Department of Political and Social Sciences

How Caste Works:

Forging New Identities in a Punjabi Ex-Untouchable Community in Catalonia, Spain

Kathryn Lum

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of
Doctor of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute

Florence, October 2011

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Examining Board:

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnographic study of an ex-untouchable group from the Punjab region of India known as the Ravidassias. Its aim is twofold: on the one hand to elucidate the mechanisms of caste in social life and in particular, to analyse how ex-untouchables negotiate caste stigma, and on the other, to explore the caste, gender, and youth dimensions of the Ravidassia community in Catalonia, Spain. This study is comparative in nature, discussing caste, the management of caste stigma, and the Ravidassia sociocultural/religious movement in the Punjab, India and Catalonia, Spain. The Ravidassia community is an interesting case study for the study of caste, because the Ravidassias are the most important former untouchable group demographically in both the Punjab and in the diaspora. They have also become in the postwar period one of India´s most economically and socially assertive ´Scheduled Caste´ or SC caste groups, an assertion which is articulated symbolically in the field of religion. The Ravidassias are thus an excellent example of a transnational group whose diaspora status is playing a key role in changing the caste status quo in their native Punjab. In focusing on the individual experience of caste stigma, this thesis seeks to highlight an aspect of caste discrimination that is frequently overlooked in debates on ´casteism´, and to reveal how Dalits who are now educated and middle-class still struggle with the legacy of untouchability. During the course of my research, a significant portion of the global Ravidassia community, including the Spanish Ravidassia community, chose to break with Sikhism and form a completely autonomous religious identity. I thus had the privilege to witness a profound identity shift on the part of my interviewees which has seen new forms of caste pride emerge that would have been unthinkable only a generation ago. This ethnographic study reveals that while caste prejudice/stigma has not diminished with migration, caste as institution and social organisation has assumed new forms that can be strategically used by those who were once completely crushed by the caste system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Jaap Dronkers for his advice and direction throughout the writing of my thesis; my parents for their constant support; Dr. Eleanor Nesbitt for serving as a mentor in the field of India Studies; Dr. Staffan Lindberg for his vital early encouragement and help as I embarked on the path of India studies; Dr. Roger Ballard for his very helpful feedback; Dr. Sucha Singh Gill and Dr. Kanwaljit Gill my wonderful host family in Patiala who guided me on my first fieldwork trip and shared so much knowledge with me; Mrs. Mahal of Malmo, Sweden for so generously giving me her time to teach me Punjabi; Mr. Mahal of Malmo, Sweden for first introducing me to the study of Sikhism; Mr. and Mrs. Saroa, my superb hosts in Jallandher from whom I learned immeasurably; Mr. and Mrs. Nagi and their three children, my dear host family in Amritsar, the Ravidassia community in Barcelona for so warmly welcoming me into their fold, with special thanks to Vijay Kumar and Sant Kumar for their invaluable help and friendship; Gert Cornelissen for being an excellent colleague during my writing-up in Barcelona, and finally my interviewees in India, with special thanks to Harjeet Kaur.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Ruth and Ken Lum, who have supported me throughout every step of my thesis and were a strong source of moral support in both the fieldwork and writing phase

"My final words of advice to you are educate, agitate and organize; have faith in yourself. With justice on our side I do not see how we can lose our battle. The battle to me is a matter of joy. The battle is in the fullest sense spiritual. There is nothing material or social in it. For ours is a battle not for wealth or for power. It is battle for freedom. It is the battle of reclamation of human personality." B. R. Ambedkar

INTRODUCTION:

When one thinks of India, millenarian spiritual traditions, riotous colour and extreme poverty often come to mind. Its age-old caste system is not far behind, although most people have only vague ideas of how this system works in practice, or what life is like for those at the very bottom of the caste hierarchy. A number of scholars, both Indian and European, have attempted to categorise, order and make sense of the Indian caste system. They have sought to explain its fundamental underlying characteristics, how it has evolved, and the role it plays in maintaining Indian society, producing various theories of caste. Others have examined the multiple manifestations of what is known in Indian English as ´casteism´, or caste discrimination, in both historical and contemporary India. However, what is often lacking in the scholarly literature is a focus on the *experiential* aspects of caste, that is, how caste is lived and negotiated in everyday life, particularly outside of India. In addition, there are few ethnographic accounts of how Dalit (formerly untouchable) Indians experience and cope with a devalued social identity-in short, how they deal with caste *stigma*. Reading about caste atrocities does not tell us how individual Dalits make sense of caste discrimination and construct a positive caste identity despite oppressive caste stigma. This study aims to redress these gaps by studying both the individual, psychological consequences of caste stigma, and the strategies that are employed to negotiate it, as well as the community level response to caste discrimination, using a North Indian Dalit group with a significant percentage of overseas migrants as my case study. I thus will treat both the micro and macro aspects of caste identity in parallel, for in India, the ´self´ is very much collective, and the problem of caste demands fundamentally collective solutions. A former untouchable community known as the Ravidassias, from the Punjab state of India, will serve as the prism through which the dynamics of caste, caste stigma, and caste based religion are analysed and explored. The Ravidassia experience(s) of caste will be studied principally in the diaspora context of Catalonia, Spain, with the Punjab/India serving as a point of reference as the homeland and ´caste centre´, for its caste politics affects the global Indian disaspora. Diaspora-homeland links among the Indian diaspora in general, and the Ravidassia diaspora in particular, are multiple and strong

especially in the field of religion. Spain has been selected as the main site of fieldwork due to its research interest on a number of fronts. As a country that until 1977 was governed by a Catholic fascist dictatorship that resulted in a closed society and economy, it is a relatively new immigration destination; traditionally, Spain has been a source of emigrants. Within the recent phenomenon of mass immigration to Spain, Indian immigration represents an even newer trend. Spain thus offers the possibility of studying a first-generation migrant community and the opportunity to observe how caste persists or changes, along with how religion is used in combating caste discrimination, all in a context of recent settlement. Secondly, unlike the UK, Spain has no important historical ties with India; the cultural and political ties between Spain and South Asia in general have been limited, although this is now changing with India´s newfound economic growth. Spain has traditionally focused on cultivating ties with its former colonies in Latin America, and more recently with the Maghreb region in North Africa; there exists little public policy or media debate on India or its diaspora, ironically because Indians are not seen to be a "problematic" or "conflictual" community. Punjabis in Spain are thus confronted with a society and political class that is generally unfamiliar with Indian culture, and particularly with the institution of caste. Studying caste in Spain can furthermore help us answer the question of whether the phenomenon of institutionalised caste segregation (reflected in separate places of worship for different caste groups) observed in the UK is unique, or rather a Punjabi cultural pattern that is repeated across the diaspora. Since the Indian diaspora in the UK is the largest, most established, and politically/culturally active in Europe, it can serve as a reference point with regards to caste patterns in the broader European diaspora. Thirdly, studying the phenomenon of Punjabi migration in non-Anglophone countries represents a relatively new direction in academic research, although this is rapidly changing as scholars turn their attention to Indians in countries across Europe where the Indian presence is a novelty. Whilst an extensive scholarly literature has been built up on Punjabi communities settled in Canada, the US, and the UK, relatively little is known about the characteristics and particularly the caste profiles of Punjabi diasporas in non-English speaking countries. This is particulary true of Southern Europe. While in recent years, an increasing number of researchers have started to study the Indian population in Italy (the largest in continental Europe), the vast majority of sociological/anthropological research in Spain has been devoted to the study of the Roma (Gypsies), Muslim immigrants (particularly Moroccans), and Latin Americans. Indians, yet alone Punjabi Sikhs, rarely make the news, and are invisible in public debates on immigration and integration, despite their growing numbers. A Catalan-based study can help remedy the scarcity of Spanish scholarship on the Indian diaspora within its borders. Finally, in Spain the Indian population is concentrated almost exclusively in the

autonomous Spanish region of Catalonia, which meant that fieldwork could be carried out efficiently in one part of the country. The Ravidassias were selected as the focus of my study due to the fact that they are the largest Dalit community in the Spanish diaspora. Indeed, in Spain there are very few Dalits from other castes- the number of Valmikis, another important Punjabi Dalit community, is extremely small. Thus, when speaking of Punjabi Dalits in Spain, one is in practice referring to the Ravidassias.

Yet why focus on caste? Indeed, according to conservative Indians, particularly Hindu nationalists[1], caste does not exist. In the US, Hindu nationalists actively sought to suppress references to the caste system in the infamous California textbook controversy, attempting to promote a section on Hinduism devoid of the term Dalit. The Texas-based Vedic Foundation insisted that all references to caste be in the past tense, "since it is no longer a reality" (All Indian Christian Council, 1999). When the caste system was mentioned, Hindu nationalist foundations in the US submitted briefs aimed at watering down the language employed and "santitising" its most egregarious aspects, proposing amendments that suggested that the caste system was a largely innocuous system, removing references to the actual status of the untouchables in this system. Thus a reference to the untouchables occupying the lowest rung of the caste system was replaced with: "During the Vedic times, people were divided into different social groups (varnas) based on their capacity to undertake a particular profession" (All Indian Christian Council, 1999). [2]However, it is not only Hindu nationalist or *Hindutva* activists who oppose efforts to highlight the injustices of the caste system. A significant number of typically upper caste Indians consistently downplay the issue of caste, arguing that it is increasingly irrelevant, especially in India´s teeming metropolitan cities, or among the educated middle-class, the only exception they acknowledge being the domain of marriage. Conservative Sikhs are also recluctant to admit that caste is a serious problem within the Sikh community, preferring to repeat the standard line of "there is no caste in Sikhism" or "our Gurus preached against caste", in order to associate caste and casteism with Hindusim and distinguish Sikhism from its´ purportedly more caste-ridden peer. The following example, from pre-fieldwork preparation for my Masters degree, can serve to illustrate a common attitude within the Sikh community in the diaspora. When I first embarked on

[1] Hindu nationalists constitute both a political and cultural movement that seeks to privilege Hindu interests in India (those of the upper castes), define India as a Hindu nation, and views Indian Muslims as in internal ´fifth columm´. Its political voice is the BJP party, which has governed at the both the national and state levels.

[2] For full details of the website please see bibliography

my study of the Punjabi community, and was learning Punjabi in the home of a Jat (the dominant caste in Punjabi society) Sikh family in Malmo, Sweden, I one day enquired about caste within the local Sikh temple, at a time in which my knowledge of caste was in its infancy. My host and language teacher rather curtly replied that caste was not an issue, that all Sikhs “were one”. It was only once I was in India that I learned of the deep caste divisions and resentments that crisscross Punjabi society, and affect all caste groups. In journalistic and even in some academic articles, particularly of the Punjabi diaspora outside of the UK, the issue of caste is commonly neglected, and the ´Sikh community´ is described as if caste divisions were non existent, and all Sikhs formed a united, harmonious whole. Furthermore, many expect that in the diaspora, caste soon loses its importance and is eventually no longer relevant in a new society that does not recognise caste. At the very least, they assume that with the second generation, caste starts to die out. During the course of my research, I often faced comments such as, “but surely caste cannot survive beyond the first generation!” and others that evoked disbelief that such a practice could endure. Yet it is precisely for all of these reasons that it is critically important to study caste, for in addition to socially ordering Indian society, caste is a basic cognitive category, akin to gender or race. This means that, just as all individuals are inescapably gendered by their society, so too are all Indians forcibly ´casted´ by Indian culture. Caste is thus a vital part of the ´cultural baggage´ that accompanies Punjabi migrants to their various destinations abroad. My research, and that of other scholars who work on caste, suggests that centuries-old prejudices are proving remarkably resistant to the forces of both modernisation and migration. The words of B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of modern India´s Dalit movement and the chief drafter of India´s constitution, continue to hold true today, both in India and in the diaspora. Ambedkar described casteism as a state of mind, akin to a pernicious disease that infects and debilitates the entire social fabric in a speech to the Bombay Presidency Mahar Conference in 1936:

“Caste is a state of mind. Caste is a disease of the mind. The teachings of the Hindu religion are the root cause of this disease. We practice casteism and we observe untouchability because we are enjoined to do so by the Hindu religion. A bitter thing cannot be made sweet. The taste of anything can be changed. But poison cannot be changed into nectar” (Ambedkar: 1936).

The ´casted mind´ cuts across class, religions and urban/rural distinctions; it permeates daily life, both consciously and unconsciously. Although highly visible in politics due to the existence of caste-based parties and quota-based caste politics, it is in daily social contexts that caste is felt for the vast majority of Indians. As former untouchables start to breach educational barriers, and enter into professions that were previously closed to them, caste conflict, always present, is intensifying. A previously disenfranchised group has now reached the point where they represent competition for scarce job posts and university places. An illustrative case of contemporary caste conflict is provided by the prestigious national medical school AIIMS, located in Delhi. The experiences there of Scheduled Caste or SC students (current Indian nomenclature used to refer to former untouchables), show that casteism, far from declining with modernity, has gained new and often violent force as it seeks to maintain centuries long privileges for the upper castes. The following personal account exemplifies the harassment and abuse SC students face at the elite institution:

"I had been to school at the Navodaya Vidyalaya for seven years, and I knew about casteism from my experience there, but it was nothing compared to AIIMS. In school, I used to think I wouldn't have to go through the same humiliations if I were at a big institution. I came to the biggest of them all, but in vain. At least we would eat together at Navodaya….I have been reminded of my "low" status every moment I have been here. I was the only "Category" student in my wing. One day, I found this on my door: "Nobody likes you here. F**k off." On another day: "Everybody can use the carom board, but not Room No 45." People would bang and kick at my door at all hours, disappearing by the time I opened it. They tried their best to make me leave, but I told myself I wouldn't, no matter what. I gradually isolated myself from them, and started interacting only with others from the "Category"….It is true that not all General Category (upper caste) students are casteist, but caste cuts through everything at AIIMS. They won't talk to us. We have no representation in the students' union this year. They won't let us play cricket; in a basket ball match, they won't pass us the ball once. The hatred was out in the open in 2003, during Pulse (AIIMS' annual medical college festival). They beat up a Dalit student so badly that it was a miracle he survived…." (Singh, 2007).

The ´casted mind´ also travels, and despite expectations to the contrary, has transplanted itself in faraway lands. In the UK, the European country with the largest Indian diaspora, numbering approximately one million, caste consciousness continues to thrive- even amongst the second and third generation. While perhaps more sheltered from the culture-wide impact of caste that exists in India, former untouchable diaspora youth encounter casteism in social settings, whether at

school or later on at university, particularly if they live in neighborhoods with a large and diverse Indian population:

"People with a strong religious feeling always want to know what caste you are. My parents encouraged me to conceal my background, but I felt inferior to children from other castes" (BBC, 2009)

"I wasn´t aware that this caste thing existed in my community. It meant nothing to me until I went to university, and then suddenly my caste was more important than the degree I was doing and the person I was. It wasn´t what are you doing? What sort of person are you? It was what caste are you and then I´ll decide if I want to be friends with you" (Mahtani 2003: 13).

In the UK, the influence of caste is often dismissed, particularly among community leaders and official spokespersons, and there exists a great deal of reluctance to discuss the issue openly. The Hindu Forum of Britain officially denies that caste exists in the UK (BBC, 2009). In a similar vein, the Indian government has consistently opposed attempts at the international level to include caste as a form of racism. This contrast between official narratives and the lived reality of caste is a recurring theme that begs the question: why attempt to minimise the importance of caste? Why is caste seen to be a ´disruptive´ issue? I became interested in exploring the issue of caste quite by accident. I first went to the Punjab for my Masters on a quest to understand gender ideologies among young, unmarried women. My focus was on gender, and despite having read extensively on the history of the Punjab and of the Sikh faith, this literature spoke of caste only in a cursory and non-ethnographic fashion. I knew ´of´ caste, but not much about it in practice. During my fieldwork, in my interviews with young women, I noticed that references to caste, not only in the context of marriage partners, but also with reference to quotas in higher education, were universal. It soon emerged that young Punjabi women not only faced gendered pressures, but also caste-based pressures- and that their gender ideologies were shaped by their caste position. I also noticed that most of my interviewees were from upper or intermediate caste groups; very few were Scheduled Caste. My interest in caste might have been passing, were it not for the reactions I received when I mentioned that I was exploring the possibility of studying a Dalit caste group for my PhD. In Chandigarh, when I asked a family I knew if they could take me to a Ravidassia (Dalit) temple, they promptly asked me, "Why do you want to go there?" This was the same family who had proudly and willingly accompanied me to a variety of Sikh temples, and

enthusiastically discussed their Sikh faith with me. When I shared my budding interest with a professor of Punjabi studies, he responded by making clear that he felt that studying such a "marginal" group was a waste of time, and advised me to devote my attention to a more "important" subject. Such reactions ironically only encouraged me to further explore the thorny issue of caste. The present ethnography was thus born out of my desire to bring to light an area of study that many would prefer remain shrouded in silence.

Research Questions

This study takes as its starting point the social significance of caste, and asks the following questions: 1) How does caste ´work´ and how is caste stigma negotiated on the part of Dalits? This question aims to explore the mechanisms of caste in social life on a micro (personal) level. Since Dalits suffer from caste stigma, while the upper castes benefit from it, although the views of the upper castes will also be dicussed, my focus shall be on those who suffer most from the caste system. 2) How has the Ravidassia community collectively responded to caste discrimination, and why has the community chosen a religious movement in their struggle against casteism? 3) Why does caste persist in the Spanish diaspora and does it change as it is transplanted into a new environment? The objectives of this study are thus twofold: to provide greater insight into the micro functioning of caste by paying particular attention to caste stigma, and to offer an analysis of the macro religious movement of the Ravidassia community in both historical context and the present, linking the Punjabi motherland with the Spanish diaspora. The third question seeks to address the broader issue of how the ancient institution of caste is like a resilient chameleon, adept at adopting new forms in modern and postmodern times. Through the case study of a particular Dalit community and its trajectory in the diaspora, with a special focus on the experiences of its youth, my aim is to highlight a contemporary struggle for social equality that is finding its voice through new formulations of caste and religious identity.

Who are the Punjabi Ravidassia Chamars?

Many low caste groups across India are known by more than one name, often due to attempts by Dalits to improve their social status by changing their collective designation. The Ravidassias are an example of this. ´Ravidassia´ is the contemporary, ´politically correct´ term applied to the caste group commonly and historically known as Chamar. ´Chamar´ is the colloquial caste term

that is most often used in daily life, both on the part of Chamars themselves, as well by other Punjabis. Throughout my thesis, I will use both terms interchangeably, taking my cue from members of the Ravidassia community, who although usually using the term Chamar when describing themselves, often refer to Ravidassia when describing community affairs. The Chamars are an ex-touchable caste group found across North India, whose historical occupation was leather tanning/processing and trading in leather goods. The Chamars are one of the many castes that make up the Scheduled Castes category (the group of formerly untouchable castes that are entitled to government reservations), and are known by different names depending upon the state in which they live. The term Chamar is derived from the Sanskrit word charmakara, meaning leather worker (KS Singh 1993: 301). Despite their association with leather, the Chamars of the Punjab have also historically been agricultural labourers, working in the fields of Jat upper caste landowners. The religion of the Chamars varies; although the majority are ´Hindu´, in the sense that they have not formally converted to another religion, in the north Indian state of the Punjab, Chamars have adopted en masse Sikhism (the dominant religion in the state), and more recently, some have turned to Christianity. The Punjabi Chamars who embraced Sikhism are known as Ravidassia Sikhs in honour of the fifthteenth century poet saint Ravidass, a Chamar from Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, who has become their ´patron saint´ and community religious symbol. The religious poetry or *bani* of Guru Ravidass is included in the Sikh holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which has played a major role in drawing Chamars into the Sikh fold. In the Punjab, the Chamars constitute the most powerful and influential Dalit or SC caste, thanks to their high literacy level and growing economic prosperity. Their economic strength can be traced to colonial rule in the Punjab, when the British established a cantonment in the city of Jalandhar. The British demand for leather boots for their soldiers led to increased economic opportunities and social mobility for the Chamars of the region (S.S. Jodhka, 2009). They were also recruited in Chamar regiments into the Indian British Army. The Chamars are also significant due to their demographic weight. The Punjab is unique in having the highest proportion of Scheduled Castes of all Indian states- 28.9% of the Punjabi population was Scheduled Caste according to the 2001 census, against a national average of 16%. This proportion is higher in certain regions of the Punjab, such as the Doaba region, where in some districts it reaches 40%. According to the 2001 census, Chamars form 41% of the total SC population and it is estimated that they constitute 11% of the overall population of the Punjab. Unlike other Punjabi SC castes, Chamars, particularly from the more advanced Doaba region, have emigrated abroad in large numbers, settling primarily in the UK, the US and Canada. With the tightening of immigration policies in these countries, continental Europe emerged as a new migration

destination for both Chamars and other Punjabis. Beginning in the 1980´s, Ravidassia Chamars began to settle in the Catalonia region of Spain. This case study of the Ravidassia Chamars in Spain reveals that caste and religious identity, far from being static, is constantly evolving and being reformulated at both the individual and collective level. The Ravidassia Chamars are a leading example of how a caste-based religious identity can be used to mobilise and galvanise an oppressed community (although the emphasis on religion also brings fracture and division). Whether in the Punjab or Spain, Ravidassia Chamars are increasingly challenging and fighting back against the ´casted mind´ through the development of an autonomous religious identity. Subjected to intense religious discrimination for centuries, they are transforming the very tool used to oppress and enslave them into a collective resource for psychological empowerment. Thus, while in the West social groups disenfranchised and marginalised by religion tend to abandon institutionalised religion altogether, in India, the overwhelming importance of religion has meant that the Ravidassia movement has been religiously inspired and motivated. Unlike other historically persecuted caste groups in India, many of whom have pursued a strategy of sanskritisation (imitating those higher in the caste hierarchy), in order to improve their social status, the Ravidassia Chamars have increasingly elected not to accommodate themselves within dominant religious traditions. The Spanish Ravidassias exemplify a strategy of political, psychological and social assertion through the creation of their own caste-based religion.


INDIA
States and Union Territories
N
JAMMU & KASHMIR
Srinagar
HIMACHAL PRADESH
Shimla
Chandigarh
PUNJAB
UTTARANCHAL
Dehradun
DELHI
HARYANA
PAKISTAN
CHINA (TIBET)
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
NEPAL
SIKKIM
Gangtok
BHUTAN
Itanagar
UTTAR PRADESH
RAJASTHAN
Jaipur
Lucknow
Patna
BIHAR
ASSAM
Dispur
NAGALAND
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Map not to Scale

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Techniques of Data Collection:

In answering my research questions, I have adopted an anthropological research approach and methodology. The complex and sensitive nature of my subject matter has meant that collecting statistics or distributing questionnaires would yield limited, incomplete or only superficial data. Statistics on caste can give us a useful global snapshot of the overall educational and economic position of Dalits, but we do not learn *how* Dalits subjectively experience caste discrimination and construct their caste identities, nor *why* casteism persists despite being legally banned over a generation ago, or why it continues to thrive in the diaspora. Statistics furthermore fail to capture the social aspects of caste discrimation, such as the widespread stigma that continues to affect Dalits. In order to truly understand the inner workings of caste, and be able to access the mental life worlds of the people I was studying, an anthropological research methodology was necessary. Ethnography allows one to produce "thick description" (Geertz 1973), which in turn permits the reader to genuinuely enter into the multifarious world of caste. The anthropological approach is qualitative in nature, based on two key research tools: in-depth personal interviews, carried out over an extended period of time, and participant observation in the field. Carrying out in-depth interviews and performing participant observation in two different field sites- the Punjab, India and Catalonia, Spain, has enabled me to collect extensive data that reveals the many subtleties and contradictions of caste in social life as well as individually- subtleties and contradictions that are often difficult if not impossible to capture through survey data. Throughout my research, in addition to an anthropological perspective, I have also been guided by two key assumptions: 1) That caste is a fundamental social and cognitive category that traverses all of Indian society and religions and 2) That it is important to study the effects of caste, from the ´bottom up´, that is, first and foremost from the perspective of those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. To take the margins and place them at the centre, as opposed to simply having a section: ´Dalit Experiences´. A supplementary aim of my research is thus to expand the range of voices that are heard in academia and include the voices of the long silenced and invisible Dalit community (particularly in the West). I thus situate my research within the critical ethnographic tradition, which (like feminist scholarship) seeks from the perspective of those below, to challenge and destabalise the status quo. Following the critical pedagogue Paulo Freire, I take the Ravidassia "cultural universe" as my point of departure (Freire 1973). More broadly, I agree with the epistemological

approach taken by the anthropologist Davies (2008: 6), who argues for a "critical realism" that takes into account postmodernist perspectives while avoiding its claims about the impossibility of an independent social reality (all reality is socially constructed according to postmodernists), as well as its extreme relativism (all perspectives are of equal value). In the critical realist perspective, the aim of research is to increase our understanding of social reality, a reality that is knowable, and which does not simply exist in the researcher´s mind (Davies 2008: 6). Critical realism seeks to bridge the dichotomy between positivism and interpretivist positions by rejecting the myth of value-free research and stressing reflexivity, without abandoning the goal of offering analysis and explanations that increase our knowledge of society and enable us to ´see´ the world better (Davies 2008: 18). Research that is critical, socially engaged, power-sensitive and reflexive- this is my goal and explains my motive in studying a marginalised social group.

Data Collection: Interviews and Participant Observation

Anthropological fieldwork was carried out in two phases: the first phase occurred over a period of three months on the campus of Lovely Professional University in the city of Jalandhar, Punjab (January- April 2009). The second phase was carried out in Catalonia, Spain over a total period of twelve months (a two-month exploratory period of fieldwork took place in the summer of 2008), principally in Barcelona but with regular visits to families living in other Catalan cities. A greater amount of time was spent in Spain, since my main focus was on the Ravidassias in the Spanish diaspora, my Indian data serving to help me better understand caste politics and evolution of the community in Barcelona. A total of thirty-one interviews were carried out in the Punjab, with an almost equal gender balance: sixteen interviews with women and fifteen with men. In Catalonia, interviews with twenty-five community members were carried out, with a preponderance of male interviewees, reflecting the male majority within the community: eighteen interviews with men and seven with women. Although formally I had a smaller sample in Spain, since the majority of interviews carried out were repeat interviews, I conducted many more interviews over the course of my fieldwork in Catalonia. In both India and Spain, most interviews were semi-structured in nature, conducted with an interview guide. The motive behind holding semi-structured as opposed to structured or unstructured interviews was to have a clear idea of the questions I wanted to ask, yet allow at the same time sufficient flexibility to focus more on certain questions or eliminate others depending upon the interviewee in question (my interview guides are included in the appendix). The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the interviewee feels guided

during the interview, and the potential for rambling and deviations off-topic is reduced. The vast majority of interviews were held on a one-to-one basis, in order to both protect interviewees´ privacy and build trust and rapport between the interviewee and myself. In Spain, in practice, several interviews were not strictly one-one-one, since they they often took place in family homes, during which other family members were present, particularly spouses. However, given the nature of Punjabi family life, this was inevitable, and far from being perceived as an infringement of privacy, Punjabis preferred to be interviewed in the comfort of their own homes with other family members present. During the process of writing up, some follow-up interviews were conducted over the phone in order to clarify certain points that were unclear in interview transcripts, primarily with those Ravidassias living outside of Barcelona.

Interviews generally lasted at least one hour, with most lasting two to three hours. With the exception of one interview in Spain, all interviews were transcribed by hand. This was done primarily to respect the cultural sensitivities of my interviewees- most of whom would have felt uncomfortable and intimidated had I used a tape recorder, and correspondingly have shared less information. Given that I was discussing a sensitive social topic, I did not want to use an instrusive instrument that could impair interviewer-interviewee trust. Thus although this meant the actual process of interviewing was more tiring due to constant writing, a notebook was far less conspicuous and aroused less suspicion than a tape recorder. I wanted my interviewees to feel at ease- indeed my aim was for the interview to be as informal and relaxed as possible. Interviews were carried out in a variety of locations, depending upon my field location. In India, interviews took place either at the individual desk of teachers, or in various locations on campus in the case of students. In Spain, interviews were mostly carried out in family homes, or in the gurudwara (Sikh temple). Carrying out interviews in the gurudwara brought both advantages and disadvantages. As a ´modest´ public space, the gurudwara was useful in allowing me to interview young unmarried men (married men could invite me to their homes). However, due to the fact that the gurudwara also served as a temporary shelter for recent male arrivals, complete privacy could not be assured. To remedy this disadvantage, I increasingly used the doctoral researchers´ office at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona in order to carry out interviews with unmarried men. In India, all interviews took place in English and language was not a barrier due to English language fluency on campus. In Spain, interviews were conducted in either Spanish or English (with a majority in Spanish), depending upon the preferences of my interviewee. One difficulty encountered in my fieldwork in Spain was the linguistic barrier. Women and recent arrivals (as well as more settled Ravidassias), often did not speak adequate English or Spanish,

which meant that they were less accessible to interview. Although it was not difficult to find an interpreter within the community, I found that interviews with interpreters did not flow as well as those that were performed without an intermediary, and resulted in less extensive and articulate information. Three of my Spanish interviews had an interpreter present.

In both India and Spain, interviewees were found using the snowball sampling technique. Initial contacts were used to find other interviewees, who in turn introduced me to further interviewees. The snowball sampling technique is useful where the the size of one´s sample is small and not easily accessible. The Ravidassias, as a minority within a minority, constitute a very small sample group in Spain. Although snowball sampling can lead to the danger of a biased or skewed sample, this problem was overcome by asking my initial contacts to refer me to a broad cross-section of the community, and not simply to community elders, seen as ´experts´. A second difficulty with snowball sampling- the risk that certain contacts become resistant and refuse to cooperate with the researcher further down the line, was overcome by ensuring that I had a number of reliable contacts, in order to avoid excessive dependency on any one contact. The only significant difference between my Indian and Spanish samples concerns their caste and religious profile. In India, I interviewed individuals from a variety of caste groups, both upper and lower caste, Hindu and Sikh, along with two Christians and one Muslim. The relatively cosmopolitan nature of Lovely Professional University ensured a diverse interviewee sample. In Spain, in contrast, the vast majority of my interviewees were Ravidassia due to local caste politics. Had I also interviewed upper caste individuals, this would have significantly harmed the trust I had built up with members of the Ravidassia community. This situation was further exacerbated following the assassination in May 2009 of the spiritual leader of the Ravidassias in Vienna, which resulted in even deeper caste cleavages in Spain. Given the still relatively small nature of the Punjabi community in Catalonia, speaking with members of other castes was seen as a betrayal and supporting the ´other side´. Indeed, when I innocently informed one Ravidassia girl of an interview with a Punjabi boy who happened to be Jat, she promptly started to circulate a rumour within the gurudwara that I was socialising with Jats. In order to safeguard my reputation within the community, I decided to circumscribe all my interviews to Ravidassias as a result. A second difference between my Indian and Spanish samples concerns the number of repeat interviews carried out. Due to my longer fieldwork period in Catalonia, most of my interviews were repeated a number of times (an average of three times) with the same individuals over the

course of my fieldwork. Several interviews were also repeated in India, but with a smaller part of my interviewee sample due to the time constraints involved.

In addition to in-depth, semi-structured interviews, I also relied upon the research tool of participant observation in a variety of locations. The advantages of participant observation are manifold: they enable one to glean information from everyday interactions and practice without directly asking questions. Indeed, some of my most important insights regarding caste came from participation observation living with my host family in the Punjab, staying with Punjabi families in Catalonia, in informal conversations, and by observing interaction in the gurudwara in Barcelona (I regularly attended gurudwara religious services on Sundays during the duration of my fieldwork). My observations were ´stored´ and later recorded in a fieldwork notebook. Participant observation is a versatile research tool that allows the researcher to immerse her or himself in the field and place herself in the mental shoes of her interviewees. Critically, participant observation allows one to gauge if there is any gap between what is related in interviews and what actually happens in practice. It is an excellent tool for learning about the micropolitics of caste, and for picking up on aspects of caste that might never be directly discussed in an interview. Participation observation also allows one to discuss what has been observed during interviews, with often very fruitful results. To give one example, one of my interviewees in India had invited me to her family home. Before entering the living room, I noticed that my interviewee´s father hastily put away the matrimonial section of the newspaper before inviting me to sit down and proceeding to fire a series of questions at me. The girl in question had mentioned that she was hiding from her parents a relationship with a boy from another caste. Although she had alluded to marriage pressures, she had not disclosed that her parents had already initiated a search for a match for her. Later, when we were alone, I was able to mention the matrimonial section, which led to her revealing far more information than she had provided before- including information about her real caste, thus providing me with a concrete example of the phenomenon of ´passing´. My host family in the Punjab (Jallandhar) provided another illustrative example. One day, when discussing the difficulties inherent in applying for a passport in India without trying to bribe government officials, the wife of my host related how when questioned by a government civil servant about his caste, her husband had replied that he was Brahmin (when in fact he is a Ravidassia Chamar). This story, as related in ordinary everyday conversation, revealed an aspect of the micro-politics of caste that is often not admitted to in formal interviews: lying about one´s caste, particularly in the context of the emerging Ravidassia pride movement.

Finally, to supplement my interviews and daily participant observation, in India I also read the weekly matrimonial sections of the main English-language Indian dailies (Times of India, Hindustan Times), along with a Punjabi daily (The Tribune). I used the matrimonials as an informal barometer of caste attitudes in the Punjab, since matrimonial ads are an excellent indicator of the extent to which caste consciousness persists in Indian society. I also used the ads to get an idea of the main caste groups within each religion in the Punjab (Sikhism and Hinduism), and to learn about the gendered demands of the marriage market. The continued sparseness of ´caste no bar´ ads (the overwhelming majority of ads specify both caste and sub-caste), reveal that in the matrimonial field, values remain conservative and traditional caste rules continue to govern the selection of marriage partners.

Interviewing Philosophy

Traditional anthropological guidelines for carrying out fieldwork stressed maintaining distance between interviewer and interviewee, ´objectivity´, and ´scientific´ detachment. One was instructed never to become too close to ones´ "informants", and above all, certainly not to cultivate friendships or equal relationships with the "objects" of one´s research. Whilst being encouraged to immerse themselves in the culture in they are studying and to learn its language, anthropologists were simultaneously warned against ´going native´, or truly adopting the ´other´s´ categories as their own. Reflexivity was not encouraged, and the impact of the researcher´s presence in the field was seen as a problem to be overcome (Davies 2008: 11). Feminist and postmodernist anthropologists have since strongly critiqued this model of fieldwork for being androcentric and highly unequal in nature, and for narrowing viewing research subjects as mere sources of data, rather than full human beings. Reflecting the ´critical turn´ in anthropology initiated in the early 1970´s by the acknowledgement of the discipline of its complicity in colonialism, anthropological thought has consistently challenged the possibility of scientific objectivity in the field. The new anthropological approach has highlighted that we all necessarily view the field through a biased lens, but this bias, if we are critically aware of it (i.e self-reflexive), can be harnessed as a positive resource in our research. The self-critical wave in anthropology has also called attention to the unequal power dynamics that often exist between antropologists and the people they study. Feminist anthropologists in particular have encouraged anthropologists to become aware of and critically interrogate their ´positionality´, that is how their gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, age, civil status, nationality, disciplinary training, and

dis/ability can influence their interactions in the field and powerfully condition how they approach their research/subjects. This new awareness is commonly called ´reflexivity´ within anthropology. Thus, before entering and whilst in the field, anthropologists are now urged to reflect upon the biases and preonceptions produced by their positionality (particularly those resulting from being raised in the West), and including those generated by social conditions that have previously been invisible and unmarked in the academy (Whiteness and maleness have traditionally been unmarked and universal positions). Feminist anthropologists have stressed how power relations are always inherent in ethnographic fieldwork and argued that the ideology of objectivity served to mask how positivist research orientations are equally political. As the anthropologist Davies elaborates:

"They (feminist anthropologists) argue that the positivist goal of value freedom was really a disguised political position, one that supported existing power relationships, in particular patriarchal and class-based forms of oppression" (Davies 2008: 17).

The historian of science Haraway, in her landmark article "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", critiques both the "doctrine of objectivity" as well as radical constructivist critiques of science, arguing for a "feminist objectivity" that is grounded in what she terms situated knowledges- asserting that "only partial perspective promises objective vision…feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (Haraway 1988: 583).

Thus, what was once seen as negative and limiting within the discipline (the inevitable partiality of the anthropologist in the field), is now viewed as offering, in the words of Haraway, a "privileged partial perspective", a concept echoed by Mies, who speaks of a "conscious partiality" (Mies 1983: 117-139). By acknowledging rather than denying partiality, as positivist scientists do, the researcher and her/his research subjects can be seen as co-constructing the field. Feminist anthropologists have also been instrumental in developing new interviewing methodologies that do not mandate distancing and detachment. For example, the sociologist Oakley, in a direct challenge to the traditional injunction against ´over-rapport´, maintains on the

contrary that it is important for the interviewer to become involved, to answer as well as to ask questions, and to reject the traditional hierarchical paradigm of interviewing in favor of an egalitarian relationship and collaborative approach (Oakley 1981: 30-61). Particularly in the case of longitudinal in-depth interviewing, Oakley advocates "no intimacy without reciprocity", underlining her view that the interviewer must also be prepared to share about her/his life- and indeed that the quality of the interviews depends upon this capacity to reciprocate (Oakley 1981: 49). According to Oakley, traditional textbook instructions for conducting interviews have the following drawbacks: interviewees are seen as passive data banks; only the interviewer has the right to ask questions; and the interviewee must be ´socialised´ into answering properly. This approach does not work in practice and is an exploitative model of interviewing (Oakley 1981: 36-37).

My interview/fieldwork philosophy derives inspiration from feminist anthropological thought and seeks to foster an egalitarian working relationship in the field. I avoid the use of the terms informant or respondent, for I feel that it promotes an orthodox concept of the interviewee as a data-producing machine. I view interviewees as subjects rather than objects, and while not renouncing the authority that accrues to the status of anthropologist, view the interviewing process as dynamic, reciprocal and a two-way flow of information. I was repeatedly asked a number of questions, such as who funded me, why I choose the Ravidassia Chamars as the subject of my research, as well as questions about my nationality and my family. I answered all such questions and treated curiosity about me as part of the normal process of community members getting to know me. During interviews, my interviewees would also often ask me questions, which, rather than being avoided or brushed off (as recommended in traditional interviewing methodology), were answered when appropriate. Throughout my fieldwork, I have been acutely aware of the impact that my gender, nationality, age, class, mother tongue and above all my civil status has had on my interactions with interviewees and other members of the community. Language wise, I was aware in India of using a colonial language- English, as my main language of research, although it was not an issue for my interviewees. This linguistic power imbalance was mitigated in Spain, since most of my interviews were carried out in Spanish- a foreign language for both myself and my interviewees. As an unmarried female anthropologist, I have faced a number of restrictions and logistical problems in carrying out my research and this has made me very conscious of power relations in the field. Such power relations are not always straightforward and can be contradictory depending upon which elements

of one´s positionality are called into play. As a researcher from the global North, I am privileged when I travel to India due to my geographic origins, my nationality (I hold a British passport), my skin color (fair skin is a status symbol in India), education, economic status and mother tongue- English being a prestige language valued above all others in India. However, as a woman, who is furthermore unmarried, I am subject to discrimination and experience second-class status along with my female Indian peers. In particular, my mobility in India was greatly restricted. During my stay at Dera SachKhand Ballan in Jallhander district Punjab (akin to an ashram), I was not allowed to leave the dera premises alone or without permission, while visiting male researchers were free to come and go as they pleased. When soon after arriving I had tried to walk to the local village (just a five-minute walk away) to buy toothpaste, I was quickly informed that male ashram volunteers would buy it for me. I realised it would be ´inappropriate´ for me to be seen shopping in the village, for in rural Punjab, a taboo still exists on girls shopping in their native villages, a task that is carried out by their menfolk. An unmarried female researcher in the Punjab is seeen first and foremost as Woman- her status as a researcher is secondary. Using a feminist fieldwork philosophy to guide my research has made me aware of the need to create a participatory, reciprocal and both gender and culturally sensitive model of interviewing. Juggling the gender and culturally sensitive aspects of my fieldwork philosophy has not always been easy. Thus, while I have sought to avoid playing the role of ´dutiful daugher´ during fieldwork (in which female anthropologists adopt the role of obedient daughters as mandated by the culture in which they are living), I did seek to respect Punjabi gender norms as far as possible without compromising my egalitarian principles. In India, I wore traditional Indian dress at all times at the university, as well as at home, and in Barcelona, I wore Indian dress when carrying out interviews at the gurudwara during the week. However, in India at home I was expected to show an interest in cooking, and my mobility was always circumscribed, gendered assumptions and limitations that would not have affected male anthropologists in the field. Female anthropologists inspired by feminist principles thus continually face the thorny issue of how to walk a cultural tightrope that will earn them respect and approval if they are willing to accept second-class status. Despite these contradictions, I strove at all times to cultivate relationships based on trust, equality (including gender equality) and mutual respect, leading Ravidassia community members in Barcelona to consider me an honorary member of the community and to affectionately call me *Kiran*, a Punjabi name meaning ´ray of light´. Ethical considerations were taken into account from the very beginning of my project. Strictly adhering to a policy of informed consent throughout my fieldwork, all of my interviewees were informed about my research and research aims, and assured that their data would remain confidential and anonymous. Davies points out that in order

for true informed consent to be obtained, one´s research must be explained to participants in language that is comprehensible and meaningful to them (Davies 2008: 55). In the case of caste, my research topic was readily understood. When interviewing about masculinity however, I realised that a number of terms used in academic discourse were foreign to my interviewees and hence made a number of linguistic adjustments so that my questions would make sense to them within their cultural and lingustic categories. Davies also maintains that it is important over longterm fieldwork to continually renegotiate consent, which I did with my interviewees (Davies 2008: 56). I also made it clear that they were free not to answer a particular question if they felt uncomfortable or did not know how to answer. Finally, with regards to confidentiality, Davies recommends that researchers be realistic and cautious about the degree of confidentiality they promise to their interviewees, since she argues that even in using pseudonyms, it can be possible to identity participants by the language their use (Davies 2008: 60). In my case, in addition to explaining to my interviewees that I would be using pseudonyms when quoting them (and giving them the option of choosing their own pseudonym), I also asked them if they wanted to change any other personal details, such as their age, for their description in my thesis- an option which was declined by all.

Description of the Field and Sample Selection

Punjab:

Lovely Professional University (LPU) is a large, private university located on the outskirts of Jalandhar, Punjab (please see Punjab map after this section) run by the Lovely corporate group (founded by the wealthy Mittal family, belonging to the Punjabi Hindu business or *bania* caste). It has 24, 000 students, who study on a sprawling campus of over 600 acres. LPU is one of the Punjab´s newest universites, established in 2006, and its main language of instruction is English. Although new, LPU aims to position itself as a national, prestigious university with an international outlook, and prides itself on its cultural diversity. LPU was selected as my main fieldwork site for a number of reasons. I wanted to be based at a university in order to have easy access to an English-speaking sample of interviewees. LPU is located within the Doaba region, close to both Jallandhar and Phagwara, which have a large Dalit population. I had previously

carried out interviews at Guru Nanak Dev University (Amritsar) and Punjabi University (Patiala) during anthropological fieldwork for my Masters thesis. I was thus keen to choose a different field site, and additionally a more cosmopolitan field site for my PhD research. Unlike Guru Nanak Dev University and Punjabi University, which are overwhelmingly local universities, LPU has a more diverse student and teaching body, attracting a much higher percentage of out-of-state students and teachers. Since I intended to interview both men and women, LPU was an attractive research site due to its more relaxed gender code. At more provincial Punjabi universities, it is not easy for a young, unmarried woman to interview men without attracting attention and suspicion. The marked gender segregation that characterises other Punjabi universities is absent at LPU, and its more free gender mixing meant that I would not encounter problems in interviewing male students and teachersI had a faculty contact at the university, who helped me secure permission from the dean to carry out my research, and assisted me with initial introductions to interviewees.

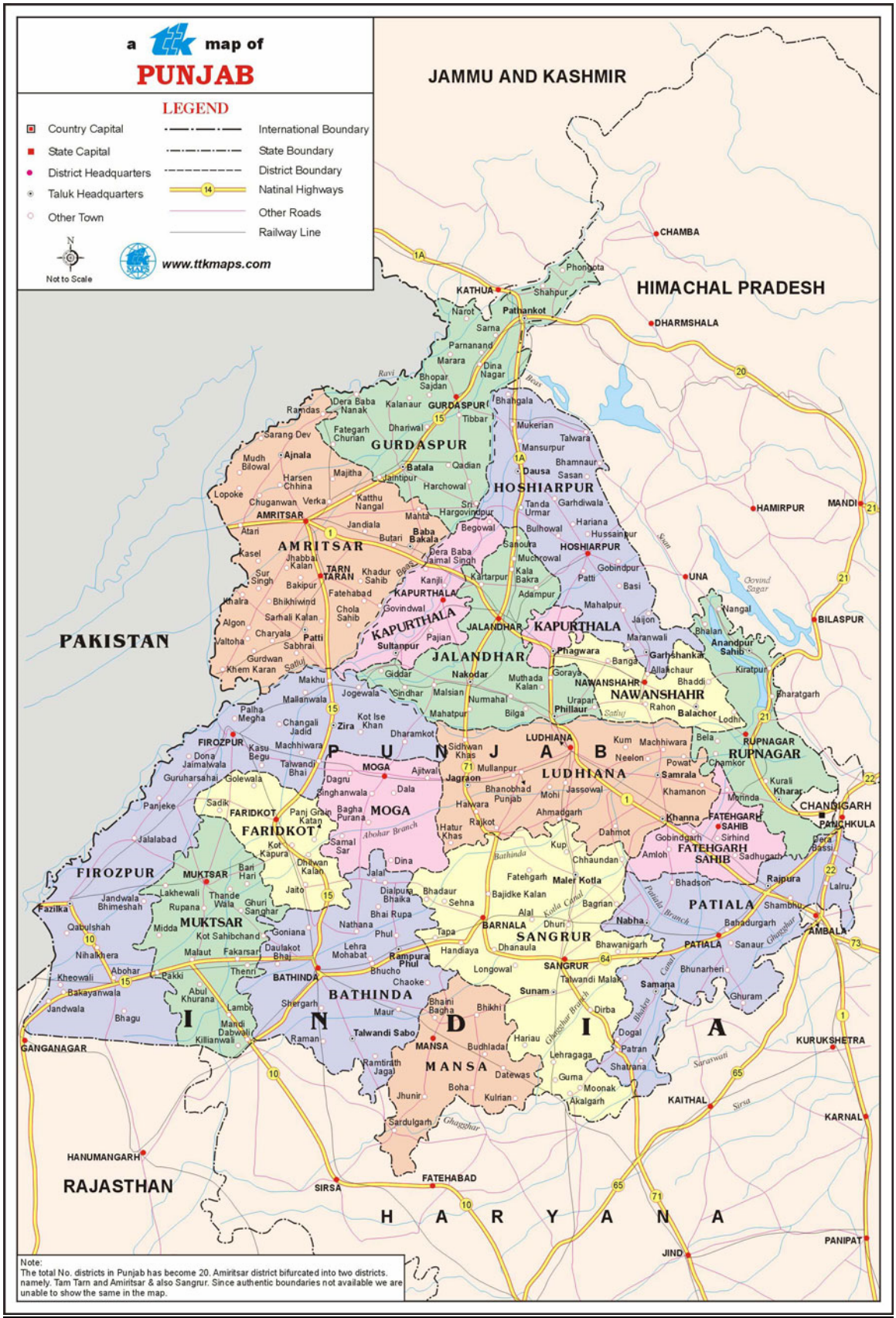
My interviewee sample was in large part influenced by LPU demographics. My interviewees consisted of a mixture of students and teachers at the university. The age range, however, was the same (20 to 30 years) due to the recruitment policy of LPU, in which recent graduates (without PhD´s) are hired to teach. Most of my interviewees came from middle-class backgrounds, due to the high fees of LPU, its competitive teacher salaries, and its attempts to market itself as an international, high-tech university. Given that my main interest in this study was exploring how caste consciousness and stigma operate in the texture of everyday life, an urban, middle-class setting such as LPU was ideal for uncovering how caste works among both the upper and lower castes in a purportedly ´modern´ academic milieu. Studying caste in a typical village in which the caste identity of all is known (and the caste hierarchy is extremely rigid), would not have enabled me to uncover the mechanisms of caste in contemporary urban, educated India, where caste is both more subtle but no less important socially than in villages. In rural areas the scourge of caste is acknowledged by all; it is in urban, middle-class environments that its presence is often contested. Critically, studying caste in an urban, middle-class environment gave me the opportunity to answer the key question of which factor- caste or class, would be more important when determining social status in the case of middle and upper class Dalits. Would wealth overcome caste stigma in such cases? Caste-wise, my interviewees came from a variety of Hindu and Sikh castes- Chamar (Dalit), Brahmin, Ramgarhiah, Marwari, Jat, Rajput… (please see glossary for further information). In India I wished to interview individuals from both the upper and lower castes, as well as from all religions, in order to gain a diverse as possible perspective on caste. Although I was primarily concerned with Dalit experiences of caste, it was

also important for me to understand how the upper castes negotiate caste- and particularly, how they view Dalits.

Interviewing upper caste students and teachers allowed me to evaluate caste attitudes and stereotyping in independent India several decades after the abolishment of untouchability. Interviewing individuals from all the major faith traditions of India (possible thanks to Christians from southern India as well as Muslims from other states), was designed to demonstrate the presence of caste consciousness and caste discrimination in all religions in India, regardless of their theological sanction of caste. The LPU campus itself was a microcosm of the gender, caste and class inequalities that plague Indian society. The campus is thus a space that while formally contructed as equal and merit-based, is in fact a strongly gendered, ´casted´ and classed unequal environment. As a new university, several buildings were still being constructed, using low-caste labour from the neighbouring, poorer states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The children of these migrant labourers did not attend school and could be seen playing on campus, as well as begging. All cleaners at the university were female former untouchables. This was the visible face of caste inequality. The invisible face of caste inequality is what I explored in my interviews. As a private university, Dalit students and teachers at LPU were often automatically assumed to be ´general category´ or ´caste Hindus´ (Indian English parlance for non-untouchables), due to still rampant stereotypes linking class and caste (the low castes are assumed to be poor/uneducated and hence not able to afford the fees charged by LPU). Like all Indian universities, LPU has an official policy of reservations, akin to American affirmative action, for Scheduled Caste students (LPU adheres to the Punjab state policy on reservations), but I was not able to access statistics on the formal caste breakdown of the student population at LPU (I was informed that no such statistics existed). The *perception* however, of LPU as a middle-class and hence general category environment reveals the extent to which anti-Dalit stereotypes continue to operate in the domain of common sense or ´doxa´ as defined by Bourdieu (1977).

Gendered inequalities also structured the LPU campus. Although LPU ironically has a high percentage of female staff members due to its policy of recruiting young, recent graduates (many of whom leave teaching after marriage), the campus functions as an extension of the patriarchal family, subjecting its female hostel students (known as ´hostellers´) to intense policing and control. Female hostel students were subject to strict curfews (6:00 in the evening), and could only study at the library beyond this hour with special persmission. Severe restrictions were also placed on their mobility: only one outing outside the campus per month was allowed. In contrast, male students were free to come and go as they pleased, both on and off campus, and were not

subject to curfews. The patriarchal campus thus plays the role of an ever-vigilant panopticon to ensure that that its female population is ´protected´. The concern with the ´modesty´ of its female students is reflected in the regular speeches given by the dean to female hostellers stressing the need to avoid socialising too much with boys. The intersection of class and gender on campus produced a greater sartorial flexibility for girls than that normally available in the Punjab. On most Punjabi university campuses, the vast majority of girls wear Indian dress, and girls who dare to wear jeans are stigmatised as being ´fast´. The upwardly mobile class model at LPU meant that over half of the girls wore jeans, both as a fashion and more importantly, as a class statement. Female teachers were required to wear a Western, formal suit uniform in order to project the globalised, professional image that the LPU wished to promote. The gender regime at LPU thus simultaneously intersects with class and caste to advance a gender model that is both modern and traditional at the same time- still centrally concerned with controlling female sexuality and ensuring respectability. At LPU, the main difficulty I encountered during fieldwork consisted in interviewees´ frequently cancelling interviews with little or short notice. Apart from this minor inconvenience, fieldwork proceeded smoothly and I was completely independent when carrying out interviews (in the sense of my movements not being tracked by the university administration).


a map of
PUNJAB
LEGEND
Country Capital
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Other Town
International Boundary
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Other Roads
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MOGA
FARIDKOT
FIROZPUR
MUKTSAR
BATHINDA
MANSA
SANGRUR
BARNALA
PATIALA
AMBALA
Note:
The total No. districts in Punjab has become 20. Amiritsar district bifurcated into two districts. namely. Tam Tarn and Amiritsar & also Sangrur. Since authentic boundaries not available we are unable to show the same in the map.

Barcelona:

Within Spain, Barcelona was chosen as the site of my fieldwork for very practical reasons: almost all Indian Punjabis living in Spain have settled in the autonomous region of Catalonia, and particularly, in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. Although no official statistics exist on the Punjabi population in Spain, it is estimated that 10 000 Punjabis (a figure that includes both legal and illegal immigrants), reside in Catalonia. Estimates of the proportion of the Ravidassia population within the Punjabi community vary widely. Ravidassias claim that they make up as much as half of the Punjabi population, but a more realistic proportion would be 10-15% of the overall Punjabi community. Due to factors explained in my chapter on Spain, very few Punjabis have settled in Madrid, or in other large Spanish cities. When one speaks of ´Spanish´ Punjabis, then, one is in practice speaking about Catalan Punjabis, since Indian migration to Spain is overwhelmingly a Catalan phenomenon. The city of Barcelona has technically 1.621.537 inhabitants, but when the entire metropolitan area of Barcelona is taken into account, its true population swells to 4 million (2009 figures). Punjabis are spread thoroughout the metropolitan area of Barcelona, but are particularly concentrated in the neighbouring municipalities of Badalona, Santa Coloma, and L´Hospitalet de Llobregat where rents are generally cheaper. In recent years, increasing numbers of Punjabis have been settling outside of Barcelona, especially in the province of Girona, in the cities of Girona and Olot (please see map following this section). In Barcelona, there are now five gurudwaras (Sikh temples)- one in L´Hositalet, one in the historic centre of Barcelona, and three in Badalona/Santa Coloma. There are also two gurudwaras located outside of Barcelona, in the province of Girona.

In Spain, my interview sample consisted exclusively of Ravidassias. As mentioned above in my section on data collection, caste politics within the Spanish diaspora necessitated that I minimise my ties with other castes, in order to build a strong alliance with the Ravidassias and cultivate their trust. Although I had initially intended on interviewing upper caste Punjabis for comparative purposes (whilst maintaining Dalits as my main research focus), I soon realised that in the context of a small, highly fractious and polarised diaspora community, that this would not be possible, and could seriously jeopardise my relations with the Ravidassias. Even attending other gurudwaras became a sensitive issue following the assassination of the spiritual leader of the Ravidassias in Vienna in May 2009. My Ravidassia sample was composed of both males and females (with a preponderance of the former due to the male demographic bias within the community), adults and youth, members of the first generation and of the ´1.5´ generation. My goal was to interview as broad a cross-section of the community as possible. Children were not

interviewed formally, however informal conversations were held with the children of key interviewees in order to subtly determine their level of caste awareness. The general class profile of the community is working class- most men work in the construction or catering industry, and many since the financial crisis are unemployed. A number of members of the community are highly educated or professionally qualified, but as first-generation immigrants lacking language skills and cultural capital, are not able to find work in their fields. Most women are homemakers.

The vast majority of my interviews took place in Barcelona, but I also travelled to carry out interviews with Ravidassia families living in the Catalan cities of Reus, Vic and Banyoles. The focal point of the community is the small Ravidassia gurudwara, located in Badalona, which has converted a non-descript two-story home into the only Chamar-specific cultural and religious space in Spain. During the week, it serves as a shelter for homeless and jobless Punjabi men, as well as home for the officiating *granthi* (Sikh priest). It is also the gathering place of young Punjabi men, who often go to the gurudwara for socialising with their male friends. During the week, the gurudwara is thus a male public space. On Sundays, it is transformed into a formal religious space, when the weekly religious service is held and a large *langar* (community meal) is prepared. Women and children stream into the gurudwara, along with their bright colours, and the gurudwara is converted into a family space. Following the religious service and langar, rather than dispersing as is common in many other places of worship, small groups of men and women (who always sit and socialise separately) are formed, to chat and drink sugary *chai* (tea). Far more than simply a religious space then, the gurudwara also functions as a vital social arena in which information (and gossip) is exchanged, and alliances formed. After chatting for several hours in the gurudwara, the socialising then shifts to individual family homes, making Sunday a day that is devoted to both worship and social life. Most Ravidassias socialise within the community, very little social life takes place with Spaniards, members of other ethnic groups, or with Punjabis from other castes.

Regarding difficulties encountered in the field, the main difficulty I encountered was linguistic in nature. Many members of the community lacked fluency in either Spanish or English, which somewhat limited my sample base. In order to overcome the linguistic barrier, I carried out a small number of interviews with fluently bilingual interpreters from the community. As an unmarried woman, I had to obey Punjabi gender norms regarding interviewing unmarried men. This problem was overcome by finding acceptable public spaces in which to carry out interviews (migrant Punjabi men tend to live in overcrowded flats with as many as ten others, making their homes a ´no-go´ zone for a female researcher). Studying a small diaspora

community also meant that my movements as a researcher were subject to greater scrunity and community gossip. Visiting and staying with one family, the news would soon travel, and, given the multiple ideological alliances (and enmities) within the community, could result in me being identified with that particular family.

Theoretical Perspectives:

In analysing my field data, I have been guided by the concept of stigma as defined and conceptualised by the American sociologist Erving Goffman in his seminal work “Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity” (1963). Although working within a Western framework of reference, and particulary rooted in American society, Goffman´s analysis of the functioning of stigma, the problems that the stigmatised face, and his description of the social interactions

between stigmatised individuals and "normals" (his term for privileged, dominant members society), speak to universal stigma conditions, including that of the status of untouchables in Indian society. Goffman defines stigma as an identity that is deeply devalued by society, which dehumanises stigmatised individuals, treats them as failures and considers them to be permanently morally suspect. A stigma ideology, along with a corresponding stigma vocabulary consisting of demeaning words to describe the stigmatised, is constructed, in order to justify our discrimination and explain the "danger" that the stigmatised represent (Goffman 1963: 5). Stigma, according to Goffman, thus effectively reduces the life chances of stigmatised individuals and groups, and leads to great human suffering on the part of the stigmatised, who must struggle with issues of acceptance and shame, and above all, with *how* to respond to their situation. Goffman´s definition of stigma corresponds perfectly with the situation of Dalits in both India and abroad, for whether "discredited" (when one´s stigma condition is visible) or "discreditable" (when stigma is invisible), all Dalits must confront society´s definition of them as inferior, defective, and impure- in short, as less than human.

I have used stigma as my theoretical framework for analysing caste discrimination, because in both urban, contemporary India, and in the diaspora, casteism is manifested in social distancing applied by the upper castes, and by former untouchables needing to elaborate strategies for combating caste stigma, both individually and collectively. Although caste stigma varies in intensity depending upon where one lives, one´s class position, level of education, and gender, untouchability remains a deeply discrediting identity when it is discovered or revealed. The former untouchable continues to be defined as outside of humanity, negatively different and morally unclean, in the words of Goffman "he is… reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman 1963: 3). Such is the weight of untouchability, that it cancels out the other chararateristics of the person in question, reducing the untouchable to her/his ´failing´. The permanent moral blemish of untouchability, means that Ravidassias and other Dalits who live in urban India, or in the diaspora, face what Goffman defines as the discrepancy between a person´s actual and virtual social identity. In village India, there is no escape from crushing caste stigma- caste discrimination is overt, flagrant and systematic. The lower castes are expected to ´know their place´ and carry out their roles accordingly. Social interaction is smooth because it is conditioned by prior knowledge of the caste identity of each villager, and by the expected social subordination of the Dalits. The greater anonymity provided by India´s teeming cities means that caste identity cannot always be automatically deduced. Goffman argues that in daily social intercourse, we expect the people we come into contact with

to fall into certain social categories, and are guided by unconscious expectations that enable us to deal with others in a routine fashion. In other words, we expect that the people we meet are ´normal´, or in the Indian context, ´touchable´ individuals, especially if they do not conform to our stereotype of the ´typical´ (poor, dirty) untouchable. Dalits living in cities and in the diaspora are thus assumed to be ´normal´, fully human and respectable, until their *actual* social identity is exposed, leading, according to Goffman, to discomfort on the part of both parties in mixed stigmatised-normal social interaction (and particular anxiety and stress on the part of the stigmatised). All stigmatised individuals must therefore learn to manage their stigma in their social dealings with ´normals´, since they rupture the unspoken assumptions and expectations of the former in everyday social life.

Goffman´s theoretical framework is useful, because he highlights how both ´normals´ and the stigmatised respond to stigma, and in particular, focuses on the micro politics of power that occurs when ´normals´ and the stigmatised interact. Goffman´s stigma theory furthermore has the benefit of stressing the psychological mechanisms of stigma, which is central for understanding how the Ravidassia negotiate caste stigma. Goffman asserts that, for the most part, the stigmatised individual internalises society´s values and beliefs about his stigma, which often leads to feelings of shame, a sense of personal failure/inadequacy, and a deeply ambivalent relationship to the stigma category and fellow stigmatised individuals. Thus, even though the stigmatised individual may believe deep down that he is fully human and equal to ´normals´, he also struggles with society´s view of him as possessing a defiling trait. This attention to the complexities and contradictions of stigma corresponds well to the reality on the ground for individual Ravidassias, who both believe themselves to be fully human and worthy of respect, at the same time as they experience inner conflict/shame regarding their identity and stigma.

Goffman identifies three broad responses to stigma: 1) attempts to eliminate one´s stigma condition (ex: a blind person who undergoes eye treatment) 2) attempts to correct one´s condition indirectly, by for example the handicapped seeking to excel at sport and 3) those who "break with reality", and create their own "system of honor" that shields them from society´s definition of them as failures. In this third option, the stigmatised elect to live as equal, ´normal´ members of society despite their stigma: "he bears a stigma but does not seem to be impressed or repentant about doing so" (Goffman 1963: 6-9). In seeking to pass as upper caste, individual Ravidassias in both India and the diaspora fall within the first response outlined by Goffman of striving to erase one´s stigma. However, with the emergence of a Ravidassia pride movement, there is an increasing tendency to challenge societal definitions of untouchability by positively evaluating it-

in effect creating an alternative value system that minimises the impact of stigma psychologically. Emphasising the centrality of stigma in understanding the Ravidassia community and movement helps us to identity the key identity and social challenges that Ravidassias face both individually and collectively. The story of the Ravidassias is one of shame and pride, conformity and defiance, self-rejection and self-acceptance. The framework of stigma is well positioned to capture and analyse these contradictions.

