Our debt to Mahatma Gandhi is manifold. He took within his fold many things. The problem of untouchability, in all its socio-political context, engaged his serious attention. This led him to thinking about the cruelty of the caste-structure. He fought valiantly to abolish it. It is because of him that the monstrous grip of caste is so relaxed now. He is the fountainhead of inspiration for the writers of India in this respect also. Political freedom came later on, but earlier Gandhiji had brought with him, on his return from South Africa, social democracy.

During the quarter century preceding Independence, Indo-Anglians - like other Indian fictionwriters, to mention a few leading ones amongst them, Tagore, Sharadbabu, Prem Chand, Khandekar, Ramanlal Desai, Meghani - welcomed this first glimpse of social revolution. In pre-Independence times, Mulk Raj Anand is the champion fighter on this front. He has preferred to concentrate mainly on the problem of untouchability. It is a pity that except Bhabani Bhattacharya no great writer has devoted an entire novel to this important theme. The inter-play of subtle caste-complications and reactions to the Caste Order should not be unrewarding. The ruinous tidal waves of caste are receding now, but, good or bad, the caste system has been a part of Indian life and, with a stab of regret, one is compelled to remark that Indo-Anglians, in fairness to Indian life, ought to have treated this aspect more fully.
Quite a few Indo-Anglian novelists have viewed the position of Brahmins in the Indian society from different angles. There are both types of Brahmins: pious scholars and selfish gluttons. True Brahmins study and honour scriptures and are enlightened guides for others. They do not hanker after material gain, but are always contented. They are men of thought but do not despise action. They are virtuous and practise Brahmacharya. They are scholarly and non-violent, but not cowards. Such an ideal concept of Brahminism offers strength even to those who have strayed away from it. These novelists are also critical in their attitude to Brahmins who, in their opinion, must not be extremists about rites, rituals, food, medicines, planetary influence etc. They must give up all sense of social superiority as mere birth right, despotism and superstitions. These novelists have shown that selfish, greedy and vicious priests will always be looked down upon and have also warned them against casteism and fanaticism. In the pre-Independence era, Brahmin was mostly depicted as a degenerated priest, - selfish, gluttonous and lecherous - as illustrated by Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao in Untouchable and Kanthapura respectively. In post-Independence times, Anand's views have not altered much, but Raja Rao has endeavoured to examine and present both sides of the picture. B. Rajan and others have indicated what the real defects are and
how these could be removed. A new spirit is afoot and things have to change radically and so must Brahmins too.

The origin of castes is wrapped in myths according to traditional views. Bhabani Bhattacharya shows, in *Music for Mohini*, how people of the older generation still believe that castes were created by God. Equality cannot be thought of. "All men are born equal? Then why did the Creator bring forth the Brahmin out of His mouth, the Vaishya from His navel, the Sudra from His feet? Tell us that." The old and orthodox challenge the young people with new lights to explain this. No, the castes cannot go, they say emphatically.

Raja Rao defines Brahmins. He states that Brahmin is a person 'devoted to truth and all that' and, 'Brahmin is he who knows Brahman', etc. Rama, in *The Serpent and the Rope*, roguishly tells Georges and Catherine that Brahmins are reputedly those who know Brahman and they are notoriously those who love good banquets. Catherine observes that he is not a Brahmin in the sense of being a glutton. Brahmins can pride themselves on being at the top of the caste pyramid, provided they have had the highest spiritual achievement. Those who have just parasitically banked upon their birth should lament the depths of degradation reached by them. Brahmins are expected to be pure, contented and happy. Ideal Brahmins just do their worldly duties.
and prepare for happiness in the other world, ignoring material happiness. As Krishnan, in B. Rajan's _The Dark Dancer_, points out to the Singhs: "We Tamil Brahmins are a tight-lipped community. There are other values needed to complete a civilization and may be we've tended to neglect them." This is generally applicable to all true Brahmins. Raja Rao also supports this view in _The Serpent and the Rope_. His hero Rama says:

