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Views from the Indian Electorate: Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions with Democracy, Politics and the Economy

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Views from the Indian Electorate: Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions with Democracy, Politics and the Economy*¹

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In this paper I present findings from Chapter 2 of the forthcoming book by Alfred Stepan, Juan J. Linz and Yogendra Yadav titled “*Crafting State-Nations: India and Other Multinational Democracies*”. The results presented here are largely drawn from responses to the National Election Studies (NES) and the State of the Nation Surveys coordinated by the Center for the Study of Developing Societies, India over six national elections between 1971-2009.³ We focus on questions as they pertain to support for democracy, political efficacy and political participation in India. In particular, I focus on the responses of the seven most marginalized groups in the country based on their caste, religious, economic and gender status. These groups are Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Muslim, Very Poor, Poor, Illiterate and Female respondents.

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³ The Center for the Study of Developing Societies is a think-tank based in New Delhi, India. We thank Yogendra Yadav for the datasets for the NES All-India post-poll surveys conducted in 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004 and other CSDS data. Stepan and Linz were on the Advisory Committee that helped draft questions on identities, and religion and politics in the *State of Democracy in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

The first section of the paper outlines the details of CSDS surveys, how they were conducted and how they compare to alternative national surveys in India and elsewhere. Subsequent sections delve into why India makes a critical case for the “State-Nation” model in our book and the results of the surveys. In the final section of the paper I present results from questions on the Indian economy and how economic change has affected people’s perception of their wellbeing.

ABOUT OUR DATA AND THE INDIAN CASE

Surveys by CSDS are distinctive for their large cross-section samples of Indian voters and are based on demographic information provided by the Census of India and electoral information provided by the Election Commission of India. The surveys are designed by employing multi-stage stratified random sampling techniques with the unit of analysis beginning with the state and then randomization being employed at the national, state, polling booth and individual voter levels (using electoral rolls provided by the Election Commission). At every level efforts are made to ensure representation of social, cultural and political groups in the country. The final surveys are conducted face-to-face using a structured questionnaire and in the local dialect. Consequently, these surveys are some of the most ambitious surveys ever undertaken on any single national polity. For example, the American National Election Studies (ANES) had an N (number of respondents) of 1,807 for the U.S. election survey of the 2000 presidential elections. In contrast, the National Elections Studies of 2004 in India had 27,189 respondents and was conducted in 22 Indian languages. In comparison, the World Values Survey (WVS) of India conducted in 2006, had 2000 respondents and was administered in only ten

major Indian languages⁴. Compared to the 172 Muslim, 370 scheduled class, 186 scheduled tribe and 610 illiterate respondents surveyed by the WVS, the NES 2004 sampled 3254 Muslim, 4319 scheduled caste, 4274 scheduled and 8416 illiterate voters. These large size differences mean we can do more statistically with the responses at a disaggregated level.

India's democracy is of particular interest to contemporary social scientists because it has developed in the context of deep diversity. One of the greatest points of conflict in multicultural and multinational societies, federal or not, is language. In India, at Independence, ten different languages were spoken by at least thirteen million to thirty-three million people, many of them with mutually unintelligible alphabets. In descending order of number of speakers (excluding Hindi), Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, and Oriya were all spoken by between thirty-two to thirteen million inhabitants of India.⁵ In addition, another seventeen languages were spoken by at least one million people.⁶ The largest language, Hindi, according to the 1961 census of India, was only spoken by 30.37% of the total population. This proportion has gradually risen to 41.03% in the 2001 census, but is still short of anything like a majority⁷. What would John Stuart Mill have said in 1947 about India's chances of

⁴ Lokniti Team, coordinated by Sandeep Shastri, *World Values Survey-Wave V 2005-2010 India Segment-Questionnaire Codebook* (Bangalore, India: World Values Survey, 2007)

⁵ For an analytic discussion of these figures, see Jyotirindra Das Gupta, Language Conflict and National Development: Group Politics and National Language Policy in India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 31-68.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Census of India, 2001, Office of The Registrar General of Census. Statement 6. http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Language/Statement6.htm. Accessed 29 March 2010.

building a democracy under such conditions?⁸ How has this "Millsian" problem been managed democratically?

Indian society has large communities of almost every major world religion--Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, Sikh, and Christian. Even after Partition in 1947, India had a large Islamic population. In 2009, India's Muslim population constituted a "minority" of approximately 161 million people, which made it the world's third largest Islamic population in any country in the world, exceeded only by Indonesia's 203 million and Pakistan's 174 million.⁹

Conceptually and comparatively India's poverty also raises important intellectual challenges, especially for those who might think that democratic norms are a luxury of wealthy countries. Of course, India would be significant on grounds of population alone. With its population of slightly over 1.1 billion, it is almost four times more populous than any other democracy in the world.¹⁰ The next most populous democracy is the United States with a population of 300 million. The combined population in 2006 of the only other longstanding multi-national federal democracies - Spain, Canada, and Belgium - was less than 85 million, which is less than half the population of Uttar Pradesh, which is the most populous of India's twenty-seven states.

