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**The Nation and Its
Historical Mediations:
Towards Typologies of
Regions/States**

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THE NATION AND ITS HISTORICAL MEDIATIONS: TOWARDS TYPOLOGIES OF REGIONS/STATES¹

Anil Kumar Vaddiraju*

Abstract

Societies are a product of the diverse mediations that they go through in time. These mediations are not the same for every society. The concrete historical events and processes that are mediated over time determine the substance and form of a society. The West as we know it today has undergone definite economic, social, political and cultural mediations in its history. Consequently, it is today a product of these mediations. The developing /third world countries on the other hand have gone through their own events and processes in history. And their historical trajectory therefore determines their present condition. This trajectory, however, is not uniform for all societies. It is definitely specific to each society. The specificity of concrete historical mediations therefore determines what type of society has resulted from them. This is true even of different types of capitalism that evolve in different societal contexts. The theory of historical mediationism therefore directs us to look more and more for concrete historical events and processes that shaped the history of a place rather than rely on one broad general supra-historical theory that suits all places and all times. Historical mediationism therefore focuses on two aspects: The concrete historical processes that shaped a society and the diversity or similarity of the same between different societies. While this theory shifts the balance from a supra-historical theory of studying and understanding concrete history, it neither rejects nor strictly follows Marx. What is stressed therefore is historical specificity and diversity. In sum, this theory says that there is no reason to steamroll historical diversity to suit one particular straight jacket of a theory.

'There is no supra-historical theory of history.'

- Karl Marx

'Knowing oneself better, by knowing the other;

Knowing the others better, by knowing oneself'.

- Antonio Gramsci

Introduction

This paper deals with India's regions and their relationship with the nation. We focus in this paper on the historical making of regions in India. In doing so, we propose a new concept called 'historical mediation', and a theory of history of regions based on that concept, namely 'historical mediationism'. In fact, this concept and theory proposed here are somewhat paradoxical. In focusing on the history of Indian regions, we plead in this paper for a more empirically based, nuanced history, almost to the

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extent of denying a theory. And yet, we are proposing a theory of history of Indian regions here. In the following paper, we elaborate some of these ideas.

It appears paradoxical to deny a theory of history and yet to propose one. I think in this aspect, no other theory of history has had as much influence in our times as that of Marx's. The theory of history proposed by Marx is supposed to be trans-historical, applicable to all regions of the world, of course with due modifications, without, however, altering the core features. Thus historical materialism came, in a way, to supplant history itself. Despite the enormous influence of Marx on historical writings, when we see Marx's own understanding of Indian history itself, we find many inadequacies. The theory of history apart, Marx's *Notes on Indian History* (1960,1986) start with the Islamic conquests of India, as if the history of India preceding to that did not exist, or even if it did, did not matter. Our problem in this paper is not with Marx or Marx's theory of history; it is concerned with the problem of generalization in history which often tends to result in overgeneralization when it is conceptualized into a theory or philosophy of history. These are the pitfalls of any general overarching theory of history. In this paper, in contrast to the above, we plead for a more nuanced, empirically grounded history of India in general and of its regions in particular.

It is a truism to say that India as a nation consists of its many regions. Historically speaking, the relationship between the nation and region was crucial in India. The relationship was often a dialectical one, wherein the empire building and nation building rulers from above and the regional forces from below often negotiated their relationships in complex ways. In this, neither could the nation obliterate the regions with all their distinctness nor could the regions completely remain free from the influences of empire building and later nation building enterprises. In this regard, Rudolph and Rudolph (1985) note the following:

'In sum, state formation and state-society relation in India cannot be understood in the light of theory whose principal components are Oriental despotism, the Asian mode of production and the village commune. More relevant are the doctrine and practice of Mauryan and Gupta empires of the northern India, the Chola and Vijayanagar empires of southern India, and the Ottoman, Byzantine and Safavid empires of Western Asia in so far as they influenced the Mongol inheritance and Persian borrowings of the creators and builders of Mughal empire in India.'(pp 48-49)

and,

'Social formation in India shaped a process of state formation characterized by a dialectical relation between imperial state and regional kingdom. When the imperial prevailed, it invariably did so in the context of preserving the aspects of regional kingdom, rather than obliterating it. Indian Federalism is an expression of this process of state formation' (pp 56-57)

