

COLOUR-BLIND GLOBALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Globalization as a narrative seldom extends well beyond the vicissitudes of interpretations. But be it Hyperglobalists, Sceptics or Transformationalists, for all of them, it is understood and practiced in terms of ‘Global Connectivity’ and ‘Global Community’. Many a time, this global connectivity and community is assumed to be given and inevitable. But reality belies the truth as globalization comes to many with so many filters. Many of the agents of globalization are colour blind, of course not literally but in generic sense. They pose themselves as custodians of globalization and development and thus decide up to a greater extent who becomes the part of the global connectivity and global community. What is mind-boggling in all this customized version of globalization is the fact that this stake-out is based on the colour of the body! One can easily guess by now that this particular colour would be most probably ‘black’ or some variant of it and also can smack of racism instantly. There are many people in the southern part of India who share the black colour of their bodies. At the same time there is a sizable population of people who share the fair complexion of their bodies. Based on a primary survey this paper explains the modus operandi through which the people sharing black colour of their bodies have been kept out of bounds in regard to globalization and its fruits and also depicts the saga of struggles of these black people and the niche they have carved out in society for themselves with the help of Christians.

Keywords: Globalization, Black, Stake-out, Christians

Introduction

India was never a tranquil haven, untouched by the global agents and forces. From the dawn of Indus valley civilization, it has its link beyond its borders. Philosophically, Globalization is not a brand new phenomenon at all. Be it trade, intellectual or cultural exchange, it has always been there, of course may not be with the same intensity and stage as we witness today, as argue many Marxist Scholars. Keohane and Nye (2003)^{xv} clarify that

globalization is not a recent happening. It has always been there but its degree and intensity have varied. They explain about ‘thin globalization’ and ‘thick globalization’. ‘Thin globalization’ refers to a phase when global connectivity was limited only to certain places and certain people. ‘Thick globalization’ indicates an age where global connectivity encompassed many nations and many people. This present age is categorised under ‘thick globalization’. But there are some scholars for example, Stoics philosophers who trace out the roots of globalization in antiquity and as far as India and study area of this paper, Kerala, is concerned, globalization within its borders is not a recent phenomenon. Mohan (2005)^{xvi} documents that Kerala had linkages with the world outside even before the early centuries of the Common Era.

Before the real issue is dealt with, it is imperative to get right with the notion of globalization, at least for the present study. One has to really grapple hard to grasp the meaning of globalization as Perry (1998)^{xvii} confesses that it is “Glimpsed, but not grasped”. “It [Globalization] is not a singular, linear narrative, nor is it just a matter of economics. It is cultural as well as commercial and in addition it is legal: it is about power as much as prosperity or the lack of it” (Held et al., 2005)^{xviii}. The term ‘globalization’ was used for the first time in Webster’s English dictionary in 1961 in the sense of interconnectedness of social events and relationships (Waters, 1995)^{xix}. Held (1997)^{xx} defines globalization succinctly and it fits properly with the notion of globalization being discussed in this study. He says, “Globalization today implies at least two distinct phenomena. First, it suggests that many chains of political, economic and social activity are becoming interregional in scope and, secondly, it suggests that there has been an intensification of levels of interaction and interconnectedness within and between states and societies”. British sociologist, Anthony Giddens also echoes the same idea. He considers globalization as “the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens 1990)^{xxi}.

Main Discussion

Definitions of globalization bring out two elements at the forefront i.e. interaction and interconnectedness. Both of these elements find their roots at individual level. Though philosophical, it is reality that a person may not actualize the real interaction even with himself. Other individual can pose a threat to one’s interpersonal interaction, thus distorting or destroying the larger societal interaction at regional and global levels. This is exactly what happened to certain people in Kerala whose interaction was distorted and destroyed even at individual level let alone regional and global level.

They are still bearing the brunt of that ruptured interaction and interconnectedness which is reflected in their relative socio-economic standing in the society. It was an intriguing enigma as to what happened to this section of people that they are still long way behind from others in terms of global connectivity and feasting over the fruits of globalization. As in most cases of this sort, past serves as key to the present, this case not an exception. The fault line started in the early centuries of Common Era.

