Chapter-II

DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS IN INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

Introduction:

Indian writing in English, still considered as elite and esoteric brand of literature even after more than two hundred years of its existence, has had its share of emphatic writings on Dalits, though not in a big way. Dalit aspect has yet to take the shape of movement in Indian English literature. Moreover, there has been hardly any attempt to either chronicle the development of Dalit empathy or make critical evaluations of individual works from Dalit perspective by our scholars.

Indian novel in English became more socially relevant after the advent of Gandhian mass movements in the 1930s. Nearly all the major novelists of the Post-Independence era started writing in the 1930s. The publication of Anand’s first novel Untouchable (1935) is a landmark in the history of Indian novel in English because of its ideological involvement with the Gandhian movement for the uplift of the so-called Asprishya or Untouchables designated as Harijans by the Mahatma Gandhi, and their assimilation in the mainstream of the Indian society. Anand met Mahatma Gandhi in 1932 and spent some days in his Ashram. During his stay in the Ashram, he completed Untouchable, his maiden novel. The novel already a classic in the Indian English literature describes one single day in the life of Bakha, an untouchable boy. In the process, it presents before the reader the vicissitudes in the life of such marginalized people in the traditional framework of her social hierarchy. Untouchable is perhaps the major fictional representation of the Dalit/Untouchable issue in Indian literatures. It may also be acknowledged that, Anand’s Untouchable was the first major Indian work on Dalits which drew instead attention from heterogeneous constituency of readers. More importantly, Anand continued his authorial involvement with the issues related to the marginalized/oppressed in many of his later works, especially in novels like Coolie (1936) Two Leaves and a Bud (1937), The Old Woman and the Cow (1960) and The Road (1961)

‘Why we don’t have enough Dalit literature?’ is not a difficult question to answer. First, a large part of the available literature is still being, written by an enlightened minority of Dalit origin. Secondly larger portion of Dalit literature has confined to bhasha literatures. Thirdly, literatures of Dalit awareness/ empathy written by non-Dalit writers have been unacceptable to people of certain quarters. Agreed, a
majority of Dalits cannot read Dalit literature. Besides, in most of the literatures of India including Indian English literature, the pioneering writers of Dalit empathy are the non-Dalit writers like Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, Padmini Sengupta, Tare Sherka, Bandopadhyay, Gopinath Mahanty, Kanhu Charan Mohanty, Babani Bhattacharya, K. Shivram Karanth, T. Shivshankar Pillai, S. Menon Marath, Mahashweta Devi, Parashuran Mund, Rajendra Awasthi, Shashi Deshpande, Pratibha Roy, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Warrier, etc. Creative writers are normally responsive and rational individuals, free from parochial concerns and prejudices. Let there be no distinction between Dalits and non-Dalits as far as writing is concerned.

**Dalit Consciousness in Indian English Fiction:**

Though there is only a handful of works centralizing the Dalit issue, quite a good number of novelists in Indian English have shown their empathy for the marginalized including the Dalits in their novels. Dalits constitute an integral part of the Indian social order and no narrative can be complete without Dalit characters. One can see that Dalits as well as the other communities of oppressed people-wage-earners, farmers, barbers, iron-smiths, etc are treated as individuals, not just stock characters. These characters are invariably portrayed with understanding and empathy. They are people with self-respect. For example, Suruchi, in Bhabani Bhatachyraya’s (1906-1988) *Shadow from Laddakh* looks upon Jhanak, a Dalit woman as “the spirit of the age”, with courage and resolve to grasp life, and the boldness to fight” for her rights. (Bhatacharya 1978)

Another novel that focuses on Dalits is Shanta Rameshwar Rao’s *Children of God* (1976). The central characters of the novel are Dalits and the novelists presents a down-to-earth picture of the caste oppression through the woman narrator whose son Kittu was beaten and burnt to death for entering a temple more than 25 years after Independence. Like Anand’s *Untouchable*, and other Dalit narrations, Rao’s novel also gives an account of the various forms of social abuse, being deprived from using the common well, being forced to wash laundry only downstream and at night, making eye contact or speaking directly to a caste Hindu considered audacious, punishment for even inadvertently touching a Savarna etc. The higher caste people of the village burnt her child to death because they found him aggressive and articulate. Interestingly, the novel makes oblique references to the Dalit complicity in the self-degradation of their own classes. As Acharya Harishchandra tells the Dalit woman-narrator:
“You have been called untouchable only because you have allowed men to call you and treat you as such. You have allowed yourself to be treated worse than animals, and held out your hands for the shackles that men have put upon you.” (Rao, 1976)

_Baba’s Tribe_ (1989) by Suresh Chandra, a writer, activist and academic from Nagpur, is a novel completely focused on the Dalit question. It tells a poignant story of Dalits, who are “terrorized and exploited by their own leaders”, but the rustic trio Wako, Sada and Rasu team up to become self-styled spokesmen and “messiahs” of the well-being of the Dalits.

_A Black Paddy_ (1995) by Rangin Banerji set in the 1920s and 1930s fictionalization the life of the fishermen of the East coast. The novel tells the story of Paddy, the central character, who is low caste boy. His daring journey to the outside world and his love for Geet are the stuff the novel is made of rendering it more a tale of romantic adventure than social realism. Paddy leaves his small fishing village as a stowaway, and finally comes back home to be regarded as a respectable person. (Banerje, 1995)

Roman Basu, a prolific but underrated novelist writing on a variety of themes as a novel highlighting the cause of the so-called “outcast” people. Set in the Post-Independence rural Bengal, _Outcast: A Novel_ (1986) documents the socio-political transition in the decolonized country. The novel shows that the traditional power structure still prevails and the common people, now imbibed with greater political awareness, and have become disillusioned with the efficacy of the political institutions in solving social problems. Therefore, violence is indicates as the right strategy to achieve social justice and Sambal, the village _chandal_ is presented as the instrument of a new social order. His father was beaten and ostracized for entering into Kali temple. In his righteous indignation, Sambal becomes an iconoclast, refuses to accept established ideas, do not subscribe to the principles and strategies of political parties, and almost becomes a low unto himself. He even refuses to marry his beloved Putu, a Dalit girl of Mochi caste, because she refuses to follows Sambal blindly and opposes his drastic and reckless radicalism. As Sambal looks upon her as “betrayed”, she ends her life by committing suicide. Thus, the novel ends as a tragedy, but Basu drives his message home successfully.

Arundhati Roy’s _The God of Small Things_ (1997) marks the realistic and insightful study of isolation and oppression of several dimensions in different contexts: women, children, Syrian Christians, Dalits, and so on. Velutha, the Dalit protagonist
controversies and the hegemonic norms by having an affair with a woman of his high caste and the ultimate outcome of this love affair is the tragic death of an untouchable by the ‘Touchable Boots’ of the police, an incident that caricatures the idea of God. Velutha, the outcast, thus epitomizes social injustice and inequality. The untouchables were “not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed.”(71)

Shashi Warrier (b.1959), the writer of popular thrillers like The Night of the Krait (1996), The Orphan (1998) and The Sniper (2000) has also written The Hangman’s Journal (1999), a fascinating novel based on a hangman’s real life story.

In Dalit discourse, Ekalavya, the tribal youth in the Mahabharta who was denied the studentship by Dronacharya, the royal Guru engaged to teach and train the Pandava and the Kaurava princes, has emerged as a poignant metaphor of otherization. In Shashi Tharoor’s The Great Indian Novel, Eklavya is portrayed as a defiant and aggressive character. After proving his worth to the Guru and the princes, Eklavya is asked by Drona to chop off his right thumb and offer it to him as his Guru-dakshina. In the Mahakavya, Eklavya complies with the Guru’s demand, but Tharoor’s Eklavya does not do so. He raises his voice against discrimination and power politics and refuses to concede to the irrational and prejudiced demand of his Brahmin Guru. Bir Singh Yadav writes:

“In the Ramayana, Shambhuka, a Shudra who was doing penance, and was dealt with death penalty by Lord Rama on the advice of his political council comprising the learned scholars and rishis like Vishwamitra and Vashistha. In the Mahabharta, even a great rishi Uttanga emitted bad smell of untouchability when he refused to drink water from the Nishad-the disguised Indra, saying that he would prefer to die than accept water from an untouchable. Eklavya was debarred from the art of archery by the great Guru Drona and he had to pay and heavy price for being a low-caste.”(Yadav 71)

In India Dalits are easily identify. R. K. Nayak’s (2000) description in this regard is revealing. Nayak writes, “Almost every fourth Indian is a Dalit, and is easily identified. He may be a beggar near a temple or a church, a permanent squatter, a prematurely old person in his forties, a child laborer in a factory, a pauper in a village, a child domestic help, a porter, a rickshaw puller in a city, a bonded laborer and migrant slum-dweller. A Dalit woman is always ill clad, a bag of bones, often with a
malnourished child in her arms, a temple Devdasi. Although they constitute a significant number of the country's population, they remain unseen and unnoticed since unseeability and untouchability, are the hallmarks of their identification.” (8)

The years of misery, poverty, ignorance, slavish mind-set and economic dependence gradually eliminated a desire for any kind of freedom from the collective consciousness of untouchables. It was due to the repressive socio cultural state apparatus, their self-respect or identity had replaced by self-hatred. Their consciousness was colonized by the socio-political and socio-cultural discourse which conditioned their minds as passive receivers and slaves of the system. As a result, of this conditioning, they began to look at themselves as the high caste people would do, and in the course of time they lost sense of their Self and will to fight. It would be pertinent here to refer to the 19th century European view of the Indian caste system as recorded by a French missionary Abbey Du Bois. In his book entitled, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, “Du Bois presents an account of life in the early 19th century society in India. He attempted to show the contrasting life styles of the pariahs (the untouchables in Tamil) and that of the high caste Hindus.” (Kolekar 10)

In ‘Deterioration or Amelioration: Assessing the Destiny of Dalits’ Sunil Kumar writes, “The treatment of Dalit is two-fold; one is done by born Dalit writers and other by non-Dalit writers who have often been, especially in dawn of Dalit awareness, excluded from any discussion of Dalitism.” (168)

Because such studies invariably expose the inherent dichotomy which emerges from two different perspectives. While the non-Dalit writers have charged with producing only imaginary and fictional plights of Dalits. The Dalit writers have applauded for rendering a very authentic and often autobiographical or empathetic literature. But it is not fair to divide the literature in castes or groups which is in itself employed to expose the absurdities of the division of caste in the society. Intentions and objectives should be sincere and sensible in literary crusade against this heinous caste-structure of the society. Experiences may vary from writer to writer in their poignancy; and simply on the base of indignation and stings of anguished experiences.

