CHAPTER 6

ENCOUNTERING THE POLITICS
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The reason the Romans built their great paved highways was because they had such inconvenient footwear.

~ Charles de Montesquieu

Based on the theoretical framework established in the initial chapters – i.e. a discussion on the emergence of the modern nation-state, novel as a form of narration that originated in and due to this process, and the survey of various literary theories and criticisms in order to derive the possibilities for some appropriate standpoints for the present study in the first chapter; contextualizing of these global perspectives and trends to the Indian situation with an analysis of the societal changes that took place, affecting the power relations at different levels, before and during the colonial encounter with specific emphasis on the genesis and growth of modern cultural revivalism in the second chapter; and exploring the way in which the Dalit identity was handled during these phases, especially by the elite, national leaders along with the challenge posed to them by the Dalit thinkers and leaders like Phule and Ambedkar in the third chapter – the last two chapters have made an attempt to explore the specific strands of the ascribed and implied identity of Dalits in certain selected novels of Shivaram Karanth and U R Ananthamurthy. The purpose of this final chapter is to summarize and tie-up the loose ends that might exist in our argument so far by showing how these two novelists in certain way continue the politics of the modern cultural revivalists of upholding the vedic, chaturvana system which is the basis of the caste as well as jati
system in its multiple hues. Our intention here, however, is not to argue that the novelists were totally incapable of entering into the world-view of the Dalits because of their Brahminical identity and hence unable to evolve an egalitarian vision in their novels, but to propose that due to the effects of side-glancing and the captivating ideal of the modern cultural revivalism (which in turn was borrowed from the dynamics of colonialism in general and orientalism in particular) they have missed the opportunity of either shattering or rising above the domestic walls of the vedic, chaturvarna system.

Before proceeding with these arguments however we need to attempt a response to certain questions, mostly posed by the writers from the upper-castes and represented well by Keshava Sharma in his book, Bahumukhi. Sharma raises these arguments in an attempt to ‘defend’ Karanth against the ‘onslaught’ of the critics with a ‘casteist’ bias. However, these arguments could safely be used by anyone who wishes to ‘protect’ Ananthamurthy and many similar writers from such criticism. Hence, it becomes necessary here to address the concerns raised by Sharma.

Sharma (2005, 10-12) opines that critics have attempted to read the novels of Karanth in a biased manner by making a wrong use of the discipline of ‘cultural studies’. He goes on to list out certain biases operative in the act of criticism by these critics: i) As Karanth is an insider to Vedic culture he is incapable of grasping the dynamics of other cultures; ii) As he is a Brahmin he has not allowed Choma, the protagonist of the novel, Chomana Dudi, to own a piece of land he was aspiring for; and iii) As Karanth is a Brahmin (and hence has no direct relationship with the nature as the laboring castes would have) he has not been able to establish a genuine relationship with the earth and nature. This, according to Sharma emerges due to a superficial understanding of ‘culture’ as well as ‘caste’. He argues that both these concepts are very complex and dynamic. He says that it is very important to realize that there are many regional variations in the way caste system is practiced.
and hence the Brahminic community is not the only one or even the main caste responsible for the oppression of the lower sections of the society.

As shown by Sharma it is limiting and regressive to correlate one’s caste to one’s creative work like the novel. It is because genuine creative works offer us the possibilities to rise above and even to resolve, at least in the sphere of imagination, some of the ideological bindings experienced in the real world. However, it is equally wrong, specially from the perspective of a critic and researcher, to say that one should not suspect the influences of these factors even in the creative works like novels, because cultures and identities, though are complex and dynamic, are also quite subtle in surviving in the thoughts, emotions and dreams of individuals as much as in the community. This we have seen in our discussion on culture and identity in our very first Chapter.

As far as the question of regional variation in the caste system, Rodrigues (2008, 8) opines that while the dalit-bahujan intellectuals saw their opposition to Brahmanism as the opposition to a world-view, a set of beliefs and principles and to institutions and practices implicated in the same, Brahminical intellectuals have tried to drive a wedge between dalits and bahujans by arguing that the dalits were subjected to exploitation and oppression primarily by the dominant castes of non-Brahmins. The latter highlighted the conflict of interests between the non-Brahmin dominant castes and the untouchable castes who were mainly landless labourers. S. Srinivas Iyengar, for instance, was to argue that non-Brahmins were chiefly responsible for the low and despised status of the Adi-dravidas (Geetha and Rajadurai: 1998, 45). This was an argument that Annie Besant and other Brahminical apologists repeated ad nauseam. However, as Ambedkar has rightly pointed out, it is Brahmanism as an ideology that proposed a set of ideals and justifications that gave the chaturvanra model. It is on internalizing this ideology that the other upper castes found it natural to oppress the Dalits. Hence, Ambedkar would say ‘My quarrel with the Hindus and Hinduism is not over the
imperfections of their social conduct. It is much more fundamental. It is over their ideals’ (quoted in Rodrigues: 2002, 317).

