Chapter 5

Scavenging and Civil Society

Introduction

Scavenging originated from the caste system in Telangana, as explained in the 3rd chapter “caste and scavenging in Telangana”; the idea of condemning Dalits into scavenging is a tool of oppression to deem Dalits as sub humans and to relegate them to the bottom of the caste society. As observed in one of the incidents in the chapter, a landlord forced a Dalit, Madiga Bakka Lachaiah to clean human excreta with his bare hands even when there was no need for scavenging work. The landlord produced the need for scavenging by defecating in the very place where he was sitting and asked Lachaiah to remove it. It was simply to humiliate the latter because he was a Madiga. Therefore, the activists who are engaged in fighting against manual scavenging have defined scavenging as slavery and refuse to call it work or job or profession or occupation. This chapter will explain how caste based society in Telangana has understood this modern slavery of scavenging, what actually constitutes the civil society in Telangana and how it has intervened and responded through activism to issues of scavenging in the state.

This chapter is divided into five sections 1) Civil society in Telangana 2) Civil society and Dalits 3) Civil society and understanding of scavenging 4) Dalit movement and scavenging 5) Dalit NGOs and scavenging

5.1. Civil Society in India

The Word Web dictionary says “civil” means “Not rude; marked by satisfactory (or especially minimal) adherence to social usages and sufficient but not noteworthy consideration for others, it also says, of or relating to or befitting citizens as individuals” and there is no generally accepted definition for the term “civil society”. The London school of Economics, Centre for Civil Society's working definition is one clarifying example:
“Civil society refers to the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interest, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development of non-government organizations, faith based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups”.

In general, a civil society is a society of civilized individuals, which treats its members equally and does not discriminate people on any grounds and works for the similar interests, because a group of individuals cannot be called as civilized without it recognising the other human as being equal. The concept of “Civil Society” is old but recently it has been in the news across the world because of the collapse of Communism and the democratic openings in East Europe and the recent trends in the Middle East. The term Civil Society is in the news in India recently, after the so-called anti-corruption movement was started by some individuals who claimed them to be representatives of civil society. Contemporary historians and political analysts have described civil society as “the ultimate third way” of governing a society.

However, we cannot say that a civil society has today emerged in India, or at least we cannot say that the Indian civil society is free from caste biases and except for a few individuals, nothing and none is free from caste in India including all progressive movements and discourses. In a situation of caste, religion and economic inequalities, it is difficult to name the Indian society as civil society. It is important to remember that Dalits, the people who are relegated to the bottom of the society and forced into modern forms of slavery i.e. scavenging have to say about the “Civil Society” in India.

---

On 23rd November 2010, a round table conference was organised in Hyderabad by all Dalit NGOs in the context of the continuing atrocities on Dalits even after 20 years of the passing of the SC/ST POA Act, 1989. Non-Dalit NGOs, Police officers, IAS officers, lawyers and activists also participated in this meeting. One of the speakers, Korivi Vinay Kumar, the president of the Dalit Bahujan Front, which is an organisation working in the Telugu states against atrocities on Dalits said “There is no civil society in India; caste society is not civil society – it is criminal society by its nature”.  

What then was the basis of the argument made by the Dalit activist? When it comes to Dalit issues, the upper caste people who talk about progressive ideologies mobilise against Dalits, irrespective of their political or social affiliations. There may however be a few exceptions to this pattern.

The civil societies across all political, socio-economic formations are dominated by Savarna Brahmanical castes, who inherently maintain their caste privileges and discriminate against Dalits, reject Dalits’ aspirations and participation in society. This is because the civil society in India never really takes into consideration anti-caste perspective as a discourse for the formation of a civil society. Instead, the so-called civil society upholds the Gandhian ideals; as observed in the earlier chapters, Gandhi endorsed the Chaturvarnya system of social hierarchy and advocated for caste-based occupations, scavenging and other menial works to only Dalits, although he himself transcended his own caste-based occupation as a trader to become a lawyer and a politician.

Gandhi as image and Gandhian ideologies as a nationalist ideology are propagated and practiced as a form of civil society across all the political spectrums and state operations. Here is an example as to how Gandhi has been elevated as an upholder of civic values. According to Sumit Pathak,

---

Korivi Vinay Kumar, in his speech in the workshop on Atrocities on Dalits and civil society response, on 23rd November, 2010, in Hyderabad
“Gandhi never talked about civil society explicitly but his action of including all in the society and respecting each others views made him an exponent of civil society in India. His ashram society and fight against social evils based on civic virtues created a civil society in India. His concept of civil society is very different from the western concept because he always made a critique to modernization. The civic virtues like toleration, mutual respect, self-sacrifice are the basic tenets of Gandhi's civil society. His concept of civil society is based on live-and-let-live where the violence between groups would be ended”.

Here the author has completely missed the point that Gandhi advocated for the caste-based occupation to the Dalits.

Therefore, the “Indian civil society” has never been sensitive or civil towards the issues of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, religious minorities and other marginalized groups in India. In addition, it has failed to respond to the problems faced by the Northeast and the people of Kashmir and the police atrocities on Adivasis in Central India. The civil society in fact opposes caste-based reservations to marginalised communities.

As rightly observed by Elizabeth Abraham in a paper titled “Locating Dalit Rights Concerns in Civil Society Initiatives in India”, “Issues of discrimination and deprivation, the core concerns of the Dalit communities were never a prime concern in the civil society or a prime focus of Indian politics.”

This uncivilized face of the Indian civil society is better exposed in Dilip Bobb’s article, “In search of a Civil Society” according to which,

---

“Civil society is not inherently virtuous; it is fractured from within and embraces a wide range of people and organizations, which makes it difficult to define. In India, it can embrace spiritual gurus with vast followings and agendas of their own, NGOs, environmentalists, voluntary agencies with political affiliations, corporates on a social responsibility trip, celebrities looking for free publicity and those who are loosely termed social activists. And then of course, there are the largely anonymous claimants comprising students, teachers, executives, retirees, housewives, etc. What they all have in common is that they are all members of the civil society. That actually is the paradox. Civil society is a one-size-fits-all description but it is hard to define because it is so diffuse.”  

Simply to define civil society, it is a “third sector” separate from the government and business. Therefore, the civil society refers to the so-called intermediary institutions like professional associations, religious groups, and labour unions, NGOs, which can influence all sectors of society and improve public participation in democracies.

Gramsci uses the analogy of civil society as a system of trenches and redoubts surrounding the state. However, all political attempts by the underprivileged classes—castes in the Indian context—to overcome the barriers are drowned by the development sector that claims for itself the status of the civil society. Does the civil society, popularly understood as the NGO sector, act as the entry point of marginalized sections into better social positions? We need to think about this aspect seriously because those who were fed up by the government and corporate sector have been increasingly turning towards the development sector because it appears “modern”, politically correct, without realizing that in fact it can be equally hegemonic. The hegemony of the civil

---

society is nowhere more visible than in its attempts to reinforce the existing social norms of hierarchy in their day-to-day activities. It is starkly visible in their staffing practices, which prefer people of privileged backgrounds, especially in important positions.

