

CIVIL SOCIETY,
COMMUNITY, AND THE
NATION IN COLONIAL
INDIA

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In contemporary discussions, theorists have identified community as an important arena for rethinking identity and politics. My paper examines the colonial genealogy of community in India, and argues that it cannot be conceived as a space outside of modernity. While community emerged at the site of the failure to establish civil society, governmentality – in Foucault’s sense – was a condition of its constitution. This feature limits its potential as a framework for democratic politics.

There was something deeply contradictory in the universalization of civil society as an aspect of the “civilizing mission.” It meant upholding the ideal of free subjects with the practice of colonial despotism, producing a civil-social arena free of state control in the act of exercising political domination – an impossible project. The purpose of this paper is to identify how the site of this impossibility served as the locus for the constitution of other spaces of the social. Rather than simply point to the Western provenance of the idea of civil society, I wish to identify how other powerful modes of modernity have arisen from the displacement of the colonial project. My purpose is not to simply claim that Western notions get dislodged in non-Western societies; rather, my aim is to explore the nature of the institutional architecture that emerged from the contradictory and truncated existence of civil society in the colonial context.

Standing out in the new landscape of colonial India were bonds of community. As opposed to civil society, which treated its constituents as sovereign individuals whose relations were mediated by markets and laws, communities invoked primordial bonds of blood, religion, culture, and territoriality. Partha Chatterjee views the emergence of these communities to be of notable theoretical and practical significance. Suggesting that the community/capital opposition, rather than the state/civil society dichotomy, remains the unresolved contradiction in Western theory, he argues that communities provide another way of understanding and acting upon modernity. This is so because whereas capital is able to accommodate civil society and the state within its narrative, it can view community – the realm of natural and primordial sentiments – only as its Other, as something that cannot have any legitimate existence within its domain. Consequently, “[c]ommunity, which ideally should have been banished from the kingdom of capital, continues to lead a subterranean, potentially subversive, life within it because it refuses to go away” (Chatterjee 1993: 236). He identifies such a suppressed narrative of community in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. Focusing on Hegel’s discussion of the actualization of subjective will in ethical life, Chatterjee seizes on the

definition of family as an institution grounded in love, distinct from civil society which designates its members as individuals and brings them together contingently through market relations and civil law. By defining love and the free surrender of individual wills, not contracts, as the basis of the family, Hegel gives expression to the suppressed narrative of community – a narrative which resists, on the one hand, the language of contracts and contingency spoken in civil society, and the claims of the disciplinary state, on the other.

Chatterjee is exactly right in drawing our attention to community as an issue of urgent theoretical and practical relevance, but he overlooks the extent to which community mimics the modern state. This is important, for to see the capital-community relationship as an opposition, as he does, is to accept capital's construction of community as its premodern Other, to treat it as a space that exists outside the domain of capital and the disciplinary state. From this it is easy to slip into the dichotomy of modernity and tradition of which the genealogy in the Indian context goes back to the early period of British rule when colonial officials spoke of India as a collection of unchanging "village republics" that had been resilient before the forces of change. Such a view permitted the colonizers to represent their rule as non-intrusive, as an island of modernity in the sea of traditions. If we are to avoid the risk of falling back on this modernity/tradition opposition to understand the truncated existence of civil society in colonial India, the capital/community opposition must be dislodged. This requires that community be understood as an aspect of modernity's history – not a premodern Other that challenges capital with an archaic language but a force of difference and critique emerging in the historical functioning of modernity. What follows is an exploration of the history of community in colonial India, conceived here as modernity in disguise, something that at once both inhabits and distances itself from modernity.

The colonial state

In the colonial setting, the idea of civil society as the domain of market relations and civil law, as a dense network of voluntary organizations which existed prior to and independent of the state, had a necessarily limited validity. This was because the colonial state could never accept civil society as an arena of freedom, as a domain of free individual citizens; the purpose of civil society was to accommodate subjects – who were expected to legitimize alien rule – rather than citizens.

The intrusion of the state in society was no accident of policy but a fundamental condition of empire. In fact, even those British critics of the East

India Company who did not want it to upset the traditional order accepted the dominance of the imperial state. This is true, for example, of Edmund Burke who led the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings in the late eighteenth century on the grounds that he epitomized the East India's Company's assault on India's traditional society. Burke showed great regard for what he thought were ancient principles of Indian polity – which, he argued, was not a despotism but a constitutional order where the power of princes was restricted by the customary rights and practices of “village republics,” landlords and tenants, castes, and religious groups. But for all the respect he displayed for India's customary order, Burke did not recommend that Indians govern themselves. India was to be ruled according to Indian principles, but the ruler was to be none other than the Company; and it was not Indians themselves, but British officials and scholars, who were to define what constituted Indian principles.