When one considers the broad movement and major preoccupations of Indian thought from the late nineteenth century to the contemporary times, it seems clear that the central problem is that of identity and that the central theme is the cultural revivalism of Indians. Having possessed a tradition that claims to have a long history of two millennia, how did identity become the central problem all of a sudden from the later part of nineteenth century onwards? When we re-look at the historical time, we confront the constant struggle of the hegemonic minority not only to perceive themselves and to place a minority hegemonic culture in the mainstream of nationalist movement but also to bring a national credential to the cultural practices of the superiors in the strata of caste structure. The hegemonic minority, opposed in its very ideology to that of the Dalits, being itself insecure, was trying to create a nationalist thought process which in turn would bring maximum benefit to itself.

The basic principles of western thought like liberty and equality were directly in opposition to the basic tenants of this oppressive, hegemonic, minority community which also had high cultural capital. The hegemonic minority had clearly sensed that if the seeds of western thought process if allowed to sprout in the Indian soil would sound the death knell for it. It is because the wide-sweeping effects of western thought on certain sections of Indian society was sensed early by those of the hegemonic community who had early access to western education during the later part of the eighteenth century.

The threat of western thought on this minority community was so severe that it gradually led it to the introspection of certain Indian cultural practices in the light of western thought. This introspection in the early stage resulted in the purification of certain prevailing practices. For the first time in this land, bahujans (for whom west must have seemed very attractive) were shown a little humane consideration by some of the enlightened intellectuals of this
hegemonic community, not with the purpose of being benevolent to their fellow beings but to strengthen its own fortress against the onslaught of the west. The hegemonic minority was afraid that if the Dalits embraced Christianity due to the attraction of the west which was informed by humanism they would lose their hegemonic control over them. This fear made them appease the Dalits. It is this appeasement process which has predominantly resulted in the modern cultural revivalism.

One important aspect of the modern cultural revivalist process emanating from the insecurity about the west was the effort made by certain sections of the hegemonic minority to disguise themselves, either consciously or unconsciously, as pro-Dalit, and they, in turn, creating an identity for the Dalits as part of their project of cultural revivalism. However, this project of the pro-Dalit minority ‘superiors’ to create an alternative identity itself was ambiguous and misleading. This ambiguity should be seen in the light of the history of experiences.

Modern Indian cultural revivalists were unwilling to accept the influence of the west that was making inroads into the life of this land. They were very busy in creating an alternative identity in opposition to the western liberal thought.

In this manner, a new revived identity formation was begun, bringing together certain common elements of the life of the land, drawing practices predominantly from the upper caste itself, but careful enough to ensure that these inclusions did not take away the inherent right of the hegemonic minority to be superior over others. The inclusion and the exclusion of these practices is itself a modern purana (myth) of this land. The modern mythification of the land began once again in keeping with the spirit of the hierarchy that was constructed by the hegemonic, intelligent few of this land, many centuries ago. And this modern revival can be seen as the continuation of the project of reinventing the hierarchy to perpetuate itself. The ‘land’ itself got politicised for the same purpose. The breadth and width of the
‘land’ was redefined for the purpose of creating a new identity.

The cultural revivalism which was initially begun to counter western thought process was gradually made a weapon to counter colonisation. It is the intelligibility of the designers of revivalism that has equated western thought process with the colonizers. In fact, for the revivalists there was a dire urge to create a culturally united India to counter the western reform in order to preserve their hegemony; but they did not want this newly created unity to undermine their hegemony at the same time. An illusionary, ‘pseudo-integrated cultural identity’ was in fact created not by social pride, but on the contrary, by the desire to preserve the dominant tenants of a system which is advantageous for the superiors of the politically created hierarchy of this mythical land, India.

On a little introspection it becomes glaringly clear to us that this mega project was being carried on neither to bring together the commonalities of the cultural practices of the land, nor to raise the Dalits from the lower rungs of the ladder. Instead, it was used to harp on separateness from the ‘other’. Who was this ‘other’? The ‘other’ was the west or Christianity. This new identity is on the anvil even today. It has used various means, some times clear, most of the times subtle; has used both extremist as well as moderate means to perpetuate the ideology of the new identity. It should also be noted, for a historical reason, that a convenient pseudo-identity was moulded making people believe that the new construct of identity shared the common cultural practices of this land. On the contrary, it not only harps on separateness from the other but also from the self, a self which was construed against the current of the time.

