TOWARDS A SUBALTERN PUBLIC THEOLOGY FOR INDIA

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List of Abbreviations

CPI (M) – Communist Party of India (Marxist)
BCE – Before Common Era
ISPCK – Indian Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge
IJPT – International Journal of Public Theology
GNPT – Global Network of Public Theology
CTPI – Centre for Theology and Public Issues
NCC – National Christian Council
NLT – New Living Translation
CMS – Centre for Mission Studies
UBS – Union Biblical Seminary
SSC – Subaltern Studies Collective
SCMI – Student Christian Movement of India
TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Committee
UCL – University College London
UP – Uttar Pradesh
UK – United Kingdom

All Biblical passages used in this thesis, unless otherwise mentioned, are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
Abstract

What is public in public theology, from the sites of subalternity in India? And what might a theological account of such a subaltern public look like? These questions are pivotal to this research. These questions were identified because there has been an ambiguity regarding the definitions of ‘public’ in public theology: Public enjoys a wide range of definitions including people, context, state, culture, academy, society etc. Adding to this ambiguity, subalternity as a theological site does not have its place in western academic public theology. On placing this discussion in the context of India, the enquiry on public theology becomes further complicated due to the practice of the age-old caste system which continues to divide the Indian public sphere into dominant publics and excluded publics.

The main aim of this thesis therefore, is to enquire into the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity, the excluded public. To achieve this aim, the thesis employs a decolonial methodology and explores its subject in three parts. Part One engages with ‘theological contexts,’ where global and Indian public theologies are mapped and critically analysed. This part addresses the first research question, by enquiring into the deficiencies of the public character of public theology, and identifies definitional, subalternate and systematic deficiencies. Part Two discusses ‘theological companions,’ where ‘theological subalternity’ and ‘subaltern public’ are discussed as companions for subaltern public theology for India. This part addresses the second research question regarding the problematising of ‘public’ from a subaltern perspective. It reclaims the subaltern public as the real public, for this public proves to be an anti-caste and a counter-hegemonic site, which contests the normativity of dominant publics. Subalternity is explained as an aporetic theological method, as a contested epistemology and as a deconstructive hermeneutic. Part Three explains ‘theological contours’ for it addresses the third research question of how the enquiries in Part One and Two contribute towards a subaltern public theology for India. Subaltern liturgy is rediscovered as a theological account of the subaltern public, for ‘the broken body of Christ’ is explained as a subaltern liturgy in the context of contesting the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste.

The public character of subaltern public theology for India is explained by its contours, tasks and scope. The contours are identified as ‘God from bottom-up’, ‘liturgy before the liturgy’, ‘biopolitical nature of life’. The tasks of subaltern public theology for India are then explained as pedagogical, doxological and praxiological. Its scope is found to be a transnational public sphere, where subaltern public theology is proposed as trans-contextual theology, cosmopolitan theology and public-liberation theology. This thesis serves as a theological foundation to public theology emerging from the sites of subalternity. Subaltern public theology for India is distinctive for it offers to be a ‘deviant’ public theology to the western public theologies.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
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At the very starting days of my research in one of his emails with his comments on my proposal, my supervisor signed off with the words “Happy researching!” As I read it I thought it was an oxymoron. However, here I am to testify what a ‘happy’ learning experience it has been to research at the University of Manchester. It would have been impossible to complete this research ‘happily’ without the strong support of friends, family and colleagues. Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to all those supported and made my research experience a ‘happy’ one.

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About the Author

I am passionate about issues of subalternity, theology, ecumenism, post-coloniality, mission and church, and have been engaged in the struggles of justice, especially on Dalit issues. Having originally completed a Bachelor’s in Science (B.Sc.) from Andhra University, India with a specialisation of mathematics, physics and chemistry, I moved on to pursue theological studies. I then completed my Bachelor of Divinity (B.D) course at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Chennai, which is affiliated to Senate of Serampore, India. For my B.D. degree, I wrote a dissertation entitled ‘Paul’s Understanding of Second Coming and its Usage by Purushotam Chowdary in his Lyrics and its Relevance to the Telugu Church.’

I was sent by my college to Vrije University, Amsterdam, to pursue a Master of Arts in Contextual and Cross-Cultural Theology. It was a good experience to be at Vrije University for it gave me opportunities to explore new theological methodologies and cross-cultural learning in western public academia. I wrote a dissertation: ‘Jesus Christ between Christians and Hindus,’ which was a contribution to an inter-faith theology. Upon returning from Amsterdam, I joined another Masters course in Theology under the Senate of Serampore College (Gurukul Lutheran College) and wrote a dissertation entitled ‘Relevance of Widening Ecumenical Theology from the writings of M.M.Thomas and K. Rajaratnam.’

Having worked with the National Council of Churches in India as an Executive Secretary for Commission on Dalits, I was actively involved in the advocacy for Dalit rights. During my tenure there, I compiled my reflections and experiences in the aftermath of violence against Dalit Christians in Orissa and published a book, titled A Violent Sight on a Silent Night: Missiological Discourses in the Context of Violence Against Dalit Christians (ISPCK/NCCI: New Delhi, 2009). During my work with the Student Christian Movement of India as its General Secretary, I was commissioned by the Alternative Tourism Group in Palestine to work on a study on the Theology of Pilgrimage in Palestine Israel, which was published as book, titled Listening to Living Stones: Towards a Theology of Kairos Pilgrimage (ATG: Beit Sahour, 2016). Along with two other research scholars as editors, I am currently working on a book based on the conference papers of the ‘Living together after Empire’ conference held at the University of Manchester, which is currently in the process of being published.

All of this work and experience has informed and influenced my current research on exploring a public theology from the sites of subalternity.
1.1. The Personal is Political and the Political is Public:

In 2004, when I was pursuing my masters’ course in Theology, I was invited to speak at an ecumenical youth space in the World Social Forum on the ‘Impact of globalisation on education in India.’ As I had no access to our college library at that point, since I was on a vacation, I thought I should visit the local Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI (M) office to collect some material on the topic, for they have been one of the most vocal voices on such themes. I went to my town’s local office which was my first visit to a political leftist party, CPI(M) office. I met a local leader there and had to introduce myself and explain to him the reason for my visit. He enquired of me what kind of education I was pursuing. I said that I was pursuing my theological studies. He was puzzled to know what kind of studies are they? Then I had to explain him that I am pursuing Christian theological studies to become a minister in a Church. He further probed me to know what kind of studies are they? I had to tell him in my local language Telugu, I am pursuing ‘vedantha vidhya’ (వేదంతా విదయ), (Vedanta (religio-philosophical) studies), dealing with critical faith reflections on the understanding of religion and God. Though he appreciated my interest in knowing about the impact of globalisation, he was not pleased at my current course of study, and discounted my studies commenting, “why are you pursuing such private studies, which are unscientific and irrational with no public relevance or benefit for society.” I had to reply that, “Theology is scientific, rational, and does have a public relevance to the Church in the society.” As a Marxist he was not satisfied with this response.

Though he sent me away with some literature on globalisation and education, that conversation created several theological ripples in me, leading me to interrogate the whole project of theology, theological studies and its public relevance in the Indian context. I am

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1 This translation explains the casteist/Brahminic influence on the translation of Christian theology in my context. Alternatively, there are new translations of ‘theological colleges’ in my own Telugu language as ‘dyva gnana kalasala’, (దైవ జ్ఞాన కళాశాల) which literally means ‘divine knowledge college.’ This too presents the influence of colonial episteme on translation of theology in my home language, Telugu, where transcendentality is privileged in interpreting theology.

2 By private he meant that theology as a discipline is not offered in any Indian ‘secular’ universities.
aware that this critique of theology comes from one of the co-citizens of my country, who was a ‘left’ ideologue, whose locale has been conditioned by his Marxist ideology for social transformation. I also need to mention that those were the days when discussions on ‘saffronization’\(^3\) of education were taking roots. At this time, the introduction of subjects like Astrology to the University curricula in India was under discussion; a development initiated by the saffron ideologues and their political parties. This experience persuaded me to grapple with several questions: Is theology a private enterprise? Does theology have any public character? In what way do theological studies and theology benefit the welfare of the society in India? This incident has been my starting point in exploring the public character of theology, in other words the ‘\textit{kairos}’ moment’ for me towards a public theological enquiry. It gave me an opportunity to become introduced to public theology. As I analysed both global and Indian public theologies, I was driven towards enquiring about the publicness of public theology. What is ‘public’ about public theology? This thesis, therefore, is an exploration of the publicness of public theology. More precisely, it is an enquiry on the public character of public theology for India.

After a Student Christian Movement of India gathering at Kodaikanal, I went, together with a group of friends, to visit a famous Hindu temple in Madurai in South India on a tourist expedition. The architecture of the temple is so amazing, and the sculptures on the walls and pillars are so exquisite, for it has four towers serving as entrance gates into the temple. We joined the queue to have a glance at the statue of goddess Meenakshi in the holy sanctum of the temple. At the start of the queue there was a notice which read, “All non-Hindus are not allowed beyond this point.” However, curious to see the goddess in the holiest of the holy place, we made our way, and took a glance at the goddess. Though I was a non-Hindu, I made my way into the holy sanctum along with the rest of the pilgrims there. But on my return, I began to enquire into the reasons for that notice outside the holy sanctum. Why are non-Hindus not allowed inside the holy sanctum? To my surprise I have found similar notices in other famous temples at Kanchipuram, Tirupati, and also learnt

\(^3\) An Indian political neologism, where saffron is the colour of the robes wore by Hindu sanyasis (monks), used by critics against their policies of Hindu nationalism. Saffronization is a right-wing propaganda of promoting Hindutva ideology by distorting history, for example, by re-writing text books to give a communal version of history.
that such notices exist even in most other famous Hindu temples in India. This non-entry to non-Hindus into the temples is governed by an ideology that denies all those born outside of the caste system, which is the substratum of Hindu religious philosophy, entry into their sacred spaces for fear of those out-castes and outside of castes ‘polluting’ these numinous spaces. It is on the basis of such concepts of purity and pollution that all the public spaces are demarcated, with Dalits, who are the outcast(e)s, being denied entry into temples even today.⁴

A study in 2010 according to The Economist observes that out of the 1598 villages surveyed in the western state of Gujarat, 98 practices of exclusion were identified. These exclusions ranged from preventing Dalits from accessing public wells to denying serving tea to Dalits. In 91% of villages surveyed, Dalits were not allowed in non-Dalit temples, and in 98% of them non-Dalits would not serve tea to Dalits at their homes.⁵ The conclusion is that the public spaces in India are not inclusive, for they are fractured and demarcated in the name of caste, creating non-public, subaltern public spaces with ‘casteist walls.’ There are dominant publics and excluded publics in the Indian public sphere. As a Dalit Christian, my experience of non-entry for non-Hindus into the temples in India disturbed me. Being so disturbed by this experience, I sought to engage in contesting the normalization of the oppressive status quo from the location of my own excluded public space. The means by which I sought to do this was by recovering subaltern theological account of public in the Indian context. In other words, this disturbing experience sharpened my theological enquiry on public theology, for this thesis explores the public character of public theology from the sites of an excluded public, which I explain as sites of subalternity. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to explore the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity, which will contribute towards a subaltern public theology for India.

Further to this, my working in the ecumenical movements in India, and my participation in the struggle to achieve justice for Dalit Christians, through organizing national protests and

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⁵ “Unconscionable; Caste Prejudice in India,” The Economist (London, January 2018).
engaging in advocacy work with the parliamentarians, inspired and motivated me to undertake this research towards a subaltern public theology, as a relevant theological enterprise for India.

Alluding Hanisch’s women’s movements experiences in her article “The Personal is Political,”6 I begin my thesis by presenting my own personal experiences to explain the politics of engaging in public theological endeavour. By expressing that personal subjective experience is political and is not a mere private experience, the above-mentioned encounters set the tone of the conversation for this research. Such a political experience then becomes the source of going public. It explains that in India, there is an obvious divide within the public sphere, between a dominant public and an excluded public (with exclusion occurring on the basis of caste). While the dominant public have access to all public spaces, the excluded public has a restricted access, and in most cases no access at all, to certain public spaces. My thesis, therefore, is a theological reflection that emerges out of an excluded public, bringing into the conversation, sites of exclusion, which I explain as subalternity, and placing the public character of public theology on the table. In short, my study develops on a public theology from the sites of subalternity.

1.2. Setting the Theological Context: Public Theology

Public theology is understood on the one hand as God-talk where faith seeks its relevance in the public realm, and on the other hand is conceived as a public discourse where the public is interrogated by faith, and as such it holds both these poles together in a creative tension. The ambiguity in defining ‘public’ makes this theological discourse even more critical, creative and challenging, for ‘public’ is understood and defined in varied perspectives across the world. Habermas’ understanding of a public sphere as a place where critical-rational opinion in society is constructed, provides a direction in unraveling ‘public.’7 In surveying public theology, one can explore the notion of diverse publics, which

serve as sites of doing theology and to which theology seeks its accountability. Tracy distinguishes three distinct publics, the Church, the academy and the society as locations of public theologising. Stackhouse explains that public theology by claiming four publics. The first public, which he calls the authentic religious public, focuses on ‘holiness.’ The second public is the political public with ‘justice’ as its key word. The third public is the academic public, where ‘truth’ is the aim of it. Finally, there is the economic public with ‘creativity’ as its core. Kim’s hexagonal definition of public as state, media, market, religious communities, civil society and academies, constitutes another, different, constellation in defining public. In the journey of public theological discourses, the category ‘public’ has been revisited and rearticulated as demanded by the context of those ‘doing public theology.’ With no uniform agreement on one understanding of ‘public,’ the project of public theology remains ambiguous.

Such an ambiguity makes it difficult to propose one definition of public theology. I shall discuss some of the definitions of public theology in Chapter 2. However, to introduce public theology, I shall present the definitions proposed by Brietenberg here. On surveying the literature of public theology, he describes it in three ways. Firstly, public theology is a religious discourse that is communicable intelligently to the adherents of its own tradition and also to those outside of its tradition. Secondly, public theology addresses issues which have bearing upon its religious community and also upon other communities of faith and none. Thirdly, in order to address public issues, public theology relies upon sources, methods, language which are open to all traditions. This description explains that public theology is a religious project which communicates in a language understandable to those outside of that particular tradition. It is a project which is concerned with addressing public issues in the world, for which it depends not only on its particular religious sources but also on all other sources and resources. In short, public theology addresses public issues by

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drawing sources from all traditions communicating a language comprehended by everyone, regardless of faith. This definition sets the tone for the understanding of public theology, for it largely engages with the pressing public issues faced in any given context and seeks towards a public theological relevance. Public theologians have recognised this genre of theology that embodies a progression from political theology to liberation theology to public theology, which I shall discuss further in Chapters 2 and 3.

On bringing the discussion of public theology into the Indian theological terrain, we recognise that the nomenclature of ‘public theology’ as such, may be new, but the issues within it have been addressed in various methods and formulations. Nevertheless, public theology in India is in its infancy and slowly taking its shape and content. Zachariah observes:

Public theology is a polyphony of distinct yet related projects to theologically engage in the public arena. One can identify at least three projects here. The first project is to re-imagine the institutionalized Church in the public sphere as a public-oriented Church. The second attempt is to demonstrate the public character of theological discourse by identifying the common criteria of truth that theology might share with other disciplines or modes of discourse. And finally, a search for developing a theological mode of address that can respond to some of the most pertinent issues of our times, while at the same time engaging a wider public which transcends religious boundaries.¹²

This polyphonic understanding of public theology explains the yearning of Indian public theologising and opens a new horizon in articulating public theologies in India, for India and with India. Re-imagining ‘Church,’ discussing its public character, and addressing the public issues form the core in understanding public theologies in India.

Gnanapragasam explains public theology in the framework of India, which for him has been the multi-religious traditions (that is post-secularist and religious pluralism) which exists in the public sphere. Public theologies for India, according to him have been those that seek the role of religion in public sphere in transforming the public. Alluding to de Gruchy,

whenever Gnanapragasam defines public theology in India he always chooses consciously the plural ‘public theologies,’ explaining that they can only be in multiple forms of public spheres. He states:

Public theologies are the ‘creative wings’ of public religion, with a force of value-oriented conviction for commitment in the public sphere. They come with the possibility of transforming the public into a site of peace and harmony, nurtured with values of freedom, justice, equality, dignity, fulfilment of basic necessities, and healthy identity negotiations! It is this promise which inspires us to explore the potentials of public theology.13

Public theologies therefore are channels or agencies in transforming the multiple public spheres as sites of just and inclusive communities. His definition recognises the emphasis on multiple publics in India in a multi-religious public sphere. He further comments that public theology seeks to build upon the political, liberation and contextual theologies. While these theologies are also public in an important sense, the ‘wider public’, the public where multiple others are present, still remains an external reality to the pursuit of political theologies.14 He sees a link between public, political and liberation theologies, however the latter two are limited in their sense of ‘public’, ‘the wider public’, for they address only a few constituencies of the public.

Having presented the definitions from Brietenberg, Zachariah, and Gnanapragasam, my study moves away from defining public theology as ‘seeking theological relevance on public issues,’ to defining it as ‘public character of public theology,’ specially from the sites of subalternity.

In articulating public theology as Christian apologetics, Graham concludes that “Public theology is not only concerned to do theology about public issues, but is called to do its theology in public, with a sense of transparency to those of other faiths and none.”15 This makes an important tenet of public theology, of doing theology in public, but this raises a

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14 Ibid, p.13
question which public and whose public? Graham might respond to this question as post-secular public, which she mapped as ‘unquiet frontier’ for her location of doing public theology in the context of western society. However, no public can be ascribed normativity and take privilege over the other publics in any given public sphere. With subalternity as a companion to public theology, which I shall explain in Chapter 5, Graham’s tenet of public theology can be reframed as, ‘public theology is not only concerned of doing its theology in public but is called to do its theology of public and often called to do its theology against dominant public, from sites of excluded public’ to which my thesis, ‘Towards a subaltern public theology for India’ stands as a testimony.

Having set the context for the discussion of public theology by discussing their definition, the task of doing public theology in India becomes challenging for at least four reasons, which explains the problem of this research. I will discuss these challenges in the next section.

1.2.1. The Challenges of Doing Public Theology:

Before I present the challenging tasks of doing public theology in India, it is helpful to discuss some criticisms levelled against public theology. Though public theology is a recent entrant into the Christian theological lexicon, it has achieved substantial relevance in the field of theology and ethics, as theologians engage on varied public issues. As Brietenberg observes, public theology on the one hand receives praise for keeping the best of the Christian tradition in its seeking of public relevance, while on the other hand it is denounced as being an ‘unfaithful distortion of Church’s true calling.’ In that pursuit of doing public theology there were criticisms of public theology as being too liberal in privileging the language of the world rather than proclaiming the language of the Christian Word, or making theology a sub-set of the world. This is first a criticism of public theology on the grounds that it depends on ‘corruptive sources’ to communicate ‘positive guidance’ to others, outside the church. Secondly, public theology is critiqued for functioning as an ‘instrumentalist undertaking in putting Christianity in service of other institutions.’ Thirdly, it is asserted that public theology is ‘not a worthwhile Christian endeavour,’ or perhaps ‘a

16 Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth : Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up ?” p.55
threat to our common civil society.’ Fourthly, the sources of insight, method, content, analysis and policy proposals of constructive public theologians have drawn criticism, with their faithfulness to Christian sources and traditions being questioned.\(^{17}\) Most of the criticisms on public theology have been levelled at public theology’s Christian-ness, its faithfulness to, among others, Christian sources and tradition, and for projecting public theology’s publicness as its Christian-ness. Though these are some valid criticism, my study is not about addressing these specific criticisms. Allow me now to discuss the challenging tasks of doing public theology in and for India.

Firstly, unlike in western societies, Christianity in India is a minority religion, which constitutes 2.4% of the total Indian population. In light of this, the Indian Church asks how much of its public theological voice has been heard in the Indian public sphere and what bearing does it have on it? This scepticism is valid, as the Indian polity has perceived Indian Church as a mere ‘service machinery’ (with church schools, hospitals and other charitable work catering to the needs of the society as public service) in the public sphere and has branded the Church as ‘apolitical.’ Although, there are fragments of public theological voices that keep evolving, they are either limited to the public re-imagining of Indian Church or to that of the theological academy and have not permeated significantly into the Indian public sphere. However, when the Archbishop of Delhi recently wrote an annual prayer letter to his parish priests, starting a year-long prayer campaign to save India from the “turbulent political atmosphere which poses a threat to democratic principles enshrined in our constitution and the secular fabric of our nation,”\(^{18}\) there were serious criticisms from the ruling BJP government, calling it ‘divisive move.’ One Christian cabinet minister called it “unfair to the government,” and advised the bishop that, “godmen should stay away from politics.”\(^{19}\) This instance explains that even though the Indian church is capable of making its voice heard on the current public issues, it risks being branded as ‘divisive’ and is advised to keep out of politics. The minority status of the Indian church thus

\(^{17}\) Ibid, pp.68-69
downplays and undermines its public theological role. The challenge of who hears the voice of the Indian church and what bearing it has in the public sphere continues.

Secondly, the term ‘public’ becomes problematic within public theology. What is public, whose public and which public comes to the fore in this discussion. As Appadurai observes, “In the twenty-first century, it seems, ‘the public’ is a site where matter is perpetually out of place. In such a context, public culture as a ‘zone of debate’ becomes fixated on policing the borders of public, even as those borders remain in perpetual flux.”20 As mentioned in the previous section that there are different kinds of ‘publics’, explained by different theologians from various contexts. The notion of ‘public’ therefore has had various forms and meanings across the globe in the spheres of socio-political-cultural-anthropological and historical studies. When trying to define what is public, lots of ambiguity and fluidity comes forth, which is inherent in its definitions. Most times, public has been defined in its associational terms or in its binary contrasts, like that of public-private, public-personal, public-particular, and public-counter-public.21 Does public then mean people, society, context, state, government, space, concept or ideology? Or none of these or all of these? Gnanapragasam observes that, “public is no more an experience or arena of contradistinction to the private, but a space wherein the everyday practice of life, individual and institutional is lived out in an integral manner.”22 In the context of India, questioning whether, among others, ‘public’ refers to an audience, a space, or state makes its discussion in public theology challenging to understand.23

Thirdly, adding to the ambiguity, the Indian public sphere is further complicated by the unique sociological phenomenon called the caste system, which divides people according to their descent, occupation, and colour, practiced across the Indian society and communities. Caste today permeates religion, region, and culture, for the Indian public sphere is infested with caste and caste manifestations. Gidla, on sharing her own

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21 Breitenberg discusses the comparisons and contrasts of public theology with other terms and words in Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth : Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up ?” pp. 57-62

22 Gnanapragasam, Wings of Faith: Towards Public Theologies in India, p.15

23 Refer 5.2 for a discussion on the genealogy of public sphere in India.
experiences about her Dalit Christian woman identity, explains how deeply caste is embedded in the society: “your life is your caste and your caste is your life.” Despite the Indian church’s position is predominantly subaltern, caste and caste practices exist and continue unabated within it. Dalit theology and Indian feminist theology did emerge from 1980’s to address the issues of the caste oppression of the subalterns. However, these remain within the theological academy and the ecclesia in India and have not seriously made inroads into the Indian public sphere. Sites of subalternity and subaltern public did not find a place as companions of public theology. In other words, so far, public theology has not been done from the sites of subalternity, public has never been interrogated or theorized from subaltern theological perspectives, and a theological account of a subaltern public has not been carried out. Therefore, exploring public theology from the sites of subalternity for India is a way forward, and this thesis primarily engages on it.

Fourthly, thus far all the projects of public theology have either been a faith reflection on public issues (such as secularization, globalisation, religious fundamentalism) or on specific contemporary issues, like the Paris climate change talks, inter-faith issues, elections in UK, controversies on Danish cartoons. Stackhouse’s four-volume God and Globalisation is a first case in point. He presents these explorations on globalisation not as a confessional theology or dogmatic theology, but in terms of a public theology, which he defines as a theology of public issues addressed to a public audience. Specifically, in his fourth volume,
Stackhouse explains globalisation through the approach of public theology by discussing grace, firstly as creation, secondly as providence, and thirdly as salvation. He describes public theology as seeking Christian ethical response to the public issue of globalisation and concludes his analysis by proposing globalisation as mission.29

The second case in point is from Ganapragasam’s *Wings of Faith: Towards Public Theologies in India*30 a collection of essays on varied public issues relating to public theology and public sphere in India. According to him, public theologies provide power to the public sphere in order to rise above the crushing market world and paralysing fundamentalisms. They are ultimately, the *wings of faith* for our increasingly encumbering world.31 The volume consists of two parts, where Part I deals with ‘Contexts and Concerns,’ covering wide range of public issues like fundamentalism, violence, market, civil society, secularism and democracy. Part II includes ‘Public theological Respondings’ to the given contextual public issues and weaves the relevance of public theological expressions to them. Gnanapragasam thus explains that “public theology treats politics, the site where public decisions are made, as its important arena of involvement. It theologises publicly on public dimensions of human living like the nature of the state, democracy, economics, market, society, civil society, bureaucracy, public policies, public institutions, public issues, cultural institutions and public life.”32 Here again the defining of public theology has to do with seeking the relevance of theology to public issues.

Both the cases illustrate the lack of public theology having sufficient engagement with the public character of public theology. By public character, I mean ‘publicness’ or, more precisely, the contours, tasks and scope of public theology. By defining it as a theology which seeks relevance on public issues, public theology has been limited to the study of ethics, and to practical and pastoral theology. We are thus left with general claims that “all


30 Gnanapragasam, *Wings of Faith: Towards Public Theologies in India*.

31 Ibid, p. XV

32 Ibid, p.13
theology is public discourse” and “purely private faith is incomplete.” Public theology as a definition of the public character of theology has been left undeveloped. By defining public theology as public character, public theology will be widened to discuss in systematic theology, which will allow to provide a basis to enquire the nature of public, and the doctrines in a public theological language and methods. This thesis is an enquiry on the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity for India. Further discussion of these definitional aspects will be presented in Chapter 2.

1.3. The Problem:
The challenge of ‘doing public theology’ has created a theological necessity to explore a public theology for India, from a subaltern perspective, where subalternity becomes a theological site of doing public theology with an aim of developing a subaltern public theology for India. The sites of subalternity have been excluded from the Indian public sphere, and from a faith standpoint, the theological calling for our times is to find God and hear the God-talk that comes from those excluded publics. Graham expresses the importance of the excluded and powerless in doing public theology and argues “a ‘preferential’ public theology places itself in an explicitly partisan role, as advocate, whose objective in seeking solidarity is not to silence the voices of dissent but to hear the cry of the poor.” This thesis is therefore directed towards that aim of discussing a ‘preferential’ public theology which it calls a subaltern public theology for India. In other words, as McIntosh observes, the future of public theology is in enquiring, ‘who is missing’ and practices ‘hearing the other to speech.’ My thesis answers McIntosh by explaining subalternity and subaltern public as that ‘missing’ portion of public theology and hears them to speech.

33 Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, p.3
The public in India is restricted to the ‘pure and unpolluted,’ with no space for Dalit and Tribal people in the dominant public space. This thesis aims at recovering that space by contesting the dominant and arguing that the excluded publics, the sites of subalterntiy are the real publics. ‘Public’ has never been problematised from a subaltern perspective, and as such no theoretical and theological engagement has addressed it, despite there existing a definitive need to for this. It is high time that these sites of subalternity which are an integral part of church and society, are given ample space and voice, for these voices are seeking counter-public spaces in which to affirm life. These subaltern counter-spaces are seeking to become alternative public spaces in which its constituent members can express their resilience, construct and circulate oppositional knowledge, and create multiple counter-spaces forging solidarity among themselves. This situation then calls for a decolonial method of understanding subalternity, drawing resources from Indian subaltern theologies.

In India today, there is an increasing interest in the political and public theology, for the Church, though a minority, continues to wrestle with the contemporary issues and is trying to articulate responses relevant for the public sphere. A subaltern public theology for India is an urgent need to further interrogate subaltern theology and introduce its greater relevance into the Indian public sphere. Subaltern communities are looking for subaltern counter public spaces in which to express and locate themselves. The shift to subaltern public theology is a call towards recovering sites of subalternity, for such a shift provides a source for public theology in India where knowledge is constructed by the subordinated other, the ‘non-public’. Not only does this knowledge emanate from the forgotten margins, but it also exhibits a critique of the existing dominant public within and among the public talk, de-stabilizing the very centers of ‘public’. At the same time, theologising on the public character of theology has been insufficient, and subaltern public theology is an attempt towards discussing the public character of public theology from the perspective of subalternity.

As mentioned in the previous section, public theology in India faces several challenges. The minority status of Christians in India and the role of their public theological engagements, the ambiguity in the term ‘public,’ and the division of the Indian public sphere into
dominant public and excluded public, due to the deeply embedded caste system and the exclusion of sites of subalternity as companions to public theology, present great challenges to public theology. In addition, defining public theology as seeking relevance of theology on public issues, instead of defining it as the public character of public theology poses a huge challenge to public theology.

1.3.1. Analysis of Caste:

The historical account of caste is though not the subject of my thesis, however it is important to understand its ideology, and I have brought in Ambedkar’s analysis of caste system, which helps in locating my thesis socially and theologically.

Caste is one of the oldest phenomena stratifying Indian society based on descent, occupation and colour. Its origins are traced back to the Vedic history, associated with ‘the Aryan invasion,’ which according to Thapar, a historian is the claimed by many groups as the basis for their social and political roots. The Aryan invasion of India took place over 3000 years ago by the Indo-European-speaking people, known as ‘Aryans’. These people subjugated the indigenous people, the descendants of the land and sanctioned their domination by the structure of caste system, where people are divided into different strata. Durmont observes, “the hereditary character of caste imposes a specific dharma - occupation to each varna – colour, i.e. Brahmans as priests, Kshatriyas as warriors, Vaishyas as traders and Shudras as servants. Thus caste, continued its dominance in the Indian society, oppressing those born outside of the caste as ‘untouchables.’ Bayly noted that caste enforced endogamy, dictated a hierarchical social division, and vested preferential economic and political power upon certain individuals, leading to the formation of divided social groups and varied cultural heritages.

39 Susan Bayly, Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.13
Ambedkar, the social revolutionary, from the ‘outcasted’ community contested caste, its structures and epistemology. He therefore, never spared himself to expose the vested interests and the arrogance and selfishness of caste system, which have gone into creating this barrier and the high handedness in maintaining it. In his paper *Castes in India, their mechanism genesis and development*, which he read before the Anthropology seminar of Dr. Goldenweiser on May 9, 1916, he has dealt with how and why the castes arose. According to him, the priestly class, to separate themselves other three classes for marriage purpose, imposed the system of endogamy among themselves. This was parceling out the racially and culturally homogeneous people. Different racial groups, that is, Dravidian, Scythenian, and Mongolians, who had come to India from different directions by living side by side, had forged cultural unity. The example of brahmins was copied by other classes. He has revealed that nobility imitates its leaders that are kings and the people of nobility. The military classes, therefore, imitated the brahmins, the highest and the vaishyas the military classes. This is how classes, in the due course of time, became castes.\(^{40}\)

Ambedkar’s address, *Annihilation of Caste*, contains a masterly analysis of castes their weaknesses, disadvantages and harmful effects. Ambedkar says,

“There is no unanimity among the Vedas on the origin of *Varna Ashrama* (caste system). None of the other Vedas agree with the Rig-Veda that the four Varnas were created by Prajapati (literally means leader of people, here the divine). It does not mention which Prajapati, for there are so many Prajapatis in Hinduism. One says they were created by Brahman, another says they were created by Kassyaps, some say Manu. And even on the issue of how many Varnas, there is no unanimity. This chaos seems to be the result of concoction of the theory of *Chathurvarna*, (four castes) which the Brahmins quietly singled into Rig-Veda contrary to establish traditions?"\(^{41}\)

Ambedkar also says “*Purushasukta*” of Rig-Veda is not a historical explanation. It is purely mystical. It is a fantastic dream of a troubled mind. It is probably an allegory; later brahmins converted it into a literal statement of hard fact. It does not solve the riddle, on


the contrary it creates a riddle – which is why were the brahmins interested in supporting the theory of Chaturvarna”\textsuperscript{42}

Thus, from a position of questioning Ambedkar was very much critical of the status quo of the caste system. To Ambedkar, there is no single origin of caste, it is always plural in number. When brahmins made themselves as a caste by enclosing themselves, they created the non-brahmin caste and subsequently other social groups consolidated as closed social systems. Ambedkar criticizes the westerns scholars’ position of linking caste with the colour. He says neither colour nor race has anything to do with caste.\textsuperscript{43}

Exposing the various defences put forward to support caste system, Ambedkar has stated that it is not only a division of labour but also division of labourers and that too on the basis of graded inequality. “Caste divides the labourers, caste disassociates work from interest, caste disconnects intelligence from manual labour and caste prevents mobilization.”\textsuperscript{44} Ambedkar has also exploded Arya Samajists theory of Chaturvarna, based on worth and not on birth, as impractical and difficult to achieve. He emphasizes the need to reorganize the Hindu society on the principles of Fraternity, Liberty and Equality in order to get away from the evil system of caste, which will be discussed in chapter 5 where I will discuss subaltern understanding of public.

1.4. \textbf{Research Questions:}
In light of these challenges, the main aim of this research is to explore a public theology from the excluded public in Indian public sphere. To be more precise, it is to study the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity. To attend to this aim, it engages on three specific theological conversations. Firstly, it discusses the deficiencies of the public character of public theology. Such a discussion is important in this study, for it provides a definitional clarity on the public character of public theology, specifically on the publicness of public theology. Secondly, the study engages in a discussion on the theology of subalternity, grounding the study in Indian context. Furthermore, in the context of visibly

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p.251
\textsuperscript{43} P.Mohan Larbeer, \textit{Ambedkar on Religion} (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), pp. 25-26
\textsuperscript{44} R. Sangeetha Rao, \textit{Ambedkar on Varna, Caste and Class} (New Delhi: Sanjivayya Institute of Socio-Economic Studies, 1990), p.10

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excluded caste publics in India, to do a public theology from such sites of excluded publics, (which I call the sites of subalternity), requires an understanding on the subaltern public. The study therefore calls for an enquiry into the subaltern character of ‘public’, which is to problematise ‘public’ from sites of subalternity. Thirdly, to explore a public theology from sites of subalternity, this thesis seeks to enquire into the theological account of such a subaltern public, in other words what is theological character of a public theology from the sites of subalternity?

Considering the discussion in the above sections, this study will specifically engage with the following three research questions.

- What are the deficiencies of the public character of public theology? By mapping the global and Indian public theologies, I shall enquire if there are any deficiencies of public character in public theologies.
- How do we problematise the concept of ‘public’ from the perspective of subalterns? In the context of caste system, how do we understand ‘subaltern public’ in India, what are its characteristics?
- How might these two enquiries contribute towards a subaltern public theology for India? Here I shall enquire what is the theological account of subaltern public? What are the contours, tasks and scope of subaltern public theology for India?

1.5. Methodology:

In exploring subaltern public theology for India, a critique of the so called ‘public’ comes to scrutiny; this, in a way, is a project of modernity. A critical sociological, theological and analytical apparatus will be employed in examining the subaltern categories to decipher the contributions of the chosen theologians as part of the contextual analysis. A decolonial reading of public theologies becomes inevitable in this process. An analysis of public theologies (which I explain in Chapter 2) produces a finding that public theologies have been embedded with a colonial episteme; this calls for employing a decolonial methodology, where ‘public’ and public theology are accounted from below: from the sites of subalternity.
This study thus employs a decolonial methodology, exemplified in at least three important ways. Firstly, it takes an ‘inductive approach’ in its theological analysis and interpretation. In discussing “Coloniality and theological method in Africa” Heaney explains colonial violence in theology from historical mission malpractices and argues for ‘inductive theologising’ as way towards a theological decolonization.45 This thesis utilizes such an inductive theological method; a ‘particularist approach’ finds its importance here. ‘Experiential epistemic sites of subalternity’ forms a site of doing public theology from the particularities of Dalit perspectives, and from its critical theological readings of caste, in contrast to the deductive approaches of coloniality.

Secondly, this research employs decolonial methodology through use of the method of ‘recovery.’ Stephenson, in the context of Bolivia, engages in as a decolonial methodology which recovers indigenous agency through the reconstitution of native territory and traditional forms of authority.46 This thesis employs this decolonial method to recover the subaltern agency in the understanding of public and theology, and also in reclaiming a subaltern public as the real public. This contrasts with the dominant, casteist public, which is grounded in counter-hegemony. In discussing the subaltern understanding of public in Chapter 5, this method of recovering Ambedkar as the fulcrum in understanding subaltern public, and in Chapter 6 recovering and rediscovering subaltern liturgy as a subaltern theological account engages this decolonial method.

Thirdly, decolonial methodology is employed by the method of ‘researching back,’ which according to Smith is in the tradition of ‘writing back’ or ‘talking back’, which characterizes the anti-colonial literature. For Smith such a method involves ‘knowing-ness of the colonizer,’ recovering the self and analysis of colonialism and an assertion of self-determination.47 This thesis draws out that public theology is contaminated by colonial

episteme, and in such a context a construction of a subaltern public theology for India is in a way ‘researching back’ in the face of that colonial epistemology of public theologies, by employing an epistemology of contestation. In Chapter 6, subaltern public theology contests the anti-liturgical liturgies of caste through an exposition of subaltern liturgy, where the subaltern self is recovered and the other is revisited. This research therefore engages a decolonial methodology collaging the above said three ways which are found intersectionally across the thesis.

1.5.1. European Hermeneutics and Adivasi (indigenous) Hermeneutics:

Linda Smith in her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous people* explains the differences between Western hermeneutics and epistemologies vis-à-vis indigenous (Adivasi) construction of knowledge by engaging with a ‘decolonizing methodology.’ She explains that Western research draws from an archive of knowledge and system, rules and values, whereas indigenous research draws from experience and subjectivity. She explains, “research ‘through imperial eyes’ describe an approach which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings.”

Therefore, western constructions of knowledge become normative and all other forms of knowledge is considered ‘primitive’ and ‘uncivilised.’ In contrast to this, Indigenous research in their hermeneutics and epistemologies are writing to the public, and in their writing, they are writing to themselves from their own social locations. Objectification of the ‘other’ has been a norm in the colonial enterprise of knowledge, indigenous epistemologies contest such objectification, and engages in reclaiming and recovering their own forms of knowledge, where the self is reclaimed, and the other is re-visited. I will explain in chapter 4 where subalternity is discussed as deconstructed hermeneutics and as contested epistemology. Decolonizing European hermeneutics and epistemologies by contesting, recovering, reclaiming is recognised throughout this thesis.

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid, p.114
In this thesis there are references to several European authors with regards to public theology. The reason being, public theology in India is still in its infancy and therefore had to rely on sources where public theology has already been in full form and shape. Having utilized the Western authors, I have dealt with them critically engaging in a conversation with and for Indian subaltern public sphere. For example, I have used Catherine Pickstock’s usage of ‘anti-liturgical liturgy’ in my thesis to re-read caste as anti-liturgical liturgy for India. However, I did not seek a solution like Pickstock in a Roman rite for anti-liturgical liturgy, or did not find home in Eucharist, which Cavanaugh has sought with. I have dealt with it critically and found ‘the broken body of Christ’ as the subaltern liturgy contesting the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste. This thesis as has been mentioned is ‘writing back’ to the western colonial public theological episteme, and so deals with such sources and recovers and reclaims them for sites of subalternity.

1.5.2. Subjective Social Location:

The quest for this research came out of my own theological and social location, which is grounded in my subjective Dalit Christian experience. One of the criticisms of Dalit scholarship is that most researches have been limited to, or forced into, an empirical data analysis method of doing research and have allowed dominant caste groups to engage in theories, despite theories and philosophies having always been an upper caste domain. As such, to subvert this idea of (as Guru comments) ‘theoretical Brahmins and empirical Shudras,’ Gopal Guru, I chose to engage on a theoretical and theological analysis. According to Guru, Dalits need theory as a social necessity and as an inner necessity. Pursuing this research in a reputed institution like the University of Manchester is thus in itself an act of resilience, a testimony to prove that Dalits and Dalit Christians are capable of engaging in research on par with any other student throughout the world. In one sense, this deconstructs the notion that ‘knowledge is power, and power is knowledge’ and paves way to recognition that oppositional decolonised knowledge from the margins is as academic as any other.

I also need to mention that my positionality as a Dalit Christian theologian, refers to as Smith alluding to Hill calls it “the outsider within”\textsuperscript{51} positioning of research. As Smith observes, such a positionality has been one of the indigenous researcher’s complexity. My sociological location provides that insider’s perspective as a Dalit Christian. At the same time, doing the research in a distant foreign academic setting makes me an outsider to my own context. This liminality of inside-out and outside-in, within my positionality in doing this research makes it in the words of Smith ‘a humble and humbling activity.’

The thesis also provides a space to re-imagine public theology for India today from sites of subalternity as a decolonial public theology and as a subaltern public theology, where decoloniality as subalternity and subalternity as decoloniality serves as methodological tools. This knowledge from below, knowledge as informed by the collective, and knowledge as against the powerful, is what this thesis would contribute to the whole theological spectrum. The counter-hegemonic expressions from the subaltern public theology tries to locate God within and among the sites of subalternity, for it is here that the divine encounters the human and vice versa. There are no absolute claims made as this excluded theological public evolves. As theology goes public, it is this local site of subalternity which defines and inspires my doing a public theology relevant for our times and situations. This research makes available to the public subaltern interrogatory spaces arguing subaltern public as the real public.

Subaltern public theology for India is a theology from the margins, addressing not just the subalterns, but the entire public sphere. It derives its scope from a transnational public sphere, contesting the colonial episteme of the centers by speaking truth to the powers. It also provides a contestatory tool in theologising public from the perspectives of subalternity. Smith discusses some of the core research issues discussed in contemporary indigenous contexts and asks whose interest does a research project serve and who will benefit from it.\textsuperscript{52} I would answer that my research serves the interests of my own Dalit Christian community, whose experience has been exclusion from the public sphere along with the many subaltern communities who share similar experiences. This research will

\textsuperscript{51} Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, p.5
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, p.10
benefit primarily the subaltern communities, for it reclaims the sites of subalternity as real public sites and affirms their struggle for justice and liberation by providing a theoretical and theological base to contest the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste. At the same time, the research benefits the enterprise of public theology by widening its net to sites of subalternity and will also benefit the project of decolonial and subaltern studies, for it brings in a fresh perspective from theological standpoints.

1.6. Thesis Structure:
To address the three research questions, the research is classified into three parts. Part I consists of ‘theological context’ which addresses the first research question on the deficiencies of the public character of public theology in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. This Part engages in a critical appraisal of global and Indian public theologies. This part presents a theological context of public theologies and identifies a definitional, subalternity and systematic deficiencies within its public character.

Part II consists of ‘theological companions,’ where a theological subalternity is excavated and a subalterior understanding of ‘public’ is discussed. For a subalternal public theology for India, ‘theological subalternity’ and ‘subalternal public’ serve as companions and therefore form an important accompaniment in this theological pursuit. This part addresses the second research question on the problematisation of ‘public’ from the perspective of subalterns. Chapter 4 discusses the critical Indian theological hearing of subalternity and Chapter 5 is a critical subalternal interrogation of public.

Part III consists of ‘theological contours,’ where ‘subalternal liturgy’ as a theological account of subalternal public is discussed (Chapter 6). Based on this content, the tasks and scope of subalternal public theologies for India are presented (Chapter 7), for along with contours they explain the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity. This part addresses the third research question how the enquiry on public character of public theology might and the enquiry of problematising public from subalternal perspective contribute towards a subalternal public theology for India.
In conclusion, Chapter 8 presents a discussion based on the thesis findings. It summarises the study and establishes the distinctiveness of this proposal. Subaltern public theology for India is a ‘deviant’ public theology to the western academic public theology, which explains its distinctiveness. It discusses the significance of my research, serving as it does a theological foundation for public theology from the sites of subalternity and opens the horizon in addressing public issues from public theological perspectives. My thesis contests the dominant and normative public theologies from the sites of subalternity in the Indian context and discusses subaltern liturgy as a theological account of subaltern public. It also discusses exciting future projects that emerge out of my study here.

1.7. Conclusion:
This introductory chapter aims to provide the motivation, problem, research questions, methodology and the structure of this thesis. The overall aim of this thesis is to discuss the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity and contribute towards a subaltern public theology for India. The study now moves on to explain the first research question in Part I, ‘Theological contexts,’ which begins with a critical mapping of global public theologies.
Part One: Theological Contexts

This Part addresses the first research question of enquiring the deficiencies of the public character of public theology, by a critical mapping of global and Indian public theologies in Chapters 2 and 3.
Chapter 2
Mapping Public Theologies: A Critical Analysis

2.1. Introduction:
On 10 April 2014 in India, a public notice was posted in the office canteen of a leading daily, *The Hindu*, banning employees from eating non-vegetarian food on its premises, because, the notice explained “it causes discomfort to the majority of employees who are vegetarian.”53 This notice generated anger, protest, debate and fury from different quarters of the country, especially from Dalits, the ex-untouchables, to whom the eating of meat, specifically beef is particularly associated with. Food and food practices, which were once points of discussion only at the private and domestic table, have now been politicised and have become public issues, with the cow as a fetishised sacred object and the banning of beef-eating taking centre stage.54 In defence of *The Hindu* management’s decision, one of its staff, Praveen Swami was quoted as stating, “It is my right to eat what I want at home. It isn’t right to carry beef into a temple and pork into a mosque [sic]”55 This opens up a Pandora’s box of discussion on a wide range of topics including private, public, food, home, eating, rights and religion, and religious spaces.

However, alluding to Pandian’s transcoding of a ‘strictly vegetarian atmosphere’ as nothing but caste and caste relations,56 Gorringe and Karthikayen refer to this episode to examine the hidden politics of vegetarianism, and explain that it, “illustrates the pervasive influence of brahminical practices within the public sphere and the continued resistance to lower caste and non-Hindu assertion.”57 The history of eating meat and beef has always been

associated with caste, from where the notions of ‘purity (vegetarians) and pollution (beef eaters),’ stemmed, and on whose wheels the caste system runs, sustains and operates. Alongside many such instances, such as Dalits not being allowed into temples or on to upper caste streets, these explain the very nature of “public” in Indian society, because although that dining space is “public” space, it is not entirely “public”, for the meat and beef eaters are excluded from that “public.”

The publicness in this “public” place is, on the one hand, conditioned by the norm of the dominant caste, which is to say that the majority public are vegetarian, and therefore no minority preference will be entertained. On the other hand, it is exclusionary: as eating meat causes discomfort to the dominant public, what one eats at home cannot be eaten in the public canteen. In other words, the Indian public sphere is conditioned by the dominant caste’s normativity and draws exclusionary lines between the majority and all those oppose such norms, thereby forcing Dalits to be excluded from the discussions, perspectives and parameters of the Indian “public.” These exclusionary publics are further evident in the spatiality of villages, a visible ‘residential segregation’ where dominant castes live at the heart of the villages, forcing Dalits to live outside the village in cheris, the peripheries or the colonies. As Mallick and Malik observe, “caste identity is exclusive and the principal cause of distance and differentiation in Indian society today,” expounding the dividing lines in the Indian “public.”

This division of the public sphere in India by caste and the notion of “public” it defines, is very different from that of the eighteenth century public sphere which took shape in Europe in bourgeoisie society. According to Habermas, this society was a place of private individuals coming together to form critical rational opinion, where their critical debate of political issues had proved its mettle as a check on the government, significantly at the

58 A survey of about 565 villages in 11 Indian states studying the practice of untouchability by renowned Indian sociologists indicates that residential segregation of Dalit households in India is the most visible and long-standing form of discrimination and the most taken for granted aspect of untouchability in the Indian public sphere. For further discussion on practices of untouchability in contemporary India, see Ghanshyam Shah et al., Untouchability in Rural India (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007).
59 A Dalit settlement outside of the high castes oor (village)
nerve centre of bourgeois interest. Panikkar noted that the baggage of colonialism and the hindrance of casteism evolved a different “public,” in India, thereby creating exclusionary and conditioned “publics,” where the dominant castes and classes define and preserve it. Thus, when speaking about “public” in India, the obvious questions that come to the fore are which “public” and whose “public,” the dominant “public” or the excluded “public.”

Having lived and experienced this reality of divided “publics” in India, I now engage in discussing public theologies, from my own social and theological location of Dalit, Christian perspectives, which finds its locale in the exclusionary “public”, which I call the site of subalternity. A fuller discussion on the theological understanding of subalternity, and a subaltern understanding of public emerges in chapters 4 and 5, but for now, subaltern “public” refers to an excluded “public” which stands in opposition to the dominant caste’s normative “public.”

Alluding to Graham, Fretheim argues that although the public sphere is the context of public theology, any identification of the character of public does not define it. On the contrary, he says, “the starting point for practising, developing and constantly reassessing of public theology, is the public character of theology itself.” This chapter, therefore, carries out a critical mapping of public theologies to discuss the public character of public theology. In the process it recognises certain deficiencies in the public character of public theology. Its aim is to present a theological context of global public theologies and to discuss the public character of public theologies.

The chapter is divided into three parts, with the first part auditing A Companion of Public Theology, a collection of recent scholarship on public theology, and identifying three deficiencies: definitional, subalternity and systematic deficiencies. The second part

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61 Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. p.69.
discusses whether public theologies are showcasing the public character of theology in its diverse definitions. The third part discusses the terrains of public theologies – political, liberational and apologetic – and analyses them, which then provides certain pointers in furthering the discourse of public theologies.