Burke was not alone. The Orientalists, such as William Jones, who also exhibited a great respect for Indian traditions, took for granted the Company's role as the ruler of India and as the arbiter of its traditions. Their scholarship sought to master Indian traditions according to European disciplines of theology, philosophy, history, arts, and sciences, and provided means for the Company to practice its mastery over the dominion. Importantly, both Orientalist scholarship and the Company accomplished their mastery of populations in confrontation with native resistance. As Ranajit Guha points out, contrary to the model of pliant Indian informants collaborating with Orientalists to produce scholarly accounts of the Indian past, the early colonial state and its knowledges were formed in the crucible of resistance. The collection of land revenue – the Company's chief fiscal source during the early period of its rule – required an accurate knowledge of the territory, its resources, and the structure of rights and obligations associated with land. Unable to persuade Indians to provide this knowledge and complaining of the natives' obfuscation and chicanery, the British officials undertook to write their own accounts of the customary practices. Thus, the very knowledge of the institutions that the Company and the Orientalists pledged to uphold during the early period of British rule functioned as “a project that turned conquest into opposition,” and “[l]ike every aspect of colonialism ... had to make its way through friction” (Guha 1997: 164).

A domineering force placed in opposition to the natives (even during a period when it had pledged not to meddle with the indigenous society), the Company could not but take to the “civilizing mission” as an aspect of empire. Close on the heels of the 1813 abolition of the Company's trade monopoly in India came James Mill's ferocious attack on Indian traditions in his *The History of British India* (1817). The attack was part of a general change in British attitudes and policies geared towards modernizing India, reforming

its economy and society so that it could serve Britain in the process of industrialization. What stands out in this well-known and often-told story is how short-lived, and how restricted was the project to institute a modern civil society in India. Freedom of the press and public opinion applied only to the European residents in colonial cities, and the introduction of Western education was geared primarily to assist the administration. The reformist energies of the government were concentrated on building what Eric Stokes (1989: 322) has called an “Indian Leviathan,” that is, a vast authoritarian machine of government organized around law and order. The 1857 “Mutiny” only strengthened the resolve to secure India as a modern colony. Military engineers built walls around rivers – taming their force and channeling the water to irrigate lands – and expanded rapidly the grid of railways and telegraphs – making the vast space of India manageable and open to capital. Medical doctors and scientists followed to isolate diseases, control epidemics, and nurture healthy, productive bodies. As the “long nineteenth century” wore on, a new structure of governance crystallized, and “India” emerged as a space assembled by modern institutions, infrastructures, knowledges, and practices.

“The conquest of the earth,” Joseph Conrad wrote, “not a pretty thing when you look into it too much,” was redeemed by “an idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to ...” (Conrad 1988: 10). The “idea” was to enlighten the natives, extinguish their mythical thought with the power of reason. But the disenchantment of the world, as Adorno and Horkheimer observed, served as a tool for setting up the mastery of those who possessed an instrumentalist knowledge of nature over those who did not. “What men want to learn from nature,” they wrote, “is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972: 4). Rudyard Kipling’s short story, “The Bridge-Builders,” registers the intimate connection between the control over nature and the exercise of domination over people who see nature in mythical terms. A paean to the heroic spirit of British engineers who successfully constructed a railway bridge over the Ganges river against all odds, Kipling depicts the bridge as not only the domestication of nature but also the containment of the civilizational energy and fury of the river goddess. She becomes “Mother Gunga – in irons,” symbolizing the triumph of British engineers over Indians and their culture (see Kipling 1898). For Kipling, this was a triumph not of gross imperial ambition but of the lofty will to free the natives of the shackles of their own civilization.

The matrix in which colonial power was exercised can be understood in terms of what Foucault calls “governmentality”. Foucault distinguishes governmentality from sovereignty – which is concerned with territory, legiti-

macy, and obedience to law – and from disciplines – which are elaborated in such institutions as prisons, schools, armies, manufactories, and hospitals. Locating modern power in a sovereignty-discipline-government triangle, he defines governmentality as a mode of “pastoral power” aimed at the welfare of each and all that functions by setting up

economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising towards its inhabitants, and the wealth and behavior of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of a head of a family over his household and his goods (Foucault 1991: 92).

