

Comparative Liturgy: A Study of New Congregations in Liberation Theology and Dalit Buddhism

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Abstract

This essay will study the relationship of religion and politics in the context of two specific liturgical practices. These practices originate in the historical congregations formed during the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America and in the context of the neo-Buddhist Ambedkarite movements in India. The idea of the congregation will be articulated with the liturgical logic of “public service” in so far as the Greek word(s) for liturgy refers both to the physical assembly of citizens and the structural capacity for creating a space for the “common.” Coupling congregation with the collective sharing of a “common feeling” (Ambedkar) provides the essential material for a political analysis of two historical societies of the global South. In the case of Chile, from the time of the reign of Pinochet, political resistance came from several quarters, including that of the Christian religion, not as practiced by the Church but as a subversive challenge posed by Liberation Theology. The Ambedkarite conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism in 1956 created a strange conjuncture, wherein conversion both signified liberation from the erstwhile religious oppression of the Hindus and the entry into a new form of communitarian thought. But the future of such an act of conversion could only be realized in history if the forms of thought of a new Buddhism were to be actualized in real ethical-political practices of a people called Dalits, which means being oppressed. This paper will confront the precarious task of a comparative analysis of incommensurable situations and affirm the political universalism of a world-historical tradition of the oppressed/Dalit.

Keywords: Ambedkarite movements, Liberation Theology, Liturgy, neo-Buddhism, Dalit

Introduction: A Comparative Liturgy of Situations

Unlike the discipline of comparative religion, which takes the *total* religious object, whether interpreted theologically or historically, as a unit of comparison (between Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.) comparative liturgy is always relative to a liturgy of *situations*. If liturgy is the act of “public service,” such an act is never understood theoretically given the abstract meaning of a “public,” that is, of a totality constituted as a “people.” The liturgical act, instead, is a modality of the people *assembled*.

In the Fifth century B.C. Athenian democracy, liturgies were performed to enable the city’s religious, litigious, and theatrical activities, among others. Each domain of activity consisted of cultural and spatial conventions. Still, the real point of liturgical action was the mode of popular assembly that animated the brief history of Greek democracy. How does one make a structural

connection between liturgy and democracy? Is there a structural logic underlying the intense life of popular assemblies? Let us take the example of theatre.

In the high period of democracy in fifth-century Athens, during the rule of Pericles, nothing was more popular or drew more crowds than the seasonal theatre festival, also called the Great Dionysia.¹ Nothing provides a better instance of the direct presence of the Athenian people as a *body* than the theatre. It is as if theatre manifested a collective intensity—the Dionysiac part of the happening—within the objective civic conditions. To that extent, it was also a *ritual* manifestation of the *polis* in all its direct democratic energy, without any historically false conflation between politics and theatre. Yet, as the theatre was a *civic* activity, it was also part of the Athenian *politeia*, its constitution. However, this constitutive logic is not to be entirely fused with the image of the people assembled in the theatre as a body and as an analogy of direct democracy. To grasp this point, one must distinguish between the collective intensive virtuality that the Dionysiac philosophy of theatre, particularly tragedy, held in reserve and the structural logic of liturgy that ensured theatre as an essential *civic service*.

The liturgist for the Athenian theatre was a citizen of some wealth who funded the festival’s chorus, which consisted of the so-called professional performers because the professionals were not contractually determined but artistically skilled *slaves*. The liturgist, called *choregos*, funded the repertory of performers who formed the chorus. Now, the liturgist appears very similar to the patron of Roman culture and the corporate sponsor of the modern entertainment industry. However, the Greek liturgist was distinct in that he, the citizen, was obliged to perform liturgies exclusively *on behalf of the city*. His wealth didn’t grant any privilege to the citizens supposed to perform liturgies for civic festivals and other activities. He had no distinction by his economic capacity. The distinctiveness of the capacity enjoyed by the liturgist was the same as the other (less wealthy) citizen: which was the civic capacity of being a citizen, a kind of public analogy, wherein the *city* was the locus of the liturgical capacity for which the individual wealthy liturgist provided instantiation. But he was not the liturgical *subject*; the city was.

