



FORMING THE IDENTITY: HINDU CONSCIOUSNESS IN COLONIAL MALABAR

Dr. SHITHOR. P.R.

Associate Professor

Department of History

C.K.G.M. Govt. College

Perambra, Kozhikkode Kerala

Abstract:

The Hindu community in Malabar has been shaped by various elements of external and internal diversity and similarity. Despite the diversity, the spiritual premises of feudal relationships have produced some cultural ceremonies that are visual enough to attribute the above-mentioned similarities. Festivals like 'Kavu festivals', Onam, and Vishu are formed in this manner. It is within this cultural framework that the layers of caste and communal differences have historically resided within the Hindu community. Attempts to unify such differences were seen in the colonial period. A key insight into the above effort is the way medieval travellers also viewed non-Semitic communities. Some external elements of the Hindu community which had begun to form in this way were intensified during the colonial period. It is through this form that revival movements are formed among them. It is through this form the revival movements are formed among the Avarnas. Along with social mobility, communal reform movements indirectly caused the creation of a 'Hindu' public consciousness. Efforts to Hinduize this public consciousness was based on religious structure intensified in the post-independence period. It is the conflicts between this common sense and internal diversities that characterize the Hindu 'body' evolved in colonial times.

Key words:Reforms, Festivals, Cow Worship, Conversion, Caste.

Introduction:

The word 'Hindu' was evolved from the Persian language. Non-Semitic communities who were described as pagan, heathen, and infidel were largely helped by colonial discourses to move to the common noun that is 'Hindu'. There are references in several works to the existence and origin of different rituals and worship practices among different communities in

Malabar. The social and cultural peculiarities of each group were visible as different forms of beliefs and rituals. Many Arab travellers have recorded the people of Malabar as the people of Hind. So did Sheikh Sainudheen. Ibn Battuta had observed various communities in Malabar during the Middle Ages. He calls the non-Muslim communities as infidels. (In fact, Ibn Battuta had recorded that the Brahmins treated Muslims with hatred and while the others were given water in pots, Muslims were given only in their hands). The word 'Hindu' was widely used in all documents of the missionaries. They had, nonetheless, as part of their religious campaign, considered various communities as uncivilised. That is, Western writers and others, in the assessment based on their Semitic pattern, saw the heterodox pagan communities as cultural aliens and kept them in a backward and primitive frame. Colonial writing culture as well as the enumeration methods such as gazetteer, manual, and census began widely using the word 'Hindu'. Francis Day states that according to 'Hindu' belief Malabar is believed to have originated from the time of Parasurama¹. The term 'Hindu' is not found in any of the indigenous documents considered to be the main sources of Kerala history, but the term Hindu was mostly used by people of Semitic community background.

In the 1871 census report (Madras Presidency), Hindus are divided into four categories namely Brahmins, Kshatriya, Channan, and Paraya. Thiyya and Ezhava belong to the Channan category. Pulaya, Cheruma, and Paraya castes are included in the common category of 'Paraya'. "The 1871 census report could categorise various communities, mark them within imaginary borders, and make them accepted by the public".² According to the census report of 1881, those who could not identify their religion were included in the Hindu category. 'Hindu' itself is used in the missionary records. The Census Report of 1871 recorded that Thiyyas did not have a particular religion other than worshipping a few local deities. The same report states that the presence of Paraya would create untouchability among Hindus. It suggests that there existed a strong opinion that the lower castes including Parayar were outside of the Hindu structure. According to M.ASherring, Nayadis were to keep a 94 feet distance from Hindus."³ This suggests that the Nayadi and the like communities were not considered Hindu. Thus, it was colonial records such as the census that tried to create an officially unified form for the outwardly diverse communities. Besides, the feudal system, rituals, and communal conflicts resulted in creating the Hindu consciousness.

Belief, Ritual, Kavu Festivals.

¹Francis Day, *The land of Perumals or Cochin and its past and its presents*, Asian Educational Society, New Delhi, 1990.

²P.-P. Abdul Razak, *Colonialism and Community Formation in Malabar*, Ph. D Thesis, University of Calicut, 2007, pp-62-63.