2.2. A Companion to Public Theology: A Theological Audit

In the context of growing complexities in the public arena of the social, political and cultural terrain, *A Companion to Public Theology* is an attempt to ‘Show us what theology looks like’ in the public square.65 From here on I shall call this volume *Companion*. This volume is the latest entrant into the “public” of public theologies. The editors of this volume mention that it has taken “more than a village”66 of the Global Network of Public Theology (GNPT) to produce it and also comes at the tenth year of the publication of *International Journal of Public Theology* (IJPT), aimed at continuing the ongoing dialogue.

Editors Kim and Day bring their experience and expertise as public theologians to this volume, classifying it into four sections, reflecting the scope of public theology as they see it. The first section comprises three articles on the foundations of public theology, where Christian scripture, Christian theology and theological method are discussed as foundational in the furthering of public theology. The second section comprises four articles on public theology and the political sphere, and discusses issues of political importance including democracy, nationalism and reconciliation. The third section consists of seven articles on public theology, economics and social justice, where issues of globalisation, social cohesion, citizenship, social justice, forced labour, human trafficking, racial, gender and sexuality, and healthcare are discussed. The six articles in the fourth section are on public theology, ethics and civil societies, and discuss climate injustice, bioethics, urban ecology, minority perspectives, media, worship and liturgy.

The editors in their introduction have surveyed the developments in public theology and recognised that there cannot be one corpus of orthodoxy. Instead, it emerges out of

recognition of multiple publics. They propose six ‘marks’ of public theology, which according to them, “have been generally recognised as essential to the process of constructive public theology,” and also are reflected in the contributions of this volume, which they call, “the first compendium of public theology.” The six marks are incarnational, identification of the nature of public and public spheres, interdisciplinary, dialogical, global, and performed. Together, these six marks explain the vitality of public theology. This Companion certainly serves as a reference tool in understanding the various facets of public theology, as it identifies scripture, theology, political issues, social justice issues and civil societal issues as its companions.

It is important here to interrogate the definition of public theology employed by this volume. The editors subscribe to Breitenberg’s definition of public theology, which according to them was the “clearest and most influential contribution”. Breitenberg defines public theology as “theologically informed public discourse about public issues, addressed to the church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or other religious body, as well as the larger public or publics, argued in ways that can be evaluated and judged by publicly available warrants and criteria.” Having surveyed public theological literature, Breitenberg discusses methodological issues and definitions of public theology. He compares and contrasts certain terms, such as public theologian and public intellectual, and public theology and public philosophy, to establish the validity of public theology. According to him, the three public theological literature genres are biographical, definitional and constructive. Referring to, among others, Martin Luther King Jr., Linell Cady’s Religion, Theology and American Public Life, and ‘informed interpretations to institutions, incidents’ as examples to each of the three genres. Although Breitenberg examines public theological literature genres and widens the net of public theology whose addressees are people of all faith communities in the larger public, the emphasis has been on ‘theologically informed public discourse on public issues,’ rather than ‘the public character of public theology.’

68 Ibid. pp.10-17.
69 Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth : Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up ?” p.66.
70 Ibid. pp.62-64.
In other words, in the *Companion* most of the articles engage with public theology in line with Breitenberg’s definitions, which is a theologically informed public discourse on various public issues including democracy, globalisation, bioethics and climate injustice. Public theology as seeking theological relevance in terms of public issues takes precedence and public theology as the public character of theology is left unaddressed. This then leads to the recognition of a first point of audit, which is the onset of a ‘definitional deficit’ within the definition of public theology here in the *Companion* and also in the saga of public theology, which the next section presents.

Smit, in his article in the *Companion* alluding to the life and contributions of public theologian Bedford-Strohm, echoes the same kind of definition to public theology. According to him, “public theology should be about what counts in public life, about what makes a difference, about what effects human beings and the created world, about what matters to real people in real life.”\(^{71}\) This understanding clearly identifies that public theology has been concerned solely with public life and realities.

Added to this is an ambiguity in the term ‘public,’ with questions coming to the fore of which and whose ‘public’ is dominant or excluded. This ambiguity must be recognised and addressed. Van Aarde engages in a discussion of “What is theological in public theology and what is public in public theology.”\(^{72}\) This discussion distinguishes between public theology done in academia, and that which is done in the public arena by, among others, artists and poets, shifting public attention to the public arena. For Van Aarde, public is the people and public theology is therefore a people’s theology. This article however provides a helpful and critical theological enquiry into the definitions of ‘public’ and ‘theology’ in public theology remains to be unfolded, and appears to be insufficient in its current form. Put another way, this deficiency demands a critical theological account of public in public

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theology, for such an account provides some directions in understanding the ambiguity of the term public and theology in public theology, affecting its course of its journey.

As most public theology has been understood to be seeking theological relevance on public issues, public life issues and public realities, critical engagement with the definition of public theology as an expounding of a public character of theology has been insufficient. This thesis therefore attempts to engage public theology with that definitional premise of discussing the public character of public theology.

Secondly, we recognise that most public theology done so far has been dominated by the perspectives of western academia. It is Anglo-Europe centric, and has entirely devalued, side-lined and marginalised the perspectives, methods and theologies of subalternity in its realm. This I call the ‘subalternity deficiency’ of public theology. Burns and Monro\textsuperscript{73} suggest power analysis as the basis for distinguishing between the public/private divide and lament over the exclusion of gender perspectives in contemporary public theological discourse. As they mention that in over a decade of publication, the IJPT has had only one volume addressing feminist theological discussion of public theology. In their plea to public theologians, Burns and Monro affirm the need to “explicitly bring marginalized voices into conversation”\textsuperscript{74}. However, in their edited volume, \textit{Public Theology and the Challenge of Feminism},\textsuperscript{75} they too indicate themselves to be trapped within the colonial episteme of the cultivation merely of Anglo-Australian-European voices, forgetting the voices from the margins within Asia and Africa, who are on the peripheries of theology in general and of public theologies in particular.

Similarly, in the \textit{Companion} one can observe that out of twenty articles, none is from Asia, despite the continent’s inclusion in the volume. Privileging theological locations of colonial episteme not only devalues subalternity as a site of public theology, but also discounts it as a companion to public theology. This, in the \textit{Companion}, is a conscious omission of


\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. p.11.

\textsuperscript{75} Anita Monro and Stephen Burns, eds., \textit{Public Theology and the Challenge of Feminism} (London: Routledge, 2015).
subalternity, with the only solace coming from Pearson’s article. “The quest for a coalitional praxis: Examining the attraction of a public theology from the perspective of minorities”\textsuperscript{76} recognises that there have been minimal explicit works on public theology written by minorities from their marginal spaces. Pearson explains subaltern publics as counter publics, explaining challenges such as linguistic, mapping and mediation in constructing public theology from minorities.

It must however be recognised that public theologies have been contaminated by the colonial episteme, mostly locating it in sites of coloniality, privileging ‘euro-centric’ epistemologies, and as such de-recognising sites of subalternity. A critical theological account of public from the perspective of subalternity, which is one of the core research queries of this thesis, aims therefore to address such a deficiency by exploring public theology from sites of subalternity and decoloniality.

The third concern is with the location of public theology in the enterprise of theology as a whole. Most theologians locate it in practical theology, some in Christian ethics, some in pastoral theology, and very few in systematic theology. With every project of public theology, especially in the Companion, it is evident that it has been understood in terms of Christian faith reflections on public issues such as democracy, globalisation and religious fundamentalism. The term has also been used to describe specific faith interventions on contemporary issues, including climate change, healthcare and bioethics.

There has been no systematic public theology or a systematic theologising of public theology or, to be even more precise, a systematic theologising on the theological account of public in public theology. This I call ‘systematic deficiency.’ Public theology over the years has been not sufficiently systematised, by which I mean that it has been every(body’s) theology. Theologians such as Abraham agree with Tracy that, “all theology is public discourse,”\textsuperscript{77} leaving the questions of which public and whose public unattended to. At the same time, we have difficulty defining public. The possibilities have grown in various forms;

\textsuperscript{77} Tracy, The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism. p.3.
it can be understood to include church, academy, society, context, civil society, media, culture, economics, people, and so on. Public(s) are unlimited; to address this (un)limitedness, a critical theorising and theologising on public will pave the way towards a systematic public theology.

Public theology as it has developed in the US has, as McLemore argues, emerged out of pastoral theology, whereas in the UK, as Graham states, public theology extends from practical theology.\textsuperscript{78} There are, then, few attempts to locate it in the genre of systematic theology, with the exception of Tracy’s \textit{The Analogical Imaginations}. Such a concern was voiced by Kim in his article in the \textit{Companion}, “Public Theology in the history of Christianity,”\textsuperscript{79} where he expresses the need for a more systematic approach of public theology from the perspective of systematic theology, for the furtherance of public theology as a theological discourse.\textsuperscript{80} It is therefore high time that public theology is systematised, so that it can on the one hand strengthen the resolve of constructing public theology as critical reflection of the theological account of public, and on the other hand deepen its commitment to engaging with other academic disciplines and faith perspectives in a given public sphere.

\textit{A Companion to Public Theology} is indeed a meaningful contribution to the enterprise of public theology, for it tries to show what theology looks like in the public sphere by seeking a theological relevance on public issues, rather than exploring the public character of public theology. However, that in itself is not the aim of any public theological exploration. For me coming from a context of a fragmented public, where caste divides public as dominant public and exclusionary public, the aim of a public theology is to show the public character of public theology in a public sphere from the sites of subalternity, the exclusionary public. In other words, a theological audit of the \textit{Companion} exposes definitional, subalternity and systematic deficiencies in its volume, and my research attempts to address these deficiencies.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. p.61.
2.3. Public Theologies: Showing the Public Character of Theology?

Having identified that there are definitional deficiencies besides subalternity and systematic deficiencies in the Companion, this section discusses a few representational definitions from the five continents, starting from the formative years, to understand the course public theology has taken thus far. From these discussions, what becomes obvious is that most public theologies have taken the course of defining public theology in terms of seeking theological relevance on public issues as and when their contexts demanded. In other words, public theologies thus far have been not sufficiently defined as exploring the public character of public theology. This in a way further emphasises the definitional deficit of public theology.

Public theology as a branch of theology has come a long way since Marty’s exposition of public theology from the theological contributions of Reinhold Niebuhr in the context of American experiences and experiments as published in 1974, where he responds to the discussion of civil religion as argued by sociologist Robert Bellah.\(^81\) In his article, Marty explains Niebuhr’s theological faith articulations as those that have public relevance in the context of Americanism and expounds his philosophical praxis and the role of a Church as having a public calling in serving the society. Martinez has said of Marty, to whom Robert W. McElroy attributes the coinage of the term ‘public theology’, that he uses the term in relation to “the work of various figures who have interpreted the nation’s religious experience, practice and behaviour in the light of some sort of transcendent reference.”\(^82\) Breitenberg explains that soon after Marty introduced the terms public theology and public theologian, Christian theological ethicist Hollenbach highlighted the need for a contemporary public theology that would attempt “to illuminate the urgent moral questions of our time through explicit use of the great symbols and doctrines of the Christian faith.”\(^83\) In its formative years, public theology was concerned with the growing

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civil religion and the ethical implications that it had brought in, and therefore articulated Christian theology as applicable to the then public sphere.

Later Tracy advanced and elaborated the notion of public theology, by defining the three publics to which theology needs to adhere to, the wider society, the academy and the church. Breitenberg summarises the development of public theology in its formative period as, “Marty was concerned with questions of definition, with identifying past and present instances of public theology, and with interpreting figures as public theologians. Hollenbach called for constructive work and normative proposals in theological ethics. Tracy focussed on questions of theological method and how theology should be carried out as a form of public discourse.” In its definitions, ethical response and methodology, the premise of public theology right from its formative years has always been on seeking a theological relevance of public life issues like ‘Americanism,’ ‘urgent moral questions of our time’ etc. and therefore we have public theology in the later years, which followed that course of engagement.

Discussing ecumenical public theology with a hermeneutical lens of ecumenical social ethics, Forrester discusses the scope and task of public theology, especially in the age of terror. The scope of public theology according to him on the one hand is the world’s agenda and on the other hand is ecumenism, which he calls ‘the great new fact of the age,’ borrowing a term from William Temple. He argues that public theology is ‘necessarily always contextual,’ engaging on the ‘public agenda’ or issues of ‘public truth,’ yet times challenging the positions and the agenda itself. He also proposes that the task of public theology is ‘announcing the Gospel and denouncing the injustices and oppression,’ and he suggests that this defines the nature of public theology. Thus public theology was understood as public kerygma, which is a prophetic proclamation in the public sphere by speaking truth of the gospel in the context of public issues.

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Forrester, while enlarging the tent of practical theology, which has been limited to ministerial practice, argues for public theology as an extended practical theology, challenging Christian practice to engage with all realms of public in conversation with other disciplines. In order to explain the definitions of public theology, Forrester begins by explaining what public theology is not about, which he finds it easiest to do. He defines public theology not as an “in-house chatter or domestic housekeeping of a sect” or a “ritual incarnation of ancient formulae,” explaining that:

... public theology is rather a theology, talk about God, which claims to point to publicly accessible truth, to contribute to public discussion by witnessing to a truth which is relevant to what is going on in the world (my emphasis) and to the pressing issues facing people and societies today (my emphasis). It does not generate its own agenda, nor does it simply take over the world’s agenda... It offers convictions, challenges and insights derived from the tradition of which it is a steward, rather than seeking to articulate a consensus or reiterate what everyone is saying anyway.87

Therefore, speaking from a Christian theological perspective, public theology for Forrester is about contributing to the public discussion by offering convictions, challenges, insights from Christian faith resources, as an act of witnessing to truth in the public sphere, which again reaffirms the premise that public theology is all about seeking a theological relevance on the pressing issues of people. It was observed by Burns and Monro that the centre that Forrester has founded, ‘Centre for Theology and Public Issues’ (CTPI) intentionally engaged on the public issues and sought theological reflections for the same.88 This in a way charted the course of public theology in Britain as a wider field of practical and pastoral theology, where Forrester calls it as “public practical theology.”

The Kairos theology as anti-apartheid theology in South Africa, which emerged as ‘prophetic theology’ contesting ‘state theology’ on the one hand and ‘church theology’ on the other, was a visible creative expression of public theology, which has impacted and influenced Church and society in South Africa. Writing from a post-apartheid context, de Gruchy explains public theology as social theology, and affirms public theology as Christian

87 Duncan Forrester, *Truthful Action* (Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 2000). pp.127-128. Italics have been for emphasis.
witness. By social theology he does not mean churches making public statements or merely participating in social action, but rather that they are called to address issues of public interest which are borne out of theological grounding, convictions, and commitments. de Gruchy says,

Such theological reflection is invariably sparked off by public issues, whether global or local or both, that require exploring trajectories of faith and praxis, but theological reflection on public issues does not in and of itself constitute public theology as Christian witness. Public theology as Christian witness thus implies public engagement; which can take at least two forms, that of action and that of debate. Public theological praxis is a form of Christian witness when it embodies, even if not explicitly, theological conviction.\(^89\)

The focus of public theology again has been on issues of public interest, where theological reflections and actions are sought in the forms of witness.

In the context of South Africa, the *Kairos* document\(^90\) issued in 1985 made huge ripples in the South African context which helped in their transformation towards democracy, provided foundation for public theology in that context. However, public theology as Christian witness was demonstrated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) constituted in 1995, which provided public hearing on the human rights violations, hearing from the victims and survivors of racial abuses. This kind of public theology was not brewed and performed only in the academic publics, but was functional in the society, where Church public played an important role, by offering public theology as public Christian witness. The *Kairos* document and the TRC thus defined public theology as expressions of theological discourse on public issues in the South African context.

With a growing theological consciousness recognising the need to address the issues of the poor vis-à-vis Church dogma, and with the emergence of liberation theology in the context of Latin America, public theology has manifested itself through the very understanding of the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, as a pastoral and spiritual response in the

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\(^{90}\) Kairos Theologians (Group), *The Kairos Document, Challenge to the Church : A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).
public context. Several liberation theologians across the continent have expounded the public relevance of liberation in their own local contexts. Jacobsen, in exploring a public theology for Brazil, explains that public theology in the Latin American context is similar to that of South Africa, where liberation of the oppressed itself serves as the determinative, offering a ‘public theology of liberation’:

If theology is not incarnate in the pains, faith and hopes of all people, in each context, then it will be an empty and irrelevant discourse. A public theology ‘anchored in the lifeworld’, would be the appropriate form for any theology that, mobilized by the suffering of people, seeks to contribute to the expansion of the communicative efforts of the society.91

Public theology, from its witness mode in the South African context, takes on an incarnate form, anchoring in the life-world of the poor and suffering. Only in that incarnate form does it demonstrate relevance and meaning. Public theology as liberation, particularly in the Latin American context, continued to be the driving force in translating faith into praxis, and has been the theological discourse in the public and political spheres. I discuss liberation public theology in the next section; for now, however, we notice that public theology in the Brazilian context is also a reflection on the theological relevance to the public life world issues of poverty and the poor.

In many communities in Asia, particularly the vulnerable communities, violence has been employed as a tool to further domination and oppression. Clarke observes in the context of Dalit oppression: “violation by and violence from the caste communities are the twin realities that Dalits encounter in their liberative journey... violence is unleashed on Dalits for any infracting of the prescriptions laid down for the caste based hierarchical social order.”92 Violence against Dalits has been one of the most aggressive forms of discrimination against them.

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Therefore, arguing for a public theology of peace in the context of violence, specifically in Asia-Pacific, Haire borrows Temple’s imagery of a ‘bi-focal lens’ as being necessary for public theology in Asia. He explains that the upper part of this lens is for the vision of a ‘world community of peace and harmony,’ while its lower end is the ‘world as it is.’ Haire reminds not to forget that the upper end of the lens is part and parcel of reality. He calls upon the Churches to model peace, if at all it has to preach peace to overcome violence:

Perhaps the greatest enculturation, or theologia in locō, which we need in the Asia-Pacific region is to express the style of our theological existence through Asia-Pacific forms of peace... The way we express public theology, preach, engage in the worship of God, engage in community services and the ways we live need to express this shalom.  

The importance of upholding the bi-focal character of public theology is an important move forward in understanding the amphibious nature of public theology. Although the issue of peace is to be understood and modelled by the Church as part of its public theology within the purview of Asia-Pacific models, signifying communitarian, collaborative and liturgical expressions of public theology, it nevertheless seeks theological relevance in terms of the public issue of violence, which is perceived as public theology. In his exposition of a public theology for Asia, Haire exposes the colonial imprint on public theology and questions whether it is a need of a western Church. Haire observes: “public theology is purely western Christianity’s way of addressing the angst of the effects of Enlightenment in public place.” This explains the colonial episteme of public theology, that it has been taken over by the ‘Latin captivity’ of the western Church. For Haire, however, public theology is defined as the relevance of theology to public issues, such as violence in Asia.

From the above discussions we decipher that the most preferred course of public theology has been in seeking theological relevance on public issues. Public theology has been preoccupied engaging as a theological discourse seeking theological relevance on public issues such as the contexts of civil religions, demanding public issues, post-apartheid,
oppression and violence. Such a preoccupation has left the course of public theology as a public character of theology, neglected and undeveloped. This section not only expounds the definitional deficiency and crisis of public theology, but also recognises that most public theologies are located largely in a practical and pastoral theological field and very little in the arena of systematic theology. There is almost no public theology which is situated in and reflects from the sites of subalternity. This thesis embarks upon a journey along a less frequently traversed path in an attempt to address these deficiencies.

2.4. Traversing the Terrains of Public Theologies: Political, Liberation and Apologetic

Having identified that public theologies are grappling with definitional, subalternity and systematic deficiencies, it is also worth discussing the terrains of public theologies in order to analyse the nature of public in each of these terrains. In other words, this section aims to discuss the exposition of the public character of theology in each terrain, which in a way is to traverse the journey of public theologies. In contrast to Bell, Hewitt and Martinez’s comparison and differentiation of political, liberation and public theologies, Kim traces commonalities between political and liberation theologies in contrast to public theologies, privileging public theology over and against the other two, as that which takes a reforming rather than a revolutionary position, concerned with working towards a fair society for all.96 However, rather than emphasising the differences between these three theologies, this research focuses on their commonness and inter-rootedness. They co-exist and co-critique the dominants of their times, striving towards articulating a public theology. The research thus discusses them as political public theologies, liberation public theologies and apologetic public theologies.

2.4.1. Political Public Theologies:

Political public theologies comprise those early political theologies which were articulated in the post-second world war context or after Auschwitz, where the privatisation of religion was soon to be a reality in western Europe. After Schmitt, Metz and Moltmann are the two

most representative theologians of this group of public theologies, having provided theological reflections based upon their given political situation, and calling for the Christian faith to be both public and secularly relevant.

2.4.1.1. Public Theology as Political Theology in the Context of Privatisation of Religion:

Metz articulates a political theology critiquing the privatisation of faith, which results from the result of Enlightenment:

I understand political theology, first of all, to be a critical correction of present day theology in as much as this theology shows an extreme privatizing tendency (a tendency that is to centre upon the private person rather than “public”, “political” society). At the same time, I understand this political theology to be a positive attempt to formulate the eschatological message under the conditions of present day society.97

In critiquing the ‘private’, Metz uses the word ‘public’ and ‘political’ synonymously in contrast to the very idea of privatisation. At the time of writing, the ‘political’ was understood to be ‘public’ and took cognisance of the socio-political-economic-cultural-religious world.

Metz elaborates that Enlightenment ushered in a conflict between religion and society, and between faith and societal practice, rendering metaphysical appropriations of theology as transcendental and failing to solve these practical fights. Metz says,

It seems clear that the forms of transcendental, existential and personalist theology, currently predominant, have one thing in common, the trend to the private... At this point, therefore there seems to be need of a critical de-privatisation in the understandings of the foundations of the present-day theology. This de-privatisation of theology is the primary critical task of a political theology.98

This de-privatisation of theology opened up ways to reflect creatively the public relevance of theology, where political theology existed as proto or political public theology.

98 Ibid. p.509.
Metz further defines political theology as a practical, fundamental theology, with its central concepts being ‘primacy of praxis’ and ‘the subjects’.\(^9\) He considers it to be a ‘practical fundamental theology’, having nothing to do with the ‘neo-politicising’ of faith or a ‘neo-clericalising of politics’. This relates in a positive way to Enlightenment and contributed to the critical political discourse in the socio-public realm with the implications from the gospel.\(^1\) Metz was very outspoken in his criticism of the privatised and individualised projects of faith, and called instead for the practice of faith politically in the public. Elsewhere, he calls on the Church to be a critical liberating space and to seek out and identify political opinions from within in order to make itself more relevant and practical in society.\(^2\) In this way, Metz opened up the role of political theology to be one of an enterprise seeking the public relevance of Christian faith, thereby paving the way towards the public theology.

**2.4.1.2. Public Theology as Political Theology in the Context of Imperfect Modernity:**

Moltmann is another contemporary of Metz, a co-pioneer with him of political theology, and very vocal in his attempt to make Christian faith more political and social. He has been associated with the larger project of public theology, although he calls himself a political theologian, apprehending ‘politics’ in the Aristotelian sense of the word as ‘the inclusive horizon of the life of mankind’.\(^3\) This ‘inclusive horizon of life’ (which includes the creation) identifies Moltmann as a proto-public theologian, based on his concerns with making Christian faith publicly practicable to the society of his times.

For Moltmann, imperfect modernity is defined by the spiritual collapse of the bourgeois Christian world, the suppression of the Church under socialism, the Church’s struggle against fascism, the seemingly unstoppable ecological crisis, the exploitation and destruction of nature by industry, the persecution of Christians under Latin American

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\(^1\) Martínez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies*. p.55.


dictatorships, and the losing of belief both in God and in human self-confidence in the face of the abominations of Auschwitz and Hiroshima.\textsuperscript{103} For Moltmann it is thus the wider public world which has proved disturbing. In this context he looks for a mediating theology in the form of a political theology, able to address these needs and thereby establish the roots of a public theology.

The roots of public theology were strengthened when Moltmann located Christian theological reflections in the sites of public misery and the struggle to overcome them.\textsuperscript{104} He proposes liberation as a way out of this misery, and allows the theological language of the presence of God to run through these dimensions of misery:

In the vicious circle of poverty, it can be said, ‘God is not dead. He is bread’…. In the vicious circle of force, God’s presence is experienced as liberation for human dignity and responsibility. In the vicious circle of alienation his presence is perceived in the experience of human identity and recognition. In the vicious circle of the destruction of nature God is present in joy in existence and in peace between man and nature. In the vicious circle of meaninglessness and godforsakenness, finally he comes forward in the figure of the crucified Christ, who communicates courage to be.\textsuperscript{105}

This affirmation of the presence of God in and through the agency of the human in the public sphere forms the essence of public theology, as liberation demonstrated in praxis is the yearning for such a theology.

The centrality of the Cross event and the crucified Christ plays a major role in Moltmann’s theological pursuit. For him, both provide hope for the politics of liberation, which provides the driving force for Christians towards a critical political theology.\textsuperscript{106} In the suffering and condemned ones of this earth, present in the public of every society, the call for Christians is that Christ is waiting for his own people, for their role and their participation for liberation, which is the quintessential role of any public theology. Paeth discusses Moltmann’s hermeneutic on the public relevance of the Church in civil society through his

\textsuperscript{106} Moltmann, \textit{The Experiment of Hope}. p.118.
exposition of the ‘exodus church’, which explains the vocation of a Christian in the public sphere.¹⁰⁷

Moltmann further says that “political theology would like to try to interpret the dangerous memory of the messianic message of Christ within the conditions of contemporary society in order to free man practically from the coercions of this society and to prepare the way for the eschatological freedom of new man.”¹⁰⁸ He therefore locates political theology between Christian eschatological freedom and society, explaining that the struggle for the freedom of human towards a new humanity is the destiny of such a theology. Alluding to Moltmann, Paeth observes that interpreting the message of Christ in the contemporary public sphere with a destiny of transforming humanity, provided an opportunity to explore in a new theological language relevant for the public sphere, which paved way for the emergence of public theology.¹⁰⁹

This opening up of Christian faith for a public relevance was further elucidated by Moltmann, when he says “there is no Christian identity without public relevance, and no public relevance without theology’s Christian identity....as the theology of God’s kingdom, theology has to be public theology in the mode of public, critical and prophetic complaint to God – public, critical and prophetic hope in God.”¹¹⁰ Moltmann by seeking to strike a balance between Christian identity and public relevance, opened up a new vista for public theology, where it is a theological complaint to God, seeking hope in God, engaging theology in the public and for the public.

For Metz, the public character of theology is thus to overcome the privatisation of faith; for Moltmann its character is reflected by participating in the struggles of the crucified communities with a hope in a crucified Christ and strive for their liberation. This terrain of

¹⁰⁷ Scott R. Paeth, Exodus Church and Civil Society: Public Theology and Social Theory in the Work of Jürgen Moltmann (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008).
¹⁰⁸ Moltmann, The Experiment of Hope. p.103.
¹⁰⁹ Paeth, Exodus Church and Civil Society: Public Theology and Social Theory in the Work of Jürgen Moltmann. p.15
public theologies strove to seek the public relevance of theology in the post-war era, opening up new vistas of doing public theology.

2.4.2. Liberation Public Theologies:
Liberation public theologies are the next configuration of public theologies, which have emerged out of their peculiar and particular historical socio-economic-political contexts, with liberational theological roots and manifestations. Liberation theologies are the other set of public theologies which had their relevance out in the public, with the liberation of all people their pertinent theme. Carbine’s “Ekklesial Work: Towards Feminist Public Theology”\(^{111}\) and Cone’s “Looking Back, Going Forward: Black Theology as Public Theology”\(^{112}\) are examples of this genre of public theologies. However, here I choose Gutiérrez and Althaus-Reid as the two representative theologians of this genre of liberational public theology, as both were vociferous in calling for the liberation of the poor and the marginalised as the public expression of theology, church and Christian faith.

2.4.2.1. Public Theology as Liberation Theology in the Context of Historical Irruption of the Poor:
Gutiérrez’s liberation theology was born out of the local Latin American context of the poor and poverty which he carefully analysed and theologically reflected upon. In the context of capitalism and development, it is always the poor who are exploited and marginalised. A theology of liberation from the class system and capitalism as an expression of public discourse thus emerged out of the local Peruvian context.

Gutiérrez starts his theology by making an analysis of pastoral theology, and proposes a prophetic pastoral model which works for those outside of the Church. Salvation and grace is available to them. He says, “the Church’s mission is defined practically and theoretically, pastorally and theologically in relation to this revolutionary process (the process of


revolution, amid the violence which is present in different ways) that is, its mission is
defined more by the political context than by intra-ecclesiastical problems.”

Defining the public mission of the church in Latin American context by the political context of poverty and not by any dogmatic problems, was a welcome move of liberation theology, which provided a basis for the content of public theology. Theology for him is ‘second-act’,
whereas praxis is the core of liberation theology, setting practice in the public sphere pivotal, followed by a reflection of it.

For Gutiérrez, the biblical and theological notions of liberation are political, and serve as tools towards the liberation of the oppressed. He explains this by his reading of Exodus as a political story, where God provides liberation as part of a ‘new order’ and a ‘just society’ in the context of oppression and misery. Gutiérrez contends that biblical paradigms happen in a site of political activity relevant to the public space; spirituality and the re-reading of Scriptures from the perspective of the poor thus served for him as public acts with a public relevance, emphasising liberation hermeneutics. His crucial move is the adoption of the new perspective in reinterpreting the dogmas and themes of Christian faith from the viewpoint of the dispossessed. Liberation public theology for Gutiérrez means to re-read dogma and doctrines publicly from the perspective of the dispossessed. This requires the participation of oppressed communities, by exposing sin and injustice. It is also interesting to note that for Gutiérrez, the site of his theology is history, where liberation is present, as he says, “in this history, injustice and oppression, divisions and confrontation exist. But the hope of liberation is also present.” He thus articulates history as a public in which critical faith reflections of liberation should happen and be achieved.

For Gutiérrez, poor and the oppressed communities are the contributors to liberation theology, and not passive recipients. This is an important feature of his theology, which also affirms that the poor are not only the subjects of transformation but also of evangelisation, being called to be evangelisers as they are the historical subject bearers of

the Kingdom. For Gutiérrez, the three basic tenets of liberation theology are: the point of view of the poor, the theological task, and the proclamation of the kingdom of life. His central claim is that the preferential option for the poor is absolutely theocentric, and that this is a biblical and contextual necessity of his historical times. This understanding of oppressed communities as contributors to and makers of liberation theology provides a basis for Gutiérrez’s public theology from below. In other words, the poor and the oppressed communities are the contributors of doing public theology in the public sphere.

Thus, for Gutiérrez, it was the liberation of the poor and the oppressed communities in the public sphere which serves as the destiny and aim of doing theology. Such an understanding provides a ground for articulating a public theology, relevant for our times.

2.4.2.2. Public Theology as Unfitting Theologies in the Context of Neo-colonialism & Patriarchy:

In the context of economic and sexual exclusion, Althaus-Reid proposes an ‘indecent theology’ as an extension of liberation theology. She refers to these both as ‘unfitting theologies’117 which in turn are an expression of public theology. According to her, neo-colonialism and patriarchy have been instrumental in expounding theologies of centres, which up to now have been dictated by western andro-centric and hierarchical patterns. In her critique of liberation theology, she insists that ‘the poor’ cannot be stereotyped, but rather, must include, among others, the urban poor, women, transvestites and members of the gay community, sitting around the Lord’s table.118 Althaus-Reid brings issues of sexuality and power into her reflections on liberation theology, as key public issues seeking public theological engagement.


In “In the Centre there are no fragments: Reflections on Unfitting Theologies,”\textsuperscript{119} Althaus-Reid provides an exposition of an unacknowledged, forgotten and neglected people and their faith expressions from the margins, as those who are ‘speaking back to the empire.’\textsuperscript{120} She calls for a search for a theology of fragments, which are on the margins of the public, because they have been speaking truth back to the powers that make up the empire of neo-colonialism and patriarchy. This ‘speaking back to empire’ forms an important hermeneutical method of doing public theology.

The ‘indecent theologies’ and ‘unfitting theologies’ are the theologies of fragments, speaking the language of the margins and not succumbing to pressures emanating from either the popular or the power-centred theologies. She calls “to rescue the women’s fragmentary theology as one way of reclaiming a subversive identity which could sustain a very different kind of theology, a theology which would probably be irreconcilable with official theology.”\textsuperscript{121} She recognises that women’s fragmentary experiences need to be considered as part of the public, having been so long neglected, distorted and even forgotten.

Althaus-Reid has been highly critical in her appraisal of the church public, stating that the church has conveniently side-lined and even excluded gender and the struggles of women. She therefore calls for a public ecclesiological re-definition of the Church public, explaining that:

Latin American women have found there (Egypt of the church in exile, the Christian Base Communities) that they can participate in a new definition of the church, and women and men’s ministry, in an everyday spirituality which requires the presence of the female face of God, and the femininity of the project of the Kingdom being restored. The coming of the God-who-is-society needs to become the God-who-is-feminine.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid. p.368.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid. p.372.
\textsuperscript{122} Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid, \textit{From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology} (London: SCM Press, 2004). p.29
Althaus-Reid therefore envisages a feminine project of the public and also for the understanding of theos, which is a challenge for public theology in being gender sensitive in defining the publics and theologies accordingly. By incorporating dissent into the stream of public theology, she explains that “the task of public theology is precisely strategic, by providing a space for the people who are integrities in dissent at the margins to engage a network of thinking and sharing experiences.” Public theology, according to her, needs to take into consideration the voices of dissent at the margins, as they have been considered ‘unfitting and indecent’ by the dominant communities.

Althaus-Reid thus criticises public theology, because of its exclusion of gendered perspectives and contents in its pursuit. Instead, she offers a hermeneutical lens from the perspective of the oppressed, paving the way towards an ‘unfitting’ public theology of oppressed communities, whose hermeneutic is ‘speaking truth to the empire.’

2.4.3. Apologetic Public Theologies:
Apologetic public theologies are the third set of terrains among public theologies, whose interest is to engage with some of the contemporary signs of their time, and in public theological explorations of the public sphere. If the first terrain of the characteristics of public theology was political and the second was liberational, the third set is apologetical. Kim’s Theology in the Public Sphere124 and Stackhouse’s Public Theology and Political Economy125 are part of this genre of public theologies. However, I have chosen Graham and Tracy as the two representative theologians who explore these kinds of public theologies, arguing them to be apologetic, defending faith over and against the social public issues of their day.

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123 Althaus Reid, “In the Centre There Are No Fragments: Reflections on Unfitting Theologies.” p.382
124 Kim, Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate.
2.4.3.1. Public Theology as Christian Apologetics in the Context of a Post-Secular Age:

Graham envisages the Church as a ‘public Church’ speaking the language of post-secularism in order to communicate the values of the gospel, relevant for the times. She discusses post-liberal and radical orthodoxy as streams of public theological articulations, benefiting public theological discourse by introducing the bilingual language of the Word and the world, and stating, “Public theology espouses middle axioms or strategies of bilingualism as attempts to embody a synthesis of Christian theology and broader political principles.”

Public theology therefore is accountable equally to the Church and the society, the sacred and the secular. A public theologian grounds themselves in that oscillating site and is committed to both those vertices. Public theology’s bilingualism marks its specialisation, as it explains its amphibious characteristic.

Graham states that public theology as Christian apologetics comes with novelty and with a greater relevance to the present-day Church and post-Church contexts. Her ‘apologetics of presence’ presents a re-reading of apologetics and recovers it from the evangelical wrappings that it has come to have. Reclaiming apologetics for Christendom and for secularism is a bold venture. Graham identifies three motifs of post-secular public theology. Firstly, it is concerned with the ‘the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare’ (Jeremiah 29:7). This explains the purpose of public theology. She identifies the second motif as ‘speaking truth to power’ which explains the hermeneutics of public theology. Thirdly, in the context of the Church, she speaks of ‘the secular vocation and formation of the laity.’ This explains the praxis of public theology as Christian apologetics. Her presentation of public theology for ‘non-persons’ is of great relevance for those publics who are on the margins. Although ‘the concept of ‘non-persons’ comes from a liberation theological context, Graham explains the implications of public theology to ‘non-persons’ and for the ‘godless and god-forsaken’, thereby establishing justice and advocacy as important public theological issues to be considered in these discourses.

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126 Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age*. p.100.
127 Ibid. p.213.
In furthering this discussion, Graham also expresses the importance of the excluded and powerless, and explains “a ‘preferential’ public theology placing itself in an explicitly partisan role, as an advocate, whose objective in seeking solidarity, is not to silence the voices of dissent but to hear the cry of the poor.”128 Her preferential options of those on the margins in the public in seeking solidarity with those marginal publics provides a locus for public theology today. She further says that “public theology’s objective must be to speak about God-in-the-world, to the world.”129

In her analysis of ‘voter apathy’ as an important public theological issue, Graham recognises that the commitment to social inclusion necessitates an ‘active citizenship’ where citizens participate in the democratic electoral process. In this pursuit, according to Graham, civil society emerges as a ‘third way politics’, representing an alternative to state and market, where issues of social exclusion are addressed. To be inclusive and comprehensive, public theology needs to move beyond the roles assigned to churches and civil society as cheap ‘service providers’ to the state, and begin to question the systemic structures of state and market.

In addressing ‘voter apathy’, a ‘dynamic infrastructure of active citizenship’ is a prerequisite, with public theology assuming a ‘functional and sacramental role’ in the context of public institutions. According to Graham:

public theology into the twenty-first century will embrace both the vision of a cohesive shared polity in which all participants are treated with equal regard, as well as the conviction that the very legitimacy of such governance rests on the authenticity of their claims of equity, inclusion and justice.130

Public theology is essentially a performative discipline, measured, for example, by its engagement with marginalisation. The specific problem of marginalisation becomes a particular interest, because it recognises the connection between modernisation processes and marginalisation, the paradox of wealth-creating processes originating in Manchester.

129 Ibid. p.399.
It links the local, national and global dimensions of living today. It invites public theology to be problematic-based and contextually-located, for it is in relation to that, that we now best develop critical theories.\textsuperscript{131}

Marginalisation therefore provides an important context of doing public theology, as it is from and of the margins that a public theology engages and emerges. In this process, theology is also liberated from the clutches of epistemologies of the privileged and powerful.

\textbf{2.4.3.2. Public Theology as Public Discourse in the Context of Individualistic Society:}

Tracy’s public theology is born out of a context of a highly pluralistic, powerful, diverse, capitalistic and somewhat individualistic society. He defines all theology as ‘public discourse’\textsuperscript{132} with any critical faith reflection needing to be relevant to and understood by the public, or otherwise being unintelligible and void of public meaning. Tracy’s focus is on theological formulations of Christianity which, while remaining faithful to scripture and tradition, can be made sense of by the contemporary mind and at the same time claim validity in the realm of public discourse. He places theology within culture as a particular form of public discourse and public meaning necessary for wider culture. Its particular form is not to be confused with privateness. Particularity and publicness are not opposed to each other. Beyond its function, theology is intrinsically public because it is always an affirmation of God. Theology is \textit{logos} on \textit{theos}.

Tracy distinguishes three distinct and related publics: academy, church and society, to which all theology needs to be accountable. The theologian is located in a complex situation where meeting the expectations of all three publics is essential. For Tracy, “the Church is always one public as addressee for the theologian and usually also an internalized public as an object of moral, religious and theological loyalty.”\textsuperscript{133} The other two publics are therefore

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{132} Tracy, \textit{The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism}. p.3.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid. p.25.
\end{flushleft}
spoken about in public discourse from the standpoint of the church public. This explains Tracy’s Christian apologetics, where the church public provides the hermeneutical key in interpreting the rest of the publics. Tracy defines theology as:

a generic name not for a single discipline but for three: fundamental, systematic and practical theologies. Each of these disciplines needs explicit criteria of adequacy. Each is concerned with all three publics. Each is irrevocably involved in claims to meaning and truth. Each is in fact, determined by a relentless drive to genuine publicness to and for all three publics.\(^{134}\)

Tracy is more particular in evolving a theological method by making theology an enterprise of public discourse. He therefore calls on theology to be accountable to all three publics, interpreting them as the ground for doing theology.

For Tracy, “Fundamental theology should seek to present arguments that all people, whether religious or not, can accept as reasonable. In this form of public discourse, theology appeals to experience, intelligence, rationality and the responsibility of humanity according to criteria, in principle, accepted by all, even if subject to refutation.”\(^{135}\) As a public discourse therefore, public theology needs to appeal to all publics, so that its effect is felt, and its meaning unfolded. This once again reinforces the amphibious nature of public theology.

In describing public theology, Tracy explains it as, “the effort across many denominations to formulate a theology that justifies its claim so as to make them publicly shareable and therefore relevant for the public realm”\(^{136}\), and emphasises that public theology is an ongoing enterprise rather than a finished product, although some specific formulations of it already exist. Martinez refers to Tracy’s public theology more as a methodological stance in doing theology than a concrete theology, such as political and liberation theology. Tracy’s aim is to conceive and develop an inner coherent theology capable of embracing the three theological steps: the fundamental, the systematic and the practical\(^{137}\) and calls

\(^{134}\) Ibid. p.31.
\(^{135}\) Ibid. p.57.
\(^{136}\) Ibid.
contemporary theology a revisionist model of critical correlation. Most of Tracy’s theological career has been grounded on a ‘transcendental-phenomenological’ mode, which for him provides the setting for a possibility of conversation in the form of public discourse. This grounding makes him an apologist, defending the public discourse based on transcendental reality in the public sphere.

Tracy thus explores public theology by, on the one hand, defending the Christian faith in the public sphere and, on the other hand, engaging in evolving a theological method. Public theology as logos on theos in the public sphere is how Tracy identifies his description in the context of American experiments.

2.4.4. Analysing the Terrains and Furthering the Discourse of Public Theology:
All three kinds of theologies outlined above (political, liberational and apologetical) have been engaging in articulating the public relevance of theology, each in their own times and spaces. Privatisation of faith, imperfect modernity, poverty, neo-colonialism, patriarchy, post-secularism, and an individualistic society have been issues of public interest on the table here, which each theologian identified as political, liberational and public theological issues and argued towards finding a public and secular relevance of theology for their own milieu. Such an identification and public theological response has inspired several theologies to follow and extend as they engaged with their own local issues of public interest. For example, political theologies on nationalism, Dalit theology as liberation theology and Asian public theology as apologetic theology, which I discuss in the next chapter, have all striven to bring out the public character and relevance of theology.

Firstly, therefore, all three terrains of public theology have been busy addressing the theological relevance of public issues, which can be construed as the demand of their times and to which they have been faithful and successful. In this way, they have consolidated the definitions and destinations of public theology, while at the same time encouraging the identification of theological relevance in all issues of public interest. This research considers

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this to have rendered public theology passive, as its proponents have tended to take up every issue of public interest and called any theological response to such issues “public theology”. This returns us to the notion of the ‘definitional deficiency’ of public theology, and that its dynamism can only be re-activated when its public character is articulated. This thesis therefore furthers the discourse of public theology by embarking upon the articulation of a theological account of public from a subaltern perspective, and brings out the public character of public theology from sites of subalternity.\textsuperscript{139}

Secondly, in discussion of public theologies, aside from liberation public theologies, the presence of colonial episteme has taken precedence and privilege. Most public theologies are either euro-centric or have emerged out of western academia. This brings us to the subalternity deficiency of public theologies. Is colonial episteme made obvious in defining public theology as seeking theological relevance on public issues? As issues of power are not theologised, there appears to be a link between the definitional and subalternity deficiency. Both political and apologetic public theologies have not recognised subalternity as a site and method of doing theology. In other words, power analyses and the contesting of demons in public have not been given their due place in these theologies. Fenton observed that Graham, who wrote extensively on the ‘gendered nature of practical theology’ has not pursued the same with public theology, the feminist agenda has not influenced her public theology.\textsuperscript{140} This is to say that colonial episteme is rampant in these theologies, rendering them de-subalternised. To some extent, liberation public theologies emerged as part of the post-colonial critique of dominant voices, embedded with power analyses and emerging as a result of a re-imagined theology from and with those on the margins. To further public theology as a theological discourse relevant to the twenty-first century therefore requires a public theology originating from the sites of subalternity, and with the role of contesting the power and privilege of the powers and principalities of the public. This thesis addresses that subalternity deficiency of public theologies, and works towards a subaltern public theology for India, willing to name itself as an ‘indecent and unfitting theology’ and a ‘deviant’ public theology.

\textsuperscript{139} This thesis defines public character as contours, tasks and scope, explained in Chapters 6 and 7.  
Thirdly, we analyse the location of each terrain in the enterprise of theology. While Metz locates his theology as ‘fundamental practical theology,’ Moltmann locates as a mediating theology between humanity and God, Gutiérrez locates in pastoral theology, Althaus-Reid extends liberation theology and locates it in practical theology, Graham locates in practical theology and Tracy in systematic theology. This leads us to discuss the systematic deficit of public theology, which is explicit in most of the public theologies except Tracy’s public theology. This again is related to the definitional deficit; because public theology has been defined as seeking theological relevance on public issues, it was easy to locate in practical and pastoral theologies. By identifying the definition of public theology as a theological account of public, it is driven more towards a systematic public theology. To further public theology as a relevant public discourse for our times, a systematic public theology is therefore the need of the hour. This thesis engages in a theological account of public from the sites of subalternity, and takes on the course of systematisation of public theology. However, it does not attempt a full treatment of a systematic public theology, due to its commitments to methodological priorities, which I explain in Chapter 8.

Martinez explains that “public theology finds its *locus* in a situation, especially but not only in the United States, of radical plurality and ambiguity, of radical crisis of modern reason and of the modern self in which the truth and the claims of the “others” must be heard and theologically assumed.”¹⁴¹ This results in a widening of the net of public theology. The scope of its *locus* is ever widening, as there is an affirmation of ambiguity and plurality of truths, reflected in the historical and theological trajectories from political to liberational to apologetic public theologies.

2.5. Conclusion:

In a context where the Indian public sphere is divided along the lines of caste, mapping and evaluating public theologies calls for a shift of public theologies from the centres to the margins, the sites of subalternity. Aguilar recognises¹⁴² that the global public face of

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Christianity has shifted from the centres of the west to the peripheries in Latin America, Asia and Africa, where Christian practice has been growing in the recent past. With this shift, he identifies that there is a need to re-invent and re-locate public theologies, with such an act becoming imperative not only because of the decline of Christian practice in the west but also ‘with the developments within a political, and therefore a public theology in the Third World.’ The relocation of public theologies from the centre to the periphery helps in rethinking the politico-theological categories and also the ‘centre-periphery axis’ of theologising in the global public.

According to Aguilar, the “relocation of centres and peripheries are not movements in which a linear co-distribution of landscapes are re-settled as in urban/suburban developments, but relocation of centres/peripheries relocates the process of theologising from centres to peripheries and vice versa.”\(^{143}\) Such a movement provides a theological rationale for the location of public theology in sites of subalternity, where theologising from the peripheries and margins of any local public sphere becomes localised and mandatory, from the perspectives of the subaltern. Aguilar observes:

> The act of theologising at the periphery suggests, by its mere act of location, that the act of doing theology is a political act that challenges the injustice and centrality of the state and develops, through a committed action with others, a symbolic meaning, a political meaning and a Kingdom meaning… Thus, the process of theologising starts at the periphery and returns to the peripheral location of the Kingdom of God as anti-poem, anti-market and anti-value.\(^{144}\)

The subaltern public theological locale is therefore constituted by such a digressed location of counter-hegemonic space defined by the Kingdom of God as opposed to the Kingdom of Rome in the New Testament context.

This chapter identified that public theologies have definitional, subaltern and systematic deficiencies in reflecting their public character. By de-locating public theology from the centres of power and domination and re-locating it in sites of subalternity, an in-breaking

\(^{143}\) Ibid. p.324.
\(^{144}\)Ibid. p. 331.
of subaltern public theology irrupts, as it addresses the three deficiencies emerging from the theological audit. Chapter 6 addresses the definitional and subalternity deficiencies by engaging in a subaltern theological account of public and by expounding ‘subaltern liturgy’ as an expression of anti-market, anti-empire and specifically as anti-caste. Having mapped the global public theologies, the next chapter presents a discussion of Indian public theologies.
Chapter 3
A Critical Recovery and Appraisal of Indian Public Theologies

3.1. Introduction:
As discussed in the previous chapter, a global theological mapping of public theologies has identified a definitional, subalternity and systematic deficiencies within public theologies. A main aim of this thesis is to define public theology in terms of its public character, rather than being limited to a definition in terms of theological relevance to public issues. To this end, a subaltern public theology for India aims to bring out that public character of theology from the sites of subalternity, engaging with a theological account of public. As this project is conducted within an Indian theological context, this chapter presents an exploration and critical appraisal of Indian public theologies. Its first objective is to account for Indian public theologies, which have emerged only recently and are thus still in their infancy. Secondly, such a critical appraisal aims to provide a theological context for the construction of a subaltern public theology for India. Thirdly, it provides an understanding of public theologies in India, addressing the question of whether they express the public character of theology or are engaged in seeking the theological relevance of public issues.

The chapter presents a critical appraisal of three important and yet divergent streams of public theologies in India. The first stream, presented through an analysis of Thomas’ contributions, is proto-public theology. The second stream, presented through an analysis of Nirmal’s contributions to Dalit theology, is Dalit liberation theology. The research classifies this stream as counter-public theology, as it constitutes a counter theology to all the dominant publics. The third stream, presented through an analysis of Wilfred, is Asian public theology. The research classifies this stream as pro-public theology, as it attempts to systematise the public theological and methodological considerations relevant for India. Proto-public theology and counter-public theology have been ‘recovered’ as public theologies, as they address the public issues of their times while seeking a theological relevance.
According to Abraham, “The term public theology may be new, but the concerns implied in it have been addressed in Asian/Indian theology for [a] long time.” In this chapter, proto-public theology, and Dalit theology as counter-public theology in India, address the concerns implied in public theology, and are thus explored in a hermeneutical way, whereas pro-public theology explains the methodological considerations of public theology. Abraham further notes that, “We construct theology as a public discourse; a privatized theology is a misnomer.” This chapter therefore explores the public theological discourse in India, recovering its definitions. Its aim is to enquire into the deficiencies of the public character of public theologies in India.