⁸ His oft-cited judgment about the impossibility of having more than one important functioning language and significant nationality in a democratic polity was "free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people without fellow-feelings, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion necessary to the working of representative institutions cannot exist." See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), in *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Considerations on Representative Government*, ed. Geraint Williams (London: Everyman, 1993), p. 393.

⁹ Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life. "Mapping the Global Muslim Population. A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population" (October 2009), p. 14. Available at www.pewforum.org.

¹⁰ India will surpass China as the most populous country in the world by 2040 according to the 2004 revision of *World Population Prospects* by the Population Division of the United Nations.

Given its extraordinary diversity, Stepan, Linz and Yadav in *Crafting State Nations* argue that India cannot create a 19th century French-style democratic “nation state” with one official language and a one curriculum throughout the country in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, we consider that India has already managed to create what we call a democratic “state nation.” The difference between a “nation state” and a “state nation” is depicted in Table 1.

In our book, we argue that as a diverse polity approximates the state nation ideal type, we expect it to have the following four empirically verifiable patterns. First, despite multiple cultural identities among the citizens of the polity, there will be at the same time a high degree of positive identification with the state, and pride in being citizens of that state. Second, citizens of the state will have multiple but complementary political identities and loyalties. Third, there will be a high degree of institutional trust in the most important constitutional, legal, and administrative components of the state. Fourth, by world democratic standards, there will be a comparatively high degree of positive support for democracy, among all the diverse groups of citizens in the country, for the specific state-wide democratic institutions through which the multicultural and possibly multinational polity is governed.

Table 1: *Two Ideal Types of Democratic States: “Nation-State” and “State-Nation”*

	NATION-STATE	STATE-NATION
PREEXISTING CONDITIONS		
Sense of belonging/"we-feeling"	Awareness of, and attachment to, one major cultural civilizational tradition. With minor exceptions, this cultural identity corresponds to existing state boundaries.	Awareness of, and attachment to, more than one cultural civilizational tradition within the existing boundaries. However, these attachments do not preclude identification with a common state.
STATE POLICY		
Cultural policies	Homogenizing attempts to foster one core cultural identity, particularly one official language; non-recognition of multiplicity of cultures. Unity in oneness.	Recognition and support of more than one cultural identity (particularly recognition of more than one official language), even more than one cultural nation, all within a frame of some common polity-wide symbols. Unity in diversity.
INSTITUTIONS		
Territorial division of power	Unitary states or symmetrical federations.	Federal system. Often de jure or de facto asymmetrical. Can even be a unitary state if aggressive nation-state policies are not pursued and de facto state multilingual areas are accepted. Federacies possible.
POLITICS		
Ethno-cultural or territorial cleavages	Not very salient.	Salient and recognized and democratically managed.
Autonomist and/or secessionist parties	Autonomist parties are normally not "coalitionable." Secessionist parties are outlawed or marginalized in democratic electoral politics.	Autonomist parties can govern in federal units and are "coalitionable" at the center. Nonviolent secessionist parties can sometimes participate in the democratic political process.
CITIZEN ORIENTATION		
Political identity	Single identity as citizens of the state and overwhelmingly as members of the same cultural nation.	Multiple but complementary identities.
Obedience/loyalty	Obedience to the state and loyalty to the nation.	Obedience to the state and identification with institutions, neither based on a single national identity.

To be sure, these patterns do not simply exist right from the beginning. It is all about crafting and is very much an outcome of deliberate policies and designs. On theoretical and empirical grounds we make the case in the book (but do not have space in this conference paper to develop here) that there can be a nested set of seven “state nation” policies that reinforce each other and help facilitate the emergence and persistence of a state nation. These seven “state-nation” policies are:

- 1) An Asymmetrical, “Holding Together” Federal State, but not a Symmetrical, “Coming Together” Federal State, or a Unitary State
- 2) Individual Rights and Collective Recognition
- 3) Parliamentary instead of Presidential or Semi-Presidential Systems
- 4) Polity-wide and “Centric-Regional” Parties and Careers
- 5) Politically Integrated but not Culturally Assimilated Populations
- 6) Cultural Nationalists in Power Mobilizing Against Secessionist Nationalists
- 7) An Pattern of Complementary but Multiple Identities

Metaphorically, we say these policies are “nested” because the second policy, “group recognition,” is normally nested within the first, federalism (especially asymmetrical federalism). The fourth policy, involving the coalitionability of what we call centric-regional parties, is greatly facilitated if the choice of the third policy is parliamentarianism because the executive is a sharable good, and successful achievement of the seventh policy, multiple but complementary identities, is heavily dependent upon the prior success of the previous six policies. In chapters 4 and 5 in our book, we show how all of these policies were applied in Tamil Nadu, India and helped turn potential separatist sentiments among Tamils into multiple but complementary identities and the potential issue of separatism in Tamil Nadu became a non-issue. In

sharp contrast, Sri Lanka attempted to impose nation state policies on Sri Lanka's Tamils and what had been a non-issue of separatism became a Cambodian killing field.

We are very aware of India's continuing problems with poverty and with low levels of literacy, nutrition, basic sanitation, Maoist-style violence (by the "Naxalites", so named after Naxalbari, the place where Maoist militancy was born in India), violation of human rights and periodic communal riots. Table 2 makes some of these comparative problems abundantly clear. We also recognize that these facts are very relevant to an overall assessment of the quality of democratic governance in India and believe that policies and outcomes in these areas should be, and could be, substantially improved.

