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Structure and Anti-Structure in Hindu Pilgrimage to Ayodhya †

Introduction

Pilgrimage has only recently become a subject of interest for anthropologists. The former neglect of this important social phenomenon – in the Indian case involving millions of people – is probably due to the confinement of anthropological research to the fixed patterns of social life in the little community.[1] The seminal contribution of Victor Turner to the study of the ritual process has however caused a growing interest in the phenomenon of pilgrimage (see e.g. Turner 1969, 2974 and Turner & Turner 1978).

Turner argues that social life cannot be fully described in terms of patterned arrangements of role-sets, status-sets and status-sequences, because situations exist in which these social distinctions disappear and ' a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities arises which tends to make those experiencing it think of mankind as a homogeneous, unstructured and free community' (1974: 169). This kind of situation he observed first in his study of rites of passage among the Ndembu, a tribe in Zambia, Central Africa. These rites take place in the periphery of the residential area and thus imply a journey from one place to another and back, during which a change in status from boy to adult takes place. The total process can be described in terms of the analytic distinctions developed by Van Gennep (1977): separation, limen, reaggregation. Turner observed that in the place where the rituals were performed during the 'liminal' phase of transition from one status to another, a feeling of oneness arose amongst the participants in which their structural differences disappeared. This confrontation of 'total' individuals Turner calls *communitas* and the totality of phenomena in social life which give rise to it he calls *anti-structure*.

Whereas in tribal societies anti-structure is expressed in rites of passage, in more complex societies with historical religions it seems primarily to be expressed in pilgrimage. The place of pilgrimage is 'a center out there' and the journey to it can be analysed by making use of the distinctions developed by Van Gennep. According to Turner, pilgrimage is 'liminal' in the spatial sense and has the social quality of *communitas*. Turner, however, does not equate pilgrimage to tribal rites of initiation. Voluntarism, free choice plays a much greater role in the historical religions than in tribal religions. Further he remarks that 'the relationship between social structure and social communitas varies within and between societies and in the course of social change, (1974: 202), and 'this quality of communitas in long-established pilgrimages becomes articulated in some measure with the environing social structure through their social organization' (166,167). This suggests a dialectical relation between structure and anti-structure, so that in a sense 'communitas is not structure with its signs reversed, minuses instead of pluses, but rather the *fons et origo* of all structures and, at the same time their critique. For its very existence puts all social structural rules in question and suggests new possibilities. Communitas strains toward universalism and openness.' (202). We can easily imagine that this model, in which a dialectical relation is suggested between 'normal' social life in village, town, neighbourhood or family and the process of pilgrimage, is extremely attractive to those who refuse to see in religion a mere reflection of social structure and want to give symbolic action an important place in the study of society.

The usefulness of Turner's ideas on pilgrimage is recently assessed in studies on regional cults in Africa and South America (Werbner 1977, Sallnow 1981). In this paper I want to do the same in a study of Hindu pilgrimage to Ayodhya, a sacred place in northern Uttar Pradesh. My aim is to determine whether this kind of pilgrimage can be seen as anti-structural or, to put it differently, to

determine what the relation is between Hindu pilgrimage and the social structure of traditional India, i.e. the caste system.[2] Turner's model has certainly been devised for such cross-cultural checking. Moreover, he uses very often Indian examples to substantiate his theoretical thought (Turner 1969: 164-5, 185-8, 196-8; 1974: 205-7, 275-94). First I want to give an analytical description of the pilgrimage to Ayodhya and secondly I will try to find out whether Turner's model is of any use to understand my material.

Pilgrimage to Ayodhya

Ayodhya forms a twin-town with Faizabad, 132 km from the capital of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow. In 1971 Faizabad-cum-Ayodhya had 102,000 inhabitants. Ayodhya proper is almost strictly a religious place. It has no industry and the economy is based on pilgrimage and agriculature. The number of its temples is approximately 5000, including very small ones. It is impossible to calculate the number of pilgrims visiting Ayodhya, but it is reasonable to guess that a great part of the 22,600,000 people who came by public transport to Ayodhya from March 1976 to March 1977 were pilgrims.