Does the above create a totalistic image of the Greek city, both the object and agent of public service? Wasn’t Athens, metaphorically speaking, a unified theatre that hosted the citizens as a *body*, with no sense of a singular, anachronistic cultural experience of the mere individual? Wasn’t Athens, then, the only individual in town? However, this image and the deductions that follow from it need to be re-examined, considering the hypothesis that the liturgical capacity as part of the city’s constitution prevented the city from being thought of as a *total individual*. To this

extent, even the vivid imagination of the actual theatre as an *analogon* of direct-democratic assembly needs to be rethought in light of a few more facts.

In 450 B.C., Pericles instituted a fund called *theoric*, which was meant to pay out small amounts of money to citizens for theatre attendance, jury service, and other civic activities.² The fund, exclusively for citizens, was created from the taxed resources of the wealthy Athenians. Yet, the *theoric* funded theatre attendance for the rich and poor alike. How should this egalitarian monetary measure of citizens’ participation in the city’s affairs be understood? Liturgically, it seems. The token payment for attending the theatre signified the subjective *value* of the involvement of citizens, denied to women, slaves, foreigners, and children. However, the physical assembly in the Dionysian festival did not consist of the citizens alone but was a bustling mixture of classes. Yet, the citizens were distinguished from the others by the measure of a capacity, or even more exactly, virtuality, marked by the minor money and lived out as a kind of liturgical *debt* of participation in the city by citizens. So, from both directions of the individual liturgies by *choregoi* and the generalized liturgical debt/obligation subjectivized in the citizen group, the manifest life of theatre as *performance* refers to a structural logic and an ontological ‘outside,’ which never directly presents itself to the spaces of assembly. Strangely, this relation of a present and manifest theatre of performance, or appearance to constitutive liturgical exteriority, reminds one of the problems of how to read Plato’s story of the cave in *The Republic*.

The problem is the following: if the cave is a theatre of appearance, where the chained beings watch their shadows flickering on the opposite wall to confuse the shadows with their being as such, then will the illusion be broken by the fortunate discovery of a transcendent source of light creating the shadows? A literal transcendent space, to be discovered outside the cave *completing* the picture, and the logic to produce a “totality” consisting of the immanent theatre of appearance and the transcendental source of the theatre itself? Applying this schematization to the Athenian city leads to the internal distribution of civic spaces of assembly—theatre, law court, political gatherings, etc. – and the sovereign point of intelligibility of this topology, which is the city itself.

However, the other way of reading Plato’s cave is to envision it as a *situation*.³ The cave is a situation whose constituent elements are only partially accessible to the beings of the cave, who themselves are elements of the situation. The so-called light of the Sun coming from the outside is not a physical location but a point of synthesis, or configuration of the elements of the situation, that exceeds it from *within* that situation. The real point of exception to the repetitive appearances of the situation (of the cave), the “event,” as Alain Badiou calls it, is the *chance* liberation and turning of one of the “beings” or “elements” towards another *orientation* in the situation. This is the turn

to the ‘outside’ of the situation, which is not physically outside, but its exposure to the law of the situation, that it cannot be “completed;” it cannot be a total individual situation divisible between its intelligible rationality and its manifest flux of “performances.” The situation, in other words, is always a virtuality of virtualities. Still, its ontological exposure to this non-totalizing virtuality can only be a result of the “chance” of turning, of re-orienting a part of the situation within the situation itself. One can call this the “conversion” of a part of the situation not to another one but to its essential “truth” or “idea” (Plato’s Eidos) that the situation is virtually *infinite*.

According to the above reading, the city’s theatre in the Great Dionysia enthusiastically endorsed multiple directions of virtuality or Dionysiac “becoming” and a liturgical government of virtuality. “Service” was both the objective mechanism of limiting the locus of becoming to the form or figure of the citizen, and subjectively speaking, this citizen must not be satisfied with the *frisson* of bodies in the great assemblies of the theatre (and politics), but instead, *separate* from the popular immersion to produce a virtual intelligibility on behalf of the city, for the city’s “situation.” So, while constitutively, the city is nothing but a virtual becoming of its situations, the liturgical service of the situation is also oriented to “govern” these *becomings* by subjectivizing and enchainning them to the citizens’ civic debt of participation. Briefly, accounts of modern liturgies of the situation will be placed in what is to follow. However, the terms of the accounts, which consist of the breaking of historical and ontological chains, as well as terrible episodes of re-enchaining, will remain rooted in the limited “model” of Greek liturgy in the inaugural age of democracy.

