

The Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture 2007

THE RETURN OF THE SACRED

THE LANGUAGE OF RELIGION AND THE
FEAR OF DEMOCRACY IN A POST-SECULAR WORLD

Ashis Nandy



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This is the full text of the Mahesh Chandra Lecture 2007 delivered by Ashis Nandy on 13 December, 2007, at the Russian Cultural Centre in Kathmandu.

The Social Science Baha gratefully acknowledges Buddha Air's Corporate Social Responsibility initiative for its support in making the lecture and its publication possible.

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ISBN 978 99933 43 90 5

Back cover show Mahesh Chandra Regmi in the audience at the inaugural lecture on 24 April 2003. Photograph by Bikas Rauniar.

Published for Social Science Baha by Himal Books

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Printed in Nepal

Abstract: The nineteenth-century European dream of continuous, irreversible decline of religion in the twentieth century did not prepare modern political and social theories, particularly contemporary theories of democracy, for a world in which religion has re-emerged as post-modern phenomenon seeking to fill a void in private and public life. Important sections of the citizens have begun to see in religion ways of fighting the hazards of extreme individualism, loneliness, economism and consumerism. They have made new demands on the modern state system that have disoriented the ruling elites in many democracies who seek to contain the demands by setting up garrison states.

No one thought that religion would re-emerge from the shadows to occupy centre-stage at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Many wrote obituaries of religions as early as in the middle of the nineteenth century. Since then, it has been the triumph of one secular ideology after another, though steep decline or ignominious fall has usually followed the triumph. Religion has re-emerged at the end of what could only be called an age of ideologies, not in its pristine form but bearing the imprint and, sometimes, even the garb of the age of secular ideologies. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, religion has turned into a phoenix that has risen from its own ashes and wears the ashes as a sign of its new triumph.

This lecture draws upon two keynote addresses, one given at the International Conference on Indic Religions, 18 December, 2003, and the other under the title of 'The Language of Religion: Post-Secular Democracy and the Underside of Democratic Theory', at the South Asia Institute, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg, on 8-10 October 2003, at Heidelberg.

This may or may not be an enigma. The attempts to banish all mystery and spirituality from life, the increasing poverty of the consumerist individualism that envelops lonely crowds in wealthy societies, the steady growth of violence, often gratuitous, a decline in the sanctity of life that finds expression not only in wars and torture but also in assaults on the environment and life-support system of the coming generations, the growing scepticism in the South towards the Enlightenment as a justification for new forms of dominance and despotism—they all have contributed to the erosion of the easy faith in the age of reason and the unlimited power of human rationality.¹ But they, too, do not fully explain the re-emergence and re-empowerment of religion at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Perhaps there is another way of looking at the situation. Apart from the contents that give it its distinctiveness, religion, like culture, is a bit like a language of communication that allows one to converse with some but not others. Like culture, which also can be seen as a language in this sense, all religions, even the most tolerant ones, can be used or misused. Also, like most other domains of human life, religion includes as well as excludes. As it happens, all cultures and languages exclude, even the ones associated with modern science and humanism and even the ones dedicated to tolerance, dialogue and plurality. Diversity cannot survive without some moderate forms of exclusion, without a vague belief that one's own way of life and core values are superior to those of others. However uncomfortable the thought might be, the intellectual challenge of our times may well be to identify the means—the institutional structures and personality resources—that can reconcile diversity with exclusions that are not destructive, demeaning or driven by hatred; for some degree of discomfort with or suspicion of strangers—you may call it tolerable ethnocentrism—is an inescapable part of living cultures.²

At a time when some of the major legitimating principles of contem-

1 See, for instance, McGrath 2004. An instance of the growing doubts about the efficacy of secularism within political theory is Connolly 1999.

2 The idea that you must be perfectly impartial in matters of culture is a relatively modern development; so is the belief that cultural dislike and ethnic

porary life—the ones modern societies have come to believe are sacrosanct—are losing their shine, many are returning to religion defensively, as a last resort against the forces of globalisation, homogenisation, all-round loss of sanctity and secularisation. As modern science, development, secularism and theories of progress repeatedly show that they are as keen to be co-opted by despotic regimes as religions and traditions have been over the centuries, many have begun to yearn for a resacralisation of the cosmos. They feel that such a return of the sacred may correct for the all-round desecralisation that has taken place during the last one hundred and fifty years in human affairs, a desecralisation that has left almost nothing untouched—from nature to human life, from the impersonal to the private and the intimate.

