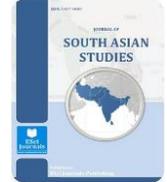




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SOCIAL COLLECTIVES, POLITICAL MOBILISATION AND THE LOCAL STATE: A VIEW FROM THE FIELD

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ABSTRACT

Based on a detailed field world, the paper is an attempt to understand the nature and character of civil social and religious collectives. The concern of the paper is to map the diverse nature of dominant civil-social and religious collectives and their role in socio-political mobilisation. It details how these collectives facilitate socio-political mobilisation, help its members to access the resources of the local state and also provide a platform(s) to its members that can be used to unfold political designs for retaining socio-economic and political status-quo.

Keywords: Caste, Communal Politics, Political Process, Political Mobilisation, Democratic Renewal.

INTRODUCTION

The paper attempts to explore the emergence and role of select civil-social and religious collectives, i.e., ethno-religious groups, caste collectives, religious social orders and petty business and trade associations in political mobilization and surfacing of new political and social elites at the local level as well as their relationship with the local state apparatus. The study is based on field surveys conducted in two urban centers of India, viz. Lucknow and Ahmadabad. It contextualizes the findings of two urban areas with the larger national and federal level social and political processes

The Study Area:

Ahmedabad: It is the capital city of western Indian state called Gujarat. The state is the rock bed of Hindu religion based political mobilisation. In 2002, the state in general and Ahmedabad in particular saw violent communal clash between Hindus and Muslims. A pogrom was unleashed against Muslims and the state -manned by right wing social formation- far from being a neutral arbitrator, actively participated, promoted and perpetuated the riots (Report on the Visit of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), 2002; Human Right Watch (HRW) Report, 2002; People Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), 2002; Concerned Citizen's Tribunal

(CCT), 2002; Vardarajan, 2002; Shani, 2007; Dhattiwala and Biggs, 2012). Moreover, the political party which was ruling the state came back to power with a thumping majority in the subsequent three elections to the state legislature (Prakash, 2002; Kanungo and Farooqui, 2008; Jaffrelot, 2013). The political fault line in the state apparently lies around communal and secular politics. The party which espouses Hindu cause – Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) is ideologically as well in action against Muslims. The current chief minister of the state is also the prime ministerial candidate from the BJP for the forthcoming national elections. The other significant political party, Indian National Congress (INC) because of its national imperative articulates secular values but field experience tells us that its cadres are also against Muslims. BJP draws support from all social groups, including *Adivasis* (indigenous social groups) except Muslims since the party has been able to carve out an organic unity between different castes and social groups in the name of Hindu religion. Small proportion of middle castes, lower castes, *Adivasis* and significant proportion of Muslims support INC (Lobo, 2002; Patel, 2003; Jani, 2009).

Lucknow: It is the capital city of the northern Indian state, namely Uttar Pradesh. The state of Uttar Pradesh has seen fierce political mobilisation based on caste as well as communal identities. Caste based mobilisation in the state has given a new flavor to Indian politics. The

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coming of the political parties having it social based in particular caste(s) have ensured the culmination of one party system presided over by INC and made space for competitive multi-party system (Yadav, 1996). The political articulation of the socio-economic interests of the upper castes, middle castes, and lower castes forms the basis of political cleavage in the state. Besides this, there is a substantial presence of Muslims who largely align themselves with any secular political formation, though in the last decade they have aligned themselves with a *Samajwadi* Party (SP) which has its origin in articulating the socio-economic interest of the middle castes. *Bahujan Samaj* Party (BSP) draws its support primarily from Dalits (lower caste) but during the last few years it has started attracting good proportion of Upper Caste. BJP commands political loyalty of Upper Castes and a minority of Dalits – (the support from the latter is true for few urban pockets only). INC because of its historical presence tries to attract all social groups but its support base has dipped to an all-time low in the state. The social demography of the state is such that none of the identity based political party can acquire political power without mobilising social group(s) beyond the social identity/ caste it primarily represents (Brass, 1997; Verma, 2004; CSDS, 2102; Ramaseshan, 2012)

CIVIL-SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS COLLECTIVES

Starting with a functional definition of civil society, any collective association formed outside the formal space of the state can be described as civil society. Thus the civil society is a space between family and state which translates individual consciousness into collective consciousness. It is the arena which allows the individuals to articulate their socio-economic and political view points and thereby contribute as well as shape the local/national social and political discourse.

The paper identifies two notion of associational life that is produced by this imagination of civil society. The first is the delimited notion which is bounded in the universal principles of modern socio-political thought – notion propounded by western imagination, by international donors, by the Weberian vocabulary used by different institutions of Indian State etc. In this scheme of imagination, the values invoked are guided by secular principles and praxis of universality of citizenship. This implies that delimited notion imagines individuals as ‘citizens’ de-linked from their social origin having a secular identity. The individual here is counted as one,

i.e., a citizen. A group of citizen can come together, for instance, unemployed working class demanding social security benefits from the state or a resident association demanding better civic facilities. By this definition, there is a political equality between all citizens (one person, one vote) and individual is expected to forge alliances with other citizenry as secular rational being. Accordingly, it also becomes the site where the democratic propensity of independent citizen action is realized in the face of unresponsive, insensitive and often lethargic state or an arena where the vested interests of the entrenched groups are contested by democratizing citizenry.

The other is the unlimited notion bound in the particulars of specificities of Indian society - notion of actual people, the manner in which they shape political alliances and negotiate socio-economic relationship with other individuals placed horizontally or vertically in the caste/class hierarchy. The unlimited notion allows the individuals to imagine and choose alliances beyond the face to face interaction and thereby allows them to transcend the limits of universal rationality imposed by delimited notion. Unlimited notion is loose and flexible and acquires shapes and vigor as per the given balance of social forces.

In substance the normative construct of delimited notion asserts universality in the name of citizenship. The unlimited notion informs us of heterogeneity, i.e., coexistence of different social identities, alliances within and between different social groups whose interests are conflictual, absence of horizontal class solidarity and presence of vertical caste alliance etc. However, in practice, the dividing line between delimited and unlimited notion is often blurred where the principles of ‘secular’ associational life are mediated by identities of caste, class, ethnicity and gender.

What Lies Out there in the name of Associational Life?

