

N I N E



Kancha Ilaiah

Bharat Vikhander

Sharda Narayanan &
Subhodeep Mukhopadhyay

The mother of all parasitic cultures is the culture of Brahmanism
– Kancha Ilaiah¹

Introduction

Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd is a noted Indian writer, academician and a self-described ‘Shudra intellectual’.² The author of influential books like, *Why I am not a Hindu* and *Post-Hindu India*, he is considered an important Indian social thinker and is referred to as the “Good Shepherd.”³ He was Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Osmania University till 2012, when he retired and then served as Director of the Centre for Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy at Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) in Hyderabad.⁴ Currently, he provides leadership and guidance to an organization called Telangana Mass and Social Organizations (T-MASS), an alliance of Dalit and Marxist (communist) social justice and activism groups whose aim is to dismantle Hindutva forces through a “socio-cultural revolutionary movement.”⁵

In academic circles, Ilaiah is regarded as a pre-eminent social scientist following “a long and illustrious line of dissenters and critics” of the Hindu social order and a key player in the fight against “violent Hindutva assertion.”⁶ He is quite well-known in rural areas and in government institutions, his work having influenced numerous Dalit

intellectuals and students including school students.⁷ Ilaiah is also famous internationally and has been instrumental in internationalizing Dalit issues and bringing it to the attention of the international mainstream. In a written testimony submitted to the UK Parliament, the Christian Solidarity Network, a Right-wing Christian evangelical organization, cited Ilaiah's testimony at a US Congress hearing, on how anti-conversion laws in India perpetuate Dalit slavery by obstructing their freedom to leave the Hindu religion⁸. He has been referred to as one of "India's most prominent political journalists" by an Arizona Republican Congressman on the floor of the United States House of Representatives.⁹ In one his poems he writes that he is willing to lay down his life for the abused although he knows very well that he is not Jesus Christ and will not be resurrected.¹⁰

Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd is, therefore, a very prominent voice in the Dalit intellectual and activism space, recognized both in India and abroad, and hence, it is important that we understand and analyze his works systematically and with the dignity, that a public figure of his stature demands.

At the same time, it would not be wrong to say that his writings have often courted controversies and his critics have complained that in the guise of being an outspoken advocate for marginalized and minority communities, he has specifically targeted Hinduism in general and Brahmins along with other so-called upper castes in particular. For example, he explicitly calls for civil war to exterminate Brahmins globally in order to make Indian society more energetic and explains in-depth how a civil war is a "necessary evil" for every society to rejuvenate itself.¹¹ During his tenure as Associate Professor at Osmania University he had been advised by the then Registrar, to desist from writing in a way "that tended to accentuate prejudices or inflame hatred among various sections of people."¹² He has been accused of promoting social unrest and enmity, of targeting Hinduism and criminal cases have been filed against him in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.¹³ Ilaiah is also against big businesses as he feels they are controlled by the Hindu Baniya capitalists whom he refers to as social smugglers.¹⁴

Ilaiah uses the term Dalitbahujan to refer to people of Scheduled Castes (SC) as well as the Other Backward Castes (OBC), and optionally also the Scheduled Tribes as suggested by Kanshi Ram, the founder of the Bahujan Samaj Party.¹⁵ On the one hand, Ilaiah says that his aim is to play a positive role in empowering Dalitbahujan forces in India in all spheres of life¹⁶. On the other hand, he seems to spew venom against certain Hindu communities, provoke tensions, clashes between different groups in India, and incite violence in the name of ‘academic’ freedom. The question before us is, does he live up to his lofty goals of providing emancipation to the underclass? Is he really intent in bringing about national integration and reforms through his criticisms of India and Hinduism? Or is he bent upon fomenting divisiveness, hatred and social unrest through his writing and radical activism?

The following essay delves into these issues. The authors offer a critique of Ilaiah’s writing on Hinduism, based on his books, essays, commentaries and lectures. They analyze his scholarship methodologies, his epistemic practices, his ideological leanings and his positions on various socio-cultural issues. They look at not only what he says, but also, delve deep to understand his thoughts and actions in order to understand what informs his views on India and Hinduism. They respond to some of his specific criticisms of Hinduism and Hindu communities.

Purvapaksha of Ilaiah’s Work

Ilaiah characterizes Hinduism as being inherently violent with no space for either debate or discourse. This is in stark contrast to Christianity which he feels has an ethic of sacrifice: “Christ’s crucifixion is a symbol of sacrifice, it is not a killing symbol.”¹⁷ In fact, he insists that Hinduism is not a religion at all, since it does not have a holy book, but is rather a ‘cult’ which encourages vegetarianism, nudity and sexual perversion.¹⁸ He admits:

“Yes, I hate Hinduism... I am angry at the Hindu gods...We do not trust the Brahmin leaders. We cannot trust the sadhus and sanyasis who are going naked at the Kumbh Mela... Why do Hindu leaders say only vegetarianism is divine?” (Ilaiah 2000)

He depicts Brahmins as being greedy and gluttonous militants that have not only not contributed to nation building, but also threatened freedom of speech in India.¹⁹ For Ilaiah, nationhood begins with eating beef, and he considers vegetarianism, which he associates with Hinduism, as ‘anti-nationalism’. He encourages Indians to eat frog meat and beef in order to sharpen their knowledge of global economics and feels that the Indian “vegetarians brains are not working.”²⁰ For him, cows are a foreign Aryan animal and hence a favorite of the fair-skinned upper castes while buffaloes are Dravidian animals.

“...the buffalo is a Dravidian animal, whereas the cow is an Aryan animal. The buffalo is a black animal and we are black people. We low caste people represent the rights of the buffaloes.” (Ilaiah 2000)

He categorically rejects reforming Hindu culture, which he sees as a foreign ‘Aryan’ culture foisted on India by the ‘cunning’ Brahmins, the representative of the Aryans.