Ever since the late eighteenth century we come across time and again a phrase, ‘a search for national identity’. Wasn’t this very phrase a product of a cultural industry which gave a notion that it was fighting against colonisers? Colonisers have moved away, yet why hasn’t the phrase seem to be dying? Who has been placed in the place of colonisers?
Has the enemy changed or has it altered, or is it being kept alive? It looks as though, the enemy has not changed at all. It was not the colonisers who led these cultural revivalists to search for a nationalist identity, instead, the ghost that haunted, threatened or challenged them was different. With the passage of time their enemy has become a greater threat for them. It was not the administrators of the west who provoked them to search for a new, an alternative identity, but in turn, it was western thought and Christianity. When the hegemonic minority saw in the past and sees in the present, Dalits being equipped with western thought and Christianity the roots of the hegemonic minority gets shaken and there is a slow, steady, benevolent or violent move towards the phrase, ‘a search for national identity’.

In the process of an alternative identity formation these cultural revivalists had a greater problem in choosing to answer these two basic questions, which are fundamental to the construction of an identity: ‘who am I’ and ‘who are we’? It is obvious that they selected the latter. Why the latter? Did the majority of the land possess a ‘self’? Was the majority-authorized ‘self’ by the upper caste which created myths to perpetuate the sanctity of the social structures of this land? If the modern cultural revivalists would have taken the earlier question the existence of these upper castes itself would have been in great danger. Answer to this question would have demanded equality to all the Indians; which was unthinkable to the upper castes even in their wildest dreams. Therefore, we do not see a great desire felt among Indians to unite and to assert their personality in the context of the assertion of the Indianness has made itself felt everywhere. Thus, cultural revivalism did not lead to a genuine investigation of the self.

The hegemonic minority has been manufacturing the puranas that were needed to justify the caste hierarchy from the time of Buddhism, Jainism and Chaarvaka cult. Even to confront Christianity they perpetuated the same kind of myth but in an altered form. At this time they seem to be more benevolent and subtle when it comes to Bahujans. The benevolence,
however, should be seen as a grand farce intended towards defending their position against the onslaught of Christianity and Western thinking.

Thus, it could be observed that anti-progressive aspects became predominant undercurrents of those writers who gave an impression that their writing was trying to raise voices against subtle evils of the inherited society. Their mode of liberating people and the society from the clutches of evil itself was political. Their exposure to the western liberal thinking in the later part of their life in the academic field contradicted the natural moulding of their self in the early stages of growing up. This resulted in an out and out contradiction in their narrator’s tone. The unavoidable but all-present hierarchical caste structure in which they were brought up made them raise their voices in support of its continued existence in an altered form and even bolstered up its existence as they went on to consciously negate its oppressive effects. Western liberal thinking took a backstage or, in some instances, was misused in the name of its appropriation or adaptation to the native mode of writing. Ironically, the inappropriate adaptation of the liberal western thinking has greatly helped them to preserve the oppressive practices of their times without recognizing them as the true saviors of an oppressive way of life. Their narrator is so politically created that he lives in a real world making people believe that he speaks of a fictitious world.

Sharma (2005, 5) in his extensive work on the writings of Karanth opines that two things are very visible in Karanth’s writing: i) experience, and ii) intellectualism that personalized the experience. His intellectualism in turn was moulded by individualism and liberal humanism. His experience however, according to Sharma, was obtained from his wide travel. Hence, he was able to avoid the pit-falls of being nostalgic or romantic about the rural, traditional life. As a result he was able to create characters that were hard-working and struggling to make a living along side depicting the consequences of nationalistic movements.
While we can agree with Sharma in concluding that Karanth's rich exposure to rural Karnataka would have helped him to avoid the dangers of romanticizing the neglected sections of the society this in itself is not sufficient to conclude that this provided him with an insider's-view to the hopes and fears of the deprived. This is because the every village and caste in India is so diverse that it does not suffice one entire life-time to complete this challenging enterprise. Also, Karanth had mostly travelled through rural Karnataka as a Gandhian on a mission of rural reconstruction. Hence, it was not a mutual and equal relationship with the rural people which would have allowed for psychological and communicative openness that is required for understanding the other without too much of mediation.