Delimited Notion: Briefly discussing the variety of organizations present in the domain of civil society which qualify to be a part of delimited notion, these are Trade Unions, NGOs, Advocacy Groups and Resident Associations¹. The relatively stronger trade unions are in Nationalised Banks, Life Insurance Corporation of India, various wings of respective state governments etc. However, in the last two decades, the stabilization and structural adjustment programmes (SAP) led to demands for increased labour market flexibility,

especially employment flexibility, resulting in mandatory provisions of voluntary retirement schemes, hire and fire polices or closure of loss-making industrial units (the best example being closure of National Textile Corporation Mills in Ahmedabad and Lucknow). There is a growing component of unorganized sector within the organized sector employers where most of the grade IV jobs as well as numerous senior positions are increasingly given out to contract workers (Ramaswamy, 1999). In the present political economic

scenario, Trade Unions are unwilling to organize workers in the informal sector and their presence in the organized sector of the economy is getting increasingly marginalized. This space in the unorganized sector is now increasingly being occupied by apolitical NGOs (Kamat, 2002). Though there are a few independent unions working for the cause of unorganized labor (for instance SEWA works for street vendors in Ahmedabad and also with the *Chikan* garment workers in Lucknow (Kapoor, 2007).

Chart 1- 'Secular' Civil Society Institutions

Name/ Type of Organization	City	Agenda	Nature of Membership
Trade Unions	Ahmedabad, Lucknow	Promote and protect the interests of its members, mostly belonging to employees in organized sector	Restricted
NGOs	Ahmedabad, Lucknow	Donor funded organizations planning, implementing and monitoring urban civic amenities, educational and health initiatives, slum development, issues pertaining to women etc.	Restricted
Advocacy Groups	Ahmedabad, Lucknow	Promoting accountability in state structures, demanding rehabilitation of development induced displacements, cultural groups disseminating secular values through art form, civil liberty groups.	Open

Source: Author's field documentation

Breman (2002) documents the demise of trade unions in the cotton textile mills of Ahmedabad which resulted in a loss of a platform for secular class mobilisation and created a fertile space for violent right-wing communal mobilisation. The present development discourse of 'good' governance assigns a primary role to the institutions of civil society (read NGOs) in conceiving, planning and monitoring development. In the present dominant discourse, NGOs are considered as harbingers of progressive change because of their 'capacity' to articulate the voices of the poor and marginalised social groups, conceive and execute the development programmes and possibly make the state apparatus transparent and accountable.

Now considering the Advocacy Groups, firstly such organizations work towards protecting the civil liberties of the citizen. Towards this effort, organizations like People's Union for Civil Liberties and People and Peoples Union for Democratic Rights have repeatedly brought out fact finding reports, publicity pamphlets etc in both the states highlighting violation of human rights and coercive measure of state apparatus (People Union for

Civil Liberties (PUCL), 2004; PUCL, 2006; PUCL-People Union for Human Rights (PUHR), 2008, 2009; PUCL, 2011).

Secondly, new groups have emerged against the centralized, unaccountable, patriarchal and at times communal character of the state/society. They primarily draw on the legacy of new social movements. These groups focus on variety of people-centric issues. The ideological proclivity of these groups varies, but all of them can be broadly classified as progressive and democratic in nature and most of them oppose the present form of globalisation. Such groups which exist in the urban centers under study are National Alliance for People's movement (both in UP and Gujarat) - a apex body of numerous peoples organization in various states; *Asha* in UP working for transparency and accountability together with educational issues, *Lok Samiti* (UP) articulating the voices of people against the present form of globalisation; *Adivasi Mahasabha* in Gujarat which articulates the marginalisation of *Adivasis* in public and political domain; Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG) working for disadvantage

women’s group and violence against women etc. Field evidences indicate that there are various cultural groups like *Darpana*, *Drishti*, Media Arts, *Samvedan* (Gujarat), *Kalchakra* (UP) which depict the exploitation and oppression in society through the medium of songs, street theatres, films and other art and cultural forms.

In the interests of the agenda of this paper, we conclude that the associations that qualify under our delimited notion of civil society are extremely limited in their expanse as well as impact. The reason being

- Earlier the state negotiated with labour, now capital negotiates with the working class directly. The response to this shift, however, remains muted because of the functional weaknesses of TUs (marginal presence in unorganised sector).
- NGOs, however, have failed to usher in a regime of empowered and inclusive development. The reasons are both structural as well as functional. The former entails that civil society institutions did not respond to local socio-economic needs but were created from above. The basis of such civil society organisations is two folds. First, the state is overextended and has to be thinned down and hence many of its earlier tasks have to be delegated to ‘independent’ civil society

institutions (Baviskar, 2001; Kamat, 2004). It also implies that the state and its officials are corrupt and unaccountable and should transfer their duties to institutions, created by them yet outside their administrative control. We were told that most of the state officials manning the government apparatus at the local level refuse to accept this fact and forgo their privileges including rent seeking. This structural lacuna converts most NGOs into extension agents of the government who have to work in a project and time-bound mode. Given the pressure of schedules, they are rarely in a position to tackle the structural factors responsible for marginalization. Consequently, they have become centres for the disbursement of funds received from various donors. The dependence on government for funds as well imperative to work with the government makes them ineffective or mellowed down in demanding state accountability.

- The advocacy groups are successful in articulating genuine demands of the people, yet they remain at the periphery. In most instances they operate within parameters set by the state. This makes them more reactive than pro-active.

Unlimited Notion:

Chart II- Ethno Religious Groups

Name of Social Collectivity	City	Agenda	Nature of Membership	Affinity with Political Party
Rashtriya Swamsewak Sangh (National Volunteer Crop)	Ahmedabad, Lucknow	Inculcates Hindutva ideology through organizing <i>Shakas</i> (cells)	Open	BJP
Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council)	Ahmedabad, Lucknow	Perform aggressive and agitational role for promoting Hindutva	Open	BJP
Bajrang Dal	Ahmedabad, Lucknow	VHP Militant wing, started to provide muscle & manpower to VHP’s agitation	Open	BJP
Sewa Vibhag a) Sewa International b) Sewa Bharti c) Vanwasi Kalyan Aashram d) Ekal Vidyalaya Found. e) Vikas Bharti	Ahmedabad	Formed apparently to carry out social service to the community. In practice provide entry point for carrying out core ideological work by ideological volunteers.	Open	BJP
Durga Vahini (Women’s Front)	Ahmedabad, Lucknow	Organise Hindu Women and inculcate religiosity , also provide entry point to ideological volunteers	Open	BJP
Hindu Jagran Manch (HJM),	Ahmadabad, Lucknow	Organise Hindu Women and Men , also provide entry point to ideological volunteers	Open	BJP

Source: Author’s field documentation

Now, we will take up for discussion variety of organizations which we have clubbed under 'unlimited notion' of associational life. This includes the documentation and analysis of the nature, expanse and socio-political and economic functions of ethno-religious groups, caste collectives, small and petty business organizations and religious social order. This documentation was done with the help of extensive primary field work in the cities of Lucknow and Ahmedabad. Each of these groups included in the unlimited notion is discussed below.

Ethno-Religious Groups: Members belonging to ethno-religious groups primarily come together on the basis of shared cultural symbols and history which is mythological in nature. The identity of the group is cemented by its hopes and fears and distorted by its ambition and ideals (Kakkar, 1993). It has members belonging to more than one caste having allegiance to the same religion.