While the nineteenth-century colonial state can be described in these terms, it must also be noted that colonial governmentality had to be radically discontinuous with the Western norm. Colonial governmentality could not be a mere “tropicalization” of the Western norm, but its fundamental dislocation. Utilitarian theorists from Jeremy Bentham to Fitzjames Stephen, including James and John Stuart Mill, had maintained that British rule in India must necessarily violate the metropolitan norm: only despotic rule could institute good government in India, only a Leviathan unhindered by a Demos could introduce and sustain the rule of law in the colony. Such an estrangement of the ideals of law and liberty in colonial despotism meant that British India could not fashion the elegant sovereignty-discipline-government triangle that Foucault identifies in Europe. Fundamentally irreconcilable with the development of a civil society, the colonial state was structurally denied the opportunity to mobilize the capillary forms of power. Unable to position its knowledge and regulations as disciplines of self-knowledge and self-regulation of Indian subjects, the colonial regime was obliged to violate the liberal conception that the government only harmonized and secured with law and liberty the autonomous interests in civil-social institutions. Combining within itself the functions of government, disciplines, and sovereignty, the colonial state developed into a gigantic bureaucratic machine committed to bring into existence and act upon a *colonial* “complex of men and things.”

“Dominance without hegemony,” to quote Ranajit Guha, characterized the entire period of British rule in India. Since its very inception – including during the period when it was pledged to stay out of native society and culture – the colonial state acted as a force of dominance. Given this exercise of dominance and the application of disciplines by the state, there was little room for the development of a civil society governed by economic and legal contracts. Private property, free trade, commercial agriculture, and modern legal regulations and institutions owed their existence to British rule and lived uneasily with the apparatuses and disciplines of colonial governmentality. Primitive accumulation carried out in the interests of British capital, not

“capital in general,” meant that colonialism and the development of a full-blooded bourgeois society in India stood at odds with each other.

Civil society and community

The western-educated Indian elites who sought to constitute India into a civil society of free, rational individuals could not overlook the giant shadow of the Indian Leviathan. Consider, for example, the following statement by Gosto Behary Mullick, a member of the newly emergent Bengali elite and the secretary of a literary club in Calcutta. Addressing a meeting of the club in 1874, Mullick spoke of reviving

the days of Elphinstones and Malcolms, Thomasons and Metcalfs, of Joneses and Wilsons and Bethunes ... who came to India not for its rice or cotton, indigo or jute, shell-lac or lac-dye, sugar or salt-petre, but to raise from the depths of ignorance and superstition – fruits of years of foreign [Muslim] domination – a race whose venerable relics of literature and science play fantastically like the dazzling coruscations of a polar winter athwart the mysterious gloom that shrouds the dark night of ages (*The Seventeenth...* 1874: 17-18).

Mullick was one among many western-educated elites in nineteenth-century British India who regarded alien rule as deliverance from the tyranny of ignorance and superstition. Such celebrations restaged British rule as the enactment of reason unencumbered by power. Yet, to claim, as Mullick did, that the “Joneses and Wilsons and Bethunes” had been necessary to raise India from “the depths of ignorance and superstition” was to acknowledge that colonial power was the secret dynamic of the narrative of progress. This acknowledgment underwrote the establishment of voluntary associations between the 1830s and the 1870s. Moved by a spirit of reform, the western-educated elites in cities and towns formed organizations charged with achieving fundamental social and cultural transformations. Most notably, they championed for women’s education and for the improvement of their status, and advocated the authority of modern reason and science.

The problem faced by the elite, however, was that they could not overlook the colonial genealogy of modern subjecthood. As studies of women’s reform in nineteenth-century Bengal show, the movement to improve women’s conditions ran up against the colonial context again and again. How could women be educated, transformed according to middle-class Victorian ideals into modern housewives and managers of households, without losing their “Indianness?” Even as the condition of middle-class women in major

