

Linguistification of the Sacred: Regaining the Civic Space

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Two socio-political phenomena engender the shrinking of civil space in India: (1) Instead of promoting inclusion and diversity through democratization, the present political regime, by endorsing authoritarian populism, reversing developmental gains in human rights, health, education, and welfare, causes democratic decline. (2) The binding influence of religion on individuals and communities in India.

At this juncture, we attempt to ensure the rights to the freedom of peaceful assembly, association, and expression by regaining and revitalizing the communicative, discursive civic space of the Indian public sphere. We aim to explore the possibility of bringing religious worldviews and civil societies to interface. Then, this article aims to discuss the modes of realizing the interchange between religions and civil societies.

The Habermasian "linguistification of the sacred" is the fundamental notion from which our discussion proceeds. We call this liberating process linguistification of the sacred. Habermas distinguishes between primary linguistification - the transition from prelinguistic cultic practices to mythical, religious, and metaphysical worldviews and secondary linguistification - the transition from 'worldviews' to the 'lifeworld'. We focus on the latter level of linguistification. It operates thus: At the primary level, the ritual meanings are given linguistic expression in mythical narratives. At the secondary level, they develop into validity claims associated with regulative speech acts as right/wrong. However, as Habermas claims, it is not a mere disenchantment and reflexive dissolution of the sacred meanings; instead, the religious worldviews get transformed into validity claims. Such a move could, consequently, liberate the democratic civil society from the inflicted constraints and eventually bring the religious worldviews and the civil societies to dialogue and expand civic space.

Keywords:

Civic Space, Linguistification of the Sacred, Communicative Rationality, Dialogue between Religious Worldviews and Civil Societies.