Regions, Historical Mediations and their Significance

Regions in India can be characterized by any criteria: language, ethnicity, religion, geography or race etc. we in this paper choose to characterize them historically in terms of the mediations that they have undergone. The assumption is that the history of each region is a layered history. Each layer of time leaves its indelible mark on the region concerned. Ultimately, today's regions are products of the historical process of impact of these layered periods of time which we choose to call historical mediations. By historical mediation, we mean large periods of time marked by a specific regime, structures of governance and a pattern of rule lasting for hundreds of years and with decisive change being left on the society thereafter.

Understanding the historical mediations of a society is crucial to understanding a society, its contemporary politics and extent and nature of the approximation of the region to modernity. These historical mediations shape the society in four distinct ways: in determining the particular nature of the overall social structure; formation of different classes and castes (as different from class formation); the nature and constitution of the subaltern in the region and approximation of the region to modernity. These aspects in turn are constitutive of differing consequences for modernity in the concerned regions. One can speak of these mediations without either contradicting or strictly following the theory of historical materialism. This theory operates altogether at a different level of generality which can very well integrate itself within the theory, the theory of modes of production, but argues that the very nature of the modes of production differs from place to place. What is stressed upon is the concrete empirical form that each mode takes in each different region.

Following the above, we present some tentative typologies of regions in India. We delineate altogether four typologies, but more can be discerned. However, why these typologies of regions? How do they help us? The entire point of underscoring the significance of historical mediations is that different regions within India have undergone different historical mediations and their contemporary society is a product of these mediations. Highlighting the respective historical mediations alerts us to the diversity of different regions within India and debunks the claim that all regions are equally poised towards modernity. Methodologically, when we introduce the element of time into the spatial dimension of regional diversity and see the differential evolution of regions, we get the concept of historical mediations. This introduction of the element of history to understand the regional diversity in India makes the understanding of contemporary India richer and, as a byproduct, can also have meaningful policy consequences as well. Basically, in terms of method of this concept, historical mediation, we have three dimensions to look at: region, nation and history, the latter denoting the time or temporal dimension. Here we consider both space and time. Thus, we can diachronically look at the evolution of regions and not just synchronically or statically at a point of time. By alerting us to the regional differences in histories and their mediations, the theory attempts to sensitize social science discourse to the diversity within the Indian society. The concept of historical mediation also alerts us to the evolution of a specific type of modernity in a region, besides helping us in understanding the inequality between regions in terms of social and political development. Below, we present some of these typologies.

India's Regions: Four Different Typologies

Taking India itself as a case, we can discuss four models or typologies of evolution of mediations:

Typology-1

This is a type of region where we find primarily a pre-Islamic society having gone through the five subsequent mediations i.e., the Islamic mediation, the colonial mediation followed by that of nationalist movement and post-Independence drives of state formation and nation building. In this case, contemporary society is a product of all these historical mediations that it has gone through. This is particularly the case with regions belonging to the erstwhile Presidency areas of Madras, Bombay and Calcuttaⁱⁱ. Here contemporary society is highly advanced when compared to the other regions of Indian society and with the formation of a highly articulate middle class and intelligentsia and these regions are also highly hegemonic within Indian societyⁱⁱⁱ. They approximate more closely to the modernity of the West than all other regions of the country. Frykenberg (1985) for example notes some of the features of the historical formation of this type of region in the following words:

As early as the 1820's, 30's and 40's the Madras School Book Society, the Madras Literary Society, the Madras Dharma Sabha, the Madras Hindu Association, Pachaiyappa's Charities, and the Madras Mahajana Sabha were sending memorials and putting petitions before ruling authorities, sometimes going directly to [British] parliament'. (62-63)

Further evidence on the rise of the articulate middle class and intelligentsia in Bengal was noted by Crane (1985). Crane observes the following regarding the phenomenon:

'In January 1881, according to the *Annual Report*, there were 31 vernacular newspapers published in Bengal. By the end of the year 1881, there were 50. Of these, 38 were published in Bengali, four were in Hindi, one each in Urdu, Persian and Assamese. Four were printed in Oriya and one in Urdu and English. Six of the papers were dailies, 38 were weeklies, three fortnightlies, and three monthlies' (pp 86-87).

