Introduction

Takako INOUE

1. Minorities of South Asia in the Globalizing World

Since the economic liberalization of the 1990s, South Asian societies are seeing the values of upper-caste Hindu intellectuals, represented by Hindu nationalism, become increasingly dominant, together with the winners of the neoliberal economy, and those capable of negotiating with representatives of multinational enterprises in the globalizing world. In the meantime, double and triple oppressed minorities in terms of caste, religion, gender, and ethnicity, such as Dalit Christians, and rural Muslim women, have few options to improve their lives under the unequal conditions sown by the widening economic and social divides.

For instance, the last three decades have seen India's religious minorities, including Muslims and Christians, face more serious problems and difficulties than before. In addition to the anti-Muslim violence that spread throughout the country in the 1990s, since the Ayodhya dispute and the destruction of the Babri Masjid during a political rally on 6 December 1992, anti-Christian violence has also significantly increased since the Bharatiya Janata Party came into political power in 1998. Due to this spread of religious exclusiveness, both rural villagers and city slum dwellers, consisting primarily of migrants who left their native villages, have faced many difficulties in their daily life, ranging from a lack of help, cooperation, and communication, as well as an inaccessible secure safety net that should have been provided by the government. Thus, the lives of minorities have been endangered by political parties and their followers.

This research project explores the voices and activities of South Asian minorities through extensive fieldwork focusing on their living and intimate spheres, as well as by examining the comparatively little material available about them. We also shed light on their survival strategies by focusing on their daily practices, and their way of protecting their lives.

The habitation space of these minorities can be analyzed through applying the

concept of "political society" of the governed, as defined by Chatterjee (2004): a political arena or space for the underprivileged groups whose living condition is explained as marginalization. The minorities regard themselves as subjects rather than citizens in a society characterized by the disparity between a "civil society" in its narrow sense, defined to be related to the political, rights-based citizenship, and a "political society" of the governed, characterized by their precarious habitation. The governed may be creating their own spatial areas no longer confined to margins or peripheries, which is an entrance into the larger political arena beyond social and cultural borders. Hence, the governed can raise their own voice, and therefore they will no longer be subalterns.

Additionally, we should also consider the concept of "public sphere" redefined by Frazer (1990). She claimed that marginalized groups form their own public spheres, which she called "subaltern counter-public" or "counter-publics". Practically, one common universal public sphere imagined in an ideal civil society does not exist, but there are several counter-publics that form against hegemonic dominance. The governed struggling against the sovereign in Chatterjee's political society can be characterized as counter-publics or subaltern public spheres. However, I would like to posit that the subaltern public sphere in India today may not always be characterized by "counter," but sometimes rather by "defensive," in that subaltern publics continuously struggle to defend their peaceful life against daily precarity (Inoue 2017: 56-57).

In this research project, we would like to propose the concept of "cohabitation" as an alternative theoretical framework, instead of using conventional terms such as "inclusion and exclusion" of the governed, from the viewpoint of "top-down reform" of the imagined ideal civil-society from above. Further, we envision the possibility of cohabitation in their living and intimate spheres from the viewpoint of the substantial political society or counter- publics.

2. Concept of Cohabitation

To explore how minorities in South Asia are struggling to improve conditions in their space of habitation by reducing precarity, we first evaluate the concept of cohabitation augured by Butler (2012). In her argument on the public sphere, Butler explains that all

habitation is always cohabitation and always fragile; further, she argues that we must actively seek to preserve "the non-chosen character of inclusive and plural cohabitation" (Butler et al. 2011: 84). Thus, the term "cohabitation" necessarily leads our attention to the space of their habitation. Further, she suggests that certain ethical obligations emerge in situations of antagonistic and unchosen modes of cohabitation: "those forms of cohabitation characterized by equality and minimized precarity become the goal to be achieved by any struggle against subjugation and exploitation but also that the goals start to be achieved in the practices of alliance that assemble across distances to achieve those very goals" (Butler 2012: 150).

Though Butler proposed this ethical and theoretical framework in relation to Palestinian society, it can be beneficial in considering the social situation of minorities living under the political pressure of homogenizing ideology, namely Hindutva or Hindu nationalism in India. According to Butler's suggestion, we cannot choose with whom to cohabit the earth, and it is impossible to live together without being involved with each other; thus, we should form alliances, instead of maintaining antagonistic relations and keeping distances between "us" and "others" in the space we have to cohabit. However, how can any mutually beneficial and effective alliance be expected in diversified societies like South Asian countries? We should pay attention to how we can share the physical and symbolic space that we cohabit, and should also recognize that others who reside next door can retain the right to secure their own space in which their culture can be preserved and enjoyed. Hence, a balanced way to realize "cohabitation without precarity" is necessary not only through acts of alliance, but also through acknowledging the need for the retention of separate spaces.

At the same time, considering Butler's views of the fragility of cohabitation, it is also important to take into account the remarks and criticism of her ethics of cohabitation in the field of feminist geography. Feminist geographers have increasingly focused on the political, economic, and cultural situations of the living and intimate spaces of habitation mapping out in global geopolitics recently (Barabantseva, Mhurchú, and Peterson 2019; Dixon 2015; Donovan, Courtney and Moss 2018; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Smith 2020; Staeheli, Kofman, and Peake 2004). It is quite natural for them to take Butler's theoretical framework into consideration, since cohabitation is always an intimate affair that is at the

same time "global" (Harker 2014). Examining ethics of cohabitation as a means of thinking intimate geopolitics, Harker critiques that cohabitation-as-ethical-relation fails to map neatly onto cohabitation-as-spatial-practice in instances of geopolitical violence: ethics of cohabitation function in non-democratic contexts, the tension increases between chosen and unchosen cohabitations, and therefore cohabitation turns into a mean of ethno-national violence.