The second key theorist to guide my work is Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a philosopher, economist, lawyer, scholar, Dalit leader and activist all rolled into one. As the founder and leader of modern India´s Dalit movement, and the person who has had the greatest influence on Dalit thinking and activism in India, Dr. Ambedkar is a vital point of reference. My decision to draw on Dr. Ambedkar´s thought and theorising is also motivated by my desire to incorporate ex-untouchable voices in my work, so that it is as inclusive and democratic as possible (and not just draw on upper caste Indian scholars as other anthropologists have been criticised for doing). Regarded as a personal Guru by many Spanish Ravidassias, his ideas and theories regarding Dalit emancipation continue to inspire and motivate new generations of Dalit youth, years after his death and miles away from India. Although largely invisible in Western academia, his impact cannot be underestimated, particularly among intellectual Dalits (as well as other castes) in India. His momentous decision to convert to Buddhism as a way to escape the caste system, his uncompromising critique of caste/the Hindu scriptures, his insistence on a political solution to the problems of untouchables, and his defiance of Gandhi, continue to stir debate and discussion among Dalit diaspora communities today. Indeed, such is his impact, that the Ravidassia community in Spain is currently fractured along Ambedkarite/non-Ambedkarite faultlines, with the Ambedkarites holding much more radical ideas regarding the organisation and religious identity of the Ravidassia community. Ambedkar´s theories and ideas regarding caste and religion will thus be discussed at length particulary in my chapter on the religious basis of the Ravidassia movement.

Finally, my work draws inspiration from feminist theorising, and in particular, the ´second wave´ of feminist anthropology in which the emphasis on gender shifted from a focus on including previously invisible/marginalised women to a broader vision of gender *relations*. In my chapter on gender, I draw on emerging scholarship on men and masculinities, scholarship which emphasises how boys and men are influenced by different cultural and temporal definitions of masculinity, hierarchies of masculinity among men, and how masculinity is performed above all in opposition to women and femininity. I draw in particular on the scholarship of R.W. Connell

and Michael Kimmel, both of whom speak of multiple masculinities, stress the influence of hegemonic masculinities, and view masculinity as socially contructed and located in gendered relationships. The definition offered by Kimmel is instructive: “Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it is historical. Manhood is not the manifestation of an inner essence; it is socially constructed…Manhood means different things at different times to different people. We come to know what it means to be a man in our culture by setting our definitions in opposition to a set of “others”- racial minorities, sexual minorities, and above all, women” (Kimmel 1994: 120). Connell (1995) speaks of multiple masculinities and defines four broad types of masculinity in order to stress the relations between men: hegemonic, complicit, subordinate and marginalised. Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant model of masculinity in a particular culture and time period, the masculinity that is most respected, and which sets the standard for all other masculinities. It functions as both cultural ideal and institutional power, drawing its force from its “successful claim to authority” (Connell 1995: 77). Complicit masculinity refers to a model of masculinity that accepts the dominant gender order while not actively seeking to oppress women. Thus men who do not meet or conform to hegemonic standards of masculinity nonetheless enjoy the “patriarchal dividend”, without actively engaging in violence against women (Connell 1995: 79). Subordinate masculinity is masculinity that is severely devalued and considered inferior in any given society. In Western culture, homosexuality is the subordinated masculinity par excellence, for it is denigrated as unmanly. According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men: “gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 1995; 78). Finally, marginalised masculinity is that masculinity that is othered by virtue of class or race. Connell argues that working-class and black masculinities are marginalised by hegemonic masculinity, deprived of the same symbolic and cultural authority. This scheme, while very general, is useful in highlighting how the construction of masculinity is always diverse, context specific, and hierarchically ordered, both in relation to other men, and to women. The traditional focus on gender has meant concentrating on women´s experiences and voices- men´s gender identities were often not interrogated. In incorporating masculinity scholarship in my work, I am keen to expand this focus to include how boys and young men are affected by and work out their masculinity in patriarchal gender regimes.

CASTE AND UNTOUCHABILITY IN INDIA

"The impurity of the 50-60 millions of the Untouchables of India, quite unlike the impurity arising from birth, death, etc., is permanent. The Hindus who touch them and become polluted thereby can become pure by undergoing purificatory ceremonies. But there is nothing which can make the Untouchables pure. They are born impure, they are impure while they live, they die the death of the impure, and they give birth to children who are born with the stigma of Untouchability affixed to them. It is a case of permanent, hereditary stain which nothing can cleanse" B.R. Ambedkar

Introduction

What is caste, and how does it work? This chapter has four goals: to explain the basic features of caste as a nation-wide institution in India, review what some of the most important theorists have had to say about caste, describe how untouchability is practiced, and analyse the regional manifestation of caste in the Punjab. This chapter is not meant to be an exhaustive explication of caste, but rather a snapshot of its most important features, both nationally and regionally, with reference to the Punjab. Caste in India is incredibly complex, with each state, region, and sub-region having a different caste configuration. In addition, while common to all religions in India, caste and its hierarchies are organised differently depending upon one´s religious community. Caste is also intimately related to gender, for caste culture mandates customs for women that are often highly restrictive. Despite these diversities however, regardless of where one lives, the religion one professes, or one´s gender, caste is an inescapable social fact in India. While some would declare that one cannot understand India without understanding caste, I would claim that knowledge of caste helps one discern how discrimination works in our own society, for all cultures have their own versions of caste and untouchability to a greater or lesser degree.

Varna and Jati

Although debate exists as to exactly when and how caste evolved into the oppressive and omnipresent social institution that exists in India today, there is no doubt that caste is one of the fundamental, organising features of Indian society, profoundly affecting social relations, and in many cases determining one´s occupation and life options from birth to death. When one speaks about the caste system in India today, one is referring to an institution, an ideology and a state of mind that assigns each Indian a particular caste at birth, and makes caste a central feature of their social identity and cognitive landscape. Caste is thus an immutable social fact for all Indians,

regardless of their religion, place of birth, or class. Castes are hierarchically ranked, although the exact classification depends upon the religion one practices, the region in which one lives, as well as changing political/economic conditions. Thus, the same caste can be assigned a different ranking and social status in different states/time periods. According to Srinivas, a leading Indian scholar of caste, each caste regards itself as equal to those that are above it, and superior to those that are beneath it (Srinivas: 1962). The primary feature of the caste system is thus hierarchy and exclusion, with each caste attempting to enhance its prestige and maintain its exclusivity by keeping members of lower castes out. Traditionally, caste dictated a person´s occupation and hence one´s economic status and quality of life. Although this is still largely the case in rural India, in urban India, with the emergence of a service economy, jobs are increasingly delinked from caste. The association of caste with occupation remains strong, however, and caste groups continue to be identified with their traditional occupations despite job diversification with the advent of a modern economy. Although Gandhi maintained that the divinely ordained tasks of each caste were all inherently equal in worth[3], in practice, the menial, humiliating jobs assigned to the untouchables are part and parcel of their ritually impure status within society. While caste is hereditary, the status of one´s caste can change over time, in response to changes in economic/political power and religious customs. Many castes are known to have launched campaigns to improve their collective status, such as the Ishavas of Kerala (a Shudra caste).[4] Caste retains its iron grip on the marriage market, and it is through endogamous arranged marriages that the institution of caste is maintained. Indeed, recent genetic research has found that the range of genetic diversity in India is up to four times greater than that in Europe due to the practice of caste endogamy. This has resulted in a demographic situation in which different Indian groups are more dissimilar than the British and the Germans (Guardian, 2009).

Caste derives its legitimacy as a religious concept rooted in Hinduism. Here it is important to introduce two terms- *varna* and *jati*, that together make up the complex caste system in India. Hindu society is commonly described as divided into four hierarchically arranged classes or *varnas*. Each *varna* is further subdivided into thousands of *jatis*, or castes and sub-castes, the

[3] See Gandhi´s reply to Ambedkar in *Annihilation of Caste with a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi*. Gandhi states that "The callings of a Brahmin- spiritual teacher- and a scavenger are equal, and their due performance carries equal merit before God and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man". Available online at: http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/02.Annihilation%20of%20Caste.htm

[4] See Osella, Caroline and Osella, F. (2000) *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*. London; Sterling, Virginia: Pluto.

unit which actually governs the daily lives of Indians, traditionally determining their occupation, and dictating with whom one can and cannot marry, share food and drink with. There is some debate as to whether it is the *jati* or sub-*jati* which is more important at the local level. Dumont argues that this debate is spurious, since both categories of caste are important depending upon the context. In intercaste relations and in occupational classifications, it is the *jati* that is the main unit that comes into play. In a typical village, fellow villagers will identify you according to your *jati* and not your sub-*jati*. However, within intracaste relations, the sub-*jati* is the most important unit, for marriage partners and caste justice are dealt with at this level (Dumont 1970: 63). *Varna* is a Sanskrit term that literally means ´colour´. Srinivas writes that the origins of the term can be traced to the ancient Hindu text the Rig Veda, where it originally referred to the difference in colour between the Arya *varna* (people) and the Dasa *varna* (the indigenous inhabitants of India) (Srinivas 1962: 63). It is only in a much later hymn, known as the *Purushasukta*, that the contemporary understanding of *varna* comes into being. In this hymn, each *varna* is described as emerging with a different body part of *Purusha*, or ´primordial man´. At the top of this hierarchy, representing the head or mouth, are the Brahmins (priests and teachers), beneath them, representing the arms, are the Kshatriya, historically warriors and rulers, followed by the Vaishya, symbolising the legs (merchants, traders, farmers and artisans), and finally, constituting the feet, are the Shudra, labourers who are destined to serve (Dube 2005: 213). Outside of this system are the untouchables, considered so polluted as to be beyond the pale. The outcaste position of Dalits explains why some Dalits do not formally identity as Hindu, even though they may follow Hindu religious practices and be included in the broad and amorphous Hindu religious universe (Juergensmeyer 1988: 1). Other Hindu texts also give religious sanction to the *varna* system, such as the Laws of Manu (*Manusmriti),* a law text that stresses the sacred duties each caste must fulfill.

The first three of the above-mentioned *varna* are considered to be ´twice-born´, their male members entitled to read the Vedas and don the sacred thread (*upanayana*) during the celebration of the *upanayana* ceremony, a permanent symbol of their social status and privilege (Srinivas 1962: 63). Shudras and untouchables are excluded from this rite of passage. In contemporary India, the term ´caste´ Hindus, rather than ´twice-born´ is used to refer to those Hindus who are considered ritually clean. The *Manusmriti* sets out the *dharma* or obligations of each *varna* (particularly for the twice-born), the rules that govern the *varna* system, and the punishments for deviating from it (punishments that are always more severe for the Shudras). The

´natural qualities´ of each *varna* are described, and the Shudras are called upon to serve all the other *varnas*, especially the Brahmins. The *Manusmriti* essentially codifies the subjugation of an entire class of people and exalts their bondage: "…a Shudra was created by the Self-Existent (Svayambu) to be the slave of the Brahmin. A Shudra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude; since that is innate in him, who can set him free from it?" (Chapter VIII: Manusmriti- English translation by G. Buhler). The *Manusmriti* is very much concerned with maintaining caste purity. The text repeatedly makes clear that any twice-born man who violates caste boundaries by associating with a Shudra will lose his caste: "Twice-born men who, in their folly, wed wives of the low (Shudra) caste, soon degrade their families and their children to the status of Shudras" (Chapter III: Manusmriti- English translation by G. Buhler). The Manusmriti also condones the enslavement of women; references to women throughout the text are highly derogatory. It has thus been vigorously criticised by both Dalit and women´s rights activists for the dual anti-low caste and anti-women bigotry that it espouses.

Srinivas is critical of the *varna* scheme, arguing that while it does describe the broad social categories of Indian society, it fails to capture the actual reality of the caste system, which is more flexible and complex on the ground (Srinivas 1962: 65). While the *varna* system suggests that the four main categories are timeless and etched in stone, in practice there is room for considerable caste mobility over time, particularly for the intermediary castes (Srinivas 1962: 42). Srinivas maintains that the *varna* model in fact distorts our understanding of caste, by forcing us to rank and pigeon-hole a caste according to a rigid scale. He cites a number of examples to show that local caste hierarchies often do not correspond to the formal *varna* hierarchy. Sometimes a Shudra caste, after achieving economic and political power, succeeds in claiming higher caste status (such as Kshatriya, the warrior/ruler class), demonstrating that caste is not only hereditary but also, in some cases, achieved (Srinivas 1962: 65-66). A key means of moving up in the caste hierarchy is through *´sancritisation´*, a term Srinivas has coined to refer to the process whereby lower castes imitate the religious and other customs of the locally dominant caste (Srinivas 1962: 42). By changing their diet to vegetarianism, giving up alcohol, and adopting more Brahmanic rituals and gods, several low castes (but not untouchables) have been able to rise in the caste hierarchy in one or two generations (Srinivas 1962: 42). Srinivas stresses that this process is not equivalent to *´Brahminisation´*, since the locally dominant caste is not always Brahmin. Thus while Brahmins are usually the top caste in most parts of India, there are numerous exceptions to this rule: the Lingayats of South India for example, claim equality with,

and even superiority to the Brahmins (Srinivas 1962: 66). And as will shall soon see when I discuss the regional configuration of caste in the Punjab, the Punjabi caste hierarchy also departs from the traditional *varna* ranking. Although Dumont does not criticise the *varna* system, he too mentions that its ideological subordination of temporal power (kings) to ritual status (the priestly class) is not always reflected in actual caste rankings on the ground, where power often triumphs over ritual status, and where multiple contradictions between purity and power exist (Dumont 1970: 75-77). What the *varna* system does is simplify the complexities of caste, giving a global vision of how Indian society is divided. It provides an overall grid, but to truly understand the ambiguities, messiness and evolving nature of caste in everyday life, one must turn to local case studies. Interestingly, Srinivas claims that Indian sociologists are more attached to the *varna* model than non-Indians (Srinivas 1962: 66). My interviews with Indians of all castes reveal that references to the *varna* system are common- for example, when Chamars triumphantly declare that according to *varna*, the Jats are classified as Shudras. Although Srinivas has rightly highlighted the problematic features of the *varna* scheme, it remains a key part of the national language on caste shared by common Indians.

Caste as a Hindu Religious Concept

Since the majority of India´s population is Hindu (approximately 83%), Hindu beliefs regarding caste have great cultural weight, influencing the attitudes of all religious groups in India. Caste is practiced socially by non-Hindus; however Hinduism is the principal *ideological* motor driving caste in Indian society. Srinivas claims that without caste, Hinduism cannot exist, for "the structural basis of Hindu society is caste" (Srinivas 1962: 44). I would add that caste also forms the structural basis of Sikhism, Islam and Christianity in India, for the caste system is maintained cross-religiously through the endogamous marriage practices of each *jati* and sub-*jati* (the locally effective unit of caste). Where Hinduism distinguishes itself from other religions is through the theological legitimacy and importance that it accords caste. Ideologically, caste is sustained through three key concepts[5]: *karma*, in which acts committed in a previous life determine ones´ caste in the present incarnation; *dharma*, which refers to one´s sacred duty in life to obey caste-related laws; and *purity/pollution*, in which castes are ranked according to their level of ritual purity, with the upper castes held to be more pure, and the lower castes, progressively more

[5] These concepts are not unique to Hinduism, but have been used in Hinduism to justify caste inequality and untouchability

polluted (with the untouchables symbolising extreme ritual pollution). The first concept is perhaps the most pernicious, because it essentially blames the victim for his/her condition. According to the doctrine of karma, the untouchables and Shudras are condemned to live a life of misery and ill treatment due to the accumulation of bad deeds from their previous lives. Hinduism justifies the permanent subordination of Dalits and Shudras through the concept of karma: if you are born untouchable, you deserve it; you have brought your misfortune onto yourself. Being born into a low caste, or as an animal, is seen to be divine retribution for prior sins. Those who are born into a high caste are seen to be closer to achieving *moksha* (liberation) from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth (*samsara*); essentially, to be more evolved spiritually (Srinivas 1962: 151).

The concept of *dharma* is used to argue that obeying caste custom is a vital religious duty. Srinivas defines *dharma* as "the total body of moral and religious rules", that are also related to the duties of one´s caste (Srinivas 1962: 151). Historically, the reasoning of *dharma* has been used to keep the low castes chained to their degrading jobs.

The third concept of purity/pollution is vital to understanding caste, since much of the caste system revolves around protecting the upper castes from the pollution of the lower castes, and is concerned with maintaining caste purity. In his seminal work ´*Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*´, Louis Dumont argued that the basic underlying and universal principle of the caste system was to be found in the opposition between the pure and the impure, which gives rise to the caste system´s other key features: namely hierarchy, separation, and a division of labour:

"This opposition underlies hierarchy, which is the superiority of the pure to the impure, underlies separation because the pure and the impure must be kept separate, and underlies the division of labour because pure and impure occupations must likewise be kept separate. *The whole is founded on the necessary and hierarchical coexistence of the two opposites*" (italics in orginal) (Dumont 1970: 43).

In the concept of purity/pollution, it is above all the two poles that are contrasted: the Brahmins on the one hand and the Untouchables on the other. In Indian culture, many life events are considered polluting, such as birth, death, and menstruation, but such impurity is seen to be

temporary, rectified through specific purification rituals, usually bathing (Dumont 1970: 48-49).[6] A Brahmin can thus maintain his purity by rigorously avoiding pollution and engaging in continuous acts of purification. Untouchables, in contrast are considered to be permanently polluted due to the contaminating nature of the life-long jobs they carry out. Dalits have traditionally worked as ´night soil carriers´ (removal of human waste), as removers of dead animals, with leather, and in general come into close, continuous contact with impure substances, such as hair (barbers) and soiled clothing (washers). The need to safeguard purity leads to the segregation of the untouchables and rigid separation of the pure from the impure in all aspects of life. The purity of the Brahmin cannot exist without the pollution of the untouchable- the entire system rests on the purported ritual danger of the Untouchable.[7] Indeed Dumont makes the important point that untouchability will not be abolished until the exaggerated purity attributed to the Brahmins is called into question (Dumont 1970: 54). According to Dumont, the Indian caste system is distinguished by the privileging, at least in theory, of ritual purity above secular power (Dumont 1970: 71). Therefore, Brahmins are considered to be at the top of the caste hierarchy, above kings, due to their superior ritual purity. In practice however, Dumont points out that Brahmins submit to the Kshatriyas, and indeed their pecking status within the internal Brahmin hierarchy derives from the rank of the castes they serve as domestic priests (Dumont 1970: 70). Thus we can see that although there is a religiously mandated division between temporal power and ritual status (which formally privileges the Brahmins), the way purity/pollution works in daily life is more ambiguous, at least in the great expanse between the two extreme poles of purity and pollution represented by the Brahmin and by the untouchable. While purity/pollution can be said to ideologically underpin the caste system, the multiplicity of criteria employed in drawing up caste rankings reveals that a number of factors beyond its scale are important in determining local caste hierarchies.[8]

[6] In the case of women, their regular menstruation leads them to be considered more impure than men in popular thinking.

[7] Dumont echoes this statement when he states “the Untouchable is conceptually inseparable from the purity of the Brahman” (Dumont 1970: 54).

[8] Dumont cites colonial caste rankings that used the following criteria to evaluate a caste´s status: whether Brahmins accepted water from it; whether it was served by Brahmins of high status, by ordinary Brahmins or by its own priests; whether it practiced infant marriage and forbade widow remarriage; profession; whether barbers would serve it; temple access; communal well access; living quarters etc (Dumont 1970: 79).

Critiques of Dumont

Dumont´s conception of Indian society is holistic and functionalist in nature, in which no individual part can be understood without reference to the whole. Dumont´s work on caste has been extraordinarily influential among scholars of both sociology and anthropology, particularly in the West. However, his thesis has also been contested, critiqued for essentialising Indian society and encouraging scholars to approach it exclusively through the filter of hierarchy (Chatterjee, Sharma). Indeed, Chatterjee and Sharma dispute "his theoretical assumption that hierarchy is indeed central to an understanding of the nature of South Asian society…" (Chatterjee & Sharma 1994: 3). They argue that "caste is one, albeit a very important one, of many modes of differentiation…" (Chatterjee & Sharma 1994: 8). According to Chatterjee & Sharma, caste can also be understood in terms other than that of purity and pollution, asserting that there are other caste "languages" that compete with the purity/pollution dichotomy. They accuse Dumont of falling into the trap of binary thinking, in which a traditional, hierarchical India is contrasted with a modern, individualistic West, a critique that is also echoed by André Béteille. Béteille maintains that the notion of homo hierarchicus reduces the complexity of Indian society, rendering it timeless and incapable of change, while at the same time eliding the numerous instances in which the purportedly "homo equalis" West has in fact exemplified hierarchy and inequality, both in principle and in practice, such as during colonialism (Béteille 1983: 34-35). Others, such as Berreman (1979), have pointed out that Dumont has written on caste adopting and privileging the viewpoint of Brahmins, thereby rendering invisible Dalit conceptualisations and experiences of caste. Therefore, while Dumont´s contributions to our understanding of caste have been invaluable, his comparison of traditional India to a modern Western society that is supposedly egalitarian in nature has been rightly contested and challenged. Many ´democratic´ regimes in the West grant full equality to all of their citizens only in theory. In much of the West, full citizenship rights are not extended to immigrants or the gay/transgender community. While India´s caste system, with its all encompassing and hereditary hierarchy, is perhaps unique in its reach, there exist parallel forms of caste in other societies that are just as powerful, and which, like caste, often benefit from religious sanction. For example, the Burakumin of Japan offer an interesting parallel with the untouchables of India, for like the untouchables, the Burakumin are ethnically Japanese, indistinguishable from other Japanese, and yet historically have been subject to intense discrimination, which Shinto and Buddhist beliefs legitimated (Alldritt: 2000). The Burakumin are the descendents of outcastes considered ritually impure for their polluting occupations of leather tanning, animal killing, grave digging, handling corpses and performing

executions. They were previously called *eta*, which literally means ´filth´ and residentially segregated in slums. Historically, they were subject to many of the same indignities of Indian untouchables: they were banned from entering Shinto shrines, faced restrictions on what they could wear, were forbidden from entering the homes of (clean) peasants, and also suffered discrimination in death- Alldritt mentions that demeaning death ritual names known as *Kaimyo* were inscribed on their tombstones and in their postmemorial notebooks by Buddhist priests (Alldritt: 2000). The Burakumin were formally granted equal legal status in 1871, but continue to suffer from social discrimination and lower living standards, including higher rates of illness, unemployment and lower pay for the same job (Alldritt: 2000). Generations after their official emancipation, many Burakumin continue to live in highly stigmatised neighbourhoods known as Burak, and face discrimination especially in employment and on the marriage market if their backgrounds are discovered (Alldritt: 2000). Some companies go so far as to buy illegal lists of Burakumin in order to avoid hiring them (Alldritt: 200). Not surprisingly, strong social stigma leads many to hide their Burakumin roots and assimilate as much as possible, although a Burakumin civil rights movement exists that has been successful in closing the education gap between the Burakumin and other Japanese. Japan is generally considered to be a modern and highly technologically advanced nation, yet this modernity has not eradicated the Japanese equivalent of untouchability. Therefore, rather than downplay the existence of hierarchy in India, it would be more fruitful to adopt the perspective that *all* societies, no matter how ´modern´, and regardless of their official discourse, are unequal and hierarchical, each with its own stigmatised groups who are, in myriad ways, denied full equal opportunities and moreover are subject to psychological oppression, or what Bourdieu would call symbolic violence.

The murky origins of Untouchability

The practice of untouchability has generated much debate concerning how such an unjust and egregarious institution could have come into being. In this section, I will present the theories of two scholars: one Indian and one Western. The Indian scholar is particularly significant, for although his ideas on the origins of untouchability have not been much discussed, his stature as the most important ´untouchable´ that India has known, makes an introduction to his thought important when discussing untouchability. B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), scholar, lawyer, economist, and principal architect of India´s constitution, was also India´s leading political leader and activist for India´s millions of dispossessed Untouchables. An untouchable of the Mahar

caste, he was born in what is now known as the state of Madhya Pradhesh, to parents of Marathi origin (from the Indian state of Maharashtra). Ambedkar was one of the first untouchables who achieved a college education in India, and thanks to the patronage of the Majarajh (king) of Baroda, went abroad to study, earning multiple degrees. He earned his MA in Political Science from Columbia University (1915), followed by a law degree from Grey´s Inn London (1922), an MSc and then a DSc from the London School of Economics (1923) and finally a PhD in Economics from Columbia University in 1928. In his work: "*The Untouchables who were they and why they became Untouchables*" (1948), Dr. Ambedkar does not mince his words when it comes to describing the caste system and his attacks on Hinduism are scathing:

"Besides the Shudras, the Hindu Civilisation has produced three social classes whose existence has not received the attention it deserves. The three classes are:

(i) The Criminal Tribes who number about 20 millions or so;

(ii) The Aboriginal Tribes who number about 15 millions; and

(iii) The Untouchables who number about 50 millions.

The existence of these classes is an abomination. The Hindu Civilisation, gauged in the light of these social products, could hardly be called civilisation. It is a diabolical contrivance to suppress and enslave humanity. Its proper name would be infamy. What else can be said of a civilisation which has produced a mass of people who….are treated as an entity beyond human intercourse and whose mere touch is enough to cause pollution?" (Ambedkar: 1948).

While many Dalits currently argue that the untouchables are in fact the original habitants of India who were conquered and then progressively enslaved via the caste system by the invading Aryans, Ambedkar offers a complex and novel theory on how untouchability arose. He advances the idea that the untouchables are in fact what he calls the "Broken Men", members of defeated tribes whose remaining members had been killed, who settled on the outskirts of villages, and in exchange for food and shelter, offered protection from raids and acted as security guards for the villagers (according to Ambedkar, this explains why untouchables are confined to the outskirts of villages across India, since in primitive times, the "broken men" were not allowed to live in the village on account of coming from an alien tribe). Like other Dalit activists, Ambedkar emphasises that the untouchables have not always been untouchable since time immemorial, but rather that this terrible social category evolved over the course of time. Ambedkar argues that the

"Broken Men" became untouchable due to the fact that they were Buddhists (whom the Brahmins despised), and unlike the "settled tribe" villagers, did not give up the habit of consuming beef. As Buddhists, the Broken Men did not acknowledge Brahmin supremacy, did not invite Brahmin priests to officiate at their religious ceremonies, and regarded the Brahmins as impure. Brahims responded, according to Ambedkar, by treating the Broken Men with hatred and contempt and by converting them into untouchables for refusing to leave Buddhism. Ambedkar maintains that the Brahmins gave up eating beef and adopted a vegetarian diet in order to compete with and defeat Buddhism. Budddhism preached against animal sacrifice (a common Brahmin practice at the time), a leading reason for the respect and honour they enjoyed among the general population. The Brahmins therefore decided not only to eliminate animal sacrifice, but to become vegetarian and make the cow a holy animal in order to regain their lost supremacy (despite the fact that the Laws of Manu as interpreted by Ambedkar do not prohibit cow killing or meat eating). Non-Brahmin Hindus soon followed in their wake. However, Ambedkar contends that the "Broken Men" did not and could not imitate the Brahmins for financial reasons- they simply could not afford to abandon eating beef. Thus the practice of eating beef that was previously common to all, with no religious meaning or stigma attached, became sacrilege and part of the untouchability of the former "Broken Men". Ambedkar´s theory of how untouchability developed shows that Dalit activists/ intellectuals actively reject the dominant ideology of untouchability that claims that untouchables are deserving of their abject status due to wrongdoing in their former lives- their ´bad karma´ according to Hindu religious philosophy. It is a clear example of a subaltern group reclaiming its voice and challenging the very ideological foundations of their oppression. The message of Ambedkar is clear: untouchability is an abhorrent socio-political institution (albeit one with religious cover), that needs to be broken. In claiming that the ancestors of India´s untouchables were once Buddhists, Ambedkar also set the stage for his eventual decision to convert to Buddhism, and in the process deal a striking symbolic blow to Hinduism. According to Jaffrelot, Ambedkar´s theory of untouchability is also strategic, aimed at surmounting the divisions among untouchables (by arguing that they all share a common origin as persecuted Buddhists), and situating untouchables firmly outside of Hinduism as a separate ethnic group in Indian society (Jaffrelot 2005: 41).

Ambedkar´s theory of "broken men" has not been confirmed by other scholars, although a number of theorists echoe Ambedkar when they state that the untouchables were at one time *varna* members who lost that status through various transgressions (known as the *vratya* theory) (Leslie 1988: 29). Leslie, who studies a North Indian untouchable group known as the Valmikis,

argues that there is no evidence of untouchabiliy in the earliest Indian religious texts (Leslie 1988: 27). Although specific derogatory caste terms are employed in the ancient texts, such as *candala*, it is only much later that the concepts of *avarna* (without varna) and untouchability emerge clearly, and a group known as the untouchables starts to be distinguished from the Shudra category (Leslie 1988 28-29). It appears that the emergence of a group lower than the Shudras was a gradual process that cannot be pinpointed exactly in time, nor linked with any particular event. Leslie offers the following summary of theories for how this fifth category of untouchables came into being: they were members of the *varna* system who had transgressed its rules; tribal groups who had failed to assimilate; the offspring of illegitimate marriages; or finally, those who were involved in unclean and inauspicious occupations (Leslie 1988: 29). Leslie concludes that untouchability arose as a result of a combination of these explanations, although the economic utility of having a guaranteed source of almost slave labour leads me to speculate that economic motives must also have been present. Leslie also highlights how untouchables themselves have made sense of untouchability. She points out that untouchable communities across India have constructed origin myths for themselves that glorify their ancient pasts, and make clear that they once enjoyed high status before their ´fall from grace´. These origin myths typically revolve around the following story: there were once two brothers, whom are asked to remove a dead cow by God or the king. The elder brother states that the younger brother will do it, but God does hear him correctly and thinks that he said his younger brother is a Brahmin (Leslie 1998: 43). The end result is that the younger brother is declared a Brahmin, and the elder brother becomes an untouchable. The moral of the story is that the elder brother was demoted through no fault of his own, punished because of a simple misunderstanding. As with Ambedkar´s exegesis of untouchability, this common myth of origin can be considered an ideological counter-offensive against the ideology of *karma*, and the blame inherent in it. It communicates the following message, to both untouchables and other Indians: we were once valued as human beings and enjoyed social prestige, but lost our status through a silly mistake. Our current low status is therefore not justifiable and is indeed grossly morally unjust. Although the cow-based origin myth was not mentioned to me during my research among the Ravidassias, a common theme in their conversations was their contention that the untouchables are the original, rightful inhabitants of India (*Mulnivasi*), who were conquered and enslaved by the invading Ayrans. Leslie is highly critical of the Aryan invasion theory, calling it a myth that is not supported by most Western research (Leslie 1998: 45). She argues that this myth is based on an erroneous interpretation of the work of Western scholars, who have drawn attention to the fact that Sanskrit did not originate in India, but came from West (Leslie 1998: 45). Regardless of the status of the Aryan invasion

theory among Indologists and historians, it is clear that for Dalits, this theory has great appeal. It explains their history of subjugation, and allows them to feel pride in a glorious past in which they not only enjoyed equality, but ruled over the land. The Aryan invasion theory speaks to the fundamental need of an oppressed group to find reasons for *why* they are considered inferior, when this view patently contradicts what they know about themselves: that they have the "same blood" as other Indians (as several of my interviewees pointed out), yet are deprived of the same status. Several Ravidassias informed me that prior to the Aryan invasion, Dalits possessed a thriving, prosperous civilisation. Their culture, they argue, was subsequently destroyed by the Aryans, implying that modern Dalits must reclaim that culture and re-establish their ´true´, proper status in India. As a modern myth of origin, the Aryan invasion theory satisfies Dalit desires to overturn their history of degradation and emerge triumphant in a new era.

The Practice of Untouchability

Once untouchability came into being, how was it enforced, and the ´purity´ of the higher castes maintained? In the past, even the shadow of an untouchable was considered to be polluting, and in some villages, in addition to being forbidden from entering higher-caste areas (except of course, to carry out their impure tasks), untouchables were required to walk announcing their presence by carrying a stick with small bells, so as not to inadvertently contaminate someone of a higher caste (Dube 2005: 217). Depending upon the region, Dalits were also required to carry mud pots to spit in, so that their saliva would not touch the ground and possibly pollute a high-caste individual (Dube 2005: 217). As Leslie succinctly states: "the primary concern of the higher castes was to keep the ´untouchable´ person at a distance from their (auspicious and highly valued) religious centre while taking full advantage of his or her (inauspicious and devalued) labour" (Leslie 1998: 35). The litany of historic exclusionary and discriminatory practices is lengthy, ranging from residential segregation, confinement to the most infertile land, prohibition from entering temples, studying in local schools and owning land, to being forbidden from wearing certain types of clothing or colours reserved exclusively for the upper castes (most famously, Dalit women in the south of India were forbidden from wearing blouses along with their saris and Dalit men from wearing shoes). Dalits were strictly prevented from eating, smoking or sharing utensils with the upper castes, as well as drawing water from upper-caste wells. Many upper caste people still refuse to accept food or water from an ´untouchable´, and will serve them food and drink in specially reserved utensils. In tea stalls, it was common practice for separate cups to be used for Dalits; upper caste families would also set aside certain utensils for their Dalit servants. Although I am employing the past tense, these practices have sadly yet to

disappear from all parts of India. One of my interviewees in the Punjab proudly informed me that in her family, the same cups were used by all, i.e. including their Dalit servants, demonstrating just how widespread the practice was (and perhaps is) in the Punjab. The unspoken implication was that her family was more advanced than most, revealing that shared cups has yet to become the norm. The following first-person example from Kerala, a highly literate but also caste-stratified state, demonstrates the persistence of these pollution taboos with respect to Dalits, even after years of campaigning around Dalit rights. The words come from a Hindu Dalit man interviewed by William Dalrymple in his book "Nine Lives: In search of the Sacred in Modern India":

"There was one Brahmin last month who worshipped me during a *theyyam* (a ritualised dance performed by Dalits in which religious stories are enacted and it is believed that the dancers are temporarily possessed by the gods)….Then the following week I went to his house to dig a well as an ordinary labourer…he gave us lunch. But we had to take it outside on the veranda and there was no question of being allowed into his house. He used an extra-long ladle so that he could serve us from a safe distance. And he used plantain leaves so that he could throw them away when we had finished: he didn´t want to eat from anything we had touched…Even the water was left for us in a separate bucket and he did not allow us to draw water from the well we had dug for him. This happens even now, in this age! I can dig a well in a Namboodiri (Brahmin) house and still be banned from drawing water from it" (Dalrymple 2009: 37-38) (description of *theyyam* added)

It is important to point out that untouchability is not confined to upper-caste/untouchable relations. It is also practiced by the ´untouchables´ themselves, who have their own internal social status hierarchy determining who can accept water, food, and daughters from whom. Thus, in the excellent (translated) oral history of an untouchable woman from Tamil Nadu of the Paraiyar caste, we learn that the Paraiyars do not accept food cooked by members of *jatis* considered lower to them (Viramma *et al*. 1997: 106). The logic of untouchability is one of exclusion, assertion of superiority, and boundary setting at all points along the graded hierarchy. The ´untouchables´ are therefore twice victims of this pernicious system: they are excluded by all ´caste´ Indians, and by internalising the logic of untouchability, exclude certain categories of their own people in turn. It

is for this reason that Ambedkar and other Dalit leaders sought to unite all Dalits under one roof, and defeat both sub-caste divisions, as well as divisions among different Dalit castes. [9]

Throughout Indian history, to be a Dalit was to be synonymous with crushing poverty, humiliating dependence on the upper castes for one´s livelihood, the most menial and degrading tasks, enforced deference, unpunished violence by upper castes, illiteracy- and if a Dalit woman, being subject to routine sexual harassment, abuse and even rape by dominant caste men. One of my male Ravidassia interviewees referred to the ease and sense of entitlement with which upper caste men abuse Dalit women- and the powerlessness of Dalit women (and by extension their men), in the following terms: "in the fields they take them like lollipops in their hands. Our women can do nothing". Viramma, the Dalit woman from Tamil Nadu mentioned above, vividly described one such incident with an upper-caste man, and the subsequent sense of impotency that both she and her husband experienced in the face of upper-caste impunity:

"A civil servant was sitting at a table near the window. When he saw me walking past, he signalled to me to come in. I said to myself that he was a top man, a Sir, a civil servant, and I should stop out of respect. Maybe he wanted me to sweep the pavement or the courtyard. I went into the room, covering my back with my sari and putting my palms together respectfully. And what did I see when I raised my eyes? His private part! A fat private part! He was holding it in one hand and he had money in the other. I screamed. I was trembling all over and I didn´t know how to get out of the situation….I walked out screaming, without daring to tell the whole story….We Paratchi have the reputation of being easy women who´ll jump into bed with anyone if they whistle…It´s the same in the hospital. All of them make make passes at us, from the doctor to the sweeper…We´re harassed non-stop down there. But we don´t dare shout or make a make a scandal: we´d be called liars, our names would be crossed off the hospital registers and we wouldn´t be given any more treatment" (Viramma 1997: 51-52)

Viramma then proceeds to describe in great detail the enraged reaction of her husband, who despite his rage, is powerless to avenge his honour:

[9] For a good discussion of the role of sub-castes within the Mahar caste in Mahahastra, see Vasant Moon´s authobiography "Growing up Untouchable in India".

"I was on my way back to the *ceri* (untouchable hamlet) feeling very ashamed, when I saw my husband on the road, drunk and with a knife in his hand…The news had got round quickly and my husband, upset at finding out what had happened to me, and angry that it should have happened to his wife, had gone drinking to get the courage up to take everything he was feeling in his heart out on this guy. A Pariah had no rights in those days; he´d always lie flat on his stomach in front of his masters…A group of old men had calmed down my husband…´Forget that man, he didn´t even touch your wife! And even if he did do something, you know perfectly well that we couldn´t do anything against him, he´s high caste!" (Viramma 1997: 53).

Given this long history of oppression, and more recently, manipulation and appropriation by upper caste political leaders, starting from the 1960´s a new term has emerged to describe the untouchables, one that is intimately linked to political struggle and human rights. That term is Dalit, chosen by ex-untouchables themselves, which is variously translated from its Sanskrit roots as ´downtrodden´, ´supressed´, ´broken´and ´ground down´ (Zelliot 2010). Gandhi´s chosen term for the Dalits- *Harijan* or ´children of God´, intended to bring Dalits securely into the Hindu fold, was considered patronising by Dalits themselves and found little currency among them. Many Dalits rejected the term, not only because it had not been coined by them, but because in some parts of India, it bears the connotation of a child born without a known father- i.e. a bastard (Leslie 1988: 31). It apparently has its origins in the *Devadasi* phenomenon, whereby poor, young Dalit girls are ´married´ to a deity, or ´dedicated´ to a temple, but in fact engage in religiously sanctioned prostitution. Their offspring are known as *Harijan*, or children of God (Leslie 1988: 31). Vasant Moon, in his translated autobiography "Growing up Untouchable in India", describes how he was even denied a scholarship for rejecting the term (Moon 2000: 37). Today, the appellation is almost obsolete. Leslie cites only two examples, from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu respectively, where former untouchable groups use the Harijan label (Leslie 1998: 31). Dalit, by contrast, although not employed by all Scheduled Caste individuals across India, has become the identity label of choice for the more activist elements of the community (indeed it was first popularised by the radical Dalit Panthers group), a term that expresses their suffering- and critically, their desire to break free from discrimination and achieve equality. For many Dalit activists, the term denotes both awareness of their oppression, consciousness-raising with respect to their rights, and protest (Ambedkar.org, 2001). Although in official discourse and in the press

(both English-language and vernacular) use of the term ´Scheduled Caste´ continues to dominate, Dalit has gained increasing currency in recent years.

Untouchability was officially abolished in 1947 with the adoption of the Indian Constitution. At the same time, in an attempt to remedy centuries of discrimination, the Constitution established quotas in government jobs and state-funded educational institutions for both ex-untouchables and aboriginals (scheduled tribes in Indian discourse). A certain number of electoral seats were also reserved for Dalits, to ensure their effective political representation. A minimum of 15% of seats/posts were reserved for the Scheduled Castes, an official category coined by the British to refer to the Dalits and continued in Indian public policy (the British had earlier referred to the Dalits as the ´depressed classes´). Further quotas of twenty-seven percent were later introduced for the ´other backward classes´, commonly known as OBC´s, intermediate castes who have similarly suffered from poverty and caste discrimination, although not so harshly as the Dalits. Although initially these quotas were designed to benefit only Hindu untouchables, in subsequent years the benefits of reservations were extended to Sikh Dalits in 1956 and neo-Buddhist Dalits in 1990 (Indian Express, 2006). At the state level, each state has the ability to set its own reservation policies, leading to varying proportions of reservations across India and different caste and religious groups being included in state SC and OBC ´schedules´ or lists (in some states the SC quota is higher than 15%) . In the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, more than 50% of educational seats and government jobs are reserved for the SC´s, ST´s, and OBC´s (reservations currently stand at 69%), despite a Supreme Court ruling stipulating that reservations should not exceed 50%. Several states have also introduced quotas for the Muslim and Christian minorities.

However, despite untouchability being declared illegal and reservations in higher education and government employment introduced, the concept of untouchablility remains very much alive, and many outlawed practices persist, especially in rural areas, where seventy percent of Indians live. Thus one regularly reads in the press of Dalits being refused entry to certain temples, or denied the right to serve on temple management boards, and of persistent discrimination against Dalits in public schools. One example is a controversy that erupted in 2008 in a village in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, in which dominant-caste schoolchildren refused to eat the food prepared by a Dalit cook in a state school, resulting in the female Dalit cook being fired (BBC, 2008). Wells and cremation grounds in most Indian villages remain segregated and

inter-caste marriages are rare, particularly between the opposite poles of the caste system, with non-conformists often violently punished or even killed for breaking sacrosanct caste barriers. However, casteism in not just a ´rural problem´. As Mitra Channa illustrates, casteism remains deeply entrenched even among the educated elite, who may overtly profess liberal views while remaining consciously or unconsciously wedded to casteist stereotypes and subtle discriminatory practices (Channa 2005: 51). Channa demonstrates how anti-Dalit stereotypes are endemic and extremely disparaging. For example, Dalit women are considered to possess an indecent, virtueless, voracious sexuality (their bodies are still regarded as ´common property´ on the part of dominant-caste men), and negative personal qualities are attributed to Dalits such as being "unpredictable, malevolent, spiteful, dirty and dangerous" (Channa 2005: 51). Juergensmeyer adds that Dalits are seen as "child-like, dumb and unclean" (Juergensmeyer 2004: 45). Physically, Dalits have a reputation for being ´dark´ and ´ugly´, for Indian society privileges and indeed exalts ´fair´ skin, especially for women. So deeply rooted is the stereotype that Dalits are dark and unattractive, that in the Punjab, it is said that if a Dalit girl is beautiful or a Dalit boy tall and strong, they must be "the progeny of a Jat", the dominant caste in the Punjab (Dagar & Kumar 2004: 286).This clearly shows the deeply held belief that Dalits are an ´inferior´, ´defective´ community incapable of producing strong, beautiful offspring. Dalits are also equated with socially uncivilised and depraved behaviour. Thus, Channa reveals that common everyday forms of speech such as "do not behave like a *Chamar*" or you look like a *bhangan* (female sweeper) reflect the overwhelmingly negative qualities attributed to Dalits (Channa 2005: 57), which are then used as insults to keep dominant caste individuals in line. Channa further emphasises that all terms associated with Dalits (including traditional caste names such as *´Chamar´*), are derogatory and offensive, akin to the term of abuse ´nigger´ when used by other caste groups (Channa 2005: 57). Thus legally, untouchability may no longer exist, but socially, untouchability remains the cornerstone of a caste system that continues to structure Indian society, its oppressive tentacles reaching into every aspect of public and private life. A democratic constitution and government quotas have not been able to erase Dalit stigma, nor improve the social status of the bulk of Dalits- indeed, Channa points out that the derisive term of "quota doctors" has been coined to refer to Dalits who have entered the medical profession through reservations (Channa 2005: 59). Furthermore, available data suggests that the reservations policy to date has not succeeded in recruiting significant numbers of Dalits at the higher levels of government service. Basing himself on national data collected by the Backward Classes (Mandal) Commission established by the Indian government, Panini writes that only 5.6% of Class I civil servants came from the Scheduled Castes (Dalits) and Scheduled Tribes in

1980 (Panini 1996: 33). He states: “In other words, the upper and middle castes form nearly 90 per cent of the Class I services although according to the Mandal Commission they constitute not more than about 20 per cent of the total population of the country…it is a well-known fact that till recently there was not a single SC/ST officer among the 40 Secretaries at the top of the bureaucratic hierarchy of the Central government… (Panini 1996: 33). He goes on to stress that the upper and middle castes in Delhi dominate the country´s most prestigious managerial, administrative and professional jobs, a process he terms “caste clustering” (Panini 1996: 33). Such “caste clustering” is also present in the business world, where the leading industrialists and entrepreneurs almost invariably hail from established trading castes, such as the Marwaris, Aroras, Parsis and Chettiars (Panini 1996: 34). Thus, we can conclude that caste-based discrimination remains widespread, although it is increasingly less socially and politically acceptable thanks to the campaigning of Dalit movements and the rise of Dalit political parties. The legal measures promulgated by the Indian government, such as reservations and the Prevention of Atrocities Act, constitute important first steps towards protecting Dalits and achieving legal equality. However, the pace of social change with respect to oppressed groups is always slower than that of legal advances- social equality usually being the last hurdle conquered by discriminated groups. Laws signal important changes in official discourse, but changing mentalities will be a long-term struggle. Evidently much remains to be done before full equality is achieved.

Caste Beyond Hinduism: the specificities of caste in the Punjab and in Sikhism

It is important to underline that although the ideology of caste is based on Hindu religious principles and texts, casteism is present in all religious communities in India, including those in which caste is officially condemned theologically, such as in Islam, Christianity and Sikhism, the majority faith of the state of Punjab. All three religions officially espouse equality and yet are marked by caste in practice. Muslim and Christian converts from Hinduism continue to be distinguished along caste lines, with low-caste stigma often permanently following the convert into the new religion. In South India, separate upper and lower caste churches and burial grounds are common and most ´upper caste´ Christians would never dream of marrying their children to ex-untouchable Christians. Dalit Christians accuse the Catholic Church in particular of being dominated by upper caste priests and nuns, despite the fact that the majority of Indian Catholics

are low caste converts. Similarly, among Muslims, there exists a caste system that is widely acknowledged. Ambedkar, in his publication "Pakistan or the Partition of India", highlights how Muslims have a parallel caste system that is almost identical to that of the Hindus, with finely graded social categories within the two main social divisions of upper and lower caste Muslims. He points out that Indian Muslims also practice untouchability and caste endogamy (Ambedkar: 1946). Ashraf Muslims claim superior status due to their purported Arab ancestry and their alleged descendence from Prophet Mohammed´s family. Ajlaf Muslims are considered Indian converts (and hence former Hindus), from "the clean occupational castes" (Fazal Indian Express Sept 06 2006). At the bottom of the Muslim caste hierarchy are the Arzals, the untouchables of the Muslim community, who were forbidden from entering mosques or being buried along with their fellow Muslim brothers and sisters (ibid). Thus caste can be considered an Indian and more broadly South Asian social stratification phenomenon in which lack of religious sanction does not prevent its flourishing. It is how caste is manifested and lived in different regional and religious contexts that makes the institution of caste in India extraordinarily complex. Thus a caste group that enjoys high status in one region, may be considered untouchable in another. A number of scholars have noted that there exists wide variation in the practice of caste in India, as might be expected in a country that is incredibly diverse. For example, Dumont mentions that "there are notable differences in the intensity with which Untouchability is felt and codified. The south is much more traditional than the north…" (Dumont 1966: 96). Dumont also asserts that in the Punjab, untouchability has been relatively weak, which he attributes to the influence of Islam (Dumont 1966: 96). Before Partition in 1947, the Punjab was historically majority Muslim and hence Muslim culture predominated- it was common, for example, for both Hindus and Sikhs to worship Muslim *pirs* or saints. However, ethnographic evidence from Urvashi Butalia´s groundbreaking book on Partition ("The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partion of India") belies Dumont´s assertion. From interviews with Partition survivors who once lived in undivided Punjab, it emerges that Muslims as a group were treated as untouchables by their Sikh and Hindu neighbours, leading one to conclude that caste and untouchability have long profoundly marked Punjabi society and its collective psyche:

"If they would come to our houses, we would have two utensils in one corner of the house, and we would tell them, pick these up and eat in them and they would then have to wash them and keep them aside…and if my mother or sister have to give him food, they will more or less throw the *roti* (unleavened bread) from such a distance, fearing that they may touch the dish and

become polluted….We, if a Muslamaan was coming along the road, and we shook hands with him, and we had, say a box of food or something in our hand, that would then become soiled and we would not eat it: if we are holding a dog in one hand and food in the other, there´s nothing wrong with that food. But if a Musalmaan would come and shake hands our *dadis* (grandmothers) and mothers would say son, don´t eat this food, it has become polluted….they would eat in our houses, but we would not eat in theirs…." (Butalia 1998: 221-222).

Thus it is clear that the Muslim majority that existed before Partition did not dilute or weaken notions of purity and pollution. Partition radically changed the demographic composition of the Punjab, leading almost all Hindus and Sikhs in what was western Punjab (now Pakistan) to migrate to eastern Punjab, where Hindus now formed the majority. Its present Sikh majority is the result of the modification of state boundaries in 1966, when out of the former large Punjab, three new states were created: Haryana, Himachal Pradesh (both largely Hindi speaking), and a now truncated, but Sikh majority and Punjabi-speaking Punjab (Sikhs constitute approximately sixty-three percent of the total Punjabi population and dominate especially in rural areas).

While Juergensmeyer supports the thesis of Dumont, he also maintains that the predominance of Jats in the Punjabi population can explain the unique manifestation of caste in the Punjab (Juergensmeyer 1988: 5). Thus, in contrast to most other regions in India, where Brahmins are the undisputed pinnacles of the local caste hierarchy, in the Punjab, this place is occupied by the Jats, a caste of farmers which has achieved both economic and social dominance through landownership. Indeed, in the Punjab, the traditional *varna* model of Brahmanical supremacy is reversed: Srinivas point out that Punjabi Brahmins, although enjoying ritual purity, have a low secular status, possessing "neither wealth nor learning" (Srinivas 1966: 18). Usually the agents of transmitting dominant Hindu culture to the lower castes, in the Punjab, it is the Jats who are culturally powerful and whose lifestyle and values are imitated by other caste groups- including the Brahmins (Srinivas 1966: 10, 21). Thus the superior ritual status of Brahmins in the Punjabi context does not translate into economic power and social prestige- the Jats monopolise this position due to their ownership of arable land, forcing all other castes into subservient patron-client relationships with them (known as the *jajmani* system). Far from enjoying the automatic social respect and deference with which they are accorded in other Indian regions, according to Paul Singh, in the Punjab the reputation of Brahmins is one of treachery, for it is said that the Brahmin cook of Guru Gobind Singh (the final Guru of the Sikhs) betrayed him by handing over

his sons to the Muslim rulers who were intent on suppressing the Sikhs at the time (Paul Singh 1977: 82).

The vast majority of Jats are Sikh, a religion which Juergensmeyer and other scholars stress has placed less emphasis on the concepts of ritual pollution and karmic retribution than Hinduism (Juergensmeyer 1988: 6). The role of caste in the Sikh faith is a complex and sensitive one, for there exists a large gap between theory and practice, which many ´official´ accounts and representatives of Sikhism ignore, at times even denying that the problem of caste exists- or if acknowledging that it does, allege that this is due to Hindu cultural influence. Sikhism was born in the Punjab in 1467, influenced by, and at the same time critical of key elements of both Islam and Hinduism. The normative teachings of Sikhism emphasize caste equality. The founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak, was categorical in his rejection of caste, stressing the equality of all human beings before God. Many of his hymns allude to the futility of caste distinctions: "God will not ask man of his birth. He will ask him what he has done" (Indera P. Singh 1977: 66). The tenth and final Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, is renowned for further breaking down caste barriers by creating the Sikh *Khalsa* or ´brotherhood of the pure´ in 1699, a new institution of orthodox Sikhs united through a ceremony of baptism (*amrit*) and commitment to five Sikh symbols of identity (known as the Five K´s), the most visible and characteristic symbol being that of uncut hair worn in a turban (*kesh*). In the *Khalsa*, caste was meant to be irrelevant, as reflected in the adoption of the generic surname Singh for all male Sikh *amritdharis* (those who have undergone the baptism ritual), and Kaur for female initiates. Indeed, it is often trumpeted that out of the five original *Khalsa* baptised individuals, known as the *Panj Piare* in Punjabi, three men came from the lower castes, although none were Dalits (Puri 2004: 184). Also stressed are the egalitarian Sikh religious institutions of *langar*, in which all Sikhs sit on the floor, and share a common meal, which in theory can be prepared and served by any devotee, and the lack of a hereditary priesthood restricted to one class of people, as in Hinduism, where Brahmins enjoy a monopoly on performing religious tasks, and often refuse to serve lower caste Hindus. The *Guru Granth Sahib*, the holy book of the Sikhs, even includes the writings of Dalit poet-saints such as Ravidass and Kabir, further bolstering its anti-caste credentials. Thus the theory and ideals of Sikhism strongly favour equality- both of caste and of gender. The gap between theory and practice, however, yawns wide, a contradiction that is felt particularly intensely by Dalits, many of whom have converted to Sikhism without reaping the hoped-for rewards of equality and fellowship.

Harish Puri argues that the emergence of Sikhism created a parallel Sikh caste hierarchy that modified rather than abolished the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy (Puri 2004: 191). Although all ten Sikh Gurus were Hindu Khatris by birth, an urban mercantile upper caste, the culture of Sikhism came to be profoundly influenced by the values and ethos of the Jats, an agricultural caste who took pride in manual labour, which was elevated to one of the three holy injunctions of Sikhism by the Gurus: *kirat karo* (do labour) (Puri 2004: 195). Puri maintains that the Hindu *varna* order was altered by the Jats, who managed to achieve supremacy despite following an occupation that was not normally considered pure or prestigious in the traditional Hindu ranking. Yet this altering did not end caste distinctions or prejudice against the former untouchables (Puri 2004: 196). Puri cites historical examples that show Dalit converts to Sikhism were still seen first and foremost as Dalits, and were not welcomed as equals into the Sikh *panth*, which can be roughly translated as ´society´, or in Juergensmeyer´s definition, "the fellowship of those who revere a lineage of spiritual authority" (Juergensmeyer 1988: 2). Thus Puri notes how historically *Mazhabi* Sikhs (the name given to Dalit converts to Sikhism from the sweeper Chuhra caste), were forbidden from entering the *Harmindir Sahib* or Golden Temple, the most important religious shrine of the Sikhs and the headquarters of the Sikh faith, located in Amritsar, Punjab (Puri 2004: 206). Indeed, the very fact that Dalit converts to Sikhism were assigned a special name denotes their inferior and stigmatised status within the community. Their offerings of *karah prasad* (blessed, consecrated food) were rejected, and they were denied access to public wells and other facilities by upper caste Sikhs (Puri 2004: 205). Puri makes the important point that although the Sikh gurus preached *spiritual* equality, they did not concern themselves with equality in the social and economic realms, nor did they expect their followers to abandon their caste identities (Puri 2004: 193). Far from undermining caste endogamy, all ten Sikh Gurus married within their caste, and three of the Gurus passed on the Guruship to one of their sons.

In the modern period, although Dalit Sikhs are no longer formally forbidden from entering temples, social segregation remains. Despite some signs of progress, such as the emergence of low caste and Dalit *granthis* (priests who takes care of the gurudwara and officiate during religious services), the overall pattern is one of persistent separation. In most Punjabi villages, apart from continuing residential and well segregation, there are caste-specific gurudwaras (Sikh temples), and Dalit Sikhs complain of instances of humiliation and discrimination in Jat gurudwaras, such as being excluded from preparing and serving *langar* (which is considered a great honour to perform, known as carrying out *seva* or service to the

community) (Puri 2004: 216). Jodhka´s fieldwork in Punjabi villages reveals that a number of subtle and not so subtle strategies are used to exclude Dalits from full and equal participation in gurudwara affairs. His Dalit informants listed the following examples of discrimination: Dalit children being asked to come for *langar* after everyone else had finished eating, Dalits being asked to sit in separate lines for *langar*, not being informed about special programmes and festivities, and being discouraged from distributing *prasad*, the blessed sweet that is distributed to all at the end of the religious service (Jodhka 2002: 1818). The same pattern of discrimination is repeated during the celebration of village festivals and other special events. Dalits report being asked to wait until everyone else has eaten before being allowed to partake of the feast, and twenty-two percent of upper caste respondents admitted that separate utensils were used for Dalits (Jodhka 2002: 1820). In his field study of a Sikh village, Indera Paul Singh found that the local gurudwara used to host the bridegroom´s party during weddings was made available to all castes except Dalit Sikhs (Paul Singh 1977: 76). In his village, there was one common gurudwara for all, but even here social disdain raised its head: he relates how upper-caste Sikhs would sit away from the *Mazhbi* (Dalit) Sikhs (Paul Singh 1977: 77). Social segregation continues even in death: most villages have separate cremation grounds for Dalits and Jats (Puri 2004: 216). In protest against this widespread discrimination and contempt, Dalit Sikhs have sought to erect their own gurudwaras and worship separately as soon as resources permit, in order to assert their autonomy and protect their dignity. Jodkha maintains that the construction of separate gurudwaras has not been met with resistance from either dominant castes or the Sikh establishment, although his Dalit informants state that dominant-caste Sikhs do not accord the same reverence and respect for their gurudwaras as they do for their own (Jodhka 2002: 1818). Puri, on the other hand, argues that the increased visibility and confidence of Dalit communites has led to resentment on the part of Jat Sikhs, who feel threatened by their growing strength and assertiveness. Thus Jat-Dalit tension is a recurrent feature of Punjabi villages, which often erupts into open violence when Jats attempt to forcefully maintain their superiority and keep Dalits ´in their place´. Puri reports that Jats use “rape, gang rape, stripping naked, and parading Dalit women…” as strategies with which to collectively humiliate an entire community and ´teach them a lesson´ (Puri 2004: 218-219). Other examples include the social boycott of Dalits, preventing Dalits from entering their fields, and from cremating their dead in the village (Puri 2004: 219). Finally, in the field of marriage, of critical importance to all Indians, intercaste unions in the Punjab remain taboo, particularly between Jats and Dalits. Thus the common myth that caste is only present in Hindu society, or at least stronger among Hindus, is not borne out by evidence on the ground in Sikh society, where, as Puri states, “it is a very clear and open truth

that Sikh society is as casteist and racist as the Hindu society" (Puri 2004: 220). Indeed, in a blatant contradiction of the commonly asserted claim of the ´casteless´ Sikh society, following Independence, the orthodox Jat Sikh leadership vigorously fought to have Dalit Sikhs included in the list of Scheduled Castes, along with Hindu Dalits, fearing a desertion of the Sikh community by Dalits in favour of Hinduism, in order to be eligible to receive the new benefits (Jodhka 2000: 391). In this case, the orthodox Sikh leadership sacrificed the dominant myth of the absence of caste distinctions in the Sikh *panth* due to their overriding strategic goal of preserving their demographic strength.

Therefore, although perhaps not always adhering as rigidly to the purity-pollution principle as Hindus do, caste discrimination and a casteist mentality are ubiquitous features of both rural and urban Sikh life in the Punjab. The Punjab caste illustrates that Hindu society is not a prerequisite for casteism to prosper, and also alludes to the possibility that caste prejudice can survive and indeed thrive without the purity/pollution dynamic that Dumont insists is central to the caste system. In the contemporary period, despite achieving educational and economic progress, and abandoning traditional ´polluting´ occupations, Punjabi Dalits continue to suffer from social stigma, leading many middle-class Dalits to hide their caste identity. Furthermore, many of the measures intended to improve their status have severe shortcomings. Using data from the Punjab, Jodhka highlights the flaws of the reservations system: Dalit civil servants tend to be recruited at the lowest levels of the hierarchy, being progressively less represented as one ascends the professional ladder. Similarly, local leaders or *sarpanches*, even when the post must by law be filled by a Dalit due to quotas, are often manipulated and controlled by the dominant land-owning Jats, being independent leaders in name only (Jodkha 2000, 2002). The ´Sikh Parliament´ or SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee), the powerful and wealthy body that controls historical gurudwaras in the Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, is Jat dominated, despite the reservation of twenty seats for Dalit Sikhs. According to a study of the caste composition of the SGPC carried out by Narinderpal Singh, 80% of its seats are occupied by Jat Sikhs, 15% by other castes, and just 5% are occupied by Dalit Sikhs (Ram 2007: 4066). Indeed, it is often remarked that upper caste Sikhs tolerate the presence of Dalit *granthis* and *ragis* (musicians), as long as Dalits do not encroach on the Jat monopoly of the SGPC. It is clear therefore that while the Punjab has a unique regional caste hierarchy, the concept and practice of untouchability has been and continues to be as deeply rooted in Sikh society as it is in Hindu dominated regions. Regardless of one´s religious community, Dalits face both overt and

increasingly covert discrimination and prejudice from their religious fellows, and must consequently negotiate having a stigmatised identity in their daily lives.

CASTE POLITICS AND STIGMA IN THE PUNJAB

"Untouchability has ruined the Untouchables, the Hindus and ultimately the nation as well….If the tremendous energy Untouchables are at present required to fritter away in combating the stigma of Untouchability had been saved them, it would have been applied by them to the promotion of education and development of resources of their nation as a whole" B. R. Ambedkar

Introduction

The literature on caste in the Punjab is striking for the sparseness of personal accounts of what it is like to be a Dalit, particularly in the Punjabi diaspora. The research on caste to date has focused on the sociological, structural or theoretical aspects of caste, with the result that actual personal experiences have often been neglected. More effort appears to have been devoted to defining and categorising caste, with the result that the lived reality of untouchablity has not been fully explored. That is, Dalits have tended to be objects as opposed to subjects of academic research. Berreman, a scholar who has highlighted the personal perspectives and experiences of (male) Dalits in India, rightly points out that there is a tendency among academics to intellectualise caste. He asserts that "caste is people, and especially people interacting in characteristic ways and thinking in characteristic ways. Thus, in addition to being a structure, a caste system is a pattern of human relationships and it is a state of mind. That is, it´s for real" (Berreman 1979: 164). A reality that is stark especially for those at the bottom of the social hierarchy, who suffer, in the view of many Dalits, from the largest apartheid system on earth. Ambedkar, in his famous speech "The Annihilation of Caste", similarly argued how "caste is a notion, it is a state of mind" (Ambedkar 1937). This chapter will explore how caste functions in daily social life in a middle class university setting, from the perpective of both Dalits who struggle with a deeply devalued social identity, that is to say, caste stigma, and upper caste Punjabis who benefit from a socially respected and valued identity, or caste privilege. We will learn how Punjabis ask about and let others know about their caste, and see how caste politics is profoundly influenced by gender relations. Like other axes of power, such as gender, race and sexual orientation, caste is always present mentally, although in different ways depending upon one´s subject position, and thus powerfully conditions social life as well as the perception of self and others. My aim in this chapter is to show how this state of mind affects Punjabis of all castes and religions, and to highlight how despite legal advances, caste stigma, a factor often overlooked in ethnographic analyses of caste, profoundly marks low caste individuals and their social

interactions with the upper castes. Caste stigma forces Dalits to formulate various strategies, which are situation dependent, in order to cope with a deeply discredited identity. These strategies, along with their consequences for both Dalits and social interaction with the upper castes, will be identified and discussed. I will also pay particular attention to the impact of anti-Dalit stereotypes on both the self-image of Dalits, and their functioning in the mentality of the upper castes.

