] cows and calves to high heavens," Guruswami says tongue-in-cheek that in such matters "we [must be] guided by *bhoo-suras* [Brahmins] who are directly born, even today, from the face of Brahma" (203).

According to Periyar, an institution like caste reveals the fundamental contradictions within Hinduism. Hindus claim that it is a universal religion, but what one sees in it is actually a discriminatory caste order: "Sankaracharya stated that there is no difference between one man and the other," but caste was reinforced (On Religion, 23). Caste is, thus, designed to sustain Brahmin supremacy.

Some Self-respecters not only demonize South Indian Brahmins as the descendants of the Aryan invaders, but also exclude the lower caste religious groups of the South such as the Saivaites.[80] They align the Saivaites with Brahmins because the

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[79] Revolt (1st May 1929): 203.

[80] Visswanathan shows how the lower caste elite of the Vella and Pillai communities campaigned against the Self-respect movement to advance the cause of Saivism. He says, "since they were also deeply religious and highly sankritized in their style of life, they viewed the Self-Respecters' [. . .] attack on saivism, Saivite restrictions on temple entry and saivite reluctance to abandon the services of the [Brahmin priests]" as a breaking away from tradition and religion (Visswanathan 102).

Saivaites too place an emphasis on religion and ritual. In addition, they are said to practice untouchability. P.C.P in "Castes and Outcastes" tells his version of the Saivaite story in South India: [81]

> What happened when caste was introduced in South India? The Tamil Andanars and Adisaivaites whoever they were, became Brahmins; and they began to think [. . .] as though they were made in the very image of the Arya-Brahmins of the North. [But] stripped of their holy thread and with some tonsorial changes the Dikshitars of Chidambaram and the Mookani Brahmins of Tiruchendur will look like any of us, Dravidians (340)

The above example points to the fact that even the South Indian lower caste society is deeply fragmented along further castelines. For instance, as the Dravidian historian, Eugene Irshchick, has observed about the political movements in South India, the Justice party leaders were elite non-Brahmin classes such as the Reddis and Vellala landowning classes (Irshschick 160).[82] The eminent sociologist, P.Radhakrishnan, in his study of the "Backward Class" movements in the South, also describes them as comprised of "Vellas, Reddys, Kammas, Velamas, and Nairs," who belonged to the higher strata of the non-Brahmin society (Radhakrishnan 113).[83] The Justicites were often criticized for marginalizing the interests of the untouchables.

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[81] Revolt (1st May 1929): 203.

[82] The higher among the lower caste groups (often English-educated upper classes)

[83] Almost the middle-castes in their social status (often of upper class)

On the other hand, as Geetha argues, for Periyar, Dravidians included the "lowest of the low in caste society, adi-Dravidas [untouchables] and women" ("Periyar, Women," WS-11). Periyar's writings condemn the elite lower castes for excluding the untouchables. In an address to the Tamil youth, he chastises the South Indian non-Brahmins for their lack of unity and says, "even amongst the Dravidians we have several castes. [We] do not have common policy or religion [and] live [. . .] without any sense of [. . .] nationality. [In short,] We are not prepared to call ourselves Dravidians" (Dear Youths, 2). In trying to mobilize diverse sections of the non-Brahmin population--low castes, untouchables, economically underprivileged, religious minorities, and women--the Self-respect movement constructed a novel notion of Dravidian identity that was defined, mainly in terms of a non-Brahmin identity. Periyar does not define Dravidian identity in any narrow biological terms.

Regionalism

As Appadurai shows, the formation of local communities are "relational and contextual" (Appadurai 178). The Dravidian engagement with caste is interlinked with its politics of regionalism. James Overton also argues that regional movements "have a history. They are products of particular forces" (Overton 97). Even as the Dravidianists collaborated with the colonial government, or opposed the post-independence Congress-ruled state later, they often fought for lower caste representation by embracing caste identities derived from the colonial Census. In fact, the Justice party had urged the Raj to provide equal opportunities for non-Brahmin communities in colonial institutions on the basis of

such classifications. Periyar also supported the communal representation G.O.[84] An intriguing article in the Revolt reveals this Dravidian preoccupation with the numerical basis of caste, a tendency which is central to the colonial classificatory politics. The writer begins by arguing that the Vedas are not everybody's religious text in India because they are,[85]

> Written in an unspoken dead language, which should be heard and read only by a divine-descended population of 3% of the "Hindus". 97% of the populations are given the appellation of "Sudras," which means "either slaves or sons of Brahmins' concubines." [If the] Sudras make bold to read the Vedas, their tongues are to be cut off; if they hear the Vedas, their ears are to be filled with molten lead: if they keep any portion of the Vedas in their heart, their hearts are to be blown. But happily under the Raj, the Max Mullers have defied the orders and their tongues are safe (226).

What is significant here is how this writer brings the reader's attention to the nexus between the Brahmins and the British Orientalists. While the Brahmins deny the non-Brahmins access to their holy texts, they let the Western scholars read and even translate them. The writer wonders why when there are vivid punishments reserved for low castes, who dare to read Brahmin scriptures, they have not affected the white man at all. In this

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[84] Continuing the Justice Party's prime demand of equal representation of the lower castes in government offices and civil institutions like education, the Self-respecters also pledged support to the British in the implementation of this communal G.O in 1921-22. Visswanathan points to the controversies surrounding this demand, including the Congress opposition to it. However, to curtail the predominance of Brahmins in public services the colonial government issued an order in 1921 granting representation proportional to castes in "posts of all grades in public services" See Visswanathan 127

[85] "Religion in Danger." Revolt No:29 (22nd May 1929): 225-26.

instance, he adopts the language of percentages and numbers to highlight the paradox that the non-Brahmins outnumber their Brahmin oppressors. The emphasis on the numerical and statistical figuration of caste shows how, as Dirks and Seal have argued, the colonial quantification of caste was often the basis of the regional and caste politics in India.

However, while writings from the Dravidian journals reveal a strong geopolitical affiliation with Tamilnadu, they also voice their support to the anti-caste and socialist movements in other parts of India (for instance, Ambedkar's anti-caste struggle).

Moreover, looking at Dirks's description of how "the Dravidian movement took many forms, from the elite political negotiations and agitations of the Justice Party from 1916 through the 1920's to the radical populism of E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker" (Dirks 144), we can argue that even though the movement was led by the lower caste elite (Periyar himself came from such a privileged background), its mass base comprised of the untouchables, economically marginalized lower caste groups, and women. In this aspect, it differed from the Justice Party, which was dominated by the lower caste bourgeoisie, very often English-educated middle-castes. The Self-respect movement included, as the Dravidian critic, Visswanathan, observes, "the socially and economically backward non-Brahmin communities [. . .] including the scheduled castes" (Visswanathan 78).

The following editorial titled "No Brahmins Please!" shows how this politics of caste marginality is linked to class.[86] The writer identifies the lower castes with the

[86] Revolt No: 32 (23rd June 1929): 253-54.

peasants and the proletariat. On this occasion, he is commending the change of caste appellation among the Bombay non-Brahmins:

> We publish [. . .] the news of the decision of the Non-brahmin party of Bombay to shed its "communal appellation" and call itself a "peasants' party, with Dominion Status for the present as its goal." [. . .] The new appellation, "The Peasants' Party," is indeed a wise decision, for we are sure that more than ninety percent of the peasants come under the "communalist appellation." If, again instead of "peasants" it is termed as the "labourers' party" a greater percentage, why even cent percent will [. . .] belong to the "Communalist appellation" (253)

In the end, he declares "when once the Brahmins become peasants or labourers, and begin to be one with either of them, they naturally cease to be Brahmins" (253). He justifies this anti-Brahminical stance by bringing up the issue of labor in connection with the Brahmins: "we condemn Brahminism, for nothing else than its exploitation of the masses, in the names of god and religion" (253). Besides, "Brahminism and labour are poles asunder," and the Brahmin is a parasite living off the society (253). In fact, Periyar often defines untouchability as grounded in the politics of labor. The Brahmin's ritual purity is predicated on condemning the untouchable to polluting occupations. Instead, Periyar opts for an egalitarian and Socialist Dravidian society.

Socialism

Despite their strong regional affiliations, the Self-respecters pledged their solidarity with the Socialist movements all over the world. As a matter of fact, Periyar's anticolonialism

was conducted on a very different register from that of the nationalist Congress.[87] His socialist sympathies brought him in sharp disagreement with the British government. In their vision of bringing a Socialist revolution in the South, the Self-respecters map the idea of caste with class. In Geetha's words the self-respecters saw caste status as "mediat[ing] one's access to work, education and social status" ("Periyar, Women" WS-14). Moreover, "Knowledge, claimed and possessed exclusively by certain castes, was [to Periyar] as much a mark of exploitative social relationships of production" ("Periyar, Women" WS-15). Thus, the Self-respecters imagined their Dravidian community as a "community of comrade[ship]" against the British and the Brahmins ("Periyar, Women," WS 13). Periyar even thought of Soviet Russia as a model for the Dravidians to emulate. The Self-respecters weave the notions of class and colonial enslavement into their rebellion, and cast the "Brahmins and Briton as agents of world capitalism," and thus, identify the British democracy with the internal colonialism of Brahminocracy (Dirks 262-63).

Unlike many Justicites and the Congress leaders, the Self-respecters were atheists. Often criticized for their "godlessness" by the nationalists and the lower caste leaders as well, they had to repeatedly defend their atheist stance. Thus, we see a Self-respecter rationalizing: "we think it is needless to point out that 'god' has been the creation of human mind, just as all religions dead and living were created by man. The very existence of crores of gods in India with their wives, concubines, and children go to

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[87] See Dirks 262-63. Also, see Visswanathan's discussion of Periyar's engagement with Communist-Socialist ideals (Visswanathan 152-56). Periyar began to involve himself with trade union activities and adopted the Tamil word "tozhar" (comrade) to refer to his followers. Kudi Arasu and Revolt published extensive Communist literature. A "Samadharma" party for worker welfare was organized. The colonial government took decisive action on Periyar. He was arrested on charges of sedition and Communist propaganda in 1933 and released later.

prove the truth of the above statement" (313).[88] He denounces the holy texts, which the Hindus believe to be written by god or his messengers "in favour of caste" system (313).

The Socialist sympathies of the movement and its revolutionary message to the low castes are visible in M.K. Reddy's address to the Dravidian youth. Reddy declares: "Ours is a cult of *Action*, [. . .]. *Revolution* thorough- paced and to the very utterance" (87). He urges the Self-respect youth to "break away [. . .] from the moribund past," and exhorts them to "make a common cause with youths of other lands" (87).[89] Finally, in a highly figurative turn of phrase, he tells them: "*Self-respect* is your cherished hermitage; and *Revolt* against deadening customs is your watch-word. Maintain your place in the vanguard of progress, but fail not to lead gently on your weaker comrades" (87).

Similarly, criticizing how capitalism, colonialism, and religion all come together in the oppression of low castes, "On the Pilgrim Line" ridicules, "the Railway companies in India [which] are busy with the task of the priests in the propagation of religion" (417).[90] The editor charges these companies with taking "advantage of the religious scruples of the people [in order] to derive as much benefit out of it as they could" (417). He points out mockingly,

> The Railway authorities seem to have a greater care for our religion than even the priests. We see glaring advertisements in all stations, exhorting the people to have either a religious trip to Benaras, or a pious pilgrimage

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[88] "Why Preach Athiesm?" Revolt (11th August 1929): 313.

[89] "To the Non-Brahmins Youths." Revolt, (16th January 1929): 87.

[90] Revolt 52 (10th November 1929): 417-18.

to Rameswaram, "Visit the Palani Hills [. . .]," "Have a trip to Srirangam," they sincerely declare "Perform Sraddh [funeral] at Rameswaram" (417). This form of Dravidian Socialism opposes British democracy. It also criticizes the religious basis of nationalism. In addition, Periyar always links caste marginality with gender oppression.

Part 2: Dravidian Gender and the Writings of the Self-Respect Women

The Self-respect engagement with the "woman question" diverged from the nationalist idea of the Hindu women's reform. The movement succeeded in mobilizing South Indian women from locations of caste marginality. The Dravidian women activists uphold women's causes in the public space of the colonial politics. More importantly, the movement made their voices heard in both the colonial and native reformist debates on women. Unlike the nationalist elite who often conflated the image of the nation's women with that of the upper caste Hindu woman, the Self-respecters gathered disparate women from lower caste, untouchable, and minority locations. The writings of the Self-respect women reveal the various ways in which the native and colonial patriarchies impact their lives. In fact, these women activists interact with the colonial government in a very intriguing manner. Even as they actively call for legislations to redress gender issues, they are outspoken about their opposition to colonial domination. They resist the dominant nationalist ideals of Hindu womanhood and construct themselves as "modern" South Indian women. The rise of this Dravidian feminist consciousness reflects the changing social contexts of twentieth-century Tamilnadu.

Frequently, the wars of tradition-modernity in postcolonial India were fought on the site of woman's body. In the nineteenth century reform movement the "woman

question" manifested itself as a strong preoccupation with issues such as sati, child marriage, female infanticide, widow remarriage, and woman's education. Well-known reformers of the time such as Rajaram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Swami Vivekananda upheld the ideal of an ancient Hindu womanhood (my previous chapter discusses the Hindu nationalist movement) even as they incorporated European Enlightenment ideas of social progress into their gender reform agendas.[91] Such reform agendas were frequently impelled by the constant colonial attacks on Hindu religion as oppressive to women. This colonial rhetoric had not only highlighted the horrors of child marriages, widow burning, and lack of education among Hindu women, but also argued that the low status of the Hindu woman was an unmistakable proof of the barbaric and uncivilized nature of Indian society. Therefore, the "woman question" became an urgent concern for these reformers. In their visions of building a new India, they saw this Hindu woman as the symbol of the nation. However, they found both the nation and its women to be in need of regeneration.

Among other things, as Chatterjee has shown in his discussion of the reform movement, the nationalists often figured the Hindu woman as a sign of the inner and "traditional" space of the anticolonial Hindu self ("Nationalist Resolution" 239). In times of crisis, such as, for instance, the freedom struggle, the upper caste women were allowed to cross the boundary lines of the "inner" domestic sphere into the "outer" public space of the nationalist movement. However, gender liberation in this movement was conducted under strict male surveillance, or after women themselves had internalized the new

[91] See Partha Chatterjee's discussion of the nineteenth-century reform movements and the manner in which it addressed the women's question ("The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question" 254-268). Also see, Chakravarti 27-87. See also my discussion of the turn of the century reform movement in Chapter II

patriarchal norms. Apart from depicting the Hindu woman as essentially "spiritual" in nature, the nationalist patriarchy also placed a strong emphasis on her sexual chastity ("Nationalist Resolution" 248-250).

In the "Introduction" to their collection of essays, which probe the inter-relations between the indigenous patriarchy, class, caste and colonialism in India, Sangari and Vaid, point out, "patriarchies are not [. . .] systems either predating or super-added to class and caste but intrinsic to the very formation of, and the changes within, these categories" (Sangari & Vaid 1). Chakravarti, in particular provides revealing insights into how the above reformers imagined the paradigmatic Hindu woman in contradistinction to not only the Western woman, but also the lower class woman (Sangari and Vaid 9). Chakravarti dwells at length on the manner in which such reformist formulations of gender, nation, and colonialism are intimately linked to class. Besides, she inflects this idea further by bringing up the issue of the marginalization of the "non-Aryan" woman. She points to the glaring absence of the figure of the "dasi "(lower caste woman) from the Hindu reform agendas, and observes that the reformers "dichotomize[d] the population into high castes comprising Aryan, and labouring groups comprising un-Aryan," where they associated "Aryan purity" with the "high castes" (Chakravarti 50). Predictably, "the entire focus of attention in the nineteenth century had been on the high caste Hindu woman whether it was to highlight her high status in the past or in reforming her low status in the present" (Chakravarti 78). What is more, such turn of the century gender ideologies often permeated into the nationalist discourses of the next century.

Nationalist Ideologies and the Liberation of the Tamil Woman

In the early twentieth century, the English-educated Tamil literati were exposed to the new ideals of the Western Enlightenment. At the same time, the nineteenth-century Bengal reformers also influenced them. They translated the ideals of gender reform of the Bengal movement into the Tamil contexts, and imagined an ideal Tamil femininity by employing the domestic symbologies of "chastity," "wifehood," and "motherhood" (Lakshmi 2957). Moreover, as Lakshmi's study of the Tamil woman's liberation shows, some Tamil leaders also drew from the images of femininity in the Tamil cultural memory such as, for instance, the figure of the valorous mother Puranuru Amma, the ideal of suffering womanhood Nallathangal, and the model wife Kannagi (Lakshmi 2954).[92] Many upper caste Tamil women participating in the freedom movement at the time internalized such gender ideals. The Tamil nationalists justified the participation of women in the movement by figuring the public space of the freedom struggle as an inner domestic space, where nation symbolized home (Lakshmi 2955-57). As a result, "while who exactly [was] a Dravidian/Tamilian was open to several interpretations, there was no doubt about who a Tamil woman was" (Lakshmi 2956). In Laxmi's opinion, "one person who vociferously tore this image apart was E.V. Ramaswamy" (Lakshmi 2956).

However, in what seems to be an intriguing inconsistency, even as Periyar makes a conscious break with the domestic ideals of gender, occasionally, the Self-respect women drew upon patriarchal symbologies in the image of Periyar as the father. Lakshmi makes this an occasion to probe the influence of male leaders like Periyar on the

[92] Lakshmi points out, "three dominant images that have become part of Tamil language and literary conventions are that of Nallathangal of the18th century folk legend, Kannagi of the epic *Silappadhikaram* and the Purananuru mother who sends the son to the battlefield" (Lakshmi 2954). For a detailed discussion of these Tamil legends, see Lakshmi 2954-2955.

women of this movement. She observes, "despite Periyar's questioning of all traditional images of women and his questioning the very validity of motherhood" the Self-respecters would sometimes invoke the "motherly nature" of the women activists (Lakshmi 2956). However,

> it is not that these women cease to be supporters of the ideology of the movement but that after a phase of active physical participation they let the movement take its course. They enter the movement with Periyar being considered the father (thandhai) [. . .] these activities fall within a patriarchal idiom (Lakshmi 2956).

In her critical research on gender reform in Tamilnadu, another cultural critic, Sita Anantharaman, turns to Tamil writing in the early twentieth-century. Tamil writers such as Vedanayakam Pillai (1826-1889), Madhavaih (1872-1925), and Bharatiyar (1882-1921), "represent the pulse of the reform movement and rising dual consciousness of regional and national identities, which intensified with the struggle for independence" (Anantharaman 111).[93] Even as they vigorously promoted women's upliftment, reform of Hindu marriage, and women's education, or condemned child marriages and female infanticide, they often reinforced the domesticity of women. For instance, Madhaviah advocated women's education and raised the thorny issue of widow remarriage in

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[93] Anantharaman points out that all these authors were either Brahmin, or Vellala castes (middle castes). These "men [. . .] used fiction to challenge women's unequal access to education and the ritually sanctified customs constraining women's sexual lives." Besides, they wrote in the "heydey of the reform movement." She describes, "Vedanayakam Pillai (1826-1889), a *vellala* Christian focused on women's education, wrote the first Tamil novel, *Pratapa Mudaliar Charitram*" in 1879. This novel focused on social problems. A.Madhaviah (1872-1925), who was a Brahmin, was the author of works like Padmavati Charitram, the controversial serialized novel Savitri Charitram, which focused on widow remarriage issue. Madhaviah also wrote Muthumeenatchi (1903), which deals with the marital rape of an underage girl. She points out, "in the years of inflamed patriotism around World War I, poet C.Subramania Bharati (1882-1924) began *Chandrikayin Kadai* (Chandrika's story), an idealistic novel on widow remarriage" (Anantharaman 94). For the other quotes above and discussion, see (Anantharaman 94-95). See Anantharaman 3, 93-119.

Muthumeenatchi. But "despite his support of women's rights Madhaviah's male characters were usually superior to his female characters who were depicted either as sexually attractive or chaste and maternal" (Anantharaman 97). Another Christian Tamil writer of the time, Vedanayakam Pillai, wrote Pen Kelvi (Women's Education), and opposed child marriages and even advocated widow remarriage. However, he too often portrays women as chaste "gems of a family" (Anantharaman 107). This Tamil intelligentsia demonized female desire outside marriage. And while they advanced women's education, they were ambivalent in portraying educated women in their novels. Often, in such novels women are educated strictly under the mentorship of liberal-minded men (Anantharaman 96-97). Such contradictions throw light on the fact that while the Tamil intellectuals of the time found it imperative to address gender reform as a part of their nationalist project (especially since the British had depicted Indian society as oppressive to women), what seemed more urgent was the need to identify a distinct Tamil tradition. They saw this Tamil tradition as a part of an essential Indian tradition, and cast the upper caste Tamil woman as the sign of this new Tamil-Indian tradition.

Thus, both Lakshmi and Anantharaman situate the formations of the upper caste Tamil womanhood in the nationalist history of Tamilnadu. Their formulations throw light on my argument that the Self-respect women's writings oppose such Tamil Hindu ideals. The Self-respect women reject the domestic ideals of Hindu womanhood. Besides, they also accuse the nationalist women in Tamilnadu of neglecting the problems of the lower caste women.

Periyar and the Women's Question

The writings of women associated with the Self-respect movement frequently reveal how they identify themselves as lower caste women, and mark their difference from the upper caste Tamil women. While they look for colonial support in bringing legislations for lower caste women's causes, they also oppose the Raj. In discussing such colonial collaborations of the Self-respect women, we could perhaps rearticulate Gayatri Spivak's view on the colonial rescue of subaltern Indian women. Perhaps, we should describe such negotiations of the Dravidian women with the colonial power as "brown women" actively and strategically urging "white men" to "rescue" them from "brown men" (Spivak "Can the Subaltern" 296). But these Dravidian women seek support from the British only as a way of countering the Hindu patriarchy. What is more, they also criticize the British for collaborating with the Brahmins and deciding issues related to women based on obscure Sanskrit texts.

Geetha, who stresses the need for studying the gender concerns of the Dravidian movements, argues:

> The progress or retardation of the women question in independent India cannot be grasped [by merely examining] the elite and subaltern versions of Indian nationalism, but would have to actively engage with the histories and ideologies of social and political movements whose founding premises were not, in fact, are not definable within the terms of Indian nationalism ("Periyar, Women" WS-9).

Geetha's words corroborate my view that gender historians and postcolonial critics in India have largely neglected the issue of the rise of the Dravidian feminist consciousness

in South India. Very frequently, it is the women's question within the Hindu reform movement that forms the central focus of their work.

The Self-respect women define their differences from the upper caste Tamil women largely along the axes of caste, regionalism and nationalism. They accuse the upper caste women in the nationalist movement of marginalizing low caste women's causes, and seeking their own emancipation through participation in the freedom struggle. Geetha observes, "Women self-respecters were particularly critical of nationalist women [. . .] and took great exception to their entreaties to women to abide by tradition and serve their nation" ("Periyar, Women" WS-11). No doubt, a few Self-respect activists like Neelavathi, or the leading women politician and reformer of the time, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, were associated with both Periyar and Gandhi.[94] But, overall, the Gandhian nationalists and the Self-Respect women "don't seem to have maintained any links" (Lakshmi 2957). Such differences spring from the dissimilar concerns of the two movements. The Tamil nationalists were also committed to Tamil language and culture. In addition, they supported the Gandhian program of "Harijan" (untouchable) reform. But their central concern was the freedom movement. They were not particularly invested in lower caste causes. On the contrary, apart from their strong commitment to

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[94] Neelavathi Ramasubramaniam (1913-1982). "She began contributing articles [to Self-respect] journals in 1925" (Srilata, One Half, 194). A passionate writer and speaker she was "enormously popular with the youth." And "Neelavati was a socialist Self-Respecter." She met Gandhi in 1933, and joined the freedom struggle (Srilata, One Half, 194). She was one of the few Self-respect women associated with both Periyar's movement and the Gandhian struggle. See Srilata, ("Biographical Notes" 194-195).