It is, of course, obvious that single-key solutions never work in human affairs. The religious worldview is a worldview after all and the language of religion is only a language. After the crusades and holy wars, genocides of indigenous peoples in the Americas and colonialism sanctioned by powerful sections of the Christian church, and the more recent rise of religion-based terrorism in the Islamic world and the blatant secular use of religion in South Asian politics—where Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism have been periodically used to mobilise hatred—we are left with no alternative but to admit that the world of religion parallels the secular world and can be as much a domain of gratuitous violence, paranoia and sadomasochism. It is true that one look at R.J. Rummell's data and some rough arithmetical manipulation reveal that in the last hundred years fully secular states have killed at least 45 times more people than religious violence and fundamentalism have.³ However, it is safer to presume that given opportunities, people will kill, rape and plunder in the name of religion

stereotyping must sometime or the other lead to violence. This is not what experience tells us. For instance, '... the founder of Zegota, the one organisation in Poland and in Europe as a whole that had as its sole purpose the saving of Jewish lives, was herself a zealous anti-Semite. She reportedly expressed her wish that the Jews she was protecting would disappear from Poland after the war.' Deák 2001, pp. 52-6; p. 55. See also Nandy 2002b, pp. 157-209.

3 Rummel 1994.

as happily as people have done in the name of secular statecraft, nationalism, progress, revolution and development.

Only two things have changed. First, whatever may have happened in the past, the violence that religion *now* sanctions cannot compete in range and depth with the violence that modern states sanction in the name of secular ideologies. Second, being primarily interest-based and a pathology of rationality, state violence has increasingly become more organised, scientific, efficient and user-friendly, whereas religion violence, to the extent it is passion-based and a pathology of irrationality, still leaves some scope for individual initiative, private resistance and inefficiency. I hasten to add, however, that these differences are getting smudged. In its new incarnations, religious violence too is acquiring many of the features of state violence.

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Why then should we study religion? Why should we learn the language of religion or enter the cosmology of religion. Frankly, the honest answer is that we do not have to. At one time it must have been different, but now millions of people live without the benefit of faith. It is unlikely that one would run out of company if one refuses to learn the language or enter the cosmology of religion. One can easily converse with a sizeable number of people in the academe, in professions and in the higher echelons of the state who speak the language of secular statecraft and individual citizenship.

However, an even larger part of the world and a huge majority of those staying in the god-forsaken parts of the world—in Latin America, Africa and Asia—have partial or no access to the language of secularism and citizenship. I should also add that they have also often been denied such citizenship, though invited to use the language of citizenship. Anyone who refuses to learn the language and the cosmology of religion has, as a result, little or no access to that other world. This is no great loss if you are a modern academic in a modern university, or if you plan to live exclusively within the confines of one of the many pockets of modernity that pockmark the southern hemisphere. I am fully aware that mostly the poor, the marginal, the retrogressive and the disposable today seem to have religion. However, if you happen to

be one of those who are dumb enough to take democratic participation seriously or seek to influence public life and public policy in the southern world, it becomes a different story.

This is because, without some access to the religious worldview, you will pretty soon become primarily a spectator of politics and left with only the option of constantly bemoaning the bad choices that 'ignorant', 'ill-informed', irrational electorates make and shedding copious tears on the rise of fundamentalism and religious and ethnic chauvinism encouraged by those who exercise power on the basis on such disreputable choices. You will also have to, I am afraid, reconcile yourself to lamenting the way in which the ungodly and the ill-motivated occupy an increasingly larger public space just because they speak the language of religion and can converse from within the cosmology of religion. If you are enterprising enough, you might console yourself by writing angry columns in newspapers or letters to editors. Otherwise, you will only bore to tears your family and friends by talking of the good old days when politics and politicians were reportedly purer and more idealistic.

