



Center for Modern Oriental Studies

Changing Identities

The transformation of Asian and African societies under colonialism

Papers of a symposium held at the
Centre for Modern Oriental Studies,
Berlin, 21-22 October 1993

■ Ed. by Joachim Heidrich

Studien 1



Verlag Das Arabische Buch

Heidrich, Joachim (Hg):

Changing Identities. The Transformation of Asian and African Societies under colonialism /

Joachim Heidrich. - Berlin: Verl. Das Arabische Buch, 1994

(Studien / Forschungsschwerpunkt Moderner Orient,

Förderungsgesellschaft Wissenschaftliche Neuvorhaben mbH; Nr. 1)

ISBN 3-86093-062-1

NE: Förderungsgesellschaft Wissenschaftliche Neuvorhaben <München> /

Forschungsschwerpunkt Moderner Orient: Studien

Forschungsschwerpunkt Moderner Orient

Förderungsgesellschaft Wissenschaftliche Neuvorhaben mbH

Kommissarischer Leiter:

Prof. Dr. Peter Heine

Prenzlauer Promenade 149-152

13189 Berlin

Tel. 030 / 4797319

ISBN 3-86093-062-1

STUDIEN

Bestellungen:

Das Arabische Buch

Horstweg 2

14059 Berlin

Tel. 030 / 3228523

Redaktion und Satz: Margret Liepach, Helga Reher

Druck: Druckerei Weinert, Berlin

Printed in Germany 1994

Contents

Introduction	5
Colonialism, Transcultural Interaction, Modernization	
<i>Anouar Abdel-Malek: Identity, Alterity, Reductionism - Positions</i>	11
<i>Reinhard Schulze: Zur Geschichte der Islamischen Moderne. Probleme und Perspektiven der Forschung</i>	25
<i>Joachim Heidrich: Orient und Okzident als Zivilisationsräume der Moderne</i>	41
<i>Barun De: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Dialectics of Changing Identity in the Indian Subcontinent</i>	61
<i>Subrata K. Mitra: Caste and the Politics of Identity: Beyond the Orientalist Discourse</i>	79
Foci of Identity Construction	
<i>Peter Heine: Kultur, Identität und Politik in Saudi-Arabien</i>	97
<i>Bipan Chandra: The Historical Process of the Formation of the Indian Nation</i>	109
<i>Tapan Raychaudhuri: The Construction of a Hindu Identity in 19th Century India. A Synopsis</i>	119
<i>Dietrich Reetz: Community Concepts and Community-Building: Exploring Ethnic Political Identity in Colonial India</i>	123
<i>Erik Komarov: Specificities of Emergence of Modern Social Classes in India in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries</i>	149
<i>Miloslav Krása: A Note on the Impact of Europeans as Reflected in the Traditional Art of Bengal. A Historian's View</i>	165

<i>Terence Ranger: African Identities: Ethnicity, Nationality and History. The Case of Matabeleland, 1893 - 1993</i>	177
<i>Achim von Oppen: Mobile Practice and Local Identity. Changing Market Moralities in Rural Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), 1930s to 1960s</i>	197
<i>Jan-Georg Deutsch: Slavery, Coastal Identity and the End of Slavery in German and British East Africa</i>	215
<i>Ulrich van der Heyden: Die Entstehung der Unabhängigen Afrikanischen Kirchen in Südafrika - kirchliche Emanzipationsbestrebungen oder Ausdruck eines frühen Nationalismus?</i>	225
Indigenous Premises, Change and Modes of Response	
<i>J. V. Naik: Intellectual Basis and Ideological Premises of Maharashtrian Response to British Colonial Rule</i>	241
<i>Dick Kooiman: Separate Electorates: Separate Identities? Experiences from Colonial India</i>	255
<i>Annemarie Hafner: Gab es eine Arbeiterkultur im kolonialen Indien?</i>	273
<i>Petra Heidrich: N. G. Ranga und Swami Sahajanand Saraswati - Bauernführer zwischen Tradition und Moderne</i>	289
<i>Heike Liebau/Margret Liepach: Christliche Hindus - indische Christen? Die "Nationalarbeiter" der Dänisch-Halleschen Mission in Südindien im 18. Jahrhundert</i>	307
<i>Dagmar Glaß: Popularizing Sciences through Arabic Journals in the Late 19th Century: How al-Muqtaṭaf Transformed Western Patterns</i>	323
<i>Milos Mendel: The Concept of "shura" as an Example of Islam's Response to the Impact of European Values</i>	365
<i>Hervé Bleuchot: Le droit penal colonial et les reactions Soudanaises</i>	375
<i>Wolfgang Schwanitz: Changing or Unknown Identities? The example of the Deutsche Orientbank AG in Cairo and Alexandria (1906 - 1931)</i>	401

Introduction

The present volume grew out of a symposium on *Changing Identities in Asian and African Societies under Colonialism*. The symposium was arranged by the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies and held in Berlin on 21 and 22 October, 1993. Scholars who specialise in areas which are covered by the research conducted at the Centre - that is, Africa, Near and Middle East, and South Asia - were invited to contribute papers. Professor Peter Heine, the Acting Director, welcomed the gathering. Professor Dietmar Rothermund, who spoke on behalf of the Board of Advisers, reviewed the growth of the Centre since its inception in 1992 and outlined the scope of its future research.

The symposium intended to stimulate discussion on a subject which currently engages scholars of several disciplines. The choice of the subject has been occasioned by academic, but also by more immediate considerations. The recent decades witnessed a remarkable and politically relevant proliferation of group identities of various kinds and at different levels - ethnic, social, religious, national and sub-national - as well as a crisis of long-established ones in diverse parts of the globe, leading to sometimes rather dramatic consequences. The underlying idea in arranging the symposium was to venture a fresh look at the transformation of Asian and African societies by focussing on the issue of changing identities and making this the point of departure. It was suggested to the invitees that the task could be achieved by drawing attention to external as well as internal factors which contributed to identity-building, by singling out factors which determined and changed the role of identities in different historical situations under colonialism, and finally, by attempting a cross-cultural comparison of events bearing similarity but which could possibly have been generated by disparate processes.

The developments ever since decolonization in the erstwhile colonised countries of Asia and Africa necessitate a thorough rethinking. Apart from the need to expand the factual knowledge about what actually occurred within the societies under colonialism and thereafter, the multilinear trends which have surfaced in the modern period of world history constitute a major topic for studies devoted to these continents. The preliminary findings in this respect lend support to critiques of earlier simplified notions of a unilinear universal evolution. Moreover, as we stand at the threshold of a new millenium, the experiences gained in course of the twentieth century should be taken into consideration. The outgoing century witnessed the emergence on the part of former colonial countries of a strong urge to change a largely European-dominated world order towards a new type of universal relations without any form of hegemonic domination. Against this background, the dialectic relations between Europe or, for that matter, "the West", and non-European societies and cultures, including the perception of such relations, are bound to play a predominant role for examining societal transformations and putting individual events in a proper historical perspective. Simultaneously, the transformation

Community Concepts and Community-Building: Exploring Ethnic Political Identity in Colonial India

Dietrich Reetz

While the formation of political identity in India is most often associated with pan-Indian forces of the nationalist movement, regional identity-building before independence is often neglected or relegated to the background. Though the main political forces of the time, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, were themselves composed of different regional sub-groupings, both aimed at objectives comparable in their reach beyond a particular region and for the lure of power over the whole of India. To fill this gap, a comparative study of regional politics under colonial rule might be required. This paper focuses on ethnic and religious movements of an independent stature and a somewhat indigenous political nature before independence. It builds on a conceptual framework which was laid out in an earlier article on the subject.¹ The twenties and thirties of this century with their high tide of the nationalist movement gave a strong boost to mass support for regional political parties aiming at an ethnic or religious appeal. After independence their concepts, organisations and leadership networks extended right into the body politics of the young states of India and Pakistan.

For the purpose of comparison, I would distinguish between *three types of regional political reflexes* relying on ethnic and religious support: major activist, minor activist and loyalist movements. Their political status varied. At some time they were independent, on other occasions they belonged to one of the major pan-Indian movements, the Indian National Congress or the Muslim League and at times all three options applied simultaneously. When a local group championed a particular cause like the administrative amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking tracts of various provinces it lobbied for whatever support it could get, be it within Congress, any other party, or independently.

1. For the major activist movements it was characteristic that at some stage they became political parties, making full use of the techniques of mass politics. In the pursuit of their goals they would grow militant and clash with the colonial administration. But the Indian National Congress also attracted some of the fire. After Congress formed some of the provincial governments as a result of the elections of 1937 under the reformed constitution of 1935, smaller communities, more than ever before, regarded Congress as the *heir apparent* to British rule. As independence drew nearer, so grew the animosity these groups harboured for the Congress and the Muslim League who acted as the future masters of British India.