Muthulakshmi Reddy (1886-1968): "was an eminent medical practitioner and social reformer [in Madras]." She was the first woman doctor in the country. And "she was nominated to the Madras Legislature as a member of legislative council in 1926, and became the first woman to be a member of any legislature in India." Moreover, "she was the founder-president of the Women's Indian Association (WIA)" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muthulakshmi_Reddi>

As Lakshmi has pointed out, "from among those who fought for legislative reforms, Muthulakshmi Reddi was the only one who maintained close links with the leaders of the Self-Respect Movement" (Lakshmi, "Bodies," 2957). The Self-Respecters "supported her anti-Nautch bill which sought to abolish the custom of dedicating young women to Hindu temples" (Visswanathan 129).

Tamil language, the Self-respect women were fighting for social equality, economic emancipation, and freedom from caste oppression (Lakshmi 2957).

The feminist concerns of the movement comes through strongly in Mrs. Rukmini Lakshmipathy's presidential address at the Ceylon Youth's Conference. Lakshmipathy situates this Dravidian feminist consciousness in world history.[95] She denounces tradition and recommends a "thorough overhauling of things" (286). According to her, "what is needed now is a radical revolution" (286). Locating Dravidian feminism within the rising feminist consciousness in the world, she traces it to the women's rights movements. This phenomenon is the "outcome of the awakening that has taken place among the womanhood in Asia" (286). Commending the progress made by Indian women, she says, "the grant of franchise to Indian women has made it possible for them to agitate for the abolition of unequal civil laws" (286). Laksmipathy's article points to the ways in which South Indian women began to locate themselves in the public space of colonial politics, and speak the language of legislation and rights with ease. Therefore, Geetha observes that the Self-respect women construct themselves as "citizens," for whom, the "millennial imagery [of Periyar's Socialist visions] translated itself as an invitation to citizenhood, to a community of comrades" ("Periyar, Women" WS-13).

However, as I pointed out earlier, some critics like Lakshmi have questioned the influence of the male leaders, especially Periyar, on women Self-respecters. Perhaps, we can counter Lakshmi's criticism by arguing that even as these women activists were influenced by Periyar, they often negotiated and contended with his ideas on gender reform and rearticulated the idea of Dravidian feminism. They constructed themselves as modern South Indian women, who were resisting both the colonial and indigenous

[95] Revolt (14th July 1929): 286.

patriarchies in their everyday lives. Srilata rightly argues that mapping the "women's history" of the movement will lead to a "*different* understanding of its gender politics" ("Preface" xiv). She underlines the necessity of making the "critical voices of women Self-respecters" heard, since often in the writings about this movement, "the figure of Periyar has loomed large" ("Preface" xv). In dispelling the idea that these women were pushed into passive roles by their male counterparts, we can explore how they engaged issues such as "sexuality, marriage, caste, widowhood, domesticity, ritual, work and the 'public' sphere" as they participated actively in the movement (Srilata "Introduction" 13).

Alongside analyzing Dravidian women's writings, I also examine Periyar's views on women's liberation in order to mark the manner in which these women negotiate with his ideas in constructing their feminist revolt. Periyar challenged the nationalist models of gender reform. Instead, he offered new models of Dravidian womanhood that were fashioned along the lines of modern Western, and mainly, Socialist visions of women's liberation. Unlike the nationalists, he focused on lower caste women's upliftment.

For example, the following editorial in the Revolt is greatly critical of the Gandhian ideals of womanhood.[96] The editor is angry with Gandhi for his ambivalent advice to an abused wife, who has left her husband. Gandhi is supposed to have told the girl to "live apart" from the husband without however breaking the "legal tie" (386). In addition, Gandhi allegedly declared that there was no cause to demonize Hinduism "based on a hysterical generalization from [this] isolated instance," since, after all, "millions of Hindu wives live in perfect peace and are queens in their own houses" (385). The editor squarely charges Gandhi with hypocrisy, and condemns Hindu reform as

[96] "Mr.Gandhi's Wavering Reply" Revolt No.48 (13th October 1929): 385-86.

ineffectual. He argues that what stopped a terrible system like "Suttee" was only the British law and not the glorified efforts of the nineteenth-century Hindu reformers. Going back to Gandhi's response to the abused wife, he says, "[the] worst part of [Gandhi's] answer lies in his advice on the question of the satisfaction of the sexual appetite" (386). Gandhi, according to this writer, had also said that since "the grievance is not that the wife cannot satisfy her sexual appetite," she should now go to her "parents [who] are willing to support her" (386). The writer finds this reply to be hedging the issue of woman's sexuality and states firmly, "[Gandhi] should say plainly, that the girl should marry again or not" (386). Interestingly, this Dravidianist also sees remarriage as the right option for the wife, and thus, perhaps reinforces the patriarchal equations of women and marriage. However, the part of his argument that is challenging is his attitude toward woman's sexuality.

Periyar had always promoted women's sexual rights, and their right to motherhood. The Self-respecters see marriage as a consensual relationship between grown up men and women. Periyar particularly sets up what he idealizes as "love marriages" against arranged matches. Such concerns are visible in this short dialogue in Revolt called "The Marriage Problem: A Dialogue."[97] The writer, Miss Gnanam, sketches an incident where a brother opposes his sister's decision to marry a Muslim. However, the sister rebels against the conventional caste and religious restrictions. She tells her brother, "marriage, [. . .] is not a thing of arrangement [but] a culmination of the bond of love" (381). The story ends with the brother receiving the following curt telegram, "'Abdul Kareem Saraswathi married under Self-respect methods--Ramaswami'" (381). In Periyar's work, the politics of love is linked to equality in

[97] Revolt No: 48 (6th October 1929): 380-81.

gender relationships and women's freedom to choose her companion. He promotes the ideal of companionship that is based on mutuality and equality between man and woman.[98]

In this instance, a brilliant article by a fiery intellectual and social worker, Sumati Bai, is fascinating for the manner in which it challenges an orthodox deputation to the Viceroy, which defended child marriages.[99] Sumati Bai attacks this Brahmin orthodoxy on multiple levels. On the one hand, she employs scriptural arguments and invokes the authority of the sastras, and on the other she draws upon the liberal Western ideas of modernity and progress. In "The Disgraceful Deputation," written with scholarly sophistication and a passionate feminist message, the writer critiques the supporters of child marriages. Right at the outset, she makes her stance very clear. She condemns the orthodox case by declaring, "how far their assertions can stand the lime light of reason is indeed very doubtful" (363). Then, she goes on to demolish every line of argument that the orthodox group makes in favor of child marriages. Marshalling her counter-arguments with astuteness, she challenges them on both the fronts of tradition and modernity. First, she questions the validity of the scriptural arguments made by her opponents and points out, "no two editions of the same smriti [scriptures] even agree on

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[98] "Marriage interpreted in the self-respect fashion, ceased to mark the limits of domesticity, family and community, and in fact, enabled women (and men) to orient their life to ideas, to the world outside" See Geetha "Periyar, Women" WS-13

[99] Revolt (22nd September 1929): 363-34.

"Sumati Bai (1900 -1955) was my mother. A brave, eloquent, and generous woman. She was my father's disciple, colleague and later became his wife. She was probably one of the first educated woman (Queen Mary's, Madras) in her backward caste. She wrote a book (Towards Womanhood) on sex education for Indian girls, in English. She was a progressive thinker, and wrote many articles in English on problems faced by women with power and precise erudition. She stands with Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya and Muthulaxmi Reddy as a pioneering woman intellectual in 20th century India. She did not hanker for public recognition, though she could, on occasion, be a powerful orator. She loved reading Browning, Carlyle and Shakespeare" (Taranath, Rajeev. "Re:Sumati Bai." E-mail to the author. 16th February 2008)

all points, and often contradictory passages [are] found in the same smritis" (363). Then, she critiques their claim that late marriages are tantamount to "Bhruna hatya" (killing of the fetus). At this point, she deftly introduces the medical argument by citing the ancient surgeon Sushruta who is supposed to have said, "when a youth less than twenty-five years old has sexual intercourse with a girl less than sixteen years old [. . .] the child born will most probably die early" (363).

Later, this writer goes on to quote from the Vedas to contradict the orthodox claim that Vedas support child marriages. She points out, "the vedic mantras of marriage themselves are clear proofs of the high cultural achievements and the mature age of women at the time of marriage" (363). Maintaining that girls under ten could never have been able to chant the Vedic marriage vows, she demands "is not pre-pubescent marriage inconsistent with the teachings of the Vedas the bed rock of Hindu Dharma and religion as the orthodox themselves call it?" (363).

Having checkmated the traditionalist defenders of child marriages, Sumati Bai quickly moves to the different register of modernity and progress. She condemns the "traditionalism" of her opponents and upholds the ideals of rationalism. She raises the issue of health and hygiene. Identifying herself as a "medical practitioner," who has worked in a village in Karnataka (state in South India), she mocks the orthodox rhetoric that had idealized Indian villages as the sanctuaries of the Hindu Dharma (363). In her view, these villages are often the scene of horrors such as child marriages, the consequent increase of child widows, "unhealthy children and ailing child-mothers" (363). She argues with deep concern that the general ignorance in the matters of health and sanitation in these villages lead to an increased number of diseases and deaths. She is

even roused enough to call such villages, "the dens of so-called Dharma," where lack of modern amenities and the superstitions of the population result in the intense suffering of child widows (363).

At this point, constructing the idea of marriage in terms of the Victorian model of companionship, Sumati Bai urges education for women. She upholds gender equality and asks, "does it not behove society to give its boys and girls enough time for the sound education so imperative for happy matrimony?" (364). Trying to counter the orthodox view that women themselves support child marriages, she publicizes the popular sentiment of women in this matter by pointing out, "the Women's associations all over India, All India Women's Conferences and not less than 22 constituent Conferences-have with one voice denounced child marriage" (364). She is particularly critical of a few women, who had apparently supported child marriages. "What opinion can be expected of them when they neither have nor are permitted to have any individuality of their own, or even any idea even not compatible with the mind of their self-appointed lord?" she demands (364). Apart from lack of education and narrow domestic outlook, their desire to uphold child marriages also springs from the patriarchal conditioning of their minds.

Finally, Sumati Bai even argues against child marriages on the "spiritual" plane. The orthodox set had glorified child marriages by calling them the communion of "spirits" (364). She mocks the unequal gender laws which underpin this view and asks with strong irony, "granting that child marriage is a spiritual concern, why should man marry again when his wife dies, since, after all, her spirit is not dead?" (364). In effect, bringing an impressive range of knowledges spanning scripture, history, medicine, and

sociology, and drawing with great facility upon the discourses of both tradition and progress this Dravidian feminist calls for the prevention of child marriages.

In a similar manner, Dr.Muttulaksmi Reddy, a leading women activist and politician of the time, also portrays the horrors of child marriages in "A Heart rending Rape."[100] Dr. Reddy narrates the incident of a marital rape of an underage girl. According to her account, the husband had taken the girl to his house when she was only eleven and raped her repeatedly until her parents found her in a bruised condition. Finally, the girl's father sought the help of Dr. Reddy, who was a member of the Indian Woman's Association. At this point, she asks the girl's parents pointedly, "may I ask why [you] did not protest against legislation in the Indian States to abolish Child marriage" (339). Tracing the whole tragedy to the practice of child marriage, she urges the colonial government to take action against it:

> If the British government on the plea of religious neutrality had desisted in the past from interfering with other similar customs such as Sati or the burning alive of our Widows, Human sacrifice, or infanticide, today our government would surely have been put down by the other free nations of the world as having been a party to the perpetration of all those crimes (339).

In this report, even as she actively seeks colonial intervention in reforming Indian society, Dr. Reddy also attacks the British government for consulting Brahmin legal scriptures in resolving matters pertaining to women. She states categorically, "you cannot reconcile common sense with Shatras and orthodox opinion" (339). The above

[100] Revolt (1st September 1929): 339-40.

article is one example of how the Dravidian feminists opposed the British reliance on Brahminical law in deciding gender issues, a law which they found to be repressive to women.

When Periyar constructs Self-respect women as "citizens," he also wishes to make their voices heard in the public debates on gender reform. Interestingly, however, while the women Self-respecters draw upon Periyar's models of modern womanhood, sometimes, they also exhibit conflictual attitudes toward such ideals. We see this, for instance, in the article of Miss T.S. Kunjitham, who writes on "The Position of Indian Women."[101] Kunjitham complicates the East-West binary, which Periyar draws, in a very intriguing manner. She begins by developing the contrast between Western and Indian women. While she depicts the former as liberated and modern, her piece is also beset with an anxiety about the "immorality," which is stereotypically associated with Western women. Reflecting on the prevalent rhetoric of the "permissiveness" of the modern Western woman, Kunjitham portrays a problematic picture of gender reform in the West, even as she praises it.

At the beginning, Kunjitham traces the history of the feminist movements across the globe and points out, "as a result of the great war, women in the civilized countries in the West have come to realize themselves and won their emancipation" (379). But "India is still medieval in her outlook as far as the position of her womanhood is concerned" (379). Kunjitham is of the opinion that "Western women have liberty though not properly used, where we have none" (379). In fact, while "freedom misused is moral poison, when denied [it] is death" (379). Thus, even as she suggests that the Western

[101] Revolt (October 1929): 379-80.

woman's liberation has resulted in making her "immoral," she is emphatic about how India is worse off in comparison. The reason for the backwardness of the Indian women is, of course, the "hoary system of caste" (379). Because of the caste divisions "women for the most part have remained disunited illiterate immersed in ignorance and superstition" in this country (379). They are steeped in domesticity and "regard marriage as their one goal" (379). Kunjitham ends by stressing the need for gender reform as a part of modernizing India (380).

The above women's writings in the Revolt are evidences of how in "root[ing] a new and radical female subjectivity," Periyar imagined the Self-respect woman as a self-defining social subject ("Periyar, Woman" WS-9). Moreover, this Self-respect feminist consciousness also forges "relationship[s] between gender and caste [. . .] and a dalit political militancy" ("Periyar, Woman" WS-12). These women writers see their marginalization as closely related to caste hierarchies. After all, as Leela Dube has shown, the ritual status of even the high caste woman is equal only to that of the lower castes. Dube claims, "women never attain the level of purity of men of their own caste. It is well known that traditionally women of twice-born castes have been equated with Shudras who could not be initiated into the learning of the Vedas" (Dube 10). It is not surprising, therefore that Periyar aligns even the upper caste Hindu woman, oppressed by the Brahmin patriarchy, with the low castes. In addition, he points to how caste and gender are interlinked with the issue of "labor":

> It is an inexcusable principle of varnashrama dharma that women are born only for kitchen work. To say that women exist only for cooking is many times more cruel than setting apart shoe-making to one community,

> washing to another community [and so on]. If community cooking comes into vogue, nobody will worry about cooking [. . .] If underground drainage is adopted there will be no need of [. . .] scavenger community (On Women's Rights 60)

The labor that low castes and women are traditionally forced to perform defines, and even naturalizes their social identity. Often, it is this demeaning labor that they are condemned to do that fixes their low status in society. Periyar believes that it is only by adopting modern science and technology that such traditional equations of labor, gender, and caste in Hindu society can be deconstructed.

The Self-respecters seek a complete dismantling of the Hindu tradition. Periyar was even wary of what was glorified as the Tamil tradition. Among other things, he vehemently opposed the mythical models of victimized and "suffering" femininity that are celebrated in the Tamil cultural imaginary. He warns, "we will be moving like tortoise and writing and talking about [. . .] Sita. Until then our country will only produce women like Nalayani [a figure from the Tamil cultural lore who was subjected to endless domestic sufferings] and not like the gifted Russian woman Perowiskaya" (On Women's Rights 44). Celebrating the Socialist woman he declares unambiguously that "the very word 'Russia' seems to imply the rights of women" (On Women's Rights 64).

In another instance, urging the Dravidian women to break away from the Hindu mold of gender, Periyar argues that it is the linguistic domination of Sanskrit that has lead to the indoctrination of the Aryan values in the Tamil country. In one of his rather infrequent references to Tamil tradition, he points out that there are no equivalent words for the Sanskrit term "pativratha" (woman who practices the ideal of husband worship) in

Tamil. According to this theory, the "idea of subordination or slavery came to be associated with the Tamil word 'karpu' [chastity]" only after the South became Aryanized (On Women's Rights 8). In the end, he concludes that the ancient Dravidian culture was characterized by its egalitarian gender relations. This gender equality is visible in how "the Tamil equivalents *Nayaki* and Thalaivi [female companion] shows equality and companionship. "[These words] used in the Tamil puranas and stories clearly imply equal status for both man and wife" (On Women's Rights 8)

Most significantly, Periyar casts the Dravidian woman as a sexual subject and asks why "she has freedom only to request [the husband] to have his meal, but not ask him to go to bed with her" (On Women's Rights 9). Questioning the Hindu reformers, who rely on the Sanskrit texts in the matter of widow remarriage, he takes exception to the erasure of women's voices in the reformist debates on women. Defending woman's desire, he asks: "what is the practical use of asking whether the sastras or conventions of particular communities permit widow remarriage or not? The relevant questions to be asked are: Will the widow experience physical passion or not? And does she need a husband or not" (On Women's Rights 36). He criticizes the domestic and spiritual ideals offered to the Tamil woman, and rejects "the imposition of chastity [. . .] on women alone," by arguing that men too should be bound by similar rules (On Women's Rights 10).

While most articles in the Dravidian journals focus on the lower caste women's causes, they also include articles by Brahmin women who voice a sense of victimization within the high caste societies. Besides, Self-respecters like Neelavathi charge even the lower caste men of oppressing women. This sharing of the common concerns of women

across castelines shows the Dravidian movement as not at all monolithically caste-based, but as encompassing various marginalized South Indian women.

Srilata's translations from the Self-respect women's writings in Tamil bring out such gender and caste concerns of the movement in a vivid manner. The Self-respect women highlight the problems that they face in their domestic and public lives. Such topics range from women's right to "use umbrellas" to their right to get education. For example, the feminist zeal of a leading Self-Respecter is visible in Neelavati's call for women's participation in the movement.[102] In her radical message she calls for gender mobilization, promotes Self-respect marriages, urges the raising of women's consciousness, and advocates mass agitations by women demanding their rights. In another article "Is the Bliss of Freedom Not for Us?" Neelavathi equates Brahminism with patriarchal oppression and argues, "if the Brahmins decreed in their books and scriptures that none apart from themselves should have access to education [. . .] men have snatched away the right to education from women" (Srilata 78).[103] At the end of the article, in an impassioned plea to men, she declares, "it is best to co-exist peacefully. Do not deny us the bliss of freedom" (Srilata 60).

In contrast, "The Skies Wont Bring Forth Rain" is an ironic essay about the restriction on women to use umbrellas.[104] This women writer mocks the shastras, which

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[102] Srilata, One Half, 32-36. Original article by Trichi Neelavathi, titled "Penn Makkalum Suyamariathai Kollgaigallum" ("Womenfolk and the Self-Respect Principles") appeared in *Kumaran*, July-August 1930, Vol 9, Issue 1.

[103] Srilata, One Half, 78-80. Original article by Neelavati Ramasubramanian, titled "Inba Suthanthiram Yengallakku Illaiyaa" ("Is the Bliss of Freedom Not For Us") appeared in *Kumaran*, November-December 1930.

[104] Srilata, One Half, 54-55. Original article by Janaki, titled "Mazhai Peyyathu" ("The Skies Wont Bring Forth Rain") appeared in *Kumaran*, November-December 1930: Vol 9, Issue 5.

warn that "skies wont bring [. . .] rain" if women use umbrellas like men (Srilata 54). She rejects such patriarchal prescriptions for women by showing them up as not only oppressive but also comic. In making the West the model of gender reform within the Dravidian movement, she urges lower caste women to use umbrellas just like the white women (Srilata 55). She declares, "like the whites, let us freely enjoy the use of umbrellas during the rains" (55).

However, it is not only the militant voices of the lower caste women that we hear in these journals. Even the oppressed Brahmin women speak out against the Brahmin patriarchy. In a heart-rending story "What is in Store for Us?" a Brahmin woman laments that "the brahmins also oppress their own kind," and reveals the nexus of caste and class in the victimization of women.[105] In a highly intriguing manner, she calls herself Miss and Mrs Kamalakshi. This conscious self-reference points to the fate of a Brahmin woman, who has been married but whose marriage has not been consummated by performing what is called the "ritushanti" ritual. The husband refuses to accept her since her father does not have the dowry to pay him. She marks her résistance to the system by declaring that she has "dared use both titles" (Srilata 31). She expresses her intention to "speak out [and] enlighten [her] sisters and fellow-sufferers" (Srilata 28). She hopes that her voice will give them strength "to struggle" (Srilatha 28). Another anonymous story "Pankajam's Tragic Death" narrates how a brother murders a Brahmin widow for the crime of just looking out of the window (40).[106]

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[105] Srilata, One Half, 28-31. Original article by Miss and Mrs Kamalakshi, titled "Engall Gathi Yenna" ("What is In Store For Us?") appeared in *Kumaran*, August-September 1930: Vol 9, Issue 2.

[106] Srilata, One Half, Original article "Pankajatin Paridaba Maranam" ("Pankajam's Tragic Death"). Author anonymous. Appeared in *Kumaran,* March-April 1931; Vol 9, Issue 9.

Not only Brahmin women, but also women from minority communities, such as, for instance, the Muslim women writer, Alhaj Subako, write for these Self-respect journals. Subako contends with Periyar's views on Muslim women's liberation. Her article "Why was Woman Enslaved? Muslim Women are Slaves Too! The Plight of Muslim Widows" questions Periyar's misreading of the status of the Muslim woman.[107] Subako points out, "from E.Ve.Ra's [Periyar] stand on widowhood and Hindu society, it appears as though the stigma attached to widowhood [is] confined to Hindu society alone; that Muslim society for instance, is happily exempt from all this" (Srilata 75). She negates Periyar's views and declares, "let me proclaim openly, 'Muslim women are slaves as well'" (Srilata 75). Setting Periyar right on the issue of Muslim women's oppression, she says "Muslims may pat themselves on their back for being progressive in their attitudes towards widows, but [they] are only hiding behind a mask when they proclaim, 'our Prophet, our religion, our Islam has given all possible rights'" (Srilata 77).

It is evident from the above examples that the manner in which the Self-respect movement addresses the women's question contrasts with the dominant mold of Hindu gender reform. The writings of the Self-respect women show how they participate in the movement. One might, perhaps, argue that much like the Hindu reformers, who wrote the notion of "tradition" on the bodies of upper caste women, Periyar tried to write Dravidian modernity on the bodies of low caste women. But the Self-respect women's writings show that they constantly appropriate, negotiate and contend with Periyar's gender ideologies in inventing a Dravidian feminist consciousness.