Ayodhya combines two features, both of them making it a sacred place of pilgrimage. It is situated on the banks of the holy river Sarayu (present-day Ghagara), which according to local pandits is a tear from the eye of Viṣṇu and for that reason more sacred than the Ganges, which flows from the toe of Viṣṇu. Moreover, it is the birthplace of Rāma, one of the two most important avatāras of Viṣṇu. The other is of course kṛṣṇa, whose sacred area (kṣetra) is Braj. Therefore it is at the same time an appropriate place for the performance of the rituals that have to take place on the banks of a holy river, and a nodal point in the devotional cult of Rāma, which is one of the most important cults of North-Indian Hinduism.

Already at an early date Ayodhya was an important holy place. In many purāṇas it is seen as one of seven places that grant release and also in the Buddhist and Jaina traditions it is mentioned as one of the important centers of Aryan India. Its present-day importance, however, is mainly due to the widespread devotional (bhakti) movement which swept across Northern India from the fifteenth century onwards (see Bakker 1982). It is in my opinion highly probable that prior to the bhakti-cult of Rāma Ayodhya was mainly a sacred place, because of its river and some Śaivite temples near it, so that there is some resemblance with the situation of Braj, which according to Charlotte Vaudeville has not been an area of the 'Krishnaite' cult prior to the arrival of the great Vaiṣṇavite reformers at the beginning of the sixteenth century (Vaudeville 1976). Nowadays Ayodhya is primarily a sectarian center of the powerful Rāmānandi sect. As in their theology a central place is given to Rāma and Sītā, his wife, it is a matter of course that they have settled in Ayodhya, the birthplace of Rāma and see it as their most important theological center. The Rāma cult has become so powerful down the ages that everything sacred before its rise has become to a certain extent incorporated in it. No pilgrim will come to Ayodhya only to perform the rituals on the banks of the Sarayu without visiting the temples of Rāma and, for that matter, no pilgrim will only visit the temples without going to the river.

Nivertheless, it is possible to make a clear analytic distinction between pilgrimage-activities which are primarily focussed on the river Sarayu and those activities primarily focussed on the Rāma cult of the Rāmānandi sect. The river is connected with beliefs and rituals concerning death, ancestors and purity. A brahman priest, the panda or tirthapurohit, plays a central role in it. The Rāma cult of the Rāmānandi sect is connected with beliefs concerning spiritual salvation. The spiritual preceptor, or guru, is the central figure here. In the next two paragraphs I shall describe these two Pilgrimage-complexes, which I would like to call ritual and spiritual.

The ritual complex

The name for a place of pilgrimage in Sanskrit is tīrtha. The original meaning of this word is 'ford' and therefore it applies primarily to a sacred place on the banks of a river. Water — and especially

running water – is often seen as a medium of ritual purification.[3] This idea might be based on a simple analogy between physical and ritual impurity. The concept of ritual purity is certainly one of the basic concepts in Hinduism. According to Louis Dumont the polar opposition of pure and impure is the basis of the hierarchical ideology of the caste system (Dumont 1972: 81).[4] Rituals of purification in the context of the *dharma* of a system of closed hereditary groups (*jātis*) can in the theory of Dumont only be understood as expiatory rituals. Pilgrimage to a sacred river can in this sense be seen as a sanction on impure behaviour. This is certainly true, because the caste-councils (panchāyats) do impose pilgrimage as a punishment. Expiation (*prāyascitta*) then is an acclaimed aim of pilgrimage, mentioned in many Hindu lawbooks. It is, however, not the only aspect of purification, because pilgrims do often connect their rituals of purification with the ideas of transmigration (*samsāra*) and retribution for actions (*karma*). In the context of pilgrimage to a sacred river the result of bad, impure actions can be washed away by certain precisely performed rituals, so that a good rebirth is ensured. The status of these beliefs in Hinduism is not very clear. They might be the result of the speculative thought of heterodox world-renouncers, as Dumont thinks (1970: 47), and it is certainly true that they play a monor role in the ordinary run of life. In the pilgrimage to a sacred river they are, however, of great importance. .

The rituals of purification start with *muṇḍana*, the ritual of shaving of the hair of the head in order to get rid of the inauspicious influences of bad planets. After that, the river is worshipped as a holy mother, a goddess, and finally the pilgrim takes a ritual bath, while uttering sacred formulas (*mantras*).

