

Whose Reality Counts?

Emergent *Dalitbahujan* Anthropologists

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ABSTRACT: The low caste, Dalit and Tribal social movements in India have reconfigured the fabric of Indian society in significant ways over the past decade. Likewise, the movement of these same groups into anthropology, a discipline previously dominated in India by upper-caste intellectuals, has created a dynamic force for change in the academy. At a time when India is vying with the global economic powers for supremacy, the people severely affected are low caste, Dalits and Tribal peoples, who see their lands being lost and their lifestyles in rapid transformation. Some from these same groups are also witnessing some of their daughters and sons pursuing higher studies and entering into the social sciences. The entry of these young scholars not only challenges the caste-based status quo in the academy, but it also forces these scholars to question their own position in relation to these social movements and in relation to Indian society more broadly.

KEYWORDS: auto-ethnography, caste, colonial governance, *Dalitbahujans*, decolonisation, knowledge regulation

Many foreigners and Brahmanic scholars of India have attempted to undertake such a journey in an attempt to unravel the complexities of its many social, cultural and civilizational systems, but have ultimately failed to understand the essence of India. Studying the Indian society involves living through its processes which also involves a close study of its multiple castes that have constructed myriad forms of suppression and hegemonic relationships. (Ilaiah 2009: xxvii)

Indian society is being reconfigured by the mobilisation of people who had historically been marginalised in economic, social and cultural life. These people are referred to in the constitution as Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC), and combined they constitute the majority in India. In recent years, there has been an impetus to refer to them collectively as *Dalitbahujans* as an acknowledgement of their salient productive role and in recognition of their historical marginalisation and their awakening over the past several

decades (Ilaiah 2009; Mohanty 2004). Some amongst them wish to see power turned on its head, but more prevalent has been their thirst for egalitarianism (see Ilaiah 1989). In this article, I explore some of the issues related to the recent influx of *Dalitbahujans* into anthropology programmes in recent years and ask some salient questions that touch on the mandate of *Anthropology in Action*. Will the entry of lower-caste people into anthropology lead to a progressive and emancipatory pedagogy, and might it lead to the inclusion of movements, histories, cultures and sensibilities that have previously been excluded? Will it contribute to 'asking how social science can and will advance the interests of the poor and excluded in the face of insistent pressures for it to contribute to the dominant ideological concerns of policy-makers and those who fund academic research' (Ross and Price 2005: ix; see also Bayly 2016; Shah and Shneiderman 2013)? Or will their knowledge be instrumental in forwarding the interests of a G20, capital-centric India? These are also questions of concern to *Anthropol-*



ogy in Action, as they bear on how we understand the relationship between anthropologists and anthropology concerning India, as well as on the use and abuse of indigenous knowledge in the context of globally accelerating dynamics of corporatism and militarism. In this article, I begin to explore some of these issues and hint at some emergent patterns. It is still too early to ascertain the direction that *Dalitbahujan* scholars will take in the remainder of the twenty-first century.

There has been much written about the *Dalitbahujan* entry into politics and literature (Ilaiah 2009, 2004, 1996, 1989) but not much in terms of the role they will play in the social sciences in a G20 India. Central to this discussion is the question of *whose reality counts* and how low-caste anthropologists will be positioning themselves in relation to power. My own experiences and observations as a low-caste scholar who has experienced this transformation first-hand over the past decade of economic liberalisation in India while being a student of anthropology, and the son of a small subsistence agricultural family in South India, informs my discussion as a participant observer (Ilaiah 2004; Shah and Shneiderman 2013). In this article, I will first briefly introduce ST, SC and OBC peoples who constitute *Dalitbahujans* and then examine the content of 'empire' in the Indian context. I will then discuss some of the ways that *Dalitbahujans* have experienced empire and some of the potential pitfalls in navigating a way out of it. While I do think that the recent caste transformations could potentially offer a path out of empire, in this article I will also expose some of the possible obstacles to this in the hope of motivating emergent *Dalitbahujan* scholars to carefully consider how they position themselves in the coming years.