“Brahmins are basically Aryans who came from outside. They brought the cow along with them... All Brahmins in India have been consumers in the history of India. They were never the producers.” (Ilaiah 2000)

Ilaiah accepts only Christianity and Islam as being *bona fide* religions since they were “constructed by prophets who sacrificed and struggled in life for people’s liberation.”²¹ He says that there are three types of God – an abstract eternal God, prophets who became Gods and human-Gods. The abstract, shapeless eternal God is the most democratic and is seen in both Christianity and Islam. This God treats humans as superior to all other beings, and other creatures have been created as food for humans. In the second category, Jesus Christ is the greatest example of a Prophet who became a God. According to Ilaiah, Jesus was the first to clearly state the necessity of separating religion and state, and thus, Christian countries are naturally democratic. In the third category, are Hindu deities like Shiva and Vishnu, the Gods imagined as humans, who promote casteism, inequality, misogyny and counter-democracy.²²

Hinduism according to Ilaiah, is an artificial construct and hegemonic tool crafted by the upper castes to subjugate and oppress the Dalitbahujans. He finds it shocking when the Dalitbahujan communities are classified as Hindus. Speaking on their behalf, he says that, as a community they had never even heard of the word Hindu – “not as a word, nor as the name of a culture, nor as the name of a religion”, and that culturally they are similar to Muslims and Christians, rather than Brahmins and Baniyas whose culture he finds alien and, in fact, plain offensive: “the very sight of its saffron-tilak is a harassment to us.”²³ He compares Hinduism to the Klu Klux Klan in America, an American white supremacist terrorist hate group, and says that Hindus rape nuns, destroy churches and distribute weapons.²⁴

Ilaiah is a strong proponent of English-medium education for Dalitbahujans as he feels that it is the only way to defeat Sanskrit and Brahminical Sanskritic culture in the modern, post globalized world. According to him, upper castes established a pan-Indian connectivity through Sanskritic names; however, Dalitbahujans have neither pan-Indian identities nor connectivity and must therefore, embrace English in all aspects of their lives including even in their names.

“The farming communities can become Mr and Mrs Tiller, Dalits can have names like Mr and Ms Cobbler, Tanner, Shoemaker. Thus pot makers can have names like Potter, Iron and gold smiths can become Smith. Thus the marginalized communities could all have English names – from Washerman to Fisherman.” (Ilaiah 2016)

Ilaiah is a proponent of caste-based reservation in the private sector, and feels that institutions of national importance like IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology) and IIMs (Indian Institutes of Management) must be shut down as they teach discrimination against Dalitbahujan communities.²⁵ He wants his community to be able to freely embrace global religions like Christianity and Islam.²⁶

According to Ilaiah, Hinduism is a “spiritually fascist system” and it is not at all coincidental that Hindus and Nazi Germany share the same

swastika symbol.²⁷ He therefore, endorses the conversion of Dalitbahujan to Christianity, which he says is “happening in a big way.”²⁸

“Our spiritual potentials were never released ... They are rebelling against the Hindu order, Hindu spiritual life and quite a lot of them think of Christianity as an alternative.” (Ilaiah 2005)

Ilaiah sees caste as a tool of oppression in the hands of upper castes and therefore, advocates a caste-based census to assist policy-making. Such data-driven policies, he feels, will radically alter the very idea of democracy in India. He cites an interesting Biblical parallel of a census two thousand years ago which led to the birth of Jesus in a shepherd’s shed.

“The ‘Telangana All family Census 2014’ reminded me of Joseph and Mary (the parents of Jesus Christ) travelling to Bethlehem from Nazareth to get counted in their own place. According to the Bible (Luke 2:1-7), “Joseph and Mary’s trip to Bethlehem is undertaken in order to satisfy an imperial command that all individuals return to their ancestral towns... Since Mary was pregnant with Jesus at the time the command had to be carried out.” (Ilaiah 2021)

Ilaiah feels that there is a need of Bible education in India in order that people can read about God and the notion that all men are born equal. Without this kind of reform, Indians will continue to wallow in depression, poverty, hunger and uncivilized ways of life. He sees English education as a means of salvation as it will allow children to learn about the world and the word of God. Therefore, it is imperative that the Western church help Indians get English education. Each church could sponsor one school itself, he says. He warns that unless such a thing happens urgently, hunger will only increase in India and consequently “huge riots may take place in Indian context breaking the whole society into pieces.”²⁹ He appears to imply that Christianity alone can offer a true English-knowing Universal God, and Dalitbahujan masses must therefore shun the primitive rituals associated with the worship of regional gods.³⁰

“O Brahmins of Bharath and the World, you want to crucify me
 Knowing that I can’t resurrect, as I am not Jesus Christ.
 But, I will follow that Star, as I am an Indian shepherd.
 I will not destroy your temples; but, I will destroy all our shackles,
 As I follow only the God of Equality.

.....

I am now Ilaiah Shepherd, Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd.” (Ilaiah 2016)

Examining Ilaiah’s Research Principles

*As a teacher of social sciences, I am bound to take up critical writing because,
 unless there is critical writing, social science does not mean anything –
 Kancha Ilaiah.*³¹

Research in general, entails the process of finding answers to specific questions in a structured, organized and systematic way. Social research, in particular, is meant to produce new knowledge or to improve upon existing knowledge on societies using a collection of well-defined methods and methodologies.³² In the context of Ilaiah’s profound statement on the importance of critical analysis, we therefore, examine not only his scholarship but also his research methodology and methods.

A key requirement of research, whether quantitative or qualitative, is to provide evidence of claims. In this regard, Ilaiah fails miserably, as, throughout his vast corpus of work he makes a large number of unsubstantiated and unverifiable claims, and sweeping over-generalizations on Hinduism, caste, society, economics, which the authors of this paper, will discuss in-depth in the next few sections. In his book, *Why I am not a Hindu*, he admits that his work has autobiographical underpinnings, with inputs from a few Dalit intellectuals. In addition, a number of his upper caste friends had also given him insights into the “socioeconomic life processes in their castes and families.”³³

Ilaiah claims that Harappa is a pre-Aryan indigenous name that has nothing to do with Vedic Sanskrit; rather it is closely linked to South Indian term *appa*. He further claims that Harappa is associated with the Old Testament based on his linguistic analysis which goes as follows:

- Harappa ends with *appa*
- *appa* is associated with *ayya*
- Words like Mesaiah and Jeremaiah are actually Mess-*ayya* and Jerem-*ayya*
- Ergo: Harappa is associated with Old Testament

Solely on the basis of superficial similarities in name endings he establishes a fantastic linkage between the Harappan civilization and the Bible! If superficial linguistic similarity is what one is looking for, then why not consider the name Harappa to be closely linked to the *bona fide* Punjabi word *hadippa*, which means, among many things ‘hooray’ or ‘yippee’? There is no need to go all the way to southern India to discover etymological similarities, given that Harappa is located in Punjab (Pakistan)! But Ilaiah doesn’t just stop there and continues: “Joseph tells the migration to South first reached Karnataka crossing the Western plains.”³⁴ If his reference is to Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel, in the Bible’s Book of Genesis, then this is indeed a hitherto unknown and singularly specific Biblical reference to a southern Indian state Karnataka.³⁵

Elsewhere Ilaiah claims that a Brahmin never gives away extra rice to others.³⁶ This is such a bizarre claim that one is left flabbergasted. Is it based on any context that he himself experienced? Is it verified through the experience of a large number of other people and their experiences? Is it based on some specific instance where the person happened to be Brahmin? Is it in the context wherein the Brahmins in consideration were not in receipt of any other benefits from the government, etc.? He does not provide any of the contextual information needed to arrive at a reasonable sociological or political inference.