³Rev. M.ASherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes*, Vol II., Cosmo publications, New Delhi, p.145

William Logan, a colonial officer, observes that the Hinduism of Malayalees is a strange mixture of all kinds of faiths. F. Fawcett states that 'Malabar Hinduism is not the Hinduism of Southern India.'⁴ Fawcett also observes that the names of Hindu gods like Sri Ram and Vishnu didn't mean anything to the Malabar Hindus and the Nair community had a different religion from that of the Brahmins. C.A. Innes, the author of the Malabar Gazetteer writes that despite the Brahminical influence on the Hindus, animism based on witchcraft etc. was strong in Malabar and communities in Malabar had different forms of idolatry and idols from community to community. They worshipped female deities and the sacrifice of chickens, which was a common ritual among many lower caste communities, was a rite to escape from demons. Innes observes that the deities worshipped by slave castes such as the Pulaya and tribal communities such as the Kurumban and the Paniyaan had no place within the Hindu structure. Yet, the slave castes and tribals made offerings once a year to the Brahmin temples, sometimes as feudal courtesy, says Buchanan. It must have been said about the Kavu festivals. Buchanan points out that in Malabar the god of Pulayas was 'Paradevata' to whom they gave chicken and alcohol as offerings at the beginning of the year.⁵ The lower castes were given entry into the Kavu festivals as per the feudal system. About the KodungallurBharani festival, William Logan writes: "All castes below the Brahmins participated in the festival organized either in the month of Kumbham or Meenam. Pulayar and Cheruman eat food and drink toddy before circumambulating the temple. Brahmins do not enter the temple during these three days." Fawcett records that a similar pattern was shared in Kottiyur as well, where the devotees going to Kottiyur used to show off to those they saw on the way and returned very calm. Similar to Kodungallur, this too may be a design to keep the lower castes culturally inferior. In general, caste-based processions are the main feature of Kavu festivals. Fawcett's account of the 1895 festival at Pisharikavu is remarkable for the description of the procession. Thiyya community carrying pots containing locally made alcohol, the procession of communities such as Mukkuva, Vettuva, and Panar, and the attractiveness of the thiyya women's 'thalappoli' are described in detail. Like Kodungallur, the Brahmins leave the Kavu during the festivals in Pisharikavu as well to observe untouchability. This custom is still in practice. AnanthakrishnaAiyar observes that Kavu festivals were rare opportunities for agricultural slaves like the Pulaya to enter the temple.⁶ These practices were able to maintain the subordinate masses in awe of the upper caste rituals, thereby validating

⁴F. Fawcett, Nairs of Malabar, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1985, p.267.

⁵Francis Buchanan, A journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar, VolIII, Madras, 1870, p.492.

⁶L.K. AnanthakrishnaAiyar, TheCohcin Tribes and Castes, Vol. I, Higginbotham, London, P.115

feudalism and caste supremacy. This allowed most of the Hindu caste communities to become implicit participants in the Brahmanical Hindu belief system.

Caste- Power Relations

UnnichirutheviCharitham, one of the Achikavyas which mark medieval caste relations in Kerala, depicts a scene where two Nair soldiers are in a violent dispute. One soldier is seen shouting to the other; ‘Cheruma! I will behead you.’⁷ The use of lower-caste names to refer to someone with disdain indicates the alienation of upper and lower-caste relationships. The caste relations that were strong in South Malabar during the medieval period had many levels of functioning in the form of ethnic hatred. The facts recorded by officials later in the colonial times are a continuation of the medieval period itself. “On the way back from the temples, if the Nair saw either a Cheruman or a Pulayan or even a Thiyyan, they would go back and bathe again”.⁸ Likewise, if a Thiyya or Mukkuva even touched the path of a Nair, they would be cut down. The slave castes who were seen on the way also had the same fate.⁹ Fawcett says that their audacity has decreased since the introduction of gun laws by the British government.

According to Thurston, there was a traditional belief that the Nair caste originated from the relations of the Namboothiris with deva, Gandharva, and Rakshasa women. In the book, ‘EnteKeralam’ by KunjikuttanThampuran, it is written thus: ‘If the Shudras in Kerala get any status over the outside Shudras, it is because of their Aryan contact’.¹⁰ Namboothiri's relationships with lower caste women were validated from a spiritual perspective. Rituals such as Pulappedi (fear of Pulaya) and Mannapedi (fear of Mannan) indicate the distance that Nair women had to keep the lower castes in the medieval period. The liberal sexuality of Nair women towards the upper caste Namboothiri was of spiritual backing. On the other hand, Nair men had anxieties about the possibility of their women having affairs with lower-caste working men. Thus arises the above-said rituals. Zainuddin writes that the punishment for such ensnared women was banishment, sale, or conversion to Islam or Christianity.