Tribes and Caste

Tribal Peoples

The Tribal Peoples of India, also referred to in the Constitution of India as Scheduled Tribes (ST) or Primitive Tribes (PT), are understood as being indigenous and constitute approximately nine per cent of the total population (Higham and Shah 2013; Sahu 2001; Singh 1994). The British used the designation 'tribe' as a political-administrative category of people who were challenging the annexation of their lands (Pathy 1989; Singh 1994; Subramanian et al. 2006); some were referred to as 'criminal tribes' (Bhat 1984). Linguistic diversity is the norm within this nine per cent, which comprises more than 700 geographically

isolated tribal groups (Das 1994; Guilmoto 2011). As among Canadian First Nations peoples, some tribal groups have not yet been recognised by the state and are fighting for recognition, and this term has been adopted by some STs as a form of self-reference. An additional category that was added in the 1970s is that of Primitive Tribes (PT) with currently some 52 PTs (Sharma 2006) representing more than 24 million people. There are differing levels of disenfranchisement from forest and/or agricultural lands amongst PT and ST groups, but peri-urban relocation is now a growing phenomenon as large corporations like Tata and Mittal seek minerals such as bauxite and coal, iron, steel, stainless steel, sponge iron, and ferrochrome (Hardiman 2007; Meher 2009; Shah and Shneiderman 2013).

Caste

The largest caste grouping is known as the Other Backward Classes (OBC), which constitute the majority population in India.¹ They are positioned at the very bottom of the *Varna* system,² formerly referred to as *Sudras*, a term with a negative connotation. Scheduled Castes (SC), also often now referred to as Dalits, were called 'untouchables' during the colonial period and after. Both SC and OBC people perform the back-breaking work that the higher castes do not do, mainly skilled agricultural labour, stone-cutting, pottery-making, construction, waste removal, and slaughtering animals. Many also engage in daily wage labour for higher caste people who own land. SC and OBC groups have also long been active in the anti-caste movements which commenced with Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's book *The Annihilation of Caste*, which was written in the 1930s, and the anti-Brahmin Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu (Ambedkar 2004; Nanda 2003). While there are many linguistic and cultural differences between ST, SC and OBC groups, the majority are poor – either small land-owning peasants, semi-peasants or migrant workers – and, additionally, there is a growing class of upper-caste people whose class position is equally poor but who have no state protections (Delige 2011; Ray and Bagchi 2001). Intermediate castes such as the land-owning and small business castes have long been oscillating within the social hierarchy (Sharma 1990), and Brahmins, at the top of the caste hierarchy, tend to dominate the intellectual and professional spheres.

Dalitbahujans' willingness to participate in the institutions and rituals of the dominant 'moral economy' are rapidly fading, and they are searching for alternatives that are more just and equitable not only for themselves but for Indian society as a whole

(Hardiman 2007; Ilaiah 1989; Meher 2009; Shah and Shneiderman 2013). Mass inter-caste and inter-tribal mobilisation has led to stopping a growing number of state–industry projects in the tribal belt of Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Northern Andhra Pradesh (Meher 2009). In addition to these more militant activities, over the past decade there has been an increased effort on the part of *Dalitbahujan* political organisations and their political parties to force state and private universities and colleges to meet their quotas for ST, SC and OBC students, a struggle that has been highly successful (see Guru 2004). Thus, the mobilisation with non-tribal peoples has strengthened their resistance, and, like other global social movements, they have discovered that working together increases their viability (Higham and Shah 2013; Stanbridge and Ramos 2012). Currently, state institutions are required to accept, as a proportion of their total student enrolment, a standard proportion of 30 per cent SC and ST students and 27 per cent OBC students. Since 2009, this effort was strengthened through the implementation of Centre for Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies throughout state universities, which have also become an important source of post-degree employment. The aim of these centres is to create new positions to be occupied by low-caste and ST people who are able to highlight problems facing their communities and forward an agenda to solve these problems. Anthropology plays a large role in these centres as well as with respect to communities that had previously been excluded or relegated to being objects of research. But does this phenomenon have the potential to be a path out of empire, or might it also be part of the expansion of empire and a large-scale accommodation to India’s capital-centric arrangements?

Two Centuries of Structural Adjustment and Knowledge Regulation

In order to understand the significance of these struggles and social changes, we need to consider the content of empire in India. While there is still a sort of denial in the West about recognising the serious negative impact that British colonialism had on India, and a celebration of all things British in contexts like South Africa and Canada, it is very important to re-assert the damage done to Indian people during that period and the ongoing erasure of that impact (Oakley 2006; Zurba and Bullock 2019). For many Indians, the celebration of British colonialism ne-

gates the horrific impacts of two centuries of British domination and post-colonial submission to market forces (Joshi 2007; Higham and Shah 2013). Until the late 1850s, during the period of indirect rule, the pre-colonial Hindu kings and Muslim sultans had a degree of autonomy *vis-à-vis* the British colonial government (Chossudovsky 2003). The British did everything possible to strengthen land-owners’ rights and maintained the Masters and Servants Acts long after these had been ‘given a quietus’ in Britain, meaning that the British had abandoned practices for their own people that they continued to impose on Indians (Bagchi 2010; Oakley 2006). From 1870 to 1920, wages fell, food prices increased, the British converted many subsistence crops into cash crops, and the majority of taxes were used to fuel British rule in India and to build infrastructure that was useful for military or commercial purposes to utterly ruin India even further (Bagchi 2010; Higham and Shah 2013).