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[107] Srilata, One Half, 75-77. Original article by Alhaj Subako, titled "Penn Yenn Adimai Aanall? Muslim Penngallum Adimagalle Daan! Muslim Vidhyagallin Nilamai" ("Why Was Muslim Woman Enslaved? Muslim Women are Slaves Too! The Plight of Muslim Widows") *Puratchi*, January 28, 1934.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated how the leaders of the native Dravidian movements appropriate colonially mediated ethnographic knowledges, even as they draw from Western ideals of modernity in forming their ideas of an authentic Dravidian South. Such regional formations simultaneously resist British colonialism and the internal hegemony of Hindu nationalism in the subcontinent.

Besides, I have explored the anti-Brahmin, and anti-nationalist stances that are central to the Dravidian ideologies by focusing on the Self-respect writings. I have highlighted the Self-respect interactions with the colonial government by showing the manner in which these Dravidianists found in the Raj, an instrument to bring in caste reform in South India. Nevertheless, they opposed British domination. As a result, their anti-colonial ideals conflict sharply with their opposition to the nationalist ideologies. The Self-respect writings reveal such tensions between the nationalist and regionalist ideologies. While Periyar embraced colonial modernity and incorporated the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and progress in reinventing a modern Dravidian consciousness, he also drew upon Caldwell's ideas of a Dravidian tradition. Such battles of tradition and modernity often hinge on the issue of gender reform in this movement.

In arguing that we can look at the Self-respect women's struggle as a subaltern resistance to the dominant discourses of the nation and caste, I have shown how this movement draws lower castes, poor, untouchables, and women into the Dravidian community. This movement turns into a banner for uniting the underprivileged caste and class subjects of South India under the sign of marginalization.

Besides, what is particularly significant about the Self-respect movement is how it addresses the women's question. Unlike the nationalists, who focus only on the upper caste Hindu woman's liberation, Periyar brings the figure of the low caste woman to the forefront. The empowerment of the lower caste women in this movement led to the rise of a Dravidian feminist consciousness in South India. The Self-respect women's writings reveal the ways in which they interrogate both the colonial and indigenous patriarchies. Interestingly, the Self-respect journals even comprise of the writings of oppressed upper caste women, thus, drawing a range of subaltern South Indian women into its community.

Periyar's ideologies of a specific brand of regional and lower caste Dravidianism continue into the late twentieth century in the work of his followers such as Veeramani (the leader of Dravida Kazhagam) Annadurai and Karunanidhi (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), and the famous film star, M.G. Ramachandran (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam).[108] Apart from his successors and disciples, who became key actors in the post-independence political arena of Tamilnadu, many contemporary South Indian writers and literary figures also show a marked influence of Periyar's ideas in their writings. My next chapter discusses postindependance literary representations of South India, and demonstrates that the anti-hegemonic discourses of caste and nation within the Dravidian movement become deeply contested in these literary works.

[108] See Chapter I "Introduction" to this study for a brief overview of post-Periyar politics. Also, see Note # 9 of the "Introduction."

Chapter IV

South India is India: Contestations of the Nation and Region in Postcolonial Indian Literature [109]

The idea of "South India" in the writings of the Dravidian movements is strongly identified with the lower caste identity in Tamilnadu. However, when we examine an array of post-independence literary works in India we find that South India here figures as a contested site riven by differences in caste, language, region, and gender. By and large, the early post-independence Indo-Anglian writers configure the South in terms of a "supplementarity" and an otherness to the nation. Intriguingly, even some early Indo-Anglian writers of the South at this time tend to see South India as "India," where their South Indianness becomes integral to an essentialized idea of Indianness. In contrast, many women writers and vernacular writers of the South are more invested in probing the conundrums of caste, region, and gender in more local and regional contexts. This chapter examines a few representative postcolonial Indian writings in English and translations of works from the regional languages of South India, and raises some crucial questions about the issue of literary regionalism in South India.

A majority of the early post-independence Indo-Anglian writers, interestingly, many of whom associate themselves with privileged caste and class locations, re-inscribe the dominant notions of the nation and caste, while they claim to uphold liberal Western

[109] Balachandra Rajan, the early Indo-Anglian writer of the South locates himself in a specifically, Brahminical world. Like Raja Rao, Rajan also reveals a tendency to integrate his South within a larger pan-Indian consciousness. He idealizes a Sanskritic brahmin culture, even as he tries to uphold the notions of a secular nationhood. His novel The Dark Dancer revolves around the lives of a South Indian Brahmin protagonist, Krishnan and his wife Kamala. Even though Krishnan locates himself in the South, he is always quick to assert his Indianness. He describes the South with: "more than anything else it's India" (84). The title of the chapter draws from this line of Rajan. See Rajan 84.

ideals of nationalism. Among them even some writers of the South, such as Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan, for instance, identify themselves only with a Brahminical mileu in the South. While they are preoccupied with tracing a pan-national consciousness into which they insert such ideas of an Aryan and Brahmin South, they distance themselves from the lower caste South India. Such tendencies in early post-independence Indo-Anglian writing lead us to ask the following questions: how do the Indo-Anglian writers of the South in the 50's and 60's assert their distinct regional identities even as they see South India as a part of an overarching nation? And even as they reveal an attachment to South Indian places, why do they reveal a hegemonic tendency of conflating this South with Brahmin cultures? On the other hand, do writers who speak from the locations of caste and gender marginality in South India bring into play the multiple identities marked by differences of caste, region, language, and gender even within this South Indian space? Besides, does the corpus of women's writing and vernacular works disrupt the dominant accounts of a Hindu national history, and give visibility to the subaltern and local histories in the South? In raising these critical-historical questions my discussion in this chapter provides a new category—bracketing a group of writers with a particular identification with South Indian cultures. While these writers identify with different South Indian places, their particular caste and gender locations seem to impel their divergent visions of South India. I bring the post-colonial Indo-Anglian writers, mainly those of the South, in conversation with vernacular writers of South India to highlight such contestations of caste, gender, and language.

In effect, my study departs from an exclusive preoccupation with the globally visible Anglophone literature, and explores how writings in South Indian regional

languages also contribute important insights into the constructions of the notions of region, caste and gender in South India. However, I do not, of course, argue that we can filter an essential "South Asian [or even South Indian] reality" from a study of these writings (Brains, 6).[110] Instead, my work is concerned with mapping the breaks and ruptures in the intersecting discourses of nationalism and regionalism in these writings. It argues that the literary formations of South India are largely inflected by the positionality of these post-independence writers, especially in terms of their particular identifications with place, caste, language and gender in South India.

Theory

My intent to study Anglophone, and vernacular literatures of South India together is strengthened by the views of a few contemporary postcolonial critics, who have begun to question the equations of postcolonial literature with Anglophone writings. Recently, cultural historians like Aijaz Ahmed have expressed an alarm at the manner in which postcolonial literature is frequently seen as synonymous with Anglophone writings. In a similar vein, another postcolonial critic, Paul Brains, argues, "although many South Asians are proud of the international prominence of writers from their region, many are also resentful that talented authors writing in Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, [and] Malayam" have been neglected for long (Brians 4). A sharper critique comes from Angus Calder in "Does 'Post-coloniality' Mean Anything?" Calder charges postcolonialism with a "parochial[ism]" that only "privileges the consciousness of English-speakers from the territories of the [former] empire" (Calder 11). In Calder's opinion, postcolonial literature is largely oriented toward English, and English speaking people. By and large,

[110] Paul Brains rejects the idea of an essential "South Asian reality." See Brains 6.

it must said that, while Indian writing in English has gained access to international audiences, regional writings have limited readership. This problematic of English language at the heart of the national and international literary discourses also forms the crux of the debates on contemporary postcolonial Indian writing.

However, Ahmed does not reject English. His view is much more nuanced. In "The Future of English Studies in South Asia" he maintains, "access to English language, English culture and knowledge that were obtainable through English was very much a part of class and caste mobilities, or rather class mobilities and caste consolidations" (Ahmed 49). Ahmed even links a new postcolonial consciousness in India to English Studies and concedes, "in the modernization and democratization of literatures in a whole range of indigenous languages, English has played a deeply constructive role" (Ahmed 50). But despite the assertion that English language led regional writing into new directions, Ahmed is worried that "the definition of new literatures is the definition of things written in the English language" (Ahmed 54). At the same time, he also distances himself from "the regionalists, the linguistic fundamentalists, for whom any crossing of the linguistic boundary between one language and the other" is a sacrilege (Ahmed 54).

For Ahmed, postcolonial literatures in vernacular languages are the sites where we can recover the subaltern perspectives of caste and gender. Thus, he points out, "the archives of every single literature in India, are [. . .] clusters of contestation: [of] caste hegemonies, [and] gender contestation" (Ahmed 55). In short, "it is by the assembling of all these that the kind of cultural hegemony for which high, bourgeois, Brahminical, Indian nationalism has been famous in the nineteenth century can actually be contested" (Ahmed 55). I agree with Ahmed's view that very often vernacular literatures highlight

voices from the hitherto silenced locations because here we find writings from the underprivileged castes and women "of a very different sort" from those in English (Ahmed 55). Ahmed's insistence that Indo-Anglian and vernacular literatures are mutually complementary underpins my discussion. In observing that very often the works that are located in subaltern gender, caste, and linguistic locations reveal the complex and fractured constructions of locality and region, I also show how they frequently go against the dominant nationalistic grain of the early Indo-Anglian writing. Moreover, while linguistic differences are the center of the discussions of Indian writing, literary critics have often neglected the inter-relationships between gender and region. In my discussion of women's writing in the South, I demonstrate how they construct the notions of the local and the regional by exploring the links between caste and gender.

Somewhat along the lines of Ahmed's argument, the literary critic, Rumina Sethi, also maintains that Indian postcolonial literature in English has, after all, been instrumental in providing visibility to marginal identities and women. Sethi sees liberatory possibilities in this literature, and feels that "literature as a discipline has shown a lot more resilience and promise when faced with the explosion of identities" (Sethi 36). However, the paradox at the heart of the Indian writer's appropriation of English, an erstwhile colonizer's language, becomes sharper when we look at the fact that it was the nationalist elite who first institutionalized English as a national language. These nationalists "extended a 'national' character to the language of state administration, enabling only works in English to assume the status of national literature" (Sethi 39). Simultaneously, they also allowed regional languages to flourish, since these vernacular

tongues provided a "connection with the past which the nationalists wanted to maintain" (Sethi 40). In addition, the nationalist writers also indigenized English (Sethi 41).

Salman Rushdie voices a similar concern with the issue of English in India in his controversial "Introduction" to the collection of Indian writing. He too underlines the national character of English and points out, "English has become an Indian language," and adds, "in many parts of South India people prefer to converse [. . .] in English rather than Hindi," where Hindi is seen "like a colonial language" ("Introduction," Mirrorwork xi). Besides, disputing the charge that postmodern English fiction has led to "deracination and Westernization" and is a part of the neocolonialist drive, he sees English instead, as a language of global empowerment for writers of diverse backgrounds in the subcontinent ("Introduction" Mirrorwork xiii).

Such debates about language are, of course, also about cultural locations. While English occurs at the conjunction of the nationalist project, it also points to the possibilities of cutting across national and global spaces. Again, while access to English in the subcontinent is still tied to caste and class privileges, it has enabled the regional and marginal writers access to diverse literary and cultural spaces. Very often, even vernacular literatures of the South have found national and even international visibility largely due to their translations into English.

While an engagement with the above language debates are important in recognizing the tensions within Indian postcolonial literary discourses, it is equally important to situate these literatures within the interlinked colonial and post-independence histories. The postcolonial critic, Sara Suleri, stresses the need to probe such relationships, when she locates what she terms the "English India" within the

"colonial and postcolonial narratives" (Suleri 3). In this instance, Suleri studies early twentieth-century Indo-Anglian writers like Naipaul, whose narratives of postcolonial India reveal the uneasy histories of imperialism and the nation-state. While she does not posit a "seamless history of [. . .] imperialism and its aftermath," she sees a "dialogic relation" between such colonial and postcolonial narratives of history and fiction in the subcontinent (Suleri 21). Thus, "the idiom of postcolonialism is necessarily reactive and, unless it is to be lost in its own novelty, must engage in the multiplicity of histories that are implicated in its emergence" (Suleri 21). Suleri's "'English India' accommodates the cultural and political perplexities of both idioms," and gathers together the "divergent histories that comprise the Anglo-Indian encounter" (Suleri 21).

Apart from situating post-independence Indian writing within such postcolonial encounters, my study of literary regionalism also underlines how "region" itself is a fractured discourse. The images of the Dravidian South that surface in the writings of South India are highly heterogeneous. Thus, I contend with critics like Roberto M. Dainotto, who tend to see literary regionalism as based on essentialist notions of the region. Dainotto begins his discussion of "place" in literature by raising some problematic questions on regionalism. He looks at the current interest in regionalism as "revived [. . .] by the fear of placelessness brought about by an incipient globalization" (Dainotto 4). Regional literature is not about literature related to geography but "a new place from which to conceive a new literature" (Dainotto 4). If regionalism seeks to construct an alternative theory of cultural productions, Dainotto sees this as emerging out of a "disciplinary crisis: distrustful of 'nationalism'" especially, of the nineteenth-century variety (Dainotto 4). Nevertheless, he is greatly skeptical of the idea that exploring

"marginal and vernacular cultures [will] free [us] from an all-equalizing nation" and help "recover residual forms of cultural identity" (Dainotto 5). He ends up questioning, if regionalism can ever be an "alternative to such imagined—[and] imposed--'colonial' identity" as the nation, and asks if we should at all "assume that regionalism could offer instead a more 'natural' collective identity than nationalism?" (Dainotto 7).

Dainotto's question becomes clearer when we look at how he defines regionalism in the first place, and why he thinks that it "is only at a superficial level pointing to the 'margin'" (Dainotto 9). According to Dainotto, regionalism springs from the "desire for an original and free literariness that has survived the instrumental impositions of nationalism and politics alike" (Dainotto 9). He terms this a "pastoral" ideal "set free from the historical and political impositions" (Dainotto 11). In his view, "the danger, [. . .] is that regionalism is merely taking the place and role that was once given to nationalism: they speak the same language, they foster the same desires, menacing and *unheimlich*, of purity and authenticity" (Dainotto 173). It is precisely any such notion of a "natural" region that my study attempts to break. In contrast, it stresses the idea that South Indianness is a constructed and highly contested discourse.

As against Dainotto's views, Christian Riegel and Herb Wyile in their "Introduction" to A Sense of Place point to the liberatory possibilities of the regional perspective in literature.[111] In fact, we can answer Dainotto's charges by highlighting Riegel and Wyile's view of region as the ground of resistance in contemporary literature. Riegel and Wyile explain, "critics are viewing region and regionalism as constructs rather

[111] Although Riegel and Wyile's work focuses on regionalism in the context of Canadian and American literatures, it provides useful insights into the contemporary debates around literary regionalism.

than natural formations and recognizing the processes of negotiation, contestation and conflict in forming their definition" (Riegel & Wyile x). Moreover, they argue that even as regionalism is seen as "largely defined in relation to nationalism," it often figures as a "corrosive force undermining the cohesion of the nation-state, sometimes a more organic alternative to the nation-state with its arbitrary borders" (Riegel & Wyile x). They define regional literature as "the unifying principle of a corpus of literary texts," which is based on "the attachment of a writer to a particular place, the diversity of writing within the larger body of a national literature, or a kind of ideological consiousness or discourse" (Riegel & Wyile x). Their idea of regionalism as an attachment to a place, not merely in geographical terms, but as an ideological consciousness, is particularly important for my discussion. My work explores such "tensions between the center and the periphery [. . .], the local and the cosmopolitan, the regional and the national" and in doing so, theorizes "heterogeneity and difference" (Riegel & Wyile xi).

Following from this, in Reigel and Wyile's view the new interest in regionalism is the result of "decentralization, regional consciousness, and a growing suspicion of institutional nationalism, combined with a development of a global economy" (Riegel & Wyile xii). Regionalism becomes a "larger critique of cultural hegemony" (Riegel & Wyile xii). However, in theorizing this idea in relation to race, gender, and class, which are important in "the construction of subjectivity," I extend Reigel and Wyile's views by bringing also the categories of caste and language centrally into my study of South Indian regionalism (Reigel & Wyile xii). Besides, focusing on how women writers of the South often reveal a gender-inflected vision of locality and region, I maintain that a study of gender is crucial for understanding the contestations in the discourses of South Indian

literary regionalism. In addition, while Reigel and Wylie situate regionalism largely within the discourses of nationalism and globalization, my work also interrogates the colonial and postcolonial contexts of their formations in South India.

Chapter Description

This chapter consists of two parts. Part 1 discusses the representations of South India in post-independence Indo-Anglian writings. It focuses on the manner in which an anglicized literary consciousness at this time constructs an all-encompassing national idea much to the detriment of a lower caste South. As against this, reading women writers in English such as Arundhati Roy, I show how their writing not only recovers the silenced histories of women in South India, but also reveals this gender marginalization as crucially predicated on the discourses of caste and region. Part 2 engages the translations of works in the regional languages of South India, and argues that these vernacular writings bring the divisions of caste, locality, and language to the foreground.

Part 1: Postcolonial Indo-Anglian Writings: Nation and the Dravidian Element

Many Indo-Anglian writers of the post-independence era, the 40's through 60's, participate in the euphoria of the making a new Indian nation. Such nationalist imaginings are frequently interwoven with the idea of a common Hindu cultural heritage. A paradigmatic work like Jawaharlal Nehru's Discovery of India is a good example. Nehru's Discovery celebrates the rich cultural heritage of India. In this work, Nehru establishes Indian culture as composite in nature, even as he plays with the idea of plurality. In his vision, Indian culture is a nice blend of all the multiple traditions in the subcontinent.

Right at the outset, he hypothesizes a racial "synthesis" of the Aryans in the North and the Southern Dravidians resulting in a unified and a "basic Indian culture, which had [. . .] elements of both" (69). Nevertheless, this textual discourse repeatedly submerges the so-called Dravidian element. In contrast, it often highlights the Sanskritic and Aryan strands of Indian culture. In a familiar and markedly Orientalist turn of writing, Nehru upholds the Hindu civilization in India and declares that the Upanishads and epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, "typical[ly]" represent the "living force" of "the Indian people" (98). In the manner of the nineteenth-century Orientalists, he too denies any linguistic autonomy to South Indian tongues by arguing, "modern languages in India are [. . .] the children of Sanskrit" (172). In such moments in this text, Nehru simply elides over the lower caste South in constructing this Indian cultural history.[112]

If Nehru's representation of the Dravidians, despite his inclusivist national idea seems problematic enough, this Aryan-Dravidian story takes yet another disturbing twist under the disapproving Western eyes of another well-known writer, V.S. Naipaul.

Naipaul & the Abject South Indian Body

Naipaul's India, especially, in his earlier works like the Area of Darkness, splinters into countless negative images of a postcolonial nation in the terminal stages of cultural decay. Within this logic of abjection, South India becomes a further inassimilable reminder of the nation. Intrigued by Naipaul's "uncanny ability to map the complicity between postcolonial history and its imperial past" Suleri has found his language "so

[112] While the nineteenth-century orientalists like Max Muller had argued that Sanskrit language and culture had civilized and enriched Dravidian tongues, the ethnographer of the time, Robert Caldwell, maintained that the Dravidian tongues did not originate from Sanskrit. For a detailed study of the Aryan-Dravidian linguistic divide, see Chapter II of this dissertation.

troubling that it almost begs rejection as a gratuitously remorseless attack on the inevitable political and cultural crisis that marks the first two decades of India's independence" (Suleri 156, 157). She argues that Naipaul's journey in the Area,

> Deconstructs leaving the narrator with a fearful apprehension of how foreign he is to his own history and to the language in which he writes. As a consequence, the narrative can only enact a moment of postcolonial panic, in which inchoate impressions of place only barely intrude on the text's relentless mapping of its own absence of location (Suleri 158).

In grappling with this "postcolonial panic" of lack of location, at once linguistic and geographical, Naipaul begins to displace his frustration onto the native racialized bodies. Suleri shrewdly points out, "the landscape of *An Area of Darkness* is littered with bodies," mainly because Naipaul tries to avoid the recognition of "what it means to live in a racial body" (Suleri 160, 162). Thus, every time the Area "approaches an overt recognition of the bodily and consequently racial quality of its own narrative, its storytelling [. . .] veers away into the safety of some third-person tale, in which the body at issue becomes a representative of Indian otherness" (Suleri 163). In further complicating Suleri's views on Naipaul's representation of the native bodies, I would argue that it is often the racialized South Indian body which embodies an absolute "otherness" and bears the burden of racial negativity in Naipaul's texts.

In the Area, as Naipaul's dominant posture of outsiderness slips away somewhere along the narrative, he is conscious of his own voice assuming a subliminal complicity with that of a racist Sikh he meets on the train. In fact, even earlier on in the narrative the mood for this meeting is already set with Naipaul's narrator feeling simply "rattled" by

the "excessively vowelled" South Indian languages the moment he steps into the compartment (240). When he begins to converse with the Sikh, he finds the Sikh breaking into an abusive speech against the South Indians on the train. At this point, the narrator finds a temporary affinity with the Sikh's anti-Dravidian feelings. No doubt, he expresses a distaste for the "color-prejudiced" Sikh's rhetoric, especially when the latter begins to refer to the Dravidians variously as "monkeys," "niggers," and "blakies" (241). But despite his ironic stance and an express desire to dissociate himself from the Sikh, the narrator's own description of the South Indians on the train takes on a highly degrading tone. His vision of the uncouth South Indians slurping their food marks them as racially and culturally inferior people. The narrator describes: "chewing, sighing with pleasure, they squelched curds and rice between their fingers" (249). Not surprisingly, the xenophobic Sikh's "bitter[ness]" now becomes a "bond," and his reactions seem to mime the author's "own mood" (243). The narrator admits "yielding to the rage and contempt" of the man beside him (247).

Later, at the cantonment, there is a replay of this anti-Dravidian mood. The Sikh is lamenting about how "in the olden days they didn't allow the niggers" in the cantonment, but now "the blakies are all over the place" (245). He compares the dark South Indian waiters at the restaurant to the "American darkies," and proceeds to talk about their "servile" nature (245). When they visit the temple, the narrator tries to disengage himself from this race-hatred by ruminating on the "composite" Indian culture, where the mixture of "black gods and the white gods" suggest to his mind "India's ancient mixture of aryan and Dravidian" (246). Suddenly, the Sikh's voice cuts across this reverie with, "this is how the trouble started" (246). The Sikh calls the Dravidians

agents who "spoil the race," and asserting his own Aryanness, informs the narrator that "Arya-a good Sanskrit word. [means] noble" (247). Alarmed that the "Aryan-Dravidian business is starting again," he is furious that "the blackies are asking for their own state" (247). He is even angry that "they have all got the vote" (247). As this race hysteria culminates in the physical assault of a dark man at the restaurant, the narrator quickly distances himself with the sophistry of self-analysis. Projecting his guilt onto the Sikh, the narrator declares, "the whole city [. . .] had been colored for me [. . .] by the association with the Sikh" (250).