The river is not only a place of purifying water, but at the same time, strangely enough, a place connected with death.[5] In the Vaitārani ritual the river is symbolic for the Vaitārani, the river of death. The first part of this ritual consists of the worship of a cow (*go-pūjā*) by circumambulation (*parikrama*), touching its four feet as a sign of respect and after that feeding it. This is of course a common part of many rituals, since the cow is seen as the goddess of wealth and prosperity. In the Vaitārani ritual the *go-pūjā* is followed by taking the tail of the cow in one's hand, while uttering *mantras*. This is a symbolic imitation of the crossing of the Vaitārani, the dreadful river of death, guided by a cow, which is grasped by the tail. The word *tīrtha* acquires in this ritual the metaphorical sense of 'ford' to the other side of the river of death.

Another ritual, for which the bank of a river is the appropriate place is the cremation. It is only indirectly connected with pilgrimage one would say, but since it is believed that cremation in a sacred place will lead to a better rebirth, people come to die in a place of pilgrimage or will have their descendants take their body to such a place for cremation. Elaborate descriptions of this type of ritual are given by Kaushik (1976), who shows that different castes have different customs in the performance and by Parry (1980).

The funerary rites transform a dead man in an ancestor, who has to be worshipped. The best place for ancestor-worship is, again, the place of pilgrimage, since it is believed that in these places it is easy to come into contact with them. The ancestors are worshipped by giving them small balls of rice or flour (*piṇḍa-dāna*). This ritual, which is seen by the local priests as a shortened *śrāddha*, can take place whenever one visits the place of pilgrimage, but a very auspicious time for it is *pitṛpakṣa* in Asvin.

Escept for the cremation ritual in all the rituals mentioned above the ritual specialist is the *paṇḍa* or *tīrthapurohit*.[6] In Ayodhya he is primarily the priest of the sacred water, but in other places like Puri he may as well be a temple priest. For his assistance in the performance of the rituals he receives a sacrificial fee (*dakṣiṇa*). His most important function, however, is as an intermediary between the ancestors and the pilgrim. The *tīrthapurohit* accepts special gifts given to the ancestors in a place of pilgrimage (*dāna*). These may be clothes, jewels and even elephants or, in the old days, slaves. My informants tried to explain his function in this way: 'The *tīrthapurohit* is a mailbox, you give him something and he will bring it to the right place'. The ritual of the giving is concluded by the *Tīrthapurohit* when he utters: *saphalam* (fruitful) to indicate that the ancestors are satisfied. The priest may refuse to utter this, when he considers the gifts too small. What is given depends very much on the status of the pilgrim. By means of the giving of *piṇḍa* and special gifts the Hindu maintains a relation with his ancestors, whose wrath he fears, whose craving he wishes to satisfy and whose belessings he desires (see also Vidyarthi 1978: 43-5, and Kaushik o.c.: 281). The benign attitude of

the ancestors is needed for prosperity in this and the future life. The more one gives, the more one gets in return: *do ut des*.

The relationship between the pilgrim and the *tirthapurohit* is an example of the so-called *jajmāni*-system, the traditional system of division of labour in the caste system. It has its origin in the religious field in the relation between the 'lord of the sacrifice' and the priest, who performs the sacrifice on his behalf. The paradigm of the *jajmāni*-system is the relation between the king and his brahman *purohit*. In the *varna*-hierarchy, which is in the theory of Dumont the ideological basis of the *jāti*-system, the status of the brahman is higher than that of the king. But, whereas the brahman priest is spiritually and absolutely superior, he is at the same time materially and temporally dependent on and inferior to the king (Dumont 1970: Ch. 4). This situation applies not only to the relation between the king and his house-priest, but also to that between him and his *tirthapurohit*. The priest may be of higher spiritual status, his position is endangered by his acceptance of sacrificial fees (*dakṣiṇa*) for his ritual services. In this case, however, he gives something in exchange, but in the case of the acceptance of the special gifts for the ancestors (*dāna*) he has to consume everything completely as a sacrifical vessel. This might explain why *dāna* without *dakṣiṇa* is not fruitful (Parry 1980: n. 22). The priest must be paid for his sacrifical assistance before he is free to accept the *dāna* for which he has nothing in return. Therefore the brahman who only accepts *dakṣiṇa* has a higher status than the brahman who also accepts *dāna* given for the ancestors, whereas the highest brahman is he who does not work as a priest at all (see also Mauss 1974: 58). In this way there are hierarchical distinctions within the *varna* of brahmans on the basis of their acceptance or refusal of *dakṣiṇa* or *dāna*. The lowest place is given to the funeral priest (*mahābrahman*) who is the specialist of the ritual cremation. He is scrupulously avoided — even more than an untouchable (Dumont 1972: 96) — because he is the intermediary between the family of the decreased and the dead man, when he is still a dangerous ghost (*preta*), before he has crossed the river of death and has become an ancestor (*pitṛ*). Because of his connection with the danger of death he is a very inauspicious character (Parry 1980). The *tirthapurohit*, on the contrary, is not avoided at all and is of great importance on account of his function as an intermediary between the pilgrim and his ancestors. His status within the category of brahmans, however, is — as said before — endangered by accepting *dāna* from the king.

