CHAPTER 3

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RECASTING THE CASTE
THE POLITICS OF REFORMATION

Because they know the name of what I am looking for, they think they know what
I am looking for!

~ Antonio Porchia, Voces, 1943, translated from Spanish by W.S. Merwin

Locating the Caste

Caste is the most contentious issue that has fascinated and divided scholars who have
wished to study this system of stratified social-hierarchy in India. There is an enormous
body of academic writing and political polemic on the issue. These are basically the part
of debate on the transformation of Indian society under the impact of colonialism and its
administrative mechanisms. Some argue for the continuities of pre-colonial social-structures
including caste. Others stress the basic qualitative changes introduced by the colonial rulers.

Louis Dumont (1970), the French scholar and writer of a famous book on caste,
Homo-Hierarchicus, constructed an image of caste based on certain texts. In this image,
two opposing conceptual categories of purity and pollution are the core elements of caste-
structure. These unique core principles of caste-hierarchy, according to Dumont, are observed
in scriptural formulation as well as the every-day life of all the Hindus. In other words,
these values separate Indians culturally from the Western civilization, making India a land
of static, unchangeable, ‘oriental’ Brahmanical values.

Nicholas Dirks and others have challenged this notion of caste. They cite ethnographic
and textual evidence to demonstrate that Brahmans and their texts were not so central to
the social fabric of Indian life. According to this view power-relations and command over
men and resources were more important. Brahmans were merely ritual specialists, often subordinate to powerful ruling families. The caste-based scriptural or Brahmanical model of traditional India was an invention of the British Orientalists and ethnographers, according to this view. However, caste played a very critical role in the Indian social-reformers and nationalists’ perception of caste. It was certainly not a mere product of British imagination (Jones: 2004).

As we hinted above, two opposing viewpoints see caste differently. Some view it as an unchanged survival of Brahmanical traditions of India. According to this view, Brahmanism represents a core civilizational value and caste is the central symbol of this value. It is the basic expression of the pre-colonial traditions of India. Contrary to this view, Nicolas Dirks, in his *Castes of Mind* (2001), argues that caste is a product of colonial modernity. By this he does not mean that caste did not exist before the advent of British. He is simply suggesting that caste became a single, unique category under the British rule that expressed and provided the sole index of understanding India. Earlier there were diverse forms of social-identity and community in India. The British reduced everything to a single explanatory category of caste. It was the colonial state and its administrators who made caste into a uniform, all-encompassing and ideologically consistent organism. They made caste as a measure of all things and the most important emblem of traditions.

Colonialism reconstructed cultural forms and social-institutions like caste to create a line of difference and demarcation between themselves as European modern and the colonized Asian traditional subjects (Pimpley and Sharma: 1990). In other words, British colonialism played a critical role in both the identification and production of Indian ‘tradition’. The colonial modernity devalued the so-called Indian traditions. Simultaneously, it also transformed them. Caste was recast as the spiritual essence of India that regulated and mediated the private domain. Caste-ridden Indian society was different from the European civil society because
caste was opposed to the basic premises of individualism as well as the collective identity of a nation. The salience of this pre-colonial identity and sense of loyalty could easily be used to justify the rule by the colonial modern administrators. So, according to Dirks, it was the colonial rule of India that organized the ‘social difference and deference’ solely in terms of caste.

The attempts to downplay or dismiss the significance of Brahmans and Brahmanical order is not in accordance with much familiar historical records and persistence of caste-identities even in contemporary Indian social life. Caste-terms and principles were certainly not in universal use in pre-colonial periods. Caste in its various manifestations and forms was also not an immutable entity. However, starting from the Vedas and the Great Epics, from Manu and other dharmsastras, from puranas texts, from ritual practices, the penal system of Peshwa rulers who punished culprits according to caste-principles, to the denunciations of anti-Brahmanical ‘reformers’ of all ages; everything points towards the legacy of pre-colonial times. It is true that there were also non-caste affiliations and identities such as networks of settlements connected by matrimonial alliances, trade, commerce and state service in the precolonial times. However, caste was also a characteristic marker of identity and a prevailing social-metaphor. Caste was not merely a fabrication of British rulers designed to demean and subjugate Indians. It did serve the colonial interests as by condemning the ‘Brahmanical tyranny’ colonial administration could easily justify their codes to ‘civilize’ and ‘improve’ the ‘fallen people’. Moreover, strengthening of caste-hierarchy could also act as a bulwark against anarchy (Pimpley: 1990).

Caste as Viewed by the Orientalists

Zelliot (1994) asserts that the colonial construction of India began by the early Orientalists with their own cognitive maps and with texts explained by pandits. Their social
model was *varna* based Brahmanism of Manu. The early admiration of a golden age gave way to a condemnation of Brahmanical tyranny. William Jones translated and published *Manu Dharma Sastras* or *The Laws of Manu* (1794). Manu was concerned with such topics as the social obligations and duties of various castes (*varnas*), the proper form of kingship as upholder of varna, the nature of sexual relations between males and females of different castes and ritual practices related to domestic affairs. It became the main authority in imagining of Indian tradition as based on *varnasrama-dharma* (social and religious code of conduct according to caste and stage of life). Scholars have questioned the attempt to codify Indian social relations according to this single, orthodox Brahmanical text. The text, compiled by Brahman scholars, depicted a caste society under the exclusive domination of Brahmanas who reserved for themselves pride of place in the caste hierarchy. The prescriptive text also became the basis of actual description of Indian social order. James Mill, in his *History of India* viewed caste as a prime example of an Indian social institution based on priesthood and adapted to oriental despotism. Mill borrowed from Jones' work despite his attack on the Orientalists (Jones: 2004).