In another example, he postulates that Kshatriyas are a hybrid caste that emerged from the cross-breeding of white-skinned Aryans with the dark-skinned Dravidian Dalitbahujans.³⁷ In the same vein, he continues that the Vedic deity Indra was responsible for the genocide of the Harappans, who were of Dravidian racial stock.

“Indra is the original Aryan leader who led the mass extermination of the Indus valley based Adi-Dravidians, who were also Adi-Dalitbahujans.” (Ilaiah 2002:73)

It must be noted, that his entire thesis is based on obsolete colonial era racial Aryan invasion theory, which even its strongest proponents like Romila Thapar have given up on.³⁸ While modern Aryan theorists talk about migrations and frame the question in linguistic terms, Ilaiah still uses the older racial constructs. It seems that he has not kept himself up-to-date with the latest theories within his own domain. He posits a Dravidian origin of the Harappan civilization and says:

“Harappa! We are all your descendants

You shepherded the first civilization

....

You were God’s Own Man.

Brahma came and burnt all your civilization

Indra damaged it beyond reparation

Agni and Vayu became their weapons of destruction”³⁹

He further writes that the descendants of the Harappans escaped to southern India and became ‘Ayyappans’;⁴⁰ a rather audacious association between two material culture separated by thousands of kilometers and a few millennia.⁴¹ He makes several such fantastic and often derogatory statements about other Hindu deities as well. During his childhood he imbibed from his mother, her portrayal of Saraswati, the Hindu Goddess of learning, as a devil who kills Shudra children, and admits that he often had nightmares about Saraswati in the guise of a female ghost in a white sari and blouse, haunting him in his sleep.⁴² This becomes the chief source of his latter interpretation of Saraswati as an illiterate luxury-loving deity without any agency or free-will who spent her life as a courtesan to Brahma.⁴³ He writes disparagingly:

“The source of education, Saraswati, did not write any book as the Brahmins did not allow women to write their texts. Nowhere does she

“speak even about the need to give education to women. How is it that the source of education is herself an illiterate woman?” (Ilaiah 2002:74)

Ilaiah trivializes the prominent role played by women seers, philosophers and scholars in the development of the Vedic corpus. Not only did women have access to education, they were also encouraged to “study the scriptures and were given *Upanayana Samskara* (initiation into learning).” The *Rig Veda* has hymns composed by twenty-seven women seers like Ghosha, Apala, Vishwavara and others.⁴⁴ In the Upanishadic period Gargi and Maitreyi are prominent female scholars mentioned in the Sanskrit texts. Gargi was not only knowledgeable in Vedas and Upanishads, she even participated in scholarly debates with male-philosophers of her time.⁴⁵ The entire Hindu idea of worshipping the divine feminine is premised on the fact that women and men had the same potential when it came to spiritual evolution and achieving enlightenment, and therefore for Ilaiah to say that women were not allowed to compose Vedic texts is disingenuous and dishonest. It is in the Abrahamic traditions where women were denied the most basic rights till modern times. Not a single author of any of the books in the Bible, be it the Catholic Bible or the Protestant Bible, were women.⁴⁶ In fact, women were not even considered proper humans till late into the modern era and in fact, there were debates on whether women possessed souls and whether they were even humans.⁴⁷

He describes Vishnu as an offspring of Brahmin and Kshatriya parents who was given godly status in order to contain a Kshatriya revolt against Brahminical hegemony. He further claims that Brahmins created Shiva and Parvati to control tribals. According to Ilaiah, Brahmins later created Krishna and even wrote the *Bhagavad Gita* with the sole purpose of quelling a Dalitbahujan rebellion and to implement Manu’s law in northern India. He compares Goddess Lakshmi to a masseuse who forever presses the feet of Vishnu.⁴⁸ He also claims that Goddess Lakshmi reports to Vishnu all instances of Dalitbahujan men or women acquiring wealth or revolting against the caste system; immediately thereafter, Vishnu rushes off to handle such people.⁴⁹

It is unknown as to how Ilaiah is privy to information about hitherto unknown Dalitbahujan rebellions a few millennia ago or what his sources are on what Goddess Lakshmi reports to Vishnu. Nowhere does Ilaiah cite a single reference, textual or otherwise. Some of Ilaiah's views on Hindu deities are based on the discredited theory by archaeologist, Sir Mortimer Wheeler who had blamed the collapse of the Harappan civilization⁵⁰ on the invading Aryan hordes and had declared rather grandly: "Indra stands accused."⁵¹ Ilaiah paints a one-dimensional and very negative image of Hindu deities. He seems to be unaware that almost every Hindu deity has myriad representation across the length and breadth of the country, and that different forms have different origin and achievement stories.⁵² For example, in the *Ashta Lakshmi* pantheon⁵³, Lakshmi manifests in eight different forms where she is seated on a lotus and *not* pressing the feet of Vishnu. Similarly, while Saraswati holds the book and 'veena' in some manifestations, as 'Mahasaraswati' she can as easily wield the bow, arrow and trident⁵⁴, and hence' characterizing Saraswati as a delicate, passive, agency-less deity reeks of some underlying motive – one that is most certainly not honest scholarship. Ilaiah, perhaps, feels that he does not need to provide any evidence for his pronouncements, however bizarre, divisive or prejudicial, because he will not be held accountable for his statements.

"...Hinduism has never been a humane philosophy. It is the most brutal religious school that the history of religions has witnessed." (Ilaiah 2002:114)

He freely misrepresents fundamental Hindu concepts regarding life and death, with no distinction between popular superstitions, cultural practices, Vedic rituals or philosophical explanations.

"Brahmanism looked upon every dead body as a potential ghost, and it was believed that with the burning of the body, the ghost also gets destroyed." (Ilaiah 2009:65)

Poetic composition allows artistic freedom for the poet to conjure anything. But serious research writing requires substantiation with

proper referencing and evidences – something which Ilaiah completely lacks. Most people, with even a passing familiarity with Indian cultural history and Hindu symbolism would exercise caution in their comments for fear of exposing their own ignorance; not so Ilaiah, who blithely plunges to any depth of misrepresentation, no matter how low. Given his personal animosity towards Hinduism and so-called upper caste Hindus, as noted earlier (see section: *Purvapaksha of Ilaiah's Work*), one could very well question as to what extent his research is impartial, and honest – the key ethical requirements of academic integrity. What is more worrying is that, his book *Why I am not a Hindu* has been cited over four hundred times by different scholars in their works, including, in the widely read and definitive book on colonial and postcolonial studies, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism (The New Critical Idiom)* by Ania Loomba – a book which has been described internationally as “exactly the sort of book teachers want their students to read.”⁵⁵ Incidentally, this also highlights another important aspect of social sciences scholarship in India in general – that those without any depth in understanding Hindu texts, pass of unscholarly and prejudiced writing as scholarship. Not only that, this kind of vitriolic and inflammatory polemic masquerading as scholarship, is then also given legitimacy by being cited as authoritative work.