Survey for this study has been carried out in two districts i.e. Kottayam and Pathanamthitta of Kerala, one of the advanced states of India. People from three sections of the society namely, Syrian Christians (people having their origin in the ‘upper caste’ Hindus), Christian Dalits (people having their origin in the ‘lower caste’ Hindus), and Hindu Dalits (‘lower caste’ Hindu people) were considered for the survey. Around 450 households, consisting proportionate number of households from all the three sections were surveyed during 2013-2014. Further discussion is based on the personal narratives and data captured during survey as well as historical literature available on the subject.

People who comes from the lowest rung in the society are known as ‘*Pulaya*’ in Kerala. They have other nomenclature (*Paraya and Kuruva*) too but it is the most widely known lowest caste in Kerala. Some scholars like Thoma (Thoma, 1992 as quoted in Palakkappillil 2007)^{xxii}, considers them as original inhabitants of Kerala. According to Thoma, about the 4th century, Aryan Brahmin had come to kerala and settled there. After some time these Aryan Brahmins started oppressing the original inhabitants of Kerala and made them to occupy the lowest rung in the society. As the time passed by oppression became severe and took the ugliest form of slavery. *Pulayar, parayar, kuravar, vettuvar* were rendered as the slave castes (Palakkappillil 2007)^{xxiii}. People from these slave castes were traded like any other commodity (William adam as quoted in sanal mohan)^{xxiv}. Owners had a right to kill a slave if he wished not to sell him (Mohan, 2005)^{xxv}. This was a severe blow to the interaction at individual level. A slave did not have any right over his body. Body as a space is the primary means to connect to and experience other spaces (Valentine, 2001)^{xxvi}. Bereft of their inborn right over their bodies, these slaves became nonentities. Their spouses were sold to a different owner and children to another owner, who then will go on a spree of sale to many hands (Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Record of 1912, as quoted in Sanal Mohan)^{xxvii}. This was the beginning of curtailing the connectivity at household level, the primary unit of a community. Every landlord has his own slaves and they were not allowed to interact to the slaves of other landlord. This was the second blow to the intra connectivity. Their black bodies were considered ominous and a dirt. They possessed nothing. Every day they were made to work on the fields of ‘upper caste

people’. They were not allowed to walk on the road as and when they wanted. They had to maintain a distance of 64 yards from the other caste person. They were not allowed to visit markets or other public places (Mateer, 1883)^{xxviii}. This all ensured that people from slave castes were never able to interact with the larger society. This made intercommunity interaction non-existent among slave castes. Distortion and destruction of interaction at every level hinges on their bodily attributes. This point was affirmed during survey as many upper caste people accepted that black colour of their bodies is the main hindrance behind their level of interaction with others.

Globalization indicates towards a global connectivity to a global community. In case of these slave castes both the terms ‘global connectivity’ and ‘global community’ seem to be ironical as they did not have even an effective societal connectivity and community let alone global connectivity and global community. In fact, they were never allowed to establish ‘intra-community’ as well as ‘inter-community’. When a person is reduced not only to the level of ‘sub-human’ but also downgraded to the level of commodity, expecting community formation from such a person would be cruel. This was not the story in moments, hours, days, months, years but of centuries and it still evades the capture of exact temporal dimension. They were all groaning under this ‘Racism’ which was more inhuman than racism because slavery in the form of caste was religiously sanctioned and they have no religious say at all. They earnestly desired an escape from the landlords and the rotten system of slavery. But no saviour was in sight. A breakthrough came in the form of Christian missionaries and mission.

