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Colonialism, casteism and development: South-South cooperation as a 'new' development paradigm

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COLONIALISM, CASTEISM AND DEVELOPMENT:

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AS A 'NEW' DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

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COLONIALISM, CASTEISM AND DEVELOPMENT: SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AS A 'NEW' DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

Ryan Higgitt and Mazharul Islam*

"You do not want to appear too political; you are afraid of seeming controversial; you need the approval of a boss or an authority figure; you want to keep a reputation for being balanced, objective, moderate; your hope is to be asked back, to consult, to be on a board or prestigious committee, and so to remain within the responsible mainstream; someday you hope to get an honorary degree, a big prize, perhaps even an ambassadorship."

Edward Saïd, 1993 Reith lectures

1 CASTE-BASED DISCRIMINATION HURTS PEOPLE VERY MUCH

In her "How Did We Get Here?: The Pathways of South-South Cooperation", Morais de Sá e Silva (2010) notes that economic growth and social gains experienced by some developing countries in recent years have made them potential role models for the rest of the developing world. India, which managed an average annual GDP per capita growth rate of 6.3 per cent between 1990 and 2008 (Ortiz and Cummins, 2011: 27), is often cited as the standout example. Many in the development community believe that if Indian economic growth continues on this upward trend the outlook of the entire Asia-Pacific region is likely to see further improvement (see ESCAP, 2011). However, as the United Nations Assistant Secretary General, India's Ajay Chhibber, cautions, doing so must entail strengthening democratic institutions; promoting inclusive growth and equity, and ensuring access to justice and the rule of law (UNDP, 2011: 1).

Extreme poverty in India is commonly associated with the Hindu caste system. UN human rights bodies have highlighted the issue of casteism in several reviews and relevant thematic UN studies, and Chhibber's counsel, echoing the philosophy of pioneering activist B.R. Ambedkar (see Ram, 2010), is itself grounded in recognition that discrimination based on work and descent stands as one of the most serious challenges to the country's development vision.

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But caste realities are not unique to India or even the Asian subcontinent as a whole. An estimated 260 million people across the globe (IDSN, 2009) currently lead powerless lives under casteism's influence, and indeed rigid social stratifications characterised by hereditary status, endogamy and social barriers sanctioned by custom, law or religion have histories in nation-states well beyond Asia. This would include numerous countries in the Sudano-Sahelian region of Africa (see, for example, Obinna, 2012; RADDHO, 2012; Tamari, 1997; 1991) but also the Americas (see, for example, Cahill, 1994). In the 18th and 19th centuries millions of outcast, downtrodden and socially ostracised people from England, France, Spain and Portugal migrated either on their own or by force to the 'New World' (Commons, 1913; Matulich, 1971). In South America numerous mixed births during the colonial era between natives, Europeans and people brought in as slaves or indentured labourers saw the emergence of '*castas*' characterised by elaborate entanglements of race, heredity and economic status which persist, in various guises, to this day (Rodolfo, 2011; Gómez and Gómez, 1999). The situation is similar in North America, with the systematic stigmatisation of African-Americans having long-inspired comparisons, particularly among abolitionists, of Blacks in the USA with India's so-called 'untouchables', also known as the 'Dalit' (Immerwarh, 2007; see also Cox, 1948).

The ubiquity of such a pernicious socio-cultural phenomenon surely obliges development practitioners interested in South-South cooperation to make caste-based discrimination a key focus of emerging discussion on 'inclusive growth'. Yet, that said, none of this ubiquity negates the simple but indispensable fact that casteism, tenuously separable from racism, is neither structured nor experienced the same way everywhere. Caste-based discrimination in Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries of the world and a border neighbour of India, embodies this paradox of similarity and difference in exemplary fashion, particularly in terms of the ways Bangladeshi Dalits have been for centuries trapped in poverty by highly complex psycho-social divisions unique in Bangladeshi society. Drawing attention to the ways caste identities are neither universal nor natural but in fact, on the contrary, irreducible socio-historical practices is crucial if new development actors in the so-called Global South are to avoid reinforcement of those very binaries of thinking—Occident/Orient, developed/undeveloped, progressive/backward—which collapse particular regions, races and ethnicities of the world into ideologies, the very ones which characterised global 'development' from the colonial era right through the Cold War and, indeed, may still lie latent within, as one example, the nearly \$1 billion (IMF, 2012) recently lent to the Government of Bangladesh by the International Monetary Fund.¹

With this basic premise in mind, the primary objective of this Working Paper is to contribute to an understanding of how South-South cooperation as a 'paradigm' might distinguish itself as a genuine alternative to erstwhile development approaches predicated on the totalising impulse of a modern Western scientific rationality linked with neoliberalism which actually creates inequality by projecting humans as having followed a particular evolutionary or developmental trajectory; whereby one half of the planet 'moved forward' and the monolithic 'other', as it were, 'did not'. We begin our analysis with an outline of recent evidence suggesting that the historical primacy given to GDP—"a *natural* measure of a nation's standard of living [per capita]" (Kozmetsky and Yue, 1997: 32; our italics)—has resulted in increased social and environmental problems worldwide while simultaneously benefiting the already rich and powerful. It is in the apparently relentless concern with augmenting people's purchasing power, guised as it is as 'progress', that casteism, a manifestation of inequality, acquires contemporary expression. Indeed, Louis Dumont's widely cited

Homo Hierarchicus (1970), identified by a number of scholars, Jodhka (2010) included, as “perhaps the most influential theoretical work on caste” (p.5), is quite clearly bound within the same evolutionist thinking that informed, among other Western scientific works instrumental to the entrenchment of GDP-thinking globally, Rostow’s ‘Take-off Theory’ of economic growth. *Homo Hierarchicus*, we contend, embodies the proclivity of development practitioners today to conceive of human identity in essentialised ‘value’ terms, and thus poverty and inequality as practically natural incorrigibles of development.²

It is against this backdrop then that we offer our analysis of Bangladeshi casteism. A comparison of existing literature on the Dalit experience in India with an as yet dismally small body of work aimed at describing that in Bangladesh, coupled with primary-source data derived via qualitative interviews we carried out in 2008 and 2010 with Dalit communities around the country, reveal the low caste ‘reality’, contra Dumont, to be far from fixed and uniform—that is to say, far from ‘natural’. Apart from the fact that the population of Bangladesh itself constitutes a massive Muslim majority, one of the most salient features distinguishing Bangladesh’s Dalits from their counterparts in India, we find, is a kind of powerful ‘double consciousness’ experienced by many untouchables here. In the most concise terms, Bangladeshi Dalits feel not merely like ‘second-class citizens’ but, indeed, ‘second-class nothings’—veritable strangers in their own homes and communities as a consequence of their forced migration, centuries ago, from Hindu-dominated India to Muslim-dominated East Bengal. The failure to recognise this idiosyncrasy of Bangladesh’s Dalit community may go some distance toward explaining the chronic dearth of literature on casteism in this country in and of itself; not to mention any thoroughgoing action on the part of the government to quash caste-based discrimination.

Altogether, the particular features of Bangladesh’s socio-historical landscape which have for so long colluded to perpetuate the plight of Bangladeshi Dalits underscore a broader thesis, one which Higgitt (2011) has argued elsewhere but by no means is his own, that there is no complete homogeneity between culture and identity; that development practices which fail to appreciate micro-level context and the plurality of self risk, as Saïd (1998) demonstrated in his critique of the absurd ‘Clash of Civilizations’ thesis put forward by Harvard-trained political scientist Samuel Huntington, interventionist and aggressive attitudes towards other peoples and a concomitant betrayal of the very principles of fallibilism, tolerance and understanding upon which the UN was originally built. In terms of inclusive growth, this is perhaps the most pertinent lesson for a new generation of development leaders in the Global South. If the South-South movement is to be genuinely different from those development schemes operating under the rubric of the ‘Washington consensus’, then those who celebrate it must embrace the intersubjectivity—‘we could be wrong about our ideas; there are different ways of seeing and being’ (see Habermas, 2006)—associated with the collapse of grand narratives, thus avoiding ‘race’, GDP, gender and other forms of essentialist thinking which continue to exacerbate inequality across the globe.³

2 EQUITY AND THE MODERN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

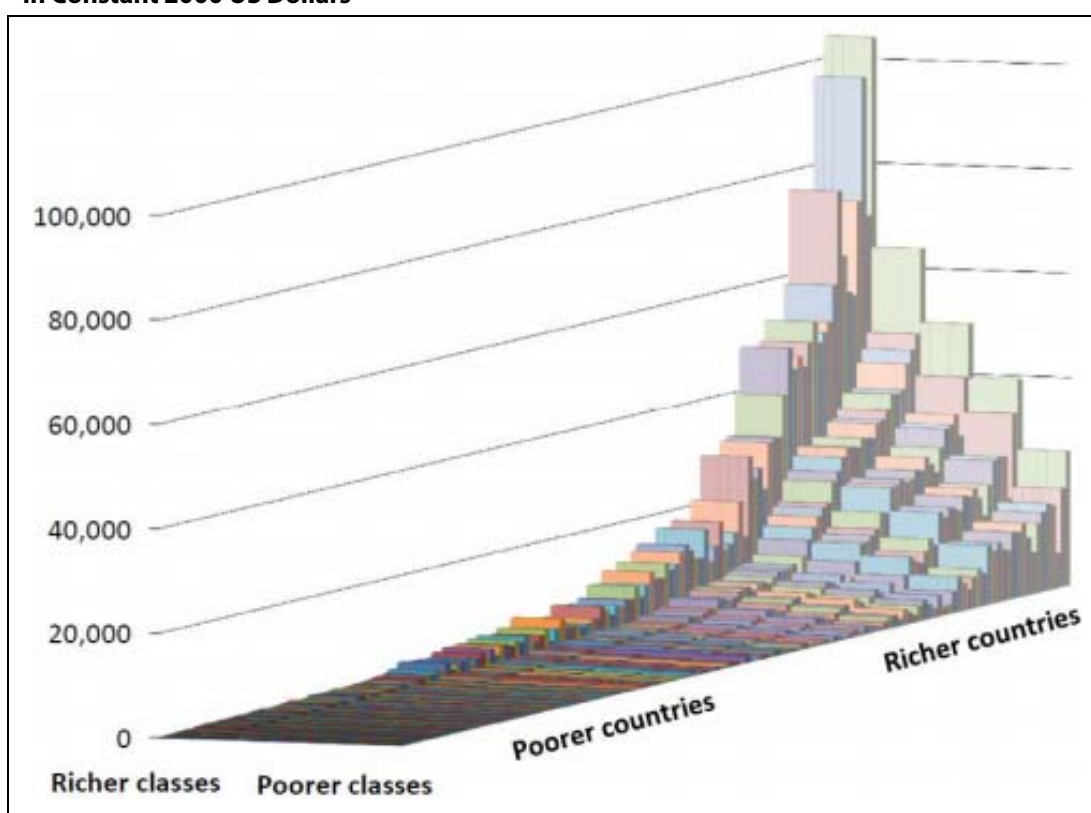
It is hard to deny any more that global financial systems and the formal legal instruments that shape them are mostly benefiting those already well-off. If the crisis in the Eurozone and the rise in protest movements worldwide are not in and of themselves telling enough, Ortiz and