The Bharat Vikhander⁵⁶

Identity, Separatism and Civil War

As mentioned earlier, Ilaiah uses the term Dalitbahujan to refer to SCs and OBCs, a rather large pan-Indian community with cultural, economic and knowledge system commonalities “which mesh them together like threads in a cloth.”⁵⁷ According to a National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) survey, SCs comprise 20%, ST's 9% while OBCs comprise 41% of Indian population.⁵⁸ Dalit-bahujans, therefore, constitute 61% of Indian population. According to Ilaiah, these seventy-eight crore Dalitbahujans are not Hindu by either birth or culture, and forcibly labeling them as Hindus is yet another example of a state-sponsored and state-sanctioned Hindutva supremacy.⁵⁹

“I do not know how I can relate to the Hindu culture that is being projected through all kinds of advertising agencies. The government and the state themselves have become big advertising agencies. Moreover the Sangh Parivar harasses us every day by calling us Hindus.” (Ilaiah 2002:x-xi)

If we exclude Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and others who make up roughly 20% of India, we are then left with the so-called forward caste Hindus, who constitute merely 10% of India’s population. It is this 10% of Indians that Ilaiah takes a strong exception to, castigating them at every juncture.

“The Brahmins continue being semi-naked while performing these yagnas and kratus. This reflects their primitive brains and body culture.” (Ilaiah 2018b)

Ilaiah is not alone in insisting that Dalits are not Hindus. Quite a few politicians, public intellectuals as well as academicians, including those associated with prominent institutions like Harvard and Columbia, insist that the idea of a Hindu majority India is a faulty one. Hindu majoritarianism is a false construct of ‘savarna’ Hindus who “have taken for granted the status of Adivasi and Dalits as being Hindu.”⁶⁰ The Chief Minister of Jharkhand, an elected representative, observed that Hindu religion was separate from Adivasi (tribal) religion.⁶¹ In fact, there is an entire thesis, that modern Hinduism is itself, a sham and an artificial construct made up by Swami Vivekananda and others during the British era, and that, the contours of contemporary Hinduism were bequeathed to us by our colonial masters as explained by Rajiv Malhotra in his book *Indra’s Net: Defending Hinduism’s Philosophical Unity*.⁶²

Setting aside such personal views of public intellectuals and leaders, one questions as to what is the legal position of Hindus as defined in an Indian context? Legally, the definition of Hinduism is very crisp, unambiguous and consistent as can be seen in various codified Hindu Laws and the Constitution, itself chaired by B.R. Ambedkar.

- a. One who is a Hindu by religion in any of its forms or developments, including a Virashaiva, Lingayat, Brahmo Samaji, Prarthana Samaji as well as Arya Samaji
- b. One who is Buddhist, Jain or Sikh by religion
- c. Anyone else who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion⁶³

In other words, all Dalitbahujans are Hindus, except those, who have converted to other religions like Christianity or Islam. And this definition happens to be a major problem since it quite obviously renders the opinions of Ilaiah and his ilk irrelevant. It is hard to believe that an intellectual of the stature of Kancha Ilaiah, is unaware of how the state legally defines Hindus. Moreover, this has nothing to do with either Hindutva or what Ilaiah imagines the Sangh Parivar⁶⁴ want him to believe. What then are his intentions?

If one is to summarize his work so far, Ilaiah detests Hinduism, as well as the so-called forward caste of Brahminical Hindus. Nor does he intend to reform Hinduism in any way. Rather he makes ad hominem attacks on Hindu communities and vilifies them to no end. He accuses Hindus of killing wantonly, raping women, and burning alive hundreds and thousands of people and hence, feels that a violent uprising is justified.

“Social upheavals with a vision of change to establish better human relations and equality as an essential goal of human beings are necessary evils.” (Ilaiah 2009:238)

He concludes by going so far as to justify why a civil war against Brahminism (used interchangeably with Hinduism) is required and how it can serve as a harbinger of new knowledge and eventual equality of all Indians.

Moreover, Hinduism, according to him, is against collective economic activity. He makes the charge that Hindus use socially useful products, but are unaware as to how they are produced – they consider such products as a product of prayer.⁶⁵ A civil war will lead to a

revolutionary transformation of the poor into rich and vice versa and bring about social, economic and scientific development.⁶⁶

Ilaiah's Strategy

What is it that will help in this endeavor of rebellion/revolution? Ilaiah is categorical that it is Christianity alone, which can grant the disenfranchized the right to equality, and the process can begin with the reading of the Bible. It was the Bible which was the "harbinger of civil wars to achieve socio-spiritual equality in the West."⁶⁷ Therefore, it is Bible reading among Dalitbahujans and the knowledge of the universal ethic of monotheism inherent in Christianity will bring about dignity to the Indian masses.⁶⁸

Ilaiah's agenda now starts becoming clear. Based on the plethora of evidence furnished thus far, it seems that he wants to Christianize India through the following steps:

- a. First by positioning himself as a champion of the Dalitbahujan communities, declaring that they are not Hindus and by alienating them from their Indic roots
- b. Second, by developing 'atrocities literature' to target Hinduism and attack Hindus, especially Brahmins, and to incite people and provoke violence against Hindu groups through his writings, international support and activism
- c. Third, encouraging civil war to wipe out the so-called Brahminical forward castes, whom he sees as violent, barbaric, racist and discriminatory groups
- d. Fourth, by offering Christianity as an alternative and encouraging Bible reading among the Dalitbahujans
- e. Final: Post-Hindu Christian India

It is no wonder, that he believes that a "believer in God of Equality is a better nationalist, than those who worship gods that breed inequality."⁶⁹ Could one not conclude that, according to him, therefore, only Christians are true nationalists, while so-called Hindu nationalists are nothing but fascists and militants?