As Ambedkar observed, the idea of charity in India itself is caste-ridden:

“Go into the field of charity. With one or two exceptions, all charity in India is communal. If a Parsi dies, he leaves his money for Parsis. If a Jain dies, he leaves his money for Jains. If a Marwadi dies, he leaves his money for Marwadis. If a Brahmin dies, he leaves his money for Brahmins. Thus, there is no room for the downtrodden and the outcastes in politics, in industry, in commerce, and in education.”

Now the international charity organizations that set up their offices in India continue the same old idea of charity by which their own kith and kin benefit; not the downtrodden people of India.

The lack of access to resources and opportunities for the underprivileged castes and classes in the NGO sector is the result of deep-rooted prejudices, which the powerful privileged castes carry along with themselves. The more they claim to adhere to the values of equal opportunity and inclusion in the language of modernity, the less is the possibility of them identifying and overcoming their own biases. Civil society was always seen as the theatre of all forms of power politics, as per the Gramscian understanding. However, the term is now colonized by NGOs who claim to represent all progressive values; but in fact, they have been reinforcing hegemonic values that suppress the marginalized. Historically, the movements of the

---

underprivileged have generated many democratic values, but in practice, the NGOs have appropriated them.

The majority of NGOs are headed by individuals from Brahmanical dominant castes who claim international funding that serve only their own interests. It was proved at the time of the tsunami in Tamil Nadu, many orthodox NGOs headed by upper castes did not extend their help to Dalit victims and they asked Dalits to vacate the rehabilitation camps. This was because the upper caste tsunami victims did not want to co-habit with the untouchables in the rehabilitation camps.

In India, the civil society only talks about the issues of the elite and it never addresses the problems of marginalized communities. Sunitha Narain says,

“In the US, the middle class comprises a key component of civil society. It has been in the forefront of major campaigns including the way garbage is collected from homes. However, in India the situation is very different. Take the example of the rag picker. How concerned is civil society about this situation? Who is speaking on his behalf? Everyone here follows the NIMBY (not in my backyard) principle. We don’t want something uncomfortable to happen in our own backyards.”

However, her arguments only consist of half-truths, since the rag pickers and other menial work based labourers, including scavengers in India have a common social background that of oppression based on caste. There are no Brahmanical dominant caste people in rag picking and scavenging works. Therefore, the civil society, which consist of groups of upper castes never address the issue of rag picking and scavenging as an issue of concern for civil society but reinforces the same Gandhian idea, that it is the duty of

---

8Sunita Narain, *civil society is a cacophony not a orchestra*, available at http://infochangeindia.org/agenda/civil-society/civil-society-is-a-cacophony-not-an-orchestra.html, seen on 7th January 2016
Dalits to clean the garbage. This was seen in the case of Anna Hazare movement against corruption in 2011.

5.1.1. Roots of Civil Society in India

Civil society theory is not merely descriptive; it has strong normative and political dimensions. Specifically, the theories of civil society recommend forms of associational life that is thought to promote the “civility” of society. It must be remembered that in the Indian subcontinent, the attempt to form a civil society was started centuries ago with Buddhism, with the Buddhist set of norms constituting civility.

“Buddha ensured proper implementation of democracy. He has shown his Buddhist monks congregation as ideal in this regard. Buddha is also a general member in monks circle. There is no special status for Buddha in that circle. If we want any reforms in government machinery, it is customary to consider majority members opinion and implement in accordance with that opinion. Buddha carved and implemented present day system of Speaker, general body, discussion, decision two thousand years before. All the transactions related to public administration were taking place in people’s language.”

The political and economic policies of Buddha have been considered ideal by many. These were elaborated in the book “Kutadantha Sutta.” While addressing a small gathering at a village called Alavi, Buddha said, “The main reason for violence and unrest is hunger. It is the duty of all citizens to confiscate hunger. It is the responsibility of all states of the world that none should suffer from hunger.”

---


10 Ibid
Buddha taught economic policy in public administration to King of Kosala, Prasena Jith. He said,

“Crimes cannot be eradicated by making one suffer or by hanging the criminals. Every individual of the society must be provided with economic security. Employment must be provided to everyone. Farmers should be in a state of producing enough food for the society. Pensions are to be provided for senior citizens. Taxes should not be imposed on the poor. No restrictions, pressures and oppressions are to be imposed on workers and labourers. Training must be given to individuals in different professions according to their interest. The rulers should lead a simple idealistic life by keeping away from all luxuries and extravagance. The leader should garner the blessings from the people and not the money. In this way make people follow your path.”

In the context of foreign relations Buddha said,

“Your state may not be in a secured state when your neighbouring state is suffering with instability and insecurity. When you come to a proper understanding with your neighbouring state, then everyone can live with peace and prosperity. You should show kindness to the people of your neighbouring state in par with your own people.”

What Buddha said about the economy, equality, foreign relations and democratic system are foundations to the formation of a civil society, but after the decline of Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent, Brahmanism and its caste system have spread across the country which is totally against the spirit of “Civil Society”.

The role of the civil society is to ensure the smooth functioning of democracy, but it is now difficult to expect it from the Indian civil society, which is in itself formed and operated according to caste lines and divided along caste lines. Many of the so-called leaders of the Indian civil society believe and practice caste system in their life. However, caste which preaches

\[11\] Ibid
\[12\] Ibid
hierarchy and discrimination should ideally become grounds for the formation of a civil society.

5.1.2. Civility of Indian Society Today

The modernity of a society should be calculated through the lens of cleanliness and hygiene of the public places, the public toilets and toilets in the institutions. Toilet is a private space where one expresses oneself freely. Be it in showing a sense of belongingness or in the outpouring of creativity in its rawest best. The civic sense, drawings, the abuses, or other writings in these public spaces speak a lot about the people using them. The real test of integrity is how people act when no one is watching them. The style of usage of public places reveals the mind-set of the people and that reflects the overall civility of society. It shows that the users of those public places and toilets very well know that they are not going to clean them; they know that there are other people who clean up after them, that is the Dalits. This show humane and civil people are. Many civil society groups including the civic bodies of the governments preach cleanliness and hygiene. Most of the private corporate institutions mention in their toilets, „Please do not spit pan masala or chewing gums in to the toilets, a human hand needs to clean it“. In spite of the patronizing nature of the message itself, we will still find 'educated' and 'sophisticated' people spitting gutka, pan masala, chewing gum etc. in to the toilets. This shows the apathy of elite Indians.

5.1.3. Uncivilised Caste in a Civilized Mask

If the individuals belonging to the Brahmanical dominant castes are confused by someone's surname, or lack of it, and are unable to locate the caste location, they follow with a sequence of questions to know the caste location of the person. In the villages, if anybody wants to know someone's caste, they openly ask the person about it, but in urban spaces, people try to infer the caste of the other through elaborate questions instead of asking them about their caste identity directly. Some of the questions are given below but are not limited to them.
Common question is 'what is your surname? This is because surname is a reliable source to identify one's caste. If information about the surname is not available then they will ask for father's name and occupation. If it is still unclear, then they will ask about the village and ask where their house is located in the village. If it is still unclear, then they will attempt to make social connections with other members of the village with questions such as, “do you know this man, and how you are related to this man?