colonial cities changed with the spread of education, the prospect of women as modern individuals created anxiety among elite males who perceived such changes as responsible for the erosion of traditions and the introduction of unwanted and morally inferior Western mores (see Chatterjee 1993: ch. 6; Chakrabarty 1992: 11-17). This was not, however, a confrontation between modernity and tradition. Underlying the masculinist fear of the world turning upside down by women's agency was not a knee-jerk defense of tradition but a fear that the autonomy of the indigenous community would be lost to colonial dominance. The elites fixated on women because, as Chatterjee suggests, they served in the elite discourse as signs of an "inner," uncolonized domain of the national community. Thus, while the elite men eventually accepted the need for the education of women and even became its energetic advocates, they worked strenuously to draw a sharp boundary between the improvement of women's status and what they saw as westernization – the latter appeared as the intrusion of a morally inferior culture in the essential core of the community. Similarly, the elites opposed social legislations enacted by the colonial government on women's issues because they viewed them as interference in the inner sphere of the community. Again, this was not a defense of tradition against modernity, for the elites generally agreed with the necessity for reform while opposing colonial legislations.

As the tide of modern bourgeois subjecthood beached on the shores of native resistance, what took shape on the colonial landscape was a discourse on the rights of the community. The concept of community evoked a collectivity bound by culture, traditions, and social memories, not by economic and legal contracts between individuals. Clearly, it was to be governed by another set of institutions and practices than those of the civil society. Yet, the discourse of community did not function outside the domain of modernity; the "inner" (defined as the essential, spiritual domain from which the West was to be kept out) was not separate from the "outer" (the sphere of science, technology, economy, and power in which the West's dominance was acknowledged). As Chatterjee himself notes, the "inner" sphere defended by the Bengali elite men did not mean an uncritical return to the past; rather, the elites' vision of the ideal Bengali womanhood signaled a "new patriarchy," one that was distinguished from the traditional patriarchy (see Chatterjee 1993: 127). Paradoxically, the inviolability of the "inner" was achieved by its violation; women became powerful symbols of the traditional community precisely when they were fortified with new ideals of learning, hygiene, loyalty, and respectability.

This point is made even more sharply by G. Arunima's study of the discourse of modernity among Nayar men in Kerala represented through two Malayali novels, *Indulekha* (1889) and *Padmavati* (1920). Arunima reads these novels as works of "literary ethnography," that is, as literary representations

of the changes confronting the upper class and the structure of matrilineal Nayar society. These representations portray historical change as a crisis of the self, and offer strategies of self-fashioning. The fashioning of a new self, however, could not be undertaken without redefining the Nayar community as a whole, for at issue in self-fashioning was the status of the polyandrous matrilineal household which had come under attack as an immoral and backward institution. Thus, the novels oppose the practices of the matrilineal household with a new self, one embodying the ideals of romantic love and Victorian standards of marriage and female sexuality. The new self, however, was not a bourgeois individual but a Nayar engaged in distancing the community from the “immoral” past of polyandry and resignifying it with both western modernity and “classicalized” traditions of Sanskrit and Malayalam. Predictably, the novels designate women as symbols of the Nayar community, but they do so by subjecting them to new disciplines of female sexuality.

Community and nation

Elite men designated women as symbols of community, but did not view them as a community into themselves. Women belonged to a community rather than forming a separate community of their own. What was central to this discourse of community was not a concern with women’s conditions and rights as women, but with their role in signifying the rights of the community as a nation. At different times and places, communities had a diverse set of referents – Bengalis, Malayalis, Tamils, Hindus, Muslims, Indians, etc; yet, each of these was cast in the image of the modern nation, that is, as a unity of culture, traditions, and pasts that demanded recognition of its rights as a modern political community. Simultaneously invoking ancient solidarity and modern belonging, the colonized represented community as a traditional collectivity that was entitled to the modern rights and authority of “a people.” Given the political fact of empire, it is not surprising that the concept of a cultural community came to embrace the political. But to understand what positioned the nation as the framework of imagining a political community, we have to take into account the functioning of modernity in the colonial setting, that is, its authority as a sign of universality and its functioning as an aspect of empire. Placed in this condition, the desire for the modern authority of traditions led the elite intelligentsia to envision the nation as the framework for imagining community. Let me illustrate this point by taking the example of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reformist organization that achieved a substantial following in north India during the late nineteenth century.