The Indian army was financed by the Indian people even as it defended the interests of the British Empire in Asia and beyond (Joshi 2007). Tax collection methods encouraged individual forms of ownership and were rarely used to build infrastructure for the affected people. Tribal groups were displaced from forest lands so that in Orissa hundreds of communities actually ceased to exist (Padel and Das 2010). Tribal peoples inhabiting the forests were forced to go deeper into the hills and mountains in order to eke out their subsistence (Mili et al. 2010; Mohapatra 2010). Wealth was drained at a staggering rate from India both to industrialise Britain and to entrench colonialism in settler colonies like Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Famine was the norm, which the British dismissed as ‘seasons of scarcity’ (Bagchi 2010: xxxix; Oakley 2006); yet this explanation defines the propensity for famines to occur in the hundred years of despot British rule after the Great Rebellion in 1857 (Joshi 2007). From 1894 to 1947, for example, exportable crops proliferated while food insecurity ensued, and in 1943–1944 there was famine throughout India (Degaonkar 2006).

Contemporary Empire: Competition between the Global Trade Blocs

Today India acts as a major player in the BRICS constellation (the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa trade bloc) that is vying for global economic supremacy (Bhaduri 2011). While an emergent eco-

conomic force, India continues to have a very friendly relationship with the United States, which is arguably still the heart of empire. Pursuing the headlines, one can glean that over the past decade India has purchased more than eight billion dollars' worth of military equipment from the United States. In contrast to the indirect rule of British imperialism, the post-colonial period features a more direct approach characterised by the Union Minister of Finance reporting directly to the World Bank Head Office on 1818 H Street NW Washington, DC, which bypasses Parliament and any democratic processes (Bagchi 2010; Chossudovsky 2003; Joshi 2007). But this has not led to many economic benefits for the most marginalised populations – the *Dalitbahujans* – who continue to see their lands bought up by local and foreign industries as their life ways face rapid and imposed transformation (Bayly 2016; Hardiman 2007; Naik et al. 2006; Rao 2006; Ray and Bagchi 2001). In Andhra Pradesh, for example, the past decade has evidenced amongst the most vigorous entrenchments of capitalism and loss of protection for small land-owners such that the number of landless people has increased and the upper-caste domination of land ownership persists (Rao 2006). The recent entry of India into the G20 and numerous economic deals that have been developed between Canada and India alone make one wonder how vulnerable *Dalitbahujan* peoples will withstand another century of neo-colonial economic exploitation (Higham and Shah 2013).

Historical Knowledge Regulation

While the economy was being ravaged, so too were Indian peoples' ideas. India experienced two centuries of British regulation of its cultural values and the imposition of foreign values with *Dalitbahujans* often the target of this regulation. For example, the British conceptualised the body, bodily substances and also notions of the sacred and the public domain in ways that did not match diverse Indian notions of the same (see Bayly 2016; and Bhat 1984).

A Victorian-style interpretation of caste and class that was imposed upon the country and its people (Bayly 2016) was an 'extremely useful device for the British rulers and their Indian compradors in "re-constituting" Indian society and in maintaining their rule' (Bhodra 1989: 343). In this regard, it is important to note that caste is not the monolithic entity that texts and academic representations of India make it out to be.

Knowledge and Anthropology Programmes

For many *Dalitbahujans*, entering into the social sciences means reading about one's own people in a distasteful and inaccurate manner, a manner which some have referred to as the theft of one's history and an erasure of identity (Ilaiah 2009). It means seeing higher caste anthropologists conduct studies with depictions of upper-caste practices as divine and *Dalitbahujan* practices as uncivilised and in need of modification (Ilaiah 2009; Shah and Shneiderman 2013). From my experiences and observations amongst colleagues and friends, for today's South Indian students encounters with empire are often a focus of their discussions on campus. These depictions, the people who write them, and the make-up of the professoriate on campus as well as their treatment of *Dalitbahujans* does not go unnoticed. Students spend considerable time reflecting on, sometimes joking about and laughing-off,³ and sometimes taking action against casteism on campus. For example, although there is a quota system in place for *Dalitbahujans*, it often happens that positions are actually given to higher caste candidates (referred to as "general category" candidates). In response to this, student unions often organise large demonstrations in front of the administration buildings, and sometimes they are successful in forcing the administration to review hiring and admissions procedures and to provide redress.