Table 2: *Comparative Indicators of India's Human and Income Poverty*

Average GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in 2000 U.S. dollars among Arend Lijphart's universe of the thirty-six continuous democracies of the world from at least 1977 to 1996	\$20,252
India's GDP per capita in PPP in 2007 U.S. dollars	\$2,753
India's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking among the 173 countries of the world ranked by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	134th out of 182
India's HDI ranking among Arend Lijphart's thirty-six continuous democracies	34th out of 36
India's Human Poverty Index (HPI-1) ranking among 135 ranked states	88th out of 135
Adult female literacy rate in India	54.5%
Percentage of underweight children in India at age 5	46.0%
"Great Poverty" Level	
All India	22.7%
Muslims	31.0%
States with more than 20 deaths due to Naxalite violence in 2008	6 (18%)

Sources: UNDP, Human Development Report 2009: Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 173, 177, and 181-184; Government of India, Prime Minister's High Level Committee, "Social, Economic, and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India," Sachar Report, November 2006; and Arend Lijphart, Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999)--table 4.1 shows Lijphart's universe of the thirty-six countries in the world, including India, that were continuous democracies in his judgment from at least 1977 to 1996 For information on Naxalite violence in India, see Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Naxal Management Division. http://mha.nic.in/uniquepage.asp?ID_PK=540

However, this essay and our book is not about democracy and its links to development per se but whether India, despite its deep diversity, has been able to at least create the minimal degree of identification and trust in the state of India that a democracy requires. Obviously, the USSR or Yugoslavia were not able to do so. Let us see how India has fared in creating a sense of common identity among a population of so many different languages, religions and culturally diverse regions.

PRIDE IN BEING INDIAN

One important indicator of identification of a citizen with the society and the state is the sense of pride, in this case the pride of being Indian. The pride question has been asked in the widely used comparative public opinion survey *World Values and European Values* under the direction of Ronald Inglehart et al., based at the University of Michigan. To date there are four rounds of these surveys available for our comparative analysis. India has been included in all four rounds.¹¹ The World Values Survey allows us to place these figures in a comparative perspective. Table 3 presents responses to the pride question across eleven long-standing democracies from the latest comparable wave of the World Values Survey. This wave of WVS (1999-2002, held in India in 2001) showed that only in the United States (71%) and Australia (70%) was the proportion of those who feel ‘very proud’ marginally higher than in India (67%). When we look at Brazil, Spain, Austria and Belgium the proportion of respondents saying “Not Very” and “Not at all” proud ranges from 8% to 22% compared to 7% in India.

¹¹ See Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Appendix A, pp. 243-246. Also see www.worldvaluessurvey.org

Table 3: *Pride in nationality in the Eleven Longstanding Federal Democracies**(per cent).*

	<i>Very Proud</i>	<i>Quite</i>	<i>Not Very</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Don't know / Not Applicable</i>	<i>Total</i>
USA	71	23	4	0	2	100
Australia	70	23	2	0	5	100
India	67	21	5	2	5	100
Canada	65	28	3	2	2	100
Argentina	65	24	4	3	5	100
Brazil	64	19	14	2	1	100
Spain	51	36	6	3	4	100
Austria	50	37	6	2	5	100
Belgium	20	46	15	7	11	100
Switzerland	23	47	16	7	7	100
Germany	15	46	22	7	9	100

Source: The data for all countries is from response to the question “How proud are you to be (nationality)?” *Human Beliefs and Values: A Cross-Cultural Sourcebook Based on the 1999-2002 Values Survey*, edited by Ronald Inglehart et al. (Mexico D.F.: Siglo XXI Editores, 2004).

While it is important to understand the views of the citizens as a whole, it is equally important to look at the views of any significant minority who may vary from this response. Therefore it is important to ask if the conclusion about the high level of national pride holds across the different sections of society. We thus need a disaggregated picture of national pride for some of most salient marginal groups in India: Muslims (largest and most disadvantaged religious minority), Scheduled Castes or Dalits (ex-untouchable community that has historically suffered social exclusion), Scheduled Tribes (forest dwelling indigenous communities that have remained on the periphery of modern development) and non-literates.

As Table 4 makes clear, respondents from Muslim community and the Scheduled Castes feel no different from the average national response on this question. The respondents from Scheduled Tribes and those without any formal education do report

lower levels of pride, possibly because a larger proportion among these groups fail to understand the question itself (this itself reflects the uneven dissemination of the idea of nationalism in modern India) and partly because their level of enthusiasm for Indian nationalism is indeed lower. Yet this lower level of enthusiasm does not lead to any significant rejection of the national identity: in none of these groups does the proportion of those who do not feel proud at all exceed 5%. Thus, notwithstanding the variations in the reception of and enthusiasm for the national identity, there is no noticeable rejection of the national identity in any minority group for which we have information.