Cummins (2011) employ a distinctive three-dimensional graph (Figure 1) based on population quintiles of 135 countries to reveal inequality to be growing not only between countries globally but also between the haves and have-nots within any given country itself.⁴ In their words,

“As of 2007 the wealthiest 20 per cent of mankind [sic] enjoyed nearly 83 per cent of total global income compared to the poorest 20 per cent, which had exactly a single percentage point under the global accounting model. Perhaps more shocking, the poorest 40 per cent of the global population increased its share of total income by less than one percent between 1990 and 2007” (p.2).

FIGURE 1

A Visualisation of Global Income Distribution, 2007 (or latest Available) in Constant 2000 US Dollars



Source: Ortiz and Cummins (2011: 4), adapted from Sutcliffe (2005) using World Bank (2011), UNU-WIDER (2008) and Eurostat (2011) data.

Ortiz and Cummins also point to poignant studies (for example, Milanovic, 2009) indicating income inequality to have in fact been constantly increasing since the early 19th century—the height of the colonial era. Gini indices calculated over time reveal global income inequality to have risen steadily from 1820 to 2002, with a significant increase from 1980 (Table 1).⁵ Broadly speaking, the dramatic and increasing shift in voices of discontent to voices of utter desperation, in the last 10 years especially, is a driving force behind our own research. It compels us to ask what exactly the relationship has been between colonialism and the modern development model, and in turn modernisation and inequality.

TABLE 1

Estimated Global Gini Indices, 1820–2002

Year	Gini
1820	43.0
1850	53.2
1870	56.0
1913	61.0
1929	61.6
1950	64.0
1960	63.5
1980	65.7
2002	70.7

Source: Ortiz and Cummins (2011: 11), adapted from Milanovic (2009).

Maddison (2006) employs a historical analysis to argue that the rise of global GDP per capita over the past two centuries was largely driven by the industrial revolution in Western Europe and the USA along with a few countries that managed to position themselves as strategic exporters (Table 2). Moving forward from both Milanovic and Maddison's insight, as well as that of postcolonial theory-inclined Chang (2003) and Reinart (2007), Ortiz and Cummins claim that the extraordinary increase in GDP among these countries enabled them to become hegemonic and influence global policy in their own interest. To be sure, Ortiz and Cummins are on to something when they point to the increase of global inequality as betraying fundamental flaws in development policies which conflate growth with GDP as 'indicator' of standard of living. But we prefer to approach the inequality dilemma in an effectively converse way.

That is, we want to know how much the 'revolution' and resultant political ascendancy enjoyed by the West since the early 19th century might actually have been driven by cultivating GDP obsession as part of the enormously systematic discipline by which Western scientific and legal discourses managed, even produced, the very identities, 'high caste' and 'low caste' included, that characterise our current social order. This entails not only flipping the two items on their shared axis but also, more critically, reconceiving the modern development project and its economics focus as ideologically positioning poverty and inequality as veritable 'functions of evolution'. Here then we differ fundamentally from Ortiz and Cummins. "For developing countries to emerge", they advise, "a similar employment-intensive productive development push [(as once experienced by the West)] is needed, as well as an international setting favourable to it" (p.29). Our worry is that such concern with "what matters to economic growth" (p.45) is effectively an echo of Rostow's prescription for change, which, as the ongoing rise in the global power differential clearly shows, did little, to say the least, to tackle inequalities at their root. Indeed, our fear is that the ongoing difficulty so many contemporary development practitioners have in eschewing the term 'mankind' in favour of, for example, 'people', 'populace', 'humanity' or even 'humankind', despite innumerable social theorists reminding UNICEF (of all organisations) time and again of the importance of doing so, is not at all unrelated to a neoliberalist inability to not only let GDP go but also stop speaking in

terms of some countries having ‘failed to emerge’. “Inequality is economically inefficient and dysfunctional” (p.36), Ortiz and Cummins insist. But clearly it is not inefficient and dysfunctional for everyone, and in a policy context, with innumerable numbers of people worldwide, children included, currently finding their food in rubbish dumps, we can no longer permit scope for even a hint that it is.⁶ The wealthiest 20 per cent that Ortiz and Cummins refer to are not crying foul, and never have.

TABLE 2

Per capita GDP in Selected Countries and Regions, 1–2000*

Country / Region		1	1000	1500	1600	1700	1820	1900	1950	2000
Main Drivers	Western Europe	599	425	798	907	1,032	1,243	3,076	5,018	20,090
	United States	400	400	400	400	527	1,257	4,091	9,561	28,403
	Australia	400	400	400	400	400	518	4,013	7,412	21,549
	New Zealand	...	400	400	400	400	400	4,298	8,456	16,178
	Argentina	...	...	...	...	...	...	2,756	4,987	8,544
	Chile	...	...	...	...	...	694	2,194	3,670	10,311
Other Regions	East Europe	412	400	496	548	606	683	1,438	2,111	5,901
	Former USSR	400	400	499	552	610	688	1,237	2,841	4,454
	Latin America	400	400	416	438	527	691	1,113	2,503	5,893
	Asia	456	470	568	574	572	581	638	717	3,807
	Africa	472	425	414	422	421	420	601	890	1,474
World Average		467	453	566	596	615	667	1,262	2,113	6,055

Source: Ortiz and Cummins (2011: 29), adapted from Maddison (2006).

* In 1990 international Geary-Khamis dollars.

3 THE CONVENTIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF CASTE

The Manusher Jonno Foundation, a Dhaka-based human rights non-governmental organisation (NGO), conducted a study in 2007 called *Poverty Profile of the Dalits in Bangladesh*, an ambitious 165-page undertaking and apparently the first of its kind, by a civil society organisation or otherwise, seeking to comprehensively capture the reality of Bangladeshi casteism in and of itself. The report goes some distance toward helping remedy the conspicuous void of literature on the subject, particularly in terms of its emphasis on qualitative data. The fact that it is home-grown makes it even more valuable. Nevertheless, from the perspective of South-South cooperation in general and inclusive growth in particular, the report does appear limited, perhaps hazardous, insofar as it only legitimises a mainstream understanding of casteism and its origins.

The authors introduce the report with a survey as to what is known about caste-based discrimination, citing several key works going back as far as *The People of India* (1908) by British ethnographer and colonial administrator Herbert Hope Risley. But each one of these works, Risley’s included, stand firmly planted in either a race-, occupation-, ritual- or

class-based theory of caste.⁷ Casteism is some 3000 years old, the report states; the general consensus being that it was born of a conflict between incoming Aryans—a linguistic subgroup of the Caucasian race (Jackson, 1869)—and the indigenous non-Aryan peoples they met on their arrival which restructured socio-economic relations in the region in ways that led to the newcomers' ascendancy (MJF, 2007: 11). With their analysis grounded in these terms, the authors of the report immediately (and predictably) proceed to an analysis of casteism's 'economic dimension'. But if such a seminal work itself fails to acknowledge matters of postcolonial identity, including how knowledge of the world is generated under specific social relations of power, it risks actually reproducing the historic patterns of inequality which came to be the impetus for such a report in the first place.

Social theorists operating within postcolonial and feminist canons, many coming from the Global South, have drawn important attention to the ways in which identity and the sense of self of a culture is based on the knowledge generated and codified about this culture. Each of us exists within language and representations (as names, as affiliations, as descriptive categories) given form via constellations of stories—'narratives'—which over time become taken for granted. These narratives are by no means neutral. That is, they carry political weight inasmuch as they are largely determined by prevailing power-holders and in turn create and disseminate ways of thinking and being. 'Progress', the idea that there is a largest-scale trend in evolution and that trend is toward improvement, is a narrative.

4 CASTEISM AS SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC CONSTRUCTION

Historians and linguists tell us that the word 'Dalit' is derived from an Indo-Aryan root 'dal', meaning, generally crack, break or open(ing). Beyond 'Dalit' itself, manifestations of 'dal' are actually evident in contemporary English, German and several South Asian languages. In both Hindi and Bengali today, the word dal refers to a thick stew (also spelled dahl, daal or dhal) prepared from dried lentils, peas or beans which, fittingly, have been stripped of their outer hulls and split or crushed. In English a 'dale' is a valley or cut in the ground, and in German the word for valley is Tal or Thal—for example, 'Neanderthal' (not just the "slouching cave brute"⁸ first discovered in 1856 but, indeed, the small gorge in eastern Germany through which the river Düssel flows). Widespread adoption of the term 'Dalit' as a self-designation, however, is quite recent. It springs out of an awareness and perception of the oppression/humiliation (Guru, 2009) low-caste peoples have to endure; an awareness embryonic in a modern theorisation of caste which only began when Western colonial empires first engaged with Indian civilisation (Jodhka, 2010; Dirks, 2001; Cohn, 1996). This theorisation of caste reached a zenith with post-war French sociologist Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus*, first published six years after *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960) by the Yale-educated Rostow, itself premised upon the idea that the 'Third World' could become a better place if it pursued the same process of transition from 'primitive' to 'modern' social organisation once experienced in the West.