How the lower caste communities were evaluated in various foreign narratives reflects the state of caste relations at that time. Barbosa describes the Pulaya as a 'devil's race'. Buchanan says that even the slave communities did not touch the Nayadi. “They lived far away from the villages. Usually, ten or twelve people walk together away from the public road. If they saw passengers, they shout and let them know.”¹¹ Buchanan talks about the need to

⁷P.V. Krishnan Nair, *UnnichirutheviCharitham*, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1973, Page 49.

⁸F. Fawcett, *op.cit*, p.254.

⁹Francis Buchanan, *op.cit*, p.410

¹⁰KunjikuttanThampuran, *EnteKeralam*, Devi Books, Kodungallur, 2008, Page 284.

¹¹Francis Buchanan, *op. cit*, pp.413-414

elevate them to human status. They are subjected to severe caste-based discrimination. The historical facts narrated above depict a society that was divided along caste and ethnic lines. Attempts have been made later to make such a diverse society a homogenous one.

The Sacred Cow of Faiths

With the development of Brahminical rituals in Kerala began the ritual practices centred around the cow. Tourists have recorded that such forms of worship existed in Kerala. A sort of bull/cow eaters and non-eaters divide was formed here. Such divisions repeatedly illustrate a clear indication that sects such as the Paraya are outside the Hindu fabric. In the same way, the cow has a role in separating the Muslim and Christian communities. The upper Hindu spiritual politics, which put the cow first, did not gain influence in Kerala in the later years because of the majority of slave castes and Muslim Christian sects who ate bull/cow meat.

Certain special circumstances conducive to Hindu unity arise where cultural identities are strong enough to become independent communities. Feudal cultural environments, colonial discourses, nationalist movements, social reform movements etc. created some such conditions. In this succession, the upper caste communities naturally gained supremacy. This formation takes place by rejecting the inferior culture and completely erasing many of its cultural life elements. Although many social reform movements in Kerala rejected the upper caste heritage, they followed its spiritual trends. Many of the caste reforms were advanced by placing the non-Hindu authorship of the lower castes in a Hindu value sphere outside their customary institutions. (This subject is further elaborated in the chapter on cow politics in Kerala).

Reforms, Realities

Although the social reforms were more widespread in the Tiru-Kochi region, its movements also reached Malabar. 'The Thiyya community emphasized leading the community to the forefront and thereby to equality by building a temple on its own.'¹² The community clamoured for temple entry but hesitated to allow other lower-caste communities like Pulaya to enter their temples. It was also necessary to alienate their slave caste groups as the upper caste Brahmins did to emulate the traditions and to raise the social index of the middle caste communities including the Thiyya. Osella points out that in many respects this kind of process of 'Nair-ization' has occurred within that community.¹³ One of the major debates during the colonial period was whether the Thiyya community was Hindu or not. Discussions on standing as an independent community against Hindu social inequalities were also

¹²Dileep Menon, "Becoming 'Hindu' and 'Muslim': Identity and Conflict in Malabar, in working paper No 255, January 1994, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, p.10.

¹³See Filippo Osello and Caronline Osella, *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*, Pluto Press, London, 2000

actively going on during this time. There was a great debate in Travancore about the need for the Ezhava to remain within the Hindu structure. For example, the Ezhava of Chirayinkeezh gave a letter to the then Dewan P RajagopalAchari before setting up a school. At the outset, the paper states that the Sivagiri Math was established to uphold the ancient Hindu culture and to control conversions from the Hindu backward class.¹⁴ The Ezhava Memorial is also concerned about Ezhava having to convert for education and employment. In 1915 Mitavadi published a letter written by one A.R. NarayanaIyer. In the letter, while voicing against the denial of admission to the Thiyya community in Kozhikode Samoothiri College, there is a mention of giving admission to Christians.