Another reason that is often given to 'guard' Karanth's works from any kind of 'hard' probing is that he had a scientific bent of mind and that he was a liberal humanist to the core. However, any student of Western philosophy and literary theory knows how Karl Popper and others have shown the limitations of excessive belief in science as also the constraining factors inherent in liberal humanism as pointed out in the first Chapter. Also, it is quite possible that a person who applies the logic of science to certain areas of life might totally ignore them when it comes to certain other aspects like art and fiction.

Sharma (2005, 13-14) asserts that Karanth's narration does not suffer from fixed, unitary ideology as his creative writing spans over many decades, starting in the pre-independence stage and extending up to the times of Indira Gandhi. Hence, he assumes that there has been a lot of transformation in terms of the value system in the writings of Karnath. D. R. Nagaraj, however, (2003, 27) has a different observation to make. He argues that since Karanth's political understanding had stopped to the historical incident of 1947, all his political novels of his of later period appear only as a satire. We do not see in his political novels the minute growth of the real perceptions of politics, social life, caste, class, rule and so forth from 1947. Due to the hovering of the earlier logic of national
politics all over a gulf is created between the historical growth and the logical grounding. Therefore, the logic of the writer has not given opportunity for a plural search of the content.

Sharma (2005, 14) argues that although Kamath belonged to the Brahminic caste, whose social functions and occupations as priests and teachers were rigidly-defined, he was successful in breaking this mould by taking up various unorthodox careers. This, although is true, is cannot be limited to Karanth alone. As Ananthamurthy has observed,

It was the Brahmins who first gave up their caste-related profession. The follower of the vedic (relating to Hindu holy scriptures) way of life became a secular person. And those Brahmins who stuck to their original profession as Hindu priests did not move forward. Such people no longer wanted their children to follow in their footsteps. While Christians take pride in their children entering the priesthood, for the Brahmins it is neither a matter of pride nor a lucrative profession. In the past, it was important for the Hindu priest to earn the faith of the community. The mantras (religious chants) that he recited were not tangible. His value came largely from the faith that people vested in him. When this faith vanished, the priest became redundant (New Internationalist: U.R. Ananthamurthy, I, a Brahmin: UR Ananthamurthy is an Indian poet and writer famous for his outspokenness on issues of caste. He is also a Brahmin July, 2005 by http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0JQP/is_380/ai_n14795007/. acceced on 08/01/2010).

Ananthamurthy further observes that ‘Today it is not the priestly Brahmins who are angry, but their secular counterparts. Though they no longer observe a religious way of life, they internally still cherish their notions of superiority’. This observation aptly concludes that giving up ones traditional occupation need not automatically result in abandoning ones cultural notions and ideals. (Ibid)
Sharma (2005, 16) opines that there is a continuous negotiation between the regional and nationalist discourses in the novels of Karanth and he prefers to uphold the significance of the life stances of ordinary, laboring persons like Nagaveni and Laccha rather than the grand vision of Ramakrishna, Aurobindo and Gandhi. However, this fact in itself is not sufficient to argue that Karanth does not chisel the characters of the ordinary persons like Laccha in the mould of the modern cultural revivalists like Ramakrishna and others. In fact his open admiration for them and his active experiments of their teaching encourages us to think that we have greater reason to suspect that there is even the influence of Leo Tolstoy, filtered through Gandhi. Thus, through this process of inspiration for nation-building through bottom-up approach and character-building that the characters like Laccha are created. However, this process of opting for the regional is not a guarantee for egalitarianism and anti-casteism as not even Gandhi had propagated such a radical approach.

Sharma (2005, 13-14) has argued that Karanth's novels basically focus on the social dimensions of life. He also has an 'unromantic' view of life as his novels have existential base. However, it can be noted that the social problems that Karanth has taken up – be it sati, widow remarriage, occupational displacement, extra-marital relationships, the Dalits' aspiration for the land – were primarily concerning the upper-castes, just as those of the social reformers and cultural revivalists. Also, his depiction of Kudiyas in Kudiyara Koosu and the 'betta' (hill) in Bettada Jeewa have elements of romanticism and nostalgia for the innocent and harmonious life that is fast changing.

Mogalli (2008, 27) has persuasively argued that in the caste allegiant society even though the writer tries to distance himself from it, as an undissolving, an annihilating conscience, transgressing the request of the writer creates a chasm in creativity. It is of no use to blame the writer for it. As caste is in the writer's consciousness, it is also a status of creative weakness which can embody the writer. For an Indian writer, experiences that emerge through
caste create together with both beautiful and the distorted. Mogalli (Ibid.) further asserts that in the depth of Indian aesthetics, without getting diluted, the stigma of caste impurity creates non-secular images by coming out when it is needed, changing its costume to suit situations.

