

Our hymns are different but our gods are the same: Religious rituals in modern garment factories in Nepal

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This article deals with the emerging literary convergence between the two strands of literature that examine the rise of modern capitalism among the inherently acapitalistic societies of South and East Asia. Singer's (1972) ethnography of the Indian industrial leaders of Madras establishes a case for "a palimpsest for continuity and change" in terms of modernization of business and socio-religious organisation among the elite industrial leaders. An essential supplement to it are Ong's (1987) ethnography of the Malaysian modern factory workers and Parry's (1999) study of the Indian industrial labour, both of which explore the inherent psychological and cultural dilemma that the predominantly rural workforce faces as they proceed towards adapting to the Fordist and Taylorist methods of industrial production. Such converging literature reiterates the falsity of the linear dogmatism of the modernisation theory, on both counts – among the industrialists as well as the workers. Drawing from an ethnography¹ of a readymade garment industry in Nepal, which is at the forefront of the course of globalisation in the country, I offer a discussion on the extent to which the changing religious rituals in the modern industrial sphere support the Singerian deduction on the incessant coexistence of religious creed with capitalistic calculations, and the extent to which the two pillars of industrialisation, i.e., the industrialists as well as the workers, are part of and share this entangling temporal conundrum.

Milton Singer's book *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization* (1972) is one that has a similar stature as Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* in Indian anthropology, or Weber's *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* in economic sociology, both as an exploration of "culture" in economic territories and as a critique of the stale old comparative static of the conventional sociological modernization theory. Singer concluded that the modern features of industry are not likely to displace the traditional features overnight, nor are the two sets of features necessarily incompatible. He showed that the challenges that an industrialist encounters in his industrial ventures which he is powerless to solve in a mercantile way, as well as the conflicts he encounters with traditional institutions, beliefs,

¹ Conducted from October 2002 to July 2004.

and the values he contains are often mitigated by developing a “compartmentalisation” of industrial life from domestic and social, and thereby seeking a “rational adaptability” rather than an “irrational resistance” of Hinduism to change.

The ethnographies of the industrial labour force so far have not documented such “compartmentalisation;” instead the ethnographies of the workers in the emerging capitalisms – the most prominent ones being Ong’s (1987) and Parry’s (1999) – have shed light on the second important feature of industrial modernization, which is that the workers have come to use cultural symbolism for sheer resistance to the new industrial order. These ethnographies claim that the imposition of the “new” order, and the interruption to the idyllic agrarian life that it generates, is ritually evaded and consciously or subconsciously retaliated.

Ong (1987) sought to illuminate the cultural change in an industrialising society by talking about changing peasant beliefs and practices in a situation of “shifting, complementary, and contradictory” meanings. Her study of spirit possession amongst Malaysian factory women begins with a portrayal of the traditional Kampong life where a young woman’s work followed easy-going rhythms of day and night, seasonality and social harmony. This pastoral idyll is shattered by a Taylorist factory discipline, by reduction of work to time-motion manipulation, and by the constant surveillance of, often male, supervisors. What this dislocating experience gives rise to is a series of minor acts of resistance, of which, seizure of the hantu hallucinations is a kind of ritual rebellion against a loss of autonomy and a “residual image” of remembered village (p. 9). Similarly, Johny Parry’s (1999) *muhurat*² of the ethnographic study of the Indian industrial workforce is an anthology of various forms of worker resistance to the industrialists’ construction of “new” industrial labour loyalties based on the credit and payment systems as well as the reconstruction of “old” loyalties deriving largely from the social ethics of caste, age, gender and obligational hierarchies. Parry argues that the “shirking” behaviour of the industrial worker in the “new” capitalistic order in India is an expression of their pre-emptive resistance to the capitalistic efforts to usher in change to their rhythm of work.

These ethnographies on labour resistance leave us with a pertinent question: Does a “compartmentalising” phenomenon that has come to embody the industrialists’ adaptation to modern capitalism also extend to the industrial workers who follow the same process of change? Does the natural process of resistance preclude the workers from developing any compartmentalisation of their personal and industrial spaces as a more

² A ritual launch.

encompassing tool for resistance? Owing to the cohabitation of workers and industrialists in industrial spaces, is it sensible to use the compartmentalisation or resistance theories to jointly explore the common industrial and cultural circumstances shared by these two groups? These will be the key questions this article will try to address in its ethnography of the industrialists and workers of large-scale Taylorist garment factories in Nepal.

