

**Debating Dalit and Brahmin Psyche: A Study of Kancha Ilaiah's
*Untouchable God and Why I am Not a Hindu***

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled “**Debating Dalit and Brahmin Psyche: A Study of Kancha Ilaiah’s *Untouchable God and Why I am Not a Hindu***” submitted to the Central University of Haryana in the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in English, is a record of my original research work, done under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Sanjiv Kumar.

I, further, state that the work reported in this dissertation has not been submitted so far in part or in full for any degree or diploma in any other institution.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**Debating Dalit and Brahmin Psyche: A Study of Kancha Ilaiah’s *Untouchable God and Why I am Not a Hind***” is based on the bona fide research carried out by **Mr. Surender Kumar**, Department of English and Foreign Languages, Central University of Haryana, under my supervision and submitted to the Central University of Haryana in partial fulfilment for the award of *Master of Philosophy* in English.

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Introduction

India is a country which is divided in various religions, castes, classes and regions. Each aspect/part of it has its own beliefs, followers and even customs and behaviours. These differences were always there from the very beginning of Indian society. As far as religion and castes are concerned, these are later ideas. Differences on the basis of religion took place with the arrival of Arab merchants in the Western and Southern coast of India in the 7th century AD. Later, with the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni (971-1030 AD) and Muhammad Ghori (1149-1206 AD) in 11th and 12th century, Islam religion spread in India. During the Mughal Empire, Muslims came into full power and authority. Differences on the basis of caste occurred with the Aryan settlement in India in around 1500 BC. They invaded and got settled around Indus River. Aryans were the first to divide Indian society in different groups and allotted them various tasks to perform. Groups into which Indian society was divided were; Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. Those, who did not follow the rules and regulations and did not perform the tasks which were allotted to them, were segregated from the society. These people fall under the category of untouchables. In this piece of dissertation, the researcher will explore the conditioning and functioning of the psyche of Dalits and Caste Hindus.

During the British rule, there was a significant change in the conditions of Dalits as British government introduced various reform acts, educational policies and legislative schemes. Special legislative schemes were planned to provide equal share of representatives to each and every group of the society but somehow those schemes were not implemented. Hence an opportunity, which would have changed the political and social condition of dalits, remained unimplemented. Even literature was also mute about the

issues regarding dalits and other subjugated groups until the appearance of postcolonial studies. Postcolonial Studies has opened the door for various other areas such as feminism, cultural studies and dalit literature to flourish. It has provided readers with various phases and areas of studies to explore and understand the “other” aspect of the society. Feminism talks about the problems that women were facing and their demands for equal rights in the society whereas cultural studies explore the effects of colonial period on the culture of colonised. Dalit literature raises the voice of subaltern, underprivileged and exploited. It portrays the miserable condition of dalits in the society and puts forth their demand for equality. The research intends to study socio-cultural conditions of Indian society and their effects on dalit and Brahminic psyche.

The term “dalit” means broken, split, scattered and exploited. This term was initially used by Mahatma Jyotirao Phule to denote oppressed masses of the society. Dalit is not just a caste identity of a particular section of Indian society but also a sign of pain, exploitation and struggle of the marginalised and oppressed people. Dalit is a self-chosen name taken up by various castes which were considered to be untouchables. They were also known as “Panchamas” because they were out of the four folds of Indian society. Earlier Indian society was divided into many groups and these groups were performing various tasks to live their life properly. The concept of caste was formulated after the Aryan settlement. Aryan was a nomadic tribe that attacked and got settled around Indus Valley. Though they did not develop in India, they were responsible for creating caste system in India. Aryans divided Indian society into four parts; Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. These groups were known as Varnas. They attributed various tasks to all these Varnas. At that time, this division was quite appropriate according to the situations which

were prevalent at that time. The most positive and important aspect about this division was that a person who was in a particular caste was having the right to change his/her caste if he/she was efficient in other works than those which were attributed to the caste he belonged to at the time of his birth. Hence the caste system at the beginning was not as rigid as it became later. Later, another group was formed which came to be known as Untouchables. People belonging to this group were those who did not follow the rules and regulations and tasks which were attributed to them. This group was given the lowest rank in the society. They were supposed to skin the dead animal and clean streets and toilets. Later on, with the appearance of Manu, caste system, which was completely flexible earlier, was fixed on the basis of birth rather than action. Hence, it became very difficult for them to change their caste. They were, physically and mentally, segregated from the society. Manu divided Indian society on the basis of religion and tried to associate the division with the God's will. "But for the sake of prosperity of the worlds he caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs, and his feet" (*Manusmriti*, 1.31). These lines define the process of division of society by Manu. He defines the origin of Brahmin from the mouth of Lord Brahma, Kshatriya from arms, Vaisya from thighs and Shudra from His feet. He created a hierarchy in the society where he gave advantage to a particular group of the society and ridiculed others. Differences were not only among various castes and peoples but also among their names, occupations and roles in the society.

But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet. (*Manusmriti*, 1.87)

Let (the first part of) Brahmana's (name) shall be (a word) implying happiness, of a Kshatriya's (a word) implying protection, of a Vaisya's (a term) expressive of thriving, and of a Sudra's (an expression) denoting service. (*Manusmriti*, 2.31)

These lines denote that not only people were grouped on the basis of occupation but their names were also given on the basis of their castes. Those who were born out of his mouth were Brahmins and they were supposed to teach rest of the Varnas. Kshatriyas were supposed to protect their kingdom and fight against enemies. They were supposed to take suggestions from Brahmins. Vaishyas were supposed to do business and increase their property and provide economic security to Brahmins and Kshatriyas. But Sudras were not given any kind of rights. They were supposed to serve the rest of the Varnas without any objection. On the other hand, the process of naming people according to their castes was a strategy of keeping people informed about their position in the society. Their names were according to their castes i.e. a Brahmin's name was like a teacher and a Kshatriya's was like a dominant and brave figure. Similarly, a Vaishya's name was like a merchant and a Sudra's like a servant. This process affected human psyche quite deeply and resulted in caste consciousness among people.

Their entry in the villages (caste Hindu settlements) was prohibited. They faced discrimination, harassment and other physical and mental disturbance. They were having no rights as other castes in the society. They were mere slaves and were supposed to serve upper castes. They were completely separated from all kinds of social, religious and political life of caste Hindus. They were prohibited from owning their own land, property and other resources which can help them in generating income and reforming their social and economic status in the society.

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Dalits

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was an activist, reformer and a renowned writer. He worked for the welfare of dalits and raised his voice for the eradication of caste system and discrimination against suppressed people. He formed *Satyashodhak Samaj (1873)* for the welfare of Dalits. The purpose of this social organisation was to put a check on the discriminatory nature of caste Hindus towards Sudras. He rejected the superiority of Brahmins in the society. He rejected idolatry and the necessity of priests to perform religious and other worshipping functions. His wife Savitribai Phule was the first female teacher of India. She, along with her husband, worked for the welfare of Sudra women. She mainly focused on improving the condition of Sudra women by educating them. She condemned child-marriage of dalit girls and ill-treatment with widows.

Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar and Dalits

Bharat Ratan Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was a well-known social reformer, politician and a barrister. He is mostly known as Babasaheb for his hard-work and devotion towards eradicating caste system and providing equal treatment to dalits. He himself was a dalit and he himself had faced the discriminatory behaviour of caste Hindus. He knew the pain of casteism and discrimination against dalits. He knew that until or unless dalits enter politics no one else is going to raise their problems and bring solutions for them. He demanded for separate electorates and reservations for dalits so that they can get admissions into better institutions and improve their social and economic status. Though his demands were opposed by Mahatma Gandhi, more or less he succeeded in his attempts. He started *Mooknayak*, a weekly magazine, and *Bahishkrit Bharat* to raise issues related with dalits

and demand equal rights for them. He wrote *Annihilation of Caste* as a speech in 1935 which remained undelivered as the organisers found it too harsh and critical of religious values of Hinduism. He changed his speech into a book form on his own expense and in this book he talked about the various ill-effects of caste system on Indian society. It turned out to be earthshaking work of dalit movement and literature. Most of the post-independence dalit writers remained deeply influenced by this piece of work.

Ambedkar was a visionary person. He always wanted to secure the rights of underprivileged. He, after his unsuccessful attempts of raising dalits' voice, took part in politics. He formed a political party, Independent Labour Party, and became a part of Indian government. After independence, he became the first Law Minister of India. While drafting Indian constitution, he provided reservation to dalits so that they can at least raise their economic status. Even today, provision of reservations is helping the oppressed people in raising their social, political and economic status. The endless efforts of Babasaheb Ambedkar brought a significant change in the life of dalits. Dalits were provided reservation for access to education and jobs and laws against discrimination and untouchability. Gradually, changes were visible in the lives of dalits. They started sending their children to schools, colleges and universities and started looking for jobs. After the death of Babasaheb, there was a significant change in the lives of dalits. Dalit movements took place in various places of the country. *Dalit Panthers Movement* of Maharashtra is one the best examples of Dalit consciousness. Dalit literature turned out to be a turning point in the field of literature. Dalit and Non-Dalit writers started portraying dalits' conditions and demanded equal treatment for them in the society. Issues related to dalits were raised at national and International level. Mulk Raj Anand, Munshi Premchand, Sharankumar

Limbale, Narendra Jadhav, Bama, Kancha Ilaiah and many more writers with Dalit sensibility raised the problems and issues related to dalits.

Differences between Dalit and Dalitism

Dalit and Dalitism both are completely different concepts associated with each other. Dalit, as a term, is just a socially accepted identity. It signifies a group of people belonging to the oppressed community of Indian society. These people were ranked lowest in the social hierarchy. They were deprived of all rights and were segregated from the four-folds of Indian society. They were portrayed as untouchable because they were forced to perform low tasks i.e. cleaning gutters and toilets in the society. On the other side, Dalitism, which is seen to be associated with dalits only, is a much broad concept. Initially, it was seen as an integral part of dalit literature. It was taken up as a dalit ideology and national concept to raise voice of oppressed people of Indian society. But in the current period the term has a broader meaning. Now it is not limited to a particular caste or group. Today, every group of people whose rights are denied, and who feel suppressed, considers itself to be a dalit. This change is now seen in the light of economy. Dalits, who were earlier seen as extremely backward, they have acquired the status for which they were struggling for a long period. They were not having access to educational and economic resources which became the reason of their economic and political backwardness also. After independence, dalits were provided rights against untouchability, access to education and jobs which brought a significant change in their present condition. In the present time, it is necessary to include all those in the category of Dalit who are really suffering economically, socially, politically and educationally.

Brahmin

Brahmin is an identity attributed to a group of people belonging to same social category in India. People belonging to this caste follow and perform more or less the same rituals and rites. The term 'Brahmin' is a part of Indian Varna system specialising in worshipping and teaching. They were responsible for religious and social activities in the society. There was a social status associated with it. Brahmins were assigned the highest rank in the society. They were supposed to perform those tasks which were considered pure and clean. Every activity without the Brahmin's consult was not seen as a successful one. Hence, they (Brahmins) got the privilege over all other Varnas. Prior to Manu the condition of society was better because the caste system was not so harsh and people were entitled to switch over to different caste identities. But with the appearance of Manu and his works the caste system changed. It was made permanent which provided an upper hand to those who belonged to the upper castes.

Difference between Brahmin and Brahminism

As described earlier, Brahmin is an identity related to a particular group of people sharing same tasks in the Indian society. Providing education to the other groups of the society, worshipping, religious and other social functions were performed with their consent. On the other hand, Brahminism is an entirely different concept. Earlier, it was associated particularly with Brahmins because of their negative behaviour towards dalits and other oppressed groups. But in the current period this concept has also changed. Nowadays, even they also support dalit rights. They write literature on the problems faced by dalits and show their sympathy through this. Brahminism, as a concept, is a mindset of a

person where he/she utilizes his/her power to dominate others and receive whatever he/she likes. This kind of attitude can be there in anyone whether he/she belongs to upper caste or lower caste. In rural areas, where casteism is practiced in common, discrimination still functions in a broad way. Dalits, who have easy access to education and economy, automatically differentiate themselves from the rest of the dalits. These kind of dalits create a hierarchy among themselves and operate dalit society according to their own wishes. Hence, nowadays, Brahminism has nothing to do with the caste Brahmin. This element can be found among dalits also.

Psyche

In psychology, 'psyche' is an engine which runs the thought process of human beings. It is the controlling system of entire range of human activities. It is a scientific approach through which one can understand the nature of the other through his/her expressions, activities and behaviour. Sigmund Freud has divided human psyche into three parts; 'Id', 'Superego' and 'Ego'. 'Id' represents the natural drives of the humans. These activities depict the unconscious state of mind where there is no scrutiny of what comes into mind and what goes out through verbal or non-verbal communication and physical activities. The best example of 'Id' is the behaviour of a child who behaves without thinking any. 'Superego' represents the conscious state of mind where a person scrutinizes what is right and what is wrong. He thinks twice before he speaks or acts. He remains conscious about the social norms and conditions. Hence he behaves according to the others' perceptions and hides his own ideas, desires and perceptions. The best example of Superego is the psyche of a mature person who thinks twice and consults his peer group, friend circle and his parents before taking any step or action. Ego is a joining aspect of both

Id and Superego. It's a conscious part of human psyche which scrutinizes the unconscious ideas, compares them with social norms and morality and then defines the further actions.