Dumont's efforts to pin down socio-cultural features that made India different found much of their form in the post-war scholarship of American structural-functionalist and Chairman of Harvard's Department of Social Relations, Talcott Parsons, whose own anti-Marxist theories about social order are now widely criticised as operating in support of the status quo and dominant élites.⁹ For Dumont, the caste system is a whole that includes the different

castes as parts. Holism entails hierarchy, while individualism, which modern society adopted after myriad revolutions, entails equality. Hierarchies, Dumont argues, actually emerge innately in the social world as a function of value, and in the case of India these values, failing to have ever undergone any revolutionary change, remain more or less as they had been in Europe during the Ancien Régime—i.e. mostly religious in nature. Chatterjee (1989) points to the science of economics for the most direct example of what exactly Dumont means by this, in doing so helping lay bare not only the ways in which Dumont adopts the externally given standpoint of bourgeois equality, but also the close connections between late 20th century Western foreign policy and what Adam Smith called ‘inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations’. Particular commodities can be distinguished from one another by a variety of subjective qualities, Chatterjee explains. But it is a definition-for-self of commodity—i.e. a ‘value’—which ultimately enables ordering of commodities by quantity precisely because a definition-of-self immediately implies definition-of-another. This very kind of definition-of-self/other applied by Dumont to Indian culture affords him the ability to make determinate distinctions of ‘castes’ otherwise devoid of any inherent boundaries or essence. In effect, his work reifies caste as ‘thing’, simultaneously provoking a certain number of difficulties around this ‘thing’ in such a way that a diversity of thought responses and interventions—morality, science, politics, the law etc.—can now be brought to bear on it. Said differently, Dumont “completes a Western journey into the social scientific invention of India whose roots ... go back to the Orientalist and proto-Orientalist conception of society” (Appadurai, 1986: 745).

How exactly was Dumont able to make such a contribution to this journey; a journey which culminated in a neoliberal Washington Consensus promoting structural reforms that increased GDP-thinking among Southern countries and simultaneously reduced the capacity of marginalised peoples in these same countries to undertake sustained collective action (see Kurtz, 2004)? To put the question another way, why did anyone even listen to Dumont’s words, about the nature of Indian society or anything else? Part of the answer lies in his status as ‘expert’, sanctioned as it was by other ‘experts’, Harvard’s Parsons included, in a process traceable all the way back to Europe’s Age of Enlightenment.

Having command of definition—i.e. to be able to ‘objectify’—allows specialists to have control of discourse. Marx, whose ‘Asiatic mode of production’ represents a classic expression of Orientalism, is himself a standout example of this. James Forbes argued in his *Oriental Memoirs* (1813) that South Indian “civilization ... has long attained its height”; Tamils and Malayalls have been “for some thousand years in the same state of mediocrity; producing no new designs in building, no alteration in manners or dress, no improvements in art or science” (quoted in Bayly, 1995: 174). Fifty years later, James Hunt, founder of the Anthropological Society of London, echoed Forbes’ sentiments in his *Negro’s Place in Nature* (1863), proclaiming in fact that such people—‘Negros’—have, “since remote antiquity”, been “without a progressive history”, eternally lacking in the capacity to mature, to develop ‘advanced’ morals and political institutions which define the civilised races of mankind and render them “fit for places of power” (p.28–30). Such ideas were clearly a major if unacknowledged source for Marx’s ‘radical’ system of thought regarding the nature of social life in general and capitalism in particular. Indeed, Marx’s ideas went on to become a fundamental component of the West’s dichotomous view of the world, including that promulgated by both Parsons and Dumont, despite (or perhaps because of) their antagonism toward prevailing neoliberal ideologues. Just as Dumont would go on to do, Marx argued that Asia had no real history, that is, no historical revolutions which brought about significant changes in the social order—for

example, through the introduction of private property (Turner, 1978). Both he and his close friend Engels affirmed in their writings the need for a colonial intervention which alone could break the equilibrium that so many others—Forbes and Hunt among them—were claiming had kept the Indian village community “static for centuries” (Kohl, 1991: 29).

‘Expert’ modern Western scientific ideas of social evolution proliferating in the Western consciousness during the colonial era thus interacted in complex ways with the emergence of development theory, which itself reciprocated by further influencing anthropological and political thought right through the Cold War, not to mention the Chicago-School economic models (developed by Columbia-educated Milton Friedman and Princeton-educated Gary Becker) imposed on ‘less developed’ countries by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Marx realised that the prehistoric discoveries and recently defined periods ‘Lower’, ‘Middle’ and ‘Upper Paleolithic’ could be interpreted in a manner consistent with the stages of social evolution advanced by American lawyer-ethnologist Lewis Henry Morgan, themselves clearly resonant with those later put forward by Parsons—‘primitive’, ‘archaic’ and ‘modern’—as well as Rostow’s ‘Take-off Theory’ of economic growth. Each of these were in fact instrumental in cementing within development discourse the terms ‘Third’, ‘Second’ and ‘First World’ and, more recently, ‘developed’ and ‘less-developed’.¹⁰ For his part, Engels, complementing Marx’s anthropology-minded conflict theory, relied on Darwin-informed discoveries to reconstruct a hypothetical race of very “highly-developed hominid apes” inhabiting equatorial and subtropical regions “somewhere in the vicinity of the Indian Ocean”. The insuperable laws of biological evolution, claimed Engels, placed before this race of sub-humans a dilemma: to die off or to adapt to changing conditions (Andreev, 1985: 9); a perspective congruent with the contemporary neoliberal insistence, backed by ‘the insuperable laws of economics’, that if conditions among lower classes ever deteriorate it is because the people who make up these classes failed, usually for personal and cultural reasons, to enhance their own human capital.

Some 40 years before Harvard-educated Indian historian D.D. Kosambi claimed in his *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India* (1965) that “*caste is class on a primitive level of production*” (p.50; Kosambi’s italics), in his *Prehistoric India* (1927), Panchanan Mitra, India’s first Professor of Anthropology, likewise traced the ancient origins of contemporary Indians. Employing categories plainly influenced by a modern Euro-American worldview, Mitra, Yale-educated, gave special attention to the research of French naturalist Jean Louis Armand de Quatrefages and English geographer-anthropologist Thomas Griffith Taylor. Taylor’s working assumption was that during the early Pleistocene, while the dark-skinned, dimwitted and generally grotesque Neanderthals probably gave rise to ‘the Negro type’, the Negritos, on the other hand, little different from Negros, were probably giving rise to the various ‘pygmy types’ (Taylor, 1937).¹¹ Specifically, for Taylor, and distinctly reminiscent of Marx and Engels, the ancient Negritos “all along the borders of the Indian Ocean” (p.216) “are almost certainly relics of a bygone type which have been pushed to the margin by later-evolved forms” (p.282). These ‘later forms’ were not ‘Dravidians’, a people who migrated to India from the Eastern Mediterranean sometime around 2000 BC and who were probably a “breed of Negritos themselves” (Mitra, quoting de Quatrefages), but in fact a race of Indo-Aryans—fair, sharp-nosed and possessing, in general, more refined features (see Bêteille, 1968: 174–6)—who moved in long after.¹² A research team led by Kumarasamy Thangaraj of the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology recently brought these ideas of conflict into sharp relief.¹³ Like Risley and Dumont, both of whom, some 60 years apart, used anthropometric data

to help fix the determinate being of castes, Thangaraj et al. (2002) extracted mtDNA data from 47 hair samples originally gathered in the early 20th century by Cambridge University's Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, finding that today's Andaman Island Negritos, who have "earned a reputation for ferocity due to their violent resistance to foreign intrusions" (p.1), became cut off sometime in the remote past from their Paleolithic cousins on mainland South Asia.¹⁴ The respective arguments of Taylor and Thangaraj bookend decades of other 'survival of the fittest'-styled writing, including Fuchs (1981), indicating that sometime in the second millennium BC a wave of migrants—"Neolithic agriculturalists" (Thangaraj et al., 2002: 5)—effectively pushed the Indian Negritos into the sea, assimilating, exterminating or enslaving those who resisted.¹⁵ In the words of two contemporary Indian scholars, in South Asia today it is the current ancestors of those slaves, millennia later, who are now understood to go by the name 'Dalit' (Sadangi, 2008: 47; see also Rice, 1937): "[g]enetically almost all Dalits come from non Aryan origin ... [and] even if there is trace of Aryan gene that was because sexual crime committed by Aryans an [sic] Dalit women during various point of time" (Ghosh and Ghosh, 1997: 9).

5 CASTEISM IN BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh today Hindus represent less than 10 per cent of the total population. But just as their counterparts in India are, Bangladeshi Hindus are traditionally divided into upper, lower and scheduled caste groups. At the top are the *Brahman*, *Kashtriya* and *Vaishya* castes. Below these are the *Shudra*, which include the traditional serfs, craftsmen, agricultural labourers, and below the *Shudra* are the 'out-castes', *Atishudras*, who perform manual labour considered impure by the rest (Mohanty, 2004; cited in Chowdhury, 2009: 6). Bangladesh has for centuries been dominated by the Muslim faith, even before the arrival of the British in the region. But obviously at some point in history a particular section of Muslims in South Asia also came to consider it degrading to accept menial service or do certain kinds of physical work, evidenced in the subjugation felt by some 5.5 million Dalits, many of them Muslim, in Bangladesh today (Griffin, 2009). However, as Zene (2011) and Thorat and Newman (2007) note, 'untouchability' is not even part of the Islamic faith. And thus when, why and how exactly did this kind of localized corruption happen? Forgetting for the moment their Hindu counterparts, why would there even be such a nonsensical contradiction as a 'Muslim Dalit'?