Christian missionaries from London missionary society (LMS) and Church Missionary Society (CMS) as harbinger of hope treated slaves differently. Mateer (1883)^{xxix} documents the change accurately. These missionaries tried to expose the cruelties of system of slavery to the various officials. They bought some slaves to start the process of a future change. They were not cruel to them. They provided them holidays from their work, started evening informal classes in the church premises to impart the basic knowledge of language and accountancy. Teachings of the Bible became instrumental in educating them. They instilled within them a message of hope in spite of all the cruelties in their life. They preached about the equality of all human being. They stood with them in odd instances, ensuring their entry into the forbidden realms of Christianity and larger society (Mohan, 2007)^{xxx}. The most important effort of these missionaries was to leave no stone unturned to ban the oppressive system of slavery. By 1819 slavery was abolished in those areas which were directly under the Britishers. But in Travancore it was abolished only in 1855 (Saradmoni, 1980)^{xxxi}. Although slavery was abolished on paper but it was still practiced in the public. Even the native followers of most ‘egalitarian religion’ i.e.

Christianity were not ready to mingle with the new converts (Fuller, 1976)^{xxxii}. They still thought them to be untouchables. Missionaries had to hold the hands of new converts and ensure their entry into the churches. People who were regarded as ‘black devil’ and ‘brute beasts’ (Hunt, 1918)^{xxxiii} were breaking the bastions of barbarism.

No historians would deter to accede to the fact that it was the genuine effort of Christian missionaries which witnessed abolition of slavery and opening up of new vistas in the lives of slave castes. Missionary intervention alone paved a way for the global connectivity. Their struggles reclaimed following spaces:

1. **Interaction at individual level:** Slave castes got the forlorn right over their body, a cardinal space which connects a person and enable him to experience other spaces. If this space is robbed of a person, he cannot be globally connected. This was revolutionary in regards to global connectivity.
2. **Interaction at household level:** Abolition of slavery ensured that slave castes could live as a family, a primary unit of any society.
3. **Interaction and interconnectedness at society level:** As free human beings they could interact with the other people from their castes and forge a unity at societal level. They could also connect to the people from other castes and claim their own social space. This brought ‘black devils’ to the launching pad of the globalization.

Discussion till now makes one thing crystal clear that ‘brahmins’ and ‘nairs’ landlords would have never given them any space to escape from the slavery and thereby slave castes would have never experienced even the interpersonal connectivity let alone global connectivity. This is affirmed by the fact that even today so-called Brahmins and Nairs and others hesitate to interact with these ‘black devils’. Even the Christians who boast of equality amongst themselves practice casteism and consider ‘*pulayas*’, ‘*parayas*’ and ‘*kuruvas*’ as lesser human beings. They face blatant discrimination at every level and in every institutional space in the society. They did not spare even the graveyards from this cruel reality. So called Syrian Christians do not have matrimonial alliances with the ‘black devils’. They will preach that God has made human beings equal and God has also made black colour and then they will treat the people with dark skin as black devil and erect separate edifices of worship place for ‘black devils’. How can one be convinced that people with such stinking mentality will budge a step to impart connectivity at any level unto these ‘lesser human beings’? Survey results seldom approve this idea. But the interesting fact is that these ‘black devils’ in spite of all the snag and scorns are building up on the foundations of liberty and equality visualized and concretized by Christian missionaries. Of course they are least globally connected today but the game has begun.

Global connectivity was an issue to look into while surveying people in Kerala. Language is considered as a powerful medium of global connectivity. People from Kerala use Malayalam as their mother tongue. As far as global connectivity is concerned Malayalam cannot help much. English is considered the lingua franca of globalization. Table 1 gives the glimpse of the use of English by various communities.

Table 1: Use of English by various communities

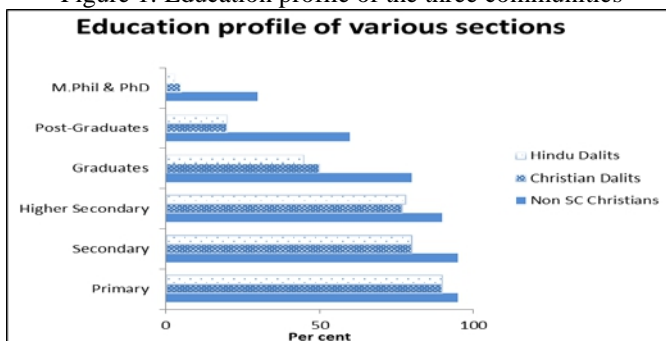
Use of English /Communities	Syrian Christians (in per cent)	Christian Dalits (in per cent)	Hindu Dalits (in per cent)
Can understand	90	60	40
Can write	85	50	30
Can speak fluently	50	30	15

Source: based on primary survey data (Figures show approximate values)

It can be understood well from the Table 1 that Christian Dalits are faring better in comparison to their Hindu counterparts. Christian missionaries helped them to start interaction with the larger Syrian Christian community and it is paying well as Christian Dalits get motivation from their interaction with Syrian Christians. Being Dalit Christians, it becomes easier for their wards to get an admission in Christian schools and colleges and that enable the present generation to claim the global connectivity.