Stigma: A framework for understanding contemporary caste relations

In recent decades, there has been a flourishing of Dalit literature and poetry written in a variety of regional Indian languages (particularly from Maharashtra), that powerfully convey the texture of caste in everyday life. Unfortunately, much of this vernacular literature is not available to a Western audience, because it has not been translated into European languages. Two leading Dalit autobiographies, from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu respectively that have been translated into English or French, are Vasant Moon´s "*Growing up Untouchable in India*" and Viramma´s "*Une vie paria*". The former is the account of a devout Ambedkar follower and activist, while the latter is the life story of a non-political Dalit woman. However, both these autobiographies are anchored in poor, rural contexts. First-person accounts of how one negotiates Dalit stigma in an urban, middle-class context are rare. A. Shukra, (a pseudonym), a UK-based Ravidassia who migrated from India as a child, is one of the few Dalits who has revealed how caste stigma functions away from traditional rural life, in both India and the diaspora:

"I was given a Sikh name by my father who perhaps felt that it would be advantageous not to be openly known as a Dalit. In this he was absolutely right" (Shukra 1994: 173).

In the UK, working in a Jat-dominated workplace as an engineer, an environment which he describes as characterised by strong caste feelings, Shukra felt compelled to pass as a Jat, rather than ´come out´ as a Dalit. Shukra concludes that revealing his true identity would simply be too risky and not worth the effort:

"Will I stop ´passing´ myself and one day declare what I am, for example in my office? The answer must be a definitive *no*. From my bitter experience and that of my friends I know what happens when people find out about your caste. I know it is the society which is to blame, but for me I have only one life to live. I must choose my own battleground for struggle and it is not the workplace…" (Shukra 1994: 177).

Although Shukra never mentions the term stigma when describing his experiences, it is clear that untouchable stigma continues to make passing as upper caste an attractive option, and that revealing one´s Dalit identity is perceived to be fraught with risk, particulary in modern urban environments in which it is often assumed that one is non-untouchable. The concept of stigma is key to understanding how caste works on a micro level today, both in India and in the diaspora. With untouchability now abolished and affirmative action programmes in place for Dalits, resulting in a growing Dalit middle class, why does untouchability continue to stick like glue? Erving Goffman´s classic work on stigma: "*Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*" (1963), can make a valuable contribution in teasing out the multiple strands of how caste works in daily social interaction. Although Goffman does not refer to caste in his work, his research being entirely Western in focus, his definition of stigma fits perfectly with the functioning of caste. Goffman defines stigma as an attribute that deeply discredits the individual in question, disqualifying her or him from full social acceptance (Goffman 1990: 11). A stigmatised individual is thus someone who is:

"reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one…By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents…We use specific stigma terms such as cripple, bastard, moron in our daily discourse as a source of metaphor and imagery, typically without giving thought to the original meaning. We tend to impute a wide range of imperfections on the basis of the original one…" (Goffman 1990: 12-16).

Goffman´s definition of stigma corresponds exactly with the ideology of untouchability, in which untouchables are subhuman beings who in addition to being ritually impure and hence inferior, are seen as fundamentally flawed in terms of their personal qualities and inherently unworthy. Their pejorative caste names are the stigma terms used as constant reminders of their low social status. Goffman outlines three different types of stigma: physical deformities of the body, blemishes of individual character (ex: prisoners, alcoholics), and the ´tribal´ stigmas of "race, nation, and religion, these being stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family" (Goffman 1990: 14). Dalits fit into the category of a ´tribal´ or ethnic stigma, since their stigma is inherited and passed on through birth. Goffman further distinguishes between two types of stigmatised individuals: those who are discredited and those who are discreditable. Thus, the discredited are those whose ´failing´ or ´defect´ is immediately visible and known to all- as in the case of the physically handicapped or black people in white societies. The discreditable, on the other hand, are those who are presumed to be ´normal´, but whose actual social identities do not match the assumed norm. Here, Dalits can potentially fit into either category depending upon where they live, geography therefore determining how they can potentially respond to caste stigma. In a village setting, in which the entire community knows the caste status of all villagers, Dalits are clearly discredited, and the option of passing is not available. However, caste stigma is still resisted, as shown by the American scholar Dr. Berreman. Berreman studied how Dalits sought to escape "stigmatised ethnic identity" in an isolated sub-Himalayan village. His research reveals that untouchables employed a variety of strategies in order to escape from grinding low caste stigma- ranging from moving outside of the village, minimising contact with the upper castes, using mental illness as an escape route, to turning to religion, and in particular the esteemed status of shaman in order to free oneself from the social role of village untouchability (Berreman 1979: 164-177). Although untouchables did not openly revolt against the caste system, and most accommodated to their stigma, Berreman concludes that "every opportunity is taken to utilize any crack in the wall of oppression to mitigate it or escape it. The most ingenious and persistent mechanisms imaginable are utilized to manipulate the system and to avoid the worst of its consequences" (Berreman 1979: 167).

Outside of small villages, however, the situation is quite different- for the first time, untouchables can enjoy a degree of anonymity unimaginable in village India. In urban and semi-urban India, the caste identity of individuals often cannot be immediately deduced, especially for those Dalits who are educated, have abandoned their traditional occupations, and have entered

workplaces which are mixed caste wise. Here Dalits will have the option of passing, and indeed constructing a new identity for themselves, but they will also face the dilemma of how to deal with their caste identity in a whole new range of social situations. Berreman argues that passing is the "most universal of all escapes from stigmatized identity", and that when given the opportunity to do so, individuals attempt to shed their stigma (Berreman 1979: 167). However, he does not discuss *how* individuals will manage this new passing strategy. Goffman´s key argument is that discredited individuals must manage tension generated during social contacts with ´normals´ (due to the discomfort that their differentness provokes), whereas discreditable individuals need to above all manage information. Potentially discreditable individuals thus face the thorny issue in each social encounter and with each new acquaintance of whether to reveal or not to reveal, and if so, how, to whom, and when. Not knowing *how* upper caste individuals will respond to their stigma generates insecurity, since, as Goffman points out, former untouchables can never be sure what their upper caste peers are *truly* thinking about them. Stigmatised individuals also are much more self-conscious in mixed contacts, aware of their need to ´perform´ in a certain way, performances that are not necessary for the non-stigmatised (Goffman 1963: 14). These observations, although based on American stigmatised social groups, hold true for Indian Dalits, who likewise face chronic insecurity regarding how they are really viewed, and whether they are truly respected by ´touchable´ Indians. In the urban middle-class context in which I carried out my fieldwork, Dalits fit the latter category of potentially discreditable individuals who have the option to pass, but also, the option to reveal in certain circumstances- passing is by nature complex and highly situation dependent. Stigmatised individuals, therefore, whether discredited or discreditable, need to *manage* their identities, and develop strategies for coping with their stigma in daily social life. This is especially so for those who are discreditable and whose identities can be ´spoiled´ at any time. It is to these delicate identity acrobatics that I will now turn. In the following section, I will discuss the identity management strategies that Dalit students and teachers employ in the Punjab, followed by examples of how upper-caste individuals perceive former untouchables.

Dalit Identity Management Strategies: The Invisible yet Omnipresent Presence of Caste in Daily Life

My interviews with educated, English-speaking Punjabi Dalits reveal that many Dalits who have broken out of poverty and entered into the professional world or higher education prefer to leave

their Dalit identity behind- or at least ensure that their origins do not become widely known. Indeed, so strong and deeply rooted are anti-Dalit stereotypes, that if a person is highly educated, well dressed, or well off, it is automatically assumed that they are upper caste- Dalit and wealth being inconceivable. Former untouchables continue to be equated with poverty, menial jobs, being poorly dressed and uncouth- essentially apart from respectable society. Thus Dalits studying at university or working as professionals face a general culture saturated in negative stereotypes and condescending attitudes. The policy of reservations has opened up the playing field to Dalits, but the rules of the game are still dictated by the upper castes, and the dominant culture is shaped by them. Furthermore, reservations have generated a great deal of resentment and jealousy on the part of the upper castes, worsening Dalit stigma, for not only are Dalits unworthy, they are now ´stealing´ ´our´ jobs and university places. Many upper castes maintain that Dalits have benefited unfairly from reservations and displaced more worthy candidates (under the reservations policy the minimum grade threshold is set lower for SC candidates). Since Dalits are invariably a minority in such institutions, openly assuming a Dalit identity exposes one to possible rejection, and a loss of social status and respect. While this is a far cry from the social boycotting applied to ´uppity´ Dalits in villages as collective punishment for the assertion of their rights, it is no less discriminatory and personally wounding. Growing economic prosperity has not been equalled by an increase in social standing. Indeed, it brings with it a new set of identity dilemmas. Assumed to be upper caste due to their middle class status, they in theory fit in, but in fact know that they are out of place and ´discreditable´ at any time. Conscious that their identity continues to be devalued and considered inferior, individual Dalits pursue a variety of strategies in negotiating social stigma. This means that for Dalits, social relations can be fraught with uncertainty and anxiety- marked by fear they will be discovered if they are passing, or the fear of rejection and a change (demotion) in their status if they choose to disclose their caste. Although my interview results concur with Berreman´s in revealing that passing is the most common strategy adopted by ex-untouchables, there is a new trend, still very much in the minority, in which some Dalits no longer seek to pass. A strategy employed particularly by Dalit activists and those who are more conscious of the Dalit movement involves declaring one´s caste identity openly to all- what I call the *pride strategy*. One male student and active *sevadar* (volunteer) at a Ravidassia *dera* (religious centre) makes it clear that he is Chamar in order to avoid overt casteism:

“My friends according to me are just like me. But five fingers are not similar. One of them, he once said, pointing out someone else, ´he is behaving like an untouchable´. I said to him, don´t say that, you are also attacking me. So I say I am Chamar to prevent anti-SC comments” (Ravi, male university student, Ravidassia)

Even in choosing to be open and proud, Dalits experience doubt regarding how trustworthy and non-prejudiced their friends and acquaintances really are. Ravi expressed that he knew that in front of him, his classmates would not speak openly about how they felt about the lower castes. “I really want to examine what is in his heart”, he affirmed when speaking about his friends, revealing the need to be seen and treated as a full human being, and not perceived simply through the limiting prism of ´Chamar´.

Most Dalits are more cautious and declare only to those individuals whom they feel that they can trust and when they feel it is safe to do so. I term this the *wait and see strategy*. One boy described how he had learnt from his brother how to use ´testing´ in order to detect casteist individuals and ascertain who was truly pro or anti-Chamar:

“I use testing. Whenever I am interacting with a new person then I ask them: what are your views on Chamars? For example, I don´t like Chamars, what are your views and they say- the real comes. Most of the boys pass this test, but the girls fail. Most boys say, no problem with all communities. Most girls say, also we don´t like these Chamars. We don´t want them in our group. Girls´ groups are based on same village and same caste. Only five, six girls have passed this test” (Suraj male university student, Hindu)

In Suraj´s case, his testing technique is used to filter out casteist individuals and select true friends to whom he reveals his caste. Aware that most upper caste people will lie about their views on ex-touchables, he poses as upper caste in order to see how they truly perceive Chamars. This strategy seemed to work for him, he saw it as protecting himself from casteism, although it also exposed him to high levels of prejudice that he admitted often discouraged him and made him feel down.

Whether one chooses to pursue a pride strategy or a wait and see strategy, declaring one´s caste is not a comfortable or carefree process for Dalits (as it is for those who are upper caste), for it can provoke bigoted and unpleasant responses. One interviewee describes the casteist mentality he faces when he discloses that he is Chamar:

"My schooling was done in top class schools in Ludhiana and graduate school in Mumbai University. My accent, my English, when I´m talking to anyone, more than 90% think I am from an upper caste. When I say I am Chamar, the next question is: leave it, forget it. They don´t believe it. Why are you saying like this (they say). It comes in my mind these people think Chamars are just like animals" (Harwinder male software engineer, Ravidassia)

Another girl related how the attitude and behaviour of her secondary school biology teacher radically changed after she revealed her caste, leaving her feeling discriminated against and powerless:

"She was asking for the caste. I tell her, Maam, I am SC. Then she told me- really, you´re SC? Because I´m a good student. Then the next day, she give more attention to other students, not me. She didn´t send me to the science fair. She belongs to caste Arora. I did not complain- I feel, what can I do, I can´t fight against my teacher" (Pinky female teacher of mathematics and science, Ravidassia)

If revealing one is Chamar can provoke such strong reactions, one can imagine the hidden shock and astonishment that many upper-caste individuals feel when they learn that the apparently ´normal´ person before them is in fact an ex-untouchable. It should come as no surprise therefore that a majority of middle class Dalits choose to pass in order to avoid such painful and awkward experiences. The *passing strategy* appears to be widespread. My interviewees who were open about their caste repeatedly underlined the fact that they are in the minority, and stressed that

most of their Dalit peers prefer to pass to varying degrees. There is thus no one passing strategy but rather different ways, means and intensity of passing:

"Two or three more Ravidassias are in my class, but they don´t want to show they are. But I say I am Ravidassia with pride. I always encourage my fellow Ravidassia students but they don´t want to be with me- they don´t want to be seen with me. They don´t want others to come to know. They are impotent persons. If you are not living freely, why are you living?" (Ravi male university student, Ravidassia)

Ravi further pointed out that Ravidassia students are reluctant to join the newly formed Shri Guru Ravidass Youth Federation. Therefore, in choosing to be open, in addition to facing greater social vulnerability in dominant society, one also risks being ostracised by one´s fellow Dalits who prefer to practice identity avoidance.

My interviewees stated that many Dalits choose to pass completely as upper caste when they reach high positions, implying that wealthy Dalits often abandon their community and the stigma attached to it when given the opportunity to do so. One common passing strategy involves adopting upper-caste surnames:

"In Chandigarh there a lot of Class I officers, IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officers who change their last name. One girl at my university, she has changed her last name to a Bania *got* (a *got* is a lineage that indicates caste- the Bania are a respected business caste). My uncle in Chandigarh has changed his last name from Baswal to Bansal, a Bania *got*. He is an inspector in a bank. Even his nameplate at home says Bansal. They take SC reservations, but then they change identity as officers" (Ravi male university student, Ravidassia)

"Some top-class officers from our community like IAS, IPS (Indian Police Service), when they take up their positions most of them don´t disclose their identity. In Mohali (a middle-class suburb of Chandigarh), they don´t mention they are Chamar" (Kuldeep male MBA, Ravidassia)

All mentioned examples of acquaintances or family members who have chosen to pass as upper caste, in the following case not only by adopting an upper caste surname, but also by avoiding religious imagery associated with Chamars:

"We had a friend, a friend of my elder brother who is a businessman. We think he is not of our community. There was no picture of Guru Ravidass Ji in his office, only of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. However, at a funeral we came to know. I asked him straight out- what is your community? He said, basically we are *Pandit* (Brahmin). Straightaway he denied it. Another time we met. When I asked him about his cousin´s mother´s cremation- I asked him do you know him? (his cousin). He first said, he is my friend, he did not admit. Then he admitted, basically, I am hiding my identity, I have faced so many problems in my business life as a Chamar. They won´t buy from me if they know I am a Chamar. He faced many problems in Bangalore. His competitors from Ludhiana would tell his story (reveal his caste) to the buyers over there and say don´t buy anything from him- he is a Chamar. That´s why not so many of our people are successful in business. The ones who are millionaires are in the leather business" (Harwinder male software engineer, Ravidassia).

Like the case cited above, many instances of passing are due to economic or social survival, and are not simply an issue of striving for social prestige. The following example is illustrative, and once again involves the avoidance of Ravidassia religious imagery in order to pass effectively:

"In 1999, I visit Delhi and I see some of our community members. I stay with them in their homes. But they don´t disclose- they are known as Radhasoami (a popular religious movement in India). In their home there are pictures of Mararaj (the Guru of the Radhasoami movement) but none of Guru Ravidassi Ji. I ask him- why this happen? He tells me that when the landlord knows he is Chamar, he will be forced to move" (Kuldeep male MBA, Ravidassia)

I also had one case of an interviewee who was passing herself. This girl, after initially identifying herself as OBC (other backward caste), considered an intermediary caste, eventually admitted to me that she was Kamboj (SC), but that her father had ordered her never to reveal her true caste:

"Basically, we are Kamboj, but my father has told us to say we are Saini. We are very strict Sikhs. Only now that they are looking for a match for me, is my father looking for a Kamboj. But we are not known as SC" (Preety female Chemistry teacher, Kamboj Sikh)

Thus sixty-two years after untouchability was formally abolished, we can see that while for urban, educated Dalits the most pernicious effects of caste discrimination have disappeared, strong stigma forces many Dalits to hide their caste identity, which ranges from simply not disclosing their true caste, to completely passing as upper caste by adopting upper caste surnames and rejecting religious imagery that could associate them with Chamars (and hence the taint of untouchability). Others choose to enact a situational caste identity in which they only reveal their Dalit identity among fellow Dalits or when they feel that they can fully trust their non-Dalit peers. It appears that only a small minority pursue a strategy of proudly declaring their caste identity to all. I believe that the first two more common strategies of passing and ´wait and see´ ultimately harm the self-esteem and respect of Dalits, and prevent them realising their full potential as human beings. As alluded to in the quotation from Ambedkar´s work in the introduction to this chapter, passing steals vital energy that could otherwise be devoted to more productive life projects. Furthemore, passing implies that Dalits can never be fully relaxed or themselves in public life, diverting human energy that could be chanelled into community and self-development into life-long hiding.

Dealing with Untouchable Stigma

Although my interviewees did not explicitly refer to the term stigma when describing their experiences, it is clear that they are acutely aware of anti-Dalit cultural bias and some were also conscious of and able to articulate the psychological effects of Dalit stigma. Dalits effectively live immersed in a sea of negative cultural stereotypes that are toxic for both their individual and collective self-esteem. The following quotes reveal that Dalits in university environments

challenge by their very presence upper caste assumptions about the purported ´nature´ of the low castes:

"At LPU (Lovely Professional University) I look like a Punjabi, by health. But my accent is Pahari (from Himachal Pradesh). They think I am higher-caste person. I have a motorbike- most Chamar families are poor. They think if I have a bike, I belong to a rich family. They are taught by their parents that Chamars are not good, not to mix with them. They are making comments "*kiah ye Chamaro ki sarah gandgi dali hai*"- "this is what Chamars do". Whenever they have to give a good example, they go to upper castes. Whenever they have to give a bad example, they go to Chamars, Chuhrahs. Most of my friends know I am Chamar, they are good with me, they don´t discriminate. But when I invite them to my home, they don´t tell their parents (Suraj male university student, Hindu)

"They (upper castes) think that SC have no patience. They are pulling of leg, they have less money but showing more. They are doing jobs here or there. They are backbiting and have no manners. They say they have a proper way of *puja* (worship) and *pat* (prayer) but SC no. They think that their parents are open-minded and our parents are close-minded. They say that SC girls have so many restrictions but it´s not true because we are also free like them. It´s true that Jat girls are more beautiful than us. They have good food, all the fruits, season by season, *dal* (lentils). They have land, buffaloes, animals. Height wise, they are taller" (Pinky female science teacher, Ravidassia)

"Once, I was with my roommate from Sharma family (Brahmin) and other boys from my hostel- two Thakur (Rajput). Some topic on casteism came up. I wanted their views on lower-caste people. They started abusing Chamars and Chuhras. At last, I told them I am also from a Chamar family. They told me: you don´t look like a Chamar. They are thinking Chamars are black, don´t take bath, they smell, clothes are dirty and not good habits. They live good with me but they distinguish (caste) on dress, skin colour, bad habits" (Sanjay male university student, Hindu)

"Psychologically they are beating us. *Swarna*= upper caste, which in Sanskrit means gold. One teacher was telling me, Ravi, you may become intelligent but you are untouchable. I challenged my professor in my monthly conference. I told the Chancellor, he was punished. His pay was cut for three months. We need *chetna*, consciousness in Sanskrit. We need to be conscious souls. Girls from my community, she is female and Ravidassia, she thinks she is inferior. But she should be aware. Its in their DNA- their mothers give them that in their milk (referring to the upper castes). Don´t play with that girl- she´s untouchable. It remains for the whole life. It is like a virus…." (Ravi male university student, Ravidassia)

The above comments demonstrate that anti-Dalit stereotyping is actively challenged by Dalits and seen as wrong and harmful. The legitimacy of these stereotypes is contested by Dalits and they are for the most part resisted. Thus, as Berreman argues, Dalits do not accept the rationalisations that the upper castes offer for their inferiority and view them as oppressive (Berreman 1979: 164-165). However, even though Dalits challenge the legitimacy of the stereotypes that oppress them, their self-image is simultaneously harmed by them. Ravi´s insightful comments allude to the fact that many Dalits unconsciously internalise the negative stereotypes that surround them, no doubt leading to lower levels of self-confidence, and greater mental energy being expended on protecting themselves from discrimination- both real and potential. Dalit stigma thus works as a mechanism that continually reminds former untouchables of their low status in society, which not surprisingly, is discouraging and burdensome. In order to overcome this mechanism, Dalits must consciously, as Ravi has done, ´unlearn´ what dominant society has taught them and build a consciousness that is capable of defeating such stereotypes psychologically.

<u>"Your Full Name Please?" A Micro Analysis of Caste Politics at Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar, Punjab</u>

Caste, although rarely openly discussed, is always lurking beneath the surface. The infamous ´caste question´ is pervasive, although it is increasingly posed in an indirect manner. In multi-caste environments, knowing the caste identity of ones´ colleagues is important, and this information is considered to be part of the basic knowledge one typically has about another person, along with their religion and place of birth. It is so common a question, that it can be considered equivalent to the ´where are from?' question posed in multi-national settings in

Europe. Dr. Ambedkar´s contention that caste is so essential to the Hindu mind, that without knowing it, "you do no feel sure what sort of a being he is" (Ambedkar 1937: 30) is borne out by my fieldwork and participation observation on the campus of Lovely Professional University. However, the ´need to know´ is not confined to the ´Hindu mind´, but rather is a generalised social phenomenon that cuts across all religions and Indian ethnicities. It it simply the modality in which one asks the question that varies from region to region and place to place. Berreman maintains that it is the most stigmatised identity in any social interaction in India that takes precedence: "In any situation… people continually try to convey to others the most favorable identity for themselves that they can muster and they continually try to detect in others the most stigmatized identity which can be accorded to them" (Berreman 1979: 167). At Lovely Professional University, where the majority of my interviews took place, the way in which individuals sought to communicate a prestigious social identity was through subtle last name caste politics. The use of caste-based surnames was ubiquitous and it was usage of such surnames that enabled my interviewees to be aware of the caste identity of all of their colleagues. Thus, just as in middle-class neighbourhoods each house proudly bears the caste-based nameplate of the head of the household, in the lecturers´ rooms, where each lecturer is assigned a cubicle, the vast majority had written their surname alongside their name to indicate their working space. Despite the injunction of Guru Gobind Singh to adopt the universal Sikh surnames of Singh and Kaur in order to eliminate caste distinctions, most Sikhs, in addition to using Singh or Kaur, add their *got* (lineage) to their surname, thereby indicating their caste. Thus Sucha Singh Gill, in addition to declaring that he is Sikh, also communicates that he is Jat (Gill being a Jat *got*). Upper caste students and teachers were very keen to state their full names, especially Jats. Dalits, on the other hand, preferred not to use their surnames or would use generic surnames such as Kumar, which means prince (many of course also adopt upper caste surnames as we have seen above). Since last names reveal caste in the Punjab, an indirect way of asking someone´s caste is to ask for their full name. Another strategy, employed by Jats, is to ask if the other person is Jat. For Dalit individuals, this can mean that they are continually being forced to identify themselves, provoking personal discomfort and embarrassment, emotions that are not experienced by their upper-caste peers, who rather benefit from the social prestige associated with their caste and declare their caste identity with pride. For Dalits, it can be a question that they dread. One of my Dalit interviewees described how he felt humiliated by such questioning: "Once he asks the caste question there is some humiliation, that why is he asking caste. I feel uncomfortable but I try to ignore" (Suraj, male university student). In daily social life then, Dalits are inescapably

confronted with low caste stigma, including in environments in which everyone is at least formally ´educated´ and caste supposedly ´doesn´t matter´.

There is also a strong gender dimension to the caste question, since a number of my interviewees maintained that girls were more likely to ask about caste and also be more casteist in their choice of friends and acquaintances. Caste politics is therefore also simultaneously gendered, as the following comments by both boys and girls reveal:

"I have been asked more by girls about my caste identity than in Tamil Nadu, in the hostel for example. They say- full name? Or ask if Chitra is my caste. Girls are more curious. Not boys, they have not asked. Caste is all over India, but the mentality is more here. In Tamil Nadu they find out about your caste by asking for your father´s native place, not full name like here" (Chitra female journalism teacher- Dalit Christian)

"Most of the girls, the first question they ask is, what caste you belong. After, the communication is not good, they start avoiding. In the first semester, one girl came to me for study help in organic chemistry- first she asked me for my caste. I said to which caste I belonged and she never came back. Until now she´s not interacting with me, Punjabi girls are mostly like this. Girls prefer friendship with same- boys no" (Suraj male university student- Dalit)

"Boys and girls declare their caste equally, but girls are asking about caste more than boys, they are concerned about the caste more. I don´t know why, they generally, this thing will come up. Girls are more involved- caste, where are you from, your studies, they are more concerned about past life. Boys, we just enjoy. I don´t know the caste of 80% of the boys, but girls, they will find out about the caste of everyone by hook or by crook" (Vishal, male university student- Brahmin Hindu)

"I think girls ask more about caste because girls have so many restrictions from their parents. Among male friends it doesn´t matter. In my hostel room we are four boys, four different castes and living happily" (Ravinder, male university student- Ramargiah Sikh)

"Girls are more interested to know full name. Girls are more questioning than boys" (Monica, female finance teacher- Marwari Hindu)

"In the case of boys, its good to know before the person is of the same caste. At Punjabi University (a university in Patiala, Punjab), so many SC boys are there through SC quota. They are using Jat surnames so the girl is not knowing he is not Jat. If a person introduces himself as

Brah or Siddhu (two Jat *gots*) you don´t ask, are you really Brah? SC, they lie easily because of inferiority complex. For boys it doesn´t matter much" (female university student, Jat Sikh)

"Girls ask more about caste. Basically, this is the mentality of girls. Girls- we should know very much in advance to which community he belongs. Girls ask boys, girls ask girls less. Boys don´t bother about all these things" (Harjeet, female corporate business law teacher, Jat Sikh)

Thus a clear trend has emerged in which girls are shown to invest more in caste. The key question is *why* girls seek with greater insistence to know the caste of their peers, particularly their male peers. I believe that social and matrimonial pressures play a role in girls´ greater interest in ascertaining the caste identity of their peers. Many girls are at university for matrimonial purposes- indeed certain programmes are known to attract female students who are in turn positioning themselves to be attractive to certain candidates on the marriage market. An MA in English or Computer Science, for example, is said to be aimed at securing an NRI (Non Resident Indian) match, highly valued in the Indian marriage market. Similarly, many girls do an MBA in order to find a ´good match´. Knowing that they will not be able to marry out of caste, girls are cautious particularly when interacting with boys, and keen to avoid those boys who are not of their caste. In the Punjab, male-female friendships do not exist, and are automatically assumed to be romantic in nature, meaning that girls who are seen more than once with the same boy will face gossip that can destroy her reputation and hence her marriage prospects. Being seen with a boy from another caste is even more taboo. Girls traditionally represent the ´purity´ of the caste and are seen as its boundary markers. Indeed, much anxiety around inter-caste mixing and the taboo on inter-caste marriage can be traced to concerns over controlling female sexuality and keeping ´their´ women within the fold, so that no caste defilement takes place. Thus girls are doubly bound to uphold family and caste honour. Their greater interest in caste could stem from the intense social control they are subject to, especially as young unmarried women, when the potential for dishonour is at its peak. Their low social status as a group in India could be leading them to invest more in caste socially as a way to compensate for their gender stigma and their weak position within the family and society. However, I believe that boys, despite claiming and boasting that caste does not matter to them, at least with regards to their male friendship circle, do in fact share the same caste concerns as their female counterparts when it comes to socializing with the opposite sex. One boy, from the Ramgarhia caste, shared with me his friendship strategy

with girls on the campus of the relatively liberal Lovely Professional University, where male/female friendships are not as taboo as in other university campuses:

“First I ask whether she´s Punjabi or not (Sikh). I try to do friendship with that girl. Then I research which caste she belongs to- what about your caste? I then do friendship personally. If she´s Jat, then I will make a simple friend. If she´s Ramgharia, then I will ask if she will be my best friend” (Ravinder male university student, Ramgharia Sikh)

Another boy confessed that he was eager to find out the caste of his roommate (from another state), but “I never dared to ask him, if he´s SC, it will be embarrassing. I want to ask him, I want to know what Patials are” (Sohal, male fine arts teacher, Jat Sikh

Thus I believe that boys and girls are equally interested in caste, but that girls face greater social and family pressure to maintain caste boundaries. Given their vulnerable position within the family, they must take extra care to abide by caste rules. Boys enjoy more freedom and it appears that male friendships are better able to overcome caste differences. That boys ask less does not mean that caste is meaningless to them. In a highly unequal society in which *izzat* or social honour is central, knowing another´s caste and hence knowing how one relates to the other in the social pecking order will be of the utmost importance for both genders. The ´desire to know´ however is manifested differently along gender lines, demonstrating how caste is always simultaneously a gendered phenomenon.

UPPER CASTE VIEWS ON CASTE

My interviews with upper caste students and teachers reveal a contradictory panorama of attitudes. With the exception of one interviewee who was very frank when speaking about Dalits, the majority of the people I spoke with affirmed that they did not “believe in caste”, while at the same time expressing casteist sentiments or flatly rejecting the possibility of an intercaste marriage with a Dalit. One boy affirmed that practicing caste was “rubbish” and “against humanity”, yet would never consider marrying a Dalit girl. Only a small minority contended that intercaste marriages were scientifically healthier, on the grounds that they would produce genetically superior children (and of these, two out of the three interviewees were from outside of the Punjab). When it comes to marriage, it appears that discriminating on the basis of caste is not perceived to be a problem. In effect, while same sex friendship with Dalits is now possible and increasingly common in urban contexts, marriage to a former untouchable remains off limits,

indeed unthinkable. Dalits are increasingly tolerated, but full social acceptance and equality are a long way off. Reservations have led to jealousy and resentment on the part of the upper castes, in some respects worsening the mental caste divide that already existed. Upper-caste comments expose how deeply rooted the casted mind is, and how resistant it is to change. They also reveal how inter-caste friendship does not necessarily weaken the bonds of castesim:

"You see friendship is there, we are eating and drinking together. Most of my friends are SC, very good friends. But there are limits. In the core of their heart they have this pain- they can never get that status, equality. That is a fact. No matter the laws. Never. They have adjusted with this setup. In educated families, they are getting high posts, reservations. But they know that in that matter they will always be considered low- SC. At the end of the day, he´s Chuhra for me. Even if he has achieved something. He got a job through reservations only. I was more brilliant than him. He´s enjoying officer status but at the end of the day I am Jat, I am superior. Reservations should be according to economic status not caste. If I´m thrown out I will always bear a grudge against the SC. We can do each and every thing together. But when the point of marriage comes, we say sorry. You can be my friend, but not part of my family" (Sohal male fine arts teacher, Jat Sikh)

Sohal´s comments reflect the continuing arrogance and condescension of the upper castes, particularly the Jats, in refusing to consider Dalits their equals. Reservations have become a convenient excuse to belittle and downplay their accomplishments and new economic status. Sohal evidently delights in the knowledge that no matter how prestigious their job may be, their low caste status remains- and Jats remain ´king´ of the social hierarchy. His comments about marriage encapsulate the current thinking that Dalits are now ´touchable´ to a certain extent in public life, but they are to be firmly excluded from equality in the private sphere. Sohal´s remarks further demonstrate that intercaste friendship and dining alone cannot be assumed to weaken caste prejudice and anti-Dalit stereotypes. The casted mind and intercaste friendship can go hand in hand, leading one to conclude that a deeper cultural transformation will need to take place in order for the casted mind to truly change.

Casteism and Marriage

A common theme in my interviews was the affinity and common culture that fellow caste members share, which was used as an argument to justify intracaste marriage. Even those who

stated that they were against casteism, were in favor of intracaste marriage, which they did not view as casteist but rather as practical and commonsensical. The majority of youth in the Punjab, far from challenging the institution of arranged marriage, fully support it and view it as assuring a successful marriage. Time and time again, both girls and boys asserted that love marriages, which are frequently intercaste, do not work and often end in divorce. This failure is attributed to the "huge" cultural differences that purportedly exist between castes and also the greater insecurity of the marriage, since love marriages often lack family and community blessing. One boy, after asserting that his caste was more liberal and had more intercaste friendships than other castes, went on to argue for intracaste marriage on cultural grounds:

"I prefer an Aggarwal girl. I need not teach her about going to the temple and all that. She will have the same customs. More or less the personality traits of that girl will match my mother´s. Most Aggarwal Jains are vegetarian- not true of the Khatri girls"

Regarding the possibility of his sister marrying an SC boy, he reacted with horror, stating:

"No way, it will be like death for us. We will not be in a position to face the society afterwards. People will say: was there any dearth of good boys in your community?" (Sunny male management teacher, Aggarwal Jain)

His sentiment was echoed by a number of interviewees:

"Jat-Jat has same understanding, emotions, feelings. With a non-Jat there will be a difference. They can´t talk so comfortably with him, the feeling that he is a non-Jat will dominate their feelings. Jat Sikhs are seen as superior- they are the top caste. Lubana or Ramgarhia are below them. If not from the same caste, they will not feel proud of their son-in-law" (Kaman female university student, Jat Sikh)

"I am not biased against any caste but when it comes to marriage, I will want a Sikh- should be a Khatri Sikh. I belong to a proper Sikh family" (Jaspreet female commerce teacher, Khatri Sikh)

Others were similarly emphatic about the necessity of an intracaste marriage, but rather than stress cultural resaons, argued that this was due to societal influence and the need to respect and obey one´s parents:

"Definitely I will do arranged marriage. I will not break my parents´ heart. I will marry those girls who serve my parents and never quarrel, these are the main requirements of my parents. This about intercaste marriage, this is because of my parents´ nurture. They always told me, we have

to attach to our religion. That´s why in 5th class my parents said, you can do anything, but not this thing- intercaste marriage. I can only marry Punjabi girls of my caste. If I will do intercaste marriage it will create trouble for my family. They will say characterless family. It will affect my sister´s behaviour and nature. They will think his sister is characterless. It will spoil my sister´s life. The old women will come to my parents and say, ´what have you done´? (Ravinder male university student, Ramargiah Sikh)

"Marriage with SC or ST (scheduled tribe)- no way. My parents will not accept. Among upper castes okay" (Ujwal male university student, Hindu Vaisha)

"It has been embedded- don´t go for intercaste marriage. Most girls cannot say no to their fathers when it comes to arranging marriages" (Megha female management teacher, Hindu Brahmin)

"Intercaste marriage: NO. You´ll be a social outcaste. One well-off Sikh guy in Tanzania got married to an SC girl and his life is destroyed. He´s like no longer part of the community" (Tanveer male university student, Jat Sikh)

"Marrying a non-Marwari is quite difficult. Marwaris are segregated into different sub-castes and within sub-castes there are further sub-castes (*gots*). You must marry within your sub-caste. If you are a bit distant from your caste, you can be more independent. If not Marwari, then other Kashatyria or Brahmin. They will not marry into Shudra. They don´t prefer Muslim, Pasi or Sikh. My cousin brother married an Aggarwal (Vaisha). It was not accepted by our family- only after fifteen years. No one talked to him and we are an educated family. We Indians value our relationships. We can´t break four hearts for joining two hearts. Because you don´t want to break the hearts of your parents. They have done a lot for us, so we can´t let them down" (Monica finance teacher, Hindu, Marwari)

"Usually Jat with Jat but now the scenario is changing. Marriage with an SC or OBC- (Other Backward Caste) that would will be totally unacceptable. There is flexibility but to some extent" (Shubhpreet female university student, Jat Sikh)

Thus for upper caste boys and girls caste boundaries are clear when it comes to marriage, and are not to be trespassed under any circumstances. Upper caste girls face the threat of excommunication from their families should they marry out of caste, especially if they marry an SC boy- "you are dead for me now" is a common reaction from parents. In extreme cases, girls

are killed by family members when they dare cross sacrosanct caste lines. Several of my interviewees rather nonchalantly mentioned such cases occurring in their villages: “in my village, one upper-caste girl (Rajput) fell in love with a low caste boy. The parents killed her, cut her up into pieces. There was no (police) case. All know but all try to cover this” (Suraj male university student, Dalit Hindu). The stigma attached to marrying out of caste means that entire families lose *izzat* (face or honour) and are seen as “characterless” and “having no shame” in the eyes of society. Furthermore, such a scandalous marriage can destroy the marriage prospects of younger siblings. There is thus intense social pressure to abide by caste rules. Although the taboo on intercaste marriage is stronger for the upper castes, Dalits also prefer to marry within their caste, and there are in fact very few marriages between Chamars and Chuhras due to internal caste hierarchies among the Dalits (Chuhras are considered ´lower´ than Chamars). Dalits can also be reluctant to allow their daughters to marry into upper caste families, for fear that they will be mistreated by their in-laws. One upper caste boy related to me how his attempt to marry an SC girl failed because her family- and not his, refused the match, fearful that their daughter would be abused. Thus, intercaste marriages are viewed negatively, although for different reasons, at both ends of the caste spectrum. The above comments on marriage clearly reveal the limits of Dalit social integration. Dalits are acceptable as acquaintances and friends (although Dalits are often “simple friends”), but inconceivable for marriage purposes. While there is now increased flexibility in the range of caste for potential spouses within some families, this flexibility is circumscribed- only contiguous “status” castes are considered. If marriage norms can be considered a litmus test for the social equality of Dalits, then Dalits are still very much second-class citizens in India.

Anti-Dalit Stereotyping among the Upper Castes

Apart from marriage, a second area in which caste discrimination manifests itself in daily life concerns the pervasive stereotypes applied to ´Chuhras´ and ´Chamars´, the two largest former untouchable groups in the Punjab. ´Chuhra´ and ´Chamar´ continue to be used as terms of abuse, both when directed to Dalits, and when used amongst the upper castes in order to shame or reprimand someone for their behaviour. Upper caste children grow up hearing these derogatory terms and quickly learn that these groups are not to be respected. Apart from one girl, all my upper caste interviewees maintained that they could identify Dalits by their dress, behaviour and

way of speaking or walking. Thus, my upper caste interviewees consistently stereotyped Dalits in ways that reduced and essentialised their humanity:

"I can easily find out by name, by body language, manners, dressing sense, etiquette. Valmikis (contemporary name for Chuhras) use abusive language. The Jat community wears light colours. Valmikis choose bright, dark colours. When I fight with my brother, I say you are like a Chuhra. He reacts by saying, you are! My parents also say- you are behaving like a Chuhra" (Jaspreet K female university student, Jat Sikh)

"If she wears gaudy clothing, they will say, she has made herself into a Chuhri (gramatically female equivalent of Chuhra). If a girl wears a sparkling suit, I say oh God, I also pass comments. They (Chuhras) like to highlight themselves (stones, glitter) and wear dark colours. Red does not look good on dark complexioned girls. You can wear red if you are fair" (Pooja female university student, Thakur, Hindu)

"They are totally different- their living standards, their style of eating, etiquette. Their language is totally different- more abuse. Dress is traditional one- they (girls) are not allowed to wear Western dress" (Harpreet Journalism teacher, Jat Sikh)

"Here the name is used a lot. You can tell he´s not Jat, even if he has a Jat surname from the cars they (Jats) drive, their style- short hair, light beard, twisted moustache. A typical Jat is healthy and walks with his chest out. Once there was a boy on a (motor) bike that said Dhillon (a Jat *got*). He was very short and dark. My friend said: from what angle does he look like a Jat? A Jat girl- if she´s wearing suit I can tell- not in uniform. Jat girls are fairer than Ramgarhiah girls. I don´t have an SC friend at LPU. Here you can´t trust people so soon. You can´t even trust a Jat, so how can you trust an SC- the trust just drops. One of our teachers is from UP (Uttar Pradesh), we call him "baiyan", meaning he is SC, what will he teach us?" (Tanveer male university student, Jat Sikh)

"In their blood they (SC) have bad habits. They are known for their betrayal, they are not trustworthy. They're not loyal, not of good character. "*Tu churiyan walleh gul kiti*"[10]- we say what you have done is like a Chuhra. Even it is said that you cannot trust, should not trust a fair Chuhra or a black Brahmin. If someone wears flashy clothes, silver, yellows, reds, I will say Chuhra- these are the colours they wear. If somebody wears fluorescent colours, he´s Chuhra. If

[10] The transliteration from Punjabi/Hindi into the Roman script used in my interviews has relied on input from my interviewees in the Punjab with regards to the best form of transliteration.

somebody wants to criticize my clothes they will say "*Chureyan walleh kapere pie hoi han*" (you are wearing the clothes of a Chuhra). Most of the abuses in Punjabi are Chuhra, Chamar. It is associated with colour also. This caste system is so much embedded in the mind of Indians. Suppose a tall, fair good-looking boy or girl is there. Everyone says he must be a Jat- "*E Jat lagha he*". If a short, dark, ugly person is there "*E Chuhra lagdha he*"- he is Chuhra" (Sohal fine arts teacher, Jat Sikh)

"The major difference between the SC and the upper castes is the talking style and living style. A Chamar girl will walk different" (Kaman female university student, Jat Sikh)

While there are stereotypes about all castes in the Punjab, and across India, the stereotypes regarding Dalits are overwhelmingly negative. Dalits are perceived as possessing intrinsic personality traits that make them defective, inferior and incompetent human beings in the eyes of dominant castes. They are the Other for the upper castes, seen as deviating from respectable norms of behaviour and decency. Indeed, according to psychologists who have studied caste, the upper castes are more likely to essentialise caste, both their own and that of other caste groups, seeing caste as a primordial identity acquired at birth (Jaspal 2010: 38). There is also an underlying belief, not always made explicit, that Dalits are morally defective. One Jat interviewee, for example, insisted that only Dalits would engage in same sex activity, alleging that upper castes "won´t indulge in these things, they don´t believe in these things. They will not allow such things in their family- they will kill" (Sohal male fine arts teacher, Jat Sikh). Another stated that mostly Dalits practice female feticide (a major problem in the Punjab), but that Jats, although also preferring boys, "won´t do this" (Jaspreet K female university student, Jat Sikh). In contrast, apart from their reputation for drink and dearth of educated boys, the stereotypes about Jats are consistently positive. Jats themselves would boast about being the ´top´ caste and even having a "superiority complex". "I am proud to be Jat" was a common refrain in my interviews. Jats emphasized their wealth, their ownership of land, and that fact that although they might be fewer in numbers, they are more powerful. Even when caste-based stereotyping is less than flattering, as in when Marwaris are said to be tight-fisted or the Banias shrewd, these are generally prosperous castes and hence they are socially respected. The implication is that both are good money-making business castes. No caste faces the social opprobrium and stigma of the Dalits. Only one upper caste person voiced a positive stereotype about Dalits. One of my female Jat interviewees asserted that although Valmikis were "black", the Ad-Dharmis (Chamars) "are

very beautiful. Their colour is fair. They have long height also. Jats are also beautiful, but Ad-Dharmis are more so" (Jaspreet K female university student, Jat Sikh). A lone voice in an otherwise desolate landscape of pervasive negative stereotyping.

Upper caste responses to Dalit peers and colleagues

My upper caste interviewees were well aware that being a Dalit meant having a stigmatised caste identity that they would prefer to hide. Some felt that educated Dalits were proud to declare their caste identity, but the vast majority maintained that Dalits hid their caste and felt shame about being low caste. They concurred in observing that Dalits hesitated or sought to avoid having to reveal their caste either by changing their surname or using their village as a surname. Yet, due to their belief that Dalits are somehow essentially different from the rest of society, they continue to assume that most people they meet on campus are like them, i.e. ´normal´/upper caste. They are thus shocked to discover when some of their classmates, despite looking and acting like them, are in fact Dalit:

"The SC, their looks are different- colour, complexion. Way of talking is different- accent. Way of dressing is different. Jat boys are going more for branded items, branded jeans. There was one girl in my hostel room. After two years, we came to know she´s an SC girl, from her semester exam form. We were not knowing because her living style was the same as ours. Same clothes, same talking style. We were totally shocked. But we haven´t said anything to her. We are knowing, that is enough" (Kaman female university student, Jat Sikh)

"Sometimes I say something ´that Chuhra´ and then come to know that my companion was also Chuhra. It is embarrassing. Nowadays they are health conscious, fashion conscious. Even a good-looking SC can roam like a Jat" (Sohal male fine arts teacher, Jat Sikh)

Dalits rupture the purported ´normality´ and assumed upper caste dominance of university environments. In not conforming to the derogatory stereotypes held about them, they can ironically pass easily until ´discredited´ either by choice or by chance.

The stigma that forces many Dalits to hide their identity can also reinforce the belief that Dalits are inherently untrustworthy people who lie easily, when the truth about their caste is discovered:

"I had one colleague. She told me she´s from Jat community. But we met one of her relatives and came to know she´s not a Jat, she´s a Kamboj. Obviously, when you come to know such things,

you get an image of what type of person they can be. They´re not true. If you´re Kamboj, admit that, what´s wrong with that? If they´re pretending, then it can impact the friendship" (Harjeet female corporate law teacher, Jat Sikh)

The passing strategy in dealing with caste stigma can backfire and ironically buttress the belief that Dalits "cannot be trusted". Dalits therefore face a thorny dilemma. If they choose to make their stigma known, they can face rejection and discrimination, both overt and covert, and be signalled as ´that SC boy or girl´, their entire identity reduced to being low caste. If they choose to hide their stigma and pass as upper caste on the other hand, they know that they can potentially be ´discredited´ at any time. Moreover, passing presumably requires a great deal of energy and can be very draining and damaging emotionally. It appears that no matter what identity management strategy Dalits pursue, upper castes continue to perceive them as fundamentally Other. However, I believe that as more SC students and teachers begin to declare their caste identities with pride, as their upper caste peer do, this Othering will gradually decrease, and the presence of Dalits in university environments will be increasingly normalised.

Education: The solution to casteism?

When I posed the question of how to overcome the problem of casteism, the overwhelming majority of my interviewees, both upper and lower caste, argued that education was the way to end casteism and do away with caste stigma. However, my interviews among highly educated individuals reveal that formal education does not appear to make a dent in the casted mind. On the contrary, casteism, like sexism, thrives alongside higher education. Yet, education was repeated like a mantra as *the* solution to end casteism, despite the fact that the issue of caste is rarely addressed in the curriculum and the works of Ambedkar are typically invisible (very few Indians have actually read any of his works). My upper caste interviewees felt that increasing education would be the panacea for the disease of casteism, seemingly ignoring the contradiction that they were educated individuals themselves, and yet just as casteist, and sometimes even more intolerant than their non-educated counterparts, due to their being more directly affected by reservations. Indeed, several upper caste students and teachers identified casteism with reservations, implying that the real problem of casteism lay with the "unfair" reservations policy that was depriving "general category" castes of jobs. The fact that passing on the part of Dalits

appears to be very common in prestigious jobs leads one to conclude that high levels of education does not necessarily translate into a decrease in prejudice. The often-repeated myth that casteism only exists in the countryside, or that educated individuals do not practice caste, belie the fact that casteism is an ideology, a social structure and a state of mind from which educated individuals are not immune. Formal education, being strongly influenced by dominant cultural values, does not always have the desired effect of producing socially critical and responsible citizens. The limitations of formal education as a permanent solution for prejudice has been highlighted by the historian Theodore Zeldin. In "*An Intimate History of Humanity*", he asserts that "the educated have as poor a record for tolerance as the ignorant, because it is as easy to be infected by intolerance as by the common cold" (Zeldin 1998: 261). He cites key examples from history to show that education has not prevented outbreaks of intolerance, such as the the case of Nazi Germany: "in 1933 the most educated nation in Europe suddenly became the most intolerant that had ever existed…Toleration is not the modern medicine it is made out to be, but an old folk remedy, with only short-term effects" (Zeldin 1998: 261). Education, and its supposed colloary-toleration, has always been vulnerable to economic downturns and sociopolitical events, allowing old hatreds to quickly resurface and become violent. Although it flies in the face of common sense and our deepest hopes for a progressive civil society, education and various forms of prejudice live side by side, with the former sometimes even feeding the latter. Indeed, Zeldin points out the similar paradox of the remarkable spiritual openness of India coexisting with the "the most long-lived intolerance of free social contact, the caste system" (Zeldin 1998: 263). It is clear that ´education´, as it is currently conceived, does little to weaken social stigma and intolerance. For a lasting solution to the problem of casteism, as one of my Dalit interviewees astutely noted, a different type of education is necessary, one that is truly transformative:

"There is no use for only bookish education. Book knowledge is not good for casteism. Book knowledge does not provide information about casteism. It should start from the home. If a single person changes himself, also society will change, by default" (Suraj male university student, Dalit, Hindu)

In order to defeat casteism, what is needed is a transformation of the state of mind that inculcates the notion of caste from birth. As Ambedkar stated, "the destruction of caste does not therefore mean the destruction of a physical barrier. It means a *notional* change" (Ambedkar 1937: 33-emphasis added). The current educational system in India may produce literate individuals, but like most educational systems around the world, it does not seek to instill a critical attitude

towards hegemonic ideologies such as caste. Only a broad-based social movement can achieve the ultimate destruction of caste- one mind at a time.

Casteism in Popular Punjabi Songs

A final area of casteism that it is pertinent to discuss refers to castesim in the cultural realm. The persistent cultural discrimination that Dalits experience, has, along with untouchable stigma, a negative psychological impact on the self-confidence of Dalit communities. In popular culture, Dalit experiences are rarely reflected, meaning that Dalit children grow up surrounded by cultural forms which render their reality (ies) invisible. Punjabi music, particularly the folk genre known as Bhangra, is a case in point. Bhangra songs are replete with lyrics that celebrate Punjabi culture and its people. Less well known, however, is the systematic glorification of the Jat caste in Bhangra lyrics. The dominance of the Jats in the Punjab is not just economic, political and religious; it extends to the cultural realm as well. Thus, all Punjabis grow up hearing songs that continually exalt Jat characteristics and extol their extraordinary courage and manliness (Bhangra is traditionally a male dance and Bhangra singers are typically male). In the Punjab, only Jat pride is manifested in popular music- no other caste similarly produces such songs, although the Chamars have very recently started to compose songs that speak of pride in being Chamar, in response to what they see as the ´Jattism´ or Jat discrimination in Punjabi music (I will discuss this new phenomenon in greater detail in a subsequent chapter). The overwhelming cultural visibility of the Jats in music further enhances their dominant position in Punjabi society and makes their values the invisible reference point and standard for all castes. Bhangra lyrics reveal how central caste identity is in the Punjabi psyche, and demonstrates the extent to which caste pride can be taken to unhealthy extremes, as in the case of the Jats. I wish to share their lyrics so that the cultural context in which Punjabi Dalits live can be fully appreciated.

The following song is a good example of the masculine Jat pride that saturates Bhangra, both in India and in songs composed by the Punjabi diaspora in the UK. Taken from the hugely successful Punjabi film ´*Mera Pind*´ (My Village, 2008), its lyrics illustrate how Jat men portray themselves as proud, strong, masculine and absolutely fearless:

God has given me power

Devotion has given me power, the way to achieve strength

Bhakti (devotion) says one must pray

Bhakti (devotion) says make yourself strong-come on!

I am a Jat!

I am a Jat!

I am a Punjabi Jat!

Even on a hot summer´s day, my brow sweating

The sky raining fire

I am working in the fields

My body is covered in dust

But no matter how dirty I get, it does not matter, I am who I am

I have never complained to God

I am a Jat!

I am a Jat!

I am a Punjabi Jat!

Pride and rebellion are what make the Jats, my friends

I protect the weak

I only fear the one True God

I am always ready to fight against evil

For the truth and for rights I am ready to give my head

To tell the truth, I can face death, but I am not afraid

I am a Jat!

I am a Jat!

I am a Punjabi Jat!

I am not a small child

I know all the dirty tricks, you can´t fool me, don´t try and be clever

Strong chest

I am strong, I can fight against cunning, devious, deceiving and thieving people

I cannot tolerate humiliation

This is true!

Listen with your ears pricked

He who does any of these evil things

I´m going to thrash him

I´m a Jat!

Punjabi Jat!!

You get out of the way

If you don´t, I know how to settle the score

Glorious Jat!

Punjabi Jat!

Make way!

Oh Guru!!

In the video that accompanies the song, each time the chorus of ´I´m a Jat!´ resounds, particular body gestures are used that communicate aggressiveness and hyper masculinity. With the first ´I´m a Jat!´, a fist is made. The second Jat affirmation is accompanied by a macho posture. In the

third Jat affirmation, the singer uses a gesture from the male team sport *kabaddi*, which indicates strength and a ´come and get me, I am waiting for you´ attitude. Throughout the video, the actors are seen tweaking their mustaches so that they point upwards, another symbol of pride and superiority that is traditionally associated with Jats. The message is clear- the Jats do not fear anything or anyone apart from God, they are strong, hard-working people, honourable, and above all- superior. Don´t mess with us- we will take revenge, is also a recurring theme.

The next song, a classic entitled "*Putt Jattan De*" (Sons of Jats, 1981), similarly stresses the noble traits of Jat males:

Sons of Jat

Bakareh!

Bakareh! (Punjabi expression)

We carry our sticks on our shoulders

And wear gold necklaces

We wear white and when we walk, our dress cleans the earth

Get away! (singer addressing himself to a girl)

Girl of the beautiful dupatta (scarf)

Stop and listen to me you too

The sons of Jats are singing

Listen to me young girl

The sons of Jats die for their country

Sons of Jat

We die for our country and laugh in the face of death

We are courageous

We are courageous like Bhagat Singh [1]

We take revenge like Udham Singh [2]

Even though we have to cross seas

The friendship of Jats is never half-hearted

Sons of Jat!

Jat, Jat, Jat!

[1] (a famous Punjabi freedom fighter and revolutionary 1907-1931)

[2] (another celebrated Punjabi freedom fighter who avenged the British "Jallianwala Bagh" massacre of over 300 women, men and children in Amritsar in 1919, by shooting and killing the governor of Punjab, the person responsible for the massace. This revenge murder took place 21 years after the massacre when Udham Singh was in London)

These songs instill great pride and confidence in Jat children (and indeed are particularly used for this purpose in the diaspora). The message they consistently receive is that they are special and unique. Ex-untouchable children, on the other hand, grow up learning that their caste is not only something that is not proudly proclaimed, but rather hidden. Most of my Indian Dalit interviewees seemingly took for granted the constant references to Jats in bhangra music,

shrugging their shoulders, as if this state of affairs was inevitable. Only an articulate minority expressed anger at their invisibility in Punjabi music. This glaring discrepancy in access to cultural resources that reinforce collective pride is yet another example of the legacy of the systemic disempowerment that Dalits have suffered for centuries.

Conclusion:

The results of my fieldwork carried out in Jalandhar, Punjab make clear that changes in legislation alone have not produced the desired outcomes on the ground for millions of former untouchables. The formal abolition of untouchability and the introduction of reservations in public policy have not made a dent in untouchable stigma. Being a Dalit continues to remain a devalued identity, a ´moral stain´ that has not been removed despite legal progress. Socially, Dalits face an invisible mental wall of prejudice and negative stereotypes regarding their ´essential´ natures and character. When dealing with low caste stigma, the majority of middle-class Punjabi Dalits pursue either a ´passing´ or a cautious ´wait and see strategy´ when interacting with dominant society. The fact that only a minority have opted for a full-fledged pride strategy reveals the risks still inherent in declaring oneself a Dalit. Upper caste Punjabis are fully aware of the power of caste socially, and use their surnames to communicate their social status. Such is the power of the last name, that the caste question now takes the form of asking for an individual´s surname in order to determine caste. Dalits, in contrast, have tended to adopt Sikh (i.e Singh), generic or upper caste *got* surnames in order to avoid being easily identified as low caste. Although most upper caset individuals affirm that they are ´against caste´, and do not condemn intercaste dining or frienships, their tolerance stops abrubtly at marriage. Within the realm of marriage, they feel that it would be unthinkable to even consider marrying an SC due to both societal and family pressure. The public shame involved is enough to convince upper caste Indian youth that marrying out of caste with an SC is definitely out of the question- although marrying another, similar status, caste is no longer so taboo. Caste is simultaneously a gendered phenomenon. Girls are perceived to be more interested in caste, and more likely to pose the caste question. I believe this gender difference can be attributed to the greater pressure brought to bear on girls to remain within caste boundaries, and thus protect the pride and honour of the entire caste. Education is overwhelmingly perceived as the solution to casteism, despite the fact that formal education does little, if anything at all, to defeat the casted mind. It is repeated like a mantra as a cure-all for the problem of caste, which shows that most individuals have failed to

grasp how overcoming casteism is more complex than simply achieving literacy. A ´human rights literacy´ must be taught if caste is really to be tackled effectively. Finally, the lyrics in Punjabi Bhangra music reflect the severe imbalance in Punjabi society, in which one caste, the Jats, have thus far monopolised the means of cultural production. This cultural casteism combines with caste stigma to silence and psychologically oppress Dalits. To conclude, although reservations can improve the economic status of Dalits, until the stigma associated with untouchability is removed, there will be no social democracy in India.

THE RAVIDASSIA MOVEMENT

"Begumpura, the ´city without sorrow´, is the name of the town. There is no suffering or anxiety there. There are no troubles or taxes on commodities there. There is no fear, blemish or downfall there. Now, I have found this most excellent city. There is lasting peace and safety there, O Siblings of Destiny. God´s Kingdom is steady, stable and eternal. There is no second or third status; all are equal there. That city is populous and eternally famous. Those who live there are wealthy and contented. They stroll about freely, just as they please. They know the Mansion of the Lord´s Presence, and no one blocks their way. Says Ravidass, the emancipated shoe-maker: whoever is a citizen there, is a friend of mine" (from the *bani* of Guru Ravidass, page 345 of the Adi Granth)

Introduction

This chapter will highlight the psychological importance of Guru Ravidass to Punjabi Chamars, and his centrality to both historical and contemporary Chamar religious movements against untouchability. Since Guru Ravidass is the figurehead that binds the highly fractious Chamar *zat* (caste) together- transcending the Hindu/Sikh divide within the Chamar community (even Christian Chamars revere Ravidass), it is important to understand how his poetry and the stories about his life have inspired and been interpreted by Chamars. The two life stories of Guru Ravidass described below are frequently cited by Ravidassia Chamars, and are a source of intense pride. This chapter will then discuss the critically important Ad-Dharm movement against untouchability that arose during the 1920´s, spearheaded by a Chamar, Mangoo Ram. The iconic figure of Guru Ravidass was vital to its success and its ability to reach even the poorest members of the community with its novel ideology of Dalit religious and cultural emancipation. Today, the principal beliefs of this movement, for example, that Dalits are the original habitants of India who were enslaved by the invading Aryans, who suppressed their once strong and independent identity, is now often repeated by contemporary Ravidassias. Thus even though the Ad Dharm movement did not survive, its ideology did, and Ad Dharm thinking continues to influence especially educated members of the Ravidassia diaspora. Finally, this chapter will focus on the widespread and deeply rooted phenomenon of religious centres or *deras*, devoted to both Sikh and non-Sikh saints, which constitute a key feature of the religious, social and political landscape of the Punjab. Understanding the *dera* phenomenon is key to understanding the caste-religion nexus in the Punjab. *Deras* are important not only for the economic, religious and political power that they wield in the Punjab, but also for their strong influence on gurudwara politics in the

diaspora, within both Sikh and Ravidassia *sangats* (congregations). The reasons for their recent growth in popularity, especially among Dalit followers, will be analysed, for *deras* represent the most salient religious trend in contemporary Punjab, and play a central role in the global Ravidassia movement. Both the strengths and limitations of Ravidassia *deras* in their role as motors for social change will be discussed.