Table 4: *Pride in India for all citizens and for marginal groups, 2005*
(Figures in percent)

	<i>All India</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Scheduled Caste</i>	<i>Scheduled Tribe</i>	<i>Non-literate</i>
Very Proud/Proud	89	88	85	81	78
Not proud	3	3	5	3	5
Don't Know/ No answer	8	9	10	15	17
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N	5227	636	901	427	1964

Source: *State of Democracy in South Asia: A Report* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

The question that has been asked in many countries is, “With which of the following phrases are you most in agreement?,” “Democracy is preferable to any other form of government?,” “In some circumstances an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic government,” “For someone like me a democratic or non-democratic regime makes no difference,” in addition in allowing for no answers and “do not know.” This question has been asked in India in two waves of the National Election Study held in 1998 and 2004 by CSDS.

Table 5 reports the findings of both these surveys with those of some other important countries that figure prominently in the democratization literature, such as Spain, Korea, Uruguay, Brazil and Chile. The level of support for democracy in India varies from 60% in the 1999 survey to 70% in the 2004 survey. This is substantially higher than ex-authoritarian regimes like Chile, Brazil and Korea but clearly behind Spain and Uruguay. It might seem that the support for democracy is moderately high in India. But it is important to notice that those who do not fall in this category are not opposed to democracy. The proportion of Indians who support authoritarianism (6% and 4% in 1999 and 2004 respectively) or are indifference to this choice (7% and 6% in 1999 and 2004 respectively) is very small, even when compared to Spain and Uruguay. The unusually large proportion of the “do not know” response (27% and 20 % in 1999 and 2004 respectively), the highest recorded in any country for this question, accounts for the rest. As we have documented elsewhere, “do not know” answer correlates highly with illiteracy.

Table 5: *Attitudes toward democracy and authoritarianism in India and five important “Third Wave” democracies*

	<i>Uruguay</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>India 1999</i>	<i>India 2004</i>	<i>Korea</i>	<i>Chile</i>	<i>Brazil</i>
Democracy is preferable to any other form of government (per cent of valid responses excluding DK)	80 (85)	78 (83)	60 (83)	70 (88)	58 (62)	52 (54)	41 (48)
In some circumstances an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic government.	8	9	6	4	27	18	21
For someone like me, a democratic or a non-democratic regime makes no difference	6	7	7	6	8	25	23
Don't know/ No answer	6	6	27	20	7	4	15
N	(1213)	(1000)	(8133)	(27148)	(1037)	(1200)	(1240)

Source: The data for India are from the *National Election Study, 1999 and 2004*, of the Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Data for Uruguay, Brazil and Chile are from the *Latino Barometer 1996*, directed by Marta Lagos. The Spanish data are from the *Eurobarometer 37* (1992). The Korean data is from the *Korea Democracy Barometer, 2004*, directed by Doh Chull Shin.

Table 6 shows responses to this question by four major disadvantaged groups “Scheduled Castes”, “Scheduled Tribes”, the “poor” and the “very poor”. The most striking thing about the data is that there is not a single exception to the norm of very high support for a democratic political system. In no group does support for democracy fall below the 60% level and nowhere does the support for authoritarianism reach double digits. At first sight some groups appear to deviate slightly from the national norm: the support for democracy among the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the Very Poor is about five to ten percentage points lower than the national average. But much of this is a function of larger proportion of ‘don’t know’ among these groups, which is directly associated with lower levels of educational attainment. Once we control for ‘don’t knows’—by examining the valid percentages after treating ‘don’t know’ as missing data—most of the apparent, even if minor, differences among various groups and states disappear.

Table 6: *Support for democracy in India by disadvantaged social groups, NES 2004*
(figures in percent)

	<i>All India</i>	<i>Scheduled Caste</i>	<i>Scheduled Tribe</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Very poor</i>
Democracy is always preferable	70 (88)	65 (87)	61 (81)	71 (88)	61 (87)
Sometimes authoritarianism is preferable	4	3	5	4	3
No difference	6	6	8	6	6
Don't Know/ No answer	20	25	26	19	30
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N	27145	4967	2356	9409	8117

Figures in parentheses in the first row are for per cent of valid responses if the DKs are treated as missing data. Source: *National Election Study [India] 2004*

The NES surveys have also been using a somewhat different question to tap the support or non-support of the need for elections in the Indian polity. The question they

use is, “Suppose there were no parties or assemblies and elections were not held, do you think that the government in this country could be run better?” Answers to this question are available for several points in the last four decades. This question is valuable for double checking the conclusions drawn above: it has the advantage of measuring popular attitudes to democracy, without using the “D” word, and also of avoiding a lazy ‘yes’ by requiring the supporters of democracy to disagree with the statement.

Table 7 shows the results of this question over time, and the trend shows that the support for one of the key democratic institutions, elections, has steadily increased. In a poll given before the last parliamentary elections held in 2004, as many as 91 per cent of those who gave a valid response rejected the idea of government generated without parties, electorate, or assemblies (legislatures). These answers are obviously quite consistent with the commitment to democracy we have just noted: in both these questions, the proportion of anti-democrats is barely ten per cent of the citizenry.