Max Muller also based his interpretation of caste on textual sources (Pollock, 1994). He suggested that the caste in Vedic period was different from caste in the later degraded periods. For Muller, the soul of Indian civilization was that of the Vedic age, while the later distortions began in the time of Manu. Orientalists saw the Hindus as victims of an unchangeable, hierarchical and Brahmanical value system. Their insistence on this played a crucial role in the making of a more caste-conscious social order. The basic objective of the colonial state was to procure data about Indian social life so as to tax and police its subjects. From the early nineteenth century, the company officials turned increasingly to literate Brahmans or to scribal and commercial populations to obtain such information. The Orientalists treated *shastra* texts as the authoritative sources on 'native' law and custom.
Such informants had an incentive to argue that India was a land of age-old Brahmanical values. They insisted that effective social-control and cohesion could be achieved only if hierarchical *jati* and *varna* principles were retained. Many nineteenth century Orientalists saw priestly Brahmans as an important but also pernicious force in the society. They doubted the veracity of claims of these indigenous literate specialists Inden (1992).

Desai (1989) argues that the image of India as a Brahman-revering caste society in some instances suited both the colonial rulers and local landed elites. For example, the landed-aristocracy in the early colonial era in Tamilnad found it advantageous to play up claims of superior *varna* and *jati* origins in their dealing with the colonial judiciary and revenue officials. The colonial judges and revenue officials had come to see the use of prestigious Brahman and Vellala caste titles as evidence of authentic lordly origins, even though they were aware that families of humble birth had acquired rights and property under recently subdued warrior dynasties through purchase or endowment. The colonial establishment looked for social-stability and emphasized on age-old *jati*-statuses and divinely mandated traditions rather than individualistic principles of achievement and personal gain. The local landed magnates used these caste-principles in order to get preferential treatment from the colonial state (Ray: 1990).

**Caste through the Lenses of the Colonial Ethnographers**

By mid-nineteenth century, especially after 1857, anthropology supplanted history as the principal colonial modality of knowledge and rule. Jones contends that (2004) the taste for ethnographic inquiry was stimulated by new trends in the intellectual world. New formal schools of social and scientific thought were taking shape in the academic institutions. These influenced the colonial ethnographic curiosity about caste as the primary object of social classification and understanding. The colonial ethnographers compiled new kind of compendia
about castes, tribes and their customs. W.W. Hunter, who was appointed director general of statistics to the government of India in 1869, produced and supervised a series of gazetteers that sought to systematize official colonial knowledge about India. These contained descriptions of the local castes and tribes including their manners and customs. More specifically, they described marriage system, kinship patterns, funeral rituals, clothing, geographical distribution of different caste groups and adherence to Brahmanical priesthood and values. M.A. Shering’s *Hindu tribes and castes* (1872) was part of a new kind of empirical quest. Manu and his *varna* categories and *dharmic* explanation for multiplicity of caste because of inter-marriage were retained in his description. Caste, thus, became the site for detailing a record of people, the locus of all-important information about Indian society.

H.H. Risley, in his multi-volume work, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* (1891) stressed the racial basis of caste. His work, *The People of India* (1901), resulted directly from his work as Census Commissioner for the census of 1901. Risley emphasized anthropometric measurements for origin and classification of Indian races or castes. Another colonial ethnographer William Crooke (1848-1923) questioned subsuming of caste-categories into biologically determined racial essences. He suggested that occupational criteria provided much more comprehensive and accurate indices for understanding caste as a system. Risley had proposed that anthropometry would provide good results in India because caste system as the organizer of social relations was based on the principle of absolute endogamy.

India, thus, became the testing ground for speculative theories of races and human species propounded in Europe. The ethnographic surveys were also useful as easy reference works for the colonial administrators, for police as well as revenue authorities, district magistrates and army recruiters (Malik; 1986). However, Oommen (1984) argues that the colonial ethnographers and data-collectors’ viewpoints regarding castes were not part of
a uniform ‘colonial’ discourse that worked to invent the ideology and social-experience of caste in India. Sometimes, race and racial categories played a more significant role in their thinking rather than a monolithic consensus on caste. Denzil Ibbetson’s picture of castes in his *Punjab Castes*, demonstrate marginal importance of Brahmans and their standards of rank and hierarchy. Ibbetson stressed that castes like Rajput and Jats in Punjab were based on the concepts of occupation and accessibility to political power and resources.

Here, the caste-like affinities and ranking schemes were not based on four fixed varnas. Other colonial ethnographers such as W.W. Hunter, the author of famous *Annals of Rural Bengal* (1868), and Walter Elliot also depicted caste as a feature of life for some Indians, but not all Indians. In their analysis caste is often a subsidiary to racial categories.

**Colonial Administrative Vision of Castes**

Census took over the task of producing empirical data and information on caste from 1871-72 onwards. Census consolidated the imperial ideology of caste by meticulously gathering data about castes (Zelliot: 1994). There was a general consensus among most of the enumerators that caste should be the basic category to classify diverse population of India. There were, however, differences about the manner and procedure regarding organization of information about castes. Risley adopted a procedure to organize castes on the basis of ‘social precedence’ in 1901 census. As a result of this, a number of caste associations emerged to contest their assigned position in the official hierarchy, each demanding a higher position and organizing their fellow caste members in the colonial public space. After 1931, the colonial state found it difficult to ignore the political implications of the caste-oriented census. It abandoned the use of caste for census counting altogether (Murtton: 1973).

