

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 unmaskes 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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