It is to be noted that calling for the genocide of Brahmins, a minority community which makes up less than three percent of India⁷⁰, has become exceedingly common, and normalized through mass media and academia. Starting with the Islamic invasion of India, all the way to modern India, this trend has continued, and if nothing else, has become especially exacerbated in recent times. Ilaiah is therefore, not alone in calling for an extermination of Brahmins; he is in the hallowed company of famous personalities like the Christian missionary Francis Xavier and Dravidian ideologue E.V. Ramasamy Naicker.⁷¹ In the words of the former:

“There are in these parts among the pagans a class of men called Brahmins. They are as perverse and wicked a set as can anywhere be found, and to whom applies the Psalm which says: ‘From an unholy race, and wicked and crafty men, deliver me, Lord.’ If it were not for the Brahmins, we should have all the heathens embracing our faith.” (Sharan 1991:97)

Ilaiah’s caricature of Brahmins is equally problematic. Discerning readers may observe interesting parallels between his controversial views on Brahmins and the systematic buildup of animosity towards Jews in Europe culminating in the Nazi Holocaust. In the words of Koenraad Elst:

“Read e.g. Kancha Ilaiah’s book *Why I Am Not a Hindu* (Calcutta 1996), sponsored by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, with its anti-Brahmin cartoons: move the hairlocks of the Brahmin villains from the back of the head to just in front of their ears, and you get exact replicas of the anti-Semitic cartoons from the Nazi paper *Der Stürmer*.” (Elst 2007:12)

Ilaiah’s Ideological Position

What is the ideological basis of Ilaiah’s work? What is the intellectual framework which informs his academic positions? What are his conceptual assumptions?

A study of Ilaiah’s work reveals, that he is obsessed with the ideas of the ‘white-skinned’ invading Aryan race and the dark-skinned Dravidian

who is the 'son of the soil'. Most of the divisive hate speeches popular in India revolve around the controversial racist Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT), subsequently moderated to an equally controversial linguistic Aryan Migration Theory (AMT).

“The Brahmans.....Once they occupied India after the Aryan invasion, they never left this land.” (Ilaiah 2009:186)

As shown earlier, Ilaiah considers cows as foreign animals, Aryan in origin, and white in color, whereas, buffaloes are indigenous, and the favorite animal of the dark-skinned natives of India. Perhaps he is unaware that aurochs, the ancestors of modern cows originated almost *two million years ago in India*, and spread westwards all the way to Europe. Around nine thousand years ago, domestication of cow took place in the Indian subcontinent, much earlier than any supposed Aryan invasion in 1500 BCE.⁷² Cows may be white or brown or black or any color in between, and their presence in India has nothing to do with any invasion, Aryan or otherwise.

Much has been written by various scholars challenging each and every aspect of the contentious and problematic Aryan theory. Discoveries in archaeology, genetics, hydrology, linguistics and other disciplines have robustly contested these racial theories and exposed the grave problems inherent in their positions. In his seminal book *Breaking India*, Rajiv Malhotra traces the evolution of this theory, from the invention of the Aryan race all the way to Nazism. He also delves into the parallel development of the Dravidian thesis – from the invention of the Dravidian race to modern Christian Dravidianism. Malhotra illustrates how imperial evangelism shaped Indian ethnology and the evolution of race science to classify Indians to castes and groups.⁷³ Manogna Sastry and Megh Kalyanasundaram, have studied the so-called Aryan-Dravidian schism, in detail, and shown how these were colonial tools meant to provide “a revised historical account and new theories of the very origin of the land’s culture.”⁷⁴

Renowned archaeologist B.B. Lal, based on his extensive archaeological discoveries and research, demonstrates the cultural

continuity of Indians from Harappan times to present, the absence of any evidence of invasion, and insists that Aryan invasion or migration is a myth.⁷⁵ Genetic studies indicate that there has been no significant external genetic influence in India since 3000 BCE, significantly predating any supposed Aryan invasion in 1500 BCE.⁷⁶ Similarly, there are no literary accounts in Hindu scriptures of any exotic racial group known as Brahmins bringing Vedas into this land from some foreign land, nor is there any racial connotation anywhere in our central literature.⁷⁷ In fact, there is an entire field of scholarship, referred to as ‘Out of India theory’, which proposes that, by and large, all Indians are indigenous to India and that Indo-European languages, including Sanskrit, originated in India and spread out to other locations.⁷⁸ Ilaiah, however, does not appear to be interested in conducting an open-minded well-rounded academic inquiry on the Aryan question.

He appears to be driven more by political and religious zeal rather than academic interest. It is no wonder that he ascribes all manner of evils to Hinduism.

“While they continue their murderous activities, the priests perform special pujas for money so that murderers can keep murdering and rapists can keep raping women again and again.” (Ilaiah 2009:192)

Such prejudicial views can hardly qualify as scholarship. In fact, some of Ilaiah’s statements are downright libelous and malicious as shown above. If unsubstantiated claims and defamatory sentences like these are supposed to be examples of Ilaiah’s critical thinking, it is but a reflection of the sad plight of social sciences research in India. So deep is his hatred for Hinduism and an imagined Hindu *rashtra*, that Ilaiah even dismisses genuine science coming out of India.

“It is because of Hindu casteism that India has remained a land barren of scientific discoveries throughout modern history. It has survived on modern science begged and borrowed from other countries, and the Brahmanic intellectuals are solely responsible for this status of the nation.” (Ilaiah 2009:xii)

This view is the exact opposite of all known knowledge of scientific achievements of India and discounts India's stupendous advancements in astronomy, mathematics, medicine, surgery, Ayurveda, music, metallurgy and architecture over the centuries. Much of this indigenous knowledge was often, way ahead of its times and far more advanced than the rest of the civilized world. For example, more than two thousand years ago Panini, the ancient Sanskritist par excellence, made several discoveries in the fields of phonetics, phonology, and morphology many of which remained more advanced than the west until the mid-20th century.⁷⁹ Or that more than two thousand years ago, the physician Sushruta was performing cataract surgeries.⁸⁰ In fact, the West has routinely, without acknowledgement, appropriated (and continues to do so) knowledge of Indian models of mind, into the cutting edge of western cognitive sciences.⁸¹ Infinity Foundation has published fourteen volumes on the history of Indian science and technology covering areas like animal husbandry, water management, iron and zinc technologies and other areas, written by top experts in the fields.⁸² Ilaiah ought to study these books, and clear his misconceptions about the history of indigenous science and technology.

Shepherd of Hindu Hatred: Allegations and Responses

Claim: Hinduism promotes Inequality

Ilaiah's work is replete with factual errors and misrepresentations, especially in the context of Hindu texts. For example, he traces what he calls Hinduism's "spiritual fascism" and propensity for inequality to the *Purusha Suktam* in the Rig Veda.⁸³ The *Purusha suktam* describes the divine, figuratively, and says that Brahmanas or priests came out of his mouth, the Kshatriyas or kings and warriors from the shoulders, the vaishyas or tradesmen from his thighs and the Shudras or laborers from his feet. Ilaiah often uses this hymn to showcase inequality and discrimination in Hinduism. Perhaps, he is not aware or chooses to ignore the fact, that in Hinduism, the feet is not considered inferior or derogatory in any way. Rather, it is celebrated – the concept of "lotus feet" is integral and perhaps unique to Hinduism.⁸⁴ The very names of

revered saints are referred to by alluding to their lotus feet.⁸⁵ *Pada puja* is done by offering sandal paste and flowers to a revered person's feet and even his sandals are taken as emblems in case the person is not present. There are popular hymns like *Guru Paduka Stotram* and the *Paduka Sahasram* which glorify the feet.⁸⁶ In the Ramayana, Bharata acting as Lord Rama's regent during the long years of exile placed the sandals on the throne as the royal emblem, not Rama's weapon, crown or scepter.⁸⁷ In other words, reverence for the feet is an ancient tradition traceable to the Vedic age, and the *Purusha sukta* in that vein is simply a metaphorical description of a society with its priests, kings, warriors, tradesmen and laborers, and not an exhortation to racially discriminate certain groups.