The idea of an all-India census was first seriously contemplated in the mid-1850s.
It had a number of precedents. There were regional household counts, an attempt in 1846 to test population estimates that had been derived from land settlement records, and presidency-wide census of Madras before 1851. The first all-India census took place in 1871-72, although it was flawed in that it did not cover all the regions and was not very systematic. The primary principle of classification used in 1872 and in the next decennial census of 1881 was that of varna. The statistical project was enmeshed with the Orientalist categories for the classification of social hierarchy (Oommen: 1984).

The minute and endless ramification of castes was classified according to the fourfold varna-system. In this mode of classification, Brahmans held the first rank. Majority of Hindus were indiscriminately thrown together into the category of Sudra or servile classes. The regional enumerators often ignored regional variability. In actual practice, the varna or ritual markers were used to differentiate and order the higher castes, and occupational markers to classify the lower caste groups (Srinivas: 1986).

The British enumerators associated with census operations recognized the problem of using varna as a single classificatory category. The regional position of Brahmans varied. Aside from Brahman and Rajputs, few actual castes could be easily correlated with varna distinctions. The caste configuration varied from one place to another. Dominant caste groups in most regions were confined to those regions and did not have an all-India presence. The use of occupational criterion for differentiating castes was also based on shaky and unsound foundations as formal caste titles only rarely indicated true occupations. Even there was difficulty of ascertaining caste status within a particular locality because caste titles, names and other markers of caste identity were used in numerous and apparently conflicting ways (Naidu: 1994).

In the census of 1881, enumerators were asked to classify only caste groups whose size was more than one lakh. The total population was sub-divided into Brahman, Rajputs
and other castes. The number of other castes, who crossed the requisite number of 100,000, was 207. They were listed in an alphabetical order, as classification of castes according to their social position was an explosive issue. The Census Commissioner, W. C. Plowden, further aggregated census data to create caste blocs such as major agricultural castes, major groups of artisans and village servants and so on. Large caste blocs were seen as amenable to administrative concerns of the colonial state regarding recruitment to the colonial army, maintenance of social order, agrarian policy and legal adjudications. Although enumerators were enjoined to find where different caste titles or names could be merged into single groups, they, in fact, found a huge proliferation of actual caste groups (Murton: 1973).

The 1891 census formally abandoned varna criterion for enumeration in favour of occupational criteria. J.C. Nesfield in his Brief view of the caste system of NWP and Oudh (1885) and Sir Denzil Ibbetson as the Census Commissioner for Punjab in 1881 census advocated a functional approach to caste enumeration. The adoption of occupational criteria in 1891 census was based on the proposal of Nesfield and Ibbetson. Nesfield suggested that tribal groups based on descent became amalgamated into larger tribal groups that were organized around occupations and specific functional affiliations. The census of 1891, thus, broke sixty sub-groups into six broad occupational categories of castes: agricultural and pastoral, professional, commercial, artisans and village menials and vagrants.

H.H. Risley, as the leading proponent of colonial ethnology from the late 1890s until his death in 1914, criticised Nesfield. He divided Indians into seven main racial types on the basis of physical measurements of various bodily traits. In his anthropometry, these physical measurements and colour of skin became the basic principle of caste ranking—“the social status of a particular group varying in inverse ratio to the mean relative width of their noses”. As census commissioner for the 1901 census and honorary director of Ethnological Survey of the Indian Empire, Risley conceived a grand scheme for the mapping
and measurement of every racial ‘type’ and ‘specimen’ in India. His basic assumption was
that although there were frequent cultural borrowing and exchange between different caste
groups, but due to the practice of endogamous marriages, there was hardly any racial-
mixing. Risley’s sociology of caste, however, was based on Brahmanical indices such as
the acceptance of food and water, the use of Brahmans in rituals, ritual proximity to Brahmans.
The question of social precedence and hierarchy assumed greater force in the census of
1901. Caste as subject of social analysis not only organized many administrative concerns
from famine relief to criminality, but also constituted the Brahmanical ritual system. The attempt
of census of 1901 to rank castes by status induced a number of petitions from caste-
associations clamouring for higher status for their own caste. Therefore, although the census
of 1911 continued to gather caste-information, it abandoned the scheme of ranking them
according to status. In 1931, the colonial state completely stopped the use of caste data
in census (Omvedt: 1976).

Nationalists’ Grapple with the Caste

There was an indigenous side to the perception of caste that was reformulated by
nationalists and social-religious reformers. The Indian thinkers identified caste as a topic
of vital concern for the making of modern nation. They debated at length whether caste
was good or bad for the Indian society or whether the collective identities of castes could
be reshaped and function as a new kind of bond of unifying nationalist visions. Broadly
two viewpoints emerged in these debates: i) those viewing caste as a divisive and harmful
institution negating nationhood; and ii) those who saw caste as varna or an ideology of
spiritual and moral order, a source of national strength and the ‘essence’ of Indian civilization.

The sub-sections that follow will deal with some aspects of these debates and their
implications.
Social Reformers’ Perception of Caste

Omvedt (1976) opines that in the nineteenth century, the traditional learned scholars defended Brahmanism. They insisted on the knowledge of Vedas as a prerequisite of salvation and saw the varna based social-hierarchy as the essence of Indian civilization, a hierarchy that debarred those of non-twice born status from access to Vedas or the source of salvation-knowledge. However, they were also critical of certain aspects of these traditions. Raja Ram Mohan Roy insisted on a critical examination of shastric texts. He attacked many forms of polytheistic Hindu worship advocated by the traditional and mythological texts or puranas. He indirectly challenged the legitimacy of caste. The Brahmo Samaj saw itself as an advocate of a new, universal, casteless religion. Paradoxically, however, Brahmos themselves became an exclusive endogamous community within Hinduism (Geetha and Rajadurai: 1998).