The grievance in this letter is that "the Hindus have to go to the nearest missionary college when they cannot get admission in the institutions of Hindu owners, and the missionaries there are trying to change their religion and thus Hinduism is declining. Kozhikode is becoming the centre of such people. if these problems are resolved as soon as possible, it will be good for Hinduism." The concern of the above-mentioned man belonging to the upper caste can be seen as an indication of the prevailing elite public sentiment of that time. Such concerns are not a criticism of Hindu-based practices such as untouchability, but rather a drain on Hindu communities that may be caused by conversion. At the same time, people like Mitavadi Krishnan from the Ezhava community say about Hinduism: "Hinduism and Hindu community organizations have caused the decline of our pride. We must become a self-respecting community. This cannot come from the old Hindu structure. We must have the wisdom and courage to pull away from the Hindu structure. If you keep dreaming of the old practices and the old religion, our time will be wasted."¹⁵ During that period, there have been incidents where Ezhava people, who were derisively called Chilanti and Koti, were attacked for wearing sandals. The young Ezhava generation like TK Madhavan and C Keshavan, who were exposed to such humiliating incidents, took the lead in communal reform movements.

Although debates arose about the acceptability of Hinduism, signs of Hinduization among the Avarna castes began to be seen during this period. Most of the reform movements embraced the Brahminical culture and sought to denigrate and amplify the symbols of lower caste culture. Due to this, the community gods like Chatan and Chamundi started disappearing. They were labelled as primitive gods. Later experience shows that the widespread adoption of Brahmanical symbols was a stepping stone towards Hinduization within the lower classes. During such Hinduization efforts, the cultural spaces of the lower classes were shrinking though Narayana Guru aimed at the social revival of the Ezhava, "All the gods that arose out of the native way of life disappeared or were Brahmanized under Brahmanical supremacy, and even

¹⁴Mitavadi, April, 1914.

¹⁵P.KBalakrishnan, SreeNarayanaguru, D.C Books, Kottayam, 2012, Page, 87.

their worship practices underwent a change."¹⁶ Innes points out that even the lower castes gave mythological names to their gods and were interested in converting them to Brahmanical forms. The lower caste spiritual culture, which was strong during the colonial period, embracing Brahmanical culture also fuelled the Hindu awakening in later times. This has led to an unhealthy attitude towards other communities.

Conflicts and Approaches

A middle class was emerging from the Thiyya community during British rule. As a result of English education, many people joined the government service. They also started interfering in the trade which was the monopoly of the Mappilas. It is in this kind of social environment that Hindu-Muslim conflicts started growing. In other words, the MappilaThiyya conflicts were transforming into Hindu-Muslim conflicts. DilipMenon's observations on these conflicts are interesting. In 1936, there was a minor conflict over the issue of performing a percussion instrument called 'Chenda' deliberately for some time in front of a mosque during the procession to the temple at a place called Alavil. After a day, youths belonging to the Nair community gathered and again went in front of the mosque and performed the percussion. The magistrate of the day recorded that the entry of Nair youths intensified the conflicts.¹⁷ The other was held at a place called Kakadu. There the Muslims bought the land of a member of the Thiyya community and built a mosque. There was also a temple nearby. The music coming from the temple was a subject of conflict there. Another conflict occurred during a procession to the Cherumba temple. On February 28, 1936, the procession had to pass in front of a mosque. The police inspector of the day recorded that they abused the mosque by calling it a toilet, besides vandalising some nearby shops. DilipMenon also points out that other communities viewed the youth of Thiyya with suspicion when they tried to become 'Hindus' and fraternize with the Nair community.

The above movements gave strength to the efforts to create Hindu consciousness in Malabar. Attempts to merge the communal and cultural diversity with the emphasis on Mappila other and thereby pave the stones of Hindu unity and Hinduism in Malabar grew in this way.

Conversion, Mappila, Tippu Sultan

It is significant how discussions of conversions since the pre-colonial period have helped to shape Hindu public consciousness. The most used for this are the narratives about Tippu Sultan and the Mappila rebellions. Census figures indicate widespread conversion to Islam by the lower classes during the colonial period. In the past, selling land to the Mappila was considered a punishment for serious crimes. It is recorded that any Hindu women caught in

¹⁶M.Muraleedharan, Hindu Community Formation in Kerala: Process and structure under Colonial Modernity, South Indian Studies, July-December, 1996, p.19.