Narhar Kurundkar shows Nirmalkumar Phadkule’s opinion that the basis of Dalit literature is the caste system that prevails here and the inspirational force behind this literature is the suffocation of ending slavery from the birth to death-thereafter, ‘non-Dalit writers can create Dalit literature’. However, this view is not acceptable to
M. S. Patil: “Being Dalit is significant, because it gives a distinct shape to consciousness.”(3)

Dalit literature is that literature, which has written by one who is Dalit by birth, which has filled with rebellion and rejection, and which gives expression to Dalit consciousness. It is not possible to convey imaginatively the caste-specific experience of Dalits. Today, non-Dalit critics think along two lines on this issue first line is that a non-Dalit writer can write Dalit literature with the power of imagination and second line is that only a Dalit writer can write Dalit literature. Between these two, the later argument seems more realistic and the first is on imagination.

Dalit Consciousness in Select Dalit and non-Dalit Writer’s Works

Rabindranath Tagore’s Chandalika (1938)

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, many prominent writers sporadically took up the cause of the untouchables. One of them was Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). In his essay on Nationalism, he condemns the unjust social order of Indian society and seeks justice for the lower castes. He observes that it is a narrow mentality to deny certain people their social rights. As long as Indian society remained unjust, there could be no justice in politics. At least in the poems of his Gitanjali (1913) Tagore lashes out at the humiliation meted out to untouchables in the country, predicting that the asymmetry borne out of the caste system will one day drag down the privileged upper caste to the same level of degradation.

Tagore’s important drama entitled Chandalika deals with an untouchable girl Prakriti. In Manu Smriti Chandals are given instruction to go away from high class Hindus- Mousumi Das observes: “Chandals and untouchables should live outside the village, they should use earthen pots instead of utensils, should have dogs and donkeys as their property and should put on the cloths as taken from dead bodies.” (Das 70) In the deft hands of the poet, her pathos and poignancy turned into hope and aspiration and she started believing that social tyranny, however unbearable, was worth suffering if only a person like the Bhikku could befriend an untouchable.

Versatile genius as he was, Tagore employed his pen not only in the defence of the downtrodden in Hindu society but through his poetic imagery urged the Hindu community to change its ways and atone for the sins of the ages. In his discursive prose he often came back to this problem. Some of his short stories and novels (e.g. Gora, 1909) deal marginally with the concern about injustice, but one does not find a single
major character in any of his novels belonging to an untouchable status. This makes Mulk Raj Anand say in the 1930s that, “Most Indian writers of the modern period, like Bankim Chatterjee, Ratnanath Sarshar and Rabindranath Tagore had not accepted in their novels that even the so-called lowest drag of humanity, living in utmost poverty, could become heroes of fiction.” (Daggal 31)

Tagore’s drama *Chandalika* first it has been published in Bengali in 1913 and then in 1983 it was translated by K. R. Kripalani in English, from the perspective of caste, gender, and sexuality. The idea of Dalit consciousness is an issue that relates with the realization of human sensibility and implies the politics of oppression. The non-Dalit writers have constructed Dalit consciousness to explore and construct the essential self of an individual that shines beyond the paradigms of caste and racial prejudices. In *Chandalika* Tagore tries to investigate the psyche of resistance through the consciousness of an innocent girl who was chandal by birth.

*Chandalika*’s nature of the protest becomes more vehement because it becomes resistance against the domination of patriarchy as well as against the domination of Brahministic chauvinism. In the context of the play *Chandalika*, Beena Agrawal attributes that “the protest of Prakriti is neither a social protest nor a voice of political propaganda but it is an expression of the reactions of suppressed human sensibility that is beyond all conventions and inhibitions.” (09)

*Chandalika* attacks religious fanaticism and the evils of casteism respectively. This is play inspired by Buddhist theory and legend. V. S. Narawane rightly points it out as he writes:

In Tagore’s plays, we find that the fascination for the mysterious and unpredictable aspects of life goes hand in hand with deep concern for the crucial practical problems faced by humanity. Religious fanaticism, aggressive nationalism, social injustice, irrational adherence to convention, the misuse of scientific knowledge, racial and caste prejudices—all these issues are very much in the minds of Tagore’s characters. (96)

*Chandalika* begins with the invitation of a group of women who sell beautiful vernal flowers. They invite young maidens to purchase floral garlands, which they claim will add to their beauty and make them more desirable. When Prakriti, the chandal girl asks for flowers they leave the stage in hurry and in contempt. Being an untouchable girl, she has no right to do what other maidens of her age indulge in. She humiliates for the low birth. Any physical contact, human bonding or business
transaction with her avoids that she is a Dalit woman. It follows by the entry of the curd seller. When Prakriti asks for curd, the chorus (representative of society on stage) informs the curd seller about her identity as a chandalini: “Don’t touch her, she is a Chandal girl. Don’t you know that her touch will contaminate the curd?” (Chandalika I)

Prakriti is shunt as the source of impurity. She is destined to humiliation, suffering, ill-treatment, abuse and contempt because of her position as the lowest of the low. Her birth in a chandal family is a fact over which she has no control. Yet, her birth becomes the cause of her humiliation. Likewise, the bangle seller too refuses to sell bangles to her. It is important to note that these characters who humiliate Prakriti for being a Dalit woman themselves come from lower socio-economic basic ground, still they humiliate Prakriti as she is as ‘Atishudra’ and therefore ‘achhut’ in a caste-ridden society. Three episodes of humiliation, which form the opening premise of the dance drama, leave a deep and lasting impact on the psyche of Prakriti who is sensitive and intelligent girl. Firstly, she holds God responsible for her plight and refuses to pray to god as it is God who has subjected her to a life of darkness and humiliation. Secondly, she holds her mother responsible for giving birth to her. She asks furiously, “Why did you give birth to me? A life of ignominy and shame, In spite of being my mother you brought this curse to me!” (Chandalika I)

Prakriti’s mother is equally helpless. She has no answer to satisfy Prakriti and soothe her. Hence, she leaves her alone with her sorrows which she adds the construction on a false notion. It is at this crucial moment that Ananda, Buddha’s disciple enters asking for water to quench his thirst. This identity of a Chandalini is thrust upon her. It has brought her shame and humiliation without any wrong doings on her part. Prakriti is struggling with binaries of right/wrong, purity/impurity; she is “captivated”. She explains her identity to serve the monk citing her Chandal origin: “I am a chandal girl. The water in my container is impure.” (Chandalika I)

Prakriti conquers her fears. She turns into a new woman who is no afraid to assert her choice. She desires to possess Ananda, the man who brought about this transformation within her. According to Sutapa Chaudhuri, “her desire for the monk is the elemental desire of the woman, Prakriti for the man, Purush, and it comes only with her awareness of her still nascent womanhood.” (554)

Prakriti an innocent Dalit girl becomes a nomenclature of protest and rebellions without any hesitation. She challenges the authority of religion and social laws. She
declares, “I respect him who respects me. A religion that insults is a false religion. Everyone united to make me conform to a creed that blinds and cage.” (Chandalika I)

The echoes of anger in the following assertion of Prakriti affirm that the impression of the malpractices of caste binary became an integral part of human consciousness and it essentially reflects in the form of ‘anger’ she warns her mother: “Why are you afraid of, Mother? You are the lips I use, but it is I who chant the spells. If my longing can draw him here, and if that is a crime, then I will commit the crime. I care nothing for a code which holds only punishment, and no comfort.” (Chandalika I)

Krishna Kripalani in his criticism enunciated in the preface of the play Chandalika makes a very emphatic assertion-

It is not the story of a wicked girl roused to lust by the physical beauty of the monk, but of a very sensitive girl, condemned by her birth to a despised caste, who is suddenly awakened to a consciousness of her full rights as a woman by the humanity of a follower of Buddha, who accepts water from her hand and teaches her to judge herself, not by artificial values that society attaches to the accidents of birth, but her capacity for love and service. (Chandalika I)

Commenting on this transformation of Prakriti Tapashree Ghosh writes:

The dance drama concludes with Prakriti’s journey from self-ignorance to knowledge. Emancipation and liberation comes from within. Prakriti is able to attain the same as she can free her mind from narrow confines of caste and class to an understanding of herself as a woman and as a human being with human wants, desires, follies but above all humanity. The play may be subtitled ‘From Chandalika to Prakriti’ as the dance drama maps her personal graph, her journey from ignorance to enlightenment, from oppression to liberation. (4)

Tagore attempted to bring a note of Dalit consciousness and explore the black shadow of Dalit consciousness in the background of his mystical and humanitarian ideology in his work. He spreads the message of equality as given by the Lord Buddha. Chandalika, portrays how the anti-castiest pronouncements of a Buddhist monk cast a magic spell on an untouchable girl Prakriti who suddenly stumbled on a new connotation of life together. Buddhism remained a vital pointer towards Dalit consciousness.
However, Tagore’s presentation of the Dalit world is limited to show sympathy not different from that of Mahatma Gandhi. As an outcome, Tagore’s *Chandalika* cannot present the hard realities of Dalits, which the Dalits were facing every day.

