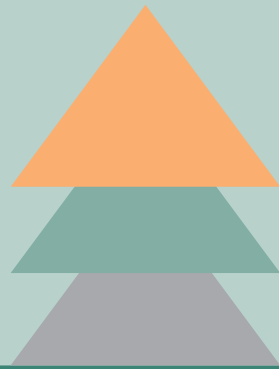# Religions and Development
Research Programme

India: Some Reviews of Literature Related to Religions and Development

Edited by the Religions and Development Research Programme

University of Birmingham

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Religions and Development

Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics.
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies.
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan.

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

http://www.rad.bham.ac.uk   Contact: c.bain.1@bham.ac.uk

Religions and Development
Working Paper 10

India: Some Reviews of Literature Related to Religions and Development

DFID Department for International Development

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Preface

As part of the initial work of the Religions and Development Research Programme, a number of reviews of the literature emerging from various disciplines were undertaken, as one part of an attempt to identify work relevant to the research programme and assist in the clarification of key concepts, contribute to conceptual thinking and inform the design of new empirical research (see back cover). A second component of the preparatory work was comprised of reviews of the available literature in the focus countries of the research programme: India, Nigeria, Tanzania and Pakistan. Some initial members of the research teams in these countries had participated in the design of the programme and were entrusted with commissioning these literature reviews. Each approached the task somewhat differently, depending in part on the nature of the materials available to them. In the Indian case, decades of academic endeavour and an indigenous publishing industry mean that there is a great deal of published literature on which to draw, in addition to secondary sources. This is less so in the other three countries, where the intention was, above all, to identify the secondary material available in the absence of very much directly relevant published literature. Relatively short-term and constrained exercises, these reviews were seen as preliminary and it was anticipated that they would be incomplete. The intention is that each of the specific research components to be carried out between 2006 and 2010 will build on the disciplinary and country reviews to prepare more detailed reviews of the literature relevant to their research questions, as a preliminary to new empirical work.

In the Indian case, the then country coordinator commissioned seventeen preliminary papers that were presented at a workshop held at Jawarharlal Nehru University in Delhi in 2006. Following the workshop, a number of the presenters were asked to revise their papers for inclusion in an edited collection. This working paper represents a selection of the best of the revised papers.

It has been further edited at the University of Birmingham. The Religions and Development Research Programme is responsible for the final selection of the papers that have been included. Without the hard work of Umakant Mishra in the earlier stages of the project, this collection would not have been published – his contribution was invaluable. The assistance of Tamsin Bradley, Research Associate of the RaD programme, London Metropolitan University, with the final editing is gratefully acknowledged.

Carole Rakodi
Director, Religions and Development Research Programme

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Introduction

This collection of essays is intended to assist in the development of an inter-disciplinary framework for understanding religions and development in modern India.[1] It was motivated by the increasing realization amongst social scientists that there is a need to take faith seriously in understanding the complexity of discourses of development, as promoted by the imperatives of democratic nation-building in post-colonial India.

The first chapter, entitled "Religion and development in India: an introduction" is written by Professor Surinder Singh Jodhka, who contextualizes the study of religion and development in post-Independence India. He reminds us that India had to negotiate numerous challenges in the immediate aftermath of Independence. Independence from colonial rule saw the largest ever uprooting and migration of people on religious lines, along the India and Pakistan border. The communal bloodshed, assassination of Gandhi and refugee situation in the immediate aftermath of 1947 convinced Indian leaders that religion must be kept a private affair, and there must not be any role for religion in the public sphere. India adopted secularism as a state policy and turned its attention to economic development through a command economy.

The author of this opening chapter then goes on to highlight that, despite the centrality of religion in India, it did not acquire centrality in the research agenda of any of the social science disciplines. Issues of development have been left mostly to economists. According to Professor Jodhka, the continued poverty of the vast majority of Indians, together with the failure of the command economy and its subsequent liberalization raises serious questions about the secular policies pursued since Independence.

The second chapter is written by Dr. Umakant Mishra and is entitled "Religion in the making of modern India: an historical profile". He looks at Indian responses to the challenges of the colonial discourse on Indian poverty and its cultural roots in the colonial and post-colonial periods. He reviews a series of studies that have critically analysed the core values of religion in the Indian context of development. The Indian tradition emphasizes material wellbeing, wealth and salvation, but all three goals of human life should, it is argued by many, be anchored in the principle of *dharma*. On the other hand, the colonial discourse located Indian poverty in the cultural traditions of India. Indian responses to this view were varied and complex and Dr. Mishra examines some of these responses in 19th and 20th century India. Alternative models of development attempted to anchor themselves in indigenous value systems, especially those with religious roots.

Chapter Three, also by Umakant Mishra, is a preliminary analysis of some demographic aspects of the religious communities of India. The chapter analyses different indicators of development, such as literacy, education level, population growth rate, work participation and unemployment, and poverty level among different religious communities. The data analysed comes from the official censuses, the National Sample Surveys. The purpose of the analysis is to identify whether some religious groups are relatively marginalised in terms of wellbeing and access to opportunities, although further research will be necessary for a full and accurate picture to emerge.

Chapter four is contributed by Rev. T. A. John and critically examines the changing character of Christian missionary education in India. He identifies three phases in missionaries' engagement in the field of education. In the first phase (the evangelical phase), missionaries aspired to use education for converting Indians to Christianity. There was a deep conviction among missionaries that the existing socio-cultural organisation of India would benefit from Christianity. In the second phase, starting in the early decades of the 20th century, missionaries realised that conversion of all Indians to Christianity was not possible. If the Protestant missionaries cherished hopes for the conversion of India as a result of Christian education during the first half of the 19th century, they redefined the role of Christian education in the second half of the century by saying that it was nevertheless worth the effort in order to prepare people's minds for potential eventual conversion. In the third phase, in the post-Independence period, Christian missionaries have used education as an instrument for the liberation of lower castes and rural Indians. This phase was marked by the spread of educational institutions from urban to rural India and of missionaries to more backward rural districts.

Footnotes

[1] Here modern India refers to the period of colonialism, which brought its own discourse of 'reason' and 'imperialism'. Many historians and sociologists argue that India was prevented from developing its own trajectories of development in the 18th century because of the abrupt rupture colonialism brought about in its economy and culture. Asish Nandy's studies contend that modern colonialism was successful, not only because the ruling country subjugated India through superior technical and economic resources, but also because the rulers propagated cultural subservience of the subject people. Exploring the myths, fantasies and psychological defences that went into the colonial culture, particularly the polarities that shaped the colonial theory of progress, Nandy describes the Indian experience and shows how the Indians broke with traditional norms of Western culture to protect their vision of an alternative future (Ashis Nandy, 1983). Also see Subramanyam (2004).

Chapter 1

Religion and development in India: an introduction

Surinder S. Jodhka[*]

Abstract

Partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan at the time of its independence from the colonial rule in 1947 played an important role in determining the attitude of India's social and political elite towards religion. Though the Indian brand of secularism did not advocate a complete separation of religion from the affairs of the state, religious politics was always regarded with suspicion, as being divisive and negative. The then dominant discourse of development and modernization also viewed religion as being a part of the tradition that hindered progress and rational thinking. Religion, it presumed, needed to be privatized and personalized if the country was to move on the path of modernization. Such a common sense about religion also influenced the social science agenda of post-independence India. However, beginning with the 1980s, Indian society and politics have also been witness to several new trends, which have made issues relating to religion and religious communities much more significant and central to the Indian political process and to discourses on development.

1   Introduction

This paper attempts an overview of the Indian experience of nation-building and development and their complex and changing relationships with religion over the last six decades or so. It tries to identify various social and historical forces that shaped the Indian idea of secularism and highlights the fact that religion was rarely seen as being relevant to discourses on development. However, beginning with the 1980s, India has seen some interesting new trends at the social and political levels, which have brought the questions of culture and religion to the centre stage of Indian politics. The material reviewed is separated into four sections (beginning with section two), reflecting the most significant periods of India's history. The review begins with literature that examines the impact of decolonization and the challenges of nation building facing the newly decolonized India. The next section looks at the relationship between secularization and development with reference to the emerging concept of modernization. This section highlights the huge diversity of India culturally, socially and economically, which in turn made the task of nation-building difficult. Section four considers the impact of religion and India's diversity on development by reviewing the responses from social scientists. The return of religion to national debates about development is then reviewed in the last main section. Concluding remarks highlight a lack of material that directly addresses the link between religion and development in India.

2   De-colonization and the challenges of nation-building

Independence from the colonial rule in 1947 was an important turning point in the history of contemporary South Asia. The end of British colonial rule was accompanied by a political restructuring of the region into sovereign nation-states. As the boundaries of such states were being drawn, a large majority of the "autonomous" princely states in the sub-continent also lost their political autonomy and were merged with the new nation-states. Some of these new sovereign nation-states chose western-style constitutional democracy as a form of government. The initial impetus to the adoption of democratic systems of governance had come from the pre-independence experience of political mobilization against colonial rule. Though the movements for independence were largely led by the newly emergent middle class elites, the nationalist movement attracted diverse social classes and communities, who responded enthusiastically to the promise of a better social and economic life.

At the time of its independence from colonial rule in 1947, India was confronted with many challenges. Division of the sub-continent into Pakistan and India resulted in large-scale migration and bloodshed. A large number of Muslims living on the Indian side of the newly drawn international border moved to Pakistan and similarly the Hindu and Sikh populations of "East" and "West" Pakistan fled their homes for India. Partition of the sub-continent remains the single largest episode of uprooting of people in modern history. According to available estimates, as many as 12 to 14 million people left their homes to take refuge across the borders. The estimates of people who died in the "communal" violence during this period vary immensely, generally hovering in the range of 0.5 to 1.5 million.[1]

Apart from the immediate challenge of dealing with a large number of refugees, providing them with shelter and viable sources of livelihood, the partition and violence that accompanied India's independence had many other long-term implications for the new state. Notwithstanding India's espousal of secularism as a state ideology, partition was a means of defining territorial identities along communal lines.

Further, communal violence and the influx of refugees were not the only problems that the new state of India was confronted with at "birth". Unlike the nation-states of Western Europe, India had not evolved as a homogenous "political community". It was primarily the experience of participation in the freedom movement against colonial rule that had brought people from different walks of life together. The new institutions of governance and communication introduced by colonial rulers had also helped to make

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Indian nationalism possible (Desai, 1947). On the ground, however, India was still characterised by a large number of diversities. Writing on the *Idea of India*, Khilnani describes this rather well:

> The possibility that India could be united into a single political community was the wager of India's modern, educated, urban elite, whose intellectual horizons were extended by … modern ideas and whose sphere was expanded by … modern agencies…. The nationalist elite itself had no single, clear definition of this idea, and one of the remarkable facts about the nationalist movement that brought India to independence was its capacity to entertain diverse, often contending visions of India (1998, pp. 5-6).

The political elite, which acquired the reins of power in 1947, also had a rather narrow social base. They were mostly from the traditional upper castes of Indian society, who had acquired Western education in schools and colleges opened in India by the colonial rulers. Some of them had also studied further in British universities and had returned to join modern professions in colonial India.

The diversity was not confined to the visions of India's selves and futures held by its elite. Diversities also had some concrete social and historical dimensions. Culturally and linguistically Indian people differed quite significantly. There were more than a dozen well-developed linguistic regions and languages with a sense of independent identity and culture. India also had a substantial population of groups and communities whom the British had classified as Scheduled Tribes. Though they constituted little more than six per cent of the total population of India at that time, a large majority were concentrated in certain pockets where they were invariably the largest communities. They spoke several different dialects and had diverse ways of life. The question of bringing them into the national mainstream became a serious issue of contention among academics and the political elite around the time of Independence. Caste was yet another factor that made Indian society complex. Ideas of hierarchy and pollution were common to caste everywhere. However, the actual structures of caste varied considerably from region to region. Classically caste was a local level institution that organized social life, typically in the rural setting; with growing integration of Indian society, caste also began to take a different shape. Right from the days of colonial censuses, caste groups had begun to consolidate themselves into regional blocks and were to play an important role in democratic politics in the days to come.

Religion too was an important source of diversity. When the colonial rulers began to enumerate populations in the subcontinent, a large majority of the people identified themselves as Hindus. Unlike

the western religious traditions, Hinduism is quite a diverse system of faith communities. However, over the last more than two centuries, a new self-identity of Hinduism has become pronounced in India and internationally. Apart from the colonial enumerations, this identity was refined and articulated by a variety of social reform movements that emerged in India during the 19th and 20th centuries (Cohn, 1996; Ludden, 2004; van der Veer, 2002). Hindus constitute more than 80 per cent of the India's population today. However, internal diversities of caste, language, region and tribe continue to be quite sharp within Hinduism.

Though a large number of Muslims moved out from the Indian side of the sub-continent to the new state of Pakistan, the number of those who stayed back was also quite substantial. The proportion of Muslims in India was around ten per cent at the time of partition, and has marginally increased since. At the levels of cultural mores, social/kinship networks and language, there have always been diverse communities among the followers of Islam in India. Christians (around 2 per cent) and Sikhs (around 2 per cent) too were important minority groups in independent India, with significant presence in certain parts of the country. India also had several other religious communities: Buddhists, Jains, Zoroastrians and Jews.

Apart from these cultural and political challenges, India was also confronted with material/economic difficulties. In the language of development, India at the time of its independence was a largely backward country, with low levels of national income and a stagnant economy. In terms of demographic distribution, only around 15 per cent of its population lived in urban centres. Of the 85 per cent or so who lived in rural India, most were dependent, directly or indirectly, on agriculture. As a consequence of colonial policies and the historically evolved structures of social hierarchy and dependency, the prevailing state of affairs in rural India was rather dismal.

Several economists, such as Daniel Thorner (1956), Krishna Bhardwaj (1974) and Amit Bhaduri (1984), pointed to the implications of the inherently backward looking and rigid nature of prevailing economic structures. Such 'traditional institutions', they argued, were directly responsible for the apparently perpetual stagnation of Indian agriculture. The real producers – the peasants and labourers – not only did not possess ownership rights over the land they cultivated, they were also tied to local landlords. Their indebtedness made them participate involuntarily in markets that were nearly

completely controlled and manipulated by these dominant landlord-moneylenders. Such 'interlocking' of land, labour and product markets produced stagnant agriculture and an authoritarian power structure. No viable democratic institutions, they argued, could work in the context of such semi-feudal social relations of production.

3   Nation, development and secularism

It was in this context of the challenges posed by partition and the existence of significant diversities that India under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru evolved a 'national philosophy' that could help it succeed as a nation state. In the global political environment of the time, Nehru chose a specific brand of 'Modernization', which despite its novelty had much in common with the classical evolutionary view of social change, in line with what had happened in the West and was being advocated by the modernization/ development theories popular at that time. According to Bhikhu Parekh, Nehru's articulation of modernization as the national philosophy had seven interlinked goals. These were national unity, parliamentary democracy, industrialization, socialism, development of a scientific temper, secularism and non-alignment (Parekh, 1991, p. 35).

This philosophy found its resonance in the Indian constitution. After prolonged deliberations, the Constituent Assembly under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar framed a Constitution for independent India. The Indian Constitution made a clear and unambiguous statement that the vision of India was to modernize itself within the framework of democratic politics. This is perhaps best reflected in the Preamble. India was to be a "sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic", and the new nation promised social, economic and political justice to its entire citizenry. It also granted them freedom of thought, expression, and faith. It promised to work for equality of status and opportunity that would enable every individual citizen to live a life of dignity and self-respect. It was in one of his speeches delivered in the Constituent Assembly in 1946 that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru spelt out this promise, explicating the path of development India proposed to pursue after independence. He said,

> The first task of this Assembly is to free India through a new Constitution, to feed the starving people, and to clothe the naked masses, and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity (as quoted in Harriss, 1998, p. 289).

Thus, apart from making legal provisions and installing an autonomous judicial system, the independent Indian state initiated a process of planning for development. Inspired by the erstwhile Soviet Union, and without compromising on the liberal form of its democratic polity, India chose a 'mixed economy' as its path to economic development. The state was not only to provide a regulatory mechanism for the economy and markets to function in a manner that would bring growth and prosperity, but was also to invest in building economic infrastructure and industrial production. The Indian philosophy of planning was summarized in the second chapter of the Second Five Year Plan document in the following words:

> Economic development is intended to expand community's [sic] productive power and to provide the environment in which there is scope for the expression and application of diverse faculties and urges…. The task before an underdeveloped country is not merely to get better results within the existing framework of economic and social institutions but to mould and refashion those so that they contribute effectively to the realization of wider and deeper social values….These values have been summed-up in the phrase 'socialist pattern of society'. Essentially, this means that …the benefits of economic benefits must accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society and there should be a progressive reduction of the concentration of income, wealth and economic power.[2]

As is evident, there are three different agendas that are spelt out in this statement. First and foremost was to evolve an institutional framework for democratic politics. Second was to raise the basic standard of living by increasing incomes and improving distribution. The third was to expand the capability of the Indian population by providing social security and opportunities, which would include education, health and a general atmosphere that would encourage a culture and institutionalization of equal opportunities for all citizens of independent India.

4   The Indian social sciences and religion and development:

Development and modernization of a country with not only a stagnant economy, but also divided culturally and socially, was indeed a difficult task. Apart from the political orientation of the nationalist leadership and the new political elite that took over the reins of power from the British colonial rulers, India was also faced with historical and demographic compulsions that made it necessary for the new leadership to choose the path of secularism. The experience of partition and the widespread communal riots that followed in its wake in the subcontinent convinced the new leaders of the

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indispensability of secularism. Further, despite 'partition' and the large-scale transfer of populations, independent India continued to be a nation with enormous demographic diversities. Also, the influence of the Soviet Union and the socialistic path of development, from which Nehru had borrowed the idea of planning, made the new political elite suspicious of religious organizations and their place in a modern India.

Though a modern system of education had emerged in India during the colonial period, the social sciences acquired an identity of their own only after independence. Even while they continued to use the theoretical paradigms and conceptual systems developed in Western universities, the social sciences in India began to engage very closely with the task of nation-building. Apart from giving them a sense of legitimacy, this engagement also set out a research agenda that was close to the ground realities of Indian society. Historians in the post-independence period, for example, framed their research questions directly around the struggle for national autonomy and independence from colonial rule. Similarly economists soon became closely involved with the project of planning for development. Political scientists had a vast and exciting arena for studying the working of parliamentary democracy in a country like India, which was not only economically poor but was also marked by the kind of cultural diversities that had never been present in a single nation-state before. Sociologists/ social anthropologists, though not directly involved with questions of nation-building, allowed their interests to be shaped by the larger agenda of modernization and development.

Although everyone recognised the centrality of religion, it did not acquire centrality in the research agenda of any of the social science disciplines. To the historian preoccupied with the question of nation-building against the backdrop of partition, questions of 'religion' were reminders of the "two nation theory" and communal violence. The economists simply had nothing to do with religion. In fact, in most cases their approach to religion was negative, as it was seen as part of 'tradition', which was regarded as a hindrance to economic growth. Though for the sociologists and social anthropologists, religion had always been an important area of inquiry, they too invariably searched for ways of legitimizing their disciplines in the larger project of development and treated religion as being a part and parcel of traditional culture. Modernization, they expected, would inevitably lead to secularization, where religion would be relevant only in the personal lives of India's citizens. In his vastly influential study, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries,* Alex Inkeles (1974) had

promoted secularization as an imperative for the process of modernization to advance in developing countries. Inkeles was perhaps echoing what had earlier been argued, albeit indirectly, by Max Weber about the other-worldly attitudes of Hindus, which he regarded as having been the major impediment to the growth of capitalist ethics in societies like India.

However, there were some who argued against such simplistic assumptions about religion and development and contested the modernization theory approach to religion and culture (Singer, 1968; Dube, 1974)). Perhaps the most obvious criticism of Western-style modernization had come from Mahatma Gandhi, who had emphasized the need for integrating spiritual aspects of human existence with material development. In the Western paradigm the two tended to be negatively correlated. Material development was invariably expected to bring about declining spirituality and moral degeneration (Iyengar, 2005). Instead of developing urban centres and heavy industry, Gandhi advocated a recovery of India's traditional rural economy, which supposedly combined agriculture and crafts in a framework of communitarian living without greed for endless material wealth (Jodhka, 2002). Thus on the subject of development, Gandhi was often in disagreement with Nehru, who became the first prime minister of India.

However, despite such criticisms of the grand thesis of modernization and development, religion, or even culture, rarely became a serious candidate for public policy debate. Religious communities and traditions were studied by scholars, mostly for academic reasons. Even the question of ethnic minorities and their socio-economic status was rarely taken seriously by planners and those engaged with the implementation of development projects. Programmes were designed almost exclusively by economists, keeping economic criteria in mind.

This approach to religion and secularism had many problems. Even when operationally secularism acquired a local touch in India, it was essentially derived from the Western notion of modernity. It was rarely seen as a political process or an ideological system. Rather it was seen as a natural process, an inevitable outcome of evolutionary change (Jodhka, 2001). The continued presence of religion only meant distortion. Communal mobilizations or communalism was regarded as one such example of distortion. As a conceptual framework, the influence of communalism has been so extensive in the

Indian social sciences that it virtually became 'a gate-keeping concept', one that limits theorizing about a place or process (Appadurai, 1986).

In this context, religion could not become a part of the development discourse in India. Though some social scientists had continued to work on various aspects of religion, it was seen primarily as an aspect of tradition. Religion as a value system, as well as a source of social organization/communal identities, was mostly seen as a hindrance in the path of development.

5   The crisis of development and the return of religion

The decade of the 1980s was an important turning point in the history of contemporary India. Apart from a wider consolidation of democratic political processes at social and cultural levels, the decade of the 1980s also saw some interesting new trends, including the rise of several 'new' social movements. These new mobilizations questioned the wisdom of the developmental agenda being pursued with much enthusiasm by the post-colonial state. The following decade saw the beginning of liberalization policies and a gradual withdrawal of the state from the economic sphere. This was an important ideological shift, a decline of the Nehruvian framework of development and social transformation (Jodhka, 2001). This change is well summarized in the following words by Veena Das:

> The goals of rational organization of life, the scientific management of society,
> Modernization and development, to which great energies had been devoted in the sixties
> and early seventies, now seem like signposts to cities that are abandoned and empty
> (Das, 1994, p. 1).

Critiques of the dominant development paradigms came from a variety of actors. Local private capital that had initially grown with help from the state increasingly began to feel uncomfortable with the 'license-quota raj' and began to lobby for state withdrawal from the economy (see, for example, Kohli, 2006). While India's model of development had promised a better life to those on the margins, four decades of planning had not solved many of the basic problems faced by the historically deprived. The poverty studies of the 1970s clearly showed that a substantial population of India (nearly fifty per cent) continued to live below the officially drawn poverty line. Autonomous movements by farmers, women, tribals and above all, ethnic groups, also began to criticize the dominant statist paradigm of development

The ethnic crisis in Punjab and the northeast during the decade of the 1980s produced an acute sense of anxiety among the 'secular' elite of India. The north-eastern states experienced a long phase of communal violence and a growing demand for autonomy from the Indian nation-state. Aspirations of the newly emergent middle classes in the region and growing articulation of militant tribal identities proved difficult for the Indian nation-state to accommodate within its legal and political framework. Even when the contestations were on the question of development, the new aspirations were invariably articulated in ethnic terms.

The crisis in the north-western state of Punjab seemed even trickier. Beginning in the late 1970s, Sikhs, who constitute nearly 60 per cent of the total population of the Indian Punjab, began to mobilize themselves around the issues of religious identity and political autonomy, which eventually culminated in a full-blown demand for secession. Punjab had been a success story of the Indian model of development. The Sikhs too had been a well-integrated community of the nation. There were no indications of their being discriminated against or marginalized in any sense of the term. Located on the border with Pakistan, geographically also Punjab was a sensitive region.

Though after a long phase of bloodshed and violence, lasting for more than 15 years, the Indian state was able to restore normalcy in the two regions, the question of ethnic identity acquired a new dimension during the post-1980s period. An ethnic crisis in Kashmir and the rise of right wing Hindu politics kept the pot boiling. The old Nehruvian idea of secularism became a contentious issue. Its advocates and critics raised many fundamental questions concerning the specific historical context of India and the implications of secularism/ secularization policies for a culturally diverse society like India.

The question of community identities (particularly of the minority cultures) and their place in building a democratic national society were raised as core issues in this debate (see, for example, the edited volume by Bhargava, 1998). Madan, for example, went to the extent of describing secularism as an elite ideology that reflected members' "moral arrogance and worse" (Madan, 1992, p. 395). "Secularism [he argued] was the dream of a minority which wants to shape the majority in its own image" (ibid: 395). However, this dream was not going to come true because, unlike the western religions,

> …South Asia's major religious traditions – Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism – are totalising in character, claiming all of a follower's life, so that religion is constitutive of society….they do not recognize the distinction between the terms 'religious' and 'secular' (ibid, p. 399).