Branches of “Psyche”

Human psyche is divided into various parts and all these parts function in one way or the other and create various ideas which develop human understanding. Human thinking is a sum of various parts; perceptions, ideas, thinking, judgement and memory. Memory is a part of human brain where all the information is recorded. It is based on perceptions, thoughts and most importantly experience and it helps in taking decisions. Perceptions identify the nature of an object through senses and pass message to brain through nervous system i.e. behaviour of a person towards others, fragrance of flowers, smell of rotten fruits and vegetables, and sounds created by various animals. Gradually, these perceptions become part of human psyche and knowledge and affect it deeply. Ideas are abstract images or mental perceptions about any person and object. Ideas can be based on physical experience or they can be based on visual or verbal experience. These ideas keep changing with the passing of time and results in the origin of new and more refined ideas. Ideas further give birth to thinking which shapes the body language and character of a person. It produces new thoughts regarding a particular person and object and further helps in taking decisions. It deeply affects the character and behaviour of a person in front of others. Decisions or judgements are abilities of a person in evaluating others. Decisions are completely based on experience. Decisions can be right or wrong because they are based on experience which can be sweet or bitter. Hence experience influences decisions very deeply. Prejudices are the best examples of decisions which challenge its basis i.e. experience. A prejudice-ridden person has a stereotypical thinking about other persons and

leads to a worst experience of giving decision without keeping the present condition of the other person. Prejudices are based on past experiences which affect the perceptions about other persons. All these aspects affect human psyche in effective manner. His/her character is modified by the functioning of all these aspects of human psyche.

Dalit Psyche & Brahmin Psyche

Psyche of a person is a sum of the ideas, perceptions and the experiences he/she has acquired throughout the ages. His character and behaviour remain completely affected by these elements. Dalits were not given equal importance in the four folds of Indian society. They were forced to perform degraded jobs which created frustration in their minds. This frustration of their minds became the main reason of their depressed psyche. They faced harsh experiences from the caste Hindus which created a negative attitude in their minds towards them. They deflect their mental position through literature and other forms of expression. Dalit literature attacks caste Hindus for the miserable conditions of dalits in the Indian society. In view of the conditions of dalits, reservations were provided to them in Indian constitution. Reservation turned out to be a major step towards improving the economic condition of dalits. It helped in changing the mindset of other people belonging to the upper castes. But this change is limited to a limited group of caste Hindus. Discrimination exists among dalits also. There is a hierarchy among dalits which is based on economy and tasks performed by dalits i.e. a person who skins dead animals is still considered as an untouchable and on the other side a person who is farmer or labourer is still considered to be a better one. It's an orthodox thinking that only caste Hindus create caste discrimination. This is also because of the depressed psyche of dalits that they have generalised that caste Hindus are their opponents. Though there is an orthodox group

among caste Hindus that favours caste system but same is the case among dalits also. A very little thought has been given towards this viewpoint. Discrimination cannot be mitigated until or unless dalits come together by eradicating it from their hearts and minds. Not only dalits, but all castes and classes should join hands to mitigate this venomous devil of caste system from their hearts and minds.

Kancha Ilaiah and his views about Dalit and Brahmin understanding of the society

Kancha Ilaiah is one the prominent and active dalit writers in the present time. He describes dalit problems in a direct and significant manner. He, in his books, creates a connection between dalits and other backward classes and uses a new term 'Dalitbahujan' to indicate the majority of dalits and backward classes in the Indian society. He mingles both groups together on the basis of caste and class discrimination. Dalits (SCs) were exploited on the basis of caste whereas OBCs were exploited on the basis of economy and both were facing the same situation after independence. Both groups were facing economic problems and it gave Kancha Ilaiah an idea to bring both groups together. He does not include STs in his studies just because of their separation from the four-folds of caste Hindu society. In *Untouchable God*, he talks about the narrow viewpoint of caste Hindus towards dalits and women. He portrays the miserable condition of dalits where it was impossible for them to get education and earn money to live their life properly. He talks about the miserable condition of women. He criticises the orthodox ideas of Indian religious scripts. In his works, he talks about the positive as well as negative aspects of dalits and their lifestyle. The present research is based on his two major works *Untouchable God* and *Why I am Not a Hindu* and the focus of the researcher will be on his radical ideas

regarding the physical and psychological development of Dalits and Brahmins and their behaviour in the society and their perspective towards the society.

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Chapter-1

Untouchable God: The Portrayal of Contradictions in the Society

Kancha Ilaiah is an Indian academician, writer and Dalit activist. He was born in Papaiahpet village of Warangal district of Hyderabad State (now in Telangana) on 5th October 1952. He was born in a Kuruma Golla caste which is associated to sheep-grazing occupation. He completed his M.A. in Political Science and M.Phil. from Andhra Pradesh. He has been awarded Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Award and Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship from 1994-97. He has also taught in the Department of Political Science at Osmania University. Currently he is holding the post of Director of the centre for Social Exclusion and Inclusion Policy at Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) in Hyderabad.

In the present Indian context Kancha Ilaiah is one of the prominent literary figures of Dalit literature. He, in his works, has put forth the life and conditions of Dalits in the society. His direct and harsh style of writing gives him a completely different image among Dalit writers. Before him, other Dalit writers such as Sharankumar Limbale, Om Prakash Valmiki, Mulk Raj Anand, Arjun Dangle etc. have talked about Dalits and their condition in the society but they put forth the problem in a very defensive manner while Kancha Ilaiah directly attacks upper caste people for their discriminatory behaviour in the society. His mother had a great influence on his life and works. She was one of the major figures of Kuruma's struggle against the discriminatory and brutal behaviour of forest guards. Her strength and determination deeply influenced him. In his works, one finds struggle against caste and caste-based discrimination based on it. In *Untouchable God*, he talks about Brahmins of the various parts of India and their attitude towards Dalits. This book portrays

the thinking and mentality of Brahmins towards Dalits and their position in the society. The themes of his works mostly move around Dalits and their condition in the society.

He expressed his ideas on Dalits and Dalit Literature in “International Seminar on Dalit Literature and Historiography” held in Jamia Millia Islamia on March 30, 2014. He compared dalits with buffalos in the land of caste Hindus whom he compared with cows. He uses both animals as symbols of two different categories of the Indian society. He compares buffalo with dalits and cow with the caste Hindus. He says that though buffalo gives more milk which is much nutritious and healthier than a cow’s milk but it still does not receive such respect as received by a cow. Here, he symbolically contrasts both groups by depicting dalits as more struggling and hard-working than caste Hindus. He highlights the reasons of conflict between two groups from the period of early history. He talks about two early trends of cultural development in India. One trend was led by social reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other by Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. One trend was getting inspiration from Hindu scriptures such as Vedas, Puranas, Ramayana and Mahabharata and the other from Buddhist scriptures. Kancha Ilaiah portrays Raja Ram Mohan Roy as a Brahmin communist who mostly worked for the development of Brahmins only and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule worked for the welfare of Shudras. Both trends were taking inspiration from different epic characters. Caste Hindus were taking inspiration from the characters of Arjuna and Krishna whereas dalits were being inspired by king Bali. These examples given by Ilaiah portray the psychological development of the two groups. Kancha Ilaiah also portrays the flaws which were there in caste Hindu society. He talks about the evils of child marriage, lack of education and intellectualism among caste Hindus. He says that in the western part of the world, literature is mostly produced by the working class

people because it comes out from their practical knowledge. But in India even after getting education from Oxford and Cambridge, literature could not reach at its best because those who laboured were never allowed to have education. He appreciates dalits and their practical knowledge which was denied by caste Hindus but appreciated and learnt by foreigners.

In his first work, *Why I Am Not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy*, he talks about the differences between Dalits and Caste Hindus. He portrays a completely different picture of the society. He shows difference on the basis of culture, tradition, gender roles, mythology and economy etc. He, in this piece of work functions as an omnipresent writer who portrays the ideas and perceptions of Brahmins of various parts of India. He directly attacks their behaviour and actions against Dalits in the society.

In his other works such as *God as Political Philosopher: Buddha's Challenge to Brahminism* (2001) and *Buffalo Nationalism: A Critique of Spiritual Fascism* (2004), he talks about some other similar issues. But his ideas remained moving around caste and its rigidness. In *Buffalo Nationalism* which is a collection of letters published in various newspapers such as *The Hindu*, *The Deccan Herald*, *The Deccan Chronicle*, *The Hindustan Times* and journals such as *Mainstream* and *The Economic and Political Weekly*. In this work, he does not go against the idea of nationalism but rather shows his dissatisfaction with branding cow as a symbol of Nationalism. Kancha Ilaiah takes cow as a symbol for caste Hindus and buffalo as a symbol for dalits.

In *Untouchable God*, Ilaiah portrays six characters of Brahmin caste from the various parts of India to show their status and grip over the society and their prospective

towards the society, lower caste and women. This novel puts forth the condition of Dalits in the society. It shows as to how illiteracy results in ignorance and hinders the development of Dalits and women. He portrays such a society where it was a sin for Dalits to think about equality. Women were not allowed to give their opinion on any kind of issues. Only Brahmins were the ones who were having the power to mould ideas and situation according to their thinking and advantages.

Paraiyah had worked all day collecting the grain cut by the women and bundling it so that they could carry it away. Only an exceptional man like Paraiyah did both male and female tasks. He had a reputation as an interlocutor between men and women; his voice and manner had a peculiar femaleness. (*Untouchable God 2*)

These lines portray the condition of Dalits in the southern part of India. They were supposed to work for caste Hindus without any demand. Though works were divided on the basis of gender but dalits were supposed to perform all type of works without any distinction. Dalits, who were having no land of their own, used to work in the fields of caste Hindus who were having the largest share of land. Works were divided for the proper running of the society and they were followed by the caste Hindus, but dalits were treated as slaves only. They were having nothing of their own. Hence they had to work as per the dictates of caste Hindus which depicts their helplessness and dependency. Meena Kandasamy in her debut novel *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014) depicts the same situations of dalits.

For the past ten years, agricultural coolies have been constantly demanding an increase in their daily wages, and whenever it has been denied to them,

they have organized strikes and paralysed life in our district. Self-styled communist leaders, who are themselves comfortably well off, are also responsible for illegal encroachment on other people's lands. Not merely do they disregard the rights of the landowners, but they do so like militant Naxalites, by instigating the labourers to commence farming on these encroached lands. It suffices to state that, in practice, they harvest other people's fields and take away the agricultural produce, a major share of which is given to their leaders. (*The Gypsy Goddess* 3-4)

These lines portray the condition of labourers who work very hard to fill the bellies of their families. The earning of these labourers is based on the policies of the government. Meena Kandasamy in her debut book criticises the capitalist policies of the government. She also criticises the communists for instigating and using labourers for their own use. In this paragraph of the book she portrays the bad condition of labourers. Their demands are crushed so that government is able to give maximum profit to the caste Hindus who have already occupied major positions in governance as well as in administration. She also criticises communists for encroaching the lands of others and forcing poor labourers to work on them. She shows that in both ways poor labourers get completely exploited. Whether it is right wing or left wing, both are led by caste Hindus who exploit the labour class. Lastly, this kind of policies creates a doubt in the minds of the poor labourers regarding their exploitation.

Pariah grunted. His mind was restless today; it was running like a rat in a cage, nibbling at all these ideas. Which was food and which were the bars? He thought of his children. They were born as gift of the same God, yet their

future was bleak and fearful. (*Untouchable God* 6)

These lines show the mental pain of a Dalit who was deprived of education and social acceptability. He shows his anger towards the formation of caste system in Indian society. He had worked very hard throughout his life but at the end he had received nothing. He felt very bad about his condition. His bad condition made him feel disappointed about the future of his children. He apprehended that, like him, his children will be exploited very badly. He found himself completely helpless. He showed his disappointment towards God for such kind of social structure.

In “Poisoned Bread”, a short story written by Bandhumadhav and translated by Ramesh Dnyate, one finds the mental pain of an old dalit grandfather who follows the caste system in the society and whose life had become miserable by working hard throughout his life. He works in the fields of caste Hindus to satiate the fire of hunger of his family. He accepts the harsh words of the caste Hindu zamindars for no reason. The following lines show his helpless situation in the society.

