Premium

Dalitality: Hindu, Muslim, and the nonsense of it

The Hindu-Muslimisation of India's past and present falls well into the trap of Brahminical rhetoric of theocratic nationalism that wants the world, and Indians in particular, to believe in this dichotomy and not about the grand legacy of Buddhism and the internal violence of caste.

Written by Suraj Yengde

Updated: December 15, 2019 10:28:31 am

NewsGuard



The laity, mostly Dalits, accepted Islam to escape the tyranny of Brahminism.

A dominant-caste acquaintance at Harvard who recently turned liberal was aghast at the Ayodhya verdict. She went on a long tirade about the situation in the country, describing how her family and friends are anti-Muslim, especially since Narendra Modi came to power. She had forums of fellow dominant-caste Hindus and Muslims to discuss these issues. Even liberal universities in the US continue to host events to discuss 'the communal problem of India'.

Every now and then I bump into the group of wokes trying to make sense of their frustrations. Their arguments range from Muslims not having equal rights, to the Kashmir issue and, the favourite of all, how their Muslim friends living in posh quarters in state capitals are now unable to perform their Muslimness openly.

Read Tavleen Singh's opinion | Dangerous priorities...surely the needs of Indian citizens should come first

I asked my friend if her family members were always anti-non-Hindu or she just became woke after coming to the US and working in MNCs? She said, "Maybe I was like them. Oh my god a Muslim hater!"

And then I asked, do you know Dalits and Adivasis of India? She replied with an 'of course' and a slight reserved posture this time. I asked her if she knew the population of Muslims in India and she got the answer off the top of her head (14%). I asked if she knew the percentage of Dalits. She did not (it is 17% by government figures and some more in actual, if Dalits in other religions are counted). The Q&As continued for a while.

SUBSCRIBER ONLY STORIES View All

Premium
'I don't think the human need for friendship is going away&#8...

Premium
Shankersinh Vaghela: 'There is nothing free. What is this 300 units...

Premium
Could India be a mediator between Russia and Ukraine?

Premium
Maharashtra will discuss return of Shivaji sword with UK PM: minister

I asked her if her love for Muslims is rooted in deep-seated hatred for Dalits? Second, if her family's hatred for Muslims was rooted in deep-seated hatred for Dalits? She was flummoxed.

Also read P Chidambaram's opinion | CAA has introduced a new route to acquire citizenship — by executive fiat

40 YEARS AGO


INDIAN EXPRESS
200 dead in Gujarat storm, 1,500 missing

November 10, 1982, Forty Years Ago: Refugee mass suicide

The Indian EXPRESS
Confused about Academic choices after 10th & 12th

EXPRESS OPINION


Opinion
What Vande Bharat says about lopsided priorities of Indian modernity


Opinion
EWS judgment is a setback to social justice, India's constitutional scheme


Opinion
Byju's and the great retrenchment that wasn't: Why IT workers' action in Kerala is significant


Opinion
Ela Bhatt, Herman Daly challenged economic theocracies that privileged profits over well-being

BEST OF EXPRESS


Supreme Court pulls up Centre for withholding appointments in higher judiciary


Cities
NCP leader arrested for stopping 'Har Har Mahadev' screening in Thane


Entertainment
Uunchai movie review: A heartfelt ode to friendship


Entertainment
Actor Siddhaanth Vir Surryavanshi dies at 46, collapses in gym


Trending
Woman dances enthusiastically in front of her mother-in-law. Watch her reaction


Trending
From George W Bush 'missing killing Iraqis' to OJ Simpson saying 'I did it', impersonators have field day with Twitter Blue service


Sports
Blind faith in star power holds India back at World Cups

This acquaintance knew Muslims were undergoing problems with regard to their food culture, religion and citizenship. But she had no idea about Dalit and Adivasi lives. She is not to blame. The liberal, conservative, progressive, radical, revolutionary, education system, media, family, political and social organisations, all help continue the legacy of untouchability and anti-Dalitness.

Despite her new-found love for India's minority, that for her were singularly Muslims, she could not deliberate upon the condition of other minorities.

Invasions & Invasions

Muslims, like Brahmanic and Hindu colonisers, ruled over India in the pre-British era. During their tenure, there were no significant efforts to eradicate untouchability or facilitate a society of equals. Hindus butchered Dalits, Buddhists and Jains who were challenging the Brahminical order. Likewise, the Muslim invaders contributed in desecrating Buddhist heritage sites and monks. Many were forced to accept Islam.

Also read Meghnad Desai's opinion | Myanmar and Suu Kyi have 'othered' the Rohingya who have lived there for centuries

The laity, mostly Dalits, accepted Islam to escape the tyranny of Brahminism. They pursued Sufi Islam that was liberal in posture when it came to practices.

The Hindu-Muslimisation of India's past and present falls well into the trap of Brahminical rhetoric of theocratic nationalism that wants the world, and Indians in particular, to believe in this dichotomy and not about the grand legacy of Buddhism and the internal violence of caste. Babasaheb Ambedkar is spot on. In his scholastic treatise, The Triumph of Brahmanism, he uncovers how the legacy of invasions of both Hindus and Muslims diluted the non-colonial (non-Hindu, Muslim or Christian) peaceful past.

"Reels and reels have been written to show how wave after wave of Muslim invasions… enveloped the people. The whole history of India is made to appear as though the only important thing in it is a catalogue of Muslim invasions. But even from this narrow point of view, it is clear that the Muslim invasions are not the only invasions worth study… If Hindu India was invaded by Muslim invaders, so was Buddhist India invaded by Brahminic invaders… From the point of view of the permanent effect on the social and spiritual life of the people, the Bramhanic invasions of Buddhist India have been so profound… that compared to them, the effect of Muslim invasions on Hindu India have been… superficial… ephemeral."