The ideas of development and modernity were criticized on moral grounds as well. Nandy, for example, offered a rather aggressive critique of the dominant paradigm of development and secularism, which according to him had only produced violence and misery. He advocated the recovery of ethnic and religious tolerance from "the hegemonic language of secularism popularised by the westernised intellectuals and middle classes exposed to the globally dominant language of the nation-state" (Nandy, 1994, p. 69). It was around this time that Gandhi began to be rediscovered by scholars and popular movements in both India and in the West. As mentioned above, Nehru and others who took charge of the independent Indian state had largely ignored Gandhi's ideas on development. However, his ideas were seen to provide answers to the new questions thrown up by the various social and political crises of the 1980s. While some revisited his notions of tradition and reform in the changed context, others found his suspicion of western modernity useful in dealing with the contentious questions of sustainability and the environment or growing violence and deprivation (Parekh, 1989; Nandy, 1987; Rudolph and Rudolph, 2006).

Rudolf and Rudolf, for example, described Gandhi as one of the first post-modern thinkers to develop a serious critique of western modernity. His emphasis on human capital, decentralized production, and 'appropriate technology' challenged modernity's emphasis on physical capital and its efficiency when deployed in Fordist mass production assembly lines (Rudolph and Rudolph, 2006).

Changes in the geopolitics of the world following the collapse of Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the unleashing of new technologies of telecommunications all meant the beginning of a new phase in the reach of the global capital. This process of globalization, as it has come to be known, was not confined to the economy alone. It has also influenced culture and politics everywhere and has opened up new possibilities for social action and networking. Growing migration and the expanding population of Indian diasporas have unleashed new kinds of social processes. The inability of people of Indian origin to assimilate in their host societies produced a cultural anxiety about identity and cultural continuity among them. This has given birth to new global networks of religious resources

(Williams, 1988; Vertovec and Peach, 1997; van der Veer, 1995; Appadurai, 1996; Werbner, 1999), the focus of which is the families, for fear that children will lose touch with their parents' cultural traditions (Blank, 2001). Peter van der Veer has summarized this process quite well in the following words:

> The globalisation of production and consumption, including flexibility and mobility of their labour, is addressed by religious movements and is a major element in their politics of belonging. The idea that migrants are rootless because they are highly mobile misunderstands the imaginary nature of roots. To have roots requires a lot of work for the imagination (dream-work). One element of that dream-work is that pride in one's nation of origin is important in the construction of self-esteem in the place of immigration (van der Veer 2002:183).

Apart from the changing global context of religion, India also witnessed the rise of several "new" social and political movements around questions of environment, ethnicity, gender, urban bias in development and human rights during the decades of the 1980s and 1990s. Some of these questions arose almost simultaneously in different parts of the world. Networking across national boundaries gave them a different kind of legitimacy and strength from earlier movements. For example, the movement against the construction of a dam across the Narmada River invested considerable energy in mobilizing not only internal public opinion but also the global funding agencies against the project, with some degree of success. Similarly the question of human rights violations is watched and commented upon by global agencies. The question of gender rights is articulated more or less similarly at the global level and women's organisations working in India actively network with their counterparts in other parts of the world. Even the Dalit movement, which rediscovered itself during the 1980s and 1990s, has tried to take the question of caste to international platforms by linking it to the question of race (see Thorat, S. and Umakant, 2004).

The growing significance of 'vote banks' also gave impetus to minority groups to make demands from the political elite and use pressure group politics. The Muslim communities of India underwent an interesting transformation during this period. Many of them shifted their loyalty from Muslim communal parties and the Indian National Congress to smaller and local level parties. The ethnic minorities also began to articulate their grievances through the newly available discourse of human rights and social justice.

Beginning in the 1980s, right-wing Hindu organization also grew in size and strength. It used, quite intelligently the anxiety generated by a secessionist movement in Punjab and the ethnic crisis in Assam to mobilize different segments of the Hindu population in the name of cultural nationalism. These efforts culminated in a movement for demolition of an old mosque called Babri Masjid, which had been built by the Mughal ruler Babar in 1526. The Hindu right wing claims that it was raised on the site where the Hindu god Rama was born, by razing a Hindu temple. The mosque was demolished by a violent Hindu mob in December 1992. This movement also helped the emergence of right-wing Hindu political opinion and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as a major player in Indian politics. The BJP was able to form a national government by making an electoral alliance with several regional parties in 1998, which continued in power until 2004.

Another important trend that took off during this period was the growing involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in development. NGO advocates argued that voluntary action could be a viable alternative to state-sponsored poverty alleviation programmes like the IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme), which had been unable to help the rural poor. The NGO sector, they argued, had become a "potent instrument for bringing about social transformation and building an egalitarian and humane society. It may be only a protest forum in the short run, but over time, it had considerable potential for effective social change" (Dantawala et. al., 1998, p. 9).

Though it was Mahatma Gandhi who had advocated voluntarism long ago and some Gandhians had been practising it throughout, the NGO movement took off in India only with the growing interest of international funding agencies in issues of rural poverty. The paradigm shift from state-oriented development to a market-driven economy also helped in giving legitimacy to the NGO movement. With NGOs came a new language of development: empowerment, participation, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), social capital etc. One of the most popular and effective programmes initiated by NGOs has been the promotion of thrift societies (Dantawala et. al., 1998; Rajasekhar, 1998; Khan et. al. 1989; Srivastava, 1999). These shifts during the 1980s towards civil society interventions also created a new space for faith-based organizations (FBOs) to participate in the process of development.

These changes have also brought about a significant shift in the Indian discourse of development. Religion is no longer seen as necessarily being anti-developmental. Similarly, development is not seen as being anti-religion. Though at one level, this shift has produced a much wider space for right-wing majoritarian politics, the religious idiom is also being used quite extensively by those on the margins of the Indian society.

6   Conclusions

India's experience of nation-building and development over the last five decades or more has become a textbook example for social scientists. Though one can find many flaws and failures, its successes can not be ignored. Apart from achieving a moderate rate of economic growth, India has also been an interesting experiment in democratic governance. Its ability to deal with cultural differences and diversities has been exemplary. From a guarded approach to the question of religious diversity and a fear of communalism, India has begun to recognize the need to confront questions relating to the backwardness and development of religious communities. However, we notice a lack of a social science discourse on the subject of religions and development. This has also been responsible for religion not yet having become an important subject for empirical research in most of the social sciences in India.

Footnotes

[*]   Professor of Sociology, Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi 110067 and Director, India Institute of Dalit Studies.

[1]   A good amount of literature is now available on the partition, ranging from historical and demographic to cultural and literary aspects (see Pandey, 2001; Mahajan, 2000; Nanda, 2003; Prasad, 1999; Bhalla, 1999; Hassan, 1994).

[2]   From Chapter II of the Second Five Year Plan document reproduced in Wadhwa (1977, p,10-11).

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Chapter 2

Religion in the making of modern India: an historical profile

Umakant Mishra[*]

Abstract

Colonialism in India brought its own discourse of power and domination. The epistemological tradition of the west, based on the enlightenment notion of reason, technological development and the capacity of human beings to master the environment, sharply challenged indigenous traditions. The colonizers regarded Indian religion and culture as mired in purity and pollution taboos that segregated people on the grounds of caste, condemning many to lives of misery whilst others lived in decadence. The colonizers felt that the root of these divisions rested in religion. For example, caste and the related purity and pollution beliefs were thought to have acquired religious authority. Given this critical link between social inequality and Indian religion, it is not surprising that faith-based organizations (FBOs) were the first to challenge the negative colonial portrayal of India. The responses of the faith-based organizations were both subtle and radical. They simultaneously tried to redefine Indian tradition, while defending its civilising essence. In pursuit of this venture, FBOs set out a socio-economic agenda in the initial stages of the freedom struggle. However, the prominence of religion as a platform for social change was reversed with the emergence of radical communal politics in the 1930s. Gandhi's assassination at the hands of a religious fanatic and Nehru's aversion to religion in the public sphere led to the eclipse of FBOs. However, this does not been that they disappeared – instead they continued to work in development, presenting agendas that were distinct from the official discourse of Nehruvian secularism. Historically, therefore, the role of religion in the early years of the independence struggle as a powerful tool for public mobilization, social protest and motivation for undertaking development tasks has continued.

1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to review the most prominent attitudes towards India's state and the course of its development. The chapter will begin with colonial perceptions of India's backward state. It will highlight how the colonial regime used images of India's desperate poverty and social inequality to highlight its need for western development and therefore to justify the presence of Britain in India. The chapter then goes on to review various responses to this colonial attitude. The most significant responses have come from religious groups or movements. The third section looks historically at the emergence of faith-based organisations reacting against the poverty of India and presenting their

solutions to the economic and social problems of the country. The fourth section focuses on specific movements, beginning with the Young Bengal Movement, which was the first group to openly reject a western lifestyle, opting instead for a traditional Indian approach to solving the country's problems. The fifth section reviews the impact of Rammohun Roy and others who supported western values, believing that India should pursue a development path similar to that of the west. However these movements also stressed the need to remain loyal to India's unique cultural and religious traditions. The sixth section looks at the Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna mission, both of which wanted to use aspects of India's past traditions to launch a new phase in its development. The Arya Samaj were militant in nature, stressing the *vedas* as the source of all knowledge. The Ramakrishna movement, less militant, looked towards spiritual training and advancement as the way forward. This section ends by considering the impact of Gandhi in shaping the freedom struggle. Although Gandhi did not form a distinctly religious movement, his influence on India's landscape has been huge. Furthermore, he drew on many religious ideas and teachings in his work. The last section reviews the impact of Nehru's secular modern approach to development. The chapter then concludes with some reflections on religion in India within the wider context of today's globalized world.

2   The misery and poverty of India in colonial discourse

The theme of poverty in India can be seen consistently in all aspects of the colonial agenda. It is clear in the writing and speeches of the colonial administrators. The accounts written by historians, missionaries and novelists all contributed to a distinctly negative discourse on India emerging in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This discourse stressed the backwardness of a country that allowed acute poverty to exist. Charles Grant observed in 1792 that the "people of Hindostan [India] were sunk in misery". The discourse took vivid physical images of poverty and used them to highlight the uncivilized nature of Indian culture and society. This can be seen in the writings of Grant (1792) and others (for example, Mill, 1817; Morison, 1911; Anstey, 1929). Their descriptions conveyed value judgements about the kind of culture and society responsible for bringing material deprivation to its populace. For example, this can be seen in the following passage: "degenerate and base, retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation, yet obstinate in their disregard of what they know to be right, governed by malevolent and licentious passion, strongly exemplifying the effects produced on society by a great and general corruptions of manner" (Grant, 1792, quoted in Stokes, 1939, p. 31). A further example of a source influential in shaping this negative colonial discourse is the book written by James

Mill: *History of India* (1817)*.* Mill represented India as a 'rude' society stuck in the European medieval stage of development.

Poverty thus became the marker through which divisions between the East and West were drawn. The East was depicted as consumed by poverty, whilst the West represented progress. The colonial discourse used the term poverty alongside superstition and barbarism which came to shape a colonial retelling of India's past. In contrast, the history of western civilization depicted a transformation from this same backward state into one anchored on the principles of rationalism, objectivism and scientific and industrial progress. Thus the basis of Indian poverty and Western economic development was ascribed not to a convergence of historical factors in Western Europe, but to cultural differences between the West and the East. Consolidation of colonialism took place in India at the height of the Western enlightenment and industrial revolution (the late 18th century and early 19th century). This era was influenced by the French Revolution, out of which came the ideas of utilitarianism, liberty and equality. The expansion of colonial power in India also came at a time when the West was marvelling at the industrial revolution, which redefined man's relations with machinery and changed social organization and cultural life. The Age of Enlightenment hoped that human beings would shed their traditional allegiances and local identities and unite in a universal civilization grounded in humanism and rational morality. The progressive character of humanity was stressed, highlighting man's capacities to master the physical world through rational understanding of the law of nature. Secularism was to replace religion. Science became the new faith and human progress a form of salvation. Midgley (1992) describes how, during this period of history, the inherent capacities of human beings, with their faculty of reasoning, were emphasized. These were expected to result in solutions to all the problems that have haunted the human mind and stunted human progress. In short, the basis of Western superiority was considered to be enlightenment rationalism and the principles of equality, liberty and secularism.

Hinduism was contrasted with the enlightenment view of the world, because of its other-worldly attitude. The hierarchical caste system and the resultant political-economic structure were held responsible for India's lack of progress. Marx described this arrangement as the Asiatic mode of production, characterised by the term oriental despotism (Marx, 1971, vol. III Chapter X). This view was endorsed by colonial writers such as Knowles (1928, p. 269), who claimed that India was poor

because of exploitative oriental despotism (Knowles, 1928, p. 269). The discourse of poverty in 19th and 20th century colonial writings (Mill, 1817; Anstey, 1929; Morison, 1911; Knowles, 1928) asserted that poverty in India was the consequence of the particular structural and cultural features of the country and its people. This view was shared by many, who felt that India had managed to preserve almost unchanged its way of living because of the rural isolation of most of the country. Village life was considered to remain uninfluenced by the modern division of labour and social organization (Morison, 1911, p. 153). A further colonial view asserted that religion produced a spirit of fatalism, which inhibited free enterprise (Anstey, 1929, p. 2-3).[1] Hinduism was said to stress that fate is a natural consequence of past actions and cannot be challenged. Destiny must be accepted. Colonialists took this interpretation of *karma* literally and used it as an explanation of India's continued resistance to change.

Lord Curzon too repeatedly harped upon the theme of the endemic, age-old poverty of India, using it as the material evidence needed to justify Britain's presence. Curzon, an imperial administrator par excellence, believed with conviction that India was prospering under colonial rule. His speeches reveal a self-congratulatory attitude, along with the conviction that poverty was inevitable in India because the country lacked the conviction to change (Chandra, 1977 [1969], p. 31). Cultural traits were again held to be the possible cause of Indian poverty, proving that it was not a consequence of British rule but inherent in the foundations of the country.

The British empire managed to conquer India through superior military and technological power, which was then sustained through its modern bureaucratic institutions, backed up ideologically through a discourse that shaped and protected British rule. The contrast between misery and decadence within India's divided population provided a rationale for British rule to level these inequalities and civilize the populace. The justification for British rule came at a time when writers and academics had begun to raise the issue of the economic conditions of the English working class. The colonial discourse made a dichotomy between the poverty of working class Europe, which was ascribed to the social relations between owners and workers, and poverty in India, which was ascribed to cultural practices.

3   Reponses to the discourse of poverty – the emergence of faith-based organizations

The colonial discourse placed western and Indian cultural principles in opposition to each other. The West was represented through secular modernity, the East through oriental mysticism. The mystical roots of India were seen as the cause of its poverty. It was assumed that traditional religion, with its caste structure, superstitions, and ritual purity and pollution, were antithetical to the development of people. On the other hand, western modernity, characterized by the rise of nationalism, the dominance of capitalism and the emergence of powerful state institutions shaped a secular scientific worldview that was regarded as favourable to development. Thus secular modernity was considered essential to the development of all people and oriental other-worldliness, casteism and pollution were considered to be obstacles in the pursuit of a progressive, economically and culturally developed nation (van der Veer and Lehman, 2001).

The deployment of cultural arguments[2] to justify British dominance was not quickly challenged by the people of India. Although Hinduism had been perceived negatively before, the colonial threat was different. Indian people were, for the first time, accused of causing their own misery. The legal rationalism on which the Western tradition was based recognised a contractual individualistic relationship between men and society, whereas in India the allocation system was based on communal and family status (Singh, 1977 p. 86). Further, the colonial system brought a new system of social stratification, which was based on achievement and not ascription.

The challenges that colonialism posed to Indians occurred at a time when there was a growing national consciousness. Processes of westernization and modernization created conditions for the growth of this national consciousness in the second half of the 19th century. The introduction of western education exposed Indians to the idea of a nation-state and John Stuart Mill's (1817) utilitarian concepts of liberty and equality. These new ideas and concepts were accompanied by the development of modern transportation and communications (for example, steam railways, postal and telegraph systems) and resulted in a greater unity between Indians than ever before achieved. Those groups of Indians who were exposed to western education and western ideas began to rebel against the prevailing conditions in India. Since the colonial discourse had identified religion and religion-sanctioned cultural practices as the root causes of poverty, some among this new group of educated

Indians founded religious organizations to reverse this cycle of backwardness. The responses of these religious organizations varied. The different forms the responses took are summarized below and then discussed in more detail in the subsequent sub-sections.

The first group accepted the duality between occident and orient and found the latter to be inherently inferior, needing to be rejected outright. Vivian Derezio's Young Bengal movement belonged to this category but had little appeal and was short-lived.

The second form of religious organization also recognised the duality of the occident and orient and accepted the superiority of western rational values, the spirit of free enquiry, and the equality of men and women. It tried to reform many of the social evils of India and advance India on the path of equality and freedom. But it tried to reform institutions and practices not by rejecting the past but by finding the sanction of tradition in its crusade against social evils. Raja Rammohun Roy was the chief protagonist, founding Brahmo Samaj. Other faith based organizations of this 'form' were Veda Samaj (1864) in Madras, Parthana Samaj (1867) in Maharashtra and the Aligarh movement of Sayed Ahmed Khan.

The third group supported occidental claims that a new social system was needed, but felt that such a system could be found through a reintroduction of ancient Indian vedic beliefs. Arya Samaj (1875) of Swami Dayananda Saraswati belonged to this group. Arya Samaj planned radical changes in indigenous tradition by challenging priestly orthodoxy, championing education and challenging social inequalities based on birth.

The fourth type of religious organization believed in the progressive character of certain aspects of western civilization, like education, rationalism, science and technology, and the principles of equality and liberty. But simultaneously it believed that the soul of the future Indian nation-state could not be anchored on the civilizing essence of the occident, with its emphasis on materialism and enjoyment of the senses. Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Mission (1897) represents this worldview.

The fifth response was more complex and nuanced and concerned with both the social and political aspects of life. Gandhi's movement falls into this category. Gandhi's stout defence of Hinduism (he

claimed himself to be a Sanatani Hindu), his crusade against social evils like untouchability and his championing of Hindu-Muslim unity may have been influenced by his acquaintance with the western writing of Ruskin and others, but it grew also from the indigenous tradition. Gandhi's response to western civilization and colonialism (he called western civilization Satan) and his ability to mobilize the Indian masses against colonialism were novel and unique. Gandhi did not establish a religious organization but the fact that he believed his 'experiment' was a quest for truth and the influence his words and actions had over whole generations warrants his mention in this paper on religion in India.

The sixth group was influenced by Western discourse and completely repudiated the 'great tradition' of India. Instead, it found an alternative in the dissenting voices of the indigenous tradition as expressed by the low caste movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Narayana Guru, Jyotiba Phule, Adi-Dravida movements, and low caste movements in Madhya Pradesh and other regions found meaning in dissenting voices within the indigenous tradition, such as the Bhakti movement of medieval India and the Vira Saivism of Karnataka.

The seventh group were puritanical movements. Many of the religious organizations in Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism aimed to return to a 'pure' form of the religion. For example, many of the Islamic renewal movements of the 19th century belonged in this category.

The final approach repudiated indigenous tradition but found meaning in another tradition, such as Christianity. Conversion was the mode through which many social groups tried to find a more positive social and religious identity.

It is to be noted that, while religious reform was a major concern for all the socio-religious reform movements mentioned, none were exclusively religious in character. Strongly humanist in inspiration, the idea of otherworldliness was not part of their agenda; instead their attention was focussed on worldly existence. Let us now discuss some of the different forms these responses took.

3.1 Cultural rejection and Derezio's Young Bengal movement

The response to the colonial challenge was the cultural rejection of indigenous tradition. A group of people, mostly the product of Calcutta's Hindu college, openly rejected indigenous tradition and adopted a western lifestyle. Percival Spear (1961, p. 292) sums up this response:

> "The…reaction was the move of a radical group in Calcutta to accept the West in toto. They accepted the Western claim to have found the secret of progress based on the principle of reason; they accepted Western humanist values. The only way to mend abuses of Hinduism, they believed, was to end them. They were much influenced by the French and English rationalists, whose representative in Calcutta was David Hare, the watchmaker. A section of them, influenced by Alexander Duff, the Scots missionary, went further and accepted the philosophy and philanthropy of the West. Pains were taken to symbolise the break with tradition by ritual means of beef, one poet could boast of dreaming in English."

The rejection of indigenous tradition was not confined to this group of Bengalis or their philosophies. It permeated literature, dress, food and other spheres. It also found footing in other regions. However, the movement was too denationalised and hyper-westernised to receive wide support and was short-lived.

3.2 Cultural synthesis: Rammohun Roy and others

The chief protagonist of the second form of response was Rammohun Roy, who came to occupy a prominent place in the socio-economic reforms of 19th century India. Exposure to English education and interaction with English commerce led to the emergence of a group of people in Calcutta called the *bhadralok* class. Caste taboos were less rigid among them, as their work could not go in tandem with rigid taboos. Further, exposure to education led to reconsideration of the efficacy of many social practices like widow remarriage, *sati*, etc. At the same time, the new *bhardralok* class was a product of new social relations that grew up due to Cornwallis's agrarian restructuring. Because of their association with the colonial system, they became landlords and were acutely conscious of their class character and their landed property base.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy was a product of this class. He was exposed to Western and Persian learning and began to champion many Western liberal ideas like equality, liberty, freedom of the press and stratification on the basis of property and achievement rather than birth. He was a passionate

advocate of western values and the western system of ethics but also championed a positive view of Indian culture. He campaigned for the introduction of western learning in Indian educational institutions. Underlying his faith in western values was a passionate desire to revitalize India and imbue it with the social, cultural and economic dynamism which he observed in Western societies. However, his espousal of Western values and ethics did not lead him to reject indigenous traditions. Roy's ardent championing of western values did not mean that he was a blind imitator of the west. As Collet said, "If we follow the right line of his development, we shall find that he leads the way from the orientalist, into, but through western culture towards the civilisation which is neither western nor eastern but something vastly larger and nobler than both." (Collet, 1911, quoted in Vyas, 1957, p. 29). For example, in contrast to cultural rejectionists, Roy was careful to invoke indigenous tradition and his extensive study of Veda and other ancient literature to argue that there was no scriptural basis for *sati*.

> "I regret to say [said Rammohun Roy] that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinctions of caste introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort" (Vyas, 1957, p. 19).

The religious reforms that Roy advocated were aimed at freeing the individual from the restraints imposed by religion. These restraints, in his view, denied Indians social comfort and the opportunity to undertake economic enterprise. Thus in his thinking, the freedom of the individual was not an end itself but a means to achieve economic prosperity. Roy's adherence to theism, his rejection of idolatry, his advocacy that social evils like *sati* and widow re-marriage should be cast off, and his challenges to priests and their rituals, along with his emphasis on liberty, equality, property rights and freedom of speech (including freedom of the press), formed the basis for his advocacy of a 'reconstructed national self'.

Roy established Brahmo Samaj, borrowing many Christian notions such as separate organization, long sermons, and discourses on emancipation. He found universal ethics from the Indian tradition of Vedas and used Western categories to differentiate it for different spheres of life. For example, his advocacy of free speech and liberty were of mixed eastern and western origin. Thus, he invoked western principles of freedom, rationality and the secularization of the public sphere to support both

British rule and different types of social and political reforms. He sincerely believed that western values would open the door for Indians to access the good things of the West, including economic development, representative institutions, freedom of speech, and stratification on the basis of achievements rather than birth. Indian liberalism, as represented by Rammohun Roy, was a significant force in the 19th century.

However, Roy defended the continuation of British rule, failing to see the repressive colonial nature of British administration. In accepting uncritically the superiority of Western tradition, he failed to deconstruct the colonial discourse and therefore failed to provide appropriate responses to the challenges of poverty and its associated exploitation. Moreover, he stoutly defended contractual relations between individuals and justified the property rights of Zamindars (Mukherjee, 1974, p. 389). In addition, Brahmo Samaj's monotheism and *nirguna* worship was anachronistic in the deeply religious cultural landscape of Bengal, while its heavily westernized organisation, with its many sermons and debates, became a handicap in its development (Kopf, 1969; Jones, 1994). Rammohun Ray therefore failed to develop a comprehensive critique of colonialism and his ideas did not develop deep roots in the cultural soil of India. However, the liberal western ideas he championed provided a solid base for future nationalist movements, for these ideas were vigorously defended and demanded by subsequent leaders in the early part of the 20th century.

3.3 *Aggressive cultural nationalism: Arya Samaj*

At a time when Western-educated Indian liberals had complete faith in the liberal values of the West and the salvationist character of British colonialism, and vigorously supported colonial rule, there were other groups who tried to defend and redeem India from its socio-economic and cultural backwardness by appealing to its past. The inspiration for appealing to the past came not from the western utilitarianism of Mill or enlightenment humanism, it came from the Indian Vedantic tradition. Orientalist scholars began to take great interest in India's religions and its past. Scholars like William Wilkins and later Max Muller emphasized the glories of ancient India, the great philosophical formulations in the Vedas and Upanishads, and the democratic values and practices of its ancient polities. K.P. Jaiswal, for example, argued in *Hindu Polity* (1988) that a democratic form of polity was found not only in ancient Greece but in the ancient republics of the Chola *Nadus* in the 6th century BC. Theories of a Greater India emerged, which argued, through studying the Hindu and Buddhist heritage

in Southeast Asia, that India had in the past colonized this region. What provided the base for this view was the study of Vedantism, which teaches that the Varna system is a divinely originated part of the dharma and *Rta* (cosmic order) for the ordering of society.