3.2. Proto-Public Theology in the Context of Socio-Political-Religious Issues in India:

Theologies in pre-independent India were busy interpreting the Christian faith in Indian categories like salvation as bhakti marga, engaging with Indian brahminical philosophies as a hermeneutical task of doing theology in India. The attempt was to find a new currency for theology in India which differed from western theologies in terms of its language and relevance. However, epistemologically, the then new kind of theologising in India, expressed in Indian philosophical categories, mirrored the same colonial episteme in doing theology. On the one hand it did not find its locale in the struggles of a people strangled by the forces of, among others, poverty, casteism and patriarchy, while on the other hand it clung to a theological language alien to the lives of these struggling communities, ‘disparaging indigenous knowledge and their bodies.’ Clarke observed that in the twentieth century Indian Christian theology responded to more specific historical contexts, and particularly involved the incorporation of the spirit of national independence leading to a theology of Indian renaissance.

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146 Ibid. p.18
147 Indian categories then were understood as Hindu religious categories. Salvation as a ‘way of devotion.’
148 YT Vinayaraj, Dalit Theology After Continental Philosophy (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). p.92
149 Sathianathan Clarke, Dalit and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). p.39
In post-independent India, Indian Christian theologies shifted towards theologising in the context of the public issues of their times. Thomas, Devanandan, Kappen and others pioneered this shift and attempted to interpret Christian faith in the context of their realities. This study engages in excavating the public theology of Thomas as a form of proto-public theology for India in the context of socio-politico-religious movements. Clarke observes that:

M.M. Thomas’ theological contribution emerged from the dialectic and dynamic interrelation between salvation, which is based on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the continuing process of humanization, which finds expression in the religious and political movements in India.150

For Thomas, ‘public’ happens to be the locale of religious and political movements in India, where ecumenism, religious pluralism and Indian polity are the ‘publics’ which served as parameters for doing public theology. At the same time, his theologising exhibits the amphibiousness of public theology by holding together in creative tension Christian faith and the political context of his times, interpreting society through the lens of the Christian gospel. Thomas locates God in Christ working for the reconciling of a world torn apart by social revolutions, political division and oppression of many kinds.151

When analysing the public of the ecumenical movement in India, Thomas lamented that it had reached stalemate, because, he said, “we have so far confined our attention in all inter-Church conversations only to the classical questions of Faith and Order, leaving out the Christian confessional approach to tribe, caste and culture as well as to vested economic interests and politics of social change.”152 Thomas was critiquing the privatisation of the ecumenical movement, or as Cochrane puts it, the ‘privatisation’ of oikos153. Thomas emphasises that oikoumene represents the whole inhabited world, and the orientation to human needs is the only way in which Christian ecumenism can give its true substance.154

In this context, Thomas proposes a theology of political engagement which will allow

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150 Ibid.
Christians to participate in the struggles of the people and a theology which will clarify the dialectical relation of faith and ideology in the light of Christ’s cross and resurrection.\footnote{155}{M.M. Thomas, “Jesus Christ Frees and Unites,” in *Towards a Theology of Contemporary Ecumenism* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1978). pp.313-314}

Thomas’ public theology can also be recovered by his theological interpretations of public issues, such as nationalism, communalism and democracy, which were of national importance in the post-independent times of India. When most Indian Christian leaders remained silent spectators to the suppression of civil liberties and the abrogation of the rule of law, with many surrendering their critical judgement and becoming apologists for autocratic rule during the state of emergency (1975-77) in India,\footnote{156}{M.M. Thomas, *Response to Tyranny* (New Delhi: Forum for Christian Concern for People’s Struggle, 1979). At the Nairobi Assembly of WCC (1975), there was difference of opinion among the Indian church leaders on the need to support or oppose Emergency and Thomas took a firm position on the prophetic task of the Church to resist the Emergency.} Thomas was one of the few who responded courageously to the tyranny. When justice fails, when democracy is at threat, when people are treated as objects of exploitation, Thomas calls a ‘spirituality for combat’ as an expression of his public Christian spirituality. This refers to a spirituality which would serve people in their struggle for a new society, contending with the spiritual sources of social structural evils.\footnote{157}{Thomas, *Religion and the Revolt of the Oppressed*. p.68} It is a spirituality formed in dialogue with other religions and ideologies, able to sustain people in their struggle for a new society, in the face of inhuman forces. It enhances the spiritual warfare against society’s principalities and powers. Christ-centred spirituality is a world-affirming one, as Christ’s death and resurrection signifies his victory over the powers of the empire. It has a double movement: of being called by God from conformity to the world, and of being sent by him to transform the world.\footnote{158}{M.M. Thomas, “The Pattern of Christian Spirituality,” *Religion and Society* 16, no. 2 (1969). p.64} In contrast to Kim’s observation on public theology’s difficulty in retaining Christian distinctiveness while being publicly relevant,\footnote{159}{Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate*. p.19,25} Thomas demonstrates that being Christo-centric in his theology and spirituality is the strength needed to be publicly relevant.

The other public issue with which Thomas theologically engages is religious pluralism. In attempting an ecumenical theology of pluralism, he explains that theology is not just an explication of our faith in Jesus Christ, but also attempts to address the privatisation of
Christian faith in the context of religious pluralism. For Thomas, it also involves putting that faith alongside other faiths, and alongside rationality and other human values, which we share with others, allowing the examination of each, including our faith, in the categories of the others. In this process, I understand that Thomas’ important contribution to public theology is best captured that we as Christians risk Christ for the sake of Christ in the public sphere. In his attempt to find the relevance of Christian faith in the context of religious pluralism, which was a public issue, Thomas’ public theology calls towards ‘risking Christ for Christ’s sake,’ so that in any given public sphere the grounding in Christian faith is not compromised but rather strengthened in that ‘risk.’ He states therefore that that as Christians we also hope to show that rationality, morality, community and other values require grounding in the faith-dimension, and to affirm our confession of the ultimacy of Christ as the judge and redeemer of human rationality, community and other penultimate values, as well as of the religiosity of humankind.¹⁶⁰ For Thomas, an ecumenical theology of religion cannot just be the product of inter-confessional dialogue on dogmatic orthodoxy. It can emerge only as a result of dialogue among Christians and churches involved in orthopraxis, that is, common involvement with adherents of all religions and secular ideologies in the people’s struggles for justice to realise full humanity.¹⁶¹

If ‘risking’ is the theological method that we gather from Thomas’ public theology, ‘humanisation’ is the theological content of that theology. To interpret salvation in a public theological language in the context of religious pluralism, Thomas introduces the idea of ‘humanisation.’ Despite the expression being deeply anthropocentric, this is the term he chooses to communicate the meaning of the historical direction and corporate dimension of salvation within the realms of pluralism of his times. Salvation, according to Thomas, is the realisation of “the ultimate meaning and fulfilment of human life revealed in the divine humanity of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.”¹⁶² This salvation has two directions: one is eschatological, the other is historical. According to Thomas, salvation is eschatological, but the historical responsibility within the eschatological framework cannot but include the

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p.118
task of the humanisation of the world in secular history. These two are not identical, but both share a deep nexus. Thomas says that salvation is the spiritual inwardness of true humanisation, and humanisation is inherent in the message of salvation. Humanisation is thus the outward expression of the inward message of salvation, because salvation transcends humanisation. Humanisation is centred in Christ; Thomas places Jesus Christ and the new humanity offered in Him as the source of true humanisation. The gospel in a pluralistic society, where the common search in the public is for the path of humanisation is, according to Thomas, the news of the New Man Jesus Christ. More specially, it is valid to present the new fellowship of mutual forgiveness created by the divine forgiveness in Christ and expressed in the Eucharist and the social koinonia of the church as the foretaste of true human community as the essential gospel. This koinonia-in-Christ can also be the potent source of inter-communal community in society outside the Church. In a context where the dehumanisation of a population is carried out in the name of, for example, caste, religion, gender and class, has been rampant, Thomas’ public theology of salvation as humanisation finds its fecundity at least three levels.

Firstly, it communicates the characteristic of amphibiousness of public theology. Thomas argues that the humanity of the crucified Jesus as a foretaste and criterion of being truly human would be a much better and more acceptable Christian contribution to the common inter-religious ideological search for a world community, because the movements of renaissance in most religions, and rethinking in secular ideologies, resulted from the impact of what we know of the life and death of the historical person of Jesus or of human values arising from it. Secondly, humanisation as a public work becomes the goal of public theology. Thomas proposes that it is the common historical responsibility of building a genuinely human community which brings peoples of all religions and cultures within the dialogical framework of pluralism. At the same time, it entails correcting inhumanities such as state totalitarianism, increasing the impoverishment and marginalisation of the majority

164 Ibid. p.10
165 Ibid.
167 Ibid. p.131.
of the population, the destruction of the ecological basis and mechanisation of human
death, because public theology contests the anti-public work of de-humanisation. Thirdly,
salvation as humanisation emerged out of the sites of a decolonial hermeneutic, disrupting
the doctrine of salvation from its ‘top-down’ approach and engaging towards a ‘bottom-
up’ understanding, from the sites of subalternity.

Thus, Thomas presents a new way of theologising in India, opening up ways towards proto-
public theology in the context of socio-politico-religious movements. From his works, public
theology can be encapsulated as ‘faith seeking relevance in the context of public issues.’

3.3. Dalit Theology as Counter-Public Theology in the Context of Dalit Issues in
India:
Fraser’s subaltern counter public spaces are alternative discursive spaces where
subordinate groups invent and circulate counter discourses, and where oppositional
interpretations of their identities, interests and needs are nurtured. Dalit theology first
appeared as a counter theological discourse in the early 1980s, from sites of subaltern
counter-public spaces, contesting the dominant publics of casteism. As Prabhakar
comments, “Dalit theology emerged as a counter-theological movement, seeking to
construct ‘an authentically Indian Liberation theology’ on behalf of Dalits,” being a
protest theology against the forces of marginalisation, domination and oppression carried
out in the name of caste.

Dalit theology as a counter-public theology establishes itself as an important milestone on
the map of Indian Christian theology. It has come a long way since March 1981 when Nirmal
attempted to construct a Dalit theology from his innovative address, “Towards a Shudra

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168 Ibid. p.129.
169 For further discussion on the critique of salvation theology of Christian missions in the context of Dalit
struggles, refer to Kothapalli Wilson, The Twice Alienated: Culture of Dalit Christians (Hyderabad: Booklinks
Cooperation, 1982).
170 Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing
171 M.E. Prabhakar, “The Search for a Dalit Theology,” in Indigenous People: Dalit Issues in Today’s
Theology.” Clarke observes “that this was a watershed event, in that it called upon Dalits to shun theological passivity and sociological camouflage in order to embrace the more demanding task of reclaiming the liberative ends of theology.” To further qualify Clarke’s observation, that address of Nirmal not only shook the Dalits from their passivity, but has created seismic shifts in the Indian Christian theological academy by protesting against, countering and contesting dominant brahminical theological endeavours.

The aim of this section is to recover Dalit theology as a counter-public theology from the writings of Nirmal. One task of this discussion is hermeneutical, namely, to interpret Dalit theology as a counter-public theology, as thus far Dalit theology, borrowing vocabulary from Squires, has either been “enclaved” within liberation theologies or has served as a “satellite” hub for contextual theology. One methodological clarification that should be mentioned here is the discussion between Storrar and Cochrane with regards to the consideration of protest theologies as public theologies, which settles whether Dalit theology be considered as public theology. Storrar, in discussing the publicness of public theologies, places theologies of anger and protest outside the ambit of public theologies; according to him they are ‘oppositional’ and do not meet to the civic, democratic spirit of publicness, as they are not yet aimed towards achieving an inclusive public sphere. Cochrane expresses his problems with distinction by discussing the questions of responsibility for and participation in the public sphere. He explains that both moments of public anger and public spirit belong intrinsically together, constituting different forms of public theology. Following from Cochrane’s discussions, Dalit theology emerges from a ‘constrained’ public sphere, against the dominant casteist publics, holds together public anger and the public spirit in its expositions claiming to be a counter-public theology in

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172 Aravind. P Nirmal, “Towards a Christian Dalit Theology,” in A Reader in Dalit Theology, ed. P. Aravind Nirmal (Madras: Gurukul, 1991). This was the revised version of his speech that was published. ‘Shudra’ is the name of the caste, who are at the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid of the caste system.

173 Clarke, Dalit and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India. p.45.


175 Ibid.


177 Cochrane, “Against the Grain: Responsible Public Theology in a Global Era.” p.62
India. It counters the dominant casteist academic, church and society publics, and strives towards a transformative society, annihilating caste.

Dalit theology, according to Nirmal, is from the Dalits and their sites of subalternity, and is done by the Dalits with their own theological resources. Nirmal explains that Dalit theology will be based on their Dalit experiences (‘contrast experience’ in the words of Per Frostin, defined against the privileged, dominant, normative experience of those in power)\(^{178}\), their own sufferings, their own aspirations and their own hopes. It will narrate the story of their pathos and their protest against the socio-economic injustices they have been subjected to throughout history. It will anticipate liberation which is meaningful to them. It will represent a radical discontinuity with the classical Indian Christian theology of the Brahminic tradition.\(^{179}\)

As a protest theology, Dalit theology rails against the dominant publics by theologising the Dalit experience of struggle for justice and by focusing on the liberation of all people in the public sphere.

Nirmal analyses the traditions and patterns of Indian Christian theology and calls for its extension, positing that it has not been relevant or adequate enough in meeting public issues. According to Nirmal, “What is amazing is the fact that Indian theologians ignored the reality of the Indian Church. While estimates vary, between 50% and 80% of all the Christians in India are of Scheduled Caste (a legal term for out casted communities, who are from the Dalit communities) origin.”\(^{180}\) He questions how Indian Christian theology can ignore the dreams of this community, and its aspirations for justice, thereby recognising an urgent need for a Dalit theology, which would speak from and to the context of marginalisation. This need emerged as part of a critique of classical Indian theology, which has been very brahminical,\(^{181}\) liberation theology, which has been Marxist in its analysis,

\(^{180}\) Ibid. p.215.
with no reference to caste analysis, and ecumenical theology in India which excludes Dalits in its representation. For Nirmal, the ultimate goal of Dalit theology is not a simple gaining of rights, reservations and privileges merely for Dalits but the realisation of the full humanness (or alternatively, full divinity), the ideal of the *imago dei*, that is, the image of God in us. With the realisation of full humanness as the goal of Dalit theology, it therefore yearns for an inclusive public sphere, exhibiting public spirit by being and becoming a liberational public theology striving towards full humanness in a community.

In his quest for creating an inclusive public sphere, Storrar alluding to Young’s feminist account of the public sphere, recognises theologies which are truly public in its communicative, participatory and pluralist sense, and identifies a key characteristic of public theologies, which is “they speak with this reflexive awareness that third parties could be listening.” Dalit theology as counter-public theology engages in political communicative forms and methods of expressing public anger through, among others, folk songs, laments and drumming, in the public sphere. Nirmal therefore argues that Dalit theology is a ‘people’s theology’, pointing to a shift in theologising from ‘propositions to people.’ Nirmal says:

> In the past we understood theological truths as a series of propositions which had to be logical, consistent, coherent and ‘systematic’. In liberation theologies, however, we moved away from the propositional character of classical theologies and became more concerned with people in their life-life with all its absurdity, illogicality, inconsistency, incoherence and unsystematicness.

The academic public then has been pre-occupied with philosophical Sanskritic propositions, and therefore Dalit theology as counter-public theology shifted its focus from philosophical propositions to peoples struggles, communicating ‘bare life’ of the subaltern Dalits. Such subversive communicative expressions are embedded with contested epistemology in the

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183 Ibid. p.73.
public sphere, locating Dalit theological counter-public theology in decolonial theological sites, speaking to be heard by all.

Referring to the historical Dalit consciousness as the hermeneutic tool\textsuperscript{187} and pathos as the epistemological key,\textsuperscript{188} Nirmal attempts to interpret the traditional doctrine of God in a Dalit theological way, locating the divine in a context of Dalit realities and identities, circulating oppositional epistemology in the public sphere. According to Nirmal, a non-Dalit deity cannot be the God of Dalits, so the God whom Jesus Christ revealed is a Dalit God. He is a servant God — a God who serves. Service of others has always been the privilege of Dalit communities. The astounding claim of a Christian Dalit theology, according to Nirmal, is that their God, the self-existent, the \textit{svayambhu}\textsuperscript{189} does not create others to carry out servile work but does that servile work themselves — he is a servant God. Servitude is innate in the God of Dalits. He is a waiter, \textit{dhobi} (washer man) and \textit{bhangi} (manual scavenger). To speak of a servant God therefore, is to recognise and identify God in Jesus as a truly Dalit deity.\textsuperscript{190} Dalit God is well represented in the servant-song of Isaiah as mentioned in his 53\textsuperscript{rd} chapter; Nirmal also says that by taking up traditionally impure jobs, Dalits have ‘participated in the servant-God’s ministries.’\textsuperscript{191} Nirmal locates the servitude of Dalits among the Godhead as the common denominator in drawing a Dalit God, presenting the very understanding of God in a counter-public theological way. Dalit God as a servant God, as a suffering God, is a counter-public theological imagery of the Dalit communities, for such an understanding of God relates to their struggles and perceives God from the ‘bottom-up’. The dominant public imagery of God has been pure, unpolluted, transcendent, and holy of holies, whereas God as servant and as Dalit is a counter-public theological exposition and relevant to the subaltern Dalit context.

If the participation of individuals in generating public opinion is an important factor in the Habermasian public sphere, their equal representation as ‘social belonging’ matters greatly.

\textsuperscript{188} Nirmal, “Doing Dalit Theology.” p. 141.
\textsuperscript{189} A Sanskrit term meaning ‘that is created by its own accord,’ or ‘self-manifested.’
\textsuperscript{190} Nirmal, “What Is Dalit Theology?” pp.81-83.
for Fraser’s counter-public.\textsuperscript{192} Who represents whom? In addressing the question of representation, Nirmal proposes the term ‘methodological exclusivism’ as an authentic expression conveying public anger and public sprit in Dalit theology. Over the years, Dalits and their experiences have been unrepresented (or misrepresented) and undocumented in the Indian theological realm. For Nirmal, Dalit theology must observe a methodological exclusivism in relation to other theologies. This does not imply community exclusivism – as a community, Dalits must be open to other communities and other peoples, while promoting every horizontal community relationship. A methodological exclusivism, however, is a different matter. Dalit theology is a counter-theology. The tendency of all dominant theological traditions is to accommodate, include, assimilate and finally conquer other theologies. If Dalit theology has to play the role of a counter-theology, then it must adopt an exclusivist stance and shut out the encroaching influences of the dominant theologies. Nirmal states that this methodological exclusivism is necessary for maintaining the distinctive identity of Dalit theology.\textsuperscript{193} Such a methodological exclusivism became inevitable as a result of, on the one hand, the potential misrepresentation of Dalit experiences by those who had never encountered the pain and pathos of the Dalit life experience, and because of the threat to Dalit theology of assimilation by dominant theologies in India on the other. As Bird observes:

This methodological approach has been prevalent among first generation Dalit theologians, including Bishop Azariah and Bishop Devasahayam. It is a methodology which essentially polarises Dalit theology from Indian Christian theology in order to construct a counter theological movement specifically related to the concerns of Dalits.\textsuperscript{194}

To articulate the pain and pathos of Dalits, methodological exclusivism was required as a liberative space for the community to articulate itself as a counter-voice to the public voices of hegemony. Methodological exclusivism does not in any way lead to theological exclusivism, but for Nirmal, it was a theological necessity in terms of making Dalits speak

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\item \textsuperscript{192} Nancy Fraser, \textit{Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World} (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010). p. 17.
\item \textsuperscript{194} Adrian Bird, “M.M. Thomas: Theological Signposts for the Emergence of Dalit Theology” (University of Edinburgh, 2008), https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/2594/Bird A thesis 08.pdf?sequence=2%0D. p.8. (18.12.16)
\end{itemize}
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out for their own concerns, and to counter the misrepresentation of them and their struggles.

Nirmal’s Dalit theology as a counter-public theology is thus a theology of hope directing Dalits to seek liberation through the God of the oppressed. It gave the Indian Church a new awareness of its own identity, challenging the dominant publics by affirming the excluded Dalit publics.

3.4. Pro-Public Theology in the Context of Asian Public Issues:

This section attempts to elucidate the contributions of Wilfred to Asian public theology. Public theology in India is a relatively new stream of theologising and is still in its infancy. While in its discussions of Thomas’ theology and Nirmal’s Dalit theology, this thesis presents interpretative forms of public theology, this section forms an exposition of public theology. Wilfred is one of the early contributors to Asian public theology, instrumental in shifting the locale of theology onto the public issues, recovering and uncovering new sites of doing theology in the twenty-first century. This discussion attempts to explore the contributions of Wilfred to Asian public theology. According to Wilfred, “public theology represents an unexplored dimension of Indian theology, and Asian theology at large”; he ventures into this unexplored zone, unpacking the characters and contours of public theology for India in particular and Asia in general.

In accordance with Marty’s understanding of public church surrounded by religiously diverse societies providing a multivalent site for doing theology, Wilfred begins his definition of public theology by placing world issues as his starting point. He states:

In the context of multi-religious and multicultural societies with fast transformation in the field of culture, economy, politics etc., theology needs to interrogate itself regarding its responsibilities to the larger world... Asian public theological reflection needs to be open-ended and should begin from the world.

In other words, the starting point of any public theology would be the ‘world’, and that would pave the way in keeping the foci of such a theology.

Wilfred further explains:

Asian Public Theology is one in which the accent will be stronger on the ‘public’ than on theology. The focus will be the issues and questions that affect the people and societies of Asia and which need to be addressed urgently. The theology envisaged here is not the kind that will confine itself within the Christian community, but one which will have an import for all the actors in public life. It does not mean that we impose a Christian theology on others, which, obviously, will be counterproductive. Rather Asian Public Theology will be one that will be inherently interreligious in nature.¹⁹⁸

The emphasis on the ‘public’ sets the tone in defining public theology, as such a theology transcends the purview of Christian community and theology, and takes into consideration the multi-faith context with sincerity and sensitivity towards each of the faiths present. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, this understanding of public theology comes with a ‘definitional deficit,’ seeking the ‘relevance’ of theology to public issues, rather than trying to define it as the public character of theology.

On another occasion, Wilfred explains public theology as:

... offering an open forum for all those who, inspired by their religious beliefs and convictions, wish to engage themselves for the liberation of the poor and the marginalized. For Christians, the vision of the Reign of God opens up a large horizon of public theology with immense possibility to dialogue and interact with all segments of the people on issues and questions that touch everyone- issues of human life and society, and issues of the world and nature. Public theology can discuss with others issues of liberation, ethics, and jointly envision alternatives and utopias for life-together in the future.¹⁹⁹

In the Christian endeavour of public theology, its heart lies on the one hand with issues of the world (particularly the liberation of the poor and marginalised), and on the other hand

encapsulates a vision of God’s reign on earth, where both these concerns have equal footing in this theological enterprise. These definitions of public theology again emphasise the relevance of theology to public issues; Wilfred engages with public theology within this framework.

To further elucidate this definition of the theological relevance of public issues in Asia, Wilfred enquires into the Asian public context which, according to him, provides a starting point in constructing a distinctive public theology. He finds four crucial public issues for consideration, which he identifies as objects of concern for Asian public theology. They are: the defence of freedom against various types of state despotism; the defence of the poor from the tyranny of the market; the creation of harmonious and non-exclusive communities; and the protection of the environment. For Wilfred, the socio-political, economic and religious context and the public issues of Asia which demands a public theological response.

Doing public theology in Asia, according to Wilfred, is very different from the west. He observes that the de-privatisation of faith, interdependence between faith and public life, and the contribution of faith to public spheres in the west have been defining moments in the formulations of its public theology. In Asia, he argues, in contrast to the west, Christianity has been unable to act prophetically in the public sphere, as neither the region’s faith nor her theology has had any impact on political life or on Asian economic policy. There has been an isolation of Christianity from the public life of society, and the theology it has developed over time has not prepared it for public intervention. This gap between faith and the public sphere thus necessitates an urgency in evolving a theological ethic for Asian theology, in being and becoming a public theology of our times.

Wilfred observes the widening gap between academy and public life, commenting that:

In spite of the innovative character of Asian theology, it is a fact that theological reflections have remained mostly internal to the Church and its pastoral needs. I am not saying that the concerns of the world and society are absent. But the point is

200 Wilfred, Asian Public Theology. pp. xii-xv.
201 Ibid. pp. xv-xvi.
that these are treated as realms or fields for the application of faith and theology. It has been more a theology in service of public life. The understanding of the nature of theology is basically the same, while the applications differ.\(^{202}\)

This is a valid comment, as most theological reflections have either remained within the theological academy or with the Church, and have not permeated into society as they should have. This theological introspection therefore calls for an exploration of a public theology for Asia, which would transcend the character of ‘in service of public life’ and engage in the realities of the world along with the world.

In developing a public theology for Asia, Wilfred observed that existing Asian theologies have insufficiently addressed the notion of relevance of public issues. According to him, mission theology in Asia has been an ‘extrapolation of traditional western theology according to Roman Catholic or Protestant traditions.’\(^{203}\) Mission theology in Asia has been deeply engrossed in western paradigms both in its content and method, and has been inadequate in meeting the challenges of public life from faith perspectives. Among others, expansion and conversion have been its theological catch words. Asia being the birthplace of most major and minor religions, a theology of religions was inevitable. However, most such theologies were predominantly engaged in seeking agreement and clarification on specific dogmas, doctrines and rituals of the different religions, and left unaddressed the real issues of public life.\(^{204}\) In acknowledging the role of liberation theology by promulgating political significance of faith in public life, Wilfred observes that liberation theology has remained limited, in that it has made a public impact only in the Christian countries of Asia, thereby pointing to an inadequacy in its public impact upon other Asian countries, both secular and religious.\(^{205}\)

In this context, Wilfred explains that:

> the Asian Public Theology we envisage is different from all these various forms of theologies. It addresses the public concerns and, in the process, constitutes itself as


\(^{203}\) Wilfred, Asian Public Theology. p. xviii.

\(^{204}\) Ibid.

\(^{205}\) Ibid.
interreligious. It is involved also in a transformative praxis with movements and ideologies committed to the public cause. In this way, Asian public theology ceases to be sectarian, and becomes inclusive. The addressees of Asian public theology are not Christians or Christian communities in the first place, but the larger public. It brings in new perspectives and stimuli for the engagement of all for the questions and causes that affect everyone.\textsuperscript{206}

Wilfred extends his definitions further, by making public life and a wider public the address and addressees of public theology in Asia, where again it is the theological relevance to public issues which defines his public theological locus. Wilfred proposes Asian public theology as an ‘organic’ theology, different from traditional theology, stating:

\[\ldots\] traditional theology explains the truths of faith for the Christian community and elucidates at the most their relevance for society. It tends to maintain the existing order of the society and the Church. On the other hand, Asian theology as organic public theology will be innovative, constantly in dialogue with the new questions and issues as they emerge in the continent. The pursuit of public theology calls for organic intellectuals and theologians who would give a transformative impetus.\textsuperscript{207}

Public theology in Asia, according to Wilfred, acknowledges the diversity and plurality of knowledge and aims to forge alliances in addressing public concerns. Despite his strenuous efforts in relocating public theology from the sites of western theologies to Asian public realities and issues, Wilfred’s definitions of public theology displayed that definitional deficiency of public theologies, limiting it to ‘seeking the relevance of theology on public issues’, in this case, Asian realities.

**3.4.1. Characteristics of Asian Public Theology**

Having discussed the definitions and developments of public theology, Wilfred attempts to present a more schematic public theology for Asia. He engages with the characteristics and methodological issues of public theology in Asia.

Wilfred redefines the public sphere in Asia by using the term ‘political society.’ In his discussions of civil society, de Tocqueville identifies ‘political society’ as another realm in

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid. p. xix.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid. p. xxii.
society, explaining it as a law of life which encapsulates the art of associations among people, contributing to the body politic. Gramsci later defined ‘state’ as the combination of political society and civil society. From this, Wilfred argues that

... in Asia, the public sphere is mostly occupied by the bourgeois and the rising middle-class. The poor and the marginalised groups of Asia are at a different level than being citizens of bourgeois society. Hence if Asian public theology were to deal only with public sphere, it may not touch upon the burning questions and issues affecting the poor of Asia. That is why it makes sense to speak of “political society” (political here stands for negotiation of power) in the case of India and other regions of the continent. Political society is where the poor and the subaltern grapple with their life-issues, waging struggles and protests, and thus exercise their agency. Asian Public Theology will respond to this situation rather than address the questions of public sphere.

Wilfred’s redefining of the public sphere in Asia in terms of political society represents a yearning to identify a real public, as it is among such political societies that counter-public spheres exist and the real-life issues of those on the margins are identified and addressed. Since the time of colonialization, civil societies in India have been occupied by the dominant groups of upper caste and upper class, leaving only a meagre or even no space for the subaltern to articulate their critical voice. Political society in Asia also contrasts the understanding of public spheres as coffee shops, salons and table societies as in Europe or even the bourgeois public sphere as presented by Habermas, for such western concepts would be too elitist and alien to the Asian socio-political milieu. The starting point for Asian public theology for Wilfred is the subalterns and therefore engaging in a public discourse for public transformation along with subalterns and for subalterns and by subalterns would become crucial in this journey.

The second characteristic of Asian public theology is its recognition of the non-dichotomous role of religion and public. In the context of western post-secularity, religion and society are viewed as dichotomous, explained by the paradigms of sacred and secular. Wilfred states that:

209 Wilfred, Asian Public Theology. p. xx
... the relationship of religion and society is viewed differently in the Asian continent. This means that religion and society are not connected in terms of sacred and profane, religious and secular. Rather, public life includes also a place for religion. Religion is also in the market place. Therefore, it is part of Public Theology to explain how religions relate among themselves in a harmonious way, so that peace and concord result. The inter-relationship of religions itself is a public issue in Asia.210

Wilfred’s presentation of religious life in Asia as an aspect of public life, and the inter-relationship of religions as a public issue, provides an opportunity in the pursuit of doing public theology in India. Religious fundamentalism and conflict in the name of religion are part of those public issues which need to be addressed inter-religiously by every public in Asia. In public theology, the inter-relationship of religions should passionately address human rights violations and other public issues without becoming entrenched in doctrinal divisions or dogma. Public theology in Asia re-imagines the cordial relationship between religion and society, seeking mutual enrichment in addressing issues of public life.

The third characteristic of Asian public theology is reaffirmed in the inseparability of ethics and theology in public theology. To address Asian realities, a dynamic ethic must be intertwined with theology. According to Wilfred:

In the midst of complex, contradictory and ambiguous realities and experiences, developing a moral and ethical outlook is a very challenging task, which once again underlines the importance of conversation and dialogue with other religious traditions and also movements at the grassroots level. In the present-day context, all the religions will need to rethink their traditional ethical approach and outlook, and shape through mutual sharing and exchange a new ethical vision for public life... To develop the ethical dimension of public theology means to take up issues of poverty, caste, migration etc., and to respond them critically, taking ‘life for all’ as the criteria of judgement.211

Public theology, according to Wilfred, is affirmed in the inseparability of ethics and theology, because only then are issues of public concern addressed with sufficient care and sensibility. A new ethic of inter-religiosity coupled with justice and liberation would be the

210 Ibid.
211 Ibid. p. xxi
new ethical vision for public life in Asia. Ethics in the west would deal with philosophical arguments on morality and goodness, whereas in Asia, ethics would deal primarily with the situational aspects of a given context. Public theology in Asia views ethics and theology as two sides of the same coin, coexisting in their content, method and direction.

Wilfred’s fourth characteristic of public theology in Asia is its inter-disciplinary character. He says:

Inter-disciplinarity is another important characteristic of the Asian public theology that we envisage. Since public theology begins from the concrete realities of life and directs itself to its transformation, it needs to study, analyse and interpret the situation and facts for which the assistance of other disciplines is indispensable. Thus, Asian public theology will be in dialogue and conversation with other disciplines studying Asian societies, its history, its dynamics; so also, it will be attentive to what critical studies have to say on the economic and political processes taking place in Asia, and the various struggles Asian societies are going through. All these facts, data, analyses and interpretation will be woven into a public theology, so that it could respond more adequately to the developing Asian situation.212

Asian public theology is called to be inter-disciplinary, making coalitions with science in bringing about transformation in society. Knowledge has been perceived as a network, and public theology affirms and reorients herself towards it, seeking fragments of truth in all faiths and in all disciplines. Asian public theology would contradict the old dictum that ‘theology is queen of all sciences’; theology no longer enjoys such authority, monopoly and monarchy, as a critical faith response in a public sphere seeks inter-disciplinarity. Such characteristics would sit well with the methodological understanding that public theology is amphibious in its nature.

The characteristics of Asian public theology as proposed by Wilfred explain the diversity of public theology as emerging from Asian realities. Nevertheless, this public theology he offers contains definitional deficit, as he engages in seeking relevance for theology in public issues of Asia. Wilfred makes a conscious effort to distinguish between public theology in Asia and that in the west; however, he does not sufficiently address decolonial epistemic

212 Ibid.
shift by articulating a public theology from the sites of subalternity. This then leads us to
discuss some of Wilfred’s methodological considerations, in order to further understand
his Asian public theology.

3.4.2. Asian Public Theology’s Methodological Considerations:
In doing public theology in Asia, there are several methodological considerations which
need to be taken into consideration; this section presents a few which fit our discussion.
Wilfred distinguishes public theology from other forms of theology, in order to clarify and
crystallise its definition.

Wilfred’s first methodological consideration is the distinction between the theology of
public life and public theology. He states that the theology of public life speaks about faith
motives and convictions for involving oneself as a believer in the affairs of the world –
politics, economy, culture, violence, war and peace etc. It is a discourse within the Church
about the world.\textsuperscript{213}

It could be said that Wilfred argues with Mathews’ \textit{A Theology of Public Life}\textsuperscript{214} and
concludes that although such a theology speaks about the affairs of the world, it remains
Church talk for the Church by the Church. For Wilfred:

\begin{quote}
in public theology, the concrete life-situation and the questions flowing from it are
taken seriously, and an effort is made to respond to them in faith – a faith that
understands itself in relation to others, and not as a private matter. It is a theology
strongly based on God’s creation and on the Reign of God which have no
boundaries. Besides, in public theology we try to create a discourse and language
that is understandable to others, and therefore can be shared with them. This new
language breaks forth when we hold aloft the truth of creation and the great vision
of the Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{215}
\end{quote}

In contrast to a theology of public life, the starting point of doing public theology is the
concrete life situation experienced in the world; only later comes the faith response to it.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{213} Wilfred, “On the Future of Asian Theology: Public Theologising .” p. 35}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{214} Charles Mathews, \textit{A Theology of Public Life} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{215} Wilfred, “On the Future of Asian Theology: Public Theologising .” p.36.}
\end{footnotes}
Public theology is also multi-lingual, in that it listens, speaks, understands and responds using a shared language with our neighbours. It is also amphibious, in that its language is understood both by faith communities and others. Wilfred also argues that the reason theological responses have not crossed over the realms of Church is partly because theology suffers from ‘clericalisation’, which is that theology has been taken over by the clergy. Public theology therefore needs to seek a ‘de-clericalisation’ of theology which can then be freed to see and identify the presence and action of God in society, the world and history.\(^{216}\) Graham echoes this when she calls for the ‘secular vocation and formation of laity’ as a motif of public theology in post-secular context.\(^{217}\)

The second methodological consideration that Wilfred identifies is the distinction between liberation theology and public theology. He states that:

Public theology is related but different from liberation theology. This latter theology broke the privatisation of religion and made its way to the public realm. The motivation for praxis of liberation came from Christian roots and the methodology and tools of analysis were by and large Marxian in character.\(^{218}\)

In no way does Wilfred discount the role and impact of liberation theology in the public realm, as this has been an extended political theology addressing the needs of society. He does however distinguish liberation theology from public theology, arguing:

Public theology incorporates the concerns of liberation theology, but its approach is much wider, and its premise lies in the kind of relationship of religion to common good. Some comrades may be sceptical of public theology and wonder whether it is an attempt to hijack liberation theology, and even a conspiracy of capitalism. The point we need to remember is that liberation is the goal to which God’s word is beckoning us. Moving towards that goal calls for a continuous rethinking of our analysis of the society and the tools we use to uncover oppression and bondage... Public theology will explore new methods to assess the nature of oppression with regard to specific issues and questions and seek a multipronged approach to overcome them.\(^{219}\)

\(^{216}\) Ibid.
\(^{217}\) Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age*. p.213.
\(^{219}\) Ibid.
Wilfred would recognise public theology as an extension of liberation theology or even acknowledge public theology as a post-liberation theology, which would employ a multipronged approach in addressing the labyrinth of oppressions in our world today. The political character of theology is not even slightly diluted in public theology, as the latter juxtaposes or even extends political, liberation and contextual theologies in its content and method.

Wilfred’s third methodological consideration is that public theology distinguishes itself from ‘Protestant neo-orthodoxy’ as proposed by Milbank, Stackhaus and others. Wilfred says:

Here we have a theology of Barthian inspiration, rather than a contextual theology bearing upon culture and society. This theology concerns itself with public life so as to make it conform to transcendental values, to the Kingdom of God, to God, who is “totally the other” and who challenges and judges the world. It rests on the assumption that instead of God’s Word coming in encounter with the world, it is the world which needs to conform to God’s Word.²²⁰

Although radical orthodoxy is not purely based on ‘Barthian inspiration’, it presents the Church as the ideal public sphere from which the other publics can learn. In contrast to this ideal, he explains public theology in Asia as:

a theology that focuses on questions and issues that are public in nature and touches everyone across borders. In the process, it frees itself from doctrinaire moorings that have no or little bearing on the shared life and history with others in a society or polity. Since public theology needs to be done differently depending on the concrete situation, it cannot but be contextual.²²¹

Public theology is therefore a contextual theology, particular in its nature and contradicting the universal appeal of any theological response.

The final methodological consideration which Wilfred observes is that whenever there is a discussion on ‘public’ in the Asian context, there is always a distinction made in its

²²⁰ Ibid. p.38.
²²¹ Ibid.
understanding: Every day experience shows that what the western cultural world would consider private is blatantly public for Asians, and the reverse is also true. The cultural determination explodes the conventional demarcation between the public and the private. Without going into details of cultural determination, we may say that religion in Asia is both public and private. In a certain sense it is private; in another sense it is public. It is the intermingling and criss-crossing of the two that is something uniquely Asian.\(^{222}\) One has to recognise the distinction between cultural determination in the west and that in Asia, and prudently distinguish the overlapping of public and private spheres.

These methodological considerations are important for Wilfred because he perceives public theology as seeking relevance vis-à-vis public issues or realities in an Asian context. He summarises that “to speak of public theology is to speak of the future of Christianity in Asia in multicultural and multi-religious societies in the larger horizon of the Kingdom of God.”\(^{223}\) Public theology in Asia is an unexplored theological project; any reflections on it would therefore extend any future Asian theological pursuits. Public theology in Asia emerges as an extension of political and liberation theologies, and in no way discounts their role and the impact they have made. Public spheres in Asia continue to evolve and present new challenges, creating urgency about crafting Asian public theological reflections in response to these public demands.

There cannot be one single, mono, public theology for Asia or India: here are located multiple local publics, evolving as their local contexts demand. The epistemological privilege awarded to subaltern communities as a starting point makes Asian public theologies relevant for our times and contexts. Wilfred’s method of doing public theology has been to expound various contemporary issues from a public theological positioning, thereby articulating a Christian public response. In order to make theology go public in India, public theology’s amphibious character and its multilingual character are still to be further unpacked in this Asian theological journey. The book *Theology to go Public* carries a photograph of Martin Luther King on its cover; Wilfred as its editor states that this is to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of King’s ‘I have dream’ speech, and in recognition

\(^{222}\) Ibid. p.48.
\(^{223}\) Ibid. p.54.
of King’s contributions as public theology. However, it communicates the ambivalence and mutuality of contexts and makes one wonder whether the editors could not have found an image of an Indian or Asian public theological figure for their cover page? Public theological engagement becomes a trans-contextual endeavour, as the public character of theology is mutually enriching and critical of each particular context. Wilfred’s public theology in Asia illustrates the definitional deficit of public theology by seeking a theological relevance to public issues rather than engaging with the public character of theology. His attempt to engage in relocating public theology has thus far been a western theological project in the Asian public realities. In that shift, however, he has not sufficiently located his argument in the theological sites of subalternity, thereby displaying a ‘subaltern deficit’ in his theology. Wilfred is one of the early proponents of discussing public theology in Asia and India in a systematic way, and began to address the ‘systematic deficit’ of public theology. Nevertheless, a critical systematic public theology for Asia remains a subject for further research.

3.5. A Critical Appraisal of Indian Public Theologies:
Mapping Indian public theologies has been an ardent task, and to map them as proto-public, counter-public and pro-public suggests a progression in their meeting the challenges of chronos, kairos and topos (historical time, appointed time and selective space) within the Indian theological terrain. This mapping thus provides a systematised approach to Indian public theologies, as so far in India, no such systematic theological endeavour has been carried out. By engaging in a Christian response to socio-religious-political contexts, Thomas questioned the ‘principalities and powers’ of their times and exhibited ‘a spirituality of combat’ as a political spiritual necessity. This kind of theologising has set the tone in doing public theology for India, for until then Indian Christian theology grappled with dogmas encountered within a more classical brahminical framework. Then the emergence of Dalit liberation theology in India as a counter-public theology, engages in an act of theologising in the context of pathos of the Dalit communities, which in itself was an expression of protest against the dominant public domains and discourses. Dalit theology as counter-public theology took Indian public theological discourse into a new realm, where the sites of Dalitness become the sites of doing public theology in India. This
kind of theology accentuated Indian public theology with liberation, justice and equality as their quest for destiny. Asian public theology as proposed by Wilfred consolidates on the mapping as the pro-public theology, exploring the ‘unexplored’ theological terrain in India. This kind of theology addressed the relevance of theology on public issues more explicitly than their former ones and voiced out the characteristics and methodological considerations of public theology today. From all these three theologies, public theology is predominantly perceived as seeking theological relevance on public issues, like democracy, religious pluralism and Dalit struggles. Therefore, a definitional deficit continues with the Indian public theologies, leaving its definition as public character of theology undeveloped.

All these three kinds of theologies are not without criticisms. MM Thomas though was pioneer in making Christian response to socio-political public contexts; the later Dalit theologians have criticized him for having not addressed the issue of caste, which was a dominant factor in the Indian public. Clarke comments:

For Thomas, who was a member of the dominant Syrian Christian (caste) community, to have missed this in some analytical (theological and anthropological) depth makes one wonder whether he deliberately undercuts particular human beings and their concrete debilitation in valorising the much more abstract notion of humanization.  

The indication here is that Thomas’ public theology contains a subaltern deficit, further elucidated when Clarke suggests that Thomas, by not critiquing the ‘western domination’ of knowledge/power of colonialism, has denied the empowerment of subjugated voices and their communities. On the other hand, Dietrich commenting on Thomas’s work on dialogue with religions and ideologies says:

I do not think that MM Thomas was a protagonist of “public theology.” He was a lay theologian who intervened forcefully in critical life situations like the Emergency. One of the reasons why I think he was closer to liberation theology and social analysis is his pre-occupation with social movements and with biblical theology...

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225 Ibid.p.435.
He was not preoccupied with ethics in the way some of the promoters of public theology are.\textsuperscript{226}

These criticisms explain Thomas’s theology for being and not being public enough to meet the expectations of public theology.

‘Methodological exclusivism’ as proposed by Nirmal has been critiqued by many, remarking that it may lead to ‘theological exclusivism.’ With regard to public theological positioning, and commenting on Dalit theology, Gnanapragasam says:

For example, a Dalit theology in the Indian context motivates the Christian public to interrogate the inhuman hierarchy of caste; but it does not embark, as a conscious theological endeavour, upon the responsibility of motivating the wider public, constituted by religious and non-religious others, to interrogate the reality of caste.\textsuperscript{227}

Dalit theological articulations have not motivated the wider public to embrace its relevance, and therefore have had to be restricted to the publics of the theological academy and the Church.

On questioning the centrality of public theology in India, Dietrich says:

It is not entirely clear to me how public theology came into the picture so centrally and how it is related to liberation theology. I am under the impression that a systematized onslaught against leftist positions has been built up over a long period of time and that public theology can be an important instrument to displace liberation theology. It can appear as a new vehicle of creating a more democratic and socially just, though culturally plural society. But it has to be scrutinised regarding its origins, its aims and objectives and the ways of getting there.”\textsuperscript{228}

She further comments that “It is interesting that neither capitalism nor socialism are appearing in the index of Felix Wilfred's book on public theology, \textit{Asian Public Theology}.”\textsuperscript{229}

At a time when Marxist ideologies are being attacked by capitalist proponents of


\textsuperscript{229} Ibid. p.120.
globalisation and Marxist methodologies are being questioned, Dietrich’s observations have some relevance in terms of the nature of public theology. These criticisms have emerged because public theology has been understood as seeking theological relevance to public issues; those such as caste, capitalism and socialism have been points of contestation, either for their inclusion or exclusion.

However, these criticisms are valid, as they are helpful in addressing the primary research question about the epistemological basis for constructing subaltern counter public theologies for India. A critical appraisal of Indian public theologies reveals several themes running through them, positing that public theologies are built on political, liberational and contextual theologies. Indian public theologies are amphibious, that is, holding in creative tension the language of the Word in the language of the world. ‘Salvation as humanisation’ is an example of that amphibious nature. Indian public theologies are ambiguous, in that there are different, diverse and multiple publics in the Indian public sphere. Interpreting ‘public’ is therefore a challenging task. The Asian public, with its issues of violence and multiple faiths, explains that ambiguous nature of a singular public. Indian public theologies are also amorphous: they are fluid, shaped according to public demand and the needs of the public cause. Within Asian public theology are located issues such as poverty, terrorism and exclusion, which are defined by each contextual public concern.

3.6. Conclusion:

According to Wilfred, “public theology represents an unexplored dimension of Indian theology, and Asian theology at large.”\(^{230}\) This chapter attempted to provide a critical analysis of Indian public theologies and a sufficient theological context for the construction of a subaltern public theology for India, yet another unexplored theological dimension of Indian theology. The discussion on Indian public theologies is an attempt to explore that unexplored dimension, and provides a systematic analysis, mapping the three streams of public theologies in India. We understand from these theologies that public theology in India is perceived as seeking theological relevance to public issues and has not ventured into the discussions of public character of public theology.

\(^{230}\) Wilfred, Theol. To Go Public. p.xi
One must realise that proto-public theology in India as addressed by Thomas, and Dalit theology as proposed by Nirmal, were ‘undeclared’ public theologies, and therefore had to be recovered and presented as public theologies. Wilfred made a first attempt to engage public theology in India in a more systematic manner that is through his utilising the discussion of Asian public theology. The theological relevance to socio-economic-political publics, to subaltern publics and to Asian publics has been dealt with within this chapter, as proto-public, counter-public and pro-public theologies form a spectrum of diversified theologies, with contemporariness to their own contexts. Indian public theologies still have several unexplored avenues, one being a subaltern public theological discourse for India. This thesis therefore attempts to construct a public character of theology from theological sites of subalternity. This leads us to the discussion in the following chapter of the most likely theological companions for a subaltern public theology.
Part Two: Theological Companions

Part two discusses ‘theological subalternity’ and ‘subaltern public’ as the theological companions of subaltern public theology for India in Chapters 4 and 5. This part addresses the second research question of problematising ‘public’ from the perspective of subalterns.
Chapter 4
Can the Subalterns Speak? A Critical Indian Theological Hearing of Subalternity

4.1. Introduction:
Part Two of this thesis is a discussion on the companions for subaltern public theology for India. According to Storrar, a clue to identify public theology’s companions for our time are social networks, movements for change and congregations that draw knowledge from the resilience of ordinary people, ‘whose names will not be known, yet their time has come.’ Subalternity therefore constitutes as an important companion to public theology, for out of its epistemic sites, emerges an epistemology of resilience to the dominant episteme, and thereby a ‘deviant’ public theology emerges out of such a site for our times today.

Paul Rabinow in his quest towards a contemporary anthropology discusses the importance of companions for a critical practice of thought and research in his book *The Accompaniment: Assembling the Contemporary*. Rabinow explains ‘contemporary’ by bringing in a German word *zeitgenosen* and explains it as a combination of two words *zeit*, time + *gennosen*, companions, which according to him inelegantly and if correctly translated means, “those who accompany us in time.” Thus, Rabinow explains, “to accompany in time depends because, “to accompany” is a transitive verb, on where you are, where you are seeking to go, and with whom you want to be accompanied.” In the quest for public theology for India, theological subalternity and subaltern public as a companion explains that it is accompanying public theology in time, explaining its contemporariness. Theological subalternity and subaltern public as companions to public theology for India explains firstly its subjective location, which is sites of subalternity, secondly its destiny of reclaiming a just and inclusive public sphere in subaltern public sphere, and thirdly as the critical reflective partners for public theology for India.