Karim (1976; 1980) and Arefeen (1977; 1982) have sought to offer answers to these questions, yet beyond their valuable (if obscure) works no significant theoretical attention has ever been given to the issue. Both Karim and Arefeen largely argued for a 'nobility of descent' understanding of casteism in Bangladesh, noting that historically Muslims in the Asian subcontinent tended to divide themselves into three broad divisions: (1) *Sharif* or *Ashraf*, (2) *Atraf*, and (3) *Aljaf* or *Arzal*; the first (highest) division, *Ashraf*, being either 'noble born' or foreign Muslims. Such insight lends itself well to an argument that within the complexities of cultural diffusion existed a historical relationship between the Islamists and the British *raj* similar to that between the *raj* and the Hindus. That is to say, in grossly simplified terms, Islam was already a significant component of South Asia when the British arrived; the British manoeuvred the 'higher-caste' Hindus against the 'lower ones' as a means toward asserting British dominance, and the Muslims had little problem with it since it further insinuated their own 'upper divisions' into a certain privileged position.

There may be some measure of truth within this line of reasoning. The late-18th century writing of Calcutta magistrate William Bolts does suggest a certain historical approbation of a ‘Muslim élite’ by the British. “[It was] the fault of the Hindoo people”, insists Bolts, “and not their Mahomedan government, that India did not many ages past figure ... much in commerce abroad and ... acquire the arts of western nations” (Bolts, 1772: 15). Sikand (2004) likewise argues for a complicity of ‘noble-born’ Muslims with ‘upper-caste’ Hindus: “[the noble-born worked] along with them to promote inter-communal strife, setting ‘low’-caste Muslims against the Dalits and other marginalized communities and thereby preserving their own hold over the Muslim masses” (p.103). But the fact that Bangladesh, 90 per cent Muslim, has for so long been one of the poorest countries of the world—40 per cent of its 140 million people live below the poverty line, and more than half of all Bangladeshi children are malnourished (Chowdhury, 2009: 43)—convinces us that the most prudent way of making sense of the contradiction that is Bangladeshi casteism is in terms of the fact that by far the biggest ‘winners’ to emerge as a result of caste-based discrimination was the West itself, and indeed a certain privileged subset within Western countries; an approach wholly consistent with Milanovic’s (2009) observation that inequality has been growing exponentially (with ‘official’ proclamations about ‘what matters to economic growth’) since colonial times.

“We were not sweepers in the past. We were peasants. We became sweepers after we migrating [sic] here”, a Dalit woman recently told Farzana Islam.¹⁶ This woman, at the time of the publication of this Working Paper at least, has never been a student at an Ivy League university, or for that matter worked or interned at a policy institute. Nor does she own a computer to help her calculate GDP. But research undertaken by a number of contemporary historians (for example, Ghurye, 2008; Dirks, 2001) supports Dalit oral histories such as hers; suggesting, indeed, that the social system characterising modern India was never completely rigid and the four-fold Varna hierarchy never ubiquitous in South Asia until the British’s centrally managed social plans imposed schematic visions (based on attempts in both liberal and emerging Marxist analysis to formulate economic understandings of the past) that did violence to complex interdependencies neither appreciated nor fully understood. Discourse analysis of historical documents reveals such violence to have been a constant feature of colonial writing.

In 1681 English traveller-physician John Fryer offered readers of the English-speaking world a description of a seasonal ritual in southern India, wherein a chicken is sacrificed by the “Dregs of the People”. “[T]hese Underlings that do these services to the Devil, or are said to do so, may be aspersed”, wrote Fryer, approbating a disdain by ‘upper-caste’ Hindus towards the ‘heathen’ (and thus immoral) ‘lower castes’.

“For the Brachmins [sic], and other the Purer Sort, as they account themselves, may defame them only, because shedding of blood is horrible to them, and therefore Diabolical: ... and the Devil without doubt cannot easier work on any, than the Weak and Simple, and upon that account may probably delude and overawe these People, that give themselves up to him wholly out of Fear, having not so much Virtue, Fortitude, and Cunning, to resist and check their own Lusts, as the Wiser sort” (p.180).

Less than 100 years later, and a mere four years before Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* (in which Smith proposed that individual pursuit of self-interest and the unimpeded operation of the market resulted in the achievement of the ‘common good’), the Calcutta magistrate Bolts (1772) decried the “despotic state of *nature* evident at the interior of the country”,

“where the laws of England [do not reach]”. Bolts insisted that only through systems of ‘free’ trade could Bengal “be made flourishing and importantly beneficial to the British state” (p.vii; our italics), and his readership apparently took note. Within a decade British Foreign Secretary, Lord Grantham (1782 [Harlow and Madden, 1953]), was complaining to the Cabinet in London that the Dutch had beaten Britain to the kind of real ‘free’ trade Britain’s élite themselves coveted:

“Our situation in India certainly renders the Port of Trincomalé [(Sri Lanka)] not only desirable, but almost necessary to us. . . . The Dutch have hitherto kept themselves masters of the navigation of the Eastern Seas. With what consistency can they in one instance claim free trade, and in another pretend to keep an exclusive one?” (p.8).

By the mid-19th century, the same time an increasingly science-committed Marx was writing about the French Revolution and the Western disciplines of anthropology and economics were finding their distinct and mature form, British colonialists interested in free trade had spread east toward Dhaka, bringing untouchables (wholly unfree) along with them to perform menial tasks—sweeping, sewer cleaning, meat processing, care of the dead and tea gardening. Administrative reformers in this ‘new land’ continued the vocabulary utilised by their countrymen Fryer and Bolts (and others), helping provide the footing for Dumont, via *Homo Hierarchicus*, to eventually equate hierarchy with value. Bengal civil servant George Campbell was such an administrator. In his *Modern India: A Sketch of the System of Civil Government* (1852), Campbell proclaimed “[t]he actual outcast class, who are not admitted to be Hindoos at all, and whom good Hindoos regard with abhorrence and dread of their very touch, . . . are of inferior personal appearance, and to be regarded as the aboriginal race” (Campbell, 1852: 55–56). For Campbell, the descendants of the “old Aryans” (the ones whom arrived in the region before the colonial British themselves) were a “good-looking”, “intellectual” “Bramin race” that built little village republics that were respectable if nevertheless “less democratic” than those of “the races that followed them” (Campbell, 1868–9: 134–6).¹⁷ Fellow Indian civil servant William Wilson Hunter promulgated effectively the same view, but in this case focused exclusively on the region which would eventually go on to become Bangladesh. In his widely circulated *Annals of Rural Bengal* (1897) Hunter provided an Engels-reminiscent ethno-historical portrait depicting a region shaped by titanic warfare between ‘noble’ Aryans and ‘rude’ aboriginals.

In light of the work done by colonial governments in Australia, Africa and the Americas, the will of each of these writers to conflate ‘outcasts’ with ‘aboriginals’ (and indeed the ‘fair-skinned’ with the ‘human’) is irresistible.¹⁸ Since the 16th century, beginning with the Royal Decrees of 1572 and 1573, the Spanish Crown in the Americas made successive moves to position blacks, mulattoes and *zambaigos* (a child of an American ‘Indian’ woman and a negro or mulatto [see Forbes, 1993: 236]) as *castas* for the purposes of establishing a legislative basis which could exploit these ‘breeds’ (Gómez and Gómez, 1999). By the 17th century referring to the original peoples of the Americas, North and South, as ‘Indians’ was (and remains) commonplace. Advocating a union of the East India and Hudson’s Bay Companies so that, in words evoking Lord Grantham’s complaint against the Dutch, “no other traders can stand in competition” (p.35), Alexander Dalrymple (1789 [Harlow and Madden, 1953]), hydrographer for the British Admiralty, expresses “strong desire of correcting the brutality of the Indians [in Canada], truly called *savage*, by introducing amongst them the comforts and humanity of

civilized life" (p.36; Dalrymple's italics). By 1867, by way of its Indian Act, the Government of Canada was making definitive moves toward such 'correction', defining who is a Canadian 'Indian' and setting up certain legal rights and disabilities for those officially registered with the 'Indian' title (Figure 2). And just as it had been used to justify the conquest of the Americas, talk of the 'lazy native' and the miraculous benefits of free trade accompanied the entire European land grab in Africa. "The Arab never changes", opined British-American explorer Henry Morgan Stanley (1872: 5). "For the half-castes I have great contempt. They are neither black nor white; neither good nor bad" (p.6).

FIGURE 2

Duck Lake Métis Museum, Manitoba, 2009

CERTIFICATE OF INDIAN STATUS
Department of Citizenship and Immigration
CANADA

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
PIERRE (WHITEFISH) AHTAHAMAKE

No. 121 BIG RIVER Band
is an Indian within the meaning of the Indian Act,
Chapter 149, Revised Statutes of Canada 1952.

N^o 37599 U.M. Dean
L.A. 2-6 Superintendent, Indian Agency

Date of Birth	Sex	Height
<u>1867</u>	<u>M.</u>	<u>5' 3"</u>
Marital Status	Hair	Weight
<u>Married</u>	<u>Grey</u>	<u>130</u>
Complexion	Eyes	Date of Issue
<u>Dark</u>	<u>Br.</u>	<u>12 Jun 56</u>
Scars, Birthmarks, Amputations		
<u>Scar on forehead</u>		
Agency <u>DUCK LAKE, Saskatchewan.</u>		

Finder Please Return, Postage Free,
to Indian Affairs Branch, Ottawa, Ont.