Table 7: *Growing Support for Democratic Political Institutions in India, 1971, 1996, 2004*

	NES 1971	NES 1996	NES 2004
"Do you think that the government in this country could be run better if there were no parties or assemblies and elections were not held?" (those saying 'no')	43 (74)	69 (86)	72 (91)
N	Not Available	9614	27189

Note: all figures in per cent of all respondents. Figures in parentheses are for valid responses, if ‘Don’t know’ are treated as missing value. All the NES data are from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY

When we examine all of India’s major religions, do we find comparable consensual support for democracy? Or is it an area of great dissensus and polarization as

the “clash of civilizations” literature would suggest? India has traditionally been a country with high levels of religious heterogeneity, coupled with high levels of religious practice and belief. According to the 2001 Government of India Census, India had approximately 805 million Hindus, 138 million Muslims (making it, after Indonesia and Pakistan, the third most populous Muslim country in the world), 2.3 million Christians (approximately 60% Catholic and 40% Protestant), 800,000 Buddhists, 400,000 Jains, 600,000 “other religions,” and only 100, 000 people who did not state a religion.¹² India also has some of the highest levels of religious belief and practice in the world; 93% of the population describe themselves as believing in God, 87% as being “very” or “somewhat” religious, 53% as praying daily, and almost half (at least 400 million people) say they have gone on a pilgrimage or traveled to another place for religious purposes in the last ten years. Finally, against this very high base, 3.9 times as many respondents say that in the last ten years their “family’s engagement in religious activities” has *increased*, as say they have *decreased*.¹³ In recent decades, contrary to classic modernization theories, India has combined steadily increasing levels of education and urban living, with sharply increasing self-reported levels of religious practice, especially among the more urbanized and more educated. For example 46 percent of villagers say they pray daily, whereas 65 percent of those in towns, and 77 percent in large cities, say they pray daily. The same trend is visible in education, 44 percent of illiterates say they pray daily, but 56% of university graduates say they do, and whereas 18 percent of illiterates were

¹² *Census of India, 2001*, Office of Registrar General.

¹³ The above percentages concerning religious beliefs and practices are found in *State of the Nation Survey*, New Delhi, January 2007, Lokniti, CSDS, N=15,373, questions B5, B3,B11, B6 and B17 respectively.

classified as “high participants” in public religious activities, 24% of university graduates were so classified.¹⁴

The model of state religion relations crafted by the Indian Constituent Assembly and developed later was a highly original model with strong affinities to our state nation model. All religious communities were recognized and respected by the state. All religious communities for example could run schools, organizations, and charities eligible for state financial support. The norms and practices of this model are so pervasively accepted that the Hindu nationalist BJP party did not dare, when it was the head of a ruling coalition, not to honor the tradition of giving extensive state subsidizes to help Muslim citizens make the Hajj to Mecca.

We do not want to make the case that the Indian model of secularism, by itself, created the attitudinal and behavioral patterns we are about to present, but we believe that the “state nation” like policies and values of India’s secular model helped Indians address their great religious heterogeneity, and their great intensity of religious practice, and constitutive to the remarkable consensus among all religions concerning democracy we will document.

The first point I would like to stress is that the percentage of members of *all* four of the major religions in India who self-identify themselves as having a “preference for democracy as opposed to any other system” is very high by world standards; Muslims (86%), Hindus (88%), Sikhs, (89%) and Christians (93%).¹⁵ The Muslims, the largest and

¹⁴ The source is *ibid*. For a rich analysis of the date in this report see Sanjay, “Religious Practices Among Hindus: Does this Influence Their Political Choices? ”, CSDS Working Paper,(Delhi) June 2008, pp.3-9.

the most disadvantaged religious community in India, thus have about the same figures as the national norm for all four of the categories concerning democracy. See Table 8.

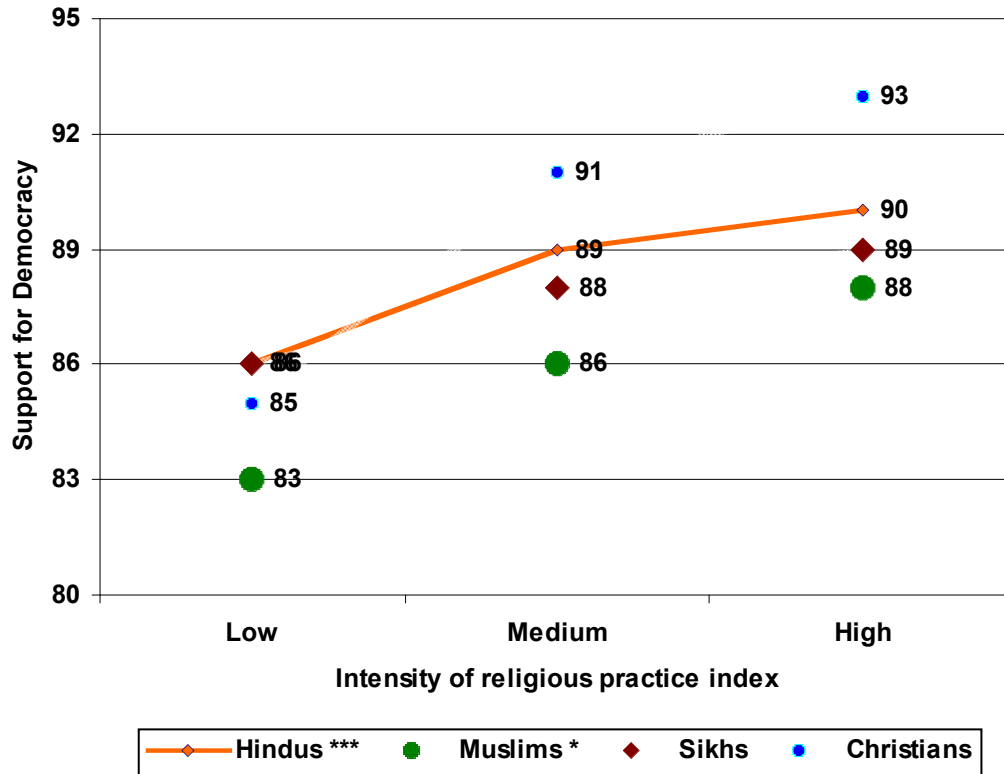
Table 8: *Support for Democracy In India As A Whole and By Four Major Religions*