Caste identity of many of the Kannada writers was evident even in their beliefs and practices in their later life. This is made evident by the fact that even the writers like Bendre, Maasti, and Adiga, turned out to openly take recourse in the traditional, vedic symbols and rituals. Even though Kamath had renounced all attachment to his caste during most part of his life time it is ironic that his last rites were done according to the rituals of the orthodox religion that he belonged to, amidst the chanting by the priests, whom he vehemently opposed.

Ananthamurthy has gone to the extent of advocating the viewpoint that the castes should be seen as the repository of creativity. He has also acknowledged that in the present times, "It has become extremely difficult to perceive issues of caste with any kind of transparency" (I, a Brahmin, Rujuvathu).

However, in tracing the history of anti-caste movements Ananthamurthy (I, a Brahmin, Rujuvathu) presents a very partial view that most of the modern cultural revivalists suffer from. He believes that Vivekananda, Gandhi and Ambedkar were the 'first' to set this trend of questioning the supremacy of Brahminism. Thus, he not only fails to acknowledge the struggle between the culture and power relations between the vedic and non-vedic forces from the ancient times till the times of Phule and Periyar (as traced in our second chapter) but also glosses over very major philosophical and ideological differences between the modern cultural revivalists and even Ambedkar, for example (as discussed in the third chapter). Thus, he faultily assumes that the rational struggle towards the eradication of the caste system is of recent origin and that it the cultural revivalists have a genuine solution for uprooting its ill-effects. In his opinion the caste system would be completely destroyed in our country
when the Dalits are allowed a free entry into temples (which again stand for vedic ideology controlled by the orthodox priests) and not inter-caste marriages as argued by Amedkar. Thus, he falls into the trap of the cultural revivalists who seek solution to the problem of the Dalits within a religio-cultural domain vitiated by the vedic traditions rather than the here-and-now of the socio-political and economic existence.

Mogalli (2008, 28) opines that although Karanth had not been loyal to his caste identity and has advocated secular values, the sensibilities that were made available for him by his childhood experiences were formed from a confined, vedic-dominated world. This is applicable to all the writers. It cannot be believed that the writer of the Dalit origin would write completely as non-communal. The roots of writing shoot from the environs of the writer’s birth. It may be easy for the intellectuals to cut off from the caste, but, it is difficult to check in the uncontrollable force of the aesthetic flow of stream of conscience. But, this is transgressed by highly sensitive writers. Karanth very valiantly has faced this danger. Though Karanth wrote in a great realist style, by his intellectual path he has tried to be secular. When we say Karanth has found an alternative, we cannot generously tell that he has separated from the caste sensibilities.

This suspicion of Mogalli is corroborated by Kakar (2009), a psycho-analyst who has extensively studied the influence of Hindu world-view on Indian psyche. Kakar has asserted that –

The world image of traditional Hindu culture, like those of other societies, provides its members with a sanctioned pattern, a template which can be superimposed on the outer world with all its uncertain ties and on the flow of inner experience in all its turbulence, thus helping individuals to make sense of their own lives. Shared by most Hindus and enduring with remarkable continuity through the ages, the Hindu world image, whether consciously acknowledged and codified in elaborate rituals,
or silently pervading the ‘community unconscious’, has decisively influenced Indian languages as well as ways of thinking, perceiving and categorizing experience. This image is so much in a Hindu’s bones he may not be aware of it. The self-conscious efforts of westernized Hindus to repudiate it are by and large futile based as they are on substantial denial (2009, 30).

This, Kakar (2009, 12) says, is effectively executed among the ‘twice-borns’ through the practice of the threading ceremony which initiates a process of teaching of Dharma Shastras (the religious teaching for the Brahmans which upholds the hierarchical structure of the society with the Brahmans at its helm) between the age of five and ten. Thus the traditional, ‘twice-borns’ caste very successfully transforms a human being into a cognitively coded social being by first emotionally binding him to the caste affinity at the infancy and intellectually binding him at the early impressionable age of early childhood. Thus, the sense of caste system as the most natural and rational thing, Kakar argues, is much more deep-rooted among the Brahmans than the others.