Pierre Whitefish Ahtahamake

CERTIFICATE OF INDIAN STATUS
Department of Citizenship and Immigration
CANADA

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
MRS. PIERRE (WHITEFISH) AHTAHAMAKE

No. 121 BIG RIVER Band
is an Indian within the meaning of the Indian Act,
Chapter 149, Revised Statutes of Canada 1952.

N^o 37620 U.M. Dean
L.A. 2-6 Superintendent, Indian Agency

Date of Birth	Sex	Height
<u>1873</u>	<u>F.</u>	<u>5' 1"</u>
Marital Status	Hair	Weight
<u>Married</u>	<u>Grey</u>	<u>145</u>
Complexion	Eyes	Date of Issue
<u>Dark</u>	<u>Br.</u>	<u>12 Jun 56</u>
Scars, Birthmarks, Amputations		
<u>Nil.</u>		
Agency <u>DUCK LAKE, Saskatchewan.</u>		

Finder Please Return, Postage Free,
to Indian Affairs Branch, Ottawa, Ont.

Mrs. Mary Ahtahamake

Source: Photo by Higgitt.

In India-proper by the early 20th century applying the 'rule of law' appropriately entailed creating, via the *raj's* Government of India Act, a list—or 'schedule'—of the various castes. Designed to give Indian provinces greater autonomy, this Act itself had the effect of bestowing throughout the British-administered provinces a certain legitimacy to casteism as 'cultural norm', ordering society while simultaneously justifying British authority (Sharma, 2002). The *raj's* efforts to systematise personal law—laws related to marriage, inheritance, adoption and so forth—had particularly far-reaching implications for religious practice across communities (Metcalfe, 2009: 20). Altogether, this 'book-view' of caste, as Jodhka (2010) has called it, positioned—indeed 'oriented'—South Asia as a part of the broader monolithic and, to be sure, 'backward' and 'animalistic' non-Western world.¹⁹

The official exit of the British Empire from the subcontinent in 1947 saw the Bengal region partitioned along religious lines, with the western part going to newly created India and the eastern part, with its Muslim majority, joining Pakistan as a new province called 'East Bengal', later renamed 'East Pakistan' (Collins and Lapierre, 1975; see also Shah, 2007). Their options

few and far between, Dalits brought over by the British largely stayed where they were, by this time looked on with contempt by the descendants of foreign Muslims (Arabs, Persians, Afghans) who deemed themselves 'Ashraf' (noble-born). On 11 August 1947 (24 years before East Bengal's 1971 liberation from Pakistan), British-educated lawyer Mohammad Ali Jinnah, 'founder of Pakistan' and proponent of the Huntington-reminiscent Two Nations Theory,²⁰ proclaimed to his country's Constituent Assembly in Karachi "You may belong to any religion, caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State..." (UN, 2012). What exactly Jinnah meant by this is debatable. But the fact that no official statistical analysis of Dalits was ever undertaken in 'East Pakistan' or, to this day, Bangladesh (see IDSN, 2009) is compelling, especially since Pakistan is today itself one of the poorest nations of the world and, to borrow from Azad (1988), Two Nations Theory actually affirms an essentialised racism which holds some portions of the world to be pure and others impure.²¹

6 DALITS AND BLACKS AS SUBALTERNS

The history of exploitation suffered by Dalits is commonly said to closely resemble that of African-Americans. Even Campbell, the Bengal civil servant, was noting as far back as the mid-19th century a sameness between Blacks and Dravidians, "modern representatives of one of the earliest phases of the history of mankind" (Campbell, 1868-69: 128). According to Campbell (1852), no democratic republic seems to have ever succeeded which included the whole population alike: "The balance of the constitution could not be maintained, and there has always been in such cases a large population of free republicans, with an inferior class to do the dirty work" (p.55).²² By the end of the 20th century V.T. Rajshekar offered an exposé on the similarities in his often-cited *Dalit: The Black Untouchables of India* (1987). In the USA itself, during the American civil rights movement the Spartacist League, with chapters in New York and San Francisco, was actively describing the Black population as "an oppressed race-color caste" in its leftist literature (Spartacist League, 1967). Meanwhile, the Black Panther revolutionary movement was inspiring, back on the other side of the world, a Dalit rights advocate named Namdev Dhasal to form the militant-styled Dalit Panthers in Mumbai (Singh, 2007). Even the United Nations saw fit to cite parallels between the respective careers of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi, pointing to these two leaders' use of non-violence to advocate for the respective human rights of African-Americans and Dalits (UNESCO, 1999).

Comparisons between Dalits and African-Americans continue to be a standout feature of contemporary Dalit studies (see Jodhka and Newman, 2009). However, as compelling as these may be, a common feature these comparisons share is a latent conflation of 'Blackness' and 'Dalitness'.

Actions on the part of an oppressor necessarily provoke 'countermoves', and a countermove that is merely reactionary is ineffective because it is no more than a programmed effect in the oppressor's strategy; it may actually work to reinforce that balance of power. In his *The African Presence in Asia* (1971), Howard University Distinguished Professor Joseph E. Harris notes that "[m]any Indian languages use the words *fair* and *beautiful* synonymously" (p.116; Harris's italics). Few contemporary writers on race- or caste-based discrimination, Harris included, explicitly perceive underdevelopment or poverty to be a consequence of the traditional society's inertia or other endogenous factors that have nothing to do with the colonial or imperialist legacies of contemporary economics. Yet such is the relationship between

discourse and power, insofar as these writers work to draw parallels between the 'coloured' and the 'out-cast' and then position this group against an 'oppressor' fewer still can avoid having their work become grist for the mill which links the adult, white, male, Euro-American with evolutionary 'progress'—a progress reflected, for example, not only in the *Fair & Lovely* billboard advertisements (Figure 3) by Anglo-Dutch corporation Unilever that currently dominate South Asian and African urban centres but also in the popular science magazine *Origins*, practically the 'scientific' mirror-image of these advertisements (Figure. 4; see also Wiber, 1997).

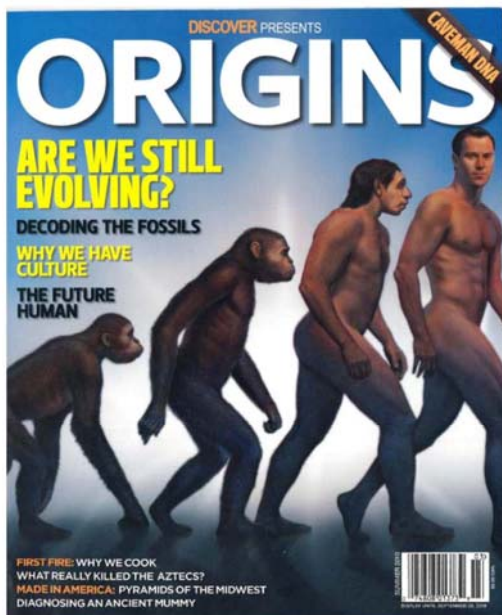
FIGURE 3

Unilever's *Fair & Lovely* Billboard Advertisements (photo courtesy Shunya.net)

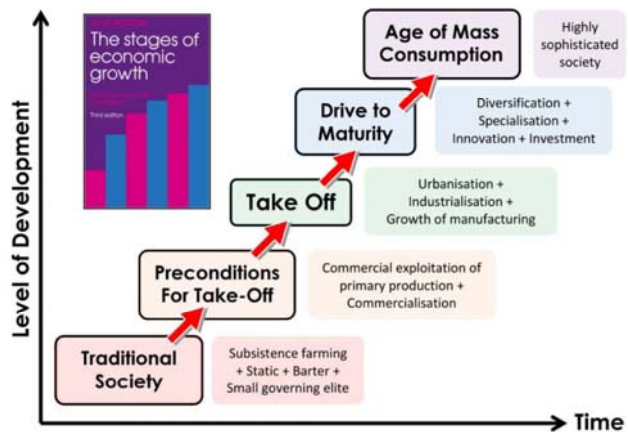


FIGURE 4

Human Evolution and Rostow's Development Model



Rostow's 5 Stages of Economic Growth



Magazine cover reprinted by permission of Discover. Graph adapted from Rostow's Five Stages of Economic Growth (1960).

The 'progressive' form (i.e. the adult, white, male Euro-American) has less meaning without the 'non-progressive' (Blacks and Dalits), and Blacks and Dalits have no meaning without the adult, white, male Euro-American. This link undergirds prevailing conceptions of the world's poor people as 'natural' and, conversely, the wealthy as 'cultural'—a false dichotomy evident, for example, in the early-18th century writing of French Sanskrit scholar J. A. Dubois, who informed his readership that "if the Hindus were not kept within the bounds of casteism they would, like the outcastes, checked by no moral restraints, abandon themselves to their natural propensities" ... "and speedily become worse than the hordes of cannibals who wander in the vast waste of Africa" (1905 [2007: 29]).²³ It is also part of a larger cultural accretion of meaning that connects progress and race together with gender in insidious ways, which in turn helps explain the continual resistance on the part of so many development practitioners, particularly those not in the 'soft' sciences, to eschew reference to 'mankind' in favour of neutral wording.

Such is the power of discourse this is precisely why it is important, as Lyotard has argued, to increase displacement in the language games, and even to *dis-orient* them, in such a way as to make unexpected 'moves' (i.e. new statements) (Lyotard, 1979). The historical fact of Blacks' forced migration to the Americas as slaves versus Indian Dalits' status as 'natives' ('aboriginals') undoubtedly sees the "complex sets of factors involving history, social, political, economic and psychological elements" (Etienne, 2007: 29) constituting the reality of Blacks in the USA, especially at the turn of the 20th century, much more faithfully relate to Bangladesh's Dalits than India's. Drawing attention to Bangladeshi casteism as different—that is, breaking up the conventional Black–Dalit homology by breaking up the uniformity of 'Dalitness' itself—may be an 'unexpected move'.