**U. R. Anantha Murthy’s *Samskara* (1965)**

Udipi Gopalacharya Anantha Murthy was born on 21 December 1932, in a remote village, Milige, in Shimoga district, Karnataka. Anantha Murthy is the product of a rare mixed education because he was born into a traditional Brahmin family and was educated in Sanskrit and Kannada as well as in English. After completion of his early education in Durvasamatha Sanskrit School, he took his later education in Thirthalli and Mysore. He completed his graduation and post-graduation from the University of Mysore. In 1966, he earned Ph. D in English and comparative literature from the university of Birmingham, UK for his thesis on “English and Comparative Literature.” There he worked with Malclom Bradbury, David Lodge, and Raymond Willings. It was in the university he began to write and revise his first novel *Samskara*, which brought him Jnana Peeth Award in 1994.

The novel, *Samskara* was originally written in Kannada and was originally published in 1965. It was translated into English by the eminent poet-translator A. K. Ramanujan in 1976. The novel depicted the degenerate ways of a group of Southern Brahmins living within an *agrahara*, a Brahmin colony. It had evoked serious controversy right after its publication. The novel, was charged for attacking on Brahminism particularly by those critics who are interpreted the novel as a realistic rendition of a social problem. The novel was made into a film in 1970 and its English translation was serialized in the *Illustrated weekly of India*.

*Samskara* presents a vivid picture of a society, which has accepted caste discrimination as norms. It has unquestioningly accepted the Brahmin eminence, and pushed the lower-caste people to a periphery. Brahmins are supposed to be the spiritual and temporal guides, teachers and exponents of law, whereas the Dalits perform menial services only. They are routinely denied even the semblance of equality. Their hutments are quite a distance away from the Brahmin *agrahara*. The abject poverty of their life is also discernible. They depend on manual labour for their livelihood. Chinni and Belli pick up the cow dung. They treat with indifference. Chinni begs for something to eat, standing at a distance from a Brahmin woman, “Please, avva, throw a morsel for my mouth, avva.” (Samskara 12) Betel leaf, betel nut and tobacco have
thrown at her from some distance. Such incidents highlight the extent of untouchability practiced in the contemporary South Indian society. Thus, we see that the caste emerges as an independent character in *Samskara*, which shows the Dalit consciousness.

Anantha Murthy presents his character named Chandri who belongs to lower caste. He in no way makes her base and lower human being rather she possesses the basic human quality “compassion, the right way of dharma, being human Brahmin- hood.” (48)

Usha P. Sundari has very appropriately summed up her qualities, how *Samskara* refined and cultured she is:

She is a conscience that is lovable. At least, she is not thankless, she wants the funeral rites to be perform for the separated man, when she had spent a good many intimate moments. The money paid or the ornaments gifted, do not compensate the feelings, however fake or rehearsed. She is the only person who demonstrates man’s love for man. She does not pack up or go to her village (Kundpura) the moment Narrapa dies. Rather she offers all her gold for the Samaskara of her man. She is another Antigone running towards uncertainties for certain basic values she goes back as she came, somewhat mellower perhaps, but never richer. Before she goes, however, she trounces the Acharya’s pride.” (64-74)

As compared to the jealous and greedy wives of the Brahmins and other women of low caste, it is Chandri who stands apart for her praiseworthy traits which undoubtedly makes her a *Samskari* woman in spite of her belonging to a low caste. Being a Dalit in that social set up though, she cannot speak openly and assert her opinion of right and wrong but she speaks through her good-intentioned acts, which cross the boundary of caste-laid norms. The non-Brahmin movements in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra in the 20th century seriously contested the Brahminical notion of caste. These movements focused on the real degrading conditions of the lower castes and exposed the exploitative and repressive nature of the caste system. Though Mahatma Gandhi too criticized untouchability, he supported the caste system and advocated *Varnashrama* dharma, that is, caste based division of labour. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, on other hand, viewed the caste system as the most vile and exploitative institution of the Hinduism.

Therefore, throughout the novel, caste remains the defining feature of *Samskara* and its shadow continues to hang on all the characters, even after, because the novel is
open-ended. Not one character in the entire novel can think beyond caste nor can he or she, being ill equipped intellectually and emotionally, attempt to destroy it.

Anantha Murthy in *Samskara* attempts to establish that even a low caste woman like Chandri, can retain the sensitivity that can be found in any high caste man. She loves Narrapa but fears of his corpse and implores for his honorable and appropriate cremation. She asserts that no human ritual can abolish the rite of funeral. Her inner-self revolts against the hollowness of the conventions. She realizes, “If Narrapa’s body didn’t get the proper rituals, he could become a tormenting ghost. She had enjoyed life with him for ten years. How could she rest till she got a proper funeral?” (Samskara 44)

In spite of her low birth, Chandri is conscious of her moral duty towards her dead husband. She proceeds with the faith that a dead man has no caste and asserts, “If they didn’t give him a death rite according to Books, he’ll surely become an evil spirit.” (Samskara 46) In this confusion of Chandri, there is a rare grace and sublimity. She conceives the commitments of life on that sublime plane where the idea of caste binary becomes a mockery.

Chandri’s sincere concern for the funeral shows that she constructs the ideology of life above the evils of caste and gender. Prof. Tejendra Kumar subscribes the view:

Whereas other Samskari Brahmins are unwilling to perform Narayana’s Samskara because of many property related reasons, it is only Chandri who is anxious and worried about the plague not corpse of her paramour and wants it to be cremated as per the proper rites to be cremated. (Kaur 117)

The boldness of Chandri justifies that caste discrimination can lead to social suppressions but it can’t shadow the light of the spirit. For Chandri, the only religion was to protect the corpse of Naranappa from humiliation and degeneration. She declares, “Only one thought burn clear; it’s rotting there, that thing is striking there, its belly swollen. That’s not her lover, Naranappa. It is neither Brahmin nor Shudra. A Carcass, a stinking rotting Carcass.” (Samskara 70)

Finally, Siripati one of the devoted Brahmins admits that Dalit woman, Chandri is better person than the most of the Brahmins. What they thought was already been executed by Chandri. He remarks:

Whatever anybody man say, whatever Brahmins say—I swear—what do you say?—in a hundred miles radius is there any woman as lovely as bright, as good as Chandri? Take a count. If you find one, I’ll give up my caste. What does it matter if she is a whore?....didn’t she behave
better than any wife with Naranappa? If we drank too much and vomited, she wiped the mess. She even wiped ours up, didn’t she? Any time, even at midnight when he woke up her cooked and served him, all smiles. Which Brahmin woman would do so much? Stupid shaven widows (Samskara 72)

Hence, Samskara is appreciated as the bold attempt of Anantha Murthy to challenge the weak edifice of caste in comparison of the solidarity of human consciousness and Dalit consciousness.

**Mahasweta Devi’s Water (1972)**

Mahasweta Devi is a recipient of the Sahitya Academi Award (1979) and the Bhartiya Jnanpith Award (1996). As a social activist, she has consistently championed the cause of the Dalits. She has also received the Raman Magasaysay Award (1997) and the Padma Vibhushan (2006). She herself said in her Raman Magsaysay Award Acceptance Speech that:

My India still lives behind a curtain of darkness, a curtain that separates the mainstream society from the poor and the deprived. But, then why my India is alone? As the century comes to an end, it is important that we all make an attempt to tear the curtain of darkness, see the reality that lies beyond and see our own true faces in the process.

Devi is one of the contemporary Bengali writers whose literary expressions give voice to the silent sufferings of the Dalits in the post-colonial socio-political milieu. She raised her voice in defence of the weaker sections of society. She thinks, “A responsible writer, standing at a turning point in history, has to take a stand in defence of the exploited. Otherwise history would never forgive him…” (Water IX)

Mahashweta Devi’s observation is very realistic and reveals the pain of her heart at the pitiable plight of the Dalits. Her play Water represents the annals of the suppression of Dalits by the so-called custodians of the social setup. This play is a dramatic account of the life of Maghai who is water diviner by the caste a dome, the untouchable. The society as usual is stratified and at the lowest stair, there is the family of Maghai his wife Phulmani and son Dhura and at the top most stairs, there is Santosh Pujari, a Brahmin who seems to be all in the village Charsa. He is a man of religion and also the moneylender and owner. He got every right to exploit the poor villagers:
“…he goes to the town, collects money for relief, and wouldn’t spend a paisa for the stricken village itself. Look at his house, rising from height to height. There are twenty villages bound to him in debt forever?” (Water 107)

The village Charsa represents the same story. In spite of five big wells and three small ones in the village, inhabitants of a particular class used to struggle a lot even for getting drinking water. Their hands get wounded in search of water:

“…Look at three leper’s fingers of mine; all firm digging into the sand for water. I dig a shallow hole in the night, till a little water trickles into the hole, ah, the gift of Charsa, to be gathered in before down breaks lest the first rays of the sun soak it up.” (Water 122)

Dalit people could not drink water freely according to their thirst. The height of misery is that they have to use sand in place of water on the burning pyre to calm it down. On the other hand, Santosh Pujari, his friends and relatives enjoyed the plenty of water to wash their cattle, to drink as much as they need, to water their fields and to cool their Verandas. After requesting by lower caste people to Santosh Pujari, to dig new well for them but he refuses and tells them that the new well would be dug for Harchal Thakur as he requested him earlier. It signifies that the well is to be dug not according to the need of such Dalits but on the basis of the pleasure of those who already occupy the centre.

Gradually these sparks of revolt begin to spread amongst the other members of Dalits, specially the members of Maghai’s own family and they begin to raise their voice against the atrocities of Santosh Pujari. They even mock at the hypocritic attitude of Santosh who on one hand asks Maghai, to use his Divine power of a Dome pollutes his pitcher and he throws away water. Reacting to the behavior of Santosh, Dhura, the son of Maghai asks his father not to use his power, as a water diviner for such a man but Maghai does not agree with him. He asserts, “The work we were born to may not provide us with food, but we left to us by our ancestors.” He too calls it, “a job that I owe to my caste.” (Water 130)

Here the dramatist wishes to show that the people of lower caste are more humble and humane in comparison to the pseudo Brahmins.

