

## **Papers to be included in Panel 7: Rethinking the Role of Religion in Processes of Development and Social Change in South Asia**

### **Religious Political Parties and their Welfare Work: Relations between the RSS, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Vidya Bharati schools in India**

Padmaja Nair, Religions and Development Research Programme, University of Birmingham

Religious forces that attempt to gain political power may establish political parties, often leading to conflicts in states based on secular principles, such as India. Some of the main religious political parties in South Asia are also engaged in the provision of welfare services. As part of a larger study of the welfare wings of religious political parties, this research examines the Indian context through the history of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The paper observes that the BJP, is not technically a religious political party. However, it has strong historical and ideological bonds with the self-proclaimed 'social organization', the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), which pursues a Hindutva agenda and has established a large network of affiliates, many involved in social welfare activities. The paper seeks to understand why the BJP and RSS have a compelling need for each other and to what extent the BJP, as the political offspring of the RSS, is influenced by it. In addition, it examines the relationships between the BJP and Vidya Bharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan (VBABSS), the educational affiliate of RSS, in order to obtain a better insight into the BJP's role in furthering RSS's *Hindutva* agenda through the medium of education, catering largely to poor and middle class families.

The paper observes that BJP today has an ideological, but somewhat fractious, relationship with the RSS. At the same time there is a familial kinship between the BJP and the Vidya Bharati, whose schools seek to groom young minds towards the concept of a Hindu nation. For those members of BJP who owe allegiance to the RSS, links with Vidya Bharati are a means of reinforcing their ideological moorings and gaining acceptance for the BJP in the larger *Sangh Parivar*, although some in VB fear that many within BJP do not adhere to the core *Hindutva* ideology. The paper argues that the nature of the Indian state (secular /democratic) and its political trajectory makes it somewhat difficult for BJP to clearly acknowledge its relationship with a religious oriented RSS. The relationships between the organizations studied are fragile and, while the RSS and Vidya Bharati's determination to achieve their goals will continue to reinforce their desire to work together, the BJP may find itself having to part ways with them or to reinvent itself with reference to its Hindutva agenda and the RSS.

## **Constitution, Religion and Women's Education Contradiction and Convergence**

Rubina Saigol, Religions and Development Research Programme, University of Birmingham

This paper proposes to examine the complex relationship between Pakistan's constitution, the varied and multiple discourses of religious organizations, and the issue of women's education. The paper would be in two parts. In the first part, the constitution of Pakistan will be explored in terms of its provisions on women's rights as well as education. These will be juxtaposed to the constitutional provisions on religion to identify and explore the contradictions as well as convergences between the overlapping, yet discrete discourses.

In the second part, the state's discourses on religion, and women's rights and education will be compared with the findings of the study of women's education undertaken in Peshawar and Lahore for the Religions and Development Component on Values and Beliefs in Religion and their relationship to development concepts.

The idea is to understand the complexity of the relation between religion, development discourses and women's education, at the levels of both the state and religious organizations/parties. The contradictions as well as convergence and overlaps will be examined to find out the extent to which the state and faith-based organizations are impediments or facilitators of women's rights in general and education in particular.

## **An Uneasy Relationship: Religion, Philanthropy and Development in Karachi**

Nida Kirmani, University of Birmingham and Sarah Zaidi, International Treatment Preparedness Coalition

This paper explores the role of religion in philanthropic activities and in development initiatives in Karachi, Pakistan. The authors discuss the different approaches to development taken by organisations that are locally grown and rely on indigenous sources of funding and non-religiously affiliated NGOs, which are largely reliant on foreign funding. The authors argue that locally-funded charitable institutions do not frame themselves as part of the NGO-led 'development sector' even if many of their activities are focused on serving the poor. The drive to engage in philanthropy in Pakistan is closely tied to religious practice, with the majority of funding originating in religious forms of giving such as *zakat* and *sadqa*. Hence, although these organisations may not identify themselves explicitly as 'faith-based organisations', religion is intimately intertwined with their identity and practice. Christian organisations are an exception to this rule because of their position as members of minority groups and due to their participation in international networks. NGOs, on the other hand, speak the language of 'development', and do not actively incorporate religion into their work. The role of religion in these sectors of civil society must be understood in the wider context of both the Pakistani state, which has historically appropriated religion for

its own purposes, and the international donor community's uneasy relationship with Islam. Both charitable institutions and non-religious NGOs rarely class themselves as 'faith-based organisations', because of the general fear surrounding religious labels in the context of Pakistan's 'War on Terror'. This research contributes to the wider understanding of 'faith-based organisations' and competing notions of 'development' in Pakistan and beyond.