Situation I: Liberation Theology

Historically speaking, the modern movement(s) of Liberation Theology that have stirred the Latin American nations in the last century bespeak a passion for justice and some unconditional form of democracy since these movements testify to the experience of brutal dictatorships, to which Liberation Theology represents a *thought* of resistance. Such thought necessarily had to be a refusal of government by states, the voice of which refusal was not the official “citizen” but the unconditional “people.” It is a matter of some theological interest that this name, “people,” was articulated with the sign of Christianity, particularly the sign of Christ on the cross of tribulation, passion, and redemptive hope. At the same time, one must also note that Liberation Theology, in these contexts, also instituted a more limited discipline of “social service,” particularly about the programs of education, credit, etc., for a deprived poor population.

The interesting political argument for the experience of the Latin American nations is that the *subject* of the limited liturgies of Christian societies was already torn from the question of mere

membership to the Church to be rendered into an unconditional people of Christ. But Christ himself was not only a theological and commemorative subject; instead, he was a ‘situation’ in these national histories, a situation to be thought of and confronted *here and now*. William Cavanaugh, in his extraordinary study, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ*, offers an elaboration of the political argument, specifically for the context of Chile during Pinochet’s dictatorship.⁴

The main feature of this elaboration is ontological, while the consequent force of the feature is much more political. It is that for a people shattered by the violence of a regime such as Pinochet’s, all ontological virtuality of the *polis* has been captured and held hostage by the State. The people are entirely localized to the obscure and (for that reason) efficacious suspension of the “norm” of the situation. The norm supposed to be subjectivized through the debt of participation in the affairs of the state has now changed to pure command. So, the question at this point is how to consider the subject’s relation to the Church. What happens to the Christian debt?

Cavanaugh’s scholarly verdict is clear: in times of bloody emergency, the Church is on the side of the State, where the state of exception has ‘occupied’ the People to the point of saturation. Cavanaugh refers to the magisterial work of Ernst Kantorowicz (*The King’s Two Bodies*) to diagnose the corporate superimposition of the Church on the body of the State. The theology of the “immortal” sovereign state expresses as much a Christian stake of power as the other commitment to popular liberation as a kind of situational imitation of *Christi*. What is required, then, is to enquire into what kind of *body* distinguishes the people as a “situation” from the immortal sovereign body. Whose modern figure is the absolute state? Cavanaugh strongly suggests that we take a liturgical path to this inquiry. He cites the Orthodox theologian Alexander Schneemann, concerning the origin of the Greek word “leitourgia,” which is “an action by which a group of people becomes something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals.”⁵ So what is at play is the becoming of a ‘body’ of the people, as contrasted to the body of the state, which must encode, govern, and, in the state of total exception, murder all corporate virtuality. Such ontological murder necessarily accompanies the torture and murder of real human bodies. However, it would be doing injustice to Cavanaugh’s passionate argument if it were posed entirely in terms of the sovereign against the people. Instead, he urges for reciprocity between the true Church and the dispersed multiplicity of real human beings, such that the church commits to the *world* as the greater *ecclesia*, even while the world performs a kind of liturgy towards the Christ-ic hope of liberation. But this worldly liturgy is indeed so because it is not secured, regulated, or enacted in the theatre of the Church; it is performed in the world on behalf of the

world. The tortured body of Christ is the invocation of a commemorative object in support of the subjective search of a chained people for the *chance* and *thought* of change or redemption from a situation, apparently chained entirely to its point of suspension. The aleatory and noetic bodies of the people, in circumstances of the gravest danger, are only conceivable as the ontological victory of the people over the Church and the State insofar as the Christ-people release the point of suspension or, arrest to its constitutive exteriority. At the same time, sovereignty produces the image and count of one body, one being that is close in on themselves in the murderous form of the exceptional total individual (that is, the dictator).

Situation II: Dalit Buddhism

One chief presupposition of the last section was that if the people were brutally deprived of their political virtuality in an unjust regime, it was a virtuality that constitutively *existed*. "The People Are Missing" is a speech act correlated to the Latin American "situation," vivid in its cinema of the 1970s, as Gilles Deleuze shows.⁶ The people as the "poor" of an unequal society who would be the locus of "social service," whether in programs of education or economic liturgies at a micro-community level (credit schemes, for instance), were already historically constituted as *political* in countries like Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, Nicaragua, etc. *Because* they were historically signified as political, the people would be vigilantly noticed when they went missing. Their being *missing* was a limit-mode of their virtuality. But what if a people, a community, or a social group, with its multiple individual members, were primarily excluded from this virtuality, whether in the normative mode of the citizen's civic debt, the limit of the possibility of a willed and revolutionary default, or the official debt to the Church and State? What if a people are denied even the privilege of singing the glory of sovereign power in a comprador liturgy of traitors?