Jiten the school Master appears in the play like a real ‘Torch Bearer’ for those Dalits who were unable to protest against the exploitation done to them. He tells SDO that, some people are discriminating amongst villages in Charsa on the base of caste
and there is crisis of water for a particular class of people. But the SDO answers in a measured official tone that there is no scarcity of water as there are a number of wells in the village and also expresses his helplessness in implementing the law, “It’s no use-laws are made because they have to be made. They are never enforced.” (Water146) Instead of solving the problem, he advised him to get him transferred “if it hurts you to see the plight of the lower caste.” (Water 146)

Devi’s prominent play ‘Water’ expose and explode the sham and fraudulence of not only big landowners but also of the government officers. These officers know the facts but make perfect fake records of the flourishing prosperity in the village. Dhura, the central character in the play who is landless water-diviner is not a naxal but he helps the naxalites from the city as he and others are being, pestered by the head of the village. Dhura himself says, “They won’t allow us to touch it. Even at the government wells, we aren’t allowed to draw water. That’s why we have to go and dig at the sands of Charsa.” (Water 126)

The condition of Dalits since time immemorial has been very pitiable. The feeling highlights in the play from the line, “When we go distribute the Prasad from the Dharma puja in the village, they won’t let us stand under the ledges of their huts-we’re the untouchables.” (Water126) The people in the play feel more offended when they realize that even the government is adding to their fury. One of the city men whom the SDO declares as Naxalite says, “The castes, upper and lower, don’t mean a thing. They are labels designed by men. The constitution clears on that. But who cares to uphold the constitution.” (Water 126-127)

All the public and private wells are under the control of Santosh Pujari. But every time villagers asked him for water, a fixed denial was there. The worst thing was that everything had shown perfect in records but it was away from reality. Maghai mustered his courage up to some extent and said, “We have been told that there’s no untouchability in our subdivision, and yet Santosh Babu, you, your caste brothers and your relations won’t let us draw from any well.” (Water 138)

As Maghai and Dhura belong to untouchable Dome caste, they never allow to touch the water. Even at the government wells, they never allow to draw water. That’s why they have to go and dig at the sands of Charsa (river). When the Dalits raise their voice against injustice, against vicious landowners and moneylenders like the pujari, they branded as Naxalities and they tortured. As Dhura puts it: “The cry of Naxal extremism is only to justify the harassment on us” (Water 99)
Devi’s writings reveal us the treatment of Dalits, which also depends on the ethics and politics of contemporary society. *Water* not only sympathizes with those Dalits exploited lot, but also they try to perceive their desires and develop consciousness among them to speak out their demands.

**Vijay Tendulkar’s *Kanyadaan* (1983)**

Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008), a leading Indian playwright, film and television scriptwriter, literary essayist, political journalist and social commentator, was born on 6 January 1928 in Kolhapur, Maharashtra. He wrote his first play at the age of eleven. He went on to write twenty eight full-length plays, five collections of short stories, five volumes of literary and social criticism, seventeen film scripts, two novels and a biography. In addition to these, he also translated nine novels, two biographies and five plays by other authors into Marathi. Tendulkar breathed his last in Pune on 19 May 2008. For over five decades, he had been a highly influential dramatist and theatre personality in India.

Tendulkar, the vanguard of Marathi as well as Indian theatre has successfully depicted this new understanding through his anti-romantic play *Kanyadaan*. Dalit consciousness appeared first in Marathi literature and Tendulkar is an active recipient of it. His play *Kanyadaan* is an emerging document on Dalit consciousness in India. In this play, he has described life and experiences of a Dalit youth in an objective way. He emerges there as a propagandist as well as iconoclast who presents life with the scorching social reality, having a motto of art for life’s sake. He advocates for annihilation of caste system and rational values for social awareness with the outlook of non-separatist author. Vijay Tendulkar is not a Dalit by birth but he is always concerned with predicament of human being. He says,

> As an individual—or rather as social being—I feel deeply involved in the existing state of my society (because I’m affected by it though not immediately in some cases or not as much as some others are) in my own way brood over it. As a social being, I am against all exploitation must end. (*Kanyadaan* 310-311)

*Kanyadaan*, is centered in Maharashtra, the region that pronounced the cause of the Dalits due to intense Class Consciousness. As K. C. Das’ observes:

> Maharashtra has been the site of the most radical Dalit assertions. From the turn of the present century, Dalits have shown signs of awakening and
protest...Under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, rights to Dalits became an issue in Indian politics.”(XVIII)

In Kanyadaan, Nath Devalikar is an MLC with political inclinations. His wife Seva is a social worker, and their son Jayprakash is an M. Sc. student. Nath regards himself to be a democrat, reformer and a model for others. He cannot tolerate negligence of duty. A political and social activist who supports democracy, he is actively involved in improving the condition of the Dalits and socially neglected people. At this position, he does not show any discrimination between his ideals and his practical deeds. He tells his daughter, “We have a democracy in this house and we are proud of it. Democracy outside and dictatorship in the home, we don’t know these two timing tricks.” (Kanyadaan 04) He further tells his wife, “The value I uphold in my public life, I will never use compulsion on anyone who is capable of thinking.” (Kanyadaan 37)

As the play opens, the middle-class family is discussing on the proposal about the inter-caste marriage of their daughter Jyoti and the Dalit poet and writer named Arun. Albeit Nath ecstatically consents to the proposal, Seva and Jayprakash express their apprehensions. Jyoti introduces Arun to the family. After the initial discussion with Arun, Nath admits:

Nath: Seva, until today ‘Break the caste system’ was merely a slogan for us. I’ve attended many inter-caste marriages and made speeches. But today, I have broken the barrier in the real sense. My home has become Indian in the real sense of the term. I am happy today, very happy. I have no need to change my clothes today. Today I have changed. I have become new. (Kanyadaan 23)

Nath’s mission is to achieve communal harmony. At his personal risk, he makes a social experiment to mitigate caste differences. He tries to make the marriage a successful realization of his principles not only because Jyoti is his daughter but also because his views this marriage as the reconciliation of his social perspectives and his personal life. He tells his wife:

Nath: Seva, let not this wonderful experiment fail! This dream which is struggling to turn real let it not crumble into dust before our own eyes! We will have to do something. We must save marriage. Not necessarily for our Jyoti’s sake …This is not just a question of our own daughter’s
life Seva, this has...a far wider significance ...this experiment is very precious experiment. (Kanyadaan 23)

Kanyadaan explores the shadows of discontent and anger of a Dalit youth who is in spite of his intellectual accomplishment fails to get rid of his anguish of oppression done to him in the name of caste. Arun appears as a spokesperson of Dalit oppression whereas Nath Devlikar is the representative of constructive Brahmin ideology. Dalit consciousness, that manifestation of the stigma of caste binary often constitutes the psyche of discontent, rebellion and non-conformist attitude. Vijay Tendulkar constructs Dalit consciousness with the realization of the experiences that can no longer be defends in the light romantic zeal of social upliftment. Arun admits:

Arun: Generation after generation their stomachs used to stale, stinking bread they have begged! Our tongues always tasting the flesh of dead animals, and with relish! How can there be any give and take between our ways and your fragrant, ghee spread, wheat bread culture?
Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my father’s hut without vomiting? Tell me, Jyoti, can you shit everyday in our slum’s village toilet like my mother? Can you beg, quaking at every door, for a little grass for our buffaloes? Come on, tell me! (Kanyadaan17)

Arun exposes the stark reality of what Arun realizes in big houses of big people- ‘I feel uncomfortable in big houses’ (Kanyadaan 512) He prefers his ‘father’s hut’ to Jyoti’s father’s big house:

If you see my father’s hut you will understand. Ten of us, big and small lived in that eight feet by ten feet. The heat of our bodies to warm us in winter, no clothes on our back, no food in our stomach but we felt very safe. Here these damn houses of the city people they are like the bellies of sharks and crocodiles, each one alone in them! (Kanyadaan 512)

Arun feels secure on the street: ‘As for me I feel safe on the street. The bigger the crowds, the safer I feel.’ (Kanyadaan 342) He depicts various nuances of his Dalit community raising venomous attack on the so-called traditional culture of Johaar that dehumanized his community: “Our fathers and great grand fathers used to roam, barefoot, miles and miles, in the heat and in the rain, day and night…till the rages on their butt fell apart…used to wander shouting ‘Johaar Maayi-baap. Sir Madam, Sweeper! And their calls polluted the Brahmins ears.” (Kanyadaan 513)
Through these lines, Arun depicts the years of servitude under the miserable conditions that the Dalits have to expose.

The fact that Arun’s and Jyoti’s marriage is more a challenge than out of love is revealed. Soon, Nath stumbles on the stark reality that Arun, the Dalit and the lowest working section of the society is crude and uncivilized. He is quite a different natured of person, highly criticized of the sophisticated and high caste people “bellies of sharks and crocodiles”. (Kanyadaan16) He believes that the civilized culture is an “unwrinkled Timopal world” of the polish and outward appearances. (Kanyadaan17)

Seva, Nath and Jayprakash express their consensus on the issue that Arun’s ways are different. The irony is explicit that Nath defends the cause of social justice but is not ready to give equal status and respect to Arun. He remarks, “Not, only is he a middle class man, he is a Dalit. He has brought up in the midst of poverty and hatred. These people’s psychological make-up is altogether different.” (Kanyadaan 27)

Nath rejects the autobiography of Arun with the accusation that it is nothing but only a pulp fiction. He realizes that his consent of marriage of Arun with Jyoti is the worst error of his life. He confesses, “I had this maniacal urge to uproot casteism and caste distinction from our society. As a result I pushed my own daughter into the sea of misery.” (Kanyadaan 61) It shows that Nath even at this stage was not prepared to change is opinion about Dalits. His idealism of social justice was only an external garb on his own insecurity.