Established in the 1870s by the charismatic preacher Swami Dayanand Sarasvati, the Arya Samaj was a movement of Hindu revivalism. The origin of this revivalism lay in the conflicting pressures of two opposite demands faced by reform-minded Hindu intellectuals. On the one hand, the emergence of Western science as a sign of modernity demanded that the indigenous culture cast off its difference and be recast in the image of Western reason. On the other hand, the association of science with colonial power required that reason speak in the language of the indigenous culture, that India's ineluctable difference serve as the medium for the emergence of science's authority. It was through this dilemma that there arose a powerful project to rid the indigenous culture of its "superstitions" and "myths." Swami Dayanand was a leading figure in this project; and his vision of a pristine Vedic Hinduism, shorn of "superstitions" quickly won a large following among the educated elite in the Punjab and north India in general. Asserting the superiority of Vedic Hinduism over all religions, the Arya Samaj's mission was to restore a pristine and classical Vedic religion cleansed of such "corrupt" accretions as priesthood, the caste system, idol worship, child marriage, and prohibitions on widow remarriage and female education. This vision of a pure, scientific Hinduism of the Vedas was based on the authority and originality that Dayanand claimed for Vedic texts. This was not new, for the assertion of the Vedas' absolute authority has a long history. Neither was the claim that, strictly speaking, the Vedas were not religious texts, but transcendent knowledge. Derived from the Sanskrit root *vid*, "to know," *Veda* means "true knowledge." Thus, the orthodox and pedagogical Brahminical tradition of Mimamsa philosophy argued that the Vedas contained timeless and absolute truths. Dayanand, however, advanced these claims in a new context in which the Hindu intelligentsia was anxious to not only establish the Vedas as a canonical "scripture" on par with the Bible and Qur'an, but also superior to them as a body of knowledge, as science. The intelligentsia's predicament was that a simple citation of Mimamsa philosophy on the Vedas' transcendent truths, for instance, could not suffice because it operated in an environment in which traditional arguments had to confront criticisms leveled by Western critics. It was necessary to invoke modern science in order to show that Vedic knowledge deserved the status of scientific truths.

Claiming that the Vedas contained scientific truths was not an act of nativist one-upmanship. Dayanand invoked science's authority in order to both deflect Western criticism of the Vedas as a body of texts riddled with myth and magic and to authorize a reading that delegitimized popular rituals and legends associated with the epic literature of the Puranas. Underlying his effort was an attempt to define Hinduism as a religion. Science helped to specify religion, to script it in texts, to divest it of "improper" accretions and

devise new standards of its order and intelligibility. Hinduism was to be a religion like other religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

To represent Hinduism as a religion, free of magic and armed with the power of reason, was to press its claim for universality. But how could a tradition stigmatized as metaphysical and out of joint with modernity claim modern authority and universality? While global expansion permitted the West to assert the universality of its reason despite its particularity, the colonized were denied this privilege; they had to come to terms with precisely this universalization of the West-as-History if they were to express the universality of their cultures. Their historical fate was to assert the autonomy and universality of their culture in the domain of the nation. Because alien domination was structured as the rule of one nation over another, the colonized culture was obliged to express its autonomy and universality in the framework of the modern nation. Thus, Dayanand linked together community, religion, and nation, and asserted that only the Aryas, who possessed “the most ancient records of knowledge,” could represent their country’s “genuine history” (see Prasad 1889: 171). As possessors of a body of knowledge whose universality was provable in the court of modernity, Hindus constituted a people, a nation. This positioned Vedic Hinduism not just as an authentic religion of the Hindus but also as India’s national religion. Such a view of Hinduism as a glue that bound India as a national community was not confined to the Arya Samaj, and it was to have grave consequences for Hindu-Muslim relations. What produced this vision was the imbrication of community and nation under colonial modernity.

Community, then, was Janus-faced. Neither tradition nor modernity, it inhabited both at once. It evoked bonds of culture, traditions, and pasts, but it authorized these in terms of modern dispositions. This was true even in the case of Gandhi who went the furthest in defining India as a non-modern community. He spoke of India as a non-modern civilization, as a community of villages bound by disciplines of truth and nonviolence, and said that he wanted no part of the modern state. “In an ideal State,” he wrote, “there would be no political institution and therefore no political power” (Gandhi 1958-1994: 265). In 1946, when the modern nation-state appeared imminent, he visualized the political structure as a constellation of villages organized in “ever-widening, never ending circles.” It would not be “a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom,” but an oceanic circle “whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals...” The outermost circumference of this circle would not possess the power to crush the inner circle, but would strengthen it and derive strength from it. Such a vision animated Gandhi’s struggle against British rule, exercising a powerful mobilizing appeal.