As more students from marginalised backgrounds enter the academy, I expect that both previous and current anthropological writings about their communities will be called into question even more vigorously than in the past. For example, Kancha Ilaiah (2009), a scholar from an OBC background, compellingly demonstrates the bias in the accounts of lower-caste peoples produced by Brahmin and other high-caste scholars, depicting them as uncivilised; uncultured and polluted for eating meat; polluting for their handling of the dead; polluted for their handling of leather; filthy and unhygienic for their handling of soiled cloths; and primitive and unspiritual as evidenced by their drum music (Higham and Shah 2013; Hollen 2003). In response, Ilaiah challenges these stereotypes and depicts these same people as productive and industrious; caretakers of their own health through a diet that, by necessity, includes meat; caretakers of communal village health and well-being through their handling of the dead; skilled craftspeople whose leather work has produced the best sandals in the world and whose agrar-

ian knowledge has fed Indian society; and musicians whose drums have been used by higher castes for a variety of religious purposes (Shah and Shneiderman 2013). Ilaiah strikes at the heart of this dynamic of inequality when he states that ‘the makers of history themselves should become writers of the history so that the interaction between history and the makers of history is a living interaction’ (2004: 227) and that both Brahmin and Western intellectuals have failed to sensitise the scholarly world with respect to the question of caste. Indian anthropology remains steeped in the ‘civilising’ mission of Hinduism and modernity, particularly with respect to *Dalitbahujans*, exemplified by the preoccupation with notions of hygiene and the need for the higher castes to teach the morality of cleanliness (Chakraborty and Bose 2008; Dwivedi and Sharma 2007; Hollen 2003).

The tendency to continue to use stale, casteist and Brahmin-centric materials in university courses still goes on today in several Indian anthropology programmes. While studying anthropology in a state university, one colleague of mine took anthropology courses in which she had to read texts about her own caste community. Some of the articles characterised her caste as having low morals and being prone to crime and alcoholism. This stereotype was used for decades by the British to humiliate, to shame and ultimately to govern *Dalitbahujan* peoples (Bayly 2016; Pathy 1989), and it continues today also amongst tribal peoples (Prakash and Raju 2010). More recent literature amongst this same caste focuses on their lack of genetic fitness due to their practice of endogamy (Reddy et al. 2006, 2007). The authors of these papers conclude that the caste’s cultural practice – which they refer to, incorrectly, as ‘inbreeding’ – is maladaptive from a genetic point of view in that it leads to an increase in infant mortality due to the prevalence of a recessive gene (Reddy et al. 2006, 2007). These depictions are humiliating, and written from an outsider or etic point of view that ignores colonial and imperial processes that have led to extreme poverty amongst some sectors of this caste and that have a direct relationship to increases in infant mortality (Hollen 2003). In particular, families in great debt are under nutritional strain, as they must either sell their subsistence crops to repay loans or find a way to earn wages. Either way, nutrition and health are compromised, and this would certainly affect patterns of infant mortality. For my colleague, however, the most egregious aspect of this account was the use of the term ‘inbreeding’ (Hollen 2003; Reddy et al. 2006, 2007) to characterise her caste’s norm of cross-cousin marriage. Kinship is a social construction in

all human societies, and the imposition of the term ‘inbreeding’ by upper-caste scholars (whose caste grouping, incidentally, owns most of the adjacent lands in the region being depicted and has been known to dominate lower-caste people) goes against the anthropological concept of cultural relativism and the social construction of *Dalitbahujan* genetics (Shaw 2009; Yalamala 2013). Methodologically, this research raises troubling questions relating to upper-caste scholars studying lower-caste communities. How did these upper-caste scholars gain access to the lower-caste communities for this research? Given that the study in question involved the collection of blood samples, under what arrangements were these samples collected in the communities? How was full and informed consent achieved? None of these questions are broached in the articles (Hollen 2003; Reddy et al. 2006, 2007). There are many social nuances of the caste that would be hidden from the reader of these foreign journals in which anthropological articles are published, and yet these dimensions are vitally important to understanding the social realities at hand. But perhaps the genetic-based and ultimately biomedical audience for whom these articles were written are not concerned about cultural meanings in such communities (Reddy et al. 2006, 2007).