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233 Ibid, p. 3.
Rabinow further argues that, “the search for companions is itself both an end and a means for an ethical science.” 234 Theological subalternity and subaltern public as companions to public theology for India is an end and a means for an equal and just public sphere, where subaltern public is argued as a real public by the ethic of contesting the hegemonic powers.

This part ‘theological companions’ consists of two chapters. Chapter 4 discusses a reflection on an Indian theological hearing on subalternity; Chapter 5 discusses a subaltern understanding of public in India, as they constitute important companions for any public theological engagement. The objective of this part is to address the second research question, problematising ‘public’ from the perspective of subalternity.

This chapter is an invitation to hear to subalternity from a theological perspective. In the quest for making ‘theological subalternity’ a companion of public theology, this chapter intends to unfold and unpack various theological trajectories inherent in subalternity.

‘Subaltern’ is a term taken from military regimental vocabulary to refer to those of inferior rank. However, it was Gramsci, who grounded ‘subaltern’ in the socio-economic-theoretical milieu, using it to describe ‘subordinate social groups or classes with lower status.’ 235 His suggested definition emerged in the context of a fascist state, hegemony and classism, where the ruling class dominated and oppressed. According to Green, Gramsci has used the word ‘subaltern’ in at least three perspectives. Firstly, in its literal sense, where he used it to mean those inferior ranks in the military. Secondly, he uses it figuratively, where he recognises subordination of people in the Italian society. Thirdly, in a social sense of the Italian peasant history, where slaves, peasants, religious groups, women, different races and the proletariat are identified as subaltern social groups. 236 Gramsci in explaining the methodological criteria for studying the history of subaltern classes mentions at least six criteria, which are helpful for our study here. They are:

234 Ibid, p. 143
236 Ibid.
“1. The objective formation of the subaltern social groups, by the developments and transformations occurring in the sphere of economic production; their quantitative diffusion and their origins in pre-existing social groups, whose mentality, ideology and aims they conserve for a time; 2. Their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations, their attempts to influence the programmes of these formations in order to press claims of their own, and the consequences of these attempts in determining processes of decomposition, renovation or neo-formation; 3. The birth of new parties of the dominant groups, intended to conserve the assent of the subaltern groups and to maintain control over them; 4. The formations which the subaltern groups themselves produce, in order to press claims of a limited and partial character; 5. Those new formations which assert the autonomy of the subaltern groups, but within the old framework; 6. Those formations which assert the integral autonomy,...etc.”

This study engages in discussing the theology evolving out of Indian subalternity as a new formation asserting integral autonomy by contesting the hegemony of castesim and colonialism. Later, Spivak’s article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” has garnered enormous interest among enthusiastic socio-political-literary critics attempting to re-read and rewrite historiography ‘from below.’ She posited this question in the context of post-coloniality, challenging the dominating view and review of history from above, which have been deeply soaked in the colonial ink and prints.

‘Subaltern’ was popularised and disseminated internationally by the Subaltern Studies Collective (SSC) in the 1990s, since when it has continued to refer to the subordination of people in South Asia in terms of categories such as class, caste, gender and age. Mignolo observes:

When the category of subaltern moved from Gramsci’s Italy to Guha’s India, the criteria used to single out a certain kind of people changed from European class distinction to colonial Indian caste and racial classification. Class differential was not ignored, but the situation got complicated when class distinctions had to be adapted to account for caste differentials and the new racial classification

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engrained in the mind of British officers, merchants, missionaries and agents of the state.\textsuperscript{240}

‘Subaltern’ has thus been used much more broadly in the Indian and South Asian context, to refer to those who have been subordinated in all walks of life and by all forms of domination. The term has gained in currency and been widely used in the postcolonial contexts of Latin America, Asia and Africa by the ‘colonised’ communities.

However, Gnanapragasam in his critique on the Subaltern Studies Project observes that either by choice or by chance the socio-religious movements history of subaltern people did not find sufficient space in these studies, and therefore there is a need to locate subalternity within and among such discourses, and Christian theological endeavour in that pursuit would be a welcoming one. Ganaparagasam observes:

Of the 13 volumes that they have brought so far, they have dwelt predominantly upon insurgency or rebellion of tribes, hills-men, women, minorities, and of late of Dalits. Except two or three essays, all the other dwell upon the so-called ‘secular’ acts of resistance or rebellion. It leaves behind a whole stream of events/discourses known as ‘socio-religious movements’ which occurred in the history of the people of subalternity and made a very meaningful and liberative impact upon their personal as well as collective lives.\textsuperscript{241}

To address that critique of Gnanapragasam on SSC, this chapter provides an understanding of subalternity from Indian Christian theological perspective. Subalternity is at the heart of Indian Christian theology today, for no theological engagement in India can exclude this reality, and therefore subalternity serves as a challenging companion to public theology.

This chapter constitutes a theological enquiry to the query ‘Can the subaltern(s) speak?’ from an Indian subaltern theological positioning. It identifies a critical theological hearing of subalternity in reference to Indian Christian theology. The word ‘hearing’ has been used consciously for more than one reason. Firstly, in historical analysis subalterns have never been heard, and this chapter therefore attempts to recover their voice. Secondly, in


\textsuperscript{241} Gnanapragasam, Wings of Faith: Towards Public Theologies in India. p.161
subalternity, ‘hearing’ precedes ‘reading’, ‘voice’ precedes ‘text’, and ‘sound’ precedes ‘word’; to reiterate that subaltern principle, ‘hearing’ is used. Thirdly, ‘hearing’ here is used in the same manner as in judicial legal terms, where a fact is tried, and evidence presented to determine the issue; this chapter presents evidence to form a public theological ‘hearing’ of subalternity. The intention of the chapter is to ensure the subaltern is heard, unpacking several layers of subalternity, and unfolding them from a theological perspective.

To understand subalternity, this chapter presents two perspectives as proposed by two Indian Dalit theologians, who locate their theologies among and within the sites of subalternity. The first perspective is represented by Clarke, whose theological genre can be described in the category of ‘subaltern interpretations’, where subalternity is understood by investigating the hermeneutical discourses within it. The second perspective is represented by Vinayaraj, whose theological genre can be explained under the category of ‘subaltern intercessions’, where subalternity is understood by interrogating the epistemological underpinnings within it. The intersectionality between these two schools of perspectives is recognised in their theological methodology, with a common vision for justice and liberation to subalterns.

Subalternity is analysed as an aporetic theological method, as contested epistemology and as deconstructive hermeneutics, providing an understanding of subalternity, a core companion of subaltern public theology. The chapter aims to explain the meanings of theological subalternity within and among Indian theological enterprise. It provides a locale for envisioning and unfolding a subaltern public theology for India. This understanding of subalternity then provides a basis for Chapter 5’s problematising ‘public’ from the perspective of subalternity.

4.2. Re-interpreting Subalternity: Subaltern Religious Theological Hearing:
Clarke interprets theology, subalternity and liberation from contemporary perspectives. His theological engagement involves his research on *Dalits and Christianity: Subaltern Religions and Liberation Theology*,\(^{242}\) which creatively knits together subalternity and Dalit

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\(^{242}\) Clarke, *Dalit and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India.*
theology. His work makes a significant contribution, as it applies subaltern studies to theological and religious resources, where the agency of subalternity is re-visited and reinterpreted utilising religious symbolic characters like ‘drum.’ For Clarke, subalternity is a hermeneutical category significant for liberation theological enterprise, for he draws resources from subaltern religions and forges that creatively into the method of doing and listening theology in India. His theological methodology includes Dalit historiography, recognising the activity of doing theology from ‘below.’ He reinterprets subalternity by redefining and revising the categories of subalternity within the given theological locus. His interpolations of subaltern religious symbol ‘drum’ into the Christian theological settings, has profoundly funded the very act of doing theology, and paved way for the reconstruction of theology as an episteme of the local and the particular. Here is a ‘hearing’ on ‘subaltern interpretations’ for Clarke claims subalterns are a collective of interpreters with an interpretive posture.243 This section explains subalternity as a site of non-essentialised community, as a site of counter-symbolic factory and as a site of contradictory consciousness.

4.2.1. Subalternity as a Site of Non-Essentialised Community:
While agreeing with the definitions of SSC’s understanding of ‘subalterns’ as those in South Asia who have been subordinated in under the rubric of, among others, class, caste, gender or age, Clarke attempts to redefine subalternity, clarifying it in two important ways, as a ‘non-homogenised’ category and as communitarian consciousness, in his analysis of religion of the subalterns.

Firstly, Clarke opposes the homogenisation of subalterns, or the generalization of subalternity, which tries to club together all forms of oppressions. He affirms that each of the categories like class, caste, and gender have their own specific contexts and particularities; alluding Spivak, therefore, Clarke cautions against the essentialisation of multiple identities and categorising them as a ‘single underlying consciousness.’ In this process, he concentrates on the caste dimension of subalternity: subalterns for him are the

communities that are ‘cumulatively and comprehensively subordinated by the oppressive caste system.’

Clarke also proposes subalterns as post-Dalit and post-Adivasi communities, recognising various diversities among these communities. He also proposes subalterns as an anti-caste community that denounces and renounces any essentialist conception of human identities. This helps to look at subalternity as a ‘non-homogenised’ and ‘non-essentialised’ categories, where multiple identities are affirmed and any monolithisation of subalternity is deeply contested. Arguing with Clarke, this research posits that although looking at the particularities of each of the strand in the subaltern groups is a welcome move, but that there is an intersectionality and nexus of subordination according to a hegemony of categories such as class, caste and gender which should not be denied or side-lined. For instance, the subordination of caste forms a nexus with patriarchy and capitalism; casteism, patriarchy and capitalism thus share in their epistemology of contestation against domination, which needs to be taken into consideration in understanding subalternity.

Secondly, Clarke contends that subalternity is not always a single ‘negative consciousness,’ but recognises that there is a collective, communitarian consciousness among the subalterns, which is very crucial in actualizing their subjectivity: He says,

I propose that subaltern religion is an emerging symbolic order, which obstinately expresses the collective subjectivity of outcaste communities, and which purports to emanate at the locus of Divine-Human encounters, within the overall dynamics of subjection by and subordination to the mechanisms of the caste system.

As a communitarian consciousness, in the context of subaltern religions, subalternity is envisioned as a collective oppositional epistemology and theology, which is non-hierarchical and non-dogmatic, emerging out of their struggles for life. One must recognise to the fact that the struggles against the giant caste system are collective movements, evolving out of the subaltern people’s aspirations and hopes for justice, and therefore as

244 Clarke, *Dalit and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India*. p.7
246 Clarke, *Dalit and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India*. p.8.
people’s movement, subalternity churns out people’s consciousness and therefore it is always a collective consciousness.

4.2.2. Subalternity as a Site of Counter-Symbolic Factory:

Employing Dalit ethnography and historiography, Clarke interrogates with the history of religion of *Paraiyar* (a subaltern Dalit community in South India) and brings out their counter-symbolic perspectives for a conversation with theology, for mutual enrichment and criticism. In this forage, Clarke brings out some salient features of subaltern religion, which helps to recover the characteristics of subalternity.

Subaltern religions and their religious world-views have been considered by the dominant groups as irrational, un-redeeming and rudimentary. However, Clarke discovers that there is a rich symbolic capital in the subaltern religions, which serves as contestory sites, by which subaltern communities realign their own subjectivity. Subaltern religion serves as a ‘counter-symbolic factory’ for subalterns, where they reject the hegemonic symbols and their worldviews and construct their own religion, which symbolizes their resistance, hope and aspirations.247 His findings are substantiated by his analysis of the religion of *Paraiyars* surrounded around Goddess Ellaiyamman. In this process, their subaltern subjectivity is radically reconstructed, and subalternity is revived. Subalternity as a contestory site of symbols provides theology to locate its locale on such sites, for such symbols become heuristic and hermeneutical categories in doing theology.

In interpreting subaltern religion, Clarke chooses the rich subaltern symbol of the ‘drum’ and transposes this to situate it as a new theological locale in doing theology. In this process, he explains that the underlying ethos of subaltern culture is rooted in its ‘orality,’ for which the symbol of ‘drum’ becomes a key hermeneutical key in organising and interpreting ‘orality.’ Subaltern-based orality is expounded as sound-centred orientation, which interacts and resists the dominant expansive modes of literacy. Subalternity, in its orality therefore aligns itself to the modes of hearing from drum, in contrast to the

247 Ibid. p.126.
dominant world as symbolized by literacy with modes of seeing and reading. Clarke, referring to the importance of the sound of drumming, says:

"Sound can be said to have three properties that are linked with the ways in which the drum symbolizes subaltern-based orality: it unites communities by connecting 'interiority to interiority'; it situates human beings in context-dependent, present actuality, which is participatory; and it fosters collaborative and eclectic patterns of community behaviour."

Such subaltern-based orality symbolised by the ‘drum’ thus becomes a new site of theologising, where ‘hearing’ precedes ‘reading’ and provides a basis from which to move to other forms of media like music, art, poetry and dance, beyond the subsuming universality of written-ness.

The dominant-funded world of literacy has always conjured written word as the norm and yardstick, where by excluding the subaltern and their orality as subordinate and irrational. Whereas, the oral religions of subalterns have been open and flexible, sustaining communities through their oral stories, myths, dances and songs as their understanding of religious texts. It is in this context; Clarke observes that drum as a symbol of subaltern-based orality is critical and resistive of the dogma of the Christian Bible as the sole medium and manifestation of God. Drum as a counter-symbol serves as a mediation between the divine and the human, reminds that there is mediation ‘before, beyond and beside written Word’ for not all of God’s revelations are in the medium of writing. This is an insightful contribution of subalternity to theology, based on its orality, to look beyond ‘literacy’ as written words and to open up to ‘hearing’ diversity of sounds where voice of the divine is also present.

Indian Christian theology has always sided and theologised either on the ‘western’ notions of text as in the forms of ‘writing’ which is ‘biblicism’ or has always colluded with the Hindu philosophical concepts based on their religious texts of literacy. As Clarke observes, “Theology has been script-and text-centred in its discourse and thus is unable to contain

248 Ibid. p.150.
249 Ibid. p.163.
the mode of thought and reflection of Dalits that is oral in orientation.”\textsuperscript{250} Subaltern-based orality therefore provides a point of departure to theology to move beyond its cosy written texts, from its script-and text-centeredness towards non-textual and post-textual worlds, looking for the sounds as texts, as God’s presence transcends and transgresses written texts and textual worlds. In this sense, theology has to transfigure to become theo-orality, where the divine is understood and received in varied forms of orality, liberating God’s word from written-ness and the printed pages of a particular book. Theo-orality then would be sound-and orality-centred, locating the sounds of the divine among and within the sounds of cacophonic and polyphonic voices and noises of the mundane.

Within the subaltern world and subaltern-based orality, Clarke finds ‘drum’ to be an organising symbol that contests the standardisation of ‘written-ness’ and proposes it as an instrumental multi-media of orality. He also explains that ‘drum’ not only serves as an organizing symbol in subalternity but also functions as a ‘theological interpretant,’ which is a sign that interprets another sign of the certain respect. In this regard, Clarke says:

I suggest that the drum is a ‘well-constructed, archaeological deep, experiential interpretant of God [/the Divine]’ that forces Indian Christian theology to both comprehend and utilize the religious collective experience of subaltern communities in its effort to make theological reflection more inclusive and liberative.\textsuperscript{251}

As a symbol of the subaltern religion and world-view, ‘drum’ helps to affirm non-linguistic modes of theology/orality, and also helps to be open for multisensory forms of doing theology/orality. What is word for literacy, drum is for orality. ‘Drum’ as a theological interpretant is a subaltern offering to theology/orality, for as a symbol, it deconstructs the texts to become sounds and offers as a deconstructive hermeneutical tool in the art of theology/orality. Clarke contends that in the collective religious life of \textit{Paraiyar}, among whom he has researched subaltern religions; drum serves three important functions, which are appropriate for the Indian Christian theology/orality. He observes that drum serves as a medium of divine human communication; drum

\textsuperscript{250} Ibid. p.158.  
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid. p.159.
serves as linking the subalternity of communities in resisting evil forces and drum exemplifies and manages collective subaltern suffering.\(^{252}\) The subaltern is understood through their symbols of non-literacy and non-verbal modes of expressions, which are varied, diverse and multiple among their communities. Clarke concludes his subaltern theology by proposing Christ as Drum, which is complementary to Christ as \textit{logos}.\(^{253}\) Subalternity is thus understood as a site of counter-symbolic factory.

\subsection*{4.2.3. Subalternity as a Site of ‘Contradictory Consciousness’:
\textit{Alluding to Gramsci, Clarke interprets subalternity as those that are commonly bound by ‘contradictory consciousness,’ so that they can strike coalitions among various groups that have been collated within subalternity, striving towards liberation and freedom from hegemony and domination. According to Clarke:}}

Thus, the subaltern are the working classes that are connected together not by any ethnic or essentialist traits, but by their ‘good sense’, which seeks to escape the hegemonizing scheme of the elites in order to live in freedom and dignity. Dalits, Adivasis and other subordinated communities are bound together by a consciousness rather than an ethnicity.\(^{254}\)

The commonality binding every diverse group together in the collective of subalternity is their ‘contradictory consciousness’ to counter hegemony. He defines subalternity by invoking the Spivakian concept of ‘non-essentialist’ categories, as subalternity is not in its fixidity of any defined boundary. He reviews subalternity by imploring a ‘non-essentialist’, ‘non-ethnic’ identity, and contends that God’s ‘preferential’ cannot be privileged as though there is an ethnic boundary to contain it. He argues that the ‘dynamic of Jesus as mediated in Christic mystery’ deconstructed God’s covenant with people in the categories of ethnicity and opened up new relationality with people.

The next sub-sections explain subalternity as participation in countering hegemony and as a category of interpreters.

\begin{itemize}
\item \(^{252}\) Ibid. pp.164-169
\item \(^{253}\) Ibid. p.195
\item \(^{254}\) Clarke, “Subalters, Identity Politics and Christian Theology in India.” p.276
\end{itemize}
4.2.3.1. Participation in Countering Hegemony as a Theological Positioning in Subalternity:

Taking his cue from Gramsci, Clarke proposes to re-interrogate God’s preferential option to the subaltern by arguing that such an option is located in the process rather in substance. God’s covenanted with subalterns is aligned with those people who participate in ‘countering hegemony’ and ‘embracing their own freedom and dignity,’ and not those that claim preference by ethnicity or by any other essentialist categories. He contests that God is not on the side of Dalit and Adivasis because of their ethnicity, rather in ‘participatory knowing’ striving hard to struggle along with God for freedom. Therefore, subalternity is amplified and is characterised by participation in solidarity with God’s liberative work, which is recognising the knowledge of God in participatory knowing of God’s work, by which the alienated will take side of God. Such a theological positioning, Clarke argues:

Firstly, it saves communities from the politics of measuring their own worth before God in direct proposition to the weight of their suffering, as if the more one accumulates marginalization the more one is preferred by God. Secondly, it retains the inclusive character of God, and thirdly it proposes an understanding of God’s relationship with God’s people which is based on participation in God’s activity. Finally, it reiterates the principles of self-help and self-worth in the process of liberation.\(^{255}\)

In a way, Clarke contests essentialism of subalternity, proposes that in the participating of countering hegemony of the subalterns, and locates God’s presence in that co-struggle of God along with those struggling people.

4.2.3.2. Subaltern as a Category of Interpreters in Relation to Theology:

In the process of theologising in the context of subalternity, Clarke observes that one cannot disembody subalterns, and revives the notion of subalternity as a category of interpreters whose interpretations have been discounted, particularly in relation to theology. Referring to the SSC’s rationale of reviving subaltern historiography, Clarke recognises that the Collective explores the alternate perspectives in the historiography of

\(^{255}\) Ibid. pp.277-278
India, which has been dominated by either ‘colonialist elitism’ or ‘bourgeois nationalist elitism,’ by giving voices to the suppressed and discounted truth of the subalterns. He notices a similar trend in the history of theologising in India, where the dominant narratives have been on the one hand, ‘missionary-advocated’ and on the other hand, ‘nationalist-promoted’ theologies, missing out the subalterns, who have been the largest category of interpreters. Subaltern forms a collective hermeneutic in the enterprise of theology. Subaltern theology therefore is a counter perspective as presented by subaltern interpreters, a view from below, contesting all dominant perspectives.

Clarke also explores the understanding of Bible and its varied interpretations of the subalterns. He emphasises that on encountering post-colonialism, subalterntiy methodologically locates within the categories of local, domestic and particular, which serve as a basis of subalternity in excavating subaltern Biblical hermeneutics. He then unfolds the various understandings of Bible within subalternity, where Bible is understood as a native talisman, as a colonial fetish and as an alternative canon, for the subalterns understanding of text is beyond the written word, for which reason he mentioned the importance of eyes and ears of subalterns in relation to Bible. Clarke then proposes that Subaltern biblical hermeneutics include seeing Bible to recover universal human values, and also as a resource of subversive local expressions on subjugation and subordination. Bible for subalterns is read for ‘transformation’ and not for ‘understanding.’ It recognises multi-scriptural, multimodal and multimedia approaches to hermeneutics.

Clarke states that his interpretation of the term ‘subaltern’ has been profoundly funded by the theological concept of the reign of God as mediated through the Jesus as the Christ dynamic. He explains that the reign of God provides the basis for the subaltern’s hope for freedom, emphasising that Jesus renders reign of God as a kinship based on water rather than on blood, whereby he contends that it is not an essentialised identity of ethnicity which is the prerequisite for the reign of God, but a new life experience affirmed in baptism. Clarke explains this by rereading Jesus’ baptism and registers that at his baptism, Jesus repented of his male, Jewish supremacy and privilege, which were grounded realities of

256 Ibid. p.279.
257 Clarke, “Viewing The Bible Through The Eyes And Ears of Subalterns In India.”
identity in their society. Finally, Clarke explains that Jesus locates the dynamics of reign of God within the social, spiritual, political and economic realities of the excluded communities. He reaffirms the Lukan version of beatitudes, where Jesus says, ‘Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God’ and reasserts that the ‘reign of God’ finds fecundity for a subaltern theological model of community.

Thus, theological subalternity has been re-interpreted as non-essentialist, non-ethnic and non-homogenous categories and Clarke interprets subalternity theologically taking subalterns as an important theological hermeneutical category. Finding a funding in the counter-symbolic world of subaltern religions like ‘drum’ for theological articulations, Clarke provides a new theological interpretative clue by engaging in creative conversation between subaltern world-view and theological world-view. The relocation of theology to theo-orality is a substantive, subversive, subaltern turn in the very understanding of theology and opens up new vistas of seeking orality as an important dimension that theology needs to give heed to in the public sphere. Subalternity thus, becomes an important theological method, with a ‘contradictory consciousness’ epistemology and with theo-oral hermeneutics.

4.3. Re-imagining Subalternity: Post-Colonial Theological Hearing

Vinayaraj has been deeply engaged in interrogating Dalit liberation theology within postcolonial contexts, where subalternity continues to be one of his core ingredients, around which he weaves his theological discourse. His pivotal theological challenge is to re-imagine Dalit theology in the postcolonial context, where transcendentalist frameworks of western theological and philosophical foundations are contested, and a theology of immanence comes to the fore in strengthening the political becoming of Dalit bodies in contemporary contexts. Such a challenge re-imagines subalternity by re-interrogating its subjectivity and epistemology. Vinayaraj re-positions Ambedkar as a key political theological contributor in defining Dalit theology, a subaltern expression of doing theology. Vinayaraj’s emphasis is on epistemology, and for the purposes of our discussion his analysis

259 Luke 6:20
of subalternity can be classified into two streams. Subalternity is viewed firstly as a radical space of deconstructive embrace, and secondly as a site of radical theological location. Here is a ‘hearing’ of ‘subalternt intercessions’, as according to Vinayaraj, “in intercessions, theology, liturgy and politics will not remain the same, but interact, interrelate and interrogate ‘in-between’ and envisage new forms and formulations – of theory and praxis.”

4.3.1. Subalternity as a Radical Space of Deconstructive Embrace:

Indian liberation theologies have argued over their theological methodologies regarding the categories and criteria of exclusivism, inclusivism or pluralism. The logic of Indian caste system states that once a person is born inside or outside of their caste, they remain within that social location for life, unaffected by any other mobility. Vinayaraj critiques such methodologies, which have essentialised the social location of subalternity or marginality as fixed locations of identity and separation. He contests the episteme of caste which divides and rules communities into fixed locations of the centre margins. Alluding to Spivak, Vinayaraj argues that subalternity or marginality is to be re-understood as a radical space of ‘deconstructive embrace’, in which both the subaltern and the intellectual relocate themselves in a radical relationality of planetarity. Only then can theories of domination be dismantled, in this space which helps the subaltern to re-articulate their ‘othered-identitarian imaginations’ and to relocate the fixidity and rigidity imposed upon their identity, envisaging their difference and alterity, in the Church, academy and society.

For Vinayaraj, ‘subalterns’ refers to the marginalised, subordinated, subjugated, silenced, forgotten people of histories, and include the histories of Dalits, Tribals, Adivasis, minorities, women and other rejected people of Indian social history. It thus refers to the oppressed and their histories, which have been in an oppositional gaze to the dominant, hegemonic, power-centric people and histories. The subaltern category is also

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262 YT Vinayaraj, *Re-Visiting the Other-Discourses on Postmodern Theology* (Thiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samithi, 2010). p.56.
used to delineate the political, aesthetical and epistemological engagements of the marginalised in Indian social history. Vinayaraj further explains that:

Subaltern communities are today in the struggle of re-locating their social agency and space. They are in the theological engagement of re-presenting themselves as active social agents of democratic society. By re-drawing their subjectivity constructions and re-presentations of their social space as the ‘missiological other’, they are engaged in the process of reconstituting new communal practices of liberation and solidarity.\textsuperscript{263}

In a context where subaltern communities have been (mis)understood as communities lacking a representational character and have therefore always been represented in public spaces by the powerful; as those who lack liberational agency and which have therefore always been on the receiving end, as objects and targets of doing mission; and as those which have always experienced a forced subjectivity of subordination via the episteme of caste, Vinayaraj’s re-location, re-presentation, re-drawing and re-constituting of the condition of subalternity provides a theological account of it from Indian perspectives.

Subalternity as a radical space of deconstructive embrace is further understood from its location of contested epistemology. Subalternity is a contested knowledge system, where domination and hegemony are interrogated in both their institutional theory and practice. Within Indian history, subaltern discourses have opened up new epistemologies from below, explaining the struggles of subalterns against, among others, caste, class and patriarchy. It is important to realise that the richness of subaltern epistemologies lies in their fostering of their own subjectivity and resistance. As Vinayaraj says,

\begin{quote}
The discourses of resisting dominations are embodied in their memories, myths and even in their bodies. These embodied histories constitute their epistemologies through which they create counter imaginations and aesthetics of transformation.\textsuperscript{264}
\end{quote}

Subalternity therefore exists in creative forms such as histories, memories, myths, songs, dance, folklore, graffiti and liturgies, where counter imaginations and contested

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{263} Ibid. p.66. \\
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid. p.78.
\end{flushright}
epistemologies are de-enveloped. In agreeing with Dalit epistemology as contested epistemology, Vinayaraj affirms it as ‘politics of difference,’ which tries to create anti-caste discourses and practices. He explains that, “by engaging in new discourses and creating new languages, meaning systems and practices, Dalit epistemology envisages a dialogic-democratic social existence for all.” As a contested epistemology, Dalit epistemology arose out of the de-casteist traditions of Dalits, contesting the epistemological foundations of caste, brought to the fore their agency of ‘small voices’ and circulated their contested episteme in the form of ‘little histories.’ As a contested disposition therefore, and as an oppositional knowledge from below, subalternity creates new discourses of meta narratives of resistances, where their subjectivity and social spaces are re-imagined. Vinayaraj observes:

For Spivak, subalternity is ‘a rhetorical space,’ that cuts across any essentialist position or identitarian location in terms of caste, class, gender and geography. Subalternity is a space of marginality that denies the marginality of the margin and the centrality of centre. Spivak theorizes a non-essentialist, heterogeneous and contestatory location of subalternity/marginality that erupts at the centre. For Spivak, subalternity or marginality is not a fixed location that demands the validation from the centre; rather, it is a deconstructive space that upholds the ‘irreducible singularity’ and alterity of subaltern.

In the spirit of post-coloniality, Vinayaraj’s proposition of subalternity as non-essentialist identity with no fixed locations corresponds with Clarke’s understanding of subalternity as a site of non-essentialised community. Vinayaraj also extends the net of theological methodologies of exclusivism and colludes towards more inclusive methodologies in subaltern theological exercises.

Vinayaraj observes that sites of subalternity have been construed by the dominant castes as a space to dump knowledge from above. In other words, subalternity has been nullified and discounted, in an assumption that no ruptures of rational knowledge emerge out of them or from among them. The norm has been learning from above, or from the powerful, for whom ‘knowledge is power.’ It is in this context that Vinayaraj perceives subalternity as

266 Vinayaraj, Intercessions: Theology, Liturgy and Politics. p.9.
a radical pedagogy, which is in turn to learn from below – from the subalterns – from where fountains of episteme have sprung. Spivaks’s willingness to learn from the other – ‘my teacher is the subaltern’ – supports this. In order to escape the logic of ‘margin’ and ‘centre’, she chooses a different name for herself: that of ‘teacher.’ Spivak proposes the pedagogy of aesthetical education through which she reimagines herself as the teacher, and the educational programme as the training in imagination ‘to learn to listen to the voice of the other.’ In Spivak’s radical pedagogy, the subaltern is not an object of study; rather pedagogy is a discursive engagement by which education is reimagined as learning to learn from below267 and where asymmetrical power relations between subaltern and intellectual, and educator and educated are radically reconfigured.268 Subalternity as a radical pedagogy thus disrupts the traditional norms of learning from above, and is re-imagined to enable us to learn from below, from the sites of the subalternity: such spaces have long been un-encountered spaces containing contested epistemologies and where knowledge has always been brewing.

The chapter began with the invitational query ‘Can the subalterns speak?’, a question which has had a ripple effect, challenging the nuances of subalternity and subsequently their alterity. When Spivak posed a similar question using a singular ‘subaltern’, she critiqued two premises; firstly, the romanticisation of the ‘other’, and secondly, the essentialising of the subaltern, as both premises follow the colonial scripts of representationality.269 Vinayaraj observes that for Spivak therefore, the voice of the subaltern cannot be heard, because its language cannot be understood within the dominant discourse. For Spivak, when intellectuals claim that the subalterns speak, they assume only the possibility of ‘proxy’; the subaltern’s voice remains always an ‘aporia’, an impasse, a puzzle. It is in such an aporia that the possibility and impossibility, absence and presence, voice and voicelessness, essentialism and constructionism, coincide.270 Subalternity thus constitutes this ‘in-between-ness’, which is a ‘rhetorical space’ and a ‘decolonised space’,

269 Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” pp.290-291
270 Vinayaraj, Intercessions: Theology, Liturgy and Politics. p.57.
deconstructing representationality, essentialised identities, ‘epistemic violence’ and colonial imprints. For Spivak, if the subaltern speaks and is heard, then they cannot be a subaltern, as the speech of subalternity is an ‘echo’; impossible for any gaze and representation to comprehend without deconstruction.

Vinayaraj thus explains subalternity as a radical space of ‘deconstructive embrace’, where subalterns and the other alter their positions and relocate their selves, paving way for a pedagogy with a contested epistemology to emerge from below.

### 4.3.2. Subalternity as a Site of Radical Theological Location:

The emergence in India more than three decades ago of subaltern theologies such as Dalit, Tribal and Feminist theology, have gone some way to meet the aspirations of the subaltern communities. However, Vinayaraj questions whether these theologies are ‘ruptures’ or mere ‘repetitions’ of humanistic foundations based on western theological constructs. He proposes the need for an epistemic shift in subaltern theological discourses, where subalternity serves as the site of radical theological location.

Referring to Spivak’s relevance to theology, Vinayaraj identifies the need to shift towards subalternity as an important theological location, from Eurocentricism and other colonial locations. In theological locations such as Eurocentricism, subalterns (Dalits and women, for example) are considered as the ‘other’, where the ‘self’ is constructed based on the episteme of privilege. In contrast, it is here that subalternity is identified as a radical theological location, signifying a process of theologising where the question of othering is transgressed and transcended. It is here that the self is deconstructed and the other is revisited. Vinayaraj explains that Spivak affirms the subaltern as her teacher through which she is invited to reinvent herself. For Vinayaraj, it is this possibility of reinvention of the theologian which makes subalternity/marginality/planetarity a radical theological location, where a theologian learns to learn from below and makes the subaltern their teacher. Spivak constructs the concept of planetarity to counteract global capitalism and globalisation, as a ‘sheer space of alterity’, where the global is deconstructed. Throughout most theological enterprise there tends to be a practice of representing and speaking for
the other via by dominant theories of privilege in their epistemologies, languages and paradigms. Alluding to Spivak, Vinayaraj observes that a shift to subalternity as a radical theological location is an invitation not to represent anyone in the process of theologising but allowing the subaltern to speak for themself and to ‘learn to re-present oneself’ in dialogue with the subaltern. This is to ‘unlearn one’s privilege as loss’ and indicate the epistemic shift where self and other are radically rediscovered and reconfigured. The next section presents certain markers which aid understanding of subalternity as a site of radical theological location.

4.3.2.1. Shifting Theology towards Subaltern Political Thought:

Since its arrival on the subcontinent in 19th century, Christian theology in India has depended on the western philosophical notions of God. Vinayaraj criticises Dalit theology, with its anti-Eurocentric and anti-colonial methodologies, for following uncritically the epistemological foundations of Christian theology, and thus falling prey to modernist trappings. He suggests instead a shift in theology in general, and Dalit theology in particular, towards the subaltern political thought of Ambedkar. Vinayaraj argues that Ambedkar was incorporated into Indian Christian theology without attending to his epistemological differences and contestations. A shift towards the subaltern political thought of Ambedkar obliges Christian theology to take a postcolonial and subaltern epistemological turn rooting it in the materialist philosophical tradition of India, finding doctrinal fecundity in de-casteist epistemology. Vinayaraj says, “Engagement with Ambedkar’s (subaltern) political thought is a ‘crucifixion point’ for Christian Theology that necessitates new resurrections in the political programmes of the disenfranchised in the Indian context.” Such a shift of theology not only destabilises its philosophical foundations, but also reconfigures Christian theology in India based on subaltern episteme. I shall engage with Ambedkar in understanding the subaltern perspective of ‘pubic’ in Chapter 5.

271 Ibid. p.62
272 Ibid. p.46
4.3.2.2. Shifting theology towards Subaltern Episteme of ‘De-transcendentalized Sacred’:

God-talk in its traditional settings found its fecundity within the paradigms and parameters of transcendentality. God has always been understood as the transcendental other, and Dalit theology in the context of post-coloniality, with its turn towards materialistic episteme, shifts towards a ‘de-transcendentalised sacred’ epistemological position. With this shift, Dalit theology envisages an immanent God who is intrinsically connected to matter/flesh and to the materialist philosophy like Carvaka. In such a context Vinayaraj argues that the concept of transcendence of God is not totally rejected, but at the same time it is in no way an experience of the ‘beyond.’ In the context of post-coloniality, echoing Nirmal’s understanding of Dalitness as Christianness, for Vinayaraj God is a Dalit God and such a Dalit God is an enmattered God in which the becoming of the Dalit body is re-envisaged from within. Dalit God is an enwombed God out of whom the fluidity of life flows out. The dichotomy between transcendence and immanence is denied and tangled towards an open materialism and open immanence. In that immanent turn, alluding Agamben, Vinayaraj observes that a messianic God is a God who happens in the present unfulfilled promises and such a God is not a God with a future orientation. Vinayaraj states:

For Agamben, the cross of Jesus Christ becomes the fulcrum of theo-politics where we see a weak God who relinquishes sovereignty and power. It is a weak God who embodies the politics of the marginalized and the excluded. It is not an identifying God who comes from beyond and incarnate; rather, it is a God who ‘inter-carnates’ as the inherent potentiality to challenge the practice of exclusion within the political process of becoming.273

Such a shift towards immanentity in theology would help to understand a God who raptures from within the communities of subalterns to challenge domination and the hegemony of exclusion in society. This shift evolves a completely new language for God-talk, situating and locating the divine among and within the margins, that is, the subalterns.

273 Ibid. pp.142-143
4.3.2.3. Subalternity as Radical Theological Method:

At a time when contextual liberation theologies in India are grappling with theological methodologies of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism, Vinayaraj’s call for a shift towards subalternity as a radical theological method constitutes a criticism of those that are ‘speaking for the other’ or ‘representing the other,’ as he places his methodology as the ‘in-between-ness’ of exclusivism and inclusivism. Drawing on Spivak, he grounds subalternity as a theological method of ‘radical imagination,’ which comes with an ‘ethical responsibility.’ By ‘radical imagination,’ he means subalternity as a method where the speakability of the impossibly ‘unspeakable’ subalterns speak and does theology. As a method which takes ‘ethical responsibility,’ it ensures and exercises justice, equality and liberation for subalterns in society. According to Vinayaraj:

It is an apocalyptic space where the self, the other, the text, the community, the tradition unveil themselves and touch the infinite – the radical other. Therefore, Spivakian methodology invites theology, whether it is ‘universal,’ or ‘contextual’, to destabilize its ‘contextual autonomy’ and to respond to the ‘ethical responsibility’ to the justice to come, the messiah to come, the democracy to come. ‘Learning to learn from below’ becomes paradigmatic to theological methodology.274

In that radical imagination and ethical responsibility, subalternity as a theological method offers a point of kenosis, where all privileged theologies and theories radically revise themselves, providing a listening space for subaltern re-presentations, which are done through their own epistemologies and theologies.

4.3.2.4. Subalternity as a Eucharistic Point of Theological Hospitality:

The epistemic shift in the subaltern theological discourse is the reinvention of subalternity as a ‘space of radical hospitality’, as a ‘eucharistic point’, where kenosis and grace are mutually shared and received among all theologies. Subalternity provides a space for all theologies to be interrogated and to form a communion of theologies with ethical responsibilities. It is here that the so-called ‘indigenous/contextual theologies’ are invited to deconstruct their ‘contextualities’ and to reposition them in the pedagogies of learning to learn from below. Vinayaraj observes,

274 Ibid. p.63
It is here Spivakian feminism invokes theologies to be transformed methodologically into a deontological, decontextual, decolonised, displaced space of theological hospitality in order to find the kenotic point of exchange in their act of ethical responsibility to the radical-wholy Other – in the contemporary context of globalisation.  

Subalternity as a eucharistic point of theological hospitality provides all theologies with the opportunity to relook at themselves and to deconstruct the self, to revisit the other, to de-transcendentalise the sacred, and to lose their theological privilege.

**4.3.2.5. Subalternity ‘s quest to ‘De-Contextualize’ the Contextual Theologies:**

Contextual theologies have been constructed as the context demanded or evolved. In this process of theologising, they have assumed ‘context’ as a totalising factor and missed some of the other agents. Vinayaraj observes that such an assumption has essentialised ‘identity’ in fixed locations while failing to attend to the micro-power relations which are inherent in it and at the same time silencing the plural locations within the mega category of identity. Vinayaraj says: “These theologies of identity by locating the unified self at the centre, defined themselves as the ‘binary opposite’ and rejected the possibility of having a ‘third location’ for subalternity.”

Subalternity therefore deconstructs binary opposites, and envisages either an ‘in-between-ness’ or a space ‘beyond’ those categories. In this process, subaltern epistemology calls to ‘de-con-textualise’ the contextual theologies, and to deconstruct its contextuality, and seeks a platform to relocate them dialogically, and transactionally with theologies of domination to reject those practices within and without.

**4.3.2.6. De-construction as Subaltern Hermeneutical Method:**

Taking the lead from Derrida, Vinayaraj employs deconstruction as a subaltern hermeneutical method. Deconstruction is a political activity, where subalterns engage with the text in which they figure as, among others, invalid, marginal or untouchable, and tries

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275 Ibid. p.64
276 Vinayaraj, *Re-Visiting the Other-Discourses on Postmodern Theology*. p.79.
to interrogate those texts to recover their representationality. In this process, ‘counter subjectivity’ is regained. The Bible is an important text for the subalterns in which to articulate their aspirations and to critique the dominant paradigms. Dalits draw on other hermeneutical elements, such as inter-textuality, intra-textuality and extra-textuality, in deconstructing the ‘authority’ in the Bible, where the Bible contains the word of God, but is not in itself the Word. Dalit stories, biographies, lyrics, songs, dance, festivals, cultural symbols, and even their bodies constitute their texts.\footnote{Vinayaraj, Re-Imagining Dalit Theology: Postmodern Readings. pp.60-61.} The subalterns read the texts to read themselves; in this process, deconstructing helps them as an important hermeneutical clue. It is important to recognise that the ‘body’ of subalterns constitute an important hermeneutical tool in the design of subaltern theology. Vinayaraj contends that Dalit bodies have been perceived as sites of violence, violation and oppression and says,

Dalit body as a theological method invites Dalits to review the historical construction of the social institutions that are built into certain discourses in certain historical contexts and to reconstruct them with new strategies and symbols.\footnote{YT Vinayaraj, “Envisioning a Postmodern Method of Doing Dalit Theology,” in Dalit Theology in Twenty-First Century: Discordant Voices, Discerning Pathways, ed. Philip Vinod Clarke, Sathianathan, Manchala, Deenabandhu, Peacock (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010). p.100.}

In this case, the body as a hermeneutical tool helps to contest the episteme of caste and takes on Dalit bodies as the clue in reading and interpreting the texts.

### 4.3.2.7. Embodied Histories of Subalterns as Theological Context:

The challenge is to trace back the history of the formation of Dalit subjectivity, how it is being constructed, and how power is being played out in the construction of subjectivity. Relying on Massey’s understanding, Vinayaraj argues that Dalit theology is Dalit history, and in de-membering those narratives forms sites of doing theology. To substantiate this with Gramscian understanding, there needs to be coherence among ‘historical analysis’, ‘theory’ and ‘praxis’; that unitary coherence which according to Green as ‘philosophical praxis’ is therefore desired in subaltern historiography.\footnote{Marcus Green, “Gramsci Cannot Speak: Presentations and Interpretations of Gramsci’s Concept of Subaltern,” in Rethinking Gramsci, ed. Marcus Green (London: Routledge, 2011). pp.75-78} Vinayaraj, utilising Derridean terms, refers to Dalit theology as ‘hauntology’, as it is haunted by the memories of
rejection, oppression and the historical experiences of resistance. This notion of hauntology helps Dalit theology to go beyond its own fixed ‘ethos’ or ‘pathos’ which renders the Dalit body a ‘self-enclosed’ subjectivity or just a ‘thing’. The Dalit body in the theological methodology of post-coloniality becomes a political space of ‘plasticity’ where multiple ‘spectral practices’ of ‘touching each other, the touch of their breaking down, and into, each other’ happen. Hauntology envisages Dalit body as flesh that has the inherent possibility of becoming and belonging as if it touches the divine flesh.280

All these discussions help us to understand subalternity as a site of radical theological location. Reimagining subalternity in the context of post-coloniality as proposed by Vinayaraj has been a resourceful exercise in unfolding the trajectories of subalternity. This reading of subalternity has interwoven diverse epistemological, hermeneutical and methodological trajectories. It is a contemporary theological reading of subalternity, and thus poses several challenging insights into the subject. Vinayaraj and Clarke’s understanding of subalternity helps us as a to discern the theology of subalternity, relevant towards a discussion of subaltern public theology for India.

4.4. A Critical Theological Hearing of Subalternity:

Subalternity exists and is celebrated as, among others, ‘non-homogenous,’ ‘non-fixed,’ and as ‘contested knowledge’. Subalternity today finds its place as an inter-disciplinary, intersectional and interpretive category, as it involves those who have been historically side-lined, subordinated and downplayed. It includes a decolonised space, where the histories of subalterns are revisited from below, and it provides a theological space, where the objective of God and the hopes of subalterns are met in commonality. Subalternity as counter-hegemonic, as decolonial and as counter-cultural category continues to challenge dominant knowledge centres and powers.

The two schools of thought on theological hearings of subalternity (as provided earlier in the discussion as ‘reinterpreting subalternity’ and as ‘reimagining subalternity’) excavates in-depth resources on theological understandings of subalternity. Synthesising both these

280 Vinayaraj, Intercessions: Theology, Liturgy and Politics. pp.113-114.
schools, one can recognise an intersectionality of the theory, theology, and identity of subalternity, which is useful in our understanding of subalternity. Both schools explain subalternity in ‘non-essentialised’, ‘non-homogenised’ categories; both recognise subaltern epistemology as ‘contested epistemology’ or in ‘contradictory consciousness’, and both argue that subalterns occupy interpretive categories and incorporate their hermeneutics as ‘deconstructive’ and ‘detextuality.’ The theological analysis of subalternity can be explained using these three vertices of method, epistemology and hermeneutics; these provide direction, meaning and purpose, relevant for our discussion here. Drawing from the ‘hearings’ held so far, there follows an analysis of these three selected areas, relevant to the discussion towards a subaltern public theology for India.

4.4.1. Subalternity as an Aporetic Theological Method:
Subalternity is loaded with several categories and criteria with which it holds them all together. From both Clarke and Vinayaraj’s theological analysis of subalternity varied categories are brought forward, where some are common, and some are in contrast. Subalternity has under its roof ‘non-essential’, ‘non-homogenous’, ‘non-ethnic’ categories; ‘rhetoric’, ‘decolonial’ and ‘postcolonial’ spaces; self and other, theol-ogy and theolo-rality, hybridity, non-fixidity, symbolic world, drums, art, marginality, Dalits, Adivasis, subalterns etc. To contain all of these categories together either in agreement or disagreement is a huge task in the endeavour of unpacking subalternity. Subalternity therefore remains, in Spivakian terms, an aporia, an impasse and a puzzle, where its ‘in-between-ness’ contain all the varied categories. It can be best understood as an ‘aporetic theological method’, where the inconsistencies, when grouped together stay together, with their logical contradictions.

Aporia should not be confused with dilemma and paradoxes, but should be recognised a conglomeration of creative contradictions, and therefore subalternity ‘s aporetic nature provides the starting point in evolving a theological method. From the theological readings on subalternity in the previous sections, we notice that there are several binaries and opposites that have been held together in it. Subalternity seeks spirituality in materiality, subalternity offers a ‘detranscendentalized sacred’ inhabiting a ‘trans-immanence’
categories in the understanding of divine, subalternity as a site of ‘plasticity’ and ‘hybridity’, and subalternity holding together theology and theo- orality, all bring us to understand puzzlement of subalternity, inherent within it. When Clarke locates subaltern methodologies in ‘local, domestic and particular’ and when Vinayaraj articulates subaternity’s theological method as ‘radical imagination’, they are proposing a method that can hold together in creative tension all the binary categories as ‘in-between-ness,’ without losing any of their own characteristics. All these categories in subalternity can be best understood in the aporetic theological method.

In evolving this methodology, one might argue aporetic theological method as an oxymoron, for how can puzzle (aporia) and unpuzzle (for theology has been perceived as a means to solve the puzzle of God, about God) as two contradictory words stay together? Subalternity offers for a re-imagination of theology, where aporia qualifies theology, and theology finds its location in aporia. In other words when subalternity is analysed as aporetic theological method, it is striving for an inconsistency management plausibly systematizing theological meanings from a perspective of subaltern subjectivity. It is restoring subaltern theological consistency to inconsistent categories.

As a subaltern theological method, aporia expresses oppositional knowledge from below, culling out their inconsistencies together, and synthesising coherence in decolonial, detextual and deconstructive spaces. This theological method is the possible ‘third space’ that the subalternity is looking for in which to express this ‘in-between-ness’ or a space ‘beyond oppositional binaries.’ It is via this theological method of aporia that a subaltern space of theological hospitality finds its fecundity, for it is here both kenosis and charis seek to employ their mutual exchange.

4.4.2. Subalternity as Contested Epistemology:

The hegemonic domination of colonialist, modernist, imperialist, nationalist, capitalist, casteist, patriarchal elitisms and their production of knowledge systems have assumed to bring meanings as universal, objective and neutral perspectives. ‘Knowledge is power, and
power is knowledge’ best describes their vision and identity. Over and against these dominant systems emerges subaltern ‘criticality,’ ‘oppositional knowledge’, ‘knowledge from below’, ‘contested knowledge’ and ‘contradictory consciousness’, where the subaltern subjectivity is re-imagined and re-invoked. It is the episteme of privilege and power which has created a centre for the dominant and has pushed the subalterns into the margins. However, subalternity de-centers the centre and de-marginalises the margins, by creating new subaltern episteme which deconstructs the imposed marginalisation on the subalterns. Subalternity as contested epistemology is best captured in Spivakian terms as ‘learning to learn from below’, for there is a radical pedagogy to learn from below. The epistemology for such a pedagogy is again ‘radical imagination’ which transcends the western logic and reason, and paves way for knowledge production in creative forms such as histories, memories, myths, bodies, songs, dance, poetry, liturgies and art. Such subaltern knowledges come in ‘small voices’ and ‘little histories’ in new discourses of resistance and resilience, contesting the mega-narratives of objectivity. It also comes with an ‘ethical responsibility’, where the subalterns re-present themselves and collectively seeking for justice. Subaltern epistemology has always been ‘collective consciousness’ or ‘communitarian consciousness’, which is non-hierarchical and non-dogmatic, emerging out of the communitarian struggle for justice. Subaltern religions offer ‘counter symbolic factory’ where contested knowledges emerge from within their own religious and symbolic world-views.