Religion's role in building trust

The readymade garment industry in Nepal is largely dominated by Hindus because the garment industry flourished in Nepal as a direct aftermath of the international Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) of 1974, whereby the United States which held over ninety percent of the global garment market introduced a country-specific global garment quota among its primary garment supplier countries. MFA quotas largely curtailed the supply potentials from India and redistributed the surplus among the smaller South Asian countries – Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Owing to an open border between India and Nepal, the MFA prompted an overnight, large-scale relocation of the Indian garment capital to Nepal. The Garment Association of Nepal (GAN) estimated that more than ninety per cent of the garment factories registered in Nepal in the 1970s and 1980s comprised of substantial Indian capital. Contemporary commercial law in Nepal had made it mandatory that any alien capitalist seeking to invest in Nepal, including the Indians, must do so under the formal business partnership with a Nepali national. This had important implications for the relocation of the Indian garment industry in Nepal: Although the Indian garment industry originally comprised of a large number of Muslim and Christian industrialists, it was primarily the Hindu garment factory owners who chose to relocate their operations to Nepal. Not surprisingly, almost all of them chose to form business partnerships with Nepali Hindus.

Among the 93 garment manufacturing firms that I surveyed, 49 factories were business partnership firms. Sixteen of these had been closed by March 2004. Among the 33 that were still operating, the business partnership was almost always between the people of a common religion – in this case Hinduism. Only one of the 33 factories that I surveyed was a business partnership between a Nepali Buddhist and an Indian Hindu, while thirty were partnerships between the Hindus. Within this, fourteen of the business partnerships were between Nepali Hill Hindus; eleven were between Indian Hindus and Nepali Hindus of Indian origin; and five were between the Nepali Hill Hindus and Indian Hindus. It was not possible to

ascertain the religions of the owners of the two remaining firms. The business registration records of the Garment Association of Nepal (GAN) and my informal interviews with the key officials of GAN as well as other specialists of the garment industry confirmed that hardly any non-Hindu Indian garment industrialists had moved to Nepal over the past three decades. What this suggested is that religion provided a source of cooperation and a platform of trust among industrialists when they were bound by common religious values. In the absence of a sound legal framework for commercial agents to abide by, factory owners often resorted to religion for settling financial disputes. The following case of a complex financial dispute between three garment industrialists from one of the factories where I undertook my ethnographic research substantiates my argument further.

A tripartite partnership between Ram Lamichhane (Nepali Hill Hindu / NHH), Suresh Sharma (NHH) and Ajay Manandhar (Nepali Hill non-Hindu) was undergoing a serious financial crisis. Within this partnership, Suresh Sharma and Ajay Manandhar were not only long-standing business partners but also friends from childhood whereas Ram Lamichhane was much older and had only recently offered Suresh and Ajay business partnerships in his firm. Within a year of the partnership, worrying symptoms were appearing, and Ram expressed his wish to opt out. A separation deal was reached where the three partners agreed that Ram's investment was worth 1.5 million Rupees – a fairly substantial sum by Nepalese standards. Suresh and Ajay made a verbal agreement with Ram that they would pay back his capital within a year. The spouses and sons of the three business partners were brought in as informal witnesses to this agreement. Nevertheless, no legal formalities were done and no documents were signed.

The unrecorded verbal promise among the three business partners - Ram, Suresh and Ajay – came to a major challenge within six months as the factory came to a standstill and the government blacklisted all three partners for non-payment of interests to their bank loans. The response of the two business partners to this crisis marked a stark contrast. Owing to major financial pressure, Ajay Manandhar denied his financial obligations to Ram. Not visibly different in his financial and social positions, Suresh Sharma still abided by his commitment. It took more than five years for Suresh to materialise his commitment, but he finally paid back the debt in October 2004. This earned him great respect among his professional and social circles, that “as a Brahman he would not let down another Brahman.” Ajay Manandhar's refusal to respect his credit obligations was less attributed to his individual dishonesty and more to his socio-religious standing, and as Ram's son Sameer put it: “Why would he pay back when

we did not have a single common kin ... and [more importantly] even [our] Gods [are] different.”