### **Shifting Identities, Histories and Networks: Educational FBOs in Mumbai**

Martin Rew, University of Birmingham and Emma Tomalin, University of Leeds,

Development organizations, particularly NGOs, have often been characterized as moving from a charitable and welfare orientation, through to developmental and advocacy based interventions. Faith-based organizations have also witnessed similar shifts and argued that, like NGOs, they have a comparative advantage through their pragmatic, socio-economic and cultural proximity to the poor. This welfare through to advocacy trajectory has been characteristic of non-state actor involvement in the field of education within India where religious institutions have, historically, provided important safety nets, while increasingly being central to educational provision and nation-building. However, this paper will challenge the relevance of this depiction of a policy and organizational pathway - largely defined by development management perspectives - through the perspectives of two faith-based educational organizations from minority socio-religious groups in Mumbai; namely MESCO (an educational Islamic trust) and Shelter Don Bosco, an international Catholic charity. The paper argues that the analysis of FBO engagement needs to incorporate more sociologically and historically integrated understandings of FBO social and political networks and identities. The paper shows that while targeting the same demographic group (young people from 'impoverished' backgrounds between the ages of 7-18) both organisations project different class aspirations, and images of self-improvement and religious identity, in response to both local, national and international discourses around appropriate 'religious' intervention. Ultimately, the paper will be specifically concerned with examining how such organizations accommodate religious pluralism in response to both educational policy and society within Mumbai and its implications for how the future city might be envisaged in socio-religious terms.

### **Religious Transnationalism and New Development Initiatives in South Asia: a Case Study of Ravidassias in the West Midlands, United Kingdom**

Gurharpal Singh, University of Birmingham (RaD)

In recent years there has been an increasing recognition of the role of migrants' remittances in development of the South. In 2006, the World Bank estimated that remittances to the South from the North amounted to \$167 billion, with possibly an additional 50 per cent transferred through unofficial

channels. The size of these flows varies considerably with different communities, with the Chinese, Mexicans and Indians commanding a large proportion of these transfers. In India, economic liberalisation since 1991 has been followed by organised efforts to channel non-resident Indian investment into the Indian economy by new policy initiatives.

Although migrants' remittances have attracted considerable scholarship, researchers have overlooked the impact of 'social remittances' - the transfer of 'ideas, norms and values' to the home country - and the role of religious organisations in the North of migrants from the South of poor and *marginalised* communities in promoting religiously based philanthropy that also addresses issues of inequality, social uplift and good governance.

This paper will examine the efforts of the Ravidassia community in the United Kingdom – traditional of low caste/ agricultural workers from Punjab - to mobilise funds for economic and social development in central Punjab, India. It will assess how issues of religion and caste identity are central to such mobilisation in the United Kingdom and the impact of resources and ideas transferred to Punjab for social and economic development channelled through the Dera Sach Khand Ballan, based in the central district of Jalandhar.

The paper will argue that the case study provides a framework for looking at new transnationalism religious movements of marginalised groups. These groups have a significant contribution to make to economic development that is not fully captured by the literature on religious philanthropy in South Asia or much more broadly.

### **Religion and Politics in Pakistan**

Mohammed Waseem, Lahore University of Management Sciences

This paper argues in favour of de-essentializing Islam, as opposed to its understanding in terms of conflation between religion and politics by *ulema* as well as Western scholars. As a schematized religious system, Islam operates in Pakistan in pursuit of programmatic reordering of the state and society. Religion has moved from an instrument of state policy to a socially embedded ideological force. The Islamic discourse projects a divine source of legitimacy superior to constitutionalism. It discounts issues relating to democracy, minorities, women, human rights and public access to justice. The paper discusses the historical progression of Islamic politics through the colonial heritage of reification of religious identities leading to Muslim separatism, the post-independence nation-building project focusing on Islamic unity, religious and sectarian movements, Islamization of law, education and economy and the war against terror. The paper points to the need to go beyond the conception of Islam as transhistorical essence based on the hermeneutics of the text to a living experience of a modern constitutional state.