On the whole, Naipaul's depiction of South India in this work makes it a place that is caste-ridden, steeped in provincial linguistic regionalism, and lacking in a proper sense of hygiene. His visit to Madras leads to vivid excremental imaginings, where he describes how "in Madras the bus station near the High court is one of the most popular latrines" (70). The text even goes on to project an "evolutionary" inferiority onto the South Indian body. When the narrator sees a man from the South Indian State of Andhra Pradesh he muses, "the physique of the people of Andhra [. . .] suggest [s] an evolution downwards, wasted body [where] nature [is] mocking herself" (42). South India in this text figures, largely as a location of biological and cultural backwardness. It is only redeemed for an instant in the past, a past which suggests more "inspiring possibilities" (220). Admiring the Hindu ruins at Mahabalipuram in Tamilnadu the narrator is struck by the sense of "unity" and the "continuity and flow of Hindu India" (220). This is a particularly revealing moment in the text because it provides a contrast to the Moghul

ruins, which among other things, suggest the "plunder" of the country by the Muslim invaders (220).[113]

In this work, Naipaul also brings up the turbulent issue that had rocked the South of the 50's, that of the anti-Hindi protests.[114] The Dravidian movements had seen the Congress move make Hindi a mandatory language in schools in Tamilnadu as a form of linguistic imperialism of the North over the South. Naipaul constructs this rejection of Hindi in the South as a form of a colonized sensibility. He argues, "in the South the nationalist zeal for Hindi, encouraged by Gandhi has altogether died. Hindi, it is said, gives the North an advantage; it is better for the North and the South to remain illiterate and inefficient, but equal in English. It is an Indian argument; India will never cease to require the arbitration of a conqueror" (230).

However, in his recent work, India: A Million Mutinies, Naipaul sets out, ostensibly, to correct his view of India as a Hindu land and provide greater visibility to South Indian cultures. Critics like Suvir Kaul feel that "the India Naipaul recognizes is Hindu India" (Kaul 240). However, even Kaul concedes that in the Million Mutinies Naipaul attempts to record the "organized assertions of sub-national group identities [as] both a productive and destructive loosening of the construction of Indian society" (Kaul 242). Ironically, Naipaul's discovery of the South in this work begins with nostalgic

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[113] For instance, Talboys Wheeler's The History of India, which is paradigmatic of the colonial histories of India, constructs the Muslim as an invader and usurper in India. Wheeler provides vivid descriptions of the "horrors of Mussalman invasions," and recounts how the Muslim invaders, whom he casts as "fanatical marauders," went on to "ransack [. . .] every chamber and every shrine." In his words, the Muslim invaders "hacked and hued at temples and idols," and "broke down the Brahminical deities; [. . .] derided the relics of the holy men; [. . .] profaned the altars of the gods" and sold off the Brahmin priests as slaves in the "bazaars of Cabul and Ghuzni." James Talboys Wheeler (1824-1897). His History of India was written between 1867-1891. See Wheeler 476, 334.

[114] See Chapter III of this study

invocations of the Brahmin worlds of Madras and Mylapore. While he praises the cultural superiority of the Tamil Brahmins in "the arts of music and dance," he blames the Dravidianists for what he sees as the cultural degeneration of South India (208).

Initially, in the Mutinies Naipaul decides that he has learnt much about the Dravidian revolt in this visit to Madras. He sums up these South Indian movements as follows: "the revolt of South against the North, non-brahmin against brahmin, the racial revolt of dark against fair, Dravidian against Aryan" (210). Soon enough, this "Dravidian" Madras, especially as he watches the frenzy of the DMK election campaign sweeping over the streets (DMK is a Dravidian Party, which identifies with lower caste groups), begins to present him with vivid vignettes of an ascendant mass culture (210-11). Even as he declares, "the original dravidian revolt had not gone back on, had not been rejected by the people," his gaze takes in the large cut outs of the Dravidian leaders and people waving the Dravidian "red-and-black" flags among rubbish heaps (the result, he informs us, of the mismanagement of the non-Brahmin DMK) (211). Seized by a persistent anxiety over the "cultural impoverishment brought about by the movement," he locates this sad state of affairs, among other things, in the Dravidian "iconography" (226). This iconography reflects "the exaggerations and simplicities and contradictions," and the wordy "conceit upon conceit" which characterize the speech of the Dravidian leader, Periyar Ramaswami Naicker (226).

Contrary to his perspective of the DMK Madras, idealized visions of the now "desolate" Brahmin temple at Mylapore and an admiration for the "cleanliness" of the Brahmin "Vegetarian" restaurants in Madras stand out in Naipaul's account (208). The underlying nostalgia for the Brahmin way of life comes through in a long description of

the "religious pastoral" existence led by an unusual Madras brahmin, Kakustan. Kakustan seeks to "preserve" the brahminical tradition in the midst of the pervasive non-brahmin attacks against Brahmins (244-249, 251). He has "heroic[ally]" saved his "churki" (tuft) and caste marks against the ridicule of the Dravidian activists, who are supposed to go about "cutting off brahmin churkis" and polluting brahmin food with meat (253). In the end, Kakustan declares, "brahmins are indispensable to the society" (267). Wistfully pointing out that the "Brahmin world [he] had come upon in 1962" had already been "undermined" since the Dravidian movements led to the mass migration of brahmins from Mylapore, Naipaul tells his reader (although with a touch of self-conscious irony) that little brahmin enclaves still exist in Tamilnadu (210, 215). In the lives of his brahmin friend Sugar, who has turned into a spiritualist and a minor god man, and the educated middle class brahmins who cluster around Sugar, the old world still continues (215).

Even as Naipaul attempts to concede the "justice" of the Dravidian cause, he constructs the non-Brahmin Dravidian movement as largely symbolic of the "popularization," or erosion of Brahmin high culture. Moreover, Naipaul's figuring of Periyar, whom he calls the "prophet of the South" is highly reductive. A Periyar cut out he sees leads him to muse upon how "with all [his] reading about the independence movement in India" he had read so little about Periyar (216). He describes Periyar as the "atheist and rationalist [who] ridiculed the Hindu gods" (217). However, in Naipaul's view this Dravidian leader is only a "satirist," whose "prophet" stature comes to him as a surprise (217). At the Periyar Thidal, the memorial institution built for Periyar, he is shocked out his comfortable assumptions of a "common" Indian nature (217). Reading

the message carved on the pedestal of the statue of Periyar "there is no God. He who invented God is a fool. He who propagates God is a scoundrel," Naipaul is surprised that such stark "godlessness" is accepted "in any part of India" (217).

Overall, Naipaul's attempt to trace the history of Periyar's life, ideals, and activism (mainly, Periyar's rejection of God, caste, brahmins, Sanskrit, and Hindu culture), leads him to figure this leader as the "doppelganger" of Gandhi. Here, Naipaul constructs Periyar in derivative terms. He argues that the figure of Periyar had "meaning only because the real Gandhi existed" (222). In this comparison, Periyar is faulted, among other things, for his failure to have a broad "universal" base. Thus, "Gandhi developed and grew and he was constantly searching. [This] made him a universal figure" but Periyar, on the contrary, was only a "local figure," who never "outgrew his cause" (222). Naipaul concludes, "without Gandhi and the Congress and independence movement his cause wouldn't have had the power it had; he was riding on the back of something very big" (222). He justifies his own lack of knowledge about Periyar and his movement on this lack of "universality," and points out, "that might have been why I hadn't heard of him" (222).

Nevertheless, in this work Naipaul does provide brief visibility to the old Self-respecters (activists of the Dravidian movement started by Periyar in the 1920's). He attempts to explore the private and collective histories of oppression of the lower castes in the South in the form of a series of interviews with these activists. However, the remarks of Naipaul's upper caste friend Sadanand continually undercut such accounts of the Self-respecters. The Self-respecters evoke the painful histories of caste oppression, social segregation, and religious ostracization. They highlight the Dravidian protests

against Hindi, Periyar's fight for untouchable temple entry, and such other landmarks of the movement. They talk about Periyar's attitudes toward nationalism, Congress and Gandhi. Naipaul also visits Veeramani, the president of Dravida Kazhagam, at the Periyar Thidal (Periyar Memorial). He exclaims, "after 30 years Periyar's more than life size portrait was to be seen in many places in Madras, and Mr. Veeramani, keeper of the flame, moved through Madras like a hero" (271).

However, slowly, Sadanand's voice assumes dominance in this narrative. Sadanand declares that Periyar's "rationalist movement had become a parody" during the DMK rule. The DMK catered to the "religious sentiments" of the masses for votes (223). Accusing these political Dravidian Parties of "narrowness," "regionalism," and "caste obsessions," Sadanand attributes the linguistic and cultural decay in Madras to the Dravidian ideology (225). Additionally, Naipaul also criticizes these movements as not representing "all the non-brahmin castes" but only "middle castes" (225).

What underlies Naipaul's exploration of the South in this work is the feeling that Madras with its "temples, special foods [. . .] music and dance" (which he associates with Brahmin culture) might still appear like a "whole" culture, but that there has been a Dravidian "usurpation" (226). Therefore, "it [is] hard not to feel sad at the undoing of a culture" (226). In portraying this picture of the Dravidian South, woefully lacking in cultural refinement and steeped in crass populism, what Naipaul sees is a fall from Brahmin high culture. Consequently, even as he feels a degree of empathy with the Dravidian cause, he dismisses this non-brahmin movement as impelled only by "passion," and not any "logic and regard for historical correctness" (226).

The Dravidian Fisherwoman, "whose sari [is] as tight as her morals [are] loose": The Case of Salman Rushdie

While South India in the works of the earlier Indo-Anglian writers such as Nehru, Nirad Chaudhuri, or Naipaul figures in highly ambivalent terms, even in some postmodern writings this Dravidian South turns into an absent signifier. Many contemporary critics defend postmodern writers against the charge that their work is tied to global and neo-colonial structures by pointing out that these writers represent the multiple and marginal histories in the subcontinent. But the literary critic, Meenakshi Mukherjee's, view is rather contradictory. Mukherjee feels that even as the postmodern writers like Rushdie try to challenge the univocal discourses of the nation, culture, and history, their work is still "beset with an anxiety about the fragility of this concept of India" (PE 177). It is perhaps, this anxiety about the idea of India that underlies Rusdhie's deeply troubled address to the subaltern South Indian worlds in the Midnight's Children.

Midnight Children conjures up visions of dismembered forms, "perforated" sheets, "cracks" in the national body, and a general "chutnification" of national culture (3,189). But South India occupies only a liminal space in this story of modern India. It hovers on the textual margins, surfacing, sometimes, in the stray references to Amina's darkness (she has the "skin of a South Indian fisherwoman"), or the "divisive" sensibility of the "Madrasi" (Rushdie here parodies the stereotypes of a "monolithic" South, and the pejorative use of the term in Northern India) (58, 125). Then again, a "close up" of the 50's relives the scenes of the language wars in India where the cacophony of voices rending the unified national body includes "the Southern slurrings of Tamil" (191-192). In the voyeuristic "peep show" that Saleem watches, he travels to "Madurai's Meenakshi

temple" and is lost in the "woolly mystical perceptions of a chanting priest" (198). Later, in "Cape Comorin" Saleem assumes the form of "a fisherwoman whose sari [is] as tight as her morals [are] loose" (198). In addition, as this flighty fisherwoman, he also "flirt[s] with the Dravidian beach-combers in a language [he] couldn't understand" (198). Evidently, even as Rushdie self-consciously mocks the stereotypes of the linguistic incomprehensibility of South Indian tongues, he too ends up conflating this South, rather in a stereotypical manner, with temples and Brahmin priests. As opposed to this, he images the non-Brahmin South in the form of the lower caste "fisherwoman," where this Dravidian South India is not only feminized, but also sexualized.

The contemporary critic, Chelva Kanaganakam, builds up a case against postmodern writing in English. Kanaganayakam sees this writing as still tied to the idea of India, even though it claims to celebrate marginal cultures and identities. In Counterrealism and Indo-Anglian Fiction, Kanaganakam begins by indicating that postmodern writers, freed from the burden of "replicating the 'real'" are "ideally placed to deal with 'meta' issues that relate to history, religion, politics, [. . .] and the construction of identity" (Kanaganayakam 186). However, even for this "contemporary writer [in English], the probing of what it means to be Indian takes precedence" (Kanaganayakam 180). It is often the location of postmodern writing, imbricated as it is in global structures of power that determines such pan-Indian thematic choices. This cosmopolitan writing is oriented largely toward metropolitan middle-classes and English-educated elite caste groups. As a whole, its engagement with the less privileged caste and regional locations like the South remains mostly peripheral.

Overall, when we look at a range of literary works by Indian writers in English in the early through mid-twentieth century, and in fact, even some contemporary diaspora fiction like the above work of Rushdie, we arrive at very sparse material that is specifically associated with the lower caste, or Dravidian South. Even Indo-Anglian writers of the early post-independence era, who emphasize their South Indianness, portray a static and hierarchical caste-inflected society that does not, however, represent the voices and presence of this lower caste South. Their writings address largely pan-Indian issues such as, for instance, the formation of national culture, or the search for an authentic national tradition that makes this Brahminical South integral to the nation. Frequently, the nationalist fervor of these writers takes the form of recounting the nostalgic narratives of the freedom movement. In fact, the freedom struggle seems to be powerfully present in this South Indian cultural memory. Many of these writers, even as they express an attachment to a South Indian place, identify mainly, with elite caste locations (with access to English education). Raja Rao, Balachandra Rajan, and R.K. Narayan, exemplify this tendency. By and large, they portray South India as largely Hindu and Brahminical in nature.

In relating the above Anglophone writing in the South to the often coalescing discourses of caste and nation, I will start with Mukherjee's claim that Raja Rao constructs "a brahmanic India," while Narayan's Malgudi shows "a metonymic relationship with India as a whole" (PE 174). In contrast, the vernacular writer, or what Mukherjee calls the "bhasha" novelist is not often invested in the "figurative use of something as amorphous as the idea of India, because s/he has a multitude of specific and local experiences to turn into tropes and play with" (PE 181). Referring to what she

terms an "anxiety of Indianness," Mukherjee explains that Indo-Anglian writers, who are writing for global audiences in a foreign tongue (which also happens to be a colonial language) often feel impelled to affirm their Indianness (PE 166). In consequence, the East-West encounter frequently becomes a recurring theme in their works.

South India is India: Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan

I pointed out in my earlier chapter that the durable Orientalist legacies of a homogenous Hindu tradition, often recognized in terms of a Brahminical culture, resurfaces in the twentieth-century nationalist discourses in India. Moreover, quite apart from such assertions of a homogenous Hinduism, the "unitary nationalist sentiment also emphasizes the notion of a common language" (Sethi 22). The nationalist writers, who incorporated English as a way of overcoming the linguistic plurality in the subcontinent, also tried to "play" Indianness against the "new egalitarian ideas of west in the very language of the west" (Sethi 22). Therefore, while novels written in English like Raja Rao's Serpent and the Rope, or Kanthapura are seen as national works, vernacular literatures are hardly national since they have to rely on English translations for their "dissemination" (Sethi 3). As a result, "English is bound to become 'the language in which the knowledge of "Indian" literature is produced'" (Sethi 3; citing from Aijaz Ahmed, In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures [Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993]. 250).

The above equations of English and nation are strongly apparent in the writings of Raja Rao, Balachandra Rajan, and R.K.Narayan. These writers invoke the specificities of landscape, customs, traditions, and linguistic variations of their local places, but they

make the thematic of the nation central to their work. Besides, they privilege a class-inflected South Indian Brahmin society.

Speaking of the early Anglophone writers in India, Mukherjee has concluded, "themes of local interest are conspicuous by their absence in Indo-Anglian fiction" (TB 211). However, such writers must struggle with the amorphous idea of India, since "even though the Indo-Anglian novelist is writing in English [with its pan-Indian spread], his area of intimate experience is limited to [only a] small geographical area" (TB 174). Alternatively, the critic, Leela Gandhi, adds a cosmopolitan dimension to this writing by saying, "the nation-centredness of this new generation of Indian novelists was tempered by a characteristic cosmopolitanism" (Gandhi 168).

At the outset, Raja Rao seems to provide an excellent instance of such conflictual locations. He emphasizes his nationalist credentials and simultaneously claims a rootedness in the local South, specifically in Karnataka, the Kannada-speaking region in South India. Yet, having lived in Europe and America the most part of his life, he reveals what Mukherjee has termed the "anxiety of Indianness" even as he draws eclectically upon such global cultural influences (PE 166). Writing in the 60's modernist era of Europe's fascination with a "mystic" East, Raja Rao plays upon this global interest in Indian spirituality. In addition, he packages such Orientalist ideas of Hindu spirituality with a nationalistic fervor. What is often seen as an autobiographical work, The Serpent and the Rope, reveals these tendencies in Raja Rao's writing in a vivid way.

Paradigmatic of Indian writings in English in the early post-independence era, the 50's and 60's, which frequently highlight a national self-confidence, Raja Rao's work makes his South integral to an Aryan India. In his works the terms, "Aryan," "India,"

and "Hindu" often seem to overlap. India here looms as a singular term identified with a Sanskritic and Aryan tradition. Raja Rao brings the familiar themes of the nationalist writing of the time such as the conflict between the East and West, longings of exile, and a desire to reconnect with Hindu roots centrally into this work.

This novel revolves round the spiritual self-search of Ramaswami, a South Indian Brahmin, who is engaged in theological research in France. Ramaswami is married to Madeleine, a Buddhist, who sees her husband as her spiritual guide. However, the marriage falls apart even as Ramaswami becomes increasingly conscious of their "fundamental" cultural differences. Meanwhile, he also finds another spiritual mate in the modern Indian woman, Savithri, who is studying in England. At the end of the novel, parted from Savithri, who leaves to fulfill her duty as a daughter and marry the man her father has chosen for her, Ramaswami decides to go back to India, interestingly, to Travancore in South India, to discover himself.

Even as the novel begins, we see Ramaswami asserting, "the fact that I was a Brahmin by birth and a South Indian seemed to have given me a natural superiority" (33). However, this sense of superiority is located in his consciousness of an Aryan heritage. Forging links with an ancient Aryan culture, he reclaims "that noble, imperial heritage of ours, Sanscrit" (37). In making this claim to a Hindu past, Ramaswamy also dismisses the idea of a distinct Dravidian South and argues, "[the] Dravidian tradition [is indistinguishable] from the Aryan tradition" (139). He defines Dravidian as part of Aryan and even points out, "Aryan wisdom seems to have found a permanent place in South India than in the Aryan North" (139).

On the above occasion, Raja Rao's language replicates the prevalent Orientalist historical versions of a Hindu India ravaged by the Islamic invasions. In Raja Rao's view, such foreign invasions led to the slow degeneration of an ancient and pristine Hindu tradition in the North, and, therefore, South India remains as its last outpost. In fact, Savithri, though herself from the North, reinforces Ramaswami's words. She describes, "North is finished, [. . .] South still has so much beauty, wisdom and purity" (352). However, in this instance, even as Raja Rao celebrates the idea of a pan-Indian Aryan culture, he makes this idea problematic not only by associating it with the South, but also by constructing contemporary North India as a location of spiritual backwardness. However, within this spatialized politics of spirituality, he casts the Muslim as an alien invader and defines India as a predominantly Hindu land.

Raja Rao's blend of Indian spirituality and patriotism is not a new concept in Indian writings. Raja Rao shows a strong influence of the writings of the nineteenth-century reformers like Swami Vivekananda.[115] Swami Vivekananda had argued that patriotism was not at all discordant with his spiritual quests. In fact, he was passionately committed to the idea of disseminating Hindu spirituality all over the world. He saw this as a national mission. Raja Rao's rhetoric here is reminiscent of Swami Vivekananda's writing, especially, as he proclaims, "India still has the most ancient civilization on earth" (139). Raja Rao even constructs the idea of a reverse spiritual colonization of the West by arguing, "India makes everything and everywhere India" (139).

Moreover, in the novel, while Ramaswami sees contemporary North India as a location of spiritual decay, his mystic transports are often triggered by the visions of grandeur of the Northern landscape. On a pilgrimage to the holy places of the North with

[115] See Chapter II of this study

his recently widowed mother, he imagines how "it was here that the ancient Aryans, when they first entered the country, camped [. . .] with the Ganges flowing by" (37). Projecting spiritual as well as nationalist meanings onto the Himalayas, Varanasi, and the river Ganga, Ramaswami exclaims: "Truth is the Himalaya, the Ganges humanity" (37). Apart from this constant sliding of the spiritual and national, and geographical and cultural, we also find an emphatically gendered vision of India in Raja Rao's work. Thus, Ramaswami says, "I am paying homage not to my country—not to the land of great mountains and big rivers [but to the] nameless magnanimity [and] mystery [that is my] Mother, my land" (195).

As a matter of fact, all through this novel, Raja Rao's constructions of women remain particularly problematic. He casts the Brahmin male as the paradigmatic spiritual seeker and defines the ideal of Hindu womanhood in the following terms: "the feminine to the Indian must always be accessory [and] man must lead the woman to the altar of God" (38). Besides, such assertions of the spiritual self of the South Indian male are often made over the site of the bodies of non-Brahmin, North Indian, and Western women. In the end, as Ramaswami slowly moves away from Madeleine who is struggling to find her own enlightenment, he makes her to understand that "one can only be born a Brahmin" (336). Conflating this naturalized Brahmin identity with an equally essentialized notion of Indianness he adds, "that is--an Indian" (336).

The Serpent and the Rope employs a range of pan-Indian and local lore, stories from the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, as well as folk tales from South India. In addition, it also draws upon global myths, "Chinese fable, German legend, and Christian theology" in establishing Hinduism as a world religion (TB 147). Despite such

cosmopolitan influences, Mukherjee feels, "Raja Rao's East [. . .] is no general term; it is India, Brahminical India, which represents the quintessence of advaita philosophy. India at all other levels is excluded" (TB 91). However, I have shown a deeper level of complication in this study of Raja Rao's, no doubt, essentialist national visions. I have revealed the underlying tensions, which his ideological consciousness of South Indianness introduces into this narration of the nation. Raja Rao seems to subscribe to an idealized vision of an Aryan and Hindu India, but at the same time, he locates this authentic Aryanness and Hindu heritage in his Brahminical South India, rather than in the contemporary North. In this comparison between the North and South, he declares that the North has lost its pristine Aryan culture.

As against the cosmopolitan spread of the Serpent, Raja Rao tells this national story in more local terms in Kanthapura. Sethi has observed that Raja Rao's work "explor[es] the configuration of a timeless Indian community of the nationalist intelligentsia" (Sethi 36). In seeing the village community as an idyllic location of authentic Indianness, Raja Rao draws upon the specificities of language, custom, and traditions in rural Karnataka. He makes use of the local and folk mode of story telling in this novel. Even as he writes in the global and pan-Indian English, he underlines his sense of "rootedness" in the local South by using myths, folktales, history, and local lore to construct the experience of daily life in a South Indian village.

Interestingly, in the "Foreword" Raja Rao articulates the tensions of an Indian writer in English who must grapple with the problem of translating native experience into an alien language. Coming to terms with the issue of this divided linguistic sensibility he declares that for the modern Indian writer, English is the language of his/her "intellectual

make up, much like Sanskrit or Persian was before," even if not the language of their "emotional make-up" ("Foreword" vii). Besides, Raja Rao also claims that he has incorporated the native Kannada speech rhythms into English in this novel. Thus, he attempts to "pollinate this intellectually acquired language of formal discourse with memory, myth, oral tales and gossip to capture the texture of daily existence [. . .] the smell and sound of a village on the slopes of the Sahyadri mountains" (PE 167).

The central theme in the novel is how Kanthapura, a small pastoral place in South India, turns into the nodal point of social and political tensions. The dizzying impact of the freedom movement changes this rural place so much that even the local myths are in a state of flux. While Kenchamma, the village deity, has all along provided a center for the bonding of the Kanthapura community, with the onset of modernity and change ushered in by the freedom movement, the villagers begin to include new gods such as Gandhi into the local pantheon.