The Indian question of social untouchability, as it was practised till the middle of the twentieth century and still is, customarily, but not officially, in independent India, is a peculiar empirical reality that was never liturgically encoded nor politically constituted. It was as if the untouchable had no ontological debt to society, religion, or the state while being crushed under material burden. However, the name "poor" or "proletariat" does not correspond to the untouchable because the poor, or the proletariat, already carry the virtuality, which can be activated under the force of the real point of exception to the situation. The untouchable is denied a *situation*. Therefore, the question of the event as the force of change cannot apply to the untouchable since she is excluded from even the *illusion* of the shadow in Plato's cave. It is as if she has no ontological, hence no political, constitution in the 'situation' to express any stakes in changing the situation.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar rigorously arrived at this as the conclusion to the epochal question, “Can Hindu society be decisively reformed or changed?” The rigorous investigation lasted all his life, but the conclusion was processed between 1936, when he published *Annihilation of Caste*, and other speeches at Yeola, Bombay, in 1935—and 1956, when he, along with lakhs of other untouchables, converted to Buddhism.⁷ According to the present argument, this was a conversion not simply to a pre-existent religion, theology, or liturgy but to a ‘situation’ in which the very act of conversion provided a constitutive point of exception. It was an exceptional conversion, testified to by the fact that it was simultaneously an act of a new religious naming – neo-Buddhism, Ambedkarite Buddhism, the name Bahujan, etc. This act becomes decisively politicized when one speaks further of a “Dalit Buddhism,” since “Dalit” is, properly speaking, a retrospective intensification and generalization of the conversion in the light of greater Dalit politics from the 1970s up to the present in India. However, is there also a liturgization of the act with the enunciation of the name of a historically oppressed identity—Dalit, meaning oppressed and broken – and the name of a new “participant” in the service of a newly constituted republican body?

This is a crucial point because, on the one hand, the very basis of the name Dalit is a fundamental liturgical exclusion from the debt of participation in society. On the other, the Dalit equally represents today a republican – and, of course, Ambedkarite, since Ambedkar was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution—enthusiasm. How does the Buddhist sequence in Ambedkar’s rigorous research lead to the conversion prefiguring, or taking a distance from, the larger Dalit dialectic? In Eleanor Zelliot’s pioneering study, *Ambedkar’s World*, one references some specific moments in Ambedkar’s thought between 1950 and 1956.⁸ This time of thought also steps beyond Ambedkar’s constitutional preoccupation between 1947 and 1950. Still, it was also a step beyond the thought of a limited and univocal national totality. Zelliot points out that Ambedkar, in his essay, “The Buddha and the Future of His Religion,” urges both for a decisive separation from Hinduism and critical interventions in Buddhism itself. Given that Ambedkar was the unique contemporary voice of fundamental generic principles—liberty, equality, fraternity, universal humanity⁹—and he declared the Buddha to have made possible a generic egalitarian revolution in ancient India, he unhesitatingly launched a critique of Buddhism as it existed in his time. He wrote of the need for a Buddhist Bible to reform the congregation, the *sangha*, and its re-orientation to *service* through a true commitment to Buddhist education. He also desired international Buddhism, or a Buddhist International, given that he would lecture on Buddha and Marx in Nepal in 1956.¹⁰

But the Buddhist Bible would not be a source of *theology*; it would be the presentation, in different genres of discourse, of thinkable rational principles, or better, “ideas,” that thought can grasp, and consequently prescribe, for an egalitarian disposition of life. The liturgy of the emancipated *sangha* is also a service of thought of principles embodied in a world of reciprocal and egalitarian dispositions. “Education” is the name of an intellectual liturgy on behalf of the intellect itself, insofar as the latter is not a measurable individual attribute but a universal world of dispositions. The ontological virtuality that the liturgy of principles unchains, or education forms, into bodies and lives is the same as a kind of egalitarian human intelligence. Provided “intelligence” is not understood as a common predicate of the formal human subject but is grasped as the perpetual exteriority that makes every interior image of the subject flicker, dale, and who knows, enlighten or blind, according to the chance and risk of converting to a new principle.