I have also personally experienced the humiliating feeling of being a low-caste student in a class instructed by upper-caste faculty who assigned readings about my own caste community, in which we were depicted as thieves, unhygienic, stigmatised meat-eaters, drunkards, and in-breeders. Hence, these are all the typical stereotypes that come up in daily life when interacting with upper-caste people in the rural agrarian setting where I grew up and where my own father was a bonded labourer for local upper castes, to whom his parents were indebted, until the age of 21. In sharing discussions with anthropology friends and colleagues over the past decade during my studies, the majority of my low-caste friends have had similar humiliating experiences with regard to their own caste groups and have had to employ various strategies in order to survive these stereotypes and practices (see Deshingkar and Start 2003; Higham and Shah 2013; and Olsen and Ramanamurthy 2000). No critique of the materials was forthcoming, and they were presented as if they were simply social facts. Creating a critical archive of these experiences and depictions is an ongoing project that I will be working on over the coming years as a form of anthropological justice in India, and this article foreshadows this longer-term project inspired by the hope that young *Dalitbahujan* scholars will

not have to experience the same humiliations. More than this, my intention is to contribute to the public imagination in India, which is imbued with, as Max Haiven put it, a 'radical spirit of commonality, intentionality, passion, and hope fundamentally predicated on the reinvention, restoration, and defence of public spaces, common understandings, and shared ambitions' (2007: 90). The challenge for these young scholars will be to determine precisely how they will position themselves in relation to empire-building projects of the future and fortify the public desire for a caste-free Indian society (Giroux 2004; Higham and Shah 2013).

Obstacles Blocking the Paths Out of Empire: Military and Biomedical Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

The rapid economic growth in India has not dramatically improved standards of living amongst the most marginalised groups (see Basu 1994; Bhaduri 2011; Guilmoto 2011; Kalla and Joshi 2004; and Ray and Bagchi 2001), and some contend that India ranks globally amongst the worst in terms of economic inequality (Bardhan 2011). While middle-class and upper-caste Indians boast about the high proportion of Indian billionaires in the *Forbes* magazine list (Bardhan 2011), the financial oligarchy in India is intensifying as is land loss amongst poor *Dalitbahujan* peasants. Free-trade zones, such as Special Economic Zones (SEZs), are industrial zones covering hundreds of acres which are developed with promises for peasants who are eager to receive large payouts for their land and who believe they will be offered a job once the industries are established (Oza 2011; Higham and Shah 2013). The period between 1964 and 1985 was the initial planning phase of SEZ developments, and between 1985 and 1991 the Government of India established five such zones. In many cases, there is a significant delay in between the companies' acquiring of the land and their actually establishing of industries on it, and people are left with no means of making a living (Cross 2009). These same people are often unaware that they had permanently signed away the rights to grow crops on the land, and, in a growing number of cases the companies that purchase the land at cheap rates put the same land up for sale at exorbitant prices. Social scientists are often employed to study the dynamics involved in SEZs and, specifically, to study strategies aimed at minimising the anger of people who sell their land and subsequently realise that they have

been cheated, some of whom seek out involvement in social movements for change such as the Maoist or Naxalite movements (Ilaiyah 1989, 2004; Mukherjee 2007; Shah and Shneiderman 2013). Arun Mukherjee (2007), former Superintendent of Police had involved in the arrests of key Naxalite leaders such as Charu Mazumdar,⁴ devoted an entire paper in his book to the need for the military to understand the Naxalites and to the need for ethnographic work to be one of the ways in which to accomplish this goal (see also Shah and Shneiderman 2013). Some social scientists in India are very concerned about the tendency for social science researchers to adjust their agendas to meet the demands of the corporatised state, the private sector (Higham and Shah 2013) or non-governmental organisations, thereby leaving theory and ethics behind in the process of their own accommodation (Gosh 2008).

Emergent *Dalitbahujan* Scholars as Organic Intellectuals

'I am a better activist because I am an anthropologist, and can therefore take the broader view, explain the other side, and make the invisible seen'.