This is not a convoluted plea to return to faith or to establish the superiority of the language of religion. It is a plea to acknowledge the costs of democracy. It presumes that in a democracy every citizen has the right to bring his or her ethical framework within politics and the framework may not meet the criteria set by his or her earnest well-wishers. No lecture on the need to keep separate religion and politics—the church and the state—is likely to work on people whose everyday ethics are directly or indirectly derived from religion, especially since it is unlikely that we shall be able to employ an efficient thought police to make sure that people conform to the principles of such separation.⁴ It is a pity, I am sure, that despite more than three hundred years of

4 For that matter, there is little evidence in contemporary psychology that people can maintain such separation within themselves on a long-term basis. Indeed, there is much evidence that they try to reduce such dissonance. While there is evidence that South Asians can live with greater cognitive dissonance within themselves, this capacity is in decline in the urban melting pots of the region, where most religious violence takes place.

spirited, dedicated efforts, so many still use religious cosmology as a ballast in life, particularly when buffeted by the disorienting pace of social change, uprooting or personal insecurity. Like many of you, I do not use such ballasts, but I cannot ensure for your sake that in a democracy others will not.

The situation has been complicated in recent decades by the growing tendency in many secular, modern states to set up as a political ploy entire religions and civilisations as demonic others that need to be de-fanged. Those at the receiving end of such stereotyping under an iniquitous global media regime, are naturally finding it increasingly difficult to adore the secular worldview as intrinsically opposed to fanaticism and hatred.⁵

Here, the African-Americans in the United States have a lesson to offer to Africa and Asia, particularly to the Indians who tirelessly and pompously speak of the virtues of secularism. No one can deny that Christianity was imposed on American Blacks. Their Christianity bears the mark of their immense suffering over two centuries. Nevertheless, it will be foolhardy for anyone to appeal to them to give up Christianity on that ground. They have made something out of that imposition that is distinctively theirs. Christianity in turn, I dare say, has been at its creative best when deployed as a theology of emancipation by the African-Americans and African Africans. From Martin Luther King Jr to Desmond Tutu, it has been the unfolding of the potentialities of an Asian faith that defies the European heritage of Christianity to supply

5 On this subject, see for instance, Barlas 2002. Barlas says at one place, '... one could argue, for instance, that whereas in the West, modernity brought the benefits of capitalism, industrialisation, and representative democracy, for most of the world, it brought colonisation, slavery, economic ruin, a militarisation of politics, increased poverty, the extinction of indigenous people and cultural alienation. Similarly, the very secularism that freed "man"—in the masculinist language of the Enlightenment—from the alleged tyranny of religion, also opened up to doubt people's sense of themselves as purposive moral agents in the world. Hence, what some embraced as freedom, others experienced as profound loss.' For a powerful, detailed treatment of the issue, see Mazrui 1996, pp. 153-74. Strangely, such arguments, when made in the context of Islam, are more acceptable in academic circles in India than when made in the context of Hinduism.

a potent political philosophy of militant non-violence that has radically changed our ideas of political resistance and dissent. (This Christianity, borrowing something from the Hindu-Jain traditions through Gandhi, has also initiated a remarkable dialogue of faiths in our times, anticipating the bloodless, academic versions of such a dialogue.) It has emancipated Christianity from its European conventionalities and, perhaps, even from its European history, a history that prompted Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to say that Christianity was a good religion before it went to Europe. I need hardly add that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was not a secular enterprise. Nor was it a *sui generis* brainwave of Tutu. It was squarely located in an ecumenical normative frame that also made sense to most nonbelievers. The Commission was a clear case of religion intruding into politics, in a way that Gandhi would have applauded.⁶

It is often said that Muslim rulers in mediaeval India imposed Islam on unwary Hindus. The entire movement to reconvert Muslims to Hinduism in states like Rajasthan is based on that presumption. Swami Vivekananda once claimed that a large majority of Indian Muslims converted voluntarily. Even if the functionaries of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) know better and Vivekananda is wrong, such attempts to reconvert can only re-endorse a defensive, closed version of Islam among the South Asian Muslims, as it has already begun to do. For South Asian Islam, in the meanwhile, has become a language of self-definition and a means of social creativity for millions. It has contributed something to the universal culture of Islam—and, for that matter, Hinduism—that is non-substitutable. South Asian Islam is not a lightweight variation on Islam; over the last two centuries it has shaped the contours of the global culture of Islam. It is with anguish that I notice that, plagued with a peculiar sense of inadequacy, some movements in this part of the world seek to turn South and Southeast Asian Islam into a pale copy of West Asian Islam.