The common feature of all these collectives is that they belong to the same family network – the *Rashtriya Swamsewak Sangh* (RSS). The RSS and its affiliate organizations, which are popularly known as *Sangh Parivar* (hereafter *Sangh*), representing the Hindu right. Sangh is a family of organization comprising of cultural, religious, political, and militant and social service wings. The social and political logic of the existence of Sangh emanates from their ideological commitment to challenge the present conception of Indian nation and to re-imagine it in terms of culture- read Hindu Culture (Jaffrelot, 1993; Nandy et al., 1994). Culture in their ideological worldview becomes the basis for carving out a Hindu *Rashtra* (nation). Hindu *Rashtra* by definition accepts only those as full citizens who are racially and culturally Hindu and castigates those who adhere to or identify with different faiths or religions. This design of re-imagination of the state has come to be known as Hindutvaⁱⁱ. Hence Hindutva believes in re-arranging Indian nation around Hindu religion through selective interpretation and self-serving historiography. However, it should be noted that invoking of such nature of History – largely mythological – never argues for the rejection of modern science and technology and modern nation state. The capture of the state apparatus is most essential for unfolding their designs to redefine the nation in exclusivist terms. The capture of state power, unlike the extreme left groups, is not to be through violence but through the rules laid down by the

constitution and through sovereign ballot. This requires general acceptance of their ideological worldview by the people. This crucial task has to be performed by numerous social collectives representing the *Sangh* and operating in the civil society arena.

These collectives work at several levels. RSS is the core institution of the Sangh. Its members are exclusively male and primarily from upper caste. It imparts ideological and physical training to its members organized at local level in *shakas* (cells). These members are later expected to carry out similar exercise through various affiliates of Sangh. BJP, the parliamentary wing of the Sangh participates in electoral politics. *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) is apparently the religious face of the Sangh though it does not fall far behind *Bajrang Dal* (BD) in organizing and undertaking militant, often violent, agitational activities supporting the reason for which Sangh exists. VHP draw its members primarily from holy men as well traders, small entrepreneurs and professions in urban areas, large and middle farmers in rural areas. It regularly organizes religious *yatras* (processions) (Nandy et al., 1995; Corbridge and Harriss, 2002: 188; Yagnik and Sheth, 2005; Sud, 2012), religious discourses, street corner meetings, funds construction of temple of Hindu. BD is explicitly a militant wing and very often its members are foot-soldiers in right wing militant activism. We noted that BD regularly organizes training camps for its members – who are mainly drawn from lower castes - where they are taught to use firearms and *trishuls* (tridents).

The social service wing apparently formed to undertake social service and relief services are notoriously known for indulging in sectarian activities. We met representatives of several organizations, many of which are also registered as NGOs, working in Ahmadabad and Lucknow claiming independent status but in practical terms work dexterously for promoting the cause of Hindutva. They provide entry point to *swam sewaks* (RSS members) to carry on their ideological work amongst the people. Often, education provides an effective cover for carrying out these ideological operations. For instance, we were told by the teachers of *Ekal Vidyalaya* – schools established by the RSS in the tribal regions of Gujarat - that their efforts are also directed towards stopping Hindus converting to Christianity and promotes re-conversion to Hinduism through teaching the values of Hindu culture; Vikas foundation claims to promote Indian culture but in practice

promotes Hindutva through negating syncretic cultural traditions through *Gurukuls* (tradition schools). We observed that organizations like *Sewa Bharti* and *Vikas Bharti*, works for consolidation of Hindu society through celebrating Hindu festivals such as *Holi*, *Raksha Bandhan*, *Sankranti*, *Yugadi*. Similarly, *Hindi Jagran Manch* primarily celebrates Hindu festivals and mobilizes people towards this end. We documented that the *Durga Vahini* concentrates its efforts to women and its task is to mobilize women across caste for social gatherings and celebrating Hindu festivals. Thus, their efforts, often through invoking cultural symbols, are to construct Hindu identity cutting across caste, class and gender. Some collectives try and inculcate the philosophy of Hindutva through education in the young minds, others have built temples in the name of development activities and some others have carried out forceful malicious, historically untrue propaganda against Christians and Muslims thereby creating there image as 'adversarial other' in the minds of the target community. In substance, their agenda is to discipline the popular consciousness towards the Hindutva political and social processes.

Each of these social collectives is governed by a hierarchical command structure. The lowest unit being *shakha* (cells) or *mohalla* committees (branch at housing colony). Several *mohalla* committees together form a ward. Several such wards together form a zone and all the zones constitute the district unit. Each unit is a delimited in a manner that it corresponds to the political division of urban area. The ward, zone and district unit corresponds to geographical delimitation for political election of corporator (municipal government), MLA (state assembly) and MP (National Parliament) respectively. Further these sub-units in the collectives are further sub-divided into Youth committees, Women Committees, Cultural Committees, *Kirtan* (devotional song) Committees etc. Every effort is made share some functions of the collectives with each member. Each unit depending on the strength of the membership either has a full time president/ secretary or part time volunteers. The leaders at each level are important professional (doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants) or business persons/traders or some important political functionary. The membership of these leaders may overlap with other associations like caste associations and business associations. We will take up this for discussion shortly.

It was observed that the important sites for incorporating new members and sympathisers are resident welfare associationsⁱⁱⁱ, felicitating young and adult achievers, celebrating Hindu festivals, organizing *kirtans* and *bhajans* (devotional songs sung in a group) at the local temple, filming religious and nationalist commercial films at local clubs, organizing religious discourses. During important festivals or on the occasion of the visit of the some senior national level or state level leaders, larger social gatherings are organized. These functions are normally chaired by some important government functionary or leader of the religious sects. It was noted that free gifts (cotton saree/cotton shirts) are given to the "poor" invitees, usually from the lower caste. The free gift is accompanied by some religious symbol or the photo of some Hindu God. Each important member at the *mohalla* (housing colony) level is requested to nominate few "poor" who can be given the free gift. This is an effort to build up the patronage network. The idea behind this being that each important member, when required, can command the political and social loyalty of at least a dozen people. Further any development benefits (health, education, small subsidised loans) are distributed through the social collectives or through the same patronage network.

All these collectives are supposedly autonomous but are organically united towards the logic of its existence. These collectives are also the training ground of future local politicians and Hindutva social workers. The weekly calendar of these collectives, it was noted both in Ahmedabad and Lucknow, are filled with religious discourses, social functions, street corner meetings, inter *mohalla* meetings etc. Another crucial function which select members of these collectives carry out in Ahmedabad is to collect *hafta* (protection money) from street vendors and traders. In return they ensure that the local municipality and government official don't remove them or object to any of their extralegal business. Thus, these collectives through their gradual and painstaking efforts ensure that newer individuals are disciplined to the logic of Hindutva and are ready to support them in any political, social or communal battle.