A major difficulty that the modern cultural revivalists had faced is was of understanding the rights language of the Dalits. Operating from the unequal, vedic framework they thought that providing some public space for the representation of the Dalits was good enough of a reform. However, the rights-language has been central to dalit-bahujan thought from Phule onwards. Phule himself had read Paine’s Rights of Man in 1847. He discusses rights as human rights, although the focus is on the former and not the latter, as we understand them today. He inveighs against Brahmanism for denying rights. ‘For thousands of years, the defeated shudras were kept ignorant of their human rights’ (Deshpande, 2002: 174). The Brahmans thought that it was their right to treat the Shudras the way they did, and the Shudras themselves thought that ‘it was the right of the Brahmans to do so’ (Deshpande, 2002: 174). The novelists working from within the tradition established by the cultural revivalists fail to
capture this aspect of the Dalit assertion in their novels as seen in the preceding two chapters.

Thus, we find Mogalli (2008, 7) right in arguing that the major symbols of the main forms of Kannada literary conscience is of the Hindutva. Hinduism has ruled Kannada tradition. With the decline of the patronage to Sanskrit, as the native languages grew, Vedic writers migrated to the regional languages; they brought Sanskrit aesthetics and spread the essence of Hinduism even to Kannada literature. Even today many writers have not come out of its repercussions.

Chenni (2002, 73-4) notes that when the novel was born as a form of narration, our writers had to compulsorily forget two cultured languages. It was for the novelist a process of obligatory unlearning. He had to give up two narrative traditions. The type of story changed into a phenomenological type. Like Gunadhya, our writers had to forget one language, one hegemonic discourse. The discourse of what was not secular or not worldly had to be given up. However, the question to be answered is - did our novelists really give up their hegemonic discourse? Partly yes because the novel, with its rootedness in the West, especially after the enlightenment project and modern nation-state based on the assumed equality of all the citizens demanded of them to give up certain aspects of the hegemonic discourse. However, we also have learnt from the discussion in the various sections that the genre of the novel was adapted by the Indian novelists to suit some of their interests which did not allow them to totally abandon the hegemonic discourse. Caste system is one such aspect. Although they attacked many of its evil practices they glossed over its ideological stances borrowed from the vedic, chaturvarna system. This could be partly due to their compulsion to safeguard their own community against the pressures originating from the West through the British which resulted in – i) large-scale conversions to religions such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism which preached equality and promised an egalitarian society; ii) English education which preached values such as rationalism, fraternity and equality;
iii) various legislations which wrought large-scale changes in the socio-economic arena; iv) the ideal of equality and empowerment of women; v) militant and intellectually scathing Dalit assertions; and vi) Muslim consciousness of partisan view of the Congress and its subsequent assertion, apart from many other factors that resulted in the introduction of modernity which could not be rolled back by the traditional, vedic forces. However, in their preoccupation with defending the interests of their community, since many of its dogmatic viewpoints did not stand the test of rationality and modernity, they chose to reinvent themselves without deciding to throw away all that kept them away from progress and genuine human relationships.

This side-glancing of the West and the efforts towards modern cultural revivalism became very overwhelming mainly due to the overarching purpose of achieving independence from the foreign rule and establishing swaraj. Naturally, in the process, the repeated assertions by the Dalits for egalitarianism were only 'represented' by the reformist revivalists at various levels and not taken very seriously in order to show a united front in the face of the enemy, the British, understood primarily as Christians beaming with a feeling of superiority and tendency to look-down upon all that was pagan. By the time India got independence there was a total fusion of the cultural and religious aspects of most of the Indians under the umbrella of Hinduism and, consequently, the Dalits had to contend themselves to be defined and judged by these 'Indian' values which were filtered, invented, and appropriated from different sources at various historical moments. The novelists and the novels chosen for our study too could not come out of these frameworks due to the compulsions or pressures discussed so far. This, ultimately, could be the reason for their many omissions, a few commissions and plenty of silences in their novels with regard to the identity and rights of the Dalits.

The most pertinent question that needs to be asked at this point is – 'what is the
significance of the arguments presented so far in this thesis that direct towards a possibility of certain kind of politics in the alternative identity of Dalits evolving out of the Novels of Shivaram Karanth and U R Ananthamurthy to Indian society and literature? The significance is multi-directional:

• it warns the historian regarding the possibility of wrongly assuming that just because of the influences of Vivekananda, Gandhi and such other social reformers, the Western education and such other factors, the elite in India, including those who have exhibited social commitment, could have risen above the limiting influences of modern cultural revivalism within the framework of nationalism in general and vedic, chaturvarna ideology in particular;

• it alerts the sociologist to the fact of transformed but unresolved predicament of caste biases that get only mutilated but not annihilated in the process of modernization;

• it goads the cultural scientist to look closely at how the elite cultures, defined and controlled by the vedic, chaturvarna system at the base, even while propagating the ideals of justice and egalitarianism, tend to safeguard their privileged positions;