¹⁷DileepMenon, op.cit

adultery were sold to the Mappilas. It is said that a Namboothiri would be put to death and his children would be converted to Islam if they committed murder or ate food from other castes. Barbosa notes that Nair women were handed over to Muslims if they violated caste customs. One of the great promoters of conversion to Islam was the Zamorin king of Kozhikode. According to KV Krishnaiyar, Zamorin played a major role in the conversion of the coastal Mukkuva community. It is estimated that Zamorin took this kind of stance to give more strength to the navy under the KunjaliMarakar. Innes notes that during the colonial period, lower castes such as Thiyya and Cherumawere converted to Islam to escape discrimination as an untouchable caste and to attain relatively higher social status. Logan's position is that "the conversion of the Paraya or lower castes brought about changes in their social status and they came to be respected by other Hindus".

ShaikhZainuddin notes that Islam came at a time when the people of Malabar were observing practices such as untouchability due to their ignorance and stupidity and it was such practices that especially attracted the lower castes to Islam. Zainuddin also says that other Hindus behaved with respect towards those who had changed their religion. LKANanthaKrishnaiyyar, who conducted extensive anthropological studies on caste and community issues during British rule, worried that the Pulaya would be lost to Hinduism and converted to Islam or Christianity unless efforts were made to improve their living conditions. Kumaranashanobserves in his work *Duravasthath* that those who were converted to Islam from the lower castes did not face any discrimination from the upper castes and that conversion was a social necessity in that period.

The above descriptions and observations make it clear that most people from other communities join Islam because of the social environment of caste discrimination. Converting the lower slave castes was not a difficult matter because they were outside of formal Hinduism and their historical authorship was traditional. Disregarding such reasons, discussions about conversions have mostly focused on Tippu Sultan and the Mappila rebellions. British official records mostly give horrifying accounts of the conversions. Such are the accounts of Christians and Hindus being tied to the legs of elephants, their places of worship being destroyed and Christian women being forced to marry Muslims. References in the colonial records about the battle and the Mappila riots are written in such a way as to create anti-Muslim sentiment. The propaganda of the destruction of temples and forced conversions was solid. According to Innes, the brutal conversion created a sharp divide between Hindus and Muslims. The following observations are from Buchanan: 1. The Namboothiris were captured and forcefully subjected to circumcision. 2. Mappilas are bloodthirsty and destroy the lives and property of Hindus. 3. Tippu destroyed the city of Kozhikode and took the people to Nellore. 4. Like others, Nellore was changed to Farrukhabad. 5. Tippu tried to make Islam the dominant religion in Malabar. "In addition, the Mappilas in the interior of Malabar are recorded as cruel and blood-thirsty thugs who were

instigated by Tippu to endanger the lives of Hindus.”¹⁸ In the section that mentions Trithala, it is said that during the reign of Tippu, the natives who were here fled the country fearing execution. Buchanan also explains why the Mappilas are so involved: “The Mappilas in the interior locations are brutal and blood-thirsty. They acquired this character through conflict with the rough and thuggish Nairs. The justification of the Mappilas is that their brutality is necessary to deal with the enemy Nairs.” It is recorded that a colony of rogue Mappilas was established in Thamarassery during Tippu's time. Buchanan attributes the barrenness of fields in the Kurumbanad region to Tippu Sultan's cruelty towards the Hindus and the conflict between the Mappilas and the Hindus in Thamarassery.

According to the report of C. A. Innes, it is said that the fort of the King of Kadamthangal in KutTippuram was attacked and about two thousand Nairs were circumcised and made to eat beef. Francis Day has recorded that Hindu shrines were defiled in Thrissur during the reign of Tippu Sultan by slaughtering cows. Such observations later created anti-Mappila sentiments among the upper castes in general. The Mysore kings are recorded in British colonial records as agents of strong resistance to British rule. The Renaissance tradition and Hindu constructs followed colonial representations of anti-Hindu accusations among the Mappilas who rebelled against the British in Malabar.

