

EDITORIAL

Nation and nationalism usually imply a social significance and it refers to a group of persons united by common descent and common language. In the post-colonial era the stress laid on the ideal of nation-state in the south Asian countries has become all the more remarkable. It is in the context of the all out effort of the present Hindutva movement and of the Central government of India to Hinduize national culture by reviving those elements which, in its judgment, are specific to the high caste Sanskrit culture, that the subaltern movements have gained momentum. Social classification of Indian society into classes also aggravated the plight of the downtrodden or broken, who are here designated by the Indian term *dalits* (the broken people). It is fashionable to use the term 'subaltern' among the academicians to refer to this section of the people.

That section of the people, which is outside the mainstream of the society, is marginalized both economically and socially. The present neo-liberal capitalistic ideology centred on the market economy envisages a new cultural, political and economic order in a global dimension. The development paradigm under this socio-economic programme is bound to exclude the poor, especially women, children, tribal, dalits and other vulnerable groups. For the free movement of capital and trade our society conveniently forgets the economically weaker sections and the religious and ethnic little traditions and excludes them from its consciousness. The societal counter movements, however, by the victims against the incursion of cultural homogenization are on increase. In the context of India, the understanding of Hindu nationalism of its proponents has turned out to be a cultural reductionism, for it has not proposed a good theory of nation on which India could build up the nation collectively, respecting its cultural and religious pluralism. It ignores the multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-religious context of the country. The articles in the present number of Journal of Dharma reflect the struggles of the minority ethnic and cultural groups to survive in dignity with the mainstream nationalism of the majority. This search has taken different forms of polarization and violence, ethnic as well as religious, vis-a-vis identity politics or policies of nationalists in developing countries, especially in Asia.

In connection with the celebration of the twenty-fifth year of service of the Journal the Dharma Research Association has published in 2000 a research volume on 'Little Tradition and National Culture.' A few articles from this volume are included in this issue.

The article on 'The Social meaning of the Middle Way' by Douglas L. Berger argues that the Madhyamika Buddhism is in fact a social invective against various Indian ontologies that either directly underwrote caste society or did nothing to up set the status quo. He further shows that it rejected both the hierarchical essentialism of the caste society and the escapism of a reclusive, renunciate and metasocial *nirvana*, leaving the individual to demand social equality on religious grounds. The aim of the article of J. Susaimanickam, in the words of the writer himself, is 'to analyze the protest elements which are articulately manifest in the book of Job and in the dalit counter cultural movements and to see the similarities between the symbolic world of Job and the symbolic world of the dalits.' Christian Churches usually decry the caste system found in Hindu society and deny its existence in their communities. In this connection George Koilparambil's article is an attempt to highlight the caste elements found even in the Catholic Community in Kerala.

A. Bendangyabang's Article on the 'Impact of Christianity on Aos of Nagaland covers the history of social and cultural transformation of the Aos during the 19th and 20th centuries. It traces how the transformation from Ao Naga traditional life-style and religion to Christianity evolved and influenced the modernization of the tribe. The study on the Ezhavas shows how a caste held very low in the social hierarchy in Kerala and held as polluting and untouchable came up in the social ladder by its united efforts for justice and by the appropriate moves in caste-ridden politics of Kerala. Manjoor Gopalan deals with the caste of craftsmen (Viswakarmas/Kammalans), their origin, special customs, religious practices and their present political status. Focusing attention on Hindu conceptualization of time Tom Forsthoefel discusses how religion in south Asia, especially Hinduism, draws time into the orbit of the sacred and imposes a spiritual order into the world of ordinary history and change. The article argues that apocalypticism is yet another creative human device designed to infuse added meaning and value to human conceptualization of time. It offers an ethical eschatology and moral cosmology.

Any aggressive attempt at moral and religious renewal with a particular conservative religious worldview, as Tom Forsthoefel has put it in the concluding section of his article, will certainly have a host of conservative political assumptions. The mainstream religious culture can assume the status of national culture only at the expense of marginalized members of the society. In a composite culture the mainstream culture is expected to maintain a complementary relationship with the identities and the difference of Indian ontologies for the genuine liberation of human person.

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