There is another lesson for us in the African-American enterprise.

6 For a glimpse into Tutu's own way of looking at the Commission, see Tutu 1999.

American Blacks, through all their struggles and movements, never seriously yielded ground to the religious fanatics though there were small, identifiable groups within them that moved close to fanaticism. Because the Black leadership never abandoned the domain of religion as untouchable or as irrelevant to the public sphere, some of the most creative inputs into the Black struggle for equality and dignity came from within the Black religious consciousness. Not only that. Those who opposed fanaticism and bigotry among the Blacks could make sense to others in their community because they had access to the language of religion. I could give a series of similar examples from Latin America, the Sandinistas being one of the most conspicuous among them. The Sandinista cabinet included a number of priests and was headed by one, and the movement they represented, whatever its other flaws, never lost touch with the religious self of their constituency. It is not true that all shades of Marxism have to embrace the secularist dogma with fundamentalist fervour.

In India, on the other hand, the first generation of post-Independence leaders was respectful towards but fearful of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and his 'intemperate' use of religion in politics. Some of them, to the delight of 'progressivist' intellectuals, quickly shifted to a political idiom that could be called an insipid copy of social-democratic ideologies floating around in Europe, especially Fabian socialism of the inter-war years, leavened with a pinch of the hard materialism of the Leninist kind. They declared the entire domain of religion untouchable and left it to those they felt to be its natural carriers—the 'backward', 'illiterate', 'provincial' apprentice-citizens of the society.

The results of that short-sightedness and obeisance to transient fashions could only be disastrous, particularly when combined with the fear and contempt for the ordinary citizens and their worldviews and categories, which have constituted the underside of both democratic politics and political radicalism for at least two hundred years in much of the world. Taking advantage of such inanity, not only have Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Sikh fundamentalists and religious chauvinists in South Asia tried to establish their hegemony in the sphere of

religion, even the occasional attempts of well-motivated NGOs and movements from the modern sector to use the language and cosmology of religion to counter fanaticism and violence arouse derision. Such attempts enjoy little legitimacy because secular India has systematically eroded the credibility of anyone from the modern sector speaking on behalf of religious traditions. More so because all appeals against violence based on modern, state-centric ideologies seem hypocritical, as the past record of these ideologies is primarily one of unmitigated, unapologetic violence.

At the same time, the modern intelligentsia in India has devalued the leadership of serious religious leaders by mechanically accepting the credentials of anyone who loudly claims to speak on behalf of a religious community. Because this intelligentsia knows little about religion or the religious way of life, it has to take at face value everyone who claims to speak on behalf of a religion—from psychopathic, violence-prone, rabble-rousers like Sadhvi Ritambhara and Praveen Togadia to scheming, paranoid necrophiles like Narendra Modi and Ashok Singhal. Those who tamely accept the claims of these worthies, as spokespersons of the Hindus, would never take seriously anyone making similar claims on behalf of, say, the intellectual community. One of the saddest spectacles in India in recent years has been the effort of some Catholic religious figures to open a dialogue with the un-elected, self-proclaimed leaders of Hindus like the RSS and the VHP. These are formations that claim to speak for all Hindus of the world—the one billion of them—when they and the parties they support have together never won even one fourth of the Hindu votes in India. That is the price modern India has paid for quitting the domain of faiths and declaring it irrelevant, redundant or obsolete.