Mustering all his strength and his tremendous will power Grandpa finally succeeded in articulating a few words: ‘Mhadeva, don’t weep, my boy. I am an old thing now. And being so old, I may not stop breathing any moment. What can I say to you now? I can only say: never depend on the age-old bread associated with our caste. Get as much education as you can. Take away this accursed bread from the mouths of the Mahars. This poisonous bread will finally kill the very humanness of man....’ (*Poisoned Bread* 174)

These last lines said by the old grandfather express his lifelong pain resulting from

the failure to the fruits of endless hard work. He, at the end of his life, realises the value of education in one's life. His death becomes a symbol of death of ignorance and hierarchy in the society. His last words become sermons for his grandson. He had seen his grandson's resistance in front of the landlord as well as his defeat due to his helplessness and the caste system they belong to. He himself had experienced the tyrannical nature and mindset of caste Hindus, hence, he suggested his grandson to go against it and create his own independent identity. His words became symbolical declaration of independence of Dalits from the caste Hindu division of society.

He was a piece of walking pollution, never to be clean. Perhaps if he were to touch a priest, really touch one, his untouchability would vanish, insofar as a thing with no existence to start with can vanish. But no: to touch a priest meant touching the Hindu Gods with their arms and legs and hands and heads and swords and shields and knives and tridents and discusses and axes and maces and ... how could he expect to survive such an encounter?

(Untouchable God 7)

These lines put forth the psychological pain and struggle of a Dalit. He finds himself on the fringes of the society. The stereotypical depiction of the society made him feel isolated from the mainstream life. The division of the society was made on the basis of works but it also gave superiority to the caste Hindus over dalits. He, somewhere, feels worried about his miserable condition that he can't touch god with his unholy body because he belongs to the untouchable category of the society. On the other hand, Brahmins are depicted holy and they are given god like place in the society and if a Dalit dares to touch him his purity falls in danger. Dalits were not allowed to take public roads, touch the idols

of gods, bring water from wells and even live life according to their own desires. If they ever dared to do so then it was taken as a sin and a step against societal norms. The miserable condition of dalits is well depicted by Mulk Raj Anand in his novel *Untouchable* which came in 1935. He, through the character of Sohini, depicts the bad condition of untouchables in the society. This novel also shows the restrictions which were imposed on dalits in the society.

The outcastes were not allowed to mount the platform surround the well, because if they were ever to draw water from it, the Hindus of the three upper castes would consider the water polluted. Nor were they allowed access to the near-by brook as their use of it would contaminate the stream. They had no well of their own because it cost at least a thousand rupees to dig a well in such a hilly town as Bulashah. Perforce they had to collect at the foot of the caste Hindus' well and depend on the bounty of some of their superiors to pour water into their pitchers. (*Untouchable 14-15*)

These lines portray the picture of dalits and the restrictions that were put on them. Sohini, who is a dalit girl, is not allowed to bring water from the well by herself. It was not the case with dalit women only but men were also restricted from such activities. In such a situation dalits became prey of caste Hindus. Caste Hindus exploited dalits in whatever way they wanted them to be exploited. The main reason of Dalits' exploitation was that all the rights were occupied by caste Hindus and dalits were to serve them only. Kancha Ilaiah depicts these restrictions and the effects very effectively in this paragraph:

He shivered again. He did not want to think of what would happen if the other saw him using this road. His very touch, his breath, his shadow cause

pollution. As if he had a disease. But in himself he felt perfectly healthy, albeit weary, half-starved and sorely troubled: maybe then it was society that was diseased? (*Untouchable God* 8)

These lines portray the condition of Dalits in the society. They were treated brutally as if they were traitors and dangerous to the society. Pariah, who is a Dalit, is going through a mental struggle and shows a resistance against caste-based society. This paragraph also shows that dalits were not allowed to use public roads because they were supposed to be untouchables and their touch can make the roads impious. But he finds nothing wrong with himself. His body structure, the way of working and speaking were similar to the touchables. Hence, the writer, through the character of Pariah and his mental state, creates an irony of the society which was divided to help each-other.

He cried out, ‘O God, I am dying!’ The blows rained down as he sank to the ground. ‘You bastard, how dare you think about Soul, God and Caste?’ shouted an unknown voice. ‘That means ... Equality? You son of a bitch, you have begun to think! You too!’ (*Untouchable God* 8)

These lines put forth the psychic understanding of upper-caste people. The division of the society and the tasks assigned to various castes had given an upper hand to caste Hindus. Their psyche got changed according to the status they received in the society. They were considered holy according to the Hindu scriptures and later this idea or perception got settled in their psyche and they started changing their lifestyle according to their depiction in mythological works. They took the privilege of this myth and started degrading others. But when this concept of purity started getting challenged, it became very difficult for them to digest the resistance. These lines also show as to how casteism in India has gone so rigid

that even thinking about caste and its drastic nature was unacceptable and when a Dalit dares to question casteism then it takes the form of a sin. In these lines, a dalit who is thinking about equality and mistakenly takes a route which was related to Brahmins and gets beaten up for his unholy commitment.

Another said, ‘Some foreign forces have been operating on your mind. Some white bastards are entering your bodies and creating a soul in them. If you too develop a soul—the dangers of this are too many. Aryavarta, the sacred land of the Aryans, the sacred land of Aryans, will end. Bharatkhand, this country of Hindus, will burn. The sin of the Pariah’s thinking, of knowing about soul and god, will put an end to our existence.’(*Untouchable God* 10)

This paragraph depicts the narrow mentality of upper castes towards dalits and also show their anger towards other religions because these religions could attract dalits and subjugated people by offering them education and accessible sources of income. These facilities were not provided to dalits in the Hindu religion which caused a slippage of subjugated people from Hindu religion which somewhere added fuel to the fire. Caste Hindus took it as a threat to their identity and superiority. They considered the division of the society as a better step and slippage of dalits as harm to the society.

Further, Kancha Ilaiah has given detailed description of various caste Hindus who behave in a particular manner. He talks about their perspectives, ideas, actions and their behaviour towards the society. His main motive is to bring forth the idea that discrimination is there in all parts of India. He talks about various problems such as ‘sambandham’, ‘sati’ system, child marriage and the restrictions on widow remarriage. He did not restrict himself to

dalits and oppressed people but he also raised voice for the upliftment of women of all castes. He started his journey from Kerala and ended at Benares describing various problems faced by the dalits, backward classes and women.

He walked out of the house towards the backyard. Sounds reached him before the sight: she was sitting in the backyard, sobbing. Nair stood over her and told her what Namboodri had proposed for their daughter. Halfway through she lifted her face with angry red eyes and said: 'Fool! Do you think I don't know why you have silly smile on your face? Reflect on what this means! My hopes have crumbled. Do you really wish her to live in sambandham? With all the namelessness my life is better: she will have neither face, nor name. She will be the mother of Brahmin children but shall remain an unwed Nair. Can her children become Brahmins, let alone Namboodris? Can they become priests in any temple? You foolish man, how could you agree? (*Untouchable God* 28)

These lines depict the condition of Dalit women in the society. It shows as to how they were exploited in the name of 'sambandham' by the upper caste men. Surprisingly it was the part of their tradition and culture. In this relationship women of the lower caste (Nair caste) were nothing more than commodities which could satisfy upper caste men's needs and desires. In Southern India this type of relationship was very common. In this process a younger Brahmin boy of the family can marry with women of the lower caste. Sambandham was celebrated to fulfil multiple purposes. The first and major reason was that only elder son of the family was allowed to marry. Younger sons were not allowed to marry for the simple reason that is to save the property from getting divided into multiple

parts. In that situation the younger brothers were allowed to marry with women of lower caste to satisfy their physical needs. But the children born out of this marriage were never accepted as children of Brahmin. ‘Sambandham’ resulted into many harmful outcomes. Brahmin girls did not get Brahmin boys to get married. Dalit girls suffered from physical and mental exploitation. They had to submit themselves in front of Brahmin boys. Hence, the desires of lower caste women were not valued.

‘What is sambandham if it is not marriage? But don’t worry it is not you I’ll mourn on my pyre, but my life, what it could have been if you had not come along. Since my life is dead, it’s pointless for me to carry on, a widow to myself. I will become a sati.’ ‘I never heard such nonsense! You’ll have to die a dog’s death,’ he snarled, and walked out of the room. (*Untouchable God* 40)

In earlier times Kerala of earlier times, ‘sambandham’ was a process in which a dalit woman was married to two or many more husbands: Dalit and Brahmin(s). She was supposed to give birth to children of her husband; both dalit and Brahmin, but those children were ascribed to the caste of another and not of the biological father belonging to the upper caste. These lines put forth the agony of a dalit woman who is completely broken in her life. She was used as a commodity to satiate the carnal desires of Brahmin counterpart. She shows her resistance against her husband and wants to become ‘sati’. It shows her mental disturbance and anger towards the wrongs done to her in her life. When she shows her resistance towards these practices, her voice is silenced. On the other hand, she was exploited more brutally than before. They were deprived of education which caused their exploitation. The condition of women in India always remained a serious issue

that needed to be discussed. “Mother”, a short story written by Baburao Bagul and translated by Mira Manvi, edited by Arjun Dangle in *Poisoned Bread*, portrays the miserable life of a mother who works very hard to win bread for her children. She knows that the wages she gets are not sufficient to fulfil the needs of her family, hence, she sells her body to earn more money to provide comfortable life to her children.

Pandu was just an infant then. The kitchen fire had to be kept going, and he needed medicines, and milk and fruit. All day she would work at the construction sites, hauling bricks and cement. On her return she would glimpse the same dark suspicion that stared out of Pandu’s eyes at this minute. She was beautiful, desirable, which automatically meant that perhaps she consistently sold her beauty, gave it away for a price.

(“Mother”, *Poisoned Bread* 214)

These lines depict the miserable condition of a woman as well as mother who is completely devoted towards her family. She is not selling her body just to seek sexual pleasure but to fill the empty bellies of her family. She works hard on the construction site to earn as much as she can but when she realizes that the earnings are not sufficient she sells her body, unwillingly. The condition of women has been shown in such a miserable condition that it creates a question in the minds of readers- “do should we deserve to be called human beings?” Kancha Ilaiah has also discussed about the condition of women and their lives and opinions. ‘Sambandham’ is a process which makes the condition of women more miserable.

The priest began to speak in an unnaturally calm voice. ‘I am a pundit and priest of this temple. Above all I am a Brahmin. Do you think we teach

Shudras, Chandalas, dogs and donkeys? Who let you march into the temple like this and ask me whether I would teach your low-born daughter—a girl, a damned bitch puppy! Get out! Out of this temple! Take your defiling feet off my floor!’ (*Untouchable God* 69)

Indian society was divided into four castes and this division was based on various tasks. Education was provided by the pundits/Brahmins to Kshatriyas and Vaishyas but not to Shudras. They were supposed to be slaves who were having no right to get education. This paragraph puts forth the mentality of Brahmins towards Dalits on the issue of education. These satirical lines create anger and hate and pity in the minds of the readers. Dalits were not only restricted from education and entering into temples but this paragraph reveals that Brahmins considered dalits as lower than animals. They can't accept the idea of education among dalits they have a predetermined mindset about them. Whenever Dalits have attempted to move further they were never accepted. Centuries of domination have created a settled mindset among all categories. The jobs were predefined and any dalit who dared to go against this kind of settlement were punished. Even in the present time when situation is changing, dalit awakening and inclusion, is not considered as an ordinary phenomena.

The entire country was shocked when V Azhagumalai on 24 April 2005 resigned as panchayat president of Keeripatti village in Madurai district (Tamil Nadu) within minutes of getting elected to the post. His fault: he was a Dalit, and the Hindu Thevar community could not imagine being ruled by a Dalit. In April 2002, a similar situation had happened when Karutha Kannan quit his elected administrative post immediately after

taking charge. (*Dalit Phobia* 9)

These examples attack Brahminism and its ill-effects on the society. From the very beginning their psyche remained dominating as they could not accept any other group rebelling against their ideas. Therefore, they have always condemned the idea of pain. Brahmins have always held the prime posts in the society and when a dalit occupies these posts it becomes very difficult for them to digest this. They take the mobility of dalits as a challenge to their superiority. Hence, they do not let them prosper in any field. Generally, dalits find themselves quite helpless and feel compelled to accept Brahmins' superiority over them. In *Untouchable God*, a priest turned down the request of a Dalit to teach his daughter because of his being a dalit. But the same girl, after changing her religion, gets education and gets good marks. This again enrages Brahmins. They denounced other religions not only verbally, but physically also. They could not accept dalits changing their religion. They took it as a threat to their superiority and authority over society. In order to keep their superiority over other categories, they did everything they liked. They took steps which benefited them in keeping their hegemony over Dalits. In that case dalits were completely dependent on caste Hindus for their development. The chief cause of their dependency was the lack of Dalit representation in governance which further resulted in their miserable condition. In *Outcaste* by Mulk Raj Anand, the mentality of caste Hindus has been depicted in a significant manner.