"Holiness is happiness. Happiness is holiness. That is why a Brahmin should be happy...." Raja Rao shows that Brahmins are to be enlightened guides. Madeleine acknowledges her debt to Rama's Brahminism which, as Rama ironically observes helps her to see Buddhism. Raja Rao brings out how Brahmins have to respect the ideal of continence even in married life. Madeleine, who resents touch, prevails upon Rama to forgo bodily pleasures. How could a proud Brahmin say, 'no' to such a proposal from his wife? B. Rajan shows that Brahmins are not only scholarly and self-abnegating, but also courageously non-violent. Only a truly brave Brahmin like Krishnan, in _The Dark Dancer_, displays rare courage in saving a Muslim - who tried to kill Krishnan - from the fury of a Sikh who cannot understand Krishnan's magnanimity. But B. Rajan also shows that Brahmins, though peace-loving, are not craven and cowardly and would be furious when unbearably wronged. Krishnan cries out for revenge when Kamala, his new-found love, is killed by a fanatic. To have a great sage as the originator
of one's dynasty is to feel distinguished; but then, all Brahmin families could be traced back originally to some sage or the other - this, as Nagarajan illustrates in Chronicles of Kedaram, gives the democratic - equalising - touch. As Gangadhar Suri puts it: "Therein lies your strength. Part of a real democracy. No rank, no precedence, no manoeuvring for social position." Koni naughtily suggests - it would be a democracy of aristocrats. The irony is unmistakable. Rajan shows how Brahmins never violate scriptural edicts, in spite of their foreign education, because the sacred thread plants priesthood in their hearts. Kruger, in The Dark Dancer, testifies to Krishnan's being a true Brahmin, because he went to Benaras and performed the funeral rites after Kamala's death. Raja Rao shows how Brahmins feel a natural superiority owing to their high caste which gives a status higher than one given by continental education, prolonged stay in Europe and a French wife - Rama experiences all this. A Brahmin would hardly forget his Brahminhood, though the Brahmin and he might be 'separate points of references'. Rama stresses Brahmins' superiority, insularity and status, even in suffering. Kamala Markandaya also illustrates this point. In A Handful of Rice, a Brahmin woman, raped by British Tommies, commits suicide instead of living in shame. Purnima, in He who Rides a Tiger, commits suicide because of her mismatched marriage with an elderly Brahmin. Almost absolute supremacy has made
Brahmins - as some liberal Brahmins themselves think - 'too smug' and 'too complacent' and they deserve 'some shaking.' Such views as expressed by Gangadhar Suri, in Nagarajan's *Charonicles of Kedaram*, annoy Roni, a representative of traditional Brahminism. These critical views have a post-Independence ring about them. Brahmins who have received foreign education are likely to disregard the claims of traditional religion. They cease to be regular temple-goers and do not say their prayers daily, e.g. Krishnan in *The Dark Dancer*. He nevertheless, takes Cynthia to a temple for blessings and is tormented to know that Cynthia, the foreigner - the casteless - cannot be blessed. This indicates that the religious learning, lying latent in the subconscious, asserts itself in the face of a crisis. Brahmins, even those who are away from Brahminism, think that they have a monopoly of religion, and are the receptacles of godliness, conveniently forgetting that being born a Brahmin is not being Brahmin. Krishnan consoles Cynthia when they fail to receive blessings from the priest, in the tone of conviction he does not at all feel: "Wherever a Brahmin is, there is a temple." Rajan, however, points out that Brahmins - if they wish to remain leaders of religion - must prefer inner and deeper religion to rituals. Cynthia, in *The Dark Dancer*, tells Krishnan that the deeper acceptance comes from 'the knowledge of having done right' and not from something done with flowers and saffron.
This frank self-criticism indicates the new spirit awakened after Independence. Brahmins believe that they are privileged to be thinkers and philosophers and that it is the duty of the lower castes to act. Krishnan, in The Dark Dancer, when engaged in practical politics, imagines Kruger’s reaction thus: "Action" Kruger might have said, "is basically a lower-caste privilege. A Brahmin is the intellect, the philosopher...."\textsuperscript{18}

Rajan and Bhattacharya illustrate that the external caste-marks are sometimes used for deception. In The Dark Dancer, Krishnan is taken in by a Muslim wearing the sacred thread of a Brahmin.\textsuperscript{19} In He who Rides a Tiger, B-10, a prisoner - released from the prison of Brahminism - advises Kalo, a Kamar, to counterfeit the twice-born and that too, with the help of a simple thread.\textsuperscript{20} Malgonkar reveals how people sometimes bribe priests to earn the right of wearing the sacred thread and bettering their caste status. Hiroji, in The Princes, tries to whitewash the ugly past of his disreputable ancestors by buying off the Brahmin 'caste-mark.'\textsuperscript{21} In Bhattacharya's He Who Rides a Tiger, Kalo, a fake Brahmin, feels the prick of conscience when Viswanath, who is a Kamar like Kalo, appreciates Kalo's Brahminism: "So long as there are true-hearted Brahmins like you, people cannot lose faith in this social order.\textsuperscript{22} The dramatic irony is effectively managed.
Brahmins are particularly rigid in not taking food cooked or touched by lower castes and consequently, they avoid hotel food also. It is, however, indicated that these caste-notions have undergone a lot of change in modern times. Brahmin children obey the caste-injunctions drilled into them by elders and do not accept tempting food from persons of lower castes. In Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini, Heeralal refuses to touch curried pork cooked and served by the beggar woman at the snake-charmer's. Not only Heeralal himself, but his low caste admirers also disapprove of a Brahmin defiling his caste. The woman asks the Brahmin boy, in a quavering voice, not to lose his caste. Bhattacharya also brings out how, by not allowing persons of lower castes to touch their food, Brahmins offend their sense of self-respect. In He Who Rides a Tiger, the priest-woman's words addressed to Obhijit are much too harsh: "Casteless waif! Boy from the gutters! Dare you set eyes on a Brahmin's kitchen? You will pollute the food with your breath." Brahmins generally do not eat hotel food, so, while on journey, they have to observe fast. Women are more rigid about this than men, who have to go to different places frequently. In R. K. Narayan's Mr. Sampath, Editor Srinivas advises his wife to forget her rigid caste-notions. This reflects the general post-freedom trend of concession in caste-considerations. Brahmins are proverbial teetotallers. Krishnan, in Rajan's The Dark Dancer, has taken a strong dose of gin to assuage the
pain of a serious wound. Kamala remarks that Kruger would not like 'Gin in a Brahmin's blood-stream.' Her satire is clear. Gin as medicine is not gin. This critical attitude indicates the post-Independence impact on social evaluations. Brahmin families have faith in planetary influence and the atmosphere of fatalism is rather thick in a traditional Brahmin household.

In Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya's father's love for his child makes him shed superstitious astrological beliefs and he has got horoscopes burned. This is also a new sentiment fostered in the climate of freedom. Khushwant Singh shows how ignorant and illiterate Brahmins sometimes become victims of their own dogmatic and superstitious beliefs. Ganga Ram, in the short story "The Mark of Vishnu", meets with an untimely death due to his blind worship of the V mark of the Kala Nag. This critical attitude is characteristic of modern India.