Originally the *tirthapurohit* was a *rājapanda*. He had *jajmāni* relations with royal families all over India, but of course especially in the North. The position, however, changed in the course of time. Rosel, in his study of Puri, makes a distinction between three stages: 1) the traditional stage (ca. 1000-1850 AD); 2) the feudal stage (ca. 1850-1948); 3) the stage of poverty (since 1948); (Rosel 1980); (Rosel 1980: XXVIII-XXXIV). In these distinctions he follows partly Vidyarthi's study of Hindu Gaya (1978: 86-111). The same can also be done in the case of Ayodhya, although the periods may somewhat differ. Because of the improvement of the infrastructure in British India — especially the railways — there was an important increase in the number of pilgrims. The traditional relations between *tirthapurohits* and *rājas* were now extended to all pilgrims coming from the little kingdoms of these *rājas*. The increase of *jajmāni* relations, however, urged the priests to keep registers of the names of their patrons. In these registers the name of every patron is entered together with all the names of his relatives as far as he is able to give them, so that the priest can prove to other members of the family on their arrival that he is their *tirthapurohit*. These registers classify patrons according to district, sub-district, village etc. In this way the priests have connections with several areas of India, their pilgrim estates. The priest is not only visited on pilgrimage by his patrons, but he himself also pays visits in return to receive gifts and to maintain relations. To manage with these expanding networks of *jajmāni* relations the priest makes more and more use of agents.

Although nowadays the *jajmāni* relations with some part of the pilgrims' visit to Ayodhya to perform the rituals on the bank of the river are still of importance for the priests, there can be observed a gradual decline in them. Many pilgrims do not want to have anything to do with the traditional bonds between their families or their villages and the priests. Therefore, and because of the dwindling importance of the traditional patrons of the priests, the *rājas*, the personal *jajmāni* system gives way to a neutral system, in which the priest is paid by the pilgrim for his performance. The practice of giving *dana* has accordingly declined and, on the other hand, because of the still increasing number of pilgrims, the giving of *dakṣiṇa* has increased. The change is affecting the community of priests very

much, because now they are obliged to compete among themselves for pilgrims to earn their living, whereas before they were secure as a result of the traditional ties with their patrons. Some individual entrepreneurs are highly successful, while most of them get poorer. The role of the agents, who are now responsible for bringing enough pilgrims to their priest as well as secondary activities like the guidance of pilgrims to the temples of Ayodhya, have become more important at the expense of the position of the priests and their primary activities.

The spiritual complex

Most pilgrims come to Ayodhya to perform the described rituals and to visit the temples. In the temples the inner sanctum is worshipped by making a clockwise circumambulation of it. After that a 'view' (darśan) is taken of the idols and an offering of flowers, fruits etc. (pūjā) takes place. During the worship in the temple the pilgrim is assisted by a priest (pūjarī) and he is guided to the temples by the tīrthapurohit or his agent. Traditionally the sequence of the sacred sites and temples to be visited is prescribed in a Sanskrit pilgrimage manual, an eulogy of the places of pilgrimage (māhāt-myam). Although the māhātmyams often stress that the visit to the several palces of worship as well as the correct performance of the rituals is sufficient to attain the liberation of the soul (mokṣa), this belief is not widely held. The pilgrims, guided by the tīrthapurohit, have much simpler ideas about it. The worship of the gods is connected with the same beliefs as the purificatory baths in the river, but, besides that, it has a definite wishfulfilling aspect. In Ayodhya this is most prominent in the wishful-filling Hanumān, in its most popular temple/monastery Hanumāngarhī.