Jyoti realizes her father’s hypocrisy and breaks her relation with his family. She claims to be a member of the Dalit community, to be a straight forwards scavenger, an untouchable than an upper caste hypocrite. She remarks:

“I am not Jyoti Yadunath Devlikar now; I am Jyoti Arun Athavale, a scavenger. I don’t say harijan. I despite the term, I am an untouchable, a scavenger. I am one of them. Don’t touch me. Fly from my shadow, otherwise my fire will scorch your comfortable values.” (Kanyadaan 70)

Jyoti thinks that her father’s ideal notions and reforming principles are unreal. She has learnt the whole truth only after coming in contact with Arun. Until now, she has remained a mute spectator to her father’s ideal notions. As K. C. Das claims that “understanding in dignities and humiliation is only possible once we confront these experiences frontally.” (Das 43)

Before Jyoti’s realizes her father’s contemptuous attitude towards the autobiography of Arun she identifies herself with the anguish of Arun. Therefore, she
denies her identity as the daughter of a Brahmin and accepts her identity as the daughter of Dalit. She declares, “You know very well to whom I belong. I belong to someone who makes you clean and pure soul impure by his touch.” (Kanyadaan 66) Jyoti’s radical acceptance of her unconventional identity is the only remedy to redeem the community of the untouchables. His generalization on the nature of human will is the true acknowledgement of Dalit consciousness. She defends:

No man is fundamentally evil, he is good. He has certain propensities towards evil. They must be transformed. Completely uprooted and destroyed. And then, the earth will become heaven. It is essential to awaken the God slumbering within man….putting man’s beastliness to sleep and awakening the God head within is an absurd notion. You made me waste twenty years of life before I could discover this. I had to learn it on the strength of my own experience. I had to meet a man named Arun Athavale. Arun gave what you had withheld from me. (Kanyadaan 67)

Thus, the play is criticized as “anti-Dalit” and has provoked a great deal of anger and protest. In this play, Tendulkar presents quite different themes. Here he does not depict a Dalit character who is exploited by the society or neglects and who wants equal of right in the society. But Arun Athavale, a young Dalit boy is able to get married to a Brahmin girl of upper class, and treats her as an object of revenge against all the persons of higher caste and class. Here, instead of Dalit person, a girl of higher strata, suffers humiliation, and tortures at the hand of a Dalit boy. So many critics believe that instead of arousing sympathy for Dalits, this play produces ant-Dalit feelings. It is concluded that the play has misrepresented the Dalit consciousness.

Girish Karnad’s Tale-Danda (1990)

Tale-Danda literally means Death by Beheading. It devotes the idea of offering one’s head either on the completion of vow or in penitence. It is a 1990 Kannada play written by Girish Karnad, an eminent writer in Kannada literature. He is recipient of many awards like Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award (1993) and Sahitya Academy Award in Kannada language for the play in 1994. He was also honoured with the Jnanpith Award in the year 1998.

Karnad appears to be the champion of social peace and Dalits in his famous play, Tale-Danda. He has tried to resolve the age-old issue of great significance, the problem of Dalits. As a matter, of fact this issue is one of the priorities of our
government ever since the independence. The government has tried its best to eradicate this problem but it still exists. The playwright focuses on the problem of the Dalit people in a very effective manner. Shukla observes that “the major theme of Karnad’s Tale-Danda is that of deconstruction of caste and religion to arrive at its real, proper meaning and to restructure the same for the benefit of the society and the country.” (312)

The play unfolds some revealing facts through the character like Bijalla, the king of Kalyan who belongs to a low caste i.e. barber. He desperately tries to acquire the caste of Kshtriya by bribing the Brahmins but all his attempts prove to be futile and he is still regarded as a barber. His bitter reaction on caste system is thought provoking as he utters the following dialogue:

One’s caste is like the skin on one’s body. You will peel it off top toe, but when the new skin forms, there you are again. A barber, a shepherd, a scavenger. Bijjala feels obliged of the Sharana leader Basavana because he is trying to create a casteless society where all are equal. (Tale14-15)

However, the idea of marriage of a Brahmin daughter with the son of a cobbler was a matter of serious uproar among the people. However, all Sharanas celebrate the occasion as a triumph of their success, a dream of a casteless society. Basavana in spite of being a pioneer of Sharana is apprehensive of the consequences involved in the radical resolution of the two families. Karnad accepts that social revulsion requires lot of patience and upheaval. Basavana’s personal creed comes in conflict with the hard and rigid codes of humanity. He declares, “We are not ready for the kind of revolution this wedding is. We haven’t worked long enough or hard enough.” (Tale 57) However, the newly stirred consciousness doesn’t compromise with the logical arguments of the Sharana. One of the Sharanas challenges Basavana. Revolution is essential for the reconstruction of the social order. He challenges Basavana with these words:

All these years you have been teaching us that caste and creed are phantoms. And how that people here are willing to act on your percepts you want to turn tail. (Tale 51)

Basavana does not care for the idealism of Sharanas and fears of the safety of the girl and the boy. Haralyya accuses Basavana of his discouraging attitude at this stage. The contradiction in the vision of Basavana is a reflection of the conflict existing between the choices of individual and the recommendations of the society. Haralyya remarks:
But Basavana you gave us hopes. You told us it was possible to escape from the coils of caste. We have been snarled up in them too long. Now I am ready to face the consequences.” (Tale 53-54)

The personal alliance between two families Madhuvarsa and Harlyaa becomes a matter of hues and cry. Not only Basavana but also the king Bijjala is apprehensive of the social protest involved in inter-racial marriage. He is apprehensive that he won’t be able to protect the Sharanas after the marriage ceremony:

You know perfectly well the higher caste will turn not take this lying down. The wedding Pandal will be turn into a slaughter house, the street of Kalyan will seek of human blood. (Tale 48)

Dalits are allowed theoretically to overcome malignant caste system but in practical it is vice versa. They are not allowed to join with the upper castes even after shedding their caste taboos and turning to another community, named Sharana. This is why the king Bijjala wants the marriage to be called off. He is very anxious of large scale violence, the marriage could provoke. Vanashree Tripathi remarks:

The attitudes of the Sharanas in this respect obviously are not as much motivated by the desire to lay the foundation for a casteless society but more by the urge for personal aggrandizement. (98)

The upper caste and Brahmin accepts the challenge of maintaining Varnashram system which is challenged by the act of inter-caste marriage. The old system has challenged by the inter-caste marriage then unrest spread among Brahmin Nobles. So they form conspiracy against king Bijjala because of his support to the marriage and protect Sharanas. They first kill Bijalla’s loyal servants and then imprison him in his own palace. Later they begin butchering thousands of Sharanas. Damodara Bhatta, Marchanna Kramita and Prince Sovideva succeed in their evil design of dethroning the king and grabbing power and succeed in destroying a new reformist movement.

In spite of the strong arguments and the sublime vision constructed for the reaffirmation of the identity of Dalits, the exposure of the heinousness of the reality of the destiny of Dalits in Tale-Danda is disgusting. In spite of the series of death and atrocity, for the Sharanas it was difficult to restore the appropriate vision of humanisms. It was finally ordered: “From this moment all Sharanas, foreigners and free thinkers are expelled from this land on pain of death. Women and lower orders shall love within the norms prescribed by our ancient tradition or else they’ll suffer like dogs.” (Tale101)
This play shows hard, brutal and violent consequence of the inter-caste marriage and calls upon us to rethink as why we fail in our objective to bring about social equality and awaken essential consciousness of caste equality in the minds of the people, which show a formulation of compressive ideology of Dalit literature.

**Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things (1997)**

*The God of Small Things*, a Booker Prize winning book brought Arundhati Roy into international limelight. It established her as a champion of the Dalits and the downtrodden. Her commitment to the Dalits and the deserted (small things) issues from her worldview and one has to consider her novel in the light of the rest of her literary and social activities.

This novel deals with the ravages of caste system in South Indian state of Kerla. Roy presents both the miserable plight of untouchables and the struggle of the woman trying to have fulfilment in life in a patriarchal society. Velutha, of the God of Small Things, transgresses the established norms of society by having an affair with a woman of high caste. The ultimate outcome of this love affair is the tragic death of an “untouchable” by the ‘Touchable Boots’ of the state police, an event that makes a travesty of the idea of God. God is no more in control of “small things” rather the small things have an ultimate power over God turning him to ‘the God of loss.’

*The God of Small Things* presents the story of forbidden cross-caste love and what a community will do to protect the old ways. Roy, a great champion of the course of the Dalit and the deserted, points out those unnoticed shades of a social problem, which generally escape the eyes of social scientist in the novel. Roy’s portrayal of the plight of the untouchable is very near to that of Mulk Raj Anand. Velutha, the protagonist of the novel, is very close to Bakha in both his vision and vesture. He, too like Bakha, has to fight for his existence in society. Velutha can never co-exist peacefully with the ‘touchable’ communities for as long as there is the stigma of untouchability attached to him and countless others like him.

In *The God of Small Things*, Ammu, is denied to take education in India while her brother Chacko is sent to the Oxford for higher studies. It is consider that, it is an unnecessary expense to give education to girls. Ammu compelled by her husband to have sexual relationship with his boss Mr. Hollick to save his job. If a woman of upper caste falls in love with a man of lower caste, it will create too much problems. At the same time, if a man from higher caste has illicit relationship with a woman from a
lower caste, there won’t be any problem as it is termed under man’s needs. Ammu’s relationship with Velutha is viewed as an illicit, unethical, immoral or sinful activity while Chacko’s flirting with a lower caste woman is called man’s needs. Ammu is treated as social outcaste. The church refuses to bury her. Her dead body is cremated in the electric crematorium like an abandoned or beggar’s body. This is the price, one has to pay for paying a non-conformist woman in the postcolonial society.

*The God of Small Things* deals with the confrontation between the God of Big Things (Baby Kochamma, Pappachi, Mammachi, Chacko, Comrade Pillai and the Inspector Thomas Mathew) and the God of Small Things (Ammu, Vellay Paapan, Velutha, Rahel and Estha, Sophi Mol etc.) The novel crystallized the issues of atrocities against children, women and untouchables – all these dispossessed of an identity or speaking a voice. The novel can be view as a discourse of the marginalized and subordinated.