Subalternity as contested epistemology is also understood in the episteme of orality. The oral religious traditions of subalterns deeply consist this episteme of orality, which has sustained the communities towards a ‘contradictory consciousness’ against hegemony and domination. The dominant-funded world of literacy made written word the yard stick for knowledge production, and in contestation against this ploy and plot of the dominant epistemology, emerged the epistemology of orality, where sound becomes pivotal in their construction of knowledge. Alphabetisation of the society has been a modernist construct, for writing solidified knowledge and meanings got limited in word and assumed power, and over the years that followed, the episteme of privilege went along with word, subordinating and subjugating orality.
In this process, sedimentation of word and dilution of orality took place, and subalternity contests such a move. Subalternity therefore revives the episteme of orality, for subaltern historiography seeks knowledge from oral traditions of subaltern communities. The ‘unspeakablility’ of the subalters is again a colonial imposition, and the episteme of orality provides courage for the subaltern to speak and be heard, for the subalters can speak. In order to transform and transfigure theo-logy to theo- orality, the subaltern episteme of orality becomes the point of departure, for there is a shift from logos to orality and such a turn would be radical and contestory for a theo- logical enterprise. Subalternity as a contested epistemology provides a ‘holistic knowledge.’ Edward Said’s remark on the Subaltern Studies Series is suggestive in this context:

In fact, as Guha shows, the subaltern alternative is an integrative knowledge, for all the gaps, the lapses, and ignorances of which it is so conscious. Its claim is that by being subaltern it can see the whole experience of Indian resistance to colonialism more fairly than the partial histories provided by a handful of dominant native leaders or colonial historians.281

Subalternity as contested epistemology is also recognised in its epistemic shift towards materiality. Subaltern episteme finds resourcefulness in all and sundry of all materials in the subaltern religious world. Materiality has been perceived by the dominant as unspiritual and irredeemable, and subaltern contested episteme subverts such a notion and makes spirituality out of materiality and relocates God and God-talks from the episteme of privilege into the episteme of people, and de-transcendentalises the divine.

4.4.3. Subalternity as Deconstructive Hermeneutics:
Deconstruction is a political activity for subalternity, where texts, self, and other are critically interrogated and recovered from the world of hegemony. Subalternity is a collective of interpreters who interpret history, theology, society, context, public issues etc. from below, for the subaltern-self as a non-essential category, becomes the hermeneutical key in deconstructing the dominant paradigms imposed on them. Subaltern counter-symbols like ‘drum’ serves as a hermeneutical key in understanding subalternity and

theology in the public sphere. For ‘drum’ as a theological interpretant deconstructs the coloniality of written texts and challenges the interpreters ‘to learn to hear the sounds from below’, or from ‘shrill small little voices’ which usually gets lost in the cacophonies of power and privilege. Bringing such subaltern symbols as ‘interpretants’ offers as deconstructive hermeneutical tool in the very art of theo-logy/theo-orality. Subaltern hermeneutics, which is based on ‘sound’ and ‘orality’ resists the dogmatic perception of Bible as a written text is the sole manifestation and medium of God. It subscribes to an understanding that God’s word is mediated as ‘before, beyond and beside written word of God.’ Time and again in the world of theological literacy it has always been insisted as, ‘for it is written...’ as an objective starting point for a hermeneutical journey, however subalternity would deconstruct such objectivity and look for subjectivity in orality and oracles of people and texts subscribing to the episteme of ‘for it is spoken.’ In this process of deconstruction, the hermeneutics of theology based on ‘script-text-centred-ness’ gets transformed to ‘sound-voice-orality-centred’ theo-orality. Subalternity strives for a theo-orality before theology, which is a ‘theology before the theology.’ Therefore, in subalternity, the hermeneutics of alphabetisation is deconstructed by recovering the hermeneutics of orality. In this act of deconstruction, ‘authority’ of texts is radically altered, and subaltern biographies, songs, poetry, dance, festivals, liturgies and even their bodies reconstitute their texts. On the other hand, for subalterns, the Bible is interpreted not for ‘understanding’ but for ‘transformation’ is a key in this deconstructive hermeneutical space. To excavate, ‘what is behind the text’ has been a luxury of eurocentric and colonial hermeneutics but finding transformative meanings from ‘what is in front of the text’ is where subaltern hermeneutics finds its location. Such hermeneutics provides subalterns to read the text and be read by the texts, so that their subjective self is deconstructed. Subalternity as a radical space for ‘deconstructive embrace’ is also relevant in these discussions, for ‘othered-identity imaginations’ are radically deconstructed envisaging their difference and alterity in the text, church, society and academy. In subalternity, the subaltern ‘body’ also constitute as a hermeneutical key in the process of deconstruction, for their ‘bodies’ are the sites where violence, violation and scars of oppression are imprinted. Therefore, the hermeneutic of ‘body’ provides a method to review the episteme of oppression that has prevailed in history and helps the subalterns to reconstitute their self with new symbols and meanings. Subalternity as ‘deconstructive hermeneutics’ is a space to rearticulate the subjected self,
it is a space to revisit the other, it is a space to reinterpret the text by deconstruction and
it is a space to rediscover the hermeneutics of transformation utilizing subaltern symbolic
interpretants.

4.5. Conclusion
The chapter began with an invitation, ‘Can the subalterns speak?’. When Spivak posed that
question with a singular ‘subaltern’, it was not merely rhetorical, but a question aimed at
seeking and excavating the potential in and among subalternity that had been until then
subjugated by colonial imprints, western prints and nationalist elitist reprints. For Spivak,
‘representation’ and ‘organisation’ are key to subalternity; once achieved, subalterns cease
to be subalterns. In her own words, “If subalterns can speak then, thank God, the subaltern
is not a subaltern anymore.” In enquiring further this question in a theological context
of India, two subaltern theological conduits have been presented here, as proposed by two
Indian theologians Clarke and Vinayaraj. These two conduits as ‘subaltern interpretations’
and ‘subaltern intercessions,’ have been analysed here with a view to unpack and unfold
subalternity in an Indian theological milieu, and in this process subalternity has been
excavated as method, epistemology and hermeneutics.

The critical theological ‘hearing’ of subalternity therefore provides facts, layers and
categories of subalternity, so that the evidence on subalternity is determined. Out of that
‘hearing’ emerge the three theological trajectories of subalternity. As aporetic theological
method, it is a site where theological inconsistencies are held together where its subjective
self-understanding of ‘in-between-ness’ is theorised and theologised. Subalternity as
contested epistemology becomes counter-hegemonic discourse, contesting the episteme
of privilege, power and domination. As deconstructive hermeneutics, subalternity
deconstructs texts with a ‘political difference’ arriving towards transformation rather than
understanding of the texts.

282 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present
In this process of theological enquiry on subalternity, theology is challenged on two counts. Firstly, ‘theos’ in theology is unsettled from ‘transcendental divine’ and is located towards ‘de-transcendentalized divine.’ Secondly, ‘logos’ in theology is condescended from its ‘text-centred-ness’ to ‘orality-centred-ness’, whereby theology is radically challenged to consider it as also as theo-orality. This radical reinterpretation of subalternity and the radical relocation of theology opens up new vistas and horizons, in the discussion towards a subaltern public theology, which is the aim and destination of this research. Such a theological subalternity from India, offers to be a companion to public theology, for so far, such a companion did not find a place on the western academic public theology. In the book A Companion to Public Theology\textsuperscript{283} we notice that Scripture, theology, political issues, social justice issues and civil societal issues have been acknowledged as companions of public theology, for most of the articles are based on such public issues. In contrast to that, ‘theological subalternity’ is offered as a companion to public theology for India. This chapter now serves as a lens in problematizing ‘public’ from subaltern perspective, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{283} Day and Kim, A Companion to Public Theol.
Chapter 5

5.1. Introduction:
This chapter offers ‘subaltern public’ as a companion to public theology for India. The aim of this chapter is to interrogate ‘public’ from subaltern perspectives, in a way trying to problematise ‘public’ from subaltern viewpoints and trying to bring out various issues involved in understanding ‘public.’ The objective of this chapter as in Freitag’s words is also to ‘provincialise the public’ recovering it from the cultural normative notions of the west and grafting it into the indigenous bases on Indian resources.284 The scheme of this chapter is that it begins with a discussion on genealogies and typologies of public sphere in India and then goes on to interrogate public sphere as articulated by Habermas, thereby bringing out various subaltern considerations in public sphere. Then there is a major section on engaging with Ambedkar’s understanding of public, for this section forms the fulcrum of subaltern perceptions of public. This is followed by a critical analysis of the interrogation and offer some understanding on subaltern public. This chapter addresses the second research question: how do we problematise ‘public’ from subaltern perspective. In the previous chapter, we have unpacked the theological trajectories of subalternity, and that gives an understanding of subalternity from Indian theological position.

Can the subalterns public-ise? is a question that comes to the fore in this discussion. By ‘public-ise’ I mean ‘making an act of public’ by the subalterns, who have been historically considered as non-beings and non-actors in the public sphere of India. Subaltern publicising, therefore, becomes an unusual act, an unconventional act, a subversive act and an aporic act, for subalterns historically and spatially have been considered as excluded publics and are now (ad)venturing to interrogate ‘public,’ which in a way is reclaiming that space by countering the dominant and exclusive publics. This chapter is a mere ‘interrogation’ of public and not aiming at bringing out constants and definitions of public by subalterns. By this engagement, discussions and concerns regarding public for subalterns are brought together to project the perceptions of subalterns on public

5.2. The Genealogies & Typologies of Public in India:
The ambiguity that is inherent in the term ‘public’ further gets complex when it has to find its origins and roots in India. Scott & Ingram, in their study on South Asian publics have classified that there are two methods of studying publics, which they call the typological method and genealogical method.\(^{285}\) They agree that both these methods take into cognizance the ‘North Atlantic’ notions of public as their points of departure, however bringing in a significant difference in their notions. It is difficult to trace the moments of ‘triumphant arrival’ of public into India from the colonial times, for there have been pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial vignettes that have been associated with public. Here are few conceptions on public that emerge out of tracing these two methods aforementioned.

5.2.1. Public as a Site of Multiple Intersectional Historical Meanings:
The concept of public has never possessed a monolithic meaning. In Latin, *publicus* mean ‘of or belonging to the people as a whole, common, universal.’\(^{286}\) Later *poplicus* became associated with *pubes*, which meant as those ‘adult men.’\(^{287}\) Scott & Ingram have pointed out that by the time *publicus* travelled to Anglo-Norman world in the 13\(^{th}\) century, it carried an array of meanings, which include, ‘open to general observation’; ‘in print’; ‘prominent, well-known’; ‘official, professional’; ‘carried out or made on behalf of the community by the government or state’; ‘the body politic’; ‘a writer’s readership’ or a performer’s audience.’\(^{288}\) Scott & Ingram finally conclude that by the time the concept of ‘the public’ travelled to India, it already was loaded with multiple meanings that it earned over the period of time and eventually public was more defined by what it was not. Public was pregnant with several meanings and it was hard to simply import it into the south Asian cultural contexts. The ‘oral traditions’ of pre-colonial times and pre-printing times were the main sources of gathering public information in India. Civil society mechanisms like press were influenced by this public. ‘Public debate’ was a common feature in the Indian society,

\(^{285}\) Scott and Ingram, “What Is a Public? Notes from South Asia.” Ibid. p.359
\(^{288}\) Scott and Ingram, “What Is a Public? Notes from South Asia.” p.361
where royals entertained such debates on literary and religious grounds. Public therefore had multiple forms and multiple contexts and offered to be a site of multiple intersectional meanings.

5.2.2. Translation as a Key Hermeneutic in Understanding Public Locally:

Situating such a loaded word like public into Indian grounds is not an easy task. Scott & Ingram presents, how public was translated into the vernacular languages of India, for it carries various multiple meanings. Tracing its genealogy, they identify that public in Indian English first appeared in 1820 when Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a social reformer of the 19th century wrote ‘Appeal to the Christian Public.’ In the 1850s, journalist Karsandas Mulji tried to translate ‘public spirit’ into Gujarati.289 Widespread difficulty in translating the word ‘public’ led to a series of transliterations, including ‘publik’  عوام in Urdu. In Hindi, the word public was used as sarkari (सरकारी) which was meant to be governmental, for State assumed the role of performing public welfare activities. In my language Telugu, there are variations in the usage of the word public. For public-meetings, the word used is bahiranga sabhalu (బహిరంగ సభలు), which is translated as ‘outside meetings.’ For public opinion, the word used is praja abhiprayam, (ప్రాభిప్యం) which is translated as ‘people’s opinion’. For public guest house, the word used is prabhutva athidi gruham, (ప్రభుత్వ అతిధి గృహం) which is translated as ‘government’s guest house’. For the famous ‘public gardens’ which is a historic site in the state capital Hyderabad was once a Nizam, a Muslim rulers territory and they called it Bhag-e-am (Urdu: باغ عام) which is later translated as ‘common peoples garden,’ or ‘people’s park.’ These examples show how even in the translations in the vernacular language, the word public could not be fixed. Piliavsky in discussing the understanding of ‘public’ in Rajastani (a north Indian state) language observes that ‘pablik’ in India is never used as an adjective and there is no vernacular word for ‘private’ to which ‘public’ is opposed to.290 Therefore, translation becomes a key

289 Ibid. p.360
hermeneutic in understanding public, for each context, each situation and each locality constructs their own meanings for public.

5.2.3. Public in India as ‘Emic’ rather than ‘Etic’: Scott & Ingram acknowledges that in order to adequately construct a South Asian typology of ‘public’ it is necessary to consider how publics are split and fractured according to caste, ethnicity, language, region, class, gender etc. Today there are various publics that exist within the public sphere of India, and which best can be explained as ‘publics within public’. In the colonial period there were ‘middle class’ publics, who form a major base in expressing public opinion, the ‘vernacular publics’ were busy with their language reforms, ‘caste publics’ and later ‘Dalit counter-public’, ‘religious publics’ and ‘market publics,’ all make ‘Indian public’ as the sum of all the varied publics within it. With all these mappings of publics in India, Scott & Ingram offers to important conclusions concerning the meaning of ‘public’: firstly, public is never an ‘empirical object’ and always a subjective reality and secondly, public is not an external imposition but a self-understanding and self-critique of the colonial and post-colonial India.291 Public in India is an ‘emic’ a subjective insiders account and interrogation and can never be an ‘etic’ which is an outsiders objective imposition.

5.2.4. Inviolability of Private Sphere & Homogenization of Public Sphere: In the light of growing religious fundamentalism in India today, minority religious communities like Christians have been branded as ‘anti-national’ and ‘anti-cultural’ because the beliefs of these people do not fit into the rhetoric of the dominant ideology of ‘Hindutva’s’ homogenisation project.292 The Indian public sphere is becoming more and more ‘intolerant’ against minorities, for it has to be recognised that ever since public sphere in India took its evolution during the colonial times, it has always been polarised. Ali in his article, ‘Evolution of Public Sphere in India’293 argues that the division of public and private

has had a deep impact on the evolution of public sphere in India, for the private has been left unattended, leaving it to the purview of religious affairs in contrast to state as public activity. He opines that the colonial powers which constituted the public had taken over the public in the name of ‘representative governance’ colliding with the native elites and in return leaving their religion to be their private affair. In this collision, the private sphere became inviolable making religion and all that relates to caste, endogamous marriage etc. are to be governed and controlled by the religious leaders.\textsuperscript{294} Even the nationalist movement, followed by post-independence movements further institutionalised this private sphere with illiberal and regressive tendencies leaving it less democratised and inaccessible to the most people.

In this process, the religious elites took over the private sphere and the political elites took over the public sphere, trying to make the public sphere monolithic and homogenous. ‘Ritual enactment’ replaced ‘public opinion’ in the public sphere and has led to the marginalization of the minorities in India. Ali says, “the inability of the public sphere to reflect a plurality of cultures has resulted in its inaccessibility for members of minority groups and hence their exclusion from it. As a corollary to this inability to adequately reflect cultural diversity has been the fact of the public sphere being defined and dominated by majoritarian values and norms, which have been considered to be neutral. This particular tendency has been further accentuated and exacerbated by the recent rise in the Indian polity of the phenomenon of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism. This particular phenomenon seeks to firmly entrench and institutionalise the symbols, cultural norms, values and beliefs cherished by it as the only legitimate ones capable of defining the Indian state.”\textsuperscript{295} This process of homogenization of public sphere coerced the exclusion of subalterns and forcing people to adhere to the dominant narratives, leaving no space for a renegotiating of public and private sphere and contesting the multicultural nature of the public sphere in India.

This discussion helps us to locate public in India and helps us now to move forward in understanding the ‘emic’ explorations of public from subaltern perspectives, which then takes us to look at the concerns and considerations of subalterns on public.

\textsuperscript{294} Ibid. p.2420  
\textsuperscript{295} Ibid. p.2419
5.3. Public Sphere: Subaltern Concerns and Considerations:

Habermas brings to light that the bourgeois public sphere arose from the aesthetics and literary discourses of the enlightenment coffee houses in Britain, from Salons in France and from Table Societies from Germany. He notes, that "the fully developed bourgeois public sphere was based on the fictitious identity of the two roles assumed by the privatised individuals who came together to form a public: the role of property owners and the role of human beings pure and simple." The bourgeois public sphere is the place for the exchange between education and economics in ‘forming the critical-rational public opinion in the society,’ which took place in the private gatherings of the bourgeoisie.

Habermas has a great relevance in understanding the public sphere in India today. India too has coffee houses, salons, (though modern innovations) in the urban contexts. Primarily, the community gatherings in the village around the old banyan tree at the centre of the village are places for public debate and argument. The collective of privatised individuals and property ownership as mentioned by Habermas are not the only required roles to form the public in India, similar other concerns like education, class, caste, gender, language etc. have been the underlying factors to form a public in the Indian public sphere. These public spheres be it around the tree in the village or in coffee houses in the urban contexts, had always a dominant public who enforced their power to make their voice normative as public discourses. Gorringe explains the politics of caste spaces in India where exclusion of Dalits in the public spaces have become predominant, and how Dalits have been contesting and protesting for a place in contemporary India.

In the context of the divided public sphere in India on the lines of caste, Gorringe observes that Dalits as excluded public assert their position within the Cheris (Dalit settlements on the outskirts of the villages) and within the Cheri life, and yet stakes claim to public space. In so doing, Gorringe observes that the Dalits challenge the hegemonic social relations and spatial patterns which sediments that dominance. This enquiry on a subaltern understanding of

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296 Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. p.56
299 Ibid. p.165.
public is towards challenging the normative and hegemonic dominance of dominant castes and their perspectives in the Indian public sphere. Now let us consider the key concerns of subaltern communities in India.

5.3.1. Recognising Multiple Publics:

Fraser critiqued Habermas for proposing the bourgeoisie public sphere as the public sphere and for not recognising the multiple, diverse publics. She says,

Habermas’ account stresses the singularity of the bourgeois conception of the public sphere, its claim to be the public arena, in the singular...the effects of operating the advantage of the dominant groups and to the disadvantage of subordinates will be exacerbated where there is only a single, comprehensive public sphere.300

Such an idea of the idealised single the public would lead to swallow and negate the multiple publics and disadvantage the recognition of subaltern publics. In the context of India, Banaji proposes that with the rise of ‘Hindutva,’ which she calls, ‘an indigenised version of fascism,’ there has been a growing ‘vigilante publics’ that will demoralise, delegitimate, suppress, command or eliminate many existing cultures, where Dalits, religious minorities etc. will be at a receiving end.301 Such ‘vigilante publics’ pose a threat to the recognition of multiple publics and strive to eliminate, demoralise or silence the voices of the subalterns, who form and affirm in multiple publics.

To problematise ‘public’ from a subaltern perspective is to recognise and affirm in multiple publics. These multiple publics are not limited to any region or topography or institution or system but exist where groups gather to debate on public issues. Bhandari explains that such a recognition of multiple publics creates “multiple civil societies” to exert pressure on the State, without being influenced by any normative practices. “This flexibility,” Bandari observes, “has allowed subaltern groups to subvert those forces of the liberal/capitalist

300 Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere : A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in Habermas and the Public Sphere, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993). pp.122-123
order that sanction the “colonisation” of civil society as bourgeois interests gain control of
mass media and commodify public culture on their own terms.”\(^{302}\) Thus, an affirmation of
multiple publics in India helps the subalterns not to be content with dominant’s publics
normativity, but to resist, protest and contest in reclaiming their stake of public space.

5.3.2. Contesting Hegemonic Power in Public Sphere:
Fraser has critiqued the Habermasian public sphere as a sphere that has not practised the
parity of participation, for there were several inequalities and exclusions in the name of
gender or class in the idealised bourgeois public sphere. Fraser supplements her
perspective by bringing in the critiques of scholars like Landes, Mary Ryan and Geoff Ely
against Habermas. Fraser draws from Ely as she says,

> the official bourgeois public sphere is the institutional vehicle for a major historical
transformation in the nature of political domination. This is the shift from a
repressive mode of domination to a hegemonic one, from rule-based primarily on
acquiescence to superior force to rule based primarily on consent supplemented
with some measure of repression. The important point is that this new mode of
political domination, like the older one, secures the ability of one stratum of society
to rule the rest. The official public sphere then was, and indeed is, the prime
institutional site for construction of the consent that defines the hegemonic mode
of domination.\(^{303}\)

This explains that the powerful continues to rule, and subordinates the weaker sections of
people, for the dynamics of power shifts from domination to hegemony, pushing those on
the margins to further peripheries in the public sphere. In other words, the public sphere
served as a fertile ground for the dominant groups to exercise power and hegemony over
the weak and powerless.

One of the important concerns of subaltern understanding of public is to address the issue
of power and hegemony in the public sphere. Gorringe explains that Dalits contest and
deconstruct the hegemony of caste spaces by exercising symbolic politics, like the

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\(^{303}\) Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere : A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.” p.117
increased presence of Dalit icons and concerns in social and political spheres. He notes that Cheris are not just sites of contention, but sites within which resistance is nurtured and Dalits emboldened.\textsuperscript{304} Tiwari recognises the importance of Dalit statues in the public space as a matter of pride for Dalits helping them to gain self-respect, for these statues as visible symbols are ‘creating memories among the Dalit communities.’ Tiwari states:

space and spatial formations lead us to think how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and contested in the contemporary political landscape. The public spaces hold a special meaning for the Dalits in Indian society since they have been excluded from the public space in rural and urban India due to the stigma of untouchability with them. They have been marginalised in the symbolic landscape of the nation-state due to these spatial arrangements.\textsuperscript{305}

This is a counter-public symbolic act, that the Dalits engage in contesting the homogenisation of the public spheres done by the dominant Hindutva publics.\textsuperscript{306} These statues in the public spaces represent the subaltern radical subversion of the public spaces. Installation of Ambedkar statues and other statues of Dalit leaders in the public locations offers a political consciousness for Dalits to contest hegemonic forces of caste in their social spaces.\textsuperscript{307} I shall explain Ambedkar’s symbolic politics of resisting the hegemony of caste public through his bold acts in the last section of this chapter. Thus, contesting hegemonic forces in the public sphere is an important concern in problematizing ‘public’ from the perspective of subalternity.

\section*{5.3.3. Reclaiming Subaltern Counter-Publics:}
Fraser critiques the idea of Habermas’ public sphere as an ideal public sphere, for she explains social inequalities in the public sphere like women who have been consciously excluded does not have the right to participate. Fraser observes that ‘bracketing of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{304} Gorringe, “Out of the Cheris.” p. 170.
  \item \textsuperscript{306} Refer 4.2.2. for the discussion of subalternity as a site of counter-symbolic factory
\end{itemize}
inequalities’ does not foster the participation of parity.\textsuperscript{308} In such a context Fraser explains that the subordinated social groups like women, people of colour, workers, gays and lesbians etc. look out for alternative publics, where counter discourses emerge, which Fraser calls \textit{subaltern counter publics}.\textsuperscript{309} In a divided public sphere, these counter-publics, Fraser explains have a dual role and states:

On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides. This dialectic enables subaltern counter-publics partially to offset, although not wholly to eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies.\textsuperscript{310}

In the context of a divided public sphere in India on account of caste, Dalits constitute an alternative public sphere as the excluded public to generate contested epistemologies. Oppositional discourses of education, which is counter-discourses, agitation, which is contestation and organising, which is regroupment, nurture in these spaces. I shall explain more in detail about the educational, agitational and organisational tasks of subaltern public theology in chapter 7. Thus ‘public’ when problematised from a subaltern perspective it reclaims a public, which is subaltern counter-public, the Dalit public, the excluded public as the real publics for India.

\textbf{5.3.4. Exclusionary Publics:}

Following Fraser’s critique of the inadequacy of Habermasian public sphere as \textit{the} public sphere,\textsuperscript{311} Sahoo observes that Habermasian universal public sphere is not compatible to Indian public sphere for there exist exclusionary public spaces in India which is closed to the participation of subordinated groups in the public. Sahoo mentions two specific reasons as:

\textsuperscript{308} Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere : A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” p. 120.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid, p.123.
\textsuperscript{310} Ibid, pp.123-124.
\textsuperscript{311} Ibid, p.133.
The first is the development of a strong welfare state and the legacy of colonialism which kept the politicised Indians apolitically busy and produced a *depoliticised* citizenry, and the second is the exclusion of the common people from the public sphere on the basis of standards set by the virtues of modernity.\(^\text{312}\)

The colonial episteme in India has created a ‘depoliticised citizenry,’ who accepted the division of Indian public sphere into caste publics as normative, for divisions in the name of caste received sanctions of religious texts of the dominant groups. Accepting the normativity of caste system in the Indian public sphere created several excluded publics, which Ambedkar calls ‘*Bahishkrit Bharat*’ (excluded, ostracised India). I will discuss this in a later section.

### 5.3.4.1. Caste Publics:

Exclusion on the basis of the virtues of caste has created exclusionary publics in India. According to Guru, there is a refusal to acknowledge that the Indian nation is constituted by the ‘ghettoised’ and ‘stigmatised fragments’ of Dalits populations in India. Guru says, “The Hindu vision of India feeds on the existence of the Dalit as the stigmatised or insignificant other.”\(^\text{313}\) This stigmatisation and ghettoization of Dalits continue on the principles of the caste system, for they are socially, economically, politically and culturally excluded from the public sphere. Such a stigmatization as observed by Gundimeda in the context of opposition to beef stall by Dalits at a University space, not only is humiliating to Dalits but also injures their agency towards transforming their community.\(^\text{314}\) Guru, therefore explains “Dalit officers and elected leaders are publicly humiliated, for which they believe that the public sphere is full of caste discrimination that denies them equal social standing. It is this apprehension of humiliation that prevents them from participating in the political realm and makes them ‘exiled citizens’ or ‘stigmatised citizens.’” Thus, the public sphere in India is imbued with the ideology of purity-pollution which destroys the


possibility of any intimacy.” Therefore caste publics which are predominantly and permanently present across the country creates exclusionary publics, excluding Dalits and stigmatising them. Subaltern understanding of public exposes such caste exclusionary public and their politics of exclusion.

5.3.4.2. Patriarchal Publics:
Deeply entrenched is the culture of patriarchy in India, and which creates a huge divide in the public sphere in the name of gender. The patriarchal society operates on power, making male and masculine domains as powerful over other genders and women, restricting their activities to the private sphere. There has been a disparity between men and women in terms of birth ratio, literacy rates, employment opportunities etc., which reveal the domination of patriarchal publics. Marshal and Anderson observe: “the separation of the public and private spheres and the corresponding separation of the male and female worlds have their origins in the rise of capitalism. Although patriarchy predates capitalism, it is with the advent of capitalism that the separation of the public and private spheres intensifies.” It is patriarchy and capitalism which are in force for such a division of publics in the public sphere. Sahoo observes, “In the patriarchal ordering of society, the relegation of women to the private sphere of family based on compassion, affection, emotion and unreflective loyalties are in sharp contrast to the rational-critical principles of the public sphere. They are denied of equality and agency in the public sphere of civil society. The purdah (veil) system denies women of the Muslim community from the public space. The practice of sati (women forced (my emphasis) to commit suicide in the pyre of the husband, an old tradition which is abolished) was very much part of the tradition. Violence acts as a weapon through which society exercises its power and keeps a section of the population excluded from public sphere.” Critical rational thinking has always been upheld by men as their own possession in the public sphere, and devalued women’s critical rational

316 My experience of visiting a Hindu temple as explained in 1.1. serves as a case in point here.
318 Sahoo, “Civil Society, Citizenship and Subaltern Counter Publics in Post-Colonial India,” p.61.
perspectives as irrational, illogical, unscientific for from times immemorial it has been men who are constructing knowledge and making public opinion. This exclusionary public created in the name of the gender divide in the Indian public sphere makes it unrealistic and incompatible in realising a universal public sphere as envisioned by Habermas. Subaltern understanding of public exposes such patriarchal exclusionary publics and allow women to contest exclusion in the public sphere. Nelavala explains that In Indian public sphere, the question ‘can the subaltern speak?’ is irrelevant for Dalit women, for they are often seen as louder than the other caste woman, for Indian culture it is shameful to be loud and to be heard of in the public. She says, “they are subaltern not because they cannot speak, but because they are not heard.” Dalit women are considered as ‘noisy and clumsy’ by the dominant patriarchal culture.319

The above two publics are illustrations of exclusionary publics in India, which makes it incompatible to construct a universal normative public sphere. For a subaltern interrogation of public, a discussion of such exclusionary publics provides an opportunity to expose these dominant publics and also provides a space to generate oppositional discourses from the sites of exclusion.

5.3.5. Can the Subalterns Public-ise in a Public Sphere?

There has been an ongoing discussion on who can represent whom in the public sphere, and it was Guru in the context of Dalit struggles vehemently opposes non-Dalits representing Dalits and theorizing their struggles, for he argues for a ‘lived experience,’ to be the norm in both representation and theorizing. He also opines that without a ‘lived experience’ it would lead to ‘misrepresentation’ of the community and their struggles. Guru reiterates a ‘methodological exclusivism’ for Dalits in their theorizing and publicizing their representation. It is here that Habermas as a public sphere theoretician, who universalises the bourgeois public sphere is brought to scrutiny by Indian subaltern academy. Sarukkai in responding to Guru’s articulations criticises Habermas for theorizing

public sphere in universal terms as an expression of ‘distributing guilt’ which his particular context is burdened with and prescribes this public sphere to ‘us’ those who have not experienced or lived it. He says, “Guru’s trenchant criticism, of the attempt by non-Dalits to theorise oppression of Dalits can also be seen as an example where theory is used by the dominant and forward castes to distribute their guilt.”

Thus mere prescriptions of universalization of public sphere theoretically are only an expression of distributing their burden and guilt for having taken over the public sphere by their dominance, and positions Habermas and Guru on two opposite poles of ‘experience & theory.’ Sarukkai concludes by saying, “The theory is to be felt, is to embody suffering and pain, is to relate the epistemological with the emotional – that is, is to bring together reason and emotion. That is really the challenge that Guru forces on the practice of social science in India.”

This then takes us to answer the question that is posed before us, can the subalterns publicise in the public sphere in India? In contrast to Habermasian understanding, where the publicizing, by which I mean representation, happens on some other’s experience, Guru’s emphasis on the subalterns speaking for themselves, representing themselves, theorizing themselves, and making an act of public, which is public-isng themselves becomes a priority in any public sphere in India. Subalterns ‘lived experience’ becomes a rich epistemological resource in making ‘public opinion’, for there is an ‘oppositional knowledge’ that comes from ‘below.’ In Spivakian terms, when she questions ‘can the subaltern speak?’, she problematises the ‘unspeakability’ of subalterns and proposes that the language of subalterns has not been heard in the cacophony of the dominant discourses. Similarly, the question ‘can the subalterns public-ise?’ helps us to problematise ‘public’ from a subaltern perspective and paves way for their public-ising as excluded publics.

Therefore, the answer to this question ‘can the subalterns public-ise?’ is an affirmative yes, for they speak out of and from their ‘lived experience’ which cannot be theorised or publicised by any others except them.

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321 Ibid, p.45.
This discussions on subaltern concerns and considerations help us to understand the nuances of subaltern ‘public’. Subaltern ‘public’ exposes exclusionary publics, reclaims subaltern counter-publics, contests hegemonic powers, and seeks to public-ise and represent by themselves from their epistemic experiential sites. This discussion also helps in dismantling a notion of the public sphere, with a definite article preceding it and calls reclaim public spheres, which are multiple, alternative, counter-cultural and subaltern in their essence and content.

5.4. Towards a Subaltern Perspective of Public: Engaging with Ambedkar

Having discussed some subaltern concerns and considerations on public, I shall now discuss Ambedkar’s understanding of subaltern public. This section will explain an understanding of ‘public’ from subaltern perspectives. In Chapter 4 I had discussed on Vinayaraj’s proposal that theology be shifted towards subaltern political thought, and especially of Ambedkar. In response to that call, in order to problematise ‘public’ from the perspective of subalternity, I now bring in the resources from Ambedkar, to locate Indian Christian theological engagements in the sites of decolonial epistemologies.

Ambedkar, has been one of the pioneering champions in Indian history, who strived relentlessly for the cause of public-ising the subaltern through his political and social activism. He saw to it that the ‘untouchables,’ who have been pushed outside and excluded from the caste-ridden and caste infected Indian public sphere, have equal access into the public sphere. At the very front page of his book What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables, Ambedkar quoted the Greek philosopher Thucydides who said, “It may be your interest to be our master, but how can it be ours to be your slaves?” Ambedkar was bold in questioning the validity of caste system, which has manipulatively taken over the public sphere in India through religious, scriptural and cultural sanctions,

322 Refer 4.3.2.1
324 Ibid, p.xi.
and paved way for the liberation of the public sphere. Towards that end, Ambedkar stood against religious oppression and embraced Buddhism, as a counter-public act, so as to free his people from brahminical subjugation, the dominant public.

Skaria engaged on why Ambedkar converted to Navayana Buddhism; explains the relationship of his ‘exiled citizenship’ and his religious conversion as an expression of his public necessity towards ‘a civil religion.’

Chairez-Garza explains, for Ambedkar, space played an important role in the construction of untouchability and argues how village becomes a site of perpetuating inequality in the name of caste; how the very idea of nationalism is therefore created out of those closely-knit spaces which are run on the principles of ‘purity and pollution.’ When the caste publics did not provide an ample space for the minorities and subalterns, then Scott & Ingram would say that “Ambedkar’s response is to ‘search for another universalism’ based on a principle of ‘unruful spectrality’.” That ‘search for another universalism’ is understood as when Hinduism could not annihilate caste, Ambedkar chose Buddhism as ‘another universalism.’ In the context of dominant caste public, affirmation of excluded public as a contestory public is a search for another universalism.

Ambedkar’s subaltern perceptions of ‘public’ is an extension of Habermasian public and even Fraser’s counter public, for unlike Habermas and Fraser, Ambedkar speaks from his experience as an untouchable, which constructs his perceptions of publics. Guru would argue that ‘experience would initially create an epistemological condition for a creative reflection of theorizing.’ To put it in other words, for Habermas and to Fraser, ‘public’ becomes an object in performing their experiment or in their theorisation, but for Ambedkar, being a subaltern provides an ontological experience of contesting the public. Allow me to present four understandings of subaltern ‘publics’ from the writings of Ambedkar.

5.4.1. Re-visioning ‘Public’ as whose Indirect Transactions are systemically Cared for:

Ambedkar as a student of Dewey, an American pragmatist philosopher, understands ‘public’ as ‘democratic citizenry responsible for the state.’ Dewey makes a political inquiry in the constitution of ‘public’ and tries to define it in terms of political categories, required for a democratic state. In Dewey’s own words, “The public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for.” As such, Ambedkar had Dewey’s influence on his thinking and interpreted ‘public’ appropriated to the Indian context, which for him would be to problematise ‘indirect consequences of transactions’ in India. This is based on caste system and untouchability, and therefore aspiring a ‘public’ as political citizens is affirming for a just and equal society as against the caste public, which stratified people and society unequally and unjustly. Such an understanding is found in most of Ambedkar’s writings, for he keeps contesting caste and hierarchy, finding ways of making ‘untouchables’ political citizens overcoming their oppression and exclusion.

Ambedkar’s construction of public as ‘whose indirect consequences of transactions are cared for’ in India can be understood through his response to the Kalaram temple entry at Nasik in 1930. For Ambedkar through this movement, he was contesting the ‘sacred space’ notions of the temple and was creating a sense of self-respect and self-dignity among the ‘untouchables.’ In his statement to Gandhi regarding this incident, Ambedkar gives two reasons for answering the question ‘Do the Depressed Classes desired entry to temple? Or do they not?’ Ambedkar answers this question firstly from a materialist point of view, where he argues it is up to the Hindus to open the temples or not, but if they

330 Ibid.
333 Ibid, pp.198-200.
recognise ‘sacredness of human personality’ then they can open it and behave as gentlemen. Secondly, he responds to this question from a spiritual point of view where he opines that what Depressed classes desired is ‘a religion with social equality’ and temple entry should be only an opening towards that destiny and should not be an end in itself. Ambedkar states:

There is, however, one more argument which Mahatma Gandhi and the reforming Hindu may advance against the position I have taken. They may say: “acceptance by the Depressed Classes of Temple entry now, will not prevent them from agitating hereafter for the abolition of Chaturvarna and Caste. If that is the view, I like to meet the argument right at this stage so as to clinch the issue and clear the road for future developments. My reply is that it is true that my right to agitate for the abolition of Chaturvarna and Caste system will not be lost if I accept Temple entry now. But the question is on what side will Mahatma Gandhi be when the question is put. If he will be in the camp of my opponents, I must tell him I can’t be in his camp now. If he will be in my camp, he ought to be in it now.334

These reflections, therefore, explain Ambedkar’s construction and re-visioning of public whose indirect consequences of transactions like caste intricacies are systematically cared for, and mere acts of tokenism don’t constitute ‘public.’ For him, public constitutes where the caste system is completely annihilated and abolished, and all other acts are directed towards the realization of that free public. The major reason for temple entry movement for Dalits was to bring out the worth of ‘self-respect’ among Dalits and to create a rational thinking for Hindus. Ambedkar’s perception of public is ‘pre-Habermasian’ for he resonates with Dewey’s understanding of public, which is to care for those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions, and envisions public as space, which is beyond civil society and bourgeois public sphere aiming for total liberty and liberation. ‘Public’ is a contested space and an agitational space for the subalterns against the dominant caste ideologies and practices.

334 Ibid, p.201.
5.4.2. Restructuring ‘Public’ as Anti-Caste and Anti-Hierarchical Space:

Ambedkar’s address *The Annihilation of Caste*[^335^], which was denied permission[^336^] to deliver as a public address to the Jat Pat Todak Mandal in Lahore, a Society for the Abolition of Caste, an offshoot body of Arya Samaj, contains a masterly analysis of caste, its weaknesses, disadvantages and harmful effects. This address is a public theological treatise applying hermeneutics of suspicion on Hindu Scriptures, breaking down the religious notions on which caste is designed. In the thirteenth part of the address, Ambedkar brings in his views of public, which are very relevant in recovering his perspective of public. Ambedkar says,

The effect of caste on the ethics of the Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. A Hindu’s public is his caste. His responsibility is only to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound. There is no sympathy to the deserving. There is no appreciation of the meritorious...the capacity to appreciate merits in a man apart from his caste does not exist in a Hindu...have not Hindus committed treason against their country in the interests of their caste?[^337^]

Ambedkar critiques the dominant public in India, for it is caste which takes the centre of gravity and the centre stage in the construction of public. According to Habermas’ public sphere, production of public opinion is one of the key issues. Ambedkar would say that it is caste that makes it impossible in the making of public opinion, for caste totally destroys that sense of public-ness, creating hierarchies and gradations in the society. Ambedkar also critiques that Hindus have done a great disservice to the national public succumbing to the caste structures. Ambedkar’s criticism of the caste social order is inseparable from his criticism of Hindu religion. If he starts with evaluating the caste system inevitably he ends up with the criticism of Hindu religion. If he starts with the evaluation of Hindu religion, he

[^336^] The letters of correspondence between Ambedkar and the Mandal committee members, which is printed as a prologue in the earlier editions, explains the reasons for the denial of its publication. To summarise the reasons, it was because some parts of the address were hurting the caste Hindus, the majoritarian public and was critiquing the religious views of Hinduism on caste. In 2015 when this address was again re-printed, Arundati Roy a higher caste person had written an introduction, which left several Dalit scholars to respond to this encroachment of the Dalit-Bahujan space and an appropriation of Ambedkar’s Annihilation of caste. In response a Ambedkar Age Collective, Hatred in the Belly: Politics behind the Appropriation of Dr Ambedkar’s Writings (Hyderabad: The Shared Mirror Publications, 2015). was published addressing this appropriation as a counter public narrative.
inevitably ends up with the criticism of caste social order. Exposing the various defences put forward to support caste system, Ambedkar has stated that it is not only a division of labour but also division of labourers and that too on the basis of graded inequality, that divides the public sphere. He says, “Caste divides the labourers, caste disassociates work from interest, caste disconnects intelligence from manual labour and caste prevents mobilization. The caste system is not merely division of labour. [It is a division of labourers].”338 Such a division has spatial implication for public is polarised with hierarchy and gradation, for both labour and labourers are graded unequally in the name of occupation and by descent.

Therefore, over against these dominant publics, Ambedkar’s perceptions of the authentic public would be spaces of anti-caste and anti-hierarchical spaces, where ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’339 would prevail and sustain. By ‘fraternity,’ Ambedkar would equate that as democracy, where people conjoin together and move freely with shared experiences.340 By ‘equality,’ he refers that statesmen should take a rough and ready rule in treating all people as equal not because they are alike, but because classification and assortment are impossible.341 This requires a rigorous practice and test. By ‘liberty,’ he means that people should be at liberty to the right to choose their work and should not be forced into the slavery of occupations.342 Thus Ambedkar restructures public as spaces for liberty, equality and fraternity that are exhibited as anti-caste and anti-hierarchical spaces.

Larbeer, therefore observes for Ambedkar, reconstruction of the identity of the broken people and through that restructuring Indian society on a moral basis becomes a life mission.343 Restructuring public as anti-caste and as anti-hierarchical spaces, based on liberty, equality and fraternity, becomes imperative for Ambedkar. Only in such restructuring subalterns can find a place and space, which otherwise is impossible. ‘A

339 Ambedkar finds the very principles of French Revolution (1789) that counters the graded the Hindu social order based on caste divisions.
340 Ibid. “Annihilation of Caste with a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi.” pp.57-58
341 Ibid.
342 Ibid.
343 Larbeer, Ambedkar on Religion. p.157
structural transformation of public sphere in India’ or in other words a ‘Habermasian Kairos,’ becomes a possibility only when caste system is totally dismantled and eradicated and grounded on liberty, equality and fraternity. Until then, the public sphere in India becomes fractured and dominated by the dominants. Towards a subaltern public theology aims towards that end of transforming the Indian public sphere.

5.4.3. Touchables in the Village as ‘Public’ and Untouchables in Ghettos as ‘Non-Public’:

Ambedkar in his yet another important writing in 1948 “Untouchables or the Children of Indian Ghettos,” succinctly explains the roots of untouchability and their place in ghettos, which again is divided in the name of ‘purity and pollution.’ In this section, Ambedkar explains that the constitution of the Indian villages is basically divided as touchables and untouchable. For touchables are those people who are the majority, economically powerful, ruling class and lives inside the village. ‘Untouchables’ are minority, powerless, dependents, and are forced to live outside of the villages. He further explains the codes for untouchables given by touchables, and any breach of those codes is considered a terrible offence on the part of the untouchables. Further to that, there are duties that the untouchables need to follow in keeping up the order and demarcation of space. These boundaries of the public touchables and non-public untouchables are so rigid, and any trespasser is punished severely for transgressing the given social order. Ambedkar, based on these drawings of the boundaries, and by the codes and duties, therefore exhibits that Indian villages are sites of disgraceful unjust practices and sites of perpetuating caste inequalities.

It is interesting to note Chairez-Garza’s exposition on Ambedkar’s spatial features of untouchability, where he contends that for Ambedkar, “social segregation and spatial exclusion are co-constitutive, marking the village fundamentally as a site of inequality and

345 Ibid. pp.19-22
injustice.”346 This he places in contrast to Gandhi’s glorification of the village as an ideal Indian symbol of nationalism, and village as the real Swaraj (freedom). Ambedkar on commenting on the Indian villages alludes that Hindus are proud of this village republics for he says,

What is the position of the untouchables in this Republic? They are not merely the last but are also the least. He is stamped as an inferior and is held down to that status by all ways and means, which a majority can command. This inferiority is the destiny not merely of an individual but of the whole class. All untouchables are inferior to all touchables irrespective of age or qualification.347

The practice of untouchability in a spatial context explains the perceptions of public and re-public in this context. Is an Indian village a real re-public? Ambedkar would contest such a notion of a republic, for he perceives the boundaries of public and non-public are visibly recorded and found in Indian villages, which is defined and dictated by the touchables. Ambedkar says,

Such is the picture of the inside life in an Indian village. In this republic, there is no place for democracy. There is no room for equality. There is no room for liberty and there is no room for fraternity. The Indian village is the very negation of a republic. If it is a republic, it is a republic of the touchables, by the touchables and for the touchables. The republic is an Empire of the Hindus over the untouchables. It is a kind of colonialism of the Hindus designed to exploit the untouchables. The untouchables have no rights. They are there only to wait, serve and submit. They are there to do or to die. They have no rights because they are outside the village republic and because they are outside the so-called republic, they are outside the Hindu fold. This is a vicious circle. But this is a fact which cannot be gainsaid.348

For Ambedkar, this village re-public is an expression of empire, where the untouchable non-publics become their subjects, and this village re-public is an expression of colonialism, where the untouchable non-publics become their colonised. This ghettoization of untouchables as non-public is against the vision of an inclusive public sphere in India.

347 Ambedkar, “Untouchables or the Children of Indian Ghettos.” p.25
348 Ibid. p.26
In this analysis, Chairez-Garza identifies two important issues relating to untouchability, social relations and spatial features. Firstly, he identifies that space is a social product which emerges due to social interactions, and places that sites in the village produce and acquire notions of purity and pollution. Secondly, social relations are constituted by their spatial contexts. Therefore, public and non-public spaces constantly evolve according to their social interactions and interrelations, and the distinction between touchables and untouchables are incompatible with the idea of an inclusive public sphere in India. Therefore, when ‘public’ is problematised from the perspective of subalterns, we recognise that colonial episteme takes over the re-public in India and ghettoises subalterns as ‘untouchables.’

5.4.4. The Notion of Nation: Bahishkrut Bharat as a Counter-Public to Indian Republic:

The idea of India for Ambedkar was Bahishkrut Bharat, which means ‘India of the ostracised’ or ‘excluded Indian’ which represents his understanding of the national public sphere in India, which sought its ‘self-rule’ by declaring herself as re-public. Ambedkar started a Marathi journal in 1927 as a first untouchable journal and named it Bahishkrut Bharat, after the incidence of drinking water from the public water tank in Malad. Gopal Guru in explaining and foregrounding nation as space reflects on Gandhi’s imagination of nation as ‘Ramarajya’ (God’s rule) as against Ambedkar’s notion as Bahishkrut Bharat. Gandhi theorises his notion of nation drawing from the experiences of Indian peasants, who for him form the locus with the village as his ideal spatial construction and acclaims towards ‘self-rule.’ On his voyages across the country, he found a common narrative among the experiences of Indian peasantry and therefore did not discover the notion of a nation like that of Ambedkar. On the other hand, Ambedkar has no other choice than to imagine a nation as ‘excluded’ people for they form the imagination of the Indian public sphere. Since the Hindu public spheres are closed and inaccessible to the untouchables, Ambedkar had to contest for the entry into such publics by bringing in political action. His notion of nation is defined by ‘social justice, self-respect and self-dignity’ over against ‘self-rule’ of

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the dominant publics. His imagination of nation was a counter-public imagination to the Indian republic, which was deeply infected by caste prejudices and practices. Guru says that Ambedkar moved from Bahishkrut Bharat to Prabuddha Bharat (India of the enlightened people)\(^{351}\), as an aspiration expressing his hope towards the annihilation of the caste system in India.

To further recover his notion of counter-public understanding of the nation, his final speech as a chairman of the Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution is helpful. Ambedkar quotes the American Protestant Episcopal Church’s discussion on the revision of their liturgy on a prayer ‘O Lord bless our nation,’ and applies it to the discussion of the nation in India. Ambedkar says,

> There is no nation of Indians in the real sense of the world, it is yet to be created. In believing we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into thousands of castes be a nation? The sooner we realise that we are not yet a nation, in a social and psychological sense of the world, the better for us.\(^{352}\)

Ambedkar explains this notion of ‘not yet a nation’ in India for the presence of castes make it as anti-national, and urges, “For fraternity can be a fact only when there is a nation. Without fraternity, equality and liberty will be no deeper than coats of pain.”\(^{353}\) This was his radical subversive understanding of the public sphere, for how can a nation and its public sphere divided as thousands of castes, constitute a nation public. Ambedkar calls the dominant caste publics to realise collectively why India is not able to be an inclusive public sphere and proposes fraternity can only be realised in India when there is a nation of equality.

Scott & Ingram observes that since colonial times, the Indian public has always been a ‘deficient entity.’ They go on to say, “Indian publics were seldom thought to be ‘public’ enough. They had to be educated, reformed and reworked before they could aspire to the

\(^{351}\) Ibid.
\(^{353}\) Ibid.
name. From this vantage point, far from self-constituting, the public emerges here as something that comes into being when regulated from without. This deficiency continues because of the nexus of state, market and dominant forces defining public and on the other hand due to the conscious exclusion of subalterns as ‘non-public’ from constituting publics and constructing public opinions. Thus, Ambedkar’s imagination of *Bahishkrut Bharat* emerges as a counter-public expression in Indian re-public. Conceptual space collides with social space and that helps in recovering the subaltern perception of public. The ‘India of the ostracised’ or ‘excluded India’ constitutes the public for Ambedkar, which affirms the ‘excluded public’ of the subalterns.