In the late nineteenth century, controversies about whether caste was a degenerate social evil or an embodiment of progressive spirituality were articulated in the Indian Social Reformer (a journal founded in 1890). Even religious revivalist reformers like Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj and Swami Vivekananda were united in depicting India where universal standards of reason and morality were to be applied (Mallampalli: 2004).

In their indirect critique of caste, various social issues cropped up. These included the claims of Brahmans to possess unique sacred knowledge, the age of marriage and other matters of corporate honour and sexual propriety; and the origin and meaning of untouchability. All these indigenous intellectuals exalted the values of purity, hierarchy and moral community, the virtuous cornerstone of caste ideology. As a result, the new spiritually regenerated India which they envisioned was an India in which the forms and values of so called traditional varna were to remain salient and active, even if in a modified form (Aloysius: 1998).
Early Nationalists and Caste

Among the early nationalists, M.G. Ranade floated a reformist organization, National Social Conference. The organization, founded in 1887, aimed to persuade Indians to modernize their values and behavior. As seen earlier, one of the chief aims of this western-educated intelligentsia was to campaign against the ‘evils’ of caste. It helped to define an ideal of enlightened social uplift. They did not regard every aspect of caste as an ‘evil’, to be annihilated. Nevertheless, Conference adherents were expected to endorse so-called uplift for the untouchables and reform the high caste Hindus especially with regard to the position of women (Geetha and Rajadurai: 1998). Contemporary western ethnology and eugenics shaped their ideas to some extent. A leading activist of Conference, T. V. Vasvani, justified a stance against the ‘evils’ of caste on the basis of Aryan ‘race genius’. The bond of race was extolled as the force, which could eliminate divisions and unify people into a single nation. In the resolutions of National Social Conference, caste was seen as a ‘national’ problem for the freedom-loving people of India to be solved through their own free will and initiative. Its evil practices were to be challenged primarily in the field of faith and social morality. It attacked caste as ‘an alien and slavish institution’, a relatively recent creation that shackled Indians within a prison house of superstition and oppression. The reformers attacked the ‘fetters’ of caste as pernicious and shameful obstacle to the moral and political regeneration of the nation (Desai: 1989).

The radical congressmen of ‘extremist’ stream, especially B.G. Tilak led a militant public agitation for immediate home-rule and saw nationhood as an expression of collective moral, spiritual and racial essence. Tilak and his followers were deeply conservative in social and spiritual matters. They viewed the reformist challenge to the so-called caste evils as an attack on the national faith, and a challenge to divinely mandated standards of decency and biological purity. They did not want these divisive issues to be raised from the congress platform (Michael: 1986).
Caste Conferences and the Uplift of the ‘Community’

A score of caste conferences and associations sprung up between 1880 and 1930s in response to census operations. These regional-based associations claimed to act as moral exemplars for their jati members. Most of them belonged to castes of scribes, trading communities and cultivating agricultural castes. However, some like Tamilian Nadars or Shanars were low in caste-hierarchy. Their educated and prosperous leading men raised vocal opposition to stigmatization of their castes as ‘unclean’ and ‘backward’. Many of these associations were anxious that public recording of jati and varna status might be used by the colonial state in such important matters as military recruitment and the creation of electoral constituencies (Wolpert: 1962). Western moral convention and dharmic varna norms of purity both were utilized by such associations to achieve a creditable reputation for their community in the public arena. Many of them advocated temperance, remarriage of widows, the raising of age of consent for marriage, the abolition of temple prostitution and sympathized with campaigns such as against ‘lewd’ female dance performances, in order to achieve social-purity (Heehs: 1997).

Panikker (1995) shows that the national social conference’s scheme for upliftment of India’s ‘depressed castes’, or untouchables, and Arya Samaj project of Shudhi or purification of low-caste converted groups were also part of similar concerns. They were means of restoring both the numerical strength and the ethnological vigour of the ‘Aryan community.’ Their ideal of a transcendent pious community was far from being hostile to caste. Their ‘modernizing’ critique of caste challenged the idea that the highest forms of knowledge and ritual expertise should be the preserve of a closed caste of Brahmans. They advocated a purified form of caste based on a bond of idealized moral affinity of followers rather than blood or birth. Many of the caste associations drew inspiration from the ideology of such reforms. Such purified varna or jati social order did not challenge the caste-hierarchy
although it was based on collective moral identity of its members. However, such idioms and ideologies furnished the themes and strategies for the uplift of ‘community’ (Viswanathan: 2003).

**Veneration of Caste as the Agenda of Hindu Nationalists**

The works of Fernandes (1983), Common (1984), Desai, (1989), Pannikar (1995), Aloysius (1998) and many others have shown that the Hindu nationalists did not find it wrong to emphasize racial pride, ties of blood and nationality. They resisted modernization of the Indian social order. While they sometimes deplored certain features of caste in contemporary Indian social life such as untouchability, they insisted that caste in its true form was essential to the spirit of Hinduism. It represented a legacy of higher moral values from the national past. Vivekananda condemned the oppressive treatment of untouchables and other subordinate castes. Yet, he defended caste and varna hierarchy as a natural order and matter of national pride. G K. Gokhale was particularly concerned about the declining number of Hindus and saw the success of Muslim, Sikh and Christian proselytizers in attracting low castes as a sign of Hindu weakness and racial decline (Michael: 1986).

When Ambedkar bid for separate electorates for the untouchables at the second Round Table Conference (1931), this ploy aroused deep anxieties about Hindu representation and electoral arithmetic especially in Punjab and Bengal. Therefore, Hindu Mahasabha and other Hindu revivalist organizations intensified their ‘purification’ drives among untouchables and tribals by vesting such people with markers of Hindu identity such as sacred thread and a recognized set of jati and varna titles (Keer: 1962).