Clearly, Gandhi's conception of politics did not envision a bourgeois civil society and a modern state with a representational form of government. Still, it would be a mistake to see him, as is customary, as an outsider to modernity, an anomalous figure who stood completely apart from other nationalists. Nor is it adequate to trace his connection to modern nationalism primarily through his imperative to come to terms with the practical aspects of organizing a movement while dealing with the bourgeois legal and political structures set up by the colonial state. To think of India as a nation – apart from reckoning with colonial institutions in the course of political struggle –, was to locate it in the field of modernity. As a *national* claim over a territory configured by modern technics, *swaraj* was at once an intervention within modernity and an attempt to steer the nation in a different direction. The concept of *swaraj* rejected the colonial state as a model, but within it was also the idea that a national political authority would supplant the alien rulers; that another ethical order would arise and exercise sovereignty over the territory ruled by the British. India was to be a nation in a world of nations. To be sure, it would be different from every other nation, but this was not exceptional; try as he might, Gandhi could not escape the logic of his nationalist thought. The state, as an expression of the collective life of the community, was immanent in the concept of the nation even as the association of modernity with colonialism demanded that the nation-state be different. Nationalism could not wish away the modern state; instead, it subjected the state to the pressure of the nation, demanded that it shed its character as an embodiment of technics. *Swaraj* was not a negation of the modern state, but its reinscription; it represented an effort to create something new and authentic from the available and the alien.¹

State and community

Colonial India witnessed the emergence of community as an alternative to the concept of civil society composed of bourgeois individuals. The fact that community came dressed in the garb of traditional solidarity should not cause us to overlook that it functioned as a form for the expression of modern collective identity – one that accommodated the logic of the modern nation and the nation-state. Thus, while opposing the notion of a political collectivity composed of individual subjects presided over by a state, the concept of community implied a homogenous collectivity authorized by culture and traditions. Thus, women were not to be individual agents, but members belonging to the

¹ For a fuller treatment of the relationship between the modern spatial configuration of India and the idea of the nation, see Prakash 1999: chs. 6-7.

community; and the community itself was to be defined according to reworked Vedic and Brahmanical traditions, expunging alien and corrupt influences. It is difficult to overlook the community as a displaced image of the state in its demand for an absolute and homogenizing solidarity. Consider also the use of the disciplines of gender, sexuality, and religion to represent and enforce a unitary identity of the community. This is not to say that the two are identical, but that it makes no sense for community to be placed in opposition to the state. The challenge of community to the modern state is based precisely on its historical existence as a form that takes shape within modernity. As political struggles in India during recent decades show, the effort has been to rearticulate state and community. Thus women, oppressed castes, and minorities have demanded that the state recognize them as rights-bearing groups, that the state enact laws and provide affirmative action on their rights not as individuals but as members of groups. It is worth noting here that these are not anti-statist demands, but attempts to reconstitute communities in the domain of the modern state and its legal institutions. By doing so, they seek to not only refashion the state but also to restructure civil society as an arena founded on the clear recognition that it consists of social groups, not bourgeois individuals, whose relations are mediated by power.

This conjuncture has its roots in the structure of the state/community relations foregrounded in India's colonial history, and it brings to light what the state/civil society difference in the West conceals, that is, the attempt to forge modernity in other than strictly bourgeois terms. It also demonstrates that the history of Indian modernity cannot be conceived as part of "an incomplete project" moving haltingly but inexorably towards completion; it cannot be conceived in terms of a colonial/national/postnational (or postmodern) trajectory of successive stages leading to the full development of civil society and "the end of History." Colonial modernity came into existence as a form of "belated" enlightenment, separated from the time of Europe and addressed to those who lived in "other times." Community represents the time and space of this other modernity.

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Gyan Prakash

SOCIEDADE CIVIL, COMUNIDADE E NAÇÃO
NA ÍNDIA COLONIAL

Nos debates contemporâneos, os teóricos identificaram a comunidade como um campo de grande importância para repensar a identidade e a política. O artigo examina a genealogia colonial da comunidade na Índia, argumentando que ela não pode ser concebida como um espaço exterior à modernidade. Apesar de a comunidade ter emergido onde as tentativas para estabelecer uma sociedade civil falharam, a governamentalidade – no sentido atribuído por Foucault – foi uma condição indispensável para a sua constituição. Este facto limita a sua capacidade potencial para enquadrar a democracia.

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