Caste Collectives: A caste collective draws its members, primarily male, from the same caste/sub-caste and may have been formed with the explicit objective of protecting its economic and political interest or may be guided by the logic of political democracy. It may or may not give importance to shared cultural symbols and

mythology. The dominant caste collectives in these two urban areas share some common features. The caste collectives in these two cities primarily belong to upper

castes. However, because of the political climate in Lucknow, the intermediary castes association has also acquired some prominence.

Chart III- Caste Collectives

Name of Social Collectivity	City	Agenda	Nature of Membership	Affinity with Political Party
Patel Panchayat	Ahmedabad	Promote Caste solidarity and acts as an interest group	Restricted	BJP
Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha	Ahmedabad	Do & influential in electoral politics	Restricted	BJP
Gujarat Kshatriya Sangh	Ahmedabad	Do & influential in electoral politics	Restricted	BJP
Patidar Mandal	Ahmedabad	Do	Restricted	BJP
Kurmi Masabha	Lucknow	Do	Restricted	SP
Kyastah Mahasabha	Lucknow	Do	Restricted	BJP/Congress
Vaish Mahasabha	Lucknow	Do & influential in electoral politics	Restricted	BJP
Yadav Mahasangh	Lucknow	Do	Restricted	SP
Kanya Kubj Brahmin Sabha	Lucknow	Do	Restricted	BJP

Source: Author's field documentation

There is a history of caste associations and caste panchayats (caste courts- which settle disputes between members of the castes) in the country in general and these two districts in particular (I. L. Rudolph and S. H. Rudolph, 1960; Rao, 1968; Pocock, 1972; Shah, 1975; Carroll, 1975; Michelutti, 2004). However, it seems the present nature of democracy in the country have given a new shape to various caste collectives. Any social platforms which have numerical strength to make a difference to electoral outcome become a force to be acknowledged and respected by the contending political formations. The caste collectives, unlike the ethno religious collectives, don't seem to have a neat governance structure. There is generally one office at the district level. These caste collectives are propelled by individual who are quite successful either in government service or are political leaders or command high respect in the community because of his/their high socio-political or economic status. The political parties often nourish and promote the caste collectives which they perceive are ideologically close to their worldview. The numerical strength of the caste association provides the political parties a social platform to organize social groups towards its electoral ends. Few caste associations - *Patidar Mandal, Gujarat Kshatriya Sangh, Yadav*

Mahasangh and Kurmi Mahasbha - were started by local political leader of particular political parties belonging to that particular caste. It may also be the case that the leader in a particular political party may organize his fellow caste men to increase his bargaining power within the political party. The members of all these caste collectives are business persons/traders or middle and upper middle class professionals, government servants, working class etc. The active members of the caste collectives are educated and vouch for 'modern' outlook and are also keen to preserve their caste identity. It was documented that several prominent members of the caste collectives control business in transport, brick kilns, real estate, construction, security agencies, government supplies, liquor trade, public parking lots etc. These members also happen to local musclemen. In few cases, they control business in real estate and construction on behalf of prominent politicians who also happen to be the leader of the caste collective. The authors was informed by several people that politician of all colors bank on them for collecting protection money, managing their economic activities and investing their ill-gotten wealth in high return sectors or share markets and para-banking operations. It was also documented that several of the musclemen slowly

graduated into the leaders of caste collectives and then became mainstream politicians. The political parties also encourage these musclemen because of their ability to control votes both on caste identity as well as their muscle power. In the present days of extra-vigilant and strict election commission, the musclemen use various tactics to delay voting in particular election booths where the rival candidate has chances of getting majority votes. The recruitment of newer members is through finding out caste members in different trades, professions, government offices, markets etc. It is normally by word of mouth. A letter of invitation with a free postage registration form is normally sent for the prospective members to reply. The mailing list once prepared is used for informing all the members of their future social activities.

The caste collectives hold various religious and social functions which are associated with their respective community. Several people outside their respective community are also invited to the functions. We documented that the people who do not belong to the community and are invited are the local political bosses, senior legal administrative and police officers and top self-employed professionals (senior advocates, doctors etc). The caste collectives through these functions provide a space to the members to carve out a social network outside the community. We were explained that this extended social network is a resource which can be exploited when there is a need and is not meant to dilute the community identity. The extended social network involving the important people in the city is often a resource for the community members to facilitate their engagements with government offices, hospitals, and courts. Our interviews with the members of the caste collectives also tell us that the possibility of activating the extended social network is contingent on the class location. In other words, the people who are higher up in the class ladder are the ones who are able to activate the extended social network. Further, the prominent leaders of the caste collectives can be approached any of its members for claiming state development schemes or seeking favours with the government departments, especially police or for resolving intra-community disputes etc.

Another very crucial feature of the caste association is that the membership base significantly overlaps with the traders associations and ethno religious groups which we will discuss below.

Traders and Petty Business Association: Traders and petty business associations represent various business units primarily formed to protect business/economic interests. These associations either represent a particular market or a particular trade or both.

The members of these associations as the name suggests are the traders and business people. In terms of their caste locations, overwhelming majority of them belong to the upper castes. In other words, the petty trade and business of these two cities are completely in the hands of upper castes. Interestingly in Lucknow, *Khatiks* (vegetable sellers belonging to lower caste) and *Dhobis* (cloth washing community) also have a powerful association.

Further, all these associations also fund political/ electoral campaigns, social and religious functions, religious discourses etc. It was also documented that business association in Ahmedabad give protection money/ funding to any of the right wing social collectives. The ruling party for the last one decade in Gujarat is the political wing – BJP- of the right wing social collectives. In Lucknow, the markets also seem to control by associations which have ideological compatibility with Sangh. The monetary contribution is raised by the business association but it contributes to the activities of the right wing social collectives or so called 'apolitical' religious discourses. The overlapping of membership, especially of the prominent members and leaders, between ethno religious groups, caste collectives and business association ensures that monetary contribution reaches to the coffers of right wing social collectives. But the office bearers of the associations in Lucknow pointed out that don't alienate any powerful political party. Hence a share of their contribution in Lucknow is also reserved for the ruling party.

Further, another crucial function of the association is ostensibly to protect the business interests of their members. Accordingly, these associations network with government officials and local political bosses. The networking with the government officials may also take the form of rent seeking by the latter. It was repeatedly told by numerous office bearers of these associations that the extra-legal favours are not always explicitly asked by the government officials. The 'good' office bearer knows how to satisfy the wants of the rent seeking bureaucrat. The amount of rent given is considerably lower if the market association is also in the good books

of the local political leaders. The association of the wholesale vegetable sellers primarily works for preventing their vending sites not to be demolished during the 'beautification' drive of the city. This is the only association which has violently demonstrated against any such removal attempt of the local government.