Indian novelists in English have criticised Brahmins and priests. According to them, these priests are prejudiced and parochial and hamper the new advancement of the Indian society. They are mere mercenaries. A little more money and they would adjust any muhurat for anyone for anything. They are poor parasites and not persons of principles. Raja Rao, however, appears to be fairly impartial in his approach. Nagarajan points out
that Brahmins engaged in the priestly and ritualistic jobs are looked down upon. In Chronicles of Kedaram, Koni feels that his stocks would not rise by the avowal of his priestly ancestry. Vanchi is unduly harsh with the priests at the time of Vasu's wedding and haughtily orders them about. Raja Rao caustically shows how Brahmins have lost social respect by debasing the priestly profession and turning greedy like Jews. The Benaras priests disallows Rama to perform the funeral rites after his father's death, because he is foreign-returned. But the Walpole method would succeed. A small sum of fifty rupees would deaden their Brahminical consciences. Nagarajan too has a similar situation in Chronicles of Kedaram. Gangadhar Suri finds it difficult to get the priests for religious functions in his family, because he had gone to Burma. Vivekanand's teachings, social reform movements and Gandhian principles helped in doing away with these taboos. Anand shows how priests try to eke out their living like parasites by flattering people, adjusting muhurats, reading horoscopes according to clients' wishes. In Private Life of an Indian Prince, the priests flatter Vicky by saying that the stars always tally for him. Raja Rao suggests that Brahmins, as priests, are a study in contrast. Rama is not sure whether the Brahmins of Benaras - a surrealist city -
are like crows or like the Sadhus. "You never know where reality starts and where illusion ends."

Nagarajan brings out the conflict between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. He shows how people - among them, some modern Brahmins also - believe that Brahmins had the monopoly of government service for long and now it should be the turn of non-Brahmins. Koni, in Chronicles of Kedaram, resents 'preferences based merely on caste and community'. Chari, Vasu, Vanchi and many others advocate the case of low castes. Nagarajan also shows that the virus of communal hate results in false and frenzied attacks. After Vanchi's acrobatic appeal to Brahmins to support him in elections, non-Brahmins raise a cyclone of abusive scandals against Brahmins. Koni feels lost but Suri hopes that the friendly spirit would ultimately prevail. The novelist also suggests that Brahmins - and other high castes too - who have been in power in India for the last many centuries, should not now appeal to caste-fanaticism like 'Brahmins for Brahmins'. They might have to suffer, because non-Brahmins far outnumber them. Nagarajan illustrates this by describing the election campaigns at Kedaram.

The Bania caste is traditionally considered to be a shrewd caste but its shrewdness has been sometimes depicted in a derogatory manner - as in Aamir Ali and Anand. It is not pleasant when Aamir Ali refers to Gandhiji's infallibility, in The Conflict, because 'he was a shrewd old Bania'. Again, he describes the
Mahatma lecturing to the A.I.C.C. in 1942 as 'Like a Bania sitting in his shop'. It is ironic that the prophet of castelessness is thus referred to in terms of caste-parochialism. In Anand's *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Vicky abuses Banias, whenever he is peeved and indignant. "I shall teach that snorting Bania, Bool Chand, the lesson of his life!" Vicky is sarcastic even with Diwan Popatlal. "Your Gujarati and Marwari Banias are coming in to spread their tentacles around the life of Sham Pur!"

Indo-Anglian novelists have shown their royal characters to be vain about their birth. The Rajput caste is the caste of fighters and rulers. Anand's Vicky, the weak tyrant in *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Malgonkar's Hiroji, the desperado in *The Princes*, Hanut, the sensualist in Huthi Singh's *Maura*, were all proud of their tribes. Throughout the entire expanse of *Maura*, Hanut is seen only once preoccupied with ethnocentric sentiments about a Rajput Renaissance: "Two militarist races in the world - the Germans in the West and the Rajputs in the East. Master races both. We Rajputs ought to realise that.... It's our heritage to rule - we are the only ruler race extant. We don't go out for what we want. A Rajput Renaissance, that would be something to work for."

Bhattacharya deals with the problem of education of the children of low caste people at length in *He Who Rides a Tiger*. People of lower castes, like others,
desire to give their children proper education, but persons of higher castes discourage the spread of education and social opportunities among lower castes. Kalo is worried about Lekha's education, because of caste-prejudices of the high-born. The children of low-caste people pursuing professions not considered respectable come in for insults and harassment from their high caste classmates. Lekha has to face all this; Kalo's profession is ridiculed. One girl impudently says to Lekha: "Smith girl, tell your father not to cheat his customers." Such low-caste children are almost ostracised if they are clever and ridiculed if dull. Lekha always stands first which makes it worse. The greatest pity is that some persons of low caste themselves are critical of the advancement of their own caste-brethren due to envy or ignorance. One Brindavan refers to Lekha thus: "A Kamar girl puts on the feathers of learning! A sparrow preens as a parrot!" Not only the children of lower castes studying feel isolated but their parents also are looked down upon, sometimes by their own caste-fellows. This may be because of their inferiority complex or their suspicion of the new light of learning.