The 'Red Shirt' movement of the Pathans fell into this category. It started in 1930 and was closely connected with the Civil Disobedience movement. The Sikh

movement of the early 1920s also belonged here. It grew out of a religious campaign to gain administrative control over the Sikh temples called the *gurdwaras*. The latter had almost changed into private property of the pro-British ministers, the *Mahants*.

The Madras-based Non-Brahmin movement from 1916 onwards has been included here as well. It was a social reform movement that aimed at the emancipation of all Hindus who were ranking lower than the Brahmans, the highest caste in Hinduism. In the late thirties it converted into an ethnopolitical Dravidian and Tamil movement which clashed with the first Congress Government of Madras Presidency under Rajagopalachari (1937-1939) over the language issue of Hindi vs. Tamil.

The Sikh, Pathan and Tamil cases serve as the major reference examples of the present study since they were the most extensive, coherent and sustained regional challenges. They represented a wide variety and broad sections of India's political and social geography.

2. Smaller activist movements of lesser extent and ferocity in Kashmir, Assam, Baluchistan and many more places which simmered sometimes in the underground or had only short peaks of prominence could be combined into a second group. They often did not succeed in creating a large impact on both the provincial and the national politics of India at the time. Yet, they created the first network of political activists, ethnopolitical concepts for their respective communities etc. and they usually continued after India and Pakistan gained independence.

3. The third type of movement mainly stuck to loyalist constitutional means. Here, first of all, one has to mention the various movements for the creation of linguistic provinces of the Andhra, of Sindh, of the Oriya, the Tamils, and the Kannarese. Some of their demands were granted through the reforms act of 1935. They usually had no spontaneous or militant mass following and were often confined to what one would call 'drawing-room politics.' At a later stage, they were partially incorporated into the Congress movement which was more receptive to regional sentiments and had shown the way by creating linguistic Congress provinces at its annual Nagpur session in 1920. On occasions when they did approach the public like the movements for the amalgamation of the Oriya and the Telugu areas, they were fairly successful in striking a sympathetic cord with the masses. Their legacy was substantial. Most of their leaders continued to work for ethno-nationalist causes of these communities once independence was achieved.

When the Pathans, the Sikhs and the south Indian Tamils developed sub-nationalisms of their own they often emulated the all-India nationalist movement since it was so successful with its campaigns of civil disobedience.

What was distinctive about Indian nationalism? Though it was inspired by Western concepts of territorial and political nationalism it was not identical with it. The cultural and religious factor was much stronger in India. More precisely, it was the system of intellectual and social norms within a particular religion rather than the belief in God that became the bedrock of infant nationalism. Influential Congress leaders like Gandhi (1869-1948) himself and, more pronounced, Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950), Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928) and Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861-1946) used Hindu religious rhetoric, symbols and practices to reach the broad, illiterate masses. Nationalism was wedded to religion right from the very beginning whereas in Europe nationalism had been dissociated from religion, had after the Enlightenment and the French Revolution grown out of a negation of belief and the affirmation of reason. The Indian experiment was to reconcile reason with God. As Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), a staunchly pro-British Muslim reformer, most radically speculated, God could not have given reason to man without wanting him to use it.² And Ramakrishna (1836-1886), when asked if God cannot be realised without giving up the world, answered, '... By living in the world you are enjoying the taste of both the pure crystallised sugar and of the molasses with all its impurities. ... Work with one hand and hold the Feet of the Lord with the other.'³

Modern political identity is no doubt a function of mobilisation. Groups of like-minded and interested activists, the famous élite, are as much involved in this process as the masses with their demands and expectations. In the early nineteenth century and prior to that political group identity had few opportunities to manifest itself in India, except in religion, in tribal, or clan affairs. Even the famous mutiny or uprising of 1857/58 was a largely spontaneous event which then was pushed in certain directions and utilised by local political and military leaders. It is true that there was a way of ascertaining the will of local village populations through councils, the traditional *panchayat* system. The hallmark of religious, tribal, caste or clan identity, however, was structural, largely indisputable authority which had not to be ascertained since it was either inherited or God-given. The very process of the transition from individual or local to group identity was one inseparable from the nationalist movement and the introduction of democratic political institutions, even if they were only partially or very minimally representative.

If all-India nationalism was moulded by religion from its inception, so was sub-nationalism, or ethnic politics. In that respect ethnic nationalism was even further apart from the Western model than Indian nationalism. It was much closer to traditional structures like caste, clan, tribe or religious community. In the cases under review here, ethnolinguistic identities could not be separated from religious aspects. Ethnic groups like the Pathans or the Tamils were equated with particular sub-divisions of religious communities. The Pathans were known as a Muslim people. The descent of their tribes from the Prophet and his times was always an important element in the group mythology of the Pathans.⁴ Rejecting traditional

Brahmanical supremacy, Tamil religious reformers developed an egalitarian variant of Hinduism shifting emphasis to the worship of Shiva, one of the major incarnations of the Supreme Being in Hinduism, and the medieval Tamil *siddhi* teachers who questioned religious orthodoxies. Their religious hymns gave rise to the philosophical system of *Saiva siddhanta* which acquire the status of indigenous revivalism.⁵ In the Sikh case, the nexus between identity-building and religion was obvious and followed the opposite pattern with a religious community going ethnic. Fragmentation was another mark of distinction from the Western mould, both of the all-India and the regional variants. Where the social fabric betrayed a multitude of religious, caste, or tribal divisions it looked like a patchwork of multiple loyalties. Larger groups could be constructed in different ways with similar legitimacy out of the same material, the *jatis*, the basic units of Indian society. It was rather the rule than the exception that extra-regional movements like those of the lower-caste Non-Brahmins, the depressed classes, or religious orders of the Muslim *Naqshbandi* kind, were overlapping with linguistic movements of the Telugu, Tamils, Mahrattas, Sindhis etc., criss-crossing the political geography of India.

Stages of Mobilization

At the same time, ethnic and all-India nationalism were modern concepts. They could hardly be regarded as a simple continuation of a well-worn pattern of society. Their appearance on the political stage involved drastic changes of conventional structures. The process of change through which social and cultural movements went to become nationalist was surprisingly similar for both the whole of India and its regional and ethnic components:

The shaping of political group concepts started with a drive for religious or cultural awakening and revival. Those movements bore the first traces of indigenous nationalism. Religious and ethnic community élites tried to redefine themselves against the alien influences of British authority and Christianity which had so successfully challenged their traditional hold over Indian society. The spiritual ancestor of Indian nationalism, Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), wrote the polemical pamphlet 'The Precepts of Jesus' in 1820 and the forebear of Muslim politics, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, joined in with the first Muslim commentary on the Bible, *Tabin al-Kalam*, in 1862. The 'Indian Renaissance' and the movement for better education of Muslims followed closely on the heels.

Revivalism also led to a renewed interest in the vernacular as an authentic medium of expression and instruction. At the same time, this was a response to the domination of English print and culture. Printing provided the vernacular languages with new avenues for dissemination of linguistic material and with the means for creating an indigenous intellectual élite. I here refer to Benedict Anderson's

exposition of the influence of print capitalism on nationalist reflexes.⁶ The vernaculars gained rising significance with the foundation of vernacular colleges and universities which became another hallmark of these movements.

At the second stage, loyalist parties emerged who were trying to plead the cause of the community they represented with the authorities on the lines of constitutional reforms and political representation. From the history of Congress loyalism is the known hallmark of its initial phase. And, when the Muslim League came into being in 1906, who could rival with its loyalism towards the authorities?

The third stage was characterised by a radicalisation of the pursuit of political goals of representation and power. While forces supporting the loyalist organisations often co-operated with the British because they owed their status to their patronage, they were now challenged by up-and-coming social classes connected with the general commercialisation of society. The new strata resorted to mass actions of a pronounced militancy along with the civil disobedience movement or following its suit. They positioned themselves for independence which since the end of the First World War was believed to be imminent in one form or the other. The Congress under Gandhi and Nehru and the Muslim League of the thirties and forties stand as obvious examples for this phase on the all-India stage.

Though these stages were no doubt mirrored by the regional movements under discussion their evolution showed significant variations. The clear sequence of time, leadership and organisation at different stages which was so typical of the all-India movements was blurred and sometimes reversed at the regional level. Be it for the lack or scarcity of leadership, structures and mobilisation in the region, fact is, that, unlike at the centre, ethnopolitical activists and organisations rather themselves passed through the different stages mentioned above displaying diverse attitudes at different times.