If the man wants to know whether the other is a Brahmin or not, they ask, "when was your upanayana (thread ceremony) performed"? This ritual is specific to Brahmin males only and if the man is unable to answer about the upanayana, they suspect that that man is not a Brahmin. One can identify upper-castes especially through caste symbols such as the sacred thread, customs and traditions.

According to the Hindu Brahmanical ideology, few dominant castes in the Backward Classes lists think that they are superior to SC/ST and Minorities. In addition, those BCs discriminate against SCs, STs and attempt to interact with Brahmanical dominant castes. The Minority communities, Muslims and Christians and others think that the SCs and STs are “others” and that the former are superior. They also think that they are not Dalits, and hesitate to associate with Dalits and Dalit movements. As observed in the above chapters, some of the indigenous communities, in the list of scheduled tribes also discriminate against the Scheduled Castes. We also see that the Adivasis own some extent of land although they are not part of the villages. Many Adivasis are now known to imitate the village dominant castes. Even though they have different kinds of problems with the upper castes they never identify with Dalits. They also try to interact with upper castes and look down upon Dalits. It is precisely because Dalits do not have lands. However, all the Brahmanical dominant castes look down upon and discriminate against the SCs, STs, BCs and Minorities.
If an atrocity takes place, the Dalits come out on the roads for all these communities. Dalits fight for themselves and for others. However, when there are atrocities on Dalits, it is considered only an issue that concerns Dalits and no other community comes forward to fight along. This is the social condition in Telangana regulated by caste Hindu hierarchy as an ideology and practice. Any socio-economic, cultural and political formation is not different from the above situation. Because of this situation the emergence of a civil society is complicated.

5.2. Telangana Civil Society

After the formation of the Telangana state, we find large numbers of NRTs (Non Resident Telanganites) speaking about the development Telangana state. There is no issue that is uncovered in their debates. They debate on every issue under the sun that is, beginning from irrigation projects, education system, and village development to human behaviour etc. They refuse to talk about caste, or about the dignity and progress of Dalits. They advise the government on what to do, what not to do; if one imagines this as civil society interventions for the development of society, then, it is a civil society that excludes Dalits.

The Telangana region has seen massive communist armed struggles since the pre-independence times, against Nizams from 1946 to 1951 in which the marginalised communities organised against the local landlords and Nizam agents. It has seen another active communist Naxalite movement since 1967, which even now has presence in the Telangana region. According to an India Today news article, "Six of the Maoists' most important leaders including their chief, Muppalla Lakshmana Rao alias Ganapathy, come from a quaint knot of towns and villages of Karimnagar district, 160 km north of Hyderabad." Apart from these radical left movements, which have been closely associated with the people of Telangana, there have been other

---

mainstream communist parties, who are now participating in the elections.

There has been no dearth of progressive movements in the Telangana region in the last century, beginning from Bagyareddy Varma, who led a movement for the upliftment of Dalits in the 19th century. He started the Adi Hindu Social Service League in 1907. Though Telangana has seen all types of progressive movements and discourses over a century, caste and its social practices have remained become more visible. Progressive discourses and movements have failed to create an effective anti-caste civil society, because their actions are based on received ideas, which are then implemented without consideration of the local social structure that is the caste system. The Brahmanical dominant castes have become communist leaders by default due to their social location as upper castes and because of English education. They have begun representing the Bahujan masses, turning the latter into mere consumers of knowledge, and by denying them the right to produce and disseminate them. And at the same time, the core social issue of Dalits and other marginalised communities who have been denied education and self-respect is not considered as an issue by upper caste communist leaders. It is this situation that has resulted in continuation of caste in newer forms, in all progressive discourses, organizations and movements. Nothing can be said to be free from casteism today.

Brahmins and their allied caste oppressors have become the leaders of progressive politics by hiding their oppressive cultural beliefs and practices in the name of personal life, and their presence in the progressive movement ruthlessly suppresses ideas of Dalit empowerment, leave alone the question of emancipation and establishment of an equal society. The dominant castes have denied Dalits their proper representation in so-called progressive forums and platforms. The left progressive movements continue glorifying Marx and Engels but never read and propagate the anti-caste ideas of Ambedkar, Phule and Kanshiram.

Late Dasarathi Rangacharya was a well-known writer and poet in Telugu states, was involved in the Communist movement in 1948. After
coming out of the Communist Party, he was introduced to Ramayana, and from then onwards he began preaching the values of Ramayana instead of Marxism. He further said, "Ramayana overrides Communism, Marxism influenced my writings on Ramayana and Vedas". Many communist leaders from the dominant castes have a similar understanding of communism. This led to the utter failure of practicing the tenets of progressive politics. The Ramayana and Mahabharata were the epics that kept the caste order intact. Rama killed Shanbuka because the latter read the Vedas. Shanbuka was an untouchable and according to the Brahmin Dharma, untouchables are not allowed to read Vedas. These cultural values have been propagated by Brahmanical communists as well as right wing intellectuals. It gives us a clue as to how communism is pursued by Brahmins and their allied dominant castes. Rangacharya was the writer of Vedas, Upanishads, Bharatha's, and many other Hindu texts and they were published by Vishalandhra publishing house owned by the Communist Party of India (CPI).

The educated employed sections of Brahmanical feudal dominant castes enjoy the privileges of all progressive politics and the status of a civil society. For example, traders and business association (Vyapara, Varthaka Vanijya Sangham) and doctors’ associations, engineers’ associations, officers’ associations, teachers’ associations etc. in any town in Telangana claims that it is casteless and talks about the well-being of society through its charitable approaches. But in reality the social location they maintain is certainly not different from their caste locations. Without losing the caste based privileges and without breaking their linkages from caste networks, no dominant caste individual can civilise and form a civil society that includes their association with Dalits.

Left intellectuals continue to dismiss the assertions of Dalits as casteist and communal while maintaining their respective caste privileges and associations. They also dismiss the intellectual credibility of Dalit and

---

marginalised communities. The upper caste intellectuals avoid Dalit articulation of caste because they question the past and present caste privileges of the upper caste progressive left intellectuals. Malli Subbarao, a social activist belonging to the Vaddera nomad community says,

"For the dominant caste communists, the history of caste starts from the Muslim invasion and reaches its climax with colonial rulers and Christians, because they are within the frame in the real history of caste that starts from the pre-Rig Veda regime, where the Indo-European (Aryan) invasion started on the Austro-Asians and Negrotoid people, the ethnic people of India. It is very convenient to blame the Muslims or Christians who actually perpetuated the system created by Indo-European Aryans".  