Raja Rao's narrator is an old and illiterate woman, whose story-telling blurs the borders of the myth and fact. To this narrator, Gandhi's idea of "*satyagraha*" becomes some kind of a "religious ceremony" (TB 39). This old narrator recounts how Murti, the educated Brahmin protagonist, opens up Kanthapura to the influences of the nationalist movement. Murthi is a local figure, who represents Gandhi. As Mukherjee explains, "Raja Rao, who among the Indo-Anglian novelists seems most deeply influenced by Gandhi, prefers to deal with him through a local figure who appears to be his representative" (TB 61). Soon, Murti's movement begins to push across the traditional barriers of caste and gender in the village. Even though Murthi is inspired by Gandhi's ideals of caste reform, he is sometimes traumatized by fears of losing his Brahminhood.

Nevertheless, he goes on to incorporate women, widows, and low castes into the cadres of the movement. But ironically, after every meeting with the outcastes whom he tries to mobilize, he takes a purificatory bath to avoid caste pollution. Besides, even the manner in which he introduces the freedom movement into the village takes the form of organizing Hindu religious celebrations like festivals and temple gatherings.

As a result of all these social and political upheavals, the village community with its traditional hierarchies of Brahmin quarters at the center, "a Pariah quarter [. . .], a Weaver's quarter, and a sudra quarter" at the periphery undergoes a drastic change (5). Finally, owing to the repressive colonial measures the villagers are all uprooted. These exiled men and women are left hoping that one day, "the [temple] gong will sound over the pilgrim lines for the dawn procession of the Mountain God [Gandhi]" (122). Of all the changes that take place in Kanthapura after the movement, the most tragic one is the displacement of these South Indian villagers by people from Central India. In the end, the reader is informed, "there is neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura, for the men from Bombay have [arrived here and] built houses" (182).

Overall, Raja Rao's novel portrays how the wave of nationalism and impact of leaders like Gandhi and Nehru sweeps over this small village in South India. Kanthapura is crisscrossed by forces that are at once, national and regional, universal and local. While Raja Rao does invoke a strong sense of nostalgia for an idyllic Kanthapura before the freedom movement tore this little rural society apart, the novel still idealizes the figure of Gandhi and the freedom movement.

The Brahmin South: R.K.Narayan

Although, the well-known South Indian writer in English, R.K.Narayan, does not share Raja Rao's fascination with Indian spirituality and is, in fact, known for his ironic treatment of this spiritual zeal, his writings are also tied to the same South Indian Brahminical milieu. Often, they too revolve around the themes of the freedom movement and the influence of the nationalist leaders like Gandhi and Nehru. Some critics like Mukherjee point out that his Malgudi, "a quintessential Indian town," which represents the ordinariness of daily life, is, in fact "Hindu upper-caste pan-India" (PE 170, 171). No doubt, Narayan's work rejects the wider canvass of the cosmopolitan writer. Even as his works deal with pan-Indian themes such as the nationalist struggle, formation of the local Congress party, powerful impact of Gandhi on small towns and villages in South India, harijan reform, or Congress propaganda of Hindi and Hindu culture, the frame in which he looks at these issues remains invariably local.

In general, the "microcosmic" South Indian small town, provides only the "plausibility of geographic status" and remains anonymous in its actual location on the map (Guide, "Introduction" viii). But Kanaganayakam begins by tracing Malgudi to Tamilnadu and points out,

> Although [Narayan] is always at pains to remove specific referential markers from his fictive world [. . .], there is sporadic signposting to suggest that Malgudi accommodates Karnataka as well, [but] for the most part, the landscape, the monuments, and the language that the characters use suggests Tamilnadu setting (Kanaganayakam 36)

While it seems as though Malgudi is "fixed in the 1930's" it also moves through time (Kanaganayakam 36). Somewhat like Mukherjee, Kanganayakam also claims that Narayan writes only of an upper caste South in his works. In addition, he charges Narayan of reinforcing the status quo relations of caste and religion in society. Narayan's writing naturalizes an Aryan and Hindu India though "most don't recognize that, in the process of recreating India, he has offered a vision of the nation that is orientalist, binary, caste-bound, and essentialist" (Kanaganayakam 42). In evidence of this accusation, Kanaganayakam gives the interesting example of Narayan's glaring neglect of the issue of the Dravidian struggles in Tamilnadu.

The Dravidian movements brought about many changes in the social ferment of South India, especially Tamilnadu in the early and mid-twentieth century. They challenged the Brahmin dominance, and fought for thelower caste representation in administrative and civil institutions (my earlier chapter discusses these Dravidian interventions at length). The controversial leader, Periyar, made a powerful impact on Tamilnadu politics at this time. In this instance, Kanganayakam is very intrigued that Narayan does not give much visibility to these lower caste movements in his writing. He concludes, "Narayan has been extremely selective about the extent to which social realities would be allowed to enter his fictional world" (Kanaganayakam 48). Though Narayan does bring out the "contradictions" within this Brahmin world, "[the] Malgudi he presents masquerades as the real India" (Kanaganayakam 49). Within this politics of realism, Narayan "naturalizes his fictive world to uphold a Brahminical and patriarchal world" (Kanaganayakam 50)

Another interesting aspect of Narayan's Malgudi is how he erases the caste markers from his fictional world. While, by and large, Narayan avoids direct references to caste in his novels, there is always a tacit sense that the world that he represents is the one he is located in, that is a South Indian Brahmin world. In effect, though characters from marginal castes do figure in Narayan's novelistic worlds, they are often secondary figures in the narrative.

Besides, Narayan's upper caste world is often preoccupied with the nationalist interests of the time. Waiting for the Mahatma, for instance, traces the emotional and spiritual struggles of a new initiate, a South Indian Brahmin, Sriram, into the Gandhian movement. In the other famous work, Swami and Friends, which is often seen as semi-autobiographical, Narayan tells the story of a small town schoolboy, Swami. Swami, and his set of friends clearly belong to the upper strata of caste society. Narayan gives a humorous account of Swami's involvement in the nationalist protest. One day, stirred by the eloquence of a local leader, Swami begins to shout the slogans of "Bharat mata ki Jai," and "Gandhiji ki Jai," ("Victory to Mother India," and "Victory to Gandhiji") (46). He participates gleefully in the destruction of the school building, and even joins the "Swadeshi" burning of "Lancashire" (foreign) cloth (46). Again, in The Bachelor of Arts, Narayan portrays a young Brahmin student, Chandran, who is greatly angry with his English professor because he is convinced that the white professor "wont do the slightest service to Indians with a sincere heart" (5). In this work, Narayan also describes Chandran's problematic friendship with a non-brahmin student, Veeraswami, and the latter's violent anti-British attitude in an ironic vein (63).

Surprisingly, as another critic, Pankaj Mishra also argues, My Days, which is an autobiographical account of Narayan, "[is] an acknowledgement, however indirect, of one of the first and most effective anti-brahmin agitations anywhere in India [. . .] against the near-monopoly of Brahmins [. . .] (over government jobs in Mysore state)" (Mishra 196). The school headmaster warns a young Narayan: "these days are difficult for Brahmins to get jobs in the government" (qtd in Mishra 196; My Days 85). In this work, Narayan makes a few passing references to the Dravidian movement and its impact on Madras. The Dravidianists had charged the Brahmins of collaborating with their colonial masters, and cornering government jobs. Often, the colonial education which these Brahmins received was geared to prepare them for such posts. With the protest of the lower caste Dravidian movements for equal representation in the civil institutions, Brahmins had felt increasingly threatened. Mishra describes these times, "everywhere across the South, Brahmins left [the] rural settings and occupations and moved into towns and cities, where they formed the first administrative middle class" (Mishra 194). Narayan is constantly haunted by the visions of the colonial cities of Madras and Mysore in which he grew up (Mishra 194).

Narayan depicts this Madras of his childhood in My Days with a sharp specificity of detail. In this nostalgic flight into a picturesque old Madras, Narayan fondly re-creates the "fierce Madras sun" and "Purushwakam High road" with only "cyclists and horse and bullock-drawn carriages" (5, 4). The colonial ambience of the city comes through in the description of the Christian College High School with its "spacious corridors, a gothic tower with a bell, [and] chapel" (49). In this instance, he indirectly critiques the colonial project of education in South India, when he describes the Lutheran School with its

"converted" Christian teachers. These teachers engage in "lampooning Hindu gods" and mocking Brahmin students about eating meat in secret (a humorous detail which recurs in many works of Narayan including Swami and the short story "Fellow Feeling") (12-13).[116]

In My Days, Narayan also narrates his early encounters with the non-Brahmin world as a child. What surfaces in these childhood accounts is a mingled sense of fear and fascination that the child-Narayan feels for the non-brahmin "otherworlds." There are exotic descriptions of the low caste festival of Mariyamman, where "goats and hens are sacrificed" (19). This Brahmin child is also traumatized by the sight of a low caste neighbor, the "fuel shop man" Kodandam, whom he believes to be a child sacrificer (19). Much later in life, the grown up Narayan has another major encounter with the low caste society when he lands a job in the non-brahmin newspaper Justice. He is particularly intrigued by the fact that "the Justice [which is] a propagandist paper against the Brahmin class, [accepted a Brahmin] as a correspondent in Mysore" (111). On this occasion, he also shows how in the Madras of this time caste and class divisions were closely aligned with nationalist interests. Thus, while Brahmin papers like "the Mail and the Hindu" had ample resources owing to their national spread, the non-Brahmin ones, with their limited regional readership, had very meager resources (111-12).

Although, Narayan underplays caste markers in a majority of his works, in his most popular novel, The Guide, he makes his central female character a low caste woman. In this novel Narayan tells the story of a tourist guide Raju and his relationship with Rosie who belongs to a family of "dedicated" temple dancers. In fact, in the early

[116] Meat is seen as polluting food. It is taboo for the Brahmin caste in many parts of South India. Most Brahmin communities of the South do not even eat fish.

through mid-twentieth century the issue of the temple dancers (who were sometimes equated with prostitutes) was a major concern of the native social reformers and also the colonial government. The nationalist and Dravidian movements in Tamilnadu were involved in this anti-nautch campaign.[117] It was a collaborative project of the native reformers and the Raj to stop the practice of dedicating lower caste girls to the temple. Mrinalini Sebastian in her "Dancing away Their Memories: Cultural Legacy of the Devadasis" relates this issue of temple prostitution to Narayan's work. Located within this traumatic history of the devadasis (temple dancers), Narayan's novel reveals the underlying tensions of the devadasi's emancipation and empowerment. While Rosie achieves a certain degree of social mobility owing to the prevalent anti-nautch temper of the time, this reform discourse also threatens to erase her history.

Sebastian points out that Guide was, in fact, written at a time when temple dedication was already abolished in 1947. The reform rhetoric against the devadasis, who had now become upwardly mobile, had to an extent changed. But this discourse still separates the devadasi "from the art form in which she participated" (Sebastian 45). By

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[117] It is also interesting to see how the missionaries intervened in a major way in the debate on temple prostitution. Their pamphlets, replete with voyeuristic delight, dwelt on the strange practices of the less hierarchically privileged groups. In due course, as a part of its civilizing program, the colonial government undertook the tasks of regulating the "management of temple trusts, [and the] abolition of devadasis" (Dirks 256). In this, the British and the native reformers alike sought to reinforce an "authentic tradition" by cleansing Hinduism of superstition and barbarism, which they saw as inherent in lower caste customs and rituals (Dirks, 256).

The reformists, or the abolitionists saw the devadasi system as a social evil. The anti-nautch (this movement, mainly targeted the institution of prostitution) campaign began during 1880-90. Fredrique Marglin's excellent introduction to the devadasi issue describes the reformist endeavors in terms of the internalization of "Western moral judgments" being reinforced by the "paternalistic colonial gaze" (Marglin 6, 3). The reformists led marches and organized campaigns to turn public opinion against the system. They also appealed to the Viceroy, the Governor General of India, and to the Governor of Madras to ban the devadasi institution. Moreover, these reformists employed the rhetoric of an ideal Aryan femininity and female domesticity to demonize the depravity of the devadasis. Even Periyar's Self-respect movement advocated the prohibition of the devadasi system. It often offered marriage for the devadasis as a solution. However, as Marglin reveals, some orthodox groups tried to uphold the system as a part of Hindu tradition. Some fought against its prohibition. But the traditionalists "lost this battle," and the "Madras Prevention of Dedication of Devadasis Act was passed in 1947 (Marglin 8). See Marglin 6, 3, 8.

this time, culture and dancing were already dissociated from the painful history of the temple dancers and incorporated into the project of building a national culture. Dancing had become a cultural activity that respectable middle class and even upper caste women could pursue. Reading the Guide against the grain of this erasure of the devadasi history in South India, Sebastian shows how Narayan engages the interlocked discourses of caste and gender in tracing ambivalent images of the erstwhile Devadasi in his work.

In the novel, Raju's uncle abuses Rosie and says, "you are a dancing girl. We do not admit them in our families" (Guide 149). At an early point in their relationship, Rosie herself informs Raju that temple dancers are viewed as "public women," and not "respectable [and] civilized" people (73). Narrating her life story, Rosie tells Raju that her mother, in an attempt at social mobility, educated her and even pushed her into an apparently good marriage with Marco. But Marco, who is a research scholar of "high social standing," is opposed to his wife's dancing (74). In the end, Rosie has to break away from this marriage to resume her dancing career.

In contrast, Raju, the protagonist, a picaresque mix of do-gooder and con-man, comforts Rosie by declaring that times have changed and "there is no caste or class today" (73). He even helps Rosie to set herself up as a dancer. No doubt, the project of modernity in South India gives Rosie an access to education and even helps in freeing her from sexual exploitation by upper caste men. But at the same time, it also checks her from pursuing her dancing. In the reform rhetoric of the time the subaltern devadasi is seen not so much as an artiste, but rather as an object of colonial and nationalist rescue. Therefore, her dancing must be sanitized from her history to make it, and her respectable.

Eventually, however, "Rosie dances away the humiliating memories of her life and continues to live" (Sebastian 47).

Apart from its engagement with the devadasi issue, this novel is also intriguing for its ironic treatment of the Gandhian-saint figure. However, Narayan does not undermine Gandhi in this work. But he replays the Gandhi-figure in portraying the predicament of the ex-convict Raju, who is forced by circumstances into a fast to bring rain to the village. The news of Raju's fast spreads far and wide and "the place [is] swarming with press reporters" (215). Narayan mimics scenes from Gandhi's fasting campaigns--the press coverage, American media attention, and global exposure provided to the Mahatma's satyagrahas (217-18).

While the Guide does skirt around the problematic issues of caste and gender, it does not even approach the issue of the raging caste wars between the Brahmins and Dravidianists in South India at the time. It is the short story, "The Fellow Feeling" which makes such caste tensions of the time its central theme. Here, Narayan makes the encounter between a non-Brahmin and a Brahmin the main theme of the story. The non-Brahmin is depicted as an uncouth bully. It is interesting that Narayan constructs this encounter in terms of a stereotypical "brain-versus-brawn" situation. While, rather predictably, the Brahmin is cast as the brains, the non-Brahmin becomes the body, or simply mindless brawn. The story begins on a train compartment, where a verbal duel ensues between the Brahmin Rajam Iyer, and a nameless non-Brahmin. Right at the outset, the non-brahmin starts to fling a series of insults at Iyer's Brahminism.

Narayan indirectly mocks the anti-Brahmin attitude of the Dravidianists in the speech of the non-Brahmin. Reconstructing an ironic situation reminiscent of the

Dravidian-Brahmin conflicts in Tamilnadu, he makes his non-Brahmin character mouth strong and abusive lines against Brahmins. Thus, we see the non-Brahmin bully inform Iyer that his "days are over" (103). He warns Iyer, "don't think you can bully us as you have been bullying us all these years," and taunts him with the familiar charge against Brahmin hypocrisy, that of eating meat on the sly (103, 104). Finally, when the fight threatens to turn physical, the puny but smart brahmin bluffs his way out by telling his opponent that he is an expert in the Asian martial art of "jiujutsu." This leads to the physically strong, but rather gullible, non-Brahmin jumping off the train at the very next station. On the whole, the story bristles with subliminal caste prejudices, and even Narayan's ironic tone fails to diffuse these tensions in the textual discourse.

Caste[ing] the South: Women Writers and South India

While Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan locate their South in the upper caste Hindu worlds, they often elide over the issue of the caste divisions in South India. On the other hand, contemporary writers in English such as Shashi Tharoor, David Davidhar and others, who locate themselves in the South, explore the ramifications of caste in more local and regional contexts. However, it is in the works of the women writers in English such as Geetha Hariharan, and Arundhati Roy that such caste contestations become central to their constructions of the politics of locality and region.

Local Traditions and Hindu History: Gita Hariharan's In Times of Seige

Geetha Hariharan's novel In Times of Siege delves into the long history of the Veerashaiva movement in Karnataka.[118] Times narrates the trials faced by a South Indian History professor in Delhi, who accidentally gets involved in the cross-currents of a politically motivated religious warfare. Professor Sivamurthy has recently written a course module on the anti-Brahminical Veerasaiva movement in twelfth-century Karnataka. This immediately attracts the attention of the Hindu Right. The Hindu fundamentalists (called "fundoos" by Sivamurthy's progressive students) accuse Murthy of not only misrepresenting the movement and its founder Basava, but also highlighting, rather needlessly, the Veerasaiva revolt against caste. Soon, protests from Left wing intellectuals, students, and other supporters of Murthy follow.

All along this time of his persecution by the Hindu groups, Murthy thinks obsessively of the turbulent history of the Veerashaiva movement. The stories around the movement unfold with a panoramic vividness upon his mental eye. He begins to muse over "the tensions that grew between the court, Brahmins and the merchants on the one hand, and on the other, the low-caste artisans and the untouchables [of] Basava's Veerasaiva movement" (69). A political crisis is imminent. When Basava organizes an inter-caste marriage between an untouchable bridegroom and a Brahmin bride, King Bijjala, under pressure from the Brahmins, orders the brutal killing of the couple (63).

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[118] The Veerasaiva movement in Karnataka rose as an anti-caste movement that questioned Brahminical religion and ritual. Its founder Basavanna is supposed to have gathered the saints of the order from lower caste and lower class groups. The vachana poetry of this movement was written in native Kannada language and not in Sanskrit. For a detailed study of this movement see, A. K.Ramanujam's "Translator's Note" and "Introduction" to his translation of Veerasaiva poetry titled, Speaking of Shiva. Ramanujam historicizes this 12th century movement and shows that it gathered diverse low caste people into its anti-Brahminical revolt. It was a protest against "mediators like priest, ritual, temple, social hierarchy, in the name of direct, individual, [and] original experience." It even employed the "dialectical speech of medieval Kannada country" in the vachanas. See Ramanujam 35-36, 28.

Some of the militant followers of Basava decide to retaliate. King Bijjala is assassinated, and the "city burn[s]" (64). Finally, a "disillusioned" Basava leaves for Kudalasangama, the holy place that he had immortalized in his poems (64). He is believed to have died there under mysterious circumstances (64). This resistant and disturbing Veerashaiva history strikes Murthi as being in stark contrast with the domesticated versions of Basava's story disseminated by the Hindu conservatives.

The novel ends with Murthy's realization that such an "unsafe past" with its violent history, its revolt against caste order, and its novel interpretation of God as an "absence" could well threaten hegemonic Hindu interests. The Hindu groups try to re-write the Veerasaiva revolt as a part of Hindu history, and even construct Basava as a Hindu god. This rewriting is a part of their political agenda of denying "non-Hindu traditions, or 'little' traditions that are critical of the mainstream tradition" (171). Hariharan's novel highlights the contemporary debates over the invention of a dominant Hindu national culture. It reveals how the non-Hindu and low caste South Indian histories are appropriated in constructing Indian history as a uniform Hindu history. In this hegemonic attempt, "religions outside Hinduism-[. . .]—that interrogate Brahminical philosophy and practice, have been carefully absorbed into the mainstream of Hinduism by sweeping aside their distinctiveness" (Sethi 29).

Matter of "Small Things": Contestations of Caste, Gender, and Region in Arundhati's Roy's Work

After a glimpse of post-independence writers such as Nehru, Naipaul, Raja Rao and Narayan, who share a common concern with constructing a pan-national identity, we

must linger over Arundhati Roy's God of Small Things because it allows us to raise some important questions about local and sexual politics at a later moment of post-nationality. As a matter of fact, what Roy invokes in this novel is a sense of the failure of the nationalist project in modern India. Even as she re-creates Ayemenum, a small South Indian place in the novel, she reveals it to be deeply imbricated in national and global economies. Whether in the form of the thriving tourism industry, or the Gulf money that is pumped into this rural economy, global capitalism intersects local spaces like Ayemenum. Thus, as Roy traces the geographical specificity of the rural landscape of Ayemenum, or describes the surviving traditional art forms such as Kathakali, she also expresses a sense of outrage at the manner in which everything in this place, even "History" gets packaged and turned into marketable commodities for the consumption of the tourists (127). In the description of the Hotel that springs up at the "Heart of Darkness," Roy gives a vivid and painful portrayal of how Kathakali is appropriated within this consumer economy.

Commenting on Roy's engagement with the forces of globalization, Julie Mullaney, who examines the interlocking discourses of "race, religion, gender, sexuality, caste, and class" in Roy's work, sees this novel as "concerned with how individuals, groups, or local communities engage with the forces of globalization" (Mullaney 8, 16). In Mullaney's view, Roy's use of English is a form of postcolonial resistance, not a co-optation into these global power structures. While English writings in India often occur in a problematic relationship with vernacular literatures, Roy "'wrench[es]' English language from its colonial roots" into the idiom of native Malayalam tongue in an innovative manner (Mullaney 22). Since, unlike the "pastoral fables" of Narayan, Roy's

work pays close "attention to the specificities of space and place," she "carve[s] a space on the literary map for Kerala" (Mullaney 28).

Roy's novel interrogates the seamless contexts of the historical oppression of marginal identities such as women and lower castes. She brings out the submerged histories of caste and gender formations in Kerala by interrogating the conjunctions of religion, gender, and class. Born in a Syrian Christian family (much like her protagonist Ammu), Roy gives an insider perspective of how regional communities such as Ayemenum which are caught in the crosscurrents of tradition and social change, grapple with the project of modernity. Pointing to the manner in which the status quo relations of caste and gender are repeatedly reinforced within these histories, she delves into the disparate and unequal social worlds of Ayemenum. She points out that in translating the traditional caste hierarchies into the new religion, the influential Syrian Christian community in this place constructs itself as "caste Christians" like "caste Hindus" (66). Historicizing caste in Kerala, she observes, "twenty percent of Kerala's population were Syrian Christians, who believed that they were descendants of the one hundred Brahmins whom Saint Thomas the Apostle converted to Christianity" (66). Besides, here caste privilege is crucially linked to class location since these high castes are also the elite estate-owners who always vote for the Congress (66).

In this instance, narrating the circumstances, which perpetuate the marginalization of the outcastes, the novel gives shocking glimpses of a past, when "paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their foot-prints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravan's footprint" (74). Later, the colonial missionaries convert many untouchables

in Malabar. But this does not improve their condition much because caste lines are strictly re-drawn even within the new Christian community. In fact, this only leads to the paravans losing their "reservation" quotas in the education and employment sectors after independence because they are not paravans anymore. Roy sums up that in modern India, "they were not *allowed* to have footprints at all" (74). Moreover, such caste repressions have a deep and damaging psychological impact on the outcaste psyche. In Velutha's father Vellya Pappan, Roy depicts the abject figure of the faithful paravan, an oppressed untouchable, who has internalized the caste prejudices against himself. Pappan even wants to punish his son for the abomination of sleeping with his high caste employer's daughter (257).