And he explains as to how the middle class developed and perceived itself as early as 1820s in Bengal, thus:

'Since the 1820's, the *bhadralok* of Bengal had very actively involved in founding, supporting, teaching and studying in the large numbers of schools and colleges in Calcutta and in the *muffassal*. Because Western education had become the best available "passport" to respectable careers and social status, the Bengali middle class believed that education was and should be their own special preserve' (pp 92-93).

And finally, Crane notes, as a result of the above, a public sphere formed in Bengal:

'One of the most impressive aspects of the so-called Bengal Renaissance has to be the very *wide* range and variety of clubs, societies and associations that sprang up—

predominantly but by no means exclusively among the new educated middle class or the *bhadralok*' (pp 96-97).

Typology -2

The second typology belongs to that of regions which have not seen direct colonial mediation, having been continuously ruled by the Islamic princely states till the time of Independence. Here at the bottom there is a pre-Islamic society having gone through Islamic mediation and then directly having reached national Independence and the mediations of post-Independence drives for state formation and nation building. In this case, colonial mediation is missing. And the mediation of the nationalist movement too is thin, so to say. The prominent case that can serve as an example is the erstwhile Hyderabad state or what forms the present Telangana. In this society, the approximation to modernity, its social and political sense, is highly stunted. While we have cited the example of the erstwhile Hyderabad state, it is not difficult to multiply examples of this type or regions from across India. Hyderabad state had been under the rule of an Islamic princely state since 1800, and even before, till the time of the formation of post-Independence Indian states.

Typology -3

This type of region is characterized by pre-Islamic society and political regimes. These had been historically under the rule of the native princely states. These regions also have had the continuation of these regimes during the colonial period through various arrangements made of tribute and subsidiarity between the British and the native Hindu princely states. However, in this type, we see the historical mediation of colonial rule and its impact. The mediation of colonial rule may be indirect; however, it is still very strong. And this colonial mediation is directly followed by the mediations of the nationalist movement and leading finally to the evolution of contemporary polity, society and its approximation to modernity. The interesting fact is that in this type of regions, Islamic mediation is thin or absent. The largely historical continuity of pre-Islamic caste-Hindu society is obvious. Mysore state, before the formation of united Karnataka, can be taken as an example for this. At least since 1799, Mysore state had been under Hindu rulers till the time of the post-Independence period. There are also other princely states of this type such as Travancore and Baroda (Vadodara now).

Typology-4

In this type of regions, we discern only two historical mediations. Here, the first mediation being the British colonial conquest of pre-existing tribal/non-tribal kingdoms, followed by the extension of sovereignty and the nation-building enterprise of the post-Independence Indian state. North-Eastern India is a prominent case in point. Regions of this type have only seen conquestorial mediations of the Indian state. And as such, their relationship with the centre of polity also largely remains contested. They form the geographical, political and social periphery of state formation. Such regions remain marginalized and peripheral to the Indian state with the 'stateness' of the Indian state being rather thin in such contexts. The regions' relationship with the Indian nation-state always remains tenuous and

contested. These also happen to be regions of perpetual political turmoil with their integration into state formation and nation-building being met only half-way when compared to the 'mainstream' regions of the country.

It is, of course, well known that different regions in India evolved differently. What we are suggesting is that this is owing to the different historical mediations that they had undergone. Today, this does not only mean horizontal difference but also a vertical structure. This vertical structure of regions obtains with regions with prominent colonial mediation being advanced and being ahead of all other regions. And the most backward regions today are those which lacked the mediation of the colonial rule early on.

Constitution of the subaltern

In the above, we have mentioned that historical mediations of a society result in the shaping of four aspects: a) the overall social structure; b) formation of classes; c) constitution of the subaltern and d) approximation of the region to modernity. In the following, we take one aspect of the above four i.e., constitution of the subaltern, and attempt to elaborate the same in terms of how historical mediations have come to result in a particular form of constitution and mobilization of the subaltern in each region. We take the example of the Dalit movement as an illustration for this. In attempting to elaborate the same, we follow the work of Sudha Pai (2013) on the Dalit movement and assertion in India.