Although the worship of the gods in the temples and the visit to the places where they have lived — birthplace, palace etc. — certainly is part of the devotional religion, in which Rāma is the central divine figure (Rāma-bhakti), it is in my opinion to be considered as an extension of the ancient ritual complex, in which the sacred river was the central place of worship. Not only is there a direct link between the rituals of purification and the worship of the gods, but also its organization depends on the social network of the tīrthapurohit. One could say that because of the intimate connection between the Rāma-cult and the Rāmānandī sect the temple-organization in Ayodhya is not in the hands of the tīrthapurohits — as is the case in Puri and Gaya — but in the hands of the Rāmānandī sampradāya. To this rule there are, however, numerous exceptions, the most important of which is the very popular kanak Bhavan. This temple is managed by a trust, in which the mahārāja of Orccha is the central person and its pūjāri is a brahman priest from Orccha. Bhakti, historically a sectarian development, has since long become a part of the brahmanic group-religion and the visits to the temples of the major part of the pilgrims belong to that religious sphere.

A different section of the pilgrims come to Ayodhya in the first place because they are lay-disciples in the Rāmānandī sect. A Hindu sect is divided in a lay section and a monastic section and a layman can choose a monk as his spiritual preceptor, guru. So, in Ayodhya, which is an important monastic center of the Rāmānandī sect, there are many gurus, who are regularly visited by their disciples. In a monastery it is usually the abbot (mahant), who is the guru of most disciples, but also other monks have disciples of their own. The choice of a guru by a layman is completely personal and free. The son may choose a different guru than his father's and he may as well choose no guru at all, when he does not want to follow a spiritual path. In the relation between guru and disciple (śiṣya) we find the ancient idea that a person needs a preceptor who is spiritually advanced enough to show a specific path of spiritual perfection. After the initiation, in which the guru imparts a meditation formula (mantra) and some religious instructions, it is important for the disciple to visit his guru as often as possible to learn from his exemplary behaviour. The guru himself is also often on tour to visit his disciples. Occasions (samaya), on which there are great gatherings of disciples are the anniversaries of important gurus. Thousands of disciples come to Ayodhya on these occasions. The contacts between the guru and his disciples are of course not completely restricted to spiritual affairs. The advice of the guru is also asked in worldly matters like the management of business and family affairs like the marriage of children. However, the guru does often not want to become enmeshed in the things of the world, so that emphasis is given to the spiritual relation.

Why does someone want to become a lay member of the Rāmānandī sect? One might say that he strives at spiritual perfection to attain salvation, but what these things actually mean is a hotly debated theological question. From the sociological viewpoint the problem comes down to the following question: What is the social significance of the Rāma-*bhakti* as preached by the Rāmānandīs? To answer this question we have to make a short excursion into the history of this sect. We have to bear in mind, however, that the history of Hindu sects is still very much conjectural. Little research has been done in this field, and besides that, the historical material is difficult to interpret, since it contains for a large part a strange mixture of fairy tales and unconnected events.

Rāmānand, the obscure founder of the Rāmānandī sect, seems to have lived in the fourteenth century (Bakker 1982: 108 and n. 71). The religious scene of North India in this period was very complex, but we may follow Vaudeville's suggestion that Rāmānand connects Vaisnavite and Śaivite mysticism (Vandeville 1974: 114). In her view Śaivism was dominant in Northern and Central India from the sixth or seventh century onwards, while the influence of Buddhism and Jainism declined. The Nath Jogis mixed Saivism, Tantrism and Buddhism in to a popular religion for the masses. An important factor in the further religious development was the interaction between Islam and Hinduism. Islam was highly successful in gaining supporters amongst the *śūdras* in Northern India. From the fourteenth century onwards one can find the result of the inter-penetration of Jogic and Islamic beliefs in the movement of Sants or Nirguṇi Bhaktas. They were mostly of low *śūdra* origin and the most famous among them were Kabīr (a *Julāha* or weaver) and Ravidas (a *Chamār* or scavenger). A common Hindu belief has it that Kabīr and Ravidās were initiated by Rāmānand and indeed according to an important Rāmānandī text — the late sixteenth century Bhakta Māla by Nābhā Jī — the Sant movement is part of the Rāmāndī sect. Rāmānand seems to have initiated the *śūdra* Sants by giving them the Rāma-*mantra* according to his principle contained in a much quoted saying: 'Do not ask anyone's caste or sect, whoever worships Visnu belongs to Visnu'. The Rāma-*mantra* does not begin, as usual, with the Vedic *praṇava* OM, but with Rāma because the Name of Rāma can be equated with the *nirguna* World soul. According to Vaudeville there is evidence that the Name of Rama is used in the same way in Yogic sects and, besides that, there is an old Vaisnavite tradition in North India, in which the constant repetition of the Name of Rāma as *mantra* is of central importance (Bakker 1982: 107; Vaudeville 1974: 115). We might conclude then, that originally the Rāmānandī sect was a universalist movement that catered for the religious needs of the lower castes and, as such, it was an important rival of Islam in North India.