The Exemplary Figure of Guru Ravidass

Unlike in other Indian states, such as Maharashtra, where former untouchable Mahars have coalesced around the secular figure of Ambedkar, in the Punjab, the two leading former untouchable castes have each embraced religious figures for inspiration and unity. The sweeper caste have adopted Valmiki (author of the Hindu epic Ramayana), and the leather workers (Chamars) have turned to the poet saint Ravidass as their collective Guru. Although Ambedkar also serves as a source of pride and dignity, it is Guru Ravidass who most ´speaks´ to the common woman and man. Ravidass was born c. 1450-1520 CE (Schaller 2005: 221) into a humble family of leather-workers, in what is now the state of Uttar Pradesh, in Benares. Thus he was born a Chamar, for many the lowest of the low in terms of caste[11], considered to be permanently tainted at birth by the sins committed during his past lives and hence fully deserving of his abject status. During this time, it was forbidden for untouchables to worship God or even listen to the Hindu scriptures, yet alone consider the preposterous idea of an untouchable capable of achieving spiritual realization and producing sacred poetry. Yet Ravidass is a collective hero for the Punjabi Chamar caste today due to his achieving the unthinkable for his era: not only was his spiritual status recognised beyond the boundaries of his community, forty-one of his hymns were incorporated into the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib. Even more inconceivable, he achieved public recognition without hiding or disowning his Chamar status. Thus for contemporary Punjabi Chamars, Guru Ravidass is a shining example of someone who has claimed pride in a historically denigrated and dehumanised caste identity. Although the bulk of the poems composed by Guru Ravidass do not allude directly to issues of caste or inequality, being concerned with purely religious themes, his caste identity is clearly stated in several of his poems in the Guru Granth Sahib (Lochtefeld 2005: 216). One of his poems however, does stand out for its vision of an ideal egalitarian and just society in which no suffering, poverty or

[11] In contemporary Punjabi society, Ravidassias consider themselves superior to the Valmikis in the internal SC pecking order

inequality exists- called “Begumpura” by Guru Ravidass (cited above at the beginning of this chapter). In this poem, Guru Ravidass gives voice to his (and no doubt his fellow untouchables´) deep longing for a society without want in which they could find their rightful place and be treated with respect. The line “they stroll about freely, just as they please” could be a reference to the myriad restrictions placed on the freedom of movement of the untouchables, during a time when social segregation based on caste would have been extremely rigid. Hence, apart from the notable exception of “Begumpura”, it is not his poetry, but rather the figure of Guru Ravidass himself that is radical and which dramatically shattered caste boundaries. Being Chamar and being a spiritual leader at the same time radically challenged caste thinking on the ´rightful´ place and destiny of the untouchable. For a caste that has long suffered from the moral stigma of being considered sinful and polluting, having a spiritual figure who broke free from this mould and proved the humanity and capacity for spirituality among untouchables was and is tremendously empowering and dignifying. Ravidassias always refer to Ravidass as Guru (a term that conveys maximum respect and devotion), in stark contrast to orthodox Sikhs, for whom Ravidass is a *bhagat*, or devotee of God, but certainly not a Guru (for Sikhs this designation is reserved exclusively for the ten Gurus officially recognised by Khalsa Sikhism). This difference in nomenclature reveals a profound ideological cleavage between Sikhs and Ravidassias that will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

Guru Ravidass composed his religious poetry during the medieval *bhakti* (devotion) spiritual movement (also known as the *sant* or saint tradition), which stressed complete inner devotion to God as the means to achieving salvation. This emphasis on devotion rather than ritual or status opened the door to all aspirants, and not just the ´twice born´ of the upper castes, achieving salvation. God was accessible to all. Guru Ravidass was part of this movement, as his poetry underlined that the most important quality in knowing God was a person´s devotion and not their birth, with the concomitant message that all human beings are equal and similarly humbled before God (Lochtefeld 2005: 216). Through indirectly rendering caste immaterial in his poetry, Guru Ravidass further contributed to delegitimising caste in judging the worth and ranking of human beings. The stories of Guru Ravidass´s life highlight how he consistently managed to overcome caste prejudice despite incredible odds and even attract royalty to adopt him as their guru. They also emphasise his saintliness and his supernatural powers. In one popular story, we learn how his teachings and his defiance of Hindu orthodoxy provoked the wrath of the local Brahmin establishment. Outraged, they complained to the king and demanded that his preaching be

stopped. The king decided to organise a ´spiritual duel´ to prove whose claims were correct. Both Ravidass and the local Brahmins were invited to put their skills to the test before an image of Hari (a Hindu deity). Hari remains unmoved before the Sanskrit chants of the Brahmins but responds enthusiastically to the verses of Ravidass (Lochtefeld 2005: 206). Thus Ravidass dramatically triumphs; his Brahmin opponents are humbled and humiliated before a ´lowly´ untouchable, forced to recognise his spiritual powers. In some versions of this story, he is then paraded throughout the city of Benares on a royal chariot, accompanied by the king, and applauded by all (Prasad & Dahiwale 2005: 250). Another celebrated story narrates the visit of Guru Ravidass to Queen Jhali of Chittorgarh in Rajasthan, who despite fierce opposition from her court Brahmins, had persisted in adopting Ravidass as her guru. Although Queen Jhali had planned on holding a banquet to welcome her guru, her court Brahmins had argued that this would be an insult to them and asserted their spiritual superiority and authority. The Queen, after consulting with Ravidass, then decided to hold a banquet for the Brahmins in order to placate them. During the banquet, Ravidass miraculously appeared between each Brahmin diner, despite the fact that he was staying at a camp outside the city. Astonished at this display of magical powers, the Brahmins rushed to his camp to prostrate themselves before him and beg his forgiveness. In upper-caste Hindu accounts of this story, Ravidass then reveals that he is in fact a Brahmin, when he rips open his chest to expose his sacred thread (Schaller 2005: 224). The Brahmins in his presence then proceed to become his disciples. According to some accounts, the King also repents and declares Ravidass his guru (Prasad & Dahiwale 2005: 254). Two common themes emerge in these often-repeated stories of Guru Ravidass´s life and mission. One is the theme of the dramatic inversion of social and religious hierarchy that Guru Ravidass performs. Even in those versions in which Ravidass is described as having been born originally Brahmin (versions that Ravidassias strongly reject), Ravidass is still portrayed as a Chamar until his “true” identity is revealed. It is important to note that in his own poetry, Guru Ravidass only ever refers to himself as Chamar, he makes no reference to a brahmanical heritage (Kaur Takhar 2005: 91). Secondly, in his multiple moral victories over Brahmins, Brahmins are shown as continually repenting for their discriminatory and haughty attitudes. Although they are making an exception due to the extraordinary powers of Guru Ravidass, and not making the slightest dent in their belief in the caste system per say, the humbling of the all-powerful and arrogant Brahmin is both very spiritually and emotionally satisfying for contemporary Ravidassias. Guru Ravidass is a unifying figure because he speaks to the anger and pain that ex-touchables feel over their lack of status and respect. He represents their aspirations to triumph over prejudice and discrimination, claim their rightful place in society, and

prove their caste enemies wrong. Ravidass symbolises religious justice and equality, a harbinger of what Ravidassia Chamars hope to achieve in the social field.

Ad Dharm: The Quest for an Autonomous Dalit Identity

The courage and life example of Guru Ravidass served as a key source of inspiration and motivation in the most important movement against untouchability that the Punjab has witnessed. This movement skillfully drew on the figure of Guru Ravidass in order to appeal to all Dalits and instill in them a new consciousness of their identity and their rights. The Ad Dharm (original people) movement arose in the Punjab during the 1920´s. The Ad Dharm was founded by Mangoo Ram, a Dalit of the Chamar caste, and a great visionary who gave birth to a daring and entirely new self-concept and worldview for Punjabi Dalits: that of being a separate *qaum*- a distinct religious community or people (Juergensmeyer 1988: 45). Mangoo Ram´s own life illustrates the extreme inhumanity of the caste system. One of the few of his caste who even attended primary school (he was the only Dalit student in attendance), he was forced to listen to the lessons outside of the school building. Juergensmeyer relates an incident in which due to heavy rain, Ram came inside the building for protection. In response, the Bramhin teacher beat him and "put all the classroom furniture, which he had ´polluted´ by his presence, outside in the rain to be literally and ritually washed clean" (Juergensmeyer 1988: 284). Despite these extraordinary obstacles, Ram excelled academically, and even placed third in his class in primary school. He went on to secondary school, although he later quit to help his father with his thriving leather business. In 1909, Ram set sail for America, one of the few Dalits at this time who went to work abroad. While working as a fruit picker in California for former *zamindars*, or landlords of his village, he got involved with the revolutionary, nationalist Gadar movement, which aimed to topple the British from power. Ram´s experience as a full-time worker for the movement had a profound influence on him, as for the first time in his life, Ram experienced equality: "it was a new society; we were treated as equals" (Juergensmeyer 1988: 285). He was no longer just an ´untouchable´, but a comrade (Juergensmeyer 1988: 287). Although the movement failed in its attempt to overthrow the British, and almost led to the execution of Ram, it gave him a taste of social equality, and raised his expectations of life as an ´untouchable´.

When he returned to the Punjab in 1925, he was convinced that the most pressing priority was not the independence of India, but liberating India´s long-suffering Dalits from oppression and subordination. Ram set up a primary school for Dalits in his home village, and

launched a new religious movement for social reform that had as its basic premise the need to assert a separate Dalit religious identity- one that would be equal in stature to the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities. The Ad Dharm movement advocated the belief that the Dalits were the original people of India, who had once had a glorious civilization and lived harmoniously, but that this superior, casteless society was destroyed by the Ayran invaders, who proceeded to enslave the Dalit´s ancestors:

"In India one-quarter of the population is Untouchable, people who have been enslaved by the high caste Hindus for the last 5,000 years. These poor people have been dethroned from their political and religious status to such an extent that their souls have been crushed- crushed so hard that they have lost their identity" (Juergensmeyer 1988: 291).

The goal therefore was to reclaim this lost identity and assert independence of mind, identity and spirit. The key text (Laws of Manu) that throughout the ages has been used to legitimise the exploitation and subjugation of Dalits was directly attacked and criticised, and indeed Ad Dharm called for the complete boycotting of all religious texts that promoted an inferior position for Dalits, warning that to follow such texts was a "mortal sin":

"In this period of time Manu was born. He made some regulations and imposed them on the original people. For example, it was he who started the idea of discrimination, stating how different people were to be treated differently. Such principles of injustice were adopted as values by the Aryans to enslave the local people. Books were written to teach humiliation and were taught in the schools as textbooks. Every means of humiliation was used" (Juergensmeyer 1988: 296).

To overcome centuries of oppression, both material and psychological, the Ad Dharm movement decided to break decisively with Hinduism- identified as its key oppressor since the Ayran invasion, and create its own religion, deriving its spiritual guidance and inspiration from Dalit *sants*, or poet-saints, namely Guru Ravidass, Rishi Valmiki, Kabir and Guru Nam Dev. The poetry, image and legends of Guru Ravidass in particular were used extensively (Juergensmeyer 1988: 33). The manifesto of Ad Dharm states unequivocally the autonomous status of Dalits:

"We are not Hindus. We strongly request the government not to list us as such. Our faith is not Hindu but Ad Dharm. We are not a part of Hinduism, and Hindus are not a part of us. Ad Dharm

should be listed separately in the census and in other ways be given rights equal to Hindus" (Juergensmeyer 1988: 301).

The demand to be listed in the census as Ad Dharm rather than Hindu relates to the particular political climate which existed during this time, in which Hindus and Sikhs competed to have Dalits listed as part of their community, in order to enhance their demographic and hence political strength. The advent of Christianity, which was attracting significant numbers of Dalit converts, sharpened and intensified this competition, particularly among upper-caste Hindus who feared losing political influence in the Punjab.

The focus in the Ad Dharm movement was on carving out a distinct religious and social identity for Dalits, based on the long-standing popular worship of Guru Ravidass. Religion was the vehicle used for making a number of demands for concrete economic and political measures for Dalit advancement. Thus, on the symbolic plane, the colour red for Dalits was reclaimed, as in many areas, it was forbidden for Dalit men to wear red turbans:

"Red color is the symbol of the Ad Dharm. It is the color of the original inhabitants; the Aryans took it and prohibited Untouchables from wearing it. We request the government to allow us to wear red colors. In fact, we insist on it: red is our rightful color" (Juergensmeyer 1988: 53).

Along with symbolic assertion, specific demands were made for scholarships and schools for Dalit children, land and employment for Dalit farmers (traditionally Dalits were forbidden from owning land, a prohibition that was enshrined in the Land Alienation Act), and adequate representation on municipal/district councils, in the Legislative Assembly, in the police and military, and in all other government departments (Juergensymeyer 1988: 300-301). From a gender perspective, it is interesting to note that the all-male Ad Dharm leadership advocated primary education for both girls and boys, equal inheritance for sons and daughters, and declared that "there should be equally great happiness at the birth of both boys and girls" (Juergensmeyer 1988: 304). The leadership also condemned child marriages, bride price and extravagant weddings. The Ad Dharm movement thus aspired to complete equality with the dominant castes in all spheres of life- economic, political, social and religious. It was a holistic effort aimed at both economic and spiritual empowerment after centuries of being treated as failed, lesser human beings- when they were seen as human at all. The crowning success of the Ad Dharm movement

was achieved in the 1931 census, in which half a million Dalits recorded their religion as Ad Dharm, despite fierce opposition and even violence on the part of dominant caste Sikhs and Hindus (Juergensmeyer 1988: 290).

The Ad Dharm movement did not survive, fizzling out in the mid 1930´s, due to a combination of changed political circumstances and internal factionalism (Juergensymeyer 1988: 152). My Valmiki Dalit interviewees stressed that the Ad-Dharm movement was also hampered by the fact that its support base was primarily composed of Chamars- Ad Dharm did not achieve the same success among other Dalit castes and was perceived as an essentially Chamar movement, although Ram sought to reach out to all SC *jatis* (caste groups). However, although Ad Dharm did not manage to achieve all of its goals or radically transform Punjabi society, it did instil a new political consciousness among Dalits and create a receptive environment for social change among them. The seeds of a new social vision, a re-ordering of society, had been planted, giving new hope and symbolic power to a community long denied even symbolic resources. This landmark movement against untouchability gave religious and political form to the idea that discrimination against Dalits was no longer morally acceptable or justifiable- asserting that Dalits were full humans, with a civilised and glorious past. Ad Dharm symbolised independence, dignity, collective strength and pride in one´s identity- aspirations and values that were not extinguished with the movement's passing.

The *Dera* Phenomenon and Caste Politics

In the contemporary period, while no visionary Dalit leader exists in the Punjab akin to Chief Minister Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh or Mangoo Ram, religious centres known as *deras* are continuing the devotion to Guru Ravidass. The current *dera*-based Ravidassia movement forms part of a larger cultural and religious tradition in the Punjab that transcends any one caste or religious group. To understand the significance of the *dera*-based Ravidassia movement, it is important to first gain an overview of the centrality of *dera* culture in Punjabi society. The Punjabi religious landscape has long been dotted with countless *deras*, devoted to both Sikh and non-Sikh religious leaders (commonly known as *babas* or *sants*). It is estimated that the Punjab has a total of 9,000 *deras*, both Sikh and non-Sikh (Ram 2007: 4067). Most of these centres are gurudwaras run by influencial *babas* or gurudwaras that have been built to honour the memory of a particular *sant*, and managed by his descendents or followers (Jodhka 2008: 3). Such *deras* observe the Sikh *Rehit Mayrada* (code of conduct) and adhere to a Khalsa (orthodox) Sikh

identity. A second category of *deras* follow the tradition of a Living Guru that orthodox Sikhism strictly rejects, but continue to form part of the Sikh universe and identify with the Sikh *panth* (society) as in the case of the Sikh sects of the Namdharis and the Nirankaris. Although not having an explicit caste following, most of these Sikh or Sikh-related *deras* draw their followers principally from one caste or are run by a particular caste. Orthodox Sikh *deras* tend to be run and frequented by Jat Sikhs (Ram 2007: 4067). The Namdhari sect has a high number of Ramgarhia devotees due to its founder and successor *sants* being Ramgarhias. Likewise, the Nirankari sect is controlled by the Khatri caste (Ram 2007: 4067). A third category of *dera* are those *deras* within the Living Guru tradition that are neither Sikh nor Hindu, but promote a synretic spirituality that draws from a variety of faith traditions, although borrowing extensively from Sikhism. They draw their strength in particular from Dalit followers, although ironically their religious leadership is usually high-caste, often Jat. The leading example of such a non-Sikh religiously hybrid *dera* is the Radhasoami movement, which is one of the most successful religious movements in the Punjab. The Radhasoami movement has become wealthy and powerful, commanding large amounts of land, resources and followers. Indeed, such is their economic power, that some *deras* own the land of entire villages and have special land acquisition officers (Jodhka 2008: 5). The Radhasoami movement is a good example of a *dera* that while flatly denying the role of caste in their movement, is in fact governed by Jats, while drawing the bulk of their devotees from Dalits (a fact that was often pointed out to me by several Dalit interviewees in the Punjab).

A fourth category of *dera* is constituted by explicitly caste-based *deras*, as in the case of *deras* devoted to Guru Ravidass- approximately sixty-four *deras* dedicated to Guru Ravidass exist throughout the Punjab (Puri 2008: 326). The largest and most popular of these *deras* is known as *Dera* Sach Khand Ballan (abode of truth), located in the Jalandhar district of the Punjab. The Ravidassia *deras*, along with other *deras* devoted to non-Sikh saints, pose a considerable challenge to the hold of mainstream Sikhism on the hearts, minds and pockets of Punjabi Dalits. For in flocking to these alternative religious centres, Dalits are actively participating in a non-orthodox, fluid religiosity that is not controlled by Khalsa Sikhism. SGPC (the central body that governs historic gurudwaras in the Punjab)-controlled gurudwaras lose both followers and perhaps most importantly, the substantial *golak* or donations that they bring with them. In the case of the Ravidassia movement, Dalits from the Chamar caste are also fashioning a distinct religious identity that sets them apart from orthodox Sikhism. *Dera* Sach Khand Ballan, while sharing the broader Sikh culture of the Punjab, has developed its own religious rituals, symbols

and language. For example, while up until very recently the Guru Granth Sahib was read, *aarti* (a Hindu religious ritual) is also performed and a separate non-Sikh *Jaikara*, or religious cry, is used (rites that are both anathema for orthodox Sikhs). Ravidassia *deras*, *Dera* Sach Khand Ballan in particular, form the backbone of the contemporary Ravidassia movement that has been instrumental in increasing the visibility and confidence of the Chamar community in the Punjab. However, while Ravidassia *deras* are very much rooted in the Punjab, their following is global in nature, linking Ravidassias worldwide in an international fellowship devoted to Guru Ravidass. Indeed, in many respects, Ravidassias who have migrated to Europe and North America are the key drivers of this movement, and provide crucial financial support to Ravidassia *deras* back home. A case in point is *Dera* Sach Khand Ballan, which depends financially on generous contributions from Non Resident Indians (NRI´s). Each year, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Guru Ravidass in February, *Dera* Sach Khand Ballan organises a special train pilgrimage to the site of Guru Ravidass´s birthplace in Benares, Uttar Pradesh, in which a disproportionate number of NRI Ravidassias participate due to their financial influence. Ravidassia religious festivals are an opportunity for Chamars to demonstrate their growing economic strength, their NRI connections (which bring great social prestige in the Punjab), and above all, their pride and confidence in being Chamar- a defiant reversal of years of untouchable stigma. It is this growing visibility and assertion that particularly irks orthodox Sikhs. This challenge to their previously uncontested symbolic power in the religious domain has erupted into open conflict in recent years. Certain *deras*, such as the highly controversial *Dera* Sacha Sauda (based in Haryana but having large numbers of Dalit Punjabi devotees), have provoked widespread political and social unrest due to the actions of its Jat chief being perceived by orthodox Sikhs as offending and attacking the basic beliefs and principles of Sikhism. Thus *Deras*, while offering spiritual services, are intricately bound up with caste/religious politics in the Punjab, and are at the same time both economic and political organisations that struggle for ´market share´ and symbolic power in an intensely competitive religious marketplace. Their wealth and devotee base means that their influence extends to the political sphere, even though most *deras* do not openly support any particular political party or programme. Jodkha affirms that it has become increasingly *de rigueur* for Punjabi politicians to visit *deras* and court their *babas* (Jodhka 2008:5).

What explains the popularity of *deras* and *sants*?

The growth of religiously syncretic caste-based *deras* throughout the Punjab has given rise to multiple analyses that account for their increase in popularity. Punjabi scholars such as Ronki Ram link their growing appeal to the disillusionment and disenchantment that Dalits feel with mainstream Sikhism, which has failed miserably in putting its egalitarian religious ethos into practice. The hoped for equality that Sikhism promised has simply not materialised. According to Ram, even the Singh Sabha Sikh reform movement was unable to make a dent in the casteist mentality afflicting Sikhism, due to its failure to adopt concrete measures against untouchability (Ram 2007: 4066). Jodhka stresses the cultural and psychological reasons that individuals flock to *deras*, ranging from the intense desire for a male child which people feel a *baba* has the power to grant them, to the "personal touch" that the *dera* offers, often completely missing in mainstream gurudwaras (Jodhka 2008: 4). Jodhka also advances the gendered thesis that women are particularly keen on *dera* worship, due to their preaching against alcohol and drug use, which afflicts an alarmingly high percentage of Punjabi men (according to a 2010 Al-Jazeera report picked up by the Sikh news service Sikhnet, 70% of male Punjabi youth between the ages of fifteen to thirty-five are addicted to drugs). Ballard´s analysis of the popularity of *dera*s shows that Punjabis have long flocked to these centres and their spiritual masters (both living and dead) in order to find answers for the inexplicable, to help them make sense of and cope with personal misfortune/disaster, and thus to overcome adversity in life (Ballard 2000: 9). He classifies *dera*s and their *sants* as belonging to the *kismetic* dimension of Punjabi religion (present in all the faith traditions of the Punjab), in which *dera sants* play a key therapeutic role in diagnosing and offering practical solutions to the many daily and domestic problems that afflict Punjabis, particularly Punjabi women (Ballard 2000: 10). Indeed, Ballard affirms that *deras* and their *babas* offer a culturally cogent form of psychological treatment and relief on a par with Western psychotherapy (Ballard 2000: 12).

I believe that the popularity of Ravidassia *deras* in particular can further be attributed to the vital social function they fulfill, their role in promoting education for Dalits, and the spiritual (and hence mental) security that they offer in a highly uncertain and unstable world. Having stayed at *Dera* Sach Khand Ballan for several weeks as part of my fieldwork, I was able to observe the vital social role that *deras* perform. Given the lack of other ´entertainment´ options available, for many families, a trip to the *dera* functions as *the* social outing in their calender. For both women and youth (particularly female youth), a visit to the *dera* is respectable and justifiable on religious grounds, and will be one of the few occasions in which travel will secure

family approval. For many local women and unemployed male youth, the *dera* provides the only social outlet and activity they have outside of the home. The *dera* phenomenon is thus a reflection of the complete overlapping between the religious and social realms in the Punjab- a person´s religious community is also simultaneously one´s social network due to the weakness of civil society in the Punjab. That is to say, almost all socialising and outings revolve around religion. Indeed, for many women and girls, religious pilgrimages are their only opportunities for travel and carrying out *seva* (voluntary service) at the *dera* is often the only socially acceptable occasion in which they can leave their homes and participate in some form of public life. Jodhka´s thesis regarding female *dera* attendance is born out by the popularity of *Dera* Sach Khand Ballan´s ayurvedic medicine dispensary among women. Each morning, the ayurvedic service is crowded with women who wait patiently to explain the multiple ailments that they or their family members suffer from- many of which involve the addictions of their menfolk. Thus *deras* perform a particularly important social and psychological role for women, many of whom lack emotional support, and indeed live as completely dependent and unequal subjects as married women living in their in-laws´ home. A second reason for the success of Ravidassia *deras*, *Dera* Sachkhand Ballan, in particular, lies in their furthering of education among a constituency that has historically had very high levels of illiteracy due to poverty and casteism. Many followers of *Dera* Sachkhand Ballan feel eternally grateful to the *dera* and its earlier *babas* for their promotion of education, without which they would not have achieved upward mobility. There is therefore a strong sense of ´moral debt´ to the *dera*, which is perceived as the root of their personal success. Finally, a third reason that accounts for the success of Ravidassia and Sikh *deras* alike lies in the commonly accepted belief that following a guru is indispensable for spiritual progress. The notion of having a personal guru is a deeply rooted one in India, and for many taking *naam* (initiation) from a *sant* provides another source of spiritual protection and ´insurance´ that complements their other religious activities. Following a particular guru is also in many cases a family tradition, so that all family members are bound to the same spiritual path- thus the decision to take *naam* is not necessarily an invidual one, but dictated by family and wider cultural expectations. Unlike in the West, multiple religious attachments have traditionally not posed a problem (although this is changing as Sikh fundamentalism has reared its head), and religious activity is far more ´promiscuous´, with involvement in both ´mainstream´ religious and *dera* activities common. Taking into account the widespread belief that spiritual progress and ultimate salvation can only be achieved by following the guidance of one´s guru, the pull of *babas* must also be seen as part and parcel of the broader cultural context of the primacy of ´guruship´ in Indian spiritual life.

Ravidassia *Deras* as Social Assertion

While the specifically Ravidassia *dera* phenomenon can in part be explained by the above analyses, there are broader factors at work that relate to the role of religion as social protest in India. The social conditions and aspirations of their followers is a key underlying factor that fuels *dera* growth. Given the supreme importance attached to religion in Indian society, and the fact that religion permeates almost every detail of daily life, many marginalised and dispossessed groups turn to religion in order to improve their status in society. They transform an ideological tool that has been used against them into a force for their own empowerment and liberation. Former untouchables both within and outside of the Punjab have pursued an essentially religious strategy in their quest for human rights and collective advancement. At the historic Yeaola conversion conference held in 1935, Ambedkar urged his followers to leave Hinduism and famously declared that "I was born a Hindu, but I will not die as a Hindu" (Ceeby.com, 2010). After much deliberation, he decided that the best way forward for untouchables was to leave the shackles of the Hindu religion, due to its cruelty and inhumanity towards the lower castes, and convert to Buddhism. Although this conversion call was issued to untouchables across India as the solution to the humiliations of Hinduism, in practice it was largely the Mahar community of Maharashtra that converted en masse (Ambedkar was also Mahar). The Buddhist movement initiated by Ambedkar has hardly made its mark in the Punjab. However, religion has equally served as a platform in which to achieve progress and assert community identity in the Punjab, both historically as we have seen with the Ad Dharm movement, and in the contemporary period with the increased visibility and power of Ravidassia *deras*. Ravidassia *deras*, while connected to Sikhism due to the inclusion of Guru Ravidass´s *bani* in the Sikh holy book, are the key drivers behind the creation and flourishing of a distinctive Ravidassia community in which religious and caste identity coincide. Puri calls this process the "inventing and strengthening of distinct *jati*-based religio-cultural markers" (Puri 2008: 326). Former Punjabi untouchables are thus using religion to assert their cultural and social autonomy from mainstream religious institutions dominated by Jats and other upper castes. While up until very recently, there has been no radical split from dominant religion as in Maharashtra, Ravidassia *deras* have been instrumental in promoting a distinct religious (and hence social and cultural) identity within the overall structures of Hinduism and Sikhism. Although not politically activist, Ravidassia *deras* have succeeded in carving out an alternative cultural/religious space partially in the spirit of the Ad-Dharm movement, which advocated a completely autonomous Dalit identity equal in stature to the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities. Indeed Ram argues that Ravidassia *deras* such as *Dera*

Sach Khand Ballan have been promoting "a kind of middle path between assimilation, on the one hand, and radical separatism, on the other" (Ram 2008: 1343).

The Limitations of Ravidassia *Deras*

Ravidassia *deras* have played a key role in Ravidassia identity construction and promotion, but they have been less successful at tackling the many social inequalities that the Ravidassia community suffers from. The lack of explicit political demands on the part of Ravidassia *deras*, and their emphasis on religious identity and symbols, has meant that pressing social and economic issues have been neglected. Unlike with the Ad Dharm or Ambedkarite movements, religion has not been as yoked to overt political and social assertion, having been stripped of its more radical potential. Although *Dera* Sach Khand Ballan has opened a school and two hospitals (institutions that serve to bolster the image and legitimacy of all large religious organisations in India), apart from charitable works, social activism is noticeably absent. In contrast to the Ad Dharm movement, issues of gender inequality, for example, are completely invisible. The thorny issue of female feticide has been ignored. *Dera* leadership is exclusively male and its management committees are overwhelmingly male-dominated, while much of the most demanding and invisible *seva* (voluntary work) is carried out by local village women. Nor is economic inequality addressed. Ram points out that despite laying claim to the highest proportion of SC population in the nation, Punjabi Dalits have the lowest share of ownership of land (Ram 2007: 4066). Ravidassia *deras* have thus far not made an effort to tackle such systemic problems. Indeed Ram argues that one reason Dalits have flocked to *deras* in such large numbers is the absence of a strong Dalit movement in the state (Ram 2007: 4067). Ravidassia and other *deras* have effectively filled the vacuum created by the lack of a strong Dalit-based political party and Dalit-based social organisations, for Dalit civil society is similarly weak. While playing an important role in satisfying the identity needs and psychological aspirations of a segment of the Dalit population, Ravidassia *deras* have not been effective in bringing about broader socio-economic change. Moreover, their patriarchal leadership structures and subcultures further strengthen and normalise the existing gender equality in Punjabi culture.

Ravidassia *deras* are similarly limited in their scope due to the fact that they are fundamentally linked to a Chamar following. Other scheduled castes, such as the Valmikis, have their own socio-religious movement centered on the worship of Valmik. Ambedkarite activists in particular have criticised the narrow *jati*-based nature of religious identity in the Punjab. In

promoting the worship of Guru Ravidass, who was a Chamar, Ravidassia *deras* are also strengthening a Chamar-based identity, as opposed to an all-embracing Dalit identity that includes all former untouchables. According to Puri, in the place of a more politicised Dalit identity, a "discrete *Jati* consciousness" has emerged that has reinforced the internal caste hierarchy among the SC population, widening differences between Chamars and Mazhabis/Valmikis (Puri 2008: 326). The lack of solidarity and unity between *jatis*, or even within a single *jati*, since Chamars are spread among many religions and religious movements, seriously weakens the overall Dalit movement in the Punjab. Thus Ravidassia *deras*, while enabling Chamars to assert their difference and claim their respect as a caste community, also simultaneously sustain caste differences and maintain *jati* boundaries. Tellingly, no Ravidassia *dera* chief has advocated inter-caste marriage, which Dr. Ambedkar argued was essential for ultimately demolishing caste barriers. The custom of caste endogamy remains untouched. Paradoxically then, the *dera*-based Ravidassia movement both challenges and upholds the caste system that it seeks to eliminate. Its very presence is like an open thorn in the heel of the Sikh *panth*, for their separate cultural spaces serve as a reminder of the legacy (and continuing practice) of discrimination and exclusion on the part of upper caste Sikhs. No Ravidassia movement for self-respect would be necessary if Chamars and other Dalits had been welcomed on equal terms into the *panth* and treated as brothers and sisters. By keeping alive, however, one of the cornerstones of the caste system (arranged endogamous marriage), the Ravidassia movement, like their upper caste counterparts, perpetuates caste culture and a caste-based identity. In a culture in which caste saturates every aspect of life from birth to death, this is perhaps unavoidable. Having been deprived of a voice and their own dignity for so long, Ravidassia Chamars now feel it is time to reclaim their identity and lost pride, even if this must be done within the broader parameters set by the caste system itself.

Conclusion

Guru Ravidass is the glue that binds Chamars together, and the principal ´spiritual fuel´ of Chamars from the Hindu and Sikh faith traditions. His powerful life example has been the driving force behind both early twenthieth century and contemporary Chamar movements against untouchability. In proudly declaring his caste identity, he stands as a beacon to all Chamars who have suffered the stigma of untouchability. During the Ad Dharm movement, his name was invoked and his image used to motivate Chamars to unite and form their own *qaum* (nation). In

the contemporary period, *deras* devoted to the worship of Ravidass are instrumental in instilling a separate sense of identity and belonging to Chamars. Although Ravidassia *deras* have not been effective in addressing economic or gender inequality within the community, they fulfill a vital psychological role in aiding Chamars to mentally and spiritually unlearn the foundations of caste. Like marginalised communities elsewhere in the world, Ravidassia Chamars are now challenging and breaking down the mental barriers imposed by an ideology that has oppressed them pyschologically for centuries. In taking this step of mental freedom from the caste system, Chamars are initiating a slow, but sure psychological and spititual revolution against the Indian social order, without however, transgressing the ultimate caste taboo of intercaste marriage.

THE RAVIDASSIA COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY(IES) IN CATALONIA, SPAIN

"It is disgraceful to live at the cost of one's self-respect. Self-respect is the most vital factor in life. Without it, man is a cipher. To live worthily with self-respect, one has to overcome difficulties. It is out of hard and ceaseless struggle alone that one derives strength, confidence and recognition." B. R. Ambedkar

"The basis of my politics lies in the proposition that the Untouchables are not a sub-division or sub-section of Hindus, and that they are a separate and distinct element in the national life of India" B. R. Ambedkar

Introduction

Spain is not a country that traditionally has been associated with immigration, and particularly so Indian immigration. Historically, Spain, along with other Southern European countries, has been a source of emigration, rather than a desirable destination for immigrants. Under the fascist Franco regime, Spain was closed culturally and economically. A nationalist Catholic identity was imposed in which the Roman Catholic Church was the only religion that enjoyed official recognition and legal status. Internal diversity was severely repressed in pursuit of a model of Castilian cultural uniformity, resulting in the suppression of regional languages and cultures such as Catalan, the Basque language, and Gallego. With the transition to democracy beginning in 1979 and the growth of Spain´s economy during the 1980s, Spain has rapidly transformed from a homogenous society into an immigrant receiving country. Immigration in large numbers really started to take off during the 1990s. According to 2009 figures from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 12 percent of Spain´s population is now foreign born. This chapter will first discuss the phenomenon of Indian immigration to Spain and explain why it is unique, along with how Spain has emerged as a new migrant destination for people from the North Indian state of the Punjab. I will focus particularly on the special case of the formerly untouchable Punjabi community known as the Ravidassias, describe their evolution as a community in Barcelona, and explain the factors that led them to establish their own gurdwara and increasingly distance themselves from the main Sikh tradition. The Ravidassias in Spain come from the Chamar (leather-working) caste and are those Chamars who embraced Sikhism, while maintaining the worship of their patron saint, Guru Ravidass. The term Chamar refers to an endogamous caste group (Chamars can and do profess a variety of religions), while the term Ravidassia denotes a specific caste-based religious identity, although in contemporary Ravidassia discourse, the two terms are often used interchangeably. After introducing the Ravidassias, I will then present the

results of my anthropological fieldwork in Barcelona on Ravidasia experiences of casteism in Catalonia, and I will analyse why Ravidasias maintain that casteism is more acute in Spain. The ideological complexity that characterises the Spanish Ravidassia community will be addressed and its implications for gurdwara development and cohesion discussed. Finally, I will analyse the dramatic consequences that the tragic "Vienna incident" has had on the Ravidasia *sangat* (congregation) in Barcelona and the important psychological ruptures and changes in religious and caste identity that it has produced.

Indian Immigration to Spain: An Overview

The bulk of immigration to Spain is composed of economic migrants from Latin America and North Africa, regions with which Spain has historic ties due to colonisation or geographic proximity. Consequently, immigration debates in Spain tend to be centered on these immigrant groups. The phenomenon of Indian immigration to Spain has thus far generated little media attention; very few Spaniards are aware of the origins of Indian immigrants. Indian immigration to Spain is unique in Europe, for it has been characterised by two different waves of immigration and two different Indian groups. The first Indian immigrants to arrive in Spain were the Sindhis during the 1960s, pushed by the partition of India in 1947, which saw their home province of Sind being ceded to Muslim-dominated Pakistan. This led to the subsequent worldwide dispersal of the Sindhis in search of new homelands. The Sindhi community in Spain is one of the largest outside of India, superseded only by the US, with estimates ranging from 10,000 (Haller 2005: 155) to 20, 000, according to the website SindhiInfo.com, to between 20, 000 and 30, 000, including Andorra (Falzon 2007: 123). Today the Sindhis are a prosperous, well-settled community of merchants specialising in the import/export business, electronics equipment, consumer goods and jewelry. The Sindhis are concentrated primarily in Catalonia, but have also settled in the Canary Islands and in the British crown colony of Gibraltar, just off the Spanish coast (still claimed formally by Spain). Little published caste information exists on the community, although the Mediterranean scholar Falzon mentions that the bhaiband *jati* or caste is the driving force behind much of the global and Spanish diaspora, maintaining however that caste distinctions in business practices have since disappeared following Partition in favor of a unified Hindu Sindhi identity (Falzon 2007: 129). Informal conversations with Sindhis in Barcelona support this view of caste as much less important within the Sindhi community than among orthodox Hindu groups. In particular, they stress the absence of untouchability and the fact that

among Sindhis, the most powerful and important castes are mercantile in nature and not Brahmins- usually the highest caste in the mainstream Hindu caste hierarchy.

Punjabi migration to Spain is more recent, starting in the mid-1980s, and driven by economic and social factors - a lack of employment opportunities in the Punjab combined with the great social prestige attached to being an NRI, or non-resident Indian. Although Punjabi migration to Spain is still in its early stages, the Punjabis have a long and proud history of migration to and success in foreign lands. Due to India´s status as a former British colony, most of this migration has historically flowed to other countries of the British Empire. Beginning with the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849, Punjabis began working overseas as soldiers, police officers and security guards first in Southeast Asia, and then in other parts of the British Empire. Unlike Indians from other regions, most Punjabis did not make their way abroad through the route of indentured labour, with the exception of Punjabi indentured labourers in East Africa. Punjabi migration to non-English speaking countries with no link to the former British Empire represents a new empirical phenomenon. In the unofficial Punjabi destination hierarchy, Spain remains relatively unknown and obscure, and it certainly does not rank with the leading Anglophone countries of choice (US, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand). However, in the wake of the more desirable migration countries' tightening their immigration policies, Punjabis have increasingly been settling in continental European countries, including southern Europe. Italy, for example, now boasts a significant Punjabi population. Although Spain´s immigration policy has since become far more restrictive, and general amnesties are no longer declared for settled illegal immigrants, progressively restrictive immigration policies have not been successful in stemming the tide of illegal immigration. Punjabis come to Spain in their search for residency permits, the much-coveted "papeles" in Spanish, which explains why Punjabi Sikhs "end up" rather than consciously choose Spain as a migration destination. Many Punjabis are effectively forced to abandon other continental European countries and come to Spain in order to legalise their status in Europe. Thus Spain is perceived as a country in which it is easier to obtain legal status. Many Punjabi migrants, once they have obtained residency status in Spain, hope to migrate to other, wealthier European countries. Southern Europe in general is viewed as a feasible migration destination for financial reasons, since not as much initial financial/educational/lingustic capital is required in order to migrate illegally. Nor have the Southern European countries as yet implemented a points-based immigration system. "Only the rich" now make it to Canada or Australia according to Punjabis settled in Spain. Within Spain,

Punjabi migration is concentrated almost exclusively within the autonomous Spanish region of Catalonia, particularly Barcelona. Outside of Catalonia, Punjabis are found in significant numbers only in the region of Valencia. Although Catalonia has historically been an economically prosperous region, drawing internal migration from the south of Spain, before it attracted foreign migration, other regions, such as Madrid, are also engines of job creation. The reason why Catalonia has captured the lion´s share of Punjabi migration can be explained by two factors: first, according to my interviewees, there is greater competition in Madrid for jobs from Latin American and Moroccan immigrants, both of whom also possess better Spanish linguistic capital than Punjabis. Secondly, the first Punjabis who settled in Spain found jobs in Catalonia, leading to chain migration to the region. Catalonia is also home to a large and well-established Pakistani community that is majority Punjabi. Thus Punjabis are drawn both by the presence of a significant Punjabi community in Catalonia (both Indian and Pakistani), and the prospect of finding jobs.

Punjabi migrants in Catalonia are spread throughout the region making Punjabi migration both an urban and a rural phenomenon. Apart from Barcelona, Punjabis have increasingly been settling in smaller cities and towns throughout Catalonia; in some towns their presence is so significant as to make them the largest immigrant group. The Punjabi community in Spain is still largely first-generation and male-dominated, although through family reunification and marriage, both a “1.5” and a second generation are emerging, and consequently the gender balance of the community is gradually changing. The 1.5 generation can be defined as those adolescents and young adults who were born in the Punjab but came to Catalonia with their families at a young age. The majority of men of all castes work in the construction or catering industries. A third important group works in factories as manual labor, particularly in the meat industry. While an increasing number of Punjabis have established small businesses, Punjabi Sikh entrepreneurship lags significantly behind that of their Punjabi Pakistani counterparts. Most women of all castes work as homemakers, although younger, unmarried women increasingly work outside of the home. The Spanish government does not collect region-specific migration data and hence official figures do not exist on Punjabi-specific migration. It is estimated that 10, 000 Indian Punjabis are settled in Catalonia. Catalonia is currently home to eight Sikh temples or gurdwaras: five in the Barcelona metropolitan area, and three located in small cities in the north of Catalonia (Vic, Girona and Olot respectively). The caste profile of the Punjabi community diverges significantly from that found in the longer-established Punjabi diaspora in the UK. In the UK, the Punjabi community is Jat and

Ramgarhia dominated, with Punjabi Dalits (an umbrella term that refers to all ex-untouchables) representing an important minority. Castewatch UK, a Dalit human rights organisation, estimates that there are 50, 000 Dalits living in the UK (Castewatch website). In Spain, the Lubanas, a small yet highly mobile caste from the Kapurthala district of Punjab dominate, followed by Jats (the dominant land-owing caste of the Punjab) and the Ravidasia Chamars. Given the predominantly first-generation nature of Punjabi migration in Catalonia, levels of linguistic and social integration within the host society are weak. Only a minority of first-generation adults have learned Spanish and virtually none Catalan, the official regional language. The linguistic integration of first-generation Punjabi women is even poorer, and much more could be done to reach this group. Lack of linguistic skills and above all legal status has made integration on the job market difficult, and facilitates exploitation by fellow Punjabis, even by ones´ relatives. Many young men who are well- qualified are unable to use their skills in Spain due to their "illegal" status, which has resulted in problems of depression, alcoholism, and to them accepting odd jobs with a high risk of being fined by the police (such as selling drinks on the beach or outside of nightclubs). However, signs are promising for the 1.5 and emerging second generations, who are fluent in both Spanish and Catalan, and whose levels of educational and job integration are encouraging. However, very few 1.5/ second generation Punjabi youth go to university, a trend which will hopefully change as the community as a whole becomes more established. For the moment, most Punjabi youth who continue their studies beyond secondary school enroll in vocational education courses. Regarding residential settlement, within Barcelona, settlement patterns are dispersed. Punjabis of all castes have settled in both the historical centre of Barcelona, as well as in the neighboring municipalities of Barcelona where property and rent are cheaper. Punjabis enjoy what the Spanish term a good "convivencia" (peaceful relationships) with their neighbors, particularly their Spanish neighbors, but also towards Pakistanis, with a number of male Indian Punjabis reporting friendship with Pakistani Punjabis. However, high levels of mistrust are experienced towards other migrant groups and the Spanish Roma in areas that are immigrant dense.

Caste Patterns in Barcelona and the Special Case of the Ravidassia Chamars

During the early years of Punjabi settlement in Barcelona, all castes worshipped together in the same central gurdwara. Given the small numbers, community solidarity was a necessity. As the Punjabi Sikh community has grown however, the same pattern of caste fragmentation that has

been observed in the UK, has been repeated in Spain. As the Punjabi population has expanded, gurdwaras have multiplied, and have become increasingly caste based. Barcelona now has two caste-specific gurdwaras (one Lubana and one Chamar), but all gurdwaras tend to be associated with a particular caste, or identified with the caste that dominates its management committee. Therefore, when speaking about the "Punjabi Sikh" community in Barcelona, it is important to highlight how caste has and continues to play a key role in shaping different migrant trajectories in Spain. Although all caste groups face the common problems of adapting to life in a new country, and difficulties in finding work, not all arrive with the same level of economic, cultural and social capital. Chamars assert that they start off with relatively lower levels of economic resources when embarking on their migratory project. According to my Ravidassia respondents, the Lubanas arrive with the most capital, having previously lived in Germany or Belgium, and consequently have established the greatest number of businesses in Catalonia. Jats have sold their land before emigrating, which gives them a more solid economic base once in Spain.

The caste hierarchy in the Punjab is unique within India due to the dominance of a landowning caste group known as the Jats, whereas in most other regions it is the Brahmins who dominate the local caste hierarchy. In the Punjab, Brahmins are even looked down upon (Ram 2004: 896) and it is the Jats who hold economic, social and cultural power (particularly in the countryside), and also constitute the largest group within Sikhism. The prosperous urban, Hindu mercantile castes do not tend to migrate abroad. The lower castes, until very recently, have been poor, illiterate and economically dependent on the Jats. In most villages, caste conflict has centered on Jat-Chamar power relations (the two largest groups in the countryside). This can explain why for most Chamars, Jats and not Lubanas are their main source of reference when referring to upper caste discrimination. Most Chamars have had no or little previous contact with Lubanas prior to migrating to Spain.

Most Ravidassias work as manual labor in the construction or catering industries. Ten Chamar men have established their own businesses (two own construction firms), but many are currently unemployed due to the financial crisis in Spain, which is compounded by their illegal status. Despite these relative economic disadvantages, however, the region of origin of Punjabi Chamars has greatly influenced how the Ravidassia community has developed in Catalonia. The Chamar population in Barcelona comes predominantly from the Jalandhar, Nawanshahr and Karpurthala districts of the Doaba region of the Punjab. This is the region where the Ravidassia movement and identity is at its strongest (it is the birthplace of the historic Dalit rights Ad Dharm movement), and Chamars generally enjoy an economic, educational and social level far superior

to their Chamar counterparts in the Malwa and Maja regions, where the situation remains one of economic dependence upon and subservience towards the upper castes. Punjab Studies scholar Ronki Ram notes that in the Doaba region of the Punjab, most Dalits have completely dissociated themselves from menial work. (Ram 2004: 899). The Doaba region has been and continues to be the heartland of Chamar socio-religious movements for a separate Dalit identity. The greater educational and economic advancement of the Doaba Chamars (Jodkha 2009) has made them more confident and assertive, and this factor has been instrumental in the separate religious trajectory that the Ravidasias have pursued in Spain. Since 2003, the Ravidassias have had their own gurdwara, where until very recently they practiced only slightly modified Sikh rites. Although the Chamars are not the only caste group to form a separate gurdwara - in 2009 a Lubana-controlled gurdwara came into existence - the reasons behind the creation of a Ravidasia-specific gurdwara are different from those driving the establishment of other caste-based temples. Internecine Jat-Lubana power struggles on management committees led to the formation of a gurdwara in which Lubanas could command complete control. Lubanas also face prejudice from Jats, as they are perceived to be "lower" in the caste hierarchy, but they are not treated as untouchables and hence do not experience the same degree and intensity of discrimination. Lubanas in turn discriminate against Ravidasias and view them as their inferiors. While we can see from the UK experience that the trend has been for all caste groups to promote their own identity and seek institutional autonomy, for Ravidassias, this push for independence has deeper significance. For Chamars, establishing their own institutions is part and parcel of a broader socio-religious movement for equality. Indeed, B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of modern India´s Dalit Liberation movement, argued that equality for Dalits could only be achieved through the radical social transformation of Indian society. He famously converted to Buddhism and urged his followers to do so as well in order to accomplish this goal. Another important Dalit leader, Mangoo Ram from the Punjab, argued that liberation for Dalits could only come about by forming a completely separate cultural and religious identity or *qaum*. The Ravidassia community´s progressive institutional autonomy should therefore be interpreted in light of the broader context of Dalit politics in India, where a key strategy for liberation has involved religion, and in particular conversion from Hinduism to other religions such as Islam, Christianity Sikhism and Ad-Dharm in order to escape the caste system. In the next section, I will treat in greater detail the particular case of the Ravidassia *sangat* (community) in Barcelona.

The Evolution of the Ravidassia Sangat in Barcelona

As mentioned above, Chamars initially worshipped alongside other Punjabi Sikhs in the same gurdwara, and the vast majority identified as Sikh, while maintaining a dual allegiance to Guru Ravidass. Belief in the ten Sikh Gurus along with Guru Ravidass was seen to be perfectly compatible, and did not provoke the slightest hint of contradiction for Ravidasias. Although caste fault lines and caste-based social groups existed in the common gurdwara long before other gurdwaras were born, during the early years of settlement, the Chamar community did not seriously consider setting up their own temple. However, an incident that occurred during the 2002 *janamdin* or birth anniversary of Guru Ravidass was decisive in leading to the emergence of a separate gurdwara and sharpened community consciousness on the part of Spanish Chamars. This incident came to symbolise the collective humiliation of the Chamar community and emerged as a trope in almost all of my interviews. As related to me by a number of Ravidassias, during the celebration, a young boy, instigated by his elders, went and took the portrait of Guru Ravidass and placed it on the floor, a sacrilegious act designed to cause maximum affront to the dignity of Chamars. Significantly, no (non-Ravidassia) adult intervened. Along with the *janamdin* episode, another incident of intimidation and humiliation has been imprinted onto the collective consciousness of the Ravidassia *sangat* in Barcelona. In 1997, a Ravidassia woman was walking along the main thoroughfare of Barcelona, when she was approached by a group of three upper-caste women, one of whom shouted at her: "*Chamars Spain ton bar kadeney*!" (Chamars get out of Spain!), and proceeded to scratch her face in public, causing her to bleed. The woman who suffered the attack insisted on denouncing it, despite the fact that her husband and some other community members advised her to keep quiet. She twice filed police reports against the same woman, for they had another confrontation in a market two weeks later. These incidents, while dramatic in their severe casteism (and certainly not representative of all caste relations), is an extreme example of the underlying current of caste prejudice and inter-caste jealousy that permeates the Punjabi Spanish diaspora. Thus while the above related incidents are defining moments of collective humiliation for the Ravidassia *sangat*, they served to reinforce and crystallize the general feeling of not being respected and treated as equal by their Sikh fellows. While my interviewees highlighted in particular the *janamdin* occurrence, it became clear that this insult was simply the spark that lit the fuse of Chamar anger at being treated as second-class Sikhs. My interviews reveal that the underlying reason driving the necessity of a separate place of worship stems from the subtle yet persistent casteism that Chamars face in daily social life, and in their perception that upper-caste Punjabis continue to see them as uneducated and ignorant. The

desire to establish their own gurdwara, where, in the words of several interviewees, they could finally be in control, and feel completely at home, is therefore first and foremost motivated by deep-seated feelings of discrimination.

Ravidassia Experiences of Casteism in the Spanish Diaspora

In my interviews Ravidassias repeatedly affirmed that "deep down", upper caste Sikhs continued to remain wedded to a casteist mentality, and felt that social interactions with upper-caste Sikhs while superficially polite, did not reveal the true extent of social prejudice against them. Ravidassias were acutely aware that outward politeness often concealed feelings of condescension and jealousy. Chamars repeatedly highlighted the fact that upper caste Sikhs were jealous of their growing educational and economic progress. A recurring theme that emerged in my interviews was the resistance they could detect, even if not openly expressed, to their new status and assertiveness. The following comments reveal that "veiled" casteism is the dominant experience of Chamars in their new home:

"We own a construction business. Most of our workers are Jat or Muslim. They never say anything to your face. The Jat workers talk amongst themselves and say "they are Chamar" in a disrespectful tone. To your face it always *bhaiji* (respectful term of address that literally means elder brother). To your face nobody says anything, but behind your back yes. Once I was with a Jat worker in the park when he was drunk, and he said "I work for a Chamar" (male, youth, Barcelona).

"I overheard a disparaging comment when I was thirteen or fourteen in the first gurdwara (the general gurdwara before the creation of the Ravidassia temple). I mentioned it at home. My parents told me that they continue to think we are their servants, uneducated - this is an inherited mentality. Punjabi songs are always going on about how we are all Punjabis, long live Punjab. They are all about self-promotion for Jats. But the reality is other, we hate each other. There is mistrust, jealousy, pride. This mentality exists from birth- you can´t change it" (female, youth, Barcelona).

“People think very badly about the Ravidassia *jat* (caste). In the factory where I used to work, there was an Auntie (generic term of respect for middle-aged married women). To my face she would not say anything but behind my back she would talk to others- she was Lubani. She would ask everyone for their *jat*. Very gossipy. Every woman of every *jat* has *mann* (pride), but the Jats have more *mann*. I worked six months with her- sometimes she treated me very nicely. She would say you are like my daughter. But she spoke badly about my *jat*! She was *sardi* (jealous) because they had assigned me computer work because I am young. That is why she spoke badly about me” (female, youth, Barcelona).

“They ask you about your caste, but indirectly, they ask where you are from, what your name is. Of course names are deceptive. To ask directly doesn´t look good. I have seen how upper caste people react towards lower caste people. Their facial expression, the tone of voice, how they speak. Sometimes they change when they find out that you are low caste. They don´t say anything, but you notice it, that this person has changed suddenly” (male, youth, Barcelona).

These individual experiences of casteism reveal that low-caste stigma has not diminished socially. Although casteism has become less overt, it continues to saturate social interactions and above all, the desire to *know* another Punjabi individual´s caste remains strong. Thus the decision to create a separate gurdwara, while officially motivated by the collective *janamdin* insult, was taken in a context in which individual Chamars were being subject to a constant “drip, drip” of subtle, yet equally damaging, acts of caste prejudice. The widespread feeling that upper caste Sikhs had not changed and indeed stubbornly refused to change their mentality vis-a-vis Chamars, even in the migratory context of Spain, convinced many Ravidassias that the only solution was to worship separately. Indeed, several Chamars referred to casteism as a virus that had so powerfully penetrated and infected Punjabi society (“it´s in their blood”), that it was impossible to uproot it from the Punjabi psyche. A virus that is transmitted from parents to children, so that each new generation carried and reproduced it. A second key reason for the establishment of a separate temple was motivated by the resentment Chamars felt at being used by dominant caste Sikhs for financial purposes, but excluded from any real participation in the running of the temple that they had helped finance. They pointed out how their donations were always welcome, but not their sharing of power and influence on gurdwara management committees. In the diaspora, positions of leadership on gurudwara management committees are particularly prised, due to the large donations that such gurudwaras receive, as well as the

potential for gaining status in the community. Several of my interviewes complained about Chamar exclusion from gurudwara management committees:

"The central gurdwara was constructed by all communities but controlled by Jats. No representation by other groups. Their mind is casteist, they feel the Guru Granth Sahib is for them only - that they own it. In India I go everywhere but here, I never go to the central gurdwara because of the atmosphere" (male, adult, Vic).

"When they want to build a new temple, they will ask for our donations, but then they will say, you can´t join, you are Chamar. They take our money, but no Ravidassia is on the management committee" (male, adult, Banyolles).

A third factor leading to the exodus of Ravidassias from the general gurdwara relates to the fundamental ideological differences between Ravidassias and mainstream Sikhs regarding the status and title of Ravidass, which I term the Guru/*Bhagat* dispute. Mainstream Sikhs do not concede the title of Guru to Ravidass, but rather call him *Bhagat* Ravidass, a term that means devout follower of God. Takhar defines a *Bhagat* as "an individual who is highly devoted to a personal God, and one who seeks to surrender the self to God…" (Takhar 2005: 89). A Guru, in addition to being a pious disciple of God, is also a teacher, a master, and hence in contemporary Punjabi society the title of Guru confers maximum respect and prestige – in popular usage *Bhagat* is viewed as a secondary honorific title. According to Sikhism scholar Pashaura Singh, the compositions of the *bhagats* are clearly distinguished from that of the Sikh Gurus in the Sikh scripture, and it is only recently that the followers of Ravidass and other *bhagats* have claimed Guru status for their patron saint (Singh 2003: 176). Cole and Sambhi, in their dictionary of Sikhism, define *bhagat* as "the general name given to material in the Guru Granth Sahib which was not composed by the Sikh Gurus". They further specify that "Sikhs attach much significance to the *Bhagat bani* as a demonstration of the willingness of the Gurus to recognise that revelation was not confined only to them" (Cole & Sambhi 1997: 21). However, despite this remarkable theological openness (which extends to non-Hindu *bhagats* as well), the Ravidassias allege that in practice Bhagats are perceived as secondary spiritual figures. For the Ravidassia community, this lack of acknowledgement of the full spiritual status of their patron saint is offensive and disrespectful. For Ravidassias, Guru Ravidass is equal to the ten Sikh Gurus officially recognised by mainstream Sikhism. Most Sikhs only recognise the succession of ten Sikh Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib as Eternal Guru for the Sikh Panth- the term Guru not being allowed to be

bestowed on any other person. There are some exceptions however, such as the Namdhari Sikhs, a sect within Sikhism which follows a living Guru (Takhar 2005: 89). Every single Spanish Ravidassia, without exception, highlighted the lack of consideration shown towards their Guru, which for Chamars is a key, perhaps *the* key manifestation of disrespect towards their community. They strongly challenge the title of *Bhagat* assigned to Ravidass on the part of mainstream Sikhs, which apart from not according due respect to their Guru, is also interpreted as a slight to the entire Chamar community. Given that Ravidass is a powerful collective low caste symbol, the lack of full spiritual status accorded to Ravidass reflects for Chamars the lack of respect and equality shown to the entire Chamar caste in Punjabi society. The exclusion that Ravidassias feel is accentuated by the caste equality that Sikhism preaches- many Ravidassias feel disillusioned by the de facto lack of caste equality, both in India and in the diaspora. Although a number of mainstream Sikhs acknowledge that casteism has harmed Sikh unity and are committed to a caste-free *panth*, Ravidassias continue to feel that are not fully welcome. Ravidassias continually stressed how upper caste Sikhs had arrogantly assumed that "Sikhism belonged to them", that the Guru Granth Sahib was theirs alone, and countered upper caste dominance of Sikhism by offering alternative interpretations of Sikh history and theology that are silenced by mainstream Sikhism. The Ravidassia vision of Sikhism shows how marginalised minority groups, far from passively accepting dominant versions of history and religion, are active in developing their own, often subversive, counter narratives:

"Sikhism was started by Baba Farid, then Guru Ravidass, then Guru Nanak. But in the (Sikh) gurudwara you can´t say this. They become jealous. Guru Ravidas gave a symbol - *Ek Onkar*, but Jat people don´t accept this, they say Guru Nanak gave this symbol. Guru Nanak adopted this word from Guru Ravidas. Guru Ravidas was the teacher of Guru Nanak. It says so in the Guru Granth Sahib. The *bani* of Guru Ravidas starts with Ek Onkar. In the Guru Granth they say there is only the soul of ten Gurus, but there is only the *bani* of six. We say that the Guru Granth is the soul of many Gurus: Guru Ravidass, Guru Kabir, Guru Nanak Dev, Sainji, Baba Faridji, Trilochan - so many. The Guru Granth is the soul of *all* Gurus. They insult the other Gurus. They only give respect to the Sikh Gurus - nothing more" (male, adult, Barcelona).

"We worship both Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Guru Ravidass Ji. Both are equal. People say that Guru Ravidass is a *Bhagat* and that Guru Nanak is God. In *gurbani* (Sikh scripture) it says that Guru Ravidass Ji came before Guru Nanak Ji. People say that Guru Ravidas is a *Bhagat* of Guru Nanak Dev Ji - they have told many stories. For me both are equal" (female, youth, Barcelona).

"In the Guru Granth Sahib Ji all for me are Gurus, because all make a contribution, not only the ten Gurus as they say. We are all *Bhagats*. Guru is the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The message for all Sikhs is to consider the Guru Granth Sahib Ji your Guru. And all within are Gurus, but it depends on the interpretation of each person. This is what the *bani* says, so why this difference of 10 Gurus and 40 *Bhagats*? (female, youth, Barcelona). [12]

"The Guru Granth Sahib Ji belongs more to Ravidass and the Shudra saints. It belongs to all, it is the Guru of all. There are ten Gurus, why others are *Bhagats*? It cannot be. If the whole book is Guru, how can they say some are *Bhagats*? (male, adult, Banyolles)

"In the Guru Granth Sahib Ji all for me are Gurus, because all make a contribution, not only the ten Gurus as they say. We are all *Bhagats*. Guru is the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The message for all Sikhs is to consider the Guru Granth Sahib Ji your Guru. And all within are Gurus, but it depends on the interpretation of each person. This is what the *bani* says, so why this difference of 10 Gurus and 40 *Bhagats*?" (female, youth, Barcelona)

"Sikhs don´t want to give respect. *Bhagat* used to mean supreme teacher, master, but today it means disciple. We are taught that Guru is a superior word to that of *Bhagat*. Moreover, when they say *Bhagat*, they say it with a disrespectful tone. So we must use Guru to give him more respect. I think that these terms are a creation of the people, because Guru Nanak did not give him this title. Guru Ravidass was born before Guru Nanak - so why did they not call him Guru also? (male, youth, Barcelona).

"Sikhism is like *jatwadh* (a term that means Jat people and in this context signifies Jat domination and discrimination). Practically now Sikhism is *jatwadh*. Because the Jat people think that Sikhism is their own. They want to dominate Sikhism. Actually, nobody mentions that the… original five Singhs (the first five Sikhs baptised by Guru Gobind Singh), no one was Jat. Everyone was from a low caste. They think whole battles are won by them. Yet the mass persons from low castes give their lives. In 1984, when Operation Bluestar happened. After that, the bodyguards who killed Indira Gandhi. Both of them are Chamar. We have a very, very long history of martialism in Sikhism" (male, adult, Vic).

[12] The Guru Granth Sahib contains the writings of six of the ten Sikh Gurus

In insisting on the spiritual equality of Guru Ravidass with the Sikh Gurus, and challenging any attempt to relegate him to second class status, Ravidassias are thus also asserting their dignity as a community and elaborating a counter narrative that challenges mainstream interpretations of Sikh history and scripture. They strongly feel that mainstream interpretations of Sikhism have marginalised them, and that their contributions to Sikhism have not been recognised. Many Chamars also feel that Sikhism has been "hijacked" and monopolised by one caste only - the Jats, who are seen as refusing to share power with other caste groups. The decision to create a separate Ravidasia gurdwara, although officially motivated by a very public act of humiliation, was therefore driven by long-standing underlying feelings of marginalization and experiences of casteism within a faith in which their Guru, like them, is perennially seen as "less than".

Greater Casteism in Spain**?**

The overwhelming majority of Chamars settled in Catalonia affirmed that casteism was worse in Spain than in India, and surprisingly, several maintained that prior to leaving the Punjab, they had experienced little or even no casteism. For the 1.5 generation of Punjabi youth who came to Spain at an early age, this is understandable, for many of them were sheltered from the worst effects of caste discrimination whilst in the Punjab, and consequently their first exposure to caste discrimination came in Catalonia. Having not reached advanced school age in India, they did not experience the caste consciousness-instilling measures of the Indian state, in which SC (Scheduled Caste) students often must fill out forms in order receive special government aid and scholarships. This institutionalisation of caste categories reaches its zenith when applying to college/university, when all students must indicate on their application forms one of three broad caste categories: General Category for the upper castes, Other Backward Caste for middle castes, or Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe for ex-untouchables. Ravidassia Spanish youth do not have an "SC" (Scheduled Caste) identity as a result of the limited time they have spent in the Indian educational system. Indeed, many 1.5 youth arrived in Spain with little caste awareness and only become conscious of the meaning of their caste identity when interacting with other Punjabis (girls, in particular, are often asked by "aunties" about their caste). However, for the first generation of immigrants, these statements appear to be contradictory. How can caste discrimination be perceived to be stronger in a country in which dominant castes no longer benefit from the structural and cultural advantages they enjoyed in the Punjab? Due to the still relatively small size of the Punjabi community in Catalonia, there is more inter-caste mixing than in the Punjab in places of worship, where religious life is more segregated. Inter-caste mixing in

gurdwaras brings the opportunity for both caste prejudice and religious conflicts to emerge, particularly around the Guru/Bhagat controversy.