Pai (2013) has argued that the Dalit movement in India can be mapped^{iv} in terms of three geographical regions, namely Dravidian south, Gandhian north and Ambedkarite west. It is, however, interesting to note that two of these regions i.e., Dravidian south and Ambedkarite west fall in the '*Typology-1*' that we have charted above.

Regarding the Dravidian south, Pai has this to say:

'The Tamil speaking areas of the Madras Presidency witnessed the construction of Dalit ideology of non-Brahmanism quite early in the colonial period. Based on religion, language and particularly caste, it challenged the position of the Brahmins in the caste hierarchy. However, the conscious construction of low caste or Adi-Dravid identity predates the political expression of non-Brahmanism, which the former supported, beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is seen in the writings of depressed class intellectuals such as Ayothidas, Masilimani, and Appaduriar, and organizations such as Advaitananda Sangh in 1870, the Chakya Bhudhist Sangam in the late 1800s, and the Dravida Mahajana Sangam in 1881 which petitioned the colonial government for separate schools and common wells, and work places for the depressed classes (Geetha and Rajadurai 1993:2091)' (pp 4-5).

Regarding the Gandhian North, Pai observes the following:

'In contrast to Tamil speaking areas of the Madras Presidency, a seminal feature of the Hindi heartland in the colonial period, continuing into the early years of independence, was the delayed development of Dalit consciousness among the large mass of untouchables (Pai, 2002). This region did not experience any large scale or

sustained Dalit movement until very late in the colonial period, its impact in terms of mobilization upon the masses of depressed classes was limited, and it came too late to have transformative impact on society. Rather a series of small, widely separated, and weak movements took place which did not coalesce into large movement, as in the Bombay Presidency, until very late in the colonial period' (pp 12-13).

Regarding the Bombay Presidency region, Pai says the following:

'Ambedkarite ideology, which has now spread to large parts of India [which originated in Bombay Presidency region] is the product of the writings and speeches of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar who emerged as an important leader of the depressed classes, but more particularly of the *Mahars* in the Bombay Presidency (Gore, 1993). He was a product of western India, where significant social reform movements had created notions of equality, leading to considerable ferment during the nineteenth century due to leaders such as Jyotiba Phule (O'Hanlon, 1985). In sharp contrast to Gandhi, Ambedkar in his writings systematically constructed a philosophy of protest against caste-based oppression which provided legitimacy to the Mahar movement, and put the social question squarely at the centre of his thought (Gore, 1993)' (pp 17-18).

We presented the lengthy quotations from Pai (2013) above precisely to illustrate how subaltern got constituted differently owing to social movements in different regions. The subsequent transformations in the social movements are indeed prefigured by the original historical mediations.

The point, however, is for a situation such as this to have come into existence, the different historical mediations of different regions are responsible. And without understanding these mediations that each region had undergone, we can hardly understand or study India. The general rubric, or the idea, of considering historical mediations is applicable to other societies as well. However, Indian society, of all, is most suited for explanation with the help of historical mediations. What this calls for is a renewed study of empirical history of regions as a backdrop to the study of its contemporary context. This helps us understand the evolution of a specific type of social structure, formation of classes; constitution of the subaltern and approximation to modernity in each region.

Reconsidering the views of Ainslee T Embree

What we discussed above is in contrast to what Embree (1985) has elaborated earlier. Embree has argued that the unity of Indian civilization derives from two sources: a) from the overarching, pan-Indian Brahmanical ideology; and b) from the integrative role (in integrating regions) played by the two external intrusions, Islamic and the Western. To put this in Embree's words:

'It would be possible to identify many of these unifying linkages in some detail, but here only two very broad categories, which subsume the most of the others will be noted. One is ideological, the Brahmanical tradition; the other is the historical experience resulting from the impact of two alien civilizations, Islamic and the Western. More attention will be given to [Brahmanical] ideology, not only because it is a very complex phenomenon but also because it is the matrix which made possible

the particular role of the Islamic and Western intrusions as unifying factors' (pp 20-21).