The Indo-Anglian novel reflects how caste people have to put up with social tyranny. Bhattacharya shows how these unfortunate persons, harassed by social injustice bordering on starvation and loss of their women's virtue, cannot but feel embittered and almost
dehumanised. The high-born people chastise and abuse
the down-trodden as and when they wish. In He Who Rides
a Tiger, the trader from Calcutta regrets that Kalo
stayed away from his trap and says that God had sent
'this mighty hunger to teach the low-born people a true
lesson'. The author shows in the same novel how the
attitude of the high castes creates in persons of low
castes a desire to hit back. Kalo can-not forget that
his Lekha has returned from the gate of Hell. He creates
a fake God not just to eke out a living, but there is
the sense of revenge. Desperation and destitution,
insult and injustice, rouse the rebel in man and enable
him to defy the Caste Order. Kalo, who feels wronged
by the society, seeks his rehabilitation and retaliation
in posing as a Brahmin by putting on the brand-new nine-
stranded Brahminica thread, defying and defiling the
holy emblem. Kalo plays the counterfeit Brahmin so
well that the merchant who owned the site of the temple
and the magistrate who had sent him to prison come and
touch his feet now. The tyranny of higher castes
breeds revolt and allows layers of hate to thicken in
the hearts of the social bottom-dogs. Kalo ruthlessly
wreaks his colossal revenge against society by polluting
the castes of high-born and let them know of it in
his Olymic Confession. Kalo is enthused to see Biten
and Viswanath by the side at that crucial moment:
"They had come back in time to hear him, to see him drive his steel deep into the tiger. The scum of the earth had hit back, hit back where it hurt."

The irony of the caste system lies in the fact that the lower castes themselves do not wish to abolish the caste system but are always very eager to better their caste-status anyhow and, as Mulk Raj Anand illustrates, marrying into a higher caste is one of the ways. In the story, "At what Price My Brothers", Tara Singh asserts repeatedly that he does not believe in caste and has given his daughter - who never existed - in marriage to a barber who walks into the Sardar snare and loses his money and dream of having 'a high-born bride in his home'. It is a pity that people of lower castes themselves also like to flatter themselves by feeling caste-superiority. They also need a foot-rest of inferior castes. The problem of relationship between Hindus and Harijans is already complicated but that is not all. The one between Chamars and Bhangis is more baffling. The outcastes themselves would cast others out. They wish to perpetuate their own internal caste-hierarchy. Bhattacharya explains that most of the people are the willing bondmen of the caste system. Only the people at the bottom of the social pyramid really object to castes and, of course, those nourished on the visions of universal brotherhood. In He who Rides a Tiger, B-10 (Biten), once a Brahmin, takes his food even with untouchables. Even Kalo, a Kamar, can not think of doing so, because
Untouchables were "as far beneath him in the scale as Brahmins were above". Over and above the internal caste-order of the casteless, the Untouchables, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have their own vested interests in keeping the cobra of communalism alive. They are not prepared to forgo their special privileges and concessions regarding election, education, service etc. Harindra, the Village social reformers, in Bhattacharya's *Music for Mohini*, comes to know all this. "Don't you go about giving folks ideas," the cobbler warns Harindra threateningly. "What if our own low caste folks lift up their heads to the higher among us? What if a scavenger claims to be a leather-worker's brother and equal?" It is very easy for foreigners to cast aspersions on high caste Hindus for their caste system, but they must understand that the system is far too complex to be wiped out all so soon as they might wish from their distance.

Indo-Anglian novelists have dealt with the problem of untouchability, bringing out the misery and craven-ness of untouchables. They show how the high castes cause their heart-burns but they also show that all high caste persons are not always harsh and hostile. These social underdoges also have their sense of self-respect and feel like retaliating. Harijans are also Hindus and yet they do not feel involved in the fate and future of Hindus. There is a sort of listlessness and indifference about them. It is also indicated that it is not just to
uplift Harijans by devaluing people of higher castes. The depiction of the Untouchable in pre-Independence fiction is more or less concerned with the atrocities of the high-born Hindus and the wretchedness of the Untouchable. In post-Independence times, the problem is discussed more seriously and fairly.

Mulk Raj Anand brings out how not only are the bodies of untouchables broken by hard work but also their spirit is slain by ancient, chronic and deep-rooted inferiority complex. He describes how people of high caste, at times, would annihilate untouchables, if they could, their rage is so devilish. Their children are not taught to respect the untouchable elders. All this indicates their desire to perpetuate their supremacy. It also reveals their vanity and meanness. Such thoughts throng in the mind of 'Old Bapu' in Anand's story, honoured by that name. High caste Hindus of older generation firmly believe that "Breeding always tells"; Malgonkar brings out this in The Princes. Ruler Hiroji chides Abhay for paying for the studies of Kanak Chand, who should have been only curing leather in his life but for Abhay's generosity. Later, Minister Kanak Chand reveals his meanness and ungratefulness. Low caste women are considered to be game by men of high castes. People of low caste feel the humiliation and think of effective retaliation. In Sengupta's Red Hibiscus, Rasmi's drunkard husband Ramdani wants to teach the Sepoy, who used to harass Rasmi, a strong lesson. He
says, "I may be a Bhangi, but I have hands just as strong as anyone else. Let it not be said that I cannot protect my woman." This reflects the increasing tendency of self-assertion based on the sense of human dignity - a patently modern sentiment. In Bhattacharya’s Shadow from Ladakh, Jhanak, an untouchable woman, wreaks her vengeance on the high society by luring to her fiery self youths of high castes and wrecking their lives. Padmini Sengupta shows how Harijans are a part and parcel of the Hindu community, but because our castes are based on professions, they do not feel a sense of belonging. Rasmi, in Red Hibiscus, does not feel enthused at the British quitting India - as if Independence is meant only for the Hindus and the Muslims! The Hindus call them outcastes and the Muslims consider them beyond God's grace. "Only Mahatma Gandhi, Rasmi knew, loved them and, of course, God Himself."56

Nagarajan shows that the orthodox high caste Hindus are not always cruel to low castes, whom they would help in a general manner, but because of their deep-seated conventional religious notions they cannot bear Harijans' presence in their houses and temples. In Chronicles of Kedaram, Koni feels shocked and polluted to see an untouchable moving in Vasu's house as his personal servant. Koni surmises that they might invade their temples even
Sengupta also shows how a few persons even of the old, orthodox generation are charitable to the lower castes. In *Red Hibiscus*, *Bara Ma*, the big mother in the Das family, warmly compliments Rasmi on her serving to add to her husband's inadequate earning. "Yes, you're a brave caste. No wonder Mahatma Gandhi admires you." This kindly attitude is representative of the opinion of high castes in Gandhian times. Owing to Gandhiji's firm devotion to this aspect of social reform, there has been a dramatic and radical change in the country so far as attitude to caste is concerned.