	<i>All India</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Sikh</i>
Democracy is always preferable	70 (88)	71 (88)	71 (87)	74 (91)	71 (88)
Sometimes authoritarianism is preferable	4	4	4	3	4
No difference	6	6	7	5	6
Don't Know/ No answer	20	19	18	18	19
Total	100	100	100	100	100
	27,145	21,626	3,103	838	687

Source: National Election Study [India] 2004. All figures in the columns are percentages. Figures in parentheses in the first row are for percent of valid responses if the DKs are treated as missing data. According to a Pearson's Chi-Square test the findings for all religious communities are statistically significant (p-value < .001). Thus, the probability of this occurring by chance is less than one in 1000.

Given the self-reported increasing religious practice in India, we constructed an index of religious intensity going from ‘low’, to ‘medium’ to ‘high’ to see if the trend toward growing intensity of religious practice correlated with growing undemocratic attitudes and practices as some feared. From our data the exact opposite has occurred. For all four major religions in India, a steady counterintuitive trend is discernable; for each increase in religious intensity, there is an increase in support for democracy. See Figure1

Figure 1: *In all four of India's major religions, the greater the intensity of religious practice, the greater the support for democracy*



Notes: The analysis is based on valid answers in the *National Election Study - 2004* [India] (Total n=27,189.) Valid responses for the table are: Hindus=17,261; Muslims=2,549; Sikhs=544; and Christians=697). The findings for Hindus are statistically significant (Pearson's Chi Square <.001), which means that the possibility of the findings occurring by chance are less than one in a 1000. The findings for Muslims are also statistically significant (Pearson's Chi Square <.050), which means that the possibility of the findings occurring by chance are less than one in 20. The findings for Sikhs and Christians are also positive, but not statistically significant. Valid answers refer to excluding 'don't knows' and 'no opinions' from the analysis for reasons we have previously explained in this chapter. "Support for democracy" (Q23) is as measured in Table 2.7. The "intensity of religious practice index" was computed by adding the self reported frequency of praying (Q34a), visiting a religious place (Q34b), participating in religious meetings (Q35a), making donations to religious organizations (Q35b) and fasting (Q35c). 50 percent of the weight in the index is given to frequency of praying, as it is the highest in all religions. Participating in religious meetings and fasting are given 20 percent weight each as both these activities are high among all the four major religious groups in India, but are much lower compared to the frequency of praying. Going to a place of worship and making donations have been given 5 percent weight each. This is because making donations depends on the economic class of the respondent, and the fact that many Muslim women do not go Mosques. In order to further analyze the impact of intensity of religious practice on support for democracy, we made a binary logistic regression model. In addition to the intensity of religious practice, we added as control variables efficacy of vote (q21), membership of organizations other than caste or religious organization (Q19), whether the respondent voted or not in the 2004 parliamentary election (Q3), gender, respondent's education (B4), monthly household income (B19) and level of urbanity (B10). The coefficient on the index of religiosity is .138. Thus, we can say that a one unit increase in the index of religiosity (controlling for other factors) predicts approximately a 3.5% increase in the probability of support for democracy.

In the *State of Democracy in South Asia: 2005* we constructed a battery of questions exploring the relationship between religion and democracy. Unfortunately our sample size (5387, compared to the 27, 189 for the *National Election Study: 2004*) only permits us to do detailed comparative study of the two largest religions in India, Hinduism and Islam. The sample size for other minority religions is too small for a robust analysis. A key question we wanted to explore was the relationship of increased levels of “the intensity of religious practice”, our independent variable, to four critical components of democratic Political Society which we will be our dependent variables: “political efficacy”, “overall trust in political institutions”, “satisfaction with the way democracy works in this country”, and “voting ratios.” As Table 9 makes clear, again counter-intuitively for much of the literature, on all eight observations (Hindus and Muslims on each of the four variables) the group with “high religiosity” has higher scores on each of the four variables than does those the group with “low religiosity”.

The findings of our surveys indicate that among all four major religions in state nation India, at the aggregate level, there is a relative consensus among devotees that both their practice of religion, and their practice of democracy, are integral and valued parts of their public and their private lives.