5.2.1. Civility of Telangana Movement

Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) joined the separate Telangana movement in 2002. Before his joining, the separate Telangana movement was headed and propagated by only left wing intellectuals, and their frontal organisations. With KCR joining the separate Telangana movement and the formation of the Telangana Rastra Samithi (TRS), a mainstream political party, many feudal dominant caste leaders started joining the Telangana movement and the TRS party. There were lots of debates and criticisms against the joining of feudal leaders in the movement, since there would always be the risk of the movement becoming status quoist for the benefit of the feudal Reddys, Velama and Brahman castes in Telangana. Now it is realized that how with the formation of a separate Telangana state has resulted in the transfer of state power to the Telangana dominant castes and the atrocities on Dalits have also drastically increased since then.

Post-independence, the first generation of feudal landlords became MLAs, MPs and leaders in all political parties, be it Congress, the Communist parties, BJP, or regional parties such as TDP (Telugu Desham Party) and TRS

---

15Malli Subba Rao, interviewed by Karthik Navayan 20th November 2015 in Hyderabad
Many of the first generation feudal landlords also became IAS, IPS, lawyers, doctors, engineers and other professionals. Except for those who were in politics, the others left villages due to the Naxalite movement and settled in cities such as Hyderabad, or migrated to western countries such as America, Canada, Australia and UK with the advantage of modern education. The second generation also became doctors, engineers and other professionals apart from being in politics. The third generation of feudal castes are not much aware about Telangana villages because most of them were born and brought up in either foreign countries or in metro cities; they are mostly into software and other modern professions. One needs to be aware of the cultural differences between societies in foreign countries and feudal societies such as Telangana.

The first generation of feudal families enjoyed the exploitation of Dalits and marginalised communities in Telangana villages with the practice of Vetti, bonded labour and Jogini. Those were the times when no one from the marginalised communities dared to wear shoes and rumal (the traditional head dress of man) before the feudal landlords. When feudal landlord enters into the village, the people of marginalised communities are required to remove their shoes and their rumal. They are compelled to stand and fold their hands. In foreign societies, the situation is completely different. In this context, famous Dalit song writer Guda Anjanna (The song he wrote was Ooru manadira- this village is ours) explained the attitude of the Telangana feudal dominant castes and their participation in the separate Telangana movement.

Anjanna spoke to me, "A first generation man (grandfather) from a feudal family from Telangana visited his grandson in America. The grandson took him around in America in a big and expensive car, and they partook of all the modern facilities there. One fine day the grandson told his grandfather, 'you are lucky to have your grandson, me, in America; I have shown you many things here in addition to going around in a big car and living in a big bungalow with all modern facilities be proud of this'. The boy repeatedly mentioned this.
The old man, fed up with the comments of his grandson, and said 'I enjoyed more when I was in village than in America. Have you seen anyone folding their hands in respect, or anyone touching your feet here, or standing up on your arrival, or removing their shoes and caps in your presence?’ No, but it was different in my childhood in our villages. Whenever we entered village, everyone used to stand up, remove their shoes and Rumal, and fold their hands in respect. We used to get whatever we wanted free of cost (referring to Vetti, Bonded labour and Jogini system) and that is our background. Now who cares about us here in America, who recognises us here, my life was much better in a Telangana village in comparison to your life in America.

When the grandson expressed his desire to visit the Telangana village, the grandfather replied, "we can visit the village, but those golden years when all the people of the village used to come and work for us free of cost and serve us like our slaves are gone now because of the Naxalite movements. However, the situation has improved after the formation of the Telangana Rastra Samithi; now-a-days when we go back to our villages, people come and pay respect to us”. They both visited their ancestral village, in the capacity of a political leader who was fighting for a separate Telangana. Just as the grandfather had said, all village people arranged welcome banners; people came to their bungalow and paid respect while standing with folded hands, some of the village lower caste people also touched their feet.

The grandson felt happy to see this, and said, "It is nice that a whole village pays attention to us". Said the grandfather replied, "It was much better during my childhood days". The grandson asked, "Is it possible for those old days to return?” to which the grandfather replied "why not, if we get a separate Telangana, we will get our old pride and golden days'. The above story was used by some of the activists to make fun, but that is the truth about Telangana. Feudalism has comeback after the formation of a separate Telangana state and Telangana NRIs want to come back to their villages. This story also tells us about the kind of politics that was played in the Telangana
region in the name of a separate Telangana movement and which eventually led to the formation of the Telangana state.

Some of the well educated people of Telangana from the Brahmanical castes justify the caste discrimination with modern knowledge and logic. Mr K Narasimha Reddy writes "When Aryans conquered Dravidians and ruled over them, might was right. If Dravidians were able to conquer, they would have ruled over Aryans. Brahmins didn't know that untouchability was wrong, and so didn’t my father and grandfather and everyone else at that time. We must not condemn our ancestors for their beliefs.”¹⁶ This is the perceived understanding among the intellectuals of Telangana about caste and untouchability. We may not need to condemn any one because of their beliefs, but we have to differentiate the good from the bad. We have to say what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong in today's context. But the Telangana educated intellectual class needs a developed Telangana without annihilation of caste, without any one questioning their caste privileges and atrocities of their ancestors, which has in effect been reinforcing the age-old caste system in newer forms in modern times.

5.3. Civil Society and Dalits in Telangana

As observed in the above section, there is no civil society in Telangana with regards to the issues of Dalits. The very nature of caste based civil society has been to deny the reality of caste as a social hierarchy, deny the caste based reality all around. In such an understanding, there is no scope to recognize the scavenging roots of the caste system and how the caste system has forced untouchable communities into the slavery of scavenging and the denial of this reality is continuing to force the Dalits into the modern slavery of scavenging in modern institutions.

¹⁶K. Narasimha Reddy, posted in tdf (Telangana Development Forum) charcha group on Wed Oct 28, 2015 under the debate subject Preoccupation of TDF with Aryan and Dravidians
In Telangana, no civil society organisation is led by a Dalit. Whenever a Dalit heads an organisation with considerable Dalit representation, it is by default recognised as a 'Dalit civil society' organisation, but never simply as a 'civil society' organisation, implying that Dalits can only form “Dalit civil society” and cannot be representatives of the “civil society” as a whole. That is why, whenever a Dalit is recognised for his expertise, his intelligence, his hard work, he is recognised as a Dalit first and then his expertise later.

For example, when a Dalit becomes an academician; he will be addressed as a 'Dalit Academician' and if a Dalit becomes an industrialist, he will be called a 'Dalit Industrialist'. If a Dalit becomes an intellectual, he will be called a 'Dalit Intellectual'. If a Dalit becomes a Marxist, he will be called a 'Dalit Marxist'. If a Dalit is a writer, he will be called a 'Dalit writer' and the list goes on in this manner as we see with the case of Dalit professor, Dalit artist, Dalit student, Dalit activist, Dalit singer, Dalit women, Dalit men, Dalit transgender etc. However, the same people never recognise the scavengers as 'Dalit scavengers' because it raises the very basic question of caste which they then need to engage with. Therefore, they are comfortable with hiding the truth about this caste forced scavenging occupation.