'Oh, Maharaj! Maharaj! Won't you draw us some water, please? We beg you. We have been waiting here a long time, we will be grateful,' shouted the chorus of voices as they pressed towards him, some standing up, bending and joining their palms in beggary, others twisted their lips in

various attitudes of servile appeal and abject humility as they remained seated.

Either the sepoy was a callous brute or in too much of a hurry. But he passed by without heeding the request of the group collected at the foot of the well.

(Untouchable 18)

These lines present the mentality of caste Hindus who considered dalits as untouchable and unholy just to make Dalits feel dependent on them. Dalits were generally deprived of performing the rites as being practiced by the caste Hindus unless permitted by caste Hindus. Similarly Dalits were not even allowed to mount the wall of the well and to get water from the well meant for upper caste Hindus. This shows that inaccessibility to perform various acts, rites and rituals to dalits was just a medium to create a feeling of dependency on others. This kind of set-up was established to provide hegemony to caste Hindus over others. People later got fed up with such kind of rigid caste system. Those who belonged to lower caste changed their religion. They either adopted Christianity or Islam which challenged caste hegemony of Hindus or caste Hindus. When dalits rejected the caste hegemony and changed their religion it created religious tensions which took place in Indian subcontinent.

It was Friday. Friday at the mosque is a day of special prayer. The whole village had gathered around the mosque gates. Hussein's naked body lay there in a pool of sticky blood. A litter of broken teeth lay around his head. One eye had been popped from its socket and dangled nearly to the ground. His chest was grotesquely bruised, the centre caved in as though an enormous weight had slammed down upon it. His private parts had been cut

off and placed on his stomach. The Muslims silently came and saw the body and went away. Hussein's mother and father were lying unconscious in their house. Wailing rose above it, and the crying of the youngest child.
(*Untouchable God* 78)

This paragraph depicts the anger of Hindu upper caste people against dalits and Muslims. On one side, dalits were denouncing their superiority and escaping from Hinduism and on the other side Muslims were alternating those dalits in their religion. It worked as a fuel to the fire. They threatened newly converted Muslims to return back to Hinduism. This later resulted in brutal murders of dalits and riots between duo religions. In the present scenario; issue like "Love Jihaad" is a recent example of such kind of events in India. In 2015, the women wing of VHP targeted actress Kareena Kapoor in the name of "Love Jihaad". These kind of religious groups mostly target those Muslim boys or men who marry non-Muslim girls especially Hindu girls. They take it as threat to their religion, identity and culture.

Brahminism and Socialism

Socialism was a movement which was started for the welfare of common people in India. The basic reason was to bring equality in a caste ridden society. Its main motive was to end the caste-based discrimination based on caste. But the main failure of its success was that it was led by those who were already well established and mostly belonged to the upper castes of the society. They could not completely associate themselves with the lower castes. There was always a gap between both the groups of the society.

Benerjee Babu was not a cruel man, regardless of what the people on the

street thought. In his youth he had been an idealist. No one presently alive knew that in his youth he had been fired by the ideas of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar about the wrongs of child marriage and compulsory widowhood. He had wept over tear-jerking tales of the point that he had actually managed with a certain amount of contrivance to fall in love with one. This had happened when he was still a student; the widow in question had lived in the house of the Chatterjees opposite and no one had ever seen her face.

(Untouchable God 104)

This paragraph talks about one of the Bengali Brahmin families and their perspective towards the society. Benerjee Babu's character is depicted in a dual prospective; what he is and what people think about him. In addition to that there is a contradiction in his character. There is contrast in his youth and old age. His principles towards life have changed. He was an idealist who was deeply influenced by social reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. He favoured widow remarriage and opposed child marriage. While he was young, he was concerned about the welfare of the society but in the old age he got completely changed. Widow in his house remained sufferer throughout her life. He came to know about the culture and customs of the society and caste he belonged to. In Brahmin caste, widow remarriage was not allowed and child marriage was very popular. Social reformists such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, etc. worked for the welfare of society, especially dalits and women. Thus this paragraph shows contradictions in the thinking of the caste Hindu society. A Brahmin, who in his youth, thinks rationally and always remains ready to bring changes in the society later in his old age finds it difficult to change the same society. The main cause

may be that the caste rituals and traditions may not allow him to go against those activities which were performed under various castes.

This paragraph depicts the picture of those people who follow the reformists in the prime time of his life but they find it very difficult to stand against the evils. Benerjee Babu's change depicts his defeat as a social reformist. He found it very difficult to take a stand against his own roots. Hence, the cause of social reformation remains undone.

It is a well-known fact that a mind left forcibly unoccupied will go to the end. The English express this by saying that an idle mind is a devil's workshop. Bengali Brahmins did not believe in devils, as they thought spirits and djinns were the bugbears of the lower castes, the Buddhists and their Mara, and the Muslims with their Shaitan. (*Untouchable God* 108)

These lines exhibit a sharp contrast of beliefs among various religions and castes. On one side, there are upper caste Hindus who are depicted as superior from other religions and caste. They demoralise lower castes and other religions by depicting them as corrupt and immoral. In this paragraph Brahmins are depicted as rational and logical and other lower castes and religions are depicted as superstitious. These kinds of baseless rumours are spread to depict other castes and religions as different but mostly to create the superiority of one major religion over others. Om Prakash Valmiki, in his autobiography *Joothan* (1997), satirises the blind beliefs. He gives his own example as a person who himself has become a victim of these irrational beliefs. He adopts superstitious practices for the treatment of his disease which could have been cured by taking medicines. Lack of education in the rural and tribal areas of India become a main reason of this kind of backwardness and blind beliefs.

We are socialists, they are national socialists. Russia is fighting them because they used aggression against Poland, a neutral country. But Poland will not feed Bengal. We can have no territorial quarrel with them, so why should we fight? And the Japanese? They are rice-fed Asiatic like us. Would you rather be ruled by the white man from the West, or the oriental from the east? (*Untouchable God* 124)

This paragraph talks about the group of caste Hindus who discusses about society and its welfare. These Brahmins talk about various parts of the world and social movements that took place in those parts. They pretend to be equally responsible concerned about the welfare of Bengal. But this welfare remains limited to a particular category of the society. They take it as their social responsibility to protest against oppressors, but the flaw with their socialism is that it remains limited to a particular geographical area and caste. They do not talk about the whole country or other communities. Their hypocritical nature overtakes their desire for social reforms.

It is respectfully prayed that as the honourable Chief Minister, Your Excellency shall interfere in this grave matter and take necessary steps to restore the lost confidence of the terror-stricken landowners who are living in a constant state of fear, and thereby liberate Nagapattinam from the clutches of Communists in order to prevent violence and bloodshed. (*The Gypsy Goddess* 8)

In this kind of situation, it becomes very difficult to develop each and every group of the society. Hence social schemes for the welfare of common people could not become successful. These welfare schemes remain limited to one particular group of the society.

Again it creates a feeling of dependency on caste Hindus among dalits which gives advantage to the upper caste society.

‘Oh, nonsense.’ Basu picked up his coffee cup and inspected the thick white porcelain rim. ‘You’re such a hypocrite, Gayatri Roy. All this while I thought you were a courageous being, making her way through a hostile world, and in fact you were play-acting. Well, it disgusts me. Let me tell you, I am going to do it for real. I will apply to my lord college for a position, I will quarrel with my father, I will leave his house, and I will build my own life. I will even go to the villages and work with Sanyal. I don’t need your silly upper-class upper-caste fairy tales. You know, now that I know who you are, you have lost all attraction for me. I feel for you as a sister, not as a lover or a comrade.’ (*Untouchable God* 135)

Basu is disillusioned with the hypocritical nature of his father. His understanding of the society is just opposite to his father. He argues on the issues of hypocritical nature of upper caste people. He liked Gayatri for her selfless service but he found her also on the same track. Initially he found her to be a lower caste progressive women struggling for her rights but later he found her to be a hypocritical woman. She cheats him as well as lower caste people. She plays with their emotions and tried to win their favour. Basu who is a radical thinker and favours the welfare of lower caste people in a selfless manner feel cheated. He goes against all those who cheated them. He decided to leave his father’s house and lives together with his lower caste. This paragraph put forth the hypocritical psyche of uppers castes and classes who at one point of time present themselves as representators of oppressed and subjugated people but at the other time their belonging to the castes they are

targeting or condemning put them in the circle of doubt.

Mother, why do you cry?

I, your son, have vowed to wipe your tears with the hair of proud palace
beauties whose husbands, so calm and mild at home

Have pillaged the countryside and looted the treasures of a thousand
highborn Maidens dedicated to Shiva. Look how their locks stream.

Flying upon a wind of lamentation unbound with grief.

Their jewels snatched and scattered by unhallowed hands. Dirty mouths
sully your high secrets.

Dirty mind probe your devotions.

Dirty feet walk your streets and enter your temples,

Bringing the stink of manufactories, cowsheds, fishponds and latrines.

Now they dare to sing your songs, they dare to taint the air with their breath

In your praise. This cannot be, O Mother, this can never be. (*Untouchable
God* 147)

These poetic lines are recited by Krishnamurthy in the novel *Untouchable God*. These lines put forth the idea of Brahmin superiority over Dalits. This poem is a mental expression of an upper caste Hindu towards dalits. He depicts caste Hindus as responsible persons to serve the goddess. Somewhere it shows that the kind of hierarchy is there in the minds of upper caste people. He, rather than reading out a poem, insults dalits which shows his aversion towards them. Through this poem, he shows his indifferent attitude towards

Dalits and those reformists who tried to bring changes in the society. They took it as a challenge as well as a threat to their hierarchy in the society. He had openly condemned dalits who speak against them and connected it to their speaking against society and its norms. He has connected all these changes with the religion and tried to instigate caste Hindus.

‘Don’t give me that line, you are no longer the Mahar-Mangs of the good old days, to beg for your share of the corn. You are now Harijans! You have even started claiming equality, so I was told, eating and drinking with us at the city hotels. So, there remains absolutely no difference between us, does there? Now that you’re our peers, tell me, why do you still beg for a share of the corn?’ (“Poisoned Bread” 168)

Arjun Dangle, in his short story “Poisoned Bread”, portrays the changing aspects of the society and gives a hateful picture of caste Hindus. These lines show the unacceptability of social changes in the society among caste Hindus. Differences, which were settled in the beginning, took a fixed form and later it became very difficult to vanish or reduce them. Various social reformers tried their best to remove these differences but the efforts could not yield the designed results. The term ‘harijan’ (children of god) was given by Mahatma Gandhi to Dalits. This change, though it was not accepted by dalits, did prove to be fruitful and differences rather got increased. On the other side, caste Hindus started challenging these reformists and started preaching Hinduism to keep those differences intact.

Krishnamurthy was in the main hall giving audience to a group of journalists from ‘nationalist’ papers with names like Tears of Our Mother

and Pure Sons. He was saying, ‘Both Telugu and Kannada are languages of recent evolution, but we are not taking enough care to keep them pure. Food production is necessary but the language of food production should never become part of the book that young Indians will have to read in the future. All future education should focus on only the Vedas and Puranas. Rationalism is not only European, but essentially Christian. Look how a Christian priest like Copernicus tried to get into science and created problems for the religion itself. Hinduism should nip such trends in the very bud. (*Untouchable God* 151)

Krishnamurthy sets an example of well established Brahmin hierarchy in the society. He is a well established upper caste poet who has a reputed position in the society. Basically, he focuses on the regional languages, culture and tradition. He has a cynical prospective towards rationalism. Rather he focuses on traditionalism and focuses on the studies of Vedas and Puranas which were dominated by Brahmins. Rationalism is mostly defied by him because he thought that it would provide logical justifications to dalits for raising their voice against the supremacy of Brahmins. He gives examples of Nicolaus Copernicus who went against the traditional theory and came up with a new heliocentric theory. Though he was criticised for creating complications in religion but still he has a remarkable place in science. Krishnamurthy uses his example not to talk about science but just to create complication and fear in the minds of poors and dalits. He, in context to religion, favours Hinduism and expresses his typical brahminical mindset in front of everyone.

‘Do you think I’m an idiot, Brahmin scum?’ Gurram shouted. ‘You lured

me here with palm wine. Why do you want my polluting presence in your precious nest of holiness I have no idea, but I will not sing for you. If you have any experience of caged wild animals (which I doubt) you will know why. Now go and tell your master to do one of his yoga asanas and put his manlihood in his ear to stop his skull collapsing from the vacuum.
(*Untouchable God* 161)

This paragraph puts forth the resistance of those dalits who live in a multi-caste society and always suffered discrimination and violence whether it was physical or mental. Gurram is a character who represents dalits in the society. He is showing his resistance through his rejection of the invitation of poetry recitation. He compares dalits with caged wild animals whose liberty was curtailed. He also satirises the concept of purity of Brahmins and questions on its being impure with his presence. He symbolises those rational and logical dalits who were demanding their own identity. He rejected the invitation of caste Hindus just to show his unacceptability of others' hegemony over him. He, somewhere, tries to separate his identity from others.