• it exhorts the psychologist to the prospects of understanding the specificity of the power of Hindu myths, symbols and rituals implanted in the culture getting only rationalized and sublimated without destroying its basic prejudices borrowed from the vedic, chaturvarna system despite the efforts by an insider to be critical of it with the help of modern sciences

• it cautions the writer against the lethargic as well as arrogant attitude that makes him take for granted the power of the culture and identity that has fashioned his identity since his conception through an ideological orientation
to view vedic culture as ‘superior’ and as the chaturvarna system as one of the ‘natural’ things on earth;

- it helps the reader to avoid the pitfalls of becoming an uncritical sahrudaya and consuming all the conventional identity ascription to the Dalits just because of the show of certain ‘empathy’ and ‘generosity’ by the narrator towards them; and finally,

- it enables the critic to make a bold departure from the conventional notions that judge all literature that is rich in metaphors and looking ‘realistic’ as good and overcome the undue hesitation in critiquing the works of certain accomplished writers, especially in matters of caste identity, as even the slightest expression of suspicion regarding any residue of the caste prejudice in their literature is looked-down-upon as ‘petty’ and ‘backward-looking’.

The last point requires a little elaboration here. Writers like Sharma (2005) have observed that as Karanth was very ‘self-centered’ he used to get annoyed with any kind of ‘unwarranted’ questions of the critics. This difficulty, in fact, was coupled with another, more universal one – the difficulty of becoming unpopular and being voted-out by being true to the spirit of criticism and daring to critique the works of certain writers (mostly hailing from upper castes) already declared as ‘geniuses’, ‘infallible’ and hence, ‘legends’. This is very much true in the case of Karanth, if not Ananthamurthy, who was described with all sorts of epithets and highly revered by many established ‘critics’ themselves. No ordinary human therefore would venture into such an unpopular task of subjecting their works to rigorous tests of literary criticism. However, as we have discussed right in the first Chapter of this thesis, no writer, however accomplished he may be, is above the influences and pressures of his time. The response to these circumstances and pressures may vary. One may even resolve and transform these challenges into something beautiful and noble in one's
creative efforts. All the same, it is unwise to conclude that it is improper or undesired to suspect the residues of these influences even in a transformed way in the creative works of these writers.

In this context, I believe that we cannot resolve the predicament of identity ascription controlled by the caste system which is transformed but not destroyed, without inventing new ways of creative writing which helps us go beyond the dialectics and hermeneutics of the vedic, chaturvarna system. As argued by Butor (1968, 47-48), the search for new novelistic forms with a greater power of integration plays a triple role in relation to our consciousness reality: unmasking, exploration, and adaptation. He further observes that,

The novelist who refuses to accept this task, never discarding old habits, never demanding any particular effort of his reader, never obliging him to confront himself, to question attitudes long since taken for granted, will certainly enjoy a readier success, but he becomes the accomplice of that profound uneasiness, that darkness, in which we are groping for our way. He stiffens the reflexes of our consciousness even more, making any awakening more difficult; he contributes to its suffocation, so that even if his intentions are generous, his work is in the last analysis a poison (1968, 48).

In the words of Malcolm Bradbury (1977, 5-6) the novelist’s business at best is to make himself or herself an exemplary creative citizen of a world which is still occurring and which needs to be named into existence, to invent the possibilities of an imaginary book in a universe that needs to find names for things. He or she works inside a convention that always has to be de-conventionalized in order to generate a new work authentic to the author and the contemporary occasion.

In a similar vein, Johnson has remarked that the novelist cannot legitimately or
successfully embody present-day reality in exhausted forms. If he is serious, he will be making a statement which attempts to change society towards a condition he conceives to be better, and he will be making at least implicitly a statement of faith in the evolution of the form in which he is working. Both these aspects of making are radical; this is inescapable unless he chooses escapism. He argues that,

Present-day reality is changing rapidly; it always has done, but for each generation it appears to be speeding up. Novelists must evolve (by inventing, borrowing, stealing or cobbling from other media) forms which will more or less satisfactorily contain an ever-changing reality, their own reality and not Dickens's reality or Hardy's reality or even James Joyce's reality (1973, 170).

The history of a genre is the story of its advocates: a story they tell each other and whatever audience they may find and persuade to listen and to believe; a story retold from generation to generation, changing along the way, not simply to encompass new instances of the genre, but to reshape the past into a coherent account of the present. In another sense, the history of a genre is the story of these stories: an account of a genre's partisans which embraces, not only the story of the genre as it has been retold, but the many stories that have ceased to be told or were told but to a few. In this second sense, the past ceases to be a coherent account of the present, or becomes so only in the less tangible sense in which the past must also be asked to account for what the present is not.