Thus Embree continues to elaborate on these two unifying factors that have outplayed regions and contributed to the unity of the Indian civilization^v. We discuss these two aspects briefly below.

Firstly, the Brahmanical ideology has faced, as we have noted above, and continues to face, challenges from middle-ranking castes and Dalits in the Indian context. These challenges varied in their scope and extent in the past and even today the same variance is observable across regions. The cases of Madras Presidency and the Bombay Presidency cited above clearly point to the challenges that emanated from the lower castes in the caste hierarchy to the Brahmanical ideology as early as the 19th Century. Over time since then, however, two major changes have come about: one, even in the erstwhile Presidency areas, the Brahmanical ideology as such did not disappear, rather however, it became diluted in practice. Secondly, the same ideology of hierarchy is passed on to the middle-ranking castes. Now it is these middle-ranking castes popularly known as 'backward classes' that strongly uphold the caste hierarchy. As a strengthening factor to this, since Independence, the land ownership pattern too has shifted largely to the middle-ranking castes in the rural areas. Therefore, they are the new upholders of the *dharma* of caste hierarchy. Brahmins may still carry out the priestly function, or may not even do that, with some middle-ranking castes having their own caste priests (for example the Lingayats in Karnataka have their own priests). However, the power of enforcing and maintaining the caste hierarchy has largely shifted to the middle-ranking backward classes since the previous 71 years of Indian Independence.

Two consequences of this are visible from this. As the middle-ranking castes are more regionally based, unlike the pan-Indian Brahmin caste, and are more locally rooted in land, agriculture and allied sectors, their politics too are more region- oriented. Thus this has led to, in turn, either the emergence of new political leaderships and parties from them, or strengthening of the regional leaders in the national parties (the so-called 'regional satraps'). However, the region has been reborn once again in Indian politics. And the social bases of these regional politics are in the regional middle-ranking castes. While this phenomenon started in the 1980s, it has reached a crescendo in the coalition politics of the early years of the twenty-first century.

Second, related to the emergence of middle-ranking castes in different regions of India, particularly in agriculture and allied activities, is also the phenomenon of increasing conflicts, in the regional arenas, between these middle-ranking castes, who now enforce the caste-hierarchy *dharma* even more stringently than the Brahmins, and the Dalits. The violent caste conflicts across the country of late have largely taken place between the regionally rooted middle-ranking castes and the Dalits. For instance, between Jats and Dalits in Haryana, between Marathas and Dalits in Maharashtra, between Patels and Dalits in Gujarat, between Kammas and Dalits in Andhra Pradesh and between the backward classes and Dalits in different districts of Tamil Nadu^{vi}.

The point of mentioning the above is that we need to take a more nuanced view of Brahmanical ideology today. While the ideology has now moved downwards to the middle-ranking castes, therewith the pan-Indian nature of Brahmanical ideology has become diluted. Now it is more regional and regions themselves have emerged once again as major arenas from which democratic

legitimacy and sovereignty is derived by the Indian nation-state. The Indian civilization too now exists and thrives on the cultural and political strength of the regions. (That is why today, in the discipline of Indian Politics, State Politics has emerged as a very important sub-discipline). Regions have once again re-emerged in politics.

With regard to the historical mediations of the impact of Islamic and British rule too, Embree vastly overgeneralizes the Indian historical experience. We can, in the face of such overgeneralization, only point to the article cited above of Crane(1985) as to how modernity spread in the erstwhile Presidency of Bengal reflecting in the development of a social structure, a literate, self-conscious, and articulate middle class and as a result a vibrant press and an overall public sphere. The same is true of the other two Presidency areas in general and that of Madras Presidency in particular. If there were many significant 'perennial nuclear areas' (such as Punjab, Bengal, Andhra, Rajasthan and so on) in Indian history, as Embree notes, the three Presidency areas were the perennial nuclear colonial areas that advanced often ahead of all other regions during the Western impact over Indian civilization: the most decisive to date^{vii}. And non-Presidency areas did not have the same exposure to Western civilization and its myriad forms of modernity as did the Presidency areas. How come then is the Western incursion into Indian civilization a unifying one and operated within the matrix of Brahmanic ideology? We do not go into medieval history or early modern history to show the differential impact of the Islamic incursions into Indian civilization. Suffice it to say that both the incursions — or what we call historical mediations, and Embree notes only these two — had differential impacts on the social and political development of the different regions of Indian civilization. And Embree vastly overgeneralizes his thesis on both the counts: the unifying role of Brahmanic ideology and the same role played by the external intrusions into Indian civilization. All that we have to say is that both the theses have to be seen in a much nuanced manner and the differential impact of these historical mediations – and transformations brought therein have to be noted. And what is more, ideology alone does not act on society; social change too impinges upon ideology. The same Brahmanical ideology is now being used by the already emerged middle castes to further oppress Dalits in local arenas and configure state processes in the national theatres. Therefore, a more nuanced and region-specific picture of Indian civilization is called for.