Nagarajan illustrates that the attitude of social reformers and some progressive persons to high castes is, sometimes, a little unreasonable. Instead of lifting up lower castes, they seem to be lowering high castes. Nirmala, in *Chronicles of Kedaram*, believes that one can lift up harijans by becoming harijans. Koni does not like that the superior classes depress themselves. Injustice should not be redressed by injustice. It would be a primitive sense of justice.

The Indo-Anglian novel reflects how caste raises impediments in the path of love. The authors seem to believe that true love should not be strangled by caste-parochialism and stratification, because the marriage of true minds is the real union. However, they show how
caste plays the stock villain in the story of 'star-cross'd lovers'. M.V.R. Sarma suggests that stratification is almost suffocating the social conscience. A love affair, even if it is true and pure, between persons of different castes is 'a disease of the mind', whereas marriage, though devoid of love, in the same caste is 'a social event'. Murty, in The Stream, uses these filthy weapons against Swarna to deter her from marrying Gopalam. Sarma shows that love is above caste and creed considerations. Swarna, in The Stream, tells Murty as much. But according to the orthodox, love is a sinful act, if the lovers do not belong to the same caste. The woman marrying out of her caste would be like a 'mistress of someone belonging to a different caste' - as Murty taunts Swarna. Difference in castes is the surest way for lovers to dejection and death, because their parents would then hasten to arrange even monstrously mismatched marriages. In Bhattacharya's He Who Rides A Tiger, Purnima loves Basav, who is not a Brahmin. She is made to marry a Brahmin widower with children and grand-children and she drowns herself. This fills her brother Biten with disgust for castes. Santha Rama Rau brings out that the same caste is a great factor in favour of youthful lovers, though they may belong to different social strata or environments. In Remember the House, Baba's grandmother feels activesed about fixing up Baba's marriage with Krishnan, because their caste
R.K. Narayan suggests that a young man, when deeply immersed in love, is likely to be indifferent to considerations of caste, for the magic of romance would beautify even an ugly caste. In *The Guide*, when Rosie refers to her caste of temple-dancers—treated as public women—Raju vociferously consoles her: "All that narrow notion may be true of old days, but it's different now. Things have changed. There is no caste or class today.” R.K. Narayan here definitely points out that the caste order is crumbling in the New Age after Independence.

Indo-Anglian novelists have discussed the problem of inter-action between caste and marriage exhaustively. How hypocritical, monetary, retaliatory caste-considerations govern the problem of marriage is illustrated. The questions of inter-caste sexual liaisons and inter-caste marriages are also discussed. Whether even an international marriage is feasible is judged by a caste-obsessed traditionalist. These novelists seem to opine that winds of change have started blowing and that caste-considerations cannot much govern the problem of marriage, which means the loosening hold of castes in general.

Khushwant Singh tears off the curtain of caste-hypocrisy in matrimonial affairs. In his story, *A Bride for the Sahib*, Mr. Sen's matrimonial advertisement states: 'C and D no bar', despite which, the applicants selected
for consideration were of the same caste as the Sens*, and were supposed to be able to give 'substantial dowries'. To pose as an advanced person having no regard for castes at all has been a fashion in rage in our times, but not many Indians are really progressive in action also. Anita Desai suggests that financial considerations help one in diluting the caste predilections and prejudices of a family in decline. In *Voices in the City*, Amala's father, a Bengali highborn, marries a girl who is a part Nepalese. Bhattacharya shows that girls sometimes feign to belong to a higher caste and marry out of desperation, or sense of sacrifice or that of revenge even. Lekha, in *He Who Rides a Tiger*, offers herself as a sacrifice to Brahmin Moti Chand's lust and insists on marrying him and defiling his caste.

Caste, Shows Narayan, is a necessary ingredient of a respectable marriage. Sriram, the hero of *Waiting for the Mahatma*, is captivated by Bharati at first sight and then he wants to ask her about her age, caste and horoscope to ascertain whether he is eligible to marry her. The factor of difference in caste would dampen the fire of middle-aged high caste person's lust. In Bhattacharya's *A Goddess Named Gold*, the widowed Halwai, old enough to be Meera's father, wants to marry her, but as he tells her: "The sadness that our castes disagree, mine and
By marrying a man of higher caste a girl of lower caste would get a rise in caste status and, therefore, sometimes, money and caste status could coerce a sweet maiden into an unhappy marriage. The barber go-between explains to Meera's grandmother how Meera would gain in caste status by marrying the Halwai.