Conflicts between Nair landlords and Mappilas became widespread in Malabar in the 19th century. It is in this context that the reception of Islam during the Mappila rebellion should be seen. Most of the converts belonged to the lower castes. Naturally, the new religion saw a system for responding to the persecution of feudalism, which often came out as disturbances with the support of religious leaders. Syed FazalPookoyaThangal's (the MamburumThangal of that period) appeal to the Mappilas is an example of such intervention. High-caste Hindus were forbidden to eat leftovers on special days. They were asked to avoid calling them the honorific plural form when addressing Nairs. Also asked not to work in the fields on Fridays. All of these were viewed with concern by the upper-caste Hindu communities. Kavalappara Nair asks other landlords not to give land to Mappilas. In this way, the landlords' anti-Mappila attitude made the situation more complicated.

Another thing mentioned in the colonial records is the propaganda that Hindu temples were attacked. These observations in turn fuelled anti-Mappila sentiments and later helped the efforts to shape Hindu consciousness. Stories of temple destruction have been handed down from generation to generation among the Hindu upper caste and have served as a factor in awakening Hindu consciousness. There is still a rumour that mosques designed in the traditional Kerala style were formerly temples. As most of the Mappilas came from lower castes, there was naturally a sense of conflict with the upper-caste Hindus, and the issue of temple destruction sometimes erupted. The temples,

¹⁸Francis Buchanan, (Trans. C.K. Kareem), Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, Page, 79.

at the time, were part of elite Hinduism and the centre of all kinds of human rights abuses against the slave castes. In short, the reactions of that day can be seen as a questioning of the exploitation system of the caste-based society.

People belonging to the lower castes have also had to face these kinds of problems in the above-mentioned responses. Two people from the minor caste 'owned' by Kannankutty Nair converted to Islam and later reverted to their old faith. Logan writes about how the Mappilas decided to kill them and the landlord and become martyrs.¹⁹ Similarly, in 1880, a man belonging to the lower caste was killed for the same reason. Thurston also notes that in 1873 the Mappilas saw it as a religious duty to kill a Velichappad because he spoke against them. Logan writes that three days before Shanku Nair was killed, the Mappilas had performed a religious ceremony called 'Mawlud'. Many such incidents are taking place during this period. Similarly, Innes notes that the riots of the first half of the 20th century killed Hindus who did not accept Islam.²⁰ The aforementioned Tippu battles and Mappila mutiny observations and accounts kept telling a story. It means that the Muslims were attacking the Hindus. The term 'Hindu' is mentioned in the colonial records only when Nairs and upper castes are discussed about. At a time when no feature of Hinduism was accessible to the lower caste majority, the Mappila rioters were people of native backgrounds. It is possible that some of the Cheruma people were attacked because they renounced their religion and went back because of caste problems. A major danger in colonial records is that the Hindu-Muslim dichotomy was widely used in riots. It means that the majority of communities including Thiyya were made part of Hindu representation. This has led to the creation of large-scale communal divisions in later litigations. These colonial records were used by many to create the impression that the Mappilas were against the Hindus in later Malabar memoirs. These revolts can be seen as natural reactions of the slave castes who assumed a new religious identity looking at the upper caste Hindus from the experience of slavery.

Temple entry is an important element in the Hinduization of lower caste communities. Although there were public seasonal spiritual places like Sabarimala and Pazhanimala, they were not suitable premises for the internal integration of different communities. The entry into the temple disturbs the culture of the native lower castes. As mentioned in the first part, these types of entry movements were part of an effort to retain large sections of communities who were willing to convert themselves to be saved from caste pressures and thereby maintain population dominance. Progressive social reformers saw temple entry as a potential mechanism to eradicate rituals such as untouchability. For the lower castes, temple entry became the main entrance to Hindu Brahminical culture. Dalits were made Hindus by the elite

¹⁹William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Charithram Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1987, p.631.

²⁰C A Innes, *Malabar District Gazetteer*, Govt. Press, Madras, 1903, p.89.

nationalists in the first half of the 20th century and by the Indian state during the post-colonial period. There is also the observation that for the upper caste Hindus, temple entry was due to fear from population figures.

It was possible in Malabar during the colonial period through the above factors that created a Hindu consciousness that transcended even as the movements of traditional elite Hinduism undermined the Hindu internal structure. This type of Hinduism was formed by cultural invasion of the communities that should have been formed as independent communities and by adopting the Brahminical values by the backward Dalit groups, by presupposing Muslim otherness. Apart from that, the process of acceptance of this kind of Hindu external unification was accelerated by the style of reform movements in the lower castes. The Hindu body, shaped in this way, has remained the same in the post-colonial period.