Guest Lecture am Max-Weber-Kolleg

„Democracy and Religious Minorities in India“
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Valerian Rodrigues teaches at the Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He is currently the ICCR (Indian Council of Cultural Relations) Visiting Professor at the University of Erfurt, and Fellow of Max-Weber-Center.

Zum Vortrag:
Members of minority groups in several democratic polities across the world are charging their respective regimes that they are not accorded treatment as equals in several domains of social and political life. This issue becomes particularly acute when reasons cited for the same are group-based identities, caught in deep diversities, with little option but continue to live in such societies.

India has held on to a democratic regime for over 60 years, and known to be a large country with minority groups of all kind. This paper asks the question to what extent Indian democracy has been able to reach out to one type of minorities, i.e., religious minorities, some of which at the time of independence held deep apprehensions with regard to their future. Further there are deep cleavages within these minorities as is the case with the majoritarian community, Hindus. How has democracy responded to the internal cleavages within these communities? What are the shared concerns across members of different communities and how strong are they to hold an inclusive democratic society viable in the foreseeable future.

What makes certain minorities to respond to the call of inclusion better than the others? What is the language of confidence/diffidence that religious minorities themselves have employed to endorse/critique the system.

The paper argues that there are new structures of shared life that are evolving, and while policy may not have been adequate with regard to several concerns there is enormous pressure in that direction. At the same time religious differences are still firm, and there is little dialogue that is forthcoming in this domain. Given the significance that people assign to religion in day to day life such differences result in face-off at several levels. The paper focuses on Muslims and Christians while Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists are bought in relationally.

Much of the empirical evidence adduced in the paper is drawn from the reports of Offical Commissions at the federal level, such as the Sachar Commission and the Ranganath Misra Commission.