For more than three millennia, human beings have invested some of their best cognitive and affective resources in the spiritual and the religious. That investment, in retrospect, might not have been uniformly wise and uniformly creative. But it has not been uniformly forgettable either. The investment in secular statecraft and secular public life, on the other hand, has been relatively recent and, though it has also often been immensely creative, it has been spectacularly destructive, too. In

any case, the second set of investments can never compare with the three millennia of human achievement in the sphere of religion. Civilisation, as we know it, is largely the achievement of the religious way of life, though we try hard to forget that part of the story. I say this as a non-believer who has invested some years of life in the study of the psychological and cultural sources human creativity.

Can we ignore or bypass these achievements for the sake of a theory of progress that seeks to wipe clean the pre-Enlightenment world or freeze it as a museum piece? If the answer is 'no', how can we acknowledge the achievements of a part of our self that the Enlightenment vision has declared *terra incognita*? I leave the reader with these questions in the hope that they will help me find an answer to one of the most persistent puzzles of our times: why do we so frequently and enthusiastically forget the secular world's capacity to endorse evil, while at the same time being so fearful of religion and its capacity to endorse evil? Is it because the secular world is more transparent to us? Or, is it because we belong to the secular world and read all accusations of its complicity with evil as moral indictments of us? (Such defensive denial of complicity has become an inescapable part of the career graph of many contemporary ideologies. Despite the shoddy record of nationalism in the last century, there are millions of nationalists all over the world, even in Europe and Japan, who have paid an enormous price for their nationalist fervour. Even today, there are more Stalinists in India than in the former Soviet Union, even though these inane admirers of the Georgian psychopath have no need to defend his record of oppression and genocide.) One suspects that the evil that grows out of religion is alien territory to us and looks eerily like witchcraft and blood sacrifice, while the death of millions in the hands of secular states and secular despots look like necessary costs to pay for lofty ideals such as nation-building, state formation, progress, development, scientific rationality and history. Indeed, the emphasis on the blood-thirstiness associated with religions helps the non-believers to wipe clean the record of their own kind.

Perhaps things are not as simple as these questions suggest. The secular study of religion, at one level, is the other side of the secular use

of religion in which many politicians specialise. Part of the bitterness towards the political versions of Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity come from a vague but threatening awareness that those who deploy religion for personal or political gains have the same instrumental concept of religion and use the same set of psychological mechanisms that we use when we study religion from outside, to produce a good ethnography or social history or to write an acceptable doctoral dissertation. I suspect that the ethno-religious nationalists, who use religion as a pathway to power, and the ardent, secular nationalists are both aware, at some level, of this similarity and hence the venom the two sides show in their feelings towards each other. As if some others, whom we consider alien presences in civilised society, want to affirm, by mirroring us, that they are the ghosts within us and require exorcists rather than border guards to be kept at a safe distance.



I admit that there is a built-in contradiction in the tenor of my argument here. I have made a case for understanding or studying the religious worldview as a means of entering popular consciousness and the normative frames that shape the democratic process and, sometimes, decide its fate. Yet, it remains an open question how far this worldview and frames directly shape democratic choices and how far they are mediated or altered by the packaged interpretations of religions floating around in the public sphere.

Believers are not obliged to believe in a manner acceptable to philosophers, theologians and historians of religion. For many believers, religion is a matter of periodical participation in rituals and other modest observances. When we speak of the language of religion, do we have in mind what serious scholars and thinkers have in mind? Or do we have in mind the simple, everyday versions of the faith that look anti-philosophical and are often an embarrassment to sophisticated believers? Do we have in mind both, the first as a concern of philosophers and historians of religion and the second as a concern of anthropologists of popular culture?

I am embarrassed to admit my belief that the challenge is to bypass

this division and discover the frames of sensitivity within which the respect for—and celebration of—the unthinking, casual, everyday forms of religiosity converge with serious scholarly visions of a sacralised cosmos and sanctity of life. Let me call it the first step towards a post-secular social and political awareness.