Unlike liberal Western-educated Indians, who supported British rule, these groups of socio-religious reformers defended indigenous tradition. They believed in the superiority of Eastern civilization with respect to matters of mind and spirit, even though Europe had conquered the East in material terms. An emerging nation should, they believed, maintain the spiritual distinctiveness of its culture, while adjusting to the modern world's requirements (Chatterjee, 1993, 1998). Dayananda's Arya Samaj and Vivekananda's Ram Krishna Mission were the two most significant outcomes of this vigorous defence of the Hindu tradition. At the same time, the two organizations pursued socio-religious programmes that in their content were quite radical and succeeded in challenging the existing priestly orthodoxy and dominance. They believed that if material conditions restrict the discovery of people's spiritual inner selves, then the existing socio-economic system should be changed.

A wandering monk of Gujarat, Dayanand Saraswati, founded Arya Samaj in 1875. In contrast to Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj claimed that all knowledge is to be found in the Vedas. At the same time it was a socially radical organization, which successfully attacked priestly orthodoxy and championed the education of women (Rai, 1967; Jordens, 1982; Jones, 1994).

The Arya Samaj claimed that Vedic knowledge is the source of all knowledge. This assertion not only negated the Western notion of the superiority of materiality but also asserted that there is no knowledge beyond the infallible Vedas and therefore that those who do not subscribe to these texts are outside of the national collective self. This assertion was not only fiercely anti-colonial in nature, but also was intended to act as a powerful focus for unity in the deeply fragile pluralistic society of India. However, its failure to recognize texts other than the Vedas and its assertion that others were outside the history of India alienated many.

Arya Samaj was associated with the colonial project of reconstructing identities and national boundaries. Gauri Viswanathan (1996) and Bernard Cohn (1987) [3] have shown that the enumeration of India's populations was associated with a redrawing of the boundaries of religious communities,

based on the expansion of the Muslim population in 19th century India. The census treated Muslims separately from Hindus, at a time when representative institutions had begun to emerge and led to many Muslim leaders demanding reservations in the legislative council. Arya Samaj's Shuddhi movement was partially co-opted into this British strategy, through its aggressive reaction against evangelism by Christian missionaries and also through its attempt to define an exclusive monolithic Hindu nationalism. The three main targets of the Arya Samajists were *kernanis* (Christians), *kurnanis* (Muslims) and *puranis* (orthodox Hindus who they regarded as bringing in pollution to a pristine religion). Christopher Jaffrelot (1996, p. 12-13) notes that its tactic of stigmatising the '*other'* was an effective strategy for rallying an extremely fragmented Hindu society. Arya Samaj argued that India's fragility could be attributed to its religious and social fragmentation, and that the solution lay within the country's authentic tradition. This movement helped the colonial discourse create a negative image of 'others' as working against India's progress, although as a movement it only gained limited support. In addition, in the process of inverting the colonial view, the movement inadvertently produced more evidence to support the colonial charge that India was backward. In drawing on India's vedic past, the movement constructed a highly conservative and repressive concept of the indigenous.

Moreover, the Arya Samaj failed to accurately read the past. As Romila Thapar (1989) has shown through the Hindu conception of *mleccha,* not only were India's indigenous traditions never really threatened by other religions, 'others' had only ever existed at the margins of Indian culture and society and do not possess an 'otherness' against which one's own identity can be asserted or reflected (Hallbefass, 1988, p. 187).

Bernard Cohn (1987) has argued that the census operation enhanced the importance of caste in the new arena of competition that the colonial system created. Dayananda's solution was to take this all-India grid of caste and explain it in terms of functions and duties, thereby removing the hierarchical nature of caste (van der Veer, 2001, p. 51). In addition, Arya Samaj challenged the ritual hegemony of Brahmanas, arguing that anybody, irrespective of his [sic] caste, could officiate as a priest in various Vedic ceremonies, especially the marriage ceremony. Arya Samaj's denial of priestly orthodoxy and power provided it with a rich support base in the late 19th and 20th centuries. It is no coincidence that *kshatris*, the trading class of Punjab, who gained immensely from the commercialization of agriculture, were the most ardent supporters of Arya Samaj (Jones, 1994; Jordens, 1982). Continuing its radical programmes against brahmanical hegemony, since independence Arya Samaj has led

movements against social evils like bonded child labour, infanticide and foeticide **www.swamiagnivesh.com/aboutbmm.htm**. Thus Swami Agnivesh's Bandhua Mukti Morcha, a crusade for the abolition of bonded and child labour, was successful in spurring public action: the National Child Labour Eradication Programme was launched in 1987 on the heels of the successful campaign.

Arya Samaj was also the first Indian organization to establish Western education in India. Anglo-Vedic schools and colleges, first in Lahore and later in many parts of India, emerged as alternatives to missionary-run and government-aided schools. At present Arya Samaj is running 5000 schools in different parts of India and around 60 schools in countries like the US, Fiji, Mauritius, UK, etc. Moreover, the establishment of Jullnder Kanya Mahavidyala (a girls' school) was also a great step towards the education of women. Often women in India have been represented as pictures of virtue and sacrifice, and hence regarded as more suited to uphold tradition than work in the public sphere. Llewellyn (1998) shows how the Arya Samaj has consistently projected self-sacrificing 'maternalism' as the highest ideal for Indian women and discusses the two contradictory effects of this attitude in today's environment: this ideal has been denounced by feminists as being chauvinistic, suppressing women's sexuality and freedom in the cause of nationalism (Niranjana, 2005, pp.138–67), yet women leaders in the Arya Samaj have been able to exploit the image to wield considerable power in Hindu nationalist politics.

3.4 The Ramakrishna Mission

Unlike Arya Samaj's aggressive cultural nationalism and demonization of others, Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Mission was less militant and radical. While Arya Samaj challenged the brahmanical monopoly of Vedic rituals, Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Mission was more interested in preparing monks for spiritual progress and societal advancement. Vivekananda was a great votary of Vedanta and Hindu philosophy but he was more tolerant of diversities than Arya Samaj's Hinduism. This was more due to the life of the Great Master, Ramakrishna, which was a celebration of diversity.

Vivekananda believed that the existing religion militated against the development of a collective national self. He contended that India could not become happy by imitating the West: "The spell of imitating the West is getting such a strong hold upon you that what is good or what is bad is no longer decided by

reason, judgment, discrimination, or reference to the Shastras" (Vivekananda, 2001, p. 491). He believed that certain aspects of Western civilization must be learned but asserted that the soul of new India must be grounded in its Vedantic tradition. In this process of modelling India's collective self on Vedantic lines, he exhorted Indians to unite in brotherhood, arguing that the basis for such unity will come from its religion because, in his view, religion is the only common ground that holds India together. By religion he meant one Vedantic religion, based on a life-affirming principle which asserts that life is meant for preparing for union with the world spirit rather than enjoyment of the senses rather than Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity or Hinduism. "The only way to bring about the leveling of caste," he said, "is to appropriate the culture, the education, which is the strength of higher caste. The only safety, I tell you men who belong to lower castes, the only way to raise your condition, is to study Sanskrit" (Swami Vivekananda, 2004, p.282)

The Ramakrishna Mission became a registered society on 4th May 1909 and Swami Brahmananda was elected its President. The aims and objectives of the organization are to train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses; to promote and encourage arts and industries; and to spread Vedantic and other religious ideas as elucidated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna among the people. In the new India, the Mission's adherents believed, social relations should be grounded not on birth but on actions and achievements. It regarded scientific education as crucial for the development of the nation and believed that untouchability must be abolished. While Arya Samaj's base was principally the *kshatris* and *Jat,* who gained economic status due to colonial and post-colonial changes, Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Mission was grounded in the Bengali *bhadralok* tradition, a systematic and organized monastic tradition which enabled it to take up socio-economic development issues (Gambhirananda, 1983).

3.5   *Mahatma Gandhi and his 'experiment with truth'*

Gandhi's response to the challenge of western civilization and development was more comprehensive and all-encompassing that that of Vivekananda. Gandhi did not found a religious organisation, but the fact that he decisively influenced Congress and a whole generation of people makes his beliefs and actions an important theme in the study of relations between development and religion in India.

Gandhi had an abiding faith and conviction that Western civilization, with its attributes of industrialization, modern medicine and railways, was overly materialistic and irreligious. He regarded western medicine as bad because it does not recognise the mind and body as an undivided whole. He regarded the Western project of secular modernity as evil. Since colonialism in India was implementing this project, he felt it his duty to fight colonialism. This fight began as a personal venture, by practising abstinence, religiosity and austerity, but was soon extended to galvanising Indians against British rule. Since western civilization and colonialism were grounded in violence and force, the response in his view could not be violent. Non-violent passive *satyagraha* was his means for overcoming colonial evil. S*atyagraha* for Gandhi was not a political tool alone; it was a worldview linking the individual and society to God.

It should be noted that Vivekananda had a similar message: do not imitate materialistic Western civilization, use reason, and unite the brotherhood of man. But the greatness of Gandhi lies in his ability to actualise these philosophies into action. According to Gandhi, human development cannot be judged on the yardstick of western discourse. India, he believed, had to develop its own model of development, which would fulfil everyone's need, but not anyone's greed. Illiteracy and untouchability, he asserted, must be done away with because they are against the principles of the religious humanism of the Indian tradition, which sees divinity in each being. Education is key to lighting up the godliness in each individual. Development must help the poor earn a livelihood. Gandhi's notion of village reconstruction thus emphasized the removal of untouchability, but also stressed home spinning and local cottage industries.

It is to be noted that from Rammohun to Gandhi, all the socio-religious leaders mentioned championed the rights of untouchables and women. According to Swami Vivekananda, "All nations have achieved greatness by paying proper respect to women' and a country cannot progress by neglecting its womenfolk, just as a bird cannot fly only on one wing". Giving emphasis to women's work, Ramakrishna Mission has a separate mission, Sarada mission, that deals with women only. Similarly the Arya Samaj has throughout its existence emphasized the education of women. However, all believed that there was a limit to how far women's rights should be pushed. Women, they believed, should be educated and respected, but at the same time there is a limit to their rights. Women, they believed, should be bearers of family values and tradition and hence should not work in the public

sphere. Even when trying to revive the tradition of a Vedic age when women such as Gargi and Lopamudra were learned Vedantists, all these socio-religious reformers believed that women's place was in the domestic sphere (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 90). Because women must take on the function of maintaining the essence of indigenous culture, although they should be educated, they must be protected from colonial influence by being restricted to the home[4] (Sarkar, 2005, p. 296).

Another ambiguity that was found in the speeches and writing of these reformers was the issue of caste. While all of them deplored untouchability and social status based on birth, they still believed in the fourfold division of society on the basis of Varna (class). Gandhi was a crusader against untouchability and found the practice deplorable. However when asked what he meant by *sanatani* Hindu (which he always claimed himself to be), he outlined his belief in *varnashrama* as one of the four attributes of a *sanatani* Hindu. While the distinction between Varna and caste has been the subject of much scholarly debate (Dumont, 1999), the fact remains that ambiguity on this issue has led to many protests from lower castes, who believe it responsible for their socio-economic underdevelopment.

3.6   Cultural dissent: lower class movements

The abject condition of the lower strata of Hindu society, who were excluded from the Hindu Chaturvarna social division, led to intense ideological and social convulsions. Intelligentsia movements like Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission deplored untouchability and tried to locate it beyond the S*anatana* system. However within Arya Samaj, lower class members were not allowed to perform rituals, the same exclusion rules as those enforced through the *Sanatana* system. Dalit dissent sometimes took the form of folk religions, such as the Adi Dharma Movement of Punjab[5] or the Satnamis of central India (Dube, 1998). Another form of dalit revolt was led by Phule who aimed to create a non-brahmanical identity within the brahmanical system. Phule's main strategy to counter the brahmanical dominance in social life was to unite all other castes into a single homogeneous category and to mobilise these groups (Omvedt, 1976).

The Dalit movement focused on reservation claims in order to counter Dalits' political and social marginalisation. However, it is suggested that this had the effect of further embedding the status of dalitness.   Parekh states (2005, p. 293)

![RaD logo]

"they have turned the Dalit identity into a new identity and some even view it as a
privilege because of the petty rewards it brings. Dalithood is thus in danger of becoming
a rigid and relatively permanent category of our socio-political life. Although one can see
why the term is attractive to those who have suffered severe social and economic
oppression for long, it is essentially negative and reinforces a sense of passivity and
victimhood. It is hardly the basis on which the Dalits can become an active historical
subject shaking up the society to its roots. I cannot think of any other society in which the
oppressed of yesterday have chosen to define themselves in such a negative term."

3.7   Conversion

The failure of the intelligentsia movements to address the social concerns of the lower classes
resulted in various reactions, mostly manifested through other religious traditions or interpretations.
Conversion to Christianity, Sikhism in some parts of Punjab, or Buddhism was used to achieve a new
identity in the hope it would provide equality of status and dignity.

Many Christian missionaries believed that Christianity is the only religion that could provide salvation.
The missionary obsession with the numbers of people being converted made them aggressive
evangelists who derided indigenous religions. While Christianity has had a longer history in India than
in Europe, its close association with colonialism made Indians identify it as an agent of colonialism
rather than a positive force for Indian development. Missionaries targeted tribal people in particular.
Although their activities raised the profile of these marginalised communities, it brought suspicion from
wider Indian society as to their motives. However, the missionaries were also responsible for
establishing a wide range of educational institutions, hospitals and other developmental undertakings
in the areas where they operated, in particular targeting people neglected by government agencies.
Dalit emancipation through conversion to Christianity has been focus of many studies (Webster, 2002;
Zelliot, 1992; Jayaram, 1992; Aloysius, 1998). However, conversion did not result in significant
changes to dalits' social position, and so it has subsequently declined, with mobilization focusing on
identity and reservations instead (Webster, 2002).

Ambedkar took the view that the solutions to India's problems would be found within Indian traditions
and hoped that conversion to Buddhism would provide the dalits with a new positive identity. In May
1956, a talk by Ambedkar entitled 'Why I like Buddhism and how it is useful to the world in its present

circumstances' was broadcast from the British Broadcasting Corporation, London. In his talk Ambedkar said,

> "I prefer Buddhism because it gives three principles in combination, which no other religion does. Buddhism teaches *prajna* (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), *karuna* (love), and *samata* (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life. Neither god nor soul can save society. Even some of my colleagues who are disgusted with 'untouchability', poverty and inequality are ready to be washed away by this flood. What about the others? They should not move away from the main stream of the nation's life (*sic*); and I must show them the way. At the same time, we have to make some changes in the economic and political life. That is why I have decided to follow."

However, Aloysius (1988) states that conversion to Christianity or Buddhism has not necessarily achieved the more dignified status for which dalits hope.

4   The secular modernity of Nehru – development in the post-independence period

The reformist movements envisioned models of development either rooted in the liberal philosophies of the West or based on an Indian model that upholds the principles of India's tradition. The latter, as championed by Vivekananda and Gandhi, insisted on education and literacy and satisfaction of basis human needs but also believed that people's endeavours must be directed in the pursuit of God. These two movements embraced India's pluralism. In contrast Arya Samaj and later the Hindu right held a narrow vision of the term Hinduism and used it in exclusionary way.

Envisioning a model of development grounded in the religious values of Hinduism led to many problems, chief among which was dissent by lower castes fuelled by the rise of exclusionary communal politics. The colonial administrators stroked these dissensions by pursuing divisive policies that separated the electorate into minority religious groups and caste groups (namely Muslims and Dalits). The decade prior to the partition of India saw communal carnage and bloodshed in the name of religion. Gandhi's dream of building an alternative society lay in tatters.

The experience in the last years of the independence struggle, especially the mobilization along religious lines for a separate state for Muslims in the form of Pakistan and the killing of Gandhi by a

right-wing militant, led to disenchantment with religious organization. The main challenge for the national leaders in the immediate aftermath of independence was national reconstruction. The wounds of partition needed to be healed. There were still 550 princely states within the British Indian dominion that needed to be amalgamated with the Indian Union. There were problems of hunger, poverty, illiteracy and education. India needed to be on the fast track of economic growth in order to reduce poverty, illiteracy and hunger. National reconstruction involved negotiation with the country's diverse populace.

The Nehruvian model of secular modernity, with dams standing as the temples of modern India, was based on a belief that the rational, faith-neutral, universal ethics of the Constitution was a sufficient framework for national reconstruction. The notions of liberty, progress and development, democracy, civil society and the public sphere converged in the notion of secularism, which for Nehru was as an intrinsic part of modernization (van der Veer, 2001: 13-25).[6]

However, the issue of religion began to occupy centre-stage again in the wake of the Shah Bano case in 1984 and the Ayodhya movement in the second half of the 1980s. Scholars begin to question Nehruvian secularism. As Madan (1997) wrote, "secularism as a widely held worldview has failed to make any headway."

5   Models of development: moving towards convergence?

Even while the Nehruvian developmental paradigm was dominant in post-independence India, many faith-based organisations were adopting models of development more in line with Vivekananda and Gandhi. Satya Sai, Brahma Kumaris, Life Divine Society and Swadhyaya Movement are some prominent examples. In South Kanchi the Kamakothi Pitham Trust took up several developmental initiatives. The Swadhyaya Movement, founded by Pandurang Shastri Athavale, and with its base in rural Gujarat and Maharashtra, was one of the pioneers in using faith as the basis for a holistic approach to village development. The approximately 1,000 Swadhyaya villages that this organization has developed are ahead in terms of education, health and wellbeing (Srivastava, 1998). All these organisations took a holistic view of development, based on normative values such as a good moral life and the pursuit of spiritual perfection derived from Hindu ethics (Buch, 1998). Such thinking has become increasingly widespread, as secular thinkers have acknowledged that the concept of

development as a purely materialistic concept measured in terms of increased per capita GNP, a reduction of poverty head-counts, etc. falls much short of capturing the essence of human development. In *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen argues that development should be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (Sen, 1999).

Robert Putnam (1999) draws attention to the role of the church in engendering social capital, such as trust, interaction and communication between members. The recent increase in global religiosity has again given rise to the hope of building such capital through engagements with FBOs. The *Global Civil Society Report* 2004/5 (p. 45) argues that

> "there is no way we can understand the logic, strategies and dynamics of civil society anywhere in the Third World unless we bring the transcendental dimension back into our analysis. Religious devotion is a fundamental motive for many social movements in the South, from Latin America to Africa and South Asia."

Moreover, political and social movements and advocacy campaigns have often drawn upon religious motivations and the support of religious leaders. For example, the churches' mobilization in support of the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa and the Jubilee campaign for debt forgiveness was arguably central to their political visibility.

While development economists and faith-based organizations are converging on a holistic definition of development, there are lurking fears of possible negative outcomes increased engagement with faith-based organizations may bring. There is also a simultaneous hardening of religious identities and stereotyping of religious communities. This has become more acute in the post 9/11 era. In case the of India, there are widespread allegations that Hindu Parishad and other faith-based organizations are fundraising to further boost the communal activities of Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Rashtriya Swayamasevak Sangh **www.stopfundinghate.org**. While religion can facilitate the building of a more humane society, the marriage between the state and religion is also fraught with danger and is to be treated carefully.

Footnotes

* Umakant Mishra received his PhD from the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU.

1 Max Weber (1958) emphasized formal rationality, experimentation, codification, verification and a rational-utilitarian orientation in behaviour and thought as some of the substantive qualities of the Western cultural tradition. He admits that some of these qualities existed in Oriental civilizations but considered that these cultural elements had failed to develop systematically in those societies.

2 Asish Nandy's (1983) studies contend that modern colonialism was successful not only because the ruling country subjugated through superior technical and economic resources, but also because the rulers propagated cultural subservience of the subject people. Exploring the myths, fantasies and psychological defences that were part of colonial culture, particularly the polarities that shaped the colonial theory of progress, Nandy describes the Indian experience and shows how the Indians broke with traditional norms of Western culture to protect their vision of an alternative future. Some of the other works that look at culture and colonialism are Arnold's (1993) work on colonial medicine and Gauri Viswanathan's (1996) work on the census. Working from the Saidian perspective, in which both colonized and colonizer had a similar historical experience of empire, Peter Van der Veer (2001) looked at Indian religious reform movements. Avoiding the pitfalls of both world systems theory and national historiography, he problematizes oppositions between modern and traditional, secular and religious, progressive and reactionary, showing that what often are assumed to be opposites are, in fact, profoundly entangled. In doing so, he upsets the convenient fiction that India is the land of eternal religion, existing outside of history, while Britain is the epitome of modern secularity and an agent of history.

3 Bernard S. Cohn has shown how the British system of objectification through census-taking hinged on caste and religion as crucial sociological keys to understanding Indian society and Indian people. Cohn maintains that "ideas about caste -- its origins and functions — played much the same role in shaping policy in the latter half of the nineteenth century that ideas about the village community and the nature of property played in the first half of the nineteenth century" (Cohn, 1987, p. 243).

4 Cultural nationalists' idea of the nation was based on rigid patriarchy. Emasculated by colonialism, feminists argue, Indian men could only exercise autonomy within the sphere of home. At the same time, the importance of women in the nationalist imagination makes them potent nationalist symbols of "the unviolated, chaste, inner space" of the nation, which needed to be protected by Indian patriarchy from the corrupting influence of the colonizer (Sarkar, 2005, p. 296; Niranjana, 2004, p 138–166).

5 The Adi Dharmis, while seeking to implement its social vision, became involved in politics, split into factions and disintegrated, to be revived in the 1970s (Juergensmeyer, 1988).

6 Recently Asish Nandy (1983) questioned the suitability of the concept of secularism, which he suggests is not a valid construct for India. Colonized people, he suggests, may be victims, but they can also resist the forces of colonization. Nandy suggests this can be accomplished in three ways: violence, pacifism, or by simply "not playing" — i.e. dissenting from accepted visions and futures. By defining what is "immutable," "useful" or "modern," the West silences other cultures to ensure the continuity of its own worldviews. To break out of this structure, Nandy contends, non-Western cultures must define their future in terms of their own concepts and categories, articulating their visions in language that is true to their own selves, even if not comprehensible to Western cultures. Non-western cultures, he asserts, have to do more than simply resist the West; they have to transform their own cultures into cultures of resistance.

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Chapter 3

Some demographic aspects of the religious communities of India

Umakant Mishra

Abstract

This paper comprises a preliminary analysis of some readily available data on the religious communities of India. Selected data from the census, National Sample Surveys and a 2003 report on the religious demography of India are presented to first provide a demographic picture of India; and second identify some basic demographic characteristics of the main religious communities (Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains) at national and State levels. Finally, some recent analyses that consider the incidence of poverty amongst different religious communities are summarised.

1   Introduction

This paper tries to analyse different indicators of development, such as literacy, education level, population growth rate, work participation and unemployment, and poverty level among different religious communities of India. Most of the data used for the purpose are taken from the official censuses that have been conducted unfailingly since 1881 and the National Sample Surveys. Estimations of unemployment and poverty are made on the basis of the National Sample Survey's 55th round survey on unemployment, monthly per capita consumption expenditure and per capita household consumption. However the present study does not attempt to analyse the relationships between socio-economic characteristics and poverty among the various religious communities in India.

2   A demographic picture of India

Although in terms of total population, the USA ranks third in the world after India, there is a yawning gap of 746 million between the population of these two countries. India accounts for a meagre 2.4 per cent of the world's surface area of 135.79 million square kms, yet it supports and sustains 16.7 per cent of the world's population. In 1950 China had the largest share of the world's population (22 per cent), followed by India with 14.2 per cent. It is now estimated that, if current trends continue, by 2050, India will most likely overtake China to become the most populous country on earth, with 17.2 percent of global population. The table below gives the population of selected countries.

Table 1: Population of the ten most populous countries of the world

Countries	Reference period	Population (million)
1. China	1.2.2000	1277.6
2. India	1.12.2003	1028.7
3. USA	April 2000	281.4
4. Indonesia	1.7.2000	212.1
5. Brazil	1.7.2000	170.1
6. Pakistan	1.7.2000	156.5
7. Russia Federation	1.7.2000	146.9
8. Bangladesh	1.7.2000	129.2
9. Japan	1.10.2000	126.9
10. Nigeria	1.02.2000	111.5

Source: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner **www.censusin.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/ National_Summary accessed 20th January 2008;** UN (2001) World Population Report.

The most recent census in 2001 put India's population at 1.03 billion and in 2007 it was estimated to have reached 1.13 billion. Even though the country's population has been growing exponentially since 1951, there are definite signs that population growth is slowing down. For the first time since independence, the country's decadal population growth rate showed a slight decline from 23. 9 per cent between 1981 and 1991 to 21.3 per cent between 1991 and 2001. The table below represents the story of demographic transition in India.