However, even as Roy argues that the nationalist agendas of progress and caste reform have belied themselves, she also begins to construct instead, a local and sexual space for recovering the fragmented resistances of subaltern women and low castes. This sexual politics is evident, for instance, in how the text constructs the union of Ammu and Velutha. This transgressive union across caste lines highlights such a transitory moment of resistance. Roy makes an intriguing use of contradictory perspectives in constructing this incident. On the one hand, she traces the scopic imagination of Mammachi reliving the scene of her daughter "coupling [. . .] with a filthy coolie, [. . .] like animals" in "vivid detail" (257). In this voyeuristic flight, which projects the high caste fear and desire onto low caste bodies, we see Mammachi imagining the "paravan's coarse black hand on her daughter's breast [. . .]. His black hips jerking between hers." (257). While Mammachi's gaze demonizes this sexual act, at the end of the novel, the narrator's gaze lyricizes it. This narratorial gaze lingers on Velutha's black body. It deconstructs the color-signifier

that Mammachi associates with Velutha's otherness by focusing, instead on Ammu's gaze of love. Velutha's initial fear slowly gives way to an intense desire for Ammu's body. As the lovers are locked in this irresistible bind of desire, "Biology design[s] the dance" (335). When they come together in this dance-like union that is destined for a tragic fate, "Terror" provides the "rhythm" (335). The river "pulsat[es] through the darkness, shimmering like wild silk, [and] Yellow bamboo we[eps]" (335).

However, this liminal space of the riverbank, the location of Ammu and Velutha's transgression, provides a stark contrast to Ammu's house. Ammu's house is a repressive space, where even the bonds between women are tenuous. Her father, the imperial entomologist, Pappachi, is a domestic tyrant who represents the colonial enterprise in the South. Ever a defender of the British and their civilizational superiority, he enacts a parallel colonization of the female bodies in the household. But even after he is quelled by son Chacko, women continue to be oppressed in the house. Despite his liberal political commitments, Chacko inherits and controls the family finances. The feminist critic, Nalini Natarajan, locates the oppression of the economically disempowered women and untouchables in Roy's novel within the overlapping contexts of the domestic and state repression in Kerala. Thus, even after Pappachi dies Ammu is deprived of the inheritance from the maternal line. Her status in the house is summarized in the classic phrase, "no locusts stand I" (57). In the shifting, yet interlinked colonial and postcolonial contexts, the private space of home becomes a space that disempowers women and low castes (Natarajan 109).

Ammu's home, is an "unsafe" place, which reflects "worldly spaces and new socio-political conditions" (Natarajan 98). The novel shows the private space of home as

imbricated in "a corrupt, neo-colonial coercive state" that marginalizes women and low castes (Natarajan 109). Thus, even though Velutha is the backbone of the pickle factory that she runs, the matriarch, Mammachi, does not let untouchables into the house. But the house itself is filled with objects that are products of Velutha's work. Natarajan points out, "the labor of people like Velutha [. . .] is the hidden reality behind the opulence of Aymenem" (Natarajan 108-109). Under such conditions, the oppressed high caste women attempt to reach out and form bonds with the lower castes who also "share their class status" (Natarajan 98). Nevertheless, despite the tragedy that strikes Ammu's life, "the text does indicate the [continual] failure and anxiety of patriarchy" (Natarajan 102).

The troubled political scenarios in Kerala, which Roy explores in this novel, demonstrate a parallel subjugation of marginal identities. The novel reveals the unholy nexus of politics and caste. Roy accuses the Party of supporting the high caste interests. She provides brief visibility to the resistant naxalites, who appear on the margins of the text and disappear into a void. However, she points to the manner in which they are systematically repressed by the government (68-69). In this instance, Roy even criticizes the popular communist leader, E.M.S. Nampoothiripad, who is seen as the prime force responsible for the success of the Communist Party in Kerala. It comes as no surprise therefore, that despite being a cardholder, Velutha is also betrayed by the local Party leader K.N.M. Pillai. Pillai's words of caution to Chacko about Velutha reveal the Party attitudes toward outcaste social and economic mobility. Naturalizing the untouchable identity in the body of the paravan, Pillai tells Chacko conspiratorially, "what ever job he does [. . .] he is just a Paravan" (263-64).

Eventually, when the high caste society hits back at Ammu and Velutha with a crushing violence, a "historical" retribution befalls Velutha. Describing this gory scene of police torture, Roy observes that the "job" of the state institutions such as the police is to "exorcisiz[e]" the fear of caste pollution from the "Touchable" world (309). Her graphic depiction of this dehumanizing torture is laced with angry irony. She points out "if they hurt Velutha [. . .], it was only because [. . .], any implication that [. .] he was a fellow-creature—had been severed long ago" (309). Velutha, "the God of Loss" also disappears like the paravans of the old days. He too has left "no footprints on shore" (290).

Moreover, this Touchable cause of the police inspector, which must "inoculat[e] a community against an outbreak" also requires that resistant women like Ammu be subjugated (294). When Ammu walks into the police station to "correct" Baby Kochamma's story about Velutha, the inspector, anxious to instill order again within the disturbed world of caste and gender hierarchies (that also seem to point to an immediate political crisis in the place) touches her breasts with a baton: "a [gesture] calculated [. . .] to humiliate and terrorize her" (260).

However, Roy's narrative resists and disrupts this ordered universe, not only by revealing the anxiety that underlies patriarchal and political power, but also in its play on time and sequentiality. Toward the end of the novel, Rahel and Estha have again broken the Love Laws. Refusing a closure, the narrative loops back disturbingly to the moment of Ammu and Velutha's transgression, hovers on an uncertain "tomorrow," as if to gather up once again all those local, personal, and fragmented resistances, "the small things" that matter.

Part: 2 Writers in the Regional Languages of the South

While issues of caste and locality figure importantly in the works of the above women writers, vernacular writers in South Indian languages show a stronger engagement with local traditions and regional variations of caste. Even as they mark the larger national and global influences on their little local places, these writers devote their attention to the specific South Indian regional worlds differentiated by caste and language.

In this section, I focus on the works of the Kannada writers U.R. Ananthamurthy and Chandrasekhar Kambar, Tamil writer Jeyakanthan, and Malayalam woman writer Lalithambika Antarjanam, to show how these writers reveal strong attachments to local places in the South. Besides, their constructions of locality are connected with the divisions of caste and gender in these regional spaces. While Ananthamurthy critiques the Brahmin societies in Karnataka, Kambar explores the low caste worlds in this part of South India. On the other hand, Jeyakanthan attacks the corruption and gender injustices in the Tamil Brahmin society in post-Periyar Tamilnadu. Antarjanam writes of the oppression of namboodiri women in Kerala.

Brahmin Angst: U.R.Ananthamurthy's Samskara

The 50's and 60's can be called the high period of the modernist "navya" movement in Kannada literature. Navya drew its inspirations from European modernism and constructed itself as a revolt against the traditional social norms. It experimented with new modes of writing. Rajeev Taranath, an important Kannada critic of the early 60's points out how the major writers of this new wave movement in Kannada like Girish

Karnad, Gopalakrishna Adiga, and Ananthamurthy, show a patent influence of Eliot, Yeats, and Ezra Pound.[119]

In a similar vein, another noted Kannada critic, G.S.Shivaprakash, shows that the Western modernist concerns with "purity," and the preoccupations with sterility, meaninglessness, and anarchy resurface in navya writing (Modala Kattina Gadya 7: trans: mine). In fact, writers in vernacular languages in many parts of India often drew from European literature even as they believed that, when it came to expressing themselves in writing, they had to go back to their native tongues. Thus, we see Ananthamurthy conceding, "though I write in this language, my analytical, intellectual character comes from my association with English."[120] Shivaprakash makes another important observation about the navya sensibility. He asserts, "the formalism and symbolism of Kannada poetics are not something that turn their back on the external world, nor are they apolitical" (Shivaprakash 7: trans: mine).

Ananthamurthy's early controversial novel Samskara (1965) is symptomatic of the major aesthetic and sociological concerns of the "navya" in the mid-60's. In this phase, "navya" reveals the tensions between the solipsistic tendencies of European modernism and its progressive commitment to social reform and change. This movement was also deeply involved in the raging postcolonial debates of tradition and modernity at the time. While many navya writers interrogate the caste repressions in South Indian

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[119] *Navya* in Kannada literature can be identified, broadly, as the literary period spanning the decades between 1940's and 70's. A hegemonic Brahminical structure and its systematic subjugation of the low castes came under severe attack during this period.

See Taranath's "Sahitya Vimarsheyalli Vaicharikatheya Samsyegalu" ("Intellectual Problems in Literary Criticism") 59-79.

[120] In an interview with Prasanna. See U.R.Ananthamurthy in Hiriyadaka. (trans: mine). See page#140, and also Note on page# 145. 136.

societies, they also show a strong preoccupation with the new self-fashioning of the Brahmins in a changing world. In Samskara, Ananthamurthy translates the familiar modernist themes of individual self-search and existentialist angst into South Indian Brahmin contexts. He constructs what I term the "brahmin angst" in an attempt to question the corruption within the Brahmin order.

Represented eminently within both the regional and national canons, and frequently translated into English, Ananthamurthy is undoubtedly a major contemporary writer. He has received the prestigious national award for literature, the "Jnanapeet" (1990). Apart from Samskara, his other important works include Bharatipura (1972), Avasthe (1978) and Bhava (1994).

Contextualizing the novel and referring to the time markers here, K.V.Subbanna, a noted Kannada writer, argues that the allusions to the "plague, Congress, balloon, soda, importantly phonograph records of songs from Hirinnayya's theatre" suggest that Samskara is set somewhere between 1945-46.[121] The novel revolves around the story of the sexual transgression, and the subsequent self-search of the Brahmin protagonist Praneshacharya. Pranesha's existential predicament is interwoven with the central problem of the novel, that of performing the funeral rites to the corpse of another Brahmin Naranappa. Naranappa, a rebel in the agrahara (Brahmin locality) of Durvasapura, had always defied the norms of the Brahmin society. He ate meat, scoffed at Brahmin rituals, and lived with a lowcaste concubine Chandri. When Naranappa dies, the orthodox Durvasapura community faces a strange crisis. It is at a loss to decide whether, or not Naranappa's body should be given Brahmin funeral rites. The brahmins

[121] See Subbanna in Hiriyadaka 352. (translation of the quote is mine).

of the place wait for the advice of their leader Pranesha. As Pranesha struggles to find an answer to this problem, he is suddenly drawn into a sexual union with Chandri in the forest outside the village. His intense moral conflict and a newly felt identity crisis that follows become the major preoccupations of the second part of the novel. Meanwhile, the plague epidemic, which sweeps over Durvasapura, becomes a glaring metaphor for the crisis in this Brahmin community. Pranesha becomes a fugitive for a time. In the end, he decides to return to Durvasapura and perform Naranappa's funeral himself.

Critical Responses to Samskara:

A majority of critics of Samskara see it as a scathing attack on the traditional Brahmin society. When it was published in 1965, the novel was the center of violent battles between the orthodox Brahmins and progressive intellectual groups. Meenakshi Mukherjee calls Samskara a representative post-independance realistic novel. According to her, its treatment of social change marks the "difficult and uneasy process of tension between the fixed settled order of life and the still inchoate stirrings of self" (Realism 69).

Taranath has argued, "even though the experience of Samskara is that of the Kannada ethos," it draws its notions of existentialist self-search and meaninglessness from "contemporary forms of Western [modernism]" (Taranath "Sahitya Vimarshe" 69-70, trans: mine). He sees Ananthamurthy's writing as targetting Western and English-educated readership (Taranath "Sahitya Vimarshe" 70, trans: mine). He also points out that, while Pranesha's "alienation" seems extraneous to the regional Kannada cultural context, Naranappa's particular mode of rebellion is closer to the Kannada experience at the time (Taranath "Sahitya Vimarshe" 73). On the occasion of receiving his Jnanapit

Award in 1995, Ananthamurthy has tried to defend himself from the criticism that his writing imitates European models by saying, "I fight with tradition not as an outsider, but as an insider."[122] In any case, Ananthamurthy's Samskara, with its intense concern with the Brahmin self, hardly delves into the interiority of the untouchable worlds.

Nevertheless, Naipaul applauds Ananthamurthy's progressive intentions. But he feels that the quest of the Brahmin protagonist in the novel is limited by the stultifying effect of tradition, and a "dead civilization" (India: A Wounded, 117). More sensitive to the politics of representation of caste in the novel, D.R. Nagaraj, a noted Kannada critic, locates it in terms of Ananthamurthy's Brahmin background. Nagaraj feels that "Samskara occupies a unique place in the history of Kannada novel for its brilliant portrayal of the 'self-image' of the Brahmins as a part of a meta-critique of the caste system as a whole" (Nagaraj 67).

Bringing the theme of caste in the novel into conversation with colonialism, H.S. Raghavendra Rao, in "Samskara, Kelavu Vishayagalu" ("Samskara, Some Issues") points out, "outside Durvasapura and the Agrahara ruled by Praneshachraya there is another zone formed by the English civil law" (Rao 263, trans: mine). [123] The laws of the English and the "Agrahara values" are often opposed. But "since the English have power the agrahara does not have the courage to stop it. If they did they would have excommunicated Naranappa" (Rao 263, trans: mine). Thus, colonial law intervenes in the traditional equations of caste in local places like Durvasapura.

Interestingly, however, few critics have questioned the ambivalent representation of low castes and women in the novel. Considering that the representational politics of

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[122] "Nanna Lekanodyoga" Ananthamurthy cited in Hiriyadaka 93 (Trans: mine)

[123] Rao in Hiriyadaka 263 (translation of the two quotes is mine)

portraying the low caste world becomes the key element in recuperating the patriarchal Brahmin ideologies in the novel, such critical neglect seems alarming. Some exceptions are critics like Nalini Natarajan. Natarajan makes brief references to how the novel deals with the "male Brahman's coming into modern subjectivity through the exclusive representation of lower-caste woman as sexual object" (Natarajan 52).

Discussing the intersections of gender, caste, and modernity in Ananthamurthy's work Natarajan focuses mainly, on the representation of the Brahmin women in the novel. She claims that this textual discourse erases women's labor. The Brahmin women in the novel are also desexualized. While their presence becomes necessary for keeping up the ritual status of the Brahmin household, there is an "invisibility of women's physical and cultural labor" (Natarajan 43). In "rewriting Brahmanism into modernity" Ananthamurthy is mainly preoccupied with the male Brahmin's identity crisis (Natarajan 44). Natarajan concludes "the debates about Brahmana modernity are most often about woman. They are about woman as the immanent site of temptation or as a vulnerable point in caste survival" (Natarajan 69).

Brahminhood

In Samskara hyper-sexualized low caste female bodies become instrumental in the troubled journeys of self-discovery of the male Brahmin protagonist. This text deploys a manichean mode of representing the differences between the Brahmin world and the low caste "otherworlds." The latter are constructed as exotic locations of pleasure and adventure where the Brahmin males, deadened by religion and ritual and caught up in a sterile tradition, can seek a renewed sense of life. At the same time, this textual discourse

diffuses the threats of disruption to the Brahmin order resulting from such transgressions by drawing upon Sanskritic and Brahmanic knowledges. In its exclusive absorption with the Brahmin self, Ananthamurthy's work underplays lowcaste subjecthood even as it critiques caste. The ambivalence and play that the text employs in the depiction of Brahmin identity in this novel, paradoxically, lead to reinforcing the asymmetry of caste and gender relations.

Here, we can trace three crucial modes of constructing Brahminhood:
a) naturalization of the male Brahmin body b) employment of manichean binaries in articulating the differences between the high and low caste worlds c) appropriation of low caste female sexuality. The encounters between the Brahmin male and his Other, constructed variously as lowcaste, woman, or even transgressive figures like Naranappa, Mahabala, and Pranesha (after his sexual experience with the low caste prostitute Chandri) often end in relegitimizing the Brahmin identity of the transgressor.

a) Naturalization of the Brahmin Male Body:

The novel rehearses the challenges to the Brahmin order by introducing rebel figures like Naranappa, Pranesha's childhood friend, Mahabala, and Pranesha himself, in his later phase of self-search. However, they are eventually subsumed into the Brahmin fold and their Brahminhood constructed as inviolable.

For example, both Pranesha and his rival, the demonized Naranappa, transgress the norms of the agrahara. But the text manages such transgressions by highlighting the idea of a biological Brahminhood. In addition, it relocates Pranesha's existential predicament, represented in terms of the modernist-existentialist ideals of individual choice and self-affirmation, within an overarching Brahminical metaphysics. In this

instance, we can begin by looking at Mukherjee's view that Samskara is torn between two contradictory views of Brahminhood--the traditional idea of Brahmin identity as defined by "karma and varna," and a new self-awareness of the Brahmin, which is "partly conditioned by existential thinking" (Realism 167).[124] However, Mukherjee does not explore the sophisticated ways in which such oppositional ideas are reconciled in the metaphysics of an essential Brahminhood in the novel.

Right after his sexual encounter with Chandri, Pranesha rationalizes his predicament in terms of the Karmic theory: "now, [I am] really involved in the wheel of karma" (78). The Karmic law allows the individual to choose only that which is destined for him. What the ideal Brahmin is exhorted to do, is transcend the apparent dualities of good/evil, right/wrong, and self/other. His duty (the paradigmatic Brahmin being male) lies in cleansing himself of the egotism of perceiving himself as an agent. Pranesha quickly decides that his self-chosen celibacy, his rejection of physical pleasure, and even the desire to win over his opponent Naranappa are manifestations of a negative egotism that is unbecoming of a renouncer. He self-consciously locates the moment of his sexual experience within the karmic structures and declares, "undesired, as if it were God's will, the moment had arrived" (97). Chastened by this thought, Pranesha, who has now absolved himself of agency, is ready to experience a renewed self-awareness.

Moreover, all along his new existential self-search, Pranesha subconsciously reaffirms his Brahmin identity in various other ways. His words about Naranappa resonate through the novel defining his own identity: "[Naranappa] may have rejected brahminhood, but brahminhood never left him" (9). Within this inexorable logic of Brahminism, all the transgressors in the novel are identified with each other. Especially,

[124] Karmic theory deals with the idea of "destiny" in terms of rebirth cycles. "Varna" refers to caste

after his "fall" brought about by the sexual encounter with Chandri in the forest, Pranesha conflates the images of Mahabala and Naranappa in his mind. He analyzes the nature of his own transgression by identifying with them. He tells himself: "to make up for my defeat [with Mahabala], I tried to win a victory over Naranappa [. . .]. Whatever it was I fought all along, I turned into it myself"(100).

At this point, we see another significant way in which Brahminhood is naturalized. There are subterranean textual references to "tantrism," a form of religious practice that is esoteric and often-even demonized (and sometimes, associated with the "smartha" Brahmins of the South).[125] When confronted with the sudden crisis of Naranappa's death, the Brahmin community of Durvasapura meet to determine Naranappa's caste status in order to arrange the funeral. In the ensuing debate between the two major Brahmin sects, the "madhva" and "smartha" groups, the text plays off one set of Brahminical beliefs against the other.[126] Tracing the problematic figure of the Brahmin transgressor way back to the legendary 7th century smartha philosopher, Sankaracharya, the Durvasapura Brahmins try to grapple with the idea that the male Brahmin body is actually invulnerable to caste pollution.

Garudacharya, a madhva Brahmin, taunts his smartha rival Durgabhatta and points out, "Shankaracharya, your great founder, in his hunger for full experience,

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[125] The tantric tradition in Hindu mysticism is diverse. It treats the body, the physical, and the experiential as the way to attain godhead. Sexuality becomes an important element in this mystical pursuit. For further discussion read Douglas Renfrew Brooks's "Encountering the Hindu 'other': Tantrism and the Brahmins of South India"

[126] "Madhvas" and "smarthas" are traditionally thought of as rival Brahmin sects. Madhvas are the followers of the philosopher, Madhvacharya (13th C), who preached "dviatha," (the dualism of soul and God). They worship god Vishnu. Smartas are the followers of Shankara (7th C) who, professed "advaitha" (monism, or the oneness of soul and God).

exchanged his body for a dead king's and enjoyed himself with the queen" (6-7).[127] Sankara is supposed to have violated the mandatory rule of celibacy prescribed for the Brahmin ascetic. But this does not result in a devaluation of his Brahminhood. In fact, this incident is often cited as an example of how experiential knowledge is necessary for a true Brahmin scholar. The subliminal textual linkages between Sankara's transgression and the more recent violations of Mahabala, Naranappa, and Pranesha, alongside the invocation of tantrism lead to legitimizing Brahmin violations such as meat-eating, socializing with lowcastes, drinking, sexual union with lowborn women, and even the failure to keep up with the common Brahmin rituals.

The well-known scholar on tantrism, Douglas Brooks, in his scholarly work on the relationship between tantrism and the smartha cult theorizes this alterity within Brahminism as an experimenting with "controlled violations of Brahmin-defined conventionality" (Brooks 413). Brooks argues that such transgressions are a means of transcending the mundane rules prescribed for the spiritually inferior (Brooks 413). The tantric accentuation of knowledge as a means of transcending dualities springs from the idea that experiential knowledge helps one to assume power over the self. If asceticism and strict adherence to the shastras (scriptures) lead an average Brahmin to moksha (salvation), so does a rejection of these rules in the case of the flamboyant tantric. Within the tantric system, all transgressions and contradictions get unified into a single Brahminical episteme.

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[127] According to the myth, Sankara, the celibate philosopher, is believed to have been challenged by a woman-scholar in a debate to speak on the art of sex. Wanting in the knowledge of sex, he decided to "transmigrate" into the body of a dead king and have sexual intercourse with his queen in order to gain the experiential knowledge of sex.

Apart from veiled references to tantrism, the novel also accommodates the transgressors by citing precedents from the ancient myths. Pranesha analyzes his sexual transgression by locating it in the frame of reference of the puranic stories of Parashara and Vishwamithra, ancient Brahmins who, supposedly cohabited with lowcaste women. He muses:

> The great sage who impregnated Matsyagandhi the fisherwoman in the boat and fathered Vyasa—did he agonize over it like me? Did Vishwamitra suffer, when he lost all merits of penance for a woman? Could they have lived, seeing life itself as renunciation, staying with God, going beyond conflicts and opposites by living through them, taking on every changing shape that earth [. . .] offers (98-99).[128]

Above all, among the multiple textual strategies of preserving the identity of the Brahmin, we see that Pranesha's transgressions are invariably enacted in the heterotopic spaces outside the Brahmin agrahara. His sexual encounter with Chandri occurs in the liminal space of the forest. The breaking of rules such as eating in the pollution period of his wife's death, and drinking coffee in a restaurant happen during a journey outside the brahmin agrahara. This "in between" condition of Pranesha's search resembles Sankara's quest for sexual knowledge, which is supposed to have occurred in the limbo of the transmigration into a dead king's body.