An inter-caste marriage tests a man's sincerity and courage, because arranged marriages tend to fall into a groove of comfortable routine, but not love marriages. In Jhabvala's *To Whom She Will*, Hari complacently feels that Sushila will make a good wife for him. Amrita makes him uneasy due to her different, superior family background. Sushila is one of them after all. Jhabvala shows that those who marry outside their castes are constantly subjected to censure by the orthodox. In *The Nature of Passion*, Phuphiji prided herself on her correct augury regarding the inter-caste love-marriage of Chandra Prakash and Kanta. Jhabvala points out that even people with advanced ideas raise objections to inter-caste marriages. They deceive themselves that they do not lay an exaggerated stress on family status, but, in fact, they do not care about anything else. Pandit Ram Bahadur, in *To Whom She Will*, feels he cannot allow Amrita to marry Hari whose caste is different and whose family status is not adequate.
Even conservative communities connive at sexual adventures of their members with persons of other communities and castes, but they feel revolted at the suggestion of their marriage— as revealed by Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan*. Jugga's mother scorns Nooran and drives her away: "You a Muslim weaver's daughter marry a Sikh peasant!" The fact that Nooran had Jugga's child inside her does not soften the old woman. Anand also shows how inter-caste sexual adventures are ignored by the heads of royal families, but inter-caste marriages are not accepted. In *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Ganga Dasi, being a Brahmin woman, could never be acknowledged as the lawful queen of Vicky.

Indo-Anglian novelists bring out how caste considerations are now much less predominant than before. The same caste is a vital factor in marriage, if all things are equal but not otherwise. In Sengupta's *Red Hibiscus*, Kumodini feels that Nirmal, a Brahmin youth, will be rejected as the would-be groom for Sita, because he is dissipated and that Santosh, a non-Brahmin youth, has better chances, because he is an intelligent youth of sterling character. Owing to recent social reform, Raja Rao explains, some Indian families now seem to have got rid of caste-taboos. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, Lakshamna and Little Mother both are thinking of a matrimonial alliance, despite their different communities.
Not belonging to the same caste is a severe hurdle in the way of young lovers thinking of marriage, but not so in 'Shanti Niketan' — as shown by Bhabani Bhattacharya in *Shadow from Ladakh*. On account of Tagore's advanced and liberal views and the free, uninhibited mental climate of 'Shanti Niketan', it becomes possible for Satyajit and Sucheta to marry and become happy, though they do not belong to the same caste. Bhattacharya maintains that any person can, if he or she so chooses, marry outside his or her caste. In *Music for Mohini*, Harindra gives an electric shock to Behula, a citadel of Brahminism and orthodoxy, because he, a non-Brahmin is marrying a Brahmin girl and defying a timeless social practice. This bold attitude of the author belongs to post-Independence times. The New India has to give a fight royal to time-worn traditions of social inequality. The country has been taking big and firm strides in the direction of breaking all chains. The caste system has to go and has been going since Gandhiji's emergence as the national leader.

The Indo-Anglian novel deals with caste-distinctions. The novelists generally feel that these distinctions are not still quite disappearing. Khushwant Singh points out that caste distinctions cannot be eradicated by legislation, because these have struck deep roots in the course of many, many years. In *Train to Pakistan*, Iqbal ruminates on the spirit of social inequality: "In a country which had
accepted caste distinctions for many centuries, inequality had been an inborn mental concept. If caste was abolished by legislation, it came up in other forms of class distinction". Raja Rao feels differently. It is suggested that in cities predominantly Muslim, Hindu girls have to behave with restraint. In The Serpent and the Rope, Little Mother, after comparing conditions in Hyderabad and Bangalore, says appreciatively of the latter - "After all it's Brahmin land'. Raja Rao, through Rama, reminds us that Little Mother had forgotten that 'the benign congress Regime had abolished caste distinctions'. Lambert Mascarenhas suggests how in cultured families caste distinctions are not harped upon. Whenever low castes raise their heads, high castes are alarmed and endeavour to keep the lowly under their thumb. In Sorrowing Lies My Land, Babush does not even know anything about castes: Bramane, Chardos and Sudra. Inacinho knows about it from his father's talk with others.

The sameness of caste paves the way of equality and identification. The champion of the down-trodden soon finds full support and help in crisis. In Bhattacharya's He Who Rides a Tiger, when there are signs of violent attack against Kalo, coolies come to Kalo's rescue, because they know him to be one of them. Prawer Jhabvala brings out how the question of morality is also coloured by caste considerations. If a crime is committed with a person of
the same caste, its gravity is not as great as when it is committed with a person of other caste. In *The Nature of Passion*, Nimmi's mother is aggrieved to know that Nimmi has been dining and dancing in the clubs with a Parsi youth. Raja Rao indicates that cooperation between persons of the same caste even for an impious or dishonest motive is considered quite natural. In *The Cat and Shakespeare*, Govindan Nair's queer logic helps him in understanding that Bhoothalinga Iyer and Rama Iyer, both being Brahmins, it is natural even for the Inspector, Rama Iyer, to save Bhoothalinga Iyer. Also, in Mulk Raja Anand's *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Pandit Shiv Nath, a Brahmin, is supposed to be favouring Gangi, also a Brahmin, and spoiling the case of Tikyali Rani.

Indo-Anglian novelists have shown how caste considerations play a very important role at the time of elections and also after elections in spreading fanaticism. Khushwant Singh shows how ethnocentric sentiments are roused and exploited: it is generally expected that people have to support the candidate who belongs to their caste. If he is of the same sub-caste, then he has as good as pocketed the votes of his caste-brethren. In "The Voice of God", Ganda Singh wrests the promise for full support from the Lambardar of Bhamla on the basis of upholding the prestige of the Sikh peasantry and his belonging to the same
The influence of casteism on elections has been disastrous. It has caused segregation and hostility between one caste-group and another. Nagarajan indicates that the feud between Brahmins and non-Brahmins in some parts of South India is a notorious socio-political fact. In Chronicles of Kedaram, if Vanchi fans the fire of Brahmins' fanaticism, does Meghanatha in respect of non-Brahmins, more effectively. Vanchi has to lie in the grave dug by him. The author, again, shows that post-election effects of communal hate and dissension are devastating. Kedaram is torn asunder between Brahmins and non-Brahmins — what an awful expression! — after the elections, Koni finds, to his chagrin. Kedaram is in the relentless grip of endless emotional tension and mutual distrust spreading like miasma but maddening like nightmare. The caste taboos regarding touch, food, drink, marriage and other things are losing their hold on people, but casteism has menacingly raised its head in political and economic spheres in post-Independence times. Once politicians appeal to the bigotry of people, sheer majority of the number will win the day. It would be like etherising human minds resulting in intellectual stagnation or bankruptcy.