However, after saying that, I must enter two caveats. First, when I use the term religion I do not usually have in mind canonical texts or practices, what might be called the high culture of religion. I have in mind the lowbrow, the folksy and the non-canonical, contaminated by the interpretations of ordinary people living their everyday lives. For reasons of space, I have not discussed the manner in which the former—the canonical, the high cultural and, if I may add, the official—has gradually usurped, since the middle of the nineteenth century, the right to define what a religion is. The nation-state has always felt more comfortable with the classical and the canonical.⁷

What was left undone by the colonial administrators, perpetually looking for a single, definitive version of a faith—so that the colonial states could cope with, manage or arrive at a political *quid pro quo* with the native American, Asian and African religions—was completed by the modern university system in the West, ever eager to define and identify the ‘real’ form and core of a religion. Arab Islam became the main tradition of Islam only in the early part of the twentieth century, redefining the world’s largest Islamic societies as abodes of peripheral Islam. *Manusamhita* became the final, authoritative text on Hindu law only in the middle of the nineteenth century, thanks to the efforts of the colonial dispensation to codify Hindu law. Over generations, these redefinitions have been internalised by large sections of modern, educated believers in the Afro-Asian world. We are paying the costs of such centralisation today. The pathetic effort of many Muslim communities to defend their religious identity and self-esteem, by opting for a blood-drenched version of ‘pure’ Islam, is only one part of the story. For one sees a similar development in a number of other religions in which the axis of self-definition has shifted under the onslaught of a

7 Interested readers may like to look up Nandy 2002a and 2003.

new, 'universal' idea of faith popularised by the nineteenth-century European knowledge system in general and the European university system in particular. I have touched upon this problem in a number of places, but you may like to look up more serious scholars on the subject.

Second, the religious worldview, being a worldview, always has within it a place for irreverence, wit and play. The global triumph of European Protestantism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly its close links with industrial capitalism and colonialism and its ability to underwrite a housebroken version of religion that is subservient to the nation-state, has introduced or strengthened certain forms of Puritanism in virtually every major religion. Some of the non-Semitic creeds have been particularly unfortunate in this regard. A huge majority of their followers are accustomed to some degree of playfulness, show of irreverent familiarity, bargaining, blatant eroticism, and even accusations of nepotism against divinities. However, a small minority, exposed to the culture of religion in Western Europe and North America, are embarrassed by such disreputable behaviour and feel even more offended if someone from outside the fold is audacious enough to presume the same intimacy with the gods and goddesses, thereby drawing attention to such 'paganism'. What was a source of strength in these faiths has, thus, become an excuse for censorship and vulgar display of crude xenophobia.

In recent years Maqbool Fida Hussain, a gifted painter who also happens to be one of Hinduism's greatest iconographers in modern times, has been a consistent target of a toady Puritanism that calls itself Hindutva. I have not forgotten Hussain's shabby, sycophantic performance during the Emergency imposed in India during 1975-77. Nor have I forgotten his silence on the censorship, surveillance and fetters on intellectual freedom imposed during that period. But Hussain's past does not justify the way, brazenly borrowing from Victorian England and its version of Protestantism, Indian Puritanism has discovered in Hussain's work what Puritanism always discovers in works of art: flippancy and eroticism. As we know, in psychology and psychiatry the link between authoritarianism and over-concern with and re-

pression of sexuality is now a cliché. Perhaps Hussain should have the self-confidence to tell himself that Hinduism will remember him longer than it would the witch-hunting phalanx of a handful of non-resident Indians in alliance with a few resident non-Indians trying to subvert both Indian traditions and the culture of democracy.

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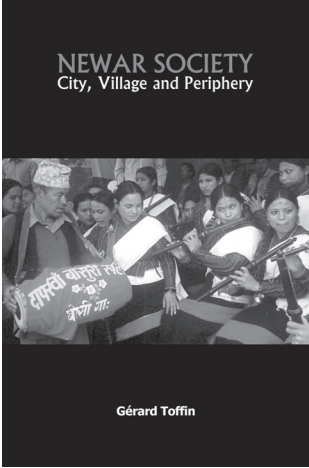
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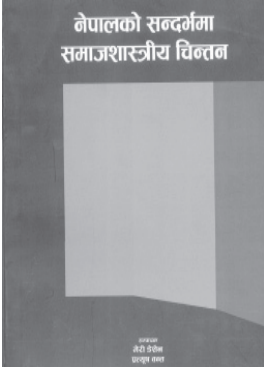
Gérard Toffin does not trudge a mono-track, one-village, one-caste study in presenting an ethnography of the Newar. This is a much fuller book, providing a broader and a more comprehensive account derived from shifting perspectives of themes, settlement locations, and such variables as their caste groups. A life-time of dedicated work is revealed in this scholarly presentation.