Incidentally, the novel also refers to the contradictions in the caste identity of the South Indian Brahmin. The South Indian Brahmin is always-already contaminated

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[128] According to the epics, Matsyagandhi was a fisherwoman who was seduced by the sage Parashara as she ferried him across the river. She bore Vyasa as a result of this union. The sage blessed her with an everlastingly fragrant body. The story occurs in Mahabharatha.

because of the historical miscegenation between the Aryans and Dravidians. However, as one of the Brahmins in the agrahara asserts, within the patriarchal logic of Brahminism, "a brahmin isn't lost because he takes a lowborn prostitute [since] our ancestors after all came from the North [and] history says they cohabited with Dravidian women" (5-6). In this instance, the text reveals how the legitimacy of South Indian Brahmin identity is drawn from the patrilineage of the Aryan North. At the same time, it also subtly conflates the figure of the Dravidian woman with a prostitute.

b) Manichean Mechanisms:

The encounters between the Brahmin male and the Other—projected either as the low caste woman, anti-figures like Naranappa and Mahabala, or even the dark, romanticized world of the low castes, which the male protagonist travels through in his quest for a new identity—are central to the novel's representation of Brahminhood. The anxieties inherent in such disruptive encounters surface in the ambivalence of desire and rejection with regard to the low caste other. The second important mode of constructing the Brahmin self in Samskara is by forging the differences between the normative Brahmin and the romanticized low caste worlds.

It is pertinent in this context to refer to the well-known anthropologist, Louis Dumont's, classic study of caste in India. Dumont argues that the caste system is structured, mainly in terms of the opposition between the Brahmin and low caste. The impurity of the untouchable is "conceptually inseparable" from the purity of the Brahmin. They must have been established together, or at least, "mutually reinforce" each other (Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus 54). Such preoccupations with purity and impurity figure importantly in defining the differences between the Brahmins and others in Samskara.

Here, the Brahmin world, even as the writer critiques it, is largely associated with rationality and nonviolence. On the other hand, the low caste world is constructed as irrational, passionate, impure, and violent. The novel employs exotic tropes of violence and animalistic metaphors to depict the low castes. In fact, even the Brahmin transgressors, at the moment of their association with the low caste world, are described in terms of these romanticized tropes of violence.

In this compartmentalized vision, lust and cruelty (both desirable and repulsive) are assigned to the low castes. For example, in the incident where Pranesha watches the "bloody" cockfight at the village fair, the low caste world is visualized as the "nether world," where "the cruel engagement glinting in the eyes of [the] entranced creatures [low caste onlookers]" will make "a brahmin [. . .] wilt" (117). And the "tigrish lust" that Pranesha feels for Chandri's body is fused with the image of Naranappa as a "striped tiger" (81, 45). Thus, Mukherjee points out: "by implication the tiger gets associated with other aspects of life that fall outside the rarified and attenuated brahmanic existence" (Realism 173).

Moreover, we have the exotic image of the night-queen in Naranappa's garden. The night-queen evokes the ideas of sensuousness and sexuality: "thickly clustered with flowers, [it] invade[s] the night like some raging lust, pouring forth its nocturnal fragrance. The agrahara writhe[s] in its hold as in the grip of a magic serpent-binding spell" (15). There is a forceful contrast between the subtle fragrance of the flowers, which bloom in the gardens of the Brahmin houses (the "sacred balsam" and other "flowers for worship"), and the heady fragrance of the flowers in Naranappa's garden that will eventually adorn Chandri's hair (14, 15). Suggestions of fear and desire are

woven into the descriptions of the "snake-like braid[s]" of low caste women, Chandri and Padmavati (123). In short, this romanticized low caste world is alienated from the Brahmin cosmos, even as the high caste and low caste bodies are caught up in a strong bind of desire.

c) Low caste Female Bodies:

Depicted as glowing sexual objects, low caste female bodies figure importantly in the new existential self-awareness of Brahmins like Pranesha and Naranappa. Pranesha's existential quest begins with the rejection of the orthodox Brahmin mode of life. Chandri, the low caste prostitute becomes instrumental in his new self-fashioning. The Brahmin males repeatedly project their fantasies onto the bodies of low caste and outcaste women like Chandri, Belli, and Padmavati. In this process, the novel replicates the language, which historically casts low caste women as "always available." Low caste women are idealized by evoking mythological parallels of celestial temptresses. For instance, Durgabhatta's gaze on Chandri itemizes her body and casts her in terms of female desirability drawn from the epics. He looks at Chandri, who is weeping for her dead lover Naranappa and describes, "her eyes [. . .] are now misty with grief and fear, but she looks good that way. Like Matsyagandhi, [. . .], shyly trying to hide her breasts bursting through her poor rag of a sari" (8). A.K. Ramanujam, the translator of Samskara points to how the low caste women in the novel are represented as "earthly and amoral [. . .] ideals of untroubled sexuality" (Ramanujam "Afterword," 144). In assigning this amoral sexuality to the low caste women, the text deploys the language that casts them as sexually deviant.

In sum, despite its overt progressive preoccupations with individual freedom and social change, the textual discourse of Samskara shows a retrograde movement that leads to the subtle relegitimization of the very Brahminical ideologies it tries to resist. This is perhaps linked to the writer's particular location within the post-independence South Indian Brahmin patriarchal discourse that was trying to rework, but not dismantle its caste ideologies.

The Short Stories of Jeyakanthan

Much like Ananthamurthy's work, the writings of the well-known twentieth-century Tamil writer, Jeyakanthan, critique the Brahmin middle class of Tamilnadu. He lays bare the hypocrisy, repressions, and gender oppression within this community. The short story "Window," for instance, focuses the reader's gaze on the scenes of sexual exploitation of a Brahmin widow. At the end of the story, the narrator wonders if such "silenced" social atrocities must be publicized by "open[ing] the window" ("Window" 73). But he is left with the perplexity that the "outer light," would only show the "beast [which] will eat its own species to quiet its hunger" ("Window" 73).

In another collection of stories Jeyakantan Avara Kanthegalu (Stories of Jeyakantan) a powerful and popular story called the "Agniprevesha" (Trial by Fire) reveals how a Brahmin mother negotiates with the patriarchal prescriptions for female chastity. When this mother finds out that her daughter has lost her virginity before marriage, she immediately gives her a ritual purificatory bath. This act is particularly subversive since, while the scriptures suggest the bath as a remedy for male sexual transgression, there are no such absolving rituals in the case of women. Moreover, what

the readers of the time found greatly shocking was the manner in which the mother superimposes the scriptural notions of "trial by fire" (an ordeal which the mythical model of femininity in the Hindu lore, Sita, had to undergo to prove her chastity) onto the bath, and tells her daughter that she is "pure now" ("Agni" transln: mine, 16-19). This story explores the bonding and resistance of women within repressive high caste South Indian patriarchies. It also reveals the patriarchal anxieties over female sexuality within this discourse.

Message to the Brahmin Sisters: Lalithambika Antarjanam

The early twentieth-century Malayalam woman writer, Lalithambika Antarjanam, critiques the patriarchal Brahmin worlds of Kerala. Like Roy, this early vernacular writer explores the changing contexts of women's marginalization in high caste societies in South India. Antarjanam reveals the appalling instances of the oppression of the namboodiri (Brahmin) women in traditional "illams" (Kerala houses). Her work is crucially concerned with the problems of a woman writer. Her powerful narratives and feminist zeal were inspired by the nationalist movement and its reformist concerns. She broke the namboodiri rules, and went on to become a writer.

The noted writer and critic, Meena Alexander, in her "Forword" to Geetha Krishnankutty's excellent translation of Antarjanam's short stories argues "the ritual displacement of women in traditional Namboodiri societies forms the core of Antarjanam's work" (Alexander "Forword" x). The "antahpuram" life of "women quarters" and its seclusion becomes the site of imprisonment in Antarjanam's novels

("Forword" x). But "in the two years she spends in seclusion Lalithambika gains what she calls her 'real education'. The 'unfortunate souls' of countless women, their homeless voices, enter into her" ("Forword" x). Translator Krishnankutty, in her "Introduction" to the work gives a detailed history of the marginalization of namboodiri women. These women were called "antarjanam" literally, "those who live inside" (Krishnankutty, "Introduction" xiii). Moreover, "unlike the Nairs, the ezhavas, or the Syrian Christians [non-Brahmin castes of Kerala], the namboodiris resisted the Western influences that came with colonialism in the nineteenth century," and they were also opposed to the "reform movements" in the twentieth century ("Introduction" xiv).

In this collection of short stories, Cast Me out if you Will, we see how Antarjanam not only brings the repressed lives of the namboodiri women to light, but also reveals their resistance to this Brahmin patriarchy. In the autobiographical story "Childhood Memories" she traces her childhood in a liberal family with supportive parents, who encouraged her education. Another story "Sesame Seeds, Flowers, Water," is a touching apostrophe to her dead mother. Here, she reveals the anxiety of the mother to keep up with the norms of the extended family, even as she wishes to bring up her daughter in a more progressive manner (181). Later, Antarjanam also talks of her interest in the activities of the Congress and the newspapers, which made her aware of national issues (Krishnankutty, "Introduction" xxiv). Her husband was a "comrade to help her achieve her aims" (141). But with the domestic pressures and "babies every year," she managed to keep up her writing with difficulty (141). Interestingly, Antarjanam talks of herself in the third person, as if to show that her predicament is paradigmatic of the

condition of all women intellectuals of the time. She points out about herself, "she brought them up. She wrote, read, and made speeches" (141).

Antarjanam's stories attack the unequal gender laws in Kerala society, where Brahmin men could form unions and marry many women, but women had to remain as widows, or abandoned wives. In the incarcerating institutions of the time such as the "samarthavicharam" the men in the family and the King held a family court to try the sexual crimes of women. These trials often led to a mock funeral being performed for the woman suspected of transgression. The accused woman was ritually "cast out" of the community (Krishnankutty, "Introduction" xxii). "The Power of Fate" describes such a "shraddha" (funeral) performed for a living woman. Eventually, this woman is "cast out" and her child taken away by the "old thirumeni" (male head of the family). The story unfolds in the gossip of two women, who are returning from watching the event. At the end, one of the women declares "it's better to be born a dog ten times over than to be born a woman in a namboodiri household" (5).

Another popular story, "The Goddess of Revenge," is based on an actual event, that occurred after 1905, when King Rama Varma brought out a new law that made it mandatory for conducting the trials of men who were part of sexual liaisons (Krishnankutty, "Introduction" xxiii). A Brahmin woman, Tatri exposed many influential upper caste men during her "samarthavicharam" trials. Antarjanam fictionalizes Tatri's story in a dramatic manner. In the beginning, the narrator of the story meets Tatri's ghost in a haunted house. Tatri's ghost tells the sad tale of marital oppression and ill treatment she suffered from her paternal family, and also at her husband's home. She explains why she decided to wreak vengeance on her husband, and

the system (26). Finally, Tatri justifies her revenge by pointing to the common oppression of Brahmin women. She declares, "oh, my Sister, what I did was as much for your sake as mine. For the sake of all namboodiri women who endure agonies. So that the world would realize we too have our pride, [. . .] strength, [and] desire left in us" (25). Antarjanam's writings bring out the acute tensions of caste and gender in Kerala society, where caste privilege does not always point to gender empowerment. However, while she is concerned with the issue of the Brahmin women's repression, her writings do not provide much visibility to the struggles of lower caste women in Kerala. Writers like Kambar, on the other hand, provide visibility to their marginalized low caste worlds.

Celebrating the Lower Caste Worlds

Moving into the history of lower caste resistance in Karnataka, we can begin by looking at Nagaraj's study of the subaltern Dalit movements in South India. "Dalit" literally means "the oppressed" (Nagaraj 61). This movement rose primarily in response to caste oppression, even though it incorporated the idea of class struggle into its rebellion. The Dalit movement often links itself to Marxist ideologies. In the early through mid-twentieth century, there were epic confrontations between Gandhi and Ambedkar, and also Gandhi and Periyar. Their differences with Gandhi over the issue of caste reform resulted in the lower caste leaders, Ambedkar and Periyar, breaking away from the Gandhian mode of harijan reform. Instead, they chose the revolutionary mode of rebuilding a new and modern society based on equality of caste.

Nagaraj emphasizes, "the Dalit movement [. . .] believed in the firm rejection of the Gandhian model" of harjan reform (Nagaraj 1). While it is no doubt, Gandhi who

brought the issue of untouchability to the forefront of the nationalist struggle, his reformist impulses were firmly rooted in Hinduism. Gandhi's mode of caste reform makes "the agony [and guilt] of the spiritual cleansing of the Hindu self leading to self-purification [acquire] tones of public grandeur" (Nagaraj 16). In contrast, in the non-Brahmin movements of the South such as the Justice Party "colonial intervention [is a] crucial factor" (5). However, according to Nagaraj, Justice only ended up representing the "middle castes and landed gentry" in Tamilnadu (5). Even though the Justicites sometimes sided with the untouchables, they were ambivalent in identifying with them.

In this instance, Nagaraj also uncovers the problematic side of Ambedkar and Periyar's anti-caste struggles. He argues, "the response of the humiliated communities to the project of modernization which was launched by colonial powers [. . .] often eras[es] cultural memory" (Nagaraj 49). Thus, "the self-reflexivity" of Periyar's movement "devoured its own ancestors," where the Dravidian "pragmatists" saw their anti-caste project as "a new writing on 'tabula rasa', [and] western notions of rationalism and atheism took over the Tamil Self-Respect Movement totally" (50). Nagaraj finds this pragmatist approach to be a break with "the radical traditions within the broad framework of Indian culture" (Nagaraj 50). Above all, "the treacherous deal struck between forces of modernity and the upper strata of the caste system" makes this Dravidian modernity greatly problematic (Nagaraj 56).

Such tensions between tradition and modernity surface in the Dalit writings of the South. Defining Dalit writing, Nagaraj says "[this writing] explores the world of the untouchables and other humiliated castes," and is "written by members of that class," from the inside (Nagaraj 61). In this case, the Dalits are "subjects" who speak and not

the "objects" of sympathy who are spoken about (Nagaraj 61). Besides, rejecting realism as a mode that can construct the complexities of the Dalit worlds, he argues, "the very cultural paradigm of the rationalist epoch did not accept the lower caste cosmologies" (Nagaraj 65). Instead, he praises the folk mode of writing. In such Dalit writing "the vast interiority of the Dalit world" is reconstructed at "multiple levels" (Nagaraj 67, 69). Writers like Chandrashekhar Kambar, who assert their sense of belonging in the lower caste worlds they write about, often make use of local myths and folklore in recuperating the subaltern histories of their communities. Their writing, despite its revolutionary thrust, does not break completely with the low caste local social and religious traditions.

In his introduction to Kambar's Jokumaraswami, the translator, Taranath, praises Kambar for his mode of reconstructing the rhythms of the rural lower caste life. Taranath says, "celebration is, for Kambar, a primary mode of experience. And because this celebration has a musicality at once private and shared, the rhythm is at once private and contemporary, a blend of self and community" (Jokumaraswami "Forword" viii). While, like Ananthamurthy, for instance, "Kambar [also] writes at a time when a version of western modernism is the presiding tone in Kannada literature," what distinguishes Kambar's work is his strong sense of "place." In fact, "to a writer like Kambar [. . .] place is the core of perception" ("Forword" viii). In Kambar's writings this definition of place "rang[es] from the actual to the fantastic-mythical" ("Forword" viii). Moreover, connecting Kambar's sense of place with his caste location Taranath argues, "Kambar's insistent relationship with place also has something to do with his social background. He does not belong to an upper, or Sanskritized, caste. Hence, he is distant from the contrasts central to the upper caste inheritance: time-eternity, *Janma-Mokhsha,*

appearance and essence and so on" ("Forword" viii-ix). Taranath adds, "in a sense, not belonging to the upper class has helped [Kambar] enormously. His people, illiterate and oppressed" employed the "mythical episteme" in "order to preserve experience," and thus, for Kambar "sensuous memory" becomes "knowledge" ("Forword" ix).

Jokumaraswami depicts the myth of a fertility god, who is worshipped by low caste people and especially, women. Kambar explains at the beginning of the work, "women belonging to the castes of fishermen, washerman, and lime-maker" are those who worship Jokumaraswami (Jokumaraswami, "Introduction" xiv). The central theme of the play is the power struggle between the socialist Basanna, who is symbolized by Jokumaraswami, and the evil village headman Gowda. Gowda oppresses low caste peasants. He appropriates their land, and even perpetrates physical abuse on them. Basanna not only challenges Gowda by forming a band of rebels in the village, but also subverts Gowda's authority in other ways. He is involved in a sexual relationship with the Gowda's wife. This adultery figures as a challenge to Gowda's power in both sexual and political terms. Although, Basanna like the god Jokumara is ritually killed at the end of the play, his traces remain in the form of a child in the womb of Gowda's wife (35). Eventually, a social renewal is prophesied: "where the blood falls/ Springs the sprout and the shoot" (78). The play closes on a note of hope that "a good government [will] rule" and justice be done to the oppressed (78).

In a recent critical volume discussing Kannada writing, Desheeya Chintana, Kambar contrasts his work with that of writers like Ananthamurthy and argues, "the left and progressive modernity did not rise high in Kannada literature" though it did give voice to some Dalit writers (Desheeya, trans; mine123, 124). In this instance, he also

underlines Taranath's observation that his "regional consciousness" is tied to his low caste background (Desheeya trans; mine13). Locating himself in such marginal and local spaces, he rejects the idea of a pan-Indian consciousness. Kambar says at one point, "today nation is an abstract concept. For me what is concrete and living is my home and the society in which I exist and the language I use for communication" (Desheeya 131-32trans; mine). Instead, he asserts, "in terms of place I belong to the rural background, my social location is in what is considered a 'sudra' (lower caste) and illiterate community" and therefore, "I am a folk person" (Desheeya 178: trans; mine). Kambar locates himself within Kannada language and cultural ethos, and describes the folk play as deeply entrenched in local tradition, religion, and ritual (Desheeya 167: trans; mine). As such, local fairs, festivals, and dances form an invariable part of this folk theater (Desheeya 215). Folk plays relate to "all aspects of society because it comes out of the experiences of an organic community" (Desheeya 216: trans; mine). Thus, Kambar's writing is crucially engaged in tracing the rural and folk worlds in Karnataka even as it engages the impact of social change on such societies. Kambar makes the problematic of caste central to his work.

Conclusion

In sum, post-independence literary writings reveal the multiple levels of complexity that characterizes the notions of the nation and region, Indianess and South Indianness. While early Indo-Anglian writers like Nehru, or Naipaul make the South, peripheral to their imaginings of India, postmodern writers like Rushdie silence the Dravidian South even as they attempt to deconstruct the much-idealized oneness of India, by playing with

fragmented and marginal identities. What is more intriguing, canonical writers of the post-independence ferment like Raja Rao, or even R.K.Narayan, who often speak of a distinct South India in their work, are, at the same time, engaged in asserting a fundamental pan-Indian national identity. Moreover, even this geocultural South that they write about tends to be predominantly Brahminical in nature. Their homogenized and Brahminical South is seen in inclusivist terms as a part of India. Besides, they leave out the lower caste worlds of South India from the imaginings of their regional South. In contrast, many vernacular writers who write from locations of caste, linguistic, and gender marginality, bring the variations and contestations of caste and gender that characterize the geo-cultural heterogeneity of South India to the foreground. While vernacular writers like Ananthamurthy, Jeyakanthan, and Antarjanam critique Brahmin societies in the South, Dalit writers such as Kambar draw attention to low caste subjectivities in local South Indian places.

A further level of dissonance in the discourse of South Indianness is visible in South Indian women's writings. In my previous chapter I have shown that the Dravidian movements in the early through mid-twentieth-century were invested in recuperating the silenced voices of the low caste South Indian women. But postcolonial literature by South Indian women writers in English like Arundhati Roy and the Malayalam writer Lalithambika Antarjanam speak increasingly of the repression of women in high caste South Indian societies. Their work also recovers the resistance of these women to such South Indian patriarchies.

Overall, literary writings in post-independence India reveal South Indianness as an unstable discourse that breaks up along the plural axes of nation, place, caste, class,

gender and language. The Brahmin South of Raja Rao and Narayan, which is largely subsumed in a pervasive consciousness of India, contrasts sharply with Roy's Ayemenum, a local place that she shows to be imbricated in both global structures of power and a repressive nation state. Moreover, she gives visibility to marginal identities like women and lower castes in constructing the politics of the local and personal in her writing. Hariharan's work questions the claims of a uniform Hindu history by highlighting the subaltern historical anti-caste movements in Karnataka. On the other hand, while vernacular writers like Ananthamurthy, Jeyakantan, and Antarjanam expose the corruption within local South Indian Brahmin societies, their work does not delve into lower caste subjectivities. However, the phantasmic worlds of folk myth and local lore that Kambar recreates in his works explores Dalit societies. Kambar's writing gives voice to "his people, illiterate and oppressed" (Taranath, "Foreword," Jokumaraswamy, ix)

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have explored the protean forms that the idea of a regional South has assumed in the colonial and postcolonial narratives of the subcontinent in the past two centuries. My project points to a new direction in postcolonial studies by constituting the issue of regionalism as a seminal area of research. Moreover, in looking at the idea of the region not just in terms of geography, but as a cultural and historical construction that is predicated on the issues of the nation, caste, class, gender, and language, this dissertation opens up an interdisciplinary approach to the study of regionalism.

Overall, while I have argued here that the cultural formations of a Dravidian South break up the inclusivist discourses of a Hindu-India, I do not posit, instead the conception of a singular and homogenous South. Looking at the divergent constructions of the ideas of the nation-region, India-South India, and Aryan-Dravidian, across plural discourses in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries such as colonial Orientalist and ethnographic research on India, Self-Respect writings, and post-independence literary works of the South, I have traced how South India reveals itself as an unstable and fragmented site. In demonstrating that regionalism intersects with the discourses of the nation, I have also shown that the notion of the regional South is constructed within complex interactions with colonialism.

My study has drawn from a wide range of interdisciplinary perspectives in attempting to include both theoretical breadth and historical depth. I have brought the studies on the "nation" of postcolonial critics like Partha Chatterjee, Uma Chakravarthy and others, alongside seminal historical research on South India by Dravidian historians

like V.Geetha, C.S. Lakshmi, and the contemporary anthropologist, Nicholas Dirks, especially his work on caste in colonial India. Besides, I have built upon Eric Hobsbawm's well-known idea that the invented traditions legitimize themselves by linking themselves to selective historical pasts. I argue that such quests for antiquity in postcolonial nations often involve the mediation of colonial knowledges.

Despite their very different engagements with the notions of tradition and culture, the native leaders of the nineteenth-century Hindu nationalist movements, as well as the Dravidian leaders in the next century were involved in intricate interactions with European Orientalist knowledges in inventing their "authentic" traditions. Therefore, in tracing the discursive formations of such national and regional traditions, I have situated the early ideas of Dravidianism in the turn of the century Orientalist discourses in India. Well-known Orientalists like Max Muller, William Jones, Monier-Monier Williams, and others established the idea of an ancient Aryan and Hindu Golden Age in India as a part of their search for the common Aryan origins of Europe and Asia. They also identified this Hindu tradition strongly with a Brahminical and Sanskritic culture. In the process, they overlooked the cultural variations and regional differences in the subcontinent.

In arguing against what Bhabha calls the "unidirectionality" of Said's Orientalist model, I have highlighted how the nineteenth-century native reformers rearticulated the above Orientalist visions of a Hindu tradition.[129] Even as they drew upon the Orientalist notion of a Hindu spirituality, they reconstructed it as an active force that formed the basis of their anticolonial consiousness. However, in envisioning a unified Hindu India,

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[129] See Bhabha 103

rather like the European Orientalists, the nationalists also marginalized the diverse regional and lower caste cultures in the subcontinent.