Table 9: Relationship Between Intensity of Religious Practice and Support for Political Institutions

		Low intensity	Medium intensity	High intensity	Net gain from low to high
<i>Trust in public institutions:</i> % of respondents who reported they had a high degree of trust in public institutions.	Hindus	31	35	38	+ 7
	Muslims	39	40	48	+ 9
<hr/>					
<i>Satisfaction with "the way democracy works in India":</i> % of respondents who reported that they are 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'.	Hindus	76	82	80	+ 4
	Muslims	71	83	84	+ 13
<hr/>					
<i>Political efficacy:</i> "Do you think your vote has an effect on how things are run in this country?" % of respondents who answered 'Yes'.	Hindus	76	81	81	+ 5
	Muslims	75	80	77	+ 2
<hr/>					
<i>Frequency of voting:</i> % of respondents who reported that they had "voted in every election since they became eligible for voting".	Hindus	64	76	79	+ 15
	Muslims	60	72	86	+ 26

Sources: The analysis is based on the 2005 survey conducted for the *State of Democracy in South Asia Survey: A Report* for "trust" (Question C-13 battery), voting (Question C-8) "satisfaction" (Question C-12). "Efficacy" is based on the *National Election Study [India] – 2004* (Question 21). The findings for 'efficacy' and 'trust', among both Hindus and Muslims, are statistically significant using the Pearson's Chi Square test (p. value < .001), which means that the possibility of the findings occurring by chance are less than one in a 1000. 'Trust in public institutions' is an index created by adding the responses to the frequency of self-reported trust in 'Central government' (C-13a), 'Provincial government' (C-13b), 'Local government' (C-13c), 'Civil service' (C-13d), 'Police' (C-13e), 'Army' (C-13f), 'Courts' (C-13g), 'Parliament' (C-13h), 'Political parties' (C-13i), 'Election Commission' (C-13j). The findings for 'voting' are statistically significant for Hindus (p. value < .001) and for Muslims (p. value < .050). The findings for 'satisfaction' for Hindus are statistically significant (p. value < .001), while the findings for Muslims are positive but not statistically significant.

POLITICAL EFFICACY

Perhaps the most important aspect of citizen's perceptions regarding the legitimacy of the democratic system is the citizens' sense of whether their votes matter or not. This is a classic question asked in political science and is called the "political efficacy" question. The National Election Studies series in India asks the following question for measuring political efficacy, "Do you think your vote has an effect on how things are run in this country or do you think your vote has no effect?" The Indian NES offers three observation points – 1971, 1996 and 2004 – that allow us to read the following trend: 48% of the respondents felt efficacious in India in 1971, 59% felt efficacious in 1996, and 68% felt efficacious in 2004. India's 30% increase in the national average of the self-reported sense of efficacy between 1971 – 2004 contrasts sharply with the U.S. sense of efficacy which dropped from a pooled 70% average in 1952-1964, to a pooled average of only 40% from 1994 – 2000.¹⁶ But, do India's most marginalized groups share in this sense of growing efficacy and support for democracy?

Table 10 presents the citizens' self-reported sense of the "political efficacy" of their vote, and their support for the democratic system of elections, among India's seven most significant marginalized groups from 1971, 1996, and 2004. Between 1971 and 2004 each one of these marginalized groups self-reported a major increase in their perception of the efficacy of their vote and of their support for democracy.

¹⁶ Virginia Sapiro, Steven J. Rosenstone and National Election Studies, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, *The American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File*.

Table 10: *Sense of Political Efficacy and Support for Democracy among Marginalized Groups in India: 1971, 1996, 2004*

Group	Political Efficacy			Support for Democracy		
	1971	1996	2004	1971	1996	2004
National Average	48	59	68	43	69	72
ST	31	48	59	41	66	68
Women	36	51	61	32	64	67
Illiterate	36	47	55	31	62	61
Very Poor	38	51	60	32	64	66
SC	42	60	65	38	67	69
Poor	43	55	68	37	68	71
Rural	44	57	66	39	69	70
Muslims	50	60	66	40	72	73

Source: India NES, 1971, 1996 and 2004. The efficacy question was: "Do you think your vote has effect on how things are run in this country or do you think your vote makes no difference?" The support for democracy question was: "Do you think that the government in this country can be run better if there are no parties or assemblies or elections?"

