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## **Why I Am Not A Hindu: A Sudra Critique Of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture And Political Economy.**

Nationalism as a phenomenon took birth not in antiquity whereas it is one of the consequential and subsequent germinations of a modern concept like 'Nation'. In India it defines itself in largely religious terminology therefore it would not be improper to address it as "religious nationalism". In the political formation of this potential phrase the one religion which plays essentially significant role is Hinduism. Initially, the phrase served as an umbrella term to envisage various other religions and communities, it has now become coterminous with and comes to associate itself with one community and religion: Hindu(ism). With no identifiable founder, more than thousand million adherents and many divine manifestations the religion seem to reflect multiple worldviews. Though the worldviews are innumerable but the essential pre-requisite to be a member is singular which is to accept the scriptures and caste system as divinely sanctioned. In this manner, caste system becomes the hallmark of this religion.

In saying that Hinduism is intricately related to caste Kancha's major argument is that there is no essential similarity between Hindus and Dalits as a community with its own signficatory practices and alliances with natural forms of worship. Since all religions foundationally are cultural and not natural, the Dalit culture shares almost nothing with Hinduism as a culture with its independent gods and goddesses which has been shepherded by the priestly caste, the Brahmins. He espouses the view that Hinduism and Brahminism serves as a potent alloy in the suppression of more inferior cultures like that of Dalits. Where Dalits are not even aware of Hindu gods and goddesses and they have not been allowed for ages to enter Hindu temples they cannot possibly identify with Hinduism which is as alien to them as Hindu sacred texts.

Kancha posits a potentially radical and democratic view of Dalit culture which incorporates: An equal division of labor between men and women, specializations in work are not gender specific, smoking and drinking are not exclusive to males, no purdah or zenana system for women, roles of male and female are arbitrary, life is one time affair so enjoy it rather than practicing abstinence and no commitments of being a vegetarian hitherto it is a voluntary endeavor. In addition, Dalits have no concept of heaven or hell, no concept of a temple where one can visit god, no fixed grammar thus no religious texts and no purity and pollution concept. In contrast with Dalits, Brahmins are portrayed as orthodox, irrational, anti-progressive, anti-democratic, intolerant to women freedom and thus in favor of sustenance of zenana and absolutely against women crossing the threshold of the house to work.

Despite differences and conflicts, both Dalits and Brahmins continued to exist on a vertical scale of hierarchy but one thing which has caused revolt and aggrandized this conflict is the significant political development and the rise of the Hindu Right in India in last two decades. Prior to independence, the right wing ideology was given ideological preference by the colonizers for various political reasons of their own. Had they but wanted to erase Brahmins from power they could have done so but British wanted to keep the status quo installed. The post-colonial India is thus a Right Wing democracy with BJP as the currently ruling political party. Since then the state of affairs is same and has coagulated for the worse. With Narendra Modi's taking over of the power various right wings hindutva militants and right wing extremists affiliated to BJP like Shiv Sena, RSS and ABVP which were deactivated once have suddenly

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resurrected themselves in order to bring to fulfillment the political idea of the construction of 'Hindu Rashtra' or 'Ram Rajya' which is primarily an Anti-Dalitbahujan project. To remain inconspicuous with regard to this notorious project, Mr. Modi has very intelligently constructed a narrative of modernity which people have accepted very naively as free from idiosyncratic reflections. In Dalit culture, production becomes the focal point of each and everything and Marital Sex is no exception to this idea. Unlike Brahmins, Sex for them is not a leisure activity but to fornicate and multiply. They go to fields to work early morning unlike Brahmins whose primary task is to take a bath and pray. This attribution of inferior, corporeal and manual labor to Dalits led Brahmins to hijack the task of maintenance of temples, service to god and spiritual labor (if it is a labor at all). Entire economic and social set up would crumble if Dalits unanimously decide not to work. With Ambani, Tata's and other trading classes controlling the entire economy of India, the contribution of Dalits in making the society function is almost negligible. I do not have to mention this here that Mr. Modi hails from a trading class who are precisely Baniyas but he has now become the impostor face for Other Backward Classes in India. With absolutely no narratives dealing with Dalit culture in its entirety, there is an attempt by the Brahminical forces to erase the genuine actual history of Dalits from India. Whatever be the expanse of modernity imagined by Mr. Modi it would definitely not encapsulate women and Dalits, in my view. They are doomed to be in the same state.

Modernity and religion cannot go hand in hand and if at all they do so it would be on the expense of women and Dalits. This means, if at all there is a religion in India, it is synonymous with Hinduism and Brahminism in particular. Kancha says that "[...] Modernity has been cleverly brahminized". He provides an active solution to this problem by suggesting to Dalitize the entire social set up rather than Hinduizing as that would recuperate the ones who are being discriminated against along with bringing an equality and harmony in the nation. It would establish a new egalitarian order for the entire social set up. Though I stand in affirmation with most of the claims which author makes here with utter profundity, I could not bring myself to accept his idea of 'Dalitization' which he makes synonymous with egalitarianism. Narrative appears optimistically narcissistic in quite boldly evading other minorities which exist and had been suffering the same. In doing away with Hinduism and asking all to take recourse into Dalit (ization), he is crowning them on the same throne on which Brahmins now sit.

To my mind, it is essential to disintegrate caste which would in turn lead to the demolition of hegemonic Brahminical forces and the rest would automatically reassemble itself on the social ladder. Dalitization would have its own ramifications in the contemporary times where we are still immersed in the juggle of naming and renaming things in post-colonial India. Ambedkar foresaw the impossibility of reforming Hinduism which entails and imply the impossibility of reforming any religion disregard to which one is in power. The project of religion is fundamentally based on hierarchy and cannot possibly exist as an entity-with-power if you reform it. No religion carries in itself the seeds of its own destruction. Religion never gets destroyed it either resurrects or renews itself only to present itself in newer forms.