However, the greater casteism that my interviewees have identified can in large part be linked to the psychological tenacity of caste as a systemic form of social discrimination. Apart from the fact that caste is an ideology and a mentality that is highly transportable, regardless of the host context, a feeling of caste superiority brings great psychological benefits, all the more so in a foreign society in which upper castes suddenly find themselves in the same situation as their lower caste counterparts. Regardless of the trials and tribulations in their new home, "upper castes" at least they have the certainty and security that they are still superior to the "lower castes". Precisely when lower castes are beginning to challenge them both in the field of education and economically, the psychological boundaries and symbolic power of caste become even more important to protect, assert and defend. The persistence and strengthening of caste in Spain can be explained by the general resistance to change on the part of dominant groups, whose social relations with subordinate groups have been based on a taken-for-granted understanding of superiority and inferiority for centuries. When the "inferior" group finally begins to challenge this understanding, resistance is to be expected, for upper castes, like any other dominant group from another society, have an enormous emotional investment in maintaining the status quo and the privileges that accompany it. Thus it is not just a question of having to share economic resources more equitably, although economic jealousy is definitely present. When a person´s entire identity is premised on the assumption of being inherently superior to certain groups, regardless of their newfound economic status, maintaining that identity, and the psychological security that it affords, will only likely gain in importance in a migratory setting in which one´s ethnic identity is now stigmatised. Indeed, it is possible that the greater casteism that Ravidasias feel in Spain is in part related to the ethnic stigma that upper caste Punjabis experience. In response to ethnic stigma, and in many cases, losing their previous high status in the Punjab, re-asserting caste serves to maintain at least some form of continuity with the past. They may be just another immigrant community in the eyes of Spandiards, but within the Punjabi community, they maintain their cultural and symbolic superiority. According to psychologists who have studied caste identity, the self-esteem of the upper castes is enhanced through "downward comparison" with the lower castes (Jaspal 2010: 37). Jaspal, who used Identity Process Theory in his study of caste stigma, points out that when the continuity principle of identity is threatened, upper caste groups will respond by protecting their distinctiveness from perceived out-group threats to their status (Jaspal 2010: 43) One of the psychological mechanisms involved is caste essentialism with

respect to the lower castes, which can explain the remarkable tenacity of negative social representations of Dalits (i.e their persistent associatation with low-status jobs), despite the fact that Dalits in the diaspora are no longer involved in such occupations. According to India scholar Webster, upper caste Punjabis are simply manifesting "a universal urge for self-expression and superiority inherent in human nature itself". (Webster 2002: 131). A number of feminist authors have highlighted the resurgence of sexism and a reassertion of sexist values in response to the women´s liberation movement. In particular, they have argued that policy changes have not been sufficient to remove sexism from a culture resistant to change (Walter: 2010). Thus the common refrain of "casteism is worse here" can be seen in the context of a growing social and psychological battle between two groups - one of whom is trying to overthrow caste first and foremost psychologically, and the second who cannot countenance such a change without completely destabilising their core identity. Accepting Chamars and other lower castes as their equals would require an enormous mental and social shift to overcome centuries of anti-untouchable conditioning- a shift that is not easy to accomplish even were it to be desired by the upper castes. Thus, the expectation that caste will weaken in Spain has not been born out, and indeed the exact opposite has occurred: preserving and investing in caste identity has become even more important, for all castes. For the upper castes, this involves defending their dominant caste position in the face of challenges from the lower castes. For the "lower castes", investing in caste involves embracing and reframing a long stigmatized identity as something positive, to be valued and celebrated.

The Ravidassia Chamar Sangat: Internal Complexity and Division

While all communities, and minority communities in particular, are internally diverse, and often highly fractured, the worldwide Ravidassia Chamar community presents a unique case of internal complexity due to their ambivalent religious and cultural position as a group both within and outside of the Hindu fold. Culturally and religiously, untouchables have historically been part of the Hindu universe, yet as impure castes, they are officially confined to the fringes of Hinduism and condemned to a life of inequality. The result is that Dalits have never enjoyed a secure, dignified religious home within Hinduism, and many have consequently sought that home and dignity outside of Hinduism. In the words of one of my interviewees: Chamars "are scattered like potatoes" among the various religious communities of India. Chamars have converted to Islam, to Christianity, to Sikhism, and more recently to Buddhism, always in the hope of escaping the taint

of caste stigma and finding brotherhood and equality in a new *dharm*, or religious faith. In the Punjab, Chamars have traditionally followed a mixture of Hindu and Sikh traditions, leading to difficulties in the modern period of religious politicisation/polarisation, in which all Punjabis are expected to unambiguously identify as either Hindu or Sikh. This religious segmentation has also led to problems of religious labeling in the diaspora, where Nesbitt found that in the UK individual Ravidassias and Valmikis have varied Hindu/Sikh leanings, leading her to highlight the pitfalls in attempting to readily define former untouchables as either Hindu or Sikh (Nesbitt 1990: 11). While simplistic categorisations of Hindu and Sikh are indeed problematic, the cultural pressure to choose has led entire *sangats* to adopt collective religious orientations that are either more Sikh or Hindu influenced. The Ravidassia *sangat* in Barcelona is an example of a more Sikh-influenced community, both in terms of identity, frame of reference, and worship practice. The Barcelona *sangat* considered itself until 2010 part of the Sikh tradition, with the key particularity of worshipping Ravidass as Guru and patron saint. However, although Guru Ravidas binds the community together, Ravisassias in Cataluña are deeply divided ideologically, a factor that impedes internal solidarity. Indeed, a recurring complaint among Ravidassias is their lack of unity compared with other caste groups. Mainstream Sikhs also face heated internal debates (particularly around who can be considered a Sikh), but for most Sikhs, the basics of their religious identification are broadly agreed upon. This is not so in the Ravidassia case. Worship within Ravidassia gurudwaras reflects their religious elasticity. In some Ravidassia gurudwaras in the UK, Hindu-style forms of worship are followed, such as the practice of *aarti*, in which a small lamp is waved before an image of God- a form of worship that is forbidden for Sikhs (Takhar 2005: 112). *Aaarti* is not performed in the Barcelona Ravidassia gurudwara, whose worship customs are thoroughly ´Sikhified´. Similarly, while Takhar mentions that the ringing of bells and the blowing of a conch are common practice in Ravidassia gurudwaras in the UK (both are Hindu-identified forms of worship); no such practices exist in the Barcelona Ravidassia *sangat*, although interestingly, they are present in Dera Sachkhand Ballan, the leading religious center for Ravidassias (Takhar 2005: 113). This diversity of practice reflects the internal diversity present within the global Ravidassia community and alerts us to the complex and ´in flux´ nature of their religious identification.

The most fundamental cleavage within the Barcelona Ravidassia community concerns religious orientation and strategy- although this is no longer with reference to the Sikh/Hindu divide, but rather Sikh versus an independent Ravidassia religious identity. One camp, previously the

dominant camp within the *sangat*, is Sikh-identified, and religiously conservative. While seeing no contradiction in identifying as Sikh and worshipping Ravidas as Guru on an equal par with Guru Nanak, they feel part of the Sikh family, and do not see the need to venture outside of Sikhism in order to improve their social status. The second camp can be identified as "Ravidasia", for this is the label most commonly employed by my interviewees. They believe that the best way forward for Chamars is to (re)claim and assert their own identity. For this more independent camp, Sikhism is viewed as obstructing the full development of the Chamar community as a *qaum* (separate religion and nation), as envisioned by the Ad Dharm (original people) movement (Juergensmeyer 1982). They are thus the inheritors and carriers of the spirit of Punjabi Dalit leader Mangoo Ram (the leader of the Ad Dharm movement in the 1930´s) in the contemporary period. According to these separatist Ravidassias, the only way for Chamars to progress is to pursue an independent religious path focused exclusively on the figure of Guru Ravidas. The third camp (minority in status) identifies with and derives their inspiration from the philosophy of B. R Ambedkar, the leading thinker and driving force behind modern India´s movement for Dalit liberation. While sharing the desire for independence with the "Ravidassias", their ideology is more political in nature; they promote a broad-based Dalit, as opposed to a specifically Ravidassia identity, and they are keen on forming alliances with other ex-untouchables. However, unlike their counterparts in India and other countries of the diaspora, in Spain, there has been no attempt on the part of "Ambedkarites" to campaign for a conversion to Buddhism, which B. R. Ambedkar advocated as the solution to the caste discrimination inherent in Hinduism.

The Ravidassia *sangat* in Barcelona is characterised by even further internal complexity based on allegiance to particular *deras* (religious centers) and *babas* or *sants* (religious leaders who run the aforementioned *deras*). The Ravidassia community is not unique in this- many Hindus and Sikhs in India commonly follow a particular *baba* and look to him for spiritual direction. However, among the Ravidassias, certain *deras* have greater weight than in other caste communities. The *dera* that commands the most popularity and respect among Ravidasia Chamars is Dera Sachkhand Ballan, located in the Jalandhar district of the Punjab. The majority of Spanish Chamars are followers of this *dera*, even though many have not taken *naam* (initiation) from its senior leader. The preeminent position of this *dera* within the sangat is due to its image as an organisation that has done a great deal to further the mission of Guru Ravidass and work for the betterment of the entire community through its charitable works. In addition to the *sants* of Dera Sachkhand Ballan, the *sangat* frequently receives visits from a number of other

Ravidassia *sants* in the Punjab. A significant minority of Spanish Chamars are also followers of the highly successful and religiously syncretic Radhasoami spiritual movement. Claiming a dual Radhasoami/Ravidassia affiliation is not seen to pose a threat, however, and is viewed as being perfectly compatible with a Ravidassia identity, partly because the Radhasoami movement is perceived to be a univeralist spiritual mission as opposed to a religion. Amongst Chamars in general, dual and even multiple identities are quite accepted. Although some Ravidassias affirm that a "true Ravidassia" or a "true Chamar" must follow and "believe in" Dera Sachkhand Ballan, for the most part a "live and let live" attitude reigns in which each individual is free to adopt the *dera* and *sant* of their choosing.

The above mentioned ideological cleavages between Sikh-identified and separatist Ravidassias have marked the Ravidassia gurdwara during the first years of its existence. From the very beginning, these two groups have been in tension and each has sought to control the gurdwara and impose its particular religious vision. The "Ravidassia" camp has consistently struggled to introduce Ravidassia symbols and rituals, such as the special Ravidassia *jaikara*[13] (the chant, "shout of victory" or "war cry" that concludes the Sikh religious service), in order to promote a distinctly Ravidassia identity and symbolic environment. The following examples illustrate how the religious direction of the *sangat* has moved from Sikh to increasingly Ravidassia with the passage of time. The entrance to the Ravidassia gurudwara was first graced with a leading Sikh symbol (the Khanda), but was later replaced with the new Har symbol developed in 1976 to represent the Ravidassia community. A giant portrait of Guru Ravidass Ji was installed next to the *palki* (throne) housing the Sikh holy book, despite initial opposition from some conservative members of the *sangat*. The first Lubana *granthi* (Sikh priest) was fired because he refused to recite the Ravidassia *Jaikara*. He was then replaced with a *granthi* from the Julalha caste whom the separatist sectors of the *sangat* still perceived as too pro-Sikh.

Ironically, intimidation and violence from mainstream Sikhs have aided the separatist camp, for orthodox strong-armed tactics served to strengthen their argument that the Ravidassia community could only be free from outside interference by charting a completely independent religious path. On one occasion, a group of men from a nearby mainstream Sikh gurdwara erupted into the Ravidassia gurdwara, and proceeded to harangue the congregation about their usage of the Ravidassia *jaikara*, and criticise them for inviting *sants* to the gurdwara. On another

[13] The Ravidassia *jaikara* is: "Jo bole so nirbheh, Shri Guru Raviassi Ki Jai" (whoever utters the following phrase shall be fearless, victory to Guru Ravidas). The Sikh *jaikara* is: "Jo bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal" ("Blessed is the person who says God is Truth").

occasion, a leading member of the *sangat* was physically attacked by three Sikh men over the contentious issue of the Ravidassia *jaikara*, right outside of the Ravidassia gurdwara. These acts of harassment and physical aggression reinforced the belief among separatist Ravidasias of the need to establish a separate Ravidassia identity, so as to no longer be vulnerable to outside criticism that they were not complying with the Sikh *Rahit Maryada* - the Sikh code of conduct that all Sikhs and gurdwaras are called upon to obey.

In effect, the Ravidassias in Spain are currently experiencing the same identity dilemmas that earlier waves of Sikh reformers faced when trying to firmly distinguish Sikhism from Hinduism. Sikh scholars Jakobsh and Nesbitt state that: "The question of Sikh identity plagued the reformers, particularly given Sikh minority status in Hindu-dominated India, and the fluidity of boundaries, at times merging, at times separating ´religious´ affiliation in the Punjab" (Jakobsh 2010: 3). In a similar fashion, the Ravidassias are a minority struggling to define themselves and carve out a unique religious identity against the backdrop of a Sikh majority. At this point in time, the most pressing need of the Ravidassia camp, as it was for the Singh Sabha Sikh reformers, is to distance Ravidassia symbolism and practice from a dominant religion.

The Vienna Incident: Rupture with Sikhism

It is likely that the Ravidassia *sangat* in Barcelona would have continued within the Sikh fold, albeit with an increasingly Ravidassia orientation, were it not for a tragic event that sent shockwaves through the worldwide Ravidassia Chamar community. On May 24, 2009, six Sikh men armed with daggers and a gun entered the Shri Guru Ravidas Gurdwara in Vienna, and started shooting, aiming at the two visiting *sants* (holy men) from India who were giving a sermon at the time. The ensuing bloodshed resulted in the serious injury of Sant Niranjan Dass Ji, the spiritual head of Dera Sachkhand Ballan, and the death of his deputy and successor, Sant Ramanand Ji. Thirty devotees were injured, eleven of them seriously. Hours after news of the death of Sant Ramanand Ji spread, the Punjab erupted in violence, a state curfew was imposed, and the army was called in to restore order. Violent demonstrations also spread to the neighboring states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, which also have significant Chamar populations. In Barcelona, although violence did not occur, the anger, grief and shock were palpable. The death of Sant Ramanand Ji, a highly esteemed and very charismatic figure within the Ravidassia movement, and the driving force behind Dera Sachkhand Ballan, forced the Barcelona *sangat*, along with *sangats* throughout the Ravidassia diaspora, to dramatically confront the thorny issue

of their religious identity and boundaries. Up until the Vienna incident, the link with Sikhism had not been collectively questioned or challenged, most Ravidassias identified as Sikh or Ravidassia Sikh - including some separatist - inclined Ravidassias. Religious boundaries were fluid and flexible. Ravidassias did not feel that they had to adopt the Five K´s (the five symbols of Sikhism) in order to identify as Sikh, and rejected mainstream definitions of what it meant to be a ”true“ Sikh.

In the aftermath of the Vienna attacks, one immediate consequence was the change in the balance of power within the *sangat*. The long-standing power struggle between the “Ravidassia” camp and the Sikh-identified camp was resolved in favor of the former, with the “Ravidassias” definitively gaining the upper hand. However, the most profound and long-lasting consequence of the Vienna incident has been psychological. The assassination (martyring in Ravidassia eyes) of their most important spiritual leader has produced a sudden psychological rupture with Sikhism and a radical change in how many Ravidassias now self-identity. Religious boundaries have hardened. The inner feeling of being Sikh or at least connected to and somehow part of the Sikh *panth* (community) has died, replaced with an exclusive, more tightly defined Ravidassia identity. Physically, this psychological rupture has manifested itself in the removal of the Guru Granth Sahib from the Ravidassia temple (a hotly debated and disputed decision), and its recent replacement with a *granth* or holy book (the Amritbani Satguru Ravidas Maharaj Ji) composed entirely of the *bani* (religious poetry) of Guru Ravidass, developed by Dera Sachkhand Ballan.[14] This dramatic decision contrasts with the non-action on the part of Ravidassia temples in the UK, which did not remove the Sikh holy book from their premises. All Sikh religious imagery, such as portraits of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, has been removed, as have the handkerchiefs for men that bore Sikh symbols. The Sikh *jaikara*, previously recited along with the Ravidasia *jaikara*, has been eliminated from religious services and the *granthi* let go. Weekly *diwan* (religious service) is now led by different members of the community. The typical greeting among *sangat* members has also changed - *Sat Sri Akal* (“God is Truth”) the Sikh greeting, which was often heard before, has been displaced by *Jai Guru Dev* (“Victory to the Divine Guru”) - in use before but now more generalised, and *Jai Bhim* (“Victory to Dr. Ambedkar”), the latter popular especially among Ambedkarites. Ambedkarites have also recently began to use the greeting *Jai Mulnivasi* (“Victory to the original habitants of India”). These changes are highly visible, they have completely changed the symbolic environment of the Ravidassia temple and

[14] Previous versions of a Guru Ravidass Granth have existed. Hawley and Juergensmeyer mention that a granth based on the religious poetry of Ravidass was compiled for the Ravidas temple in Banaras in 1988. See: Hawley J.S & Juergensmeyer, Mark, Songs of the Saints of India (Oxford, 1998).

have shaken the entire community.). Less evident are the internal changes that have occurred in the wake of the attacks. The following examples exemplify the inner transformation in religious identification that has taken place:

"Before I used to consider myself Sikh - in reality a Sikh means someone who practices the Sikh religion without caste, nor other forms of identification- neutral… They always said, you are Sikh, but Ravidasia Sikh, or Balmilki Sikh… For me, Sikhism was my religion, and I considered myself Sikh because for a true Sikh, what is most important is internal spirituality, not appearances. I am not going to consider myself more Sikh in a turban, with beard and the 5K´s…Sikhism is a good religion, was a good religion, I have the greatest respect for the Guru Granth Sahib because everything that it says is right, but what is the use of having such a complete book if in reality no one pays attention to it… Now… if they ask me, I say Ravidassia, for pride, to express myself… (male, youth, Barcelona).

"I was shocked to learn that my living Master has been attacked. My wife started to weep. I was very angry, I did not know how to react, to weep or what. I did not believe this, that they could kill in this way, in the presence of holy Guru Granth Sahib. This is a devilish, satanic act. Those dogmatics who don´t want that the Ravidassia community should rise. It´s a *qurbani* (martyring)- he has spread his blood for his community. They don´t want our money going to other *golak* (financial collection system employed in gurudwaras)….I used to say I am Sikh. We are no more Sikhs- because they don´t treat us like brothers- they don´t consider us as Sikhs. Only like puppets for votes or for money. Now I am only Ravidassia. If a Spaniard asks me about my religion, I have to explain that we are no longer Sikhs, we have our own symbol, flag, beliefs" (male, adult, Banyolles)

"Before, for my religious identification I said Sikh, because in Sikhism there are no castes. If people asked about the turban, I said I didn´t wear it because my parents didn´t oblige me to. Now, with everything that happened in Vienna, I see it as they are being racist towards us low caste people. And now, I say Ravidassia and if people ask, I say to them that it is a new religion, and I explain why I have changed (male, youth, Barcelona).

“Before the attacks, I identified as Ad-Dharmi Ravidassia. After the attacks, we are trying to get our identity as a Ravidassia *qaum* (nation). In Sikhism, they say Ravidassia Sikh. In Hinduism, Chamar Hindu. We need our own identity as a Ravidassia *qaum*. We are separate from Hinduism and separate from Sikhism. We respect the Guru Granth Sahib, we have faith in the Guru Granth Sahib, but we don´t need it here” (male, adult, Barcelona).

These results contradict the assertions of Takhar, who argues that the Ravidassias have only a “surface Sikh orientation”, that “the Sikh identity of the Ravidasias is questionable and very limited”, and that the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib in their temples is only on account of the writings of Ravidass that it contains (Takhar 2005: 115-118). Although it is true that the Ravidassias profess a special veneration for Ravidass, they deeply respect the entire Sikh holy book, and many, prior to Vienna, mentally and spiritually identified as Sikh. Takhar´s claims, which are not based on interview data with British Ravidassias, thus give the misleading impression, long before the Vienna killings, that Ravidassias have a neat, straightforward Ravidassia identity. My fieldwork among Spanish Ravidassias reveals that in practice, individual Raviassias combined a Ravidassia-based caste identity with a Sikh religious identity that is now being severed (a painful process for some). What we can observe post-Vienna, is that the term ´Ravidassia´, which was used as a respectful and honourable caste label in lieu of Chamar, is now also being used to describe a new religion.

In addition to religious identity, caste identity among Ravidassias has similarly undergone a transformation in the wake of the Vienna attacks, in many cases resulting in a strengthening of caste identity and an invigorated pride in being Chamar. Rather than try to escape from the term Chamar, it is being embraced as a positive name. Indeed, one of my interviewees had added a sticker that says “Sons of Chamar” to his bicycle as a public affirmation of his new pride. A new trend has also emerged in which some individuals have begun to identify with the more politicised term Dalit, an identity label which is linked to Dalit activism. Prior to Vienna, the term Dalit was hardly mentioned at all during my research, caste identification being overwhelmingly Chamar or Ravidassia. Indeed, many of my interviewees had not even heard of the term, or simply did not identity with it at all. This shift is particularly evident among male youth - female youth are discouraged from active involvement in gurdwara affairs and do not appear to have

embraced Dalit activism. Thus, a boy who last year affirmed that the term Dalit did not apply to him, now proudly identifies as Dalit:

“What do I feel? I feel a person, but if someone from India asks me, I am Chamar or Dalit and more Chamar than before - and more Dalit too… to say I am Dalit or Chamar is also a way of challenging the caste system. Better Dalit, because I therefore don´t create more divisions within our people. Dalit is a term that is used to describe all impure people according to Hindus. When I say Chamar, I identify with only one sector of the poor. Now what interests me is to have the most generalized identity possible, so as not to create factions within our people. So now I say with pride that I am Dalit, because it is a way to directly challenge the caste system” (male, youth, Barcelona).

Another boy echoed the broader, the more inclusive nature of the term Dalit:

Before, if someone asked me about my caste, I would say Chamar. Now I say Dalit so that people know that we are united. Dalit refers to more people, a larger group, we are not one group but rather many (male, youth, Barcelona).

The following interviewee spoke for many when he highlighted the growing pride in being Chamar, and the willingness to publicly manifest that pride:

“Nowadays I am very proud to say that I am Chamar, before shame, I used to say I am Sikh. Now we feel proud to be a Chamar, we have changed a lot. Now my people have the guts to speak to the media and say the reality. Before, the people were dependent and afraid. Now they are independent” (male, adult, Banyolles).

The Vienna attacks thus acted as a trigger that released long-stored Chamar anger at their lack of equal status and treatment within Sikhism, reflected linguistically in the special terms that have historically applied to Dalit Sikhs, but not to Sikhs from other caste communities. As innumerable Ravidasias pointed out, in a truly egalitarian *panth*, there would be no need for such terms - all would be Sikh, without the need to demarcate linguistically ”special“ types of Sikhs according to their caste origins. A critical mass of Ravidassia Chamars have been persuaded that Sikhism could not only not provide them with the social respect and status that they so craved, but was even obstructing their full development and progress as a community. Only a separate identity and religion could restore their rightful place in society and give them the spiritual ”wings“ they

needed in order to rebuild collective self-confidence and respect. The Spanish Ravidassia Chamars, along with a number of other Ravidassia diasporic communities in continental Europe, have thus chosen a more radical religious strategy for collective liberation. To date, the dominant religious-based strategy has been to attach themselves to an already established faith in the hopes of escaping the bonds of casteism and caste stigma. The Vienna attacks have forced a dramatic change in course, motivating Spanish and other Ravidassias to chart their own religious path in their pursuit of social equality.

Conclusion

The Spanish Punjabi community reflects a new trend in Punjabi migration to non English-speaking countries that have no historical ties with India. Although not a prestigious migration destination in the unofficial Punjabi migration hierarchy, it represents a feasible destination for those who cannot migrate legally to the leading Anglophone countries. The experience of the Ravidassia community in Spain reveals that the ´casted mind´ has travelled and implanted itself onto Spanish soil. Contrary to expectation, casteism is perceived to be worse in Spain than in the Punjab on the part of members of both the first and the 1.5 generations. The strong psychological benefits that upper caste Punjabis receive from the caste system, along with the need to protect and reinforce ones´ caste identity/superiority in a new setting in which ones´ ethnic identity is no longer valued, can help explain why casteism actually grows in strength rather than diminishes in the Spanish diaspora. The most unexpected development in the Spanish diaspora, however, has been the dramatic rupture - both psychological and institutional, that has occurred in the wake of the Vienna attacks on the spiritual leaders of the worldwide Ravidassia movement. The death of *Sant* Ramanand Ji has precipitated a schism with Sikhism, and a profound shift in personal identification on the part of many Spanish Ravidassias. While these changes in religious and caste identification have no doubt been brewing and evolving over some time, the attacks in Vienna have provided a major stimulus for a rethinking of both individual and collective religious and caste identity. The strong emotions and debates post-Vienna have resulted in intensified caste consciousness/Chamar pride, a growing Dalit politicisation of the community, especially of its male youth, and a strong determination to create a separate religious identity - a new *dharm* (faith) on an equal par with Sikhism. Just as Sikhs in the past declared that they were neither Hindu nor Muslim, contemporary Ravidassias assert that they are neither Hindu nor Sikh. Disillusioned with the failure of the Sikh faith to translate into practice the egalitarian beliefs and

ideals of the Gurus, they are now embarking on a separate religious path with the hope of finally achieving full equality. The question now is whether the Ravidasias will follow the same path of other religions in eventually imposing a “true” Ravidassia identity which will squash heterodox expressions of ´Ravidassiasm´. The rise of “identity Islam” and “identity Sikhism” opposed to diverse religious identities within their fold (Jakobsh 2010: 11), raises the possibility that the Ravidasias, once they have elaborated a new religious orthodoxy, will ironically repeat the same patterns to which they have been victim as a group on the fringes of mainstream Sikhism.

MANUFACTURING SELF-RESPECT: STIGMA, PRIDE, AND CULTURAL JUGGLING AMONG RAVIDASSIA YOUTH IN SPAIN

"There is nothing fixed, nothing eternal, nothing sanatan; everything is changing, change is the law of life for individuals as well as for society. In a changing society there must be a constant revolution of old values" B. R. Ambedkar

"Oppressors always have a tiger by the tail and eventually they lose their grip" Gerald D. Berreman

Introduction

The vast majority of Ravidassia Punjabi youth can be considered an ´in-between´ (Dronkers and van´t Hof 1994: 9) or ´1.5´ generation, due to their status of being Indian born, yet who came to Catalonia at a young age, generally before the age of sixteen. These youth are trilingual: fluent in Punjabi, Spanish and Catalan and for the most part well integrated within the Catalan education system. They straddle two worlds- the Punjabi cultural universe of their parents and the gurudwara, and the dominant culture of Spanish and Catalan society. They must therefore learn how to balance two identities, that of home and public life. As part of a stigmatised caste minority, they must also come to terms with their caste identity in a way that is not required of their upper caste peers. Consequently, they juggle multiple identities- ethnic, religious and caste. This chapter aims to answer the question of how these in-between youth makes sense of and negotiate their multiple identities. Using the examples of a selected few informants, I will first discuss how Ravidassia youth become aware of the implications of their caste identity- in essence, their first consciousness of caste stigma, or what we can call stigma learning. I will then discuss their attitudes towards the caste system, intercaste friendship, and marriage. In the wake of the schism with Sikhism, a new cultural trend of Ravidassia pride has emerged, reflected particularly in songs that speak of an independent Ravidassia identity and in the growing concept of "*Putt Chamaran de*", or "Son of Chamars" as a manifestation of Chamar pride. The impact of this newfound Chamar pride movement has been very positive for the self-concept of Ravidassia youth in the diaspora. Finally, how Ravidassia youth negotiate being an ethnic minority in Spain with dual cultural influences and expectations will be discussed. I will conclude by analysing the responses of Ravidassia youth to the challenges of biculturalism.

Stigma Learning

Goffman speaks of the "moral career" of stigmatised individuals, which he uses to refer to the learning and socialisation experiences of those who share a particular stigma. As in his definitions of stigma (discredited versus discreditable), he is careful to distinguish between different types of "moral careers", depending upon the stigma in question. He also identifies two phases of socialisation: that in which the individual acquires and internalises the standards/norms of dominant society, and that in which he or she learns that he has a stigma, and the consequences of possessing it. Goffman calls the moment of stigma realisation a "moral experience" (Goffman 1963: 33). These phases of socialisation are simultaneous or occur at separate times depending upon one´s moral career. Thus some individuals grow up learning about their stigma from birth. They are thus "socialized into their disadvantaged position even while they are learning and incorporating the standards against which they fall short" (Goffman 1963: 32). Others with "inborn" stigmas can be sheltered by their families until they reach a certain age, often only coming to terms with the reality of their stigmatised identity at school, as is the case for the disabled. A third group become stigmatised later in life (such as someone who becomes deaf as an adult), or learn that they have always been discredited, as in the case of gay individuals. Regardless of ones´ moral career, it is clear that all stigmatised individuals are exposed to the viewpoint of ´normals´, which becomes the norm against which they are judged. Stigmatised individuals are thus intimately aware of how ´normals´ view their ´failure´, especially those who learn about their stigma later on in life. Research from the UK suggests that Dalit children´s first experience of stigma learning often occurs at school, due to the large percentage of Punjabi children from different caste backgrounds attending state schools in particular neighbourhoods. According to a survey conducted by the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance in 2009, 16% of respondents affirmed they they had suffered verbal abuse based on their caste, and 7% stated that they were victims of threatening behaviour (Guardian: 2009). These acts of anti-Dalit bullying occurred before the age of twelve years, which suggests that upper caste Punjabi children learn at home early on about caste and its significance. However, according to another survey conducted by the Dalit Solidarity Network in 2006, Dalit children tend not to receive such caste information at home: 70% of Dalit parents affirmed that their children were not aware of their caste. Their first exposure to caste stigma therefore comes at school, often in the form of derogatory name-calling:

"My daughter – who is 14 years old and attends a local school with largely Asian students – was called a chamar (derogatory term referring to their caste designated job of dealing with the dead) by one of her classmates. I told her to respond by saying that all Sikhs are equal. However, if you think I am lower than you, then it follows that you are not a Sikh" (Dalit Solidarity Network Report 2006: 9).

Thus it appears that while upper caste parents are proactive in inculcating a notion of caste superiority to their children, Dalit parents prefer to avoid the topic, leaving their children vulnerable to anti-Dalit bullying and name calling at school. Indeed, the use of disparaging terms such as ´Chuhra´ and ´Chamar´ appears to be the most widespread example of stigma learning for UK Dalits according to both of these reports.

The "moral careers" of Spanish Dalit children differ from that of their British counterparts due to the smaller numbers of the Punjabi community in Spain. Punjabi children have yet to reach the critical mass in certain state schools that it has in the UK. Thus the stigma learning of Spanish Dalit youth has been influenced more by social interaction in the gurudwara and more generally with upper caste Punjabis, than by their school experiences. However, as in the UK, Dalit parents appear recluctant to address the issue of caste at home during childhood, which means that their first exposure to caste stigma often comes as a shock. My case study of Ravidassia youth in Catalonia shows that the majority came to Spain between the ages of ten and thirteen years, and that their first awareness and experience of caste stigma occurred in Catalonia rather than in India.

Surinder, a twenty-four year-old female pharmacy student who came to Spain at the age of twelve, describes how although she had always known she was Chamar, it was only after having arrived in Spain that she learned the full implications of that identity. That is, she realised that she possessed a deeply stigmatised identity that would have negative social consequences for her:

"The caste that I belong to I always knew…but what I realised was the importance that it had or what type of caste it was and how they treat this type of caste…I realised this in Barcelona when I

arrived. I became aware here. I realised…what it meant in society and for the people with whom I interacted…in the gurudwara I overheard a conversation between two women, who were speaking badly about another women, making a very derogatory comment. So I mentioned it at home and the answer that my parents gave me came as a great shock. Since then I started to understand more. I was about 13 or 14 years old…it was unbelievable, I could not accept it" (Surinder female 24, Barcelona)

As to why she had not experienced caste stigma in the Punjab prior to this experience in Barcelona, Surinder offers the following explanation:

"Why not in the Punjab?...I think that it is maybe because I did not move around a lot, I did not leave my family circle, I did not socialise with other people…here there are people from all of Punjab, you can meet for example people from Jalandhar and Ludhiana…So here is where you really realise how it is and when you say to someone what is your caste, how they treat low caste people" (Surinder female 24, Barcelona)

For 18 year old Pooja, a secondary school student who came to Spain at the age of 13, her "moral career" of stigma learning also began in Spain, but in contrast to Surinder, the psychological shock was not as strong. Rather than in school, it was in social interaction with upper caste ´aunties´ that Pooja learned about and internalised the social significance of her caste. As in India, however, in response to caste stigma Pooja quickly learned to pass when possible in order to escape the worst effects of possessing a deeply devalued identity:

"I first realised when I came here. When I was in my country, I didn´t know anything. There they don´t ask you (about caste), but here yes…Women ask you, you know how women are. What caste are you? The first time, an Auntie in our gurudwara asked me- she is Jat. I told her- I don´t know, my mother knows, ask her…Jat ladies ask a lot, they are like that….Another Auntie, a friend of my mother asked me as we were walking towards the gurudwara. I told her I am Ramdasi, I was uncomfortable when I told her…to some people I tell them that I am Jat. Some think that we are Jat. They say- are you Jat? And I say yes I am Jati (female equivalent of Jat)…this I told to my Pakistani friends who are Malik- like Jat. And they said, good, Jatis are the best, the prettiest. They don´t know" (Pooja female 18 Barcelona)

Like the previous two girls, for 18 year old Kulwinder, a professional training student who came to Catalonia at the age of twelve, there exists a large gap between their Indian and Spanish

experiences. For Kulwinder, learning about his caste identity in India was a matter-of-fact experience that was cushioned by the fact he attended a Chamar-majority school in which he was not made to feel Other. Indeed, Ad-Dharmi was the normalised identity. It was only later, in Spain, that he encountered discrimination based on his identity and hence was confronted with caste stigma:

"I first learned about my caste in India, at school. They told me that I was Ad-Dharmi- my classmates and my teacher also. I didn´t know. I think this was in the fourth grade. I had not asked my parents. I didn´t think anything. They told me in a normal tone…most of the people in my school were Ad-Dharmi. When you go out of India there is more discrimination. There I did not notice it, here yes…I don´t go to the central gurudwara- where is there is discrimination I don´t go, where they say that person is from a low caste and I am Jat" (Kulwinder male 18 Barcelona)

Thus the pattern of learning about one´s caste is clear. First awareness of caste *identity* dawns in India, but the more or less traumatic experience of learning about the *stigma* attached to their caste occurs in Spain, when Ravidassia youth are exposed to a greater extent to social interaction with other castes. Given that most Spanish Ravidassia youth come from the Doaba region of the Punjab, which has the highest percentage of Chamar population in the state, they were largely sheltered from caste stigma during their childhoods. The majority of Ravidassia youth settled in Catalonia also come from relatively well-off families, which cushions to some extent the effects of caste discrimation. In Spain, they no longer attend schools or live in communities with large Chamar populations. Economically, they are no longer middle-class. Hence, stigma learning, which no doubt would have occurred in due course in India, is likely accelerated upon arriving in Spain. However, in contrast with their Indian and UK peers, Ravidassia youth do not have to face caste stigma on a daily basis at school, but in Punjabi cultural spaces such as the gurudwara. Nor do they learn about the caste system at school, which is a source of information for some Ravidassia schoolchildren in the UK, thanks to the curriculum on Hinduism contained in religious education courses (Nesbitt 1997: 213). To give one example, Balminder, who completed secondary school in Barcelona at a school with a high percentage of foreign students, had very little contact with fellow Indians during his studies. Most of his peers were Moroccan, Pakistani or Latin American. Of his Indian peers, one was a fellow Ravidassia, one Punjabi Sikh, and two from Mumbai (Hindu). Caste never emerged as a topic between them, and indeed Balminder was

neither asked about his caste at school, nor knew the caste of his Indian peers (apart from the fellow Ravidassia student who was his cousin). Stigma in interactions with upper caste Punjabis thus occurs outside of the school environment for Ravidassia youth. However, it is important to note that the opportunity for stigma-inflected interactions has been decreasing with time. With the creation of the Ravidassia gurudwara and especially with the recent split with Sikhism, social interaction with upper caste Punjabis is now minimal or even non-existent. This can explain why passing strategies do not figure prominently in my interviews with Spanish Ravidassia youth. Having created their own religious institution and cultural association, Dalits no longer need to come into contact with upper caste Punjabis, even on an occasional basis. In the wake of the decisive schism with Sikhism in January of 2010, the desire to mix socially with other Punjabis has also decreased dramatically on part of many Ravidassia youth.

An interesting pattern to emerge from my interviews has been the weak role Dalit parents play in preparing their children for the social reality that they will have to face. Not one of my interviewees mentioned that their parents had spoken to them about caste stigma or discrimination during their childhoods. What can explain this surprising omission? My interviewees stated that although they had learned as children that they were Chamar and that they worshipped Guru Ravidass, further information was not forthcoming. It appears that Dalit parents are reluctant to address the thorny issue of caste stigma during childhood and prefer to wait until their children are older or until they are asked directly by their children before discussing caste discrimination. One of my interviewees maintains that many parents feel uncomfortable raising the issue and prefer to avoid it for as long as possible. I would argue that in addition to discomfort, another possible motive could be that Dalit parents wish to protect their children from the knowledge of caste stigma. This reluctance to address caste stigma continues in Spain- several youth became aware of caste discrimination only by asking the question, “why do we attend a separate gurudwara?”, hence forcing an explanation from their parents. However, in the wake of the Vienna attacks and subsequent rupture with Sikhism, the new generation of Spanish-born children is much more informed about the history of their community and aware of caste stigma at a far younger age. For example, 12 year old Jaswinder is able to speak articulately about (upper caste) caste jealousy and the importance of Guru Ravidass, revealing that she is aware of caste politics at a very young age. This is due to the fact that Dalit parents are now more forthcoming in speaking with their children, and in the new atmosphere created by the schism, are eager to impart to their children the significance of the new separate Ravidassia identity and

religion. With the reassertion of Chamar pride post-Vienna, the lack of knowledge that the in-between generation suffered from looks set to disappear quickly.

Attitudes towards the caste system, intercaste friendship, stigma and intercaste marriage

How do Spanish Ravidassia youth [15] perceive and make sense of the caste system? And how do these perceptions compare with those of other European diaspora youth? Eleanor Nesbitt, in her study of young British Gujarati and Punjabi perceptions of caste, shows that both Hindu and Sikh youth are well aware of caste- by the ages of eight to thirteen years, both Sikhs and Hindus identify other children by their caste (Nesbitt 1997: 212). Hindu children understand caste as a hereditary institution and vertically graded hierarchy that implies marriage endogamy. Attitudes to the caste system among non-Dalit Hindus range from being openly critical to an idealised acceptance (Nesbitt 1997: 207). While the majority accepted, if somewhat grudgingly, intracaste marriage, they repeatedly declared that caste was irrelevant when it came to friendship (Nesbitt 1997: 208). Among young Sikhs, both Dalit and non-Dalit, repeated reference was made to "proper" Sikhs, a concept which was often linked to caste, with Jat Sikhs perceiving themselves as well as being perceived by Ravidassia youth as "true" Sikhs (Nesbitt 1997 211-212). Among Ravidassia and Valmiki youth (Valmikis are another former untouchable community), some youth spoke of their fear of being discriminated against should their untouchable origins be discovered, and of having learned various passing strategies from their parents for dealing with the caste question (Nesbitt 1997: 212). Nesbitt concludes that caste and casteism is just as strong among young Punjabi Sikhs as it is among Gujarati Hindus. No longer considered relevant to friendship, it is still seen as central to marriage, although British Indian youth underline the fact that intercaste marriages are increasing (Nesbitt 1997: 213).

In Spain, I interviewed exclusively Dalit youth regarding their perceptions of the caste system and intercaste mixing. The caste system was universally condemned and frequently compared to racism. Indeed racism as a metaphor was used more often than casteism when describing upper caste discrimination. Interestingly, Ravidassia youth emphasised that upper caste racism was a bigger problem than racism originating from Spanish society. When asked about experiences of racism, very few offered any examples from Spaniards, apart from 24 year old Surinder. Surinder, who works part-time in the reception of a local medical center, shared her experiences of racist comments made by a few female Spanish patients, who complained about

[15] Throughout this thesis I have employed Indian English usage when referring to unmarried youth: boy for unmarried young man and girl for unmarried young woman.

special information sessions held for South Asian women on the Spanish medical system ("what about Spanish mothers?" was their reaction), as well as snide comments about "needing to wear the Islamic headscarf" in order to find work. This contrasts with the findings from an Italian case study of second-generation youth from the Magreb and the Phillipines, who mentioned local racism, especially on the job market, rather than internal instances of bigotry (Ricucci 2010: 422).

As in the UK, caste was understood as a hierarchical and hereditary institution, but the legitimacy of this vertical hierarchy, in which Chamars are placed at the bottom, was continually contested. One articulate young man referred to caste as a "trap", in which all castes, including Chamars, were ensnared: "Everyone believes that he is superior to someone else". Thus caste is also understood as a deeply rooted mentality that automatically categorises and ranks the worth of others- even when the system itself is condemned and despised. The relevance of caste to humanity or to the human personality was consistently challenged. "We all have the same blood", "I am first and foremost a human being", were common refrains. At the same time, Ravidassia youth find themselves operating within a social system in which caste is omnipresent and assumed to fundamentally determine an individual´s personality traits. The upper castes (Jats more than Brahmins), were repeatedly criticised for their arrogance and superiority complex. Negative stereotypes were voiced about Jats as a group, such as their propensity for drink, and their lack of respect for women. No Ravidassia youth was opposed to the idea of intercaste friendship, indeed most were quick to point out that they had other caste friends (or had them in India), but in practice, even before the Vienna killings, very few Ravidassia youth had close friendships with other caste youth. Only two Ravidassia boys were close friends with a Jat boy, united by their shared passion for *bhangra* dancing. For most Ravidassia youth, upper caste Punjabis were acquaintances rather than ´true´ friends:

"Look I have a lot of Pakistani friends- most of my friends are international. Amongst Punjabis, my real friends are Chamars. There is an invisible mental boundary, that even if you don´t want, exists…." (Balminder male 21 Barcelona)

Another trend was to have a mixture of mostly Spanish friends combined with Punjabi friends from the same caste:

"In the Punjab my friends were Ad-Dharmi (Chamar) and some were Jat, but not as close friends as my Ad-Dharmi friends. Here the majority of my friends are Spanish and then from the (Ravidassia) gurudwara that I see each Sunday" (Kulwinder male 18 Barcelona)

“I don´t have a lot of Indian friends here…My only friends here are Ajeet and Balvindra (both Ravidassia)…I have more friendships with people from here. In contrast in India…all my friends were from the Jat caste” (Surinder female 24 Barcelona)

Thus, while in theory no one objects to intercaste friendship, in practice, little intercaste mixing is practiced, due in large part to the social segregation that having separate worship places produces. Post Vienna, the invisible mental boundary to which Balminder alluded has deepened and intercaste friendships are now even less common. The few non-Chamar individuals (apart from Valmikis) that used to regularly attend the Ravidassia gurudwara have stopped coming after the removal of the Sikh holy book, reinforcing the ´Chamarness´ of the gurudwara and further reducing the opportunity for social interaction with other castes. However, on the positive side, it can be noted that friendships with Spaniards are on the rise, with promising outcomes for long-term cultural integration. Due to the fact that young Ravidassias live in a large, dynamic city, opportunities for inter-ethnic friendships are plentiful, not only at school but also in part-time jobs and in vocational training. A situation that contrasts with that of young Punjabis living in northern Italy in isolated rural hamlets. Gandolfi describes the situation of social isolation that Punjabi adolescents, particularly girls, face in sustaining a social life outside of school due to their rural location, lack of transport (mothers don´t have a driver´s lisence while their fathers are at work), and parental recluctance to sanction non family-based socialising outside of school hours (Gandolfi 2007: 286). While Spanish Punjabi female adolescents face the same parental restrictions, and indeed spent most of their time at home or with other Punjabi families outside of school, living in a large city does somewhat mitigate this feeling of social isolation. Both girls and boys reported having Spanish friends, although only boys had the freedom to spend time with their Spanish friends outside of school.

My question regarding whether Ravidassia youth felt the Chamar identity was a stigmatised one elicited a wide range of responses. Many (the majority) did not understand the concept of stigma and hence did not answer the question (although they often gave examples that showed the effects of caste stigma in response to other questions). Of those who were familiar with the concept, most youth concurred in that being Chamar implied having a stigmatised identity. One boy pointed out

that the majority of Chamars, unlike Jats, do not declare their identity. He also highlighted that Chamars continue to be identified with poverty- a large part of Chamar stigma being tied to economics. A Ravidassia girl went further, maintaining that caste stigma is present throughout one´s life, projecting its shadow from school through to finding a job- an exhausting fact of life that Chamars face in each and every situation. She stressed that every area of life is affected: friendships, marriage, the workplace, education. A twenty-eight year old boy emphasised that Chamars ´carry´ their stigma with them, in the form of an inherited mental straightjacket: "Manu is dead, but in the mind he is still present. How to remove Manu from the brain?" However, not all saw stigma- one outspoken boy argued that pride rather than stigma was the order of the day. He saw caste stigma as something "absurd" that was an invention of the human mind and asserted that to be Chamar was simply an ordinary identity. The stigma question revealed that while all Ravidassia youth are able to identity the problem of caste discrimination and lack of respect for their caste, most are unfamiliar with the concept of stigma, and hence have not consciously interrogated the various strategies that they have adopted for negotiating caste stigma in social life. As in India, only a minority of Ravidassia youth are reflexive about their caste identity and their responses to caste stigma.

Regarding the socially sensitive issue of marriage, the majority of Ravidassia youth accept the institution of arranged marriage, and prefer to marry a girl or boy of their own caste. As in India, the main reasons offered are the "better understanding" within the same *jat*, and the greater parental and community support that intracaste marriages enjoy. No one wished to marry a Spaniard, the strong preference was that their marriage partner should be Indian. In preferring to marry a fellow Chamar or at least a fellow Indian, youth frequently pointed out that mixed marriage (both out of caste and with Spaniards), was disapproved of by the community- particularly so on the part of girls. Indeed, one girl pointed out the dramatic gendered double standard regarding marrying out: "If I marry a Spanish boy, it is horrible; it will be very badly seen. If a boy does it, it is normal, people will feel proud, that he has married a *gori* (a white girl)". One youth asserted that caste was immaterial to him, but that his parents and grandparents would want him (or insist upon) marrying within caste, a fact which he did not protest against. Intercaste marriages were primarily viewed as undesirable due to cultural differences- a theme also echoed repeatedly in India. 21 year old Balminder spoke for many when he highlighted the cultural differences between Chamars and other *jats* and emphasised the *problematic* nature of marrying out of caste:

“Normally Chamars don´t marry with people from other castes. The Jats are not raised well. They drink a lot of alcohol, they do drugs, they have a lot of vices…people with problems. Not all are like that, but the majority yes. We prefer with another Chamar. They will be of the same culture, they will think in the same way, they will understand each other better, they have a good social position, it will avoid problems” (Balminder, male, 21 years, Barcelona)

Spanish Ravidassia youth repeatedly affirmed that they preferred to marry a Chamar boy or girl settled in Spain, rather than an Indian-based Chamar, once again due to the “better understanding” and “fewer problems” that such matches would enjoy. One boy spoke of an unofficial hierarchy involving potential matches: firstly, a Chamar from Spain, secondly, an Indian based in Spain and finally, a Spaniard.

Another boy with a strong Ambedkarite philosophy declared that for Ambedkarites, there existed a conflict between their personal preferences for marriage and their Ambedkarite inspired social ideals. Although Ambedkar was a leading advocate of intercaste marriage, and indeed saw intercaste marriage as the most effective way to finally break the stranglehold of the caste system, 18 year old Kulwinder offered a novel interpretation of Ambedkar´s philosophy that privileged an intracaste marriage, but with an interesting twist:

“What boys and girls prefer is to marry a Chamar who lives in Spain, not from India, for better understanding. But if you are Ambedkarite, the ideal is to marry within your caste, but to a person who is poorer so as to uplift the whole community- for example a poor village girl in India. If many do this, the whole community can slowly rise up. But marrying a Chamar in Spain will be a lot easier and the marriage will be more successful” (Kulwinder, male 18 years, Barcelona)

Only one girl, assertive and articulate, passionately argued against intracaste marriage and emphatically did not want to marry within her caste:

“My parents want to marry me with someone with a high level of studies- he should be from my caste. I don´t care about his level of studies or his colour. My goal is not to marry someone from my caste- it is my struggle. Every time we go to India they want to marry me. All my female cousins were married at the age of eighteen- for them I am old! My argument is this: I want to be independent and provide for myself…. It is already difficult to decide with whom you want to marry. Imagine with a person from another caste. It is difficult, but not impossible. It is the young generation that has to change. I think that if we young people give a good example to children,

those children will have an easier time when they become youth" (Surinder, female, 24 years, Barcelona)

Surinder was also one of the few youth who spoke candidly of the conflict between following one´s heart and obeying one´s parents and conforming to broader community pressure:

"The *izzat*, the dignity of my parents, their image in the community is important. The decision depends upon them. What do I want? That they decide for me? I could not be happy if I obey my parents, I would be killing all my dreams, what I want…what is more important: happiness or dignity?" (Surinder, female, 24 years, Barcelona)

Surinder´s openness towards intercaste marriage was somewhat echoed by two boys, one of whom similarly argued that intercaste marriage was the only way to end the caste system. However, last year he married a Chamar girl settled in Catalonia, showing how difficult it is in practice to break the tyranny of caste when it comes to marriage. The second boy, still unmarrried, maintained that caste "was no problem" and that his first preference was "humanity" when it came to marriage, emphasising that both Ambedkar and Guru Ravidass "fought for humanity". While asserting that he was free to choose his life partner ("it depends upon me"), and that he would be happy if an intercaste girl came into his life, when pressed, he admitted that all five of his brothers and sisters had had arranged intracaste marriages. He avoided all questions related to how such an intercaste marriage would fare in practice, especially in the current polarised atmosphere of the Punjabi community in Spain. The trend towards greater intercaste marriage observed in the UK has yet to to occur in Spain. Only one mixed marriage has thus far taken place, between a Ravidassia man and a Spanish woman, a marriage which subsequently ended in divorce. No intercaste marriage has taken place. Those few inviduals who dare to question the "better understanding" purportedly offered by intracaste marriages will likely face an uphill battle and intense family and social pressure to conform. For the majority, when given the choice of a ´love marriage´, their choices are identical to those dictated by the arranged marriage system- a person of the same caste, religion and culture who enjoys a good socioeconomic position and is "well settled" in the case of boys. Ravidassia youths´ preferences, like those of youth everywhere, are ultimately strongly conditioned by values, unspoken ´truths´ and examples that have been inculcated since birth. The tenacious association of intercaste marriage with ´problems´ and a ´lack of understanding´ means that intercaste marriages are still seen on the part of the inbetween generation as risky and doomed to fail. We must not therefore assume that greater choice on the part of the inbetween and second generations in the diaspora will

automatically lead to a greater likelihood of intercaste and mixed marriages, but rather it would be wise to be cautious and entertain the possibility that subsequent generations will use the "freedom to choose", to choose safety, security and social approval. When it comes to marriage, all castes, whether "high" or "low" close ranks and value a same-caste partner. In preferring to marry within, Chamar youth are ironically following the same pattern traditionally pursued by the "higher" castes to maintain their "purity". A practice long criticised by the lower castes as an effective means to keep them out, or as one Ravidassia man succinctly put it, to "refuse to accept our boys as their son-in-laws". The glue that maintains the caste system in place is thus also upheld with equal zeal by former untouchables, including their youth, implying that it will likely take several generations before the caste system truly begins to weaken in Spain.

"*Putt Chamara De*"- The Emergence of a Chamar Pride Movement

In the wake of the attacks on the spiritual leaders of *Dera* SachKhand Balland, there has been an explosion in songs that, imitating the dominant trend to exalt ´Jatness´ in popular lyrics, sing the praises of the Chamar caste. For the first time, Chamar Ravidassia youth are able to listen to songs that speak to their need to assert themselves both culturally and religiously, in a general context in which they feel their collective identity is under attack. Although the first such song "Putt Chamara De" (Sons of Chamars) appeared in 1998, in the aftermath of the Vienna attacks, a veritable tide of songs has flooded the market, all with themes that speak of pride in being Chamar. Ravidassia youth use new Internet media such as YouTube to listen to, share and upload their own videos to their favourite songs. In the gurudwara, "have you heard the latest song?" has become a common theme of conversation, and youth proudly discuss the number of songs now available. Although these songs appeal particularly to youth, the Chamar pride phenomenon in music has swept the community as a whole. During this year´s special birthday celebration of Guru Ravidass, one of the most popular "Putt Chamara De" songs was sung during the religious ceremony, indicating how symbolically important such songs have become. It is important to point out that it is predominantly male youth who are are the most enthusiastic fans of these songs. As with ´Jat pride´ songs, ´Chamar pride´ songs are aimed primarily at promoting *male* Chamar pride and bolstering Chamar masculinity. Thus far, no song addressing *Chamaris* (female Chamars), has been released. However, one of the most popular singers in the Chamar pride movement is a young Punjabi woman known as Miss Pooja, who has galvanised the collective consciousness of the Ravidassia Chamar community with her inspiring song "*Begumpura Vasauna*" ("Establish *Begumpura"*, the paradise of social equality envisioned by Guru Ravidass). For youth raised on a constant diet of ´Jat pride´ bhangra music, a cultural phenomenon which

many previously took for granted, the new songs that speak positively of Chamars have greatly stimulated pride in their caste. Prior to the Vienna attacks, some Ravidassia youth rued the fact that many famous singers were Chamars, but due to caste stigma, were not open about their caste identity, and even worse, sang ´Jat pride´lyrics. Now Ravidassia youth were eager to list all the singers who were Chamar, and more importantly, singing Chamar lyrics. The psychological impact of these songs on the self-concept of a group that has historically been severely been both underrepresented and negatively portrayed in popular culture should not be underestimated. In the words of a seventeen-year computer science student enrolled in a professional training college, these songs represent a collective "awakening" of the Ravidassia Chamars:

"I feel good when I listen to these songs. I feel a lot of pride- before also, but now more. Now we are more awakened. I listen to loads of songs every day; this music is ours, it makes me feel strong. I no longer listen to the songs of Jats…they speak about Punjabi culture like it was theirs, as if all important persons were Jat. These songs for the low castes are good to wake up our people. Now, there is more pride, I say, "what´s up Chamar" jokingly to my brother" (Nandeep, male, 17 years, Barcelona)

Nandeep not only listens- he proudly showed me the four videos that he had created to accompany the lyrics of Chamar pride music within his YouTube account. Thus youth are active in creating a Chamar pride subculture that is based on popular music. In the case of Nandeep, such songs are also instrumental in instilling a greater political consciousness and awareness of Indian history. Nandeep highlighted a song dedicated to the low caste political party BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) founder and former leader Kanshi Ram. "The lyrics of this song are good, even better than the *Putt Chamar de* songs, because they make you think. They teach you about the history of Dalits in India. That we can also rise up and become equal. Now we have to think positive and be proud". Nandeep also derived sastisfaction from the fact that in the new songs, Chamars could speak indirectly to Jats, "as they do to us", thus providing them with a potent symbolic weapon against their common "enemy".

Although songs form the backbone of the emerging Chamar Pride movement, at the individual level, important transformations are taking place that have the potential to completely revolutionise the unequal power dynamics that structure social interactions between former

untouchables and the upper castes. Many Ravidassia youth are enacting Chamar pride in their daily lives through attempts to *normalise* their caste identity- that is, by declaring their caste identity as nonchalantly and proudly as their upper caste counterparts do (without feeling in any way ´less than´ for being Chamar). For such a normalisation to take place, Ravidassia youth must first begin the process of ´de-Othering´ themselves in their own minds, a form of stigma unlearning if you will, that enables them to embrace their stigmatised identity and feel comfortable with it despite its social devaluation. It is a process of defying stigma from within and coming to terms with stigma in such a way that it no longer provokes inner fear or anxiety. For 24-year-old Surinder, gone is the discomfort and unease that she used to feel when faced with the ubiquitous caste question. Reflecting on how she now feels internally when someone asks her about her caste, pharmacy student Surinder offered the following astute observations:

"I don´t like to say that I am from a low caste, but rather that I have this caste, and that´s it. If I ask someone from an upper caste about their caste, they feel proud, they feel good that you have asked them that question, so why should I feel bothered or angry because I am asked?...For a Chamar or a Chuhra on the other hand, they always reduce themselves and this should not happen. I think that in a situation in which the person before you thinks he is strong because of his caste, I think a low caste person has to be his equal…Now if someone asks for my caste it´s as if they are asking me for my name and that´s how I respond, I am proud to be Chamar" (Surinder, female, 24 years, Barcelona)

After several years of internal struggle, Surinder reached the conclusion that the only feasible alternative was to fully accept and value oneself:

"If I don´t accept myself, what other options do I have?....None, and they are all negative. And they will affect you more. And what´s more, you will suffer…you have to come to the realisation that you must accept yourself in your entirety. Otherwise you will always be on the defensive" (Surinder)

Surinder´s path to self-acceptance and pride came through the realisation that she could claim a piece of upper caste privilege and enjoy the same social ease that they do by fully accepting her difference and considering herself entitled to the normalisation that is normally the prerogative of the upper castes in social life. For Ravidassia youth in the Spanish diaspora, then, Chamar pride-

both in songs, and internally, is transforming their self-image and giving birth to a new self-confidence and nascent assertiveness. In effect, Ravidassia youth, through music and in everyday social interaction, are creating a new language for thinking and feeling about their caste that is reclaiming the traditionally demeaning term of "Chamar" and turning it into a term of self-respect and self-dignity, akin to ´Jat´ or ´Brahman´. The Chamar pride movement shows that stigma, no matter how deeply rooted, *can* be overcome, at least from below, from those who suffer from its shadow. It also reveals that popular culture, in this case music, can be a very effective tool for ´speaking back´ to dominant groups and creating a self-affirming alternative narrative to that offered by mainstream Punjabi culture. The vital role played by youth in the Chamar pride movement heralds significant change for the way in which the Ravidassia community in Spain will develop in the future.

Situational Biculturalism: Some case studies of Ravidassia youth

Ravidassia youth living in Spain face unique identity challenges. Whilst Spanish youth struggle with identity issues, and must also work out who they are, they have the benefit of having secure cultural moorings to support them. Similarly, Ravidassia parents have the anchor of Punjabi culture to help them weather the stormy seas of adapting to a new culture, language and way of life. Ravidassia youth, on the other hand, must negotiate two different, and often diametrically opposed, cultural values. They receive contradictory messages regarding how to behave and identify- one at home and within the community, and the other, at school and in broader society. Their broader points of reference point them in multiple and often confusing directions. Thus, Ravidassia youth, while simultaneously facing the universal trials and tribulations of adolescence, must also find ways to incorporate two cultures, and their respective unwritten codes and expectations, into their daily lives. How do they resolve the psychological conflicts resulting from having dual cultural influences? Some theorists, such as Phinney (1999), posit a developmental model of ethnic minority identity that sees ethnic minorities proceeding neatly from one stage to another. He identified five stages: 1) conformity, characterised by a preference for the dominant culture; 2) dissonance, characterised by conflict between the dominant culture and the culture of origin; 3) resistance and immersion, characterised by rejection of the dominant culture and acceptance of the culture of origin; 4) introspection, during which the previous trend is intensified and finally; 5) integration, characterised by a synergy between the two cultures. I believe that this developmental model is of limited use in helping us understand the complex process of identity

development among ethnic minority youth. In practice, individuals do not proceed in a linear fashion from one stage to another, but rather might be juggling several stages at the same time, depending upon the issue in question. My research reveals that ethnic identity for Ravidassia youth is very much situational in nature and is much more fluid and ´messy´ than Phinney´s model allows for. Marcia (1980), who identified four statuses of ethnic minority identity, offers a more flexible, non-developmental model: 1) identity achievement, in which an identity is committed to after a period of exploration; 2) foreclosure, in which an identity is chosen without personal exploration, following family and community prescriptions; 3) moratorium, during which one is in the process of exploration; and 4) diffusion, in which no effort is made to explore or make an identity commitment. While Marcia´s model is an improvement on Phinney´s, it speaks of identity commitment in monocultural, as opposed to bicultural terms- it does not appear to allow for a dual identity commitment. It shares the limitation of Phinney´s model in that it does not contemplate the possibility that all four stages might be present simultaneously depending upon the identity issue that a particular youth might be facing. Like the previous model, Marcia´s model is too static and fails to capture the complexity and constantly changing nature of ethnic minority identity dilemmas. I also believe that the fourth stage of diffusion is more likely to apply to dominant culture than to ethnic minority youth, since most ethnic minority youth are forced to reflect upon the nature of their ethnic identity and to make certain choices in order to be accepted both within their community and within the majority culture. Usually, it is only dominant culture youth who have the luxury of being non-reflexive and non-explorative, since they take their cultural references and values for granted and do not feel the need to interrogate them.

I find the model proposed by Berger, who studied the coping strategies of Jewish adolescent immigrants from the former Soviet Union in New York, to be more useful in helping us to understand how adolescent immigrants make sense of their dual identity worlds. Berger (1997) identified four patterns for dealing with what she calls adolescent immigrants´ "double identity crisis": 1) clingers, those who hold on to their native culture and either passively or actively refuse to adopt the host culture; 2) eradicators, those who erase their culture of origin and wholeheartedly embrace the norms of the new culture; 3) vacillators, those who oscillate between both cultures, finding it difficult to choose either one and; 4) integrators, those who concurrently balance aspects of both cultures, defined by Berger as truly bicultural (Berger 1997: 268.268). Berger points out that both individual factors, such as the perception of the place of their culture

within the majority culture, and social factors, such as family dynamics, impact upon the coping patterns of ethnic minority youth (Berger 1997: 266). I would also add the critical factor of gender, since female Ravidassia youth have less scope for identity exploration than their male counterparts due to the rigid patriarchal gender ideology that governs Punjabi culture, leading to greater restrictions on their mobility and free time. The reputation of girls is much more fragile and Ravidassia girls are hence less likely to take risks when coping with their dual identities. My research among Ravidassia youth living in Spain reveals that Ravidassia adolescents and young adults exhibit aspects of all four patterns outlined by Berger, although with very few eradictators, since the vast majority of Ravidassia youth are proud of their Punjabi/Indian heritage and value their customs. Ricucci, in her case study of North African and Filipino adolescents in Italy, also found that it was "very important" for them to maintain their culture and language (Ricucci 2010: 422). Strong social and family control also means that most Ravidassia youth are not free to eradicate, even if they wished to do so. Thus, rather than represent only one of the patterns defined by Berger across the board, Ravidassia youth tend to adopt different identity strategies and levels of Spanish/Indian identification depending upon their physical environment and the situation in which they find themselves- performing a situational ethnicity. In the gurudwara, at home, and in the street (particulary in areas with a large Indian/Pakistani population), they will enact a Punjabi ethnic identity (for example, through dress in the gurudwara and by taking care not to be seen speaking with someone of the opposite sex in public). At school, work or with non-Punjabi friends, they will enact a more varied, and in some cases more ´diluted´ form of Punjabi ethnicity that is more syncretic. They live in two different cultural worlds, which they are adept at managing, and keeping separate- performing a variety of identities competently.