Views on the Economy

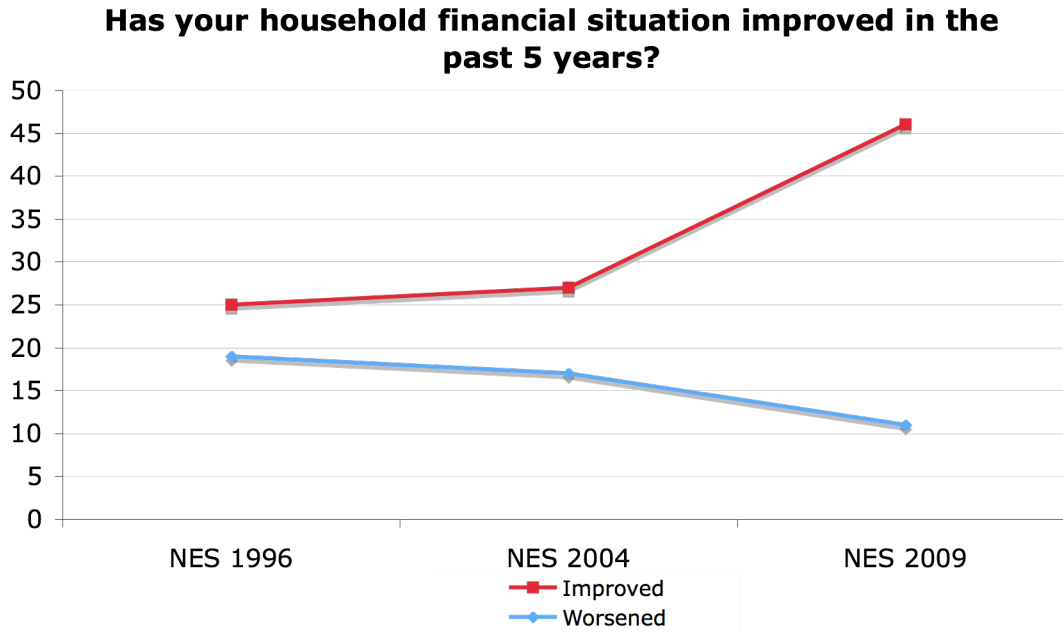
The National Election Studies ask respondents questions on their household financial well being in the previous five years and on their financial expectations for the next five years. Table 11 shows that the ratio of respondents saying their financial situation has improved, to those saying it has worsened, has grown from 1.3 in 1996 to 1.5 in 2004 to 4.2 in 2009. The overall percentage of respondents saying their situation has worsened has also declined from 19% in 1996 to 11% in 2009. Figure 2 presents the same information but in graphical form.

Table 11: *Views on Household Financial Situation in the Previous Five Years, 1996-2009*

	<i>NES 1996</i>	<i>NES 2004</i>	<i>NES 2009</i>
Improved	25	27	46
Same	56	52	34
Worsened	19	17	11
Ratio of Improved to Worsened	1.3	1.5	4.2
N	9614	27189	34000 +

Source: NES stands for different waves of the *National Election Studies*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008). The questions from the 1996 and 2004 surveys asked respondents to pick between “improved”, “same” and worsened” but the 2009 survey asks respondents to pick between “much better”, “better”, “same”, “worse” and “much worse”. We have combined the much better and better categories to create improved and similarly combined the worse and much worse categories to create worsened

Figure 2: *Increasing self-reporting that household financial situation has improved in the previous five years, 1996, 1998 and 2005*



Again, we examine the responses to the same question across the most marginalized groups in the country. While we would ideally like to present the data for

these groups for the 2009 elections, those numbers are as yet unavailable. Instead, we present the results for the 2004 elections. The results in Table 12 show that the “poor”, “Scheduled Tribe” and “female” are within 3 percentage points of the National average of percentage of improved. However, “Muslim” and “very poor” respondents were 8 points below the National average.

Table 12: *Views on Household Financial Situation in the Previous Five Years by marginalized groups, NES 2004*

	<i>National Average</i>	<i>Schedule Caste</i>	<i>Schedule Tribe</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Very Poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Illiterate</i>
Improve	27	22	24	19	19	25	24	20
Same	52	51	54	53	54	54	53	54
Worsen	17	24	16	24	24	18	18	21
Don't Know	4	3	5	5	3	4	4	5
N	27189	4319	4274	3254	8097	9550	12410	8416

Table 13 shows the results of the questions asking respondents to project their future household financial prospects. The proportion who say their future condition will improve are five times larger than those that say their situation will worsen.. The results in Table 14 show that “Scheduled Caste”, “Scheduled Tribe”, the “poor” and “female” are within 4 percentage points of the National average of the percentage of “improve” answers. However, “Muslim”, “very poor” and “illiterate” respondents were between 6-9% points below the national average.

Table 13: *Views on Household Financial Situation in the next Five Years, 1996-2009*

	<i>NES 1996</i>	<i>NES 2004</i>	<i>NES 2009</i>
Improve	48	51	50
Same	27	19	20
Worsen	9	6	10
Don't Know	16	25	22
Ratio of Improve to Worsen	5.3	8.5	5
N	9614	27189	34000 +

Source: NES stands for different waves of the *National Election Studies*, Delhi: CSDS. The questions from the 1996 and 2004 surveys asked respondents to pick between “improved”, “same” and worsened” but the 2009 survey asks respondents to pick between “much better”, “better”, “same”, “worse” and “much worse”. We have combined the much better and better categories to create improved and similarly combined the worse and much worse categories to create worsened.

Table 14: *Views on Household Financial Situation in the Previous Five Years by marginalized groups, NES 2004*

	<i>National Average</i>	<i>Schedule Caste</i>	<i>Schedule Tribe</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Very Poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Illiterate</i>
Improve	51	47	49	43	45	51	49	42
Same	19	19	20	18	21	19	20	21
Worsen	6	8	5	9	6	6	5	6
Don't Know	25	27	26	31	27	24	26	31
N	27189	4319	4274	3254	8097	9550	12410	8416