Religious reform efforts amongst the *Sikhs* started with the Singh Sabhas from 1873 onwards. The first well-known Sabha meeting gathered in Amritsar to protest derogatory remarks by some Hindus on the Sikh faith and the life of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. The Singh Sabha movement was driven by the desire to counteract conversions to Hinduism and Christianity. Other objectives were the preservation of the original teachings of the Gurus against various accretions and the promotion of Western education.⁷ The latter was symbolized by the foundation of a separate College for the Sikh community, the *Khalsa* College. The part of the loyalist party was played by the *Chief Khalsa Diwan* which was established in 1902. It continued to sponsor educational activities in the Sikh community. Sometimes its loyalty was overriding communal solidarity. When members of the *Ghadr* party, Sikh radicals and anarchists, returned to India in 1915, the Diwan supported the government's ruthless measures against them.⁸ The Diwan continued and developed earlier educational activities. In 1917-18 when the next constitutional reforms act was being prepared, it started actively jockeying for the extension of the principle of communal representation [separating the electorates

and the candidates on religious or communal lines] to the Sikhs. It was particularly feared that the Muhammadans who had been granted a statutory majority in the Punjab would use their bloc votes to 'tyrannise' the Sikhs.⁹

Radical politics in the Punjab started with the popular upsurge against the Land Colonisation Bill in 1907 in which the Sikhs were actively involved, although none of their community organisations participated. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre in the Punjab when Government troops were shooting defenceless and peaceful demonstrators on 13 April 1919 turned the tables on political fortunes across India. In December 1919, the inaugural session of the Central Sikh League in Amritsar heralded the radicalisation of Sikh politics. Leadership quickly passed into the hands of the more rebellious. Direct action was contemplated for the first time in October 1919 when the Sikh League gave a public call for 100 bands of martyrs - *shaheed jathas* - to proceed to Delhi and forcibly repair the wall of a Sikh Temple which had been demolished as a result of Government actions. They were to proceed at all costs - even of their lives. In December 1920, a movement was started to take over the Gurdwaras from the *mahants*. This campaign led to the revival of the *Akalis* not only as a religious sect but also as a political party after they had started out as the militant arm of the Temple Administration Committee, the *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee*.

The denial of constitutional reforms to the *Pathans* in the Frontier Province where elections were unknown even to the local bodies up to 1930 had significantly retarded the formation of Pathan political organisations. Educational concerns were taken up by religious leaders like the Haji of Turangzai (1858-1937) and Maulana Obeidullah Sindhi (1872-1944).¹⁰ Their approach to education was aptly reflected by Maulana Sindhi who paid a stipend of 50 Rupies to English-educated students in Delhi so that they would attend his lectures on the Koran in the Fatehpuri Mosque in Delhi. 'He was of the view that the English-educated section of the community was ignorant of religion and if they got acquainted with the true spirit of Islam, they would serve the nation and the people better.'¹¹ The Haji started *Azad* schools, independent from government, in 1910, a programme in which Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) was also involved. For this purpose Ghaffar Khan founded the *Anjuman Islah-ul-Afaghina* (Society for the Reform of the Afghans). The drive to induce villagers to boycott Government schools met only with limited success. In these *Azad Schools* the main elements of the curriculum were Islamic learning and Pakhtun culture. The Haji himself was a poet of note in Pashto.¹² The alternative schools programme was obviously started under the influence of the orthodox Muslim *Deoband* Seminar and its principal, Maulana Mohammad ul-Hasan, whom Ghaffar Khan held in high esteem. The seminar was not only the seat of Islamic tradition but also of anti-British feelings and activities.

In 1929, when Ghaffar Khan launched the *Red Shirt* movement, it was also called the 'Servants of God' Society or *Khudai-Khidmatgaran*, a name, indicative of the persisting strong concern for social and educational reform. One of his

recurring demands was the foundation of a separate university for the Frontier Province.¹³ In-between, loyalist political activity mainly took the form of deliberations on the advisability of the extension of constitutional reforms to the Frontier Province. It was the Frontier (Bray) Enquiry Committee formed in 1922 that was called upon to examine the question of reform.

By 1928, the Khans realised that an elected majority would eventually erode or do away with their revered status in the provincial body polity of the Frontier. The previous supporters of reform were frightened out of their cause during the interviews with the Simon commission touring India from 1928 for the revision of the Government of India Act.¹⁴ When in the course of the civil disobedience movement the Frontier exploded in 1930, radical politics were forced on the province by the Red Shirts. They would not have gained widespread support in such a short span of time had they not made the revival of Muslim Pathan identity the focus of their campaign. Growing into a lower-middle class rural-based protest movement the Red Shirts surged to victory as a branch of the Indian National Congress during the first party-based elections to a provincial parliament in 1937. They captured 19 out of 50 seats in the new legislature and could eventually form a coalition ministry.

Tamil intellectual revival started in the late nineteenth century. *Tamil sangams* or associations were formed around the turn of the century sponsoring the publication of Tamil classics and scholarly analysis of Tamil literature. These efforts were generally non-sectarian which means that there was no particular reference to caste membership or religion. Both Brahmans and non-Brahmins participated in the movement. The most famous of modern Tamil poets, C. Subramania Bharati (1882-1921), was a Smartha Brahman. The religious element was added by the propagation of the *Śaiva Siddhānta* system. For this purpose, local organisations named *Śaiva Siddhānta Sabhas* were formed, the earliest of which could be traced back to Tuticorin in Tinnevely district in 1883.¹⁵ After that numerous *Śaiva Siddhānta* meetings were held in district towns of the Tamil areas. Intellectual interest in the Tamil tradition continued throughout the twenties and culminated in the foundation of a Tamil University, called the Annamalai University, at the temple center of Chidambaram in South Arcot district in 1929. When the ultra-loyalist South Indian Liberal Federation which came to be known as the *Justice Party* entered the public arena of Madras Presidency in 1916 it built on the foundations of the feeble and little known Madras Dravidian Association that had been formed in 1912. In South India, the exceptional plight of Hindus who were not Brahmans was prompted by a significant variation in Hinduism as compared to the north. Except for the Brahmans, all other caste groups were regarded to belong to the *Śūdras*, the lowest of the four major caste designations. Therefore, in south India, there were no intermediate caste groupings between the Brahmans and the *Śūdras*. Caste rules of avoiding marriage, social contact and inter-dining with lower castes were more rigid here and the Brahmans were

considered to be much more arrogant and oppressive towards the lower castes than in the north. Brahmanism was equated with northern India and the non-Brahmins, originally quite an artificial term since it included all those who were not Brahmans, were supposed to be of Dravidian, i.e. south Indian origin. The Justice Party, therefore, started to pursue the aims of the non-Brahmins in a Dravidian context. The *Dravidian* cause emerged as proto-'Tamilism', i.e. ethnic nationalism of the Tamils, albeit in a more camouflaged and embryonic form. Addressing the first Justice Party Confederation in Madras in 1917, P. Tayagaraja Chetti stressed that 'the genius of Dravidian civilization does not recognize the difference between man and man by birth... It is the Aryans who have introduced this birth distinction ...'¹⁶ Much longer than other loyalists, the Justice Party stuck to its pro-British policies encouraged by its relative success as the governing provincial party of Madras Presidency since the 1920 Legislative Assembly election till 1926 and from 1930 till 1936. Its electoral defeat of 1926 when it finished the race second with 22 seats after the Congress-Swarajists (41 seats) betrayed the signs of a deepening crisis in the party.

It was then that the Self-respect movement of Ramaswami Naicker, who had been a prominent non-Brahmin leader in Congress but left it over dissent on the caste issue, started to dominate the Justice Party until he was elected the leader of the party in December 1938. Naicker and his movement represented the kind of radical politics capable of reaching the masses. He felt no hesitation to resort to agitation in order to press for his demands. The movement 'went native' that is to say Tamil with its militant agitation against the compulsory introduction of the essentially North Indian Hindi language as a medium of instruction in the south Indian heartland of Dravidian culture and languages, advocated and tried by the first provincial Congress Government from 1937 onwards.

Community of Belief

Interestingly, the movements under discussion all fostered and propagated notions of community which passed through similar stages. Goals and symbols were tied into concepts. They picked up prevailing trends and topped them with group interests of those leading the movements.

At the stage of revivalism religious reform groups counted on non-territorial and rather vague groups of adherents and believers. All Sikhs were members of the *Khalsa*, the Sikh community, living necessarily dispersed all over India with a higher density only in the Punjab. The reform efforts of the Non-Brahmin organisations were likewise directed at all Non-Brahmins irrespective of their place of residence, but with an emphasis on south India. The initial reform efforts amongst the Pathans were aimed at tribal loyalties. References to tribal allegiances were usually non-residential and extended also to their migration routes and their

temporary Afghan homes although territories inhabited by a certain tribe became more meaningful during the period in question.

At this stage the perceived state of decay and degradation of the community constituted an important element of the emerging community ethos. They felt left behind in the race for education. They had allegedly degenerated in their social customs, had started betraying their religion or their traditional belief system. They therefore had to return to the Golden Age of their community or religion, had to free their belief system or religion from corrupting influences of the British, the Christians and/or the Hindus.