21 year Balminder, a mechanical engineering student, is a good example of this cultural juggling and individual mixing of the four patterns described by Berger. Balminder is a leading member of the community due to his language skills and is very active in the gurudwara. He is a confident integrator, who at times also demonstrates aspects of clinging and eradication, depending upon the cultural conflict with which he is faced. He describes Ravidassia youth as "iguanas", skilled at changing their self-presentation depending upon whether they are at home, at school, in the street or in the gurudwara. He himself affirms that he feels completely bicultural, adopting "half of Indian culture and half of Spanish culture". However, there are times when the collision between the two is so great that he feels "radical, extremist" and chooses either Indian culture or Spanish culture in order to resolve the conflict. A dramatic example of erradication is when he and his younger brother took the momentous decision of moving out of the family home,

despite being quite young and unmarried, a taboo even for boys in Punjabi culture (and completely unthinkable for girls). In taking this decision, he challenged not only the sacrosanct authority of his uncles, but also the injunction of his culture against youth independence prior to marriage. In putting his individual wishes ahead of those of his family, he was able to drawn upon Spanish culture in order to support his case and validate his decision, although he confessed that he continued to feel guilty for several months after the move. He prides himself on the fact that according to Indian culture he is considered ´good´ because he is a strict vegetarian, does not drink or smoke, or go out partying. Going against Indian culture was difficult for him, since he knew the community would strongly disapprove of such an act. Despite this, he took the bold step of independence and is now at peace with his decision. In contrast, in an example of "clinging", Balminder refers to his personal discomfort with showing physical affection in public. Whilst asserting that seeing other Indian or Pakistani boys kissing their girlfriends in public did not bother him, he declared that he personally would never dare do so. Some things, he said, just don´t change, no matter how long one has lived in Spain. Interestingly, for both Balminder and other Ravidassia boys, it is often surrounding issues of gender values and behavior that culture conflict arises. A number of boys mentioned the dress of Spanish women or customs such as kissing in public as examples of cultural clashes that provoke unease- clashes that are usually resolved in favor of Punjabi gender norms in one´s personal life. This was however one of the few aspects of Spanish culture that was openly criticised- the high levels of alcohol consumption and smoking in Spain did not evoke criticism, despite the latter being particularly frowned upon in Punjabi culture. The youth in Ricucci´s Italian sample berated the high level of consumerism in Italian society (Ricucci 2010: 422). No such criticism was forthcoming among Punjabi youth, who adhere to consumerist values and are very much attached to status symbols and the wealth ideal. Balminder offered an example of when his two cultural worlds collide simultaneously, and he is confronted with the difficult situation of having to balance both at the same time. He related how once when he was walking with his mother in the street, he met a former Latin American classmate who gave him an enthusiastic hug, as they had not seen each other for some time. He went bright red, and felt deeply embarrassed at his (shocked) mother having witnessed such an intimate display with a classmate of the opposite sex. At the time, he felt acutely uncomfortable, since he could not enact his usual environment-specific identity strategies. Later, however, he questioned why he should have felt so bad and embarrassed, showing that that the question of ethnic identity for Ravidassia youth is continually in flux, negotiated and re-negotiated.

Ravidassia girls face the same identity dilemmas as their male peers, but have less freedom when it comes to cultural juggling and balancing. Girls, as the repositories of both community and family *izzat* or honour/respect, must jealously guard their reputations and those of their families. This means that they are more limited in the extent to which they can be culturally syncretic. 24-year-old Surinder, is an excellent example of an integrator. She is fluent in both Punjabi and Spanish/Catalan, has a number of Spanish friends, and incorporates aspects of both Indian and Spanish culture in her daily life. She both works and studies, and is determined to be financially independent. Yet, as a girl, she has faced additional hurdles in carving out her dual identity. In secondary school, she fought a major battle with her parents, particularly her father, for the right to wear jeans. Her parents had initially forced her to wear traditional Punjabi dress at all times, and it was only with much debate and discussion that she managed to secure the right to wear what she wanted. She is currently resisting their persistent attempts to marry her, for she is nearing the age at which Punjabi girls´ value on the marriage market begins to ´expire´. Thus far, she has managed to delay marriage with her studies and her insistence on first establishing herself professionally. Many of the freedoms that Spanish girls take for granted, such as the right to go the beach, go out at night or have male friends, are denied to Surinder and other Ravidassia girls. Her desire to balance Spanish and Indian culture in her life is often frustrated by unspoken gender norms that proscribe certain activities for girls. For example, although Surinder would like to distribute *langar* (vegetarian food served at the end of religious services) in the gurudwara, she does not dare attempt to, fearing the reactions of her community. In the Ravidassia gurudwara, *langar* distribution is a task that has been monopolised by boys and men, based on the assumption that it would not be appropriate for girls to come into ´close´ contact with males via serving food. Even participation in female-only activities, such as when Surinder belonged to an all-girl *giddha* dance group (a female folk dance from the Punjab), can be curtailed when parents consider the activity to be potentially culturally ´contaminating´. Surinder, along with many other girls, was prevented from attending the *giddha* group, when it emerged that one of the girls had a boyfriend. Eventually, the entire group disbanded because of the rumours surrounding this one girl. Therefore, Ravidassia girls, in addition to juggling the norms and expectations of two very different cultures, must also operate within a restrictive gender ideology, which, while also affecting boys, is far more punishing for and effective at policing girls. Surinder feels bicultural, but affirms that it “depends on the situation”, once again revealing the importance of sitational ethnicity. Surinder also experiences significant vacillation as she struggles to integrate both cultures. She declares that she feels as if there were “two Surinders´”, and confesses that committing to one is difficult. She describes how the opinions of each culture are so contrary that

she does not see how she can reconcile them at times. For Ravidassia girls, the challenge of cultural reconciliation can be greater due to the expectation that they will remain faithful to Indian gender norms. Since the Punjabi community in the Spanish diaspora has effectively used gender norms as a cultural boundary marker, cultural and gender boundaries are often coterminus. Thus the way ´their women and ´our´ women dress and behave are used to distinguish the culture of origin from the majority culture, and also to positively value the culture of origin as morally superior. This makes girls´ juggling acts all the more difficult, since transgressing a cultural boundary, automatically implies transgressing a gender boundary as well, bringing with it the accusation of being ´bad girls´ all too easily.

To conclude, the experiences of both Balminder and Surinder show that Ravidassia youth, including those who are generally confident integrators, also experience clinging, vacillation and eradication- integration is never as clear-cut and final as Berger´s model implies and ´perfect´ balancing does not exist. Rather than adopt one consistent coping strategy, youth choose the most appropriate coping mechanism tailored to specific situations and environments. They are Spanish, Indian, Catalan and Punjabi to differing degrees in different places, at all times faced with, in the words of Surinder "two opposing versions for each and every thing". They are cultural chamelons, skilled in swimming in diverse cultural waters, but, as we shall see in the next section, each person responds very individually to the challenges of the cultural juggling they are required to perform and the constant choices, large and small, that they must make regarding their identities.

Views on Biculturalism

Ravidassia youth tend to respond in one of three ways to the challenges of biculturalism: they become positive jugglers, anxious jugglers or comfort zone jugglers. Regardless of the shifting intensity of their ethnic identification(s), or whether they have achieved the position of integrator defined by Berger, all must balance to some extent the demands of living in two very different cultures. Positive jugglers are those who see the benefits of biculturalism in their lives, despite its stresses and difficulties. An example of a positive juggler is Balminder. Balminder consistently highlights the positive aspects of biculturalism, despite acknowledging its inherent difficulties, as well as the problems that come from having to deal with families that are not "modern" and gossipy members of the community that make it their business to keep an eye on youth. Balminder defines having two cultures as "fun", pointing out that he has double the options when

it comes to entertaining himself: he can choose both Spanish and Bollywood films. He emphasises the advantages of being able to choose the best of both cultures, the superior linguistic capital that having two cultures provides, a wider friendship network, and the ability to connect with a wider range of persons due to greater cultural knowledge. In other words, he feels that being bicultural has significantly enhanced both his cultural, social and linguistic capital. Indeed, he believes that his biculturalism will also bring him practical benefits on the job market. 22-year-old Akalpreet, who has completed her studies and now works in a fast food restaurant, echoes Balminders´ sentiments when she underlines that she has been able to learn many things thanks to her biculturalism, and above all, enjoy greater liberty as a girl than would have been possible in the Punjab. However, there are those for whom the stress of constantly having two cultural options and messages becomes overwhelming, resulting in biculturalism being viewed through a negative as opposed to a positive prism. These youth find that the inner turmoil and confusion of cultural juggling outweighs its possible benefits. They are self-reflexive, and hence are aware of the psychological effects of biculturalism in their lives. Surinder, for example, states that, until now, having to juggle two cultures makes her depressed, and refers to the juggling as a constant struggle that causes stress and anxiety. While she hopes that in the long-term, at the age of forty or fifty years, she can say that being bicultural has benefited her, she currently feels overwhelmed with having to deal with diametrically opposed values on a daily basis, particularly in the field of gender. She gives the example of makeup to illustrate her case. In the Punjab, unmarried girls generally do not wear makeup, but after marriage, they are socially expected to apply heavy makeup in order to publicly announce their married status. Indeed, in the Punjab, a woman with makeup is automatically assumed to be a married woman, such is the cultural association between makeup and marriage. In Spain, in contrast, girls start wearing makeup at an early age, but are not expected to follow a certain makeup protocol after marriage. Surinder cited this example as just one of many with which she is faced (should she wear makeup to the gurudwara?) and finds difficult to resolve satisfactorily, leading to depression and anxiety. 18-year-old Kulwinder is another anxious juggler. He stresses the difficulties in constantly having to change his “way of being” depending upon whether he is at home or at work/school. He feels torn between both cultures and is consequently anxious about whether he is making the right decisions in life. Although he learned Spanish and Catalan without difficulty, he found the process of cultural adaptation difficult and finds moving between cultures- from his family to the outside world, psychologically demanding, although he states that he has learned to accept both cultures “as they are”. A third trend is represented by comfort zone jugglers, who are less self-reflexive and explorative than the previous two groups. Their response to the stress inherent in combining

both cultures and defining their ethnic identity is to remain within a Punjabi cultural ´comfort zone´, effectively avoiding the often intense inner conflict experienced by positive and anxious jugglers. Such youth frequently deny the presence of cultural stress in their lives and maintain that they have no problems with Spanish culture. 17-year-old Nandeep is an example of a comfort zone juggler. Apart from one Pakistani classmate who is an acquaintance, all his friends are Punjabi (and Ravidassia). He goes to the gurudwara each Sunday, and his cultural references are predominantly Punjabi. He watches Indian films, listens to Punjabi music and eats exclusively Indian food. While comfort zone jugglers do not actively reject Spanish culture, psychologically they distance themselves from it and are often critical especially of its gender norms. Nandeep, for example, while claiming that each person is free to do as he or she pleases, speaks critically of Spanish woman bathing "naked" at the beach or being scantily dressed. They exhibit more neutral attitudes towards biculturalism, precisely because they seek to avoid the sort of questioning- and the inner doubt/uncertainty, characteristic of Ravidassia youth who confront the challenges of biculturalism head-on. Thus while almost all Ravidassia youth affirm that they incorporate aspects of both Indian and Spanish culture into their lives, and feel "both from here and from India", their responses to the difficulties involved in cultural juggling vary. Some youth choose to minimise the stresses in favor of emphasising the positive aspects of biculturalism. Others are acutely aware of the psychological stress, which they view negatively, and hence perceive biculturalism as overwhelming and draining. A third group avoids psychological stress by seeking refuge in a Punjabi comfort zone that shields them to a greater extent from culture conflict, leading to an often indifferent attitude towards their biculturalism.

Conclusion

The in-between generation of Ravidassia youth faces a triple challenge: 1) how to make sense of their caste identity and respond to caste stigma 2) how to develop pride in their caste and 3) how to juggle the demands and expectations of two very different cultures. The third challenge is particularly acute for adolescent girls, who much more so than their brothers, are expected to conform to Punjabi cultural norms and act as symbols of the community as a whole. In addition, Ravidassia youth must find a way to negotiate these thorny questions of identity at a time (adolescence) during which the search to define oneself is often at its most intense and confusing. Youth thus face a greater ´cultural load´ than their parents. The first generation, while also having to adapt to Spanish culture, remains firmly rooted in the cultural world of the Punjab. Their

children however, must struggle with having a foot in both cultures. Concerning caste stigma, the first generation has had the benefit of learning about caste stigma in an environment in which their contemporaries were also going through the same “moral career” of stigma learning. Stigma learning was therefore, in least in part, a collective process. For the in-between generation living in Spain, stigma learning has been far more individual, and each youth has had to work out for her or himself in isolation a strategy for dealing with caste stigma in their life. My interviews with Ravidassia youth reveal that their first conciousness of caste stigma took place in Spain. The majority response to caste stigma has been to consciously work at defeating it, a process that has gathered strength in the wake of the Vienna attacks on their spiritual leader in May 2009. Many Ravidassia youth now proudly declare that they are Chamar, and are defiantly leaving shame behind. The new cultural phenomenon of Chamar pride songs has further boosted their self-confidence and has stimulated a growing public assertion of their caste/religious identity. For the first time, Chamars are visible in popular culture, and this has greatly boosted both collective and individual self-esteem. In addition to coming to terms with their caste, Ravidassia youth must also face the equally difficult question of working out their ethnic identity. My research results indicate that in juggling two different cultures, Ravidassia youth are extremely versatile- although Ravidassia boys have greater scope for cultural experimentation than their sisters. Ravidassia teenagers adopt a situtational ethnicity in order to cope with having to move between two cultural worlds. Depending upon the situation, they might ´cling´, ´erradicate´, ´integrate´ or ´oscillate´, choosing the most appropriate strategy for each occasion. Not surprisingly, this constant cultural juggling is stressful and poses a number of pychological dilemmas that are not easy to resolve. Their reponses to the challenges of biculturalism range from viewing it positively as a valuable resource of social/cultural capital, perceiving it negatively, as a source of unwanted stress, to cultural shielding, in which a person limits their cultural options in order to reduce stress and uncertainty. Whether positive, anxious or comfort zone jugglers, all Ravidassia youth are active in carving out a cultural path for themselves in which they can claim pride in their various identities. They are true ´cultural workers´ in this globalised world. Despite the claims of postmodernists that fixed identities would no longer be necessary in the postmodern world, the experiences of Ravidassia youth show that having a secure identity and sense of belonging is more important than ever before. Dealing with shifting identity boundaries is unsettling, and while Ravidassia youth display a high degree of competence in situational ethnicity and cultural juggling, they too seek cultural and identity security in their personal lives.

GENDERED SUBJECTS: GENDER TRAINING, GENDER POLICING, AND PUNJABI MASCULINITY IN THE DIASPORA

"I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved"
B. R. Ambedkar

Introduction:

While caste consciousness is understandably high within the Ravidassia community, awareness of gender as an important axis of discrimination/oppression varies, and is often poor, among both men and women. Unlike caste discrimination, which is recognised by all as a pernicious social problem (indeed disease), gender discrimination and the gender regime that governs Punjabi culture is often taken for granted, rendered invisible by a gender ideology that naturalises and normalises gendered inequalities. By Punjabi gender regime, I am referring to the collection of beliefs, values and practices regarding masculinity and femininity that structure gender relations in Punjabi culture and dictate the ´proper´, socially acceptable roles for women and men, demarcating gender boundaries and determining the ´essential natures´ of each gender. Connell defines a gender regime as "the state of play in gender relations in a given institution" (Connell 1987: 120). Although Goffman, in his article "The Arrangement between the Sexes", does not employ the term gender regime, he states how each society genders its citizens by placing them at birth in one of two life-long and immutable "sex classes". These "sex classes" are then subject to different socialisation processes that result in "sexual subcultures". Gendered differences are seen to be "objective", that is natural, proceeding from biological differences that have been grossly overstated (Goffman 1977: 302-303). Each society has its own culturally and historically specific gender regime, as well as ´brand´ of patriarchy. While some cultures, such as Native Americans in the past, have had more fluid gender regimes that recognise more than two genders, most societies possess a binary gender system, with highly ritualised roles for each gender. My aim in this chapter is to highlight how gender norms operate within the Spanish Ravidassia community, and explore how successful the Punjabi gender regime is at exporting and reproducing itself on Spanish soil. With this aim in mind, I focus especially on the gurudwara as a site of gender training and policing within the community. While its more visible role is that of reinforcing caste identity, it plays an equally important role in inculcating and enforcing gender values. I will then move on to discuss how 1.5 generation boys perceive and perform their masculinity, and view gender norms within their culture. My interest in soliciting male youths´ views on gender is twofold. Firstly, within the field of gender studies (as well as popular culture more broadly), there

is a tendency to equate gender with women, as if only women have a gender. Men too are gendered beings, although their position of male privilege often renders their gendered status invisible, and their gender identity is thus not problematised or reflected upon to the same extent, if at all. As Kimmel states, just as white people in the West have the luxury of not thinking about race, men have the luxury "to pretend that gender does not matter" (Kimmel 2000: 7). Similarly, Goffman remarks that "male designations" are "unmarked" (Goffman 1977: 303). By highlighting the Punjabi experience of masculinity (ies), I aim to ´mark´ what has long been "unmarked". In seeking young male views on gender, my goal is to determine the level of gender awareness amongst a group who are both extremely privileged by the Punjabi gender regime, while at the same time punished by its strict gender boundaries and rigid definition of masculinity. Secondly, while it can be expected that girls will at times feel limited by and frustrated with the Punjabi gender regime, how do boys perceive this regime, and to what extent are they aware of their masculine privilege and gender-based discrimination in general? What is their relationship to hegemonic masculinities- both Punjabi and Spanish? Looking at gender from the perspective of those who are empowered by their gender regime can shed light on how effective it is in promoting its ideology as ´common sense´, leading to gender blindness on the part of the privileged. I will conclude by comparing Punjabi masculinity and gender values in Spain and India, in order to answer the question of how contact with a distinct gender regime influences male Punjabi youth´s understanding of gender and their performance(s) of masculinity.

Theoretical considerations: Scholarship on Masculinities

The emerging field of Masculinity Studies, which grew out of feminist scholarship, interrogates how masculinity is socially constructed, historically/culturally specific, multiple, and hierarchically ordered. It developed in response to women´s studies and its emphasis on unequal gender relations in almost all human societies. Both Kimmel and Connell, the two leading scholars in the field, emphasise the importance of hegemonic masculinity in defining what it means to be a man. According to Kimmel, "all masculinities are not created equal….one definition of manhood continues to remain the standard against which other forms of manhood are measured and evaluated" (Kimmel 1994: 124). Kimmel furthermore states that hegemonic masculinity can be understood as "the image of masculinity of those men who hold power…the hegemonic definition of manhood is a man *in* power, a man *with* power, and a man *of* power" (Kimmel 1994: 125- italics in original). Connell asserts that hegemonic masculinity is

"constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women" (Connell 1987: 183). Hegemonic masculinity does not imply total cultural dominance: it does not erase alternatives, but rather subordinates them (Connell 1987: 184). Nor does hegemonic masculinity mean that all men conform in practice to its ideals. Connell argues that its power derives from an image of masculinity that men identify with psychologically and perceive as *the* standard of masculinity: "the notion of ´hegemony´ generally implies a large measure of consent. Few men are Bogarts or Stallones, many collaborate in sustaining those images" (Connell 1987: 185). What men support ideologically is not necessarily how they behave, but what they use as an invisible, internalised standard to guide them (even if they might not agree with the entire canon of masculinity). Hegemonic masculinity thus gains its power by acting as a reference point against which men judge not only their masculinity, but also their entire personhood. As Goffman notes, our gender identity is a deeply-rooted source of identification that profoundly influences our self-concept (Goffman 1977: 304).

In American society, what Kimmel calls "marketplace masculinity" has become the normative standard against which all other forms of masculinity are judged. Marketplace masculinity must be proved, and "requires the acquisition of tangible goods as evidence of success" (Kimmel 1994: 124). It defines itself by excluding a series of others: "women, nonwhite men, nonnative-born men, homosexual men…" (Kimmel 1994: 124). In a similar vein, Connells, analysing the "global gender order", stresses that in every historical period, a certain hierarchical configuration of masculinities has reigned. Under colonialism, imperial powers, just as they created hierarchical classifications of race and nation, also created a "scale of masculinities". Thus, colonial powers distinguished between manly and effeminate groups among the nations that they had subjugated (Connell 2005: 75). In colonial India, for example, the British defined certain Indian ethnic groups as "martial races", such as the Sikhs and the Pathans, and considered others, such as the Bengalis, to be inherently effeminate and lacking in warlike qualities. In the postcolonial period, Connell argues that the global gender order is now dominated by a hegemonic masculinity that is closely linked to neoliberalism and a supposedly neutral but in reality masculine free market. Connell terms this new hegemonic global masculinity "transnational business masculinity" (Connell 2005: 84). Although Goffman does not employ the term "hegemonic masculinity", he too, a full generation before masculinity studies emerged, spoke of a dominant masculinity that set the tone and dictated unofficial standards for all American men:

"In an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports…Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself- during moments at least- as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior" (Goffman 1963: 128).

Thus it is clear that rather than speak of manhood or masculinity as some timeless essence that men ´naturally´ possess, it is important to view masculinity as a set of power relations that discipline men by forcing them to continually prove their manhood, as defined by the hegemonic model of masculinity that reigns in any given culture and time period. But who are men performing for, to whom must they prove their masculinity? According to Kimmel, it is other men who police the acceptable performance of masculinity: "we are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men´s approval. It is other men who evaluate the performance" (Kimmel 1994: 128). This constant pressure to prove one´s masculinity by devaluing women and non-normative masculinities (particularly homosexuality) sends a clear message to boys that they will only be respected and seen as ´true´ men if they reject both femininity and subordinate masculinities. The hegemonic model of masculinity, then, is fragile, its boundaries and identity constantly vulnerable and in need of protection from a variety of Others. Under hegemonic masculinity, manhood can only be affirmed by renouncing all that is feminine, a defensive rather than a celebratory identity, leading Kimmel to characterise both historical and contemporary manhood as "defined more by what one is *not* rather that who one *is*" (Kimmel 1994: 126- italics added).

The above definitions of masculinity offered by Kimmel, Connell and Goffman are all rooted in American or Western culture- what Connell would term a "local gender order". What might the hegemonic version of masculinity be in Punjabi culture? The colonial legacy in the Punjab, in which Sikhs were classified as a "martial race" by the British and heavily recruited into the Imperial army, continues to influence the local gender regime. In addition to colonial constructions of Sikh masculinity, the Sikh faith has been critically important in shaping notions of manhood in the Punjab, where religion, rather than the market, has been instrumental in defining hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, the Sikh women´s studies scholar Nikky-Gurinder Kaur

Singh, argues that the creation of the Khalsa Sikh identity by the tenth and final Sikh Guru in 1699 led to the development of a "hypermasculine" Sikh identity based on a male-centered initiation ritual and five masculine symbols of religious identity (Kaur Singh: 1995). During the Baisakhi (harvest) celebrations of 1699, Guru Gobind Singh revolutionised Sikhism by creating a baptism ritual and introducing five symbols (known as the *Panch Kakar* in Punjabi), designed to visibly distinguish the Sikhs from the Hindus and hence promote a more clearly defined Sikh identity (historically, the boundaries between the two communities have been fluid). [16] Guru Gobind Singh termed his new Sikh society the Khalsa, literally the "society of the pure", but more frequently translated as "Sikh brotherhood". The Khalsa was intended to be a casteless, classless warrior society, in which all *male* Sikhs were to unite together in order to defend the Sikh faith from the dual threats of both Muslim aggression and Hindu assimilation. Its most emblematic symbol- the turban, was conceived as a symbol of male pride and honor in addition to Sikh visibility/defiance, and indeed the vast majority of Punjabi Sikh women who are baptised, do not wear the turban, for it is regarded as a supremely masculine symbol. *Amritdhari* Sikh women rather cover their hair at all times with the *chunni*, a long scarf that matches their clothing. White female converts to Sikhism have embraced the turban, but they are a very small group, mostly based in America. [17]

In their article on Sikh masculinity, Singh Chanda and Ford argue that the turban has become the key marker of the "religio-cultural masculinity" of Sikh men (Chanda & Ford 2010: 462). Analysing the collection of short stories penned by the female Sikh author Shauna Singh Baldwin, they state that the common trope throughout can be identified as the turban as the "sine qua non of Sikh manhood" (Chanda & Ford 2010: 463). The link between the turban and Sikh masculinity was confirmed in my interviews carried out with young Sikh men on the campus of Lovely Professional University in the Punjab. According to my interviewees, the turban was a symbol that enhanced their manhood, as well as one that communicated caste identity. One boy from the Ramgarhia caste, for example, explained that the Ramgarhias tie their turban in a certain way in order to assert caste pride. Beyond the turban, the Sikh faith has influenced Punjabi

[16] Leading scholar of Sikhism Hew McLeod has challenged the tradition that the five K´s date from the Vaisakhi 1699 event. See McLeod, H. (1997) *Sikhism*, Harmonsworth: Penguin p. 124.

[17] White converts to Sikhism generally belong to an organisation known as Sikh Dharma of the Western Hemisphere, founded by Yogi Bhajan which advocates turban wearing by all; there are also some instances of Punjabi women and girls who wear the turban: a Sikh school for girls run by the late Sikh preacher Teja Singh required pupils to don the turban rather the traditional dupatta. Increasingly, there is a trend for women and girls in the diaspora to adopt the turban, wearing the dupatta on top of it.

masculinity in other ways as well. Oliffe *et al.*, in their research on the dietary practices of elderly Punjabi Sikh (Jat) male immigrants in Canada, found that while Punjabi Sikh men share with Western men the use of alcohol as a way to celebrate masculinity, bond with other men, demonstrate their purchasing power, and cement their position within internal masculine hierarchies, they also are bound by *Sikhi* (the Sikh way of life), from publicly boasting about their alchohol consumption (beyond their peer circle), a limitation that is not shared by Western men (Oliffe *et al.* 2010: 772). This is due to the fact that Sikhism strongly disapproves of the use of mind-altering, intoxicating substances. Oliffe *et al*. found that while publicly, elderly men would deny consuming alcohol, in private, they admitted that they drank alcohol, which was important to asserting both class and masculine privilege (Olifee *et al*. 2010: 768). This example reveals that religious ideals promoted by Sikhism at times clash with Punjabi ideals of masculinity; in the case of alcohol, masculine imperatives triumph over religious ones, although lip service is paid to *Sikhi* in public.

Just as much of the theorising on masculinities has initially focused on Western men (a trend however that is rapidly changing), the term ´Punjabi masculinity´ in the literature often implicitly assumes a Khalsa Sikh identity, one that is focused on the symbol of the turban (see Axel 2001). This is especially so in the diaspora, where the turban, like the hijab for the Muslim community, has come to symbolise a transnational Sikh identity. However, for Ravidassias and other ex-touchable communities, the turban does not play the same role in shoring up their masculinity. Very few Ravidassia men wear the turban, and now that the Ravidassia *dharm* or faith has been created, the turban is seen as a specifically Sikh symbol that has no place in the new Ravidassia identity. The Ravidassias throughout much of their history have arguably possessed a marginalised masculinity that was devalued precisely because it departed from both the Khalsa model of Sikhism, *and* of hegemonic Khalsa masculinity. A number of my young male interviewees, before the rupture with Sikhism, stressed that they did not feel the need to don the turban in order to prove their Sikh identity, contesting upper caste Sikhs´ view of them as ´less Sikh´ for not wearing the turban and following a Khalsa Sikh identity. However, they were silent on the corollary turban equals manliness, although the implication of the hypermasculine ideology that drives Khalsa Sikhism is clear: those who wear the turban are fully Sikh and supremely masculine at the same time. Ravidassia male youth living in Spain thus face a double potential marginalisation of their masculinity. On the one hand, by not upholding Khalsa Sikhism, both their Sikh identity and masculinity can be called into question. Although many upper caste

Sikhs, such as the Jats, also do not wear the turban, their Sikh identity/masculinity is never doubted, for they consider themselves to be ´born Sikhs´/hypermasculine, and pride themselves on having been instrumental in the rise of Sikhism in the Punjab, and in the establishment of a Sikh kingdom before British colonialism (Pettigrew 1991: 168-169). Lower caste Sikhs, on the other hand, no matter how orthodox, often must prove their ´Sikhness´. Furthermore, the immigrant status of the Ravidassias in Spain means that while they may enjoy hegemonic masculinity within their community, among Spaniards, their masculinity may be evaluated as inferior and ´backward´. For example, a male Spanish library director, in response to my question about his perception of Indian men, commented that "they keep their women locked up. Where are their women? We never see them! Quite a few Indian boys but very few Indian girls come to the library". In Spain, it is commonly assumed that immigrant men are more sexist and violent than native men, despite that fact that it is well known that domestic violence/sexism knows no class/ethnic boundaries. This chapter will thus explore how Ravidassia male youth negotiate their masculinity(ies) both within and outside of the Punjabi community, aware that, as with ethnic identity, the enactment and performance of masculinity is also likely to be both situation and context specific.

Gender Formation within the Gurudwara: The Gurudwara as Gendered Space and Institution

While formally a caste-specific space in which Chamars can feel at home and freely practice their heterodox religious identity, the gurudwara is also impregnated with gender norms that shape and limit the behaviour of women and men, boys and girls. Just as public sex-differentiated toilets *create* rather than reflect gendered differences in the West (Goffman 1977: 316), so too are the institutional practices of the gurudwara effective in producing naturalised gender differences. The gendered nature of the gurudwara and its multiple gendered boundaries is evident from the moment one enters its confines. As with many gurudwaras in the diaspora, men and women sit separately (in rural Punjab, men and women often sit together, which interviewees explained as due to the fact that most *sangat* members are related to one another). In the diaspora, women usually sit on the left, and men on the right. In the Ravidassia gurudwara, this unofficial custom is reversed, and women are seated to the right. This is due to practical reasons: the male population is still predominant in Barcelona and thus most of the gurudwara is devoted to accommodating male devotees- the left-hand side of the gurudwara being more spacious, it has been designated the male seating area. These gender boundaries are fixed for adults- only small children are free

to come and go between the male and female sections during religious services. Indeed, children are far freer than in other religious environments to move about and even play, without being chided by adults, but such tolerance abruptly ends once children reach pre-adolescence and are expected to begin performing culturally mandated gendered scripts (only children up until the age of five or six are free from the unspoken gender rules of the gurudwara). Gendered segregation continues after religious services, during the vegetarian meal that is served immediately following the service, and in the socialising and *chai* (spicy Indian tea) that follows, with men and women socialising amongst themselves and keeping to their respective gendered spaces within the gurudwara.[18] The gendered nature of the gurudwara is further reinforced by the different clothing that men and women wear: all adult women wear traditional Punjabi dress (*salwar kameez* with a long scarf known as *dupatta* which in the gurudwara is used to cover one´s head), whereas men wear Western dress, and tie a handkerchief to cover their heads. Only pre-adolescent girls are free from the unspoken norm that mandates Punjabi dress for adult females. Unlike in some gurudwaras in diaspora countries with a longer tradition of Punjabi settlement such as the UK, no teenage girls attend the gurudwara in Western dress. Within the gurudwara, women are thus bound to enact a specifically Punjabi femininity. It would be unthinkable for a married woman to attend the gurudwara in Western dress, for women within the gurudwara are the symbols and seen to be the upholders of *Punjabiat*- or Punjabi culture and tradition.

The gurudwara as gendered institution is reflected in the male monopoly of all roles of authority and prestige. The Barcelona Ravidassia *sangat* (community) thus represents an extreme example of the general trend of male dominance of gurudwara management and religious authority in both the Punjab and the diaspora. The extent of male dominance in diaspora gurudwaras varies with location; in some gurudwaras one or more women play a minority role and in countries with a longer tradition of Punjabi settlement (notably Canada), women are increasingly demanding a greater role in gurudwara affairs. Amongst the Barcelona Ravidassias, women are present as passive observers only. Men sing *kirtan* (religious hymns), lead prayers, prepare/serve food, and handle/transport the holy book (the last role being particularly prestigious). The *granthi* (priest) is male (this is also the case in gurudwaras worldwide). All leadership positions on the gurudwara management committee are occupied by men (for the most part those who have papers and are ´well settled´, Indian English for well-off economically). Furthermore, the community service that is integral to the Sikh faith, known as *seva*, is also

[18] In the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the most important temple in Sikhism, women and men are not segregrated during *langar*.

monopolised by men and young boys. Although carrying out *seva* is voluntary, it greatly enhances one´s social standing within the gurudwara and thus is highly sought after. Young boys effectively receive training in leadership and team building skills through weekly participation in *seva* activities. When community debates and discussions are held, it is men who take to the floor and express their opinions. Thus far, only one woman has spoken before the entire *sangat* (and during her speech she made several references to her husband). Women and girls are thus silent participants in the gurudwara- their presence vital, yet their voices invisible and their leadership skills severely underutilised. When I asked young (1.5) women whether they would like to serve *langar*, the vegetarian food that is served after religious services, several said yes, but quickly affirmed that this would be impossible because it would be frowned upon. Women serving men would be shameful and their modesty would be called into question, they explained. I served *langar* once during the course of my fieldwork in Barcelona, which although did not provoke any open hostility, did cause surpise and some subtle discomfort.

In addition to the male monopoly on *seva* and positions of authority, the symbolic environment of the gurudwara is also thoroughly masculine in nature. All religious imagery in the gurudwara portrays male gurus- no female imagery is present, despite the important roles played by a number of women in Sikh history, such as Mata Sundri, the first wife of the last Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh.[19] Thus although the gurudwara is very much a family-oriented heteronormative space, it is also a specifically male space, in which men are the active agents in planning, running and financing communal life. The preeminence of men is also reflected in the body language or habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) of men and women in the gurudwara. Men confidently occupy public space and stride about the gurudwara with ease, especially those who carry out *seva*. Women, particularly younger women, do not betray the same confidence and self-assurance. They approach the holy book to perform *mattha tekna* (pay their respects) occupying little public space, their shoulders often hunched, eyes cast downward, and then quickly find a place to sit in the women´s section. Direct eye contact is avoided with men. During the religious service, many continuously fiddle with their *dupattas* (scarves), adjusting them so that they do not slide, a problem not faced by men, most of whom wear handkerchiefs that are securely fastened (very few wear the turban). The posture of young women is hesitant, uncertain, and vigilant, for unmarried women are well-aware that they are being observed both by older women, and by male members of the *sangat*. Making sure that their *dupattas* are correctly positioned (so that their chests and heads are covered) reveals their concern to project an image of modesty and decency

[19] See Dorish Jabkosh, *Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning and Identity*, 2003.

at all times. Older women move with greater ease, are more expansive in their use of public space, and are more assertive in their body language, which reflects their greater power within the internal female hierarchy and the status that they achieve through their sons, and later on, as mothers-in-law. Although an internal hierarchy also exists between older and younger men, I did not observe the same reserved body language among young men in the gurudwara. Indeed, on the contrary, young men exhibited a great deal of self-confidence, both corporally and verbally. Finally, the gendered segregation of the gurudwara extends to cross-gender communication among the younger unmarried generation. Young men and women do not greet each other or acknowledge the presence of their opposite sex peers, regardless of whether they know each other or not, for such greetings could easily lead to gossip within the *sangat*. Each gender adheres to a highly ritualised form of behaviour and body language that is considered appropriate to a religious place of worship, as well as to ideals of masculinity and femininity. The gurudwara is therefore a setting in which what Goffman terms "genderisms", which he defines as "sex-class" specific behavioural practices (Goffman 1977: 305), are ritually performed- a sacred repetition which confirms the naturalness, the biological ´essence´ of gender differences. It is also a space in which young Ravidassias learn to police their enactment of masculinity/femininity, in what Foucault terms a "regime of practice" (1978) and Martino (inspired by Foucault) calls a "regime of self-surveillance" (Martino 2000: 215). Young women who ´voluntarily´ choose not to carry out *seva*, and young men/women who studiously ignore each other´s presence, are abiding by gendered regimes of self-surveillance, which over time, become second nature.

The gurudwara as gendered space and institution both socialises young children into culturally correct gendered behaviour and reinforces that behaviour among the 1.5 generation- encouraging them to perform traditional gendered scripts in the gurudwara (outside they have the ability to vary their gendered scripts, particularly outside of the family home). The gurudwara serves as a key arena in which Punjabi children are exposed to the gender values of their culture in an institutional setting beyond that of the family, and learn how to perform masculinity/femininity before a Punjabi-specific audience. Connell is critical of the concept of socialisation, arguing that the concept paints a picture of internally homogenous and consensual institutions seemingly effortlessly producing socialised individuals (Connell 1987: 193). Connell stresses that the learning and internalisation of norms is not so straightforward, since institutions are also subject to internal contradictions and conflicts. Although acknowledging the coercion and emotional pressure involved in socialisation, he maintains that children can and do choose differently

(Connell 1987: 185). Bem is similarly critical of socialisation theory, maintaining that children are already generally predisposed to what she calls "gender –schematic processing", that is encoding/assimilating information in terms of their culture´s definitions of "maleness and femaleness" (Bem 1983: 603). I argue that the concept of socialisation remains a useful tool for understanding the impact of institutions on individuals, for agency and dissent can coexist with strong institutional constraints on individual behaviour. Socialisation does not necessarily erase individuality, but does extert intense pressure to conform. Even if, as Bem argues, we are somehow cognitively programmed to process information according to sex distinctions, *what* one encodes about masculinity/femininity is still learned (indeed Bem writes that sex typing is a learned phenomenon). Despite its multiple internal contradictions and ideological conflicts, the *gendered* culture of the gurudwara is remarkably consistent. Since older men dominate the gurudwara both politically and culturally, traditional gender values are transmitted through both repetition and the operation of a ´common-sense´ ideology in which women and men are seen to be essentially different beings.

In this gender scheme, women and men are held to occupy separate but complementary spheres- the ´separate but equal´ ideology. Older women cooperate and play a critical role in enforcing this conservative gender ideology as a survival strategy and in return for some benefits for conforming- in what has been widely termed ´the patriarchal bargain´.[20] In the hierarchical culture of the gurudwara (and Punjabi culture more broadly), women and children are expected to show respect and defer to men and elders respectively. They receive respect in return by not challenging their second-class status and by remaining silent/obedient observers in the gurudwara. In a small community, even the slightest hint of non-conformity is swiftly socially punished; gossip remains a very effective tool of social control. Thus socialisation is backed up with the threat of social ostracisation for those who dare to be different, which strongly discourages ´gender trespassing´. The social moulding forces at work in the gurudwara do not imply that its gendered scripts are completely successful, but rather that *within* the gurudwara, children learn that a certain type of gendered script must be enacted in order to be seen as ´proper´ boys and girls, and also ´good´ Punjabis. Outside of the gurudwara, children and youth have greater freedom to modify their gendered scripts and perform masculinity/femininity

[20] See Deniz Kandiyoti, who coined the term in 1988 in "Bargaining with Patriarchy", *Gender and Society*, 2 (3), pp. 274-290.

differently. Within the gurudwara, however, there is very little room for flexibility- boys must conform to a hegemonic Punjabi masculinity and girls to a hegemonic Punjabi femininity. The gurudwara, in conjunction with other socialisation agents, thus *produces* culturally specific versions of masculinity and femininity that boys and girls must perform if they are to be socially accepted and respected.

A note on the use of the term hegemonic femininity: although Connell speaks of an "emphasised femininity" and does not employ the term hegemonic femininity, I maintain that the term hegemony can be applied equally to both masculinities and femininities. Women are equally subject to a hierarchy of femininities in which one particular mode of femininity is valued above all others, which subordinates and marginalises all other forms of femininity. In stating that "no form of femininity is hegemonic in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men", Connell argues that emphasised femininity does not have the same power as hegemonic masculinity to dominate other femininities (Connell 1987: 183, 187). According to Connell, this is because all women are subordinate to men and femininity is constructed in the context of this overall subordination (Connell 1987: 186, 187). In practice, however, despite subordination to men, hegemonic forms of femininity across cultures have been successful in devaluing and subordinating other forms of femininity, often preventing/limiting their cultural expression. Connell´s assertion that women have little "scope to construct institutionalised power relationships over other women" (Connell 1987: 187), does not correspond with Indian social reality, in which elderly women within the household exercise significant power over younger women- particularly their daughters-in-law. While Connell´s and other scholars´ highlighting of the limitations of the concept of socialisation are useful in helping us think critically about its mechanisms, it is important to recognise that institutions, perhaps even more so in the case of minority communities, do act as effective agents of socialisation, powerfully influencing behaviour, particularly in the field of gender. The gurudwara is successful in enforcing normative gender standards because these standards are at the same time conflated with Punjabi culture and *being* Punjabi. The successful performance of hegemonic masculinity and femininity within the gurudwara and at home is seen as maintaining Punjabi culture. Futhermore, in the diaspora, gender norms assume new significance because they also serve to distinguish Punjabis from Spaniards- cultural boundaries are simultaneously gendered. One example from my participant observation in Punjabi family homes can serve to illustrate how Punjabi culture in the diaspora is strongly linked to a certain conception of gender roles. One Punjabi husband, in response to his wife´s assertion that she would have remained vegetarian in

Spain even if her husband had insisted she eat meat, was reprimanded with her husband warning her: “don´t you become Spanish!” The same dynamic operates in the gurudwara, with boys and girls encouraged to maintain a Punjabi identity that is tied to conservative definitions of masculinity and femininity.

Two final aspects of the gurudwara environment deserve mention. The gender regime in place at the gurudwara squashes the huge variation that exists *within* men and women, in order to systematically create and re-create differences between the two. Within this gender regime, only two genders are recognised (rigid male/female binary), and gendered differences are consistently highlighted, indeed exaggerated, through both dress, spatial segregation, and the different (and unequal) roles assigned to women and men within the gurudwara. In this gender regime, only one, dominant, form of masculinity and femininity is allowed expression, suppressing, at least in public, the multiple femininities and masculinities that exist in all cultures. Gender segregation is the norm, which according to a number of anthropological studies, leads to a higher degree of gender inequality. The anthropologist Thomas Gregor found that all forms of spatial segregation are associated with gender inequality (Kimmel 2000: 54). The gurudwara as binary gendered institution also renders all non-normative sexualities invisible. A key feature of hegemonic masculinity is its basis in heterosexuality. As Connell states: “the most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual, being closely connected to the institution of marriage…” (Connell 1987: 186). The gurudwara is strongly heteronormative in nature. Marriage is seen as compulsory for both women and men and (heterosexual) family life is the only life path that exists- alternatives are unthinkable. Discussion of homosexuality is taboo, and homosexuality is completely invisible within the gurudwara. All marriages that take place within the gurudwara are opposite-sex, despite some Sikhs claiming that the Sikh marriage hymns or *laavan* are non-gender specific and hence in theory the Sikh marriage rite is open to all. [21] While no Punjabi would identify the gurudwara as a site of heteronormativity (so taken for granted is this aspect of social life), its gender regime reinforces and feeds the culture-wide taboo on pre-marital sexuality, as well as homosexuality/transexuality. All marriages performed within the gurudwara are opposite-sex in nature, and the restrictions placed on cross-gender communication presuppose universal heterosexuality.

[21] Interview with the founder of Sarbat (UK), an organisation for LGBT Sikhs.

The hegemonic masculinity that reigns in the gurudwara is not seamless. As with all institutions, gender contradictions exist, but even here, they ultimately serve to reinforce hegemonic masculinity. In the Barcelona gurudwara, it is men who prepare and serve food[22], but as with chefs in the West, these tasks, performed in the context of *seva* (community service) in the gurudwara, bring prestige and enhance rather than detract from their masculinity. Indeed, the fact that female members of the *sangat* are discouraged by the ideology of *sharam* or shame/modesty from serving *langar* adds further masculine weight to the task. At home, it would be considered emasculating for men to prepare or serve food, which is seen as an exclusively feminine task. I have observed the same man serve *langar*, who at home, snaps his fingers when he wants his wife to clear away his plate. It appears that outward gender non-conformity does not exist within the gurudwara. Thus far, not one woman has attempted to serve *langar*. Nor has any man breached the gurudwara´s gender code. However, outward conformity is not the whole story. Nor is the gurudwara the only site for the performance of gender. The highly ritualised enactment of hegemonic masculinity and feminity in the gurudwara may mask a more complex reality in other environments. The question remains, how do men perceive gender and masculinity? How do their masculinities differ from Spanish masculinities? Has their gender ideology changed as a result of living in Spain? It is to these questions that I will now turn.

Young Punjabi Masculinities

Gender Roles and Awareness of Inequality

Most of the boys[23] that I interviewed had never reflected before on their masculinity, or on gender issues in general. Well-versed in speaking about caste, several were perplexed with my questions about gender. I interviewed both 1.5 boys, as well as two first generation boys who had been living in Spain for more than a year. With the notable exception of one ´gender-aware´ boy, the vast majority of boys adhered to conservative gender ideologies in which gender inequalities were naturalised/largely supported, and awareness of gender bias was limited. These results parallel the findings of the recent "International Men and Gender Equality" survey of gender

[22] This is not the case in all gurudwaras in the diaspora. Indeed, in many gurudwaras in the UK, it is women who prepare *langar*.

[23] Following Indian English usage as well as my interviewees´ own self-identification, I use the term boy in order to describe unmarried young men and girl to refer to unmarried young women.

attitudes among men from six different countries including India, by researchers from the International Center for Research on Women (India/US) and the Insituto Promundo in Brazil.[24] This survey found that Indian men were consistently, and by a large margin, the least ´gender equal´ amongst all men surveyed, and the most antagonistic towards gender equality. For example, 81% of Indian men affirmed that "men should have the final word about decisions in home" (compared to 24% in Mexico) and 86% felt that childcare was a woman´s responsibility (compared to 61% in Rwanda and 10% in Brazil). A further 65% believed that "there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten", which contrasts starkly with the next highest percentage of 21% in Rwanda (Evolving Men 2011: 19). While my results certainly do not reveal the same extremes of patriarchal thinking (my questions were also different), a general mindset prevails in which gender inequalities are not questioned, or even ´seen´. Thus most boys, in response to my question regarding gender differences in the gurudwara, affirmed that there was "no difference" between girls and boys in the temple- that all were treated the same and enjoyed the same opportunities and privileges. One boy admitted that girls don´t speak in the gurudwara "due to shame", but the most extensive comments came from the one and only gender-aware boy, who observed that girls were more conservative, and linked this conservativeness to cultural restrictions rather than some innate shyness in girls:

"Boys are more activist. They participate more than girls, are involved in more activities. Girls are more conservative, because according to our culture, a girl who is active will be badly seen. A girl who is seated quietly there is a good girl" (Balminder, male, 21 years, Barcelona)

The male monopoly on leadership roles within the gurudwara is taken for granted- and not seen in the least as discriminatory. Women are implicitly assumed to not be interested in or suitable for gurudwara management positions. While not openly opposed to greater participation on the part of women (one boy claimed that "ladies are welcome to get involved"), neither was their total absence seen as problematic. The status quo was accepted and not seen as an example of systemic inequality, but rather just the ´way things are at the gurudwara´.

[24] The six countries in question are: India, Brazil, Chile, Rwanda, Croatia and Mexico. The Indian sample consisted of 1, 534 men between the ages of 15-59 interviewed in Delhi and Vijayawada (in Tamil Nadu).

Boys similarly affirmed that girls and boys were treated the same at home in response to my question on whether they felt brothers and sisters were subject to diferential treatment/expectations in the family home. The overwhelming response was, as with the state of gender in the gurudwara, "the same". The sex-specific roles assigned to their sisters/cousins is seen to be part of the natural order of things, and the greater mobility restrictions placed on them are not questioned or viewed as discriminatory, but rather seen as protecting girls. "We have more freedom" agreed a 1.5 boy (when pressed), but felt that the comparative lack of freedom suffered by girls was justified, since "it is not as safe for girls to go roaming about". Only the gender-aware boy remarked that boys and girls inherit (rather than ´naturally´ adopt) the gendered tasks carried out by their parents, and asserted that boys are more valued and spoiled at home:

"Boys follow what their fathers do and girls what their mothers do because this is what is expected of them. Boys can get away with a lot more- they are the favoured ones. A boy from birth is valued more since he will stay and support his parents in old age. A girl has to be more careful. She is seen to be a financial burden. She will eventually get married and leave the family home" (Balminder, male, 21 years, Barcelona)

Their views on the respective roles of husband and wife reveal that the traditional gendered division of labor remains the dominant model, even among 1.5 youth exposed to the new Spanish norm of both spouses/partners working outside of the home. One eighteen year old boy began by stating that both husband and wife should be equal and have equal rights. He continued however with a conservative discourse on gender roles within marriage:

"She can work, but I will also give her the option to stay at home. I prefer that she stay at home, it will be better for both the marriage and the children. Until the children are fourteen or fifteen, the woman should stay at home" (Kulwinder, male, 18 years, Barcelona).

His comments reveal that the decision on whether his wife works outside the home or not is seen to be his prerogative, as it is India. The husband´s primary role continues to be identified as that of breadwinner for the family. Thus 18 year old Kulwinder says that the principal duty of a husband is to provide for his family, and that of the wife to respect her husband, and if she does not work, to carry out the household tasks. 22 year old Mohinder went one step further and asserted that while he wants his wife to have some vocation (in terms of a life project), he does not want her to work, "because that would be against my masculinity". 25 year old Sandeep stressed duty and complementarity in the roles of husband and wife, using the metaphor of a train to describe marriage:

"A train needs two wheels. One wheel is the wife, the other is the husband. The husband is supporting the wife. Wife is also supporting the husband. She prepares food for the husband, in-laws, children. She cleans the home. It is duty. If you don´t do it, how is married life possible? Otherwise you will need a servant, but wife is part of home. Without a wife one cannot make a home" (Sandeep, male, 25 years, Barcelona).

When I asked Sandeep if after marriage, he will cook, he responded that "I will help my wife", demonstrating that cooking is firmly seen to be a female task within the home, whether in the Punjab or Spain. Once again, only the gender-aware boy struck an alternative note, in very radically sharing that if it were not for his parents, he would not marry. He stressed mutual respect and sharing in all aspects of married life, arguing that there should be a balance at home in both household tasks and in decision-making.

What makes a man?

Economics

What emerges clearly as the touchstone of Punjabi masculinity is the ability to provide economically for one´s family, and the drive to achieve economic independence and power. All boys agreed that without the ability to earn money, one was lacking in masculinity. A boy might be fat, unathletic, or not particularly handsome, but if he succeeds in providing for his family and can demonstrate earning power, he will have preserved his manhood and hence his *izzat*, or honour/self-respect. This result partially coincides with the research conducted on White and Asian boys in a Canadian secondary school by Athena Wang. Wang discovered that the Asian boys in her study identified dominant masculinity in Asian cultures with family and financial responsibility- although many of the boys did not agree with this model and rejected its inequality (Wang 2000: 117). In contrast, in my sample, Punjabi boys personally identified with this breadwinning version of hegemonic masculinity and fully expected to live up to its expectations. 27 year old Sunil elaborated upon the importance of money to manhood in the following way:

"*Izzat* is directly proportional to money and the job you have. It is something put into the mind of every Indian boy by his parents. They need to have decent jobs, earn money. First is money, second is dressing properly, behaviour comes third, sports being the least important"

All the boys that I spoke with stressed their economic goals and their desire to be "well-settled". For first generation boys who have migrated to Spain independently, this desire is particularly acute, since work contracts also enable one to apply for permanent residence. Boys are also well aware that without a stable economic base, they will not be able to compete on the marriage market. A beautiful, fair wife adds to one´s *izzat*, but the foundation of Punjabi masculine identity is economic strength. Boys who are not able to fulfill this ideal feel emasculated- one boy related to me the atypical case of a recently arrived Punjabi boy, who was initially supported economically by his wife while he learned Spanish and adjusted to life in Spain. The boy in question was described as feeling "less of a man" until such time as he found a job. For 1.5 boys who migrated with their families at an early age, economics is also paramount. 21 year old Balminder, the gender-aware boy, was involved in a private money-making scheme that he hoped would enable him to strike it rich and retire early. He saw his current job as a mechanical engineer as not having the potential to enable him to help others by amassing personal wealth. A number of boys emphasised that not only was economic power important, but also the ability to be one´s own boss. "I don´t want to spend all of my life working for someone else" was how 21 year Balminder put it. Several boys expressed the desire to establish their own businesses, along with frustration with their current jobs, which they saw as having limited future prospects. They aim high: 22 year old Mohinder, apart from stressing how he wanted to have a job where he did not need to worry about money, expressed how he wanted to have a job that entailed political power, the power to take decisions, and desired to reach a high level within his field (either social or police work). 25 year old Sandeep, a first generation migrant, rued the fact that he was having to start all over again in Spain, having already established himself in the field of journalism in India: "in India, I was already settled, now here, I must settle again". Sandeep, currently unemployed and struggling to find any sort of work at all, even well beneath his qualifications, has seen his status drop in Spain, but he still maintains his self-respect through his religious faith and activities. He declared that he receives more respect in India as a man, and does not feel as manly in Spain, which he attributed to the language problem rather than to his new immigrant status. He shared with me that while not seeking a "high-fi life" or "high-fi rank", he aspires to be well-settled with a "good job, good money and good home" in Spain- adding that all Punjabi boys compete with one another to settle and lead within their respective fields. However, Sandeep, like other first-generation boys without papers struggling to establish themselves in Spain, have greatly lowered their expectations with regards to vocation. While Sandeep aspired to be a good

teacher or journalist in India, he lamented that this dream was now gone: “I had a dream of being a teacher, but now it is all gone. What can I do here? I just want to find work, good work. I want to settle in my life”. The centrality of economics to masculinity means that it provides an incredibly strong source of motivation to Punjabi men (they are far more focused that Spanish youth of their age). However, it also simultaneously links their self-esteem to how much they earn and makes them extremely work-focused, often to the detriment of their physical health. Many boys were so work-focused that they had very little time for other activities, let alone leisure pursuits.

Physical strength/the body

A second key theme in Punjabi *mardangi*, or masculinity, is physical strength. This aspect of masculinity appears to be universally valued. Wang in her study found that both Asian and White boys concurred that a man´s physical build and strength were important and the foundation of male power in society (Wang 2000: 117). The International Men and Gender Equality survey reports that Indian men in particular attach great importance to physical strength: a resounding 86% agreed that “to be a man, you need to be tough” and 92% agreed with the statement “if someone insults me, I will defend my reputation with force if I have to” (Evolving Men 2011: 19). One boy, in response to my question about what image he associates with *mardangi*, made a grunting sound and raised his fists in a show of strength. Masculinity is seen as synonymous with physical strength on the part of all the boys in my sample. Men should be big, strong, and courageous. This crucially distinguishes them from women, who instead of “becoming strong”, “just wear make-up” according to 18 year old Ashok. For 22 year old Mohinder, masculinity is characterised above all by the ability to be fearless and is linked to one´s role as noble protector of one´s family, womenfolk, and society in general:

“Masculinity for me is to have the capacity to die. Not to fear death. It is very important for masculinity- it is basic. You must know how to die for an aim, for others. You must be strong, have a really big body, so that no one will not respect you. If you are big, no one will try to mess with you. You must know how to protect your family, your women. If not, I lose my *be ghera* (honour). When I go out with my mother, I am her protector. Bring food to your family, don´t depend on anyone else. If my mother has to ask for money from someone else, we lose our honour…Also to be a *mard* (a man) is to protect everyone, not just your family. To be responsible for the whole society, and help the weak…”

Thus for Mohinder as well as for many other Punjabi boys, physical strength and moral responsibility go hand in hand. In this worldview, physical strength endows men with both rights and responsibilities, and also underlies their common view of women as weak and hence in need of protection. While physical strength is paramount across the board, the importance attached to body shape varies. The new Western image promoted by the advertising industry of the perfectly sculpted chest, in which each muscle is well-defined, has less currency among Punjabi boys. Boys generally agree that having muscles is good, but in the words of 25 year old Sandeep "it is not compulsory, I believe in normal muscle", and declared himself satisfied with his body, his weight and his height. 27 year old Sunil however claimed that the muscled body ideal was becoming increasingly important, even though few boys lived up to it in practice:

"Boys, at least city boys, are more careful about their bodies, even though they can be seen generally supporting a bit of belly. They are now all aware of the fact that a muscular body is what girls are interested in and are aiming for the same"

Ironically, for 22 year old Mohinder, muscles and having a bit of a belly can coexist and he deemed both necessary in order to prove one´s manhood: "until you have a bit of a belly and muscles, you are not respected. You must eat a lot".

Dressing well was also seen as important aspect of masculinity, and for most boys, ´dressing well´ means investing in brand name clothing, which is strongly associated with being cool, modern, and attractive. Although there was somewhat less focus on brand names when compared to the brand mania that exists in India, brands still emerged as key to looking and feeling good about oneself. "To be handsome, 25 year old Sandeep explained, "we prefer brands". Sandeep proudly stated that in college in India his shoes, trousers and t-shirts were all from Reebok ("a very good brand") and proceeded to list the brand names that he wears, along with their corresponding price tags. Brand names are also used as a vehicle to communicate class distinctions (along with consumer goods such as motorcycles, mobile phones, and various high-tech gadgets). 27 year old Sunil offered the following analysis of how brands are used to advertise one´s economic/social status (as well as one´s physical attractiveness), according to one´s budget:

"For rich boys, the attractiveness is with labels, or known brands, the sense of style coming from Bollywood or Hollywood. Depending upon what their pockets allows, they are buying from

Gucci to Zara, as long as it is visible. Middle class boys take the least risk as he is constantly watched by his parents and guided by society…Lower class boys take the boldest step to look like Bollywood stars, they are colouring their hair, getting waxed, shaved"

A minority of boys insisted that spending money on brands was a waste of money, and argued instead that it was important to know how to dress simply yet elegantly, avoiding for example, ´flashy´ colours, which traditionally have been associated with the lower castes. The reference to shaving in Sunil´s quote reveals the importance of removing certain types of body hair among Punjabi boys. Indeed, in contrast to standard Western practice, several boys mentioned that they shave their underarms as well as pubic area for hygienic reasons- a custom that may date to the Muslim domination of undivided Punjab. According to a Pakistani Muslim interviewee, it is considered a religious obligation for Muslim men to shave their underarms and pubic area. While this practice departs from Western bodily norms of hegemonic masculinity, in wearing Western dress, Punjabi boys in the Spanish diaspora fit in clothing-wise among their peers. They are not subject to the same stigma that Punjabi females face when wearing Indian dress in public. Since not one of the boys I interviewed wears the turban or sports a long beard, their masculinity is not marked as different or stigmatised in the Spanish context. Nor is the turban important to Ravidassia Punjabi masculinity. While several boys pointed out that Jat boys believe they are more masculine because they wear the turban, this claim was vigorously contested on the part of all of the boys I interviewed. They emphatically stated that the turban was not necessary to feel masculine, or to earn respect. Nor did they feel that Jat boys were more masculine than them. 25 year old Sandeep expressed the general Ravidassia opinion when he stated: "The Jats think they are more manly, but they are not. Chamars are also powerful. Charmars are so settled". Unlike a number of Punjabi girls I spoke with, not a single boy reported conflict with parents or relatives over what they wear, and always felt free to wear what they wanted, when they wanted, including in the gurudwara.

Sport

The centrality of sport in many dominant masculinities cross-culturally is only partially confirmed by my interviews. Martino, in his study of masculinity/heteronormativity among adolescent boys attending a Catholic co-educational high school in Australia, found that

"demonstrating physical strength, being able to attract the opposite sex readily and engaging actively in sports" were necessary in order to achieve a high status masculinity (Martino 2000: 226). Wang found that sport was more important to the masculine identities of White boys, and that Asian boys, while they played sports, were not involved in competitive sport (Wang 2000: 118-119). All of the White boys in her sample, in contrast, were active in competitive sports and identified their manliness with athletics. None of the boys in my sample participated in sport (competitive or otherwise), although all had played various sports at school. The differences in our results are thus partly due to the different age cohort and socioeconomic situation of our interviewees (all of Wang´s sample were secondary school students). Sport was secondary in terms of achieving and expressing masculinity for the majority of my sample. Only one boy (Sunil), strongly identified with hegemonic masculinity, affirmed that it was very important to be athletic and to excel at sport. He had played the Punjabi wrestling game of *kabaddi* in his village, which he praised for its ability to "demonstrate what you are worth- for *kabaddi* you need strength, speed, technique and *mardangi"* (manliness). However, for the majority, sport is largely a spectator activity. 25 year old Sandeep related that sport for him is "just for entertainment, not for competition". He said that he had only played sport at school, and that his parents did not encourage him to pursue athletics, only to "study, study, study". He unabashedly asserted that he was a "bookworm". Sandeep enjoys attending local *kabaddi* matches that are organised periodically in Barcelona, but he declared that it is much more important for him to read books about Dr. Ambedkhar than to be involved in sport. Most Punjabi boys are too busy with work and studies to have much time for sport, and do not feel the need to be athletic in order to demonstrate their masculinity. Their sporting interests are mainly cricket and *kabaddi*, as opposed to football among Spanish boys, although football has been gaining in popularity due to its importance in Spain. Time and time again, they emphasised economics and family life over other aspects of masculinity such as sport that have greater cultural weight in the West.

Heterosexuality

An unspoken assumption running throughout my interviews was the belief that a ´true´ man is heterosexual, the sine qua non of manhood. The central importance of heterosexuality to Punjabi masculinity was reflected indirectly in the recurring theme of marriage, and in the emphasis on family life in general. In Punjabi culture, a proper, dignified man is someone who complies with his social and religious duty to marry a woman and procreate. A man who does not marry is a

social failure, and furthermore morally suspect. Since marriage is equated with responsibility and "being settled", it also symbolises one´s entry into adulthood. To not marry, or to enter into a non-heterosexual partnership, is therefore unthinkable- equal to a form of social death, since Punjabi social life revolves around heterosexual marriage and children. With marriage, comes enhanced respect and social status. While marriage is not the only life goal of boys as it is for girls, boys are similarly taught that marriage is an obligatory rite of passage; that along with fatherhood, confers full manhood. Most boys, when asked about their future plans, took for granted that they would get married and have children (on average, their preference is for two children- one boy and one girl). The ideal age for getting married does not diverge much from that in the Punjab- most boys felt that they should get married between the ages of 25 to 30 (girls they felt should get married younger). In a notable new trend that I also observed in India, a number of boys not only wanted to get married, but also desired a life partner, which they defined as the ability to share their ideals/philosophy of life with their spouses- to be "understood" by them. 25 year old Sandeep was among those who expressed this desire to find a marriage partner that could also be one´s soulmate: "I want to find a good life partner- good understanding. I want her to be interested in humanity, not interested in money". Except for 21 year Balminder, all boys stressed the importance of getting married, and saw marriage and settlement as going hand in hand. Marriage was seen as a vital part of one´s journey through life. One boy succinctly expressed this by stating that "according to an Indian, life is incomplete if you don´t marry". A common thread in my interviews was the difference between Spanish and Punjabi masculinities in this regard. Spanish boys were seen to be unconcerned with marriage, family life, and responsibility in general, in contrast with Punjabi boys who had clearly defined life plans to follow:

"They don´t believe in God…They don´t trust in marriage but a Punjabi cannot live without marriage. They believe marriage is a compulsory part of life. An Indian man finds love in his wife. But Spanish find love in every girl. They have no permanent girlfriend…in their life, no role of wife" (Sandeep, 25 years, male, Barcelona)

Thus the message I saw painted on a number of buses in the Punjab of "no wife, no life", could be the motto of many Punjabi men, both in the Punjab and abroad. Indeed, Sandeep, with his love of popular sayings, told me his life philosophy could be summed up in the following way: "one life, one wife" and "no life without wife". The ´sacred heterosexuality´ ideology of diasporic Punjabi boys thus plays a foundational, if largely invisible (due to its naturalisation) role in their masculinity.