—Prayag Raj Sharma

The Newar of the Kathmandu Valley form a highly complex society that cannot be reduced to an over-simplified and schematic presentation. Their caste system, comprising of more than 30 main hierarchical groupings, is one of the most sophisticated in South Asia. Besides the traditional high and low castes, it also includes a variety of castes of intermediate status and a number of Vajrayana Buddhist groups.

This book is the outcome of a long commitment between Gérard Toffin and this brilliant civilisation, extending from the early 1970s up to the present day. It is based on several first-hand case studies undertaken among a number of caste groups, living not only in the cities but also in rural areas. The themes that emerge include: kinship ties and the complex association of the *guthi* type; the duality between centre and periphery; the salience of territorial affiliation and social boundaries; the enactment of social ties in religious performances; and the construction of ethnic identity.

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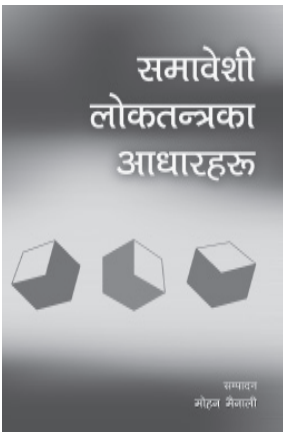
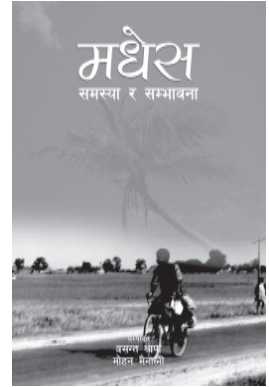
विभिन्न विषयका अठारओटा अनुसन्धानात्मक लेखकहरूबाट नेपाली समाजका साथै समाज विज्ञानका आधारभूत अवधारणाहरू बुझ्न सघाउ पुग्नेछ र समाज विज्ञानका अध्येता तथा अनुसन्धातालाई आवश्यक बौद्धिक खुराक मिल्नेछ।

मधेश : समस्या र सम्भावना

सम्पादक : वसन्त थापा/मोहन मैनाली

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तराईले बोकेका सम्भावनाहरू अगाध छन्, तैपनि यस प्रदेशको दीनहीन अवस्था फेरिन सकेको छैन। तराईका समग्र समस्या र सम्भावनालाई केलाउने उद्देश्यले सोसल साइन्स बहा:ले सन् २००५ मार्च महिनामा काठमाडौंमा दुईदिने राष्ट्रिय सम्मेलनको आयोजना गरेको थियो। यो पुस्तक त्यही सम्मेलनमा प्रस्तुत कार्यपत्रहरूको सँगालो हो जसमा नागरिकतादेखि प्रादेशिक भाषाका समस्याहरूबारे विद्वतापूर्ण विश्लेषण पाइन्छ।



समावेशी लोकतन्त्रका आधारहरू

सम्पादक : मोहन मैनाली

पृष्ठ xxii + 170, मूल्य रु. 150/-

यो पुस्तकले आम नेपालीको प्रजातन्त्रप्रतिको द्विविधा हटाउन केही आधारभूत परिभाषालाई प्रस्टचाउने कोसिस गरेको छ जो आजको सङ्कटकालका सन्दर्भमा अति नै आवश्यक छ। नेपालमा प्रजातन्त्रको नारा लगाउन थालिएको भन्दाै सात दशकसम्म पनि प्रजातन्त्र के हो भन्ने कुरा स्पष्ट हुन सकेको छैन। यो द्विविधा र अन्यौल प्रत्येक नेपालीको राजनीतिक तिर्खाजस्तो भइसकेको छ। यो तिर्खा मेटाउन पुस्तकले सानो वैचारिक कुवा खनिदिएको छ।