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Lived religion in a plural society: a resource or liability

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ABSTRACT

Recently there has been renewed academic interest in religion that brings it back into the global political agenda. Religion in the post modern global order is fast emerging as a new organising principle in the face of multi-polarity, trans-nationality and sweeping pluralisation of peoples. Contrary to the secularist self-belief, the modern context has failed to take over the tradition including religion. Instead, a logical opposite seems to be happening, questioning the very presumptions of the modernity project. The present paper is a narrative on this creative tension in the religious modern and postmodern perspective. The paper is crafted into four sections. The first section seeks to pin down the genesis of "religious" in the search for social order and consciousness beyond the material world. The second section deals with the unfolding of the enlightenment project and its manifest consequence with the birth of secularism master theory. The third section delves deep into the immediate Indian religious lived experiences under foreign rule up to the sweeping spell of globalisation. The fourth and the final part of the essay makes a case for universality of a multicultural world and religious secularism.

KEYWORDS

multiculturalism; modernity; secularism; information revolution; capitalism; Hinduism; decentring; sociology of religion; religions in India

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I

In the quest for the good life, right from the advent of civilisations, man has sprung up a range of faith systems and an associated but sometimes parallel interwoven systems of rituals, practices, and prophesies within an institutional grid that has consequently produced a hierarchal and hegemonic human existence. The good life conventionally rests in material well-being. There have been attempts to link the good life with moral coherence, such as to make it a project of humankind. Religion is found in every society. Small, big, primitive or post modern, all peoples have a sense of some unseen power, worshipped and woven around a complex set of beliefs and practices. This is even truer than it was previously. The world today is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. As Berger aptly says, "Modernisation necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the minds of the individuals. [...] But it has also provoked powerful movements of counter-secularisation" (Berger, 1999: 2–3).

In Greek ethical thought, it began with, "to be eudemon is to be well off, to have what is most desirable", and gradually led to the study of language and consciousness to explore the concerns of whether human beings can transcend themselves or whether they are bound by the natural world. In exploring the viable social order, philosophy, religion, and science have tried to analyse human nature and social order as per the dominant metaphor of the age. Historicality has shown that neither ancient philosophy nor modern social thought or any brand of religion have so far been able to comprehend human nature completely, so that a viable explanation and legitimising, in particular, of social order could be formulated. This has become more complicated when the earth was subjugated, owned, and measured by the emerging European colonial powers after the rise of capitalism in sixteenth century. The rise of capitalism was a fresh start in world history, in the sense that it produced a scientific revolution and the consequent onset of the Enlightenment Project. The beginning of the seventeenth century ushed in the age of modernity, which was the comprehension of human existence through binaries, such as public and private, self and the other, orient and occident, and finally east and west. This prompted the process of colonisation and centring of the west. After the treaty of Westphalia, Europe thought that it had found the final path of recompilation and comprehension of the social order. It was a nexus of power and ideas, where religion was to be put to the personal realm nature was to be conquered, and people and territories were to be owned by the emergent European powers. The secularisation thesis gained momentum in the nineteenth and twentieth century with the emergence of positivism and nihilism, which dominated the western intellectual movement and also had severe influences in South Asian universities.[1] The linearity

[1] Sociological enquiry of religion is premised on a master theory of religious decline in modern times. The death of religion was the conventional wisdom in the social sciences during

assumption of history was supported by mechanical and biological models of human nature. These ideas were transformed for an extensive social and political programme. However, it soon went under a cloud when the First World War erupted in Europe. The Nazi upsurge and intensification of the "two sex" theory not only divided humanity and produced the Holocaust, but also failed to justify colonisation as a civilising mission of the Enlightenment Project. Hence, the triumph of reason soon turned into scepticism. Critical sociology questioned the linearity of history and attributed power and domination to the main outcome of the modernity agenda. This, according to its critics, was as dividing and fragmenting process of humanity. The aftermath of the Second World War witnessed the collapse of Functionalism and the emergence of neo-Marxism, both in the west and also in the newly emerging post-colonial states. Religions were ridiculed and secularism was perceived to be institutional ideology for the nation-building process. The social theorists of the late 1950s and 1960s identified such separation of realms, which was prescribed as differentiation. They proclaimed that "distance meant decline". They saw it as extinction of religion in the face of modern science and bureaucratic rationality, individual freedom, and the modern nation state through the secularisation thesis.[2] The 1960s were a decade of turbulence, and the unfolding of events in this period reinforced such beliefs in secularist virtues and its logical opposite, namely, the death of religion. The emergence of feminism, and students' movements, and black uprisings all over the world rejected the human nature theory as biological hierarchy, and it was a time streak for ideological revival. From the middle of the previous century to the beginning of the new century, many books were written to claim the death of religion. It was responded to with zeal from the new intellectual movements.