This background of *nirguṇa bhakti* and specific connection with *śūdras* seems to have faded in a later period due to the strong influence of the *saguṇa bhakti* of Kṛṣṇa, which was gaining momentum in North India from the end of the fifteenth century. Besides the idea that Rāma is the *nirguṇa* World soul, whose Name should be repeated to attain salvation, the *saguṇa bhakti* of Rāma, the ruler of Ayodhya and incarnation of Visnu, becomes more and more important. Especially in the so-called *Rasik Sampradāya*, a movement within the Rāmānandī sect, in which a Sweet Devotion (*mādhuryopāsana*) is preached, the influence of Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* is marked. Not only Rāma is important in this teaching, but Sītā and her female friend (*sakhīs*) also (Sinha 1957). The gradual incorporation of the Rāmānandī sect in the Vaisnavite *bhakti* movement culminates in the claim of the Rāmānandīs that Rāmānand was a disciple in the *guru*-disciple tradition of Rāmānuja, the founder of the South Indian Sri-Vaisnava sect. At the same time the sect has become increasingly exclusive *vis-à-vis* lower castes. In the monastic section of the sect a distinction is introduced between *sūtradhārīs* (twice born) and *mālādhārīs* (pure *śūdras*). The affiliation with the Sant movement becomes discreditable, so that in short a universalist movement becomes a pure Hindu sect, from which impure elements are removed (see Burghart 1978: 131).

After this summary excursion into the history of the Rāmānandī sect we have to return to our original question: What is the social significance of the Rāma-*bhakti* as preached by the Rāmānandīs? The religious goal of the Rāma-*bhakti* according to Rāmānandī theology is not the liberation of the soul (*mokṣa*), but rebirth as a sincere devotee of Lord Rama. The caste society is accepted as a play (*līlā*) of Lord Rāma, in which the true devotee has to consider himself as a playmate, whatever his position in this society may be. Regular contact with the *gurn* is necessary to succeed in this endeavour and therefore highly valued. Thus we find here a universalistic doctrine, in which every

person is seen as equal to god, but at the same time a complete acceptance of caste society. Moreover, the organization of the sect is the result of a long process of penetration of caste values. Originally the sect recruited its members from all castes, but gradually it has become a pure Hindu sect, in which brahmans have come to play a dominant role. Of great importance is also the introduction of caste-distinctions within the monastic section of the sect.

Conclusion

When we try to understand this material with the help of Turner's model, it is at once clear that our findings do not allow simple dichotomies as for example social structure versus pilgrimage (social anti-structure). This is especially evident in the case of the ritual complex of pilgrimage activities, which is clearly symbolically and sociologically congruent with the social structure. The rituals of purification are connected with the ideology of the caste system, whereas the mortuary and ancestor-rites are based on caste and lineage. The *jājmanī*-relations between pilgrims and priests belong to the exclusivistic type of division of labour, which is one of the main aspects of the caste system. Because the priests specialise in districts etc., the pilgrims are separated from each other in terms of place of residence and caste (see also Bhardwaj 1973). This is of great importance, since it virtually bars every possibility of *communitas*. Congruent as it is with the social structure the ritual complex is also congruent with structural change. There is a general development in India that the interdependence of the castes gradually disappears. The moral economy of the *jajmānī* system gives way to a modern economy. Instead of the *jajmānī*-relations between pilgrims and priests, neutral market-relations have come, in which the priest is paid for his performance. How this transformantion threatens the subsistence of part of the community priests I have described above. The market-situation transcends to a certain extent the caste-barriers which separated the pilgrims formerly. That this brings *communitas* nearer one can, however, hardly say.