Religion's role in dealing with uncertainties

It was customary among industrialists in Nepal to invoke the power of religious rituals to bestow protection and recovery from organisational and transactional crises. The protection of such rituals was especially sought at the time of a major industrial crisis in 2004 where a new WTO provision would end the quota privilege the Nepali garment industry had been enjoying since the 1974 Multi-Fibre Agreement, which was key to the rapid growth of this industry between 1974 and 2004. While the new WTO provision was inflexible with regard to the industry, it would have different implications for the various garment factories within the industry: For example, smaller-scale factories basing their trade on the value of their produce rather than the sheer quantity of their produce would be only marginally affected by this new policy whereas larger-scale factories solely focusing on the economies of scale would be hit hard.

It is important to highlight that the two types of garment production in Nepal differed not only in scale but more importantly in the underlying factors which led them to pursue different scale economies: The former was dominated by the practising members of traditional elite castes pursuing niche markets by specialising in ethnic arts of fabric-making and dyeing, clothes-designing or pictorial icons while the latter was largely represented by world-travelled and Western-educated management experts. Rather than the social origins of the owners, it was the nature of their business products which largely influenced their organisational preferences at their workplace: factories producing ethno-contemporary garments adopted schedules that least disturbed the natural rhythms of seasons as well as the ethnic rhythms of festivities and religious rituals. These factories often kept the workers segregated by their castes and ethnicities so that the workflow was not interrupted when the workers were absent during their respective ethnic festivities and rituals. Industrial loyalties coincided with traditional *jajmani* loyalties where factory owners and workers were mutually bonded through a series of complex financial obligations with multiple temporal, contextual and social dimensions. This was a sharp contrast to labour organisation in large-scale factories which seemed to follow principles of a caste-neutral meritocracy, where workers of all castes, ethnicities and gender worked side by side in a Taylorist “chain” system. Where their adherence to cultural norms became more pronounced, they were faced with their escapism from market-aversion.

Contrary to the impressionistic notion that large-scale factories would be more pragmatic than their smaller-scale and more conventional counterparts in terms of ensuring cost-effectiveness in factory operations and work floor socialisation, they became more and more solemn in their pursuit of religious rituals as the industry headed towards the uncertainties brought about by the change in WTO trade policies. These would inevitably be detrimental to their economic well-being. As the industry approached the much-feared expiration of MFA in December 2004, the seriousness with which religious rituals were performed in large-scale garment manufacturing factories in Nepal had far outrun their conventional counterparts. Such an observation corroborates the conclusions drawn by the “economised” school of anthropologists and sociologists who interpret social and religious rituals to be the outcome of economic manoeuvres among essentially non-economic agents in societies. For example, Malinowski (1954) affirmed that the religious rituals for deep sea shark and *kalala* (mullet) fishing were more stringent than those for lagoon fishing in the Trobriand Islands. Such an observation is also consistent with Lewis’ observation that investment bankers in London followed clothing and paperwork rituals when they were performing transactions that were considered to carry greater risks than normal. In his second case study, on a large synthetic fibre factory in Japan, it was the theme of safety that permeated the religious and nonreligious contexts in which the religious rituals were observed. The supremacy of safety concerns made the religious ritual and business ethics mutually complementary rather than contradictory.³

Religion as an identity within the factory power constellation

This section will focus on what extent religion adds a dimension to the implicit power struggle intrinsic among the various actors in business operations. Arya-Nepal, one of the factories where I did my ethnography, was a large-scale ready-made garment factory, serving the global market of large-scale and low-cost ready-made garments through the India-based purchasing agents of American clients such as GAP, Walmart, Kmart, Kohl, etc. The factory was established in the year 2000 under the wing of an India-based garment/textile- manufacturing group, primarily to adapt to the MFA-related shift in the US import policy which curtailed India’s share in the American market and replaced it by an increase in Nepal’s share. By March 2003, the factory had grown to become one of the largest and most profitable in Nepal.

³ D. Lewis in Mullins et al. (1993), p. 170

Arya-Nepal senior management comprised of five full-time senior managers transferred from their headquarters in Ludhiana, and a Nepali Hindu CEO who had strong command over the Arya-Nepal workforce which was largely Nepali, and through them a strong voice in senior management decisions. The conflicting national identities among the senior management team inevitably led to conflicts on managerial issues such as recruitment of workers, supervision of the factory floors, promotion and disciplinary actions, etc. The Indian team within senior management was tight-fisted in granting approval for workers' advance payments, promotions, etc., which were frequently overridden by the Nepali CEO, and as a result his managerial decisions were the ones that the workers heeded most.