The story of *The God of Small Things* is set in the town named Ayemenem in Kerala, depicting the time-period from 1969 to 1993. Though, the story basically depicts the history of a well to do Kochamma family, while describing the socio-cultural milieu of the town, the novelist has laid bare the evil consequences of untouchability in the post-colonial India. The caste described in the novel is Paravan to which the young Velutha belongs. His father, Villiya Paapen was a toddy tapper and he too, was the victim of caste discrimination but he dare not speak even a single word against it because during the colonial period, the conditions were worse and a very inhuman treatment had given to untouchables. Remembering those days, Mammachi, the mistress of Kochamma family once told about her girlhood days:

When Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom sweeping away their foot prints...were not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouth when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed. (GST 73-74)

The untouchable Paravan, Velutha, a young man who thoughtlessly enters into a clandestine love affair with Syria Christian divorcee a mother of two children, called Ammu. When her love affair comes to light he is falsely charged with kidnapping the children and murdering their cousin and is done to death by the police. The love affair he has with an upper caste woman is a mere pretext; his real mistake is to want to rise above the station his caste permitted. His success activates ancient prejudices and poses
a challenge to the upper caste social forces who, involuntarily form themselves into a
punishing force and finally eliminate him.

Comrade K. N. M Pillai represents the Communist Party that fights for workers’
rights everywhere in the world but in Kerala, “it never overtly questioned the traditional
values of caste-ridden, extremely traditional community.” (GST 66) Velutha’s being a
card-holding member of the Communist Party, his participation in political
demonstrations and his desperate appeal to comrade Pillai on the eve of his arrest do
not help him. In Comrade Pillai’s opinion, Velutha is a Paravan first and foremost and
therefore he deserves to be treated as paravanas have always been treated. And so he
assures Inspector Thomas Mathews that Velutha does not enjoy “the patronage or
protection of the Communist Party. That he was on his own.” (GST 262-263)

For falling in love with a ‘touchable’ woman and thus breaking the ancient laws
that forbade relations between the upper castes and the Dalits the touchable policemen
in The God of Small Things swoop on the sleeping Velutha, and inflict fatal injuries on
his body. The policemen took upon their savagery as a social responsibility as
“inoculating a community against an outbreak” (GST 309)

The economic discourse extends to the professions traditionally reserved for the
Dalits as well. They expect to be happy with their unclean and demeaning occupations
and never aspire to higher professions. If they do, they can be sure to earn the
disapproval and discouragement of the upper caste colleagues and self-appointed
custodians of social norms. Velutha is a gifted carpenter and highly skilled mechanic
working at the pickle factory owned by Ammu’s family. His accomplishments oblige
his employers to put him in charge of the general maintenance. The upper caste
colleagues resent this for “ancient reasons.” (GST 121) During a conversation with
Ammu’s brother, Chacko, Comrade Pillai puts it down:

That Paravan is going to cause trouble for you”, he said. “Take it from
me…get him a job somewhere else. Send him off…..” He may be very
well okay as person. But other workers are not happy with him. Already
they are coming to me with complaints… You see, Comrade, from local
standpoint, there caste issues are very deep-rooted. (GST 278)

Arundhati Roy, a great champion of the cause of the Dalit and the deserted
women, points out those unnoticed shades of a social problem, which generally escape
the eyes of social scientists. Velutha’s grandfather Kelan, along with a number of other
untouchable embraced Christianity. Even religion conversion fails to give the disposed
an esteemed able status. In respective of religious affiliation the underdogs remains as fallen as over in the dog-eat-dog-society:

When the British came to Malabar, a number of Paravanas...converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican church to escape the scourge of untouchability...it did not take them long to realize that they had jumped from the frying pain into fire they were made to have separate churches, with separate services, separate priests. After an independence they found they were not titled to any Government benefits like job reservation or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper, they were Christians, and therefore castles.

(GST 74)

The God of Small Things is a story about love and brutality against the Dalits. On one hands the Human Rights and values are globally, seriously considered and on the other hand in rural Indian this sort of atrocity against Dalits are going on. So the Dalits have victimized throughout the past and Roy has tried no construct a history of the Dalits in her novel.


Raja Rao is one of the “Three Big” novelists - other two being Mulk Raj Anand and R.K Narayan. He has a very high sense of the dignity of this vocation as a writer. He looks his works in the spirit of dedication. For him literature is sadhana not a profession. To Raja Rao, literature is means for spiritual experience it is for him a theological thirst. He argues:

For me literature is sadhana (spiritual discipline)...my writing is mainly the consequence of a metaphysical life, what I meant by sadhana. And by man I mean the metaphysical entity. So the idea of literature as anything but a spiritual experience...is outside my perspective. (44-45)

In the story Javani, Raja Rao expresses his awareness about the discrimination in society and he endeavour to represent the voice of those who are weak and powerless. It’s focused on the misery of life of Javani, a low caste woman who was subjugated for three reasons –first for being a woman, secondly, for being a Dalit and thirdly, for being a victim of poverty. Besides these three markers of subjugation, social apathy does not permit her opportunities to lead a normal life. The chief narrator in the story is Ramappa, the brother of the mistress of the house, with whom Javani used to serve as an attendant. He was unaware of Javani’s presence in the family of the sister,
Sita. As soon as Sita looks at Javani she almost cries, “Javani! You monkey! Why don’t you come in?” With such humiliating address of Sita, Rao establishes that language works as a power mechanism to subdue the fate and identity of Dalits in society. To address Dalits in the respectable and socially acceptance, language has no longer been a cultural practice in caste based social structure.

Javani tries to maintain absolute silence and lives in perpetual nervousness and isolation in Sita’s house. Sita condemns her, “Why don’t shut up, you donkey’s widow and not pour out our vedantic knowledge.” In spite of repeated insult, Javani instead of feeling humiliated, remains isolated and indifferent to the reproaches of Sita. Instead of anguish and protest, she enjoys such humiliating situations. Through Javani’s calm stoicism, Rao establishes that Dalits like Javani are accustomed to filthy comments and social ridicule. Beena Agrawal and Neeta point out that-

The humanistic sympathy shown by Ramappa towards Javani is significantly contributed to reconstruct her lost confidence. It helps her to realize herself dignity like the re awakening of Prakriti presented in Tagore’s celebrated social tragedy Chandalika.(100)

Ramappa criticizes her sister for giving the inhuman treatment to Javani. He vehemently protests, “I could not bear that time and again. I had quarreled with my sister about it again. But she could not agree with me. They are of lower class and you cannot ask them to sit and eat with you.” Ramappa fearlessly exposes the politics of discrimination. It is not the predicament of lower caste but the reflection of the insecurity rooted in their consciousness. He interrogates, “Are they not like us, like any of us? Only the other day you said you loved her as if she were you, elder sister or mother.” (Javani 101)

Rao’s vision of the struggle of Dalits is different from the other writers. He not only exposes the anguish of Javani but also ventures to establish the latent insecurity of higher castes. They do not muster the courage to give spaces to Dalits in the mainstream. Sita possess all sympathy for Javani but is apprehensive of the consequences involved in this relationship. In this story, Ramappa and Sita represent the horrors of Dalit consciousness in their own distinctive ways. The desperate crying of Sita affirms her own weakness. She confesses, “Irreligious, irreligious, eating with a woman of a lower caste is irreligious…I have enough of quarrelling all the time.” (Javani 102)
Rao accepts that for Dalits even the right of survival seems to be a transgression of social conventions. They are so deprived of human rights that even to lives and breath seems to be a burden to them. The suffering of Javani makes a deep impression on the mind of Ramappa and he becomes impatient to enquire about her personal life. The revelation that she earns only one rupee in each month, comes as shock to Ramappa. In spite of his personal disgust, Ramappa looks forward for the destiny of the community of Dalits. He declares that ‘Whenever there is misery and ignorance, I come, oh, when will that day comes, and when will the couch of the knowledge below?’ (Javani 103)

Ramappa being swayed by her misery gives proposal of her adoption. He proposes the work for her but she trebles with fear, “No learned Ramappa. A Brahmin is not means to work. You are the “chosen ones.” She further continues, “You are, you are. The sacred books are yours. You are all you are all. You are the twice born. We are your servants, Ramappa your slave.” (Javani 105) It signifies that the horrors of Dalit consciousness can’t be uprooted only on the basis of external efforts. Ultimately, on order to avoid the company of Ramappa, she leaves the village.

Beena and Neeta assert that:
Rao in ‘Javani’ deals with the problem of Dalits without the crusade of political and social reform. He presents the reality of human suffering—in its true perspective. His distinction lies in the fact that he expresses his sympathy and human love for the beauty and innocence of Dalits who accept the apathy of society with calm stoicism.

**Om Prakash Valmiki’s Joothan (2003)**

Om Prakash Valmiki was an Indian Dalit writer and poet well known for his autobiography, *Joothan*, considered as a milestone in Dalit literature. He was born at the village of Barla in the Muzzafarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh. After retirement from the Government Ordnance Factory, he lived in Dehradun where he died of complication arising out the stomach cancer on 17 November 2013.

Omprakash Valmiki, a Dalit writer describes his life as an untouchable, or Dalit in the newly independent India of the 1950s. *Joothan* refers to scraps of food left on a plate, destined for the garbage or animals. India’s untouchable have been forced to accept and eat *joothan* for centuries, on the word encapsulates the pain, humiliation, and poverty of a community forced to live at the bottom of India’s social pyramid.
Although untouchability was abolished in 1949, Dalits continued to face discrimination, economic deprivation, violence and ridicule. Valmiki shows his heroic struggle to survive a preordained life of perpetual physical and mental persecution and of his transformation into a speaking subject under the influence of the great political leader Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. *Joothan* is a major contribution to the archives of Dalit history and a manifesto for the revolutionary transformation of society and human consciousness.