## **Conceiving 'Development': Aga Khan III and Some Aspects of an Islamic Welfarism in Twentieth Century South Asia**

Soumen Mukherjee, Department of History, SAI, University of Heidelberg

The role of religion in conceiving human welfare, and making and executing policies ensuring an aspired degree of development in the context of colonial and post-colonial South Asia still remains by and large unexplored. The present paper seeks to attenuate this lacuna by looking at a historical example: the politico-religious career of Aga Khan III Sultan Muhammad Shah (1877-1957), spiritual leader of the Khoja Ismailis and prominent Muslim political personality in South Asia. Being the spiritual head of a sub-sect not considered by the bulk of the Muslims — both Sunnis and Ithna Ashariya Shias — to be one of them, the greatest challenge that he faced in his political career was probably forging a linkage with the broader Muslim *qaum* of South Asia along political lines without diluting some of the crucial religious particularities of his own sub-sect (e.g. maintenance of his own religious position). Much of this linkage could become possible thanks primarily to his astute socio-political visions that conceived of a picture broad enough to accommodate the general and particular socio-political and economic issues assertively claimed to be affecting almost all strands of South Asia's Muslim society. A politics of compromise with a tacit belief in the benevolence of British rule became the hallmark of this vision; at the level of communication, the idea of 'transition' (affecting other communities in South Asia as well) — first voiced in 1918 — became its rhetoric. With due reference to the cognitive (internal) and contextual (external) realms, the paper deconstructs Aga Khan III's visions and choices with reference to what social scientists call 'path dependent analysis'. It assesses the role of the religious values (of *his* brand of Islam) in conceptualising (and indeed, finding solutions to) a whole spectrum of socio-political and economic problems and Horizontal Inequalities (HIs), and evolving a discourse of welfarism in late colonial South Asia and subsequently the newly independent countries after 1947. This will help shed light on the ideological and inspirational roots of much of the social policy framed under his successor, Aga Khan IV Prince Karim, and articulated through the wide network called the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

## **Between 'Religion' and 'Development': Changing Ideas of Philanthropy in Urban Ahmedabad**

Rubina Jasani, University of Warwick

This paper maps the historical shifts in the development discourse within the city of Ahmedabad from early nineteenth century to the contemporary period. It shows how notions of philanthropy and development within the city were shaped by the unique industrial, social and political context of the city, which were embedded within the religious beliefs of the ruling elites. This status-quo was challenged in the post-independence period where notions of development were introduced by Nehru. The agenda of the religious minorities was peripheral to this agenda. It was only after historical ruptures like the

earthquake of 2001 and the episode of communal violence of 2002, where the protection and well being of the religious minorities became a concern. What provided the Muslims this kind of public visibility? Who responded to these concerns? Who mobilised help for the community and who delivered this help? Did notions of development and philanthropy get re-fashioned or did Muslims have a parallel system of their own? Are some of the questions this paper will address.

While the historical context of the paper will be derived from a review of secondary literature, the ethnographic context comes from my fieldwork after the violence of 2002 in Gujarat.

**'The people know they need religion in order to develop': relationships between Hindu religious teachings, values and beliefs and concepts of development in Pune, India**

Tamsin Bradley, London Metropolitan University and Zara Ramsay, School of Oriental and African Studies

This paper is based on research carried out in urban and rural Pune and reveals that Hinduism has significant influence on how local people conceptualize and talk about development. However the ways in which religion intersects with views about (and the experience of) development vary with context (urban/rural), caste identity (lower/upper caste) and level of prosperity (middle class/poor). The nature of people's daily lives and experiences shapes their interpretations of religion and these in turn influence their views about development. Religion is both a source of social and spiritual capital and a means to acquire or facilitate development. Ethnographic research was carried out inside slum settlements, in rural Pune and in three Hindu organizations popular with middle class devotees: The Ramakrishna Movement, Guru Mata Amritanandamayi and The Sadhu Vaswani Mission. Gender emerged as a central lens through which these organisations talked about their values. Gender also emerged as a significant factor shaping peoples perspectives on selected (and sometimes contentious) elements of the mainstream development discourse: wealth and poverty, and women's education. The paper reveals a stark disjuncture between the visions of development articulated by poor, low caste Hindus and middle-class devotees of the organisations studied. For both groups religion is a fundamental dimension of their lives through which they make sense of life and practically negotiate a better existence.

## **Religious Mobilizations for Development and Social Change: A Comparative Study of Dalit Movements in Punjab and Maharashtra, India**

Surinder S. Jodhka, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Based on qualitative fieldwork in Punjab and Maharashtra in India the paper looks at religious mobilizations among the two ex-untouchable/ Dalit communities, the Ravidasi movement among the Chamars of doaba (Punjab) and Neo-Buddhist movement among the Mahars (Maharashtra). Both these movements emerged during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were made possible by the changes introduced by colonial rulers. Both these movements sprang from within the Dalit communities and they were both led by the newly educated and globally traveled individuals who, though had moved out of caste economy, had themselves experienced untouchability and humiliations that went with it.

Leadership of both these movements saw the source of their humiliating existence in the dominant religious ideology. However, while they criticized Hinduism, they did not reject, or even seriously criticize religion. They did not see religion merely as a source of spiritual quest. Religion structured social relations and cultural values of the Indian society. The religious movements they initiated were to give them a sense of autonomy and a source of dignified self representation. Over the last more than fifty years, they have not only emerged as autonomous religious communities but have also set-up a series of institutions for education, health and entrepreneurial support to enable social change and development of the members of their communities.