The next example is from the *Bhagavad Gita*. Even those who have not read the *Gita*, are perhaps familiar with 47th verse of the second chapter which goes: "You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action."⁸⁸ But Ilaiah gives this celebrated verse an altogether different twist or interpretation. He concludes from a foreign translation of the *Gita*, that, this verse establishes an ideology which says that Dalitbahujans must work but they must not aspire to enjoy the fruits of that work, which would accrue to the upper castes.⁸⁹ This example, incidentally, highlights a major problem of Hindu scripture translations, which are not grounded in tradition, and make use of academic lenses; Postmodernism for example, thereby resulting in numerous instances of what practitioners would deem as misinterpretation or mistranslations. This verse simply states that each individual should perform his duty with integrity and sincerity, irrespective of whether the act brings him rewards or any loss. If the rewards come, it is good to enjoy them; but in case there are no benefits, one must not give in to despondency, but instead should continue to cheerfully perform one's duty. It has nothing to do with any particular strata of society or the relation between different groups. The verse has to be taken to discuss the connection of a person's efforts and his own gains, not between two different individuals, leave alone two different castes. To interpret this in the manner cited, is pure slander based on falsehood, to build prejudice among new readers and to garner support

for his own hate speech. If one is interested in reading about the *Gita*, why not choose any of the traditional translations and commentaries by either Chinmaya Mission or Ramakrishna Mission or Gita Press?

Claim: Hinduism promotes Racism

Ilaiah interprets the *Mahabharata* as the fight between Dalitbahujans, represented by the Kauravas, and the Brahminical forces, represented by the Pandavas.⁹⁰ As usual there is no substantiation, whatsoever, for his grand pronouncements. Perhaps, he is unaware that the Kauravas and Pandavas were cousins belonging to the same clan, and thus, it would follow that Dalitbahujans and Brahmins also belong to the same racial stock and not to different racial groups as he wants everyone to believe! Ilaiah looks at the *Ramayana* through a seemingly post-modern social justice lens, adding everything from racism, to patriarchy to Hindutva supremacy and nationalism, to the mix, as illustrated in the following allusion to Lord Hanuman.

“It is common knowledge that Hanuman was a South Indian Dalit who joined the imperial army of Rama to fight against the south Indian nationalist ruler – Ravana. Hanuman worked day in and day out in the interest of ‘Ramarajya’ (anti-dalitbahujan and anti-women kingdom), yet his place in the administration was always marginal and subservient.”
(Ilaiah 2002:58-59)

The above lines abound in errors – Hanuman is, by no means, accorded a marginal role, being the only deity from *Ramrajya* to continue being widely worshipped till date. It is well known that Lord Hanuman was an erudite scholar proficient in the *Vedas* and *Vedangas*, and also a staunch proponent of the dharmic way of life.⁹¹ If he were indeed, a southern Indian Dalit, nobody seemed to mind (even to this day), since northern India is dotted with innumerable Hanuman temples. Hanuman is the resident deity even today, of most indigenous Indian gymnasiums and ‘akhadas’. His deep friendship and devotion to Lord Rama began well before he joined the imperial army. As to Ravana being a south Indian nationalist leader, it is based on false propaganda by E.V. Ramasamy,

who presented a distorted account of classical literature to stir up hatred against Sanskrit and Brahmins among the populace.⁹² In most such cases, Ilaiah repeats popular notions of Left liberals, Western neo-orientalists and Dravidian separatists with no attempt at any verification with facts or original research. Many of these notions are also obsolete in academia but Ilaiah freely uses them to develop his agenda, and somehow reaches the conclusion that *Ramayana* was written after *Mahabharata*.⁹³

Claim: Hinduism promotes White-ness

Ilaiah makes another claim that Hindu ethos is prejudiced against the color black and shows a favorable bias towards the color white.⁹⁴ He cites Devi Saraswati's swan and raiment being pure white and cows venerated as they are white, while the black buffalo is blacklisted. A cursory study of Vedic literature shows that, in addition to white cows, there were red, black and spotted cows as well.⁹⁵ He is perhaps unaware, that the god Yama riding a black buffalo is regarded as Dharmaraja, the ultimate dispenser of justice.⁹⁶ Lord Ganesh's pet mouse is black, as also crows, which are considered the representatives of one's own ancestors (yes, even those of Brahmins). There does not seem to be any notions of superiority or inferiority based on color, supposedly echoing the varied complexion of the people of India. Lord Krishna is known to be very dark in color, represented with blue in art so that the eyes and other features are visible, and so is Lord Rama for that matter.

Claim: Hinduism promotes Discrimination

Unlike Abrahamic traditions and their concept of God's chosen people, Hinduism considers all life as being important – human life as well as animal, flora, fauna and insects. Having said that, we must accept that discrimination in some form or other did and still does exist in Indian society, as it does the world over, and Hindu gurus have never shied away from this fact. Throughout the ages, social reformers from all strata of society have tried to reform Hinduism from within. However, it must be noted that such discrimination, if any, was not sanctioned by the 'shastras', in the way, the Quran sanctions *jihad* against the *kafirs*.⁹⁷ Let us

recall Adi Shankaracharya's unequivocal rejection of social exclusions which he felt were not in line with Advaita's tenets of inclusion and universalism. He says:

“...I am that which pervades as a witness in the bodies of all living beings right from Brahma to the tiny ant. One who has the deep conviction that ‘I am That, not any of the objects of perception’, he is a Guru, whether a Chandala or a Brahmana...” (Venkataraman 2014:107)

Jaina, Bauddha, Siddha, Saiva, Yoga, Sankhya and Vaishnava are only a few of the myriad traditions that flourished within the folds of *Sanatana Dharma* in various periods in India, each with many smaller variations within themselves. Caste has never been a predominant feature of Indian thought; rather, philosophical inquiry has always taken the highest precedence. In Tamil Saiva devotional literature of the revered Nāyanār-s, the saints devoted to Lord Siva, came from all walks of life.⁹⁸ In the Vaishnava tradition, Sri Ramanuja is known to have brought a large number of people – irrespective of their social strata – to the Vaishnavite fold.⁹⁹

In the *Pañcatantra* story of the greedy holy man Devasharma, who is cheated of his gold coins by a rogue who comes to win his trust in the garb of a disciple, the unsuspecting guru utters these words while initiating him as his disciple:

“Whether he be a śūdra or any other, a caṇḍāla or a sannyāsī, once he is initiated with the Śiva-mantra, smeared with sacred ash, he becomes as auspicious as Śiva Himself.” (Kale 2012:29)

This shows that the sannyasi (whom Ilaiah reviles as a rapacious Brahmin burden on society) had no caste. Whoever wanted to adopt a lifestyle of prayer, meditation and study, was free to do so. Buddhist, Christian, Jain and other religions have the concept of monkhood, but Ilaiah displays great rancor when it comes to Hindu sannyasis.