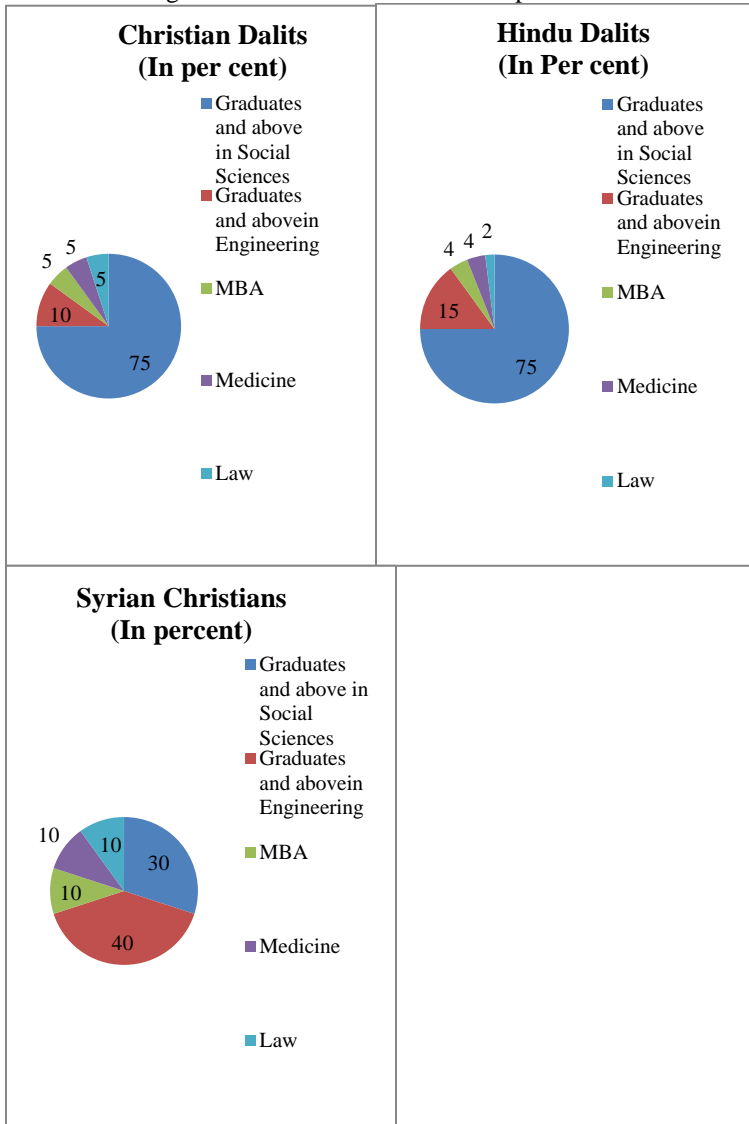
Language alone cannot get one very far if he has not got a desired level of education and professional skills. As globalization today is driven by economic gains for both the parties involved, it becomes imperative to excel in professional education. Figure 1 & 2 will help to understand the educational scenario of people from the three communities.