7 NATURAL NAUGHTINESS AND THE DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS OF BANGLADESHI DALITS

Today the vast majority of Dalits across the Asian subcontinent live segregated lives in marginal conditions; 'hardcore poor' in almost every conceivable sense of the term. Unlike the Dalits of India, however, because most Dalits in Bangladesh are descendants of Indians from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh (Chowdhury, 2009; IIDS, 2008), they are forced to shoulder the dubious burden of holding a historical status as 'migrants', a circumstance which estranges them from that symbolically powerful if otherwise extraneous (in terms of human rights) claim to being 'original inhabitants' of the land. It is not only the burden of being the lowest of castes but also the simultaneous cognitive dissonance associated with chronic feelings of being a veritable stranger in their own home that is perhaps the most salient feature of a Bangladeshi Dalit's existence. To borrow from Chowdhury (2011), who profiled Dalits in Chittagong, "[Bangladeshi Dalits are] isolated in terms of ... mental aspect [sic] from the mainstream community" (p.87).

The African-American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois was a member of the three-person delegation from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People that attended the 1945 conference in San Francisco that saw the birth of the UN as a formal global governing body. Pushing conference participants to endorse racial equality and bring an end to the colonial era, he drafted a proposal that pronounced "[t]he colonial system of government ... is undemocratic, socially dangerous and a main cause of wars" (Lewis, 1993: 656). Much of what Du Bois had to say in this proposal resonated with the arguments he put forward in his *Dusk of Dawn* (1940). Written five years before the conference, it drew explicitly

on the concept of caste in an effort to capture the intricate mechanism of racism as Du Bois saw it in late-19th and early-20th century USA. “It is difficult to let others see the full psychological meaning of caste segregation”, he wrote.

“It is as though one looking out from a dark cave in a side of an impending mountain, sees the world passing and speaks to it; speaks courteously and persuasively, showing them how these entombed souls are hindered in their natural movement, expression and development; and how their loosening from prison would be a matter not simply of courtesy, sympathy, and to help them, but aid to all the world. One talks on evenly and logically in this way, but notices that the passing throng does not even turn its head, or if it does, glances curiously and walks on. It gradually penetrates the minds of the prisoners that the people passing do not hear; that some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass is between them and the world. They get excited; they talk louder; they gesticulate. Some of the passing world stop in curiosity; these gesticulations seem so pointless; they laugh and pass on. They still either do not hear at all, or hear but dimly, and even what they hear, they do not understand. Then the people within may become hysterical. They may scream and hurl themselves against the barriers, hardly realizing in their bewilderment that they are screaming in a vacuum unheard and that their antics may actually seem funny to those outside looking in. They may even, here and there, break through in blood and disfigurement, and find themselves faced by a horrified, implacable and quite overwhelming mob of people frightened for their own very existence” (Du Bois, quoted by Kapoor, 2004: 158).

Du Bois framed this description of the psychology of segregation around his theoretical concept of ‘double consciousness’, first articulated in an essay in the American magazine *Atlantic* entitled ‘Strivings of the Negro People’—later republished, with revisions, in his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). For Du Bois double consciousness experienced by American Blacks flows as consequence of the unwavering ‘two-ness’ of being constituting the Black American’s reality—that is, “an American, a Negro; two warring ideals in one dark body”. This burden of being simultaneously ‘an American’ and ‘not an American’, according to Du Bois, was effectively synonymous with the real power of white stereotypes in Black life and thought, manifest in forced segregations which excluded Black Americans from the mainstream of society. “I’m the one who has been labeled as an outcast”, sing New Jersey rap group (and eponymously named) *Naughty By Nature*, in stark frustration simultaneously evocative of Du Bois’s Blacks facing ‘people frightened for their own very existence’ and the ‘survival of the fittest’ ideology of these same frightened people.

They teach in schools I’m the misfit ya’ll will outlast

But that’s cool; with the fool smack’em backwards

That’s what you get for fuckin’ with a ghetto bastard

If you ain’t ever been to the ghetto

Don’t ever come to the ghetto

Cause you wouldn’t understand the ghetto

So stay the fuck out of the ghetto.

These words, from the perspective of souls²⁴ across the globe forced into an unwavering two-ness of being, represent a challenge to those who stand on the other side of the glass looking in, *World Development Report* in hand: Could it be possible that our imprisonment is less our fault than in fact yours? Should a *World Development Report* now 'dedicated to the behaviour and social foundations of development' focus not on the psychology of the subaltern, and how to change it, but rather on that of those who forced this 'two-ness' of being in the first place, and in turn those who maintain it? If 'norms and human cognition are malleable and can be influenced by policy and education', might the world be a better place if the malleating was actually done, for the first time, on those directing the production of the *World Development Report*?

A joint NGO submission to the 2009 Universal Periodic Review of the human rights situation in Bangladesh indicated that political, economic and social exclusion of Dalits is practised across the entirety of Bangladesh (UPR, 2009). It is double consciousness, however, that most clearly distinguishes Bangladeshi Dalits from their Indian counterparts. Distinctly reminiscent of *Dusk of Dawn*, pioneer of the Dalit movement in Bangladesh and founder of the Dhaka-based NGO Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights (BDHR), B.G. Murthy (sometimes appearing in the literature as 'Murti'), told the Bangladeshi newspaper *The Daily Jugantor* shortly before his death that Bangladesh's "law and order agencies do not hear [Dalit voices]"; as if "we are not citizens of this country" (Masud, 2006) despite, as his BDHR colleague Babulal Sardar notes, "if by 'backwards' Bangladesh's Constitution means untouchables, Dalits are indeed Bangladeshis like anyone else here" (Higgitt, 2009: 6). Murthy is by no means alone with this feeling. In the few short years since Dalit issues east of India emerged on the global development radar, a review of the literature reveals expressions of a two-ness of being to be a prominent theme.

It has long been known that Bangladeshi Dalits have been victims of arbitrary eviction and land-grabbing going back to the Government of Bangladesh's Vested Property Act of 1974 and beyond (see IDSN, 2008).²⁵ But there is pervasive evidence that the pretext used to validate these forced evictions is Bangladeshi Dalits' historical status as migrants. The Act became increasingly controversial and was finally repealed in 2001 and replaced by the Vested Properties Return Act. However, as noted by the International Dalit Solidarity Network, implementation of this law has been slow and opposition parties have called for its repeal (p.5):

"[T]he spirit of the old Act lives on in widespread attacks on the Hindu population perpetrated by radical Muslims. As a consequence of the extensive confiscations and the delayed return of the land, landlessness is widespread. Lack of land often also means lack of access to credit and prevents Dalits from acquiring other capital assets such as descent housing. This problem is shared with Muslim Dalits even though they never had to face any of the discriminatory land acts" (p.5).

Throughout the country's seven major administrative divisions—from Rangpur in the north to Barisal in the south—Bangladeshi Dalits are constantly being told, explicitly and implicitly, that Bangladesh is not their place. Administrators and government officials frequently ask Dalits to leave and 'go back to where they came from'. As one example, a Dalit woman recently confessed to human rights NGO One Word Action (2011) "I do not feel like a citizen in my own country" (p.15). Another confided to Islam (2011) that she and other Dalits had approached their local Ward Commissioner to seek justice for a misdeed by one of his officials. The commissioner, said the woman, responded by admonishing her and her

companions, insisting they were “a burden to Bangladesh” and advising them to “go back to India which was [their] country” (p.18). Zene (2011) spent extensive time with Dalits in the country’s Khulna district. Over the course of several months their expressions of frustration at life as ‘prisoners’ in their own homes turned, tellingly, to statements as to aspirations for life when their ‘prison sentence’ was over:

“Initially, in fact, their comments were a reflection of what others—caste Hindus, Muslims, missionaries, police, teachers—said about them. Only later did they feel at ease to let me know what they thought about themselves. At times I judged their statements false, until I realized that they were projecting a vision of themselves in the future, not just as they were seen by others but most of all as they ‘wanted to be’ seen.”

The internal conflict in the African-American individual between what was ‘African’ and what was ‘American’ which Du Bois saw as tied to the African-American’s mind and, as it were, his very soul (Bruce Jr., 1992) resonates strongly with each of these expressions of the Bangladeshi Dalit’s lived reality in Bangladesh. Most Bangladeshi Dalits are not ‘original inhabitants’ of the land but rather were brought to East Bengal, just as Blacks were brought to the 13 American Colonies, to serve as free labour for colonial Masters. And, indeed, much of the modern development model, including mainstream economics, continues to tell the Dalit (and everyone else who is listening) that the lower castes are ‘naughty by nature’, even though GDP, a ‘*natural* measure of a nation’s standard of living’, misleads as an index of poverty because, among other things, self-reliance means sufficiency outside the market economy.²⁶

8 THE IMPORTANCE OF SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE

Its very ubiquity in the Global South means that caste-based discrimination is critical to discourse on South-South cooperation, an ‘emerging’ paradigm compelling for its potential to inaugurate a new conception of development departing from prevailing ‘progress’ narratives which conceive the West to be the locus around which all other nations of the world turn.²⁷ But South-South cooperation over the last decade has largely been about inter-country relations only. That is, Southern governments have tended to avoid any effort to influence one another’s national policy with respect to human rights and equality. This circumstance brings into sharp relief Morais de Sá e Silva’s (2010) concern that this new paradigm may not really be all that ‘new’ at all. “It can be argued that it all started with the ‘making of the Third World’” (p.3), she notes, citing Escobar.