Tranquebar is reeling from the shock of witnessing the sixtieth rape of the last three weeks. Dragged from her grandmother's home at the outskirts of the town, the fourteen-year-old girl heard nothing but her own screams through the night; the landlord-rapist did not stop, nor did they dignify her with a single word. Sources in Nagapattinam confirm that no case was filed.
(*The Gypsy Goddess* 34)

These lines from Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014) depict the horrible condition of Dalits in India. Whenever they have raised their voice against the

administration or caste Hindus they have crushed it in both ways, violently or non-violently. This paragraph depicts the dominant psyche of caste Hindus towards dalits and women. The most shocking part of the administration is that it shows no sympathy towards these crushed human beings. Rather, they try to exploit them as much as they can. Similarly, in *Jane Eyre* (1847) the same kind of condition is portrayed where the protagonist rebels against her aunt against her rude and rough behaviour. She finds it difficult to tolerate the tyrannical behaviour of her aunt and her cousins. Being an orphan, she is totally dependent on her aunt. She always desired to receive love from her aunt but the rude behaviour of her aunt and cousins make her feel completely separated and downtrodden.

I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved you; but I declare I do not love you : I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed; and this book about the liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I. (*Jane Eyre* 51-52)

These lines portray the picture of a girl who is subjugated and exploited for no reason. She expresses her mental pain through these lines. She expresses her hate towards the hard- hearted aunt who exploits her for no reason. She symbolises that group of society which is deprived of love and equality. Her resistance and rebellion is a symbol of protest against those institutions, groups and classes which exploit women for their own use. Gurram's resistance again loses its ground and he is forced to sing or recite his poem in the praise of Krishnamurthy. He recites a hopeful poem but at the same time criticises caste Hindus.

Here in the dark, I grow like blight

Rooted in hope, Forsaken by the day, Forgotten by love, left behind by the
light, But lit from within by a lamp of clay.

Lit from the heart with a word and a way. (*Untouchable God* 162)

These lines are recited by Gurram, a dalit poet, to show his mental position. He satirises the caste Hindus for their cynical thinking towards dalits. His optimistic poem portrays the mental condition of both dalits and caste Hindus. He compares caste Hindus with darkness because of their oppressive policies towards dalits. He portrays dalits as ignorant, hopeless and deprived of love but his poem is still hopeful for a change. He writes poetry which denounces the supremacy of caste Hindus. He also demands internal revolution or change among dalits to lessen discrimination on the basis of caste.

On the other side, he has also portrayed caste Hindu psyche. Their psyche has become so rigid that they could not tolerate any resistance against their hierarchy. They force Gurram to recite his poetry in front of Krishnamurthy, unwillingly. This shows their attitude towards dalits which has become so bitter that it will take centuries to heal.

In the last chapter, Ilaiah introduces Isaiah Jackson, a black American, who goes through various parts of India and scrutinises various parts of Indian society. His chief goal was to find out the effects of the ideas and beliefs which led India to its freedom and influenced foreign revolutionaries which brought equality in Europe as well as United States. He was deeply influenced by the ideas of Martin Luther King Jr. who was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. He was very much eager to know about Ambedkar, Subhash Chandra Bose and Nehru and their contribution to the Indian society. He went through South India, Delhi and Benares and found out the contradictions in the Indian society. He compares the condition of Dalits in India with the struggle of American Blacks. He found some similarities as well

as dissimilarities between the two cultures. He, somewhere, turns out to be an outside observer of the situations of Dalits in India.

In college he had wavered between philosophy and sociology, finally settling for sociology under the guidance of Terence Marshall, one of the Black Sociologist and a truly great man. Isaiah's thesis had been on the effect of black emancipation on industrial labour. His supervisor had encouraged him to go to the poorest part of the town and talk to anyone he could find. Many of those he met could not comprehend what he, a black man, was doing at University playing the White man's game: he found that even his own people regard him with awe and a little contemptuous fear. This saddened him, and he realized that in choosing to cultivate his mind, he had condemned himself to a kind of exile. His only, and rather rare, consolation was when he met fellow black students who had the fire of intellectual revolt in them. (*Untouchable God* 168)

It portrays the picture of blacks and their social condition in the American society. Isaiah opted for Sociology as a subject to study the condition of Blacks in the American society. He found that the condition of blacks in America is quite degraded even after the removal of slavery. Their condition is still the same. Blacks were not allowed to have education in the schools in which the children of White people used to study. His thesis was on the change of lifestyle of Blacks after their emancipation from slavery. He found out that though blacks were emancipated but their condition was still miserable. They were as poor as they were before. Similarly, the power and position which the Brahmins possess is entirely due to the Hindu civilization which treats them as supermen and subjects the

lower classes to all sorts of disabilities so that they may never rise and challenge the superiority of the Brahmins over them.

As a natural, every Brahmin is interested in the maintenance of Brahminical supremacy be he orthodox or unorthodox, be he a priest or a grahastha, be he a scholar or not. How can the Brahmins afford to be Voltaire? A Voltaire among the Brahmins would be a positive danger to the maintenance of a civilization which is contrived to maintain Brahminical supremacy.

(Untouchable God 173)

It describes the reasons of supremacy of caste Hindus in Indian society. The presentation of Brahmins in the Indian civilization and scriptures has given them a supreme place in the Indian society. Their portrayal as teachers and brave soldiers has always given them an upper hand over dalits. It also projects Dalits as people with disabilities who were always dependent on caste Hindus to lead their lives in a proper manner. They were not allowed to study as well as fight for their rights which caused their failure in the society. This dependency caused hurdles in their development and equality. On the other side, upper caste people always tried to maintain their supremacy over dalits. They dominated education system, administration and other fields of life and, therefore, dalits were, on the mercy of caste Hindus even for their basic rights.

‘Hang in there, old man,’ Isaiah said beseechingly, not caring that Elumalai couldn’t understand. Elumalai smiled feebly, understanding the tone and the expression. Jacob brought some turmeric powder and applied it to Elumalai’s wounds. ‘Hadn’t we better call the police? Surely someone here must have access to a telephone?’ Isaiah asked. Jacob wiped blood from his

cheek and smiled wearily. ‘The police are Touchable. So is the telephone. If the police comes here, it will be to rub in and repeat the lesson of the beating.’ (*Untouchable God* 199)

This paragraph is a representation of hijacked police administration by the ‘touchable’ group of the Indian society. Police administration, that has become the symbol of power, works for the welfare of the upper caste people. They do not show their concern towards lower caste people. The caste Hindus has occupied so dominant a position that dalits do not even dare to raise their voice against them. They have the fear that if they raise their voice against the oppression then they will be punished severely.

A hard prod woke Jacob. Eyes glared at him. A hand poked him again. ‘Are you a Paraiyah?’

‘I am a Christian.’ Jacob said. The faces twisted.

‘Where is my friend?’ he asked, keeping his voice level.

‘What friend?’ The Hubshi? We frightened him away. This is our bunk now. Get out, dirty Christian. Go and cower in the toilet with your friend.”
(*Untouchable God* 219)

This conversation reveals the psyche of caste Hindus of India. In Indian scriptures these caste Hindus were depicted as brave, courageous and wise people. They have associated themselves with these groups of Indian society and consider themselves to be pious than others. With the long tradition of Brahmin worship, they have started considering themselves as demi-gods. The stereotypical depiction of a black American again depicts the mentality of Indian people. As blacks were

depicted as slaves in America, similarly dalits in India were treated as unpaid slaves. The condition of both group were almost the same.

She laughed. ‘Nothing is ever so simple, Dr. Jackson. Yes, unfortunately in spite of the law, people still marry off their girls very young, sometimes to much older men. They become widows, inevitably, and then they’re packed off on “pilgrimage” to Varanasi or Kashi, the old names for Benares, from which they’re not intended to return. “Kashi Yatra”, the pilgrimage to Benares, has become a term meaning to go and never come back. But I’m sorry, I’m lecturing you.’ (*Untouchable God* 233)

These lines portray the condition of women of upper caste in the Indian society. Their condition and status in the society was so degraded that they have become puppets in the hands of caste Hindu men. Child marriage and Sati system have degraded their lives. These kind of systems have shaken the Indian society completely.

Isaiah not only went through these problems but he, as an observer, goes through the whole India and puts forth the problems that were created by the caste Hindus in the society. He uncovers the problems of casteism, condition of women, child marriage and condition of widows in India. He unmask the contradictions within dalits. He finds out that caste-based prejudices have affected the society very badly. Though these beliefs and customs were started by the caste Hindus but later they have overshadowed dalit mindset as well. Dalit men are depicted as resisting the orthodox social order but the condition of dalit women remains unchanged. Even today, child marriage and purda system are in vogue across the boundaries of caste.

‘Benares is the great purification capital of northern India. If you have sins to expiate, this is where you go-or are sent. Widows are turned out of the house and forced to go on “pilgrimage” It’s a one way journey.’

Isaiah took a deep breath let it out slowly. ‘So what happens to them when they reach here?’

‘If they’re lucky, they starve. If they’re not, they get taken into an “ashram”. Some of these places are little better than brothels. The girls have to give themselves to the “priests” who run the show, and their guests and friends. Benares is famed for its whores.’ She picked up her delicate bone china coffee cup and sipped from it. ‘Even in the good ones, they starve. It’s considered good for them: kills desire. If only it could kill others’ desires as well.’ (*Untouchable God* 239)

This conversation reveals the real picture of Indian society. It unmask the flaws which were there in the brahminical society. It also portrays the condition of women who, unfortunately, were widows. It also satirises Brahmins for the concept of being holy or pure in the society. They exploit women to fulfil their own desires. Child marriage was practiced to check girls from exercising their free will in finding a suitable match for themselves. Ironically, when husbands of those girls die they were also supposed to die on their pyre, whether willingly or unwillingly.

He wondered if he was indeed returning with answers to the questions he had brought, or merely with more complex, deeper and difficult questions that dangled loosely from his answers in an unending chain. All you could do was keep adding links. (*Untouchable God* 247)

These concluding remarks by Isaiah Jackson depicts his mental confusion regarding India. He had come to India with the ideas of better social situations because he had heard a lot about Gandhi, Ambedkar and Bose. He was very much influenced by the steps taken for the betterment of Dalits and other subjugated groups of the society. He, in his life, had favoured as well as appreciated Martin Luther and his works for the betterment of Blacks in America. He knew that he was influenced by Indian revolutionaries and their ideas. So the kind of picture he had in his mind regarding India was completely opposite to what he actually experienced. His words show that he was completely shocked with the glaring observations he could gather about India. He found it completely shocking and horrifying. The doubts that he had in his mind were now more complex and difficult to resolve.

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Chapter-2

Why I am not a Hindu: A Collision of Ideas, Principles and Beliefs

Indian society was divided by Aryans on the basis of *karma* to bring work efficiency in the society. A person, who was efficient in any kind of work, was having the right to switch to the related caste. There were no restrictions on the basis of caste. One was not bound to a particular caste but later Manu changed the focus from 'Karma' to 'Janma'. This created a complete shift in the society which further resulted in dominance of a particular group and exploitation of the marginalised group of the society.

In the present time, there are the mixed reactions about the change in the life of Dalits. On one side, social reforms, education and awareness have made the changes in the society but on the other hand sub-castes among Dalits have made it very difficult to come together and make this world a better place to live in.

The social structure in which I first became conscious of the world around me was a Kuruma social structure. My playmates, friends, and of course relatives, all belonged to the Kuruma caste. Occasionally the friendship circle extended to Goudaa boys and Kappu boys. We were friends because we were all part of the cattle-breeding youth. We took the cattle to the field and then began playing *chirra gone* (our cricket), *gooleelu* (a game with marbles), *dongaata* (a hide-and-seeK game), and so on. Surprisingly, whenever a Goudaa friend came to my house he would sit with us, but sit slightly apart; when we went to Kappu homes their parents would give us food but make us sit a little distance away. While eating we were not

supposed to touch each other. But later we could play together and drink together from the rivers and streams. (*Why I am Not a Hindu 2*)

These lines portray the contradictory life of Dalits who create distance from each other whereas Ilaiah only targets caste Hindus. These lines show as to how differences were there among Dalits also. Dalits started performing various tasks in the society and on the basis of these tasks their status got changed in the society. Those who decided to be farmers were having different status in the society than those who decided to skin the dead animals. There was a hierarchy of various tasks which were performed by Dalits. Those who chose works which were directly related to the day to day life of caste Hindus started attracting the attention of caste Hindus. This attention gave them more importance than other sub-castes among Dalits. They started considering themselves as caste Hindus and it created a rift among Dalits. These differences among Dalits became another reason of their backwardness and exploitation. Consequently, different groups of dalit population started establishing separate identities. Though they belonged to the same caste but sub-castes created a hierarchy among them and this hierarchy created huge differences among them. Children of those sub-castes used to play together, sit together and even go to same schools but they were not allowed to eat together. They worshipped different gods and goddess.