It is important to describe an important incident in order to explain why an essentially Indian factory would have Nepali managerial staff in such a strong capacity. When the factory was established, two seniormost positions were created to strike the balance between the Nepali and Indian presence within the factory management team: The Nepali CEO was expected to work closely with a Kathmandu-based Punjabi Vice-President. This arrangement went smoothly at the outset, but an implicit national-ethnic league soon emerged, which was exacerbated by a political incident in Kathmandu that gave air to general feeling of hostility to Indian "imperialistic tendencies" at times. In January 2001, the opposition political parties in Nepal protested against the Nepali government's suppression of a peaceful demonstration march towards the Indian embassy to submit a letter to protest to the denunciation of a scandal over controversial statements about Nepal allegedly made by a famous Bollywood film star. This macro political crisis had acute implications for Arya-Nepal. Echoing the protests in the streets of Kathmandu, the workers at Arya-Nepal spontaneously formed a Madheshi Daman Pratikar Samiti ("Resistance Committee against Indian Domination"). Impulsive riots engulfed the entire industry, and like most other garment factories, Arya-Nepal was forced to close its operations for more than a week. The work floor returned to normal only after the Bollywood actor concerned clarified that the alleged remarks about Nepal had in fact never been made.

Within weeks after Arya-Nepal resumed its operations, a bizarrely analogous crisis took over the factory: The factory workers started a petition to denounce anti-Nepal remarks allegedly made by the Indian Vice-President of Arya-Nepal. After the petition had collected 400 signatures, the President of the factory flew from Ludhiana to resume dialogue with the aggravated labour union. He then suspended the Vice-President in an attempt to calm the labour protests. The position was

never filled again after the Vice-President was made to return to Ludhiana from where he sent his resignation. After that, the Nepali CEO took full control of factory operations.

Arya-Nepal had maintained its religiosity from its very inception, which evolved subtly through the ethno-political turmoil that it underwent on occasion. The factory entrance held a large picture of Ganesha, a Hindu god of auspiciousness. Every senior manager's office, including the CEO, production manager and finance officer, had paintings and *mantras* of Ganesha hanging on their walls. The company greeting business cards bore large, stylised pictures of Ganesha. The company also granted regular employment to two Hindu priests. In addition, the factory employed two more practising Brahman priests in non-priestly positions, in production management, who also gave regular advice on the performance of religious rituals in the factory.

Both the Indian and the Nepali members of the senior management team took pride in the fact that the factory was *pakka brahman*, “*genuinely Brahman*”, and that *dharma* (religion) was observed sincerely as manifested in its regular undertaking of a series of religious rituals. It exclusively followed a policy of *satvik ahar* (holy food) whereby not only the canteen was strictly prohibited from serving *tamasik* (meat-based, egg-based, or garlic/onion-based) food, but the entire workforce was forbidden to consume such food anywhere near the factory premises. A story circulated among factory workers about the discovery of some egg shells on the Arya-India premises in Ludhiana: The owner apparently ordered an emergency factory closure for two days, which obviously incurred a substantial financial loss, in order to perform a religious cleansing ritual. While the Nepalis who followed a behaviourally liberal sect of Hinduism were slightly critical of such stringent norms, Punjabi managers thought *satvik ahar* to be of even greater importance in this context than the *agghorpanthi*⁴ sect of Pashupatinath that the Nepalis belonged to discounted for consumption of such *tamasik* food. A few months' operations, however, the Nepali managers and workers requested permission to cook such food at least in the workers' living quarters if not in the factory canteen. After lengthy debates, this permission was granted, but not before a wall was built to separate the living quarters from the main factory premises. Nevertheless, the fact that the Punjabi managers had given in despite their obvious unwillingness, indicated not only the

⁴ This is one of the important Hindu sects, which follows Shiva who is also known as Agghor baba – the non-follower of the rules of ritual purity, or Sanharkarta – the god of destruction, or Pashupatinath – the lord of the animals. Shiva is believed to be a dweller of the high Himalayas and hence this sect is particularly influential among the Nepalis who live near the Himalayas.

grip that the Nepali managers had on decision-making in overall factory operations, but also the sort of equilibrium the two sides often reached in terms of religious and business stances alike.