> Democracy, free thought and open expression would allow ordinary citizens to challenge the myths and dogmas by which church authorities held people in servility and lent legi-

most of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Religious decline or desacralisation thesis commonly found among sociologists has its origin in Europe. When it was first used at the end of the Thirty Years' War in Europe in 1648, it referred to the transfer of the properties of the church to the princes. Similar transfer of church properties to the state also formed a part of the achievements of the French Revolution. Later, in England, George Holyoake used the term "secularism" to refer to the rationalist movement of protest which he led in 1851. For more see Hefner, 1998; Norris & Inglehart, 2007; Pantham, 1997.

[2] There has been a long list of social scientists from Weber, Marx, and Freud to Berger and Mills who held that religion will gradually fade in importance and cease to be important with the advent of industrial society. C Wright Mills wrote: "Once the world was filled with the sacred — in thought, practice, and institutional form. After the Reformation and the Renaissance, the forces of modernization swept across the globe and secularization, a corollary historical process, loosened the Dominance of the sacred. In due course, the sacred shall disappear altogether except, possibly, in the private realm" (Mills, 1959: 32–33). Also see Meisenberg, 2011.

timacy to monarchy, aristocracy and the favourite past time of the powerful, war (Duffy, Philpott, & Shah, 2014: 237).

The idea that God is dead came into vogue in the universities, but the wave did not last long. In the closing decades of the last century, particularly after the disintegration of Soviet Union, the ideologies have increasingly gone bankrupt. The new century came with a new social political consciousness across the globe, prompted and promoted by information technology and the electronic revolution; it pushed the concerns of openness and identity further and exposed the fragility of a monolithic order with increased vigour. It is also true that the engagement with issues of individuality and open society also warranted a counter consequence, manifest in the fact that the books like *God is not great*, *The end of faith* and *God is dead* by of social scientists such as Peter Berger and Jürgen Habermas in the 1960s, were revisited by them to realise that religion is back.[3] The process of decentring is realised on a consensus that openness and identity are merged with religion and not with the secularisation thesis. To overcome this rupture caused by binary comprehension of self and the other, which modernity has legitimised by a sharp distinction between the private and public realms, there has come a rethinking to give religion a space for moral coherence in public life. The public-private distinction had broken the universal mankind project with moral judgments. As religion was diminished in the public and relegated to the personal realm in the framework of the modern nation-building process,[4] it acquired more power of persuasive influence than the public secular reality. It did not take much time for the process of globalisation to bring this contradiction to the surface. More people want to be believers. There is no truth in the proposition that religion will decrease with the increase in modernity — in fact, evidence suggests the contrary. In the global context, there is surely an upsurge in most of the traditional religions such as the Orthodox Church, Evangelicalism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, as well as worldwide and religiously inspired

[3] Contrary to the enlightenment prognosis of a decline in religious commitment of people as they become more and more modern, we now find them turning more to traditional sources of existential meaning in their modern everyday life. There is now mushrooming of more sects, cults, Gods and Goddesses; People follow these competing religions in ever increasing numbers, express them openly, volunteer to take up values, attitudes, ethics, work, consumption etc which are avowedly religious in content. Gods have suddenly become bankable. Also see Radhakrishnan, 2007; Berger, 1999; Stark & Finke, 2000.