Figure 1: Education profile of the three communities



Source: based on primary survey data. (Non SC Christians=Syrian Christians)

Figure 2: Stream wise educational profile of the three communities

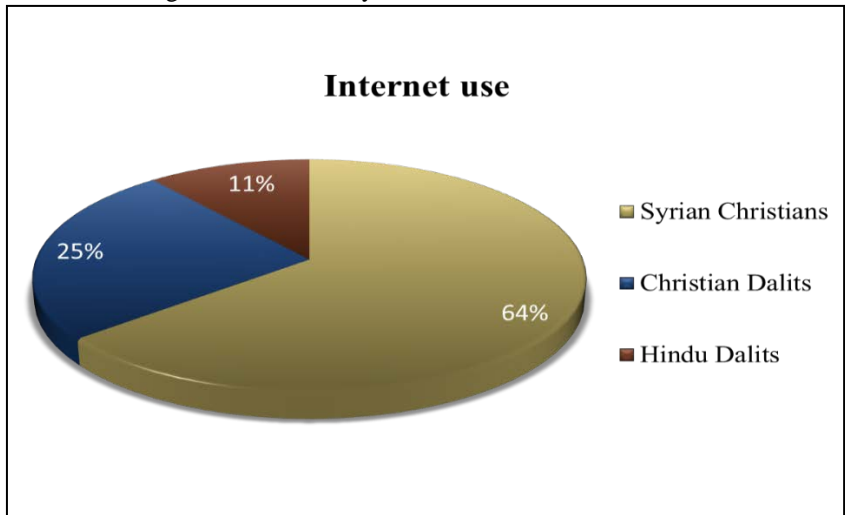


Source: based on primary survey data

Figure 1 and 2 points out the glaring disparity between Syrian Christians, Christian Dalits and Hindu Dalits. First of all, many Syrian Christians have got the privilege to attain higher education while in Christian Dalit Community and Hindu Dalit community there are less students in higher education and that too they are concentrated in social science subjects considered to be having low returns in terms of employment at global level. But Christian Dalits are still doing better in comparison to Hindu Dalits and this has been possible mostly due to Christianity.

Information technology has played a greater role in global connectivity. Now one can sit at home and the same time be globally connected. But for this one must have internet connection. Figure 3 presents the internet availability at home amongst three communities.

Figure 3: Availability of internet connection at home



Source: based on primary survey data. (Non SC Christians=Syrian Christians)

Figure 3 makes it clear that Christian Dalits have a limited global connectivity in terms of internet connection. In this era when almost everything is available online, be it online information through e-newspaper, blogs, social networking sites, online courses, online advertisements, online exams, online applications, internet connection becomes inevitable for everyone in a community if it want to register its global presence and reap the gains arising out of it.

It becomes easier for a person to connect globally if somebody from his relatives, family or familiar ones is already living or working abroad. This is a snowball process and facilitates interaction at global level in many ways and has higher returns in terms of attaining economic stability. During survey a question was asked to the informants whether they have somebody amongst his relatives, family or familiar ones who is/was already living or working abroad. Table 2 provides some insights.

Table 2: People living or working abroad from three communities (presently and recent past)

Community/people Already abroad	Person from family (in per cent)	Amongst relatives (in per cent)	Friends and familiar Ones (in per cent)
Syrian Christians	80	80	80
Christian Dalits	30	20	15
Hindu Dalits	10	5	5

Source: based on primary survey data. (Figures show approximate values)

Table 2 shows clearly that most of the Syrians have at least one from their family, relatives or friends who is presently or have been abroad in recent past. This global connectivity has brought them better economic standing in the society and it is well known fact of this present age that finance facilities or fails many things in one's life. Their global connectivity has given them a powerful social status and say in the society. On the other hand Christian Dalits are just entering into this arena. Discrimination and destitution of various kinds restricts their movement at global level. Hindu Dalits are way behind from others as their interaction at global level is very limited due to the thin presence of predecessor abroad in their community.

Concluding remarks

Thus, it can be concluded that 'chromatism' practiced by Syrian Christians and others has played havoc in Christian Dalits community. Before embracing Christianity this choromatism pushed them into slavery. As they were branded as 'black devil' and 'brute beast; the biggest blow came in the form of forlorn and fractured interaction at individual level. Absence of interaction at this cardinal level resulted into distortion and destruction in interaction at household and family level and ultimately at global level. Personal narratives, historical literature and survey data, all of them establish the fact that but for Christian missionaries as harbingers of hope, Christian Dalits would have never reclaimed their interpersonal, societal and global space.

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