If heterosexuality is implicitly discussed when mentioning marriage, homosexuality normally does not exist in spoken discourse. Given the importance of heterosexuality to proving manhood, its polar opposite of homosexuality must be avoided at all costs in order to maintain the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity. This extends to everyday conversation, where even mentioning the term homosexual is taboo. Homosexuality in India is universally rejected among all religious groups and caste communities. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey found that 92% of Indian men would be "ashamed if I had a homosexual son" and 89% affirmed that "being around homosexual men makes me uncomfortable". India thus registered the highest levels of homophobia in this cross-country survey- Croatia came next at 63% (Evolving Men 2011: 20). While homosexuality is also devalued in Spanish culture, and was severely punished during the fascist Franco regime, Spanish society has in recent years initiated a more open discussion of homosexuality. In 2007, the Socialist government passed an equal marriage law opening marriage to all, which has set a legal precedent for a number of other countries in terms of human rights. Socially however, homosexuality remains low in status and lacking in respectability- particularly outside of large cities. Yet, while homosexuality is stigmatised in both Spanish and Punjabi culture[25], the practices that form a part of each culture´s hegemonic masculinity differ. Nowhere is this clearer than with respect to the heterosexual/homosexual binary.

The following example reveals the cross-cultural nature of hegemonic masculinities, and how each culture can evolve different ways of censoring homosexual desire. Despite the extremely taboo nature of discussing homosexuality in Punjabi culture, some boys were forthcoming on this very sensitive topic. I broached the topic of homosexuality by asking about a common Indian custom- hand-holding between men. Such is the stigma attached to homosexuality, that the practice of holding hands between men ceases upon settling in Spain, due to its Western connotation of homosexuality[26]. Thus a key feature of Indian/Punjabi masculinity is quickly suppressed in a new context with a different brand of hegemonic masculinity. My interviews reveal that the Western taboo on overt physical contact between men becomes incorporated into the new Punjabi masculinity in Spain. 25 year Sandeep described how soon after arriving in Spain, he quickly learned the new ´rules of the game´:

[25] On the stigma continuum, homosexuality related stigma is much stronger in India

[26] A process that according to an Indian-resident interviewee is also occurring in urban India due to the influence of Western media

“In Punjab, there is an open culture. No problem. In college I held hands all the time. But when we are here, we walk separately. When I was new, I went to hold my friend´s hand and he said no, don´t hold my hand. The Spanish boys will say you are *maricón*” (a derogatory term in Spanish for gay men).

18 year old Ashok, although he came to Spain as a pre-adolescent with his family, also rapidly learned that all physical contact with boys was henceforth off-limits:

“In my country we walk hand in hand- we are friends only. But here no, they (the Spanish) think it is something else”

Given the increased visibility and cultural presence of homosexuality in Spanish society, there is also greater pressure to ´advertise´ one´s heterosexuality compared to the Punjab, where homosexuality is very underground. Thus Ashok similarly learned that by employing anti-gay insults and jokes, he could bolster his own masculinity within the hegemonic masculinity regime in Spain, where to be gay is to occupy the lowest rung on the ladder of masculine hierarchy- akin to the status of ex-untouchables within the caste system in India. Ashok related how in his work placement, anti-gay joking and banter is the norm:

“At work, my boss will say, are you *maricón*? (demeaning term in Spanish for gay men) as a joke. Do you want to go to a gay bar? Just for laughs. We say “what´s up *maricón*”. Boys learn to insult early”.

Although Ashok observed that such insults also exist in India, it appears that they are considered more severe terms of abuse. He reported that at his Spanish secondary school, the *maricón* insult is “normal”, and students are not reprimanded by teachers, whereas in India, he maintained that such comments at school would be swiftly punished. Among those 1.5 Ravidassia youth who have attended school in Spain, all have learned the *maricón* term of abuse, and use it when referring to gay people.

In stark contrast to the ´sacred heterosexuality´ ideology and practice that permeates the gurudwara and Punjabi culture in general, two of my interviewees spoke openly about how in practice, homosexuality is common although it is never talked about and assumed not to exist.

One boy, for whom I shall not assign a pseudonym, broke the silence that shields this topic by speaking frankly about his own personal experience of a same-sex encounter:

"There was this young Pakistani guy who worked near my place, next to the supermarket. I often saw him giving me smiles, and then finally one day he engaged me in conversation. A conversation with the usual questions, my story, his story, but the truth was he was actually interested in having sex…Well we ended up having sex and me changing my supermarket cause I didn't want see him again. All these guys sleep with men but it just ends there, cause at the end of the day, they all hope to and want to get married. Even this guy, right after having sex asked me when I was going to get married! For these guys, doing anything sexual with another guy doesn't mean anything. It's something they do but you don't talk about it the next day, you just pretend it never happened. And these very men are married and have kids today, and the chapter is closed forever"

As this Punjabi boy´s story makes clear, same-sex behaviour does not equal a gay identity in the Punjabi context. Indeed, this boy explained that as long as a man remains sexually dominant, he still considers himself to be manly, despite engaging in sexual relations with another man (the passive participant is known as *gandu*, which is an extremely derogatory term in Punjabi). As the above quote highlights, regardless of same-sex behaviour, the goal remains that of marriage. Individual desires are subordinated to collective norms. Fully aware that heterosexual marriage is the only path that is socially and religiously sanctioned in Punjabi society, anything that deviates from the norm is forgotten and buried- further feeding the collective silence that rules on this topic. Another interviewee (Sandeep), who adamantly maintained that there were no gays within the gurudwara, did admit that some Pakistani Punjabi boys were active in selling sex on the beach in Barcelona, and described how one of his flatmates had been propositioned by an elderly Spanish man, which led him to being relentlessly teased afterwards by his friends. This interviewee, while acknowledging that homosexuality existed within the community (one of the few who openly discussed the topic), made it clear that he felt such practices were shameful and against God´s plan for humanity.

While no one openly claimed homosexuality was a "Western disease", as is sometimes done in India, several boys felt that there were more gay people in Spain due to the lack of

"shame" in Europe. For 18 year old Ashok, the visibility of homosexuality was a key difference between Indian and Spanish culture, stating: "In India, men can´t go with other men. Here boys with boys and girls with girls. In India no". In general, homosexuality was perceived as being "against nature" and a deviation that had no place within the gurudwara, Punjabi culture, or Punjabi masculinity. 25 year old Sandeep, for example, spoke for many when he declared: "They are not true men. It is wrong. It is against nature. God created lady for man and man for lady". The only discordant voice came from gender-aware Balminder, who argued that "masculinity does not exist", that it "is a creation of the human mind", and that "a homosexual can also be a man". However, he also expressed his shock at discovering, via Facebook, that a former classmate was gay. "I thought he was normal- he looked and acted normal" was his response, revealing that even for gender-open Balminder, homosexuals are seen to be essentially different- and abnormal. Apart from the notable exception of Balminder, it is clear that Punjabi masculinity, as with hegemonic masculinities across the globe, rests both implicitly and explicitly on the pillar of heterosexuality. To be a man in Punjabi culture is to be a heterosexually married family man.

Comparative Punjabi/Spanish masculinities

Although the literature on masculinities might lead one to conclude that the masculinity of young, immigrant men, or ethnic minority second generation men might be affected negatively by the process of immigration and contact with another culture, my interviews reveal the exact opposite result. Scholars of Moroccan immigrants in France (Andezian, Streiff, Guerraoui) have also found that immigration does not lead Moroccan men to change their ideas about traditional gender roles (Dialmy 2010: 18). Punjabi boys, both first generation and 1.5 generation, repeatedly and universally affirmed that their masculinity was superior to that of Spanish men. Far from feeling emasculated by the pressures of finding work in a foreign country in which they do not know the language, they stated that Punjabis were manlier due to their custom of supporting their wives and children. When asked ´who is more manly´?, they did not hesitate to declare themselves more masculine due to their role as breadwinners, pointing out that Spanish women work, hence depriving Spanish men of this vital aspect of masculinity. The words of 18 year old Kulwinder are representative:

"Punjabis are more manly than the Spanish. In our culture the woman doesn´t do anything, the man does everything, like a locomotive, he directs and all the others follow him. When you provide for your wife and children you are more manly. Here women work".

For 25 year Sandeep, without work, a man loses his worth, especially if he is not able to maintain his wife:

“A man who doesn´t work and his wife does? It is wrong. She can work but it is his first responsibility to work”

Despite their struggles to find work and establish themselves, they are confident in the knowledge that in providing for their families, they are fulfilling one of the most important ´commandments´ of manhood. Far from feeling marginalised by the Spanish gender regime, Punjabi boys expressed contentment with their moral/gender code, which stresses duty and family responsibility. As mentioned in the section on heterosexuality, several Punjabis commented that Spanish boys were neglecting marriage in favor of short-term relationships without commitment, and seen as lacking in maturity as a result. For example, 25 year old Sandeep saw Spanish boys as just wanting to “enjoy”, and being “characterless” due to living with their girlfriends before marriage. In contrast, character was supremely important to Indian boys, which included not just marrying, but also avoiding “bad habits” such as smoking, drinking and partying. Many boys pointed out that one of the worst things a boy could do to destroy his reputation (whether in Spain or the Punjab), was to have a girlfriend. Not being able to participate in dating rituals and have a girlfriend, pivotal to the lives of Spanish boys, did not appear to affect the masculinity of Punjabi boys at all. On the contrary, Punjabi boys were proud of their moral code, and indirectly expressed that they felt it was superior to the lax morals and “unmarried life” rampant in Spain. Although boys were happy with the more relaxed gender code in Spain, in which socialising between boys and girls was far easier than in the Punjab, they did not approve of living together before marriage.

Punjabi boys´ assertion of superior masculinity also rested on their belief that Punjabis were better and stronger fighters than their Spanish counterparts:

“Punjabi boys will win a fight. Spanish boys don´t know how to fight. They don´t have punch. Spanish boy is quiet” (Sandeep, 25 years, male, Barcelona)

Only one boy (Sandeep), a first generation unemployed immigrant, admitted that he felt his sense of manhood had suffered in the new immigration context. Other first generation boys I spoke with did not let on if their masculinity had taken a beating, preferring to stress their resilience and determination to succeed economically in their new home.

1.5 generation boys fluent in Spanish were adept at combining gendered aspects of both cultures, while adhering to the Punjabi gender regime in matters such as marriage, intimate relationships, and the depth of cross-gender social mixing. Many 1.5 boys, for example, would greet Spanish girls by kissing them on the cheek (as is the Spanish custom), and enter into friendships with Spanish girls, yet would not entertain the notion of having a girlfriend before marriage, or inviting a girl alone to their home. When in the presence of Punjabi or Pakistani girls, 1.5 boys comply with Punjabi gender norms- gender flexibility is reserved mostly for Spanish and other non-South Asian girls. Thus, as with ethnicity, Punjabi boys employ a situational gender code according to who they are interacting with- a modified Spanish gender code with Spanish women and a Punjabi gender code with Punjabi females, switching back and forth with ease. Geography also determines their gender code. When at home, in community institutions such as the gurudwara and in residential areas with a strong Punjabi presence, Punjabi gender codes are performed. When in the workplace, school or other Spanish-dominated public spaces, a more mixed, Spanish influenced gender code is enacted. Some gender flexibility is also enacted with Punjabi girls, but always outside of Punjabi-specific spaces. One Punjabi boy, for example, revealed that while in the gurudwara, he would not even acknowledge the presence of his female Punjabi friend, they would occasionally meet outside of the gurudwara in public non-Punjabi spaces. This is a freedom that is possible in Barcelona but not in the Punjab, for in the latter public space does not afford the same degree of anonymity. Other boys use online social networking sites such as Facebook and Orkut to connect with Punjabi girls (both in Spain and in other countries), once again a ´public´ non-Punjabi space far from the intrusive, critical gaze of family and community elders.

As in India, gender borrowing is highly selective, and usually does not affect core gender beliefs. In India, boys have enthusiastically embraced Western dress such as jeans and other Western fashion trends, while simultaneously viewing Punjabi girls who do the same as “fast” or even indecent. Western media is consumed with gusto, yet while some aspects of Western

masculinities have been adopted (using expensive technological gadgets to demonstrate one´s classed masculinity for example,) Western ideas about gender equality have not met with the same success. Indeed, as one my Punjabi female hosts astutely remarked, "modernity is only for men". Regardless of her level of education, the place of a woman is still seen as within the home. If she does "do service" (work outside of the home), it should not conflict with her home and childrearing duties. Even those ´modern´ boys who want their wives to work, when asked who will do the cooking and cleaning, responded that the maid would do it. A re-evaluation of their role within marriage or the home is not contemplated. On the contrary, one boy boasted that after marrying, he would be treated like a prince by his in-laws, and told me how he could always expect deferential treatment from them, clearly relishing this enhanced status. In Spain, the situation is similar- gender borrowing is limited to certain aspects of Spanish masculinity, with conservative gender roles remaining intact despite cross-cultural exchange. For example, 18 year old Kulwinder stated that he had learned from Spanish boys how to communicate more directly, (not to hold back his feelings), yet subscribed to a traditional gender ideology that has not been modified by contact with Spanish gender codes. Others, usually first generation migrants, struggle more intensely to reconcile Spanish gender norms with their own. 25 year Sandeep, who dislikes the open displays of opposite-sex affection in Spain, has used cultural relativism to help him accept practices that make him feel uncomfortable. Thus he affirmed that "Spanish culture is good for Spanish people" and argued that "we cannot say it is wrong, it is their culture, but I feel ashamed. What is this?..." (for example when he sees a Spanish couple kissing or embracing in the street). He even went so far as to acknowledge (not without trepidation) that one day his children might adopt Spanish culture: "In the future, my children will grow up in this culture. What can I say or do? Maybe they like it". As in India, the vast majority of boys did not question the traditional role of husband in married life, continuing to view their role as that of breadwinner, and to see cooking, cleaning and childcare as inherently feminine tasks to be performed by their future wives.

When I asked my interviewees to compare the status of women in Indian and Spanish culture, many boys waxed eloquently about how Indian culture highly values women by employing a ´divine motherhood´ trope. Women were idealised for their roles as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. Their foundational role in family life, and their sacrifices for others were eulogised. The following examples, from both first-generation and 1.5 boys, are illustrative:

"Female is like God. In India we say *ma de peran vich sawarg*: ´heaven lies at the feet of our mother´. Mother, sister, *bhoti* (wife), *beti* (daughter). We do not discriminate. Where husband and

wife live together, understand each other and give respect to each other, that is heaven. Indian society respects women" (Khalsi 27 years, male, Vic)

"Without a wife you cannot make a home. Daugher, wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, this is the role of women in Indian society. Every role is important in the Indian family. Daughter works for parents/siblings. Wife works for father-in-law, home, husband, mother-in-law. Mother works for her family. God makes everything- God is in Mother. God=Mother, Mother=God. Because Mother is the living heart. Home construction is based on women" (Sandeep, male, 25 years, Barcelona)

"We will respect every girl because she will be a mother one day. Because I have a mother. Marriage is a charmful duty" (Mohinder, male, 22 years, Barcelona)

The veneration of mothers was understood to equal a high level of respect for all women, enabling many boys to overlook systemic aspects of discrimation against women/girls such as domestic violence, dowry deaths (along with the institution of dowry itself), and pervasive sexual violence against (none of which were mentioned by my interviewees as problems facing the Ravidassia community). Indeed according to a number of boys, there is "no gap" between boys and girls: "according to my thinking they are free, they have no problem. The problem is just caste, between Dalits and General Category", remarked 27 year old Khalsi. The divine motherhood ideology thus functions to both praise Indian society for its noble treatment of women (conflated with mothers), as well as to minimise, if not completely ignore, the problem of gender discrimination. Furthermore, it is clear that women do not enjoy a social identity independent of family relations in this scheme- a woman is first and foremost defined by her relationship to fathers, brothers, husbands/in-laws, and then sons.

Three boys acknowledged at least some gender-based discrimination. 18 year old Kulwinder observed that Indian culture "both respects and does not respect women", but overall, he maintained that Indian culture respected women more than Spanish culture, due to the elevated position of motherhood in Indian society. 18 year old Mohinder stated that "in India men are more respected. Here there is more respect for women". 21 year old Balminder asserted that "the gender system is more flexible in Spain- it is more rigid in India". Interviewees did not discuss the perceived gender faults of Spanish society, preferring instead to emphasise the respect accorded to mothers in Indian culture (or for the minority, greater respect in Spain). Nor did any

of my interviewees- including gender-aware Balminder, discuss at any length gender issues such as dowry or wife-beating. It appears that such issues are subject to a code of silence.

Masculinity pressures?

One interesting result to emerge from my interviews has been the declared absence of any pressure to prove one´s masculinity among Punjabi boys. A key theme of the scholarship on masculinities stresses how boys and men are subject to constant pressure to demonstrate their masculinity to male peers (Kimmel, Connell). I thus expected that Punjabi boys would also report feeling such pressure. However, in response to my questions regarding pressure to prove one´s masculinity, as well as the threat of being perceived as not masculine enough by their male peers, Punjabi boys responded that they did not feel such pressures. Questions regarding how they evaluated the masculinity of other men also did not elicit much response. Nonetheless, although they did not speak explicitly about pressure to be masculine, they did speak about pressure to settle economically, and to achieve a measure of economic power. Given the central role that economics plays in Punjabi masculinity, achieving economic strength can be interpreted as the Punjabi variant of proving one´s masculinity. Much more so than Spanish boys of the same age, Punjabi boys strive to "settle" as soon as possible after finishing school, and are more likely to buy a home at a young age. Rather than having plans to travel, take time out, or pursue further studies, Punjabi boys are firmly focused on work and their economic future, including boys who have studied in the Catalan educational system. The pressure to "settle", while not identified as a specifically masculine pressure on the part of Punjabi boys, is a key determinant of their lives as they prepare themselves to compete on the marriage market and to become breadwinners for their families in the future. Similarly, when assessing the economic position of other men, they are implicitly evaluating his masculinity, that is his ability to achieve economic success and provide for his family. The pressure to be masculine is thus very real for Punjabi boys, but is subsumed for them under the heading of "being settled".

Conclusion

The vast majority of Punjabi boys identify psychologically with dominant Punjabi masculinity and do not question their gender role, or the Punjabi gender regime in general. Their awareness of gender discrimination is limited, due to the naturalisation of gender differences (girls are seen to

be intrinsically weak, timid, dependent), and their belief in the superior strength of men. Gender discrimination at home and in the gurudwara is largely invisible to them, so normalised is the gendered division of labour in both spheres. All boys expected to be breadwinners in the future, and saw it as their duty to provide for their families, implicitly viewing women as homemakers. The only exception to this pattern of mental hegemonic masculinity was 21 year old Balminder, who was quite critical of what he termed the "system", and spoke of how it was important to be aware of how it worked to ensure conformity: "The system is interested in having a pattern that all people must fit into. One must have knowledge of how the system works. That is already something- a first step". Balminder was also the only boy who voiced open frustration with the Punjabi gender code, admitting that there were many things that he could not do because of it, such as making friends with Punjabi girls. Although 21 year old Balminder is a striking exception, his case serves to highlight that the power of hegemonic masculinity is never complete- a minority of boys will always resist the "system", at least mentally (Balminder does not openly rebel against the Punjabi gender code). Living in Spain and coming into contact with another gender regime has had limited impact on the performance of Punjabi masculinities, with the notable exception of Punjabi boys ceasing to hold hands given its stigmatising consequences in Spain. Punjabi boys do not feel that their masculinity has been marginalised in Spain, or that their masculinity does not ´measure up´ to that of Spanish men. On the contrary, they consider themselves to be manlier than the Spanish, and do not aspire to imitate the Spanish model of masculinity (identified with "enjoyment", but also a lack of responsibility and married family life). The strength of the Punjabi gender regime in the Spanish diaspora can be explained partly by the first/1.5 generation nature of Punjabi migration to Spain, but also by the long-term resilience of gender codes even when they are transplanted in a foreign culture. Indeed, the claimed superior masculinity of Punjabi boys can be read as an attempt to value their culture and protect their cultural boundaries through Punjabi gender codes in a foreign linguistic and cultural environment. Adept at gender code switching in daily social life, Punjabi boys are nonetheless firmly aligned with Punjabi gender values and continue to believe in their traditional marriage system and above all in the value of the role of the "wife". While some boys acknowledged that girls do suffer discrimination in Indian society, most boys highlighted that Indian culture respects women (more so than Spanish culture) and exalted the role of motherhood, even deifying the mother figure. What emerges is a genderscape in which boys extol women´s role as wives, mothers and homemakers, thus supporting a gender regime which accords women respect *only* for fulfilling the above roles. The authors of the International Men and Gender Equality survey find that unmarried men are more likely to be non- gender egalitarian than older, married men,

which they attribute to their lack of experience in having to negotiate on a daily basis with their wives (Evolving Men 2011: 21). I argue that it will not be the institution of marriage, but rather the growing economic independence of second-generation Punjabi women that will eventually inject greater flexibility into the Punjabi gender regime in the diaspora.

RELIGION IN THE PURSUIT OF DALIT LIBERATION: AN ANALYSIS OF RAVIDASSIA STRATEGIES IN INDIA AND IN THE SPANISH DIASPORA

"I tell you, religion is for man and not man for religion…The religion that does not recognise you as a human being, or give you water to drink, or allow you to enter in temples is not worthy to be called a religion. The religion that forbids you to receive education and comes in the way of your material advancement is not worthy of the appellation 'religion'. The religion that does not teach its followers to show humanity in dealing with its co-religionists is nothing but a display of force…." B. R. Ambedkar

"You must abolish your slavery yourselves. Do not depend for its abolition upon god or a superman…We must shape our course ourselves and by ourselves" B. R. Ambedkar

Introduction

Over the last two years, the global Ravidassia movement has witnessed momentous change, leading the largest and wealthiest Ravidassia *dera* in the Punjab, as well as many diasporic communities, to break formally with Sikhism. In so doing, the Ravidassias have transformed what has been for centuries a ´folk religion´ existing on the margins of Sikhism, into what Mark Juergensmeyer would term a *qaumic* religion in its own right; a well-defined, large and cohesive faith community following the Islamic model of religious community (Jurgensmeyer 1988: 2). As Jurgensmeyer rightly points out, the untouchables of the Punjab have long had their own religious traditions, but these traditions were not clearly defined, included a range of beliefs and practices, and most importantly, lacked a name (Juergensmeyer 1988: 94). Proclaiming a Ravidassia *dharm* or religion, is part of a broader effort to clearly define who they are as a community, using the accessories and symbolism of religion. Just like the representatives of other religious ´brands´ with more established ´market share´, those Ravidassias who have embraced Ravidassia exclusivity now proudly ´market´ the *qaumic* features of their religion, with its distinct site of pilgrimage (Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh), symbol (please see images at the end of this chapter), greeting (Jai Guru Dev), holy book and Satguru (Supreme Guru) of Guru Ravidass. These features are highlighted in order to underline the fact that the Ravidassia faith is a ´proper´ religion, equal to other more established (upper caste) faiths. For a community whose religious practices have long been seen as marginal, and whose status within both Sikhism and Hinduism has never been secure, even when they embraced upper-caste religious orthodoxy, the new

Ravidassia *dharm* is an attempt to raise their visibility, escape chronic marginality, and grant religious legitimacy to their traditions. However, the question remains of to what extent this new visibility, and the religious strategy generally pursued by the Ravidassia movement, will have on the caste stigma that Ravidassia Chamars continue to experience both in India and the diaspora. Indian Dalits have a long history of using religion as a tool to raise their social status and escape caste oppression. However, several scholars, notably Eleanor Zelliot in her study of Dalit Buddhists in Maharashtra, have pointed out that conversion, has not enabled Dalits to escape poverty or caste prejudice and discrimination (Zelliot 2001: 220). The desired increase in social status and respectability does not materalise following conversion. The caste label remains, and indeed, so many Dalits have converted to Buddhism and Christianity in post-independence India, that to identify as Buddhist or Christian in India has become the new short-hand for low-caste. John Webster echoes Zelliot´s findings by stating: "for most converts, conversion meant that the identity of religion was simply added to the continuing identity of caste; caste has not been annihilated through conversion and remains, by and large, the permanent identifier with religion only as a supplement or qualifier" (Webster 2002: 111). In the case of the Ravidassia Chamars, they are not converting, but rather transforming and ´upgrading´ a ´little tradition´ or what Juergensmeyer would term a "*panthic* tradition" into established religion status, on a par with upper-caste Hindus and Sikhs (Juergensmeyer defines a *panthic* tradition as one that coalesces around a lineage of Gurus 1988: 2). However, like their counterparts who have converted to other religions in the hopes of escaping the caste system, the Ravidassias also seek to improve their standing in society, yearning for a feeling of collective dignity and self-respect. Yet rather than reject or seek to leave behind their caste identity, they now embrace ´Charmarness´, and are creating what is in practice a caste-based religion, in which caste and religious identity are inextricably linked. This chapter´s aim is to explore the use of religion by the contemporary Ravidassia movement and analyse why a religious strategy for change has been privileged by the Ravidassias. The key question guiding this chapter shall be the effectiveness of the religious strategy for change, and in particular, the role of religion in helping Dalits overcome caste stigma. The first section will discuss why religion is the idiom of social protest used by Dalits in general as well by the Punjabi Ravidassias, placing the contemporary Ravidassia movement in historical and social context. It will then move on to discuss how religion has served as a double-edged sword for the Ravidassias in Spain, providing protective community glue, but also a source of perennial division, leading to a further internal split following the decision to move towards a Ravidassia *dharm* (religion). The second section will analyse Ambedkar´s philosophy of Dalit liberation, discuss his impact on Ravidassia youth in the diaspora, and compare his religious

stratgy to the current religious orientation of the Spanish Ravidassia community. The goal of this section will be to assess how different concepualisations of religion impact upon community organising. The third and final section will address how caste has changed with modernity and been used in the local integration process of the Ravidassia community in Catalonia.

Why Religion? Religion as Social Activism in India

The Ravidassia trajectory in the Punjab and in Catalonia to date has revealed how many of their dilemmas related to identity are shared by stigmatised minority groups in general. For stigmatised minorities, questions of group identity and how to relate to the broader society are thorny issues that are not resolved easily. Each minority group must face the difficult question of how to define themselves, and in many cases, how to carve out a positive group identity in the face of a hostile or at the very least indifferent "mainstream" society. While some stigmatised minorities, such as the *Burakumin* of Japan (a former "untouchable" group), have opted for almost total concealment and assimilation, others choose to embrace their stigma in the hope that it will eventually lose its social force, as well as to protest against discrimination (American Blacks are a leading example). Of course, the degree of stigma varies, as well as the ability to ´pass´, but all stigmatised minorities nonetheless face greater uncertainty, confusion and ambiguity surrounding their identities, in large part due to social stigma. Some stigmatised minority groups must also contend specifically with religion being used as a tool against them; a number of oppressed social groups face or have faced religiously inspired discrimination. American Americans, for example, experienced how the Bible was used as a tool to justify first slavery and then segregation. The Iranian Bahai community is persecuted on religious grounds by the Islamist regime and subject to multiple stigmatising measures. The gay community also faces a situation where the Bible and other holy texts have been used to deny them citizenship/human rights. For Indian Dalits, religion has been at the heart of their history of oppression and deprivation. The relationship to religion in the Dalit case is particularly complex given the explicit religious sanction their outcaste status receives, and the widespread social acceptance of this religious negation of their full humanity, including among non-Hindus. Dumont argued that the entire Indian social order rests on the (religiously legitimated) foundation of caste (Dumont 1970: 47). Thus Dalits face the especially difficult task of needing to challenge dominant religious concepts in order to work for social change- and questioning the authority of religious beliefs is notoriously difficult. Dalits must not only create a self-affirming collective identity, but also work actively at resisting narrow

religiously justified definitions of who they are and what they can do- effectively defying the ideology of untouchability. An even greater challenge, given that Hinduism legitimates their inequality and is directly responsible for their low social status, Dalits face the persistent dilemma of whether to work within a Hindu religious framework for change, or to abandon it altogether, usually by converting to another religion. Dalits have historically occupied a religious "no man´s land"; excluded from canonical Hinduism by upper caste Hindus, yet still culturally part of the amorphous Hindu religious universe- insiders and outsiders at the same time. Consequently, their religious identity has been ambiguous and contested. The question of where do we belong? where do we make our spiritual home?, has been a key identity conundrum for the Dalits. Throughout history and across India, different Dalit communities have chosen a variety of strategies, but what Dalits have in common is the need to craft an alternative to normative Hinduism that can unify their community and provide a cogent antidote to the psychological consequences of stigma and oppression. To learn that one is untouchable, at the bottom of the social hierarchy, inferior and hence not worthy of the same social respect as others, is damaging to both individual and collective self-worth. A number of studies have shown that oppressed and marginalised groups the world over suffer from low self-esteem, chronic shame, feelings of self-hate, and confusion about their identity (Webster 2002: 125). Webster cites from several psychological studies carried out on Indian Dalits (particularly on Dalit college students), which reveal that they suffer from higher levels of anxiety, depression and negative self-image than upper-caste Indians (Webster 2002: 124). Other findings from these studies include a more pronounced tendency towards dependence and social insecurity (ibid). Thus Indian Dalits suffer from universal problems associated with social oppression, which is perhaps compounded by the religious prejudice that they face from birth.

The Dalit´s privileging of religion can be explained by a number of factors. Firstly, the predominance of religion must be seen within the context of the profoundly religious nature of Indian society, in which religious self-expression has not been privatised as in Europe. Indeed, the notion of *not* having a religion is unconceivable to most Indians, religion constituting a fundamental element of both individual and group identity, and key to cementing *jati* ties. As opposed to the increasing individualisation of religious belief and practice in the West, religion remains an integral aspect of family and *jati* life in India; religious identity is collective. Even following certain gurus/*sants* is often a family tradition that is passed down from generation to generation. Secondly, precisely because the Dalits have been subject to religiously legitimated oppression, fighting back through alternative expressions of religion, both within and outside of

the umbrella of Hinduism, has been a powerful instrument for asserting their equality and basic human dignity. Religion is a highly symbolic domain, thus the image of Dalits proclaiming their religious independence and spiritual equality is doubly powerful. It is not surprising therefore that developing a specifically spiritual/religious alternative to normative Hinduism has been the most common liberation strategy adopted by various Dalit communities across India. In using religion creatively as a collective resource they are not alone. Just as African Americans used Black churches to build spiritual strength and resiliency in the face of institutionalised racism, and many disenfranchised Latin American communities developed Liberation Theology, Indian Dalits similarly have a long history of turning to religion in order to find solutions to their problem of social exclusion, discrimination and stigma. The role that religion can play as psychological buttress in a context of cultural marginalisation is another important factor in explaining the appeal of religion as a strategy for social uplift. Webster argues that religion has a "healing and transforming role" to play in helping Dalits overcome the psychological scars left by caste stigma (Webster 2002: 118). According to Webster, "oppression has its psychological consequences. Liberation has its psychological or spiritual dimensions…" (ibid). While he emphasises that religion is not the only solution to the problem of Dalit liberation (which must necessarily be multi-faceted), he believes that it can offer a deeper dimension than other strategies, such as political strategies of liberation (Webster 2002: 117).

Thus the propensity towards using religion as a tool to combat oppression can also be seen as part and parcel of an attempt on the part of Dalits to fortify their communities spiritually/psychologically in the face of cultural marginalisation. Since religious community can positively influence emotional well-being and give its members a feeling of pride and unity, it often provides a more powerful form of bonding than direct political action- and significantly in the Indian context, also appeals to women (political activism is male dominated and still perceived to be a masculine activity). In this respect, it is significant that scholars have found that although conversion has produced little concrete socioeconomic change in the lives of Dalit converts, it has born positive fruit psychologically. Zelliot reports that Dalits converts to Buddhism in Maharashtra state, while for the most part still poor, affirm feeling more confident and psychologically free following conversion, and she sees conversion to Buddhism as having unleashed greater Dalit creativity, which has been reflected in an explosion of Dalit literature, poetry and song (Zelliot 2001: 218-220). Zelliot stresses the fact that conversion has been accompanied by a sense of "psychological freedom from the sense of being a polluted person" and she quotes a prominent Dalit poet who states that conversion to Buddhism has freed the

untouchables from “mental and psychological enslavement” (Zelliot 2001: 219). Webster confirms the positive psychological impact of adopting a new religious identity. In the case of Dalit converts to Christianity, Webster finds that conversion has given birth to a new feeling of human dignity, although he also points out that conversion is a fragile, ongoing process which can require “years of considerable nurturing within the new religious community in order to endure and have a deeply transforming effect upon the converts´ psyches” (Webster 2002: 109). The break with the mental bonds of untouchability is perhaps most powerfully illustrated by the example of Ambedkar, who, the day after converting to Buddhism, declared that he felt as if he had left hell (Webster 2002: 108).

In India, religion is frequently the vehicle for expressing both social discontent and collective aspirations on the part of marginalised groups in society. New religions are born that give voice to egalitarian ideologies which aim to achieve greater social equality, or what Juergensmeyer calls “social visions”. As Juergensmeyer notes, social revolutions in India have taken a religious shape and form, such as Buddhism and Jainism, which grew out of a protest against the power of the Brahmanical priesthood (Juergensmeyer 1988: 4). Juergensmeyer also highlights how *panthic* (spiritual lineage) religious movements such as the medieval *bhakti* devotional movements have historically served to provide an outlet for spiritual egalitarianism, drawing large numbers of Dalit adherents, without actually destablising or overturning the overall structure of Hindu society (Juergensmeyer 1988: 4). Whether these alternative religious movements are truly revolutionary, or simply escape valves for Indian society, for Dalits, religion allows them to give public expression to their deepest longings for social justice and a radical transformation of social relations and cultural values. To imagine, in short, a society in which the concept of untouchability no longer exists. While political parties also give voice to radically new visions of society, it is religion that exercises a stronger hold on the imagination of the majority of Dalits across India. Religion is a language that all Indians, no matter what their level of education and income, can understand, and hence it is religion, rather than explicitly political ideologies, that has the broadest appeal. In the Indian context, political and social change is best ´sold´ in a religious guise.

The contemporary Ravidassia movement thus forms part of a broader pan-Indian Dalit movement in which religion has played a central role in strategies for Dalit liberation. It also can be located within a long-standing Indian tradition of the imbrication of caste and religious

interests. Just as political parties in contemporary India often have a caste and religious base, so too have various religious movements been strongly coloured by caste. Thirdly, the current Ravidassia movement embodies many of the core ideals of previous eras of Ravidassia community organising. The recent assertion of religious separatism by leading sections of the Ravidassia community is continuing in the historical footsteps of an earlier wave of Punjabi religious activists. The clarion call of the 1920´s Ad-Dharm movement for a separate Dalit identity, based on the *quamic* religion of Ad-Dharm, has partially born fruit in a very different geopolitical context in current Punjabi society- including miles away in the Spanish diaspora. The Ad-Dharm movement may have fizzled out, but not the caste grievances and inequalities that gave rise to it. During the 1920´s, the Ad-Dharm movement operated in a Muslim majority sociopolitical environment in which each religious community was playing a numbers game (encouraged by the colonial census) and seeking to defend its religious beliefs and territory in the context of the arrival of Christian evangelising missions in the Punjab. In such an environment of intense interreligious competition, Dalits- and to which religious community they belonged, suddenly began to assume wider political significance; Dalits were viewed as useful to bolster community numbers. Upper caste Hindus, for example, through the Hindu reformist Arya Samaj organisation, encouraged Dalits who had converted to Sikhism to return to the Hindu fold.

In what sort of sociopolitical environment does the current Ravidassia movement find itself, and how does it compare to that in which the Ad-Dharm movement functioned? In contemporary Punjab, although Dalits are no longer so strategic to rival religious groups, they remain an important social group due to their numbers (they constitute at least a third of the Punjabi population), as well as the politicisation of caste across India, driven by government reservations for Dalits, and caste-based political parties that articulate Dalit interests at both the central and state levels. The growing literacy and economic strength of Punjabi Dalits has increased their collective assertiveness as well as lessened their financial dependence on the Jats, and hence their challenge to Jat power at the local level has risen (see Ronki Ram on a village Jat-Dalit dispute over shared management of an important Sikh religious shrine as an example of this increased assertiveness). Post Partition, the balance of power between different religious communities has changed dramatically in the Punjab, but intergroup competition remains alive and well. Indeed, both Juergensmeyer and Ballard highlight how Punjabi society has long been fractured along religious lines. Juergensmeyer argues that the politicisation of religion is an "endemic feature of Punjabi culture" and Ballard asserts that the Punjabi social order both before and after Partition has been "rent with tension" and characterised by polarisation between its main

religious groups (Juergensmeyer 1988: vii; Ballard 1993: 1). Following the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, the Punjab´s Muslim majority was reduced to a tiny minority (a Muslim majority that has strongly been influenced by the Sufi brand of Islam, whose *pirs* (saints) have also influenced the religious practices of both Sikhs, Hindus, and Dalits of all religious persuasions). With the creation of a smaller, predominantly Punjabi-speaking Punjab state in 1966, the Punjab is now a Sikh majority state (the original post-independence state of the Punjab was much larger and comprised Hindu majority and Hindu-speaking areas subsequently known as Himachal Pradesh and Haryana states). Thus Hindus are a minority, particularly in the countryside (in urban centres they constitute a significant share of the population).

Although the religious landscape of the Punjab has changed however, three factors have remained constant: the politicisation of religion, the use of religion to further caste interests, and continuing caste inequality. The majority of Sikhs in the Punjab are Jat, and many lower-caste Punjabis, as well as mercantile upper-caste Punjabis, resent Jat dominance of Sikh institutions. During the violent and turbulent years of the "Punjab Crisis" (1980´s /1990´s), when the Khalistan movement for a separate Sikh state was at its peak, many lower-caste Punjabis associated the movement with the Jats. It consequently held little appeal for them, for an independent Sikh state would only have increased Jat power. Juergensmeyer argues that the rise of Sikh fundamentalism has been driven in large part by the Jats, and states that Sikh militancy further increased their power within the Sikh community, alienating other caste groups (Juergenmeyer 1988: viii). Although the extreme violence of the "Punjab crisis" years has now receded (Ballard estimates that the number of deaths resulting from "police encounters" during this period exceeded 3000 a year: Ballard 1993: 6), the ideological current of fundamentalism within the Sikh community has not abated, making all heterodox religious groups targets for Sikh fundamentalists. The contemporary Ravidassia community therefore, in addition to systematic casteism, also faces the threat of religious extremism from Sikh fundamentalists who cannot countenance the existence of non-Khalsa forms of Sikhism, and who believe that they have the right to determine who is a "true Sikh".

In the current socioeconomic context of the Punjab, the demographic strength of the Dalits is not matched by their cultural and political influence, their ownership of land, or their management of Sikh religious institutions (which are very financially lucrative). Socially, they remain "untouchable". The religious response to social inequality among the two main ex-untouchable groups in the Punjab has diverged, demonstrating the great variety and complexity in religious strategies both across and within caste groups. The poorer, sweeper caste, has pursued

strategies ranging from embracing Khalsa (orthodox) Sikhism in the case of the Mazhabi Sikhs, converting to Christianity, or following the patron saint of the sweeper caste, Valmiki, whose worship is religiously eclectic- scholars such as Nesbitt have pointed out that the Valmikis cannot be classified unambiguously as either "Hindu" or "Sikh" (Nesbitt 1990: 10-11); Webster has underlined the strong Muslim influence on Valmiki religious thought, such as their belief in the day of resurrection (Webster 2002: 24). While some leather caste (Chamar) individuals have also converted to Christianity or adopted a Khalsa Sikh identity, the majority have opted to pursue a semi-autonomous cultural/religious identity that revolves around the figure of Ravidass, combined with Sikh culture and ritual. Thus the Ravidassias arrived in Spain as "Ravidassia Sikhs", practicing their own heterodox version of Sikhism, rooted in the long-standing tradition of each Dalit *jati* of maintaining its own religious customs while adopting aspects of the broader religious ethos (Webster 2002: 25). In response to both local and global incidents of casteism/religious intolerance, they have moved towards an increasingly separate identity, and have now made the leap from a *panthik* tradition (where a group of followers revere a lineage of spiritual authority) to a *qaumic* identity that reflects their growing collective self-confidence. In articulating a *qaumic* identity, they are charting a path distinct from the Valmikis, who have not yet sought to declare the Valmiki *panth* a religion in its own right, as well as from other Indian Dalits, whose shift to a *qaumic* religious identity has usually coincided with conversion to either Christianity or Buddhism. The Ravidassias, without converting to another religion, are seeking full religious legitimacy for their own traditions. According to Aloysius, who developed a typology of religious movements among oppressed groups, the Ravidassias have elected to construct a new religion out of an earlier non-Brahmanical Indian tradition- which in this case is Sikhism (Aloysius 1998: 16-17). On the ground however, this change has proved to be problematic for group cohesion. It is to these tensions that I will now turn.

"What has really changed?": The Aftermath of the removal of the Sikh holy book

We have seen how the decision to remove the Sikh holy book led to a highly charged atmosphere within the gurudwara, and alienated the Sikh-identified traditionalists for whom the removal of the Guru Granth Sahib was intolerable. They have since left the gurudwara, remaining at home or joining "upper-caste" gurudwaras. In several cases, they have also severed their social ties with the remaining members of the Ravidassia gurudwara, denouncing them as traitors to the Sikh cause and identity. Of those who have remained members of the gurudwara, further faultlines

have emerged that have revealed deep ideological differences regarding the meaning of religion and the ultimate purpose of religious community. It soon became clear that for the more activist, Ambedkar-identified members of the *sangat*, removing the *Guru Granth Sahib* was simply the first step in a series of measures designed to transform the broader religious praxis of the community (it is important to point out that those Ravidassias who self-define as Ambedkarite, do not identify as Buddhist, nor necessarily have read any of Ambedkar´s works, but rather identify strongly with the figure of Ambedkar and the social/political activism that he represents). The Ambedkarites argued that covering one´s head should no longer be made obligatory in the gurudwara, since nowhere was it written in the *bani* of Ravidass that covering was necessary. Moreover, they argued, showing respect could be performed in a variety of ways, not simply by covering one´s head. These suggestions, and the actual action of attending gurudwara with one´s head uncovered (attempted only by a handful of men), provoked vitriolic debate within the gurudwara. The Ambedkarites were accused of disrespecting Guru Ravidass, mocking religion, and of seeking to sow discord within the *sangat*. They were identified as trouble makers and radicals with the "wrong" ideas about religion. The majority of *sangat* members wished to continue with the religious culture and rituals- in short the religious habitus, with which they were familiar. They now identified proudly and exclusively as Ravidassias, but saw no need to change other aspects of their worship. The Ambedkarites in contrast, felt that substituting the Sikh holy book for the *bani* of Ravidass was not enough- Ravidassias also needed to break with the inherited Sikh religious habitus. They also wanted to see more attempts on the part of the community to initiate measures to promote Dalit consciousness, such as starting a library with books written by Ambedkar, and sending funds to Dalit-focused development projects in the Punjab, as opposed to *deras* or spending so much money on weekly *langar* (vegetarian food). In other words, they wished to wed their Ravidassia identity to a new concept of religion in which worship would be accompanied by social action and Dalit consciousness. They criticised their fellow Ravidassias for being "slaves" to the *sants* and the *deras*, which they saw as stifling independent religious thought.

Sunday worship increasingly came to be marked by the growing polarisation between the two camps, with personal insults growing more scathing with each week. Many friendships did not survive the bitter debates. The portrait of Ambedkar disappeared one day, to the immense displeasure of the Ambedkarites. Initially, it appeared that a compromise had been reached whereby one could attend the gurudwara with one´s head uncovered as long as one put on a handkerchief when addressing the congregation, or if performing a ceremonial role related to the

Ravidassia holy book. However, this compromise proved to be short-lived. A vote was held in which members were asked to resolve the issue and pass an ordinance requiring head covering at all times. The result led all those who believed they should have the right to attend the gurudwara uncovered, to leave the community (around twenty persons, mostly male, but also affecting the wives of married ´rebels´). The gurudwara thus lost some its most active and dedicated members following the vote. Community members in both camps emerged bruised and exhausted after weeks of arguing and accusing the other side of seeking to destroy the community. [27] The months long internecine battles left some members so disillusioned with the gurudwara and with religion in general, that two Ravidassia youth, each from an opposing camp, decided to stop attending the gurudwara all together, arriving at the conclusion that gurudwara politics "squeezed out all their energy" without giving anything to them in return. Religion, lamented one of these youth who had invested his heart and soul in trying to get his community to accept his point of view, "is a waste of time".

The Ambedkarites, who been instrumental in the process of moving towards a *qaumic* religious identity, were ironically squashed within the first few months of embarking on the path of a new Ravidassia *dharm*. Their forced departure reveals some of the potential pitfalls in using religious community to achieve social unity and change- namely, that religion, like politics, is particularly conducive to opposing ideological interpretations that lead to further schisms and often violent conflict- a chronic factionalism that weakens religious community and encourages its members to turn on each other rather than tackle common problems. In this the Ravidassias are certainly not alone- several Canadian ("upper caste") Sikh gurudwaras have been torn apart by conflict over issues such as whether the faithful should have the right to sit on chairs when eating *langar*. While schisms can also be positive, indicating the existence of a plurality of religious thought, multiple divisions can weaken a community and lead to excessive fragmentation. In the case of the Spanish Ravidassias, rather than lead to a new-found unity and cohesion, the new *dharm* has at least initially provoked further division and the severing of social ties between former coreligionists. Although some in the Ambedkarite camp now acknowledge that "they went too far too fast" and that they were perhaps too ambitious in trying to push for rapid change following the installation of the Ravidassia holy book, there has yet to be reconciliation between the two groups. These (provisional) results must caution us about the immediate emancipatory potential of new religious movements, for adopting a new religious identity does not

[27] See Sing and Tatla (2006) in *Sikhs in Britian: The Making of a Community*, London: Zed Books for further discussion of factionalism within the UK Sikh community.

automatically imply a radical break with the past. Giving birth to a new religious identity is not an end point, but rather the beginning of a new and challenging religious journey. Webster aptly points this out when he reflects upon the limitations of conversion: "What remains problematical, however, are the continuities from the past. What from the traditional religion was carried over into the new religious life and whether the new was simply added as an extra onto the foundation of the traditional or came to…fully replace it are still unclear" (Webster 2002: 32). In the case of the Ravidassias, unlike those Dalits who converted to another religion with a whole new set of rituals and beliefs to integrate in one´s life, the Ravidassia *dharm* does not require its adherents to make a radical break with the past. Thus the fears of some Ravidassias, that the new *dharm* will be "just like Sikhism in disguise but with another holy book", are perhaps justified, for religion is about inculcating a certain culture or habitus, which in the Ravidassia case continues to be strongly determined by Sikh ritual and norms. One of the Ambedkarites expressed his dismay at the perceived slowness of change following the removal of the Sikh holy book: "they have changed the symbols, but not their thinking. People evolve at different rates; their thinking (about religion) has yet to evolve". However, as with Dalit Buddhists and Christians, it does appear that proclaiming a new religious identity has been psychologically empowering for the Spanish Ravidassias, who feel more caste pride, and mentally released from a religion that they feel never fully accepted them. Now that their religious identity is no longer ambiguous, they feel bolder and more confident. Religious independence will no doubt serve them in their struggle to defeat internalised caste stigma and culturally induced feelings of inferiority, for having a clearly defined cultural/religious identity is a boost to collective self-esteem. No longer will they have to have face accusations of not being "true" or "proper" Sikhs, or threats from Sikh fundamentalists over their heterodox religious practices. Working towards psychological freedom is a critical first step towards achieving a multi-faceted Dalit liberation; however, this psychological liberation must also be accompanied by a broad-based equality movement. Liberation starts with psychological empowerment, but must be married to social/political action in order to effect social change.

Another potential pitfall of the Ravidassia religious strategy concerns the narrow ´market share´ of the new Ravidassia *dharm*. The Ravidassia identity has an almost exclusively Chamar base. Although ´lip service´ is paid to the patron saints of other important Dalit *jatis* such as Valmiki, in practice, the Ravidassia *dharm* appeals primarily to Chamars. A British Valmiki I spoke with, a Dalit activist and Buddhist Ambedarkite, while supportive of their move towards

religious independence, thought that the Ravidassias, despite *qaumic* pretensions, were condemning themselves to a small religious community that would have limited ability to forge alliances with other Dalit groups due to the "sectarian" focus on Ravidass, in detriment to a more syncretic, broad-based faith. This is a concern shared by the Ambedkarites, some of whom are increasingly critical towards the Ravidassia identity, which they argue will not be able to draw support from other Dalit *jatis*, resulting in a narrow community that will reproduce itself, but not effect much social change. One Spanish Ambedkarite has expressed the desire to do away with religion altogether in order to build a common Dalit identity that can unite Dalits of all religious faiths. Webster remarks that, historically, the broader cultural impact of Dalit Christian groups has been limited due to their small size as well as their modest share of the Indian Dalit community- they constitute less than 10% of the total Dalit population (Webster 2002: 33). It remains to be seen whether, despite the central focus on the Chamar saint of Ravidass, the Ravidassias will be successful in building bridges with other Dalit *jatis*. Historical experience from the Ad-Dharm movement suggests that the Ravidassia *dharm* will have limited appeal for other Dalit *jatis*.

A further significant challenge is posed by the nature and meaning of religious community for the Ravidassias; whether the *sangat* will be primarily spiritual in orientation, providing spiritual and social sustenance under the same roof (the dominant model followed by most religions), or whether it will go one step further and marry spirituality with social action that seeks to transform broader cultural values, as advocated by Ambedkar. Not all "religions of the oppressed" are the same- some incorporate strong elements of social protest and resistance; others, despite having left dominant religious structures, are more passive and do not challenge the broader social structure. Ambedkar, the most important Dalit leader in India, including fifty-three years after his death, has had a profound impact on Dalit consciousness across India. What was his vision of religion, and how have contemporary Ravidassias responded to it?

The Religious Philosophy of Ambedkar

In his many speeches and essays, Ambedkar was centrally preoccupied with two interrelated issues: how to eliminate caste, and how to liberate his people from the chains, both psychological and material, of the caste system. In two essays in particular, "Annihilation of Caste" and "Away from the Hindus" (an unpublished essay that is estimated to have been written in 1936 or 1937), he expounds his philosophy of Dalit liberation, which is simultaneously a philosophy of

liberation for all of Indian society, for as Ambedkar makes clear on a number of occasions, Indian civilisation cannot prosper (although it may survive), while the scourge of untouchability continues to exist. Religion is central to Ambedkar´s strategy of Dalit liberation, for he believes that religion contains revolutionary potential and plants the ideological seeds of social transformation. Religion in his view can be used strategically in order to achieve his goal of both eventually toppling the existing social order, as well as, in the meantime, to raise the abject status of the untouchables. In "Annihilation of Caste", he points out that historically, political revolutions have been preceded by social/religious revolutions, citing Luther and the Protestant Reformation as a leading example (Ambedkar 1936: 7). Closer to home, he argues that religious and social reform movements initiated by the Buddha and by Guru Nanak have led to political revolutions (Ambedkar 1936: 7-8). For Ambedkar, religion is eminently social, its primary purpose being to promote social ties through life cycle rituals- indeed in "Away from the Hindus" he asserts that "theology is secondary" (Ambedkar unknown date: 4). In Ambedkar´s view of religion, religion can never be reduced to the mere supernatural, for in projecting and sacralising certain human values, religion is inherent to social life and social control. Religion conditions one´s perception of the world and one´s actions in it, making religion a powerful tool in moulding thought and action.

In "Away from the Hindus" Ambedkar states that "religion emphasizes, universalises social values and brings them to the mind of the individual who is required to recognise them in all his acts in order that he may function as an approved member of society. But the purpose of religion is more than this. It spiritualises them" (Ambedkar unknown date: 6). Thus religion gives moral sanction to the rules and customs of social life. According to Ambedkar, social transformation (in the form of religion) must precede political or economic revolution, for the latter will be utterly ineffective without a thorough reform of the Indian social order (he also points out that a united Indian "proletariat" does not exist, being highly divided along caste lines, and more concerned with furthering particularistic rather than common economic interests). In "Annihilation of Case" Ambedkar thus strongly refutes the arguments of socialists who maintain that property is the only source of power and that it is economics alone that motivates human action. On the contrary, he highlights the power of religion in influencing "the minds of men", once again drawing upon both European and Indian examples. His European caste study draws on the historical example of the Plebians in Rome, who were robbed of genuine political representation due to the creed that the blessing of the Goddess was necessary before a consul could be sworn into office. The temple of the Goddess of Delphi was controlled by the Patricians,

who ensured that activist, pro-Plebian consuls never received the Goddess´s acceptance (Ambedkar 1936: 9). In India, Ambedkar believes that religion is the ultimate source of power and authority, enabling "penniless Sadhus and Fakirs" to exercise power over both the common man as well as the wealthy (Ambedkar 1936: 8). Priests, he adds, regardless of their personal integrity, are respected and are invested with greater moral authority than the law.

Given that Ambedkar identifies religion as *the* source of power in India, superseding even economic power, and similarly identifies Hinduism as the religion that is "solely" responsible for the "degradation" of the untouchables, he dedicates the bulk of his essay "Away from the Hindus" to justifying his decision to leave Hinduism and lead his followers into another religion (in this essay he does not specify which religion). It is clear that for Ambedkar, a "true" religion (he does not agree with the argument that all religions are equally good in nature), must promote the self-respect and dignity of all its adherents, and social values which recognise the inherent worth of each and every human being- criteria which according to Ambedkar reveal the scandalous failings of Hinduism as a religion. His questions reflect his outrage at the abuses committed in the name of Hinduism:

"How can Untouchables stay in Hinduism? Untouchability is the lowest depth to which the degradation of a human being can be carried. To be poor is bad but not so bad as to be an Untouchable. The poor can be proud. The Untouchable cannot be…The low can rise above his status. An Untouchable cannot…In Hinduism there is no hope for the Untouchables" (Ambedkar unknown date: 8).

After having tried, in vain, to achieve Dalit human rights and reform within Hinduism, through non-violent civil disobedience actions designed to open temples and wells to untouchables, Ambedkar arrived at the conclusion that social change was only possible through explicitly rejecting the authority of Hinduism. In "Annihilation of Caste", he argues that intercaste dining and the abolition of subcastes will not bring about the end of caste and lead to an improvement in the status of untouchables: only intercaste marriage and above all striking a mortal blow to the authority of the Hindu *Shastras* will be able to attack the very foundations of the caste system. There is no use, he argues, in trying to elaborate alternative interpretations of the *Shastras*, for the common man believes that the *Shastras* enjoin them to uphold caste; Hindus must accept that their religion is "wrong", for it is Hinduism that has produced and rendered sacred the notion of caste (Ambedkar 1936: 31). In his eloquent words, not only the untouchables, but all Indians,

"clean" and "unclean" are slaves to the Hindu scriptures, from which all must be liberated in order for India to advance:

"Make every man and woman free from the thralldom of the *Shastras*, cleanse their minds of the pernicious notions founded on the *Shastras*, and he or she will inter-dine and inter-marry, without telling him or her to do so" (Ambedkar 1936: 31).

While at least for upper caste Indians, Hinduism enhances their sense of superiority, comforted by the knowledge that they are "above" millions of untouchables, untouchables only lose self-respect and honour in declaring themselves Hindu (Ambedkar: no known date). For Ambedkar it was thus imperative that untouchables leave Hinduism for a "nobler" religion "free from the spirit of caste" which would recognise their humanity, end their social isolation, and help them overcome their inferiority complex (Ambedkar: no known date). Converting to another religion would thus remove the untouchables from the psychological power of untouchability, and enable them to experience kinship with their religious fellows for the first time- in short to breathe equality rather than exclusion in their religious community. Although Ambedkar emphasised that the untouchables would not gain politically from conversion, he was well aware of the political impact that conversion would have on the Hindu establishment, which he hoped to shake out of its complacency and awaken to the fundamental humanitarian failings of their religion- with the broader aim of advancing Indian society as a whole. Ultimately, conversion was and is a political statement of social protest against a society that denies the untouchables equality of opportunity. Religion, in Ambedkar´s vision, provided it is thoroughly egalitarian in thought/ practice, is the motor that will transform the consciousness of the untouchables, and the vehicle for promoting a new set of social values in Indian society inimical to caste.

The Contemporary Impact of Ambedkar

How have contemporary Ravidassias integrated Dr. Ambedkar´s philosophy into their own strategy for individual and collective uplift? Jurgensmeyer shows that historically, the relations between the Punjabi Ad-Dharm movement and Ambedkar´s Dalit Liberation movement could be characterised as one of friendly rivals. On the one hand, while Mangoo Ram (the leader of Ad-Dharm) was broadly supportive of Ambedkar on national Dalit issues, he aspired to be the uncontested Dalit leader in the Punjab, which brought him into competition with the regional

branch of Ambedkar´s national organisation, the Scheduled Caste Federation (Jurgensmeyer 1988: 163). Mangoo Ram was hopeful that Ambedkar would embrace the Ad Dharm religion, which did not come to pass, for Ambedkar, after considering for a time converting to Sikhism, finally settled in favour of Buddhism, albeit a strongly `Ambedkarised´ version of Buddhism according to a number of India scholars (Webster 2005: 51). Ambedkar´s national alternative and more global Dalit philosophy appealed particularly to the urban, educated Dalit elite in the Punjab, who increasingly gravitated towards Ambedkar, cognisant of the need for a more political and national strategy of Dalit liberation (Jurgensmeyer 1988: 162). The implication is that for the masses of village-based Punjabi Dalits, Ambedkar´s national movement was a distant reality, as was the elite leadership of the Ad Dharm movement. The figure that they truly connected with and provided them with community and spiritual sustenance was Guru Ravidass. Ambedkar was well-known, and highly respected, but not necessarily a revered, deified figure as in Mahahastra. This historical division between the cultured and the ´mainstream´ has repeated itself in the Spanish diaspora, with various individuals within the *sangat* having different relationships with Ambedkar- although it appears that there is little middle ground; he is either perceived as *the* role model, or is peripheral to individual Ravidassia lives. For an articulate minority within the *sangat*, Ambedkar is a fundamental point of reference, a leading source of inspiration, strength and consciousness (always referred to as *Dr*. Ambedkar). For these Ravidassias, he is ´worshipped´ as an icon of Dalit success who has bequeathed them the gift of identity and self-awareness. The following quotes reveal how Ambedkar has profoundly influenced the identity formation of a significant proportion of diaspora Ravidassia youth. They also demonstrate the extent to which Ambedkar has been instrumental in raising Dalit self-esteem:

“I have three fathers. The first is Dr. Ambedkar. The second is Guru Ravidass. The third is my father. My father is like the soil- he gave birth to me and taught me about Guru Ravidass and Dr. Ambedkar. Guru Ravidass gave us the dream of *Begumpura* (an idealised society in which no poverty or inequality exists). Dr. Ambedkar completed the dream, destroys casteism. I first learn that I am a Shudra, an untouchable. But with Dr. Ambedkar I am a human! In fact, Dr. Ambedkar, he takes care of me just like a father” (Sandeep, 25 years, male, Barcelona) (explanatory note in parentheses added)

“Dr. Ambedkar fought for us. He could have been a commissioner or a judge, but no, he fought for Dalits in India. He´s not a hero, he´s a superhero. He is not less than Mandela. But Hindu media did not want to highlight him at the international level” (Khalsi, male, 27 years, Vic)

“Why are we untouchables? Life is an earthquake. When Dr. Ambedkar came, it became stable. It means that the untouchables were living life like animals. With Dr. Ambedkar they became human” (Kulwinder, male, 18 years, Barcelona)

“Dr. Ambedkar provided us with all rights. He gave constitution- not just for Dalits, for all Indians. He adopted Buddhism, not just for Dalits, for all. He provided a great lesson to humanity. What is life? Life is self-respect” (Sunil, male, 27 years, Barcelona)

“My blood, bones and brain is Dr. Ambedkar. My thoughts, my everything is Dr. Ambedkar. For me he is a God. We owe everything to him” (Ashok, male, 18 years, Barcelona)

“Whenever I get sad or discouraged, I just think about Dr. Ambedkar. I watch the film “Ambedkar”, and think, if he could overcome so much discrimination, so can I. He gives me so much strength. With him I know I can face anything” (Balminder, male, 21 years, Barcelona)

The above quotes demonstrate that Ambedkar´s life example and message of self-respect have not died with his passing, but is being used by a new generation of diaspora-influenced youth to craft positive Dalit-affirmative identities. As the ultimate symbol of strength and humanity, he continues to inspire new generations of Dalits to strive, achieve, and work towards both self and collective self-improvement. However, it is not only Ambedkar´s intellectual prestige, personal triumphs over caste discrimination, and national success that have been imprinted onto the memories of his ´devotees´. His message of Dalit unity, of overcoming internal Dalit divisions, has also resonated on a local level in Barcelona:

“We must be united, build ourselves up. We must have sufficient capacity to take decisions that benefit all and not just our personal interests. We are already very weak and scattered- what we need is unity of the entire Dalit community. It does not matter if we are Sikh Dalits, Muslim Dalits, Christian Dalits or other beliefs” (Balminder, male, 21 years, Barcelona)

Specific aspects of his thought were quoted by individual Ravidassias, showing that his political ideas have also had a decisive impact on at least some diaspora youth. The following quote was made in the context of a discussion on Sikhism, and in particular, how its holy book is essentially empty of meaning if not put into practice:

“I always give the example of Dr. Ambedkar, who said that no matter how good a constitution may be, it will not mean anything if those who apply it are not good. The results of this constitution will always be bad. Similarly, no matter how bad a constitution may be, if the people who apply it are good, the results will be good” (Balminder, 21 years, male, Barcelona)

Another key area where Ambedkar´s influence is noted is with respect to his decision not to convert to Sikhism. A wide range of *sangat* members invoked Ambedkar´s decision in order to prove the caste-ridden nature of Sikhism, and grant legitimacy to their own critiques of upper-caste domination of the Sikh faith. The following quote is illustrative of this general trend:

“Why did Dr. Ambedkar not accept Sikhism? A person so educated, with so many university degrees, he was an economist, philosopher, politican, professor. He is the sixth brain of the world. Why did he reject it? And why did he go to Amritsar to convert? When he read the Guru Granth Sahib everything seemed perfect, but when he went to the Punjab he saw the reality, the problems with caste that we have today, and he rejected it completely. He realised that they would never marry with us. This is a key point” (Dalwinder, male, adult, Barcelona)

The importance of Ambedkar to diaspora communities is however not uniform. While Ambedkar´s influence is undeniable for a more activist minority, for the average Ravidassia in Spain, most of whom come from rural areas in the Punjab, Ambedkar is a secondary figure in their hierarchy of veneration, well beneath the various Ravidassia *sants* and Guru Ravidass. Their personal connection to Ambedkar is minimal; his decision to convert to Buddhism, for them an alien religion, distances them from him. Most only have only vague ideas of his writings or philosophy. The following quote, although from a Ravidassia based in London, also applies to the *sangat* in Barcelona, with the exception of his reference to Buddhists:

“To be truthful I don´t think that many people in our *sangat* pay too much attention to the teachings of Dr. Ambedkar. They know of him but that´s about it. The Buddhists in our community follow his teachings a bit more. Most come to our temple and don´t really know about Dr. Ambedkar. They go to the temple because it´s more of a social meeting place, for the gossip” (Radu, male, adult, London)

However, despite this general lack of knowledge and interest, the Ravidassias have put into practice, albeit with some significant differences, key planks of Amebedkar´s thought. Although dealing with a religion which theologically condemns caste, and even promotes inter-caste dining, the Ravidassias face the same dilemma as Ambedkar did when battling with Hinduism several decades ago; how to experience true kinship in their religious community and abolish the pernicious effects of caste? They have come to the bitter realisation that eating *langar* and worshipping together have not created a genuine community of brotherhood and equality. Rather than continue to try to reform from within, which had not produced results, the Spanish Ravidassias eventually decided to leave, just as Ambedkar did, but without converting to another religion. The lack of appeal of converting to another religion can be explained by their different socioreligious environments. Ambedkar´s main frame of reference was Hinduism/Brahmanical power and its explicit sanctioning of caste, leading him to argue that while caste exists in other religions in India, it did not constitute religious dogma, and hence did not have the same ideological force and social significance (Ambedkar: 1936). Ambedkar also felt that despite caste surviving in other faiths, religion nonetheless predominated over caste, such that a Sikh was first and foremost a Sikh, a Muslim above all a Muslim, caste identity being secondary: "when he tells you he is a Sikh, you do not ask him whether he is Jat or Roda; Mazbi or Ramdasi (Ambedkar: 1936). Ambedkar´s mission of highlighting the unique inhumanity of Hinduism perhaps blinded him to recognising how other Indian religions were similarly blighted in practice, for as any Ravidassia will be quick to tell you, whether you are a Jat or a Mazbi Sikh makes a huge difference- there is no such a thing as a simple "Sikh", just as there not exist a universal "Hindu".