The *Sikhs* started to perceive these challenges very strongly after the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849. The missionaries of various Christian orders were the first to establish their centres in different towns of the Punjab. They enjoyed the support of British officials and vied with each other in their proselytising pursuits. It was particularly Sikhs from the lower strata of society who were attracted to Christianity. The conversion of Maharaja Dalip Singh in 1853, followed by other aristocratic families, sounded a warning signal to Sikh orthodoxy. British administrators in the early 1850s had concluded that 'Sikhism' was on the decline since the number of Sikhs seemed to be on the decrease. Their census return of 1.2 million Sikhs in 1868 caused much controversy. It had followed a rather narrow definition of Sikhism keeping the number of its adherents fairly low.¹⁷ The arrival of the Christians in the Punjab was closely followed by the emergence of the *Brahmo Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj*, Hindu reformist and revivalist movements. It was, therefore, considered high time when in 1873 with landed money support an organisation called *Singh Sabha* (society or chamber of Sikhs) was formed in Amritsar.¹⁸ Under the guidance of the Maharaja of Faridkot and Baba Khem Singh Bedi, it focused on the education of their co-religionists. While Bedi was quite comfortable portraying Sikhs as a reformist element within greater Hinduism, another organisation, the Lahore Singh Sabha, championed the more aggressive assertion of Sikh separateness and attacked popular customs, such as respect for caste and Hindu influence in ceremonies and shrines.¹⁹ Here was the Sikh variant of the all-India trend to restore the 'pure faith' and the 'true teaching' of religion. Its avowed objectives included the 'restoration of Sikh rituals', elimination of 'the other religious practices' and 'propagation of Sikh religion as desired by the Sikh Gurus.'²⁰ In addition to defending Sikhism against Arya Samaj attacks, the Singh Sabhas built schools and the aforementioned college, opened orphanages, established archives and historical societies and produced a flood of polemical and scholarly literature on Sikh tradition. By 1900, almost a hundred Singh Sabhas or related societies were scattered across the Punjab. Mainstream and majority revivalism was augmented by the increasing spread of the revivalist sects of the *Nirankaris* and the *Namdharis*, with the latter taking a violent turn in the Kuka rebellion.

If the arguments of degradation and decay were important to the Sikh movement, they were essential and central to the Non-Brahmin and the Self-Respect campaigns

that foreshadowed *Tamil* activism. Their major intention was to raise awareness among the non-Brahmin caste groups of their downtrodden status in society. The credo of a movement of all non-Brahmins was formulated in Maharashtra as early as 1873 by Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890) and his *Satyashodhak Samaj*. He proclaimed the need to save the 'lower castes from the hypocritical Brahmans and their opportunistic scriptures'²¹. His major book published in the same year was ominously titled *Gulamgiri*, or 'Slavery'²². The activists of the self-respect movement led by E. V. Ramaswami Naicker believed that self-respect should come before self-rule. They wanted to increase their self-esteem and make the non-Brahmins realise that they could achieve everything in life without the Brahmans. It was the prevalent practices of Hinduism and the Brahmans who were supposed to be degraded. To remove the stigma of unworthiness from the non-Brahmins they wanted to give them a new sense of worth, the worth of their own tradition. Here the juxtaposition of the south Indian Dravidian languages and cultures to the north Indian seat of the Aryan civilization came in handy. Although the southern Hindus were part of the same centuries-old evolution of the Indian civilization and of Hinduism they were proclaimed the direct heirs to the indigenous Dravidian peoples who had allegedly been conquered by the North Indian Aryans.

Fighting degradation and decay was no less meaningful for the *Pathans*. This concerned both real and imagined degradation. The image of the Pathan even among the Indian political and religious élites was still portrayed as being savage and uncivilized. Hostage-taking and violent tribal warfare had instilled fear in many Indian hearts, in particular in those of the Hindu families who lived in or near the Frontier and who, with their considerable wealth were a favourite and easy target of Pathan trans-frontier raids from the formally independent belt of tribal territories beyond the settled districts of the Frontier Province.

The real degradation, however, concerned the social conditions of the Pathan tribes which were among the worse in India. Ghaffar Khan, the leader of the Pathans, exclaimed in 1931: 'Whose condition is worse today? Whose children are dying naked today? These are the children of the Pakhtun. Think, at least something, about this degraded state of yours.'²³

The revival or rather the creation of a common Pathan or Pakhtun ethos was the foremost task of Ghaffar Khan, when he addressed thousands of village people across the frontier province in 1930-32. During those speeches which were simple in style and repetitive in content because they were addressed to a tribal audience he decried the lack of education, the disunity of the Pathans, the disregard for the Pashto language and the servility towards the *firangi*, the fair-haired Englishman. In the Shinkiari village on 7th November 1931, he argued: 'I say it is our country therefore the 'Maliki' [ownership, rule] will be that of the Pakhtun. The sovereignty will be that of the Pakhtun, no other nation has the right to come and rule over the country of the Pakhtun. This is my object and we want that the treasuries of our country should be used for the Pakhtun, the Firangi should not use it for making

rivalry. We will satisfactorily feed our children and construct schools and hospitals. It is because of getting this country for the Pakhtuns that we have girded up our loins. If we do not get the country, we will lie down in the graves.'²⁴

Ghaffar Khan liked to look upon himself first and foremost as a moral and social reformer. He claimed that his movement was a 'moral and spiritual' one and was aimed at eradicating the ills of Pakhtun society.²⁵ He tried to retract core values from the ethical system of the Pathans, the *Pakhtunwali* which allegedly had been forgotten and abandoned, particularly when resorting to violence in abductions and reprisals.

Community of Need

In the times of loyalism the emerging ethnic and religious parties shifted the focal point of reference to issues of social status and political participation. Disabilities and deprivation became important catchwords of the day in order to evoke solidarity with demands for special communal or extended representation.

The *Chief Khalsa Diwan* contributed significantly to the codification and harmonisation of religious and political demands made on behalf of the Sikh community. After the Census of 1901, which had returned a rather low number of adherents to the Sikh faith in the Punjab (8.49 per cent), it negotiated with the British administration the redefinition of census criteria for Sikhism so that sects on the fringe like the lower-caste and *sahajdari* Sikhs could also be included in the community.²⁶ The recognition of a separate group identity assumed a critical importance for the Sikhs during the hearings of the Public Service Commission of 1913. While the representative of the *Diwan*, Sundar Singh Majithia, contended that Sikhs were separate from Hindus and deserved an employment quota of their own, Gurbakhsh Singh Bedi argued to the contrary that Hindus and Sikhs were inseparable and should be treated that way for the purposes of recruitment and other civil service arrangements.²⁷ Later, the *Diwan* thrived on the question of securing extra-proportional communal representation in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. The Muslims had been assured a quota of 50 per cent of the seats in the Punjab under separate Muslim electorates through the 1916 Lucknow *Compact*, as the agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League was called then. The Sikhs regarded the Muslim majority a statutory domination which it was apprehended would 'terrorise' the other communities. In order to offset this threat, the Sikhs who constituted 11.92 per cent of the population of British Punjab and the States in 1911,²⁸ demanded a share of one-third of the seats in the Punjab Legislature. The tremendous war effort and the large tax contribution of Sikh farmers and landholders were quoted in justification of the extra-proportional claim.²⁹ During the second Round-Table-Conference the Sikh memorandum of November 12, 1931 still demanded 30 per cent of the seats in the Punjab

Legislative Council if a communal solution in favour of the Muslims could not be avoided. Similarly, for the Punjab Cabinet and the Public Service Commission Sikh representation by one third was envisaged. In the Lower and Upper House of the future central parliament 5 per cent of the British Indian seats were to be reserved for Sikhs. Falling considerably short of Sikh demands, the Communal Award of August 16, 1932, retained the separate electorate for them in the Punjab and granted them a fixed quota of 31 plus one women's seat which amounted to a quota of 18.83 per cent. of the 175 seats in the new Punjab Council. This exceeded their population share by half or 50 per cent. Within the Punjab allotment of 30 seats in the Central Legislative Assembly Sikhs would be represented by 5 deputies amounting to 1.6 per cent.³⁰ The 1935 Government of India Act raised these figures only marginally to 33 in the Punjab Legislative Assembly and to 6 seats in the Central Legislature. It further provided them with 3 out of 50 seats in the North-West Frontier Province, and 4 out of 150 in the Federal Council of State, in case one came into existence. The Sikhs were particularly piqued at the refusal to grant them reserved seats in the legislatures of the United Provinces and Sindh where they formed sizable minorities.³¹ In the meantime internal differences rapidly increased. The Akalis took to a more extremist position by which politically favouring complete independence from Britain which led them into an alliance with Congress. The Chief Khalsa Diwan found it necessary and promising to form its own party for the elections of 1937, the *Khalsa Nationalist Party*. As a confidential government report aptly observed the party had been formed 'with the object of getting back the influence which the Sikhs of the leading families in the province have lost' to the extremist faction of the Akalis.³² In the 1937 elections, the loyalists succeeded. Out of the 33 Sikh seats they captured 18 and joined hands with the Muslim government of the Unionist Party under Sikander Hayat Khan which gained the absolute majority.³³