This is an important observation, and one which has served as one of the guiding principles behind our critical historical analysis of the modern development project. The conclusion we draw, ultimately, is that irrespective of any noble ideals of Southern development practitioners looking to move beyond ‘business as usual’, calling it a ‘new’ paradigm demands a sustained reflexivity on the part of those practitioners; one that includes repeatedly questioning just how much this relentless ‘North’ and ‘South’ rhetoric itself remains part of the same conceptual architecture of a diffusing imperialistic logic which provides theoretical legitimisation for those ideologies giving form to notions of ‘Two Worlds’, ‘Two Civilisations’, an Occident and an Orient. Without such reflexivity, South-South cooperation is hazardous. It may actually reinforce prevailing binaries of thinking which perpetuate the stereotypes of developed/barbaric, advanced/primitive, superior/inferior,

rational/abhorrent and so on, all of which fall into the larger binaries of 'self' and 'other' and produce inequality that adds to the homologisation of the South as a monolithic civilisation.

Since people have for centuries felt like strangers in their own homes, then how can it be said that 'growth' schemes, to this point dominated by economic formulae, have ever been inclusive? The very fact that inequality has been increasing since the colonial era has to be taken as informative. The conventional response to caste-based discrimination is that it has 'adverse consequences in terms of economic growth'—i.e., reduction in job commitment and efficiency among workers who perceive themselves as victims of discrimination, coupled with reduction in the magnitude of investment in human capital by discriminated groups because the return on their investment is weakened, "is far from the model of a perfectly competitive market economy" (Thorat and Newman, 2007: 4122). But it is not supposed to be, and never was. The more we react by striving for this 'perfectly competitive market economy', clearly, the greater the disparity becomes. Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of British India, affirms that omni-lateral development was truly never on the agenda. In 1829 he writes:

"It might be very difficult to make a stranger to India understand, much less believe, that in a population of so many millions of people as the Calcutta Division includes, and the same may be said of all the Lower Provinces, so great is the want of courage and of vigour of character, and such the habitual submission of centuries, that insurrection or hostile opposition to the will of the ruling power may be affirmed to be an impossible danger...

If, however, security was wanting against extensive popular tumult or revolution, I should say that the Permanent Settlement, which, though a failure in many other respects and in its most important essentials, has this great advantage at least, of having created a vast body of rich landed proprietors deeply interested in the continuance of the British Dominion and having complete command over the mass of the people" (Bentinck 1829[1922]: 214-215).

Bentinck and the rich landed proprietors he speaks of understood implicitly that theirs was a system established to suit the needs of the few, not the many, and that the many could not therefore ever be permitted to question and alter British East India (governmento-corporate) rule.

Based on case studies of industrial and political revolutions as well as financial wealth attainment in countries such as Britain and France, modernisation theorists such as Rostow and Dumont tried to determine why Western nation-states fared, in their opinion, better than non-Western societies. Their answer, intentionally emphasising difference and distinctiveness, was that the 'primitive' societies comprising the Orient are distinguishable from Western societies by their lack of industrial capitalism, scientific rationality, participatory democracy, autonomous cities, aesthetic disciplines, a middle-class and revolutionary change. Further, they argued that the non-West could be brought up to par with Western standards of living if they simply pursued the same processes of social evolution once experienced in the 'free world'.²⁸ This notion of the 'primitive' Orient and the 'progressive' West is discernible in countless Euro-American works of anthropology and economics embodying the modernisation thesis after the Second World War.²⁹

Well before Rostow and Dumont, bringing the world's 'dark' people and places into the 'light' was sanctioned by the authorities, scientific 'experts' included. In most cases, for a white man to rebel meant challenging the system that provided his livelihood. And in contemporary

development projects expressly concerned with the welfare of 'mankind' this is still the case. A hundred years ago everyone around the 'developer' functionary was participating, and going along with the system saw him paid, promoted, awarded medals. One thing that helped functionaries become used to the dehumanisation of the 'other' was a slight, symbolic distance—irrelevant to the victim—between an official in charge and the physical act of dehumanisation itself (Hochschild, 1998). In the African Congo, white officials found "the best plan ... to be to have each *capita* (African foreman) administer the punishment [(whipping)] for his own gang" (p.122; Hochschild's italics). In the Asian subcontinent, the best plan was effectively the same; only the 'capita' in this instance were the 'more noble' higher castes. British-American literature has the function of disseminating ideas that contribute to the hegemonic domination of one class by another given the English language's position today as the supreme vehicle of expression of economic dominance (Seabrook, 2002: 120). Colonial governments in countries such as India left an élite—the 'more noble'—whose knowledge of English has enabled them to ally themselves with English-speaking élites in the global arena. Today, the bulk of development policy is written in English and focuses on the comparison of 'modern' urban-based life-ways to 'traditional' rural life-ways so as to, as Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* demonstrates, isolate the latter's 'deficiencies'—the absence of democratic institutions, of technology, of initiative etc.—and to find ways, such as augmenting GDP per capita, to repair those deficiencies in the name of 'economic growth' (see Primeau, 2010; Ibister, 2003).

Caste-based discrimination abounds throughout the Asian subcontinent despite growing international pressure from human rights organisations for governments, particularly the Indian government, to take special action to protect and support those affected by it. Casteism in South Asia only took on those features which define it today when measures were undertaken by the British *raj* to prepare India's socio-cultural environment to facilitate modernisation, whereby Western science, economics included, as a mode of governmentality grounded as immutable dichotomies abstractions otherwise inherently unamenable to quantification and codification. Just as the emergence of prisons has done little if anything to curb crime in the modern world (indeed, a case can be made that, if anything, they have only functioned to amplify crime and thus race and class divisions), the emergence of castes reflects the ways by which modern scientific rationality operates as a mode dividing, segregating, disciplining—in other words 'conducting conduct'—in ways that invariably privilege some ('mankind') and subordinate others.

The work of organic intellectuals, especially those from the South, has certainly been invaluable in bringing to light the profound contradiction inherent in our actually having a supranational institution—namely, a Bank, with powerful ties to familiar for-profit interests (Goldman, 2005)—exist today as the world's prime guidance counsellor for 'a world free of poverty', and thus why so many in the development sector, hoping to keep their own job, genuinely stare at their shoes in the midst of whisper-level discussions about that contradiction. Du Bois's insight about double consciousness and colonialism is equally valuable, helping us understand how futile, even harmful, any *World Development Report* is that is written and produced by anyone who '*ain't ever been to the ghetto*', listened to the people there, confirmed that these peoples' oral histories are relevant, and offered them a real say in the decision-making that effects their lives. Modernisation theory is now so thoroughly transcribed into a vast network of development policies, international planning agencies and institutions and various other development practices that many outside the mainstream,

including Bangladeshi Dalit activists, find their principle occupation to be one of constantly reacting to the misery inflicted on already disadvantaged groups by an upper echelon unable/unwilling to see the world in any way other than a 'the natural operation of the market must be our answer' lens.

In the development sector, the excuse that 'we just haven't yet got the details of the economic formula right' or that 'we could pull it off if we only had a little more time and money' no longer holds water, if it ever did. But nor is it enough for the rest of us to stand around shouting 'put the calculator down, you're not helping'. Instead, South-South policy must actually challenge the conventional politics of inclusion by challenging, among other things, the now hegemonic notion of 'progress' embedded in prevailing neoliberal discourse which holds relentless competition as a sign of rigor and worth, and in turn inequality and oppression as something natural. Moving forward must entail seeking to further our understanding of the impulse behind the lasting commitment to a world of money, at the most fundamental level, in the face of exponentially increasing inequality while having the courage to envision new possibilities. By adopting resistance strategies which, in relation to essentialism, are much more nuanced, including embracing alternative epistemological systems that disrupt the prevailing language games and dislocate the hegemonic neoliberal perspective, the South can help the rest of the global population embrace the contingent, the discontinuous and the unrepresentable as coordinates for remapping and rethinking borders that define one's existence and place in the world. To be effective, South-South cooperation must not at all exclude the North but instead define itself by 'unexpected moves' which indeed *dis-orient*; recognising the paradox of similarity and difference as revealed, for example, by the lived experienced of Bangladesh's Dalit folk.³⁰