## **The Cry for Citizenship: Issues of Rehabilitation and Justice among Muslim Victims of Mumbai and Ahmedabad**

Dipankar Gupta, Jawaharlal Nehru University

While Muslims were targeted by Hindu sectarians in both Mumbai and Ahmedabad, the reparations and rehabilitation involved after the violence took different trajectories. This reflects the context and the history of the place. By situating the history of the place it is possible to narrow down the features that immediately affect the outcomes of events as well as indicate their possible causes and precipitating factors. The history of the place brackets away the longue duree and focuses instead on the immediate give and take of antagonistic positions and their attendant rationales.

It is the history of the place that can help interpret why Muslim victims of Mumbai and Ahmedabad coped differently after the carnage, and why the kind of civic assistance and community help that came up also varied widely between the two cities. There is a certain sequence of events that usually follows the immediate aftermaths of such motivated attacks where rescue and refugee operations are most needed. But if one were to stay with the victims after the worst is over, one will find that the cry for justice still

remains. The victims of ethnicity believe that their status as citizens had been violated and this can only be recompensed once the issue of justice is addressed. Only then a “new normal” can be confidently contemplated where inter-faith tensions and suspicions can be put aside. The cry for citizenship rights should not be ignored. The victims of ethnic carnages want to be citizens again.

### **Religion and Education in South Asia: Opposing forces or kindred directives?**

Shailaja Fennell, University of Cambridge

The tendency to present religious study and formal education as oppositional approaches to the provision of teaching and the acquisition of knowledge has created a strong, even often exaggerated, binary between these two types of schooling. This oppositional stance is also evident in the very provision of schooling, where state education is often regarded as coterminous with secular education and community or informal education is identified with religious learning.

These oppositional tendencies evident in both in pedagogy and in provision are becoming increasingly befuddled in South Asia, as some state educational systems, at both national and sub-national level, have embraced religious principles (e.g., current education policy in Pakistan as well as educational provision in right-wing Hindu controlled states in India) while new private providers appear to be much more uncertain about the requirements or advantages of ensure a separation between religious and secular considerations of education provision. This current juncture in educational curriculum as well as in the very delivery of educational system provides a timely moment to address the question of whether religion and education should be regarded as forces that operate at the extreme ends of tradition and modernity in twenty-first century South Asia.

This paper examines this important question by looking at both public/state and private/community schools in India and Pakistan and map out their specific modes of pedagogy and provision of education. These will then be located within the context of local social structures, national discourses and global agendas to ascertain the relationship between religion and education within the development trajectory of these regions. Evidence will be provided from school level studies, national educational documents and international perspectives on this relationship between religion and education. The focus of the paper will be to understand why development thinking continues to hold the view that these institutions are oppositional. It raises the possibility that in the current context, there is considerable overlap between religious and educational agendas, and draws out the implications of such kindred objectives for future development agendas in South Asia.

## **Marker of identity: religious political parties and welfare work — the case of Jama'at-i-Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh**

Masooda Bano, University of Oxford

Religious political parties have been labelled the 'orphans' of political philosophy. Despite the current debates on multiculturalism in most western countries, the continued presence of religion within the public sphere in most developing countries, and the shift of Islamic groups in many Muslim countries towards electoral politics, little attention has been paid to understanding organized religious groups. One of the distinctive characteristics of religious political parties is that many of them invest heavily in social welfare work. This paper attempts to understand an important aspect of the reality of religious political parties in South Asia through study of their welfare programmes.

Looking at the case of Jamaat-i-Islami and its welfare activities in Pakistan and Bangladesh this paper, addresses three key questions: why do religious parties engage in welfare work, what enables them to finance and deliver welfare work, and is the focus of these activities driven by religious precepts or the needs of the local context? Analysis of these questions helps develop a wider understanding of what shapes the agenda of religious political parties, how they are organized and whether they mould religious ideology to the realities of particular contexts.

The paper argues that religious parties present a much more complex phenomenon than recognized by political theorists and are best viewed as 'membership groups' that compete with all other membership groups for citizens' loyalty and resources. It shows that the Jamaat undertakes welfare work because it is critical to its identity as a religious party. It is not voters but party members that a leader has to convince and keep mobilized through welfare work, justified by the great emphasis on social justice in all religions, including Islam. Undertaking welfare work, however, requires a very organized party structure. This means that not all religious parties are able to maintain big welfare programmes: it is only the well-organized religious parties that are able to make such sustained investment.

On a development policy level, the paper illustrates the potential these parties provide for becoming partners in development, due to their extensive networks of voluntary organizations, which have potential to be more cost-effective than regular NGOs as they rely on managers from within the party rather than paid professionals.