In Bengal, the Hindu zamindars and other followers of Hindu Mahasabha took lead in promoting programmes of Hinduization of tribals and untouchables who were induced to declare their allegiance to the Hindu ‘community’. The Hindu nationalists campaigned
actively among groups such as Rajbanshis and Namsudras to identify themselves to the census officials as Hindus of thread-bearing Kshatriya varna so as to swell the number of Hindus in the provincial census returns (Smith: 2003).

Political Casting of the Caste

As we have already noted, caste came to preoccupy the minds of Indian intelligentsia. Their responses were diverse. Some used to explain it as an exotic institution to the alien British administrators and defended it as the very essence of Indian civilization. However, most of them decried caste oppression and saw it as a symbol of backwardness of Indian society, a force that was impeding its progress and was responsible for the subjugation of women in the society. It was condemned for its divisiveness and as a barrier in the way of formation of national identity.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this critique of traditional social-cultural order also influenced the ways caste was treated in the emerging political space under colonial rule. In the next sub-sections, we describe these major political responses.

The Modernity of Non-Brahmanism

In the late nineteenth century, the educated and politically active intelligentsia utilized new avenues of 'public space'. They expressed themselves in a language of universal rights and citizenship. This modern discourse was at odds with a caste-fettered India, which acted as an impediment to the attainment of nationhood (Chatterjee: 1986).

As Damle and Aikara (1982) contend the social background of newly western educated as revealed by census enumerators for the Western India and the Gangetic North, shows that they were mostly from Brahmans and other service groups with a tradition of literacy and occupational mobility. The lower-rung bureaucracies came to be dominated by persons
of similar castes. When municipalities were established under the so-called Ripon Reforms in 1880s, they also dominated them. This was the context in which non-Brahmanism emerged as apolitical force uniting a mixed array of service, commercial and agricultural castes with artisans and other lower-caste educated activists.

Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra wrote against Brahman privilege and domination in 1850s. Rejecting emulation of Brahmnic customs and manners and breaking himself free from the usual pattern of caste movements for upward mobility, he directly attacked Brahmanism. He represented Brahmans as Aryan invaders who conquered local indigenous people by force and concealed their act of usurpation by inventing 'caste system'. In 1873, Phule established the Satyashodhak Samaj, an organization for challenging Brahmanic supremacy. Phule and his fellow radicals projected a new collective identity for all the lower castes. He used the existing symbols from Maratha warrior and agriculture traditions for discovery of this identity. He underplayed the social-differences that divided mali-kunbi, mang-mahar or Shudra-Ati-Shudra. In his Ballad of Raja chatrapati Shivaji Bhonsale (1869), Phule depicted all lower-caste people as the forgotten descendents of the heroic race of Kshatriyas. The King Bali was refigured as representing the utopias of beneficence, prosperity and casteless order. By claiming Kshatriya status for all the lower castes, Phule was trying to harness the existing trend of upward social mobility to a radical end but it also contained the possibility of slip back into caste-based claim for higher status. The Satyasodhaks failed to evolve a unified and homogeneous sense of identity over a longer period (Keer: 1964).

Sometimes, the development of 'Non-Brahmanism' is seen as the product of colonial 'modernity' and official encouragement to 'un-shackle' Hindu minds by challenging 'Brahman tyranny'. Anil Seal (1968), for example, sees non-Brahmanism as a reaction to the monopolization of opportunities in bureaucracy and professions by Brahmans. However,
Phule’s critique reveals a wider consciousness of caste inequalities and their correlation with social subordination and material and cultural oppression of the Shudra castes (Keer: 1964).

The Justice Party articulated the non-Brahman resentment in Madras. The founders of this organization were leaders like T. N. Nair, P. Tyagaraja Chetti and C.N. Mudaliar. They demanded reserved seats in the Provincial Legislative council and other concessions in education, public appointments and nomination on local boards for the non-Brahman professional middle classes. In 1926, E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, popularly known as Periyar (meaning ‘Great Man’) established the ‘Self-Respect Movement’ which took a different political trajectory than the Justice Party even though it inherited rhetoric of non-Brahmanism (Senthamizhkko: 1987). This new radical political stance advocated the overthrow of caste and instituted new forms of marriage and other ritual practices designed to promote inter-caste social intercourse. The movement further engaged in a radical critique of religious belief and practice. It attacked the Brahmins and the whole Brahmanical ideology of privilege and sacred authority in general. Periyar advocated outright atheism as the only true rational worldview. Periodically, the movement organized dramatic assaults on religions and priestly symbols like beating of priest and idols with shoes, and burned ‘sacred’ texts like Manusmriti.

The term Non-Brahmanism might have been an invention of the colonial political arena. However, their political strategies involved use of slogans and symbols reflecting satirical and hostile views of Brahmins which were common in many regional folk cultures as well as ‘modern’ Hindu reformist teachings. In South India, growing literacy in the vernaculars also helped in spread of awareness of regional identities conceived in term of resistance to the traditional authority of Brahmins. The ideology of such resistance was often an amalgam of traditional devotional bhakti faith and appropriated theory of Aryan race that distanced indigenous Dravidian people from outsider Brahmins (Aloysius: 1998).
Gandhian Critique of Untouchability as the National Ideal

The Indian National Congress issued its first guarded declaration on the amelioration of caste disabilities through a resolution in 1917. The provisions of the resolution were reaffirmed in the Congress 1920 resolution on Non-Cooperation. It committed the Congress to make the removal of ‘Depressed Classes’ disabilities a major nationalist priority. It, however, favored voluntary ‘religious’ solutions and urged the Hindu religious heads and other leading Hindus to make sustained efforts to reform Hinduism (Mangalwadi: 1996). There was no emphasis on legislation or any other sort of action by state. In 1920s, Gandhi and other prominent leaders pursued a variety of religious solutions. They took the fight against the ‘evil’ aspects of caste to the Hindu temples. They organized a temple-entry campaign at Vaikam in Travancore (1924-25). Gandhi soon lost faith in such agitations as they went against Satyagraha’s morality of non-violence. Gandhi, however, continued to make passionate appeal against ‘satanic’ practice of untouchability, which he described as a stain on Hindu faith (Mallampalli: 2004).