Similarly, the washing community have traditional claim to the bank of the local river in the centre of the city

where they wash the clothes. They are also under pressure from the local government to shift their economic activities to outskirts of the city but have successfully withstood through local political lobbying. Both of these associations have political loyalty with BSP but give protection money to any ruling party as well as local municipality.

Chart IV- Traders and Petty Business Association

Name of Social Collectivity	City	Agenda	Nature of Membership	Affinity with Political Party
C G Road Business Association	Ahmedabad	Protect and promote business interests of the members and develop and maintain cordial relationship with local politicians and government officers	Restricted	BJP
Vastrapur Shop Owners Association	Ahmedabad	do	Restricted	BJP
Ahmedabad Chemist Association	Ahmedabad	do	Restricted	BJP
Ahmadabad Brick Manufacturing Association	Ahmedabad	do	Restricted	BJP
Aliganj Vyapar Mandal	Lucknow	do	Restricted	Primarily SP
Aminabad Traders Association	Lucknow	do	Restricted	BJP
Ganesh Ganj Iron Merchant Association	Lucknow	do	Restricted	Primarily BSP & SP
Lucknow Goldsmith Association	Lucknow	do	Restricted	Primarily BJP
Brick Kilns Associations	Lucknow	do	Restricted	Primarily BJP
Khatik Vypar Mandal	Lucknow	Promote Caste solidarity and acts as caste business interest group	Restricted	BSP
Dhobi Sangh (Informal association of cloth washer involved in chikan garment trade.	Lucknow	Promote Caste solidarity and acts as caste business interest group	Restricted	BSP

Source: Author's field documentation

The support to political leaders and 'services' extended to government officials helps these traders to violate labour laws rampantly, use the coercive arm of police to coerce/terrorise the labor force, tamper with their electricity meter readings and unlawfully lower the

electricity tariffs, unlawfully use domestic electricity and water connections for industrial purposes, report lower income in connivance with tax officials so as to minimize taxes, pay lower taxes-especially sales tax- than legally applicable on their form of trade , encroach government

land near their area of economic activities, procure license for different economic activity easily etc.

Religious Social Order: Religious social order in this study implies a sect within the Hindu religion, mostly

presided over by a swami (head priest) who tries to redefine the praxis of Hindu religion amongst its followers and may or may not have close association with likeminded political parties.

Chart V- Religious Social Order

Name of Social Collectivity	City	Agenda	Nature of Membership	Political Party
Murari Babu	Ahmedabad	Give religious/spiritual discourse , preaches equality of human beings but do not question the fundamental principles of caste based social hierarchy	Open	BJP
Sant Shri Asaramji	Ahmedabad	-do-	Open	BJP
Neeb Karori Baba	Lucknow	-do-	Open	BJP
Nami Sharan Ashram	Lucknow	-do-	Open	BJP

Source: Author’s field documentation

The study documented four religious orders, two each in Ahmedabad and Lucknow respectively. These four sects are hugely popular (William, 1984; Dwyer, 1994) and the workers in the sect openly boast of havening a huge following running into millions, both in India and abroad.

Murari Babu is known to recite *Ram Kathas* (stories from Hindu epic Ramayan) in a melodious voice with interesting stories and anecdotes. He has been given the name of Sant Shri Morari Babu by his followers. But crucial to our study here, he has been repeatedly reported to give statements in the local Gujarat newspaper against Christians^{iv}. After the 2002 riots a section of the prosperous *Bohra* Muslim community in Gujarat decided to accept the Sangh’s logic of being an Indian by becoming Hindu, Murari Babu wrote ‘Shree Ram’ on the chest of prominent Bohara Muslims (“Sayedna-worshipping leads to Shree-Ram worshipping”, 2004). *Sant Asarmam* is another spiritual and religious leader in Ahmedabad. His discourses are normally in Hindi and hence he is also quite popular in Northern India too. It was observed that the *Neeb Karori Baba* who is not a living saint has tremendous following in Lucknow. The seat of his spiritual teaching by his prominent followers is at *Hanuman Setu* temple (temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman). This temple is an important social landmark in the city and also hosts numerous conglomerations. *Naimi Sharan Ashram* is a religious place on the outskirts of Lucknow where

spiritual and religious discourses are given and is thronged by rich and poor alike.

These sects are mild form of protest against the existing Hindu Social Order. The sects per se are not against the Hindu religion and the consequent hierarchal social division. All these sects question ‘untouchability’ not the caste system, they consider equality of human beings but their construct of women is highly patriarchal in nature; the sects through their discourses send the message of peace but have never objected to the caste violence and violence against woman; they argue for religious tolerance but have never opposed the communal and caste violence. These sects are supposedly ‘apolitical’. They don’t interfere in the political process. They have not supported the movement to build Ram temple at Ayodhya. In Gujarat, however, both the sects have started praising the work done by RSS towards raising Hindu consciousness. However both of them did not expressed grief over the communal clashes which Gujarat saw in 2002. Moreover, *Murai Babu* is known for his appeals for re-conversions of Christians to Hinduism. In other words, these Gurus push the *Manusmirit* (ancient text legitimising caste based division of social order) and the feudal values of caste and gender hierarchies in a new language, the language laced with modernity. While attending the religious discourses delivered at these sects, it was observed that the content and form of these discourses are most appealing to the burgeoning middle class in India.

The members of these sects cut across caste and gender location. The logic of these sects feeds into the RSS logic of weaving and organic unity between different caste and gender towards a unified Hindu consciousness. It should be noted that majority of the prominent members are upper caste, educated and having a descent or above average income. The membership base cuts across professions; laborers, self-employed, housewives, government servants, politicians, doctors, engineers, modern professionals like chartered accountants, doctors, media magnates and executives, politicians small traders and big businesspeople. The religious discourses organized by these sect unite the caste associations, ethno-religious groups. Most of the funding and other arrangements of the religious discourses are raised by donations from business associations and managed by members of caste associations and ethno religious groups. In practice, the prominent individuals remain the same but their identity shifts from a business person to a caste Hindu religious person.

SOCIAL COLLECTIVES, POLITICAL MOBILISATION AND LOCAL ELITES

In an urban electoral setting, social collectives present themselves as an important medium through which political support is mobilised. In this regard, it is crucial to understand how do they mobilise people and discipline the individuals mind towards the social and political agenda of the collectives.