Every Dalitbahujan child learns at an early age that smallpox comes because Pochamma is angry. The rains are late because Polimeramma is angry. The village tank gets filled or does not get filled depending on the sympathies of Kattamaisamma. Crops are stolen by thieves because Potaraju is angry. For Kurumaas whether sheep and goats will proper depends on the attitude of Beerappa, a cattle-specific God. (*Why I am Not a Hindu 7*)

Dalits were having the status of outcastes in the society. They were excluded from all the social activities except serving other three castes. Hence they differentiated themselves on the religious grounds as well. They associated Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh with the upper castes and created their own gods and goddess. They worshipped their gods and goddesses with full devotion, showing intense faith in them. They recalled them in every good and bad time. This separation and creation of new gods and goddesses turned out to be a symbol of search for an identity different from caste Hindus. These gods and goddesses were looked down by the caste Hindus. They were not taken as replacements of the great trinity but accepted as negative powers.

In contrast to our skill-based vocabulary they learn words like Veda, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Purana, and so on. At an early age they hear names like Brahma, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Lakshmi, Saraswathi, Sita and Savithri. Their children are told the stories of these gods' heroism (mostly killing) and the goddesses femininity. Vishnu, for example, is shown to be reclining on a serpent, with Lakshmi at his feet, pressing them. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 8)

These lines depict the picture of caste Hindu society and the development of a child's mind. Children of the upper castes are provided the understanding of the religion, gods and goddesses and their deeds. They are taught about the good and bad, gods and devils, and so on. They are made conscious of what they are and what is their status in the society and thus binaries are created. These binaries created a rift among various castes in the society during childhood. Caste Hindus associated themselves with the best in the hierarchy because of the status they have in the society. The depiction of their (caste

Hindus') gods and goddesses are portrayed ideally. Gods are portrayed as brave, intelligent and aggressive and goddesses are portrayed as devoted, faithful, feminine and defensive. On the other side, Pochamma, Maisamma and others are considered inferior because these goddesses are worshiped by Dalits.

Even a Brahmin family might talk about Pochamma, Maisamma or Ellamma, but not with the same respect as they would about Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwara. For them Pochamma and Maisamma are 'Sudra' Goddess and supposed to be powerful but in bad, negative ways. A Pochamma according to them does not demand the respect that Lakshmi or Saraswathi do, because Lakshmi and Saraswathi are supposed to be ideal wives of ideal husbands, whereas no one knows who Pochamma's husband is, any more than they can name Maisamma's husband. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 8)

These lines clarify the attitude of caste Hindus towards the gods and goddesses worshiped by Dalits. Caste Hindus also accepted the existence of these figures in Indian society but in a negative sense. They recalled them whenever they find themselves in tough conditions e.g. Pochamma is invoked when someone, in the house, suffers from smallpox. Even this invocation is derogatory. No caste Hindu child is named after these gods and goddess. But Dalits name their children after the names of these gods and goddesses.

These gods and goddesses were also considered inferior manner because of their gender roles. Caste Hindus do not give much respect to these regional goddesses because they perform those tasks which are considered to be trivial. They are not considered to be much brave, courageous and powerful. They compare these goddesses with Lakshmi and

Saraswathi. They perform their ideal duties of serving their husbands Brahma and Vishnu. But on the other hand Pochamma, Maisamma and Ellamma who save people from several diseases and epidemics are not portrayed as ideal goddesses because they don't have their husbands. Hence they are invoked only in those times when the problem is not considered to be serious. Dalits were never bothered about the husbands of these goddesses rather they took these goddesses as sacred powers among them.

Neo-Kshatriyas is a new group of Dalits who differentiated themselves from Dalits. They were treated differently by the caste Hindus. This different treatment was based on the works performed by the people belonging to different castes. Jobs were offered only to the people belonging to these castes. Hence they were trained just to follow the orders of caste Hindus. This was only reason which provided them a different space in the caste society.

The Maadigaa boys who were younger than me were jeetas (farm servants). Their family and cultural relations were very similar to ours. But what was different was that from childhood they were taught to be always fearfully obedient, addressing the young and the old of the so-called upper castes as ayya baanchan. While they were jeetas, at the age of five, they were supposed to look after the cattle and the buffalo and watch the crops. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 10)

This is a depiction of caste Hindu mindset where they utilized Dalits for their benefits and even Dalits do follow their instructions. They nurture their children in such a manner that their mindset gets completely changed and they become mute followers of the authority. They get exploited in the hands of caste Hindus. They sow, cultivate and reap

their harvests, skin their dead animals and protect their fields. However, these tasks helped Dalits to earn their livelihood. Gradually, their economic condition got improved in comparison to others. This assimilation of two opposite castes created a rift among sub-castes of Dalits.

In fact brahminical culture eulogizes negative heroes and negative heroines. For example, Krishna who encourages one to kill one's own relatives is a hero and Arjuna who killed his relatives is a hero...In 'Sudra' waadas it is just the opposite. There are a number of real-life situations from which ideal heroes and heroines emerge. Their daily working interaction with nature provides the scope for their information. One who kills relatives, for whatever reason, and one who commits crimes, for whatever reason, becomes a crook. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 17)

It portrays the understanding of the society by Dalits as well as caste Hindus. Here, sanctity, piousness and the authority of Indian epics is questioned. Though the sermons given by Krishna to Arjuna are considered to be pure to the Hindu society, Kancha Ilaiah criticizes Brahminical society for its false beliefs. He creates a sharp contrast between caste Hindu society and Dalit society. He portrays Brahmin culture as a culture based on false ideas where heroes belong to non-real life conditions and kill their relatives just to get private property. On the other hand, dalit culture and its heroes and heroines emerge from real life conditions. They do not raise weapons against their relatives and those who instigate them to do so are considered traitors. These descriptions show the sheer contrast between both groups of the society. Both have different ideologies, principles and beliefs.

These differences emerge only in the quest of different communal, religious, social or cultural identities.

For us, marriage is a human and a worldly affair that performs the human functions of production and procreation. This is clear from a proverb that our people use very frequently: *janta leenidee panta pandadi* ('without the couple, how can there be a crop?'). For Hindus, marriage is a sacred ritual divorced from all kinds of productive activity even notionally. Even in procreation the main intention is to produce a son who can pave the father's way to heaven. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 20)

Marriage is social event that takes place mostly between two opposite genders. Marriage has its different meanings according to different castes. This paragraph provides the same description of marriage. It provides a sharp contrast between the meaning and value of marriage between caste Hindus and dalits. Marriage becomes a process of production and procreation among dalits because their main focus remains restricted to their survival. On the other hand, caste Hindus associate marriage with a process to produce male child that can pave the way to '*moksha-prapti*' or '*swarga*'. Dalits are not bothered about going to heaven or hell because of their depiction in the society. They are depicted as sinful beings of the society who can never have place in heaven. On the other side, caste Hindus are considered to be pious in the Indian society. Hence, their only focus remains towards acquiring place in heaven after their death. Hence they associate their action in relation to hell and heaven.

Marriage again becomes a deciding factor of the idea of hell and heaven. Dalits take it as process of procreation and production of wealth to live their life properly. They also

take marriage as process of fulfilling physical need. Caste Hindus take it as process of producing male child but that is to get place in heaven. This stereotypical idea of getting place in hell or heaven has different connotations for dalits and non-dalits. After marriage caste Hindu women mostly remain dependent on their husbands to lead their life properly. But it is not a case with dalits. Dalit women are mostly self-dependent and they can perform those tasks which are supposed to be done by men.

In this society, the man is abnormally strong and the woman is abnormally weak. For example, a peasant woman can at times move out of her traditional role of seeding and weeding to plough the land: a Kurumaa woman can become a sheep-breeder in the absence of the man. A Brahmin woman, however, can never become a priest. A Dalitbahujan woman within her caste/class existence is very much a political being and an economic being. Whereas, a Brahmin woman is not. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 27)

This paragraph is a collision of two different ideologies in the society. Brahminical society is depicted as a male dominated society whereas dalit society is portrayed as a society aspiring to negate any dominance of one gender over others. Dalit women are trained and skilled to gender-neutral tasks. They perform their gender roles as well as they can perform those tasks which are supposed to be performed by dalit men. They are depicted as self-dependent and stronger than caste Hindu women. Brahmin women are supposed to perform some fixed tasks and serve their husbands only. They are never supposed to perform those tasks which should be done by the males. Ilaiah creates a line of difference between dalits and caste Hindus to show that dalits were always different from caste Hindus and they have their own identity.

Neo-Kshatriyas and the beginning of Rift among Dalits

Neo-Kshatriyas is a group of those dalit castes which has gradually raised its social and political status. These castes were those castes which earlier belonged to dalit category but they were very much different from dalits. They used to serve caste Hindus and earn their livelihood which provided them different treatment from rest of the dalits. To maintain this respect and status they differentiated themselves from other dalit castes.

In all south Indian villages (this may be true of North India too), the Kshatriya caste which handled the institution of state power has become dormant and a neo-Kshatriya force from the 'Sudra upper' castes have began to emerge. In Andhra Pradesh, for example, the Reddies, Velamas and Kammas are increasingly coming to believe not only that they form a part of the Hindu religion but also that they are caste who have the right to insult others. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 37)

Though neo-Kshatriyas were dalits but this group of Dalit castes was used to serve caste Hindus and it was the main reason that they were given preference over rest of the dalits. They did not want to lose either those jobs or the importance which they were receiving from the dominating people of the society. They trained their children in such a way that they started distancing themselves from dalits and started following caste Hindus and their beliefs. This division from their own caste took them away from their roots and it created differences among them. They emerged as a social and political power and dominated most of the institutes. The emergence of neo-Kshatriyas could not bring any kind of social or political change in the society. The attitude of caste Hindus did not change even after the rise of this group. Here, Kancha Ilaiah shifts the attention of the readers

towards the other side of the problem. He shows his dissatisfaction towards those groups which have forgotten their past and have lost belongingness to dalit identity and issues. By luck or pluck, they have raised their economic status but at the same time they have become averse to their own brethren.

Even in the national context, Brahmins have the monopoly over power structures in every sphere. The most powerful position in the village, that of the Patwari is even now a preserve of the Brahmins. The institutions that handle law and order are left to the neo-Kshatriyas. This gives the neo-Kshatriyas enormous control over caste divided village society. They use the power to acquire control over the land. However, the emergence of neo-Kshatriya political power did not in any way undermine the hegemonic control of Brahmins and Baniyas. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 48)

Here, Ilaiah depicts the situation of neo-Kshatriyas in the society and the attitude of caste Hindus towards neo-Kshatriyas. Though neo-Kshatriyas were prospering in the society, they were no better than other dalits in the society. They get favour from caste Hindus just because they serve them and this favour has changed their mentality as well as status in the society. Neo-Kshatriyas were given less important jobs while the decisive jobs were retained by caste Hindus for themselves so that they can dominate the whole society. Though neo-Kshatriyas are presently participating in politics and other fields of society, they are not able to take decisions on their own because those institutions are still dominated by caste Hindus. Hence, they have gradually upgraded their economic status but socially they are still supposed to be inefficient. That was the main reason that they are not

given full liberty to take decisions on their own and this again becomes the reason of their passiveness towards other dalits.

The role of the neo-Kshatriyas is not historically reactionary but also dangerous in this period of democratic modernity. It will only help the Brahmins and the Baniyas to sustain philosophical, political and economic power while granting a small fraction of it to a section of neo-Kshatriyas. This will again destroy the revolutionary spirit of the Dalitbahujans who have now acquired specific and universal ideologies (Ambedkarism and Marxism, respectively) to overthrow the caste-class hegemony of bourgeois Brahminism. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 52)

The passiveness of neo-Kshatriyas towards dalits has created a negative thinking among dalits. Caste Hindus have used neo-Kshatriyas as weapons to protect their situation in the society. They favoured neo-Kshatriyas and also made them responsible to answer for whatever steps and decisions they have taken. Providing jobs to neo-Kshatriyas was the most decisive point of Indian history because it ensured the authority of caste Hindus over Dalitbahujans. Dalitbahujans were not able to take decisions and this again became a reason for their criticism and it was taken as their inefficiency to decide, manage and lead. The reason behind the partial behaviour of caste Hindus was to break anti-caste Hindu spirit of dalits and sustain their hegemony over dalits.

Condition of Dalits in the Present World

It is very difficult to say that in the present time the condition of dalits is better than what it was in the past. Marching back towards history, one may find miserable condition

of dalits where they were not allowed to drink water from one well. They were not allowed to eat the food, sit in the restaurants and take food and use the same roads that caste Hindus were supposed to take.