The *non-Brahmin* movement was essentially a movement for the removal of disabilities. One of its first activities by its founding father, C. Natesa Mudaliar, was the creation of a hostel for non-Brahmin students in Madras to relieve their plight as they could not get access to other student accommodation due to caste restrictions. And, after it had been in office for two Council periods, the Justice Party was accused of running a 'jobocracy,' to which Ramaswami Mudaliar replied in an interesting twist: 'Yes, I am proud to be a job-hunter, only I hunt for jobs not for myself or my relations, ... but I ask openly and demand that jobs should be available to the hundreds of young men fully trained and equipped, who are now forced to remain idle, because they have not the fortuitous aids of other communities.'³⁴ Here again, it was the Public Service Commission of 1913 which threw up the issue in its full dimension. In 1912, of the appointments of Deputy Collectors, Sub-Judges, and District *Munsifs* [judges] in Madras Presidency, non-Brahmins held only 21.5, 16.7 and 19.5 per cent. of the posts respectively, while the Brahmans occupied 55, 82.3, and 72.6 per cent. of the jobs, with the Christians

and the Muslims well behind. These figures were given by A. G. Cardew, the acting Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras. The fact that non-Brahmins as compared to 1896 had visibly lost ground added additional momentum to the dissatisfaction.³⁵ Shares in literacy and university graduates were equally uneven.³⁶ By 1926, this situation had drastically changed. Non-Brahmins had entered all spheres of public life and had in fact been dominating the politics of Madras Presidency for seven years.³⁷

Communal representation in Parliament was considered to be one of the major remedies against their disadvantaged position. Yet here as in the case of the reservation of jobs in the administration heated arguments were exchanged over the advisability of reserving jobs and parliamentary seats for the majority which the non-Brahmins themselves claimed to represent. With the Brahmans making up 1.31 million in 1911,³⁸ all other groups were lumped together so that the non-Brahmin manifesto of 1916 and non-Brahmin leaders boasted of the support of 40 odd million non-Brahmins.³⁹ During the hearings of the 1919 Joint Select Committee of the British Parliament on the arrangements for constitutional reform of the same year non-Brahmin leaders succeeded to convince the committee members of the deep seated prejudice and bias against non-Brahmins and, more important, of the ability of the Brahmans, who practically held the monopoly of education and local administrative power, to manipulate the democratic process that was to be gradually introduced since people depending on them economically or spiritually would not dare voting against them. When the Brahman and non-Brahmin representatives could not agree over the share of communal representation for the non-Brahmins in the Legislative Council, the arbitrator, Lord Meston, decided in March 1920 they would be granted 28 reserved seats out of 63 which meant that in every constituency there would be one general seat, for which no caste or other qualifications applied, and one reserved for the non-Brahmins.⁴⁰ However, and this is interesting to note, significant communal reservation did not protect the Justice Party against electoral defeat in 1926 and 1937 when other parties and most notably Congress managed to court the non-Brahmin votes more successfully.

One significant reason for their decline was their increasing self-restriction to the interests of only selected non-Brahmin caste groups. At the core of the social concerns moving the non-Brahmins lay the non-Brahmin caste Hindu groups of the Mudaliars (Tamil Vellalas), the Naidus (Balijas), and the Reddys (Kapu, mainly from Telugu areas). The famous Non-Brahmin manifesto of 20 December 1916 which started the movement made a particular reference to these groups. Reading the manifesto carefully, one finds that from the very outset of the movement its chief aim was to provide these up-and-coming social groups with jobs and political power, to advance their status in the social hierarchy.⁴¹

Whether the *Pathans* and the Frontier Province were in need of reforms was hotly debated and disputed. The hearings of the Bray Committee made it clear that there existed a loyalist group of Khans which favoured constitutional reform for the

Frontier. The Committee report concluded: 'The Pathan of the districts is now keenly alive to the issues before us; and if mistrust of the Pathan is to override the Pathan's self-determination for self-development in a separate province, the danger of his turning westwards may become real.'⁴²

But when pressed as to their readiness to accept the principle of election they insisted on nominated representation with special consideration for the Khans. K. B. Abdul Ghafur Khan was a case in point here. Khan Baz Mohammad Khan of Teri was rather an exception pleading for Khans to stand for elections along with the commoners. Another point of contention was the grant of certain privileges to the Hindu minority if a Council was introduced in the Frontier. The impression was that some of the Khans and elders questioned wanted the full range of reforms that were granted in the Punjab. In this, they were less guided by their intention to improve the situation in the Frontier Province than by their wish not to be seen as inferior to other groups and regions in India. It was a matter of tribal pride not to be considered lower than the neighbouring Punjabis.⁴³ When the Pathans pressed for reforms some were rather unsure what exactly the reforms would entail: 'If Reforms is a good thing, as all of them say it is a good thing, then it should be increased ... And if it is a good thing why should we be deprived of it?'⁴⁴ But the British failed to recognize the spirit of the time in the Frontier. When they extended the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 to the province in 1932 they gave too little too late. With preparations for a new constitution after the findings of the Simon Commission in full swing, Pathan pride was deeply hurt at this minimalist concession. Only the 1935 Government of India Act treated the Frontier Province at par with the other provinces of British India.

Since the Pathans were not a minority or a disadvantaged group in any other aspect the reservation of seats as in the cases of the Sikhs and the Non-Brahmins was not a burning issue. Out of 50 seats which the Frontier legislature was to have, under the all-India scheme of communal representation 33 were rural Muslim seats. It further included three urban Muslim constituencies, nine general, *i.e.* mostly Hindu, three Sikh and two landholders seats.⁴⁵

Though the Pathans did not argue over quotas in the legislature - they had rather graciously accepted that the minorities like the Sikhs, Hindus and the landholders were well overrepresented - public service employment became an important issue in the political debate. The very fact of the extension of the 1919 reforms to the province in 1932 had opened new job avenues to the aspiring local élite which were tremendously enhanced by the provincial autonomy introduced in 1937.

Presenting the case of constitutional reforms and employment opportunities to the Pathans, Ghaffar Khan decided to play on tribal instincts and conventional social norms. Arguing for reform he evoked envy and rivalry - feelings well-known from the Bray Committee hearings. He wondered whether the denial of reforms to the Frontier that had been granted to Madras, Punjab, the central and the united provinces, did not mean 'that the Pakhtun is not a capable man in his [British]

opinion.'⁴⁶ Demanding the abrogation of special legislative powers for the Frontier, the *Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1901*, he was not averse against exploiting local superstition and religious prejudice. Protestation was not led on the ground of its undemocratic or discriminating character, but with reference to the fact that it curtailed the judicial powers of the tribes and gave certain limited rights to women to press their cases in courts of law.⁴⁷

All this was massive evidence in support of the contention that at this point the communities of the Sikhs, Pathans, and non-Brahmins, later Tamils, had turned into communities of quotas and employment in the provincial services, the administration and the legislative councils. One has to remember, however, that only few people could hope to become provincial ministers or legislators. It was basically the English-speaking élite that stood to benefit from these movements. In 1931, literacy in English stood at roughly 1.22 per cent. which was a fairly select club (that still totalled up some 3.6 million people).⁴⁸ Right through the twenties and thirties voters who participated in the political process were likewise thinly spread. The provincial franchise of the population constituted 2.8 per cent in 1926.⁴⁹ This was indicative of the narrow social base political movements had at the time. Yet it was a necessary stage since for the first time it opened politics to participation by millions.