Table 2: Demographic transition in India since 1901

Years	Phase of Demographic transition
1901-1921	Stagnant population
1921-1951	Steady growth
1951-1981	Rapid high growth
1981-2001	High growth with definite signs of slowing down

The story of population growth in India is in line with the classical theory of the demographic transition. During most of the nineteenth century, India witnessed a fluctuating but ultimately more or less stagnant population growth rate, which continued into the twentieth century until 1921. Thereafter, the country has passed successively all the phases of the demographic transition and is now widely believed to have entered the fifth phase, usually characterized by rapidly declining fertility. The crucial question is - how long will this phase extend and when will India achieve a stable population? The National Population Policy (NPP) states that "the long-term objective is to achieve a stable population by 2045, at a level consistent with the requirements of sustainable economic growth, social

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development, and environmental protection". It is assumed in the policy document that the medium-term objective of bringing down the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) to a replacement level of 2.1 by 2010 will be achieved. It is envisaged that, if the NPP is fully implemented, the population of India will be 1013 million by 2002 and 1107 million by 2010 (Government of India, 2000a). However, India's population was already estimated to have reached 1109 million in 2006, belying the population projection made by the National Population Policy 2000.

The population of India in 1901 was 283.868 million. India was partitioned into India and Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh separated from Pakistan to become a sovereign state in 1971. The partition days in 1947-48 saw the biggest dislocation and cross-migration in living history, when it was estimated that 5 million people crossed a border, greatly changing the demographic character of the subcontinent.

It is to be noted that the population of Pakistan increased more rapidly than that of India and Bangladesh in the last century. The population of the Indian union grew 3.55 fold, while that of Pakistan increased 6.72 fold. Even if one takes into account the large-scale migration of Muslims to Pakistan, the annual growth rate of Pakistan since 1991 is higher than that of India. Since 1951, India's average annual growth rate of population has been 2.16 while the average annual growth rate in Pakistan has been 2.36.

3   Population growth rate in Indian states: 1991-2001

India's 1028.7 million population (as per the 2001 census) is spread across 28 states and union territories (including NCT Delhi). The table below presents the population of these federal units of the Indian union as per the 2001 census.

Table 3: Populations of the States and Union Territories of India 2001 and the decadal growth rate 1991-2001

Sl. No.	India/State/ Union territories*	POPULATION			Decadal growth rate % 1991 - 2001	Sex ratio (females per thousand males)
		PERSONS	MALES	FEMALES		
	INDIA	1,027,015,247	531,277,078	495,738,169	21.34	933
1	Andaman & Nicobar Is.*	356,265	192,985	163,280	26.94	846
2	Andhra Pradesh	75,727,541	38,286,811	37,440,730	13.86	978
3	Arunachal Pradesh	1,091,117	573,951	517,166	26.21	901
4	Assam	26,638,407	13,787,799	12,850,608	18.85	932
5	Bihar	82,878,796	43,153,964	39,724,832	28.43	921
6	Chandigarh*	900,914	508,224	392,690	40.33	773
7	Chattisgarh	20,795,956	10,452,426	10,343,530	18.06	990
8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli*	220,451	121,731	98,720	59.20	811
9	Daman & Diu*	158,059	92,478	65,581	55.59	709
10	Delhi*	13,782,976	7,570,890	6,212,086	46.31	821
11	Goa	1,343,998	685,617	658,381	14.89	960
12	Gujarat 5	50,596,992	26,344,053	24,252,939	22.48	921
13	Haryana	21,082,989	11,327,658	9,755,331	28.06	861
14	Himachal Pradesh 4	6,077,248	3,085,256	2,991,992	17.53	970
15	Jammu & Kashmir 2,3	10,069,917	5,300,574	4,769,343	29.04	900
16	Jharkhand	26,909,428	13,861,277	13,048,151	23.19	941
17	Karnataka	52,733,958	26,856,343	25,877,615	17.25	964
18	Kerala	31,838,619	15,468,664	16,369,955	9.42	1,058
19	Lakshadweep*	60,595	31,118	29,477	17.19	947
20	Madhya Pradesh	60,385,118	31,456,873	28,928,245	24.34	920
21	Maharashtra	96,752,247	50,334,270	46,417,977	22.57	922
22	Manipur	2,388,634	1,207,338	1,181,296	30.02	978
23	Meghalaya	2,306,069	1,167,840	1,138,229	29.94	975
24	Mizoram	891,058	459,783	431,275	29.18	938
25	Nagaland	1,988,636	1,041,686	946,950	64.41	909
26	Orissa	36,706,920	18,612,340	18,094,580	15.94	972
27	Pondicherry*	973,829	486,705	487,124	20.56	1,001
28	Punjab	24,289,296	12,963,362	11,325,934	19.76	874
29	Rajasthan	56,473,122	29,381,657	27,091,465	28.33	922
30	Sikkim	540,493	288,217	252,276	32.98	875
31	Tamil Nadu	62,110,839	31,268,654	30,842,185	11.19	986
32	Tripura	3,191,168	1,636,138	1,555,030	15.74	950
33	Uttar Pradesh	166,052,859	87,466,301	78,586,558	25.80	898
34	Uttaranchal	8,479,562	4,316,401	4,163,161	19.20	964
35	West Bengal	80,221,171	41,487,694	38,733,477	17.84	934

Source: Census of India, 2001

The table shows that Uttar Pradesh continues to be the most populous state of India, even since the creation of the new state of Uttaranchal in 2001. Maharashtra is the second most populous state and Bihar, the third. So far as the growth rate of population is concerned, the state of Nagaland experienced the highest decadal growth of 64.42 per cent. The National Capital Territory of Delhi experienced the second highest growth owing to large numbers of migrants from different regions in search of livelihood opportunities.

The skewed sex ratio of India has been a major cause of concern among policy analysts, as the problem of fewer women reflects gender bias against females and the impending prospect of a number of men remaining unmarried. The sex ratio has hovered between 925 and 935 for a long time. In 1991 the male-female sex ratio was 927, which improved to 933 in 2001. However, there are significant inter-state and inter-religious variations. Haryana, Punjab and Delhi have the most skewed sex ratios (861, 821 and 874 respectively). While male migration to the National Capital Territory of Delhi partly explains the lower proportion of women in the city, the lower sex ratios in Haryana and Punjab indicate high rates of abortion of female foetuses in these two states.

4   Some demographic aspects of religious communities

India is home to communities of most of the major world religions. The majority are Hindus (the term originated not as a religious category but referred to people beyond the Indus), followed by Muslims and Christians. Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Jews also live here. The table below presents the proportion of the population belonging to each religious community and its performance in terms of literacy (7+ years), gender ratio and other important indicators.

Overall four out of every five Indians are Hindu, with Muslims making up 13 per cent of the total and the other religious minorities the remaining 7 per cent. Female literacy overall is markedly lower than male literacy, and it is also to be noted that the low male and female literacy of Muslims is considered to be an important cause of their backwardness. They also score low in other indicators of development. For example, the work participation rate of Muslims is 31 per cent as against the national average of 39 per cent, in part because of the extremely low female work participation rate.

Table 4:   Population by religious affiliation

Composition	All India	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Buddhist	Jain	Others
% of total population 2001	100	80.46	13.43	2.34	1.87	0.77	0.41	0.72
Gender ratio (female: male)	933	931	936	1009	893	953	950	992
Rural gender ratio	946	944	953	1001	895	958	937	995
Urban gender ratio	900	894	907	1026	886	944	941	966
Child gender ratio (0-6 yrs)	927	925	950	964	786	942	870	927
Literacy rate (age 7+ yrs)	64.8	65.1	59.1	80.3	69.4	72.7	94.1	47
Female literacy rate	53.7	53.2	50.1	76.2	63.1	61.7	90.6	33.2
Work Participation Rate	39.2	40.5	31.3	40.0	37.7	40.0	32.9	NA
Work Participation Rate (female)	25.6	27.5	14.1	28.7	20.2	31.7	9.2	44.2

Source: Compiled from the First Report on the Religions of India, Census-2001.
Notes: Literacy is calculated excluding people 0-6 years old. Work participation rate is estimated by the following formula: total population/total workers*100.

4.1   State-wise distribution of communities

The religious communities are generally represented in all of the 28 states and union territories (including NCT, Delhi). The table below presents the distribution of each religious community in the federal units of India according to the 1991 and 2001 censuses.

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Table 5: Percentage distribution of religious communities in different States - 1991 and 2001

Religious communities	Hindus		Muslims		Christian		Sikh		Buddhists		Jains	
	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
All-India	82	80.46	12.12	13.43	2.34	2.34	1.94	1.87	0.76	0.77	0.4	0.41
Andhra Pradesh	89.14	89	8.91	9.2	1.83	1.6	0.03	0	0.03	0	0.04	0.1
Arunachal Pradesh	37.04	34.6	1.38	1.9	10.29	18.7	0.14	0.2	12.88	13	0.01	0.0
Assam	67.13	64.9	28.43	30.9	3.32	3.7	0.07	0.1	0.29	0.2	0.09	0.1
Bihar	82.42	83.2	14.81	16.5	0.98	0.1	0.09	0	-	0	0.03	0
Jharkhand		68.6	--	13.8	----	4.1		0.3		0	---	0.1
Goa	64.68	65.8	5.25	6.8	29.86	26.7	0.09	0.1	0.02	0.1	0.04	0.1
Gujarat	89.48	89.1	8.73	9.1	0.44	0.6	0.08	0.1	0.03	0	1.19	1
Haryana	89.21	88.2	4.64	5.8	0.1	0.1	5.81	4	0.01	0	0.21	0.3
Himachal Pradesh	95.9	95.4	1.72	2	0.09	0.1	1.01	1.2	1.24	1.2	0.02	0
Karnataka	85.45	83.9	11.64	12.2	1.91	1.9	0.02	0	0.16	0.7	0.73	0.8
Kerala	57.28	56.2	23.33	24.7	19.32	19	0.01	0	-	0	0.01	0
Madhya Pradesh	92.8	91.1	4.96	6.4	0.65	0.3	0.24	0.2	0.33	0.3	0.74	0.9
Chattisgarh	--	94.7	--	2		1.9		0.3		0.3		0.3
Maharashtra	81.12	80.4	9.67	10.6	1.12	1.1	0.21	0.2	6.39	6	1.22	1.3
Manipur	57.67	56	7.27	8.8	34.11	34	0.07	0.1	0.04	0.1	0.07	0.1
Meghalaya	14.67	13.3	3.46	4.3	64.58	70.3	0.15	0.1	0.16	0.2	0.02	0
Mizoram	5.05	3.6	0.66	1.1	85.73	87	0.04	0	7.83	7.9	-	0
Nagaland	10.12	7.7	1.71	1.8	87.47	90	0.06	0	0.05	0.1	0.1	0.1
Orissa	94.67	94.4	1.83	2.1	2.1	2.4	0.05	0	0.03	0	0.02	0
Punjab	34.46	36.9	1.18	1.6	1.11	1.2	62.95	59.9	0.12	0.1	0.1	0.2
Rajasthan	89.08	88.8	8.01	8.5	0.11	0.1	1.48	1.4	0.01	0	1.28	1.2
Sikkim	68.37	60.9	0.95	1.4	3.3	6.7	0.09	0.2	27.15	28.1	0.01	0
Tamil Nadu	88.67	88.1	5.47	5.6	5.69	6.1	0.01	0	-	0	0.12	0.1
Tripura	86.5	85.6	7.13	8	1.68	3.2	0.03	0	4.65	0.2	0.01	0
Uttar Pradesh	81.74	80.6	17.33	18.5	0.14	0.1	0.48	0.4	0.16	0.2	0.13	0.1
Uttranchal	--	85	-	11.9		0.3		2.5		0.1		0.1
West Bengal	74.72	72.5	23.61	25.2	0.56	0.6	0.08	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.05	0.1
Delhi	83.67	82	9.44	11.7	0.88	0.9	4.84	4	0.15	0.2	1	1.1
Chandigarh	75.84	78.6	2.72	3.9	0.78	0.8	20.29	16.1	0.11	0.1	0.24	0.3
Pondicherry	86.16	86.8	6.54	6.1	7.23	6.9	0.0	0.01	0	0.06	0.1	0.1

Source: Table C - 9, Census of India 1991, 2001 Part VB(ii) – First Report on Religions of India

The table shows that the Hindu population declined from 82 per cent of the total in 1991 to 80.46 per cent in 2001, a net decline of 1.54 per cent, while the Muslim population increased to 13.43 per cent. It is to be noted that in many of the north-eastern states of India, the proportion of the population who are Hindu has marginally increased in comparison to the 1991 census, while the Hindu population in Nagaland increased from 7.7 per cent in 1991 to 10 per cent in 2001.

4.2   Growth rates

The Muslim population has grown more rapidly in the last fifty years than the populations of other religious communities. Worldwide also, the Muslim population has been growing at a faster rate than others, with the result that the share of Muslims in the population of the world was estimated to have reached 19 per cent in 1995 (**www.zpub.com/un/pope/relig.html** accessed 20 April 2008).

In India the proportion of the population who are Hindus declined from 84.1 per cent in 1961 to 81.4 per cent in 2001 (Table 6). The Muslim population, on the other hand, increased from 9.9 per cent to 12.4 per cent, the same proportion as at Independence in 1947, when the large Muslim-dominated country of Pakistan was created. The rapid growth rate of the Muslim population has led to an association of Islam with high fertility. However, it must be said that this relationship is illusory, as the growth rate of the Muslim population in a progressive state like Kerala shows. While the all-India decadal growth of the Muslim population between 1991 and 2001 was 21.34 per cent, the Muslim population of Kerala grew by only 15 per cent (see Table 5). The corresponding all-India growth of Muslims in the same period was 29.6 per cent as against the national average of 21.34 per cent. The table below presents the populations of different religions since 1961. one based on data without making any adjustments and the other by excluding the figures for Assam and Jammu and Kashmir, where censuses could not be conducted in 1981 and 1991 respectively

Table 6:   Proportion of population by religious communities 1961-2001

	Un-adjusted					Adjusted				
Year	**1961**	**1971**	**1981**	**1991**	**2001**	**1961**	**1971**	**1981**	**1991**	**2001**
Proportion										
All religious communities	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Hindus	83.4	82.7	82.6	82.0	80.5	84.4	83.5	83.1	82.4	81.4
Muslims	10.7	11.2	11.4	12.1	13.4	9.9	10.4	10.9	11.7	12.4
Christians	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.5	2.3	2.3
Sikhs	1.8	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.0	1.9
Buddhists	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8
Jains	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4
Others	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.7

Source: First Report on the Religions of India, Census-2001, Registrar of Census

The growth rate of populations of the various communities is also presented in Table 7, which provides data on the inter-census growth of the population of religious communities since 1961. When analysed on the basis of the adjusted data it can be seen that the Sikh population recorded the lowest decadal growth rate of 16.9 per cent between 1991 and 2001 and has also shown a declining trend since 1961-1971. The adjusted growth rate of the Hindu population fell from 22.8 per cent over the 1981-91 decade to 20.0 per cent in the subsequent census period. Similar trends are observed among Buddhists, the growth in numbers of whom declined from 36.0 per cent in 1981-1991 to 23.2 per cent during 1991-2001. If adjusted data are considered, the Muslim growth rate declined from 32.9 per cent during 1981-91 to 29.3 per cent during 1991-2001, while for Christians it increased from 17.0 per cent to 22.1 per cent during 1991-2001. In addition, the Jain population registered a growth of 26.0 per cent against very low growth (4.6 per cent) during 1981-1991. The abnormally low population growth of Jains in the 1980s decade appears to be an aberration when compared with previous decades. The overall adjusted growth among the 'Other Religions and Persuasions' was very high during the 1991-2001 census period at 113.1 per cent, followed by 'Religion Not Stated' (75.1 per cent). In brief, the emergence of a group termed 'Other Religions and Persuasions' is one of the key findings of the Census 2001.

Table 7: Growth rate of population by different communities between 1961-2001.

Communities/Year	Unadjusted				Adjusted			
	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91	1991-01	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91	1991-01
All religious communities	24.8	21.4	26.0	22.7	24.8	24.8	23.8	21.5
Hindus	23.7	21.3	25.1	20.3	23.4	24.2	22.8	20.0
Muslims	30.8	22.9	34.5	36.0	31.2	30.8	32.9	29.3
Christians	32.6	13.7	21.5	22.6	36.0	19.2	17.0	22.1
Sikhs	32.3	26.0	24.3	18.2	32.0	26.2	25.5	16.9
Buddhists	17.1	23.8	35.3	24.5	17.0	25.4	36.0	23.2
Jains	28.5	23.1	4.6	26.0	28.5	23.7	4.0	26.0
Others	45.7	26.6	18.2	103.1	97.7	26.6	13.2	111.3
Religion not stated	88.1	66.9	590.1	75.1	65.7	67.1	57.3	76.3

NB: Adjusted data exclude populations of J & K and Assam where census could be carried out for militancy.
(Source: *First Report on Religions in India*, Census-2001 p. xxviiii.

4.3 Household size

The average size of the households of all religious communities was 5.25 in 2001. However there are wide variations among the religious communities. In addition, within each group, it is found that households with female heads are smaller than households with male heads. Tables 8 and 9 present the number of households and average household size of religious communities. The average size of a Muslim household was 6.32, compared with 5.14 for Hindu households. Muslims therefore have larger families to take care of on average, despite their low work participation rate and low literacy. There is no study of the economic and social conditions of households with female heads differentiated by religious group.

Table 8: Household size amongst Hindus and Muslims

Family size	HH of all communities		Hindu HH		Muslim HH	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	3905596	3739699	3373861	3207149	301327	299016
2	12919557	3006709	11099676	2499688	1066022	273597
3-6	111328311	10415391	93255250	8330655	10704174	1219453
6-10	38568861	2385200	29802248	1748190	6641488	452409
11	6409177	440859	4884304	299181	1260156	115739
Total HH	173131502	3739699	3373861	3207149	301327	299016
HH size	5.4	4.0	5.3	3.8	6.4	5.7
HH size	5.25		5.14		6.32	

Source: First Report on the Religions of India-2001

Table 9: Household size in other religious communities

	Christian HHs		Sikh HHs		Buddhist HHs		Jain HHs	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Total	4255546	762957	3094214	316277	1407797	203378	741324	71617
1	95887	110559	48796	28422	35836	41435	11557	14944
2	341494	127162	144153	32795	116942	33457	51095	9868
3-6	3066830	438409	2027839	190895	969785	106294	521178	35171
6-10	702807	80052	736820	52603	261480	19667	127685	8993
11	48528	675	136609	11562	23754	2525	29809	2641
	4.9	3.8	5.7	4.8	5.1	3.7	5.3	5.1
HH size	4.73		5.61		4.92		5.20	

Source: First Report on the Religions of India, 2001

4.4 Fertility rate

As pointed out in Table 2, India has already entered the fourth stage of the demographic transition, with definite signs of slow growth and a slowing death rate. One factor that affects population growth is the fertility rate i.e. the number of children a reproductive woman bears. The table below shows that at national level, Muslims have a higher fertility rate (TFR) than other communities. As noted above, the National Commission of Population's projection that by 2010 India's TFR will reach the replacement level is belied by recent trends in population growth.

Table 10: Fertility rate of different religious communities

Communities	No. of children per woman
Muslims	3.6
Hindus	2.8
Christians	2.4
Sikhs	2.3
All India	3.3

Source: Population and Human & Social Development Facts – I, National Commission on Population (2001) Delhi.

4.5 Religious communities in urban and rural areas

In India the proportion of people living in urban areas is relatively low: at present only 27.8 per cent of people. Out of the urban population, 75.6 per cent are Hindus, compared to 82.3 per cent of the total rural population. Muslims and Christians, in contrast, make up a higher proportion of the urban than the rural population. The table below presents the share of different religious communities in the rural and urban population.

Table 11: Percentage of population by religious communities and their residence-2001

Religious communities	Total	Rural	Urban
Hindus	80.5	82.3	75.6
Muslims	13.4	12.0	17.3
Christians	2.3	2.1	2.9
Sikhs	1.9	1.9	1.8
Buddhists	0.8	0.7	1.1
Jains	0.4	0.1	1.1
Others	0.6	0.8	0.2
All	100	100	100

Source, First Report on Religion, Census-2001

4.6   School attendance

One indicator of educational level is the attendance rate of students enrolled in education institutions. The data on school attendance is produced from the National Sample Survey (55th round) data on employment and unemployment among religious communities.

Table 12: School attendance rate (per 1000) by age group for each religion

Age Group (Years)	1999-00				1993-94			
	Hinduism	Islam	Christianity	All*	Hinduism	Islam	Christianity	All*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Rural Male								
0-4	50	27	86	49	34	25	60	34
5-9	710	609	784	700	675	544	806	664
10-14	792	680	844	781	764	702	853	759
5-14	750	642	817	739	717	613	830	709
15-19	446	333	518	437	417	326	595	412
20-24	113	73	106	109	110	76	154	108
0-24	**461**	**388**	**495**	**454**	**419**	**358**	**506**	**415**
Rural female								
0-4	48	31	93	47	30	19	84	30
5-9	634	528	778	626	560	495	757	559
10-14	650	596	809	651	551	507	836	558
5-14	642	559	794	638	556	500	798	558
15-19	269	195	476	268	204	160	422	207
20-24	38	22	127	39	27	13	119	29
0-24	**353**	**303**	**471**	**352**	**283**	**261**	**455**	**286**

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Age Group (Years)	1999-00				1993-94			
	Hinduism	Islam	Christianity	All*	Hinduism	Islam	Christianity	All*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Urban male								
0-4	136	77	174	125	106	59	175	99
5-9	840	746	906	825	857	737	915	837
10-14	887	752	920	864	893	738	928	867
5-14	864	749	913	845	875	737	922	852
15-19	617	380	741	581	599	407	665	569
20-24	253	123	299	232	239	134	272	225
0-24	**568**	**447**	**638**	**549**	**555**	**436**	**610**	**536**
Urban Female								
0-4	127	74	192	117	103	45	137	92
5-9	824	697	946	802	818	678	928	797
10-14	835	702	913	814	839	677	942	815
5-14	829	699	927	808	829	678	936	806
15-19	552	332	644	519	531	266	704	497
20-24	176	62	322	166	140	64	229	133
0-24	**525**	**406**	**609**	**507**	**499**	**363**	**594**	**480**

Source: National Sample Survey Report (NSS report) *Employment and Unemployment situation among religious groups in India*, No.468 (55th round), 2000b, p. 28.

The school attendance rates i.e. number of children attending any educational institution per 1000 children, along with literacy levels, also indicates the skills and knowledge of the population that will replace the future workforce. The school attendance rates of children by broad age group (up to age 24) are given separately for each major religious group in 1999-00 (55th round) and 1993-94 (50th round). School attendance rates, as in the case of literacy rates, were the highest among Christians in both the urban and rural sectors and for both sexes, followed by those among Hindus and Muslims. As expected, the rates were higher among males than among females and also higher in urban as compared to rural areas. They were highest in the age-group 10-14 years for all the major religions. Compared to 1993-94, there had been, in general, an increase in attendance rates in the age groups between 5 and 24 years among all the major religious groups and this was the case for all the categories (males-females, rural-urban). Among Christian girls, however, there was a marginal drop in enrolment rates for the age-group 10-14 years.

4.7 Working population and unemployment rate

The all-India work participation rate is 39.16 per cent. The unemployment rate is defined as the number of persons unemployed per thousand persons in the *labour force* (which includes both the employed and the unemployed). This, in effect, gives the unutilized portion of the labour force. Thus, it is a more refined indicator of the unemployment situation in a population than the *proportion unemployed,* which is merely the number of unemployed per thousand persons in the population as a whole. The unemployment rates for the 55th round (1999-00) along with those for the 50th round (1993-94) are given in the National Sample Survey Report (NSS report No. 468, 2000, p. 35). In 1999-00, unemployment rates were higher among Christians as compared to Hindus or Muslims. It was highest among urban Christian women. Between the periods 1993-94 and 1999-00, the unemployment rates remained almost at the same level among Hindus, both in rural and urban areas. Among Muslim women there was an increase in the rate, especially in the urban areas. Among Christian women, while the rate had increased in the rural areas, there was a fall in the rate among their urban counterparts. Table 13 gives a state-wise breakdown of the unemployment rate.

Table 13: Number of persons unemployed per 1000 persons in the labour force (unemployment rate) for the main religious groups (State-wise data)

State	Rural				Urban			
	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	All*	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	All*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Andhra Pradesh	7	16	0	8	35	67	108	42
Assam	46	26	37	40	80	167	0	88
Bihar	17	10	2	17	75	53	123	73
Gujarat	4	51	0	5	22	18	0	22
Haryana	8	25	0	9	31	0	129	28
Jammu & Kashmir	10	11	-	9	65	33	0	51
Karnataka	8	14	0	8	33	39	45	34
Kerala	82	101	94	87	92	147	100	103
Madhya Pradesh	4	17	0	5	35	40	103	38
Maharashtra	14	45	0	15	56	60	66	57
Orissa	21	46	2	20	65	47	142	66
Punjab	22	33	52	20	28	14	0	29
Rajasthan	4	2	0	4	18	68	23	27
Tamil Nadu	17	71	43	19	41	38	45	40
Uttar Pradesh	8	7	0	8	47	26	0	40
West Bengal	35	15	112	30	81	59	75	79
All India*	**14**	**21**	**39**	**15**	**47**	**50**	**73**	**48**

Source: National Sample Survey Report (NSS report) Employment and Unemployment situation among religious groups in India, No.468 (55th round), 2000b, p. 64.