A factory order revealed through a Navagraha/Vastu Puja

In February 2003, the factory owners took the decision to add a new floor on top of the existing two-storey building in order to house four additional stitching lines, a new research and development (R&D) unit, and a new office for the Production Manager. It was perceived that an elaborate religious ritual was essential to inaugurate the new floor which was undertaken on Friday, February 14, 2003. The priest, flown in to Kathmandu from Ludhiana specifically for this purpose, set the date for the ritual, following an intense debate between the Nepali and Indian priests as to which days of a lunar calendar would be auspicious for such an occasion. The final resolution marked a compromise between the perceived ritual auspiciousness among the Nepali and Indian priests but also considerations for the factory owner's business schedule. Nevertheless, the Punjabi factory owner had a sudden change of plan at the last minute, and he had to travel overseas which prevented him from attending the factory ritual.

The main priest from Ludhiana led a group of twelve priests brought in for the inauguration ritual from the Pashupatinath temple, the sacred-most Hindu temple in Nepal for both Nepalis and Indians. The two regular Nepali priests employed by the factory, and the two Brahman work floor supervisors who were practising priests elsewhere, assisted with several organisational tasks. Inasmuch as the ritual symbolically represented the power constellation of the factory, it was not a coincidence that the main actors during the organisation of the ritual were also the active members at various levels of factory operations. The CEO and his wife shared the role of the *jajman*, the patron of the ritual. The head priest sent from the Ludhiana headquarters, in addition to his priestly functions, also performed the role of a co-*jajman* during the ritual in the absence of the Punjabi factory owner. His priestly functions included the consecration of the ritual platform, formal initiation of the ritual and attributing holy script recitals to the other priests. His *jajman* functions included participation in *ahuti* (offering grains to the holy fire), *godan* (offering holy cow to the Brahmans) and *prasad grahan* (accepting the holy foods at the end of the ritual). It is not customary either in Nepal or in India for the same person to assume two functions, *jajman* and priest, but it was an improvisation carried out during this factory ritual. Both the Indian and Nepali priests seemed to accept it perfectly well. While the workers and

junior managers supervised the logistical part of the ritual, the senior management team played the role of the *istamitras* (kin and friends).

A small team of factory workers and supervisors took part in the preparatory tasks for the ritual. The composition of this meso-team was an atypical one and reflected compartmentalisation on the part of both managers and workers of the ritualistic norms followed in their private and professional lives. On the one hand, it showed preference to people who either came from Brahman families or families who were well versed in Hindu rituals. On the other hand, it marked a symbolic deviation from the theological claims on Hindu ritual purity. While a significant number of major actors were of Brahman and of Hindu origin, others were of lower status by pure theological standards; for example, one was a Muslim man married to a Hindu woman, the other was a married Brahman woman who had been childless for decades, which would have made her ineligible to participate in rituals at home. The third was a Newar woman, who would have been of too low a status in a conservative Brahman community to be allowed to be part of any religious rituals. During the factory rituals, the theological norms seemed to have been improvised in that genealogical and ritual purity were superseded by accommodation of “acquired” knowledge and “acquired” status – a departure that would still be seen as premature had the ritual been undertaken in factory owners or workers’ purely personal spaces. Where such an improvisation drew the line was in accommodating the so-called “untouchable” castes: The factory also employed a large number of “low-caste” Magars and the “untouchable” Damais (Tailor caste). None of this staff even stepped on the floor on which the prayer was being observed although some of them had been working for the Nepali managers for several years.

Among the Punjabis, the openings rituals at the inauguration of commercial projects would normally commence with the worship of Vastu while the Nepalis would start with the worship of Laxmi and Vishwakarma. Vastu puja is the prayer to the Vastupurush who is considered to be the controller of all constructions, and finds its roots in Rig Veda, while vishwakarma puja is the prayer to the deity of construction and machinery that finds its roots in the Mahabharata and Laxmi is the deity of wealth. In a joint ritual where both prayers are recited, Nepalis tended to emphasise the latter while the Indians emphasise the former. Arya-Nepal followed the `Punjabi trend.