Since demands on behalf of the communities and ethnic groups had become more specific at this stage, territorial differentiation of their geographically amorphous group references also deepened. The rough borders of a homeland for their community became recognizable. The Sikhs established a sort of community government through the Gurdwara Act of 1925 which contrary to general politics granted universal suffrage in the elections for the organs of the Temple Administration of the whole community thereby making Amritsar and the Punjab their territorial seat of community administration. The 1931 Sikh memorandum at the Round-Table-Conference went even further. For the first time, it introduced the element of territorial readjustment to increase Sikh weightage within the Punjab province. If no agreement could be reached on Sikh demands for communal reservation, the boundaries of the Punjab should be altered by transferring predominantly Muhammadan areas either to the Frontier Province or to a separate, new province in order to 'produce a communal balance'. The Memo clearly strived to enhance the ethnic attributes of a redemarcated Punjab province by stipulating that the official language of the Province should be Punjabi and that it should be optional for Sikhs and others to use *Gurmukhi* script if they so desire.⁵⁰

The Justice Party had also withdrawn to Madras Presidency supporting only casual contact with the Bombay Presidency Non-Brahmins. This became evident during the interviews by the Simon commission of non-Brahmins of one wing of the Justice Party, the South Indian Liberal Federation (Constitutionalists). Confronted with differences of opinion with non-Brahmins from Bombay Presidency who did not favour reserved seats they preferred to confine themselves to Madras.⁵¹ And,

while the Khans interviewed at the session of the Joint Select Committee 1919 rarely referred to the Pathans in general terms, these references became frequent by 1928 in the hearings of the Simon Commission. Reform-minded Khans started to identify their province, which had only been created in 1901 by way of separating five districts from the Province of Punjab, as the home for Pathan political aspirations in the ensuing all-India race for constitutional reforms and other 'goodies.'⁵²

Community of Deed

Yet, in spite of all the achievements of the constitutionalists which were embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935 and the ensuing elections, ethnic politicians and the masses were not satisfied. Those who advocated radical change on the political scene now associated themselves with the demands for both Indian independence and social reform for broader, mostly peasant masses. With the advent of radicalism politicians could rely on a much more diversified political network. Provincial administrations had been functioning more independently. For the 1937 elections, the 1932 Lothian Franchise Committee increased the provincial franchise to between 5 and 17 per cent. That was still not very representative of India's toiling millions. But it multiplied the electorate to 36 millions posing in itself a complex technical problem how to arrange elections under the conditions of India.⁵³ Political leaders made the present condition of the common masses their central topic to enhance their attraction. It was at this stage that for the first time ethnic and ethnoreligious movements gained a real mass following. The Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab was said to have 80,000 members, according to British intelligence estimates.⁵⁴ Similar numerical estimates were given for the Red Shirts. The Self-Respect movement probably did not exceed several hundred, but its off-spring, the anti-Hindustani movement, attracted crowds of 40 to 50 thousand people at the height of the campaign.

The perceived state of bondage and slavery became a major plank in their efforts to mobilise broader sections of people who led a miserable life. The Pathan leader Ghaffar Khan couched his political demands in similar words. When Stewart Pears, Chief Commissioner of the Frontier Province, received Ghaffar Khan for an interview on July 30, 1931, he was surprised that Ghaffar Khan took so little note of the constitutional reforms. The Frontier establishment had formed the opinion that the lack of participation of the emerging new Pathan élite in the governance of the province where the introduction of reforms had been considerably delayed was the chief cause of dissatisfaction. They had hoped that the extension of the Montague-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 would buy the Pathans off from the road of resistance and violence. Recording his impressions from the interview Spears could not conceal his contempt for Ghaffar Khan whom he considered a trouble

maker, not a devout Muslim. Ghaffar Khan's 'harping on the present 'state of slavery' of the Afghan race Spears regarded as the reflection of a strong inferiority complex.⁵⁵ In the following years, the perceived state of slavery remained a recurrent theme with Ghaffar Khan's public pronouncements. When he toured the Frontier in 1945, he called on his listeners: 'We cannot continue to be slaves. The very idea is revolting, and it is a crime not to be free.'⁵⁶

The events that occurred between 1930 and 1933 were almost a Pathan rebellion. Coinciding with the beginning of the Congress-led civil disobedience campaign on 30 April, 1930, which the Red Shirts had joined, the Pathans fiercely resisted attempts by the British to control political life in the province under a mainly security-related pretext. As allies of Congress the Red Shirts who ruled the province after the 1937 elections faced a similar dilemma of choice like the Sikhs. The Congress alliance could not protect them from the ascent of the conservative Muslim League in the course of its aggressive Pakistan campaign. The nearer independence drew the clearer it became that freedom from slavery for the Pathan movement of the Red Shirts didn't just mean freedom for India, but also emancipation of their community.

It was the related theme of suffering which was raised by the *Akali jathas*, volunteers of the Sikh movement, who courted arrest for the sake of their community. Writing to Mahatma Gandhi about the essentials of their movement on April 20, 1924, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee explained its method of non-violent resistance: 'This method has been adopted with the conviction that it will lead to success by moving the callous heart of the oppressor by presenting to him the sight of suffering inflicted by him and that by cheerfully enduring this suffering strength will be evoked in us and the public will be convinced of the depth of our feeling and the sincerity of our cause. This suffering may take the form of imprisonment, fines, beating or death.'⁵⁷

When Gandhi counselled in favour of a token individual protest of some volunteers, the SGPC in its letter defended the participation of Sikh masses in the activities: 'In your suggestion about the limitation of sathyagrahis to 'one or at the most two' you have not taken into account the significance of the institution of *sangat* in Sikhism and the principle of numbers involved in the *Jaito* struggle... The *sangat* is believed as the Guru incorporate. From the times of Guru Nanak onwards, Sikhs in large numbers have been proceeding to Gurdwaras and congregating therein. The freedom of temples would mean nothing without the free and unfettered exercise of this right.'⁵⁸

After the passage of the Gurdwara Reforms Act of 1925 the temple movement died down. Though the act did not completely satisfy the Sikhs, attention reverted back to ordinary politics. But the equation of Sikh political forces had dramatically changed. The temple movement had established the Akalis as a new and radical political body whose leader Master Tara Singh (1885-1967)⁵⁹ was determined and willing to use its influence with the Sikh masses for permanently steering the course

of Sikh politics into more stormy waters. Their temporary alliance with Congress from 1936 onwards showed the pitfalls of such policy. Though the Akalis supported the quest for complete independence, Congress as a national party had a different agenda. The Akali leaders who had fought so hard to attain their strong position in the Sikh community would only accept such actions and policies on behalf of the Congress high-command which did not clash with significant communal interests. In 1939 Congress decided not to join the British war efforts because India and their newly elected provincial governments were not consulted when India was declared a belligerent party and because it still hoped it could exert pressure on Britain to advance India's release into independence so that it could support Britain as a free nation. The Sikhs, however, had always maintained a special relationship with the army. Army service was the social basis for the existence of many a Sikh family. The Akalis, therefore, contrary to Congress policy, went for a wholehearted support to the recruitment effort. Gandhi was outraged and wrote to Master Tara Singh quite pointedly on August 16, 1940: 'As I have told you, in my opinion you have nothing in common with Congress nor the Congress with you. You believe in the rule of sword; the Congress does not. You have all the time 'my community' in mind. The Congress has no community but the whole nation. Your civil disobedience is purely a branch of violence.'⁶⁰

Master Tara Singh resigned from the All-India Congress Committee but the Akalis did not leave the Congress. They tried to play both sides. Through the recruitment effort they hoped to win government support and to strengthen their bargaining position towards the Muslim League. But the Akalis grew increasingly frustrated over what they regarded as an attitude of appeasement when Congress declined to resist the Pakistan scheme by force. They feared that under the Pakistan scheme or any other communal solution that was based on the Muslim majority of the Punjab its rule would permanently remain with the Muslims reducing the Sikhs in their major home place to a position of obedience. When the Muslim League appeared to be unwilling to give the Sikhs comprehensive guarantees the Akalis decided to resist the inclusion of their main settlement areas into Pakistan tooth and nail. As a last remedy, the partition of the Punjab (along with Bengal) was effected in order to secure the non-Muslim areas for India. At this stage the Akalis again were in fair command of the Sikh masses who were ready to join them in opposing the original partition scheme. Though the Akalis remained with Congress for some time after independence was achieved they again parted ways when the Akalis felt in need of a communal solution for the Indian Punjab as well which rekindled the fire of hatred and terror.

The Justice Party found it difficult to approach broader sections of society. It was electoral failure in 1926 and later in 1937 that prompted some soul searching on the part of the non-Brahmin leaders. Given its staunchly anti-Congress politics in the preceding decades, one of the more surprising moves of the Justice Party leadership were attempts to forge a quasi-alliance with Congress. This in itself was

not unusual since Congress claimed to be an umbrella organisation for all nationalist forces which it wanted to unite and to represent. Though the alliance did not materialise, in 1926 Justice Party activists were allowed concurrent membership of Congress. Then it was clear that renewal of the party would not come from within. The well-known non-Brahmin politician E.V.R. Naicker who had been with Congress represented the type of leader needed to gain a real mass following. Capturing the leadership of the Justice Party he acted from outside. With his Self-Respect movement that gained momentum after 1926 he created a political base of his own. His language was straight and kept in simple Tamil. Like other radical politicians of the time he reflected on the deplorable state of the masses whose plight he wanted to alleviate. The theme of degradation and bondage also resounded from him. In 1931, in the preamble to the party constitution he recalled the efforts of his party to rouse 'the attention of the mass people to the enormity of their superstitious habits, customs, and practices of their religion and caste, and of their degraded economic conditions of life,' and he decried 'that the various political, social and religious bodies and institutions are ever more determined to hold the masses in social, religious and economic bondage and degradation, through their political organisation all over the country.'⁶¹

Ramaswamy Naicker tried various weapons of mass politics before he finally made ethnic Tamil nationalism his major political abode. He vigorously attacked religious customs and superstition, the role of the Brahmans, the caste system and prevalent Vedic interpretation. For instance, he demanded a re-evaluation of major characters of one of the main scriptures of Hinduism. To him, the positive hero Rama was less important and more telling of his Aryan arrogance than Ravana whom he made the embodiment of a Dravidian hero. His followers resorted to burning the religious 'Book of Manu' which contained the major caste principles. Communal representation, that means continued reservation of seats for non-Brahmins, remained of utmost importance for him.