However, Butler's cohabitation can still be useful in examining spatial issues of minorities' habitation. Considering the above criticism by feminist geographers, the concept of cohabitation should be modified to apply to spatial practices in intimate spheres. Butler's cohabitation as ethical obligation of minimizing precarity sounds rather severe and aggressive. Instead, we propose the term "gentle cohabitation," which often appears to describe affectionate feelings among family members, particularly the mother-child relationship. Since the family is the core of daily human relations in an intimate sphere, our concept of gentle cohabitation can be effective in explaining the expectation to overcome conflicts and antagonism by focusing on common problems, rather than differences and opposing issues. The word "gentle" suggests a more flexible way of cohabitation based on sympathy. At the practical level, one seeks to make the other recognize one's own spatial practices by consideration, negotiating with each other for the improvement of daily life, and formulating reasonable and convincing strategies to cohabit in an intimate sphere.

3. Case Studies

The present collection consists of six papers, each focusing on a different case study of minority practice in South Asia.

Shinoda focuses on the transformation of food habits in modern India from the perspectives of (1) the material basis for cooking, (2) food consumption patterns and regulations on eating, and (3) meal patterns. The paper examines trends all over India, and conducts a regional case study of Gujarat Vidyapith students. He explores how the diversity of food items and food culture among social groups has tended to decrease over the past 10 years, in particular by revealing the massive shift from non-vegetarian

consumption to vegetarianism among the Backward Classes. These changes in food culture have been closely related to the reorganization of identities in terms of region, social group, and economic class affected by globalization, Sanskritization, and various political and religious movements.

Next, Suda focuses on female overseas workers from rural Bangladesh. Due to the globalization of the labor market and increasing demand for labor from abroad, the number of female overseas workers have increased in the 2000s. Suda reveals their experiences and perceptions through intensive fieldwork in the Comilla district. The benefits of overseas employment are generally greater than the costs, leading poor women to seek overseas employment opportunities as an escape from poverty and to improve their life. Some of the problems faced however, are overwork, lower pay than promised, employer abuse, and family problems caused by their long absence. Suda suggests that the government of Bangladesh, host countries, and other organizations, should take steps to minimize the problems and costs for female overseas workers.

Suzuki focuses on the situation of urban Balmikis, known as the sweeper caste in Delhi. Since 2010, the privatization of the government sanitation department has accelerated, causing insecurity and the fear of future unemployment for those employed there. Suzuki explores the ways in which Delhi's Balmikis have tried to secure their livelihood entitlements. As a means of appealing to the government and civil society about such problems, their collective grassroots activism includes public interest litigation, and workers' strikes on the street. By examining how awareness of rights and entitlements is formed and manifested, she analyzes different aspects of exclusivity and collaboration within Dalit movements.

This is followed by Masuki's focus on the dry latrines of the colonial period, and the campaigns for the liberation of sweepers and scavengers. Their untouchability was gradually substantialized not just by their uniforms and brooms, but also by their daily use of the designated lanes and streets to collect and carry waste. After independence, there were campaigns for the liberation of scavengers by the demolition of dry toilets, as well as through litigation. Masuki discusses how the scavengers' labor has played a role in both their identity formation, and in their everyday experience of untouchability-based social marginalization. Furthermore, both the movements and academics have discussed

this matter in terms of technology used in the toilet system, casteism, and modern notions of sanitation and human rights.

Another Dalit group examined in this collection is the Paraiyars. Inoue explores how the Paraiyattam, a traditional group dance accompanied on the *parai* drum has become a paradoxical symbol within the traditional arts supported by the upper castes, and the religio-political practices of the Paraiyars, one of the Dalit communities. Although the Paraiyattam was once an indispensable part of the Hindu funeral ceremony and associated with pollution, today its performance is regarded as a positive practice that expresses Dalit liberation in Tamil Nadu. Inoue discusses how the Paraiyattam is affiliated with diverse political and religious groups, including Dalit liberation theology of the Church of South India, Dalit political parties in Tamil Nadu, and militant Maoist organizations, while at the same time functioning as a safety valve for the upper castes, who utilize it as an "excuse" for their political concern for Dalits.

Lastly, Ishida examines novels written by the first Muslim modern writer, Rāhī Māsūm Razā, who wrote his literary works not only in Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, and considered to be the common language for South Asian Muslims, but also in Hindi, India's official language. Rāhī, as a Muslim who chose to remain in India after the Partition of India in 1947, kept thinking of the reasons he remained in India, and expressed his thoughts in his literary works. By examining Rāhī's novels written in Hindi, Ishida explores how we should understand his thoughts. Regardless of religion, Ishida suggests that the main reason Rāhī remained in India after Independence was his attachment to his homeland, which comprises nature, life, culture, history, and so on; in other words, the undivided India before Independence.

"Unity in diversity" is a long-standing slogan of Independent India, which its founding fathers referred to as an ideal essential to national consolidation and progress. India's diversity is tremendously obvious and visible. In contrast, the invisible unity enforced by political parties composed of Hindu nationalists are a cause of tension, antagonism, and conflict among diverse groups, characterized in particular by caste hierarchy and religious beliefs in recent years. The ideal unity imagined by the founding fathers should be repeatedly inquired into, and a substantial way of peaceful and gentle cohabitation should be developed, so as not to damage the spatial practices of minority

groups.

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