Finally, revolutions, upheavals and conquests too are historical mediations. These may happen in a short span of time; however, they may leave change in the social structure for a long period to come. Eg. The peasant revolution in China. In the Indian subcontinent, however, we find few upheavals and revolutions, though in the *longue duree* of history, there were many conquests of India. Each one, though, is a historical mediation, and has subsequently left only differential impacts on different regions of India. This calls for renewed and careful study of histories of regions, and comparison of both differences and similarities of historical trajectories of regions without which the contemporary politics and political economy of regions and the nation cannot be studied or understood.

The entire purpose of understanding historical mediations is to appreciate the differential making of the historical regions of India and thereby leading to a more nuanced and deeper understanding of the plurality of the contemporary situation. This understanding of the nation militates against any monolithic understanding of the nation either in terms of a single religion or any other

single determinant of the understanding of the nation. In calling for understanding regional histories to better comprehend regions, we are pleading for depth in our understanding of the plural making of the nation called India. This certainly militates against steamrolling the diversity and plurality of our existence in the name of a religion or any other competing ideology^{viii}.

Summing up

This paper has argued that the history of regions is determined by the historical mediations that they have undergone over long periods of time. By historical mediation, we meant large periods of time often stretching into centuries, marked by a specific type of regime, structure of governance and a pattern of rule with decisive change being left on the society under question thereafter. Having defined it thus, we have identified the major historical mediations of Indian society as a) pre-Islamic; b) Islamic and pre-colonial; c) colonial; d) that of the nationalist movement; e) the nation-building efforts since Independence.

We have contended that these have variegated impacts on different regions and therefore regions of India today stand at certain unevenness and disparateness from each other, particularly regarding their social development. Having said so, we have also held that the historical mediations that a region has undergone determine at least four aspects of its current society: a) the overall social structure; b) formation of classes; c) constitution of the subaltern; and d) approximation of the region to modernity. With these parameters, we have tried to delineate the contemporary regions in India into four tentative typologies.

There are two points to mention here. One, the regions mentioned in the typologies are not watertight compartments. The migration of populations, both elites and subalterns, from one region to another has always been a norm rather than an exception. This happened through various processes of mutual conquests, retreats and distress-migrations of populations owing to various reasons including famines and droughts and floods. Secondly, these generic regions that we have identified always had sub-regions within them. For example, the Bengal Presidency had Orissa and Bihar as part of the same, the latter which were never equal in intellectual and social accomplishment to the former. These inequalities continue today. Another example is Jammu and Kashmir region which had at least three sub-regions within the region, i.e., Jammu, Kashmir valley and Ladakh. Sometimes, the histories of these sub-regions too are dramatically different from the overall regions into which we are prone to pigeon-hole them today. Finally, we have taken one aspect, that is the constitution of the subaltern, in different regions to show how it is different from region to region. We have taken the emergence of the Dalit movement as an example of this. And we have tried to demonstrate, following the work of Sudha Pai, how the subaltern movement, i.e., the Dalit movement, emerged early in some areas but did not emerge at all in other areas. Or, emerged only much later. Coming to the consideration of Embree's thesis that what define and keep together Indian civilization are its two historical markers i.e., the Brahmanical caste hierarchy and the unity brought about by the Western incursion and consequent long mediation, we have indeed held that Embree is somewhat over-generalizing these phenomena. Firstly, the Brahmanical hegemony has been questioned since the times of Buddhism; secondly, the impact of colonial rule itself is variegated. The latter is indeed the central point that we attempted to underscore

all through. Thus today, different regions of India stand poised unevenly facing globalization and market competition and a still strong national-state that always champions unification and even homogenization drives. Indeed, with the emergence of the Hindutva ideology and revival of Hindu arguments in Indian polity, indeed Embree may have had the last laugh that Brahmanical ideology is indeed evergreen to our times.