The spiritual complex, however, offers a less clear picture. It is certainly possible to emphasize the aspect of *communitas* in this complex of pilgrimage-activities. In the first place one can say that the organisation of these activities depends on a network of *guru*-disciple relations, which are not based upon caste-distinctions, but on free, personal choice. Secondly, one might point out that the *bhakti* movement emphasizes that men are equal to god and in that way transgresses the ritual barriers of the caste system. Potentially, therefore, *communitas* seems to be present in the spiritual complex. Much, however, depends on your interpretation of the phenomenon of *bhakti*. It seems to have its origin in a universalistic tendency which transcends both the Śaivite renunciation and the ritual barriers of the caste society (Dumont 1970: 55). It is however illuminating to use here a distinction developed by Mark Holmstrom (1971) between *religious* universalism and *moral* universalism. *Bhakti* represents a religious universalism, in which devotees are religiously equal, but socially bound by the values of caste society. Moral universalism implies on the contrary a real moral attack on these values. In the *bhakti* movement there seems to be a contradiction between consciousness and existence (Iswaran 1981: 81, 82). Salvation can be attained by anyone, whatever his position in the hierarchy of caste society, but in the sects caste distinctions are maintained and brahmans play a dominant role. The original spirit of this movement seems nevertheless to have been somewhat more radical. As we have seen, *śūdras* were part of the original Rāmānandī sect and only later the sect has introduced caste distinctions and excluded *śūdras*. A similar development seems also to have taken place in the case of the South Indian Śrī-Vaiṣṇava movement somewhat earlier (Stein 1968) and we might conclude that in both cases a 'routinisation' of an original radical message has taken place. Dumont seems to be right then in the idea underlying his important essay on renunciation in Indian religions, that 'a sect cannot survive on Indian soil if it denies caste' (Dumont 1970: 36).

The spiritual complex can therefore in my opinion be interpreted as a phenomenon of anti-structure which in the course of its history has become articulated with the caste society through a somewhat uneasy doctrine of religious universalism. The attempts at real *communitas* in the spiritual complex are nevertheless not to be seen as unimportant, because of their result. They show an important aspect of Indian religious history, although they may not have effected the abolition of

caste. Structural change in this direction seems to be implied by the development of values of autonomy in post-traditional India. One would expect that as a corollary of this process of change, in which the ideology of the caste system is disintegrating, the anti-structural potential of the spiritual complex would become more important. The contrary seems, however, to be the case. There is of course a wide scope for moral universalism in Indian industrial society, as is shown by Holmström, but the traditional sects are too much bound to the caste system to develop in this direcrion. In my interviews with *gurus* of the Rāmānandī sect they emerge rather as 'custodians' of caste society. They are in general very conservative and remain strictly in the tradition of religions universalism. Social reform movements with a Gandhian ideology take the lead instead.

My conclusion is that the theoretical contribution of Victor Turner is useful as far as it makes the relation between religion and society problematic. A simple dichotomy between structure and anti-structure can, however, not comprehend the complexity of Hindu pilgrimage to Ayodhya.

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Notes

1. Exceptions to this rule are the valuable early studies by Vidyarthi (1961), sec. ed. 1978), Deleury (1961) and Karve (1962).
2. It is important to stress here the fact that the pilgrimage to Ayodhya is *not* typical for Indian pilgrimage, since it does not show tribal influences. It is part of the Great (sanskritic) Tradition.
3. The purificatory power of a sacred river is stronger at its source, at the confluence of rivers and at the mouth.

The combination of auspicious place and auspicious time has a very great power, as for example in the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad.

4. Ideology means here a social set of ideas and values, which is shared by the members of a society (Dumont 1972: 311).

5. Kaushik (1976) argues convincingly that death is not primarily connected with purity, but with liminality and danger.

6. The frequently used term *paṇḍa* seems to be an abbreviation of the common word for brahman: *paṇḍita*. It is not a caste designation as Bharati (1963): 138) supposes, but a functional name, equivalent to *tīrthapurohit*.