The story of Satyakama and Jabala in the *Chandogya Upanishad* illustrates the Hindu ideals of equality of man, the strength and value of truth, the importance of practical knowledge, hard work and the

importance of spiritual knowledge. The fact that Satyakama was the son of unknown parentage, did not stop him from being accepted by his teacher. After completing his basic education, his teacher, in order to test his suitability for higher learning, gave him five hundred cows, asking him to take them to the forest and return when they had multiplied to a thousand. Not only did Satyakama complete his assignment and more, he went on to become a celebrated rishi in his own right.¹⁰⁰ This story illustrates how Hindu thought has time and again, urged humanity to overcome petty social discrimination and to aim at the loftier ideals of life. It disproves Ilaiah's oft-repeated accusation that 'Brahminism' has no practical knowledge and is 'non-productive'.¹⁰¹

In the traditional system of education, a prince and a pauper all lived in the same manner, sharing domestic and farm work, as in the case of Sri Krishna and Sudama in their teacher's hermitage during student years. This tradition of education for all, continued till the pre-modern period before the advent of the British. It is apparent, that youngsters learnt about the ways of the world and practical matters before they undertook kingly, priestly or commercial offices. In many farms, people from a wide variety of castes shared the manual work. In his book, *The Beautiful Tree*, Dharampal provides data from early 19th century British survey records on Indian education which completely negates Ilaiah's claims that upper-caste Hindus denied Dalitbahujans the right to education. For example, in Madras Presidency the percentage of Dalitbahujan students in indigenous educational institutions in different regions were as follows¹⁰²:

- Tamil speaking regions – 70 to 84%
- Malayalam speaking regions – 54%
- Kannada speaking regions – 63%
- Oriya speaking regions – 64%
- Telugu speaking regions – 35 to 41%

In Bengal Presidency, comprising modern-day West Bengal, Bihar, Bangladesh and Assam, British records indicate that a large number of students from 'Dom' and 'Chandal'¹⁰³ communities, whom social

scientists classify as “untouchables”, studied alongside students of so-called forward castes.¹⁰⁴ One wonders where is the large-scale discrimination against Shudras by Goddess Saraswati that Ilaiah talks about.

Claim: Hinduism promotes Backwardness

Ilaiah is quite critical of the backward and primitive practice of idol worship among Hindus.¹⁰⁵ It must be understood that *murti-puja* in Hinduism does not mean idol-worship; the deity is consecrated and regarded a living person through *prāna-pratiṣṭhā*.¹⁰⁶ Hence, He or She is a divine manifestation who allows the worshipper *darshan* and the opportunity to perform rituals to aid in their spiritual progress. Devotees offer food items to the deities as a gesture of love and reverence, just as one offers food to a loved one. While a modest quantity is offered to the deity, a large amount is distributed to all devotees who visit the temple, rich or poor. It is a routine feature of every temple during festivals, that the peasants and poor people line up to savor temple *prasada*. All temples have “*annadana*” or feeding the poor arrangements; in fact, temples have numerous social, educational and charitable activities on which Ilaiah is absolutely silent.

Ilaiah riles at the ‘madi’ concept of purity and hygiene followed by many Brahmins, especially in southern India, in the cooking and storing of food.¹⁰⁷ ‘Madi’ requires people to bathe before starting cooking and to wear washed clothes. The previous day’s food is to be consumed or removed from the vicinity of the fresh cooking and the stove is to be wiped clean. The reasons for these rules were ostensibly for better shelf-life and to avoid food spoilage, an important concern in a tropical climate. In a sense, this is no different from modern norms and rules of food storage that help in preserving nutrients better and offer more health benefits. One would think that people would laud, emulate the older generations for following such stringent hygiene and cleanliness norms! Ilaiah, however, freely mocks the entire practice, and sees evidence of racism in them. Most of his allegations are in fact, obsolete and irrelevant for the past hundred years. To make this concept of

previous centuries appear like a current practice is plain maliciousness on the part of the writer.

People have complete freedom to choose their diet as long as it adheres to the food safety factors, cultural norms and value systems of their nation.¹⁰⁸ But Ilaiah's views of vegetarianism and consumption of meat especially beef, seem to be driven by acute 'Hinduphobia' rather than, being based on evidence driven science. For example, studies have shown clear linkages between rising meat consumption, climate change and pandemics.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, a global shift towards a plant-based diet could increase longevity by ten percent or more, and also decrease greenhouse gas emissions by as much seventy percent.¹¹⁰ Yet, as shown earlier, Ilaiah keeps on insisting on a beef-based diet for everybody despite well-documented health and environmental risks.

Hinduism Problem: Christianity Solution

For Ilaiah, Hinduism is the reason behind numerous social ills that ails society Indian today especially with regards to the plight of Dalitbahujans and women. We have discussed many of his claims that Hinduism is inherently racist, and that violence towards Dalits is embedded in the DNA of Hinduism, and will not repeat them here. Regarding women, similarly, he makes a number of strange observations. For example, he makes a curious statement that while wife-beating is common across India, upper caste women, unlike Dalitbahujan women, lack agency and have to passively accept all sorts of ill-treatment at the hand of patriarchal Hindu males.¹¹¹ He refers to 'Sati' as if it is a common existing practice for Hindu women to die along with their husbands.¹¹² For him, therefore, **Hinduism is the problem and Christianity is the solution** and he asks of Hindu gods:

"If the God believed by a person doesn't have democratic values, where will this person get those democratic values from? In fact, shouldn't they explain why they create such Gods who are violent, undemocratic and anti-women?" (Ilaiah 2015)

It is surprising (or perhaps not), that Ilaiah finds a worldview that promotes mutual respect among different cultures problematic, whereas those like Abrahamic faiths, which, at best preach tolerance, is perfectly acceptable to him.¹¹³ A system which prompts yoga and mental wellbeing, sustainable living, holistic health-care, vegetarianism, eco-feminism, feminine divine and diversity of spiritual paths is equally problematic for Ilaiah.