*Joothan* the autobiography of Om Prakash Valmiki was originally written in Hindi and later translated into English by Arun Prabhu Mukherjee in 2003. In Hindi, the word ‘*Joothan*’ means leftover food, given to the lower class people to eat. According to the translator, the title reveals the story of pain, humiliation and poverty of downtrodden classes that have to depend on joothan for their survival. (*Joothan* XXXI)

Om Prakash Valmiki writes in *Joothan: A Dalit’s Life* (2003) that the upper and other caste people live in one side of the village pond. The churches and the low caste untouchables live on the other side. The pond stood as partition between the Chuhras did all sorts of work for the upper castes, including cleaning and agricultural work. They would often work without pay. Valmiki writes:

Nobody dared to refuse this unpaid work for which we got sworn at and abused.

They did not call us by our names. If a person were older, then he would be called ‘Oh Chuhre’. If the person was young or of the same age, then ‘Abey Churhe’ was called.” (*Joothan* 2)

In *Joothan*, Valmiki has narrated his life story full of agony and pain caused by hegemony of the upper class. In the words of Shobha Shinde “*Joothan*, is one among a body of Dalit writings that is unified by an ideology, an agenda and a literary aesthetic. The text becomes a part of a social movement for equality and justice.” (97-98)

In the preface Valmiki has expressed the painful psychological torments, which he has to undergo while writing his life history:

I had to relieve all those miseries, torments, neglects, admonitions. I suffered a deep mental anguish while writing this book. How terribly painful was this unraveling of me, layer upon layer. In the process of writing these words, a lot has remained unsaid.” (*Joothan* VII)

The members of his community have called ‘Oe Chuhre’ or ‘Abey Churhe’ by upper class. They had branded as untouchables and treated inhumanly. They had not
allowed to touch anything or any person from upper caste people. Their existence was no more than a commodity “Use them and throw them away.” (Joothan 02)

Many times, Valmiki felt helpless against the social treatment by privileged class. Once when he was asked by his scout teacher to come in a neat and pressed uniform, he tried his level best to come up to his expectation but when he went to Dhobi’s shop to get his cloths ironed, Dhobi’s replies tormented his heart. “We don’t wash the clothes of the chura - Chamars. Nor do we iron them. If we iron your clothes, then the Tagas won’t get their clothes washed by us. We will lose our roti.” (Joothan 17)

Valmiki’s consciousness is changed so much by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Marxist literature. He says, “I have no interest in religion.” (Joothan 93) He was attracted towards Buddha’s philosophy of human freedom, and in his eyes, humanity was the greatest religion. According to him, “the human being alone matters, it is karuna and wisdom that takes a person towards transcendence.” (Joothan 100)

During the period of Valmiki’s creativity, his Dalit consciousness further sharpens by the ongoing Dalit movement, run by Dalit Panthers in almost all areas of Maharashtra. There are many instances in his life where people questioned his identity. He narrates one instance where he was invited to give a lecture on ‘Buddhist Literature and Philosophy’ at a conference. There a member of the audience shouted, “How can a ‘Valmiki’ be allowed to speak on Buddhist literature and philosophy? Aren’t you ashamed?” (Joothan 131) But Valmiki silenced him with his excellent speech on the pervasive spread of casteism in the Hindu society.

Surname of Om Prakash, i.e. ‘Valmiki’ often laid hindrances in the smooth running of his career as well as position in the society and ultimately his persistence paid off but still the hurt remains and in an interrogative mode, he puts this question before the reader “Why is my caste my only identity? What historical reasons lie behind this hatred and malice?” (Joothan 134)

Valmiki had been insulted everywhere because of his ‘Chuhra’ tag. He states, “The last part of my name which is also called the surname, has landed me in a lot of dire situations because of its function as a marker of caste.” (Joothan 127) Some of Valmiki’s friends considered his surname of signifier of a courageous act, “When untouchable, a person from a caste considered low, uses his caste name as his surname, with a feeling of self-assertion, he is being very brave.” But one gentleman commented, “What is so brave about that?...After all he is a Chuhra. His surname spares us the
hassle of asking what is caste is.” (Joothan 124) He proudly talks about the surname in these lines:

This surname is now an indispensable part of my name. Omprakash has no identity without it. ‘Identity’ and ‘recognition’, the two words say a lot by themselves. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was born in a Dalit family. But Dr. B. R. Ambedkar signifies a Brahmin caste name; it was a pseudonym given by a Brahmin teacher of his. When joined with ‘Bhimrao’ however it becomes his identity, completely changing its meaning in the process. Today ‘Bhimrao’ has no meaning without ‘Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. (Joothan 132)

Valmiki reveals the incident of indiscrimination and his experience at Tyagi Inter College in Muzaffarnagar. There Phool Singh Tyagi was the physical education teacher. Mr. Tyagi punished the children for silly reasons. Once Ram Singh, a Churha by caste, was severely punished by Phool Singh, “Abey brother-in-law, progeny of a Churha, let me know when you die. You think you are a hero. Today I am going to draw oil from tresses.” (Joothan 47) Though all the other teachers and the Principal were watching the scene, no one stopped Phool Singh because they could not worry about the Churha boy.

In 1965, when Valmiki was in class eleven, Naraendra Kumar Tyagi was appointed as a lecturer of Mathematics. Once Narendra Kumar Tyagi asked Valmiki to go and bring him a glass of water from the pitcher. Valmiki said to him, “Master Saheb, I am not permitted even to touch those pitchers. Please send someone else.” As the master asked for reason, Valmiki replied quietly, “I belong to the Churha caste.” And he continued, “If you still want me to get you water, I will go.” (Joothan 64-65) The master said, “No, sit down”, and went himself to get water. Valmiki opines that the teacher was a coward and did not have courage to drink the water from his hand. At every step, Valmiki had to face discrimination and discouragement, “Whenever I asked question to my teachers, I was punished, they beat me up, gave me lower marks in the examinations.” (Joothan 62)

The Dalit writer like Valmiki has produced Dalit consciousness in his literary creations. In fact, Joothan is a saga of Dalit consciousness which represents pain, rebellion and rehabilitation of Dalits in the existing social order. The basic impulse behind Dalit literature is an awareness of the social injustice and rebellion against it.

Narendra Jadhav (b. 1953) is a noted Indian bureaucrat, economist, social scientist, writer and educationist. He has published his autobiography *Outcaste: A Memoir* in English in 2003. Jadhav was born in a Dalit family in Mumbai. His books *Monetary Economics for India* (1994) and *Challenge to Indian Banking: Competition, Globalization and Financial Markers* (1996) are popular works on Economics.

The novel is a dramatic piece of writing that forces us to acknowledge the inhumanity and injustice of a social order that treats humans worse than animals. It is an expanded version of Narendra Jadhav’s best-selling Marathi novel *Amcha Baap Aan Amhi*, meaning ‘Our Father and Us’ written in 1993.

*Outcaste*, published in the context of globalization and the internationalization of the caste question in 1990s. The new visibility of Dalits and the debate on caste in the global arena created a new interest in Dalits and their literature. Jadhav says:

There is widespread interest in Dalit writing now, all over the world. The upsurge is not because it is politically correct but because people want to know more about the lives of these whom they knew so little. I was amazed at the range of questions about the caste system that were raised during my public interactions in different parts of France. (Anand 31)

This novel is a journey of finding out remedies to trespass the boundaries of caste and gender. It is comparable to Malcolm X’s *Roots* and Maxim Gorky’s *Mother* in which history and human relations play vital role to educating oneself. Jadhav’s *Outcaste* represents the struggle of the Dalits against caste discrimination, illiteracy and poverty. Having the weapons of education, empowerment and democracy, Damu, the protagonist and his wife Sonu fought for self-assertion and self-respect which are denied to them for hundreds of years. It is not the life story of Damu and Sonu; a story of all the Dalits in the world.

It is the story of the metamorphosis of Dalits in the context of the social movement of his father led by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. It narrates from the perspective of his father, mother, himself and his teenage daughter. In his author’s note, Jadhav describes Damu, the central character of his memoir, in these words:

Damu was a leader…but he is refused to define himself by circumstances and aimed at shaping his own destiny. Damu had no formal education. Yet he steered his children to educational heights and inculcated in them the spirit of excellence. Damu was not a guru…but he taught his children to believe in
themselves and retain human dignity. Damu was often humbled …yet he maintained, ‘Goats are special offerings, not lions’. Damu was an ordinary man, they said …yet he did an extraordinary things: he stood up against the tyranny of the caste system. (Outcaste 11-12)

These lines are self-explanatory. One may describe Damu as one of the few assertive, independent Dalit characters in Indian writing in English. In the opening pages of Outcaste, we see Damu doing his Yeskar duties (village duties to Mahars) in his native village, Ozar. When his causing reminds him that Damu is violating a tradition of Yeskar duty, Damu speaks out: “…In spite of these inhuman traditions, I am not going to abide by such traditions. I am a man of dignity and I will not go from house to house begging for Baluta. What are all of going to do? Kill me?” (Outcaste 10)

Outcaste: A Memoir presents the personal anger and anguish of Jadhav. It is a saga of the signs of untouchables who are denied from the right of self-survival. The texture of the text has developed through the consciousness of Damu, who had assigned the duty of Yeskar. In spite of his sincerity, senior revenue officer humiliates him calls him ‘son of bitch’. Jadhav asserts that monopoly on economic resources and language dynamics are often used to impose the caste binarism in society. Damu had given the duty to guard a dead body floating in the well. Damu used to keep awake and protect the dead body. He was bearing the pain of his hunger and thirst without expressing it. Gradually his suppressions transform into his furry and he raises the voice of rebellion. Namya, his co-partner consoles him, “What did they care if a Mahar lived or starved or even died? All they were concerned about were the high born.” (Outcaste 06) Damu denies to tolerating the politics of discrimination because he had already seen the cosmopolitan culture of Mumbai. The city life of Mumbai has brought ‘touchability’ into his life along with an awareness of his rights as human being. Damu is subjugated but he is not insensitive. He is capable enough to realize his position. Instead of yielding to the forces of oppression, he adopts the path of resistance against the authority and brutality of Fauzdar. Damu denies to bring corpse out of well and declares, “How can I get the corpse out? The dead belongs to the high castses.” (Outcaste 07)

Damu rejects the external definitions of his identity as a Mahar, and represent himself as ‘a man of dignity’. The character of Narendra Jadhav is again that of an assertive, self-made Dalit in the text. He inherited the philosophy of his father that a
human being is a master of his own will. He asserts, “If others look down on me in their belief that my caste is low, it is their problem, not mine. I certainly don’t need to torment myself over it. I pity them, for they are the victims of their own obsolete prejudices.”  (*Outcaste* 11)

Damu, Sonu and Narendra belong to the Mahar caste among the untouchable castes in Maharashtra. They become Dalits in Mumbai with their participation in the Ambedkar social movement. As Sonu puts it:

Truly, we sensed a change in the way carried ourselves. We proudly proclaimed ourselves Dalits, with our chip up, and we looked everyone in the eye. We began to lose our former servility, associated with being born in a low caste.  (*Outcaste* 178)

Damu dreams of Mumbai as ‘a heaven.’ His journey from his village Ozar to Mumbai is described a journey ‘towards Freedom.’ Narendra Jadhav walked out of ‘the morass of untouchability, illiteracy and backwardness.’ Let us have a look at the identity claims of Narendra Jadhav and his daughter Apoorva:

Yes, I do come from the Mahar caste. Yes my father was an illiterate lowly employee doing menial jobs to earn a square meal for the family. Yes my forefathers were required to wear clay pots around their necks to keep their spit from polluting the ground and the brooms were tied to their rumps to obliterate their footprints as they walked.