Following the first two recommendations, Ambedkar, in “The Buddha and the Future of His Religion,” seeks to examine the world situation of Buddhism. Does this desire imply a geo-cultural incorporation of the Buddhist ‘situation’ with its thought and liturgy? A world body where the Buddhist people are assembled just as in the local Pandharpur region, where thousands of followers of Chokhamela congregate locally in a yearly pilgrimage?¹¹

There is reason to believe that Ambedkar, disillusioned with the experience of national politics and having resigned as Law Minister sought a more capacious intellectual, political, and spiritual perspective on the little politics of the nation. Buddhism then was a greater experiment in \thought and politics towards the end of his life. It is not a matter of surprise if Ambedkar is seen to desire a physical, spatial, and vital manifestation of the Buddhist congregation on the maximal scale. All this might well be true, but it doesn’t allow the *existential* reality to lapse that Ambedkar and others converted in an actual act, which was not merely performed as a series of gestures and speech acts—the refuges, the vows, the oaths—but was an *act of time*. History changed with the act of conversion because, as a “becoming,” it already presupposed an ontological break with the homogenous temporality of a Hindu-national history. As a radical tear in time, the conversion went beyond the imaginary of an alternative ritual spatiality to the liturgies that the crypto-Hindu National Congress and Gandhi prescribed. The temporal wound of conversion, at that singular juncture, hurt the Hindus, not merely with Buddhist ritual devices, but more fundamentally, with the interruption of a certain theological-social history of Hindu oppression. In “Dalit Buddhism,” if Buddhism still evokes the space of religious assembly (even if at a word scale), Dalit signifies the act of temporal becoming that divides the history of mute oppression from itself. And in that wedge emerges the act of existence in the form of conversion. As pointed out earlier, such an act

of existence pertains to the thought of new principles, to forms of activating new becomings through the liturgy of education and the vision of a Buddhist International, not possibly as a greater theatre of nations and parties, but as a ‘world-situation’ mobilized by an unforeseen temporality of change (the world as a situation of *time*).

Conclusion: The Contingent South of Time

Irrespective of the vast differences in contexts, Liberation Theology and Dalit Buddhism are equally constituted by an interruption of the dominant temporality that structures totalities, such as the national state and the religious church. Nevertheless, the act of liturgy arrives at the crossroads of religion and politics—but to reveal, at its heart, the chance, the contingency of a temporal becoming. At the same time, as seen above, a deep will-to-body underlies the liturgical congregation, whether in Christianity or Buddhism. The response of Liberation Theology and Dalit Buddhism is not to oppose abstract principles to corporate assembly but rather to invite experiments with creating *bodies of principles*. “Disposition” is precisely the sign of an experimental body that searches passionately for the mode of living out principles. In this sense, it is still a logic of liturgy that goes beyond the limited encoding of the incorporeal debt induced in the Greek city.

The concluding lesson to draw from the foregoing sequences is that the greater idea of an alternative to the dominant world order, the so-called North, is not a spatial, geographical, or cultural one. The figure of Other Totality must not entirely determine the idea of a Global South than the North. If allowed this slippage from analysis to prescription, one is tempted to prescribe further: think about the South as a South of Time! This means that the South is the name of a situated becoming, contingent virtuality, instead of being the inverted image of a mono-world-order or world-body. This further means that while the hegemony of the world-order depends on the spatialization, territorialization, and culturalization of a whole spectrum of political experience, the project of debunking this order while provisionally resorting to the standard records and accounts of this experience—for example, the records and accounts of colonial experience – must actively deterritorialize and de-culturalized the interpretation of this experience. Failing this, the danger of fetishizing an Other Totality called the South will not cease to threaten the true value of postcolonial discourse.

Notes

¹ I have already utilized an excellent article by Paul Cartledge and other works on Greek culture in my earlier book. In what is to follow, Cartledge is the main reference (detail in Note 2). See the chapter, “Liturgical Origins of Sovereignty” in Choudhury, Soumyabrata, *Theatre, Number, Event: Three Studies on the relationship between Sovereignty, Power and Truth*. IAS, 2013, pp. 1-55.

² See Cartledge, Paul, “Deep Plays: Theatre as Process in Greek Civic Life” in Easterling, P. E. Ed., *A Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 3-35.