The upper caste civil society in Telangana is constituted by the upper caste activists and intellectuals; and works for the interests of the upper castes; starting from anti-corruption to environment protections to pollution control. As usual, these very same people also speak against reservations for SC, ST and BCs. No civil society organisation, the professional bodies, the NGOs have taken up the issue of Dalits. Few of them supported and expressed their solidarity for Dalits when Dalits were attacked and killed by Brahmanical caste Hindus.

The first category of civil society organisations, which include the traditional and charity based organisations, NGOs, trusts, societies and organisations working for animal protection, spirituality etc. are the religious orthodox organisations run by Hindus and Muslims. They have never expressed their willingness to talk about the caste based discrimination on
Dalits. It is only the second category of civil society organisations, mostly the frontal organisations of communist parties, human rights groups and other organisations with political affiliations that form alliances and join the Dalit cause. However none of the organisations recognise scavenging as a forced occupation.

Some of the organisations who are working on farmers' issues merely hold the position of leadership, rather than actually engaging with the welfare of those farmers. An example would be the Telangana Raithu Sangham State President P. Janga Reddy and general secretary B. Chandra Reddy. Both are from dominant feudal landlord caste that is the Reddys. And those organisations who are working for the welfare of the farmers never put the demand of land distribution in their agenda. It is the small and marginal farmers belonging to the SC/ST/BC communities are forced to commit suicide because they do not own land, they cultivate the small lands they own along with the land of landlords which is not in their name, so legally they are not entitled for the loan and subsidies from the banks on those lands and also not entitled to compensation following their suicides. However the landlords claim the benefits of crop loans, subsidies and other benefits in the name of farmers.

There is no civil society to fight against the atrocities on Dalits. The entire onus is on Dalits themselves. There are very few organisations that express solidarity and join Dalits; mostly they are the frontal organisations of the Naxalite and Communist parties. This collaboration with the non-Dalit organisations is limited to the situation when there is an atrocity on Dalits. Within these organisations, when Dalits speak up for their issue, they are accused, their identity criminalised and branded as casteist. It is not limited to a few organisations but is common to all political platforms beginning from the Maoist party to mainstream communist parties. Dalits respond to all issues and are divided across different ideologies and across different political

parties. A majority of Dalits are part of the communist, Naxalite movements. Some are active in the atheist and humanist movements and there is no independent Dalit movement that is able to speak.

5.4. Civil Society Interventions on Scavenging

The above mentioned two categories of civil society in Telangana have failed to understand the problem of caste. The first category of organisation that includes temple institutions and other religious charity groups are silent about the caste, but in their private and public conversation they uphold the caste system as a harmonious division of labour and that scavenging is the duty of untouchable communities.

The second category of organisations i.e. rights based NGOs and workers unions, recognise scavenging as work and ask for higher payments, regularisation of workers and other state entitlements. These workers” unions and NGOs are headed by Brahmanical dominant castes. It is only the Dalit civil society, the Dalit activist organisations and Dalit NGOs which recognise the fact that scavenging is a caste enforced occupation on Dalit communities.

The interventions of such civil society organisations never question the Brahmanical caste system that forces some communities into this filthy work, and indirectly supports this modern forms of slavery and demands state benefits. All trade unions are part of this discourse; some of the trade unions are also running a sanitation workers wing. They are CITU- Centre for Indian Trade Unions, AITUC- All India Trade Unions Congress, IFTU - Indian Federation of Trade Unions, AIFTU - All India Federation of Trade Unions, BMS - Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and INTUC - Indian National Trade Unions Congress. All these trade unions are affiliated with political parties.

In addition to these, the Human Rights Forum has been undertaking constructive and systematic intervention regarding the issue of scavenging, particularly in the area of sewage workers. It was founded by the late K. Balagopal, a Human Rights Defender and well known activist in Telugu
states. HRF is a citizen’s forum established with the objective of working for the protection of constitutionally guaranteed and internationally recognized rights of the people. It is an organisation which is not affiliated to any political party. It is a non-profit and self-financed organization. The members of this forum are drawn from various walks of life and include teachers, journalists, lawyers and several other citizens who are committed to support the vision of an egalitarian society.

The Human Rights Forum has been conducting fact findings and documenting the deaths of sewage workers in Hyderabad and other towns in the state. Saraswathi, an activist working with Safai Karmachari Andolan, says, "As an unofficial estimation at least 20 to 30 sewage workers are dying in the manholes of Hyderabad and other town in Telangana state."\(^\text{18}\)

The manhole workers are drawn from the Scheduled Castes communities and are seen as untouchables by all sections of society. Such workers often narrate that it is the unbearable poverty and lack of alternative employment which forces them to continue in such jobs. Further, once a worker or a community gets into this kind of work, they won’t readily get other kinds of job. It then becomes difficult for the worker to break free and move to other kinds of work.

5.5. Dalit Movement and Scavenging

The seeds of an independent Dalit movement were sown by the late Bhagya Reddy Varma in 1906 with the formation of the Jagan Mithra Mandali. He spread awareness among the untouchable communities, the self-identity movement of the Adi Hindus (Original Hindus). He also started schools, advocated for the abolition of evil social practises like Jogini, bonded labour and Vetti. Other Dalit leaders of the Hyderabad state, B S Venkat Rao, Battula Shyam Sundar, Arige Ramaswamy, PR Venkat Swamy and ML

\(^{18}\) Saraswathi, Activist of Safai Karmachari Andolan, interviewed by Karthik Navayan in Hyderabad on 25th October 2015
Adaiah had built an independent Dalit movement and associated themselves with Dr. Ambedkar. But Congress leader Gandhi's intervention in the name of Harijanodyamam ruined their independent status and co-opted the movement. The merger of the Hyderabad state into the Indian union added fuel to the destruction of the independent Dalit movement.

Varun Kumar, editor of Samanthara monthly magazine says,

"Independence to India has come at the cost of Dalit movement, they were co-opted and suppressed by the Congress Nationalist leaders in all states, in Kerala, Ayyankali, Sahodaran Ayyappan, in Tamilnadu Rettamalai Srinivasan and Pandit Ayothi Thass, in Hyderabad state Bagyareddy Varma were the Dalit leaders at the time. Their identities were buried aftermath interventions of national discourse and they never appeared in the mainstream history".  

It is true that the merging of the Hyderabad state into the Indian union further marginalised the oppressed communities in the Telangana region. The great leader Madari Bagaiah (Bhagya Reddy Varma) and his family was gradually co-opted by the Congress and the son of Bhagya Reddy Varma, MB Gautham became the founding member of the NSUI (National Students Union of India, the Students 'Wing of Congress Party) and he contested as a MLA from the Ibrahimpatnam constituency (reserved for Scheduled Castes) on Congress ticket and won in the 1951 general elections and later in 1992 he was awarded the Padma Shri by the then Congress Party government.