As I look back, it is clear from the English textbooks that in class societies—which also have conflicting cultures—there is much less of a conspiracy of silence in comparison to caste societies. In the Telugu textbooks the conspiracy of silence is as loud as a thunderclap. A class which is so brazenly casteist in theory and practice is also brazenly silent about its inhumanity in its inhumanity in its literary texts. What is amazing is the eulogization of this casteist culture in all the literary texts and the condemnation of our cultures in the same texts. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 55)

Kancha Ilaiah traces the history of conflicts between various castes and classes. He gives preference to class-based differences over caste-based differences. This shows the deep influence of western societies over his mind. He favours the spirit of resistance of lower classes against upper classes and appreciates the literary figures of the West to raise the voice of subalterns. At the present time, he criticizes Indian literary figures for not raising the voice of dalits. He also shows his dissatisfaction towards Dalitbahujans for not showing any kind of rebellious spirit against the oppressive nature of caste Hindus. The only thing he observes in most of the literary texts is the praise of caste Hindus and their way of living. These texts do not talk about the condition of dalits and the oppressive nature of caste Hindus. Kancha Ilaiah criticizes such kind of hypocritical texts which praises caste Hindus and criticizes dalits.

Despite their Egalitarian ideologies they were not comfortable about people who had names Ilaiah, Yellaiah, Malliah or Peraiah entering high educational institutions. Many of them considered most of as ‘undeserving’ and felt that our coming into higher educational institutional would only lead to the deterioration of standards. In the opinion of some Hindu teachers we did not deserve a place in the university. Some other argued that we deserved better wages and improved living conditions, but that should happen within the village setting and within the agrarian economy. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 55-56)

After the independence, people of all castes were supposed to be equal before law, judiciary and it provided equal right of education and jobs to each citizen. But Ilaiah criticizes Indian context where caste Hindus continue practicing discrimination against dalits. Kancha Ilaiah gives an example of caste Hindu teachers and their unhappiness towards dalit students joining schools, sitting with them in the class rooms, receiving lectures and even eating with them in the same restaurants. They take it as a challenge to their superiority. Earlier, dalits were supposed to be good for nothing except serving and this was the only thing that was accepted about dalits. Right to equality and education gave dalits a weapon to improve their conditions but caste Hindus did not accept it and took it against the laws of Hinduism and kept demeaning dalits and continued behaving in a similar manner. The only way they supported the development of dalits was in agricultural field. They opposed education and equality for dalits. Hence, NGOs and government efforts could not work out completely. Though government and NGOs tried to provide legal protection for dalits, they could not change the psyche of caste Hindus.

The relationship between a rich Malla or Madigga and a wealthy 'upper' caste person was identical to the relationship between a poor 'upper' caste person and a poor Dalitbahujan. The poor 'upper' caste person thinks that he or she is always superior. Similarly the rich 'upper' caste people also think that they are always superior. Acquiring wealth does not change the relative social status of Dalitbahujans within a particular class. Even within a rich class, caste distinctions continue to operate. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 60)

The text depicts the inhuman and oppressive behaviour of caste Hindus towards dalits and vice versa. Though dalits got equal rights through reservation which resulted in legal security to dalits but it could not change the prejudices of caste Hindus against dalits. This negative attitude of caste Hindus created vicious mindset among dalits which further led to conflicts between two groups of the society. Caste Hindus whether they belonged to elite groups or lower groups, did not change their orthodox habit of posing themselves as superior. They always looked down on dalits, particularly those who have somehow secured the government jobs. Hence, Kancha Ilaiah depicts the mental exploitation of dalits because even jobs could not change their social status. The clash between the two groups continued even after getting constitutional rights.

Thus whichever institution the Dalitbahujans entered, either through reservation (in south India mostly through reservation) or through other ways, such institutions became the centres of conflict between Hindu irrationality and Dalitbahujan rationality, Hindu closedness and Dalitbahujan openness, Hindu silent violence and Dalitbahujan loud self-

defence. Out of this very conflict there seems to emerge a new hope of a rational future for this country. (*Why I am not a Hindu* 65)

Though dalits were getting jobs, they were not taken as competent candidates for those jobs. They were blamed to be inefficient candidates who could get jobs on the basis of reservation. This behaviour further aggravated the conflicts between two groups. Reservation worked as fuel to the fire and increased the anger of caste Hindus towards dalits. Caste Hindus are generally dissatisfied with the entry of dalits in the same schools. They could not digest the rights which were given to dalits. On the other side, dalits also started responding to caste Hindus through various movements which rather increased the differences between the two caste segments. New generations belonging to dalit community were deeply affected by these movements and this gave them a new thinking or perspective to think rationally and take correct measures to improve their conditions.

In many south Indian institutions SCs, OBCs, STs and minorities and 'upper' caste persons work together. This makes these institutions melting pots in terms of culture and ideas. It must be remembered that in this country because of the caste system several cultures have existed side-by-side, but separately. Brahminism compartmentalized human thinking and human experience was so badly fragmented that no exchange took place between them. Because of capitalist casteism the situation in the urban centres was worse. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 65)

Here, Kancha Ilaiah puts forth the condition of urban industries where every person was given equal opportunity to perform his duties. They were given jobs without any discrimination based on creed, colour or caste. These institutes became centres of conflicts

among various castes, cultures and classes. The orthodox view of caste Hindus was still not supportive enough to accept their upward mobility. Various governments took initiatives to provide jobs to dalits and illegalized discrimination against dalits. It resulted into participation of dalits in education and administration. People belonging to various castes, cultures and creeds started working together under the single roof. Ilaiah critically observes the reaction of those caste Hindus who were already well educated and employed. He finds them more harsh, discriminatory and hateful towards educated dalits. This attitude of caste Hindus towards dalits changed the mindset of dalits. They got divided into two parts; those who rebelled against caste Hindus and those who changed their lifestyle according to the lifestyle of caste Hindus. The second group of dalits started following the customs, beliefs and principles of caste Hindus.

There are several Dalitbahujan officers, politicians, academics and doctors who try to be more Hindu than the Hindus themselves. They brazenly celebrate Hindu festivals. Even in public they speak of their parental culture as low as mean. They refuse any connection with Pochamma and Maisamma. They condemn these Gods as 'Sudra Devathalu'. Short of turning themselves into twice-born castes, these people make every attempt to Sanskritize themselves. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 69)

The discriminatory behaviour of caste Hindus made it very difficult for dalits to live their life properly. This dominating and discriminatory behaviour disturbed dalits, very deeply. They reacted in two ways; one part of dalits started following caste Hindus and another part was of those revolutionaries who rebelled against them and showed their anger through different movements and in the form of literature. Hence, the revolutionary spirit

of Dalitbahujans got divided into parts and could not get success. Most of the dalits started following the norms, principles and beliefs which were earlier followed by caste Hindus and this further resulted in differences among dalits. They started differentiating themselves from the rituals, customs, beliefs and principles of Dalitbahujan society. Kancha Ilaiah deeply analyses this problem and also tries to provide an alternative to it.

Dalitization: An Alternative by Ilaiah

Throughout the text, Kancha Ilaiah remains aggressive towards caste Hindus. He attacks the culture, ethos, principles, mythology and thinking of caste Hindus. He presents these aspects as anti-dalit and dangerous to the dalit identity. He traces the history of caste system in India and finds out that castes were there even before independence. Discrimination was there in society before independence and it is there in society even after independence. During the period of national freedom movement, the discriminatory behaviour of caste Hindus was reduced just to get favour from each and every caste and class of the society. They did not directly demean dalits during that period but on the other hand gave preference to brahminical institutions. Social reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy established Brahma Samaj (1828) which was one of the finest examples of the brahminical institutions in India. Later, Mahatma Gandhi started a journal called *Harijan* (1932) just to get the favour of dalits and he became successful in it also. During the war of independence, these leaders and institutions led the freedom struggle and got the favour from dalits. But after independence the whole scenario got completely changed. Discrimination erupted from where it was left earlier. Caste Hindus took the political and social charge of the society in their hands. Hence the discrimination was again restored and it is prevalent in the society even today. Kancha Ilaiah focuses on the lifestyle of dalits and

requested caste Hindus to understand the lifestyle of dalits and the problems they face in the society. Here, he puts forth some positive aspects of dalits which can be helpful in developing Indian society.

What are the implications of Dalitbahujan collective consciousness? Everything—good or bad—that takes place within the dalitwaada is shared by everyone. Pleasure, pain and social events are all shared. If there is a birth in one house, both the pleasures and the pains of that birth are also social. The mother's labour pains are at least emotionally shared by all the womenfolk of the Dalitwaada. The pleasure of giving birth to a new human being, who will add to the number of working hands, a human being who is never regarded as a burden on society, this pleasure is not merely that of the mother and the father but of the whole waada. If there is a death, the whole dalitwaada shares in it emotionally. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 116)

Kancha Ilaiah recites the positive aspects of dalits and portrays the collective consciousness of dalits regarding themselves. He presents dalits in common by portraying their emotions, feelings and experiences. He portrays a unified picture of dalits without any discrimination. Dalit children are not seen as burden on their parents or society but as helpful human beings who contribute in the development of society. Here, Ilaiah tries to urge upon the fact that dalits are the positive contributors of the society and they should not be taken as a burden. He takes Dalitwaadas as a symbol of Indian society and dalits as human beings staying in it. Their staying together without any differences becomes a symbol of his desire of casteless society.

The future is that of Dalitbahujan in India. In order to dalitize society, the Dalitbahujan leadership must know its strengths and weaknesses. The Dalitbahujans of India have suffered hardships all through history. Modern democratic socialist revolutions have now given them some scope to liberate themselves. It is only through their liberation that the rest of the society, namely, the 'upper' castes, can be librated. (*Why I am Not a Hindu* 127)

Kancha Ilaiah further talks about the future of dalits in Indian society. He gives some suggestive measures to dalits about understanding the positive and negative aspects of their life. Dalits have faced discrimination throughout their lives because they have always evaluated their lives in relation to caste Hindus. They never ever calculated their own importance in the scheme of things. Here, Kancha Ilaiah focuses on the importance of their lives and the struggle they undergo to live with some sense of dignity. He eulogizes modern democratic system of India where each and every person is given full chance to live his/her life with full freedom. Democracy has provided due space to dalits to live their life the way they desire to live. It has given all important rights to dalits, so that they may enjoy their independent identity. It has made it possible for dalits to live their life properly and independently. This liberation from the clutches of mainstream caste Hindus has made dalits self-dependent and now their identity has become almost independent.

In an interview printed in *Outlook* on December 25, 2000, Kancha Ilaiah focuses on the need of modern education to be given to Dalits. He talks about the adverse circumstances of dalits that deprive them of good education. Even education in government educational institutions is based on the mercy of *zamindars* and *merchants* who sponsor their education. If these dalit children succeed in entering schools they are prone to face the

tyranny of the teachers. They never have the option to live their lives with propriety and respect. Their choices, desires and even lives are observed to be dependent on the upper caste society.

Just as the Brahmins are shouting Hinduisse India, we should shout Dalitise India. Shout that we hate Hinduism, we hate Brahminism. Capture the Hindu temples by expelling the Brahmins from them,” he says. “The hated must hate. They must become powerful and organized. I want to create anger.” (*Outlook* 25 December, 2000)

Here, Ilaiah seems to be instigating dalits to retaliate and behave rudely with those who troubled them throughout their lives. He seems to be very aggressive towards caste Hindus. But this aggression emerges from the perpetual negative and hateful behaviour of caste Hindus. His resistance against Hinduism is a sign of his search for identity. He takes Hinduism as a set of orthodox ideas which are supported by a particular caste and group. He tries to generalize Dalitization where he asks all dalits to come together and create their own identity. He shows his worries against brahminical texts where Hindu gods and goddesses are portrayed as protagonists (not heroes or heroines). They are depicted as heroic and brave figures, though they brutally kill those who challenge their superiority. Kancha Ilaiah suggests reworking on Hindu mythological works.

Kancha Ilaiah shows his sympathies towards women of all castes and classes because they always become victims of the male exploitation. He equates women's struggle with dalit struggle for identity because both become victims of exploitation. He asks both groups of the society to come together for their quest of their liberal identity.

Later in his interview, published in *The Times of India* on February 15, 2013, he focuses on the need of English education to be given to dalit children. He says that even today dalits are not able to get good education. He gives his own example for the changes that have come in the lives of dalits in the field of education. Lack of education is the biggest hindrance in acquiring higher official positions. In politics, there are some dalit leaders who have even acquired the position of chief ministers and cabinet ministers but still the general condition of dalits has not changed. Passiveness of dalit leaders is one of the reasons of dalits' exploitation and backwardness.