(Davis-Floyd 2011: 8)

The inclusion of formerly marginalised castes in Indian academic institutions might open up the possibility of developing a path out of empire, but it would seem that these paths are littered with a number of obstacles. One of the major ones is the ongoing and ever-increasing capital penetration of India (or as political economists would have it, 'growth' and the simultaneous exclusion of hundreds of millions of people from that growth) (Bhaduri 2011; Shah and Shneiderman 2013). The majority of these affected people are *Dalitbahujan* peoples who have been excluded from growth for two centuries. Yet, with the retrenchment of incredible inequality comes a thirst for equality and egalitarianism, and this is evident in the *Dalitbahujan* movements. But even so, to come a sense of desperation and, sometimes, a willingness to be accommodated within the military and within corporate and biotechnology pursuits related to empire in India is a problem that will not be easy to resolve.

Nearly two decades ago, Nancy Scheper-Hughes called for an 'anthropology of the really real . . . to locate and train indigenous local anthropologists and organic intellectuals to work with us and to help us redefine and transform ourselves and our vexed

craft' (1995: 417; see Khasnabish 2010). Scheper-Hughes' call is salient for India, given, on the one hand, the speed with which lives are changing as India has become a part of BRICS and the G20 and given, on the other, the need to preserve and value the unique and diverse knowledge of ST, SC and OBC peoples' senior generations (see Ilaiah 2009; and Smith 1999). Many of the students and scholars currently in anthropology programmes or in the Centres for Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies are from very poor farming communities and have attained higher education only with great difficulty and considerable sacrifice on the part of their families. The stories of the children of these people who navigate the road into the elite intellectual academy at a time of the intensification of neoliberalism would itself make for a worthy contribution to the history of anthropology in India (Bayly 2016; Smith 1999).

Ilaiah (1989) advocates for the valuing of the multiple contributions that *Dalitbahujan* peoples have made to India and for the necessity of bearing witness to their suffering (see also Scheper-Hughes 1995). With respect to the relevance of the social sciences in this regard, Ilaiah asks: "relevant to whom" (1989: ix)? For him, there is a need to eliminate the caste system forever and to build a new casteless society. Yet he also strongly feels that the 'old order' intellectuals, the Brahmins and others from high castes, are, in Scheper-Hughes' words, 'hanging on till the bitter end' (1995: 415; cf. Graeber 2004). 'Is another world possible?' ask Karen Stanbridge and Howard Ramos (2012: 142). I think so. India is a ripe context in which to investigate how these old colonial institutions are now transforming and to recognise that indeed, 'another world is possible . . . that institutions like the state, capitalism, racism and male dominance are not inevitable; that it would be possible to have a world in which these things would not exist, and that we'd all be better off as a result' (Graeber 2004: 10; see Yalamala 2011, 2013). This recognition is germinating in India, and, more than that, there is a growing recognition of the role of organic intellectuals who could fertilise the soil of society and prepare it for new creative ideas and practices and actively work to destroy the caste system (Ilaiah 1989). As had been accomplished elsewhere in the world, there is a 'path grounded in democracy, inclusivity, and the mutual recognition of dignity' (Khasnabish 2010: 4). This vision of justice includes using the tools of anthropology to facilitate the cultivation of self-respect amongst *Dalitbahujans*, who could then become an intellectual social force capable of bringing about revolutionary change as a

gift to Indian society (Ilaiah 2009; see Graeber 2004 and Shah and Shneiderman 2013).⁵ It is still too early to tell how emergent subaltern scholars can address these issues, but it is my hope that this article will plant a seed in the minds of some of these emergent *Dalitbahujan* scholars to consider how they seek to contest or ally with power in the coming years.

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Notes

1. Proportionately, the OBC class category constitutes 60 per cent of the national population, whereas ST and SC groups constitute 16 per cent of the national population (Guilmoto 2011).
2. Brahmins and Kshytrias are at the top; next are the Vaishyas; and the Sudras are at the bottom. OBCs are Sudras.
3. Keith Basso's *Portraits of the Whiteman* was a creative ethnographic exploration of the discursive methods of dealing with racism and colonialism and about how the Western Apache countered it through jokes. I think that a similar book could be written about *Dalitbahujans* and their discursive strategies in dealing with empire.
4. Charu Mazumdar was a key freedom fighter in India and a Naxalite leader for decades. He orchestrated the 1968 Naxalbari Rebellion. He, and a number of his comrades, were tortured and killed in Lal Bahadur Prison. His body was not returned to his family.

5. In some ways, Stanbridge and Ramos' (2012) *Seeing Politics Differently* will potentially raise consciousness amongst Canadian youth, such that they see the relevance of their class background in a way that could also be done for anthropology in India.

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