Notes

- ⁱ I am immensely grateful to Professor M.V.Nadkarni for suggesting the subtitle of the paper.
- ⁱⁱ In the case of Madras Presidency, serious claim has been made by social movements towards understanding the Aryan invasion in ancient India as a historical mediation driving the original inhabitants of the Indus valley civilization downwards to southern India. While not all historians seem to be in agreement with this view, at least one historian of India, Stanley Wolpert (1991, 1997) does take such a view. This view becomes complex when today's Dalit movement claims that Dalits are indeed the real Adi-Dravida people. Whatever may be the differences in views on this matter, the idea and historical imagination of Aryan invasion did serve as a powerful tool in politics and socio-political mobilization. What this, indeed, demonstrates is the power of ideas, ideologies and historical imagination in shaping politics and history. This applies only to the then Madras Presidency region and the idea does not seem to have been raised in the other two Presidency areas: Bengal and Bombay.
- ⁱⁱⁱ It is important to note that Marx did not just view that British rule in India is exploitative; he also held a view that it is both exploitative and revolutionary at the same time. The Presidency regions being directly under the British were perhaps the most exploited regions of all by British colonialism, yet they were also the regions which emerged as the most advanced in terms of social development.
- ^{iv} Recently Harriss-White attempted to map the regions of India in terms of political economy; wherein she mentions that the geography of class relations has hitherto not been attempted. She for instance says 'Marxist political economy privileges class relations as the driver of history—but class relations have hardly ever been mapped anywhere' (Harriss-White: 2017, 45-46). In this regard, we would like to note that one of the earliest attempts to map the condition of agricultural labourers in the subcontinent was made by Surendra J. Patel (1952) in his book 'Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan' in which he maps the agrarian relations in different regions in the following words: 'The landless agricultural labourers form more than 40 percent of the agricultural population in the southern triangle (Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces); between 20 to 40 percent in the eastern region (Bihar, Orissa, Bengal and Assam) and less than 20 percent in the great north (the United Provinces, Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province and Sindh). In each of these regions, a distinct system of land settlement was introduced under the British Rule (Patel, 1952: 150-151), quoted in Vaddiraju (2015).
- ^v Sanjay Subrahmanyam holds a different view on Indian civilization when he says 'We need to see India not as a civilization but as a crossroads, as a space open to external influences rather than a simple exporter of culture to its neighbours' (Subrahmanyam: 2013,4-5)
- ^{vi} For example Embree notes Ashok Rudra's point saying,
- 'If Rudra's thesis on the centrality of Brahmanism for explaining the nature of Indian society is not new in its general statement, his argument that the Brahmanical tradition must be attacked is indeed unusual in the context of Indian political life. Not only would this be a direct challenge to religion in the same way that Marxism in the West from its beginning identified Christianity as an enemy, but at the same time it would be attacking what we have been arguing is the major unifying ideology throughout Indian history'.
- However, we noted that attacking Brahmanism is not that unusual in Indian history. What is important to note regarding the relationship between Brahmanical ideology is that the practice and enforcement of the ideology is now in the hands of middle-ranking castes and this fact, at the same time, strengthens the regions, and being *Brahmanical ideology* of hierarchy of castes, by default, keeps the nation united.
- ^{vii} Bhardhwaj's article cited below details out the differential economic impact of colonialism on India's regions, both agricultural and industrial.
- ^{viii} This author does not emphasize diversity because he belongs to any 'new middle class' or 'neo-rich' class of this country; for the new middle class is very much content with the current calls for monolithic religious nationalism. On the contrary, the particular geographical origins of the author and his exposure to naive understanding of the concept of nation compel him to make a plea to understand the specificity of historical regions and their historical making in terms of differing historical mediations. As someone said, it is not 'unity in diversity' that obtains in India; rather it is 'diversity in unity'.

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