The ethno religious groups try and manufacture consent for their agenda through the trajectory of 'discipline hatred and punishment'. Disciplining implies enlisting the support of the 'Hindus', activating them in campaigns and organising them under their leadership. In other words, Hindutavising the popular consciousness by constructing a social profile of minorities, especially Muslims, as culturally polluting, anti-national, pro-Pakistan, favoured at the expense of Hindus, drawing a wedge between Christian Adivasis and Hindu Adivasis etc. (Yagnik, 2002; Concerned Citizen's Tribunal (CCT), 2002; Lobo, 2002; Yagnik and Sheth, 2005: 252-293; Sud, 2012). VHP works dextrously for developing unity between upper and lower castes by propagating that exploitation of Dalits by Brahmins is not the fault of Hindu religion but the fault of individual(s). This has resulted in Dalits entering into the social constituency of Hindutva in large numbers, specifically in Ahmedabad. This nature of cultural and political disciplining has

varied implications. It tries to create a consolidated 'Hindu' social block vis-à-vis minorities while also attempting to obscure the socio-economic and cultural differences within the 'Hindu' community. Further, it constructs an image of *Muslim* community as polluting the Hindu social order. Hence they are culturally and socially unacceptable and as a consequence become object of intense hatred. Mass hatred by its very nature just requires an excuse to physically demonstrate its sentiments. Post Godhra riots in Gujarat, the recent riots in Muzaffarnagar in UP are just apt examples of this hatred. Although, Lucknow has not seen any explicit manifestation of hatred but biasness against Muslims has grown tremendously in the last two decades.

The caste association invokes the loyalty of group of men and woman towards their ascriptive identity. The associations try and organise people and communicate to them the potential benefits of collective social front. Traditionally, the caste associations (use to settle intra-community dispute and mediate between inter - community dispute. This still holds true for rural India and to some extent urban India. However, caste associations have also shaped themselves into interest groups where they bargains with the state and other social groups, the socio-economic interest of their members. They don't have sophisticated mobilisational tools in comparison to ethno religious groups but still they are able to command loyalties of their community members. They operate independent of other similar association but as and when required they come together either against the state or other caste associations. The latter implies that the fault line of purity and pollution unite them against each other. In other words, as and when required, the upper castes associations unite, notwithstanding the differences between them, against the lower castes associations. The same also holds true for lower castes association. Caste associations, like the ethno religious groups are able to invoke loyalties of individuals beyond face to face interaction of individuals on common socio-economic and political interests. Upper castes associations also try and co-opt lower caste associations towards their own agenda through promising fringe benefits as well as coercion.

The membership religious social orders cuts across caste, class, gender and vocation. Religious social orders, it was perceived, was able to blur the difference between various castes and communities. As discussed before,

they don't try, question and mitigate the social hierarchy, still the members perceive them as egalitarian. Leaders of castes associations and ethno religious groups put in their effort to be recognized as important members of these social orders. Due to this status, the respect commanded by the religious order also translates, to an extent, on them. This gives them far more legitimacy in the eyes of their community.

The business associations are the crucial source of funding of these social collectives as well a resource for political donations. On times, some important and rich members also give large donations. This also raises their importance in the community. The important business associations are normally the ones which belong to the upper castes. The lower castes business associations do not contribute to any such activities though raise money for the rent seekers in order to ensure the smooth running of their business.

The memberships of these social collectives overlap. Individual(s) constituting one particular collective, say a trade association, have social (ethno religious groups) and religious (religious social order) stakes in other collectives and by virtue of belonging to a particular caste also have their presence in caste associations. The prominent members of the traders association, caste association as well as the ethno religious groups are more or less the same individuals. Moreover, many of the government officials not only belong to the caste associations but are also regular visitors to the religious discourses given at the religious order(s). Some of them are members of ethno religious groups and numerous others support them from outside. We also documented through the perception of many respondents that the lucrative postings and transfer of officers are governed by their choice of members of social collectives. This should not be read as if the important individuals only constitute the social collectives. There is also a presence of not so socially important individuals as well as laboring class as members of the caste associations and religious orders. This particular fact gives these social collectives a numeric strength. The numeric strength in combination of financial resources coming from the trading community helps these social collectives to become a social force to reckon with.

In the urbane setting of two cities, these associations also use other sophisticated means to enlist the support of the new members especially from the lower caste. Celebrating important lower caste festivals and

associating them with Hindu festivals is an important event. For instance in Lucknow, even the apparently working class festival like *Vishkarma Puja*^v is celebrated with great fanfare by *Hindu Jagran Manch*. The local political bosses of the Sangh preside over the function and also distribute gifts to working class. The working class is mobilised in a manner that majority of them belong to lower castes. Similarly, all the caste Hindu festivals are celebrated with great enthusiasm. In the caste Hindu festivals too, the working class is mobilised (read Dalits) in both the cities and gifts are distributed. This nature of mobilisation and subsequent distribution of gifts is through the ward level leaders and members. Other mobilisation techniques which have religious or social significance through carving out extended social network ensure ever increasing mass base of these collectives. The ward level leaders are important cadres who in turn can politically guide the network during the time of electoral contest.

CIVIL SOCIETY, SOCIAL COLLECTIVES AND DOMINATION OF THE LOCAL STATE STRUCTURE

Expanding the Normative Construct of Civil Society:

Civil society is the realm where election promises are made and the imagery of voters harnessed. Nehru's discourse of a secular and modern India, Indira's promise of a poverty free (*garibi hatao*) India, BJP's assurance of ushering in a Hindutva inspired social order and turning India into a strong state and a superpower by 2020, are all invoked in civil society. Similarly, social reaction against caste oppression, elite-centric development and state violence is also articulated in civil society. However, there is an ongoing debate on what constitutes civil society in India. Most commentators would not disagree if we posit that civil society comprises of varied nature of social collectives and constitutes that element of our social and political reality which provides a space between the family and the state for translating individual consciousness into collective consciousness. Commentators irrespective of their ideological location tend to theorise civil society in idealised terms – role that civil society ought to perform – as per their ideological location. Defining civil society in idealised/ideological terms cajoles the author to include certain social collectives in the society and ignore the rest. For instance authors pursuing the Marxist school of thought locate the civil society institutions invariably against and outside the structures of state (Kothari, 1988; Chandhoke, 1995, 1998 and

2003; Mohanty, 1998; Ajay and Vijay, 2000). Notwithstanding, the difference in nuances of their respective arguments, these authors agree that the pronounced vigour of the civil society in India is due to inability/unwillingness of the Indian state to trade the interests of majority vis-à-vis the propertied and entrenched classes. Thus civil society in a democratic polity provided a space where they can collectively express their resentment and seeks ameliorative action from the state (Chandhoke, 1998; Mohanty, 1998). Thus civil society comprises of social movements trying to protect civil liberties, opposing elite centric development, demanding decent livelihood, opposing patriarchal domination, remedial measures against caste based exploitation etc. Authors pursuing the liberal school of thought- conceptualise civil society institutions as intermediary institutions between state and society, not necessarily opposing the state. These institutions are situated in modernist discourse of individual liberty and social equality and are necessary offshoot of democratic society. The membership is governed by secular ethos and praxis of citizenship rather than principle of hierarchy and exclusion. Hence by definition they promote rule of law, maintain a distance from state, and is not administered by religious values (Béteille, 1995; Béteille, July 2005). Thus any institution in order to qualify to be a part of civil society has to maintain distance from state as well as religion. However, Mahajan, while locating herself in Hegelian school of thought argues that civil society cannot be seen separately from the state and has to be viewed as a part of "democratic constitutional state". It is the state that can only execute the universality of law and thereby promote and sustain the open and secular nature of civil society institutions (Mahajan, 1999).