The *havan-vedi* (sacred fireplace) was built on the newly built floor, with four copper flasks in four directions symbolising four mythical oceans and an additional flask in the east symbolising all seven continents. The flask contained mango, *gulmohar*, *var* (the sacred banyan tree), *amala* (Indian gooseberry) leaves and *kush* grass, and was filled with holy water,

covered with a white cloth and placed on top of a small pile of rice grains with shells. The Indian norm neither stipulates the cloth nor the rice grains with shells. After some discussion, an improvisation was found by using a combination of white and red cloths to wrap the copper flasks in to obtain “the right colour combination” so it was said. The ritual then proceeded in the following order:

- Swastivacana: Invocation of all deities and purification of sanskaras
- Brahman-varani, abhisek and sankalpa: Formal appointments of the ritual participants
- Godan: Symbolic donation of cow to the priest(s)
- Diyo-kalash puja: Worshipping of fire and water
- Ganesha puja
- Sodasa-matrika puja: Worship of sixteen female deities
- Ahuti: Offerings to the fire
- Navagraha puja: Worship of the nine planets
- Vastu and Viswokarma puja: Worship of the building and machinery

Several discrepancies emerged between Nepali and Indian customs which were solved through discussions and ritual improvisations, something that would not have been easy in religious rituals within families and societies. The factory rituals, however, indicated a clear sense of compartmentalisation, on the part of both the factory owners as well as the workers, who took on the role of jajman and the priest/occupational worker respectively. This allowed both groups to moderate their reactions to any improvisations concerning the rituals. On a less controversial front, the Nepalis allowed themselves to be mildly ridiculed for using the inscribed image of cow on a five-paisa coin to perform the godan (offering of the cow) ritual as opposed to an Indian offering of a “perceived” price of the cow in cash. On a more controversial front, the Nepalis insisted on performing a sixteen-step ritual for the Ganesh puja although it was customary in India to perform a five-step ritual for Ganesh. The Indians laid more emphasis on the Vastu or the architectural deity, and this had to be accommodated. Improvisations that would have been unacceptable in a more personal space were easily accommodated in the factory rituals.

Table 1: The similarities and differences between Indian and Nepali rituals

Ritual	“Indian” [Punjabi]	“Nepali”	Compromise
Selecting rituals for commercial entities	Worship of Vastu and <i>sriyantra</i>	Worship of Vishwokarma, Mahalaxmi and Hanuman	Worship of Vastu and Vishwokarma
Setting the day for ritual	A <i>shukla pakshya</i> (bright fortnight) Saturday was regarded as auspicious. When that was not possible, the following Friday was chosen.	Saturdays in general were regarded as inauspicious for such rituals. The following Friday that was chosen did not fulfil the astrological conditions for the <i>havana</i> either.	The chosen day was the one that was convenient for the representative from Punjab to travel on..
Roles in setting up the Yagyamandap or jagge	Mainly by women with <i>soubhagya</i> (husband) and <i>putra</i> (son). Lower-caste people not allowed to take part in the ritual.	Same	Including a childless Brahman woman, a Newar woman and a Muslim man
Statue or Pratima	Gold statue to be worshipped	Gold statue to be worshipped	A pile of Ganesh-painted ceramic tiles was worshipped which were later plastered in the main entrance and other rooms of the factory after the ritual.
Layout of the Mandap	<i>Matrika</i> painting on the <i>nairitya</i> (south-west) corner and <i>navagraha</i> on the north side.	<i>Matrika</i> and <i>Navagraha</i> paintings on the north-east side.	Indian norms followed
Agnisthapana karma	<i>Kalash</i> would carry <i>saptamritika</i> (holy earth from seven places) ⁵ <i>Kalash</i> not covered in cloth.	Four <i>kalash</i> covered in white cloth and placed on unpeeled rice with one <i>kalash</i> in the middle in the easterly direction	<i>Saptamritika</i> involved and the <i>kalash</i> was symbolically covered in white as well as red cloth. No <i>saptamatrika</i> available.

⁵ including earth from Kurukshetra, Gaya, warzone, soil under an elephant’s feet, and soil under a horse’s hooves.