The Ravidassia frame of reference is Sikhism/Jat power and the existence of casteism despite the absence of religious support for the concept; caste for Dalit Sikhs is first and foremost a social institution that a progressive religion has not been able to eliminate. Contrary to Ambedkar´s assertions, Ravidassias know only too well that a Sikh is not just a Sikh, but always simultaneously a Jat, Ramgarhiah or Ravidassia Sikh- caste identity is just as important and inescapable in Sikhism as it is in Hinduism. Having suffered caste discrimination in a faith that is theoretically caste-free, and indeed explicitly anti-caste, Ravidassias are understandably less drawn towards the dream of another religion promising emancipation from caste. Sikhism had already offered- and broken, that promise. Declaring their own religious traditions to be a *dharm* in its own right finally holds out the possibility of true equality. What unites both contemporary Spanish Ravidassias and Ambedkar is the firm belief that Dalits can only achieve progress

through cultural/religious independence. Where they diverge is on how to go about achieving that independence. Ambedkar advocated joining a universal religion, one that would be an ally in the Dalit´s struggle against caste oppression; the Ravidassias have elected to embrace a regional, caste-based tradition. Both are using religion to achieve social goals, but with the significant difference that Ambedkar sought to unite as many Dalits as possible under the umbrella of Buddhism; he envisioned a strong, national community of Dalits. The Spanish Ravidassias are operating with a regional, Punjabi context as their main point of reference, and are primarily concerned with uplift for their particular *jati*.

The politics of naming

The issue of identity labels has been central to both Ambedkar´s and the Ravidassia struggles for equality- with however divergent strategies. Ambedkar argued that it was imperative for untouchables to change their name, to escape from the "stink" of the term untouchable in order to raise their social status (Ambedkar: no known date). Given that upper caste Hindus have been raised to respond to the term untouchable with unrestrained contempt, Dalits had to choose a new name, completely delinked from Hinduism, which would distance them from the extremely low status "untouchable". Dr. Ambedkar went so far as to attribute almost magical powers to a new name outside of Hinduism:

"The name matters and matters a great deal. For, the name can make a revolution in the status of the Untouchables. But the name must be the name of a community outside Hinduism and beyond its power of spoliation and degradation" (Ambedkar: no known date).

Sadly, research shows (see Zelliot 2005, Webster 1999) that adopting the Buddhist and Christian identity labels did not offer Dalits protection from the stigma and low social status of untouchability; Buddhists and Christians continued to be perceived as untouchables and the "spoliation" of their former designation spread to their new non-Hindu identity despite Ambedkar´s predictions of an increase in social status. They were not accepted as "proper" Buddhists or Christians. The Ravidassia identity label represents a long-standing effort on the part of Punjabi untouchables to distance themselves from the denigration and humiliation inherent in the term "Chamar". Indeed, in his essay "Away from the Hindus", Ambedkar refers to the Chamars calling themselves "Ravidas" in his long list of examples of Indian Dalits who have changed their name in an attempt to escape caste stigma. While the Ravidassias have now

formalised and elevated this name change in creating a Ravidassia *dharm*, in the post-Vienna context, there has been a new trend of reclaiming the stigmatised *jati* term Chamar, in an reverse attempt to rid it of stigma and transform it into a ´normal´ *jati* name, one in which they no longer feel shame. Some Ravidassias are of the opinion that no matter which term they choose for themselves, caste stigma continues to stick to them like glue- hence the decision to finally foster pride in their original caste name, which is linked to their historical occupation of leather working. Both Ambedkar and the Ravidassias recognise the power of names, and the power of being able to name oneself in a culture in which their caste names are commonly used as terms of abuse. However, while Ambedkar conclusively rejected any name linked with Hinduism, a growing number of particularly young Ravidassias are seeking pride in their traditionally stigmatised *jati* name. Resentful of its cultural denigration, while Jats enjoy intense caste pride, young Ravidassias are increasingly determined to do the same. Whether or not reclaiming and transforming a heavily stigma laden term will eventually result in its stigma diminishing in society as a whole, this novel strategy does at least have the benefit of unsettling the linguistic status quo. In this context, it would be useful to remember the slogan "Black is Beautiful". During the civil rights movement, most American pundits would probably not have predicted that America would see a Black president elected just one generation later.

Activist or passive Religion?

Where the majority of current Spanish Ravidassias have departed from the religious path charted by Ambedkar is with regards to the socially activist and broad-based nature of religious community that he advocated. In Amebdkar´s vision of social reform, religion was to be the instrument that would awaken Dalit consciousness and spread awareness among his people of their entitlement to equality and human rights. He stated that "the emancipation of the mind and soul is a necessary preliminary for the political emancipation of the people" (Ambedkar 1936: 8). He boldly declared that any religion which prohibited some of its members from becoming educated, choosing their own profession, accessing wells or temples, or being touched by others, wast sinful- not worthy of being called a religion at all. Those who practiced this "religion", which Ambedkar accused of being nothing but a collection of rules, bereft of ethics (the core of morality for him), were not religious, but rather practioners of man´s inhumanity to man. In calling upon mass conversion to Buddhism in 1956, from the twenty-two oaths that he formulated for his followers, it is clear that his aim was for the untouchables to mentally `purify´ themselves

from what Hinduism had taught them. One of the oaths specified that "I embrace today the Buddha Dhamma discarding the Hindu religion which is detrimental to the emancipation of human beings other than the Brahmins" (Zelliot 1977: 128). Another states: "I believe that today I am taking New birth" (Zelliot 1977: 129). Thus the emphasis was not simply on converting to another religion, but also creating a deeper change that would be able to psychologically empower the Dalits and motivate them to collectively fight against inequality. In the Ravidassia case, thus far greater emphasis has been placed on establishing a set of independent symbols, rather than on encouraging the Ravidassias to systematically transform their mindsets. This can be explained by the comparatively ´advanced´ level of contemporary Ravidassia consciousness- the current generation already takes for granted the fundamental equality premises of Ambedkar´s movement- a situation which did not exist among the masses of Dalits during the 1950´s and an indication of the success of Ambedkar in influencing subsequent generations of Dalit thought. It can also be explained by the absence of a great Dalit leader on a national scale to stir Dalit consciousness, urging them to "agitate, educate, organise" (one of his key slogans) since his death. Thus, while the Ravidassias are also experiencing psychological change, greater efforts are currently being channeled towards establishing the institutional infrastructure of a separate religion, necessary in this first phase of religious differentiation from the Sikhs. Ravidassia leaders, whether in India or the diaspora, are not urging the Ravidassias to overthrow mental oppression as a precursor to social revolution as Ambedkar did.

Ambedkar was not only insistent on defeating the "inferiority complex" of the Dalits, and its accompanying "feeling of helplessness", he also stressed the importance of independent thought, which he saw Buddhism as instilling in its adherents:

"…trust your own selves; do not depend on others; adhere to truth" (Zelliot 1977: 123).

Concomitantly with this emphasis on independent thinking, in his response to Gandhi´s retort to the "Annihilation of Caste", he expressed his belief that that *sants* had done little to advance the Dalit cause, and was critical of their passivity in the social field:

"The saints have never according to my study carried on a campaign against Caste and Untouchability. They were not concerned with the struggle between men. They were concerned with the relation between man and God. They did not preach that all men were equal. They preached that all men were equal in the eyes of God, a very different and a very innocuous proposition…" (Ambedkar 1936: 41).

Although Ambedkar´s critique was aimed at upper-caste *sants*, he was implicitly indicting all *sants* for their lack of practical action in campaigning against untouchability. He saw them, as he did the socialists, as promoting egalitarian ideals without taking any steps to materialise those ideals in practice. Rather than depend on "godmen", he encouraged his followers to cultivate self-reliance and work actively for equality. The majority of Spanish Ravidassias are attached to one of the various Ravidassia *sants* in the Punjab, and look to them for guidance in both spiritual and practical matters. Such is the weight of the *sants*, that without the support of the leading Ravidassia *dera* in the Punjab, *Dera* Sachkand Balland, it is doubtful that the Barcelona *sangat* would have seriously considered removing the Sikh holy book. In the absence of a national or even a regional Dalit leader of stature (Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati, while greatly admired, does not enjoy the moral authority of a *sant*), the *sants* are the leading role models for the average Ravidassia. Regardless of their personal religious differences, most Ravidassias are united in their belief that the path to God must come via a *sant*, who will help them achieve spiritual enlightenment. The Ravidassia *deras*, while of course supportive of the Dalit cause, are not socially activist in the Ambedkerite sense. Their primary mission is to ensure the continuity of the *dera* as institution, increase the number of their followers, and enhance their prestige through charitable work. They are more focused on the theological rather than the social aspects of religion. The strong influence of the *sants* in the Barcelona and other *sangats* thus acts to limit the authority of Ambedkar´s philosophy. For the Ravidassia *sants* of the Punjab, Ambedkar represents a formidable rival (even posthumously) who could possibly lead their followers' ´astray´- whether into Buddhism or other religious movements. The Barcelona *sangat* has no intention of breaking away from the *deras*, and the various *sants* will continue to receive a warm welcome during their European fund-raising tours. Indeed, it is possible that *sant* visits will even increase in order to help solidify the new Ravidassia *dharm*.

Current Ravidassia religious strategy has also diverged sharply from Ambedkar´s philosophy of Dalit liberation regarding the demographic base of religion. The new Ravidassia *dharm* is a *jati*-based religion. In his critique of caste, Ambedkar lambasted the caste system for promoting the fragmentation of India into self-interested *jatis*, depriving it of a feeling of civil society, due to each caste striving to "segregate itself and to distinguish itself from other castes" (Ambedkar 1936: 14). This "anti-social" spirit poisoned and weakened India, making common

endeavours impossible. The primary duty of each Indian was to obey his caste, his primary loyalty was to his caste and not to the nation- "there is charity but it begins with the caste and ends with the caste" (Ambedkar 1936: 20). The damage to the fabric of the nation was self-evident, harming the formation of a feeling of national rather than caste-based citizenship. As both Dalit activist and citizen, Ambedkar wanted to see a strong and democratic India come into being, where caste would no longer be an impediment to its development. Similarly, he saw the need for all Dalits to come together in order to collectively fight the caste system. In his extensive writings, he rarely mentions his own *jati* community, the Mahars; his emphasis is always on Untouchables as a whole, regardless of their *jati* or religion. He envisioned a society in which ´brotherhood´ and ´fraternity´ would apply to more than just fellow caste members- including among the Dalits. Yet, it appears that in practice, when social change comes from below, as opposed to from an elite Dalit leadership, it inevitably takes the *jati* as its unit of organisation and frame of reference (see Webster, 2009 for a list of local religious movements among Indian Dalits that are all *jati* based). Except for a minority of ´Ambedkarites´, most Ravidassias equate the Ravidassia identity with a Chamar identity and do not identify as Dalit. The Ravidassia religious movement is a *jati*-based strategy designed above all to raise the social status of the Chamars; it does not reflect Ambedkar´s ambitious vision of Dalit unity and solidarity in a universal religion with Indian roots (although it must be pointed that the vast majority of Buddhist converts in India come from the Mahar *jati*, Ambedkar´s *jati*). The implications for community religious organisation are clear- the emerging Ravidassia faith is *jati*-based and focused on *jati* uplift, with only cursory references to the broader Dalit movement. The aim is to not to dissolve caste barriers among the Dalits but rather to strengthen the Chamar *jati* in the Punjab social economy. When members of the Barcelona *sangat* speak about the importance of younger Ravidassias learning about "our history", they are usually referring to the Chamar community and not all Dalits, perhaps understandably so, for the Indian Dalit community is incredible diverse. Nor have current Ravidassia leaders broached the sensitive topic of intercaste marriage, which Ambedkar identified as the key weapon which, combined with challenging the authority of the *shastras*, would eventually topple the caste system. Endogamous caste marriage remains the overwhelming and for the most part unquestioned social norm among the Ravidassias, regardless of their Ambedkarite or *sant* religious orientation. The persistence of a *jati*-based caste identity among the Chamars (as well as other *jatis*) reveals how caste in the modern era can be understood as akin to an ethnic group with well-defined boundaries, as shall be explored further in the next section.

Caste as Ethnic Group: How Caste Functions in Modern India and the Spanish Diaspora

My interview data from India and Spain reflects how modern Indians of all castes speak of caste much as we frame ethnicity in modern Europe: as bounded groups with a common identity, shared history, customs, and above all, "culture" (an at times nebulous all-embracing term that encapsulates for many people their uniqueness). Time and time again, young Indians both on and off the Lovely Professional University campus referred to their *jati´*s culture, and often distinguished themselves from other *jatis*, as well as justified intra*jati* marriage, with remarks about the vastly different "cultures" of other *jatis*. Implicitly, they were communicating the view that each *jati* possessed a unique lifestyle, an essence, which was often perceived as incompatible for marriage purposes, particularly when the "pollution" or cultural divide was great- i.e. when "clean" castes contemplated marrying "untouchables" or vice versa. Caste essentialism is the rule, in which the distinctiveness and noble history of each caste is stressed- and the character traits of other castes often disparaged. This caste essentialism extends to all caste groups, and is not as some researchers argue, the preserve of the upper castes (see Jaspal, 2010). In Spain, young Ravidassias speak about pride in being Chamar, about Jat "racism" towards them, and about their glorious history as the "original people" of India, who enjoyed high social status before being enslaved by the Aryan occupiers. Simultanously, Jats are accused of a number of personality defects (such as heavy drinking) and their low educational level is stressed, in what could be termed reverse stereotyping, since it is usually the Ravidassias who are on the receiving end of negative stereotypes.

In contemporary caste discourse, among both ´upper´ and ´lower´ castes, each *jati* is portrayed as being in some way essentially different from the other, as possessing certain inherent traits and characteristics that are not conducive to mixed marriages. Indians both resident and overseas conceive of caste as an essence that one is born with, passes on to one´s children, and distinguishes one´s *jati* from other caste ´essences´. In the UK, British Indians frequently use the term "community" when referring to their *jati*, complete with the institutional trappings of modern ethnic groups, such as community centres in which social events are organised so that *jati* youth have the opportunity to socialise and hence enhance their chances of finding a ´suitable´ spouse. For example, the Shree Prajapati Association, a Hindu Gujarati caste association based in Leicester, UK, organises regular youth balls, and "Single? Lets Mingle" events for Prajapati youth. During annual Hindu festivals such as *Dussehra*, the Hindu Gujarati population in the UK celebrates it along "community" (caste) lines. Thus, in practice, the true micro ethnic group for Indians is their *jati*- the macro ethnic group of "Gujarati" or "Indian" exists more in

contemporary UK discourse and classifications (such as in the census and in equal opportunity forms), than in local conceptualisations and praxis. The following example is revealing: when I was invited by some Gujarati friends to play "*dandiya*" (traditional dances with sticks) during *Dussehra*, they stressed that on that night they were attending the celebrations of another "community" and insisted that I return the following night so that I could experience *Dussehra* within their own "community". When I asked how their own celebration was different, they responded that playing *dandiya* with other communities was not the same, and lacked the right atmosphere. Once again, we see the underlying distinct culture argument being expressed.

In "Caste, Society and Politics in India from the 18th Century to the Modern Age", Susan Bayly discusses how caste has come to assume the dimensions of an "imagined community" in which caste pride functions as an eminently modern *moral* mandate, rather than some vestige from the backward premodern past (Bayly 1999: 307- emphasis added). She argues that it is precisely those Indians who identify as modern and progressive who claim that caste solidarity exemplifies modern values (Bayly 1999: 309). While Spanish Ravidassias did not voice their views in these terms (i.e no discourse on modernity), it was clear that they felt that their struggle was eminently socially and morally just- that they were fighting for a fairer social system in which caste solidarity was a necessary ingredient for success. According to Bayly, the traditional concept of caste, based on the finely graded distinctions of subcaste and the threat of excommunication for non conformity to caste rules, has been steadily losing ground to caste as ethnicity (Bayly 1999: 315). She contrasts this modern conceptualisation of caste with Dumont´s argument that Hindus had no inviolable caste "substance", but were bound to follow a particular *dharma* or code of conduct, in which failure to maintain purity was punished by loss of caste. Although in some rural areas (particularly in Haryana) caste *panchayats* (councils) still threaten ex-communication for not obeying the edict to marry outside one´s village, modern caste identity assumes the innate nature of caste regardless of *dharmic* failings. Bayly cites examples from both North and South India to show that the "blood bond" of *jati* has taken on the "features of a fixed ethnicity" (Bayly 1999: 310).

In other words, for Indians today, more than simply a purity/pollution dynamic, their *jati* functions as an ethnic group which serves as a resource and support network that can be tapped into for jobs, connections, marriage alliances, help with housing, business partnerships/investments, dealing with the bureaucracy- in short, with all those aspects of life in which social networks are an asset. In the past, due to the absence of modern communications and transport, the ability of individuals to network with *jati* members beyond their village was

limited. However, with the advent of modern telecommunications, and above all, internet, we are now witnessing a surge in caste associations, banks, hostels, marriage halls and charities at the regional and national level, as well as the proliferation of caste-specific websites that offer information, marriage partners, and networking opportunities. The Ravidassias have been particularly active in this regard, and in 2010 a number of websites have been created to present the Ravidassia religion/community to the world and especially to other Indians (the "United Ravidassia Community" website is a good example). [28]Throughout my fieldwork, my interviewees would repeatedly send me links to various websites and YouTube pages, revealing the critical role that the internet plays in building an "imagined community". This phenomenon is not new but has accelerated with the adoption of new technologies: Srinivas mentions that the printing press and the availability of cheap newsprint enabled the production of caste newspapers that promoted *jati*-specific interests (Srinivas 1962: 16). Today´s websites and other online media (such as Facebook pages and online messaging), represents an intensification of this trend of caste consciousness among all caste groups- with the significant difference that online media permits caste diasporas to be more involved with what is happening in India, and vice versa (indeed it was the internet and sms messaging that permitted Ravidassias living in the Punjab to be instantly aware of the Vienna shootings and almost immediately take to the streets in protest).

This rising caste consciousness and manifestation of caste as ethnic group is a universal phenomenon. Thus the common preconception that the educated, urbanised, "Westernised" middle class has "escaped the bonds" of caste as Srinivas puts it, because they now interdine and in some cases even intermarry, can lead to the erroneous assumption that only the lower castes make use of caste as ethnicity. This is similar to the preconceived idea in Europe that domestic violence and other social ills are more likely to be found among the working class. The association of the lower castes with greater use of caste has also found an echo in academic research: Panini quotes a study by Holmstrom which claims that lower-caste workers are especially likely to rely on caste linkages in the workplace because they lack resources beyond their caste network (Panini 1996: 36). Yet in many respects it is the highly educated, upper caste middle class that is best placed to take advantage of caste as ethnic group, using their superior social and cultural capital to ensure for their kin the best jobs and business/educational opportunities, as well as migration possibilites. Srinivas states that the upper castes are not averse to making use of caste ties, and points out that despite weakening caste endogamy, "a Kayastha

[28] Please see http://www.gururavidassguruji.com/

would like to vote for a Kayastha candidate in preference to a Rajput candidate (Srinivas 1962: 88-89).

In a similar vein, Panini, in his study of the political economy of caste, cites the wealthy entrepreneurial Marwari caste, whose success he attributes to their national network of caste-specific hostels for Marwari businessmen, as well as their apprenticeship system in which established Marwari traders train their kin before placing them as agents in nearby towns and cities (Panini 1996: 39). In the private sector, employers (who are usually upper caste) prefer to recruit employees "known to them", which translates into using kin and *jati* networks to fill vacancies (Panini 1996: 38). In the professions and in the managerial cadre of the public sector, what Panini terms "caste clustering" is prominent, with a very high concentration of the upper castes, each of whom no doubt uses *jati* networks to ensure that relatives and fellow caste members gain privileged access to these jobs (Panini 1996: 34). Such is the importance of these networks in securing jobs, that in different parts of India specific terms have been coined to denote the person within an organisation who uses his/her influence to see that relatives/caste fellows are hired (Panini 1996: 43). Another example comes from the epic novel *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth (1993). In the novel, one of the main male characters, Haresh, uses the reference of a leading businessman from his Khatri (upper caste) business community in order to help him secure a managerial job in the shoe business. He also uses Khatri contacts beyond his relatives in his search for a wife. These examples show that all Indians, regardless of their caste background, use their caste as a social and economic resource. This leads to a new interpretation of caste, in which, apart from its nefarious effects of inequality, discrimination and exclusion, also acts, at all points along the caste hierarchy, as both an "imagined" and real community; a source not only of marriage partners, but also of potential jobs, capital, information, and other forms of help in a highly competitive world in which resources are scarce and not fairly distributed. It is also central to the project to migrate, in which kin and *jati* networks are mobilised during both the planning and settlement phases of immigration. Thus, just as ethnic group mobilisation in Europe has been a double-edged sword, leading to both ethnic polarisation/distrust and ethnic self-help, so has caste-based organising brought mixed results: systematic exclusion as well as beneficial caste solidarity. A notable example that was brought to my attention by a UK-based Ravidassia is the case of the first government employee in the Punjab from the Chamar caste hired in the passport department; thanks to this employee, Chamars were able to secure passports and emigrate to the UK in the 1950´s and 60´s when demand for unskilled labour was high (interview in London 17/12/2009).

It is the logic of caste as resource/ethnic group that makes caste a ´rational´ choice in contemporary society, both in India and overseas, when in theory a modern, capitalist economy and a non-caste based society should render obsolete- class replacing caste. Yet what we are witnessing, both in India and in the Spanish diaspora, is an intensification of caste identity, a rise in caste nationalism, and increasing caste politisication (the latter being particularly evident in India, with the national debate on caste quotas and caste in national ID cards). Other identities, such as class, religion, region, and language are certainly important mobilisers, but they have not been able to neutralise the influence of caste. Instead, caste always accompanies and is ´tacked on´ to other identities. Panini demonstrates that even those social movements that are ostensibly based on other identity markers, such as farmers´ or regional ´sons of the soil´ movements that consciously seek to be inclusive, tend to be dominated by a certain caste or cluser of castes; the Marathi (Maharashtra-based) nationalist Shiv Sena movement is OBC (Other Backward Caste) dominated, and a number of farmers´ movements have their main demographic base in one particular caste (Panini 1996: 37).

In the Punjab, the Sikh nationalist movement for a separate state of Khalistan was largely dominated by Jats- very few Sikh Dalits were involved, for they perceived the movement as representing Jat interests, although it purportedly sought to defend the interests of all Sikhs. Bayly argues that in a highly uncertain and insecure world, caste continues to triumph over other forms of affiliation (such as common class interests), particularly among owner-cultivators such as the Jats, who become “fiercely strict about the pollution barrier” in times of land scarcity and rapid socioeconomic change (Bayly 1999: 323). Not all have benefited equally from the Green Revolution and “bullock capitalism”- indeed, many middle landowning peasants have been hard pressed to maintain the profitability of their land holdings. The reaction to this financial insecurity and vulnerability is a deepening rather than a weakening of caste consciousness, particularly along the all-important dividing line between “clean” and “unclean” castes. Thus, while increasingly divisions among the “clean” castes are losing importance, a trend which is also reflected in Indian matrimonial advertisements, the mental boundary separating “caste” Hindus and Sikhs from the untouchables remains as strong as ever- and is even more important against a legal backdrop of quotas for the Scheduled Castes. Reflecting this fundamental division, a young Jat in Barcelona once remarked that “if you are poor and Chamar in the Punjab, you get government aid; if you are poor and Jat you die of hunger”, a concise statement of his perception of the unfair caste situation in the Punjab, in which Jats were now being cast as victims.

Despite the fact that all Indians possess multiple identities that can be moblised for political purposes, caste continues to exercise a predominant hold when competing with other identities- particularly class. Citing an example from South India, Bayly shows that despite common class interest, the "clean caste" Vellalas working in a factory with untouchables decided against striking with them, preferring to distance themselves from the untouchables, uphold their ritual "superiority" and stress their ties with wealthier members of their own *jati* (Bayly 1999: 325). Nor is the supposedly ´rational´, profit-driven corporate sector immune from considerations of caste. Panini shows that throughout the period of "permit Raj" (before the liberalisation of the Indian economy in 1991), Indian businesses relied upon caste and kin networks in hiring staff, in order to ensure company loyalty and ´discipline´ in a political context in which labour laws were socialist in thrust (Panini 1996: 42). The (extralegal) need to avoid onerous government regulations also facilitated caste-based hiring, since managers had to be trusted to keep company secrets- a situation which favoured caste solidarity (Panini 1996: 42). Post-liberalisation, caste-based hiring has not diminished, nor is caste discrimination seen as antithetical to profit-making. Dalit representation in the private sector is very low, and it is for this reason that the Dalit movement in India is now calling for quotas in the corporate sector, often taking affirmative-action programmes in the US as their inspiration. With increasing cuts to and privatisation of the public sector, Dalit activists have realised that reservations must be extended to all sectors of the economy in order for a more far-reaching equality to be achieved. In a context of globalisation, economic liberalism, and intense competition for a diminishing number of secure government jobs, caste has come to the fore as never before. The upper castes campaign to defend the status quo (they are vehemently against reservations in the private sector and argue that the "creamy layer" of the lower castes should be excluded from reservations), while ex-untouchables have turned caste into their battle-cry for their fair share of an increasingly shrinking economic pie. Caste- rather than other axes of identity, has become their primary resource for social, political and religious mobilisation.

Caste in Spain

As in India, so too in the diaspora- caste in Spain, rather than weakening or disappearing, is adapting to new environments and conditions with remarkable ease. This should not surprise us, for just as the British recreated their class system in India, as did Spain in their colony of the Western Sahara, so have the Punjabis recreated their own system of hierarchy on foreign soil. To expect that groups will cast off deeply rooted forms of social organisation in new environments is perhaps unrealistic- especially when caste solidarity can be mobilised as a positive resource in the

migration process. Caste as ethnic group is flourishing in Barcelona and is in many respects even stronger than in India, encouraged by conditions of uncertainty, insecurity and irregular legal status during the first years of settlement. In the challenging circumstances of trying to establish oneself in a country in which the language and culture are completely foreign, *jati* ties become even more important and often a matter of economic survival. This is particularly so since most Punjabi men migrate alone, without the immediate support of their families, let alone that of the extended family that is available in India. Everything- from accommodation to a first job to help with obtaining legal residency, must be secured with support from either more distant kin or fellow caste members. Ravidassias, along with other immigrants, must therefore be resourceful and resilient in adapting to life in a new country, and seek maximum benefit from the bonds of caste in the absence of the traditional family social safety net they enjoyed in India. In effect, the *jati* functions as a mini ´welfare state´ during a period in which many Spanish welfare programmes cannot be accessed, and their immediate families cannot join them until they regularise their status. While Punjabis from other *jatis* are of course also turned to for support (many young men live in mixed-caste flats), the preference- and the greater moral claim for assistance, will come from fellow *jati* members. One of my key interviewees lived in a mixed-caste flat of seven young men, but complained of money stolen and constant tension living there, making it clear that such living arrangements are temporary solutions mandated by necessity rather than choice. Although stories of ´in group´ betrayal and underhanded dealings abound in the Spanish diaspora, trust is still greater within an individual´s *jati*, especially between followers of the same *sant*. In a new, vastly different country, the aid of fellow *jati* members can make the difference between successfully settling and losing face back home- not to mention a vital source of social support in the face of early settlement psychological adjustment. Despite the multiple upheavals that the Ravidassia community has experienced in Barcelona, *jati* ties (albeit within one´s ideological camp) continue to play a critical role in the economic strategies of individual Ravidassias.

As the Ravidassia community becomes more established, a growing number of men are opening businesses, and turning to each other as prospective business partners. One example of fruitful collaboration is provided by a young, unmarried man who after working several months as a bricklayer for a Pakistani boss who never paid him, now works in the electronic installation business of a wealthier married Ravidassia, enabling him to expand the range of services he can offer. Two other men are currently in the process of setting up an Indian restaurant together. One´s *jati* also enables Ravidassias to relatively quickly move out of rented accommodation and

purchase their first homes, home ownership being highly valued in Punjabi culture. In comparison to Spanish youth of the same age, far more Ravidassia men have already invested in property as a sign of economic success, helped by capital lent by both kin and other *jati* members. While home ownership is also highly valued among the Spanish (indeed renting is often seen as a waste of money), Spanish youth can usually only count on the financial help of their immediate family when putting a downpayment on their first home, which delays their transition into home ownership.

Caste thus acts as both a positive and negative resource in the local Ravidassia integration process. On the positive side, *jati* ties are an asset to Ravidassia economic integration in Spain. It is thanks to the assistance, both financial and otherwise, of *jati* ´brothers´, that Ravidassias establish an economic foothold in Catalonia, and hence contribute to the local economy rather than drain it. As mentioned above, a number of Ravidassia families have been able to purchase homes thanks to the pooling of both kin and *jati* resources. Similarly, the sharing of information within the *jati* has seen some second generation Ravidassia children attend *escuelas concertadas* (publically funded Catholic schools favoured by the Spanish middle class), which is an excellent indicator of an immigrant group´s level of cultural integration (most immigrant children attend state schools with a high percentage of foreigners). According to the majority Ravidassia view, one´s *jati* also provides a pool of suitable marriage candidates who share the same culture and worldview which will favour the success of the marriage; restricting marriage to one´s *jati* is not perceived as limiting but rather as advantageous. At the same time however, upper caste prejudice which travels within the suitcases of Punjabis to Spain, harms both upper and lower caste Punjabis. It limits the sphere of ethnic solidarity that could help all *jatis* to collectively prosper in their new home. Caste stigma continues to blight the Ravidassias, and furthermore leads to the risk of the Ravidassias completely socially segregating themselves from upper caste Punjabis in order to escape it. Upper caste insistence on their social superiority, their persistent Othering and social distancing of the Chamars, and their reluctance to share power with other caste groups on an equal footing within the gurudwara weakens the entire Punjabi community. It also leads to counter reactions and parallel boundary construction from the lower castes. The Ravidassias are currently imitating the Jat custom of very publicly declaring their caste pride and asserting a (masculine) caste identity that was previously a Jat prerogative. As we have see in the chapter on caste in the Punjab, caste nationalism as reflected in popular songs is also used to bolster hegemonic masculine ideals. Given the importance attached to hegemonic masculinity in Punjabi

culture, asserting caste pride is simultaneously about demonstrating both community and *male* pride- which can explain the much greater popularity of and involvement in ´Chamar Pride´ among male Raviassia youth.

We can therefore observe a repetition of the ethnic polarisation that Ballard discusses between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the Punjab (Ballard: 1993), but among caste groups within the Sikh community. Each group, feeling threatened by the other, has engaged in a process of shoring up its boundaries and creating its own autonomous institutions, where *jati*-specific culture can be promoted. Pride in being Punjabi in the diaspora is alive and well, but it has not been able to override rising caste nationalism and caste essentialism among all Punjabi *jatis*. The politicisation of caste travels just as mental caste barriers do, despite vastly different geopolitical environments. Caste nationalism is a response to both the national political context in India, in which competition for top jobs and university places is fiercely intense in the ´quota age´, as well as a response to the specific challenges of the diaspora situation, where Punjabis are not only competing against other ethnic groups (traditionally defined), but more importantly each other in the race for economic success. As one of my Ravidassia interviewees succinctly remarked: "we are all Punjabi but we don´t like it when another caste does better than us. We want to be the best in everything". The frequent references to the economic situation of other *jatis* in Spain reveals that intercaste competition is a general feature of Indian and Punjabi culture, competition that is even more intense now that all *jatis* are struggling as immigrants to ´make it´. The growing economic and social assertion of the lower castes, helped by both the legal context of quotas in India, and the more level economic playing field in Spain (where the traditional source of economic power for the Jats has been removed), makes this intercaste competition even more acute. Caste as ethnicity thus brings both advantages and disadvantages to the integration process, but despite the multiple fractures crisscrossing the Punjabi community in Catalonia, as well as individual *jatis*, *jati* based ethnic solidarity has thus far contributed to a quietly successful Ravidassia integration. The Ravidassia community in Spain is a prime example of a "glocal" community that occupies a third space- with ´mental feet´ in both India and Spain, that has been highly adaptive in responding to new living conditions, while conscious of belonging to a global community that continues to suffer caste stigma regardless of geographic location.

Conclusion

The Ravidassias, in their pursuit of equality, have pursued two interrelated strategies in their struggle to combat the caste oppression that they have faced for centuries. In their religious

strategy of liberation, the Ravidassias have sought a number of escape routes from a repressive religion that has condemned them to permanent inequality. They have maintained their worship of their patron saint Ravidass, they have adopted Sikhism, a religion of formal caste equality, and most recently, they have announced the formation of a fully autonomous religious tradition centered on the worship of Guru Ravidass. In their psychological strategy of liberation, the Ravidassias, like many stigmatised groups, have for most of their history tacitly accepted caste shame and employed a variety of passing strategies in order to escape it. Passing however, while it bought them a superficial level of social acceptance, did not raise their social status nor make a dent in untouchable stigma. In response to rising Dalit consciousness in India (fed by political parties in states such as Uttar Pradesh), growing economic mobility, and above all in response to the assassination of their leading *sant*, Ravidassias have started to declare war on caste stigma by claiming pride in their Chamar identity, and promoting a positive self-image for the community. A new, visibly proud Chamar *jati* identity is now emerging in a powerful medium for the Punjabis- Bhangra and religious songs. What both strategies have in common is the desire for cultural independence and self-respect. Although the separatist and *jati* focused strategy has limited the capacity of the Ravidassias to forge alliances with other Dalit *jatis*, and keeps the custom of endogamous marriage alive, thus feeding the foundations of the caste system, cultural autonomy is perhaps necessary at this stage of the Ravidassia community´s struggle. Equality cannot be achieved without first empowering oppressed groups that have long been excluded from full citizenship rights. Stigmatised minority groups the world over have chosen to build separate institutions in their fight for equality. Social movements have recognised that some form of cultural separatism was necessary in order to raise collective self-esteem and equip their members with the psychological resources necessary to challenge discrimination. The Ravidassias have gone one step further, and have formed their own religion as part of their fight for social equality. If the first step in defeating deeply rooted forms of discrimination that have ´infected´ generations of social relations and mentalities, is for the stigmatised group to crush its own (internalised) stigma, then the mental revolution that is now fermenting among the Ravidassias has strong potential to produce broader social change with time. While caste stigma has proved stubbornly resistant to the forces of both modernisation and migration, its psychological tenacity is under attack from those who most suffer from it. Caste is not disappearing, far from it, but being exposed to new ideologies, such as the ideology of equality/human rights, and forms of identity/organisation (caste as ethnic group). Cognisant that it may take generations before a caste-free society comes into being, the Spanish Ravidassias have

decided upon a pragmatic strategy of liberation, centered on making caste and religion work for them, as resources for empowerment rather than oppression.

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NEW AVATARS OF CASTE AND DIRECTIONS FOR EQUALITY: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE RAVIDASSIA EXPERIENCE

"Freedom of mind is the real freedom. A person whose mind is not free though he may not be in chains, is a slave, not a free man. One whose mind is not free, though he may not be in prison, is a prisoner and not a free man. One whose mind is not free though alive, is no better than dead. Freedom of mind is the proof of one's existence." B. R. Ambedkar

Throughout the course of my fieldwork in Spain, when mentioning the topic of my research, I was typically asked two questions: how does caste function, with a particular interest in how Indians learn about the caste identity of other Indians, and secondly, how is it possible that caste continues to survive on Spanish soil, even with the second generation? In responding to the first question, I would draw a parallel with the common question of ´where are you from'? in Catalonia, in order to explain caste as a fundamental cognitive and social category that both unconsciously and consciously structures all social interactions**.** Given the regional, cultural and linguistic diversity of Spain, and the large flows of internal immigration that Catalonia has received, this question is a common one, and seeks to ascertain the ancestral origins of the individual in question, regardless of how long he or she has lived in Catalonia. In effect, although innocuous, it often serves to distinguish between an in-group of indigenous Catalans versus the 'new Catalans' whose grandparents and parents settled in Catalonia from other parts of Spain, particularly from the southern region of Andalucia. In post-war Catalonia, the stigma term of *charnego* was applied to these domestic immigrants, who were often reproached for not learning Catalan and integrating into Catalan society, in an old twist on the current discourse on immigration in Catalonia, in which a new wave of foreign immigrants is perceived to be an integration ´problem´. This desire to know where ´one is from´ (to somehow classify that person as either closer or further away from one´s in-group) is fundamentally the same motivation that drives the ´what is your full name'? question in India. Caste in its modern avatar is treated, beyond questions of ritual superiority/inferiority, as akin to that of an ethnic group. Each individual is perceived as a *representative* of a certain caste, and bearer of a particular ´culture´ that makes that group distinct. Caste is also always intimately linked to another major axis of identification and discrimination: gender. The combination of caste as ethnicty and patriarchy has meant that girls and women experience caste differently- regardless of their caste identity. Indeed, throughout much of Indian history, the Brahmins were distinguished by their very strict gender customs (for example regarding widow remarriage), revealing the extent to which gender has always been a marker of caste. Unmarried girls in particular are subject to greater familial and

social pressure not to transgress caste boundaries and to uphold caste ´purity´. The result is that girls and women in India are often perceived to be more conservative with regards to caste, when in fact it is society that has imposed a stricter caste/ethnic code on its female members. Female students at university are consequently more cautious about initiating intercaste friendships with boys, and in the diaspora, such friendships are also avoided. As ´caste property´ and symbols, girls and women pay a higher social price for overstepping unwritten caste norms.

Once caste is ascertained, that person is considered to be ´known´, his/her status is ´rankable´, and s/he is interacted with accordingly. Without knowing the caste origins of the person they are interacting with, Indians have no way to automatically slot that person into a series of ready-made mental categories: in-group, out-group, clean, unclean, high status, low status, Other. While this mental ranking is easy to perform in rural areas, and in those urban areas that are effectively segregated into caste-based neighbourhoods, it can be trickier to carry out in high-skilled mixed-caste workplaces (most factories are still organised along caste lines), and in large educational institutions. In such environments, Indians cannot be sure of the ´caste essence´ of the individuals they work with, although they will rely on a number of secondary factors such as dress, accent, body language etc. in order to try and guess. Without outright asking "what is your caste?", ´modern´ Indians attempt to subtly and indirectly inquire about the caste origins of their colleagues, typically by ascertaining their surname, which also has the benefit of indicating religion in addition to caste. In middle-class working/educational environments, ´clean caste´ Indians typically assume that their colleagues are similarly ´clean caste´, since the mental purity/pollution barrier positions untouchables as firmly outside such arenas due to their poverty and lower educational levels in comparison to ´general category´ Indians. This is why ´clean caste´ Indians are surprised when they discover that their seemingly ´normal´ colleague is in fact ´an untouchable´- the image in front of them does not correspond to a lifetime of negative stereotyping about the untouchables as a group.

For the ´untouchables´, therefore, caste identity cannot exist without caste stigma, since they are born with a deeply devalued identity and a deeply discredited ´ethnicity´. This stigma, although rooted in Hinduism, is essentially social in nature and serves to keep the untouchables permanently low in status regardless of religious affiliation or educational and economic progress. Viewed as unclean, contaminated individuals from birth, when an ´untouchable´ reveals himself, he is effectively reduced to his caste and only his caste, such that his entire personality is conflated with untouchability. In contrast, when an upper-caste Khatri announces that she is Khatri, she will be perceived as a Khatri and treated as a Khatri, but also as a human

being in her own right- her humanity is not tarnished or called into question. This is not the case with untouchables, who find that their humanity is often erased when their caste identity is revealed. Henceforth, they are seen through the filter of ´untouchable´, with all of its negative associations. A parallel in the West can be drawn with HIV-positive individuals, who suffer from a similar social stigma (although of course there are many differences with untouchables, not least the fact that for most HIV-positive people in the West their stigma is not hereditary, this example can serve to illustrate the process of stigma for those able to ´pass´ in the West). Like untouchables living outside of caste-segregated areas, healthy HIV positive individuals have the option of ´passing´ in daily life. However, if their true identity is exposed, their entire personality will be reduced to their HIV-positive status- ´Pedro´ ceases to be just Pedro and becomes `Pedro the HIV-positive person´. Pedro is now morally suspect and his humanity is seen to be seriously flawed/tainted- although the way in which he contracted the disease may to some extent mitigate his stigma. Henceforth, the filter through which he is viewed will be conditioned by his HIV-positive condition, completely overshadowing his other characteristics. Given the strong social stigma associated with untouchability as well as the potential negative consequences on the private job market, most Dalits in India seek to pass, or pursue a modified passing strategy in which they test the waters before revealing their caste identity.

In the Spanish diaspora, the still small size of the Punjabi Indian community limits opportunities for passing over time (with regular gurudwara attendance for example caste quickly becomes known), but this is still the general tendency, given the possibility to hide one´s untouchable origins when interacting with strangers. The second strategy in Spain has been to limit contact with upper-caste Punjabis via segregated worship, which eliminates the need to either pass, modified pass or reveal; it is much easier to assert a Chamar identity in a majority Chamar-affirmative space. However, passing in its various guises is not the whole story. A small but growing minority in both India and the diaspora pursues a pride strategy of counteracting caste stigma through consistently revealing their caste to all. The difference for Ravidassias living in the Spanish diaspora is that many feel more psychologically protected from caste discrimination, although ironically caste has not been recognised as grounds for discrimination in Spanish law as it has in the UK (the 2010 Equality Bill recognises and outlaws caste discrimination as a form of racism). The greater protection Spanish Ravidassias feel can be attributed to the fact that their employer, landlord, and other figures of authority (such as teachers/principals) are now more likely to be Spanish rather than upper-caste Punjabis. The fact that the pride strategy has yet to become widespread indicates the extent to which varying levels

of caste shame is still the norm for both resident and non-resident Indians. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges facing the Ravidiassia community today is internalised casteism, in which Ravidassias suffer from the negative cultural and psychological conditioning to which they have been subject since birth, which is only partially counteracted via worship of Guru Ravidass. This internalised sense of inferiority is reflected in their desire to prove themselves to the upper caste Jats, who are their cultural reference point as the culturally dominant ´judges´. This is particularly evident in the ´Sons of Chamar´ songs that have emerged as a counter-cultural reaction to the Jat nationalism inherent in ´Sons of Jat´ songs and in Bhangra music more generally. The current movement to positively reframe their caste identity will therefore take time and will not be an easy or linear process. In the Spanish diaspora much more so than in the Punjab, it is youth who are at the vanguard of the ´Chamar Pride´ movement, a positive sign that internalised caste stigma will eventually weaken with time in Spain.

The survival of caste in Spain is a logical outcome of the survival of caste discrimination and casteist mentalities. As one of my interviewees eloquently put it: “if you are continually treated as second-class for who you are, how can you expect us to forget our identity?” As long as caste prejudice exists, so too will caste consciousness and caste-based organising. Thus the prediction of Srinivas that the caste system would eventually fade as “Harijans” became more educated and started to fight for their rights has not come to pass (Srinivas 1962: 76). The temporary increase in caste tension that he foresaw has become permanent due to upper caste resistance to lower caste claims for equality as well as symbolic assertion in the field of religion. Caste prejudice continues to thrive and has even become more acute in Spain due to the need to ensure the psychological continuity of caste identities based on long-established relationships of social and ritual superiority. In short, without caste prejudice, the upper castes will lose a key plank of their identities, and hence the very foundations of their self-concept are threatened, which can explain why caste boundaries have strengthened and not weakened in the Spanish diaspora. This is true not only of Spain but also the UK, the European country with the most established Punjabi community. The pattern of caste segregation in places of worship that has been observed in the UK is thus not unique, but can be considered a Punjabi cultural pattern that is repeated across the European diaspora. It appears that Punjabis, regardless of their geographic location, reproduce caste-based organisation in social and religious life, contradicting the much vaunted image of a united ´Punjabi Sikh´ community that in practice does not exist. Another reason for the persistence of caste is that traditional mentalities are notoriously resistant to change the world over; to give just one example, despite over two generations of feminist activism in the

West, both institutional and cultural sexism remain widespread. Just as caste prejudice has not abated in the diaspora, nor have conservative gender codes significantly changed in Spain. Although some aspects of hegemonic Punjabi masculinity have changed in response to contact with hegemonic Spanish masculinity (such as the taboo on two men holding hands), when it comes to core gender values, the vast majority of 1.5 Ravidassia boys continue to support hegemonic ideals of masculinity and endorse traditional gender roles. The entire hierarchy of Punjabi-specific masculinity remains intact, with those men who marry, have children, become homeowners and achieve economic success (as sole breadwinner) held up as role models. In the cases of both caste and gender, attitudinal change is far slower than we might like to admit.

Caste has done more than just survive in Spain- it has also manifested itself strongly as ethnic group, accentuating a trend already present in India, where caste ties are vital in many aspects of life, not least on the job market. Thus we find that a system which produces pernicious social discrimination, also simultaneously functions as a useful socioeconomic resource, particularly in contexts in which closer *jati* cooperation is necessary such as immigration. In a first-generation context, relying on *jati* contacts and support is a necessary and strategic resource in the migration project which can play a key role in producing individual migration success stories. Caste as ethnicity is thus driven by the forces of globalisation more broadly, which forces all individuals to exploit pre-existing group ties in order to succeed in a competitive and at times ruthless economic climate. While ethnic groups certainly do not always function as social support structures (and can risk becoming ghettos), in the case of the Ravidassias, *jati* networks have served as a positive tool facilitating their integration process in Spain. This evidence suggests that Spanish policy makers, when devising policies for the integration of the Indian Punjabi community in Catalonia, would be advised to recognise that the effective local unit of support for Punjabis is their *jati*, the group that most facilitates local adaptation. They should be aware that caste prejudice and mutual mistrust often prevents wider Punjabi collaboration. Caste solidarity is by no means limited to one´s *jati*- Ravidassias also cooperate with Punjabis from other caste groups as need dictates, but higher trust and comfort levels make one´s *jati* the first port of call, and the primary social group. For example, when searching for work, Ravidassias will exploit all possible contacts/avenues, but have a greater moral expectation that more established members of their own *jati* will give them a helping hand. The minority status of the Ravidassias, and the caste stigma that they collectively suffer further encourages caste solidarity in Spain. The institution of caste is thus versatile and multifaceted: for those at the bottom of the hierarchy, it serves as both source of oppression and crucial socioeconomic resource- and

increasingly, a source of pride. Ambedkar and other Dalit leaders sought to “annihilate” caste; Spanish Ravidassias, while still professing their ultimate goal is to eliminate caste, are currently pragmatically striving to convert caste into a positive identity that will no longer crush them. Caste is also kith and kin, around which almost all social life revolves; hence in practice, what Ravidassias seek is to raise their social and economic status within the current caste configuration and to ´rebrand´ their stigmatised caste name.

What can we learn from the Ravidassia experience with regards to combating stigma and the role of religion in fighting for civil rights? While each form of stigma is unique and varies in intensity, what all stigmatised groups share in common is low social status and greater social vulnerability. The Ravidassia experience shows that the strategy of passing is not effective in weakening caste stigma, although in the short-term it may improve the educational and career prospects of individual Dalits. Over the long-term, what is proving to be more effective in making a collective dent in caste stigma is ´rebranding´ stigmatised caste terms and reformulating caste identity, mentally purging it of stigma. This rebranding and reformulating seeks to normalise a caste identity that has long been condemned to permanent marginality. By increasingly ´declaring´ instead of ´passing´, the new generation of Ravidassias is striking a greater death blow to caste stigma than that possible through interdining or other forms of caste mixing. Saying “I am Ravidassia” with nonchalance and pride strikes at the very heart of social and mental untouchability and declares that the Ravidassias are in effect normal, ´touchable´ human beings. Less evident, but just as important, is the role of economics in contributing to overcoming stigma. While the upper castes may still look down about the untouchables with distain regardless of their economic status, growing economic power emboldens the Ravidassias, gives them confidence, and infuses them with added strength in their drive to achieve social respect. Economic comfort helps to diminish internalised stigma and hence economic strategies should not be overlooked on the part of stigmatised groups who also suffer from chronic poverty. The religious strategy of liberation that the Ravidassias have chosen also holds interesting lessons. While many social movement activists in the West view religion as inconsequential or even harmful to their movements, the Ravidassia experience shows that religion, if used strategically, can also be harnessed as a positive tool in the struggle for equality. The Ravidassias have recognised that religion is ultimately about social relations, and it is through an independent religion that they are communicating their desire for social equality. The Ravidassias could have turned their backs on religion altogether, but they decided on religious independence based on their pre-existing caste

infrastructure. While this use of religion may not be able to work for all stigmatised groups (it must also be acknowledged that the Ravidassias are operating within a cultural context in which religion is omnipresent and taken for granted), it does indicate that ´active´ religion can provide another avenue for social protest and expression. Yet, the question remains of whether religion will be an effective strategy for producing broader sociocultural change. There are many examples of religion helping its members simply cope with and survive- but not actually change or overcome oppression. Indian women, for example, have long turned to religion for succor, with little or no change in their low social status. Webster highlights the healing capacity of religion in alleviating the psychological scars of casteism and asserts that only religion offers Dalits the possibility to heal their "inner wounds" (Webster 1999: 146). I would argue that in order for the new Ravidassia *dharm* to be truly effective and an example for other stigmatised groups to follow, its spiritual/psychological aspects must be married to parallel actions in the socioeconomic field that will both improve the material status of the Ravidassias, as well as nurture their collective self-esteem. The words of Viramma, the South Indian Dalit woman quoted earlier are instructive in this regard. Speaking about the literacy campaigns of Dalit-based political parties in Tamil Nadu, she states:

Every day we hear on the radio in the *ceri*, ´Don´t stay separate! Don´t be divided! Down with castes!...Come and educate yourselves! That´s what the party workers come and tell us every evening, Sinnamma!... That´s why we women say to the political parties, ´You want to fight to bring us together and make caste disappear. But it´s impossible. We haven´t got a field or any land, nothing but the house we live in; so how do you expect us to live? If you really want to fight for us, the poor, give us some money to buy some land, or share out land for us to cultivate…and we´ll be able to make our living, eat our fill and have plenty of children. They could study, have a job" (Viramma 1997: 181-182).

If the Ravidassia *dharm* succeeds in translating its ideals into religiously based social activism, concrete socioeconomic projects, and alliances with other oppressed groups, it can show a new way forward for stigmatised and oppressed groups everywhere. Simply investing in religious infrastructure will not be enough- attention must be paid to ensuring that basic socioeconomic needs/rights are first fulfilled. In essence, by shifting from ´passive´ to ´active´ religion, Ravidassias can demonstrate a religious pathway to equality that transforms its members through both a renewed self/collective image and persistent social action; promoting in turn broader social

change over time. While it is too early to predict whether a future, stigma-free *Begumpura* (ideal society) will eventually be realised, what is undeniable is that the first seeds of change have been planted.

GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE: SPAIN (questions translated from Spanish)

1. **When did you first become aware of your caste?**
2. **What impact did this realisation have on you?**
3. **In your opinion, is caste discrimination greater in the Punjab or here?**
4. **Why?**
5. **In your view, what is the solution (or solutions) for ending the caste system?**
6. **Who are some famous individuals/celebrities who have openly declared their Ravidassia identity?**
7. **Describe some instances in which someone has asked you explicitly for your caste. How did you respond?**
8. **Do you feel comfortable attending a gurudwara dominanted by people from another caste?**
9. **What is the best way to feel proud of oneself? (to have *mann*)**
10. **Is religion a positive or negative tool in combating a cateist mentality?**
11. **What do you most like about your gurudwara and what bothers you or makes you angry? What would you like to change?**
12. **Is there gender equality in the gurudwara? (are girls and boys treated in the same way?)**
13. **Have you experienced racism in Cataluña? In the case of yes, what type of racism?**
14. **Do think that being Ravidassia (Chamar) means having a stigmatised identity? (an identity that does not receive as much social value and respect as others)**
15. **Do you have friends from other castes here? (compare with India)**
16. **Ideally, with whom would you like to marry?**
17. **What do your parents want? What (marriage) expectations do they have for you?**
18. **Tell me a bit about your first experiences in Barcelona?**
19. **To do feel bicultural, more Punjabi, more Spanish/Catalan? What is it like to have more than than one cultural influence/identity?**
20. **In your view, is Sikhism inclusive?**
21. **Guru/Bhagat debate. Who is a guru? Who is a bhagat?**

22. **How does your community deal with sensitive social issues? (divorce, mixed marriage, domestic violence)**
23. **What is your opinion of the SGPC? Have you heard of it before?**
24. **Have you read any of Ambedkhar´s works¿**
25. **In your opinion, why did Ambedkar choose to convert to Buddhism rather than Sikhism?**
26. **Who is the famous person that most inspires you- whom do you most admire?**
27. **Which term do you most identify with? Dalit, Chamar, Ravidassia, Harijan, SC, Ad-Dharmi, or none of the above**
28. **What are relations like between the Ravidassias and the Valmikis?**
29. **Is there anything you would like to change about Punjabi culture?**
30. **According to you, what is the better strategy for Ravidassias to pursue- an autonomous identity or an identity within Sikhism? What religious identity should the Ravidassias have?**

GENDER INTERVIEW GUIDE-SPAIN

1. **Duty of husband**
2. **Duty of wife**
3. **Are there any differences between how boys and girls are treated at the gurudwara?**
4. **Are there any differences between how boys and girls are treated at home?**
5. **What is the ideal age for marriage?**
6. **Discussion of man´s economic role. Do you want your wife to work after marriage?**
7. **Ideal number of children?**
8. **Who is more manly- Indian or Spanish boys? Why?**
9. **How do you define manliness?**
10. **How do you define femininity?**
11. **How does the ideal man look and act?**

12. **How does the ideal woman look and act?**
13. **Do you feel pressure to prove your manliness?**
14. **Holding hands in India versus Spain**
15. **Do Jat and Lubana boys have a different type of manliness?**
16. **What is the most unmanly thing that a boy can do?**
17. **What is the most unwomanly thing that a girl can do?**
18. **What forms of discrimination do girls/women face?**
19. **Has your concept of manliness changed sinced coming to Spain?**
20. **If the conversation permits: are there gays in the gurudwara?**

INTERVIEW GUIDE INDIA- ´UPPER CASTE´ INTERVIEWEES (questions were not necessarily posed in the order in which they appear in the guide depending on the person I was interviewing)

1. **How do you find out about the caste identity of others?**
2. **How do people generally ask about caste?**
3. **Opinions on intercaste friendship**
4. **Opinions on intercaste marriage**
5. **Do you know of any examples of successful intercaste marriages?**
6. **What do you think about quotas for the Scheduled Castes in higher education and in public employment?**
7. **How can you tell if someone is SC?**
8. **What are the stereotypes about SC people?**
9. **What terms are used to refer to SC people in colloquial (everyday) language?**
10. **How reliable is the surname as an indication of caste?**
11. **Have you ever experienced caste discrimination?**
12. **Who asks about caste more- boys or girls? Who is more interested in/concerned about caste?**
13. **What solution (s) for casteism?**

14. **What problems and restrictions do girls face? (marriage, dowry, intercaste friendship, hostel policies) (this question was posed to both males and females)**
15. **How do dressing styles/body language differ among castes?**
16. **How many SC people do you know at LPU? (Lovely Professional University)**
17. **Do SC people seek to hide their caste origins?**
18. **When did you come to know about your caste?**
19. **What for you constitutes a good match in marriage?**
20. **What are the main chacteristics/traits of your caste?**

INTERVIEW GUIDE INDIA- ´SC´ RESPONDENTS

1. **When did you first become aware of your caste?**
2. **Describe your experiences at primary/secondary school**
3. **How were you treated by teachers? Were you ever the victim of bullying/name calling?**
4. **Experiences of caste discrimination? Discuss specific examples**
5. **How do people ask about caste?**
6. **How do you respond to the caste question? How does it make you feel?**
7. **Do what extent do you reveal your caste identity on/off campus? In which situations do you feel more open or more cautious?**
8. **What are the stereotypes about SC people?**
9. **Are such stereotypes also widespread at LPU? (Lovely Professional University)**
10. **In your opinion, how do these stereotypes impact upon the self-image of SC´s?**
11. **Who asks about caste more- girls or boys? Who is more concerned about caste?**
12. **Opinions on intercaste friendship**
13. **Opinions on intercaste marriage**
14. **How does caste work on the LPU campus?**

15. **How does caste work in your hometown or village?**
16. **Instances of casteism in your friendships or in the classroom?**
17. **What solution (s) for casteism?**
18. **What problems and restrictions do girls face? (marriage, dowry, intercaste friendship, hostel policies) (this question was posed to both males and females)**
19. **Discussion of internalised caste stigma. Are they any gender differences?**
20. **Who are your role models?**

GLOSSARY

Aarti- Hindu religious ritual in which small candles or tealights are waved before images of the Gods; it is also used in some Ravidassia/Valmiki temples

Ad Dharm- literally ´original religion´, the first religious movement of ex-touchables in the Punjab

Amrit- the sweetened holy water that is administered to baptised Sikhs

Amritdhari- a baptisted Sikh who is obliged to wear the five K´s (Sikh symbols)

Baba- holy man

Bani- religious poetry/hymns

Bania- Hindi term for a trading/business caste

Beadbi- lack of due respect/deference shown to the Sikh holy book

Begumpura- the ideal society envisioned by Guru Ravidass

Bhagat- contested term meaning devout follower of God; for Sikhs it refers to low caste saints who are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, including Ravidass; for Ravidassias, Ravidass is not a Bhagat but rather Guru

Bhakti- religious devotion; also refers to a medieval religious movement that sought direct communication with God regardless of caste distinctions

Bhangra- both a traditional Punjabi male folk dance and a form of music very popular among all Punjabis

Chamar- colloquial term used to refer to the Ravidassia ex-untouchable caste group

Chuhra- colloquial term use to refer to the Valmiki ex-untouchable caste group

Chunni/Dupatta- the traditional scarf worn by Punjabi women

Dalit- political term for all former untouchables in India

Dera- place of worship and pilgrimage; can be either Hindu or Sikh

Dharm- religion/faith

Dharma- religious obligation/duty

Diwan- weekly religious service

Giddha- traditional Punjabi female folk dance

Granthi- the person (always male to date) who officiates at religious services and takes care of the gurudwara

Golak- donations given to the gurudwara

Got- clan, sub-caste

Guru- spiritual leader/guide, often used in the sense of supreme spiritual leader

Gurudwara- Sikh place of worship

Guru Granth Sahib- Sikh holy book

Harijan- Gandhi´s term for the untouchables; literally means ´children of God´

Harmandir Sahib- also known as the Golden Temple, the chief temple and site of pilgrimage for Sikhs worldwide

Izzat- personal/familial and collective honour

Jaikara- religious cry that is chanted collectively at the end of a religious service in the gurudwara

Jajmani- the term used to refer to the unequal patron-client system in Indian villages in which former untoucables would forcibly render service to the upper castes in return for food or other goods in kind and their patronage

Janamdin- Birth anniversary

Jat- Punjabi term for caste; equivalent to jati

Jati- caste in Hindi

Jatwadh- Jat discrimination against the lower castes

Kabaddi- Punjabi masculine wrestling sport

Khalsa- the society or brotherhood of baptised Sikhs instituted by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh

Langar- vegetarian food served in the gurudwara to all

Mardangi- manliness

Mazhabi- another term for ex-untouchable Sikhs

Moksha- Liberation from rebirth

Mulnivasi- original inhabitants of India

Palki- the throne on which the Sikh holy book sits

Panch Kakar- the five Sikh symbols mandated by Guru Gobind Singh for baptised Sikhs

Panchayat- village council

Panj Piare- the first five Sikhs who offered their heads in sacrifice and then accepted amrit from Guru Gobind Singh

Panth- Society

Prasad- sacred (blessed) sweet food distributed at the gurudwara

Punjabiat- Punjabi culture and tradition

Purusha- Primordial man

Qaum- religious nation/people

Qurbani- Martyrdom

Rahit Maryada- modern Sikh code of conduct

Ragi- musician who performs in the gurudwara

Ramgarhia- a caste group from the Punjab, many of whom have migrated to East Africa

Roti- unleavened bread, a staple in the Punjab and Haryana

Salwar kameez- traditional Punjabi dress worn by women

Samsara- Cycle of birth and rebirth

Sangat- community or religious congregration

Sant- holy man/leader, also the person who manages a dera

Scheduled Caste- Official term used to refer to the ex-untouchables by the Indian government

Seva- community/religious service, usually carried out in the gurudwara, but can be carried out anywhere

Sevadar- person who carries out seva; sometimes there are permanent sevadars serving in the gurudwaras and deras

Shastras- Hindu scriptures

Varna- macro caste category

Zamindar- landlord

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