Thus, revisioning ‘public’ as whose indirect transactions are cared for, restructuring ‘public’ as anti-caste and anti-hegemonic space, ghettoised ‘untouchables’ as ‘non-public’ and ‘excluded Indian’ as counter-public to Indian-republic are some pointers in understanding subaltern ‘public’ from Ambedkar’s epistemic experiences on ‘public’. Subaltern ‘public’ from Ambedkar’s experiences establish that it is a contestory space, which provides a pedagogy of ‘learning to learn from below.’ It provides a space for agitation against the dominant and it provides a praxis of organising subalterns to counter all forms of oppressive hegemonic powers.

### 5.5. A Critical Analysis on Subaltern Interrogation of ‘Public’:

‘Public’ is not a neutral concept, for it keeps evolving and shaping up according to the context and situation. Subaltern ‘public’ is an excluded public communicating the language and aspiration of the excluded subaltern communities. The section on subaltern concerns and considerations have interrogated particularly Habermasian public sphere from subaltern public perspectives. Engaging Ambedkar’s understanding of ‘public’ is to recover subaltern perspectives of publics. For it helps us to acknowledge contestation of the dominant publics by radically subverting the idea of public from spatial, conceptual and cognitive directions. Taking all the discussions into consideration, particularly bringing Habermas, Fraser and Ambedkar as theoretical conversation partners, I want to bring forth

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354 Scott and Ingram, “What Is a Public? Notes from South Asia.” p.367
four particular pointers of subaltern understandings of ‘public,’ that are helpful towards a subaltern public theology for India.

5.5.1. Subaltern ‘Public’ as a Counter-Hegemonic Site:
One important critique that comes to our scrutiny now: is the subaltern public a counter-public? If we reframe this question in other words, subaltern ‘public’ is counter-public to whom? In contrast to the dominant publics, yes, it is a counter ‘public,’ but the danger in positioning subaltern public as non-public is that it makes the dominant public normative or referral point. Subaltern yearning and struggle is to reclaim that counter-hegemonic public or in Ambedkar words ‘search for another universalism,’ where dominant epistemologies are contested. In other words, to give examples, for Ambedkar if not Hinduism then Buddhism provided another universalism, where the formers hegemony is contested. If not villages then urban spaces, if temples are closed for untouchables then reclaim that space by mass entry, thereby contest the ‘normativity,’ the caste publics have been enjoying over the years. The interrogation so far has paved the way to deconstruct the normativity in the dominant publics by subverting such publics by ‘systematically taking care of the indirect transactions’ in the public sphere. In critiquing Habermas, Fraser proposes the alternative spaces of public opinion as ‘subaltern counterpublics’. From Ambedkar’s analysis, subaltern ‘public’ is perceived as a counter-hegemonic space, where the public opinion ‘from below’ is made alongside the dominant publics, questioning the prerogatives of the dominant publics in the public sphere of India. Subaltern ‘public’ as and ‘excluded public is a ‘counter-hegemonic’ and an anti-caste site, making it as an authentic public. So, when ‘public’ is problematised from subaltern perspectives, it offers to be a counter-hegemonic public site.

5.5.2. Subaltern ‘Public as Experiential Epistemic Site:
It has already been put forth that unlike, Habermas, Fraser and Gandhi, Ambedkar as a subaltern participates in theorising or public-isng public from his social location, form his own experiences of ‘untouchability.’ For a subaltern perception of public, the experience becomes an important epistemic space, an initial step to theorise and articulate their aspiration in claiming and reclaiming their space in the public sphere. It is the subjective
experience\textsuperscript{355} of the subalterns that their epistemology in defining their publics. Cynics would argue that if experience becomes essentialism and what is ‘authentic’ experience? Subalterns would contest ‘authenticity’ from the perspective of counter-hegemony and validate every unique experience of subalternity. Secondly public for subalterns evolve from their contestatory epistemology, knowledge from below, knowledge beyond rationalism, knowledge of creating public opinion from indigenous local resources. Publics are imaginary notions like Bahishkrut Bharat, emerging from experiences, emerging from autobiographies, from vernacular languages etc. This epistemology also produces ‘negative vocabulary’ shaking the foundations of the ‘tormentor’ or the ‘caste public’, that paves way for the liberation of the public sphere captivated by caste groups and elites. This kind of public from the experiential epistemology corrects the ‘misrepresentations’ done in the public from outsiders and allows the subalterns to represent themselves and define themselves. Therefore, ‘publics’ for subalterns are experiential epistemic sites that help them to document their social experience and become their own authors of their narratives.

5.5.3. Subaltern ‘Public’ as a Site of Polyvalence Hermeneutic:
Subaltern interrogation of public openly acknowledges multiple publics, diverse publics, and vernacular publics as their inherent characteristic. Not only there are diverse publics, but there are also diverse meanings for a given public. This notion of ‘publics within the public sphere’ drives us to recognise polyvalence of in the subaltern public sphere, which requires a collective hermeneutic in interpreting that polyvalence. Polyvalence is understood as the usage of more than one key simultaneously in music, or as having many intersectional perspectives within a given thought or idea. Subaltern hermeneutics of translation comes handy in interpreting the polyvalent nature of the ‘publics within the publics.’ Subaltern publics interpret the nexus of varied publics that are operating and makes it an open-ended public. For instance, subaltern publics interprets and interrogates the anti-caste, anti-patriarchal, anti-class, anti-state etc. as actors that are operated in the public sphere and brings in a synergy of intersectionality out of their polyvalence. As explained in Chapter 4, subalternity as an aporetic theological method, polyvalence finds

\textsuperscript{355} Refer to 5.2.3 for the discussion on public in India is an ‘emic’ rather than ‘etic.’
its fecundity in such a method, for it holds together the vertices of public in intersectionality. In this polyvalence publics, universal and particular, public and private, global and local, sacred and secular etc. all work in creative tension, for the subaltern subjective translation becomes the key in interpreting such subaltern polyvalent public sphere. In that polyvalence, it also holds together the social space, collective space, cognitive space, conceptual space etc. within it, and also it holds together spatial, territorial, de-territorial, non-place etc. understandings of public. Thus, when ‘public’ is problematised from subaltern perspectives, it offers to be a space of polyvalence hermeneutic.

5.5.4. Subaltern ‘Public’ as a Site for the Language of Subaltern Mobility:
The language of the subaltern mobilization becomes prominent in understanding the subaltern perspectives of ‘public.’ Movement and moving away from the spatial confines of ‘untouchability’ will invoke a new language spoken and understood by the subalterns, for they speak out of their experience. In the process of contesting the dominant caste publics or liberating the public from the captivity of caste or annihilating caste totally, brings out a new vocabulary of social justice, self-dignity and self-respect for the subalterns in the public sphere. The mobility of subalterns from the spatial confines of villages to urban spaces, or from territories to trans-territories or from injustice to justice is part of the struggle for radical subversion of the public sphere. I shall discuss the importance of ‘transnational public sphere’ as a scope of subaltern public theology in Chapter 7. For Gandhi, subalterns have to partake in the public sphere performing their duties offered by the normative public. But for Ambedkar, it is appropriating or radical subverting of the public sphere that brings in a new language resonating with liberty, equality and fraternity. Subalterns as ‘exiled citizens’ in their own land speak of historical, realistic and political transformation and reconfiguration of the public and does not rely upon or are appeased by ahistorical, mythical and apolitical invocations of change. Subaltern perceptions of ‘public’ create that new language of mobility and mobilization of their people, which is emancipatory and liberating. Subaltern ‘public’ therefore is a social, political, subaltern construction, where subalterns strive to be liberated by contesting and annihilating caste and its epistemologies.
5.6. Conclusion:

This chapter has discussed the subaltern interrogation of public attempting to answer the question can the subalterns public-ise? This interrogation has called to recognise the varied, diverse and multiple understandings of public, with an affirmation that subalterns can public-ise, theorise, participate and create publics that are liberative and open-ended. Habermas, Fraser and Ambedkar served as conversation partners in these deliberations projecting several layers of subaltern perceptions of public. Subaltern perceptions of public are dynamic, for they keep contesting the normativity, narratives and nuances of dominant public. When ‘public’ is problematised from subaltern perspectives, it is understood as an anti-caste, counter-hegemonic, epistemic experiential site with hermeneutics of polyvalence and a language of mobility.

In conclusion, let me quote Sir Bartle Frere who delivered a speech in 1871 to Dadabhai Naoriji’s East India Association and he says, “The only difference between English and Indian public opinion is that the latter is ‘less articulate’; its many voiceless subalterns have yet to be trained to speak in a way that would help the colonial state avoid another Mutiny.”\footnote{Bartle Frere, “On the Means of Ascertaining Public Opinion in Ndia,” *Journal of the East India Association* 5, no. 4 (1871). p.102-104 as cited by Scott and Ingram, “What Is a Public? Notes from South Asia.” p.365} The Indian public sphere since then had greatly changed, but the only difference is that subalterns have now come to the fore in speaking out of their servile experiences in public by radically subverting their spaces. Can the subalterns public-ise? Yes, they are public-ising contestation against domination.

Thus, subaltern public by offering it to be a counter-hegemonic site and as an anti-caste site, join theological subalternity as a companion of public theology for India, for it emerges out of the experiential epistemic sites. As companions both ‘theological subalternity’ and ‘subaltern’ public’ serves as critical and contestatory partners to public theology, helping to provide a new profile for public theology. The next part on ‘theological contours’ explains that new profile by providing a discussion a theological account of public from sites of subalternity.
Part Three: Theological Contours

Part three discusses the theological account of subaltern public and explains the public character of subaltern public theology for India by its contours, tasks and scope in Chapters 6 and 7. This part addresses the third research question of how the enquiry on public character of public theology and problematising ‘public’ from subaltern perspectives might contribute towards a subaltern public theology for India.
Chapter 6

Subaltern Liturgy as a Theological Account of Subaltern Public

6.1. Introduction:

In the previous chapter, I have discussed subaltern ‘public’ as a counter-hegemonic site, as a site of subaltern experiential epistemic space, as a site of hermeneutics of polyvalence, and as a site for language of social mobility. From the theological hearing of subalternity in Chapter 4, I have treated subalternity as an aporetic theological method, as contested epistemology, and as a form of deconstructive hermeneutics. The present chapter, and Chapter 7, addresses the third research question of this thesis, “How might the discussions on the deficiency of public character of public theology and problematizing ‘public’ from subaltern perspectives contribute towards a subaltern public theology for India?” The aim of this chapter therefore, is to construct a theological account of public from the sites of subalternity. In this process, public theology as subaltern liturgy is explained, which paves way towards the discussion of a subaltern public theology for India.

To explain the theological account of public from the sites of subalternity, firstly, I will consider the significance of liturgy for recovering a theological site of the public. This discussion provides a considered analysis of why liturgy has been used as a theological account in explaining the nature of the of public sphere. It also considers the ways in which the refusal of liturgy in the public sphere as ‘anti-liturgical liturgy,’ is a concern for public theology. In the second part of this chapter I offer a recovery of subaltern liturgy as a means of retrieving a theological account of subaltern public. Central to this discussion is a liturgical reading of caste with a proposal of ‘the broken body of Christ’ as a subaltern liturgy. In the final section I engage in discussing three contours for a subaltern public theology for India, God from bottom-up, liturgy before liturgy, and bio-political life. These contours explain the first aspect of its public character.
6.2. Recovering Liturgy as a Theological site of Public:
This section discusses two important questions relevant for the discussion of recovering liturgy as a theological site of public. Firstly, why liturgy is chosen as the theological account of public is discussed, where the meanings of liturgy are recovered and discussed here. This exposition helps to locate the rationale for liturgy to be the theological account of public. Secondly, there is a discussion on liturgical concerns of public theology.

6.2.1. Recovering the Public Theological Meanings of Liturgy:
Liturgy has been mostly limited to the parochial understanding of Christian worship, and has not reclaimed and recovered its wider meaning. However, in the context of public theological engagements, liturgy as a relevant theological category finds its fecundity, for it demonstrates emphatically the amphibious, amorphous and ambiguous nature of public theology, bridging coherently Christian faith and public sphere. To understand this premise, we need to understand the meanings of liturgy as perceived and used in the times of early church. In doing so, liturgy is recovered as a political act, performed creatively in the public sphere, for liturgy is offered as an important public theological site.

In explaining how during ‘apostolic, sub-apostolic and Patristic times’ liturgy served as public theology, Platten explains that liturgy happened more ‘outside of the church.’ He quotes Robert Taft saying, “We are accustomed to viewing liturgy as something done in church...Things were not so in late-Antique Constantinople, when little symbolic or theological impact was assigned to the Byzantine church building... It deals, rather with what took place outside the church, in the processions and services along the principal streets of the capital.” Liturgy, therefore was understood and performed as a public act. In this sense, liturgy is understood as concrete theology happening for the welfare of the society. The capability of liturgy to be formative and transformative of the wider community will serve as a guiding rubric for the following discussion.

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In shifting the focus from ‘sovereignty’ to ‘economy’ Agamben connects religion and politics in the public sphere. He explains ‘doxology-acclamation’ as interlocutors between ‘Christian liturgy and pagan world and Roman public law,’ for it is the ‘liturgical’ which characterises the public and political nature of Christian celebrations. In further discussing the power and the glory,’ Agamben observes, “the term leitourgia (from loas, the “people”) signifies etymologically “public service,” and the Church has always tried to underline the public character of liturgical worship in contrast to private devotion.”

Liturgy as ‘people’s public service’ therefore recovers its inherent public activity transgressing and transcending the limited understanding of liturgy confined only to the practice of Church. Thus, liturgy served as the public character of public theology.

To further understand liturgy as a theological account of public, Theimann’s discussion on public theology is helpful. Theimann links liturgy to public responsibility, for he explains:

the etymology of the word liturgy, which is leitourgia, is a Greek noun meaning, “the discharge of public office.” In the context of Greek polis, leitourgia involved engaging in public office at one’s own expense, thereby offering service to the state and so contribute to the well-being of the community or koinonia. The language adopted by the early Christian community for its own worship life was clearly and explicitly public or political language...The righteousness of faith must result in transformative justice within the public realm. Thus, Christian worship is essentially political, and the leitourgia of the Church extends naturally and directly into political action.

This explanation of liturgy as ‘discharge of public office’ shifts the understanding of the liturgy into the public sphere, for the language of Christian doxology and acclamation had strong overtones of political nature. The recitations of Christian liturgy had a clear public call and demand. To put in other words, liturgy served as a public theology of the early church. Such an understanding provides an important rationale in understanding liturgy as a theological account of public.

359 Ibid. p. 174
It is also interesting to note that the early Church preferred to use the word *leitourgia* for the practice of their Christian worship adopting it from the usage of the Septuagint, rather than using the word *ourgia* which was conventionally used for ‘cultic observances in private’, demonstrating the amphibious nature of the term liturgy. On the one hand liturgy was used for the practice of Christian worship, and on the other hand it is a term used for the political community’s work in the public sphere. Wannenwetsch therefore explains,

the word *leitourgia* belongs to the constitutional vocabulary of the Greek city-states, and, as ‘people’s service’, initially meant the service performed by an individual or a group on behalf of the political community...In the New Testament the use of *leitourgia* varies. It can designate the priestly ministry in the Temple, or the Pauline mission- even the collection made for the congregation in Jerusalem.\(^361\)

Thus, liturgy exhibits its amphibious nature, finding its fecundity both in the political community and in the Christian public. Liturgy is thereby established as an important act of public theology, and serves as a rationale offering a theological account of public.

Liturgy was also understood as an activity of a community, for everyone in the community participates in the work of the public. Schmemann therefore brings out that corporeal element in liturgy when he says,

*Leitourgia* meant an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals – a whole greater than its parts. It meant also a function or ‘ministry’, of a man or of a group, on behalf of, and in the interests of, the whole community. Thus, the *leitourgia* of ancient Israel was the corporate work of a few chosen people to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah.\(^362\)

Such a corporeal activity of the community displays the public act of liturgy. Liturgy therefore, becomes an aporetic site, where members of community perform their public work collectively, for the sake of the entire community. In the context of discussing the future of Christianity in UK, Spencer proposes ‘social liturgy’, in contrast to ‘social gospel’,


understood as ‘a love of God in a love of neighbour, worship as service,’ to be a relevant Christian witness in the public square.363 Thus, liturgy as service in the community, explains its significance as an important theological marker in understanding public.

Smith reads public theology in a liturgical mode, for he proposes to perceive the State as ‘religious’ and the church as ‘political’.364 Before I discuss the liturgical mode that Smith incorporates into public theology, I want to explain his definitions of public theology. His engagements on theology have been on the grounds of political theology, however the term political for him looks very narrow and limited. According to Smith, political theology is not just a narrow account of state of government, but a theological account of the *polis*, that is the “society.” Smith widens the definition of politics to ‘life in common’ in the society. For any Christian engagement with this ‘life in common’, he prefers the term public theology, which is not just a political theology. Smith therefore defines public theology with the statement, “a Christian account of our shared social-economic-political life might be described more properly as a “public” theology – an account of how to live in common with neighbours who don’t believe what we believe, don’t love what we love and don’t hope for what we await.”365 Public theology for Smith is a Christian account on the public issues of the neighbours in a society. From the analysis based on Chapter 2, we recognise there is a definitional deficiency in his understanding of public theology, for it is limited to seeking Christian theological relevance on public issues and it is not conceived of as the public character of public theology.

In articulating public theology in a liturgical mode, Smith critiques, on the one hand, the idea of the political and the church as ‘spatialized’ projects, and on the other, the ‘rationalization’ of these two spheres, because for him, “the way of polis is a formative community of solidarity.”366 The liturgical lens that he applies in seeing the State as ‘religious’ serves as a ‘cultural highlighter’ to the rites interwoven in the public life, where democracy, market etc. have a web of liturgies. When the church is seen as ‘political’ using

365 Ibid. p.11
366 Ibid. p.9
the liturgical lens, Smith observes that, “it equally highlights the political nature of the church, that the body of Christ is a kind of republic of the imagination, a body politic composed of those whose citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20)”\textsuperscript{367} I shall further explain this understanding of ‘the broken body of Christ,’ the body politic, as the subaltern liturgy in the context of caste hegemony in the next sections. Thus, liturgical mode serves as a lens for public theology or in other words it serves as a hermeneutic in interpreting public.

These definitions and meanings of liturgy, which are impregnated by public theological character, explain the rationale for liturgy as a theological account of public. In other words, liturgy is chosen as a theological site of public on the basis that public is inherently liturgical in its character and liturgy’s performance is always in the public.

6.2.2. Liturgical concerns for Public theology:

To recover liturgy as a theological site of public, after discussing the rationale, I now will discuss the concerns of liturgy for public theology. These concerns are the liminality of liturgy, and the anti-liturgical liturgy. This section discusses the concerns of liturgy relevant for the discussion of the public character of public theology.

6.2.2.1. The Liminality of Liturgy:

Liturgy offers a liminal space between public and theological. Writing in the context of American culture and the liturgical life of the Church, Gaillardetz recognizes a conflict among two distinct types of people in his context. He describes the first of these types of people as ‘community without transcendence’ and the second as ‘transcendence without community.’\textsuperscript{368} The former description emphasizes the communality of the liturgy, while the latter emphasizes the primacy of the transcendental in liturgy. He suggests that such a conflict can only be resolved when the Christian rituals celebrate ‘communion with God’ and ‘communion with one another’ together. This observation turns out to be an important

\textsuperscript{367} Ibid. p.15

sign-post for understanding liturgy as theological account of public. Liturgy thus becomes that liminal space, where communion with God and communion with one another is creatively held together in the public theological enterprise. In other words, ‘liturgy’ becomes both the public language of theology and also becomes the theological aspiration of the public.

As Pickstock explains it is in the liturgical that the ‘realistic’ is fused with the ‘ideal.’ Here exists ‘the co-dwelling of the self and the public,’ so that liturgical act becomes the ‘work of the people’ in ‘an ecstatic act of celebratory offering.’ Pickstock recognises that it is in the liturgical that the ‘ethical’ and the ‘aesthetic’ are held together, for the fusion of ‘real life,’ ‘art’ and ‘fiction’ happens at liturgy. These axioms of ‘middle ground’ inform the very public theological characteristic, for Graham concurs with Pickstock and explains that, “public theology espouses middle axioms or strategies of bilingualism as attempts to embody a synthesis of Christian theology and broader political principles.” In the context of public theological engagements, ‘liturgy’ therefore becomes an important theological category, for it holds together both the divine and the public, the public and excluded public, the religious and the secular, the political and personal, the universal and the particular etc. In doing so, its amphibious liminal characteristic is exhibited, and its relevance is felt in the public sphere, thus serves as a liturgical concern of public theology.

6.2.2.2. Anti-Liturgical Liturgies:

To understand liturgy as a theological account of public, we need to discuss the anti-liturgy in the public. Modernity is characterised by the ‘refusal of liturgy’ today, for Pickstock says that “secular modernity has produced a kind of parody of the liturgical, a sort of anti-liturgy liturgy which nonetheless confirms the dominance of politics and art without liturgy.” Anti-liturgical liturgy is that which denies the liturgical life-world, the service of public work. Caste is one such anti-liturgical liturgy, which I will discuss it the later section of this chapter.

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370 Ibid.
371 Ibid. p. 163
372 Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age.* p. 100
373 Pickstock, “Liturgy, Art and Politics.” p.159
When public theology takes a liturgical turn, the subaltern way, it is important to trace, recognise and identify the complex dynamics of anti-liturgical liturgies, for subaltern public theology as liturgy contests these anti-liturgical liturgies and recreates subaltern public liturgies relevant for our contexts.

To capture the complexities and the dynamics of anti-liturgical liturgies of modernity, this discussion spells out the contours and operatives of such liturgies. Pickstock argues that modernity has created its own ‘mechanistic repetitive’ conditions, which have paved the way towards ‘refusal of liturgy’, ‘anti-liturgical liturgies’, ‘pseudo-liturgies’, or ‘perverse liturgies’. She therefore recognises the characteristics of such ‘anti-liturgical liturgies’ and explains them as follows:

Firstly, it overlooks and rejects ‘subjective representations and appropriations’ and takes on ‘automated subjectivities’ to suit its conditions, by which she meant there are no punctuations for time. Secondly, ‘genuine transcendence has been displaced in modernity by the fixity of space,’ by which she finds reasons for the emergence of new ultimate concerns such as state and science. Thirdly, Pickstock perceives ‘the substitution of civility for ritual’ which is creating an ‘immanentizing of pseudo-liturgies.’ Fourthly, and finally, Pickstock describes ‘the use of spectacle to sustain order,’ whereby work, worship and pleasure are trisected as three separate entities.374

Bringing the characteristics of anti-liturgical liturgy into the public sphere, we realise how modernity has enforced these values on it, where modernity creates a culture of domination thereby challenging status of subalternity within public theology. Modernity has generated a lack of punctuations to time by rejecting subjective representations, displacing divine by the fixation of space, by civility taking over the ritual practice and by dividing work, worship and pleasure into non-dependent entities in the public sphere. It be/comes a public theological problem, as time, space and ritual are devalued. It also becomes a subaltern problem due to the way modernity marginalizes self, divine and ritual. Public theology therefore, counters these anti-liturgical liturgies, either by choosing a certain liturgical tradition of the church and bringing out the nuances in addressing it,

following Pickstock, who chose the medieval Roman rite,\textsuperscript{375} or by carrying out a political reading of one of the liturgical practice like Eucharist as Cavanaugh does,\textsuperscript{376} which in a way seeks the public relevance of liturgy. However, in this thesis I have conducted a liturgical reading of caste, exposing its anti-liturgical liturgy characteristics and offering ‘the broken body of Christ’ as a subaltern liturgy. Before I do that, allow me to discuss torture as one of the anti-liturgical liturgies of modernity.

‘Torture’ is explained by Cavanaugh as anti-liturgy in the context of an oppressive state regime in Chile. He says,

\begin{quote}
Torture may be considered a kind of perverse liturgy, for in torture the body of the victim is the ritual site where the state’s power is manifested in its most awesome form. Torture is liturgy – or, perhaps better said, “anti-liturgy” – because it involves bodies and bodily movements in an enacted drama which both makes real the power of state and constitutes an act of worship of that mysterious power...The liturgy of the torture room is a \textit{disciplina arcani}, a discipline of the secret, which is yet part of a larger state project which constitutes outside the torture chamber itself.\textsuperscript{377}
\end{quote}

It is the poor and vulnerable bodies who have been tortured, for these people in their locations of subalternity, exhibited as powerlessness becomes easy targets of oppressive state regimes.

In explaining torture as an ecclesiological problem, Cavanaugh explains that the tortured bodies of the victims challenge the Churches ‘communal body’ and must be perceived as ‘the disappearance of the visible body of Christ.’ The anti-liturgical liturgy of torture in a way tortures the publicised body of Christ, pushing it into the non-public realms which is characterised by disappearance, fragmentation, secrecy and invisibility. In such a context, public theology taking a liturgical turn is a call to contest and counter these anti-liturgical

\textsuperscript{376} William Cavanaugh, \textit{Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism} (London: T & T Clarke, 2002). p.4
Cavanaugh, in the context of torture, proposes ‘Eucharist’ as a public theological response, where the body of Christ is reimagined and re-appropriated.

The above discussions raise the concerns of liturgy relevant to the public character of public theology. Liturgy’s liminality, in holding together the divine and the public, the sacred and the secular, the political and personal, and the universal and particular, makes it an important theological category in the understanding of public. The refusal of liturgy or the anti-liturgical liturgy of the public concerns public theology, for it is called to contest and counter such liturgies epistemologically. These concerns of liturgy are particularly relevant for a subaltern public theology for India, for they concur with subalternity’s aporetic method, contestatory epistemology and deconstructive hermeneutics, which were discussed in Chapter 4. These discussions will now help us to understand in the rediscovery of a subaltern liturgy as a theological account of subaltern public.

6.3. Rediscovering Subaltern Liturgy as a Theological Account of Subaltern Public:

In order to explain subaltern liturgy, I invoke Smith’s understanding of liturgy. He defines politics as habit forming in general, and ‘love shaping’ in particular. It is on these grounds that he finds politics to be ‘liturgical.’ According to him, liturgies are, “rituals of ultimate concern, that are formative for identity, that inculcate particular visions of the good life, and do so in a way that means to trump other ritual formations.” His definition deepens the understanding of liturgy as ‘discharge of public work,’ in two ways. Firstly, by informing liturgy’s role in forming identities and secondly, for the inculcation of good life in the society to trump other ritual formations that are life-denying. Such a definition is helpful in articulating a subaltern liturgy, for it plays a formative role in defining the identity of subalterns and promotes a vision of an equal society by contesting the anti-liturgical liturgies that are life-denying. Subaltern liturgy of public is liturgy which evolves out of the epistemic experiential sites of subalternity, on the one hand contesting the dominant liturgies of power, and on the other, contesting the public itself, offering ‘alternative

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universalism’ as a subaltern public. I will now discuss subaltern liturgy by offering a liturgical reading of caste.

6.3.1. Subaltern Liturgy: Contesting Anti-Liturgical Liturgy of Caste:
A subaltern reading of the Indian public sphere identifies the very hydra of caste as one of the dominating anti-liturgical liturgies of modernity, whose mantra is segregation, exclusion and marginalization of communities.\textsuperscript{379} I shall define caste as anti-liturgical liturgy in the next section. Subaltern public theology for India as subaltern liturgy contests and counters the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste in all its forms. A subaltern theological account of public rejects the casteist public and reclaims the subaltern publics which are evolving outside of caste publics. Cavanaugh, in the context of State’s dictatorial regime, calls ‘torture’ a ‘perverse liturgy’ or an anti-liturgical liturgy. Similarly, in an Indian social system, ‘caste’ happens to be the key oppressive forces and can be termed a ‘perverse liturgy.’ The bodies of the victims of the caste system become ritual sites, where its cruelty dances, and the bodies of the caste groups take their origin from the body of ‘Brahman’ (God), creating hierarchy among different caste groups and excluding those born outside of this body of God. This anti-liturgical liturgy of caste poses a serious ecclesiological, theological and public challenge in the Indian public sphere. Caste has created a dominant public of high castes, then a quasi-public which include the middle class-caste groups who take shelter under the dominant public, and then the non-public, who have been excluded and discriminated under the guise of caste system within the Indian public sphere.\textsuperscript{380} Allow me now to define caste as an anti-liturgical liturgy.


\textsuperscript{380} Though it is not under the purview of this research, I would like to mention that my research on the subaltern public theology contests the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste by calling for a thorough theological interrogation of caste, in other words it calls for a public theological account of caste. In the context of caste, I would like to rediscover the broken body of Christ, as subaltern liturgy, a liturgy from below which engages as a contestatory public theological act.
6.3.2. Defining Caste as an Anti-Liturgical Liturgy:

“When thinking of India, it is hard not to think of caste,” observed Dirks, which is to explain how caste has permeated into all walks of lives in the Indian public sphere. Dumont explains that the index of pollution gets stronger as one goes down the ladder of caste hierarchy, for he has placed caste implicitly as a religious phenomenon. Later, Srinivas’ ‘theory of Sanskritization,’ placed the ritual predominance of certain higher castes in the Indian society, while Dirk’s thesis argued that it was British colonialism which consolidated and systematized the caste system into a more visible and vocal social marker in the Indian public sphere.

Supplementing these social theories of caste, this study analyses caste as anti-liturgical liturgy, by which it is meant a liturgy which is not capable of ‘discharging public office,’ or ‘performing public work’ or ‘love shaping’. In other terms, caste is anti-liturgy that fragments the public sphere as casteist publics and subaltern publics. Caste as anti-liturgical liturgy operates on the doctrine of ‘purity and pollution’ and functions in the public sphere based on the principle of ‘divide and rule.’ This is further reiterated by Ambedkar, when he says “Caste kills the public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible.” The anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, therefore curtails the critical rational opinion in the public sphere, denies love shaping among public, thereby perpetuating hierarchy and the exclusion of those people whose are born outside of this caste system.

There have been several vantage points from where scholars have viewed caste. Mencher’s discussion of caste in, “The caste system upside down or the not-so-mysterious East,” is of relevance for our discussion here. Mencher analyses caste from bottom up and observes:

382 Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus.
384 Dirks, Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India. pp.5-6
385 Ambedkar, “Annihilation of Caste with a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi.” p.56
Looked at from bottom up, the system has two striking features. First, from the point of view of people at the lowest end of the scale, caste has functioned (and continuous to function) as a very effective system of economic exploitation. Second, one of the functions of the system has been to prevent the formation of social classes with any commonality of interest or unity of purpose.387

According to Mencher, those who view the caste system from a top-down, or from a high caste, perspective are the ones who need to rationalizing the system based on dharma and karma (duty and fate), while “those at the bottom appear to have a explicitly more materialistic view of the system and of their role in it than those at the top.”388 Though these observations have a degree of validity in the ongoing discussions of caste, these bottom up or upside down perspectives on caste should not suggest that those on the bottom are incapable of analysing caste theologically and more specifically liturgically, for this current study is invitational towards a liturgical reading of caste from below or from bottom up. I will now discuss caste as anti-liturgical liturgy in at least two categories.

6.3.2.1. Caste as Anti-Liturgical Liturgy Rejects Subjective Representations:

Alluding to Pickstock’s characteristics of anti-liturgical liturgy, allow me to define caste as anti-liturgical liturgy in at least two ways, for it serves as an ‘anti-liturgy’ and ‘perverse liturgy,’ fracturing the public work in the public sphere. Firstly, caste as anti-liturgical liturgy rejects ‘subjective representations and appropriations.’ It is instructive here to understand that ‘Dalit is a subjectivity, which one consciously chooses by rejecting caste.’389 This explains that caste imposes objectivity on the people in the public sphere, where when one is born into a particular caste it is irreversible and unchangeable. Caste has been an imposed objectivity which is revealed by the religious sanctions that it receives from certain scriptural texts like Rigveda, Bhagavad Gita, Manu Dharma Sashtra (the code/law/institutes of Manu), which have codified the classification of society based on descent, colour and occupation.390 In such a context, when caste finds its fecundity as a

387 Ibid. p.469
388 Ibid. p.476
390 Bayly, Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age. p.13-14
divinely ordained institute and imposes objectivity, as ‘caste work is God’s work,’ it succinctly rejects any subjective representations and appropriations. For those born outside of the caste are doomed to be polluting, with no amount of redemption permissible or possible. In countering the imposed objectivity of the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, as an act of defiance to the imposed caste objectivity, in 1927 Ambedkar publicly burned Manusmṛti, which for him was ‘a symbol of the injustice under which we have been crushed for centuries,’ and in 1956 along with one million followers he denounced Hinduism and converted to Buddhism, as a way of subjective appropriation and representation of self in the context of caste oppression.391

Caste as anti-liturgical liturgy takes on ‘automated subjectivities,’ with ‘no punctuations for time.’ A person born into a particular caste continues in that caste, for by the very act of descent, one’s caste is determined and enforced, creating automated subjectivity affirming the unchallenged status quo. For this reason, Ambedkar addressed the representatives of Depressed Classes in 1935 at Yeola, proposing religious conversion as a way forward. As Ambedkar stated, “Unfortunately for me I was born a Hindu Untouchable. It was beyond my power to prevent that, but I declare that it is within my power to refuse to live under ignoble and humiliating conditions. I solemnly assure you that I will not die a Hindu.”392 Automated subjectivities have been imposed by the caste system, for there is ‘no punctuation of time’ in the cycle of descent, for one is born into a caste and will die in that caste, how much ever he achieves in life otherwise. To counter publicly that lack of ‘punctuation of time’, Ambedkar chose religious conversion as a way out. In explaining caste as a practice, Hirst and Zavos discuss caste as jati, which according to the anthropological construct of caste, is based on kinship and proposes endogamy, shared occupation and receiving food only from those of higher or similar ritual status to themselves, as traits of such caste, based on kinship and descent.393 These traits explain the automated subjectivities of the caste that represent its anti-liturgical liturgy’s practices.

392 Ibid. p.253
393 Jacqueline Suthren Hirst and John Zavos, Religious Traditions in Modern South Asia (London: Routledge, 2011), p.146
6.3.2.2. Caste as Anti-Liturgical Liturgy Ascribes to be Ultimate Concern:

Secondly, alluding to Pickstock, caste as anti-liturgical liturgy then becomes the ultimate concern of modernity, displacing genuine transcendence by fixity of space. In other words, caste has proclaimed a false soteriology in the public sphere, for when each person performs their caste assigned duties and jobs, order and harmony in the society is established. In explaining ‘Caste debate and Gandhian nationalism,’ Bayly observes that although Gandhi campaigned to eradicate untouchability, he never denounced it and upheld the principle of varna (caste ideology) as an ‘egalitarian law of life’ for it is divine and moral, indivisible to the very core of Hindu faith. By ascribing divinity to caste, and upholding it as moral, Gandhi saw in caste an ultimate concern to which all humanity needs to subscribe and follow so that there is a balance in the society. Gandhi, therefore defined ‘the law of varna’ as “everyone shall follow as a matter of dharma – duty – the hereditary calling of his forefathers, in so far as it is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics. He will earn his livelihood by following that calling. He may not hoard riches but devote the balance for the good of the people.”394 Thus caste becomes a rule of life, for it is divine, moral and ultimately becomes the ultimate concern of modernity.

Contra to the social theories on caste, Vinayraj’s analysis of ‘caste as an epistemology,’ denies transcendence to Dalit bodies by ascribing full transcendence to caste for its association with the body of God. In explaining caste as an epistemology, Vinayraj says, “Caste functions as the basic knowledge that legitimizes the subsequent hierarchical ordering of the social body, unequal distribution of social capital, and marginalization of Dalit bodies as untouchables.”395 Through this knowledge, power has been asserted for the knowledge of God and ultimate concerns becomes the domain of those holding ‘ritual power’ as practiced in caste.

It is interesting here to understand how caste epistemology operates particularly in understanding the four-fold structure of caste system in relation to the being of God, to be more precise, in relation to the body of God. Rig Veda, which is one the many texts that

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394 Gandhi, Young India 21 Jan 1926 in Iyer 1987: 563 quoted in Bayly, Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age. p.253
395 Vinayaraj, Dalit Theology After Continental Philosophy. p.90
contain the validity of caste system, explains in in *Purusha Sukhta* that the priestly/elite class *Brahmana*, was born out of the mouth of God; the *Rajanyas/Kshyatriyas*, the warrior class came out of the arms of God; the *Vaishyas* – the business class came from the thighs of God; and the *Sudras* – the working class were born out of His feet. When viewed from the bottom-up perspective of caste, this relationship of caste bodies with the body of God brings to the fore the question, from where do those born outside of caste, the Dalits and the Tribals, come from? A subversive understanding of the birth of Dalits and Tribals explain that they are born naturally through the womb of a mother, for they subscribe to the materiality and physicality of life and not the mystical and mythical perspectives of life. Vinayaraj argues that Dalit bodies are ‘denied transcendence’ for they share no ‘ontological participation’ with the body of God. Through this cosmogony of castes, caste bodies share in the body of God and so ascribe transcendence to their bodies. This is an important characteristic of caste’s anti liturgical liturgy, which takes on the role of the ultimate concern of modernity by denying genuine transcendence for all people and to all bodies. Caste as anti-liturgical liturgy privileges certain caste bodies and denies Dalit and Tribal bodies in relation to the transcendental body of God, for caste epistemology excludes Dalit bodies as ‘untouchables,’ ‘polluting’ and ‘outcastes.’ These Dalit and Tribal bodies who are denied the transcendence of God constitute the subaltern public in contrast to the dominant public. Caste becomes an ultimate authority, where fixity of space is practised in ‘residential segregations’ of people in villages and colonies.

Thus, caste is defined as anti-liturgical liturgy from a subaltern public theological position, where caste bodies are privileged epistemologically and ontologically, with an ascribed transcendence. By implication, Dalit bodies or those bodies of people who are born outside of caste are ‘denied transcendence.’ In such a context, contesting the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, ‘the broken body of Christ’ offers to be, and become, a subaltern public liturgical site, where the divine and the subaltern public pitch their tents and dwell in mutual cohesion.

396 Rigveda, 1981: XXC, 126 as cited by Ibid. p.91
6.3.3. Broken Body of Christ: A Subaltern Liturgy for India

Caste, when viewed from bottom-up, reveals that those born outside of the caste are ‘denied transcendence,’ for they are born outside of the body of God. Such an understanding poses a serious ecclesiological problem, for how can the body of God exclude certain people in the name of caste, when the body of God is called to live for such people? In constructing a ‘Dalit theology of De-othering God’, Vinayaraj analyses the Dalit body as a materialist category, discussing the ‘denied transcendence’ of such bodies from a caste epistemology perspective and proposing ‘offered transcendence’ as a Christian theological possibility for such bodies.398 The discussion is very enriching, for he has spent most of his thesis on Dalit bodies and transcendence, however a theological treatment on caste bodies and their ‘self-(pro)claimed transcendence’ was left unattended to. My study therefore, brings to the fore this unattended and unaddressed subject, and initiates a conversation on caste bodies and discusses ‘self-(pro)claimed transcendence’ in the light of ‘broken body of Christ,’ a site of subaltern public liturgy.

6.3.3.1. Broken Body of Christ as a Liturgy of ‘Shared Transcendence’:

The anti-liturgical liturgy of caste operates on the hegemonic principle of dividing people according to notions of the ‘self-(pro)claimed transcendence’ of caste bodies, and ‘denied transcendence’ to ‘out-caste’ bodies. In such a context, ‘the broken body of Christ’ offers as an anti-hegemonic space, sharing transcendence in solidarity with all bodies irrespective of their identities. ‘The body of Christ’ as used in the Pauline literature of the early Church emerges from a context of contesting the Stoic understanding of the body in the Greco-Roman world. For the Stoics affirmed a hierarchical body politic and a hegemonic unity of the body, where the elitist, strong and upper-class bodies are privileged against the slave bodies who were forced to serve the ‘superior bodies.’ Kim observes,

Stoics say society as a body is one; therefore, all members must confirm to the cosmic unity of hierarchy. But Paul says that members of the Corinthian community should take care of each other because they are equal members of God’s household. Indeed, it is God, who chose the weak and the poor in the world (I Cor 1:26-30).399

398 Vinayaraj, Dalit Theology After Continental Philosophy. pp.87 -113
The caste cosmogony of certain caste bodies sharing in the body of God appears similar to the Stoic body politic, affirming the body as one submitting to the cosmic unity of hierarchy. The Pauline ‘body of Christ’ therefore, contrasts this Stoic body politic, and affirms the weaker bodies, bodies that are ‘denied transcendence,’ in equality with the other bodies, for they receive equal honour by God’s radical love and justice. The crucified body of Christ becomes a site of ‘shared transcendence’ where Christ’s body is reimagined through the broken bodies in the world, where the caste body politic of hegemony is denounced, affirming an equal transcendence in all bodies. For in the body politic of Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, master no slave, upper caste or outcaste, for all are one in Christ, sharing equal transcendence in the materiality of bodies. Kim argued that Paul chose the metaphor ‘body of Christ’ to refute the dominant meaning of ‘social body’ of divisions and to claim, ‘body as an expression of holism and dynamism.’ Thus, the broken body of Christ offers to be a subaltern liturgy for India contesting the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste.

6.3.3.2. Broken Body of Christ as a Liturgy of Public Solidarity:
“Christ’s body was broken and crucified as a result of his embodiment of God’s gospel – the cost of embracing the weak, the powerless and the marginalised,” observed Kim, which explains the reason for the brokenness in the body of Christ. The body of Christ is understood in the body of Jesus, who when he opposed the empire was executed as a criminal and his body was broken and wounded. This broken and wounded body of Jesus identifies in solidarity with other broken and crucified bodies, for collectively they become sites of subaltern liturgy. For it contests the anti-liturgical liturgies and also offers healing and hope by sharing transcendence to bodies of denied transcendence.

Moxnes, in reading 1 Peter in the context of empowering slave bodies, recognises slaves as ‘bodies without boundaries,’ who have been subjected to beating. Moxnes then identifies Christ and his beaten body with such slaves. He further says,

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400 Ibid.
401 Ibid. p.22
Christ with a body that suffers the same bruises as the most vulnerable human body represents an identification with those sufferings, but also a healing. It is a healing that creates a different space for the suffering person and that makes her or him into a full person through a new knowledge. This is recognition of the corporeality of a person that cannot be a spiritualised.  

The broken body of Christ opposes openly the caste bodies who ‘self-(pro)claim transcendence’ and it embraces in public solidarity those ‘out-caste’ bodies who are ‘denied transcendence’ and ‘offers transcendence’ to such bodies.

The broken body of Christ is embodied in the world among the crucified communities, whose ‘bare life’ has been affected and disfigured, for to be silent on the face of evil which oppresses people is, in the words of Copeland, “to be complicit with empire’s sacrilegious [anti-liturgy], which dislodges the table of the bread of life.” The caste body in the context of empire dislodges the table of life, which deliberately denies inter-dining among caste bodies and outcaste bodies, perpetrating disorder, hierarchy and inequality among people in the communities based on food-hierarchy. Therefore, as Copeland says, “in solidarity and in love of others and the Other, we are (re)made and (re)marked as the flesh of Christ, as the flesh of his church.” Thus, the broken body of Christ as a subaltern liturgy becomes a site of public solidarity, remaking and remarking the flesh of Christ by the bodies of broken communities, in this case the bodies of outcaste Dalits. To put it differently, ‘Good Friday,’ which Christians observe in the liturgical calendar as a day on which Jesus Christ’s body was broken and crucified, will be observed in subaltern liturgical public practice as a ‘Day in solidarity with communities broken and crucified by the unjust oppressive systems.’ Such a rendering reflects the amphibious nature of public theology from a subaltern perspective, (re)marking theology relevant to the public sphere of our times.

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404 Gundimeda, “Democratisation of the Public Sphere: The Beef Stall Case in Hyderabad’s Sukoon Festival.” p. 129. He explains food hierarchy and caste hierarchy’s dialectical matrix.

405 Copeland, Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being. p.83
6.3.3.3. Broken Body of Christ as a Liturgy of Anti-Caste Epistemology:

In contrast to the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, which is grounded on caste epistemology, where “sacrality and purity of the body and space is defined by accessibility to the esoteric knowledge of God and the ritualistic practices that disseminate this knowledge,” the broken body of Christ offers as a liturgy of anti-caste epistemology, where a liturgical community is formed around the body of Christ, grounded on the knowledge and practices of materiality.\textsuperscript{406} The broken body of Christ forms a liturgical community, honouring ‘bodies without boundaries’ as equals, inviting to collectively support one another in their struggles, for ‘if one member suffers all suffer together, and if one member is honoured all rejoice together.’\textsuperscript{407} Such an ontological politics of the broken body of Christ comes out of an oppositional knowledge contesting caste epistemology, shifting its perspectives from transcendence to immanence, and turning towards materiality as spirituality.

Mesher rejects ‘sacramental consumerism’, where liturgy has become another act of consumerism, and proposes ‘sacramental participation,’ by inviting the members of the body of Christ to be ‘co-responsible’ in receiving the gift and offering a ‘return gift’ by ‘living the gift in the world.’\textsuperscript{408} In other words, the anti-liturgical epistemology of caste is based on possessions and divisions, whereas the liturgy of broken body of Christ is based on dispossessions, to the extent of dying for the other and sharing equality among its members.

Thus, the broken body of Christ becomes a public theological site of subaltern liturgy, which contests the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, and offers a just and inclusive communion for all members in the public sphere irrespective of their identities. In fact, the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste demonstrates its litany by violence, wants to destroy bodies by killings, scatter bodies through terror acts, crucify bodies by unjust crucifixions, disappear bodies by torture, and disintegrate the bio-politics of life.\textsuperscript{409} In contrast to this, a subaltern liturgy

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{406} Vinayaraj, Dalit Theology After Continental Philosophy. p.91
\item\textsuperscript{407} I Corinthians 12:26
\item\textsuperscript{409} Bayly explains ‘caste wars’ and the mandate of violence to explain the kids of violence meted by dominant castes against lower castes and Dalits. Bayly, Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age. pp.342-364
\end{itemize}
of the broken body of Christ receives and embraces broken bodies into its fold, affirming life to all through resurrection experience. Thus, subaltern liturgy as a theological account of subaltern public is rediscovered, by exposing caste as anti-liturgical liturgy, and by offering the ‘broken body of Christ’ as a subaltern liturgy. This discussion leads on to a discussion of the contours of subaltern public theology for India, which explains the public character of subaltern public theology.

6.4. Contours of Subaltern Public Theology for India:

Platten’s comment that, “Liturgy is rarely, if ever, associated with public theology” comes as a challenge in invoking subaltern liturgy as a theological account of public. Taking this comment as an invitation or in the liturgical words as an introit, to pursue the association between subaltern liturgy and public theology for India, the following discussion provides the contours towards a subaltern public theology for India. Since the main aim of this study is to explore the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity, and for me the contours, tasks and scope explain the public character. The following section provides the first set of public character of subaltern public theology for India, which is the contours.

In the construction of a subaltern public theology for India, firstly an enquiry into the very definition of theology is required, for such an interrogation helps theology to go public in a subaltern way. Ward, on engaging with this basic question of what Christian theology is, elucidates that theology is a ‘discourse’. He further extends his enquiry to ask, ‘what kind of discourse?’ For our discussion here, his enquiry on this discourse is useful. He says, “is it a discourse about God (as an object), a discourse in God (because it participates in God’s disclosure of Himself), a discourse from God (who is its author and origin), or a discourse to God (as faith seeks understanding in a pilgrimage towards salvation)?” To this question, Ward further discusses the kind of discourses that theology can be expressed and concludes that ‘theology is primarily about communication’ and in that communication, he goes on to say that ‘theology is a presentation of faith, a representation of faith.’

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410 Platten, “Niebuhr, Liturgy and Public Theology.” p.102
If theology goes public, how do we then knit these articulations of God, communication, representation and public, so that theology becomes relevant? It is here that I have argued for a ‘subaltern liturgy’ as a theological account of public, which holds in creative tension, the discourse of God, the communication of God, the representation of faith of the subaltern public, for it offers an important theological site of doing public theology. We also need to recognise that in the early Christian Church, the distinction between theology and liturgy was not as dichotomised as we have it in our (post)modern times today. Zymaris observes that “theology in the sense of liturgical participation was the prerogative of every baptised Christian.”\(^{412}\) He further explains that the Greek *Theos* and *logos* in theology can be translated as ‘words appropriate to God’, i.e. ‘communication and relationship with God, which means prayer and especially the prayer of the assembly, the *synaxis*, as identified with the *Eucharist*.\(^{413}\) The primacy of the corporate nature of ‘words appropriate to God’ as liturgy provides the very basis for public theology in taking a subaltern liturgical turn.

This therefore brings to the fore three important questions to discuss here in the light of theology going public. Firstly, if theology is a conversation of, from and to God, which God are we talking about in the public? Secondly, if theology is about communication, what kind of communication does theology bring of the public? Thirdly, if theology is about representation of faith, who represents whom and how are the subalterns representing their faith of the Indian public? All these three questions find its solutions in the very articulation of public theology as subaltern liturgy. Subaltern liturgy explains that it is the subaltern God who emerges from ‘bottom up’ and from within, as an immanent God ‘offering transcendence’ to bodies of ‘denied transcendence’ by the ‘shared transcendence’ of the body of Christ. Communication builds communities, and subaltern liturgy mediates communication in the public sphere, from the perspectives of margins, for a ‘liturgy before liturgy’ provides voice to the dreams and aspirations of the subalterns in the public sphere.


\(^{413}\) Ibid.
It is in the recognition of subalterns as bio-political beings, and in reclaiming the subaltern public as a real public, that subalterns re-present themselves in various creative ways of drumming, myths, rituals, etc.