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NOTES

1. Fratianni and Pattison (2004) have argued that the IMF is effectively a tool for G7 countries to pursue their own global economic interests. More recently the IMF has faced criticism from some of its own top employees regarding selection practices for Heads of both the IMF and World Bank which have invariably seen, since the inception of these institutions, the appointment of a European and an American, respectively <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-18921670>>.
2. In a speech to the 2004 Indigenous Rights and Development in Latin America Symposium held in Germany, Carlos Viteri, Executive Secretary of El Instituto para el Ecodesarrollo Regional Amazónico, stated that “[i]n the weltanschauung of indigenous societies, in their understanding of the purpose and meaning that the lives of people have and should have, there is not a concept of development. That is, no conception of life in a linear process, establishing a before and after stage – namely, a sub-developed and developed dichotomy through which peoples must pass to achieve a desirable life, as in the Western world. Nor are there any notions of wealth and poverty determined by the accumulation or lack of material goods” (quoted in Ceruti, 2009: 10–11). In light of our argument, this insight on the part of indigenous peoples is compatible with a number of contemporary sociologists, including Barad (1998), Haraway (1991) and Ritvo (1997), who have identified boundaries as a key theme in modern scientific theory and method, especially in evolutionary biology. We draw linkages between evolutionary biology and the modernization pretext of contemporary economics.
3. The Satkhira-based Dalit rights NGO Paritran notes the problems associated with the view that GDP is the be-all and end-all of poverty alleviation: “Social scientists and development planners have always tried to understand poverty from the view of needs and their fulfilment. Therefore all development initiatives were undertaken on the basis of enhancing livelihood and purchasing capacity of the poor. As a result the whole process has been counter productive for caste minority. In fact, there has hardly been any attempt to see poverty from the perspective of social inequality.” Cited from the Paritran website entitled ‘Past and Present of the Caste System: A Brief Introduction’, <<http://dalitbangladesh.wordpress.com/dalit-2/past-and-present-of-the-caste-system-a-brief-introduction/>> (accessed 18 April 2013).
4. Fifteen years before Ortiz and CUMmins, the UN Industrial Development Organization drew a similar conclusion, estimating that the disparity between the richest and poorest 20 per cent of the world population increased by over 50 per cent from 1960 to 1989 (UNIDO, 1996).
5. This same period has seen an explosion in usage of antidepressant drugs in Western countries (see Moore et al., 2009; Olfson et al., 2002; McManus et al., 2000; Pincas et al., 1998).
6. Thorat and Newman (2007) similarly claim that “caste persists as a system of inequality that burdens the Indian economy” (p.4121). Netzer (2012), in her *Really the Future we Want?*, reports that “[t]he number of people starving was higher in 2012 than it was in 1992, and at approximately one billion, has reached a record high although global food production can adequately cover their needs” (p.3).
7. Susan Bayly (1995) notes that for Risley castes really were ‘races’, and the distinction between high and low caste was really a distinction between peoples of supposedly superior and inferior moral endowment (p.169).
8. See Hammond (1982).
9. Parsons was an instrumental figure in the creation of Cold War-era ‘modernisation’ models of development (Varma, 1980: 35). His theory on social evolution and the ‘drives’ and directions of world history influenced numerous economists and political theorists, including James Coleman, Seymour Martin Lipset and Harvard’s Samuel Huntington, the latter of whom published his ideologically loaded ‘Clash of Civilizations’ thesis in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 (see Buxton, 1985; also Saïd, 1998).
10. Morgan was a key figure in the perpetuation of the traditional Euro-American stereotype portraying America’s native peoples as inherently unprogressive (Trigger, 1980; see also Applebaum, 1987). The intrinsic importance of Morgan in the history of anthropological theory was enormously enhanced by the circumstance that Marx and Engels adopted his scheme, which Childe (1950) confirms was no accident. “Marx has announced the Materialist Conception of History in 1859 – the very year that produced the *Origin of Species* and the vindication of Pleistocene man by John Evans, Falconer, and Prestwich” (p.9–10). When he wished to test the applicability of his theory to simpler but illiterate societies, Marx, failing personal experience in the ethnographic field, naturally turned to Morgan’s work. In *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970), Dumont claims that Morgan and Durkheim actually “exaggerated the amorphy of the clan and that, as Mr. Malinowski remarks to me, they did not take sufficiently into account the idea of reciprocity” (p.346).
11. Compellingly, geologist William King, who coined the scientific term *Homo neanderthalensis*, offered a highly racialised comparison of the Neanderthal remains found in Germany with the Mincopies of the Andaman Islands near India – those “most degraded” (p.93) of humans, standing just “next to brute benightedness” (p.96).
12. This depiction of the physical appearance of the Indo-Aryans is a virtual echo of that offered by late-18th and early-19th century depictions of Crô-Magnons who moved in to prehistoric Europe and displaced the crude and cultureless Neanderthal. For a standout example, see the comparison of Neanderthals with Crô-Magnon offered by popular science writer and Governor of British Colonial India, Samuel Laing, in his compellingly titled *Human Origins* (1892). See also ‘The Revolution that Wasn’t’ by McBrearty and Brooks (2000).

13. The Dalits of Dhaka say their ancestors were brought to what is now Bangladesh from Hyderabad in southern India by the British Empire. Support for this claim can be found in the fact that the commonly spoken language of Dhaka's Dalits is not Bengali but Telugu, a southern Indian tongue and the name they sometimes use to describe themselves (Buncombe, 2008). Many Dalits today also speak Hindi as their only language.

14. See also Kashyap et al. (2003) and Destro-Bisol et al. (2000).

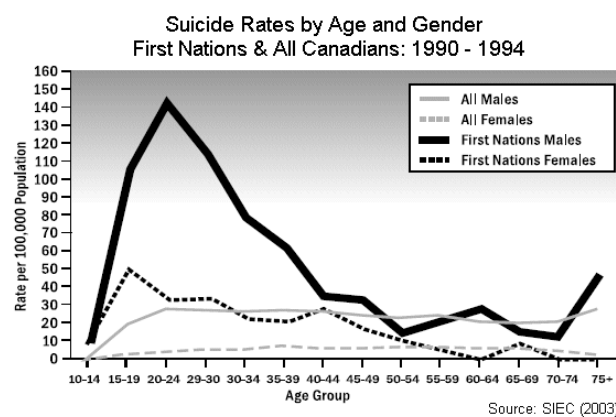
15. "All the so-called Dravidian population ... indicate by their physical characters, the presence of a black ethnological element. Documents of all sorts, photographs and skulls, testify that this element is almost completely Negro", said de Quatrefages (quoted in Wright, 1915 [2004]: 61). Topinard (1899) made a similar claim: "The physical type of the Neanderthal, and even of the Java man, is almost as far removed in terms of cranial capacity as some normal Europeans of our days are from the blacks of the jungles of India, before the Dravidians (whom the Aryans came upon) had made their appearance" (p.156). See also Flower and Lydeker (1891).

16. This quote comes from an unpublished manuscript written by Farzana Islam entitled *Political Participation of Dalit Women in Dhaka city, Bangladesh*, <http://idsn.org/fileadmin/user_folder/pdf/New_files/Bangladesh/Bangladesh_Dalit_women_FarzanaIslam.pdf>. Quote used with Islam's permission.

17. Analysing Campbell's notion of republican polity as manifested in the mythical Indian 'village republic', Bayly (1995) notes a 'clear' crucial link between Victorian racial ethnology and what many Indianists still think of as the 'respectable' historical speculating of Marx (p.193).

18. The label 'natives' as a description of low-caste peoples is ubiquitous in historian, economist and political theorist James Mill's *The History of British India* (1818).

19. First Nations and Aboriginal peoples across the world are clearly victims of this orientalisation process. The effects of colonialism on Canada's First Nations peoples, for example, remain evident in the stunningly high incidence of suicide among young First Nations men.



20. "Plainly put, the two-nation theory is based on the communal divide originating from the desire of a group to preserve its religious identity and using this as a communal card for continuously seeking political gains" (Verma, 2001: 8). In the case of India-Pakistan relations, "[t]he essence of the 'two-nation theory' ... was that Muslims in British India formed a separate nation and that there were thus two nations in India, Hindus and Muslims" (Hussain, 1966: 55).

21. Bangladesh's 2011 Census provided an unprecedented opportunity to capture national data with respect to categories related to work, descent and caste; however, this opportunity was not taken (Islam, 2010 – unpublished report).

22. "I might go into more details regarding the aboriginal tribes [of India]", writes Campbell (1868-69), "but will only now say that their physique, their languages, their manners and customs, must all be thoroughly studied before we can classify them with confidence" (p.132).

23. The Associated Press reports on 31 July 2012 that on a recent trip to Jerusalem, Mitt Romney, the Republican presidential nominee, told Jewish campaign donors that their culture is part of what has allowed them to be more economically successful than the Palestinians, <<http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/romney-press-aide-tells-reporters-shove-it-1.898796>>. In the 2005 Terrence Malick film *The New World* the fair-minded character Captain Newport contemptuously refers to 18th century Virginia's inhabitants as 'Naturals'.

24. Du Bois' usage of the word 'soul' appears to us consistent with that of myriad contemporary intellectuals. This includes Martha Nussbaum, who, in her *Not For Profit* (2010), draws upon the work of American novelist Luisa May Alcott and Bengali poet Rabindranath Thakur ('Tagore') to define 'soul' as "the faculties of thought and imagination that make us human and make our relationships rich human relationships, rather than relationships of mere use and manipulation" (p.6). It also includes Frantz Fanon, who, in his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963[2004]), borrows from Aimé Césaire and argues that the goal of the native intellectual must not be to win prizes nor be welcomed into all those self-congratulating honor societies that routinely exclude embarrassing troublemakers who do not toe the party line,

but rather the goal is the invention of new souls, 'opening up minds, awakening minds, and introducing them to the world' (p.138).

25. David Harvey (2005) has argued that neoliberalisation effectively amounts to 'accumulation by dispossession', by which "[he] means the continuation and proliferation of accumulation practices which Marx had treated of as 'primitive' or 'original' during the rise of capitalism"; practices which include the commodification and privatisation of land, the forceful expulsion of peasant populations and the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) (p.159).

26. To borrow from Seabrook (2002), statistics based on market-measured poverty discredit traditional ways of measuring well-being, and they also assume that the future of people existing outside, or only partially within the global market, will be of total inclusion within it. Development practitioners interested in South-South cooperation need to respond directly to the inability of mainstream writers to "clue [up] to the impossibility of 'solving' problems of poverty following the prescriptions of the single 'integrated' economy now consolidating itself across the whole world" (p.120).

27. Morais De Sá e Silva (2008), citing Escobar (1995), notes that South-South cooperation arguably started with the "making of the Third World" (p.3).

28. Harvey (2005) notes that the assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade is a cardinal feature of neoliberal thinking, "and it has long dominated the US stance towards the rest of the world" (p.7). He also notes, citing Gramsci, that today the word 'freedom' resonates so widely within the common-sense understanding of Americans that it becomes 'a button that elites can press to open the door to the masses' to justify almost anything (p.39).

29. In his compellingly titled *Castes et Races: Suivi de principes et critères de l'art universel*, Frithjof Schuon (1957) writes: "[I]f the West has difficulty understanding the caste system, it is primarily because it underestimates the law of heredity, and does so for the simple reason that it has become more or less inoperative in an environment as chaotic as the modern West, where almost everyone aspires to climb the social ladder ... and where almost nobody exercises the profession of his father; one or two centuries of this scheme was sufficient to make heredity precarious and fluctuating in a system not as rigorous as the Hindu castes; but even in those instances when trades were passed from father to son, the inheritance was practically abolished by machines [(industrialism)]" (p.17; our italics).



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