This essay argues that both the theoretical framework discussed above fail to capture the dynamics of social collectives present in the realm of civil society in India and particularly in the two urban areas of Lucknow and Ahmadabad. We put forth that any rigidity with ones ideological moorings may not necessarily allow us to capture the complete social dynamics. It may also be successful in ignoring, as far as understanding of civil society is concerned, certain social collectives which may not be captured through the vantage point of set theoretical paradigm. However, this is not to argue that any critique of social dynamics should be devoid of an ideological location. But no social inquiry can proceed

very far if attention is confined to what lies out there as per their ideological choice; a great deal of what is significant can be discerned only by stretching the conventional boundaries of theoretical paradigms and making sense of those social collectives which may be normally ignored by the conventional research paradigm.

Therefore, we argue that in order to capture the presence of all nature of social collectives in the society we also have to accept, however grudgingly, that non-secular and exclusivist social collectives are also part of the civil society because marginalisation and exclusion are not only the by-product of state policies but their actual roots lie in the domain of civil society.

But why should we consider this nature of social collectives as part of the civil society still remains to be answered. We argue; the emergence of open and secular social groups in the west is closely associated with the 'rise of relatively independent socio-economic relations against the family, the feudal lord and the absolutist state' (Tornquist, 1999). Likewise a particular kind of cultural, political and economic domination by the colonial power threw up revivalist 'Hindu' groups which in turn formed the seedbed of the 'Hindu' revivalist movement in colonial India (Chatterjee, 1999). Similarly, a particular kind of political economy in India led to a peculiar agri-capitalism and the emergence of 'bullock capitalists' whose interests were articulated through numerous farmers' associations and movements (L. Rudolph and S. Rudolph, 1987). In the same way, the cooperative movement in the country emerged in the context of a hybrid coalition of rich peasants, intermediary peasant castes, small landholders as the clientele of the welfare state with the dominant Congress Party guiding the passive revolution (in the Gramscian sense) (Pandey, 2001). Also, the social and economic domination of certain 'lower' castes by the upper castes resulted in caste movements for claiming hitherto unavailable public spaces (Omvedt, 2003). The political success of the caste movements has not only given vigor to the already existing caste collectives but also a fresh impetus to the formation of newer caste associations. In light of these arguments, we can perhaps conclude that specific kinds of interfaces between politics, society and economics pushes forth issues that may allow translation of the individual consciousness into a collective consciousness and be articulated through some collective(s).

The next question that needs to be answered being, what were the conditions which propelled the emergence of social collectives which have exclusionary characteristics.

This state of colonial modernity' which had the self-acquired burden of bringing in rationality and modernity (modernity as conceptualised by enlightenment Europe) sought to reorder the social order, (for instance, initiative to abolish the practice of *Sati*- (*a social custom where the widow 'voluntarily' chooses to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband*); albeit it always had marginal legitimacy since its primary function was of maintaining and regulating colonial order and extract economic surplus. Nevertheless, it created a public space where ideas of modernity (democratic rule, public power, rule of law) could be discussed and debated. These very ideas eventually threw up nationalist challenge and contributed to the demise of colonial authority (Kaviraj, 2000). Chatterjee shows that Indian version of nationalism produced a discourse which challenged the colonial claim to political domination; nonetheless it accepted the intellectual premises of modernity on which colonial domination was based (Chatterjee, 1986). Hence, the post-colonial state that came into being as a result of nationalist struggle embarked on the nation building exercise through using "reason as an antidote to religion and superstition that had prevented Indians from imitating the economic and political success of Britain and Western Europe" (Corbridge and Harris, 2000). Nehru saw religion as bigoted and dogmatic and placed his faith in science, reason and socialist ideology for building a modern nation state. Accordingly, the exercise of Indian Nation building was based on overriding concern of unity - cutting across political division, ethnic and linguistic diversity. A secular movement was to be ushered through reason, technology and ideology (Kothari, 1970). These goals were to be achieved through representative democracy based on individual rights and right to dissent coupled with special safeguards for deprived social groups and minorities. These ideals of democracy enshrined in the Indian constitution are to ensure that any individual is not discriminated on the basis of caste, religion race or language. Thus secularism supporting the praxis of citizenship is to be the basis of democracy and a non-secular state cannot be democratic. In the economic realm, the ushering in of modernity required a shift from agriculture-based

economy to industry-based economy. Accordingly, development was understood and operationalised through allocation of resources for a faster growth at the national level which would, it was presumed; finally trickle down to the lowest rung of the society thereby producing a similar growth at the local level. In this model, the asset less were to be supported by the state for building their capacities - manifested in skills acquired through knowledge - and perform the economic activities required by the service sector. Social relationship in the market was believed to be triggered by atomised rationale citizen interacting with each other on equal terms. There is abundance of literature that point out to the lacunae- both theoretical and empirical - in this model. To put the matter in brief the symbols of top down development and its impact were not able to percolate equitably due to specific model of development as well as character of its governing institutions. This alienation of the general masses from the praxis of development process provided a fertile space to the social and political formation representing the Hindu right to put in effort to re-imagine the present dominant construction of state and its relationship with the society. The same logic explains the prominence of region and caste based political parties and interest groups in the polity resulting in demise of Congress System and vociferous cry for fresh development paradigm.

Emergent Nature of Civil Society:The political and social reality in India demands that social and political change has to usher in through the apparatus of the state. It is also expected by the newer elites that social change should not substantially restructure the economic relationships. The capture of state power requires that the world view of the political party is accepted by the numerical majority. Accordingly, the fight to capture of state through ballot has to be won in the realm of civil society through social and political mobilisation. Thus various nature of social collectives (discussed in the last section) are marshalled and they acquire prominence at different time albeit all working towards the same end. However, any mobilisation from below is bound to challenge the status quo. Therefore, the mobilisation has to be guided in the manner that it suits the economic and political interest of the elites and does not substantially alter the socio-economic relationships.