Dalits and the Current Scenario

“Mann Ki Baat” is a programme which is hosted by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. It happened for the first time in the history of India that a Prime minister started a programme based on various issues happening around in the country. He also gives references to various mails, letters and calls which he receives from the people of India. The Prime minister has expressed his views on various contemporary issues of the country. In his introductory speech which was delivered on October 3, 2014, he emphasizes on the use of Khadi by each and every citizen of India. He has also emphasized on the importance of *svachchhta abhiyaan* (cleanliness campaign) and eulogized common people for supporting and making it a great success. He has also advised the ministry of Human Resource Development to make education easily accessible to specially disabled children by providing them more scholarships, and by providing differently abled friendly buildings. On behalf of his government, he has also showed his commitment to bring back black money.

In his other speeches, he spoke on drugs and its disadvantages. He also interacted with students twice or thrice. He talked about exams and the pressure that students take over themselves. He suggested students not to take much pressure of exams just to prove themselves better than others. He suggested the parents to motivate their children to perform better than their last attempt. He also raised the problems of poor farmers who feel themselves neglected due to the lack of appropriate policies of the government. He clarified his stand on *Land Acquisition Bill* and presented it as farmer friendly. He criticized the opposition for spreading rumours regarding this bill. He also gave emphasis on the use of science, new agricultural techniques, and yoga.

Criticism of the Right Wing

“It is unfortunate that the PM did not touch on issues that are prevalent and in the heart of every Indian. He did not even condemn the killings of Dalits in Haryana and the atrocious language used by his minister against the Dalits.”

“He dwelt on detailed itinerary of his proposed visit to Great Britain and his plans to visit BR Ambedkar’s house in London. But he did not say how to safeguard the interest of Dalits in the country,” Singh said in a statement following the PM’s ‘Mann Ki Baat’ radio address. (*FIRSTPOST* 25 October, 2015)

Though PM Modi’s “Mann Ki Baat” is quite touching and impressive, it gets criticized due to the indifference shown so far towards dalit issues. The prime minister was observed to be silent even when the incidents such as Faridabad massacre of two dalit kids

and Rohith Vemula case took place in the country. Dalit population of the country looks forward to the Prime minister's special session on 'Dalit issues' in his forthcoming telecast of "Mann Ki Baat"

Right Wing and its approach towards Dalits

Right Wing of India was earlier seen as anti-dalit, mostly focusing on the elite class of the society. But with the changing time and changing perspective this idea has also changed. Now there are the instances when right-wing politicians criticize Hindus for maintaining caste differences. They have expressed their views regarding dalits in their weekly *Panchjanya*. They have favoured dalits to be trained and appointed as head priests in various temples across the country. They have requested Hindus to come together by mitigating all caste differences among them. The main reason of the request is to erase caste differences among Hindus. Perhaps, the main motif of the article published in newspaper is to bring Hindus together and create a peaceful atmosphere in the country. Another reason for writing such kind of articles may be to bring dalits in their confidence and break their caste Hindu perception among people.

In the present time the right wing seems to have revisited its perspectives towards dalits. They have broken the stereotypes of being groups and parties related to caste Hindu categories or more specifically Baniya parties. Now they are taking Dalits as well as Adivasis in their confidence and appointing them on prestigious positions.

Constitutional Provisions

“There are now laws protecting Dalits and affirmative action programmes. And dalits have worked hard to increase their political power – several states have been elected Dalit chief ministers.” (*BBC* 27 June, 2012)

Indian constitution has provided equal rights to each and every individual. It has prohibited any kind of demeaning behaviour against dalits. Article 17 of the Constitution of India deals with the abolition of slavery and declares its practice, completely illegal. Article 16 gives the right of equal opportunity in employment to all the citizens. This article clearly omits any kind of differences on the basis of caste, class, creed and religion. Hence, these articles in Indian Constitution provide some relief to dalits in improving their social and political condition. These rights have provided them an opportunity to improve their economic status also. Now they have become able to get good jobs and other career opportunities. The powerful condition of dalits can be seen in politics where several dalits have been elected as chief ministers of their respective states. But still dalits are not completely developed. They are still struggling to improve their condition in the society.

“Despite the fact that untouchability was officially banned when India adopted its constitution in 1950, discrimination against Dalits remained so pervasive that in 1989 the government passed legislation known as The Prevention of Atrocities Act. The act specifically made it illegal to parade people naked through the streets, force them to eat feces, take away their land, foul their water, interfere with their right to vote, and burn down their homes.” (Hillary Mayell)

The condition of dalits has always remained very bad and pathetic. They have remained socially discriminated and exploited. Before the appearance of Babasaheb Ambedkar they were not much better than slaves and puppets in the hands of caste Hindus. No doubt, Indian constitution worked as a weapon in the hands of dalits but still lack of education, awareness and the passiveness of political leaders could not help in bringing designed improvement in the condition of dalits. Surprisingly, the incidents of violence against dalits are reported even today. There are the instances which suggest that they are not permitted to enter many of the temples in their own country, even today. The incidents of rape, murder and mental exploitation of dalits are also recorded quite often. Prevention of Atrocities Act which was formed in 1989 is a result of such atrocities that took place against dalits. These kinds of acts tell the story of pathetic condition of dalits in Indian society.

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Conclusion

Today when India is heading towards being one of the major superpowers of the world, one section of it is still aspiring to achieve ultimate dignity as a citizen with equal social, cultural and political rights. Since ages, one group of Indian society (upper castes) has dominated all resources of education, economy and other socio-cultural resources of the society and the second section (earlier dalits but Ilaiah included OBCs also) of the Indian society have remained deprived most of all these resources. This deprivation or segregation created disgusted mindset/psyche among those who were segregated. Movements like Dravidian Movement which is also known as 'The Self-Respect Movement', SDNP (Sri Naryan Dharma Pratipalan Movement) and Mahar Movement took place against the hegemonic powers of the society against their tyrannical behaviour and cynical mindset towards dalits.

Human actions and reaction are the reflections of his/her psyche or mindset. Whatever kind of environment a person receives at home, school, college, university and other institutions, his/her character is bound to be affected by its . John Locke has compared a child's mind to a 'tabula rasa'/blank slate just to signify the building process of his character. He describes a child as a learner who learns from observing whatever happens around him/her. Hence his/her mindset is shaped by the socio-political, cultural and economic content surrounding him/her. If a child is born and brought up in a dominating family his character and behaviour gets deeply affected by it and he/she starts dominating others who are subordinate to him/her. On the other hand, if he/she faces polite behaviour then he/she most probably becomes a polite person. Psyche is a sum of the lifetime experience and it can be seen in the case of dalits as well as other subaltern groups

who express their mental grief through dalit literature or Subaltern studies and various other movements. Dalit psyche is a sum of oppression and the kind of behaviour they have faced in the society. They were forced to work as mere slaves and forced to clean gutters, toilets and skin the dead animals. They were segregated from the mainstream society which affected their mindset in a significant manner. This deprivation resulted in creating disturbed psyche of dalits. They were mentally tormented and portrayed as sinners in scriptures and epics. They were deprived from entering into educational institutions and accessing economic resources which resulted in their overall backwardness. Prior to social reformers like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar, their condition was very miserable. Reformists like Phule and Ambedkar worked hard for the welfare of dalits and helped dalits in changing their socio-political and economic conditions and worked hard to change Dalit and Brahmin psyche and making them realize that they are not just objects in the hands of caste Hindus but rather they have the right to live their life with pride and honour. They used specific terms like 'dalit' just to portray their position and condition in the society and their resistance against the upper castes. Kancha Ilaiah expanded the term 'dalit' and included other inferior sections in it. He has expanded its domain to other marginalised groups of the society such as backward classes and women. Kancha Ilaiah has used the term *Dalitbahujan* to depict the majority of depressed people in India. He has combined economically backward classes with those who have been the victim of caste-based discrimination and the mindset of both groups (Upper Castes and Dalitbahujans) to understand their opinion towards the society.

A Critique of Kancha Ilaiah and his works

Kancha Ilaiah has tried to depict the condition of dalits and Brahmins in the society and their actions and perspectives towards each-other. He, in his works, has represented the psyche of various groups (Dalits, Backward Classes and Women) and their condition in the society. There are some positive as well as negative aspects in his writings. The most interesting part of Ilaiah which separates him from rest of the dalit writers is that he openly criticises dalits for creating hierarchies among themselves. He uses a term 'neo-Kshatriyas' to define the hierarchy among dalits which creates more negativity among them. This negativity further leads to their disoriented more towards achieving the desired equality in society. One of the important positive aspects of his works is that he always adheres to his ideas with strong conviction. In *Untouchable God*, he sticks to the idea of contradictions in the society and the condition of dalits in the society. He speaks through various characters such as Paraiyah, Namboodri, Tilak, Basu (Ramadev), Krishnamurthy and an American Black called Isaiah to portray the mental condition and thinking of upper caste and lower caste people and their perspective towards each-other. He finds similarities between Indian Dalits and African Blacks. Through this comparison he tries to take dalit narratives and their issues to an international level. According to Kancha Ilaiah money or any piece of land can't change the perspective of upper caste people towards Dalitbahujans. Only change of mindset of caste Hindus towards lower castes can bring this change in the society and this psychic change can be brought by providing quality education to not only Dalitbahujans but also to the children belonging to upper castes so that they also come forward to eradicate these differences in the society. Kancha Ilaiah does not look at reservation as permanent solution to the socio-political and economic backwardness of

dalits. Rather, he favours providing education, especially English education, as a major step to change the condition of Dalitbahujans in a society dominated by upper castes.

In his novel *Why I am Not a Hindu*, he delivers his views on the importance of education where he presents dalits as more educated and trained than upper caste people. According to him, dalits are practically very sound and skilled because they know how to skin the dead animal, how to cut plants and keep each and everything neat and clean. Hence, practically, dalits cannot be called illiterate. His main motive behind focusing on the need of English education is the interaction of Dalits with the whole world. Dalits, if they had English education, would have raised their voice in a proper manner at international platforms. Lack of a proper dalit leader becomes the main reason of the educational and social backwardness of dalits. Ilaiah looks at dalit leaders as failed politicians as they couldn't work for the welfare of Dalits. They could not facilitate dalit children with vocational and technical education. Besides, Kancha Ilaiah shows his disappointment on the lack of dalit intellectuals and shows his anger on rest of the dalit intellectuals on their inability to put forth the miserable condition of Dalits. This lack of intellectuals depicts the lack of educated dalits on national level. Hence it is the responsibility of those few dalit leaders to ensure the enrolment of dalit children in Universities, IITs, IIMs and other vocational educational institutions. Another positive aspect of Ilaiah's writings is that he included other subjugated groups such as OBCs and women in his definition of the term dalit. He moves further and includes every group, except STs, who suffers on the basis of caste and economy.

There are some negative aspects in Kancha Ilaiah's works. For example, he creates binaries between various groups of Indian society. He looks at upper caste as destructive

force that dominated every source of development. He harshly criticises them for their discriminatory nature without realizing their present condition. On one side, he sympathizes with the economic backwardness of those who do not belong to the dalit group of the society and on the other hand he criticises those who are out of this socially accepted identity. Another negative aspect about his writings is that he doesn't provide any solution to abolish the dissimilarities among various groups- both caste and class, in the Indian society. He just harshly puts forth the problems and contradictions present in the Indian society without proper solutions. Basically, he talks about southern part of India whereas the northern part of India remains untouched by him where dalits reside in huge numbers. Other flaw in his works is that he tries to instigate dalits to raise their voice in a violent manner.

Suggestions

Casteism was a problem at one point of time when dalits were really oppressed and exploited. They were deprived of education, economic resources and political powers. That was the time prior to the birth of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar. These reformists tried to bring changes in the society through social reforms, social movements and literature. It cannot be denied that reservation has brought a change in the life of dalits. Subsequently, they have grown economically but now they are looking for social reforms to take place overnight which is a bit difficult to change because it takes time in changing the mindset of a particular group of individuals who have been rooted in the culture of the caste-based society. At one point of time, the term 'dalit' was used to signify the backwardness of a person or a group of people to show his/her miserable condition. Reservations were provided to dalits for the removal of this kind of psyche and for the

betterment of their socio-economic condition in the society. Reservations worked upto an extent and a significant change came in the life of a handful of dalits, but not all. But this change created a negative attitude in the minds of upper caste people as they started looking down on the abilities of dalits. They even questioned the need of providing reservation to dalits as they could not accept on equal footing. Though dalits are obtaining authoritative positions in various offices but a large group of their population is still struggling to earn bread for their living. So it becomes very difficult to decide whether reservations should be provided on the basis of caste or class. At this time *middlepath* comes into functioning where creamy layer or Non-creamy layer works. One can't deny the fact that exploitation is possible at the level of caste as well as class. Hence, both social as well as economic levels should be kept in mind while deliberating any solution to the existing problem. For the welfare of dalits, education should be made compulsory because only education can mitigate all differences between various castes and classes. Lack of education is the biggest hurdle in the overall development of dalits. Dalit leaders should facilitate dalit children to pursue further education and ensure their admissions in higher educational institutes.

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