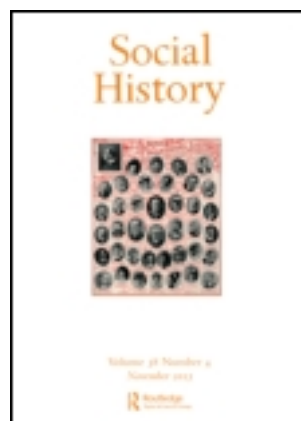


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A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste, and Difference in India and the United States

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author's treatment of the 1960s party KADU. This leads to utterly false statements such as that the Colonial Office and the colonial state favoured that party. Kenya specialists will also be struck by the number of incorrect spellings and misidentified individuals in the book, and by some factual errors. For example, Branch states that the reforms of the 1990s restricted presidents 'to two terms of four years' (240), but the narrative indicates that both Moi and Kibaki served two terms of five years.

These and other shortcomings reduce the value of the book, but its main shortcoming, particularly obvious to readers of this journal, is its near total failure to deal in any meaningful detail with the economic and social history of Kenya during the period covered.

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Gyandendra Pandey, *A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste, and Difference in India and the United States* (2013), 255 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, paperback £19.99).

The comparison of race and caste – of African Americans in the US and Dalits in India – has long been a source of inspiration and camaraderie for some, and confusion and concern for others. This ambitious study aims to provide a conceptual picture of 'prejudice and democracy as well as the prejudice of democracy' in two of the world's leading democracies: India and the United States. By intricately weaving autobiographies with 'unarchived' or even trivial evidence and secondary sources, Pandey highlights the 'invisible, unacknowledged, yet global prejudice of the modern as encountered in the lives and living of African Americans and Dalits' (3). He makes important theoretical advances by showing how the resources of modernity and democracy are denied to certain groups who are yet to become full citizens, in the view of the dominant ruling classes. These groups continuously wage battles to articulate their difference and sameness and the productivity of difference. Pandey argues that this is primarily because of the 'difference' of the disadvantaged communities as viewed by both 'outsiders' and 'insiders' themselves. He extends his theorization of the category of 'difference' from his earlier works on *Partition* and *Routine Violence* to underscore that, unlike the dichotomy of dominance and subordination (as in the Subaltern Studies framework), 'difference' in fact is 'manifold and fluid' and 'distributed along multiple grids' (40). He seems to follow a Foucauldian framework (something to which he does not refer), detailing how difference functions through many capillaries, akin to Foucault's conceptualization of power. However, the Subaltern Studies analytical frame, the dual structure of domination and subordination, stays.

Pandey extends his earlier claims on the Muslim community in his *Construction of Communalism* and *Partition* to the Dalits and African Americans, once again pointing out that it is the prevalent 'common sense' that accounts for how both the mainstream as well

as disadvantaged groups call upon the successful individuals of these communities' middle-class Dalit Brahmans and the Black bourgeoisie to follow their prescriptions. Thus, Pandey writes about the conundrums faced by the modern middle classes when the mainstream demands them to assimilate, conform with and also change their behaviour to suit the prevalent 'common sense'. The mainstream – the upper-caste, white males – in both countries want successful individuals to remember to keep in line. At the same time, the members of the disadvantaged community also want the upwardly mobile not to forget where they came from, their history, the community's experience and work for the uplift of the community.

Although upward mobility is the presumed and prescribed route out of subordinate conditions, there are many challenges that the upwardly mobile have to face. The processes, implications, and rewards of their social and economic success do not follow a straightforward trajectory. To illustrate his point, Pandey investigates the contest over surnames and the problem of 'passing'. Surnames are among the strongest indicators of caste background and hence many modern middle-class members, and especially those who are politically conscious, have contested them. While some Dalits have embraced their caste-specific names like Jatav, others have conveniently adopted caste-neutral names like Prasad or Kumar, in order to discard their being marked as Dalit. This, Pandey observes, is the predicament of the subaltern middle classes. The aspiration of higher social position and respectability, while prevalent among mainstream middle classes in the past, seems a more persistent problem in the case of the more recent 'newcomers' to modernity, especially the 'ex-slave and ex-Untouchable middle classes'.

A larger argument is made about the ways prejudice – 'vernacular' and 'universal' – have shaped the two communities and the nations involved. Pandey seeks to distinguish between the 'local' and 'relatively visible' and the largely invisible, widespread, 'universal'. Yet, in making this claim and at times applying it sweepingly to seemingly disparate communities, Pandey misses out on important particularities, especially those localized, and the most vernacular, by not referring to even a single vernacular idiom as articulated by Dalits (in the Marathi language) or African Americans themselves.

By drawing upon feminist scholars (especially African Americans) as well as women's memoirs (for example, Babytai Kamble and Viola Andrews), Pandey seeks to make nuanced claims about 'subjectivity', 'prejudice', 'difference', 'community' and 'marginalization'. He attempts a deeper treatment of Babytai's memoirs, the first scathing critique of patriarchy within Dalit communities. However, non-Dalit and Dalit scholars and ordinary women and men alike in English (the universal lingua franca) and in Marathi (vernacular) have already attacked women's subordination within the home and the prevalent Dalit patriarchy. Pandey unfortunately fails to record these efforts. Moreover, at times by raising rhetorical questions, he fails to understand the critical context that made Babytai contribute to the Ambedkar movement in the first place and also to analyse particular details in the vernacular. For example, in her autobiography, Babytai refers to *Bhimvaaraa* ('winds of change', inspired by Ambedkar's ideas and practices).¹ She

¹Baby Kamble, *Jina Amucha [Our Living]*, 2nd edn (Pune, 1990), 64–5, 113.

constructs this vernacular idiom which she claims revolutionized the community. Failing to understand her articulations and agential capacities to engage with the social movement, Pandey chooses to tell us that 'she was caught up' in the struggle (180). He thus deprives Dalit women of even the small powers they had. They were not simply 'humbler interpreters of a supernatural leader's vision' (180), as Pandey would like us to believe. He portrays Dalit women as entirely dependent on and derived from Ambedkar's ideas and simply imbibing them and imitating him. Women may seem less articulate, vocal or overtly political, unlike 'political' men; yet they were active, they made choices and contributed their bit, however limited. Urmila Pawar and Meenakshi Moon's ethnographic study illustrates the point persuasively.²

The most important drawback of the book is that Pandey does not provide any references to earlier scholarly and non-scholarly investigations into Dalit access to modern institutions of democracy. He points out the problems of gender oppression and caste, and class discrimination within the Dalit community, but in a manner which implies that his coming to these conclusions is particularly novel. Much of this, however, is already very familiar from existing vernacular literature and works produced by some Dalit and non-Dalit scholars. Moreover, both Dalits and non-Dalit leaders, spokespersons and ordinary women and men recognized these problems long before Pandey and also made attempts to tackle them in different historical conjunctures. One reason for such an erasure could be because the author focuses exclusively on the 'difference' and 'prejudice' of the modern and civilized technologies, thus almost claiming that modernity did not offer any positive outcome to the subalterns and also that his study is the first one to make these investigations. Finally, like many other authors he also misspells names of important leaders: Jotirao and Ramasamy; he sanskritizes and sanitizes them as 'Jyotirao' and 'Ramaswamy'.

Nonetheless, this is an interesting and extremely valuable book, which advances our understanding of the shaping of the modern, and it will be useful to many fields.

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²Urmila Pawar and Meenakshi Moon, *We Also Made History: Women in the Ambedkarite Movement* (Pune, 1989 [2000]).