To understand the public character of subaltern public theology for India allow me to present its three contours, God from bottom-up, liturgy before liturgy, and bio-political life.

6.4.1. Subaltern Public Theology for India Affirms in the Politics of Immanent Divine of the Public: God from Bottom-Up

Young’s volume Dare we speak of God in Public? reflects on the need to speak of God and God-talk in public. In the background of growing privatisation of religion with the rise of secularism and post-secularism in the west, this question ‘Dare we speak of God in public?’ becomes more relevant and pertinent in the public theological enterprise. If this question must be imported into the Indian context, the question might be tweaked to read, “Dare not we speak of God in Public?” This tweaking is necessary because of the growing religious fundamentalism among religions, where God, and religion is appropriated and owned by all walks of life in the public sphere from politics, to business to academia to education.

There are several examples which might be employed to explain the invocation of God in the Indian public sphere, but in order to illustrate how God-talk is used or ‘abused’ in the public sphere, I will discuss the inscription engraved on the Legislative Assembly building of a Karnataka State Government in Bangalore, where inscribed in Kannada (the local state language) and in English is the term “Government’s work is God’s work.” The inscription explains how important it is for a public in India to use theological language to express their aspirations. The public inscription has a theological implication where the government is trying to elevate itself in the public sphere to the ‘ultimate concern’ called God, implying that their public policies as divine and infallible. Any protest, dissent and opposition against

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414 Frances Young, ed., Dare We Speak of God in Public? (New York: Mowbray, 1995).
415 Graham mapped the post-secular context of the West as a ‘the unquiet frontier,’ in her book Graham, Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age. pp.32-66
416 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vidhana_Soudha (10.03.17)
the policies of the government are then considered to be against God, and eventually to be sinful and ungodly. This is just a tip of an iceberg of how God and God-talk has been used, misused and abused in the Indian public sphere. This is an example of what Cavanaugh would call ‘the myth of the state as saviour,’ trying to offer salvation for its citizens, explaining the anti-liturgical liturgical character of the state.\textsuperscript{417} The government and the state present themselves as equal with the transcendent divine.

To contest such ‘self (pro)claimed transcendence’ by caste and state, subaltern liturgy as a theological account of subaltern public, questions such self (pro)claimed divinity by asking which God is invoked in the public. Agamben in critiquing the power in liturgy, explains that, over the years, the sovereignty of the earthly powerful has been justified by positioning God in transcendence.\textsuperscript{418} In other words, by ascribing divinity to the government and state, these bodies invoke a transcendent God, for only such a divine can justify their earthly powers and sovereignty. Even the modern capitalistic societies have appropriated such sovereignty and exercise its power. Therefore, Agamben proposes a theology of immanent God, which forms the core of subaltern liturgy.\textsuperscript{419} To put it another way, as explained earlier, subalternity shifts theology towards a ‘de-transcendental sacred,’ which is to seek an immanent God, an incarnate God, an ‘inter-carnate God’ and an ‘enmattered God’, who would irrupt from within sites of subalternity to contest the domination of caste and all such publics.\textsuperscript{420} The politics of an immanent God would be the first contour of a subaltern public theology for India.

\textsuperscript{417} Cavanaugh, \textit{Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism}. p.10. Cavanaugh therefore exposes the false myth of the state which has consecrated itself as a saviour of the people by saving them from the ‘wars of religions,’ offering a ‘false soteriology’ to all its citizens, where the ‘state body is a simulacrum, a false copy of the Body of Christ.’

\textsuperscript{418} For which, Agamben says, “Identifying in Glory the central mystery of power and interrogating the indissoluble nexus that links it to government and \textit{oikonomia} will seem an obsolete operation to some. And the function of acclamations and Glory, in the modern form of public opinion and consensus, is still at the centre of the political apparatuses of contemporary democracies...To have completely integrated Glory with \textit{oikonomia} in the acclamative form of consensus is, more specifically, the specific task carried out by contemporary democracies and their \textit{government by consent}...” It has always been the powerful who invoke glory and acclamations through religious ceremonies, to justify their sovereignty and authority. Agamben, \textit{The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government}. p. xii

\textsuperscript{419} Ibid. p.314

\textsuperscript{420} Refer to 4.3.2.2.
In expounding a ‘theology of the multitudes’ in the context of the Occupy Movement, Reiger & Pui-lan attempt to reimagine God from bottom-up, as they critique the top-down God and top-down God talk which normalises the status-quo, for such an image of God has supported the hierarchy among creation and eventually upheld the domination of the powerful.\(^{421}\) They call for ‘liberating God from theism,’ for theism promoted a top-down understanding of God, in which both liberal and conservative Christians became trapped in their theology and perspectives. The Jesus Movement was an organisation organised from the bottom-up and cautions that ‘from below’ in Christ cannot simply be equated with his humanity, and ‘from above’ is not merely about Christ’s divinity. They say, “Both humanity and divinity can move from top down, as numerous empires have clearly shown. But both humanity and divinity can also move from the bottom up. This has been shown by Jesus movement and many other resistance movements in the history.”\(^{422}\) They further argue that God is known as ‘God in relation to lives and histories of people,’ particularly by consciously siding with the powerless communities and struggling along with them for justice. Ambedkar’s subaltern act of Kalaram temple entry, burning of Scriptures that sanction caste system explain that in such acts the immanent divine was in action.\(^{423}\)

Subaltern liturgy’s articulation of the ‘broken body of Christ’ in the context of caste, reveals and projects such an immanent God, who has been broken and is identified with the broken communities in the public. In the case of caste bodies, as explained in the previous section, they ascribe to them ‘offered transcendence,’ and therefore their God and God talk is all from top to bottom, with gradations, hierarchies and exclusions. For the ‘out castes’, who seek ‘shared transcendence’ with the divine in the broken body of Christ, their God is an immanent God and a crucified God, understood in terms of open materialism. For such a God contests the dominant public by evolving from among the sites of subalternity. Thus, subaltern liturgy affirming in an immanent God serves as a first contour in understanding the public character of subaltern public theology for India.

\(^{422}\) Ibid. p. 95
\(^{423}\) Refer to 5.4.1.
However, having discussed the being of God, we now need to understand the doing of God. Where is God at work in the public? What is liturgical about God’s public work? In answering this question, Reiger and Pui-lan explain that many would say God is at work everywhere, a view which can only emerge out of the top-down, powerful understanding of God, while many others think that God is working in the religious sanctuaries, so they go to Church to meet him. The dominant caste public has subscribed and propagated that God is on the side of the status quo, and so they have continued their dominance of being chosen and blessed etc.

It is therefore observed, “However, if the response to the question of where God is at work is “with the least of these” (Matt 25:45), “with people who are struggling with hunger and oppression” (Luke 1: 46-55), on “the main streets” (Matt 22: 9), in the “streets and lanes of the town where the poor are gathered” (Luke 14: 21), or with the uneducated, the powerless and the lower classes (I Cor. 1: 26-29) – all places where deep solidarity is experienced – then it may be worth paying attention to religion and theology once again.”424 Thus, the immanent God, who is perceived from bottom up, is at work on the ‘outside the camps,’ ‘non-public spaces,’ ‘indecent spaces,’ and at subaltern spaces of the public, for out of these spaces subaltern doxologies are sung and heard, for a ‘subaltern God’ or in the words of Nirmal a ‘Dalit God’ is at work along with them in sites of subalternity for justice and liberation.

In the context of public theology as subaltern liturgy, this conversation on the bottom-up divine, an immanent divine, and an inter-carnate divine, working in the sites of subalternity forms the core of ‘God-talk’ in articulating a subaltern public theology for India. For the immanent God is at work with the subaltern communities who are struggling for justice in the public, which becomes a new liturgical community, where doxologies are sung from below to the God from below. It is particularly relevant to invoke the discussion of Vinayaraj, on “Dalit Theology of De-othering God,” where he proposes Dalit God as the ‘Embodied God,’ as the ‘Immanent God’ and as the ‘Multi-God,’ for he argues that Dalit

epistemology is grounded on open materialism, and therefore rejects the notions of ‘transcendent other’ of God.425

Subaltern public theology for India as subaltern liturgy affirms in the immanent God, the crucified God, who happens from bottom up rather than top down. For such liturgies evolve outside of the top-down theologies, and are grounded on open materialism, in the broken body of Christ. This understanding of God from bottom up challenges the public to construct it from bottom up, and reclaim the public works happening at sites of subalternity, whose epistemological sites are sites of materialism. This contour of subaltern liturgy’s affirmation in an immanent, crucified God demonstrates the public character of subaltern public theology for India, explaining the discourse of God in theology.

6.4.2. Subaltern Public Theology as ‘Liturgy Before the Liturgy’:
The second facet of the theology I have identified in the previous section is about communication. It is here that I propose ‘liturgy before the liturgy’ as the communication of theology, explaining it as a second contour of subaltern public theology for India.

One of the important contributions of Orthodox theology to the theology of ecumenism is the invocation of the very idea of ‘liturgy after the liturgy,’ which emerged during 1970’s during the conversations on the linking of theology of mission and theology of church. In the context of making liturgy a site of public theology, by bringing in the relevance of liturgy to the daily life affairs or public issues in the public sphere, ‘liturgy after the liturgy’ evolved. Bria, therefore explains:

The dynamics of the liturgy go beyond the boundaries of the Eucharistic assembly to serve the community at large. The Eucharistic liturgy is not an escape into an inner realm of prayer, pious turning away from social realities; rather, it calls and sends the faithful to celebrate “the sacrament of brother” outside the temple in the public market place, where the cries of the poor and marginalized are heard.426

425 Vinayaraj, Dalit Theology After Continental Philosophy. pp.106-109
For Bria, the significance of liturgy as understood in the context of public theology is “sacrament of brother[sister].”\textsuperscript{427} This locates liturgy in the public sphere, for liturgy gets activated in response to hearing the cries of the marginalized, for it is here that the liturgy is opened inside out in the public sphere.

In the context of the engaging conversations on theology in the public, liturgy and subalternity, Coorilos, proposes mission as “liturgy before the liturgy,”\textsuperscript{428} thus supplementing ‘liturgy after the liturgy.’ This has some important implications for subaltern public theological enterprise. In the context of brokenness, lack of relationships between humanity and nature, exclusions and marginalization, Coorilos alludes that if the churches are to be and become credible in such contexts, ‘liturgy before the liturgy,’ becomes necessitated. He further says,

Perhaps it’s also time we practiced inhaling in witness and exhaling worship. How can we possibly claim to be a credible worshipping community if we are still far from being able to practise equality, sharing, justice and mutuality in our ecclesial and social engineering? How can we possibly call ourselves a liturgical community if churches continue to discriminate against people on the bases of caste, race, gender and so on even within their worship life? What is Holy Communion without social communion? To me, the challenge seems to lie in taking up ‘liturgy after liturgy’ (the ministry of healing and reconciliation) before liturgy. The actual practice of healing and reconciliation needs to be reflected in the liturgical life of the church.\textsuperscript{429}

In a way Coorilos critiques the church public, for if the church does not contribute towards social communion, in other words when there is social dis-communion among the members in the community, what is the meaning and purpose of partaking in Holy Communion? For Holy Communion loses its validity and relevance in such a context and therefore calls for a public witness of the church outside of its public which defines the Church as a liturgical community.

\textsuperscript{427} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{429} Ibid. pp. 76-77
When the church public is divided in the name of castes, and is unequal, the task of public theology is to devise a ‘liturgy before liturgy’ so that healing and reconciliation first happens, and this is then reflected in our liturgical communion. This then calls us to discuss how we might identify the site where ‘liturgy before the liturgy’ happens. It is here that I want to propose subaltern liturgy as a liturgical site in the public sphere, where witness to unjust caste practices are inhaled, and contestation of dominant public is exhaled. One might ask, “What is the distinction between ‘liturgy after the liturgy’ and ‘liturgy before the liturgy’ and why is subaltern liturgy located as a site before church(y) liturgy?” The episteme of ‘liturgy after liturgy’ privileges the church(y) liturgy and considers subalternity as a mission field imbibing a colonial practice of ‘mission to the margins.’ On the other hand, the episteme of ‘liturgy before liturgy’ de-privileges church(y) liturgy as normative and seeks to find a subaltern public and its liturgical acclamations for justice as prerogative, investing in a decolonial practice of ‘mission from the margins.’ Subaltern public theology for India as a communication of subaltern liturgical public is therefore a ‘liturgy before the liturgy,’ singing doxology from the margins, engaging in communication and communion on the sites of subalternity. In the context of the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, the subaltern liturgy of broken body of Christ serves as a ‘liturgy before the liturgy’ striving to build communication and communion among all the organs of the body.

For Cavanaugh, ‘Eucharist’ is a ‘spatial story’ where time and space are politically reimagined, but for Coorilos, ‘Holy Communion’ is a ‘community story’, where the constituency of the community matters, for unequal members of the public cannot form a communion in its ‘holy’ sense. In our public theological rendering, ‘Holy Communion’ is only possible when there is ‘social communion’ among the members of the community, and this is possible in the sites of subalternity. Subaltern liturgical public is a public theological site where the self is ‘deconstructed’ and the other is ‘revisited.’ In this way it

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431 Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism.* p.4

432 Mor Coorilos, “Perspective 3: Bishop Geevarghese Mor Coorilos, Malankara Syriac Orthodox Church, India.” p.76
forms a community of equals driving away all the barriers that divide the community. As discussed in Chapter 4, for Vinayraj, ‘subalternity is a radical theological location, where the self and the other are constantly interrogated and reconfigured.’

Coorilos further elucidates this by saying, “In fact, the Biblical tradition does take us in that direction: ‘Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before that altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.’ (Matthew 5: 23-24)”

It is the reconciliation that happens before the liturgy which is crucial to participation in the church liturgy. Subaltern public theology for India challenges existing modes and models of reconciliation by calling on those ‘privileged’ caste publics to reconcile with their sisters and brothers by giving up their power and build a just and inclusive communion, so that a peace offering can then be made in the liturgy of the liturgical community. By such an act, a subaltern liturgical public is built as a community before the worshipping community, where reconciliation, justice, equality is affirmed as public testimonies and provides a theological affirmation to partake in the ‘Holy Communion.’ This forms the core of the subaltern liturgy of the subaltern public, as Tillard says, “The eucharist is explained by the church and the church is explained by the eucharist.” Subaltern liturgy of public challenges this notion and reinvents this idea for, ‘the ‘Holy Communion’ as explained by the liturgical community which is spread before and after the liturgy and the liturgical community is explained by ‘Holy Communion’ in the realisation of the ‘social communion,’ in the public sphere, which is the communication of the subaltern liturgical public.

While discussing Eucharist in the context of capitalism and colonialism, Balasuriya explains the relationship of Eucharist and human liberation by stating that,

When the Eucharist ceases to relate to integral human liberation, it ceases to be connected with Christ’s life sacrifice; it does not then build human community; it does not, therefore, help constitute the kingdom of God on earth; it does not even

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433 Refer 4.3.2.3 of this thesis
434 Mor Coorilos, “Perspective 3: Bishop Geovarghese Mor Coorilos, Malankara Syriac Orthodox Church, India.” p. 77
honour God objectively. It becomes a ritual without life, like the type of sacrifices condemned by God in the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{436}

By this statement Balasuriya explains that liturgy in the public sphere has to relate to the integral human liberation, otherwise it ceases its liturgical principle and becomes a lifeless ritual. Subaltern public theology for India as a communication of subaltern liturgy therefore emphasises the importance of liturgical community, which in its liberative affirmations ascribes liturgical principles to the ritual performed in the public sphere, bringing to the fore the importance of ‘integral human liberation’ to liturgy and vice versa.

The ‘broken body of Christ’ as subaltern liturgy is a site of contestation, deconstruction and aporia, while offering to be ‘liturgy before the liturgy,’ and striving to build social communion prior to holy communion. This is done by challenging the dominant caste publics to give up their privilege, and by affirming the equality of the members of the body. As such, it becomes a liturgical site conducive to the type of social communion which will lead to active and meaningful participation in the ‘Holy Communion.’ Thus, ‘liturgy before the liturgy’ serves as a contour of subaltern public theology for India and demonstrates its public character by explaining its communicative role.

\textbf{6.4.3. Subaltern Public Theology Recognises the Biopolitical Nature of Life:}  
Thirdly, re-presentation is another aspect of theology, and I propose ‘recognition of the biopolitical nature of life’ as a contour of subaltern public theology for India. In western political thought, according to Agamben there has always been a distinction between natural life (ζωή, zoe) and political life (βίος, bios), like refugees, and immigrants. as ‘no human,’ ‘bare life,’ or ‘state of exception,’ for they are either ‘excluded in’ or ‘included out.’\textsuperscript{437} Alluding to Agamben, Vinayaraj says, “life, whether it is biological or political, is nothing but biopolitical – an act of sovereignty...For Agamben, it is impossible to get rid of this politicization of life or biopolitics of the sovereign power, and any attempt to resist it will ultimately become an entrenchment of the very powers that is mobilized against it.”\textsuperscript{438}
This recognition of biopolitical nature of life, is an important hermeneutical web in connecting public, theology, liturgy and subalternity. The anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, by ascribing ‘self (pro)claimed transcendence’ to the caste groups, privilege themselves with eternal life and thereby enjoy power and dominance in their earthly life. To those born outside of caste system, the Dalits and subalterns, their biological life is polluting because of their descent, and their political life is ‘outcaste’ because of the social caste hierarchy. In such a context, subaltern liturgy as a theological account of subaltern public, recognises the biopolitical nature of life to all people, holding within its amphibious character the zoe, bio, polis, demos, oikos, oklos nature of life and affirms in the integrated value of life. For the episteme of subalternity transgresses and transcends the distinction of biological life and political life of people and affirms in the biopolitical nature of life in the public sphere, specially to those people with a ‘denied transcendence.’

Subalternity contests the ‘empires of minds,’ the powers of coloniality, which employ this ‘divide and rule’ nature to life and decolonise life by integrating it as biopolitical. Caste epistemologies marginalise Dalit bodies as ‘untouchables’ and deny them access to public spaces like temples, deny their right to eat beef etc. and deny them a political and social life. In other words, the denial of political life to subalterns in the public sphere is the denial of natural life, and therefore the task of a subaltern public theology for India is to contest such distinctions and such denial of life, by engaging in a liturgy from below, paving way for the flourishing of life in the public sphere. In discussing the re-presentation of faith, subaltern public theology for India affirms the ‘biopolitical’ life of subaltern communities, for it is these communities who re-present faith of the public as subaltern public.

In the context of ‘bare life’ and ‘state of exception,’ where the living is considered dead, Agamben employs a ‘messianic politics’ which becomes an ‘irruption of messianic time.’ This messianic time is not an apocalyptic time, rather a time of immediacy, for it is not an

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439 Mani explains ‘empire of minds’ as knowledge power, for all hierarchies of inequalities based on caste, class, gender etc. were built on claims of knowledge in Braj Ranjan Mani, “The Politics of Knowledge and Caste,” Countercurrents.Org, March 2012, https://www.countercurrents.org/mani200312.htm. (27.03.18)

indeterminate waiting for the Messiah to come and redeem, rather the present in history is the eschaton where the Messiah has already come, which in a way is to conceive the present as the end. Agamben borrows this idea of messianic time from St. Paul, and names this *Kairos* as ‘the time that remains.’ Agamben says,

> It is as though man, in so far as he is a thinking and speaking being, produced an additional time with regard to chronological time, a time that prevented him from perfectly coinciding with the time out of which he could make images and representations. This ulterior time, nevertheless, is not another time, it is not a supplementary time added on from the outside to chronological time. Rather, it is something like a time within time - not ulterior but interior – which only measures my disconnection with regard to it, my being out of synch and in noncoincidence with regard to my representation of time.\footnote{Ibid. p. 67}

This understanding of ‘time within time’ as Messianic time offers an important aspect of subaltern liturgy and paves way towards a subaltern public theology for India.

Earlier in the conversation, we have discussed Pickstock’s argument that modernity’s induction of a ‘lack of punctuation to time’ by creating ‘mechanistic repetitions’ is an important trait of anti-liturgical liturgy, a trait which is also evident in the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste. In contrast to this kind of understanding of time, a subaltern public theology for India as subaltern liturgy irrigups on Messianic time, a time within time, ‘a now-time’ as God’s appointed time, where time seeks a punctuation in itself, renewing in itself and irrigupting in itself. Alluding to Agamben, Markose redefines Church as ‘a coming community’ happens during this time within time.\footnote{Baiju Markose, *Rhizomatic Reflections: Discourses on Religion and Theology* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2018). p.10} In light of this discussion, subaltern liturgy, a liturgy from below irrigups on the Messianic time, which locates public as a space where ‘time within time’ happens. Such a public is a ‘coming community’ which we need to recognise as subaltern public, for it contests the anti-liturgical liturgies of the public at a Kairos moment. Thus, recognising the ‘bio-political life’ of the subaltern public serves as a contour for subaltern public theology for India. This explains the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity.
Subaltern public theology for India as subaltern liturgy, therefore is a discourse of a subaltern God from a subaltern perspective, communicated as ‘liturgy before the liturgy’ in means and modes of subalternity, where subalterns present and re-present their faith narratives in Messianic time and experiences of the public. It is the epistemic experiential sites of subalternity, that serves as the locus of this theology as subaltern liturgy, where deconstruction and contestation become its epistemological and hermeneutical points of departure. When theology goes public, taking a liturgical turn, the subaltern way, it irrupts the dominant public on a messianic time, reclaiming its own space as a real-public, enchanting its own subaltern liturgy by contesting the anti-liturgical liturgies of modernity. Thus, ‘God from bottom-up’, ‘a liturgy before the liturgy’ and ‘bio-political life’ serves as the contours of a subaltern public theology for India and serves as its public character.

6.5. Conclusion:
The discussion in this chapter provides an understanding of the theological account of subaltern public, which I have explained as subaltern liturgy. In light of the discussion in this chapter, I want to propose a working definition for subaltern public theology for India as: a subaltern liturgy contesting the anti-liturgical liturgies of caste and all such forms, whose public character is explained by its ‘contours, tasks and scope.’ This definition provides a corrective to the definitional deficiency of public theology by developing ‘public character of public theology’ deviating from the definitions of ‘seeking a theological relevance on public issues.’ The discussion in this thesis also provides a corrective to the subalternity deficiency of public theology by providing ‘theological subalternity’ and ‘subaltern publics’ as its accompaniments and by explaining ‘subaltern liturgy’ as the theological account of subaltern public.

Public theology as subaltern liturgy, contests the anti-liturgical liturgies of modernity, and reclaims subaltern public as real public, in opposition to the dominant publics in the public sphere. A theological account of subaltern public finds its fecundity in subaltern liturgy, which in the case of the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste is explained in the broken body of Christ. The three contours of a subaltern public theology ‘God from bottom-up,’ ‘liturgy
before liturgy’ and ‘bio-political life’ explain the public character of public theology from sites of subalternity.

Public theology as a subaltern liturgy is a kind of performative styles\textsuperscript{443} of doing theology, contesting the complex trajectories of the anti-liturgical liturgies of our times. I shall explain the performance of subaltern public theology for India by its tasks and scope in the next chapter.

To summarise this chapter, subaltern liturgy contests the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste and such manifestations and provides a theological account of subaltern public in the broken body of Christ. In other words, subaltern liturgy is a theological account of subaltern public. Such a discussion provides three contours of subaltern public theology, which are ‘God from bottom-up,’ ‘liturgy before liturgy’ and ‘bio-political life.’ These contours explain the first aspect of the public character of subaltern public theology for India.

\textsuperscript{443} Graham explains public theology can be explained in one more forms of performative styles like liturgy, drama and music. Graham, \textit{Words Made Flesh}. p.239
Chapter 7
The Tasks and Scope of Subaltern Public Theology for India

7.1. Introduction:
Having pitched subaltern liturgy as a theological account of subaltern public in Chapter 6 and having discussed the contours of subaltern public theology for India as the first aspect of its public character, this present chapter discusses the other two aspects of the public character of subaltern public theology for India, its tasks and scope. This chapter contains three sections, with section one discussing ‘naming and reclaiming subaltern liturgical public.’ This discussion aims at explaining the nature of a subaltern liturgical public. Section two discusses the tasks of subaltern public theology for India, which are explained as doxological, pedagogical, epistemological and praxiological tasks. Section three discusses the transnational public sphere as the scope of subaltern public theology for India.

7.2. Naming and Reclaiming Subaltern Liturgical Public:
In the light of the discussion on subaltern liturgy as a theological account of subaltern public in Chapter 6, subaltern public was advocated as an authentic public, for the dominant public is contaminated with anti-liturgical liturgies. A theological account of subaltern public as subaltern liturgy communicates that publics are theologically liturgical, while some offer false soteriologies like that of state, globalisation, civil society etc. while others contest and contrast them like that of subaltern publics. 444 Before I discuss the tasks and scope of subaltern public theology for India, alluding to Smith,445 I want to name and reclaim subaltern public when looked through the prism of liturgy, which I call ‘subaltern liturgical public.’ This pursuit reclaims subaltern liturgical public as the real public, where power is interrogated, and anti-liturgical liturgies are annihilated. Carvalhaes opines that the starting point of any public theology is to unpack what ‘public’ means, and with whom, and to whom, are we making a commitment in this enterprise. He further says, “the liturgical quest here is to determine where and with whom we pray. The answer will decide

444 Cavanaugh, Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism.
445 Smith, Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology. pp.13-18
what we believe and what sort of liturgical theology we are offering.”

This reinvigorates the quest for naming and reclaiming subaltern liturgical public, for it is in this site that ‘theology as prayer’ happens with those on the sites of subalternity, by those on the margins and for those on the margins. In order to reclaim subaltern liturgical public as real public, I will discuss the characteristics of this public, for it will inform the kind of public theology we are offering.

7.2.1. Subaltern Liturgical Public is (Ad)ministered by Justice:

In contesting the anti-liturgical liturgies, subaltern liturgical public is contesting unjust functions and practices in the public sphere and is striving towards a just place, where justice is (ad)ministered. An analysis of the subaltern interrogation of public in Chapter 5, has brought forth public as anti-hegemonic space, for its liturgy as public work is ministered and (ad)ministered by values of justice. Subaltern liturgical public contests the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, which is centred on the occupational based classification of people, and aspires for public work based on justice, which is communitarian and collaborative. In naming the public liturgical space, Carvalhaes brings in the idea of ‘Ubuntu,’ which is I am because we are, we are because I am. This defines the very nature of the subaltern liturgical public, where the identity of the individual and the community is governed by anti-hierarchal, anti-caste, anti-hegemonic, just and inclusive values. In the context of 8th Century BCE, when the then public sphere was filled with injustice, unkindness and pride, the prophet Micah enquires, “What does the Lord require of you?” The prophet responds liturgically, in contrast to the anti-liturgical liturgies of sacrifices, burnt offerings, etc., stating that what is required is, “to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8). Justice (Mishpat) has been the character of God, and therefore becomes a theological ethic of the public sphere, for the same has been the aspiration of the subalterns in their quest to overcome the barriers of exclusion and discrimination. Diann Neu observes, “In liturgy we get in touch with fundamental

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447 Ibid. p.478
experiences of justice or the lack of them.” As such, subaltern liturgical public celebrates the justice of God and affirms equality and inclusivity within that public by contesting all forms of injustice.

### 7.2.2. Subaltern Liturgical Public is a Site of Aporia:

As explained in Chapter 4, subalternity as an aporia, that is an impasse and a puzzle, and a subaltern liturgical public is an aporetic site, where the binaries such as universal/particular, sacred/secular, spiritual/material, global/local, and imagined/reality are held together in creative tension. As a site of aporia, its epistemology is expressed candidly in oppositional knowledge from below, where the binaries cull out their inconsistencies together and synthesizing coherence in decolonial, de-textual and deconstructive spaces. It is also a site of ‘third space’ that ‘in-between-ness’ or a space ‘beyond oppositional binaries.’ In subaltern liturgical public, subalternity, liturgy and public are held together as an aporia. In other words, the anti-liturgical publics are rigid and fixated, exercising hegemony, dividing people and society according to their rule. In the case of the caste publics, the division of people based on occupation receives divine Scriptural sanction and stands as an irreversibly ordained system. Subaltern liturgical public affirms preaching good news to the poor by announcing bad news to the rich, as being prophetic and kerygmatic are held together as an aporia in this space. This explains that the boundaries of subaltern liturgical public are very transient, transparent, porous, and flexible, for it takes shape in time and space to contest anti-liturgical liturgy. By this act, it redeems both space and time with new songs and litanies. So, subaltern public when viewed through the prism of liturgy is a site of aporia.

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[449] Refer to 4.3.1
[450] Refer to 6.2.2.1.
7.2.3. Subaltern Liturgical Public is the Eschatological Consummation of ‘the City to Come’:

Subaltern liturgical public is always on the go, evolving according to the subaltern epistemic experiential demands of the given time and space, for it is constantly in exile with a tryst for destiny. It is not a site of inertia and lethargy, but a site of dynamism where anti-liturgical liturgies are contested. Subalternity constitutes struggles for ‘bare life’ and the liturgy that evolves out of these struggles, represents the liturgy of the Dalits and their ‘wounded psyche’, the liturgy of the undocumented refugees, the liturgy of several unnamed and unrecorded oppressed communities, all expressing their aspirations for a just public. One of the motifs of post-secular public theology as Christian apologetics proposed by Graham is ‘to seek the welfare of the city’ by which she attempts to seek solidarity with secular. However, the focus and the motif of subaltern liturgical public is ‘to wait for the city to come’ awaiting that ‘messianic irruption,’ in which it seeks an eschatological hope towards an authentic public to come. In Agamben’s words, it is ‘the coming community, which is opposed to sovereignty, beyond any representation. This aspiration of the ‘the city to come’ provides a paradigm and a proforma for the subaltern liturgical public to set its standards according to and to engage uncompromisingly with its practices here and now. The aim of the subaltern liturgical public is, firstly, to make it a space of eschatological consummation of the ‘city of come’, and secondly, to challenge the rest of the publics to be and become a reflection of the ‘city to come.’ The eschatological ‘city to come’ is grounded in the values of justice & equality, for it originates from the divine and returns to the divine.

7.2.4. Subaltern Liturgical Public is a ‘Public After Theology’:

In Chapter 4, I discussed subalternity as deconstructive hermeneutics, unsettling ‘transcendent divine’ theos in theology and moving towards an ‘immanent divine’, while also unsettling logos and moving from ‘written-ness’ to ‘orality’, thus proposing ‘theo-
orality’ for ‘theology.’ On a similar note subaltern liturgy has unsettled public, or in other words, public has been influenced by subaltern liturgy to contest the anti-liturgical liturgies within its fold. In the backdrop of these conversations, the naming and reclaiming of subaltern liturgical public provide us with directions in naming it as ‘a public after theology.’ By this, I mean subaltern liturgical public is a theological site, where its public is engaged in a theology of justice for the entire creation. In other words, every public sphere, be it State, civil society, globalisation or caste system, offers a false soteriology and proclaims themselves as saviours in the regime of empire today. On the contrary, subaltern liturgical public is grounded in a subaltern immanent God opposing the soteriology of the empire by contestation and by preparing for the arrival of the ‘city of God to come’. Subaltern liturgical public as a ‘public after theology’ is understood as a public ‘beyond’ the understanding of dogmas & doctrines, as a ‘forward’ looking public and as the ‘next’ juxtaposed theological site of subaltern liturgy, where it finds its mutual fecundity and validity. In short, subaltern liturgical public is a ‘public after subaltern liturgy’ and a ‘subaltern liturgy after theology.’

Thus, when subaltern public is viewed through the prism of subaltern liturgy, we understand the theological characteristics of subaltern public. The above discussed four characteristics of naming and reclaiming subaltern liturgical public help us to understand the theological nature of the subaltern public, the real public, and the yearning for contesting the dominant publics. Now when I discuss the tasks and scope of subaltern public theology for India, the naming and reclaiming of subaltern liturgical public helps us to perceive the theological nature of this subaltern public. The tasks and scope of subaltern public theology for India explain its public character, which is the main aim of this thesis.

7.3. The Tasks of Subaltern Public Theology for India: Educate, Agitate & Organise

Having named and reclaimed the subaltern liturgical public space, our next step in our discussion is to consider the kind of public theology we chant or sing or pray for our times

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455 Refer to 4.4.3.
456 Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism*. p.2
today. What is the task for a theology that emerges from a subaltern liturgical public? Subaltern public theology for India is a theology that evolves out of experiential, epistemic sites of subaltern liturgical public and it engages in ‘liturgy before the liturgy,’ striving ‘for social communion’ among its adherents as a prerequisite to ‘holy communion.’ Goncalves proposes ‘converge, dialogue, adapt’ as the words involved in the project of a public theology that concerns all people as a whole in the public sphere. To this Carvalhaes responds by proposing a motto from the Landless Movement in Brazil, ‘occupy, resist produce,’ as a core of the liturgical public theology.  

In the same vein, subaltern liturgical public in the Indian context subscribes to Ambedkar’s call to ‘educate, agitate and organise’ as the liturgical hermeneutic, and as a result, this becomes the task of the subaltern public theology for India. ‘Educate, agitate and organise’ is used here not simply as an exercise in sloganeering, but with the intention of consciously echoing the words uttered by Ambedkar at All India Conference of Depressed Classes held at Nagpur during July 1942. Ambedkar’s understanding of public has been discussed in the course of explaining the subaltern understanding of public, and ‘educate, agitate and organise’ finds fecundity as a task of subaltern liturgical public. These are the words of Ambedkar on this occasion as cited by Keer in his work,

My final words of advice to you are educate, agitate and organize; have faith in yourself. With justice on our side, I do not see how we can lose our battle. The battle to me is a matter of joy. The battle is in the fullest sense spiritual. There is nothing material or social in it. For ours is a battle, not for wealth or for power. It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of human personality.

For Ambedkar, this triumvirate (“educate, agitate and organize”) demonstrates a contested epistemology, which also forms a basis for the epistemology of subaltern public. As a liturgical hermeneutic this triumvirate contests the anti-liturgical episteme of coloniality on one hand and the anti-liturgical episteme of caste. Vinaya Raj argues that any Christian theological engagement with Ambedkar’s political thought calls Christian theology towards a ‘postcolonial and materialist’ turn, for it is a ‘crucifixion point’ for Christian theology,

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458 Refer 5.4.
459 Keer, Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission. p.351
where it is challenged to reconfigure its basic foundations in the locations of materiality and subalternity. In other words, ‘educate, agitate and organise’ as the tasks of subaltern liturgical public, challenges public theology to arrive at a ‘crucifixion point,’ giving up privileged publics as normative and reconfiguring its theological grounding on the sites of materiality and subalternity. In pitching this triumvirate as the hermeneutic of subaltern liturgical public, allow me to discuss three tasks of subaltern public theology for India here. These tasks explain the ‘deviant’ nature of public theology to the western public theologies, which I shall explain in Chapter 8.

7.3.1. Subaltern Public Theology for India is Pedagogical: Educate

One of the tasks of subaltern public theology for India is its pedagogical task, which is to educate, learn, unlearn and relearn. It must be observed that caste epistemology creates a divide in the public sphere by ascribing knowledge and rationality as an exclusive claim of those dominant castes and branding the indigenous knowledge forms of subalterns as ‘irrational,’ ‘uncivilised’ and ‘uncultured.’ In the process of reclaiming subaltern liturgical public as the real public, subaltern public theology for India contests such brandings and divisions, and offers an educational role within the public sphere, in at least two ways. Subaltern public theology for India is a pedagogy from the subalterns, and a pedagogy of the subalterns.

7.3.1.1. De-schooling from the Casteist and Colonial Episteme:

The anti-liturgical liturgies of caste and coloniality have contaminated the public sphere with their oppressive epistemologies and therefore the primary task of subaltern public theology for India is to de-school from such oppressive epistemes. This de-schooling becomes a necessity because these oppressive epistemes have taken over the public sphere and have normalised the status quo of divisions and exclusions. Ambedkar’s call to ‘educate’ was to awaken a critical consciousness among the Dalits, so that they could understand the inhuman practices of caste system and address it. V. Ramadass observes,

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for Ambedkar, “to be educated here is not to become disciplined according to the established regimen of remembering and forgetting, of assuming identities normalised through discursive practices and of accepting a history of the predictable Hindu mythology. Education should develop the consciousness that enable one to see how one is constituted as an abstract entity, scientifically reasoned and socially identified.” So the pedagogical task is to nurture such a consciousness of revisiting the ‘self’ and ‘de-othering the other.’

Therefore, subaltern public theology for India’s pedagogical task is to de-school, firstly, the subalterns from the oppressive epistemes of caste and coloniality and awaken a critical consciousness in them by contesting the unequal composition of the public sphere. Subaltern liturgical public is a theological space, where injustices and inequalities are exposed by contestatory epistemologies and by employing deconstructive hermeneutics. Secondly, subaltern public theology’s pedagogical task is to de-school the dominant from their self-ascribed privilege by deconstructing the self and the other and by de-privileging their essentialised dominant identities. Such an understanding of de-schooling is what Spivak calls, ‘unlearning privilege.’ In further explaining Spivak’s ‘unlearning privilege,’ Kapoor says, “the idea is to retrace the history and itinerary of one’s prejudices and learned habits (from racism, sexism, and classism to academic elitism and ethnocentrism), stop thinking of oneself as better or fitter, and unlearn dominant systems of knowledge and representation.” Subaltern public theology for India’s pedagogy of de-schooling, when said liturgically, is chanted as a ‘metanoia’, as an act of confession, learning to unlearn privilege of caste and coloniality and awakening with a ‘transformative consciousness’ in the public sphere.

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7.3.1.2. Re-schooling at the sites of Subalternity:

‘Subalternity as radical pedagogy’ has been discussed earlier, where the pedagogy reverses and to say it in Spivakian words, it is ‘learning to learn from below.’ The antiliturgical liturgies of caste and coloniality exhibit a dominant episteme by devaluing the other as of no worth epistemologically and pedagogically. In such a context, subaltern public theology for India’s pedagogical task is to re-school the public sphere at the sites of subalternity, which is to say, in the words of Spivak, the ‘subaltern [is] my teacher’ enrolled in a ‘training of imagination.’ Subalterns have always been considered as objects of development and never as subjects in the public sphere. This is explained by Lourdunathan in terms of how caste and capital commodify Dalits in the public. Lourdunathan comments, “The Dalit is needed as a non-thing object in order that the Non-Dalit-Caste-Self attains its self-realization or liberation.” In other words, subalterns have always have been the targets of doing Christian mission enterprise and have been perceived as a fertile field for doing mission. The pedagogical task of subaltern public theology for India is to de-objectify subalterns, and recognise them as partners in doing mission, subscribing to the pedagogy of ‘mission from the margins.’

In further explaining this Spivakian pedagogy, Kapoor observes that “What emerges about Spivak’s project of ‘unlearning’ (de-schooling) and ‘learning to learn from below’ (re-schooling) is that it turns crucially on establishing an ethical relationship with the subaltern.” This pedagogy establishes ethical relationships with the subalterns in the public sphere, for subaltern public theology for India promotes and practices such ethical relationships seasoned with justice and equality. This ethical relationship is further interpreted as theological-ethical relationship with the subaltern, as the divine is located among the sites of subalternity, where the theological pedagogy emerges from below.

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465 Refer 4.3.1.
466 Spivak, “A Note on the New International.” p.15
467 Lourdunathan, Dalit Liberation Discourse: Philosophical Re-Readings in Culture, Religion and Society. p.121
469 Kapoor, “Hyper-self-reflexive Development? Spivak on Representing the Third World ‘Other.’” p.642
The pedagogical task of subaltern public theology for India as re-schooling at the sites of subalternity, firstly, calls the subalterns to affirm their role as teachers offering training in imagination towards a just and inclusive public sphere. This is to say that, ‘the last becomes the first’ in the Kingdom of God, where the last teaches, educates, corrects, and knowledge is produced from the subaltern liturgical public. Secondly, it de-centres those dominant powerful groups from centres, and re-centres them with the subalterns on the margins, for it is an invitation to recognise the agency of subalterns towards transformation of the public sphere. To explain the re-schooling pedagogy liturgically, it is an affirmation of ‘kenosis,’ which is to self-empty or give up powers and to pitch tents among and amidst sites of subalternity. Thus, subaltern public theology for India has a pedagogical task, by which we understand its public character.

7.3.2. Subaltern Public Theology for India is Doxological: Agitate

The second task of subaltern public theology for India is its doxological task, drawing from Ambedkar’s call to ‘agitate.’ Praise, which is an appreciation in public, is the ultimate aim of any human language, and therefore praising God is the ultimate aim of any theology. Subaltern public theology for India is no exception to that, for it is a theology from God, with God, about God and unto God from subaltern perspectives,470 churning a doxology from below out of the subaltern liturgical public. In other words, the doxological task of subaltern public theology for India is ‘to sing praise to divine from below.’ Agamben’s analysis of doxology serving the ceremonial production of power brings into the fore the role of power in liturgy and liturgy in power.471 Contrary to this, churning a liturgy from below which contests the anti-liturgical liturgies offers a ‘subaltern doxology’, a doxology from below serves as a critique of power, and ‘agitate/protest’ becomes the liturgical hermeneutic towards that direction.

470 Refer 6.4.
471 Agamben, The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government. pp.186-188
7.3.2.1. Praise-as-Protest:

In ‘singing praise to divine from below’, the doxological task of subaltern public theology for India is to recognise, acknowledge and affirm ‘praise-as-protest,’ for subaltern liturgical public provides that space for ‘dissent’ and ‘protest’ against the anti-liturgical liturgies of modernity. Brueggemann explains doxology as polemic, political, subversive and evangelical act, which is instructive in this our project. He says, “When the Church says the name of Yahweh out loud, under its breath it also says quietly, but undoubtedly, “and not Baal, not Marduk, not Dagon, not Enlil, not, not, not.” Doxology to Yahweh attacks the claim of every other god and every other loyalty...Thus praise is a determined assault on the idols.” Agreeing with Brueggemann, a subaltern doxology of praise as protest contests allegiance to false saviours and their anti-liturgical liturgies and subscribes to its ‘methodological exclusivism.’ Praise-as-protest evolves from the sites of subalternity, and names the demons which offer false soteriologies such as state, globalisation, racism and caste and contests them by denying any loyalty to their epistemologies and ideologies.

Brueggemann further says, “Doxology critiques and breaks every loyalty that would put a hedge of vested interests between us and the God who invites us to a dangerous communion. This means that when rightly understood, praise itself is a dangerous act of social protest, social criticism and social delegitimization.” Subaltern public theology for India, therefore, acts firstly as a protest doxology, protesting & pro-testing the status quos of our oppressive structures like caste in the public sphere. Secondly, it acts as a critical doxology, critiquing the dominant epistemologies of empire and thirdly, it de-legitimizes the false hopes offered by ‘otherworldly’ doxologies, & the ‘prosperity’ doxologies, which are disconnected from the concerns of this life. Thus praise-as-protest explain the doxological task of subaltern public theology for India.

473 Ibid. p.118
474 Refer 3.3. Nirmal explains the representation of Dalits and proposes ‘methodological exclusivism.’
7.3.2.2. Protest-as-Praise:

Having discussed ‘praise-as-protest’, I will now discuss ‘protest-as-praise’ as a doxological task of subaltern public theology for India. In the inscription, ‘government’s work is God’s work,’ the government equates and elevates itself to the divine, and acclamations of praise are offered to government, for it projects itself as the ‘saviour’ of the people. The anti-liturgical liturgies, in this case ‘false saviours like government’, consider protest against their policies as ‘sinful.’ In such a context, subaltern public theology for India recognises ‘protest,’ ‘defiance,’ and ‘agitation’ against the anti-liturgical liturgy as subaltern doxology, for they constitute a doxological act of singing praise against the ‘false soteriologies’ offered in the public sphere. What is considered ‘protest’ by the dominant groups in the public sphere is considered ‘praise’ by the subalterns, for they are acclamations in public, uttered in a subaltern liturgical public, interrogating issues of power and deconstructing the idea that doxology serves the ceremonial productions of power, as observed by Agamben. Subaltern liturgical public nurtures such subaltern doxologies, which are sung against ‘anti-God’ or ‘pseudo-Gods’ of empire today.

Ambedkar, in offering ‘educate, agitate and organise’, was reminding his communities that their battle was not for wealth or power but for the reclamation of humanity, and by agitation, he was inspiring his communities to fight against the principalities and powers of caste. Subaltern doxology is activated by raising ‘an epistemological agitation/protest’ against the anti-liturgical liturgies of caste, whose epistemologies are grounded on ‘graded inequality.’ Ambedkar exercised this ‘epistemological agitation’ and affirmed the subjective knowledge of the subaltern communities by rejecting the Brahminic dominance and by attacking their scriptures, for they were promulgating the construction of objective knowledge. In short, protesting or agitating against the anti-liturgical liturgies of caste forms the core of subaltern doxology, where protest against the oppressive status quo turns to be a ‘shout of praise,’ that emerges from the subjective knowledge categories.

It is also important to recognise that ‘prophetic rage’ or ‘righteous anger’ also forms an important feature of subaltern doxology. Silence on the face of anti-liturgical liturgies is an

476 Refer 6.4.1.
unchristian act, for subaltern doxology activates a Christian to be pro-active by overcoming lethargy, inaction and complacency. In his criticism on Liberation theology, Ivan Petrella expresses that in the project of Liberation theology, theology is a second act, whereas commitment comes first, and prior to that commitment comes outrage, which he observes is lost in Liberation theology today.⁴⁷⁷ Feeling that he was the angriest person in America, like Malcolm X, Cone in writing his auto-bio-theo-graphical narrative of ‘Black Theology as Public Theology,’ expresses that his anger against the racism which he witnessed in theology, churches and wider society led him to write Black Theology and Black Power.⁴⁷⁸ Subaltern liturgical public is a space to be outraged by the injustices of anti-liturgical liturgies, for the doxological task of subaltern public theology for India is to cultivate ‘prophetic anger’ in the public sphere against the unjust system and practices of caste.

Thus, ‘praise-as-protest’ and ‘protest-as-praise’ explain the doxological task of subaltern public theology for India. Such a task demonstrates the public character of subaltern public theology for India.

7.3.3. Subaltern Public Theology for India is Praxiological: Organise
The next task of subaltern public theology for India is its praxiological task, which is to organise. The anti-liturgical liturgies of caste in the public sphere are function by ‘disorganising’ communities, through divide and rule, and by disempowering vulnerable communities. Subaltern liturgical public contests these anti-liturgical liturgies by organising communities against the unjust systems. Ambedkar’s call to ‘organise’ was a call to Dalits to get organised in confronting the epistemic violence transmitted by the caste system. Praxis as organising is not building another hierarchical structure, rather it is building a community of equals engaged in a liturgy of working for the common good in the public sphere. Praxis as organising is also not building homogeneity, rather it is building unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

Subaltern liturgical public is neither homogenous nor hierarchical space, and therefore it affirms diversity and plurality, organising partnership and communities of mutual solidarity among subalterns. For Gutiérrez, “theology... is a ‘second-act’, whereas praxis is the core of liberation theology.” In transcending Gutiérrez’s understanding of theology and praxis, subaltern public theology for India affirms the mutual interdependence and intersectionality of theology and praxis and rejects any idea of dichotomizing them as two independent, isolated entities. Praxis is grounded in theology, and theology is reflected in praxis. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy co-exist together and co-perform together, privileging one against other or one over the other defeats the whole enterprise of theology. Subaltern public theology for India, in its amphibious fold, holds both these dimensions on equal grounding. I shall discuss the praxiological task of subaltern public theology for India in two ways.

7.3.3.1. Praxis as Organising by Non-Co-operation:

Firstly, the praxiological task of subaltern public theology for India is understood as ‘praxis as organising by non-cooperation.’ The call for a hermeneutical praxis in bridging the ‘practical inefficacy’ of Dalit theology within local congregations is discussed by Rajkumar, for he brings out one understanding of praxis as ‘non-collaboration and non-collusion,’ which is of merit for our discussion here. He brings this discussion in the context of Church public’s engagement and reasons that the ‘conspiracy of silence’ of the Church against Dalit struggles and on the practice of caste within the Church are indicators of the Church’s collaboration and collusion with casteism. He says, “An important issue which needs to be tackled is to tap the latent resistive urge of the Dalits and translate that urge into creative and constructive manifestations of struggle for a co-operative and mutually affirming communitarian life. There is a need for a praxis of non-collaboration and non-collusion with the dominant.” Subaltern public theology for India as subaltern liturgy is activated by defiance, by its non-collaboration and non-collusion with any anti-liturgical liturgies in the public sphere, including its own Church public. This calls for a serious liturgical interrogation

479 Gutiérrez, “The Task and Content of Liberation Theology.” p.29
480 Peniel Rajkumar, Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp.139-142
481 Ibid. p.142

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of ecclesiology, for it challenges the Church public, on the one hand, to disassociate itself with such anti-liturgical liturgies like caste and, on the other hand, to defeat such liturgies.

This act of defiance reinforces subaltern liturgical public as ‘zero tolerance zones’ in relation to the practice of any unjust systems promoted by the anti-liturgical liturgies. Therefore, subaltern public theology for India’s praxiological task as organising is captured in this statement of Jesus, “Anyone who isn’t with me opposes me, and anyone who isn’t working with me is actually working against me.”

Anyone who is not working with the spirit of Jesus is working against the ideals and values of God’s reign, which he has come to establish, and in such conditions, the praxis of the subaltern liturgical public is to non-collaborate and non-collude with such forces and systems. To put it bluntly, the choice for the Church public in this context is ‘Caste or Christ’, for caste signifies the anti-liturgical liturgy and Christ signifies the subaltern liturgy, and no one can serve two masters. In simple terms, ‘praxis as organising’ is activated by imitating Christ through the conscious defiance of caste. Organising a defiant community for justice is the task of the subaltern public theology for India. I shall now discuss the second understanding of the praxiological task.