Gandhian ‘reform’ minimized caste differences and underplayed caste-identity. It stressed organic unity and harmony of varna-system rather than hierarchy. Gandhi continued to exalt the principle of varna until the 1940s as an ideal and natural order of things (around caste, stage of life and the performance of duty or dharma), an egalitarian law of life. In 1940s Gandhi called for full repudiation of caste, abandoning his earlier goal of a purified caste order purged of ‘sinful’ belief in untouchability. The goal of Harijan Sevak Sangh (1932), established by Gandhi and his close associates, was to instill habits of cleanliness and social propriety in their untouchable beneficiaries and to wean them away from toddy-drinking, meat eating and unseemly sexual indulgences. The idealized and reformed bhangi (domestic Sweeper), with his meek posture and emblematic basket and brushes was supposed to be an exemplar of the virtues, which the Harijan Sevak Sangh wished to spread among the ‘depressed classes’ (Chakravarti: 1998).
Kancha Ilaiah (2007, xxii - xxiii) argues that the values of war and violence and the values of sacrifice differ. In his opinion, modern Hinduism tried to project the Gandhian experiment of non-violence as the Hindu ethic. They forgot that Gandhi operated within the Bhagavad Gita and Rama Rajya paradigms which essentially built their philosophy around war and violence. When Gandhi was constructing his own theory of cow nationalism he had in mind the vast Brahmin presence in the Indian National Congress. This nationalist metaphor, Ilaiah believes, was aimed at constructing the vegetarianism of Brahmins and Baniyas as the superior food culture. He further argues that almost all national leaders including Gandhi knew that meat and beef are very deeply integrated into the food cultures of dalit-Bahujans in India. Despite this, argues Ilaiah, Gandhi took up the campaign of cow protection and vegetarianism as a project to spiritualize nationalism (Ilaiah: 2007, xxviii).

Ambedkar’s Idea of the ‘Annihilation of Caste’

B.R. Ambedkar made a scathing attack on caste from the standpoint a modern democratic thinker. He saw caste as an impediment to attainment of social justice, equality and reform in the Indian society. Initially, Ambedkar stood for the cause of educational access for the untouchables. He voiced his views against performances of traditional labour services and ‘village duties’ by the mahars. He also advocated forced temple-entry and use of ‘clean-caste’ markers of varna status. He took lead in the Kalaram temple-entry campaign (1930) at Nasik and in the satyagraha for drawing of water by untouchables from the Mahad tank in Maharashtra. He burnt Manusmrti in public in 1927 as the work defined the codes of Brahmanism. This radical gesture challenged the values of those for whom such sacred writings were embodiment of divinely sanctioned order. Ambedkar’s notion of caste rejected colonial ethnographers’ criteria of understanding caste as well as the idealized depiction of certain indigenous thinkers’ visualization of caste as a natural order. He rejected
Nesfield's criterion of occupational differentiation to identify castes and Risley's racial categorization of different castes. Ambedkar's *The Annihilation of Caste* (1936) made the most potent attack on caste (Naidu: 1994).

Aloysius (1997) and Omvedt (1976) in their works show how Ambedkar utilized the opportunities offered by the colonial public space and constitutional politics. However, his political options were determined by his own living experience and his links within newly constituted lower-caste identities (Koenraad, 2001). He was apprehensive of political implications of colonial constitutional arrangements as well as future democratic institutions for the fate of untouchables. He referred to India's untouchables as 'slaves of slaves' undergoing double oppression of colonial state and Hinduism at Nagpur in 1930. His mistrust of Gandhi and colonial rulers led him to articulate demand for the separate electorates for the untouchables at the second Round Table Conference (1931). The compromise formulae of Poona Pact gave a new constitutional package of higher proportion special reserved seats in the provincial assemblies for depressed caste candidates than promised in the original plan of the colonial state. This was an acceptance of electoral representation for 'communities'. It gave the colonial state a new task of 'scheduling' caste-based constituencies. After the brief attempt to unify non-Brahman tenants and labourers by Independent Labour Party (1936-39), Ambedkar returned to the champion the common cause of all those who suffered the disabilities on account of *dharmic* impurities under the umbrella of All-India Scheduled Caste Federation (1942).

**Gandhi and Ambedkar on the Issue of Power to Dalits**

"We want to become a ruling community", was a saying of Ambedkar and in fact the drive to achieve power or a share in power was seen by him and by many not simply as the negation of the extreme feudal subjugation of dalits but as the basis for achieving
any other kind of gain. But, because the national movement did not consciously organise
to build alternative revolutionary systems of power in which dalits would find a place, this
demand for a share in power became expressed in the demand for special, separate
representation within the bourgeois parliamentary forms being institutionalised in India. An
additional motivating fact was the strong feeling among dalits that they must represent
themselves, that caste Hindus could not be trusted to represent them (nor for that matter
could the British government), that the nature of caste and class conflict was so great that
no caste Hindus could speak for their interests (Omvedt: 2004, 18).