Senior Dalit activist, Ganumala Gnaneshwar says,

"The movement started by Bhagya Reddy Varma has the support of many liberals from upper castes, and they were sincere. Bal Mukund, a judge and close aide of Bhagya Reddy Varma, had instructed his family to hand over his dead body and a 1000/- (One thousand Rupees)
to the Adi Hindus, the then untouchables, and his family members followed the same and Bal Mukund”s last rites were conducted by the untouchables according to his wish. Such was the commitment of that generation of upper castes who are committed to the social cause. Bhagya Reddy Varma was honoured with Varma title by the Arya Samaj. The things changed when politics of upper castes entered in the name of Congress and Gandhi, it is entirely because of Congress and Gandhi, and the independent Dalit movement lost its existence and became part of Congress party.”

This is the tragic end of the independent movement in the Telangana region. It was in this kind of situation that there was no option other than to join the Naxalite and Communist groups if any Dalit wanted to fight against caste-discrimination.

But Dalits have realised that the Naxalite and Communist movements are not much helpful for emancipation and development of Dalits due to their upper caste leadership. Hence some of the Dalit Bahujan Adivasi activists came out of the Naxalite and communist parties, and formed an organisation called DARAKAME (Dalitha Rachayethala Kalakarula Medavula Ikya Vedika), United Forum of Dalit writers, artists and intellectuals that started publishing pamphlets and booklets on Dalit issues articulating the Ambedkarite perspective.

The above details reveal that the collapse of an independent Dalit movement has led to Dalits joining the Naxalite movement; and after realising that the Naxalite parties have not been very helpful, they began articulating themselves after the 1990s. K G Sathya Murthy alias Shiva Sagar, one of the founders of the present Maoist party (earlier referred to as the Peoples” War) was a Dalit, and he was expelled from the party. According to him, this was because he was asking for a debate on the issue of caste inequalities. Politically, the Dalits had rejected Brahmanical intellectualism much earlier.

---

But Brahmanical intellectuals have had the advantage of controlling state power through all social-cultural discourses, erasing expressions and actions of resistance or dissent of Dalit civil society interventions, be it in literature or elsewhere. This has also enabled Brahmanical intellectuals to restrict any formal political alternatives available to the Dalits.

Due to the above mentioned reasons, the scavenging issue was not taken up by the Dalit movement; also, the present Dalit movement is led by the educated and employed Dalits, who have been primarily engaged with caste issues rather than the issues specifically related to scavenging. The SC/ST Employees’ organisations have been working for the employees of the state and central governments but they have not extended their affiliations to the most marginalised sections such as scavengers, who are not on the pay role of the government.

There is no independent Dalit movement that exists in Telangana but there are many activists and a few organisations who have been contributing towards the Dalit movement in many ways. Organizations such as the KNPS (Kula Nirmoolana Porata Samithi), KVPS (Kula Vivaksha Vyathireka Porata Samithi), and SJS (Shoshitha Jana Sabha) with political affiliation, with Communist and Naxalite parties; and other traditional organizations such as the Ambedkar Yuvajana Sangham, Samatha Sainik Dal, Peoples’ Education Society, Republican Party of India have been raising issues related to Dalits on a regular basis but they are not innovative and do not really threaten the status quoist politics around them.

5.6. Dalit Ngos and Scavenging

After the 1990s, Christian groups among the Dalit organizations began receiving funds. They have established what is known as the DAPPU network of different organizations. Sakshi (Dalit Human Rights Watch) was instrumental in the documentation of all the atrocities in Telugu states, but now it has closed its office in Hyderabad and shifted to Delhi. DBSU, Dalit Bahujan Sramika Union has in the past organized Dalit masses against caste
atrocities in Telugu states but it stopped its activities in 2010 because its funds were discontinued by the donor agency Cord Aid (an International Non Governmental Organization). This was a result of an internal conflict between Dalit Malas and Madigas in DBSU, where they complained against each other to the donor agency which led to the closure of the organization.

Ankuram - Sangamam - Porum was started by DAPPU. It was registered as a women’s co-operative federation with the purpose of giving loans to Dalits since banks were not cooperative towards Dalits, but it also became dysfunctional due to several reasons. JVVPS, the Jogini Vyavastha Vyathireka Porata Samithi was one of the units in the Dappu network and still has its presence in Hyderabad.

NDF, the National Dalit Forum and CDS, the Center for Dalit Studies and DSS, the Dalit Stree Shakthi are three organizations that were started by different interventions. NDF was started by the Center for World Solidarity (CWS) but is no longer functioning and CDS has its presence in Hyderabad. Only DSS has active presence in Telugu states and has been taking up the issues of atrocities on Dalits at present.

Scavenging as a Dalit issue is usually not in the agenda of Dalit organizations, or NGOs or Employees or Students organizations. It does not mean that they don't understand this problem, but they are already occupied with other issues in hand and most of them respond to issues of atrocities.

SKA, the Safai Karmachari Andolan is one organization which is part of the Dappu network and has been working on the issue of caste forced scavenging. Its stated mission is,

"Liberation and rehabilitation of all persons engaged in manual scavenging across India from their caste-based hereditary and inhuman occupation. Safai Karmachari Andolan's major focus is to organize and mobilize the community around the issues of dignity and rights, accompanied by strategic advocacy and legal interventions". Their vision is to strengthen the struggle and build
solidarity to reclaim dignity, equality and human personality. By eradicating manual scavenging, we will break the link imposed by the caste system between birth and dehumanizing occupations.”

SKA too does not have a sufficient cadre base in Hyderabad. In fact, only one activist, Saraswathi is present to look after the activities. During another time, the NGO Basthi Vikas Manch and its activist Elisha collaborated with the SKA to conduct fact finding missions on the death of sewage workers.

Conclusion

Caste forced scavenging or modern day slavery of untouchable communities is not the primary concern of the civil society in Telangana, and also cleanliness is not the concern of the civil society in Telangana. Everyone, while creating garbage and filth, knows that there are some people who can clean that garbage. They never imagine themselves in the place of those scavengers. It is the understanding that is rooted in the Hindu religious beliefs and caste system. Except organisations such as Human Rights forum and Safai Karmachari Andolan, Dalit civil society has also failed to contribute to the issues of scavengers.

---

**Conclusion of thesis**

In this thesis I tried to look back into the caste practises and their present appearance in the Telangana society today and argued that the age-old caste hierarchies and practises have remained intact and adjusted to the modernity in Telangana society and state apparatus. And discussed how that caste ideology and practises contributed to the marginalization and deprivation untouchable communities and relegated Dalit communities as scavengers.

The introduction and review of literature explained the omnipresence of a reconfigured caste as an ideology and its hierarchal power relations in the state apparatus, and how those caste practises act against Dalit and marginalized communities to delegitimize their valid claims and violate their constitutional rights and entitlements.

In the first chapter, 'Social landscape of Telangana and Caste Practises', I have explained the social conditions in the Telangana region that regulate the socioeconomic and political life of untouchable communities. I have also attempted to explain the feudal caste practises that have been forcing Dalits to the margins and condemning some of the Dalit communities into the modern forms of slavery of scavenging.