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5   Poverty among religious groups

Poverty estimations in India are made on the basis of the household consumption expenditure data of the National Sample Survey. The data for the all-India and State-wise consumption level is generated on the basis of seven and 30 days recall of per capita household consumption. The 55th round of NSS (1999-2000) included surveys of household consumer expenditure, employment-unemployment and informal non-agricultural enterprises, and was the sixth quinquennial survey (Government of India, 2000b). The consumer expenditure survey collected data on consumption and monthly per capita expenditure from 120,309 households, comprised of 71,385 rural and 48,924 urban households.

Pal et al (1986) computed State-wise estimates of rural poverty for social groups in India, including the categories of Hindus and Muslims, using household budget data from the 28th round (1973-74) of the National Sample Survey. Muslims were found to be poorer than Hindus for India as a whole and in most States, excluding Assam and Jammu and Kashmir. The National Council for Applied Economic Research (Shariff, 2001) made poverty estimates for religious groups in rural areas (Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Others) in 1994, based on a sample of 33,230 households in 16 states. They found that the prevalence of poverty in rural India was marginally higher among Muslims than among Hindus and was lowest among Christians.

Srinivasan and Mohanty (2004) estimate the level of deprivation by caste and religion based on the availability of certain basic amenities of life, using data from the National Family Health Survey, 1998-99. They construct state-level indices of deprivation separately for rural and urban areas, showing that in rural areas, Muslims have a slightly higher level of deprivation than Hindus, but the reverse is true in urban areas. The Others category is found to have a lower proportion of deprived people in both rural and urban areas.

None of these studies, however, compute State-wise estimates of the prevalence, depth and severity of poverty for religious groups, except John and Mutatkar (2005). They estimate poverty separately for rural and urban areas in 17 states, together constituting 97 per cent of India's population. The estimates are computed using unit level consumer expenditure data from the 55th round (1999-2000) of the National Sample Survey and are reported in some detail below. The resulting headcount ratios of poverty (the proportion of the population living below the official state poverty lines - HCR) for urban and rural areas in each State are shown in Tables 14 and 15.

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John and Mutatkar note (Table 14) that

> "at the all-India level there is only a marginal difference in the prevalence of rural poverty among Hindus and Muslims. Inequality among Hindus is higher than among Muslims. Poverty among Christians is lower than for these two groups, though their consumption expenditures are more polarized as compared to all other groups. …. Rural poverty is the lowest among Sikhs and highest among the 'Others', …53 per cent [of whom are].. Buddhists. Hindus are the poorest religious group in rural areas in the majority of the states, exceptions being states such as Kerala and Bihar, where the Muslims and Christians respectively are poorer than other religious groups. Differences in the prevalence of rural poverty between religious groups are especially notable in some states. In Assam, for instance, the HCR for Hindus is much lower than that of Muslims and Christians. On the other hand, the HCR for rural Muslims is perceptibly lower than that of Hindus in states such as Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. In Orissa, Maharashtra and West Bengal, there are wide differences in prevalence of rural poverty across all the religious groups" (p. 1340).

As seen in Table 15, "Muslims are the poorest religious group in urban India, with their HCR being 15 percentage points higher than Hindus" (p. 1340). John and Mutatkar's (2005)

> "main observations from the state-level estimates of urban HCR can be summarised as follows:
>
> - In sharp contrast with the results for rural areas, …Hindus are the poorest religious group only in two states, viz, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. In the urban areas of almost all the remaining states, we find that Muslims are poorer than other religious groups.
> - Muslims are not only the poorest group in most states, but there is also a notable difference in the magnitude of their poverty as compared to other religious groups… [which vary widely]. For instance, in the case of Maharashtra, there are wide variations in urban HCR across all the religious groups.
> - Tamil Nadu is unique in that the HCR for Muslims is more than 10 percentage points higher than Hindus. ….This can be explained by a very high inequality among urban Muslims in Tamil Nadu" (p. 1341).

Table 14: Headcount ratio of poverty (Rural)

States	Total	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Others
Andhra Pradesh	10.52	10.92	5.65	6.79	-	-
Assam	40.22	34.10	51.21	50.96	-	-
Bihar	44.08	43.60	44.24	61.87	-	-
Gujarat	12.36	12.65	2.14	-	-	-
Haryana	7.40	7.58	8.96	-	4.22	-
Himachal Pradesh	7.86	8.05	4.60	-	0.00	6.57
Jammu & Kashmir	3.93	6.09	1.49	-	1.10	-
Karnataka	16.84	17.36	12.30	11.04	-	7.36
Kerala	9.38	10.30	11.51	3.97	-	-
Madhya Pradesh	37.35	38.05	22.66	-	-	-
Maharashtra	23.27	22.65	14.94	-	-	35.25
Orissa	47.96	48.23	24.44	58.81	-	-
Punjab	6.01	8.04	4.24	0.00	5.40	-
Rajasthan	13.47	13.23	18.37	-	9.85	-
Tamil Nadu	20.01	20.81	13.03	12.52	-	-
Uttar Pradesh	31.01	31.27	30.84	-	-	-
West Bengal	31.71	28.57	36.96	-	-	56.32
All India	**27.02**	**27.63**	**27.01**	**19.62**	**3.04**	**33.47**

Source: John and Mutatkar, 2005, p. 1340

Table 15: Headcount ratio of poverty (Urban)

States	Total	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Others
Andhra Pradesh	27.28	25.36	38.10	22.14		
Assam	7.22	7.0	9.89	0.00		
Bihar	33.42	31.03	45.88	31.27		
Gujarat	14.73	14.3	21.69		0.0	0.28
Haryana	10.02	9.53	8.72		0.00	
Himachal Pradesh	4.57	4.79	17.73		0.86	0.0
Jammu & Kashmir	1.92	2.24	1.81			0.00
Karnataka	24.66	21.59	37.96	4.84		
Kerala	19.84	17.99	31.09	8.32		
Madhya Pradesh	38.47	38.13	47.37	17.96		9.14
Maharashtra	26.74	21.61	44.86	3.17		38.63
Orissa	43.51	41.89	67.24	64.78		
Punjab	5.47	5.82	1.30	28.89	4.46	
Rajasthan	19.49	18.69	26.69			7.97
Tamil Nadu	22.53	21.88	32.0	17.38		
Uttar Pradesh	30.76	26.43	42.17			
West Bengal	14.71	13.63	22.49			
All India	**23.49**	**21.35**	**36.62**	**11.40**	**10.04**	**18.33**

Source: John and Mutatkar, 2005, p. 1341.

John and Mutatkar (2005) note that

> "All India rural and urban poverty estimates show that the prevalence of urban poverty among Muslims and Sikhs is higher than their corresponding rural poverty. The reverse is true for Hindus, Christians and the 'Others'. This implies, for instance, that a Muslim living in urban India is more likely to be poor than his or her rural counterpart and a Hindu living in rural India is more likely to be poor than his or her counterpart in urban India, though there are also considerable statewise variations in this regard" (p. 1341).

Analysis of inter-state variation in both rural and urban poverty among religious groups indicates significant variation. In Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, for instance, the incidence of

"urban poverty exceeds rural poverty by more than 10 percentage points. This higher prevalence of urban poverty is also reflected in the poverty estimates for religious groups in these states, but notable is the case of Muslims, for whom urban poverty exceeds rural poverty by more than 30 percentage points in Andhra Pradesh and 20 percentage points in Kerala. Assam is a unique state, where the urban HCR is lower than the rural HCR by 33 percentage points. [They].. also observe that, 51 per cent of rural Christians in Assam are below the poverty line, while the proportion of urban Christians below the poverty line is zero, which is interesting considering that the proportion of SCs/STs is equal among the rural and urban Christians in Assam. In Uttar Pradesh, rural poverty is higher than urban poverty among Hindus, but the reverse is true for the Muslims, while prevalence of poverty among rural Christians in Bihar exceeds that of their urban counterparts by 30 percentage points. Urban poverty among Muslims is considerably higher than the corresponding incidence of rural poverty in states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and Orissa. In Gujarat, only 2 per cent of rural Muslims are below the poverty line, but this proportion increases sharply to around 22 per cent for the urban Muslims. The difference in rural and urban poverty among Muslims is 43 percentage points and 30 percentage points in Orissa and Maharashtra respectively" (p. 1341).

"Statewise variations in poverty exist not only for the same religious group across rural and urban areas of a particular state, but also for the same religious group across states. For example, prevalence of rural poverty in Gujarat (12.36 per cent) and Rajasthan (13.47 per cent) is not very different, but there is a wide variation in the incidence of poverty among rural Muslims of these states. While in Gujarat, 2.14 per cent of rural Muslims are below the poverty line, the corresponding figure for Rajasthan is 18.37 per cent. Similarly in urban areas, though the poverty levels in Andhra Pradesh (27.28 per cent) and Karnataka (24.66 per cent) are not very different, a wide variation exists in the poverty levels of urban Christians of these states. While 22.14 per cent of urban Christians in Andhra Pradesh are poor, only 4.84 per cent of the urban Christians are poor in Karnataka" (p. 1341).

6   Conclusion

The present study has assembled data on some demographic aspects of religious communities in India. Preliminary analysis of different indicators of development, such as literacy rate, work participation, unemployment rate, school attendance and incidence of poverty show significant inter-state and inter-religious variations. However, the relationships between the variables need to be further analysed.

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Chapter 4

Contributions of Roman Catholic FBOs in the field of education

T.A John[*]

Abstract

Christian missionaries have played a pioneering role in India's educational development. Their engagement in education has sprung from various rationales and motivations. Roman Catholic involvement can broadly be divided into three phases, namely an evangelical phase, a liberal phase and a liberation phase, although some elements of each phase can be found in the others. The objectives of the missionaries shifted from the hope of converting India to Christianity in the evangelical phase at the beginning of the 20th century, to a liberation phase in the period after independence. In the liberal phase, educational institutions thought that it was worth the effort of preparing the minds of their students through the diffusion of Christian ideas and principles, rather than engaging in direct evangelism through mission schools and colleges. In the third phase i.e. the liberation phase, education is considered to be part of a social gospel. In particular, it is assumed that western education for the marginalized in the peripheral areas of India can act as a catalyst of social change.

1   Introduction

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are becoming increasingly active and are thought by some to be playing an effective role in development the world over. They are defined as those organizations whose involvement in civil society is similar to that of NGOs, except that they professedly draw their inspiration and mission from their religious faith. By faith, I mean not the mere assent of the mind to the cultic aspect of a religion, but a conviction of the core message of the religion, leading to praxis. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to a wider review of the work of faith-based non-profit organizations involved in development. It focuses on the contribution of Roman Catholic FBOs to education in India.

In this era of globalization and liberalization, there is not only a growing realization that nation-states need each other's cooperation for trade and economic and social development, but also that both governmental and non-governmental agencies in partnership are required to ensure responsible governance, leading to integrated development of the people. It is this interdependency of multiple agencies which gives legitimacy to FBOs in their role as partners in the developmental process of a nation in the crucial areas of human life.

First, the rationale for Catholic FBOs and the beginning of Christian mission is briefly discussed. Christian missionaries' engagement in education can broadly be divided into three phases, which are discussed in turn in this paper: an evangelical phase (Section 3.1), a liberal phase (Section 3.2) and a liberation phase (Section 3.3).

2   The rationale for Roman Catholic FBOs

Roman Catholic FBOs draw their strength and inspiration from Jesus. Going by the *New Testament*, the message of Jesus can be summed up in the verses given in John's Gospel: "I have come so that they may have life, and life in abundance" (Jn.10:10). Abundant life *for all* (emphasis mine) is a clear and unmistakable mandate given to the disciples by the Master. It was recognised and given expression by the fledgling community of believers through their lifestyle. It is told that they held everything in common and that there were no needy among them.

> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them. For there was not a needy person among them, because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet. This was then distributed to each person as anyone had a need. (Acts 4:32-36).

The unfolding of this ideal community down the chequered history of the Catholic Church has undoubtedly and often controversially been inconsistent and at times even at variance with the early experiment. However, it must be acknowledged that the vision itself never quite lost its core message. In every age, a reinterpretation of the original vision is needed, so as to ensure that it is relevant to the specific spatio-temporal context. Although the Church has neither consistently followed its avowed *abundant life for all* mantra, nor always had pure and altruistic motives, it has constantly attempted to make itself relevant for the time, often with a fair degree of success. This can be seen in various policy pronouncements by the Church over time and the strategies that have been adopted in the Church's efforts to make meaningful its presence in the world. The Church's persistent dialogue with the world, although often necessitated by historical forces beyond its control, has resulted in a constant pursuit of new thresholds by way of creative reinterpretation of the original message. The present study analyses a few such reinterpretations, especially contributions in the field of education, from the history of Christianity in India.

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3   Beginnings

Christianity in India claims to be as old as Christianity itself. The Syro-Malabar Christian tradition claims that Thomas, a disciple of Jesus, preached in the Malabar coast area of India today known as Kerala. About fourteen hundred years later, the Portuguese came to India and Christianized the population under their jurisdiction. A Jesuit priest, Francis Xavier, after whom many educational and social institutions in India are named, belonged to this time. In keeping with the Christian tradition of the times, "the gospel came to India during this period of time in ships of the conquistadors whose purpose was to conquer and convert" (Heredia, 1995, p. 232). Besides conversion of the natives to Christian faith, the missionaries chose education as part of their major mission. Heredia points to three main agencies for the spread of education in India: "the Christian mission, the Governmental, and the private Indian ones". This paper focuses on the Christian mission and its contribution to education.

Most often, western education in India is understood to be synonymous with English medium education. However, "it is the Portuguese who brought western education to India, establishing schools in their settlements at Goa, Daman, Diu, Cochin and on the Hoogly. Already in 1543, on January 25, the feast of the conversion of St. Paul, the Jesuits opened a college named after the saint in Goa" (Sequeira, 1939, p. 27). The French had also begun elementary schools at Pondicherry, Mahe, Chandernagore and Yaman.

In the erstwhile Bombay Presidency, the early education provision was "chiefly a record of Christian Missionary enterprise" (Basu, 1974, p. 131). The Portuguese "Franciscans were not only the first missionaries, but also the first school masters" (Gense, 1964, p. 19). The founding of St. Xavier's college in 1869 boosted Catholic education in Bombay. Along with higher education, the missionaries also undertook elementary education. It was Roman Catholic missionaries who took the lead in establishing elementary and secondary schools in Madras and Bengal. Some of the leading Catholic higher education centres run by the Jesuits during the 19th century were St. Joseph's College, Nagapattanam (founded in the year 1844, and moved to Tiruchinapalli in 1882), St. Xavier's College, Calcutta (1862), St. Xavier's College, Bombay (1869), St. Aloysius College, Mangalore (1880) and St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling (1888).

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Protestant missionary efforts to promote education in India began in the Madras Presidency.

> "The first Protestant English Mission came to Madras with the Society for the Promotion Christian Knowledge in 1727 and started schools in Madras, Tanjore, Cuddalore, Plamkottah and Tricinopoly (Tiruchinapalli). The Baptist came to Bengal in 1793, and the London Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Mission had far-flung settlements at Surat, Meerut, Agra, Calcutta and Tranquebar in the 19th century."(Sequeira, 1939, p.30)

The protestant missionaries did not find much favour with the East India Company, with the result that "it is doubtful whether in 1800 more than a thousand children were being educated in mission schools" (Basu, 1964, p. 4). Certain governmental policy changes led to a rapid expansion of Protestant missionary education during the first half of the 19th century. The causes of this rapid expansion were the perceived advantage of English, specifically after Macaulay's *Minute* of 1835 and after 1837, when English replaced Persian as the official and court language. The position of English as the new lingua franca was further reinforced in the1844 resolution of Lord Hardinge, which prescribed English as a preferred qualification for government service. Ever since, Protestant education has been consolidated, and thus some of the most prestigious centres of quality higher education until today are associated with the Protestant churches. They are Madras Christian College (1839), St. John's at Agra (1850) and Vellore (1918), St. Stephen, Delhi (1881), and the Christian Medical Colleges at Ludhiana (1864) and Vellore (1918).

3.1   Education mission as evangelism

For the Protestants as well as the Catholics, the education mission had a larger and longer-term objective in mind, which was the eventual conversion of India to Christianity. However "a unique feature of the official education policy in British India was its strict religious neutrality" (Heredia, 1995, p. 2335). In his farewell address to some missionaries in 1835, Lord Bentinck reaffirmed that the fundamental principle of British rule was neutrality with regard to the religious beliefs of students. No religious instructions were to be imparted in government schools. In 1858 Queen Victoria herself prohibited "all interference with religious belief or worship of any of our subjects, on pain of our highest displeasure" (Heredia, 1995, p. 2335). Heredia argues that this religious neutrality may not have been due to moral convictions but, "given the diversity and depth of religious affiliations in India … was an obviously pragmatic political necessity" (Heredia, 1995, p. 2335).

It may have been political expediency for the Crown to observe religious neutrality; however, most missionaries cherished the hope that education would lead to eventual conversion of India as a whole. At the Centenary Conference of the Protestant Missions held in London in 1888, missionaries working in India spoke in favour of Christian education. They were of the opinion that a new India was being born. They saw new movements like "the Brahmo Samaj and other such reform movements within Hinduism … as the result of Christian influence" (Mathew, 1988, p. 69). The Brahmo Samaj had fought against idolatry, dehumanizing caste practices and other social evils, and those who were encouraged by these reform movements were of the view that, even though there was not much hope for direct conversions through the mission schools, modern English education would bring about changes of hearts and minds, and those educated in the schools would be a great moral influence in their own social milieu.

> "Western knowledge … is .. eagerly sought after in India… our science and philosophy and arts; and it will appear that the impulses, the tendencies and the qualities of mind and character to which it must be traced, are themselves directly due to the all transforming influence of Christianity" (Mathew, 1988).

A certain missionary observed that Hinduism was

> A gigantic system of error that has grown up for upwards of thirty centuries; remained unaffected by the sword and fire of the Mohammedan rule and the total disorganizing power of the British rule and promises to hold itself for centuries judged by the way it has adapted itself to the shattering Western influences. It had accommodated atheists and there had grown up an intellectual class, which still seems immune to the penetrating influence of Christianity. (Rajagopaul cited in Mathew, pp. 81-82).

The anguish of this missionary was compounded when he was confronted with the fact that a Hindu graduate of Madras University, had attempted to start an Orthodox Asiatic Society. It was disappointing to the missionary that, instead of going against orthodoxy, such a person would promote it. The protestant missionaries who argued and advocated for English higher education secretly hoped that eventually the Hindus would embrace Christianity. However, "It may have been true that the majority of the Indians lost faith in Hinduism but it was equally true that not all of them turned to Christ" (Mathew, 1988, p. 80). To many, it was clear that the Hindu reformists were a tiny minority and that most of those who sought western education did so more for economic reasons than for any kind of grandiose

sense of liberation or moral upliftment, with the large majority there to take advantage of the secular English education given by the missionaries.

In addition to the above categories, there were also those who did not seek western schooling and adopted a very antagonistic militant stand against western thought and influence. The missionaries were confronted with those who were far removed from the Brahmo Samajists of Bengal, the Arya Samajists of Punjab or the Theosophists of Madras. These were groups who were openly hostile to Christians. The Rev. Sathianadhan, for example, wrote to his secretary in London, informing him that there were Hindu preachers who often obstructed the Christian preachers and "sometimes treated them with violence" (Sathianadhan cited in Mathew, 1988, p. 86).

3.2 Mission redefined: from evangelism to liberation in the era of political mobilization

If the Protestant missionaries during the first half of the 19th century cherished a hope for the conversion of India as a result of Christian education, in the second half of the century they redefined the role of Christian education by saying that it is well worth the effort to prepare minds "through diffusion of Christian ideas and principles and not direct evangelism in mission schools and colleges" (Matthew, 1988, p.75). They noted that the energy manifested in religious revivalism was at that time beginning to find expression in the form of political awakening. The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885. With its limited demands for constitutional reforms, the Congress was seen as no threat to the missionary agenda. And yet there were two schools of thought among the missionaries, "one which welcomed the emergence of the national aspirations and pleaded for missionary sympathy, support and guidance and the other, which disliked both nationalism and missionary involvement in it" (Mathew, 1988, p. 121). Some of those who opposed missionary involvement in nationalism claimed that their "opposition emanated from a fundamental doctrinal (ideological) premise, namely "politics lies outside the sphere of Christian ministry." They based their argument on the scriptures, arguing that Christ and his immediate followers did not enter into politics – a claim that has given rise to many debates which have had polarizing effects in the history of the church. But there were others who anguished over the dilemma of whether to sympathise with the nationalist movement, which opposed a government in which they had hitherto found a staunch ally.

The official attitude of the church towards the rising tide of nationalism was lack of sympathy and growing suspicion, because it saw the emergence a new theology of incarnation that called for participation in the life of the converted rather than mere preaching. It was a period when the emphasis was on social involvement rather than on conversion to Christianity.

The position of the missionary as the spiritual giver and benefactor was gone. Christianity was to become one among many other religions in India, sharing its principles with others and vice versa. It appeared that Christians in India would look forward to an era of mutual cooperation with other religious communities. The emphasis shifted from evangelism to ameliorating socio-economic backwardness, not only of the Christian communities but also of others (Mathew, 1988, p. 75).

This shift in theology brought to the fore the social relevance of the Christian message. Purely spiritual salvation gave way to socio-economic relief activities becoming an integral part of evangelization. Manshardt claimed, "the Gospel of Jesus Christ is as wide as the needs of man, spiritually, politically, industrially, economically" (Manshardt, n.d. p.190). This new realization helped replace proselytization and direct evangelization with rural reconstruction programmes. The change in theological outlook also meant a change of attitude towards other religions. It questioned the claim of Christianity as having exclusive truth. It also questioned who should be the primary beneficiaries of Christian education – the poor or the rich. This period saw the setting up of large-scale primary education centres in rural India. Also, by 1928 there had already come into existence many vocational Middle Schools.

Although the changes in the social scenario brought about rethinking on the part of many in the Church and led some to abandon direct evangelization altogether, the aspiration of bringing people to Christ via conversion did not altogether die in the minds and hearts of the missionaries. The difference was that the spirit of the social gospel percolated into evangelism. Either way the social gospel had come to stay.

3.3   *Education for social transformation*

The social gospel gave birth to the agenda of 'education as an agent of social transformation'. Although the social gospel had a long gestation period, when it was finally generally accepted in the

church, the result was explosive. Many church personnel embraced it wholeheartedly, as it made sense and had meaning in the changing times. Clearly, many forces in history came together to give a fillip to the thinking. This paper does not have the scope and space to articulate all these forces. Suffice it to say that the Catholic Church seriously evaluated its educational policies and found that the clientele served did not in practice function as a catalyst for social transformation. The conclusion was that the intended trickle down effect was failing to produce the desired results. Hence, the Church decided to reach out directly to the poor rather than attempting to reach them through educating the rich.

Among the major players in this effort of the Catholic Church in India, besides the numerous Catholic parish schools and others run by various Catholic religious congregations across the country, are the Jesuits, who operate numerous higher education centres as well as high schools, primary schools and technical schools. Although one objective for starting Jesuit schools and colleges in India was the educational upliftment of Catholics, Jesuit educational institutions, like others, were open to all. In their schools "the proportion of Catholics varied from almost zero to about 60 per cent depending on the size of the population in the area" (Naik, 1987, p. 56).

Today the poor are getting greater representation in Jesuit schools. The Jesuit involvement in formal as well as non-formal education in India is quite substantial. Although the higher educational institutions may be in the cities, about 25 per cent of the high schools and almost all the primary schools are in rural areas. Quite a few colleges are bilingual, while others are English medium. Thirty per cent of the schools teach in the vernacular and about 20 per cent are bilingual.

Back in 1968, speaking in a seminar on the mission of Jesuit educational institutions, T.A. Mathias, S.J. the Jesuit Educational Director said,

> We may now proceed to study the precise point of this seminar: The social Mission of our Institutions. I feel that the world "social" is here to be understood in its broadest sense, i.e. how can our schools, and colleges better serve the complete needs of the country and the Church in today's context (Mathias, 1968, pp. 4-5).

Mathias was setting out a new agenda in education against the backdrop of the Vatican 11 documents, which argued for a new social consciousness and agenda. The Church decided to get "deeply

concerned with the world's griefs and anxieties which she [the Church] has made her own; with problems of hunger, unemployment and disease in a world of unparalleled affluence" (Matthias, 1968, p. 5). Social considerations were given greater prominence in every facet of the church's engagement in India. Mathias' social concern went as far as to speak in favour of not starting "anymore traditional schools and colleges except perhaps in areas of special importance where the church is grossly underrepresented" (Matthias, 1968).

