

## **REPRESENTING THE LIFE OF A DALIT:**

### **A STUDY OF KANCHA ILAIAH'S UNTOUCHABLE GOD**

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#### **Abstract**

Dalits are the people who are economically, politically and socially exploited and are forced to live as untouchables outside the village doing all the low level jobs offered to them by the privileged people of the society. They were not allowed to live a life with dignity they were treated as the suppressed class of Indian society. In Indian constitution the Dalits come under the category of 'scheduled caste'. The dominant caste created the rule in the form of religion and they considered themselves high and the sight, shadow, touch of the Dalits were considered as impure but the Dalit did all the odd works in their field, cleaned the household, brought firewood to cook, washed their clothes etc in spite of all these things the Brahmins considered them as untouchables. The life of a Dalit is always pitiful and they lack in the basic needs like food, shelter and clothes. The proposition of the paper will deal with the life of Dalits who lack the basic needs and dedicate their hard work by doing all the odd jobs for the Caste Hindus and gaining only injustice, inequality and poverty in return.

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#### **Keywords:**

Dalits;

Poverty;

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Injustice.

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*Untouchable God* written by Kancha Ilaiah is the novel from Telangana written directly in English in the year 2013. In this novel Paraiyah, a Dalit is apparently beaten to death while walking about his village in the evening, allegedly for the crime of thinking about God, which might well lead to thoughts of equality. Six important men celebrate his death, they represent the remarkable Brahmin of India. Veda Shastry of Tamilnadu is the rightful leader. Namboodri of Kerala is from a caste that created the most perfect system of discrimination that the world has seen; Krishnamurthy of Karnataka and Appa Rao of Andhra Pradesh are slightly moderate; Tilak of Maharashtra dreams of increasing discrimination while Banerjee of Bengal believes he is above caste. As the men take their leave from the house of Shastry lastly come to Isaiah, an American black, who knows all about race and journeys to India to find out about the non-violence movement that has inspired Martin Luther King, Jr., and discovers much more in India and leaves India with more memories

The sun was sinking and several women were returning home after the long day's labour work. Harvesting the crops was mostly a female task.

“Men were men whatever caste they were born in; they tilled the land and fed the cattle but they would never cook, or weed crops. The division between the labour of men and women was so deep that it was almost a thing of nature; it was so old that no one could have said whether it was made by Gods or humans.” (1)

Green fields surrounded the village. Paraiyah had worked all day collecting the grains cut by women and bundling it so they could carry it away. “Only an exceptional man like Paraiyah did both male and female tasks.” (2) He had a reputation as an interlocutor between men and women; his voice and manner had peculiar femaleness.

“He was black as buffalo, his hair was longish and he had no upper garment, only a loincloth round his waist. Of medium height, he had a slight, rather sparse beard. The boniness of his frame was unmitigated by muscle, and his skin, robbed early of its natural tautness, hung in wrinkles.” (2)

He was walking with a heavy heart and an aching body towards Devapuram. “Weariness bent his limbs like Lord Rama’s bow, but his soul appeared heavier” (2). He thought about the soul the whole day he wondered if the plants that the women cut had soul. He found that everything that was living had soul then even the plants which were bundles also must have soul that made his heart feel heavy. He was sad he felt that plants, animals and birds died for human benefit. He had this thought “But if people slaughtered them without compunction, could he infer that they had been made by different Gods?” (3). He walked along the muddy path he saw two dogs mating. When mounting the female the male had no difficulty, but when the time came to detach themselves they began to suffer and scream. Paraiiah started thinking of the wonder of mating. It was an act of pleasure and therefore of pain. He put himself to that situation “ He too had felt that pain when leaving the company of the crops, now cut and dying, that he had worked with all day.” (3) He felt more pain when the landlord asked him to kill chicken, but he longed to taste the chicken curry but to the end he would only get the bones as reward for the slaughter. The landlord’s family would get flesh because they never committed the sin of cutting the bird’s throat. “They, the givers of orders and the eaters, were sacred: he, the slayer and the ordered, was not. Sacredness appeared and disappeared like sunshine.” (4) He felt that pleasure and pain turn the wheel of life.