In the second chapter 'Modernity and Caste in Telangana', I have tried to understand how technological inventions, media and the education system, instead of acquiring modern values of equality, democracy and secular values, continue to be casteist and anti-Dalit in nature. I have also attempted to engage with the ways in which feudal caste practices continue to enable discrimination and atrocities against oppressed communities in Telangana.

In the third chapter, 'Caste and scavenging in Telangana', I have discussed the origin and practices of scavenging in Telangana. I engaged with references of scavenging in Hindu religious texts, and how Brahmanical caste...
beliefs have been reproduced in practice by the Telangana feudal landlords who forced untouchable communities into slavery of scavenging.

The fourth chapter 'Scavenging World' explained how feudal Brahmanical caste practises forced Dalits to migrate to the cities and adopt scavenging and other menial jobs, and recorded the reasons for the migration to cities, and also analyzed the recruitment of Dalits as scavengers in GHMC, their work experiences of discriminations and humiliations and their everyday life as scavengers.

In the fifth chapter, 'Scavenging and Civil Society', I have attempted to discuss the unaffected position of the civil society of India in general, and of Telangana in particular, with regards to scavengers and scavenging, and how it is not free from Brahmanical caste ideology.

The age-old caste practice of forcing Dalit communities into scavenging has been institutionalized in Telangana through all forms of modern, covert caste practises by the entire state apparatus. Caste forced 'scavenging' is institutionalized because 'caste' is institutionalized. This is the result of the stability of the Brahmanical caste system that strengthened in post independent India and historically affected the Telangana region with its merger into Indian union in 1948.

Scavenging is the form of slavery that has its origins in the Brahmanical caste system in Indian subcontinent. The same practice is continuing as a 'modern slavery' in today's independent India with a secular democratic mask of modernity. The same Vedic Brahmanical caste system incarnated as Indian nationalist ideals in pre-independent colonial India. The Hindu Brahmanical philosophy is a philosophy of principles of inequality that treats some communities as untouchables and condemns them to scavenging; it is a sickness that prevents a person from treating people equally, but has now become a nationalist discourse. Not only does every government office have portraits of Hindu Brahmanical gods, but also Hindu rituals are practiced by office bearers. This covert caste system in state apparatus suppresses Dalit
communities and prevents them from development by placing them at the margins, denying access to the centers of power and entitlements.

The mobility of occupation happens typically among Brahmanical castes only. As observed by Ketkar, no Brahmin will adopt a scavenging profession and no untouchable is permitted to be a priest. Due to the intervention of Gandhi from 1930, this social condition which existed a century ago, that of caste based occupation and scavenging profession for untouchable communities have become the very policies of the Government of India. We can see now that in the name of Swachh Bharat Mission, aimed at cleanliness and eradication of manual scavenging comes with images of Gandhi, instead of Gadge Maharaj, a saint from Maharashtra, also one of the greatest environmentalists Gadge Baba, advocated for environmental sanitation and cleanliness of mind. To understand it in ideological language, Swachh Bharat Mission is a clear message to the scavenging untouchable communities to remain in the same conditions of slavery. SBM speaks only the technical language of construction of toilets, which is not going to help the scavenging communities to end their slavery and sufferings. It would instead push them to the same centuries-old practices of "cleaning filth and shit, die in gutters, denied of compensation" etc. since they are not employees of the government, per se.

As Gita Ramaswamy pointed out, the hesitation of the Brahmin classes to construct toilets within homes has led to the construction of dry latrines. Thus eradication of manual scavenging is directly linked with the eradication of caste notions. As Brahmanical Hindus never think of removing their own shit because, they very well know, that there is an arrangement within the caste system that makes available to them a category of people whose job is to clean their dirt and shit. The tenet of this philosophy that has categorized some communities as untouchables to make them sub-humans and use them as scavengers is not discussed in any mainstream policy discourses. The alternative anti-caste ideology and the ideologues are marginalized by mainstream Brahmanical academia, media, judiciary, civil society.
More waste is being produced due to urbanization and growth of cities, and there is a need for more scavengers. As a result, untouchable communities who were traditionally assigned and branded as scavengers continue to be vulnerable and easily available for scavenging and while looking for scavengers, the civil bodies developed a criterion that looks for Dalits only.


Forcing untouchable communities in to scavenging is a part of the social commonsense, as Ravichandran explained this with the experience of his father,

"My father works as a sanitary worker with Kotagiri Town Panchayat in Tamil Nadu. To be accurate, my father is a sanitary worker because the occupation was predetermined by his caste and not because he applied for it to become one. Similarly, my mother was predetermined to be a sweeper and she sweeps at St Mary’s Home School in Kotagiri. With modernity and industrialization, some caste-related occupations got blurred but the "sanitation job" remained exclusive to Chakkiliyar/Bhangi. Thus, my parents’ "choice" of livelihood opportunity was not their choice but forced by the Brahmanical hegemony in the Hindu religion; then sustained by privileged caste groups; practiced by the democratic State through approved public
policies and normalized by almost everyone ".\(^1\)

The caste forced scavenging is institutionalized and became a social commonsense because it is not debated and questioned in the policy discourses, mainstream media, judiciary and academia. We find debates on other marginalized groups even though they are a micro-minority such as the people of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) communities but scavengers’ issues are not debated as required. For example, according to the 2011 census of India, transgender people are 4.9 lakhs in number.\(^2\) And according to the available estimates, manual scavengers in India are 13 lakhs. Both of these social groups are marginalized and suppressed by the mainstream ideology of caste and Brahmanical patriarchy. But we find more news and debates in the media about the LGBT people than the manual scavengers because those transgender people have access to the media because they are not untouchables, where the scavengers belong to untouchable communities.

Casteism, just like racism, cuts both ways. Both have its sufferers and beneficiaries. While sections of the people are privileged, the rest are left to rot. Both the Colonializer and the nationalist did not and do not see caste as something that needs to be eradicated, or understand it as something equally repulsive and despicable as racism.

The British-born sociologist and eminent feminist scholar Ruth Frankenberg argues in the context of white racism “the physical distance between white and black settlements in the west is the mark of social distance between them, the material boundaries were also the symbolic boundaries. She says that “the production and reproduction of dominance rather than

subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage”. This definition identifies whiteness as something that places white people in dominant positions and grants white people unfair privileges, while rendering these positions and privileges invisible to white people”. That means whiteness here acts as a privilege. In India, caste acts as a privilege rather than a mere social organizing principle and a tool of discrimination. Caste privileges provide innumerable opportunities and access to people from Brahmanical dominant castes while the people who have no caste privileges are compelled to obey and work according to the norms of the former.

In intellectual and academic discourse, the Brahmin and Brahmin allied dominant castes are privileged to interpret and introduce the Indian caste system to the world through a systematic organization of institutions. This is possible not only because of their advantaged positions in the academics but also due to their social privilege as upper castes, which endows them with a social legitimacy to speak. As Gopal Guru pointed out in his famous essay titled 'How Egalitarian are the social sciences are in India?”