The fact that the caste system is an offshoot of
religion has created many complications. In *Train to Pakistan*, Iqbal, Khushwant Singh's mouthpiece, takes all communities to task: "India is constipated with a lot of humbug. Take religion. For the Hindu it means little besides caste and cow-protection. For the Muslim, circumcision and Kosher meat. For the Sikh, long hair and hatred of the Muslim. For the Christian, Hinduism with a sola topee. For the Parsi, fire-worship and feeding vultures". Mulk Raj Anand shows how the conservative and ignorant low caste villagers are not willing to shed even their superstitious notions which they miscall religion. They complain against the government that it shows scant respect for religion. Bali, in "The Power of Darkness", says that those in authority are ruffians and scoundrels who do not respect religion and the gods. He stoops to finding fault with individuals: "And to think that the Prime Minister of this faithless country is himself a Brahmin! Look, folks, darkness has come!" 

Indo-Anglian novelists show how professions and castes are connected. Caste-taboos regarding crafts and professions have to be obeyed. Craftsmen feel dejected if they cannot practise their crafts owing to caste considerations. In fact, they wish their crafts to be passed on to their children as proud items of legacy. Bhattacharya shows how one would naturally regret to see one's craftsmanship being wasted away owing to caste
discrimination. In *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Kalo has to tear away from his craft just when it has reached the stage of art. When he sees Viswanath working, he cannot help thinking of throwing away the mask and mantle of priesthood and of being in his smithy. This shows that crafts are a tie like castes and craftsmanship is a godsend, whose call cannot be ignored. Bhattacharya shows that fathers expect from sons the continuation of clans and crafts. Kali is down-cast to know that he would be sonless and deplores that his tradition and cultivated skill would go futile. "This skill in his work was the pivot of his being, and he was its last repository. Obhijit would have to be an empty name". R. K. Narayan explains how professions and castes are connected. To be born in a high caste is not sufficient for retaining social dignity. If, by chance, one's ancestors were connected with a profession or job looked down upon by society, it would be almost permanently stigmatic.

Margayya, in *The Financial Expert*, regretfully remembers that his ancestors had been professional corpse-bearers and that it would be difficult to find out a good girl of the same caste for Balu. Of course, the passage of time and magic of money can obliterate an unfortunate blot on the caste, as is found by him. Nayantara Sahgal explains that caste taboos regarding professions are inviolable and to be highborn turns out to be, sometimes, a
liability in itself. Persons of high castes can accept reputable white-collared jobs only. In A Time to be Happy, Raghuvir, a Brahmin M.A., does not like Sanad’s suggestion to work in the business of manufacture and sale of toys to earn more money, because Brahmins cannot stoop so low.

Urbanisation and Industrialisation have contributed to the loosening of the hold of caste. Economic stringency and rather liberal urban life compel persons of higher castes to accept jobs or professions infra dig. In Kamala Markandaya’s Nectar in a Sieve, Arjun revolts against the shackles of the Caste Order and accepts a job in the tannery, because going without food is worse than taking the risk of losing caste. Caste distinctions are not very rigid in cities. Jalim, in Padmini Sengupta’s Red Hibiscus, does not have to suffer, any longer, the pangs of social inferiority and injustice; after first getting education in a city and then a post in a mill there. Probably this is why persons of low castes are now-a-days feeling inclined to leave their ancestral professions and villages. Drainage has almost assuaged the wound of untouchability. The hate for Harijans rests founded on the nausea and filth of their work. The foundations of prejudice have to crumble. They are already shaking.