[4] The theory of secularism not only means a state-religion separation but also include among other things: (a) the diminution of the role of religion, (b) this-worldly orientation rather than orientation towards the supernatural, (c) the replacement of the "sacred" or "mysterious" conception of the world with the view that the world or society is something that can be rationally manipulated or socially engineered and (d) a view of religious beliefs and institutions as human constructions and responsibilities rather than as divinely ordained mysteries. Also see Pantham, 1997: 524–525.

revival movements in smaller communities such as Shintoism in Japan and Sikhism in India. The pointers are strong enough to suggest that it is time to bury the secularisation thesis. After nearly three centuries of utterly failed prophesies and misrepresentations of both present and past, it seems time to carry the secularisation doctrine to the graveyard of failed theories (Stark & Finke, 2000). The past is being revisited. The sources of self and debates on human nature have recapitulated. No wonder books such as *God is back*, *God's century*, *Being different*, *Clash of civilizations* and *Dialogue with civilizations* have seized the academic discourse to (re)address religion in a multi-religious and multicultural world to find a dialogue with the past, not in difference but to collaborate on a social range, where openness, identity, and diversity could live together.

II

Material referent conceived right from Greek thought to the positivists alluded to parity and peace in society. This disenchantment right from the beginning was enough ground for historical reason to search for an alternative social order. With the rupture in the Modern Project, religion has again become alive to serve with the meaning and purpose for historical existence. Even for worldly well-being, moral legitimacy is required so long as death remains the ultimate reality. No era in history has remained a single streak epistemic dominion. During the modern era, the influences of the Enlightenment and religious expressivism prevailed. If Marxism was a marriage of Enlightenment naturalism and expressivism:

> there are strands of American evangelical Protestantism which in some respects are continuous with the spirituality of the Greek Awakening [...] in all sorts of ways this religion has been contaminated by the modern world [...].The emphasis is still on the saving power of grace and on the order which this alone can put in one's life (Taylor, 1989: 479).

Existentialism is supposed to be a radical philosophy; its pioneer, Søren Kierkegaard finds its roots in religious existentialism, claiming that an individual, who knows himself most, is capable of knowing God. The human nature theories, despite being contested, believe in the objective quality that the human being is essentially subjective and has uniqueness in the interest of the meaning of existence. This meaningless is related to religion. Happiness is now attributed to religion. There are studies that show that dynamism and material connivances of the United States are directly related to the fact that people are becoming more religious.[5] Organic religion on formal lines might not be so visible, but

[5] Cf. World Values Survey, 1981–2001 (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp). This global research project explores people's values and beliefs, their changes over time and

personal lives and adherences to religions are undoubtedly on the increase. It has brought out a paradigm shift in the social sciences to understand the significance of religion in peoples' lifeworlds.[6] The notion of social capital may help to explain two of the biggest puzzles of the secularisation debate: why is America so much more religious than Europe, and why is religion on the rise in so many modernising societies? Not surprisingly, the US and Europe, after the Second World War have become significantly multicultural. The huge emigrations from Eastern Europe and of Asian origins have found the US and Canada, as their new abodes. They have come with their histories and the melting pot thesis has not succeeded completely in their assimilation process. The historical past and competitive internationalism have made their lifeworld split between home and the office. The process of globalisation has made them assertive and dismissive about the modernity. No country is now a homogeneous country. Multicultural also means multi-religious, hence the western world is also reintroduced to its religion, in view of non-westerners living in an imagined community syndrome and displaying their religion, more than they would do in their counties of origin (cf. Dijkstra, Geuijen, & Ruijter, 2001). Citizen rights of minorities and multiculturalism debates are now deeply contested in some European countries, such as France and the Netherlands, and even in the United Kingdom. Majority-minority concerns are emerging not as one dominant narrative but as multiple narratives rolled and aligned along cultural and religious lines. This has forced the states in many European countries to reformulate their policies in view of expressive voices of immigrant groups, who do not fall into the religious majority group. "European enlargement, however, is infusing renewed religious vitality into Europe's political and social life, thus chipping away at its exceptional secularism" (Katzenstein, 2006: 2). As the developments have been so abrupt and different, it has brought about a blurring of neatly orchestrated private and public realms juxtaposed in an asymmetrical relationship. The slightest economic crisis would bring religious difference between the dominant communities to the surface. For Europe has yet, at least at state level, to reconcile with the dominant discourse of secular ideology. In Muslim countries, the protest movements

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their social and political effects. The WVS was registered in 1981 as the non-profit World Values Survey Association in Stockholm, Sweden. The findings published by the WVS are valuable for policy makers seeking to build civil society and democratic institutions in developing countries. They are also used by governments around the world, scholars, students, journalists and international organizations and institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations.