Gandhi’s firm opposition to separate electorates, too, had nothing to do with the threat
to Hindu unity and came from his religiously motivated insistence that dalits were part of
the Hindu community. It might also be added that the idea of separate electorates, or
‘functional’ representation of specific social groups or classes, was one that went beyond
bourgeois democratic forms entirely and in a sense could be seen as an aspect of proletarian
democracy, whereas reserved seats not only allowed caste Hindu control of dalit political
representation (as Ambedkar so bitterly and effectively established in “What Congress and
Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables”) but also, proved an ideal method for the bourgeois
State to absorb and negate the dalit movement, giving dalits some semblance of power
within the bourgeois framework but at the cost of giving up militancy. The issue, however,
was very rarely seen in this way. Instead, considerations of power prevailed (the upper
class/caste drive to control the legislatures through control of Congress, and the fact that
dalits did not simply have the same political clout as Muslims); the demand for separate
electorates was seen by most non-dalits as one leading to separatism and disunity (Oommen:
1984, 5).

Ambedkar, unlike most dalit spokesmen, was not throughout a proponent of separate
electorates. Though, along with nearly everyone else, he called for them in 1919 in testifying
before the Southborough Committee, during the 1920s, he turned away from them. Apparently believing they would lead to disunity, he argued against them before the Simon Commission. The 1920s, it should be noted, was not only the decade of the real upsurge of dalit movements as mass movements; it was also the greatest period of co-operation between Ambedkar and caste Hindu social radicals (i.e. the non-Brahman movement). This may well have given Ambedkar some confidence that separate electorates were not necessary (Omvedt: 2004, 20).

The Nagpur Conference of Depressed Classes in 1930, just before Ambedkar left for the first Round Table Conference, was in a sense responsible for the change in the position of Ambedkar on the issue of separate electorates for the dalits. Here Ambedkar became the first major dalit leader to state forcefully the need for Independence as the minimal basis for solving dalit problems, and he stated publicly that he would be satisfied with reserved seats as long as there was adult suffrage. Then at London, he completely reversed his position and asked for separate electorates. By the time of the second Round Table Conference this attitude had hardened to produce the major confrontation with Gandhi (Pathy: 1985, 55).

Two reasons that have been suggested are that the unanimous dalit opinion, aside from Ambedkar, was in favour of separate electorates, and that Ambedkar felt bound to represent this; and Ambedkar’s personal experience of Gandhi’s hardline and even arrogant attitude which rejected not only separate electorates but even reserved seats. To this it may be added that, by 1930-31, the mass of the Maharashtrian non-Brahmans were moving into Congress in a form that meant an essential abandonment of their own independently based social radicalism and a (temporary) acceptance of Upper class, Upper-caste Congress leadership (Sahu: 1994, 134).

Here it is worth noting that, When Ambedkar and Gandhi met for the first time in
1930, Ambedkar not only felt he has been treated rudely, but Gandhi himself admitted that he had not known that Ambedkar himself was a dalit but thought rather that he was a Brahman social reformer aiding the untouchables. In other words, Gandhi had not only done substantially noticing himself on the issue of untouchability up to this time, but he betrayed a crucial ignorance of the movement which had been going on for over a decade and of its leadership. Indeed he unwittingly betrayed his assumption that dalits themselves were incapable of doing much on their own or of producing their own leadership. (Omvedt: 2004, 20)

Ambedkar, therefore, insisted on separate electorates. Gandhi insisted equally adamantly that dalits were Hindus and must be represented by Hindus as a whole (and was met on his return from London by a black-flag demonstration of 8,000 Bombay dalits) (Keer: 1954, 191-91)

The British Communal Award gave Ambedkar his separate electorates; and Gandhi undertook his fast-to-death in protest. Here again it has to be stressed that this first fast over the ‘issue’ of untouchability was not a fast against the British for nationalist causes or against the oppressive caste system, but was a fast against dalits themselves to force them to give up their demands. Ambedkar conceded - knowing that if Gandhi died there would be massive reprisals on his people throughout India - and the result was the Poona Pact of September 25, 1932, which as a compromise gave dalits the reserved seats that Ambedkar had demanded in the first place. For dalits and for Ambedkar, the lesson was clear: not a faith in the ability of satyagraha to ‘change the hearts’ of caste Hindus, rather that only by fighting for their rights would dalits win anything at all. (Omvedt: 2004, 20)

After 1932, Gandhi made ‘untouchability work’ a major programme of the Congress and for many a crucial moral part of the Indian national movement. And yet Gandhi’s essential paternalism and insistence that above all dalits were Hindus remained in the choice of the
term 'Harijan', in the insistence that caste Hindus and not dalits should control the Harijan Sevak Sangh. However 'radical' Gandhi's own views on caste became (in approving of inter-dining and inter-marriage, for example), he never dropped the belief in chaturvarnya or the idea that children should follow their fathers' professions, themes that stood in direct contradiction to the anti-feudal principles of the dalit movement. Even worse, anti-untouchability became identified with Gandhian, which is the conservative wing of the Congress and remained a distraction, and diversion to the radicals within Congress (Omvedt: 2004, 21).

**Indian Novel and the Question of Caste**

It should be acknowledged as an obvious fact that any literary genre is a product of its time. The necessity of a time to have an appropriate creative form of expression is a part of the civilization process. Novel is a narrative document which records the cultural and historical aspects of peoples of a particular context at a particular point of time. The necessity of a time to have an appropriate creative form of expression is a part of the civilization process.

Mukherjee (2008, 139) opines that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century two beginnings were witnessed in India, the emergence of the idea of the nation and the appearance of a new artifact of the imagination called the novel. She further states that whether the two phenomena were causally connected or their simultaneity was merely fortuitous remains an open question. However she believes that an emotional engagement with history was a common preoccupation which marked both these enterprises.