In 1931 Naicker started to come under the influence of socialist and communist ideas. After he made a tour of Russia and some European countries in 1931-2, he began to propagate the Russian experience in applying the principles of communism. He even translated Frederik Engels' 'Principles of Communism' into Tamil. In order to give the Justice Party and his own movement more depth and strength he started to train professional propagandists. But all to no avail. In the 1937 provincial elections, the Justice Party was left with only 17 seats out of 215 in the lower house of the Provincial Legislative Assembly while Congress took 159 seats.⁶²

When in 1937 the Congress-led government under C. Rajagopalachari decided to introduce compulsory teaching of Hindi as a political symbol of the nationalist unity of India it provided Naicker with a long-sought after cause for political agitation. After the government began its Hindi programme in 125 selected secondary schools in June 1938, the agitators started picketing these. The main

focus of the campaign, however, was on picketing the residence of the Chief Minister and of the Madras Hindi Theological High School. The agitators also tried to raise bands of volunteers, the famous *jathas*, but the right response from the public was somewhat wanting. Some of the agitation did create a public disturbance, particularly, when women joined in the campaign in November 1938. The number of prisoners in the whole course of the agitation went little over 1,000. Some of the better-attended meetings pulled crowds of 50,000 people showing a real mass concern for the aims of the anti-Hindustani movement, if only a temporary one. The agitation died down in 1939 and became irrelevant when the Congress ministry stepped down in October of the same year. In 1944 the Justice Party changed its name to Dravidian League (*Dravida Kazhagam*). The new party and its various offsprings, the *Dravida Munetra Kazhagam* and the *Anna-Dravida Munetra Kazhagam* were still to play their most important role in Tamil nationalism and Indian politics after independence was achieved.

Claims and Realities: the Obstinate Balance of Independence

By 1947 group identity building had advanced a long way. Their leaders, however, did not receive the final blessing of the masses for their separate schemes of partial independence. All-India forces had been equally successful in shaping public opinion and identity perceptions.

Independence which had created the two sovereign states of India and Pakistan through a painful partition process did not fulfil the expectations of its major regional movements. The freedom of the nation states they did not consider their own freedom. All three movements met their Waterloo if only temporarily through the independence and its related factors. The Pakistan movement was probably the single most important political factor which had contributed to their dilemma since it had induced and incited a deadly and mutually exclusive competition for power and political representation. But beneath that there were several long-term factors at work which had strengthened regional élites and brought up the basically democratic demand for the emancipation of regional traditions and cultures. The failure to accommodate them more fully during the preparation of the Government of India Act of 1935 and during the transfer of power to the independent governments did cost the body polity of both India and Pakistan dearly. The movements were paralysed temporarily but within years could be seen fighting back causing an excruciating process of administrative and political adjustment to the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of their societies.

The group concepts deployed after independence had been finalised during the period under review. They resolutely ascended from the ambiguous to the definite. They gradually became more territorial and power-oriented. At the same time moral

rigour increased tremendously taking strength mainly from religious injunctions and the perceived need to return purity and morality to the belief system.

All the three movements under review banked on the moral example of their leader, on the personal sacrifice of their activists. The theme of sacrifice was obviously influenced by the ethics of Gandhi who repeatedly argued that Indians had to purify their souls and to make sacrifice. Here the topic of moral improvement was attached which resurfaced in the Sikh, Pathan and Non-Brahmin movements - a value obviously common to the whole Indian civilisation irrespective of religions or caste membership.

Possibly it was this linkage between morality and territorial power what tells the Indian nation or sub-nation concept from the Western model. In the Indian context religion and morality would and could not be distilled from national identity. I see two major reasons for that:

First, the need to reassert oneself against the real and perceived continued domination by the West which did not recede or diminish. The domination took different forms and shapes sometimes expressing itself in values and sometimes in economic relations. Whether this feeling was implanted or nourished by the colonial agent it was based on real inequality which persists even today. The morality-power connection may have been thought of as a partial remedy for that.

Second, and may be even more important: Where European nations for the reaffirmation of their identity can allow themselves to fall back on ethnic histories, constructed or real, ethnic histories in India were yet to emerge at the time of the foundation of Indian nationalism and its sub-nationalisms. It was this new sequence of historical events which returned the searching looks of Indian leaders time and again to religious and moral traditions. And it was this changed sequence of intellectual history which turned religious and moral tradition into a major part of the new ethnic histories which have been shaped since the last century.

At least during the 1920s and 1930s it was moral ethnicity that we encountered as the favourite community concept.

Contemporary developments in ethnic politics of the subcontinent confirm that the reorientation of community concepts to modernist economic development needs in a way was a passing one. The re-emergence of moral rigour in today's sub-nationalisms of South Asia is not new or surprising. If it is often attributed to disappointment with modern capitalism and political liberalism it can be equally explained through its formative roots in the period under review.

Notes

- 1 Dietrich Reetz, Ethnic and religious identities in colonial India: a conceptual debate. In: *Contemporary South Asia*, Oxford 2(1993)2, pp. 109-122.
- 2 Cf. Dietrich Reetz, Enlightenment and Islam: Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Plea to Indian Muslims for Reason. In: *The Indian Historical Review*, New Delhi XIV(1988)1-2 (July 1987 & January 1988), pp. 206-218.
- 3 From the Gospel of Ramakrishna, pp. 158-60, quoted in: Steven Hay (ed), *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Second edition, vol 2: Modern India and Pakistan, New York 1988, pp. 66-67.
- 4 'The putative ancestor, Qais, lived at the time of the Prophet. He sought the Prophet out in Medina, embraced the faith, and was given the name of Abdur-Rashid. Thus, Pathans have no infidel past, nor do they carry in their history the blemish of defeat and forcible conversion' (meaning unlike others whose ancestors converted to Islam, D.R.). F. Barth, *Pathan identity and its maintenance*. In: *Features of Person and Society in Swat: Collected Essays on Pathans*. Selected Essays of Frederik Barth, vol. II, London 1981, p. 105.
- 5 Cf. John H. Piet, *A Logical Presentation of the Śaiva Siddhānta Philosophy* (India Research Series, VIII), Madras 1952, pp. 3-4ff.
- 6 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London-New York 1991 (rev. & ext. ed.), pp. 33-36 and chapter 3, pp. 37-46.
- 7 Cf. Harbans Singh, *Origin and Development of the Singh Sabha*. In: *Punjab Past and Present*, vol. VII, part I, April 1973, pp. 21-30, here: pp. 28-29; Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Delhi 1983, pp. 232-239; G. S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of the Punjab*, Vol. II, Ludhiana 1973, pp. 454-465.
- 8 Kailash Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, Delhi 1974, p. 19.
- 9 Memorandum on Sikh Representation submitted by the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, in *Indian Statutory Commission [I.S.C.]*, Selections from the Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non-Officials (part I), London 1930, pp. 135-137.
- 10 For the biography of Maulana Sindhi, see Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the politics of the Unites Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923* (Cambridge South Asian studies, 16), London 1974, p. 425.
- 11 D. G. Tendulkar, *Faith is a Battle*, Bombay 1967, p. 22.
- 12 For the Haji of Turangzai see Government of India. Who's who in the Peshawar District. Corrected up to 1 January 1931, Peshawar 1931, p. 12. Confidential. Shelf Mark IORL L/P&S/20B.296/10. His civil name was Fazl-i-Wahid: 'In June 1915 he left British Territory and started on Rustam in August. He subsequently moved to Bagh in Mohmand (Kandahari) country and has since been unaplaceably hostile to Government losing no opportunity to suborn the assured clans.'
- 13 P. S. Ramu, *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan: Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) and National Movement*, Delhi 1992, p. 38.
- 14 'The sudden introduction into the Province of an elective system for filling the seats in the Council will, in our opinion, disorganise relations of trust and confidence between the Khans and the people, and will also lead to discord. We have, therefore, proposed the constitution of the Council in the above-mentioned manner so as to preserve the influence of the Khans who, according to their merit, will be largely nominated by the Head of the administration, and their majority will be thus assured.' Memorandum submitted by the Khans of the North-West Frontier Province. In: *I.S.C.*, Selections (part I), p. 248. See also evidence by the Khans' Deputation to the Simon Commission on 19 November 1928, *ibid.*, pp. 249ff.