[6] Early anthropological engagements with religion are found in Max Müller and E. B. Tylor (*Primitive culture*, 1871) representing naturalistic and animistic school respectively. Robert H. Lowie's thesis of "awe & mystery" as religion is also an important contribution (Lowie, 1924). Sociological treatment of religion can be found in the classical works, such as: Durkheim, 1902; Simmel, 1908; Weber, 1930; Swanson, 1960. See also Bellah, 2003; Johnstone, 2011.

inspired by or similar to the Arab Spring in the Arab-majority states of North Africa and the Middle East, according to commentators, organisers, and critics, have all been critical of the government in their respective countries. The failure of all projects of modernisation in Muslim countries has led to a new political religious consciousness in these Muslim countries, and the intellectual debate is sharpening whether there should be "Islamicisation of knowledge" or the "modernisation of Islamic thought".

III

In South Asia, especially in India, the society has evolved over the centuries through encountering different civilisations. India is an old society and a new state. Its continuity of being an old society has been a tale of selective adoption and intractable rejection of traditions. It has continued to be an enigma for social scientists to understand its sustained elements of historicality. During the era of empire building and colonisation, it was a discarded place, waiting to be subjugated and its people civilised. Its romantic history was thought to be patchy, bound with myths and tales.

The Romantics, too, agree that India is Europe's opposite. Where the Romantics do differ is in the evaluation placed upon India's civilisation by the adherents of the secularist, empiricist view. The Romantics take those very features of Indian civilisation that the utilitarian-minded find wasteful, deluded, or even repulsive, and criticise — ascetic practices, philosophies, cosmologies, customs, visual art forms — and find them "worthy of study and perhaps even of praise" (Inden, 1992: 67). The oriental understanding of the Indian society painted it as a stagnant society that lacks political unity, and therefore history. The popular argument that India was an "exotic institution and caste preventing its political unity" is contested in the post-colonial discourse. They do not consider caste as a decadent factor but an enabling institution in contemporary India. The notions have changed, not in the holistic glorification of India from the notion of a stagnant society to a dynamic worldview, but to a period-wise description of its history. The colonial discourse is a negation of the oriental view of history, but in which oriental practitioners do not form one cluster. It is also divided in a cluster of languages and religions.[7] Therefore, understanding the sustainability of Indian society is to look into its essences of history through phenomenology as well historical discourses. Nehru's *The discovery of India* (1946) is a good account of the social history of its people. In addition, if the lifeworld experiences are gathered and comprehended, it gives consensus on the contemporary strands of the social history of India. Despite claims against

[7] Cf. Edward Said, the author of *Orientalism* (Said, 1978), and the Area Studies practitioners in the US.

it by "alternative tradition", the fact remains that the notional world of Indian society has been holistic, hierarchical, transcendent and continuous. Life world experiences and rituals have been ingredients of this world view. Since the sixth century BC, there have been adaption and rejection within this canvas of holism and other characteristics of this society, whenever different political elites forced a structural change in society.

The major encounters have been the Islamic encounter in the tenth century and its ramifications and the colonial subjugation for about 200 years and its formations. The third shift had been in independent India. Within this circumference of its basic tenants, all other elements of "great traditions" are camouflaged rather than blended into its social world formation. Islam was an opposite greater tradition when encountered in Indian society. Both the power elites from the Muslim and Hindu communities knew that the two traditions had to live simultaneously; for the power elites perceived that neither Islam would completely conquer India, or it would be thrown back to west Asia. This mutual understanding produced structuration at the ground level through a very powerful movement in the fourteenth century, known as the *bhakti* movement. It was a bottom-up movement that gave India synthetic content, not only for its nationalism but also for its lifeworld existence. Its agents were Kabir, Tulsi, Nanak, and Chishti.[8] They belonged genealogically to the *bhakti* tradition and spread out representing the major religions of India living in one common world view that was Hindu monotheism in content and dualistic in essences. The agents of *bhakti* movements had an enabling capacity to integrate society through systematic participation. It was visible in common pilgrimages, bringing *ziyarats* into the Islamic fold and making music a virtue for devotion to God. Local deities were included to make peasantry a real lifeworld existence of Indian society. The agents were from different strata, mainly from lower classes and different communities, and their plank was *bhajan* and *bhakti*,[9] and to take masses away from the formalism of religion. The *bhakti* movement made the Islamic tradition veneered and permitted shrines and *ziyarats* of common pilgrimages, blended architecture and Sufi worship into new adaptations to suit Indian social world experiences, as most of the Muslims were converts from Hindu castes. The public rites (*srauta*) and domestic rites (*grihya*) became common in Hindus