By now it had become acceptable to state the objectives of Christian education as to function as a catalyst for social change by bringing about a transformation of society based on social justice and dignity. Vatican 11 in its *Declaration* in 1965 on Christian education spelt out the goals and priorities of the Church. It declared education to be a fundamental right of every person:

> All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their ultimate goal, their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth.[1]

Besides the Vatican Declaration on Education, which gave Catholic educators something to work with in India, the Kothari Commission Report in 1966 presented to the country a comprehensive educational blueprint to follow. It was at about the same time that the Jesuits, in their General Assembly in Rome, urged their members to have a high regard for the apostolate of education as one of the primary ministries of the Society. Against the backdrop of the above three landmark events, the Jesuit Educational Association (JEA) in India organised a seminar in which it was agreed that "education is the main instrument of social change, and that it should seek individual development and fulfilment through social reorganization and emphasis on social perspectives" (Naik, 1987, p. 115). It was further agreed in the JEA meeting that, when the Kothari Commission's proposal for a Common School System was implemented, "all Jesuit schools in general should join, not merely because it should be expedient to do so, but simply because it would be the right thing" (Naik, 1987).
Of the many issues discussed in the seminar's various workshops, the major thrust was education's social content. It was believed that by a determined effort, schools could "imbue their staff and students with a sense of social responsibility and commitment to national development" (Naik, 1987). The consequences too were identified (Naik, 1987, p. 121):

- No deserving student was to be deprived of education in Jesuit institutions for lack of money.
- The greatest attention was to be paid to the training and care of lay teachers, who were to be given a more responsible role in the framing of policies and the administration of institutions.
- Each institution was to be visibly committed to at least one significant scheme of socio- economic service, in collaboration, wherever possible, with government and other agencies.

Thus, a social orientation had come to be more pronounced in Jesuit education. In 1973, a Jesuit Educator's Social Action Workshop further focused on social engagement. The Workshop concluded, "the liberation of the masses can only come when they realize the oppressive social structures of which they are victims and demand justice"(Naik, 1987, p. 33) The members were convinced that in working for social justice through schools and colleges, or through other educational means, formal as well as non-formal, Jesuits and their associates must aim above all at enabling the poor to acquire the knowledge, skills and leadership needed to liberate themselves and become masters of their own destiny. Some of the practical decisions that were taken included (Naik, 1987):

- preference in admissions to students from the poorer classes
- English as a medium of instruction, to be reviewed and replaced by an Indian language as soon as possible
- reduction of fees where these were very high, possibly by seeking grant-in-aid
- schools to be used as community centres and as centres for adult education
- lifestyle of the school to be adapted to favour the poorer students
- students to be trained to channelise their energies into combating social injustice through direct but peaceful action (depending, of course, on their age).

One of the major commitments that emerged from the deliberation was that the schools were increasingly to be made neighbourhood schools. Incidentally, this was also a major thrust of the Right to Education Bill (2005) introduced by the Government of India.

Christian education for the last forty years or so has been greatly enriched by the contributions made by centres of non-formal education. Christian educators by themselves and also with governmental assistance set up rural educational centres to provide education outside the formal school system for both youths and adults among the poor. With the help of a particular pedagogy, they organize programmes to eradicate illiteracy and provide training in technical and social skills, as well as offer

ethical education geared to the analysis and transformation of the society in which the students live. They educate students who, it is hoped, can assume leadership roles in their own communities and organizations.

4   Conclusion

It can be said that through the convergence of several factors, the rationale for Christian education in India has gone through three main phases, which can be broadly classified as an evangelical phase, a liberal or humanistic phase and a liberation phase. The evangelical phase was related to the beginnings of Christianity in India, when education was used for the long-term objective of conversion of the natives to Christianity. The liberal phase was a period when education was seen from a humanistic standpoint and the main thrust of Christian education was the development of the human person as an individual in society. During the third phase, which is the current phase, the emphasis is on education for social transformation. And during this period, there has been a greater focus on the poor. A preferential option for the poor is the policy message, with efforts not only to make the poor the prime beneficiaries of education through various social programmes, but also to use education as a catalyst for bringing about their liberation from all forms of oppression. Beyond the formal, non-formal education is being given an unprecedented boost by way of personnel and structural support in the current phase of Christian education.

However, one phase did not follow each other in a unilnear way without any degree of overlap. All of the approaches have been present to one degree or another in all three phases. Even now, some Christian education providers have primarily evangelical motives, while others in the past showed some characteristics of the third phase of Catholic education provision. One reason for this is the wide variety of churches and denominations in India, with varying beliefs and theologies. Extreme liberals and hard-core conservatives can be found even within one of these numerous churches or denominations.

The belief that 'All people of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to education' is fundamental to Christian education. Education being key to human development, it has the potential to promote the dignity of the human person. The Constitution of India in its Preamble vouches to secure justice, liberty and equality to all citizens without discrimination. It is this very agenda that Christian educators try to promote through their

efforts. Besides health care, education is one of the major sectors in which Christians are involved on a large scale in India. And most Indians, especially the 'upper crust' of Indian society, would agree that Christians have done a great service in the field of education. It is also true that most of the beneficiaries of Christian educational institutions were and are people belonging to religions other than Christianity. Some churches have also set up educational institutions primarily to educate non-Christian students. An example is the Sophia College, Bombay, which was set up exclusively to educate the Muslim girls of Bombay. Even the traditional Catholic parish schools, although they may have been set up primarily for Christians, are not exclusively for them. Christian education thus has always been an open and inclusive venture.

As the rationale for education provided by the Catholic church has evolved from the evangelical to the liberational, the locale, clientele and curriculum have been through a process of transformation. To educate with a view to convert died an early death. It gave way to liberal education, and subsequently to liberation education. Liberation education aims to help liberate the poor from poverty, oppression and every form of injustice. This social thrust was so radical that there were efforts on the part of some educators to give up English as the medium of instruction, with a view to discouraging students from the upper strata of society from seeking admission, so as to be able to focus more on the poor. In addition, there was a strong rural thrust. Notwithstanding this emphasis, a large number of students from every religion and ethnic group in urban, semi-urban and rural India continue to receive education in Christian institutions.

Footnotes

[*]   Father T A John works at the Indian Social institute, Lodhi institutional Area, Delhi.
[1]   Declaration On Christian Education Gravissimum educationis proclaimed by Pope Paul John VI on October 28, 1965. See http://www.ourladyswarriors.org/teach/graveduc.htm

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Chapter 5

Religion and development in North-east India: A sociological understanding

Ksh Imokanta Singh

Abstract

In the North-eastern states of India, torn between ethnic conflict, separatism and underdevelopment, this paper argues that religion has both facilitated and impeded development. Becoming established in areas where the traditional religion was animist, the 'new' religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) resulted in widespread conversions. Although their attitudes to traditional religious practices have varied, where faced by opposition and also as part of their normal missionary and religious practices, they have been agents of innovation and service delivery. At the same time, they have sometimes incited dissension and violence. Surveying the literature on the dynamic links between religion and development in the culturally heterogeneous North-eastern states, the paper suggests that religious institutions, especially Christian organizations, have played a key role in the promotion of education and provision of health care and in the process have not only contributed to material development but also, and perhaps more importantly, engendered social and cultural change.

1   Introduction

This paper considers the religious history and composition of the eight states of North-east India: Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Sikkim[1]. It seeks to understand the history and impact of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism in a region where the people were formerly predominantly animist by outlining the history of these religions' arrival in the region, the practices of the early missionaries, and aspects of their development impact using literacy as an indicator. In addition, it explores aspects of the social and cultural changes associated with widespread conversions and some of the political tensions that have religious dimensions. First, the main concepts that are relevant to the analysis are discussed: religion, development, tradition and modernity. Second, the evolution of each religious tradition in the region is discussed, paying most attention to Christianity which is now the dominant religion in three of the states (Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland) and the religious affiliation of a third of the population in Manipur (Section 3.1). Hinduism, the dominant religion in Assam and for two thirds of the population in Manipur; Islam, important in Assam and Manipur; and Buddhism, a minority religion in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram; are discussed in less detail (Sections 3.2-3.4).

## 2	A marriage between religion and development?

Any marriage between religion and development will be a hasty and incomplete affair if those seeking it are not equipped with knowledge of the identities of both. They must also exercise caution about who is the bride and who the groom, whether the marriage is between two equal partners or there is a lopsided relationship between the two, and so on. The questions of whether religion and development can be married at all or might divorce shortly after their marriage are also pertinent. All these can be analyzed better if we have clear workable definitions of both the terms.

To start with religion, the sociology of religion has adopted various perspectives in its endeavours to understand the myriad elements of numerous religions. How sociology sees religion is different from how metaphysics or theology sees it. The sociology of religion, instead of asking the question whether God exists, is oriented towards questions like 'why do people believe in God?'; 'how do they come to believe?'; 'how do they describe their God?'; or 'is there any relationship between their description of God and their social conditions?'. Metaphysics, being a branch of the philosophy of religion, is built on the very fundamental question of whether god exists. Theology, on the other hand, "in its conservative traditions, regards religion as closely akin to true spirituality and as essentially a supernatural phenomenon that, by its very nature, can never be defined nor for that matter wholly comprehended" (Hunt, 2002, p. 11).

What, then, is religion from the sociological point of view? This question becomes "more pertinent than ever since how religion is perceived, described and analyzed in contemporary society depends to a large extent on how it is defined" (Hunt, 2002, p. 7). The history of the sociology of religion is witness to how definitions of religion or how sociologists see religion keep on changing, depending on changes in the realms beyond religion as well as within a religion itself. Edward Tylor gave a 'substantive' definition, saying "religion constitutes a belief in supernatural beings" (Tylor, 1903, p. 424, quoted in Hunt, 2002). Durkheim (1915), in his functional approach, saw the role of religion, manifested in rituals, beliefs and practices, as being to maintain solidarity within the group of people who follow a particular religion, through their collective consciousness. However, the paradigm changed again during the mid-20th century, from studying the function of religion to studying its meanings and symbols – in the context of "the study of the nature of subjective reality or of the way in which the world appears to human beings, religion is what individuals and societies say it is" (Hunt, 2002, p. 8).

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Like religion, the concept of development has also kept on changing. Adam Szirmai (2005, p. 1) suggests that "what one understands by "development' in a particular historical period is strongly influenced by dominant cultures and powers of that period". Presently there are at least two general approaches to development: first, 'the fight against poverty' approach, which focuses on the problems of widespread poverty, hunger and misery in developing countries and on the question of what can be done in order to realize improvements in the short term; and second, analysis of long-term economic and social development. The latter approach concentrates on comparing developments in different countries, regions and historical periods in order to gain a better understanding of the factors that have long-term effects on the dynamics of socio-economic development (Szirmai, 2005, p. 2).

Development has for a long time been construed in terms of materiality or economic progress, with less importance given to non-economic variables. In this context, a distinction needs to be made between economic development and growth. According to Szirmai, "Economic development refers to growth accompanied by qualitative changes in the structure of production and employment, generally referred to as *structural change*….This implies that economic growth could take place without any economic development" (2005, p. 6). The identification of economic growth with development was seriously criticized during the 1960s. This "criticism of growth fetishism led to the emergence of so-called 'social indicators': Life expectancy, literacy, levels of education, infant mortality, availability of telephones, hospital beds, licensed doctors, availability of calories, and so forth" (Szirmai, 2005, p. 7). Amartya Sen (1999) has argued for an even broader concept of development, focusing on the concept of freedom. He sees development as an integrated process of the expansion of substantive freedoms. Economic growth, technological advance and political change are all to be judged in the light of their contributions to the expansion of human freedoms. Freedoms are also accompanied by their negations, 'unfreedoms', which should be reduced. This opening up of the concept of development gives the possibility of measuring happiness, not solely on the basis of economic prosperity, but on the basis of non-economic indicators like spirituality, community solidarity, kinship ties and rituals.

Though economic security is still the basis of this holistic conception of happiness, economic development and growth is not the one and only means to this end for individuals. It has been suggested that this is why there appears to be considerable movement towards the realm of religiosity or spirituality amongst people in the economically prosperous countries. This is often regarded as a

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search for an alternative, in response to the rapidly moving pace of automation and industrialization brought about by science and technology, which, it is said, chokes sheer contentment with living itself. This is one way of looking at development from the vantage point of religion. Another would be whether and how religion is instrumental in various facets of development, such as economic security, social well-being, health care, education, civil rights, democratic progress, environmental issues, or conflict management.

Studies of the economic ties between religion and development are not new. Max Weber (1950) talks of the role of ascetic Protestantism, mainly Calvinism, vis-à-vis that of Catholicism, in the rise of capitalism in Western Europe. Because Protestantism did not allow its followers to spend lavishly and consume luxuriously, he suggests, financial resources and hard work combined to foster the development of capitalism. In this religious tradition, he suggests, people's sense of calling, when combined with the doctrine of predestination, infused a belief that he/she was chosen by God and has to work hard for the glory of God. Karl Marx, on the other hand, had a very negative impression of religion (Marx and Engels, 1976). For him, religion acts as an ideology of the ruling elite and thus an opiate of the masses. Religion, he argued, serves as an escape mechanism from misery, enabling people to dwell in an illusory sense of happiness.

Two points emerge from the above discussion. First, in some views, certain types of religion may provide a positive impetus in bringing about development. However, a second view is the complete opposite of this, believing that religion can also be quite antithetical to development. Thus the relationships between religion and development may be smooth, strained, or a mixture of both. Moreover any analysis is contingent upon the definitions of both concepts that are adopted. Thus according to Sabina Alkire (2006, p. 502),

> "Religious people and institutions may be agents of advocacy, funding, innovation, empowerment, social movements, and service delivery. Equally, religious people and institutions can incite violence, model hierarchy, oppose empowerment (women should stay at home), deflect advocacy (we care about the next life), absorb funding (build a new worship hall) and cast aspersions on service delivery (they are trying to convert you)."

There is no dearth of examples from different parts of the world of a positive relationship between religion and development (Myers, 1999; Trip, 1999; Whaites, 1999). An example is *Sarvodaya* (welfare

of all) which "has brought improvements to hundreds of Sri Lankan villages through work based on Buddhist values such as giving and service (*shramadana*)" (Tyndale, 2003, p. 23). The Hindu *Swadhyaya* (discovery of self) movement in India is built upon the same conviction. *Swadhyaya* has inspired thousands of villagers with the hope of spiritual regeneration. It has given people the self-confidence to work towards raising their material standard of living (Tyndale, 2003, p. 23-24).

However, there are also many cases when there is conflict between the two. According to Sabina Alkire,

> **"**Religion may become a practical problem when religious leaders or institutions obstruct development or view it as a threat because it promotes western liberal secular culture and human rights, or when religious rhetoric is a veneer for other motives. Classic issues of value conflict surround family planning methods such as contraception and abortion, HIV/AIDS prevention and implicit messages related to sexual morality and women's empowerment; other issues might relate to secularism, sacred sites, dress, or tolerance of outside groups" (Alkire, 2006, p. 506).

The case of HIV/AIDS is also emphasized by Wendy Tyndale, who notes that

> "religious groups have usually insisted on awareness-raising and education as means to change people's behaviour rather than the dissemination of condoms, which they see as tantamount to giving people a license to indulge in pre- and extramarital sex. The Catholic Church has been in the forefront of this controversy but it is by no means alone. The Muslim organization Sarkan Zoumountsi ('chain of solidarity') which works with impoverished communities in Yaoundé, Cameroon, refused to accept finance from certain international bodies for their campaign against AIDS because they did not 'share the same vision of the subject', even though they shared the same objectives" (Tyndale, 2003).

Apart from these conflicts of values, the world is witness to the ever-increasing violence triggered by religious fundamentalists whose motives can be traced to their endeavour to resist an outside value system which threatens to obliterate their own. The present study will strive to debate the nuances of the relationships between religion and development.

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3 Religion and development dynamics in North-east India

Northeast India is one of the most complex regions in the world in terms of biodiversity, ethnicity, culture and religion. This can be easily exemplified by the fact that there are places where people of two neighbouring villages are not able to understand each other's language, despite their geographical proximity. The importance of biodiversity is demonstrated by the way communities are attached to flora and fauna through the channel of their belief system, which may be termed animism. That is not all. The North-east is a region of transition, where the 'old' meets the 'new' and 'tradition' meets 'modernity' and where there are both conflictual and dialogic intercourses between the two. This complexity makes analysis of the relationships between religion and development formidable though not impossible. One way of approaching the task would be to identify some of the leading religions, like Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, compare them with so-called animism, and consider their involvement in political and social change and development in this region, because in some cases these major religions serve as binding forces in building up communitarian consciousness, despite stark differences in communities' religious belief systems.

Before proceeding, it is important to consider the concepts of tradition and modernity, given their rampant usage in this region in transition. The term 'modernity' seems to carry an inherent contradiction in meaning — of "order and chaos as modern twins" (Taylor, 1999, p. 15). It is juxtaposed with tradition at the other pole. To begin a holistic discourse on modernity and tradition, it is pertinent to look into the historical origin of these concepts, as a basis for a geo-historical interpretation of modernity, which will enable us to understand the specific periods and places where the practices of being modern are created, challenged and changed. Alongside this changing pattern of modernity, any understanding of what is tradition must also take a dynamic form. Further, it is important to understand the contests and accommodations for the same space between modernity and tradition, particularly when it comes to the consciousness of the communities concerned.

The origin of modernity is popularly traced to the European Enlightenment in the 18th century, which heralded an age of reason in which individualism was highlighted, religious and traditional authority critiqued, the private separated from the public domain, and liberal, secular, and democratic ideals emerged. On the other hand, tradition consists of a set of social practices which seek to celebrate and inculcate certain behavioural norms and values, implying continuity with a real or imagined past, and

usually associated with widely accepted rituals or other forms of symbolic behaviour. From the vantage point of modernity, tradition is a relative concept (Taylor, 1999).

The influence of modernity is contingent upon the power structure prevalent in world politics. The Eurocentric definition of modernity has provoked many alternatives which have redefined modernity in their own ways. In the developing world the responses of traditional societies to the forces of modernity have given rise to multiple modernities. In places, however, there is a celebration of tradition and supposed 'irrationality'. Such contrasts between modernity and tradition are present in the present-day North-east, where Western 'modernity' was introduced by the advent of the British.[2]

After getting acquainted with the conceptual terrain, now let us identify the major religions in the North-east and examine the relationships between religion and development. The most important, Christianity, is considered in more detail than Hinduism (Section 2.2), Islam (Section 2.3) and Buddhism (Section 2.4).

3.1 Christianity

Christianity today is one of the major forces in the North-east, especially in Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, small states with, unusually for India, populations that are predominantly Christian (see Chapter 3). Christianity came to present-day North-east India through the then Assam. Catholic Christianity was brought to Bengal by the Portuguese in the 1530s. Assam, after the British took over in 1823, was in the then East Bengal and came under the Vicariates Apostolic of East Bengal. By 1855 the number of Catholics in Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) and Cachar (present-day Assam) was 850 (Leicht et. al., 1989, p. 91–93). The main interest of the Catholic mission in the north-east during that time was not in the North-east per se but in using this region as a transit point to reach Tibet, which, as a devoutly Buddhist country, had been a long term challenge for the Mission. This aim was ardently pursued by the Paris Mission Seminary, which grouped Assam and Tibet under one Vicariates Apostolic. French missionaries were active in Assam between 1850 and 1857, when they tried to reach Tibet through the lands of the Abor and Mishmis communities of Assam. They were able to convert only a few of the natives, and in any case were more concerned with Tibet (Leicht et al, 1989, p. 180–185). In the beginning, due to constraints on funds and manpower, the mission was not able to devote itself to any development works, like education. However, the

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> "the Christian Missionaries did their best to bring the Nagas, the Mizos, the Khasis and the Garos, etc. into the fold of Christianity…. And ultimately, Christianity became synonymous with the tribals of the hill areas of North East India with the exception of Arunachal Pradesh. The Christian Missionaries introduced western education, modern medicine and a new way of life to the hill tribes. They contributed to the process of modernisation in North East India significantly." (Hussain, 2001, pp. 261-62)

Following this short introduction, each of the four main states where Christian missionaries were more active will be considered in turn.

3.1.1   Nagaland

Nagaland is one of the most ethnically varied states in India, containing more than 30 tribes, each with their own language or dialect. Some of the major tribes are Angami, Ao, Chakesang, Chang, Khiamniungan, Kuki, Konyak, Lotha, Phom. Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Sumi, Yimchungru and Zeliang. Today around 90 per cent of the state's population is Christian.

Protestantism was introduced to the Nagas of the then Naga Hills by the American Baptist Missionaries in 1872 (Ray, 2004, p. 16). They

> "planted churches and promoted education for the Naga people. Dr. Clark (the missionary leader) encouraged the training and development of indigenous leaders. He published a Naga Primer, and in 1878 established the first Naga school and also solemnized the first Naga Christian marriage. In 1888, using materials from America, the enterprising Dr. Clark built a suspension bridge—still in use today—over the Milak River. A few years later, he wrote the Ao Naga Dictionary, still considered a masterpiece in this previously unwritten language." (Buttry, 2005)

Similar activities are being continued by the Nagaland Baptist Church Convention (NBCC), which was founded in 1962.

Today the most noticeable contribution of Christianity in Nagaland is western education, which opened up its societies to 'forces of modernity' that subsequently produced a new educated and self-conscious elite. This class shaped the destiny of the Nagas, who had been struggling for decades for an independent nation. So, the study of the role of Christianity in Nagaland has to take into account how it is involved in both education and conflict management. It is also pertinent to discern the impact

of Christianity on the indigenous value system. A one-sided understanding might come to the conclusion that Christianity brought out the Nagas from the age-old martial tradition of head-hunting. But it is also possible that, with the extermination of head-hunting, many of their indigenous cultural and social values may also have permanently died out.

First let us inform ourselves about the conflictual and dialogic relationships between Christianity and indigenous value systems, which may imply different views about development. One view might see the material changes brought about by Christianity as development from a traditional to a modern society. But if we see it from another angle, the changes can be interpreted as the erosion (un-development) of local wisdom, spirituality and practical means of meeting exigencies, which were very much part of the existence of the community. Today, the way of life of Naga societies has been heavily westernized. .

Christianity labelled the indigenous belief systems pagan and obscurantist, and was instrumental in sweeping away the animistic beliefs

> "at one stroke, and replacing [them] with something that was entirely foreign to the Naga people. Christ's message of love and compassion was understandable, but concepts like God, creation, sin, salvation, immortality, etc. were not. What was of immediate value was the setting up of schools and provision of medical care that the missionaries brought in" (Ray, 2004, p. 16).

It also tried to replace social institutions, for example, the traditional institution of *morung* or a*riju* (bachelors' dormitory), a 'social' centre of learning and also a 'ritual' centre, was replaced by churches, which tried but failed to open replacement hostels (Venuh, 2004, 42, 53, 85).

Despite the sweeping changes arising from the spread of Christianity, there have been efforts to blend the old with the new to preserve both faiths. One such attempt is the state-sponsored Hornbill festival which is celebrated in December, the Christian festive month, with songs and dances of different tribes (Venuh, 2004, p. 55 and 58). This is also an endeavour to play down intra-tribal differences and foster a common tribal identity. In a context of tribal tussles, people see Christianity as a binding force. Understanding this possibility, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) adopted **the slogan** 'Nagaland for Christ' in their manifesto. It says, "We stand for the faith in God and the salvation of

mankind in Jesus, the Christ alone, that is 'NAGALAND FOR CHRIST'".[3] The slogan was raised at a time when Naga people had become disenchanted with the rampant violence in their societies due to conflict between the Indian security forces and the insurgent groups on the one hand and fratricidal encounters between insurgent groups on the other. It might be construed as a politics of sentiment by the strategic think-tanks of the NSCN.

Next we may turn towards the role of churches in conflict management. The first sign of Christian education among the Nagas was seen at the start of 20th century, with the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 by western-educated Nagas. They submitted a letter to the Simon Commission (1929) requesting recognition of the Nagas as an independent entity. The Naga National Council (NNC), the first fully-fledged political organization, was formed in 1946 and pursued a self-determination agenda once the British had left. The organization celebrated the independence of the Naga Hills on the 14th August, 1947. However, India intervened and made the area part of its territory. Since then, the NNC, under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo, has been engaged in a struggle for independence, in the pursuit of which it later took up arms. Dissent within the organization came to full visibility when the NSCN was founded in 1980 by Isak Chishi Swu and Th. Muivah, former NNC members (Government of the People's Republic of Nagalim, 2001).[4]

Nagaland, which had experienced violence for decades, started tasting peace with the active involvement of the NBCC (the Nagaland Baptist Church Council). In its third Convention held at Wokha from January 31 to February 2, 1964, which was said to have been attended by five thousand representatives from all the Nagaland tribes, the NBCC made a historic resolution welcoming the proposed 'Peace-Talk' (**www.nagaland.nic.in/profile/history/peace.htm**, accessed on 15.7.2006). The Peace Mission was formed in 1964 and under the signatures of Jayaprakash Narayan, Bimala Prasad Chaliha and the Rev. Michael Scott, it submitted its proposals to work out a lasting solution on 20 December, 1964. As a result, the first ceasefire between the Government of India and the armed groups was declared on September 6, 1964. This effort of the Church was well received by the people, who rejoiced at the return of peace. However, the ceasefire was on and off. The inter-tribal and intra-organizational fissures were seen when, in 1988, the NSCN divided into two factions, NSCN (K) under the leadership of S.S. Khaplang and NSCN (IM), leading to fratricidal encounters between the two, which worsened the situation. At this point, the NBCC attempted to put the divided house in order.