Yes, as village servants, my forefathers were mercilessly forced to run…human pilots, foaming at the mouth under the scorching sun, to herald the carriages of government officials.

So what? Have I not reclaimed my dignity through my achievement? Why should the caste into which I was born count now?  (*Outcaste* 207)

Apoorva, Jadhav’s daughter claims, “Now I think I know who I am. I am just Apoorva, not tied ‘down by race, religion, or caste’.”  (*Outcaste* 263) This is the term of Dalit consciousness or emancipation in the context of globalization. The realization of human dignity grips the consciousness of Damu. He exhorts, “We must have self-respect. We must have dignity as human beings. How can I take to begging from door to door? Baluta is my right, they probably claim; my food. Have you seen how they throw the food? I don’t want rights as dogs, I want my human rights.”  (*Outcaste* 96)

Jadhav explores how social injustice in the name of caste makes permanent impression on human consciousness. The encounter with Fauzdar was a significant
event and it distorted the consciousness of Damu. He became almost a rebel. He identifies himself with the ideologies of Ambedkar’s clarion call to recollect the inner strength of his will to challenge the oddities of human existence. He recalls the words of Dr. Ambedkar, “Lost rights are never regained by begging and by appeals to the conscience of usurpers, but by the relentless struggle. Goats are used for sacrificed offerings and not lions.” (Keer 82)

In Mumbai Damu refers to one particular incident when in a local train, a beautiful Anglo-Indian woman offered him to sit. The sahib requested him to sit next to him. This experience strengthened Damu’s vision about the lifestyle in Mumbai and helped him to redefine his self and identity. He asserts that to abolish the pain of untouchability, it is essential to inculcate confidence in them by acknowledging not only their identity but also their humanity. Damu reveals his inner consciousness:

My lowly place was so deeply etched in my mind that when I was treated well, I could not believe it. I thought there was something wrong. After much thought, I reasoned that perhaps Saheb did not allow that I was an untouchable. (Outcaste 96)

In this novel, Jadhav tells the awe-inspiring story of his family’s struggle for equality and justice in India. While most Dalits had accepted their lowly position as fate, Damu rebelled against the oppressive caste system and fought against all odds to forge for his children a destiny that was never ordained. It is a story of survival, of oppressive as grievous as slavery or apartheid, and of victory, as the others get an education and learns to embrace his identity and became a spokesperson for his community.

Jadhav in his personalized saga of social metamorphosis of Dalits named Outcaste: A Memoir shows the experience of his illiterate parents Damu and Sonu who come from Mahar community in Maharashtra. It also exhibits their struggle and consciousness in such a social condition.

Arvind Adiga’s The White Tiger (2008)

Arvind Adiga, recipient of Booker Prize, was born 23 October 1974 in Madras (now Chennai), India. He has written three novels. The White Tiger (2008) Between the Assassinations (2008) and Last Man in the Tower (2011) His very first and Booker prize winning novel depicts the contradiction in the early free Indian villages.
Adiga’s *The White Tiger* is the most heart rendering picture of imbalanced societies in India. The novel specially refers to the cultural and social issues of marginal groups in the early free Indian villages. They always suffer for their daily bread and butter. They are usually discriminated ignored and often suppressed on the base of race, gender, culture, religion, ethnicity, occupation, education and economy by the mainstream.

Adiga very cleverly presents a brutal view of India’s class struggles. The novel *The White Tiger* is the story of a poor boy Munna, who never get even name from his parents because they had not time to give identification to their children. When a school Teacher asks the name to him, he was unable to answer to tell his proper name:

“Didn’t your mother name you?”
‘She’s very ill sir. She lies in bed and spews blood. She has go no time to name.’
‘And your father’
He’s a rickshaw-puller, sir.
He’s got no time to name me.’ (WT 13)  
*The White Tiger* is all about Dalit consciousness in which Balram, the protagonist, narrates his life story to Mr. Wen Jaiabao, the premier of China, in seven nights from his desk, which is a revolt of a deprived against the mainstream of society and social values, made by the power centre. The protagonist, Balram is the rickshaw puller Vikram Halwai’s son born in dark corner of India, in Laxmangarh, in district of Gaya. Balram is a name given by his school teacher Krishna, on his first day of schooling.

Balram is called the White Tiger from his school days for his right answers to the school inspector’s question, “what is the rarest animals-the creature that comes along only once in a generation?” (WT 55) In the human jungle of darkness Balram really appears as White Tiger and tries to fulfil his father’s ambition by learning reading and writing. He remembers his father who had a desire not to see him as, “a human beast of burden.” (WT 27) Balram left going to school as the boys teased, ragged and scared him with a lizard while the teacher snored at his desk. The father realizes the importance of education, as he must have suffered as an illiterate man. To settle the matter, the father goes to school and finds the teacher lying in one corner stinking of booze and snoring loudly. Near him was a pot of toddy he had drunk the last night. In spite of being praised by the school inspector and given the name White Tiger,
circumstances drive him to be a coal breaker and he says, “One infallible law of life in
the darkness is that good news becomes bad news - and so on.” (WT 36)

The Dalit people have never been treated as human being since ages in India. Only because of his low birth, Balram was also treated as animal since his childhood to his grand success as entrepreneur in Bangalore. Mostly such treatment is given to him by the landlords such as Mr. Mukesh and Stork. The rich expect their pets to be treated as humans, they expect their human beings. Repressed are always deviant in front of their masters and their pets. Balram describes how he takes dogs for walk, “Then I took then around the compound on chain, while the king of Nepal (Watchman) sat in a corner and shouted. Don’t pull the chain so hard! They are worth more than you are!” (WT 78)

Through *The White Tiger*, Adiga rightly gives a message that the Dalits are still waiting for their rights and betterment. If the suppression and domination may continue, they can take turn to become criminals. The aim of the life of these people is to make “all is well” for their community and entire humanity. Neeta Yadav points out:

The novel is the story of a poor boy who is later changed into a servant class hero, a murderer and an entrepreneur. *The White Tiger*, the name of the novel, a title has given to Balram for his intelligence by a school inspector. The novel presents the consciousness of Dalits and also many problems facing by Dalits. Dowry, basic education system in villages, inhumanity of doctors for patients in the government hospitals, casteism, religionism, terrorism, bribe, prostitution, are some problems, that are making hollow the root of nation.”(Yadav 269)

Adiga presents in the novel the Indian typical villages having no facilities like electricity, water tap, telephones or nutritious diet, education, medical for poor people. As Adiga writes in the novel:

Electricity poles-defunct
Water tap-broken
Children-too learn and short for their age, and with oversize heads from which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty conscience of the government of India. (WT 20)

Adiga, like Mulk Raj Anand and Premchand, is passionately concerned with the hardships of life of villages, their poverty, squalor and backwardness coupled with gross ignorance and the cruelties of caste. In the novel, he tries to attack upon social snobberies and caste prejudice, the struggle of poor for a better life. The caste and
religion prejudice forced people to change their name to get any job as in the novel, when first driver caught Muslim, being a good driver he has to leave the job as Balram says, “I thought, what a miserable life he’s had, having to hide his religion, his name, just to get a job as a diver, and he is a good driver, no question of it.” (WT 110) The driver knows that the owners do not allow him for further service because he is a Muslim. Such kind of caste prejudice is always an obstacle in the development of the good nation.

When Dalits face so much inhumanities and discriminations, there will be definitely a revolt against the oppressors but the revolt of Balram is not right when he kills his master for money. He says, “I was a driver to master, but now I am a master of drivers. I don’t treat like servants. I don’t slap, or bully, or mock any one. I don’t insult any of them by calling them my ‘family’, either. They are any employees. I’m their boss, that’s all.” (WT 302) Balram knows very well the Indian legal system in which criminals walk and talk freely in society and innocent are to keep in jails. So he doesn’t hesitate to kill his master.

Through the protagonist, Adiga has narrated some fundamental problems of the Dalit class. The class and caste system is still prominent and a major obstacle in India’s progress presenting the facts about India. Adiga holds, “a mirror to realities.”(Deshpande1)

Adiga never mentions Dr. Ambedkar whereas he mentions Mahatma Gandhi in a disparaging way. The Brahmin of this novel has no clue about Dalits of northern India and how much the Dalits venerate Dr. Ambedkar who taught the mantra to Indians ‘educate, organize and agitate.’ But this novel does not contain any elements of Dalit mantra. The Dalit hero, Balram Halwai is uneducated and there is no effort or striving among his community towards education. They seem to be happy in their illiteracy and their impending destiny of lifelong slavery.

Thus, The White Tiger is neither empowering nor can it emancipate Dalits. In short, it is just a piece of junk written by the non-Dalit writer.
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