[8] Kabir was a fourteenth century poet saint who lived in Varanasi between 1398–1448 AD. He was a leading crusader against caste and Hindu as well as Islamic fundamentalism. Tulsidas (1532–1623 AD) famous for *Ram-Charit-Manas* is a keenly followed one in whole of India who popularised Hindu sacred books by (re)writing them in vernacular languages. Nanak (1469–1539 AD) championed Hindu reformation and founder of a new religion Sikhism which has followers across the globe. Chishti was a medieval sufi saint also known as benefactor of the poor.

[9] Italicised words, wherever they appear in the paper, are Sanskrit, Urdu and Hindi equivalents deliberately included to retain the impact.

and Muslims with certain semiotic adaptations. Collective solidarity was woven in the historical terrain from Vedic sacrifices converted into *havans* and *niyazs* represented in shrines and *ziyarts*. The Mughals encouraged, and some of its kings, including Akbar, participated in *Rasalela* and *Ramleela*[10] performances. This is what made Nehru say that Khusro was our first national poet. It augmented a composite culture where differences mingled into the pluralistic cultural stream of society, manifest in the ritualistic and routinised socio-religious experience. As Ronald Inden rightly says:

> Ritual has a strong attraction for the Indian mind, which tends to see everything in terms of the formulae and methods of procedure, even when such adjuncts no longer seem necessary for its religious experience (Inden, 1992: 39).

Rituals are embedded from birth to death at every occasion of new beginning. As in India, there was an agrarian mode of production, from sowing to cultivation, rituals would be celebrations of local deities related to crops. It had religious sanctions invoked from the saint's shrines and *ziyarats.* This was a lived lifeworld different from formal codifications, which was also there, confined mainly to narrow urban capes, but at the same time was also, not in conflict with the composite one. The Asiatic mode of production was a reaffirmation of this continuity of common traditions.

Colonial subjugation through its regenerative and degenerative roles produced an educated middle class, perhaps for the first time, in Indian history. This educated middle class knitted India together and created a social consciousness through reformative movements in different parts of the country. The *Brahmo Samaj* in Eastern India became the pace setter, which was followed by *Prathna Samaj* in the west and *Arya Samaj* in the north of the country. Their attempt was to reinterpret the symbolic core of the tradition. The messages from the scriptures and the identified traditions were reintroduced through these reform movements. And then Mohandas K. Gandhi arrived. With the arrival of Gandhi, the National Movement converted devotions (*bhakti*) and prayers (*bajans*) into patriotic fervour against colonial rule. The national movement was not secular. It was blended with traditional cultural capital mostly drawn from the *bhakti* movement. India achieved freedom with a partition founded on a "two nation theory".[11] Pakistan became a new country of Muslims, although more Muslims remained in India, even after the partition. India achieved freedom at the cost of cultural fragmentation of its composite culture states. Bengal

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[10] Rasleela and Ramleela are forms of Hindu devotional dance drama eulogising the eternal love, compassion and duty of Lord Krishna and Ram respectively.

[11] Two nation theory was propounded by Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948), the founder of Pakistan, which rests on the belief that Hindus and Muslims constitute two seperate nations.