Another ceasefire between NSCN (IM) and the Government of India was announced in 1997 and talks between the two parties are still going on. Later, in 2001, a Ceasefire was also agreed between NSCN (K) and the Government of India (Senba, 2001, p. 127-8). However, the NBCC walked out of the peace talks and supported a boycott of the 1998 State Assembly election, with its seven-point statement-Peace Agenda for Nagalim.[5] Its move was endorsed by the American Baptist Board of International Ministries (ABBIM). Nevertheless, the NBCC welcomed the suspension of the Special Armed Forces Act by the Centre and the NSCN(IM)'s decision to abstain from extortion (*The Assam Tribune*, March 20, 2001).[6] Despite the Church's efforts to bring peace in the state, the factional fight between the two NSCN groups goes on. Rev Kari Longchar, director, Peace Affairs, NBCC, is of the opinion that "the Church in Nagaland sees that the Naga struggle will destroy itself and the Nagas unless the damaged human relationships that have pitted tribes, factions and parties against one another are addressed, healed and restored."[7] Reflecting the view of the Church, he also called for the participation of other groups like NSCN-K, NNC-Addino, NNC-Merhepf and the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) and not just the NSCN-IM alone in the dialogue with Delhi, if a lasting solution is to be found.

The NBCC's efforts have been both lauded and rebuked. NSCN (IM), although it dreams of a Christian state, does not necessarily support everything done by Christian leaders, who it regards with suspicion. In its manifesto it blames them for colluding with India. It says, "This danger [the spread of Hindu influences in Nagaland] flows from India and the vulnerability of the church leaders and the pliable demagogues has added to the problem…The failure of the Christian leaders to grasp the way the evil forces work and their failure to face them in the way they should, has indeed, placed Nagalim on a most serious trial" (*Manifesto of NSCN*, **www.nscnonline.org** accessed on 25.6.2006). This is a sign of a surfacing of a deep structure of Naga politics. The Naga church bodies appear to be adopting an apolitical role in the peace process, but a deeper examination shows that they have allegiances to different insurgent groups, and so are part of the political reality of the State. Nevertheless, NBCC and other church bodies have also been very much part of the various development activities going on in the State.

3.1.2   *Mizoram*

Mizoram was known until 1954 as Lushai Hills District within Assam. It became a fully-fledged state in 1987. Mizos include various sub-tribes, such as Lushai, Punte, Poi, Khawlhring, Renthlei, Lakher,

Khiangte, Chawngthu, Paihte, Roite, Ralte, Hmar, Darlong, Ngente, Thadou, Pautu, Tlau, Zawngte, and Vangchhia (Hluna, 1992). Mizoram is a Christian-dominated state (87 per cent of the population), with different denominational missions, such as Baptist, Catholic, and Seventh-Day Adventists, in addition to a Welsh Mission (Presbyterian). It has a very high literacy rate of 89 per cent, next only to Kerala (91 per cent) among the Indian states. Thus, according to the 2001 Census of India, Aizawl, its capital, is the most literate district in India, with 97 per cent literacy. The credit for this high literacy rate goes to the Christian missionaries. In the case of Mizoram, the developmental works done by Christianity are mainly concentrated in education and health care services.

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission (later known as the Welsh Presbyterian Mission), which came in 1891, was the first Mission. As a time-tested strategy to Christianize the population, the Missionaries took the safest way - to educate the locals. This was a big leap for a society which had an oral culture. However, literacy was essential for converts to be able to read the Bible. To start the work, the missionaries, F.W. Savidge and J.H. Lorrain, started to learn the Mizo language. Then they introduced the Roman script. With this, the land was introduced to the technology of printing. Savidge and Lorrain started a primary school in 1894 and by 1898 it had 50 pupils, mostly boys. "The missionaries tried to promote ideas of liberalism, democracy and freedom for women in their educational institutions." (Senba, 2001, pp 50–53).

The educational endeavours of the missionaries were supported by the British government of India. By 1904, it provided funds to the Mission from the provincial fund of Assam. By the 1920s, the annual expenditure on education had been increased, with the motive of converting the Mizos to Christianity. However, in 1904 the elders, concerned to preserve local values, decided to constitute the curriculum in such a way that old Lushai customs would be preserved. Consequently, Mizo legends and short stories based on daily life at home, in the *jhum* and in the forest were included in the curriculum, in addition to Bible lessons (Senba, 2001, pp 99-100). In 1916 the New Testament and in 1917 a portion of the Old Testmanet were translated into Mizo, with the title *Thutlung Thar*. The first library was set up in Aizawl in 1916. As a result, by 1925 the literacy rate in the Lushai Hills had reached 6 per cent. With improving educational opportunities, a class of educated Mizos developed, who preferred to take up government jobs instead of the hard toil in which they had always been engaged in the hills. By 1941 the literacy rate in the Lushai hills had reached 17 per cent.

Apart from the Mission's involvement in education, it also contributed to the development of heath care services. When the missionaries came to the Lushai Hills, they found people suffering from various diseases like hookworm, dysentery and tuberculosis. Many children died before they reached adolescence and many mothers died during child birth. In the late 1890s, the missionaries, D.E. Jones and Rowlands, tried to cure the ailing with their basic modern medical knowledge. Initially they were opposed by the local priests, who depended on sacrifices to cure ill people. In 1905, the mission sent a girl named Nui to Calcutta for training as a nurse and the number of trained nurses continued to increase thereafter. In 1908 and 1922, two dispensaries were set up and in 1928 a hospital and fully-fledged nurse training institute were built. This Mission Nursing School was formally recognized by the government in 1944.

With India's independence, there were major changes to the educational system in the Lushai Hills. In 1952, direct responsibility for supervision of primary and middle schools was taken over by the government. This opened up an era of division between government and mission run schools. Today mission schools are actively involved in providing quality education, which the government schools are unable to do. Despite the division, the Young Mizo Association (YMA), which was founded on the lines of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in 1935, has taken on key roles on a voluntary basis in every village, helping the government in its Adult Education Programme (Senba, 2001, p.234). This practical approach may be the reason for the high rate of literacy in Mizoram today,

Christianity brought not only education and material development in Mizoram, but also many changes in the social and cultural systems. However, the Mizos retained some customary laws. The efforts of the missionaries, it seems, were not directed at changing the basic customs of Mizo society, presumably because they saw nothing much wrong with them. However, they did attempt to abolish those customs and traditions which they found meaningless and harmful. Thus tea replaced *zu* (rice beer) as a popular drink; and *zawlbuk* (bachelors' dormitories) were replaced by modern education, as noted above. Animal sacrifices on ceremonial occasions, which were once an integral part of the Mizo religious system, are now considered anathema. However, such traditions as the payment of bride price continue. Moreover, along with Christian values, the Mizos still adhere to their indigenous code of ethics, which is centred on *tlawmngaihna*, an untranslatable term meaning that everyone should be hospitable, kind, unselfish and helpful to others.

Despite a degree of tolerance, some members of Christian bodies like the YMA have attempted to tackle practices that are not considered to be in tune with Christian values. For example, in its zealous attempt to make Mizoram an alcohol-free state, the YMA, supported by the church, has recently banned and destroyed the Grape and Apple Processing Industry factory, which had been contributing to economic growth and employment generation for young people, because of a limited content of alcohol in its product (Hmar, n.d). In addition, there have been allegations of the church being involved in killing innocent people and rape. In addition, sometimes it is alleged that the church is more concerned with rupees (especially US dollars) than with saving souls. Thus the role of Christianity in Mizoram's development is diverse, including both good and bad aspects.

3.1.3   Manipur

Christianity in Manipur today (34 per cent of the population) is mostly concentrated amongst the hill communities under the two umbrella categories of Naga and Kuki-Chin. There is slow acceptance of the religion among a small section of the Meiteis, who are the majority people and are predominantly Vaisnavites. However, there is also resistance to Christianity from certain sections of the hill communities. There are around 29 major tribes in the state, some of which are under the Naga fold – Zeliangrong (composed of three related tribes, namely Rongmei or Kabui, Liangmei and Zemei or Kacha Nagas), Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Maring and Tarao. And under the Kuki-Chin group are Gangte, Hmar, Paite, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom, Anal, Chothe, Lamgang, Koirao, Thangal, Moyon and Monsang. In recent times, several Kuki-Chin communities have identified themselves as Nagas e.g. Anal, Kom, Thangal, depending on whether such an identity can provide them with socio-economic and geo-political advantages.

William Pettigrew, a member of the Anglican (Episcopal) Church under the Arthington Aboriginals Mission, was the first Christian missionary. He arrived in Manipur in 1894. By that time, the Meiteis in the valley were already steadfast Vaisnavites. Taking the usual approach of missionaries, Pettigrew started to use the instrument of education. He was, however, bothered by the use of Bengali as the medium of instruction in schools. He started a school in Imphal and tried to teach the students in Manipuri, as he was already well versed in Manipuri after his stay among the Manipuris in Silchar in Assam. Although involved in educational activities, he did not forget his mission, baptizing his first Meitei convert, Poram Singh, on the 3rd of January 1899. However, this incident created a furore

among the Meiteis, and he had to leave the valley at the beginning of the 20th century and move to Ukhrul town with Poram Singh. He later became a member of the American Baptist Missionary Union. The first Tangkhul converts were baptized at Ukhrul in 1910. This mission's contribution has been important in the field of education, not only among Christians but also in Manipur as a whole. The church, well run by Poram Singh, was instrumental in sending a labour corps to France at the outbreak of the First World War. It was also involved in the 1910-1 and 1921 censuses of the hill areas. By the end of World War I, the Mission had opened a dispensary (now a hospital), a leper's hospital and a school in Kangpokpi, in the north of Imphal (Constantine, 1981, pp. 244–49).

Among the inhabitants of the southern district of Churachandpur, the formal education introduced by the missionaries in the 1930s brought about a lot of changes in the tribal way of life. However, while the young regard conversion to Christianity as a sign of modernity, most of the elders still refuse to convert (Roy and Rizvi, 1986, p. 105). Between 1930, when the first school was opened at Churachandpur by Rev. and Mrs. Paul Rostad, and 1986, a total of 91,133 persons from a total population of 91,984 had "forsaken their indigenous religion in preference to Christianity" (Roy and Rizvi, 1986, p. 107).

The mission's activities expanded and it won many converts from both the Nagas and Kukis tribes. This led the mission in Imphal to form the Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC). Its success came when a church was built at Thangmeiband in Imphal in 1956. Today, Manipur has many denominations, including Catholics and Protestants, with the former running most of the Christian missionary schools in the state. These schools have played a vital role in maintaining quality education in the State over a period when the quality of government-run schools has been declining. In Imphal, Don Bosco School is run by the Salesian Fathers, LFS (Little Flower School) by the Salesian Sisters, and Nirmalabas by the Carmelite Sisters, while St. Joseph's school, St George School, Catholic School, and Christ Jyoti School are run directly by the Diocesan Fathers, with the collaboration of other religious sisters like the Adoration Sisters, the Franciscan Clarist Sisters, the Bethany Sisters and the Sacred Heart Sisters (*Sangai Express*, dated September 28, 2002 accessed from **www.manipuronline.com** on 26 June 2006)

Apart from education, Catholic bodies are also involved in other developmental and charitable activities. The Sneha Bhavan, run by the Salesian Sisters at Sangaiprou, is a Rehabilitation Centre for women addicts and women and children infected by AIDS. Then there is Mother Teresa's Home for the poor, located at Ahalup village (Mantri-pukhri). The Church also collaborates with KRIPA, a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts established at Mantripukhi. The Diocesan Social Service Society and Catholic Relief Services work for the development of different sections of people in Manipur. Recently they also supplied relief materials for flood victims in Thoubal District. A Catholic hospital at Koirengei and dispensaries in many parts of Manipur have been established. The churches are also actively involved in conflict management. For example, they were party to the reconciliation process between the Nagas and the Kukis after the ethnic conflict between the two in the 1990s and have formed Peace Committees to deal with any dangerous situation arising out of the delicate ethnic composition of Manipur (Menamparampil, 2004)

3.1.4 *Meghalaya*

A large majority of the population of Meghalaya (70 per cent) is Christian. The main tribes are the Khasi, the Garo and the Jaintia, the former being matrilineal. There are numerous denominations in the Khasi hills, including Presbyterians, Catholics, All Saints Church, Seven Day Adventist, All-in-one Christ and Church for Christ. Christianity was brought to the Khasis in 1813 through the Serampore Baptist Mission under the London Baptist Society (Natarajan, 1972, pp. 57–72). The first concerted missionary activity came in 1841, with the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, which later came to be known as the Welsh Presbyterian Foreign Mission. Here also education has been the main development activity, which brought in various modernizing elements. One person who was instrumental in developing education in the Khasi Hills was the Rev. Thomas Jones. He is credited with the introduction of Roman script, moulded to suit the local language, which heralded a completely new experience among the Khasis. He started his first school in 1842 at Mawsmai (near Cherapunji). The curriculum was not completely focused on Christianity, but some portions of the Bible were included to prepare the way for conversion of the locals. To win the affection of the local people, Jones participated in some of their activities and also taught them the technology of lime burning and liquor distilling, as well as introducing saws to cut wood, bringing in the rudiments of modern carpentry. These new technologies were eye-openers for a community which had experienced negligible technological advancement for centuries.

The conversion process was very slow in the beginning, due to initial opposition by local people, although schools were opened and the missionaries also trained people in hygiene and provided medical care. By 1972, the number of Presbyterian churches in the Khasi Hills had reached 410, with one hospital, six High Schools, 29 Middle Schools, 275 Primary Schools, one Teaching Training Centre, one College and one Theological College. The Welsh Mission has also been involved in various humanitarian works, like helping refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) between 1964 and 1971. Other development activities have included training of rural leaders, establishing voluntary organizations for rural uplift, etc. (Natarajan, 1972, p.72). The Roman Catholics, who came to the area in 1890, have also established facilities like schools, technical institutions and colleges.

The impact of Christianity was seen in developed agronomic practices which replaced *jhum* cultivation, including superior methods of poultry rearing and cross-breeding of cattle, and technologies for tailoring, baking, printing, leather tanning and other small industries. Living conditions also improved considerably, with the introduction of good housing (Natarajan, 1972, pp130-35).

Among the Garos, Christianity is one of the major forces which has transformed their society. In 1866, the American Baptist Mission was brought in by the colonial administration and started opening Bengali medium schools and medical centres, as well as developing the Garo dialect into a written language, first in Bengali script and then in Roman script. It also translated the Bible and other religious tracts, wrote text books, started Garo journals, and since 1902 has converted all schools into Garo medium schools, thereby contributing to Garo unity, bringing Garos from different areas and clans into various mission centres, where they were educated and converted (Kar, 1982, pp. 74-75).

However, generally Christianity in Meghalaya did not have easy access to the people, meeting with resistance from the very beginning, and some contemporary critics regard its influence on local society as damaging. One strong indigenous movement to which Christians are antagonistic is Seng Khasi, which was formed in 1899 'by some educated and enlightened Khasis, with the object of preserving the ancient Khasi culture and religion (Natarajan, 1972, pp. 113-14; Sen, 1994). It is still a force to be reckoned with, although its following has dwindled over the years. Tiplut Nongbri asserts, "Conversion to Christianity has weakened the matrilineal system. Many of the traditional rites centred in the matrilineal household have now lost their importance. In Christian households the authority of

the mother's brother is giving way to the father's authority" (Nongbri, 2000, p. 185). Even non-Christians have been influenced by wider social changes, due not only to religious change but also to the increase in salaried employment and an emerging spirit of individualism and rationality.

3.2 Hinduism

In the North-east, the states with a predominant Hindu population are Assam (65 per cent) and Manipur (56 per cent). Hinduism became established much longer ago than Christianity and as a result these societies have been more solidly moulded into a Hindu way of life, which does not mean that there are no tendencies for revival of the pre-Hindu social fabric, especially in Manipur.

3.2.1 Manipur

The role of Hinduism in shaping the present Manipuri (or Meitei) society is noteworthy, in terms of both its positive and negative ramifications. Today about two thirds of the population of this small state are Hindu. The development brought by Hinduism is not necessarily material but specifically concerns the moral, cognitive and cultural fields. This might be viewed as positive by some, although changes in the indigenous belief system as a result of Hinduism might also be construed as 'un-development', a view that is especially stressed by a neo-revivalist tendency in the society.

It is believed that Hinduism came to Manipur with Saktism and Tantrism, which reached the area (then known as Kangleipak or Meitrabak) from Bengal and Assam by the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. Vaisnavism followed in the late 17th century from Bengal during the reign of king Charairongba (1698-1709 AD) (Singh, 1992, p. 133). The king was initiated into the Radha Krishna sect. This was the starting point of the diffusion of the traits of the Hindu Great Tradition to Manipur, although the watershed was the reign of King Pamheiba or Garibaniwaz (1709-1748), when Hinduism was made the state religion, following which mass conversions started. During Pemheiba's time, the Ramandi sect became popular (Singh, 1992, p. 163). Forced conversions started and the indigenous scriptures (*puyas*) were burnt. This was the initial sign of erosion of indigenous beliefs. As time went by, the new religion slowly merged with the indigenous religion so that remaining local aspects were lost.

The Gauriya Vaisnavism of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was officially recognized as the state religion by Rajarshi Bhagyachandra (1759–1762, 1763-1798). The greatest contribution of King Bhagyachandra

to cultural development was the composition of the now famous Rasa Lilas as a tribute to the principal deities, Krishna and Radha. However, this new form of dance was not completely alien, as the dance moves incorporated some original dance forms from indigenous rituals like Laiharaoba. With this, there came various cultural forms inspired by Vaisnavism, like *sankritan* singing, a form of community singing invoking God. This in a way brought a sense of collective consciousness to consolidate the hold of Vaisnavism. This was a systemic change and some scholars, like Gangmumei Kabui (1991, p. 90), use the concept of 'Sanskritization' to describe how Meiteis took up Hinduism. However, the term is misplaced in the context of Manipur, where there was no up-gradation of caste status, as the Meiteis had not previously been part of the Hindu caste system.

Instead the new religion was directly transplanted into a different social system. Though M.N. Srinivas (2005[1966]) also talks of Sanskritization when tribes become Hindus, it is clearly inappropriate to apply this to Meiteis, since the latter did not regard Vaisnavism as a superior belief system. Moreover there was much opposition to conversion. Instead of Sanskritization, 'Hinduization' would be a more appropriate term. Lokendra Arambam prefers to call it the 'Meiteization' of Hinduism, since Meiteis took whichever parts of the latter they regarded as useful and amalgamated them with their indigenous belief system. This amalgamation is precisely what we see in contemporary Meitei society.

With this religion, the Bengali script was also introduced in place of the original Meitei script and is still the script of the Manipuri language to date, although lately there have been many powerful moves to reintroduce the Meitei script in schools and institutions of higher education. Due to the modernization process, which started with the British in Manipur, Manipuris have learnt many criteria of modernity, which in a way drive them to advance their identity vis-à-vis other communities within and outside the State. Visible signs of going back to their non-Hindu past were first seen in 1930, when a Meitei, Naoriya Phulo, started an anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindu movement in Cachar District of Assam (Sircar, 1984, p. 121). He established a religious group called Apokpa Marup (association in the name of a Meitei ancestor deity). In Manipur valley, following the launch of his movement, in 1945 a movement called Sanamahi (named after a Meitei house deity) was started. The reason why the protagonists of this movement called it Sanamahi movement was because of their desire to consolidate relationships between hill and plains people, since hill people worship the same deity. The initial opposition by the Vaisnavite Meiteis has dwindled with the growing political dissent against the Indian state, which is

equated with Hinduism by the protagonists of this new movement. However, rather than starting a completely new religious system, their efforts have focused on establishing a parallel culture to counter the Vaisnavite forces, for example observance of Yaoshang (their version of Holi) during the same period as the Hindu Holi festival. This movement may try to create a political fissure within the society, but it is very difficult to sort out which elements are purely Hindu and which indigenous, because people have long internalized both elements in their way of life.

One religious organization which took up concrete development activities is ISKON (International society for Krishna Consciousness), Imphal. The ISKON centre was established on the 25th December 1977 by Bhaktisvarupa Damodara Swami, an disciple of Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKON. To give impetus to the various aspects of development in Manipur, in 1987 it founded the Manipur Development Council (IMDC). ISKON has its own mission school (BIMS) in Imphal. In 1989, it also founded a cultural arts troupe 'Ranganiketan' to expose the exotic tradition of Manipuri art and culture to the rest of the world. In its endeavour to improve understanding of Vaisnavite spirituality, it founded the University of Bhagavata Culture (UBC). It has also opened a women's wing of ISKCON Manipur, known as ISKCON Women's Cultural Forum (IWCF), particularly for up-gradation of the status of local women. In the health sector, on March 21, 1995, it established the ISKCON Nature Cure Hospital and Yogic Ashram with nearly 30 beds in the Langol foothills (west of Imphal city). The main motto of the naturopathic hospital is 'Eat to live, not live to eat'.

3.2.2   Assam

Hinduism is the predominant religion in the much larger State of Assam where it cannot be separated from the great religious and social reformer Sankara Deva (1449-1569), who is regarded as a religious saint by a large section of the Hindu population of Assam. The Vaisnavite sect he started is known as Nam-dharma. He was driven to his mission by social inequality and also by the spiritual barrenness of the *Sakta* priests and their arrogance towards the common people. Saktas are worshippers of the Hindu God Siva and the Goddess Sakti or Durga. Deva's religious movement was based on the *Bhagavad Gita*. This Bhagavad or Ekxoroniyaa (Only One God) religion resembles Christianity to a great extent. This movement to simplify religious beliefs, also called the *Bhakti Movement,* wherein a person is guided by his or her devotion to and adoration (*bhakti*) of his/her chosen divinity was, Deva thought, needed at that time (Hastings, 1951, pp. 131-28).

This sect was not engaged in development activities in the conventional sense, but fostered social and cultural changes which provided an impetus for development in fields like the economy, technology etc. It was instrumental in bringing a large number of religious sects and cultural and racial groups into a homogenous Assamese society. Sankara Deva was an devotee of Assamese literature, fine arts, performing arts and music. His sect revolved around Xatras, which are not only religious places but also places for the propagation of ethics and socio-cultural ideals and art forms. They grew up as centres of learning and education. Judged by such external standards as land ownership and the number of 'Sisvas' and 'Bhaktas', these Xatras can still claim to be the biggest religious institutions. In their heyday, the income of these Xatras was devoted mainly to the welfare of the people by way of the promotion of learning, development of cultural activities and provision of help to the needy (Hastings, 1951).

3.3   Islam

Muslims in the North-east are mainly concentrated in Assam (31 per cent of the total population). In this region, the Muslim population is found mainly in Barpeta, Dhubri, Goalpara, and Hailakandi districts. Islam in Assam is slightly different from that found in other parts of India, in that it is open, accommodative, inclusive and adaptive in its local specificity. The systematic propagation of Islam as an organized religion was started in the early part of the 17th century by a wandering Muslim mystic, Shah Milan or, as he was popularly known, 'Azaan Fakir', who came to Assam in about 1630 A.D. Shah Milan and his brother Shah Nabi found that the Muslims of Assam did not follow any aspects of traditional Islam and had been assimilated into mediaeval Assamese society. Shah Milan and his early disciples contributed significantly to educating the majority of local Muslims in the spirit and significance of Islam through unorthodox methods, including those considered 'un-Islamic' by scriptural standards. He introduced the *namaaz*, the contents of the Quran, the Hadith and other Islamic literature, with which local people were barely acquainted, through a regime of folk songs, instrumental music and dances. The chief objective of Shah Milan appears to have been the re-organization of Muslim society in Assam by regenerating Islam in such a way that there was no discord in the age-old harmonious relations with Muslims' Hindu and tribal neighbours.

Today, Assam Muslims are at a crossroads due to the demographic pressure of immigrants from Bangladesh, which has affected their age-old relationship with other local communities. The migration

problem was worsened by the enactment and enforcement of the controversial Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal)—IM (DT)—Act of 1983, during the Congress regime, although this Act has been recently scrapped. Muslims have relied on the regimes in Guwahati for their security. To break this dependency, a new party with a secular face, the Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF), was formed. One person instrumental in this development is Badrudin Ajmal, a businessman (Baruah, 2006), also known as 'Maulana Badrudin Ajmal Al-qasim', a member of the Majlis-e-Shura of his alma mater Darul Uloom, Deoband. Sanjib Baruah writes: "he has been on the frontline of the defense of the embattled Deoband madrassas in the post-9/11 environment". On Ajmal's initiative, Deoband has now opened a department of English language and literature. Ajmal is also founding chairman of the Markazul Ma'arf (centre for knowledge), which has introduced a highly competitive two-year training programme in the English language and computers for top madrasa graduates, to enable Assam Muslims and the Muslim educational system in the area to respond to the modern competitive world.

3.4   *Buddhism*

The Buddhist population in the North-east is confined to Sikkim (28 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (13 per cent). Due to Christianization, the Buddhist population and way of life are declining. In Sikkim, the religion is followed mainly by the two major Bhutia and Lepcha communities, along with the Nepalese. Education is the main indicator of development fostered by Buddhism. Amal Datta writes, "In Sikkim, religion plays an important part in the spread of the type and nature of education among its inhabitants mainly consisting of Nepalese, Bhutias, and the Lepchas". Before the establishment of a missionary school by Reverend Macfarlane, a Scottish missionary in 1883 in Gangtok, there was monastery-based education, in which religious texts were taught to the students to enable them to become Lamas. Until the late 1960s, modern education was confined to the privileged few, while people belonging to the Bhutia and Lepcha communities, who are mainly Buddhists, preferred traditional monastery-based education because training to become a Lama were given the highest priority among these people. That religion played an important role in people's choice of the kind of education sought in the period before Sikkim merged with India (before 1975) can be seen from the following data: in 1964, of a total of 9,002 students in modern education (both males and females), 1,380 were Bhutias and 1,116 were Lepchas, while 6,280 were Nepalese (Datta, 1994, pp. 277–86). This shows the steadfastness of the Buddhists (the Bhutias and the Lepchas), who preferred traditional monastery-based education and training over modern education. After the merger with the

Indian Union in 1975, the need for trained manpower for carrying out development activities resulted in serious attention being given to education, also luring Buddhists to choose modern education. This trend has been reinforced by the facilities and privileged access bestowed on them because of their Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe status.