Independence has widened the Indian’s mental horizons and has fostered a general cosmopolitan outlook on life and ideals. He is striving to be a world citizen.
and, as such, is inclined to put his house in order. He cannot afford to be parochial and unjust and has to direct his efforts towards evolving a pan-Indian social order. Indo-Anglian novelists faithfully reflect this sociological metamorphosis and seem to assert that the caste-bonds are loosening and that the stigma of casteism is wearing out. Gandhiji's appearance on the Indian socio-political scene has hastened this process of social revolution. Bhattacharya indicates that surnames or honorifics denoting caste-affiliations are to be discarded and the ideal to be above caste-considerations should be practised, not only preached. Satyajit, in Shadow from Ladakh, does so. He disowns caste and voluntarily invites castelessness. The author stresses again that concern for caste means orthodoxy which is out of context in the present social order. In the same novel, Bhashkar thinks thus. Mrs. Mehta, when on Bhashkar's behalf she has advertised for his marriage, does not consider applications soliciting information regarding the advertiser's caste. Though R. K. Narayan does not preoccupy himself with the problem of castes, he brings out the adverse points of the system. In response to Grace's query whether the system has now disappeared, Jagan, in The Vendor of Sweets, replies: "Well, we don't believe in caste these days, you know". Jagan says generously: "Gandhi fought for its abolition." Jagan, an orthodox person is driven to
speaking against the Order he would not wish to see gone. Narayan’s irony is subtle. The novelist again indicates the Gandhian influence on caste in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. When Sriram knows Mahatmaji’s views on caste, he becomes painfully aware of the injustice meted out by the orthodox and high-handed high-born to the down-trodden. Also, in Narayan’s *Mr. Sampath*, Srinivas depicts his hero in his story as striving for the abolition of the caste system. Padmini Sengupta shows how some cultured families have started discouraging caste discrimination owing to the awakening of national consciousness, social equality and humanitarianism. Kusum and Sita, in *Red Hibiscus*, admonishes the caste-obsessed Kumodini ‘not to put ideas of caste into the children’s heads’. Political awareness and patriotic fervour have led to the crumbling of the caste pyramid in India. *Bara Ma*, in *Red Hibiscus*, asks Kusum to go with her Doctor husband to the slum to help Rasmi and her people, despite Ganesh’s fuming against ‘those low caste Harijans’. She feels that if they do not actually help the poor, there is no point in their fighting for freedom. Nagarajan illustrates how the highborn orthodox have never found themselves in agreement with Gandhiji’s views on caste. In fact, they have clearly been hostile to Gandhiji for his efforts to abolish caste. Koni, in *Chronicles of Kedaram*, is no
The Indo-Anglian novel reveals the perspective in which the foreigner regards the Indian caste system. The picture that emerges, as seen through Western eyes, seems to have been based on misconception, misunderstanding and sometimes, even malice. Their attitude is not that of a kindly mentor but of a hostile, prejudiced critic. This also betokens absence of communication and understanding between East and West. Mrs. Jhabvala wields her most perfected weapon of irony against those Westerners who hypocritically express lip-sympathy for the social bottom-dogs in India. When Sudhir, in *A Backward Place*, tells Clarissa that Indians too judged
people by their worth, not by their birth, she retorts by referring to the caste system in India. She says she is very much against untouchability. It is quite horrible and yet she finds something beautiful about the caste system. Her attitude is ambiguous - a flatterer's and also critic's. Ruskin Bond shows how foreigners would not miss any opportunity of taunting Indians with the injustice done by the higher castes to untouchables. In spite of their missionary approach, they would wish to avoid untouchables on the ground of class-distinction. The missionary's wife, in The Room on the Roof asks Rusty not to play with the sweeper boy. Even if he had been an Indian, she adds, he would not have been allowed to play with him from the view-point of caste.

R.K. Narayan expresses the average American's reaction to castes in India through Grace in The Vendor of Sweets. She says to Jagan: 'I had heard so much about the caste system in this country, I was afraid to come here, and when I first saw you all at the Railway Station I shook with fear.' Narayan shows how Americans have been meddlesomely inquisitive about the caste system in India. They invariably ask Indian Celebrities whether the system is going - as did the American T. V. Reporter, in The Guide. Raju, the fake swami, categorically replies: 'Yes.' It is interesting to speculate whether the American was really glad to know that the Indian caste system was going after all.
Thus, the caste system is dealt with from different standpoints. These novelists have commented on the apex of the caste pyramid viz., Brahmins: their love of learning, sense of duty and unworldliness on the one hand, and their greed, gluttony and gullibility on the other. Brahmins as priests come in for rather severe treatment—it is a study in degeneration. The Bania is represented, more or less, as shrewd, mean and avaricious. They deal with high castes as a group and their unjust and cruel attitude to low castes—as also the caste snobbery of low castes themselves and their sense of revengefulness and retaliation against high castes. They examine the interaction between caste and love, caste and marriage, caste and profession, caste and superstition. They also trace the effects of casteism on election and of urbanisation and industrialisation on castes. The Indo-Anglian novel presents the picture of caste through the eyes of West, and illustrates how the ties of castes now definitely tend to loosen in the post-Gandhian and post-Independence era.

Bhattacharya, Raja Rao, Rajan and Nagarajan discuss the strength and weakness of Brahmins as a caste. Bhattacharya's attitude is satirical, Raja Rao's philosophical, Rajan's sceptical and Nagarajan's sympathetic. Raja Rao delineates his Brahmin hero, Rama, in a sophisticated and elaborate manner. He is away from Brahmins but never away
from Brahminism. In anyone's embraces and under any sky, he does not cut himself off from his Brahmin roots.

Rajan's Krishnan is a renegade Brahmin and hates, like Rama, conservative Brahmins such as his uncle 'Kruger'. Nagarajan, though mildly satirical of his hero, Koni, whom he invests with a certain degree of dignity even in his parochial caste - loyalty. Koni represents orthodox Brahmins who are good at heart and idealistic, though one may not appreciate their ideals.

Mulk Raj Anand and Padmini Sengupta describe the relations between high and low castes. Sengupta's methods are artistic and coloured by sympathetic and tender understanding of the aspirations of the crushed sections of humanity. Anand is activised by the fury of a political-cum-social reformer who wants to ruthlessly change the social inequality. His fury is not always the righteous fury of a Valmiki, but it is all worked up. His championship of the down-trodden is unquestionable. M.V. R. Sarma's attitude to caste is liberal. He does not want caste to come in the way of love. He does not develop this theme, but his views are modern and romantic. He has depicted caste-prejudices, notions and distinctions. Mrs. Jhabvala, perhaps in her excessive enthusiasm to Indianise herself rapidly, is too prone to make her novel only too Indian to miss using castes as background for conflicts.
of love, marriage, family and society. Her attitude to caste is indifferent and casual, and of course, romantic inasmuch as it helps her in weaving conflicts arising from difference in castes of lovers. R. K. Narayan is a mono-theist, engaged in the worship of the god of art. He does not bring in references to social or political problems, but he is not impervious to them. His comments and observations are few but subtle and significant.

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