- 15 K. Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905-1944*, Madurai 1980, pp. 20-21.
- 16 R. Varadarajulu Naidu (comp.), *The Justice Movement, 1917, Madras 1932*, section II, p. 139, quoted in: Eugene Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, Berkeley 1969, p. 289.
- 17 Quoted in J. S. Grewal, *Legacies of the Sikh Past for the Twentieth Century*. In: J.T. O'Connell et al. (eds.), *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, Delhi 1990, pp. 25-26.
- 18 Cf. Gobinder Singh, *Religion and Politics in the Punjab*, Delhi 1986, pp. 57ff.
- 19 N. Gerald Barrier, *Sikh Politics in British Punjab prior to the Gurdwara Reform Movement*. In: 'Connell et al. (eds.), *Sikh History...*, pp. 170-172.
- 20 Ajit Singh Sarhadi, *Nationalisms in India and the Problem*, Delhi (n. d.), p. 34, quoted in: Gobinder, *Religion and Politics...*, p. 58.
- 21 Quoted in: Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, Delhi 1983, p. 57.
- 22 Cf. Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India* (Cambridge South Asian Studies, 30), Cambridge 1985; Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India: 1873-1930*, Bombay 1976, pp. 107ff.
- 23 Ghaffar Khan at a Red Shirt meeting at Khairmaidan on 6th November 1931. Quoted in: Ramu, *Momentous Speeches...*, p. 26.
- 24 Ramu, *Momentous Speeches...*, p. 33.
- 25 Erland Jansson, *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan? The Nationalist Movement in the North-West Frontier Province, 1937-1947* (Studia Historica Upsaliensia 119), Uppsala 1981, p. 49.
- 26 Barrier, *Sikh Politics...*, p. 182.
- 27 Sundar Singh claimed beliefs were primary and outward appearances less important. For his evidence, see United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Papers, Royal Commission on the Public Services in India: appendix vol. X*, London 1914, Cd. 7582, p. 71-75. Gurbakhsh Singh Bedi who represents the established section of Sikh elite held the opinion that the emphasis on the separateness of Sikhs from Hindus is only 20-25 years old. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-127.
- 28 Government of India, *Census of India, 1911, Punjab, vol XIV, part I, subsidiary table i: General distribution of the population by religion*, p. 193.
- 29 See, for instance, Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill*, London 1919, cmd. 203, vol. 2: *Minutes of Evidence, Evidence by Sardar Thaker Singh*, p. 2726. For a thorough account of the representation demand and the exchange of respective arguments, see Memorandum on Sikh representation submitted by the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, and the following interview in: *I.S.C.*, Selections, (part I), pp. 135ff.
- 30 Christine Effenberg, *The Political Status of the Sikhs during the Indian National Movement*, Delhi 1989, pp. 53-57.
- 31 See Great Britain. Parliament, *Government of India Act, 1935*, London 1935, First Schedule: *Composition of the Federal Legislature*, pp. 218-219, Fifth Schedule: *Composition of Provincial Legislatures*, p. 245. The latter still showed 32 seats for the Sikhs in the provincial legislature. The addition of one seat was made after the publication of the Act.
- 32 Emmerson to Linlithgow, 19 October 1936, *Linlithgow Papers, NMML*. In: K.L. Tuteja, *Sikh Politics 1920-1940*, Kurukushetra 1984, p. 176.
- 33 Of the 175 seats, the Muslim Unionist Party got 96, Congress 18 (of which 5 were Sikh seats), the Muslim League got only 2. Of the Sikh seats, the Khalsa National Party secured 18, the Akalis 10, and the Congress 5. The rest were Independents. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

- 34 Hindu, weekly edition, 1 January 1925, quoted in: Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict...*, p. 263.
- 35 United Kingdom, Parliamentary Papers, Royal Commission on the Public Services, appendix vol. II, Minutes of Evidence ... taken in Madras from the 8th to the 17th of January, 1913, Cd. 7293, London 1914, pp. 103-104.
- 36 For further details see Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance...*, pp. 35-40.
- 37 The figures of comparative increase of general literacy and literacy in English released in the 1931 census for Madras Presidency proved convincingly that the non-Brahmin groups had made considerable advances. With general literacy of all ages in Madras Presidency standing at 9.26 per cent in 1931, general literacy of non-Brahmin caste Hindus varied between 7 and 40 per cent. which was a twofold increase over 1901. During the same period, their English literacy had increased up to ten times. Government of India, *Census of India, 1931, Madras*, vol. XIV, part I, Report, Subsidiary table v. Literacy by communities, Madras 1932, pp. 281-282.
- 38 India. Government of India. *Census of India, 1911. Madras*, volume XII, part II, Madras 1912, table XIII, part I: Caste, tribe, race or nationality, p. 112.
- 39 Hindu, 20 December 1916.
- 40 Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict...*, p. 165.
- 41 The non-Brahmin manifesto stated that, '...though rather late in the field, the non-Brahmin communities have begun to move. They now represent various stages of progress. Some of them such as the Chetty, the Komati, the Mudaliar, the Naidu, and the Nayar, have been making rapid progress; and even the least advanced, like those who are ahead of them, are manfully exerting themselves to come up to the standards of the new times... In a variety of ways and in different walks of life non-Brahmins will now be found unostentatiously and yet effectively contributing to the moral and material progress of this Presidency. But they and their brethren have so far been groping helplessly in the background, because of the subtle and manifold ways in which political power and official influences are often exercised by the Brahmin caste.' Hindu, 20 December 1916. In: Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict...*, p. 362-363.
- 42 Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee and Minutes of Dissent by Mr. T. Rangachariar and Mr. N. M. Samarth, Delhi 1924, p. 17.
- 43 Cf. Report and Evidence of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee,
- 44 See evidence to the Simon Commission in November 1928: I.S.C., *Selections*, (Part I), op. cit., p. 269.
- 45 Erland Jansson, *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan?*, op. cit., p. 54.
- 46 P. S. Ramu, *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, op. cit., p. 37.
- 47 'These laws are such that under them, our sisters and mothers go to the courts which is a cause of disgrace to us.' Ghaffar Khan at a meeting in Shinkiar on 7 November, 1931. In: Ramu, *Momentous Speeches...*, p. 36-37.
- 48 Government of India, *Census of India, 1931*, vol I. India, part II: Imperial Tables, pp. 424-425, calculated on the population aged 5 years and over.
- 49 I.S.C., *Survey*, London 1930, part III, Working of the reformed constitution, p. 197.
- 50 See the memorandum on Sikhs and the New Constitution for India, presented by Sardar Ujjal Singh and Sardar Sampuran Singh. In: United Kingdom. Parliamentary Papers. Cmd. 3997, Indian Round Table Conference, 2nd session, 7 September 1931 - 1 December 1931, proceedings, London 1932, pp. 74-75.
- 51 I.S.C., *Selections*, part II, p. 225.

- 52 When meeting continued resistance on the part of the Simon commission to extend complete reforms to the Frontier Province, Khan Sahib Sardar Gulhan Khan of the Advanced Muhammadan Party fumed: 'If we are wanted to be a part of India, in that case we want reforms: and if we are not wanted, if this manly and virile race is not wanted, then we can be told at once, and in that case I would suggest that we may be left alone. I.S.C., *Selections*, part I, p. 272.
- 53 Franchise (Lothian) Committee 1932. In: *Indian Annual Register 1932*, vol. I, Delhi 1990 (repr.), pp. 437-471, here: p. 455.
- 54 Cf. secret government memo on Akali Dal. In: *Papers of Sir Evan Jenkins, Governor of the Punjab*, Record of disturbances and constitutional affairs, confidential letters, interview notes etc., Mar-Aug 1947. India Office Library and Records R/3/1/176, file pages 75-80. Kerr doubts that the mass participation was really massive. Mohinder Singh (The Akali Movement, Delhi 1978, pp. 100-101, table note) gives the number of 25,000 which even if doubled would amount to only 1.6 per cent of the Sikhs in the Punjab (3,110,060) in 1921. Ian J. Kerr, *Fox and the Lions: The Akali Movement Revisited*. In: O'Connell et al. (eds.), *Sikh History...*, p. 222, footnote 46.
- 55 Quoted in: Tendulkar, *Faith is a Battle*, p. 110.
- 56 Quoted in: Attar Chand, *India, Pakistan and Afghanistan: a study of freedom struggle and Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, Delhi 1989, p. 67. Another, similar quotation see *ibid.*, p. 64.
- 57 Ganda Singh (ed.), *Some confidential papers of the Akali movement*, Amritsar 1965, p. 66.
- 58 Singh (ed.), *Some confidential papers...*, pp. 65-66.
- 59 He was the president of the temple administration committee SGPC from 1936 till 1944, and he also remained the president of the Shiromani Akali Dal for most of this period. Except for a short period in 1944, he remained the most prominent Akali leader of the time.
- 60 M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works*, vol. LXXII, Delhi 1978, pp. 395.
- 61 Quoted from: Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance...*, p. 269.
- 62 *Madras Mail*, 23, 27 February 1937. In: Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance...*, p. 184.