### 7.3.3.2. Praxis as Organising by Engaging a Network of Shared Epistemic Experiences:

The second part of the praxiological task of subaltern public theology for India is explained as praxis as organising by engaging a network of shared epistemic experience. Subaltern liturgical operates through the networking of dissent, marginality and subalternity. Althaus-Reid observes, “the task of public theology is precisely strategic, by providing a space for the people who are integrities in dissent at the margins to engage a network of thinking and sharing experiences.” For Althaus-Reid, engaging a network of thinking and sharing experience forms an important praxiological task. Subaltern liturgical public is not an essentialised and generalised category, ‘one size-fit-for all’ type, rather it affirms in plural identities within it, and the praxiological task is to network among the varied

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482 Matthew 12:30 (NLT)
483 Althaus Reid, “In the Centre There Are No Fragments: Reflections on Unfitting Theologies.” p. 382
constituencies for there are several varied knowledge forms and practices that keep evolving in this space.

In a stark criticism of Liberation Theology, Petrella explains one of the ‘debilitating conditions’ with which Liberation theologians are suffering is ‘monochromatism’\(^\text{484}\) or as Reddie calls ‘the typology of colour blindness’ towards Black Christians.\(^\text{485}\) Subaltern public theology for India contests such monochromatic and colour blind liturgies and recognises multiple colours of subalternity within subaltern liturgical public, for each of them, have particular epistemic experiences, which are harnessed by networking among each other. In other words, subaltern public theology for India recognises multiple publics\(^\text{486}\) like Dalit public, Women public, Tribal public, Gay and Lesbian public, whose shared experience is subalternity and marginality. They are called to be organised praxiologically in a network to share their epistemic experiences for their collective solidarity and effective contestation. By organising a network of shared epistemic experiences of subalternity, the praxiological task of subaltern public theology for India becomes relevant, for all these shared experiences contribute towards the liturgy of creative, collaborative and collective work in the Indian public sphere. Thus, the praxiological task of subaltern public theology for India is explained by organising with non-cooperation’ and by ‘networking with shared epistemic experiences.

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the public character of subaltern public theology for India, and it is explained through the contours, tasks and scope. The contours of subaltern public theology have been discussed in Chapter 6. Here in this section, the tasks of subaltern public theology for India have been explained as pedagogical, doxological and praxiological tasks. This explains the second aspect of the public character. Now I shall discuss the third aspect of the public character in the next section, which is the scope of subaltern public theology for India.

\(^{484}\) Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology*. p.84
\(^{486}\) Refer 5.3.1
7.4. The Scope of Subaltern Public Theology for India: Transnational Public Sphere

The scope of subaltern public theology for India is discussed here as a transnational public sphere where public theology as subaltern liturgy is performed and activated. Public theology as subaltern liturgy recognises the transnational public sphere as space which engages with subaltern liturgical public in contesting the anti-liturgical liturgies in the public sphere. The transnational public sphere as a critical theory contests the structures of global domination, and as such subaltern liturgy contributes to a counter-hegemonic public sphere, which is seeking and finding its relevance today. Fraser’s coinage of the ‘transnational public sphere’ emerges in her critique of the Habermasian understanding of public. By this phrase she posits a public sphere transcending the trajectory of territorial nation-states, where publicity and public opinion are generated beyond one’s own countries and states. She recognises that the issues the world faces today, such as global warming, women’s rights, and issues of poverty do not limit or stop at nation-states, for the issues are trans-territorial and require transnational solutions.\(^{487}\) In our conversation here on subaltern liturgy, the ‘public’ we conceive and speak about in public theology is not limited to any territories including nation-states, for subaltern liturgy transcends such boundaries and engages in the public work of justice, for the common good of the entire planet/cosmos. Therefore, the scope of subaltern public theology for India is in a transnational public sphere. This explains the third aspect of the public character of subaltern public theology for India. In explaining transnational public sphere as the scope, I shall discuss various concerns associated with it.

7.4.1. Communication and Subaltern Liturgy:

The notions of communications in the critical theory of transnational public sphere are addressed by subaltern public theology for India. Subaltern liturgy as a contestation of anti-liturgical liturgy of caste articulates the who, the what, the where, the how and to whom, implied within the transnational public sphere in the epistemic experiential sites of

\(^{487}\) Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. pp.79-80
subaltern liturgical public. The ‘who’ of the communication are the subaltern communities in India and beyond, who represent and speak up for their own concerns and struggles. The ‘what’ of communication is subalternity, its epistemology, hermeneutics and methods. The ‘where’ of the communication is the sites of subalternity present across the world, where struggles for justice emerge and engage. The ‘how’ of the communication is in the vernacular of subalternity, which is through their experience. I shall discuss language in the next section. To ‘whom’ is this communication is, on one hand, the global subaltern communities and, on the other, the three publics of church, academy and society in the transnational public sphere. In other words, in a given transnational public sphere, it is the subaltern communities who function as liturgists and participate in transforming the world by shifting the centre of gravity from market and corporate dominance to solidarity, advocacy and liturgy. This communication explains the scope of subaltern public theology for India within transnational public sphere.

7.4.2. Language and Subaltern Liturgy:

In articulating a language for the transnational public sphere, Fraser depends on two key features of critical theory, one the ‘normative legitimacy’ and the other ‘political efficacy.’ She argues that these two features have to be deconstructed from a Westphalian state and needs to be reconstructed for a post-Westphalian world. For ‘normative legitimacy,’ two prime concerns, inclusiveness and parity of participation are to be tested in the given public sphere. According to Fraser, “public opinion is legitimate if, and only if, it results from a communicative process in which all who are jointly subjected to the relevant governance structures can participate as peers, regardless of political citizenship.” This would be one of the emphases of subaltern liturgy for a transnational public sphere, where inclusiveness and participation would be the key deliverables. Subaltern liturgy’s objective is to dismantle the anti-liturgical structures and create anti-
hierarchical and counter-hegemonic spaces, where the subalterns are considered as equal partners, who as a community participate in the making critical public opinion.

The second principle of ‘political efficacy’ holds that there should be a political power for the transnational public sphere to govern and hold accountable. Therefore, Fraser argues that,

the need to construct new addressees for public opinion, in the sense of new, transnational public powers that possess the administrative capacity to solve transnational problems. The challenge accordingly is two-fold: on the one hand, to create new, transnational public powers; on the other to make them accountable to new, transnational public spheres.492

Subaltern liturgy engages in creating global accountability systems for dealing with global issues in the public sphere, so that the subalterns who have been denied justice and equality in their territorial nation-states under their rule of law, find this ‘trans-governmentality’ to be a way out, by transnationally networking with movements for justice. It is instructive here to understand Arjun Appadurai’s construction of ‘globalisation from below,’ where several movements of justice are forging coalitions and partnerships in tackling global concerns, which he argues would contribute towards ‘deep democracy’ or ‘borderless democracy.’493 Subaltern public theology for India partakes in contributing towards ‘borderless democracy’ by collaborating with others’ offerings made from sites of subalternity from various contexts and emerge as a trans-contextual theology for the 21st century.

The language of subaltern public theology for India discussed praxiologically in the context of transnational public sphere, is a language of contestation and resilience, which is called to celebrate multiple identities. To understand it theologically, the liturgy of the God of Pentecost in Acts 2, is an affirmation of a resilient God, who refrained from speaking the language of the majority, the language of the temple, the language of the empire, which are Hebrew, Aramaic and Latin/Greek, but spoke the languages of the people and

492 Ibid. p.98
particularly those on the margins. This forms the core of the subaltern liturgical language. This language incorporates inclusivity, parity of participation and the political efficacy made relevant in the context of a ‘globalisation from below,’ whereby it celebrates multiple languages, multiple cultures and multiple religious identities, by contesting the languages of status quo. Thus, the language of subaltern public theology finds its scope in the transnational public sphere.

7.4.3. Global Citizenship and Subaltern Liturgy:
In arguing for the agency of self in the global era, Gnanapragasam expresses the need and relevance of a ‘global civil society’ and argues for a ‘universal citizenship’ of all people for the emancipatory identities of the subaltern communities. He expresses hope in the mechanism of global civil society, that it will provide a negotiating space for the subalterns, contesting the oppressive systems by agreed global policies and laws. Gnanapragasam says, “representing similar efforts like feminist movements, the global civil society, as a normative ideal, would help interrogate oppressions at different layers of the global world and negotiate the oppressive borders for the sake of the emancipation of the subalterns.”

Public theology as subaltern liturgy offers ‘the broken body of Christ’ as the global liturgical public, for injustice done to one part of the body, affects the entire body, and particularly honouring and respecting the least organs of the body, explains the political efficacy of the body of Christ. Subaltern liturgy attempts, in forging a global solidarity of subalternity within the body of Christ, to construct an ‘epistemology of solidarity’ based on the idea that, ‘if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.’ Subaltern public theology for India, therefore, contributes towards a global solidarity, which Cone calls a ‘rainbow coalition of all disadvantaged people throughout the globe,’ for he says, “there will be no freedom to anybody until all are set free.”

494 Gnanapragasam, Wings of Faith: Towards Public Theologies in India. p.43
495 I Corinthians 12:26
496 James Cone, For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church (Mary knoll, New York: Orbis books, 1984). p.204

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At another occasion, Gnanapragasam argues for a ‘global citizenship,’ which according to him would instil confidence among the subaltern communities and says

a citizenship recognised in a global space is in the direction of freedom as far as the closed societies are concerned. [In] a traditional society like ours (India) where caste and patriarchy have determined a rigidly closed social system, where the current phenomenon of cultural nationalism (Hindutva) is either reinforcing or creating further fetters of a closed society, the possibility of a global citizenship is liberating. It instils a new self-confidence and assertiveness.\textsuperscript{497}

This proposal of ‘global citizenship’ might sound too utopian, but this represents the aspiration of the subaltern communities, for, on the one hand, this proposal expresses a lack of confidence in the territorial nation-state to liberate them from bondage of injustice\textsuperscript{498} and, on the other hand, it articulates a subaltern vision to overcome forces of oppression and discrimination.

Citizenship is liturgical in at least two ways which are inter-related to each other, explains Mathews. Firstly, in the civic sense that the civic order is the ‘work of the people.’ Secondly, in its theological sense, citizenship is liturgical, for the citizens’ performance of work is a continuation of the liturgy of the ‘blessed in heaven that is our eschatological destiny.’\textsuperscript{499}

Going by this, ‘global citizenship’ is a liturgy of eschatological destiny, which is the hermeneutical key to understanding Paul’s phrase ‘for our citizenship is in heaven’.\textsuperscript{500}

Therefore, by contesting anti-liturgical liturgies in a public sphere, subaltern public theology for India contests the false soteriology of State, which pretends to be a saviour to all its citizenry. The prospect of ‘global citizenship’ as a subaltern liturgy emerges in protest against the false salvation offered by State. By affirming ‘global citizenship’ for subalterns, subaltern public theology for India runs the risk of being branding ‘anti-national’ or ‘anti-patriotic’. It runs this risk for the sake of its liturgy, ‘risking subaltern liturgy for subaltern liturgy’s sake’. It issues a call to be courageous enough to envision an eschatological hope of liberating subaltern communities from all forms of global and local oppressions.

\textsuperscript{497} Gnanapragasam, Wings of Faith: Towards Public Theologies in India. pp.92-93
\textsuperscript{498} Refer 5.4.4. for the discussion on ‘excluded Indian’ which explains Ambedkar’s notion of nation.
\textsuperscript{499} Mathews, A Theology of Public Life. p.146
\textsuperscript{500} Philippians 3:20
'Global citizenship' as a subaltern liturgy contests the colonial project of territorial nation-states, for it recognises the ‘biopolitical’ nature of life, offering life in all its fullness to the citizens of the entire transnational public sphere. Subaltern public theology has always been in the quest of searching for ‘another universalism’.\textsuperscript{501} For in the context of casteism, Ambedkar describes the subaltern public as an ‘excluded nation’, while Gopal Guru uses the term ‘exiled citizens’. As such, ‘global citizenship’ provides ‘another universalism’ to the subaltern communities. Thus ‘global citizenship’ serves as a marker to explain the scope of subaltern public theology for India in a transnational public sphere.

**7.4.4. Subaltern Public Theology for India as a Trans-Contextual Theology:**
Public theology as subaltern liturgy contests the anti-liturgical liturgies of modernity from sites of subalternity and offers a liberative work of the people grounded on justice to all contexts. In this pursuit, the scope of subaltern public theology transcends a particular context and engages to go ‘beyond’ as trans-contextual public theology in the purview of transnational public sphere. Allow me to propose three frontiers to understand its ‘trans’ nature.

**7.4.4.1. Subaltern Public Theology for India as a Planetary Theology:**
In discussing Liberation theology and Contextual theology, Petrella argued that calling Liberation theology as Contextual theology, “is the new way to take the edge off their critique.”\textsuperscript{502} On a similar vein, limiting subaltern public theology as a Contextual theology is to take the edge off their contestation, for contesting the anti-liturgical liturgies transcend a given context, where subalternity offers itself as a ‘radical theological location.’\textsuperscript{503} To understand transcending particular contexts in Spivakian terms is a call towards ‘planetarity,’ for she proposes planet to overwrite the globe, to reverse and displace globalisation with planetarity.\textsuperscript{504} Spivak challenges to choose planetarity over postcolonialism, for it has privileged nationalism over against colonialism.

\textsuperscript{501} Refer 5.4. for Ambedkar’s ‘another universalism.’
\textsuperscript{502} Petrella, Beyond Liberation Theology. p.132
\textsuperscript{503} Refer 4.3.2.
\textsuperscript{504} Spivak, Death of a Discipline. p.72
Subaltern public theology for India contributes to a ‘planetary’ theology which prevents the totalization of the other, by de-territorialising its theology and by affirnimg the multiplicity of contexts. It builds mutual solidarity bound by a contested epistemology which rejects hegemonic voices articulating one global public truth. In other words, subaltern public theology as a trans-contextual theology is not a universal theology from above, totalizing the other or essentialising the subaltern. Rather, subaltern public theology is a planetary theology from below, evolving subaltern liturgy towards a ‘truly planetary theopolitics’ from sites of subalternity and decolonialisation, affirming in the particularities of the contestations of anti-liturgical liturgies by building transnational solidarities for justice. Thus, subaltern public theology for India is a trans-contextual theology within the scope of transnational public sphere.

7.4.4.2. Subaltern Public Theology for India as a Cosmopolitan Theology:

In affirming the transnational public sphere, the subaltern liturgy of subaltern public theology for India transcribes its theopolitics and theopoetics to the entire cosmos, for the anti-liturgical liturgies have become globalised. In understanding the scope of subaltern public theology as trans-contextual theology, the very concept of cosmopolitanism supports and supplements this project. Kang, in constructing a public theology from the future, affirms cosmopolitanism and articulates cosmopolitan theology as public theology. This is instructive for our project here. According to her, cosmopolitan theology is trans-provincialism, trans-boundary-ness, and trans-identity politics, for Kang says,

Cosmopolitan theology represents the voice of an all-embracing view of life. However, it challenges the liberal, humanist notion of the unified, essentialized subject, and views the subject as contradictory and multi-layered. It rejects the politics of single-group identity if it essentializes the subject and invites us to rethink fundamentally how we are constituted as subjects within a rapidly changing set of political, social, economic, cultural and religious conditions.  

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Subaltern public theology for India, as expressed in its subaltern liturgy, contributes towards a cosmic liturgy of all-embracing view of life. On the one hand, it contests the anti-liturgical liturgies in the cosmos and, on the other hand, it affirms justice for the entire cosmos. Kang’s proposal that the cosmopolitan theologian is a ‘theologian without a passport’ correlates to the subaltern public theologian, for he/she /ze is not bound by a territory or nation-state, and is related to the entire cosmos, for subalternity is spread across the cosmos. The understanding of the subaltern public theologian as a ‘theologian without a passport’ in a cosmopolitan public sphere is an expression of his/her/hir identification with people crossing the borders without travel documents, for they move from one site of subalternity to the other site of subalternity, evolving a network of subaltern liturgy, which explains the trans-contextual nature of public theology.

7.4.4.3. Subaltern Public Theology for India as a Public-Liberation Theology:

In discussing the scope of subaltern public theology as trans-contextual theology, we need to recognise that it is, on the one hand, a public after theology, and, on the other hand, a theology after liberation theology. This brings us to the question of how subaltern public theology can be understood as ‘Public-Liberation theology.’ A preferential option for the poor and non-persons, as articulated in Liberation theology by Gutiérrez, and as one of the motifs of Graham’s public theology, synthesises in subaltern public theology for India, for the contestations of anti-liturgical liturgies from sites of subalternity prefers and privileges subaltern liturgical publics as real publics.

Gnanapragasam recognises this synthesis of public and liberation theologies in the socio-religious movements of subalters and explains that the subaltern vision of the public, therefore brings forth the ‘interrogatory space’ as its public. Gnanapragasam observes that, though not as popular as the other civil society movements in India, these socio-religious movements do have an emancipatory role. Indeed, a subaltern public theology takes into consideration those forgotten movements, providing the interrogatory spaces for the subalterns to speak truth to the powers. Gnanapragasam further proposes an integration of public theologies with liberation theologies for a wider and more effective

engagement with the power and politics of the market. This public-liberation theology is a theology of hope.\textsuperscript{507} Subaltern public theology for India as public-liberation theology is a theology of hope to all those on the sites of subalternity across contexts, for neither public theology nor liberation theology compromises the speaking of truth to the powers. Subaltern public theology for India, therefore demonstrates itself to be a project incorporating trans-theologies of being public on the one side and being liberative on the other side. Thus, these three frontiers explain that subaltern public theology for India is a trans-contextual theology, a theology beyond its context within the scope of transnational public sphere.

The discussion on communication, language, global citizenship and trans-contextual theology explains the transnational public sphere as the scope of subaltern public theology. This scope explains the third aspect of the public character of subaltern public theology for India, besides contours and tasks. By discussing the contours, tasks and scope of subaltern public theology for India as its public character, this thesis has addressed definitional and subaltern deficiency of public theologies. It has addressed the definitional deficiency by shifting it from ‘seeking theological relevance on public issues’ to ‘public character of public theology.’ It has addressed the subalternity deficiency by theologising public theology from the sites of subalternity.

7.5. Conclusion:

Public theology as subaltern liturgy contests the anti-liturgical liturgies of modernity from the sites of subalternity. This finding led us to name subaltern public sphere as the genuine public sphere, for it counters the hegemonic classifications of the public sphere. At the heart of subaltern liturgy is the epistemology of contestation, for it is bold and courageous in contesting the false soteriology offered by the empire of our times today. The logic of empire as exhibited in the contexts of colonialism and casteism drives on ‘divide and rule’, whereas public theology as subaltern liturgy is driven and guided by ‘educate, agitate and organise’ for it is called to ensure justice to all its adherents in the transnational public sphere.

\textsuperscript{507} Ibid. p.186
Thus, both Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 discuss the theological contours of subaltern public theology for India. The contours, tasks and scope of subaltern public theology for India demonstrate its public character and thus address the main aim of this thesis in enquiring about the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity. In the next final chapter of this thesis, I will explain the significance of this thesis and its distinctiveness to the knowledge of theology.
Chapter 8

Conclusion: Towards a Subaltern Public Theology for India

8.1. Introduction:

This chapter synthesises the main findings with regard to the research questions and discusses conclusions based on the findings of the study. It considers the strengths and the limitations of this thesis, and presents recommendations for future research on public theology. It also discusses the significance of my study, namely, that it serves as a theological foundation for public theology from the sites of subalternity, and opens up the horizon in addressing public issues from public theological perspectives. The thesis contests the dominant and normative public theologies from the sites of subalternity in the Indian context, and discusses subaltern liturgy as a theological account of subaltern public.

Subaltern public theology for India contests the anti-liturgical liturgies of caste and other such perverse liturgies by locating public theology in the sites of subalternity. Subaltern public is the authentic public, for it is an anti-caste, counter-hegemonic site contesting the normative dominant oppressive publics. This thesis provides a theological foundation of public theology done from the sites of subalternity and invites readers to explore similar attempts in providing a direction toward decolonial methodologies, finding meaning in contestations and expounding a message of justice and liberation in articulating a public theology relevant for twenty-first century. In short, subaltern public theology for India contests the anti-liturgical liturgies of caste and similar forms, whose contours are God from bottom-up, liturgy before the liturgy and biopolitical life, performing pedagogical, doxological and praxiological tasks within the church, academy and society and strives for a just and inclusive transnational public sphere.

8.2. Key Findings:

This thesis explores and explains the public character of public theology from the sites of subalternity by addressing the definitional and subalternity deficiency of public theology, and by rediscovering ‘subaltern liturgy’ as a theological account of subaltern public. The public character of subaltern public theology for India is explained by the contours, tasks
and scope as explained in Chapters 6 and 7. Rediscovery of ‘subaltern liturgy’ is explained by contesting the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, where ‘the broken body of Christ’ is discussed as its liturgical reflection in Chapter 6.

These findings of my thesis emerged because I began my enquiry by asking what the deficiencies of the public character of public theology are, which I have discussed in Part One on ‘theological contexts.’ From the mapping of global public theologies and the Indian public theologies in Chapters 2 and 3, I have identified definitional, subalternity and systematic deficiencies in public theologies. Public theologies have mostly engaged on the theological relevance of public issues and have left critical engagement on public character of public theology unexplored. On the other hand, due to the colonial epistemic contamination of public theology, sites of subalternity have never found a place in the western academic public theology. My study therefore contributes to the public theological enterprise by addressing the definitional and subalternity deficiencies through the discussions towards a subaltern public theology for India.

Part Two, discussed ‘theological companions.’ The main objective of this part is to present a discussion on the problematisation of ‘public’ from the perspective of subalterns. Since subalternity as a theological site was neglected, and did not find its place in the academy of public theology, this thesis proposed to do a public theology from the sites of subalternity, where ‘theological subalternity’ and ‘subaltern public’ become the companions of public theology for India. Chapter 4 therefore is a discussion of an Indian theological hearing on subalternity, for the method of subalternity has been explained as an aporia, its epistemology as a contested epistemology, and its hermeneutics as deconstructive hermeneutics. The findings of this chapter explain the very understanding of subalternity from Indian theological perspectives. When ‘public’ is problematised from the sites of subalternity, it is an anti-caste, anti-hierarchy, counter-hegemonic, experiential epistemic site with hermeneutics of polyvalence and with a language of social mobility. These have emerged through this thesis’ engagement with Ambedkar’s understanding of subaltern public. These have been the key findings of Chapter 5.
In Part Three, I have discussed ‘theological contours.’ In the context of doing public theology from the sites of subalternity for India, sites of Dalit public serves as an epistemic site to understand subalternity. Having problematised ‘public’ from sites of Dalit subalternity, it was imperative to discuss the theological account of such a subaltern public. It is here that I have proposed ‘subaltern liturgy’ as a theological account of subaltern public, paving the way towards a discussion on a subaltern public theology for India. This Part addressed the third research question of my study. Chapter 6 presented a recovery of subaltern liturgy as a theological account of public from the sites of subalternity. Public theology from the sites of subalternity rediscovers subaltern liturgy, by engaging a liturgical reading of caste, which is defined as ‘anti-liturgical liturgy.’ In that pursuit, ‘the broken body of Christ’ is explained as the theology of subaltern liturgy contesting the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste. This is an important finding of this thesis, where ‘liturgy’ as a theological site of public is recovered and ‘subaltern liturgy’ as a theological account of subaltern public is rediscovered. These findings pave the way towards a subaltern public theology for India, and both its contours in Chapter 6, and its tasks and scope in Chapter 7, demonstrates the public character of subaltern public theology for India.

The understanding of God as the politics of immanent divine which is God from the bottom-up, the importance of a liturgy before the liturgy, and the affirmation of the bio-political nature of life, are the three contours explained in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 is a discussion of the tasks and scope of subaltern public theology for India. Its tasks are: the pedagogical task, the doxological task and the praxiological task. The pedagogical task is explained by de-schooling from the colonial episteme and re-schooling in the episteme of subalternity; the doxological task is explained by praise-as-protest and protest-as-praise in public sphere; and the praxiological task is explained by praxis as non-cooperation and by networking with similar sites of subalternity. All these three tasks are discussed in the framework of Ambedkar’s triumvirate of ‘educate, agitate and organise,’ for it exhibits profoundly the public character of subaltern public theology for India. Finally, the scope of subaltern public theology is explained in the transnational public sphere, where it is proposed as trans-contextual theology, cosmopolitan theology and public-liberation theology.
The thesis began with three research questions: Firstly, ‘What are the deficiencies of the public character of public theology?’ Secondly, ‘How do we problematise the concept of ‘public’ from the sites of subalternity?’ Thirdly, ‘How might these two enquiries contribute towards a subaltern public theology for India?’

These questions were identified because there has been an ambiguity regarding the definitions of ‘public’ in public theology: public enjoys a wide range of definitions including people, context, state, culture, academy, society etc. Adding to this ambiguity, subalternity as a theological site does not have its place in the western academic public theology. On placing this discussion in the context of India, the enquiry on public theology gets further complicated due to practice of the age-old caste system which has been dividing the Indian public sphere into dominant publics and excluded publics. This thesis therefore is an engagement of public theology from the sites of excluded Dalit public: the sites of subalternity. My thesis is concerned with ‘public’ in an at least twofold sense. Firstly, it is a critical faith reflection of the excluded Dalit public, which I have called subaltern public in contrast to the dominant-caste public in India. Secondly, subaltern public is an excluded site with contested epistemologies and so its publicness is exhibited as a contested public. My thesis therefore proposes a public theology of the excluded Dalit public, whose voices have been silenced, suppressed and not heard due to the normalizations of an oppressive status quo.

8.3. Distinctiveness of my Proposal:
The findings of this research as explained in the previous section run counter to the conventional and widely spread understandings of public theologies. Here I shall discuss the distinctiveness of my proposal.

8.3.1. A ‘Deviant’ Public Theology and Western Public Theologies:
Its first distinctive aspect of my research, as Chapter 7 discusses, is that a subaltern public theology for India is a ‘deviant’ public theology in terms of western mainstream public theologies. Firstly, subaltern public theology for India’s pedagogical task of de-schooling from colonial epistememes and re-schooling in the episteme of subalternity exhibits the
‘deviant’ nature of this public theology. As western public theologies have been schooled in the colonial episteme (see Chapter 2) and as the Indian public sphere is dominated by caste epistemology (see Chapter 6), subaltern public theology for India offers a pedagogy from, and by, those in the sites of subalternity, inviting the public sphere to ‘learning to learn from below.’ With such a pedagogical task, subaltern public theology for India deviates from the western public theologies based on colonial epistemology, and also deviates from the Indian public sphere which is infested by a caste epistemology.

Secondly, subaltern public theology for India’s doxological task of ‘singing praise from below’ against the anti-liturgical liturgies in the public, explains the ‘deviant’ nature of this public theology. Unlike the doxology serving the ceremonial production of power,\textsuperscript{508} as observed by Agamben in the west, subaltern public theology for India’s doxological task embarks towards ‘churning a liturgy from below,’ where power is critiqued and ‘agitate/protest’ becomes its liturgical hermeneutic. Its deviance is further explained when ‘praise as protest’ and ‘protest as praise’ is anchored in the sites of subalternity, where the demons in the public sphere are named and contested. The false soteriologies offered by, such as the state, globalisation, racism, and caste on offer are thereby contested with the denial of any loyalty to their epistemologies and ideologies. Subaltern public theology for India’s doxological task serves as protest doxology, by protesting the normalisations of oppressive status quos of anti-liturgical liturgies of caste and by cultivating ‘prophetic anger’ against injustices of caste. It serves as critical doxology, critiquing and contesting the dominant epistemology of empire. It serves as a doxology de-legitimizing false hopes offered by ‘other-worldly’ doxologies, for they are disconnected from the struggles of life.

Thirdly, subaltern public theology for India’s praxiological task of organising subaltern communities through non-co-operation and non-collaboration explains the ‘deviant’ nature of this public theology. Ambedkar and the Dalit struggle today are being co-opted by the dominant ‘Hindutva’, the ideology of Hindu cultural nationalism in India, in an

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\textsuperscript{508} Agamben, The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Geneology of Economy and Government. pp.186-188
attempt to appease the political base of Dalits. Co-option of ideologies, perspectives and struggles has become the norm of anti-liturgical liturgy of caste. At the same time, these liturgies try to disorganise communities by disempowering vulnerable communities through divide and rule mechanisms. Subaltern public theology for India’s praxiological task of organising subalterns involves confronting and contesting on the one hand the epistemic violence perpetuated by caste system, and also on the other hand contesting the co-option methods of dominant groups. This is done through non-co-operation and non-collaboration with the dominant groups, and by building a network of shared epistemic experiences among the subaltern communities.

8.3.2. A ‘Deviant’ Public Theology from Relevance on Public Issues to Public Character:

Part One notes that most of the public theological engagements have addressed the relevance of public issues, whereas subaltern public theology has attempted to engage with the public character of theology from the sites of subalternity. Furthermore, subaltern public theology has argued that its contours, nature, tasks and scope are its public character and subaltern liturgy is its theological account. In the context of contesting the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, subaltern liturgy has been understood as the broken body of Christ, which explains the public character of theology from the sites of subalternity. So subaltern public theology for India is a ‘deviant’ public theology when compared to existing public theologies, for it deviates from seeking the theological relevance of public issues like globalisation, climate change, religious violence etc., and engages in seeking the public character of theology. At this point it is also important to mention that the distinctiveness of subaltern public theology for India is further enhanced where subalternity and decoloniality adds up to the public character of theology in public theology, for subaltern liturgy, subalternity and decoloniality are inherent in its content and method.

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8.3.3. A Public Theology from Below, from Sites of Subalternity:

A unique facet of this thesis is its assertion that subalternity forms a theological site of doing public theology explains it as a public theology from below, and as a public theology from the margins which employs a decolonial methodology. This is distinctive because the projects of public theology so far have not engaged with subalternity theologically. Thus, subaltern public theology for India is a theological offering to the enterprise of public theology, where subalternity, public and theology are interweaved together, engaging critically with each other. Consistent with the previous section, subaltern public theology for India is a ‘deviant’ public theology to the west, for it exposes the colonial epistemology within public theologies and propose subalternity and decoloniality as important companions in doing public theologies.

8.3.4. A Contestatory Public Theology:

Deviating from existing styles of public theology, subaltern public theology offers contestation as a key epistemological lens in doing public theology. For Forrester, public theology includes relating Christian convictions and truths to public issues; for de Gruchy, it reflects on Christian witness in the context of public issues; and for Kim it is engaging in a Christian reflection on contemporary issues.\(^{510}\) By contrast, subaltern public theology, offers an epistemology of contestation to the genre of public theology itself, contesting dominant publics and their anti-liturgical liturgies. This thesis is thus a contestatory public theology, as the agency of subaltern public is recovered and reclaimed as part of the project of public theology, with contestation serving as an epistemology. Subaltern public theology for India is a public theology done by employing a decolonial methodology, which makes it distinct in its method and content. I will comment more on the methodology used in this thesis in the next section.

8.3.5. Public Theology as Subaltern Liturgy:

Public theology as subaltern liturgy, as this thesis explains, opens a new vision for public theology. Liturgy (which is the discharge of public work) was the public theology of the early

\(^{510}\) Discussed in Chapter 2
church, and this thesis argues that subaltern liturgy is the public theology for our times, contesting as it does the anti-liturgical liturgies of modernity such as, in this case, caste). In a way, this thesis offers a fresh set of criteria for public theology, where subaltern liturgy forms the heart of it, sites of subalternity are a necessary accompaniment, and decolonial methodology the most appropriate method in doing public theology.

8.3.6. A New Profile of Public Theology for India:

It is also important to explain here what difference this thesis makes, in the context of an Indian theological enterprise. As the Introduction noted, Christian public theology in India is still in its infancy. This thesis, then, opens a new profile of public theology, where subalternity becomes an important accompaniment in doing public theology for India. Subaltern public theology for India is relevant as it is located in sites of subalternity, making it a public theology done from, for, and of, the sites of Dalit subalternity. Both the works of Wilfred and Gnanapragasam have pioneered public theology in India. Although both have spoken about subalterns, they mainly, among many other public issues, address subaltern issues such as secularism, religious pluralism, ecology, globalisation, referring to addressing public theology only in terms of seeking relevance of public issues. My thesis contrasts with this kind of public theology, explaining public theology as subaltern liturgy, contesting the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste and thereby engaging on the public character of theology for India from the sites of subalternity.

8.3.7. A Public Dalit Theology:

This thesis opens up a new vista in the enterprise of Dalit theology. By contesting the anti-liturgical liturgies, particularly the anti-liturgical liturgy of caste, subaltern public theology offers itself as a theological response to caste. Subalternity in this thesis is explored through the Dalit theological epistemic experience and, in a way, reflects a Dalit public theology: in this thesis, subalternity is a theoretical theological site within a Dalit particular experience. As explained in Chapter 7, subaltern public theology is a public-liberation theology, and to find its relevance for India, it serves as a public Dalit theology.

511 Wilfred, Asian Public Theology. Wilfred, Theol. To Go Public.
512 Gnanapragasam, Wings of Faith: Towards Public Theologies in India.
8.3.8. A Theological Foundation to Address Public Issues:

Finally, this thesis is a foundational work discussing the character of public theology from sites of subalternity. It serves as a theological foundation to address various concerns of public theology: public theology as seeking a theological relevance to public issues, epistemology of public theology, the companions of public theology and the methods of doing public theology. For instance, one might enquire after a public theology in light of the public issue of anti-cow slaughter legislation being enacted in several states in India; legislation which denies Dalits the right to food in denying them the right to eat beef. This thesis, as a theological foundation, will serve as a paradigm to enquire about such questions as, “What is the public nature of theology when right to beef eating has been denied to Dalits?” It also serves as a template to enquire, “Who are the companions for doing public theology?” Will it be the State who has enacted such a legislation, or will it be the ‘majority religious community’ who benefit out of this legislation, or will it be the victims for whom the right to a particular food has been denied? The thesis also serves as a basis from which a contestation epistemology may emerge in response to this public issue, that is, an epistemology which contests the dominant narratives appeasing the dominant majority. It leads to enquire who has enacted this legislation? For whose benefit? What are the driving epistemes in enacting such a legislation? The thesis also serves as a proforma to employ a method of decoloniality in doing public theology. Through this method of decoloniality, the agency of victims, in this case Dalits and Muslims, is reclaimed and a lens is provided through which the perspective of victims is allowed to inform the theological response to this issue. This thesis is not limited to India alone, for it serves as a theological foundation which facilitates the addressing of public issues trans-contextually. In short, my thesis serves as a theological foundation epistemologically, methodologically and theologically, in doing public theology on any public issue in a given context, not limit to India alone.

8.4. Comments on Methodology:

The distinctiveness of this thesis also lies in employing a decolonial methodology, which is employed in three ways. Firstly, is uses an ‘inductive approach’ in its theological analysis
and interpretation, particularly in bringing Dalit experiential epistemic perspectives. In the first part of the thesis, the deficiencies in public theologies have uncovered by the application of this inductive decolonial methodology to expose colonial episteme in public theologies. In the second part, this inductive approach has problematised ‘public’ as consisting of anti-caste and anti-hegemonic sites from the perspectives of subalternity. In doing so, this inductive approach reclaims the understanding of public from sites of subalternity. These findings were not deduced from a given hypothesis, but rather flowed out of the analysis of public. In the third part too, public theology as subaltern liturgy has emerged out of an inductive approach which reclaims and redisCOVERS the subaltern liturgy already inherent in public theology.

Secondly, the thesis employs decolonial methodology has been by a ‘method of recovering and reclaiming.’ Recovering, rediscovering and reclaiming has been utilised as a method throughout this thesis. In mapping public theologies in India in Chapter 2, public theology from the contributions of Thomas and Dalit theology as counter-public theology have been recovered and reclaimed as public theologies, though in their genesis they were not intended to be public theologies. In problematizing public from sites of subalternity, subaltern public sites have been recovered and reclaimed as anti-caste and anti-hegemonic sites, for the yearning of subaltern publics have been such spaces of equality and inclusivity. In the third part of this thesis, liturgy has been recovered as a theological site of public, subaltern liturgy has been rediscovered to be the site of subaltern public, and the broken body of Christ has been reclaimed as the subaltern liturgy in the context of anti-liturGical liturgy of caste. In performing public theology as subaltern liturgy, the tasks of educating, agitating and organising have been recovered from the subaltern public. In short, the method of recovering has been employed consistently in this thesis, since the colonial episteme has eclipsed the potential of subalternity. This thesis contests that colonial and caste episteme and recovers the agency of subalternity in doing public theology and exhibits subaltern public theology for India as a public theology that recovers and reclaims subaltern public as an authentic public, relevant for today.

Thirdly, this thesis employs decolonial methodology by ‘researching back’ against the public theologies of the west which have been contaminated by a colonial episteme. It is
through researching back against the colonial literature of public theology that colonial epistemology is exposed, subaltern agency and self, recovered, and subaltern public theology for India is evolved. This thesis is researching back with theoretical theological engagements in public theology from the sites of subalternity, proving that such public theological engagements are possible from Dalit epistemological positions.

Decolonial methodology is the most appropriate and suitable methodology for this research, as subaltern public theology for India emerges out of sites of subalternity and decoloniality.

8.5. Limitations:
The starting point in this research is my own Dalit Christian experience; my subjective self and experience is therefore felt throughout the thesis. I am aware that subalternity is a wide concept, and covering issues of, among others, caste, gender, class, and race. However, I limit my explanation of the sites of subalternity to the engagement of Dalit experiences as an entry point to discussing issues of caste as anti-liturgical liturgy of the public. As I have engaged on a theoretical theological discussion as an act of resilience, I have limited most of my enquiry and discussions to historical, theoretical and theological concepts, rather than engaging on practical examples or case studies (although this thesis does include such examples, notably the discussion on the politics of food).

In recovering subaltern liturgy as public theology, caste has been identified and analyzed as anti-liturgical liturgy pervading the Indian public sphere; a subaltern public theology contests this, explaining the broken body of Christ as a subaltern liturgy. It should be noted that the discussion on caste has been limited to a liturgical reading and has not dealt with a fuller theological treatment of caste. The thesis does not discuss the origins of the caste system, or several of the theories associated with caste. Instead, discussion has been limited to the liturgical reading of caste, which is most relevant to this thesis. The thesis does not provide a thorough contextual analysis of the Indian caste system, for the point of departure for this thesis is my own subjective experience as Dalit Christian academic and my own location in a fractured Indian public sphere, divided and excluded on the grounds
of caste. This thesis also does not discuss the nexus between casteism and colonialism, neither does it discuss theories on caste as a colonial invention, nor does it discuss the presence of caste in other contexts like in the UK. Rather, this thesis recognizes caste as an anti-liturgical liturgy in the public sphere that creates division and exclusion.

8.6. Recommendations for Future Research:

The future of subaltern public theology is very promising, as this project is invitational and inspirational to the public theology of our times, and herewith I put forward its invitational nature to the church, academy and society. Public theology as subaltern liturgy invites the church to imbibe the spirit of contestation against the anti-liturgical liturgies which include caste, patriarchy, and homophobia, in coherence with the decolonial method and by engaging in deconstructive hermeneutics of ‘reading against the grain,’ which is to read from below and against the dominant. The churches in India are not homogenous, and there is a wide variety of diversity in terms of their theology, experience and praxis. Therefore, subaltern public theology for India recognises such diversity among churches and challenges the churches both reformed and non-reformed churches to cast out the demon of caste from its locations. David Mosse observes that “the emergence of Dalit Christian identity has not occurred as a result of the revival of a Christian critique of caste society, although Catholic social activism motivated by liberation theology has generated caste/class mobilization.”

This observation of Mosse comes as a challenge to the church in India to engage in a Christian critique of caste, which subaltern public theology for India engages with. Mosse also notes that the practice of caste in the Church is characterised by its ‘public denial’, which makes it hard for social researchers to investigate caste within its own church institutions. This thesis calls for a serious and a critical introspection for the churches in India in overcoming this ‘public denial’ and join together in contesting caste and defeating it.

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514 Ibid, p.241
Public theology as subaltern liturgy invites the academy to creatively participate in churning a liturgy from below, which is to bring in new theological meaning and method to the traditional theological concepts by reimagining them in the context of subalternity and public theology. Public theology as subaltern liturgy invites society to script creative liturgies that transcend the parochial boundaries of any caste, race, gender and religion by offering a change and transformation to the oppressive status quo.

Allow me to propose five projects for further research that emerge out of this project of subaltern public theology for India. Firstly, my project calls for an in-depth ‘public theological account of caste,’ which is of high relevance today. This would involve creating theological tools and lenses to engage with caste (including its origins, its theories, its hermeneutics). While developing a liturgical reading of caste (Chapter 6), the importance of having a public theological account of caste was felt, as no project has yet been dedicated to providing such an account. Explaining caste as anti-liturgical liturgy opened up a ‘Pandora’s box’, necessitating a public theological treatment on the nexus of caste and colonial epistemology, and on the unholy alliances of, among others, caste, class, and patriarchy. A public theological account of caste thus constitutes an area for further research, providing a theoretical and theological engagement on caste, the oldest form of oppressive system, persisting in its domination in this modern era. Such a public theological account of caste will provide Dalit communities with epistemic tools and methods with which to critique the oppressive status quo of caste system.

Secondly, the research calls for a construction of ‘systematic public theology,’ which addresses the systematic deficiency of public theology, and engages in the formulations of Christian doctrines while, adhering to this theology’s amphibious nature and language. The following section provides a further discussion of this.

Thirdly, the research calls for a ‘re-imagining of God from a subaltern public perspective.’ Such an endeavour would activate and actualise the meaning of ‘de-transcendentalised divine’ in the context of subalternity, a discussion which emerged in Chapter 3. Later, in Chapter 6, when presenting the contours of subaltern public theology for India, God was explained to be perceived from bottom-up rather than top-down perspectives. This future
research of re-imagining God from subaltern public perspective will be a fresh offering to public theology. The language for God in theology has been mostly the language of the dominant, and in a way, this made such a language normative in the public sphere. Subaltern public theology challenges this normative, dominant language and calls for a re-imagining of God from the bottom up. This would on the one hand include an exploration of, for example, the public character of God as weak, God as crucified, God on the margins etc. and on the other hand find its implications for public theology of our times.

Fourthly, my thesis calls for a fuller exploration of ‘Dalit public liturgy’, engaging in the construction of the theological contours and content of such a liturgy by analysing contemporary Dalit liturgical resources. One of its findings is the rediscovery of subaltern liturgy as a theological account of public theology. As I have mostly applied a theoretical and theological engagement in this research, and brought out the broken body of Christ as the subaltern liturgy, this thesis invites further exploration to construct a public theological Dalit liturgy, bringing in the epistemology from Dalit liturgical resources like drum, folk lore, poems, stories, myths etc. The colonial epistemology has discounted these Dalit resources as irrational and unscientific. Construction of Dalit liturgy in the context of public theology will therefore recover and reclaim these Dalit resources and will bring out their contributions for social justice and transformation in the public sphere.

Fifthly, as Chapter 7 explains, subaltern public theology for India has been explained as a trans-contextual theology; this thesis provides ample scope to discern sites of subalternity in other contexts in the transnational public sphere. For example, to Palestinians living under the occupation regime, this thesis can serve as a methodological directive to explore a Palestinian public theology by defining sites of subalternity in their context and by employing decolonial methodology. Similarly, the Minjung community in Korea can explore a Minjung public theology, the Burakumin community in Japan can explore a Burakumin public theology. As sites of subalternity today are trans-contextual, subaltern public theology for India paves a way towards exploring a transnational public theology from the sites of subalternity. In this future project, anti-liturgical liturgies among others, like caste, occupation and race, will not be restricted to territorial public spheres but will be dealt in the transnational contexts seeking transnational solutions.
Subaltern public theology for India thus opens new future projects making public theology an exciting and promising theological enterprise, relevant to the twenty-first century.

8.7. Towards a Systematic Public Theology for India:
The thesis has identified three deficiencies in the enterprise of public theology: definitional deficiency, subalternity deficiency and systematic deficiency. By discussing towards a subaltern public theology, it tried to address the first two deficiencies by arguing that public theology should be understood in terms of the public character of theology (and not the mere relevance of public issues), and by locating public theology in the sites of subalternity. However, in this exploration, particularly in the discussions of the public character of public theology and in discussing a theological account of subaltern public as subaltern liturgy, which constitute systematic theological issues, the thesis could not fully construct a systematic public theology. A fuller treatment of a systematic public theology remains an unfulfilled task in this project.

The reasons that this thesis addresses definitional and subalternity deficiency and does not fully address systematic deficiency are twofold. Firstly, it is a methodological priority to do a public theology from the sites of subalternity with a decolonial, both theologically and contextually. Theologically it is a methodological priority to address definitional and subalternity deficiency in public theology, because for a context of India which is infested by caste and exclusion, unless subalternity deficiency and definitional deficiency of public theology are addressed, there cannot be a systematic theological treatment of public theology. In other words, any move towards a systematic public theology for India requires a critical engagement of subalternity and the definitional deficiencies of public theology, for they serve as the epistemological sources of doing systematic public theology for India. In the context of Dalit theology, Nirmal explains that, pain or pathos is the beginning of knowledge. For the sufferer, more certain than any principle, more certain than any proposition, more certain than any thought and more certain than any action, it is his/her pain-pathos which is the point of departure in engaging on a God-talk. It is in and through this pain-pathos that the sufferer knows God. This is because the sufferer in and through
his/her pain-pathos knows that God participates in human pain.\textsuperscript{515} In a similar vein, for subaltern public theology for India, addressing subalternity and definitional deficiencies comes as a methodological priority theologically. The discussions on the public character of public theology and the sites of subalternity serve as a theological foundation for doing public theology systematically. Sites of subalternity, the excluded ‘public’, are God’s preferred sites, for God pitches God’s tent on these ‘outside the camp’ sites, and this research not only situates theo-talk on these sites, but also explores the theo-praxis, the activity of God on these sites. Theologically, subaltern public theology for India is a ‘preferential public theology.’ Subalternity and decoloniality provides a theological context for India, and this thesis as a discussion of public theology irrupting from the sites of subalternity serves as a theological foundation towards a systematic public theology for India. Therefore, this thesis engaged on the definitional and subalternity deficits as a theological methodological priority.

Contextually it is a methodological priority to address definitional and subalternity deficiencies of public theology because the sites of subalternity have been excluded from public theological engagements due to the domination of colonial and casteist episteme; this thesis has recovered the agency of subalternity in doing public theology by contesting these dominant epistemologies. Any systematic public theological engagement for India which seeks to look for the sources of doing systematic public theology cannot discount the context of the sites of subalternity and their expression of public theological character, which are rampant and prevalent in the Indian theological and epistemological context.

The other reason why it has not been possible for this thesis to sufficiently address the systematic deficiency is because a systematic public theology would require a detailed study of constructing the various doctrines in Christian theology in the genre of public theology. And any attempt of doing that project would need different set of research questions with discussions on historical and theological constructions of those particular doctrines, which is beyond the purview of this thesis. A thorough engagement on

\textsuperscript{515} Nirmal, “Doing Dalit Theology.” p.141.
constructing systematic public theology remains a task needing fuller treatment by researchers on public theology.

By discussing subaltern liturgy as a theological account of the subaltern public in Chapter 6, a systematic public theology for India has just begun to emerge, and represents an exciting project emerging from this thesis. Development of a systematic public theology is expected to provide an opportunity to discuss the locus and limits of public theology by bringing in the convergences and divergences present among political theology, liberation theology and public theology. It can also bring together new companions for public theology, including post-secular public theology, post-colonial public theology, subaltern public theology. Together these new companions may address the deficiency of the systematicity of public theology, bringing it out through reflection on the public theological accounts of each doctrine, such as Trinity, Christology and eschatology. Systematic public theology will be an exciting future project, for it will provide a systematic frame work for doing public theology. This thesis serves as theological foundation, as a theological epistemological source of the project of systematic public theology. In other words, my thesis is a pre-systematic public theology for India.

8.8. ‘Towards’ a Conclusion:
On a final note, I need to mention the significance of ‘towards’ in the thesis title, ‘Towards a subaltern public theology for India.’ This thesis presents a discussion on the development of public theology from the sites of subalternity, and thus serves as a theological foundation for public theology for India. ‘Towards’ therefore presents a groundwork for discussing the public character of public theology from sites of subalternity, opening up a discussion of theological relevance for public issues in India and elsewhere. ‘Towards’ in the title of this thesis means that the thesis serves as a point of departure; in this case, the destination is a subaltern public theology for India. From such a position, a fuller engagement towards a systematic public theology can take place. ‘Towards’ also means that this thesis is a humble effort in that direction, for the fuller realization of subaltern public theology for India is still in the making. The end is yet to come.
This thesis provides a new chapter in the enterprise of public theology, unsettling both public and theology from the sites of subalternity. It will serve as a relevant theology not only for subaltern communities, but also for the public sphere of the academy. The research is relevant to students both of subaltern studies and of theological studies. It enhances subaltern studies by exploring subalternity from theological positionings, and at the same time enhances theology in general, and public theology in particular, by exploring public theology from sites of subalternity. This research is a step forward in the project of public theology, shifting the locale of public theology from the centres of the west to the sites of subalternity and decolonization, and engaging as a relevant, contemporary theology of our times. ‘Towards a subaltern public theology for India’ in fact is a kairos theology for twenty-first century located in the topos, or sites, of subalternity, where subaltern liturgy is performed, enacted and embodied.
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