Another question which begs to be answered at this juncture is- what is the emergent nature of civil society. Here we borrow arguments from Gramscian thought. For Gramsci, civil society was the arena where antagonistic classes struggle for class hegemony. It is in the domain of civil society where the ideological apparatus assert successfully the hegemony of capitalism - the virtue of private ownership of means of production and commodification of labour- against the anti-capitalist ideologies (Gramsci, 1996). This analysis provides a useful model for understanding civil society in India.

We argue that civil society is the arena where the hegemony of entrenched castes and classes is shaped and sustained. Towards this effort, social collectives are one of the important channels. The social networks carved out with the help of social collectives try and satisfy different class of people through different system of patronage and benefits. The elite members of the social collective are able to extract different extra legal concessions already discussed before at best or facilitate their work due to their proximity with the elites in political and bureaucratic structure. The lower class and caste of people are not only given gifts but they are also the one made to perceive that they have the first claim on the development goods. The latter may be their right but is given as if a favour; the reason being they are the member of social collectives. This not only makes them more committed to the social collectives but also the political regime supported by that particular social collective. This is also a mechanism where every class of people try to form an alliance with people higher up the class ladder for perceived or real benefits. The lowest class/caste tries and forms a social alliance with the leader of the social collective who in turn tries and forge an alliance with leaders up the hierarchy or important government officials and prominent professionals. This extended social network ensures demise of horizontal caste/class solidarity and constructs a vertical caste/class alliance. The challenge to this vertical caste/class alliance occasionally comes from the labouring class because of exploitative wages and extra-economic coercions. The challenge is either met by fragmenting the working class identity through caste, gender and regional loyalties or by muscle power of the entrenched elites.

Nature of Local State:The nature of social alliances emerging in the domain of civil society is at variance

with what Partha Chatterjee (2001) calls political society. Chatterjee in his writings finds an emerging opposition between civil society and political society where the former is identified with modernity and the latter with democracy. He argues that parties and protest group constitute the political society and they have the greater capacity of articulating the voices of the marginalised. Since the articulation are more often that not based on collective identity and hence Indian democracy is moving from a basis in individual rights to collective rights. This challenges the values of modernist civil society.

In our case study, we do find collective articulation as well as entry of newer groups in the political and social processes. In one sense, it can be called deepening of democracy but frankly, we fail to perceive any democratisation of society, polity and economy in a substantive sense. The so called deepening of democracy has resulted in readjustment of social, political, legal and administrative institutions towards their attempt to maintain status quo. The status quo has meant the hegemony of the entrenched castes and classes operating in a dominant coalition. The dominant coalition comprises of Local Politicians, including Musclemen, Bureaucrats and Traders. The coalition through the medium of social collectives co-opts the dissenting world views with the help of extended social network. Political society thus does not only belong to the marginalised but is also populated by dominant social groups.

The social identities of caste, religion, ethnicity which fragments the working class become a source of unity between the dominant coalition partners in the interest of establishing their hegemony. The hegemony in practical terms means, what Harriss-White (Harriss-White, 2003) found in her case study of Tamil Nadu, that there is no dividing line between the state, market and civil society. The blurring of these differences is achieved by the social collectives. In other words, the membership of these collectives, as explained earlier may overlap. Individual(s) constituting one particular collective, say a government official may have social and religious stakes in one or many of the social collectives. If the collectives and the executives managing the political regime understand society, politics and economics from the same vantage point, then the strength of the former translates into the might of the later and vice versa. Similarly, the market in some goods may be controlled

by few or many traders who may have social and religious stakes, along with the government officials in one of the many collectives. The social proximity in the social collectives also allows them to use the same officials to use the state's resources in their favor. This is particularly true when it comes to the issues relating to taxation and use of coercion to discipline the labor force. The administrative and police departments invariably side with the business interests. Thus the social collectives mediate between traders, politicians and government officials to ensure a horizontal interaction between them and blur the dividing line between state and market and civil society.

CONCLUSION: NATURE OF DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

This nature of social mobilisation also has significant impact on the evolving social and political space. It increasingly appears the dominant theorisation of the existence of 'competitive multi-party system'- existence of two parties at the state level, the diversity of which collates to give the appearance of a multi-party system at the national level - is only an apt theoretical summary of the national political landscape. Political plurality - increase in number of political parties together with their political empowerment - should be the natural consequence of articulation of multiple social cleavages present in the society. However, it appears that political plurality has not led to social plurality because ethno-religious and caste identities' have become the common reference that increasingly governs the division of votes. Political plurality has become inversely proportional to social plurality because of the several interrelated reasons. These are political preferences of other political parties to react rhetorically^{vi}, abstain from any counter political programme at the grassroots, and placate Hindutava supporters by taking recourse to the language of Hindu nationalism and opportunist designs, especially of the regional parties. The latter indicates the keenness of the regional parties to cling to state power in political alliance with BJP. Political discourses that are in the process of maturing are bound to weaken if they interact on friendly terms with an antagonistic and more powerful political discourse. As a result the nature of party system may theoretically reflect multiple ideological poles, but all of them are increasingly governed by the pro-active logic of *Hindutava* and caste inspired 'opportunistic politics'.

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ⁱ No actual case study was undertaken for the organisations qualifying under the delimited notion of civil society, except for the Resident Associations. The details were collected through informed citizens, newspapers and magazines. The examples quoted here are not exhaustive but merely illustrative.

ⁱⁱ We use the word Hindutava to indicate a planned process that feeds into the re-imagination project of the *Sangh* and derives its basis from the writings of Savarkar (1969) and Golwalkar (1939).

ⁱⁱⁱ The active members of resident association are personally visited by the local political/social leaders with the offer of organising social and religious functions.

^{iv} As per Sangh's understanding, the minorities don't constitute part of the Indian Civilization and they have either convert to Hinduism or live as second grade citizens at the terms framed by Caste Hindus. At this backdrop Murari Bapu supported the organisation of huge Hindu festival in a small area called Dangs in Gujarat dominated by 'persecuted Christians' at the hands of Caste Hindus. For details see (Gujarat Sandesh, February 5, 2006)

^v Vishwakarma Puja is a day when the working class offer Puja (prayers) to their implements which give them their livelihood.

^{vi} It is increasingly evident that political parties of all colours prefer to limit their political battle against BJP on the floor of parliament. On the issues like communal riots, saffronisation of school curriculum, the saffronisation of administration in BJP ruled states, the modus operandi adopted oppose was through creating ruckus in the parliament, giving interviews to electronic and print media; instead of going to people, organising public rallies, disseminating political literature etc. It appears ridiculous to raise voices at feverish pitch in Delhi while allowing the Sangh's mobilisations throughout the country go unhindered. Political culture in the country has become such that public rallies are now only organised to show the numerical political support that a leader or a political party commands, a trend started by Indira Gandhi, but perfected power hungry politicians who every now and then choose to float a new party in search of greener pastures.