4   Conclusion

This paper has tried to identify connecting links between religion and development, with a focus on the North-east, where there have been widespread conversions from indigenous belief systems to the 'new' forms of religion, which are comparatively recent phenomena. To alleviate suspicion in their efforts to convert people, the new religions have tried to adopt uncontroversial approaches, like providing education and healthcare, which help them to be accepted in the receiving communities. Their next step is an attempt to entrench their beliefs in the value system of the locality. So in the North-east, religion is associated with both economic development and cultural and social change. Development cannot, in these circumstances, be understood purely in terms of material progress divorced from values. The brief history of each religious tradition given above demonstrates that religion in the North-east is characterized by a dialogue between 'tradition' and 'modernity' or between an oral culture and a written culture, since there has been a major transition from the former to the latter. However, it is also true that there is critical engagement with the more recent religions by people in general and various religious and social groups in particular. Such groups have sought to go back to their pasts and reassert their identities in the face of historical pressures for change and present local and global political exigencies. This funding reaffirms the importance of recognizing the dynamism in religious and developmental discourses and practices.

Footnotes

[1]   The eight contiguous states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Sikkim constitute the region of North-east India, officially recognized in 1971. They have only a limited common boundary with the rest of India and are characterized by a degree of ethnic and religious diversity that is unusual in the country. For most of their history, they were independent, and their complete integration with India came about only during colonial times. When India became independent in 1947, only three states covered the area. Manipur and Tripura were princely states, while the much larger province of Assam was under direct British rule. Sikkim became an Indian protectorate in 1947 and a full state in 1975. Four new states were carved out of the original territory of Assam in the decades following independence, in line with the policy of the Indian government of reorganizing the states along ethnic and linguistic lines. Accordingly, Nagaland became a separate state in 1963, followed by Meghalaya in 1972. Mizoram became a Union Territory in 1972, and achieved statehood - along with Arunachal Pradesh - in 1987.

[2]   For an debate on modernity and tradition in India in general and Manipur in particular, see Eastern Quarterly Vol. 3 Issue II (July–September 2005) on the theme Modernity, Tradition and Contested Space.

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3   The word Nagalim is a term recently coined by Naga leaders to define the land for which they are struggling, which is much wider than the state of Nagaland. The word lim means land in the Ao language. The term Nagalim is used awkwardly, perhaps because of its newness or because it has not yet become embedded in people's subconscious. This is revealed time and again when the manifesto uses 'Nagaland' instead of 'Nagalim' (www.nscnonline.org, accessed on 15.7. 2006).
4   For the claim of Nagas for an independent nation, see Government of the People's Republic of Nagalim (2001; also Senba (2001) and Lanunungsang (2002). For documents on Naga conflicts, see Vashum (2001, p. 133–212).
5   For news relating to internal squabbles between the Khaplang and Muviah groups in NSCN, which led to the walk out and subsequent boycott of the general assembly election in 1998, see Baptist Agenda for Peace in Nagalim., India (www.wfn.org, 6th February, 1998, accessed on 15.6.2006).
6   The Naga Church body appealed for restraint during the truce. See The Assam Tribune, March 20, 2001, accessed from www.north-eastvigil.in on 27.07.2006
7   For a clarification of the Church's position on the Naga Struggle, see Assam Tribune. (March 29, 2003). Accessed from www.north-eastvigil.in on 27.7.2006

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Chapter 6

Mapping faith-based organizations at State level – a preliminary study of Bihar

Purushottam Mishra[*]

Abstract

In a mapping of faith-based organizations and their activities in the eastern state of Bihar, the author describes their engagement in education, health, relief activities and other fields. Using the databases of the Registrar of Societies, the Waqf Board and the Registrar of Trusts, the author's study is the first comprehensive mapping of the activities of religious organizations in Bihar. Being the birthplace of major religions like Buddhism and Jainism, where Hinduism and Sikhism also established early roots, many faith-based organizations sprang up quite early in the geographical region of modern-day Bihar. Monastic complexes of Hinduism and Buddhism imparted education. Madrasas attached to and independent of mosques also played a seminal role in imparting Islamic learning.

1   Introduction

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) have played important developmental roles throughout the ages in Bihar. In ancient times, FBOs played pioneering roles in learning and therapeutics, and they continue to do so even today, albeit with some alterations. These organizations have contributed significantly in every era – from the formation of *ashrams* (hermitages) during the Upanishadic Age, the establishment of *viharas* by Buddhist monasteries, the foundation of *math* in Hindu monastic complexes, and mosques and *madrasas* and *khankah* during the Bhakti-Sufi age, to the opening of modern schools, colleges, hospitals etc. by Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian missionaries in the colonial and post-independence eras. FBOs have continued to play significant roles even since the emergence of the welfare state.

The history of organizations based on religious beliefs is as old as the history of the religions themselves. Undivided Bihar is the place of origin and extension of many important Indian religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity. Even today, old-established as well as relatively recent FBOs with well-organized networks exist in the State. In every age, such organizations have played a considerable role in developmental activities. They have not only contributed to education, medical assistance and protection for the socially weaker sections of society, but have also provided the basis of ideologies through which society may be organized.

In this introductory overview, the early history of FBOs in Bihar is sketched first (Section 2). The scale and scope of service provision by religious institutions in the state is then described, using preliminary data obtained from a range of sources, including official registration systems, apex bodies and some individual organizations (Sections 3 and 4). In this paper, the data are assembled and reported, with little attempt at analysis, due to limitations on time and the information available.

2   The history of faith-based organizations in Bihar

It might be argued that the earliest form of FBO appeared during the Later Vedic Age (8th century BC). This era brought about epoch-making changes in the nature of religious thinking. Sages began to raise important questions about aspects of life and its rationale. They set up *ashrams* (hermitages), which imparted education. The fact that the Vedas and Upanishads required lessons in arithmetic, geometry, Sanskrit and philosophy can be deduced from the nature of the Vedic sacrifice, which required exact knowledge of geometry and arithmetic. Students sat before the Master and learnt the deep philosophies of life, as contained in the Upanishads (Keith, 1965). The hermitages became centres of religious thought and learning and played a key role in developing literature, astronomy, mathematics and therapeutics. Lord Krsna spent his early years in the hermitage of Sandipani at Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh (Majumdar, 1980, pp. 432-433).

In the subsequent period, the Buddhist *viharas* emerged as important centres of learning and education. Buddhist literature alludes to Takshashila (now in Pakistan) and Nalanda *Mahavihara* (great monasteries)*,* to which students from Buddhist countries thronged to study Buddhist philosophy. For example, Chinese pilgrims Yuan Chwang and I-tsing came and studied in Nalanda *Mahavihara* (Shastri, 1942). The *Vihara* at Bodh Gaya, where Buddha attained enlightenment, has always attracted scholars from China, Burma, Sri Lanka and other Buddhist countries (Mitra, 1972). Buddhist *Viharas* were also therapeutic centres. Buddhist *viharas* contained within a monastic complex, like Anuradhapura in Srilanka, incorporated *arogyashala* (hospitals) (Bandaranayake, 1974). Such *arogyashala* were also found in many Indian monasteries

Medieval Hindu monastic complexes and temples were also centres of learning. For example, Kancipuram, the temple city of Tamil Nadu, attained great fame as a centre of learning. Temples emerged as important foci of religious and cultural organization in the medieval period. They played an

important role in the economic reorganization of regions. Temples like Tirupati and Jagananth required different services and so employed a number of temple servants with fixed assignments. They were also great landlords with huge tracts of land. Regional traditions centring around important cults, as in case of the Jagannath temple of Orissa, facilitated the growth of a regional identity (Eschmann *et al*, 1978).

With the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate and the conquest of Bihar by Bhakityar Khalji in 1200 AD, the *khankahs* (a place for Sufi saints), *madrasas* and *maqtabs* (small Islamic learning centres invariably attached to local mosques) were established in India, including Bihar, under the patronage of the Muslim rulers. In fact, the Sultans gave *Madad-I-mash* grants (rent-free land grants) to *khanaqs* (religious teachers such as mullahs and Sufi saints) to bring new areas under cultivation. Unruly and outlying areas were also given to religious organizations and leaders to increase their integration into the Sultanates (Eaton, 1994).

The Sikh Panth started by Guru Nanak, too, became an inseparable part of the Bhakhti movement. Since then Bihar has been an important centre of activities related to the Khalsa Panth. The tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, was born in Bihar.

A new dimension was added to the religious scene in Bihar in 1745 A.D. when the Capuchin Mission sowed the seeds of Christianity for the first time (Diocese of Betiah, 2002-03)

Although inevitably the history of religious institutions and their relationships with the powerful is complex, it is reasonable to assert that they have, for the most part, championed equality among human beings and emphasized commitment to the ultimate truth or absolute knowledge. They have also contributed towards the development and dissemination of knowledge, science, learning and therapy. In Bihar today, there are considerable numbers of religious organizations of all religions, which contribute in disparate ways to the development of the state. In the next section, an attempt is made to estimate the overall scale and scope of development-related religious organizations, and in Section 4 their service provision activities are described in more detail.

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3 FBOS and their development activities in Bihar

In undivided Bihar in 1991, 82 per cent of the people were Hindu, 15 per cent Muslim, and 3 per cent other religions, of which Christians were the most numerous. After division, in 2001, 83 per cent of people were Hindu, 17 per cent Muslim and few adherents of other religions (see Chapter 3, Table 6). In the absence of an official database of religious organizations and their activities, the task of mapping them becomes very difficult. Public religious trusts are registered and their database is available with the Charity Commissioner of the relevant state. But there is no computerization of the records and nor is updated data available about these trusts in the Office of the Charity Commissioner. Public charitable trusts or societies are exempt from income tax and therefore the Tax Department of each State also holds data about them. However, many of the temple trusts only manage temples and are not engaged in development activities. The Catholic Directory of India also contains lists of Christian FBOs in each state. Religious trusts or religious societies of a national nature, such as Ramakrishna Mission, Arya Samaj and others, have state-level databases. The Charity Commissioner maintains a five volume register of Hindu religious trusts in Bihar. Similarly, the Bihar Shia and Sunni Waqf Boards maintain registers of various *waqf*. Bihar Madrasa Board maintains a list of madrasas in the state. Bihar Swetambar and Digambar Jain Dharmik Nyas Board maintain a list of their religious trusts. Similarly, The Prbhandak Committee, Takht Sri Harmandir, Patna Saheb also maintains a register of gurdwaras and their activities. However, it must be said that financial details are very difficult to get from these databases.

There are more than 14,000 religious trusts in Bihar, relating to the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist and Jain religions. There were as many FBOs in the colonial era and after independence as today. Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Prajapita Brahmakumaris Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya, Anand Marg, Gayatri Mandir Pariwar, Imarat-e-shariya, and Edara-e-shariya enjoy important positions. The Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches have founded churches, schools and hospitals in many places. However, it is not possible to tell their exact number, as there has not been any relevant survey or study.

Incomplete information is available regarding the Bihar Hindu Religious Trust Board, Bihar Sunni Waqf Board, Bihar Shia Waqf Board, Bihar Shwetambar Jain Religious Trust Board and Bihar Digambar Jain Religious Trust Board (see Table 1, which gives figures for selected religious institutions in Bihar).

The trusts Shaiva, Vaisnava, Shakta, Udasin Sampradaya, Dariya Panthi, Kabir Panthi, Raidas Panthi and Dharmshalas are tied up with the Bihar Hindu Religious Trust Board (Bihar Hindu Religious Trust Board, 2005). There were 3,658 trusts registered with the Hindu Religious Trust Board in undivided Bihar.[1] After division, there were 2,848. But in fact the actual number of Hindu Religious Trusts in Bihar is many times more. Observations show that there are many temples built by ex-landlords that are not registered with the Bihar Hindu Religious Trust Board. These include temples and trusts established under charity law by Darbhanga Maharaj, Tekari Raj, Amama Raj, Pokharpur Raj, Rai Bahadur Suja Prasad Raj, and Betia Raj etc. Also there are many unregistered temples built by families which have no living successors. In addition, some religious trusts with branches in Bihar are registered outside the state, such as Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Prajapita Brahmakumaris Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya and Gayatri Mandir Pariwar. For example, the Ramakrishna Mission was registered as a religious society in 1909 under the Society Registration Act (1860) in Calcutta but operates throughout India. Its branches (almost 140) are not registered elsewhere.

Among the Muslim religious trusts, mosques, *khankah* and *dargah* have no registration traditions; only *waqfs* can be registered. There were 2,459 *waqfs* registered with Bihar Sunni Waqf Board and 225 *waqfs* registered with Bihar Shia Waqf Board in undivided Bihar. Since division their numbers are respectively 2,308 and 217 (Register of Bihar Sunni and Shia Waqf Board, 2005). The number of madrasas registered with the Bihar Madrasa Board remained 1,119 in Bihar after division. Payment of salaries for the teachers in these madrasas is made from the State exchequer but other expenditure depends upon donations. The number of affiliated (consented) madrasas in undivided Bihar was 2,986. Although the Bihar Madrasa Board organizes examinations for their students, the government does not make grants to them, so that they depend totally on public contributions. Since division, there are 2,475 affiliated madrasas left in Bihar (personal communication with Moinul Haque[2]). In Bihar there are 87 Nizamia madrasas that do not depend upon government for financial assistance, examinations or their management. It is very difficult to make an accurate estimate of the number of *khankah* in Bihar. According to one survey, there are 46 operating (personal communication, Prof. Shamim Ahmad Munemi[3]). It is not possible to estimate the total number of mosques in the villages of Bihar.

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Table 1:   Some religious institutions in Bihar

Name of Religious Trust Board	Total	Jharkhand	Bihar
Bihar Hindu Religious Trust Board	3,658	811	2,847
Bihar Sunni Waqf Board	2,459	151	2,308
Bihar Shia Waqf Board	225	8	217
Digambar Jain Religious Trust Board	91	41	50
Shwetambar Jain Religious Trust Board	18	10	8
Gurudwaras Affiliated with Takht Shri Harmandir Managing Committee	136	86	50
Total	**6,587**	**1107**	**5,480**

Source: Field Data

There are 50 Singh Sahib Gurudwaras of Khalsa Panth in Bihar, which are affiliated with the Takht Shri Harmandir Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (Register of the Takht Sri Harmandir, Patna Saheb, 2004).

Both the Roman Catholics and Protestants have churches in Bihar. There are five RC dioceses: Betia, Muzaffarpur, Patna, Bhagalpur and Purnea. The activity of Protestant groups is, however, is very limited. Since the division of Bihar, many important temples and places of pilgrimage of Jain devotees are located within the boundaries of Jharkhand. Bihar is now left with 50 trusts registered with the Bihar Digambar Religious Trust Board and eight trusts registered with the Bihar Shwetambar Religious Board (Register of the Bihar Swetambar and Bihar Diagmbar Jain Dharmik Nyas Board, 2004). The Buddhist temples in Bihar are at Bodh Gaya, Rajgir and Vaishali. Most of these were built and are controlled by Buddhists living in other countries.
In this way, the cultural texture of Bihar is interwoven, with Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist and Jain religious streams and sub-streams, with the result that the main Hindu tradition has had a constant struggle to preserve what it regards as its core values.

4   The developmental activities of FBOs

The religious trusts have never confined themselves to worship and rituals. Engagement of FBOs has taken two primary forms: those which adopt the traditional Indian systems of education and health and those which regard themselves as 'modern'. However, there is considerable overlap between these and cooption of one by the other. For example, elements of western education and medicine are found in Indian education and medicine, while modern diagnostic tools, science and English are taught in some traditional Sanskrit colleges and madrasas.

In Bihar, there are 14 Sanskrit colleges and 33 Sanskrit High Schools, originally established by *mathas* and temples. Later on, such colleges were made constituent units of Kameshwar Singh Sanskrit University, Darbhanga. At the same time, High schools and Middle schools were affiliated to the Bihar Sanskrit Education Board (Bihar Sanskrit Shiksha Board, 2004). A total of 270 *tola vidyalayas* (village schools) based on the ancient education system are affiliated to the Bihar Sanskrit Education Board. However, little is known about the history of these educational institutions due to the absence of research.

One successful example of an individual religious trust playing a major role in health and education is the Mahavir Mandir Trust of Patna. This trust has no permanent property except the land on which the temple stands. But during the last fifteen years the trust has started seven large hospitals in different places in Bihar, solely with the income it gets from oblations and donations. Investment in these hospitals is estimated to be about ten million rupees. The trust, moreover, runs a publication unit, which has so far published at least 22 books. In addition, a tri-monthly periodical *Dharmayana* has been regularly published (Personal communication, Secretary, 2004).

Organizations established during colonial rule and the post-independence phase, like Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Anand Marg, Gayatri Mandir Pariwar, ESCON, and Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya have made contributions in the fields of school education and health. Arya Samaj started its activities around 1901 in Bihar. Its aim was to attract people to Indian literature, culture and civilization. It laid emphasis on the awakening of women and their education (see Mishra, this volume). To this end, it established *gurukulas* and other educational units. Two of the *gurukulas* are engaged in educational activities even today. They have been managing six middle schools, ten

high schools and one college since pre-independence days (Bihar Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 2000, pp. 74–75).

Swami Tatgatanand, the Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission, says in accordance with "the ideal of self-liberation and welfare of this world (*Atmano mokshartham jagat hitaya cha*) the mission takes part in social activities. The *mathas* of this mission are in four different places. It has established two eye hospitals, three dispensaries, one high school, one basic school, seven coaching centres and three libraries. An informal education centre and a free students' home too have been started by it. The mission has adopted 30 girls to educate them and provides free milk to ten children regularly. It also organizes disaster relief activities" (Personal communication with Swami Tatgatanand, Ramakrishna Mission).

Anand Marg manages 38 primary schools, 20 women's welfare centres and 30 hostels in Bihar. Gayatri Mandir Pariwar works for the development and preservation of Indian culture and educates the public through theocracy. It has also opened a homeopathic dispensary. ESCON manages the construction of cowsheds, hospitals, *gurukulas*, hostels etc. (Personal communication Vabaprakashanand, DLO, Anand Marg, Patna). Also see Table 2.

Imarat-e-shariya, Edara-e-shariya, Jamat-e-Islami, and 40 *khankah* are among the FBOs which draw inspiration from Islam. Small centres of learning in mosques are known as *maqtabs* and most of these are running in areas of Bihar where there is no alternative for education. There are also 87 Nizamia madrasas which depend not on government finance but on individual donations and have their own curriculum and examination system (see also above). Many of these madrasas have achieved an exemplary performance in the field of madrasa education. The number of madrasas whose teachers get salaries from the State exchequer is 1,119, while 2,475 madrasas depend upon the Bihar Madarasa Board only for taking examinations. Such non-supported madrasas are financed by public contributions. Shri Moibul Haq, the General Secretary of the Bihar Madrasa Teachers Association, says, "There are dozens of such *maqtabs* and madrasas where even Hindu children study in good numbers."

Imarat-e-Shariya is known for its commitment to getting people to obey the ideals of the Islamic Shariat and has made a remarkable contribution in managing education and health institutions. It organizes five technical training institutions, two polytechnic institutions, two computer training

Table 2: Number of FBOs engaged in development-related activities in Bihar

Name of the FBO	No.	Coaching Centre/ Primary/ Middle School	High School / Madrasa	College	Tech-nical Institute	Eng. College	Orpha-nage	Women's welfare centre	Dharmsh-alla /Awas	Library	Press and Publications	Hospital	Dispen-sary / Health Centre	Home for Dis-abled people	Hostel
Hindu Math and Mandirs	2847	1	32	14											
Arya Samaj		6	10	1			4								
Ramkrishn Mission		6/1	1							3		2	3		1
Anand Marg		38			1		34	20		1	1		36		30
Mahabir Mandir Nyas											1	7			
Khankah	46		2							45					
Madarsa Nizamia	87		87												
Imarat-E-Sariah					8	2						1			
Edar-E-Sariah			1				1								
Jamat-E-Islami															
Swetamber Jain Religious Trust	8								10						
Digamber Jain Religious Trust	50	2	2	1					28			3		1	
Gurudwara	51	1	2	1				1	51						
Roman Catholic Diocese	5	102	34	4	14		8	2			8	11	77	9	77
Total		**157**	**171**	**21**	**23**	**2**	**47**	**23**	**113**	**49**	**10**	**22**	**116**	**10**	**108**

institutes (one for women), one paramedical institute, one Urdu education institute and hospitals in Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa (personal communication with Maulana Anisur Rahman, General Secretary Imarat-e-s Sharia). Rahman reported that children from all communities may enrol in these institutions and the hospital patients are also from all communities. Edara-e-shariya is another organization that is totally committed to the Shariyat. It has established a madrasa and an orphanage and also provides ambulance services at a very low cost (personal communication Maulana Gulam Jilani, Naib Nazim, Edar-I-Sharia, Bihar Jharkhand and Orissa).

Jamat-e-Islami is also an organization that lays stress on Islamic beliefs. It manages 22 primary schools, 5 high schools and one college. Seventeen temporary schools and madrasas, as well as 5 hostels, are also financed by it. In addition, it provides scholarships and monthly stipends, runs an interest-free society, and plays a lead role in disaster relief and in rehabilitating riot victims (Personal communication with Kamrul Hoda, President, Jamat-e-Islami, Bihar). There are 46 *khankahs* in Bihar. These emphasize the catholic nature of Islam, with most having a library or Qutubkhana and two even running madrasas (personal communication, Shamim Ahmad Munemi, Gaddinashin, Khanaq, Munemia, Patna). The Gaddinashin of Khankah Munemia, Prof. Shamim Ahmed Munemi, asserts that Khankahs in Bihar enjoy the same importance as a centre of faith among the followers of different religions today as in the Middle Ages.

There are eight Shwetambar Jain trusts and fifty Digambar Jain trusts in Bihar. The Swetambar Jain trusts manage ten *dharmshalas* (religious lodges) and the Digambar, twenty-eight. The Digambar Jain Religious Trust has also opened two middle schools, two high schools and one college (From the register of Bihar Swetambar Jain Dharmik Nyas Board).

Takht Shri Harmandir is an important place of pilgrimage of the Khasapanth. The Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee has established 50 Sikh gurdwaras in Bihar. Takht Shri Harmandir has opened one degree college, two high schools, one middle school and a sewing centre. At every gurdwara, arrangements are made for providing free or cheap lodging and free food i.e. *langar* (from the register, Prabhandak Committee, Takht Sri Harmandir patna Sahib).

The five Roman Catholic dioceses manage 102 middle and primary schools, 34 high schools, 4 colleges, 14 technical institutes, an orphanage, 2 women's welfare centres, 8 press-publication units, 11 hospitals, 77 dispensaries and health centres, 1 hostel for disabled people and 77 hostels for other groups. They also provide for the rehabilitation of women, disabled people and orphans, treatment for lepers and large scale job training (Catholic Directory of India, 2005).

5   Conclusion and future research

FBOs play an extensive role in the development of the people of Bihar through their involvement in education, health and rural reconstruction. They run a total of 157 primary and middle schools, 171 madrasas and high schools, 21 colleges, 23 technical institutes, 2 engineering colleges, 49 libraries and 116 dispensaries and health centres. They have also worked for the resettlement of disadvantaged people and victims of various calamities through establishing ten hostels for disabled people, 47 orphanages, 23 women's welfare centres and 113 hostels (*dharmsalas*). They have attempted to meet the challenges of natural or man-made calamities and at the same time, most have tried to counteract efforts to divide Bihar society on the basis of religious identity. Thus while madarsas are centres of Islamic learning, a good number of Hindu children receive education in madrasas or institutions run by Christian missionaries. The organizations report that they do not discriminate on religious grounds among the beneficiaries of their hospitals and dispensaries. The orphanages, hostels for disabled people and women's welfare centres have a policy of admitting people without any religious discrimination.

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Unfortunately, there has not been a scientific and comprehensive mapping of the FBOs in Bihar and it has not been possible in the limited time available to compare the scale, scope and distribution of the services they provide with those provided by other non-profit institutions or the public sector, let alone the private sector. Moreover, there is a surprising lack of information about the various religious institutions and the services they provide. In the absence of such information or any evaluation of the nature and quality of services provided and the characteristics of their beneficiaries, the information provided and assertions made by the organizations themselves must for the moment be taken at face value.

Footnotes

* Purushottam Mishra is a consultant to ActionAid, Patna, as well as a senior freelance journalist.
1 Bihar was subdivided into Bihar and Jharkhand in 2000
2 General Secretary of Bihar Madarsa Teachers' Association.
3 An important functionary of Khanak Munemia, Mitanghat, Patna city.

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