What we see in the early Indian novel is the dramatization of a certain kind of resistance against colonialism, of how the Western-educated class sought to achieve 'progress' according to modern, universal norms, attempting therefore a cultural reequipping and re-
creation. Unlike the Western novel, which had for its dominant theme the rupture between individual and society, the Indian novel—authored by the newly educated class—dwelt on the recasting of social identity in the confrontation with a colonizing power. The hopes, aspirations and political ambitions of the brahman middle class are among the forces that shape the earliest Indian novels. We find in them, therefore, the attempt to imagine an Indian nation, to argue that it is culturally powerful, to search for a common Indian tradition that is essentially different from that of the West, and make this manifest in language. (Padikkal: 1993, 226-27).

The digression of the Indian novelists from the western novel as pointed out by Meenakshi Mukharjee (1985) is that the Indian novelist had to operate in a tradition-bound society where neither a man's profession nor his marriage was his personal affair. Here the word 'tradition,' seems to be a loaded word, because it looks as if Meenakshi is drawing the attention to the fact that the Indian novelist had the constrain not be modern, not being modern meant in her own words 'His (Indian novelist's) life was mapped out by his family or his community or his caste. In the rigidly hierarchical familial and social structure of nineteenth-century India,' (Mukherjee: 1985, 72). she juxtaposes the Indian life with that of west. '....the rigidly hierarchical familial and social structure' gains importance since this statement makes it viable to believe that it was the exposure to the west by the Indians which changed the hierarchical familial and social structure of India of the nineteenth century. She states, 'individualism was not an easy quality to render in literature.' (Ibid. 72) Because the novel is basically a written form of narrative, and the early education had reached the upper caste in India, obviously it was they who wrote the novels in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, the cannon of the novel genre was prepared by them. The individualism which was not a value in the upper caste world view was also not incorporated. It would be observed in the thesis even the attempts by the non-upper caste
in the Indian context to assert individualism either gets least attention or gets nullified or negated.

It was only in the second-half of the twentieth century that the Dalit literature flourished. Thus slowly and steadily there emerged an awareness of caste as a dimension of literature. A dynamic shift occurs from the late 1960s onwards with the emergence of Dalit literature, first in Marathi, then in several other languages, and in Hindi somewhat later. For the first time a totally different perspective on life and society entered the domain of print medium that had never been articulated before. It is not that earlier writers had been insensitive to the inequality generated by the caste system. There are well-known pre-independence texts like Malepalli, a Telugu novel by Unnava Laxminarayana (1922), Shivarama Karanth’s Chomana Dudi in Kannada (1931), Mulk Raj Anand’s Untouchable (1935) in English, Tarashankar’s Hansulibanker Upakatha in Bangla (1947), not to speak of Premchand’s novels and unforgettable short stories. These remarkable books focused on life beyond the upper caste middleclass parameters and brought out the daily degradation suffered by these outcastes (Mukherjee: 2008, 97).

In the early years of the emergence of Dalit literature there was some debate on what constituted Dalit writing—was it writing about the Dalits or writing only by the Dalits—but that issue seems to have been settled once and for all. In recent controversies about reading Premchand, the Dalit critics have pointed out that sympathy from those who are beneficiaries of the varna vyavastha (caste structure) cannot be the same as the bitter life-experiences of those who have been the victims of the system. Ambedkar who in many ways is the inspiration for the movement had made some really perceptive comments about the imaginative construction of nationhood long before Benedict Anderson’s much discussed book Imagined Communities appeared in 1984. I quote from Ambedkar’s writing in 1947: ‘Nationality is a very elusive quality and can be understood only as a ‘subjective’
psychological feeling. It is a feeling of corporate sentiment of oneness which makes those that are charged with it feel that they are kith and kin.' But were the lower caste people and the outcaste 'charged with it' to feel they are the kith and kin of the rest? Seen from this point of view Dalit writing constitutes a major intervention in the postcolonial debate on the nation. (Mukherjee: 2008, 98-9)

In order to drive home the importance to Dalit writers of portraying their own world Meenakshi Mukherjee (2008, 100) cites the example of Adwaita Mallabarman who wrote the novel, Titash Ekti Nodir Naam (The Name of the River is Titash). Adwaita Mallabarman belonged to the Malo caste, a community of fishermen who were also the subject of his novel. He died of tuberculosis at the age of thirty-seven and his desperate attempt to complete this massive novel might well have accelerated his end. His novel was published in 1956-five years after his death. Manik Bandopadhyay’s novel Padma Nadir Majhi which was about the same region and the same fishing community and their decline had already been published. Apparently one of Adwaita Mallabarman’s friends had asked him what was the point of his killing himself trying to write the kind of book that has already been written and would definitely be better than what he could write-Adwaita Mallabarman answered in his dialect ‘Baoner pola tar matan likse, aami amar matan likhu’ (that son of a Brahmin has written in his way, I have to write in my way) – which anticipated later Dalit assertion that those who have actually been through the experience have a perspective that outsiders can never attain.

Contours of Modern Cultural Revivalism and Its Effects on Identity Formation

Having discussed the issue of Dalit identity within the reformist and nationalistic movements, which lead to the formation of modern cultural revivalism, it seems necessary
at the end of this Chapter to highlight the major contours of modern cultural revivalism and also its effects on the identity formation of Dalits and non-Dalits in modern India. This would provide a sound base for the analysis of the selected novels of Shivaram Karanth and U R Ananthamurthy from the perspective of construing an alternative identity for Dalits as a continuation of the trend set by modern cultural revivalism.

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.

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? 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 get shaken and there is 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. 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 making them to be recognized 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. In the next two chapters some of the novels of Shivarama Karanth and Ananthamurthy will be analysed from this perspective.