representing that national content became divided, so was Punjab, the land of *sufis*, and a part of Kashmir was annexed to Pakistan, which was known as the abode of the *rishis*. Pakistan, after the death of its founder, turned into an Islamic republic. All these connected developments prompted the founding leaders of the new Indian state to declare it a secular democratic republic. Nehru thought religion would be an obstacle in the nation-building process, and therefore opted for the western brand of secularism, where state has nothing to do with religion, and faith is a personal choice.[12] A liberal centrist state with a secular ideology was deemed the proper permutation for a highly volatile Indian society after the partition of the country on the basis of religion. The early leadership took every care to build public institutions on the foundations of secularism. Nevertheless, nation-building and the state formation process was a formidable task, in view of its geopolitical situation, partition, and the Cold War rivalry of the bipolarity world order at the doors of Asia. At the micro level, the process of democratisation and development brought out the contradictions of the old society and the new state. The caste divisions, community classifications, and high religious moorings of the people unfolded within a few decades after independence. The process of development and democratisation with state-sponsored programmes of reservations for the *dalit* and backward classes ushered in an era of nonviolent social revolution that gave power to that section of society that had remained neglected or ignored in history. The traditional elites, as per the national constitutional objectives, partially or fully lost its share of resources and power. This made an emergent middle class clearly visible and large in size; and this middle class, infused with religious rites and rituals, became the new carrier of the Indian tradition. This is where the Nehruvian assumptions of science and industry-driven modern Indian state failed to take off. Part of that assumption was that traditional would yield space to the rational with the coming industrialisation and modernisation. But what we find is that modern India is as traditional and religious as it ever has been. Sceptics, such as T. N. Madan, says that "because secularism denies the importance of religion in the lives of the people of South Asia, it is an impossible credo in this region" (Madan, 1988: 757). The unprecedented revolution in electronics and informational technology in a globalised world has easily marketed these religious practices all over the world. This has created a new social and political consciousness, where we have new social and religious movements cutting across national boundaries. International movement of money, jobs and people during a global spell has helped in broadcast-

[12] The Nehruvian western secularist ambitions notwithstanding, secular State in India has always meant, neither a non-religious nor an anti-religious State but rather a State which affirms its national religiousity in no uncertain terms. Given the immense importance of religion in everyday life, secularism has always meant religious tolerance in India. For more on the secularisation debate in India, see Vanaik, 1997; Nandy, 1990; Madan, 1997; Madan, 1999; Kothari, 1970; Gupta, 2000; Chatterjee, 1986.

ing this new social and religious consciousness across the globe. Secularism in multicultural India, as in the mushrooming imagined communities elsewhere, fails to resolve the standoff between culture and capitalism today.

IV

The new global world is a multicultural world with borders transcendental but passports becoming ever distinguished. The political ideologies given by the modern project have become bankrupt. There is a process of decentring through multi-polar power centres. Not only has it made the melting pot thesis a failure but created a space for cultural relativism and each culture is clamouring to seek access to power and resources. This process of dissent manifestation is asymmetrical in its formation. The world has become more unsteady and society is losing its fabric of connection of inter cultural cohesion and the referent is sought beyond national boundaries. The intellectual concerns to overcoming the failure of secular ideology has gathered momentum, more precisely, since September 11, 2001, when terror struck to the United States of America. It has given birth to a new debate of alternate modernities and some even suggest a religious-based secularism (Bhargava, 1994: 1784–1787). Those who feel religion to be dysfunctional for multicultural interfaith accommodation are of the opinion that modernity was a mistaken modernity, as it did not have those prerequisite elements even in all the nation states in which it was launched. Besides, the sacred agenda of the Enlightenment proved profane when Europe through the goal rationality of modernity subjugated the entire world and, the countries that had relied on colonisation of people and territories proved culture power and its referent disastrous. Therefore, the Enlightenment Project remained unfinished. As the National Movement in India had its religious fever and the political unification did not precede cultural integration, as it happened in Europe, the significance of religion could never be undermined. The boundaries between religious practices and state proclaimed policies became blurred. Despite the fact, there were no minority studies centres or study of religious institutes, the daily lives of people would reveal that religious rituals and practices have been part of life world experiences, irrespective of which religion they belonged to. The state tacitly accepted the Indian brand of secularism as *sarvedharma sad bhavana* [respect for all religions]. It fitted with the synthetic nature of Indian society, practical religion was common to all, a lifeworld experiences with an agrarian mode of production. The same religious rites and rituals have been marketed with new innovative practices through *ashrams* and television *gurus* in the globalised world. The linkages are strong in a different mode of productions at work, which keeps Indian society surviving in a plural national culture.

Indian tradition has been undoubtedly argumentative (Sen, 2005: 3–17) with one stream of thought to another, inclusive in its adaption from different religions. It is hard to agree that Indian lacked "agent centred society". In fact, it always had agents that worked on the structures through messages and discourses. The kings in the Muslim rule or the colonial masters during colonial subjugation were instrumental in prompting the structuration of indigenous actors and local traditions. This is still at work, even in the market-driven religious society. Therefore, the pluralistic traditions are loaded with religious substances of different religions that co-constitute the composite national culture and lifeword experiences in India. It has to be recognised, identified, and empowered, not to be taken for granted.

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