The Dalit Experience

An ideal subaltern and native perspective is to identify the conditions of the poor. In current times, the poor — from the oppressed castes — suffer the most. The ruling elites only parade as the spokespeople in the meat market of dead Dalit bodies. Muslim hatred in India has caste sitting at the centre of its function. Although unacceptable in the egalitarian doctrine of Islam, caste is freely practised under the guise of being a minority Muslim in a majority Hindu India.

Also read P Chidambaram's opinion | CAA has introduced a new route to acquire citizenship — by executive fiat

Almost in every Muslim forum, or in the presence of Muslim audiences I address, an obvious question is asked: why did/do Dalits not convert to Islam (same goes with Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists; in case of Hindus—reconvert)? Well, they did, but the people responsible for managing the affairs of Islam betrayed the message of the Prophet. The untouchability practised against Dalit Muslims has filled reports and research projects. Yet, their condition is not the concern of the supremacy-hungry Ashraf band of elite Muslims. Aftab Alam, Anwar Ali, and Prashant K Trivedi, Srinivas Goli, Fahimuddin, Surinder Kumar have underscored the overwhelming caste experiences amongst 75% of Indian Muslims.

Communalism, as historian Dilip Menon uncovered, has lower-caste assertion dating back to 19th century violence. Be it the Cow Protection Riots of the 1920s or the violence during Partition. To upturn lower-caste assertion, dominant-caste Hindus used Muslims as target to unite the lower-castes. The worst victims of communalism are Dalits of every religion. Thus, when the lingo of communalism is presented as a binary of religious issue, it is playing into the hands of the Brahminical framework. The ones opposing communalism also contribute to the oppressive framework of their brethren on the 'right-wing' side of the debate.

While the cow violence in current times can be seen in light of the growing Dalit assertion and OBC atomisation from Brahmin control, a need to paint the anti-Muslim rhetoric is active. Similar instances happen in the Ram-Babar conflict over the structure at Ayodhya.

How about we enquire pre-Ram and pre-Babar histories? Ayodhya was one of the centres of Buddhist activities, with monasteries housing thousands, records Hsuan Tsang. Buddha had stayed here for sometime. The neatness with which identities have been demarcated into Hindu and Muslim ones "hide the porosity of identities

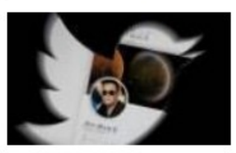

Sports
India needs T20 reboot: Rohit, Rahul, Kohli misfits as Top 3



Opinion
What Vande Bharat says about lopsided priorities of Indian modernity


PM unveils Kempegowda statue in Bengaluru; who was it?


Lifestyle
Siddhaanth Vir Surryavanshi dies at 46 after collapsing in the gym; are people over 40 more at risk?


Technology
Fake Tesla to Lockheed Martini: Twitter Blue leads to a flood of fakes

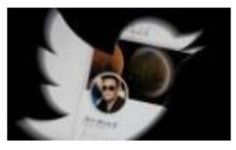
MUST READ


Sports
Blind faith in star power holds India back at World Cups


Sports
India needs T20 reboot: Rohit, Rahul, Kohli misfits as Top 3



Sports
Why old-school Team India is out of depth in the modern game


Technology
Fake Tesla to Lockheed Martini: Twitter Blue leads to a flood of fakes


Technology
CCA Lyra review: Professional earphones on a budget


Technology
Asus ZenBook 17 Fold OLED review: A new dawn for foldable laptops


Lifestyle
Siddhaanth Vir Surryavanshi dies at 46 after collapsing in the gym; are people over 40 more at risk?

MORE EXPLAINED


PM unveils Kempegowda statue in Bengaluru; who was it?



Explained
Interest rates rising, is it time to invest in debt instruments now?


Content in national interest: What new TV broadcast guidelines say


Explained
Could India be a mediator between Russia and Ukraine?

NOV 11: LATEST NEWS


As Ramesh Tilara gets BJP ticket, 2 Khodaldham functionaries now in poll fray


Watch: Rohit Sharma in tears after India's loss to England in T20 World Cup


Kanu Desai, 2 Congress MLAs among 54 who filed nominations

as much as histories of the inner violence of hierarchy", posits Menon.

Violence in India's governmentality ensures the validity of the caste system by making fools of majority Shudras, whereas minority Brahmins of Hindu and Muslim faith never alter their egoist position. Instead, they are projected as the penultimate prophets of their ethnicity to a world still attached in dichotomies. The problem of post-Aryan India has always been a caste problem and thereby it remains a Dalit problem.

Suraj Yengde, author of bestseller Caste Matters, is a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard Kennedy School and a recipient of the Rohith Vemula Memorial Scholar Award. He curates the fortnightly 'Dalitality' column

First published on: 15-12-2019 at 02:08:54 am

NEXT STORY
International drugs cartel busted, 9 held: Narcotics bureau

TAGS: Dalit

SUBSCRIBERS READING NOW


This Sunday, it's 152/0 vs 170/0: PAK PM Shehbaz Sharif takes a dig at India


Under fire for city's traffic chaos, PMC gives push to proposed intermediate ring road


NEET PG 2022 Counselling: Mop-up round registration deadline extended



SUV crashes into autorickshaw and motorbike on WEH; 2 killed, 2 grievously injured



Direct Tel Aviv-Doha flights to operate during World Cup: FIFA


In touch with Ajit Pawar; every person has an an individual life: Supriya Sule


Lionel Messi returns to training with PSG ahead