Havana	Two tiers of the <i>havana</i> , built by baked bricks	Either 3 (for <i>Swastik</i> prayer) or 5 tiers (<i>Tantrik</i>) for the <i>havana</i> . Only unbaked bricks are used to build <i>havana</i> .	Indian norm followed
Roles of Yajaman and priest	Two different individuals	Two different individuals	The main priest also represented one of the <i>Jajmans</i> , and played a dual role
Godan	<i>Godan</i> optional in <i>Vastu puja</i> . A financial sum is donated that is perceived to be equivalent to the cost of a cow.	<i>Godan</i> essential in any <i>puja</i> . A five-paisa coin would be donated because it has the picture of a cow on it.	<i>Godan</i> carried out, but 100 rupees given to each Brahman as <i>Godan</i> .
Significance of Kalash	Mainly purity	Representation of Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh	
Shodasha matrika puja	Full version of mantras cited	Only abridged versions. This is not recited when <i>Vishwokarma puja</i> is also being carried out.	Longer versions recited on the Ludhiana priest's insistence.
Puja	<i>Pancopacar puja</i> (with five worship materials) more common.	<i>Sodasopacar puja</i> (with 16 worship materials) more common on special occasions.	<i>Sodasopacar puja</i> , carried out.
Puja materials	No "cooked" sweets in <i>naivedhya</i> . Mango and banana leaves hung above doors for auspicious entrance to house	One "cooked" sweet in <i>naivedhya</i> . In addition to mango and banana leaves, add palm	No cooked sweets used; no leaves hung above doors
Havan	All family members and guests perform <i>ahuti</i> .	Same	All senior and junior managers of all caste and religions.

Concluding remarks

To summarise, it seems that the growing practice of cultural rituals and networking in modern factories can be understood as followed. In factories that produced garments for the (more profitable) niche markets, factory owners have attempted to follow caste-based labour desegregation to secure a cheap and stable labour force in the face of a fragmented labour market and a rapid expansion of market demand for their products in the 1990s as well as at the turn of the century. In factories that produced garments for the (more risky) homogenised markets, factory owners have attempted to follow a caste-averse labour organisation to reap the benefits of the economies of scale. Cultural practices differ on two fronts: first, factories producing cheaper garments for a riskier market tend to rely more on culture-based identities rather than culture-derived production-specific knowledge for their business networking; and secondly, factories producing cheaper garments also tend to use religious rituals more frequently as a “risk-handling” mechanism. Counter-intuitively, factories producing for the more profitable, niche markets tend to use their cultural heritages to generate production-specific knowledge while there is little evidence of their use of caste and ethnic identities at the face value for business networking.

Multi-faceted instances of the cultural and the capitalistic worlds overlapping lead to the conclusion that religion adds a dimension to the formal identities of factory managers and workers, thereby influencing the nature of business partnerships, transactions and alliances they are likely to take on. The study described the extent to which Hinduism provided both a source of commonality and cooperation between Indians and the hill-based Nepalese, and simultaneously a ground for dispute between them. Religion had come to fill the vacuum left by the anxiety arising from the industrial uncertainty that had come to overshadow the garment industry in Nepal.

The account of how modernity progresses in the industrial sphere in Kathmandu, based on the study of improvisation in religious rituals in the progressive but anxiety-stricken garment factories in Nepal, also showed – predictably enough – a kind of compartmentalisation of religious continuity and industrial change. I have tried to show that the changes taking place in business organisations in the context of economic modernisation and globalisation do imply what has been called a “deepening” of modernity – as opposed to “broadening” – in the sense that “disembedding” has proceeded further than before. On the other hand, industrial uncertainty which is also a characteristic feature of economic modernity has lent renewed vigour to the search for the renewal of the Hindu cultural tradition. Finally, though Singer’s case of

Chennai in the 1970s might appear to have little in common with Kathmandu in the 2000s, the “compartmentalisation” nature of industrial and personal life still appears to apply.

The problem of workers’ resistance in newly capitalising societies is that the “new” order is so anomalous that resistance is not necessarily limited to religious rituals but widespread in other fields such as political upheavals and social movements, as was the case in Nepal’s garment industry. What the study of Arya-Nepal shows us, however, is that resistance does not necessarily preclude compartmentalisation but that the two could coexist. For example, the workers adopted the political agenda to express their discontent to the control exerted by the Indian Vice-President of the factory; nevertheless, when it came to improvising factory rituals which at least partly served their common interests, workers compartmentalised their professional and personal spaces in accommodating the ritualistic improvisations as much as their factory managers did.

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