“There are historical reasons that gave a structural advantage to the top of the twice born (TTB) in consolidating its privileged position in doing theory. Historically accumulated cultural inequalities seem to have reinforced Dalit epistemological closure. This in effect left the realm of reflectivity entirely free from the TTB. Such closures have its sanction in Manu's thinking”.

---

Published by: Economic and Political Weekly, Article Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/4412959
The Indian academia, media and other publishing houses have produced caste hierarchy in academic writings in the name of caste studies and anti-caste literature. In a hierarchical caste structure, the people from dominant castes will preach about virtues, good, evil and bad and in the process relegating the marginalized to the position of mere listeners and followers. In the same way, the academia also reproduces the same caste hierarchical structure by placing marginal people at the receiving end.

In contradiction to the popular perception, radical thinkers like Ambedkar, Phule, and Periyar identified the caste system as part of a larger construction of hegemonic forces of the time to enslave the larger masses. So, for them caste system was not a natural order but a systematic exploitative system supported by economic, cultural and social reasoning. Dr. Ambedkar clearly identified the gravity of the caste system, identifying it as deeply rooted in the cultural psyche of the Indian society. Dr. Ambedkar said, “Turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform; you cannot have economic reforms unless you kill this monster”\(^6\). This definition of caste by Ambedkar is not taken seriously by the academia and activists; therefore, this has resulted in the continuous reproduction of caste and its cultural values in the postcolonial democratic institutions. The government agencies who claimed to build an equal society free from “discrimination” and “injustice” have fallen into the same trap of practicing caste discrimination through the reproduction of the caste notion. They are not even ready to look at the ideal of annihilation of caste, which will require them to critically reflect upon caste privileges, symbolic boundaries on which caste is working in modern times and caste capital invested in their own institutional system. For them caste is a system that has to be humanized through their reformatory agendas as Hindu liberal nationalists have always tried to do.

In our Indian nation state, Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized communities have some constitutional measures to claim their rights and security; they were achieved through painful struggles and mobilization. However, the successive governments of post independent India, never attempted to eradicate caste and its discriminatory practices, the policies and practices of the Indian state never questioned the caste system and Brahmanical hegemony on the Indian polity, judiciary, administration and media academia but openly supported the Brahmin imagined modern Chaturvarnya system as an ideology that was prescribed by Gandhi. Thus, the state itself is the violator of whatever scanty available provisions are there for the empowerment of the marginalized communities, for example, the constitutionally mandatory reservation policy is hardly ever seamlessly implemented. This is the way the nation state has been de-legitimizing the valid claims of Dalits and Adivasis in the institutional space while talking about their neutrality and meritocracy.

Caste plays a decisive role in the life of any individual in India. The caste system of hierarchy is embedded in the minds of people, and has been brought back into the modern national life of India through all modern means. The governments’ empowerment programmes and welfare measures also subscribe to the same framework of Gandhian liberal caste in its operations and strategies. Moreover, they maintain the caste hierarchy within their system and fight against untouchability from a distance. This is often undertaken by discriminating against Dalits, Adivasis and minorities. Now caste is an accepted form of hierarchy and social power, which has been naturalized in India's social psyche. Therefore, caste is still the only criterion based on which Indians judge and are judged in modern days.

Caste has gone nowhere; it is being strengthened and institutionalized through modern means. It has to be challenged in its conscious level in modern forms. However, the government policies and advertisements propagate the idea that the problem with caste is only untouchability and maintaining a strategic silence towards modern institutional forms of caste and its social, cultural and political power; this silence legitimizes caste practices
and discrimination towards marginalized communities. Therefore, the rhetoric of “Social Justice” means maintaining the caste status quo and dismissing the radical attempt to annihilate caste and its modern varieties.

It is abundantly clear that without a serious introspection into the various policies, interventions, welfare measures and without proper implementation of reservations for caste diversity of staff in the public and private sector, neither poverty nor injustice can be fought nor can democracy be established. The tall claim that the government’s interventions for the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, cleanliness and those they are engaged in a so-called fight against eradication of manual scavenging and rehabilitation untouchable families, elimination of poverty and injustice holds no water. Whose poverty is being claimed to be ended and to whom is it supposed to bring justice to, without addressing the caste system, which itself is the primary contributor to poverty, injustice and marginalization. One can find abundant proof that the government interventions in India, far from planning to end poverty and injustice. As Ambedkar said, in context of congress party silence on the issues of untouchables, the government policies and practises are actually 'giving artificial respiration to the ancient form of Hindu polity of a „hereditary governing class ruling a hereditary servile class‟.

As a first step to eradicate the modern slavery of scavenging, there is a pressing need for interventions with political will. The efforts should start to ensure the representation of scavenging communities, in the judiciary, administration, media, academia, politics and civil society. This is important because only scavengers can represent the issues of scavengers first hand. The non-scavenging communities take part in the eradication of scavenging as supporters and allies. The scavengers themselves represent them in all fields, be it public or private.

Let's conclude with a quote from Bhagwan Das, a Bhangi by caste and a great Ambedkarite. He says,
"I do not want reform, I want revolution. Reform might reduce the trauma of my slavery a little, but it won’t end it. My progress will be possible only through complete freedom, self-rule and revolution. Revolution too would be successful only if it’s led by me. It would be meaningful only if its leadership comes from the Dalit, oppressed classes. Using a lathi instead of a broom, or changing my name, or obtaining a raise in my wages, or shifting the excreta filled basket from my head to my hand or a hand cart – these are not a solution to my problems. The permanent solution to my problems is to completely give up this occupation. My freedom lies in giving up this religion and everything associated with it, rejecting all the customs and traditions that are a part of it, all practices that carry the stench of slavery that emanate from it".\(^7\)

**Limitations And Requisite Further Studies**

This thesis has presented reconfigured presence of caste as an ideology of hierarchy in modernity through the survey of available literature by several scholars. It has further argued that such reconfigured presence of caste is the reason for the non-implementation of reservations, thereby resulting in no caste diversity in public institutions. And that is the reason for Dalit communities to remain in their 'traditional' 'occupation' that is age-old slavery of scavenging. Three public institutions, the GHMC, HMWSSB and the South Central Railway have been examined for the purpose of this study. But the other public institutions such as universities, research institutions, government offices, assemblies and secretariats should also be studied closely to see who are cleaning the toilets there and who are sweeping and maintaining cleanliness of the public institutions and working as scavengers.

\(^7\)Bhagwan Das, *Nenu Bhangeeni*, Hyderabad book trust, 2011, p.125.126, the book translated into Telugu from the original book *'Maim Bhangi hum'* by Dr GV Rathnakar, this particular quote is translated from Telugu to English by Kuffir Nalagundwar
The status of implementation of reservations for Dalits and Adivasis also needs to be studied in all government funded public institutions and departments, because that is directly linked with the eradication of manual scavenging. In the initial stage proportionate representation of scavenging communities in all mainstream sectors, be it administration, judiciary, politics, academics and media is a must for the eradication of manual scavenging. Ultimately there is need of a revolution under the leadership of scavenging communities to eliminate manual scavenging and annihilate the Brahmanical caste system.