A colonial ethnographer and missionary, Robert Caldwell, raised a dissonant voice against the dominant Orientalist ideas of an overarching Hindu culture and claimed that there existed a more ancient and pre-Aryan Dravidian lower caste tradition in South India. The complex colonial and missionary imperatives that underlie Caldwell's discovery of this lower caste South, and more importantly, his categorical exclusion of the Brahmins of the South from this Dravidian community, are perhaps controversial issues, nonetheless, as I have argued, his work had a crucial impact on the ways in which the lower caste groups in the South began to see themselves in the next century. Caldwell's work provided the basis for their assertions of Tamil linguistic and cultural pride. His influence is evident in how the Dravidianists gather the ideas of region and caste in constructing their politics of identity. In addition, Dravidian leaders like Periyar reconstruct Caldwell's narrative of the Aryan colonization of the South in highly innovative ways. Periyar sees this "internal" colonization of South India by Aryans, North Indians, and Brahmins as analogous to the British domination of India. But despite this anti-colonial stance, the South Indian lower caste leaders frequently collaborated with the colonial government in matters of caste and gender reform. The Self-respecters dissociated themselves from the nationalist movement, since they saw it as invested in upper caste and class interests. In short, their writings declare war against Hindu religion, the nationalist Congress, and the Brahmins.

While caste is a crucial marker of South Indian identity in Caldwell's formulations, Periyar's brand of Dravidianism conflates the marginality of caste with

class. It is also along the lines of caste that this South Indian discourse is divided into further fragments. The Justice Party established a "non-Brahmin" identity in opposing the dominance of the Brahmins in colonial civil and administrative institutions. But Periyar forms Dravidianism as a social and cultural movement against North Indian and Brahmin "imperialism" over South India. Unlike the Justicites, who represented the elite sections of non-Brahmins, the Self-respect movement comprised of diverse sections of South Indian lower caste population including untouchables, women, minorities, and the poor.

Among other things, the Self-respect engagement with the postcolonial battles of tradition and modernity reveal the contradictions that underlie their construction of a modern Dravidian consciousness. By and large, the Hindu nationalists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries made the idea of an ancient Hindu tradition the defining trait of Indian culture, even though they incorporated selectively from Western Enlightenment ideas. In contrast, the Dravidianists, even as they showed the impact of Caldwell in upholding a pre-Aryan South Indian tradition, often described themselves in modern and rationalist terms. Periyar poses Indian tradition against Western modernity, and denounces the former as the reason for India's lack of progress. While the Self-respect idea of Dravidian modernity undercuts the nationalist rhetoric of a hoary Hindu tradition, it is also linked in a problematic manner to colonial reform agendas.

Moreover, the Dravidian assertions of modernity are frequently made over the site of the bodies of lower caste South Indian women. But the manner is which the Dravidian movements addressed the "woman question" diverged from the Hindu reformist discourse. Unlike the nationalists, who were preoccupied with the liberation of the upper

caste Hindu woman, Periyar brought the figure of the low caste woman to the foreground. The turn of the century Hindu nationalists had seen the upper caste Hindu woman as a symbol of the traditional and spiritual Hindu self. Such ideas of Hindu femininity made their way into the twentieth-century nationalist discourses in South India. But the Self-respect women reject the domestic and spiritual ideals of womanhood offered to the upper caste Tamil woman. In contrast, they construct themselves as social subjects and "citizens."[130] This movement gave rise to a lower caste feminist consciousness in South India. In reading a range of Self-respect women's writings, I have revealed the intriguing ways in which they actively seek the intervention of the colonial government in matters of gender reform, even as they voice their critique of both the native and colonial patriarchies. By and large, the Self-respect journals were committed to the non-Brahmin cause. But they also published the writings of upper caste women, who voiced their sense of victimization within the upper caste patriarchies in South India.

In general, even as the Dravidian writings show such remarkable alliances across caste lines, they identify Dravidianism with caste marginality. But such anti-hegemonic discourses of the caste and nation that we see in the Dravidian writings are deeply contested in the heterogeneous postcolonial literary representations of the South. In discussing post-independence literature of the South, I have brought together both Indo-Anglian writings and works in South Indian vernacular languages to show how this entire corpus of writing on the South reveals South Indianness as a plural and contested site.

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[130] Geetha describes that the "millennial urge [that] informed" the Self-respect movement "translated itself" into the lives of women "as an invitation to citizenhood, to a community of comrades" See "Periyar, Women" WS-13.

While early Indian writers in English such as Nehru, or even Naipaul make South India peripheral to their notions of India, even postmodern writers like Rushdie sometimes silence the lower caste South. If this Indo-Anglian writing on the South casts it in terms of a relationship, an otherness to the nation, what is more intriguing, many Indian writers in English of the South like Raja Rao, and R.K.Narayan are preoccupied with asserting their Indianness.

Besides, Raja Rao's works also play upon the West's post-war and modernist fascination with a "mystic" Hinduism. However, in novels like the Serpent and the Rope, Raja Rao inflects the Orientalist ideas of Hinduism by locating an authentic Brahmin-Hindu culture in the South rather than in the North. Though in a somewhat different manner, Narayan also distances himself from the low caste worlds in the South. Barring a few instances, such as, for example, the Guide, the autobiographical work, My Days, or the short story "Fellow Feeling," where he either exoticizes, or demonizes the lower caste South Indian worlds, his work frequently moves away from them.

In contrast, some contemporary women writers in English such as Arundhati Roy, and Geetha Hariharan, for instance, show a strong resistance to the homogenizing discourses of the nation. Instead, they delve into the local South Indian worlds of gender and caste marginality. Roy shows her local place, Ayemenum, to be crisscrossed by global and national structures of power, even as she focuses on giving visibility to marginal identities like women and lower castes. Moreover, she constructs a particular politics of the local and the personal in The God of Small Things in resisting such hegemonic forces. On the other hand, Hariharan's Times of Siege questions the claims of

a uniform Hindu history in India by trying to recover the subaltern history of the anti-caste Veerashaiva movement in Karnataka.

Similarly, many vernacular writers in South Indian languages, who do not share the anxieties of the Indo-Anglian writers of projecting their national credentials, and are not primarily focused on addressing global audiences, pay close attention to place and locality in depicting the conundrums of caste, and gender in local places. The Kannada writer U.R. Ananthamurthy, Tamil writer Jeyakantan, Malayalam woman writer Lalithambika Antarjanam and the Dalit writer from Karnataka Chandrashekhar Kambar, all reveal such strong focus on local places, even though they associate themselves with different caste, place, and linguistic locations even within South India.

While Ananthamurthy and Jeyakantan, claim to expose the corruption within the local South Indian Brahmin societies, their work does not explore the lower caste subjectivities. Antarjanam's powerful narratives of the oppression and resistance of namboodiri Brahmin women in Kerala, do not address the issue of the lower caste woman's marginalization. Kambar, however, draws from the rural local lower caste lore in depicting the oppressed community with which he identifies himself.

In short, South India in the above literary discourses figures as a heterogeneous space--a Brahmin South aligned with the nation in the ferment of early post-independence Indo-Anglian writing of the South represented by Raja Rao and Narayan, and a local South riven by the tensions of gender and caste within the changing contexts of national and global economy in Roy and Hariharan. Then, there are the disparate hegemonic Brahmin societies in local places in South India, which surface in the works of Ananthamurthy, Jeyakantan, and Antarjanam. At the other end of this range, we have

the vision of the submerged and subaltern lower caste worlds in Karnataka, which Kambar brings out in his writings. In employing folk myth and local lore, Kambar presents an idea of locality that breaks the conventions of realism and chronological time. Such discordant visions of South India in the works of these writers are often linked to their positionalities in terms of caste, gender, place, and language.

There is also another level of discord in the discourse of South Indianness in relation to the issue of gender. While, the Self-respect movement was invested in recuperating the voices of the lower caste South Indian women, Indo-Anglian women writers such Roy, or even the earlier Malayalam writer, Antarjanam, focus mainly on the oppression of upper caste women. However, in giving voice to these women, they break away from the tendency noticeable in writers like Raja Rao and Narayan, who, by and large, construct a predominantly male South Indian subjectivity.

In sum, my study opens up new perspectives in postcolonial and literary studies by making South India the site of understanding of the complex interplay of the discourses of the nation, region, caste, and gender in the subcontinent. It recovers the subaltern voices from heterogeneous and marginal South Indian worlds in deconstructing a unitary nationalist history of the Hindu and Aryan India that has assumed dominance in the last two centuries.

The above cultural ideologies of South Indianness and Dravidianism, which I have discussed in this study, have often figured importantly in Indian politics in the past few years. While an in depth analysis of the tensions between the nationalist and regional politics in the subcontinent is not within the scope of my study, I gesture toward such contests in the Indian political scenarios in the last half-century. In fact, in configuring

"culture" centrally into the discourse of politics, John Zavos and Andrew Wyatt have argued, "the national political arena has become subject to both cultural incursions-the political mobilization of people around cultural symbolism and language—as well as the incursions of local and regional politics in the narrower sense of [electoral politics]" (Zavos & Wyatt 2).

To begin with a classic instance, where the Hindu cultural ideologies have formed the overt and professed basis of nationalist politics, is in case of the Sangh Parivar.[131] The Rashtreeya Swayam Sevak Sangh (R.S.S) and Vishwa Hindu Parishat, both of which construct themselves as culturalist movements, are also active in political mobilization. Their uneasy alliances with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have led to alarming developments in the country. With the incidents at Ayodhya, Godhra, and Gujarat this form of Hindu nationalism has provided ample source of anxiety.[132] Charged with militant religious agendas and accused of fomenting communal violence in the subcontinent, the Sangh Parivar has often targeted the minority sections for its attack. Discussing how, in the 90's, BJP rule in India took upon the project of rewriting Indian history in order to exclude centuries of Islamic presence in the subcontinent, the cultural historian, Sumit Sarkar, observes that this propagandization of Hindu culture clearly "center[s] around the building and maintenance of the nation-state" (Sarkar 292).

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[131] The Sangh Parivar consists of political parties, and social organizations committed to the cause of building a Hindu nation. Major among these are Vishwa Hindu Parishat (VHP), Rashtreeya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bajrang Dal, Bharateeya Janta Party (BJP)

[132] Ayodhya: The destruction of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 in order to build the Ram temple, which led to major riots. See Ludden. "'Introduction' Ayodha" Making India Hindu: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India for a comprehensive contextualization of the issue.

Godhra: The burning of a coach in which Karsevaks were travelling in February 2002 led to violent communal clashes, and numerous deaths in Gujarat.

Gujarat: Violent riots, killings, and arson that followed in Gujarat as an aftermath of the Godhra incident in 2002.

Another particularly problematic issue within this Sangh Parivar politics of Hindutva is its engagement with lower caste mobilization. The Right wing Hindu parties in India have increasingly been identified with upper caste and class Hindu interests. In fact, extending this critique of a persistent upper caste bias to many other nationalist parties in Indian politics, Sarkar points out, "the cadres of the nationalist and even leftist movement have come from Hindu upper caste backgrounds" (Sarkar 275). However, the Dravidian movements in South India proved to be a strong counter-force to this nationalist drive of Hinduization, especially since they were able to mobilize marginal castes and classes in the South with remarkable success. The Dravidian Parties have successfully challenged the Congress in Tamilnadu ever since 1967.

Moreover, as another cultural historian, Christophe Jaffrelot, shows the cartographic ideologies of the Sangh often clashed with Dravidian regional politics. RSS, for instance, constructs the concept of territory, India as the Aryan land of ancient imaginings, and maps it on to the idea of the nation state.[133] They opposed federalization. In the 50s, when Periyar demanded a separate "Dravidistan," the RSS vehemently "denounced" this move (Jaffrelot 211). Interestingly, within the Sangh parivar alliance the project of unifying this Hindu India, or in a manner of speaking, marking out territory, has often taken religious forms such as the "yatra," (pilgrimage). For example,

[133] See Christophe Jaffrelot for the discussion in this paragraph. Alluding to the popularity of the rath symbolism, Jaffrelot describes, "the VHP has endevoured to mobilize 'the Hindu nation' by utilizing forms of mobilization derived from a religious style of procession and pilgrimage. This formula was appropriated and adapted after 1990 by the BJP" in the form of Advani's famous tour, the "rath yatra" (Jaffrelot 213).

However, these parties also show the trend of reaching out beyond the borders of the nation state to forge their Hindu links. Describing such tensions between the territorial and global Hindu affiliations, Jeffrelot gives an interesting insight into how during the time of collecting bricks from different places to rebuild the Ayodhya temple, the Kar sevaks even got bricks from the U.K and the U.S. See Jaffrelot 212.

M.K.Advani employed such religious symbolism and spectacle to great effect in his "rath yatra."

Overall, it would seem, as the well-known cultural historian, David Ludden, describes,

> We can [. . .] imagine two very different Indias. One is unitary. In this India, the line between top and bottom of the political system is variously complex, state-by-state, but all localities are influentially connected to the central government. [Here], Congress and BJP contest the future. Another India, however, is composed of regions. [. . .] In this regional India, national trends are illusive, deceptive, or irrelevant; only state politics matter, even as each state is separately connected to the Centre (Ludden xvi)

However, Ludden's view becomes problematic, when we take into account the recent trend of coalition politics in India. After all, even regional Dravidian parties such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (AIADMK) have, even if briefly, formed alliances with unlikely companions such as the BJP.[134]

In fact, the electoral politics in South India in the last half-century has seen great shifts in Dravidian ideologies from the time of Periyar. While the Self-respect notions of caste, class, and regional marginality, and also the strong assertion of Tamil cultural

[134] Wyatt points out about the DMK alliance in the NDA in 1999 that "the alliance with the BJP was the source of some discomfort among those who assumed that the DMK was still the legatee of the rationalist tradition of the Dravidian movement." Wyatt also feels that in the AIADMK alliance with BJP in 1998 Jayalalitha "was only making more explicit the sympathies felt by her late political mentor, MGR" (Wyatt 243, 242).

exclusivity still form the professed basis of DMK and AIADMK politics, there have been marked changes through these few decades. During the early phase of the Dravidar Kazagham (DK), Periyar's atheism, his opposition to the rhetoric of nationalism, and the demand for a separate Dravidistan were still a part of the Dravidian political agenda. When Periyar's disciple, Annadurai (1909-1969), broke away from Periyar and formed the DMK in 1949, their political propaganda began to take a new shape. DMK made adjustments to Periyar's ideals in adapting to the electoral politics. For instance, while it still constructed itself as a party that was fighting against both caste and class oppression of the Tamil people, it slowly gave up its vehement atheist and anti-brahminical tone.[135] It hastily withdrew the demand for a separate Dravidistan. However, the DMK remained commited to the anti-Hindi stance. The issues of language and culture are central to its assertions of Tamil pride and honor.

Moreover, DMK has always been invested in promoting its message through the medium of popular culture. Both Anna and the other well-known DMK leader and the current Chief minister of Tamilnadu, Karunanidhi, (1924-), were both writers and powerful orators. Along with the charismatic Tamil political leader and film star, M.G.Ramachandran (1917-1987), they engaged actively in the propaganda of DMK ideologies through Film.[136] A major break within the DMK led to MGR forming his own

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[135] Widlung has pointed out that in the DMK, the "radical atheism" of the DK was given up and the DMK even came up with the slogan "one God, one caste'" Widlung gives a detailed analysis of such shifts in the Dravidian parties in the Post-Periyar Tamilnadu politics. The break between Periyar and Annadurai was occasioned by Periyar's marriage at 71 to a fellow Self-respecter and associate in her late 20's. Anna also wanted to be inovled in electoral politics. See Widlung 63.

Irschick points out, "in the 1967 elections many Brahmins supported the D.M.K" See Irshchick 167

Wyatt also observes that while in the 50's the demand for Dravidistan was high, in the 60's DMK was more interested in "winning office" See Wyatt 236.

[136] Studies such as those of S.T.Bhaskaran, Kartikesu Sivathamby, and M.S.S Pandian have dealt at length with the links between the Dravidian parties and Cinema.

AIADMK in the 70's. MGR not only placed great stress on fighting class oppression, but also projected himself as the patron of the poor and downtrodden. MGR's successful political career until his death in 1987 has also come under criticism. His welfare policies have been questioned, and his government has been charged with corruption.[137]

Above all, some political critics like Wyatt maintain that after M.G.R's death the mobilizational capacities of the Dravidian parties are diminishing (Wyatt 240). Of late, while DMK faces charges of nepotism and family rule under Karunanidhi, the AIADMK under MGR's associate, Jayalalitha, has acquired a reputation for corruption, despite her claim of championing women's causes.[138] Jayalalitha is also seen as being more "accommodating" toward the Hindu groups (Wyatt 242). Besides, there are further breaks within the DMK such as the MDMK (Marumlarchi Dravidia Munnetra Kazagham), which sympathizes with the Tamil nationalist cause in Sri Lanka, and the PMK (Pattlai Makkal Katchi) that is strongly invested in Dalit interests.[139] In short, according to Wyatt, the Dravidian movements, which had successfully mobilized lower

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[137] Widlung refers to "skewed priorities, administrative ineptitude and large-scale corruption" (Widlung, 80). M.S.S.Pandian says "if MGR's rule thrived on taxing the poor, it benefitted the rich, especially the rural landed rich." See Pandian 22.

[138] Widlung points out, "Jayalalitha's image, and the image of her party, were sullied by accusations [. . .] of arrogance, lavish spending and nepotism" See Widlung 90
For charges of "family rule" against Karunanidhi's party see Widlung 93-95. See also Wyatt 239-243.

[139] See Wyatt for a discussion of the break between V.Gopaswamy (Vaiko) and the DMK. Vaiko broke away from the DMK on the issue of Srilankan Tamil nationalism, and his discontentment with what he sees as the nepotism and family rule of Karunanidhi's government (Wyatt "Turn Away" 243-44). Also see, Widlung 93-97.

Pattali Makkal Katchi: Following the break between DMK and members of the Vanniyar community, PMK was formed in 1989. The Dalits had felt increasingly left out of the Dravidian politics in post-Periyar Tamilnadu. There has been a mobilization of the Dalits in the form of the Dalit Panthers (Viduthalai Siruthaigal") and the PMK. See Wyatt 244, 266

Analyzing the break between the Dalit and Dravidian mobilization in the early through mid twentieth-century Gail Omvedt points out, "the South thus witnessed a powerful non-Brahmin movement and a strong opposition to 'Hinduism', but more than any other region was plagued by splits between communists and Dravidians, and Dalits and non-Brahmins," See Omvedt 256-64.

See also Irschick 153, for a discussion of the Dalit break with the Dravidian movement

caste and regional identities in developing an "alternative conception of the nation," have not retained the same power in the "populist politics of the DMK and ADMK [also known as AIADMK]," and this has led to new political formations of "those who wish to mobilize around more exclusive identities" in Tamilnadu (Wyatt 254). However, by and large, we must say that the regional parties are still powerful in South Indian politics. BJP has only recently made definite inroads into the South in the current Karnataka state in 2008. However, in Tamilnadu it is either the DMK, or the AIADMK that has been in power ever since 1967.

Another issue that is of relevance to the study of the cultural formations in South India is the manner in which the post-Periyar political parties in Tamilnadu have engaged with popular visual culture, especially the medium of Film. A Dravidian historian, Karthigesu Sivathamby, points out that Periyar himself was against films (Sivathamby 39). But Tamil Cinema became a prime vehicle for communicating Dravidian ideologies during the time of DMK and AIADMK, and continues to be so in contemporary Tamilnadu.

Anna and Karunanidhi were not only closely involved in the making of Tamil films, but also wrote scripts for films, which highlighted the Dravidian ideologies. Karunanidhi's Parasakti (1952) stands out as a paradigmatic DMK Film.[140] Parasakti centers around the themes of caste and class oppression, and highlights the corruption within the priestly class. Many films that were made under the patronage of the DMK even displayed the Party symbols and images associated with the DMK leaders in some

[140] Sivathamby argues "M.Karunanithi's epoch-making film *Parasakthy* (1952) [. . .] brought out very forcefully the DMK's view on social oppression" See Sivathamby 30.
He also cites the example of Anna's Velaikkari (1948) as one of the early instances of the DMK films to influence the "political consciousness of the Tamils" See Sivathamby 26.

scenes. MGR's popularity as an actor added to the success of the DMK. M.S.S. Pandian, in his work on MGR's film image and his political success argues, "given the DMK's overt allegiance to cinema as a vehicle for political communication, it skillfully transferred MGR's cinematic image to the domain of politics and invested it with a certain life-like authority" (Pandian, "Preface" 11).

When MGR broke up from the DMK, it is said that his large network of fan clubs became Party units for propaganda.[141] Pandian argues that while MGR's policies had been repressive and his government was engaged in financial mismanagement, it was his filmic image that helped him in eliciting the consent of the subaltern masses to this form of political control (Pandian, "Preface" 22). MGR was able to draw from the "pre-existing cultural idioms of the subaltern classes in Tamilnadu to ensure his lasting impact on the Tamil psyche (Pandian "Preface" 14). In many of his films, MGR projects himself as a proletarian hero, who fights caste and class marginality. Nadodi Mannan (1958), Ricksahwkkaran (1971), Madurai Veeran (1956), Airathil Oruvan (1965), Puthiya Bhoomi (1968), to cite a few, represent this iconic figure of the Dravidian hero.

Largely known to be MGR's companion, Jayalalitha rose to power after his death. Although, her filmic image did not attribute greatly to her political success, it was her association with MGR that catapulted her to power. Another famous film icon of the South, who has not entered into electoral politics but is known for popularizing the Dravidian-Tamil ideals through his filmic image, Rajnikanth, has also embedded social

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[141] Pandian argues, "the All World MGR Fans Association (Akila Ulaga MGR Rasigar Mantram) has about 10,000 branches throughout Tamilnadu and serves as the backbone of the AIADMK" See Pandian 30 Tracing also the off-screen stories and gossip that surround MGR's stardom, Pandian shows how they fed into his larger- than-life image. When MGR was accidentally shot by a co-actor during a shooting, there were mass protests Again, when MGR died, some fans even committed suicide. This celluloid image translated into a divinity, when a temple was built for MGR. See Pandian 17.

and political messages into his films.[142] His films propagate a sense of Tamil linguistic and cultural pride. Some films like Padayappa (1999), which is believed by some to be a critique of Jayalalitha, are seen as showing a more active involvement in the political struggles in Tamilnadu.[143] Rajnikanth's films also frequently portray the working class hero rising to social and economic success through his merit. The message of serving the poor is central to these films.

Of late, the DMK and AIADMK have also owned popular television channels, such as, for example, Karunanidhi's SUN TV and Jayalalitha's Jaya TV. Another instance of a star-turned politician in South India is the figure of N.T. Rama Rao in Andhra Pradesh.[144] NTR as he is popularly called, started the Telugu Desam Party. Unlike MGR, though, N.T.R. is known for his portrayal of the Hindu gods and mythological characters. This filmic image helped him in mobilizing support for his political success. In short, while there has been much research on the impact of Cinema on politics in Tamilnadu, a comprehensive study of the links between popular visual culture and politics in different parts of South India is still to be undertaken.

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[142] Rajnikanth (1950-), is the contemporary super star of South Indian Cinema. He began his career in Kannada films. Has also acted in some Hindi films. See, Arun Ram's "Rajinikanth" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajinikanth>

[143] See, for instance, Ram Arun's article <http://archives.digitaltoday.in/indiatoday/20001120/states4.html>

[144] Nandamuri Taraka RamaRao (1923-1996), the mega star of Telugu films between the 50s and the 70s. See for biography, Rajadhyaksha 175.

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