Inevitably, the difference between telling a story of the novel and telling the story of the novel's stories is only paper-thin. But this difference is ultimately the difference between a theory of the novel and a history of the novel—must be maintained. It may only be maintained by interrogating the fictions of genre told by novelists and their critical and theoretical partisans, by disbelieving them and their very project of bringing coherence to the novel's past. Very
likely this means telling a bad story, denying oneself the pleasure of bringing the past to a satisfactory conclusion in a right, just, and inevitable present. Compensation comes through an understanding of the history of the novel as something made—not determined by Form and History, but fashioned by a host of competing writers, critics, and readers who shaped the novel's history by telling persuasive stories with consequences for themselves, their contemporaries, and their successors. The unsung heroes of the building up of the nation should be traced so that the designs and intentions of those who dreamt to conceptualize the nation should be given their due, so that the nation which has grown and growing finds an amicable correction to grow better for the times to come.

Michel de Montaigne once remarked - "I know well what I am fleeing from but not what I am in search of". Many a time our writing and reading attempts for the new and the unconventional by deserting or destroying the traditional. However, this is only a task half-accomplished. In the elusive effort of resolving the challenges of the vedic, chaturvarna system by either prematurely declaring its death or by negating its existence, we have tried our best to disown it. However, since we have hesitated to fill the void created by this 'emptying' of the ideology resembled by the myths, symbols and rituals that constituted our world and our identity for centuries with a bold and total creation and acceptance of the new, egalitarian symbols, we find that the traditional, fragmentary vision comes back to us in the guise of the 'eternal' and 'ever creative' truth as in the case of the advatta of Vivekananda or the ahimsa of Gandhi. As could be seen, we repeatedly get into this predicament that the modern cultural revivalists got into, partly because we have a 'borrowed' and 'fragmentary' vision of our history and society, as discussed in Chapter two, and mainly because we have failed to evolve our own creative forms that would sustain and extend the modern nation-state called India; one of these forms being original, enlightened literature.
This is not to say that the challenges and dilemmas discussed so far are applicable only to the upper-caste, Brahminic writing. Dalit literature too can succumb to similar difficulties if it does not focus on understanding its historic strengths and failures and to fathom creative forms to open themselves up to the opportunities and challenges of the present era to move beyond the old as well as self-generated oppressive elements. Thus, there is a danger of Dalit literature getting into the vicious circle of getting into the emotion of ‘victimhood’ without envisaging the need and possibility of interdependence and mutual enrichment.

The process and the dynamics discussed above have relevance to the literature created by non-Dalits as it requires them to give up tokenistic engagement and 'empathetic' stances towards the Dalits and their literature. This is so because real, liberative literature cannot be produced without the openness for and acceptance of one another which in turn requires an unwavering belief in the power of human relationships, without privileging one over the other. Only then can we hope to engage in the task of doing something beautiful in the field of literature that Bertolt Brecht envisaged for theatre when he said, 'We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself'.

Finally, as I conclude, I wish to state that the intention of this thesis, as made clear in different sections, is not to brand the two novelists as 'casteists' nor to say that all their other merits stand cancelled because of their works ascribing the altered identity found in the tradition of the modern cultural revivalists. However, we need to acknowledge that the efforts of Karnath and Ananthamurthy have helped us move a little closer to the secular space in which the Dalits can hope to hold their heads high and engage in egalitarian and creative partnerships. In his Jnanpith acceptance speech, U R Ananthamurthy said: “Art’s
still a good hiding place. It allowed Solzhenitsyn to remain a believer, and it has made it possible for many non-believers to retain their integrity in times of intolerance and bigotry.”

We cannot blame both, Karanth and Ananthamurthy, for many a time hiding in the cave of modern cultural revivalism which is nothing but a partial, fragmentary vision of India. It is because many a time they have also fought, and fought bravely, through literature and other means, to extend the secular space for all of us to exist and negotiate our identities. Hence, it seems apt to agree with Chenni when he says:

A writer should be like a mason plastering a wall, not like a polisher of diamonds. Once he becomes perfect, he ceases to be a writer. It is like a terminator seed, perfection will be a terminator seed, self-destructive, not producing anything, not creating anything. Why Karanth becomes important even for the future generations is because he was a bricoleur. We have been saying that Karanth’s world is incomplete. It should be a matter of joy that it is incomplete, in a healthy way incomplete. I see this is the situation in the whole of Indian novel (2002, 79-80).

May be the same thing can be said of Ananthmurthy’s works as well.