³ This reading is greatly inspired by Alain Badiou’s “hyper translation” of Plato and his concept of the event as a site of exception. See Alain Badiou, *Plato’s Republic*. Translated by Susan Spitzer, Polity Press, 2013.

⁴ See Cavanaugh, William T. *Torture and the Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ*. Blackwell Publisher, 1998. Also, for his main reference, see Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King’s Two Bodies*, Princeton University Press, 2016.

This is the place to humbly but without reticence admit that I am not a specialized scholar of either the historical transformations of societies of South and Central America, particularly from the 1960s to the end of the 20th century, nor of Liberation Theology as a specific articulation of a kind of Christian-Socialist fidelity to the humanity of the poor, the oppressed, the outcast. I have learnt crucial but only preliminary lessons from such pioneering authors as Gustavo Gutiérrez and Enrique Dussel, to guide me in investigating the larger question of a “people,” who in their very moment of exclusion from the space of statist institutional representation (including representation within the official Church), constitutes itself as a political form of that very statist voiding: in the very statement “the people are missing,” the force of being-missing, strangely articulates itself as an “absent” liturgy. Absent here does not mean to not exist; one is absent and missing from every possibility of being freely heard in a society constricted by dictatorial laws and decrees, but what I am trying to indicate is a kind of liturgical recommencement from those very spaces of constriction (including the space of prison in the case of Pinochet’s Chile). In conducting this general but not unspecified investigation, I have been particularly oriented by Enrique Dussel’s proposition that the overall methodological repertoire of a “philosophy of liberation,” traversing Christian Liberation Theology, Critical Theory and Marxism will be drawn from traditions of both the Global North and the South but this cannot be a symmetrical putting together of the two sides. While one must be alert to the incommensurabilities of some of these features, sides and dimensions articulating the Global North and the South, one must also not enclose oneself on any one side or point of rest. This is as much a political as a philosophical task that Dussel leaves us with. see. Dussel, Enrique, ‘From Critical Theory to the Philosophy of Liberation: Some Themes for Dialogue’ in *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* Volume 1, Issue 2. <https://doi.org/10.5070/T412011806>

With Gustavo Gutiérrez, the lesson of a historicized North-South encounter as taught by Dussel reaches back into the internal displacements of society within Latin America with regard to the positing of a General Liberation Theology. That is why Gustavo Gutiérrez talks of “contextual” Liberation Theology both in relation to the social structures of a Nation or region and its historical trajectory. What Liberation Theology was in the 1960s and 70s has definitely changed in the new millennium, but Gutiérrez’s Christian-universalist point that even with these changes the fundamental reason to show fidelity to the humanity of the poor, the oppressed and the excluded remains unchanged for the so-called Christian. For my purposes in this article, the Christian can as much be a Muslim, a Buddhist and even a Marxist insofar as each of these constructions pertain to the emergence of a new and unforeseen liturgical body placed between uncertain and crisis-ridden worlds of politics and society. see Hartnett, Daniel, ‘Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutiérrez’s in *America: the Jesuit Review* February 03, 2003 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2003/02/03/remembering-poor-interview-gustavo-gutierrez>

⁵ Ibid. p.12.

⁶ For the speech-act, “the people are missing”, see Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema II: The Time-Image*. Translated by Hugu Tomlinson & Robert Galeta, Continuum, 2005, pp. 207-15.

⁷ See Babasaheb Ambedkar, “Annihilation of Caste” in *Writings and Speeches. Vol. I*. Edited by Vasant Moon, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1979, pp. 23-96.

⁸ See Zelliott, Eleanor Zelliott, *Ambedkar’s World: The Making of Babasaheb and the Dalit Movement* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2013), pp. 143-174. The chapter is called “Religious Conversion Movement, 1935-1956.”

⁹ We learn from Zelliott that Ambedkar added the Marathi word “Manushi” to the French Revolution slogans, meaning something like generic or universal humanity.

¹⁰ See Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, “Buddha or Karl Marx” in *Writings and Speeches, Vol 3*. Edited by Vasant Moon, : Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, pp. 441-62.

¹¹ Pandharpur is the single most important seat of pilgrimage of the lower-castes in Maharashtra. The congregation and pilgrimage take place under the aura of Chokhamela, the untouchable Bhakti Saint-poet, who belonged to the sect of Vithoba. Ambedkar already sees the Buddhist origin of the Vithoba image. See Eleanor Zelliot, op. cit. pp. 168-69.

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