“Yet in the life of Paraiiah no pleasure seems to exist. All the really important things he did, like killing the chicken or bundling the corps, were for others, not for him or his children. The only pleasure he tasted was that of feeding the corps with water and manure, and feeding his master’s cattle. These acts marked him as a sinner, while his master, who owned both corps and cattle, but fed neither, was pure. The only truly pure thing, it seemed to him, was eating. The landlord ate for the benefit of the village, and the priest ate for the benefit of Gods.” (4)

The summer days of Paraiiah went on starving and they would feed on the dead cattle which died of airborne disease. The hope of chicken or mutton would go unmet for years and in some families it would go thus for a generation. Paraiiah felt sad because “Instead he suffered the endless pain that came when a human being was forced to lead the life of a dog.” (4) Paraiiah dreamt that his children and the dogs were fighting over the same bones. He did not ever want to see that day in real life. He felt that “These dogs belonged to shudras: low caste, but not

untouchables like Paraiyah and his family.” (5) The Hindu Gods had failed to impress the divine separateness of caste on these dogs. The Brahmins lived in the other side of the village, far from this street. They lived in their divine feudal lands called agraharas. “The Gods gave them lands so they could stay away from the productive humans, socially connecting dogs and beasts of burden called donkeys.” (5-6) The Hindu Gods has not stooped to create Chandalas, Paraiyahs or dogs therefore the Brahmins hated them most. The Brahmins hated these things more than shit. Paraiyahs mind was restless he had a thought that why should human wear clothes and why not dogs and animals? He felt that if all went naked and he would have one less thing to worry about. He is half-naked, his wife had a sari and blouse and she imagine one for her children too. He felt “Why then had the Gods allowed him to be born? If the Gods had nothing to do with it, maybe there were other Gods, enemies of the High Gods and creators of the fallen. But if so, where were these others? Why weren’t they doing their jobs? The High Gods gave their followers land, grain, money and status. If Paraiyah’s life was the gift of the other Gods, he would have liked to be able, just one, to tell them what he thought of them.” (7-8)

He contained a history in him his body was a history house of Untouchability. He felt that “O then if he had a soul, it too was untouchable. What did it look like? Of what colour? How did it differ from others soul? Or was it like blood, which always looked the same.” (8) While walking on the road he thought of all these things and he felt that someone was throwing stones at him and they said “you were not even looking to see who, as you walked, was coming from the opposite direction or from other side.” (9) and he blabbered

“Why are you beating me?

What wrong did I do?

Whom did I harm? (9)

After a while there was a reply: ‘You bastered, stop thinking about God. The moment you think about God, you think about soul. Then you think about equality. All that nonsense.’ (9) If Paraiyah began to think, the day would come when our Gods- Our Gods in Heaven-our Gods on Earth- would have to stop thinking. All the heaven would collapse and Hell will come to earth. Another voice warned, “Don’t think about caste, but live in it. Caste is caste. They created it so

that you would not think. Thinking among the Paraijahs is likely to be the source of every evil in this village...in this area...in this country... in this world.” (9) Paraijah slowly surface from unconsciousness. He was lying on the cot in the hospital outside his wife was screaming about the condition of him and next to him Zakaraiah was sitting and praying. He heard the village heads saying “Hospitals are very evil places because all men and women go there, sit, stand and sleep without any caste or creed.” (10) The life of a Dalit is always pitiful. Dalit literature represents the plight and agony of the Dalits. It is a literature which represent about the community as a whole rather than the plight of an individual. Through this novel Kancha Ilaiah highlights the plights of the Dalits through poverty and gives a detailed view about the socio-cultural life of the Pariahs.

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