The essay will now examine the second part/premise of the equation. Is Christianity really a solution to all alleged evils of Hinduism? To answer this, some additional questions must be asked¹¹⁴:

- Is the Church qualified to ‘cure’ Indian society?
- What is the track-record of Christianity in solving social evils in Third world countries in the past?
- Does Christianity have a superior human rights track record compared to Hinduism?

Ilaiah clearly seems to believe that Christianity and its Abrahamic God is a solution to all of Hinduism’s alleged evils. To understand if Christianity is indeed the answer, let us take a look at the condition of converted Christians in India. Assuming they converted to Christianity, in order to escape the shackles of caste discrimination and untouchability, surely they must now be living a life of dignity at par with all other converted Christians irrespective of their earlier castes. Unfortunately, the reality is quite different. A well-known Jesuit, practicing lawyer and Dalit-Christian activist admits:

“...the Catholic Church says there is no caste bias but caste discrimination is rampant in the Church ... There are hardly any inter-caste marriages among converted Christians. Until recently, Church-run magazines carried matrimonial advertisements containing specific caste references.” (Natarajan 2010)

Syrian Christians are said to take ritual baths after physical contact with lower castes.¹¹⁵ Inter caste marriage is not common among Indian Christians: a Syrian Christians from Kerala will not marry a Dalit

Christian, and will sometimes prefer to get married to a higher class Hindu instead.¹¹⁶ Converted Christians belonging to influential castes routinely lobby to allow only the person belonging to their caste being appointed as bishop in their diocese, and Dalit and upper caste converts cannot bury their dead in the same cemeteries.¹¹⁷ In many churches, Dalits have separate cemeteries and funeral carts and are denied the use of the common road leading to the church, and this problem is present in both the Protestant and Catholic Church.¹¹⁸ Evidently, Christianity is not a solution to the “problem” of caste at least.

One should now explore this question from a global perspective. Rajiv Malhotra in a rejoinder to Kancha Ilaiah makes a very valid point, that if Christianity were indeed the solution then why is it that there are so many problems in Latin America and among African-Americans in the US.¹¹⁹ We would like to build upon this thesis.

In terms of rape statistics (number of rapes per 100,000), all the top ten countries are Christian majority nations, including USA, Australia and Sweden, and some relatively recently Christianized nations like South Africa, Nicaragua and Botswana.¹²⁰ In the US, which for Ilaiah is the bastion of human rights, and where he gives testimonies against India, African-American women face greater domestic violence than white women.¹²¹ In USA, blacks receive twenty percent longer sentences than whites for committing the same crime.¹²² In the UK, according to the British Institute of Human Rights, one in four women experience domestic abuse and one in five sexual assault during their lifetime.¹²³ In terms of violent crimes, the countries with the highest murder rates are mostly from South America, Caribbean and Africa – countries where natives were converted with missionary zeal.¹²⁴ Some of the recently converted countries still continue to be mired in poverty and backwardness. Clearly, Christianity has not solved crime against women, or racial discrimination or other social evils. We wish that Ilaiah and his cabal of Hinduphobic academicians reflect on these hard facts.

Ilaiah of course, paints a rosy picture of Christianity, portraying it as a religion of enlightened superior values, beyond superstitions and prejudices, and one where God treats every human being with equal

compassion. He blithely claims that Christianity gives enormous dignity to labor and that from a spiritual standpoint all animals have equal rights¹²⁵, glossing over the very important point, that in Christianity, animals do not have souls, and hence, there is no question of spirituality. In fact, throughout the existence of Christian faith there have been shrill debates whether women have souls.¹²⁶ Unsurprisingly, therefore, Ilaiah remains silent on many of Christianity's problems. For example, there is no discussion on Indian evangelists claiming to miraculously cure chronic illnesses with prayers.¹²⁷ He is silent on Biblical stories like demon pigs being possessed by heretic souls¹²⁸, or of forty-two young boys being mauled by two bears in the name of the Lord¹²⁹, or how God raises an army of bones¹³⁰, and numerous other such stories which the Church accepts as literal truth since the Bible is the word of God. Ilaiah does not talk about the innumerable Church abuse cases including sexual crimes and pedophilia across the globe¹³¹, including India.¹³² While Ilaiah has no qualms in characterizing Hindus and their Gods as violent, he is absolutely silent on violence and genocides in the Bible, whether the Old Testament or the New Testament.¹³³ It would be interesting to find out his reaction and response to Richard Dawkin's description of the Abrahamic God as¹³⁴:

“... the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”

It is also evident that Ilaiah suffers from a delusion of grandeur. Just as the great prophet-God-like Jesus was referred to as Good Shepherd¹³⁵, Ilaiah too changed his name and added the suffix 'Shepherd' to his name. He can now become the great Messiah of the Dalitbahujans, delivering them from the brutality and backwardness of Hinduism by showing them the path of true deliverance in Christendom, and heralding the dawn of a new post-Hindu Christian era.

A Breaking India Sepoy

Kancha Ilaiah is one of the most influential Indian foot-soldiers of the 'Breaking India' forces – nexuses of academic, religious and activist groups, intent upon stirring up separatism and social divisiveness in order to weaken India as a civilization and as a nation state. He is a favorite among mainstream media houses and social sciences academia for his controversial and often pejorative comments against Hindus and Hinduism, as well as for his cries to the “victims” of oppression, the Dalitbahujans, to violently revolt against the Indian nation state, whose representatives are the forward caste Brahminical forces. In India, he portrays himself as a Left-liberal intellectual and a champion of the underclass, yet paradoxically in the West he collaborates with Right-wing forces and Church groups, and freely gives testimonies against what he describes as India's abject human rights situation. Rajiv Malhotra explains this kind of hypocritical behavior very succinctly:

“Pro-India perceptions are ignored and the Indian legacy of supporting the rights of down-trodden are dismissed derisively. Worldviews that emphasize conflicts are encouraged. Ideologues give open call to racial civil wars, which are published by prestigious academic publishing houses of the West. US governmental monitoring mechanisms focus on India with distorting lenses and quote and requote their own reports to project a savage imagery of India as a dark frontier region ripe for Western intervention.” (Malhotra and Neelakandan 2011:173)

In other words, Ilaiah is a classic sepoy, similar to Indian sepoys used by the British to fight against Indians during the colonial era. In the worldview of Ilaiah, everything about Hinduism and so-called forward caste Hindus are bad. For Ilaiah, Hindus are oppressors, racists, violent criminals, patriarchal misogynists, murderers, rapists, smugglers and everything evil imaginable, and in Christianity's egalitarianism he sees a solution to all of India's ills. This kind of divisive and separatist perspective is in fact, encouraged in the field of Dalit studies, both in India as well as in the Western academia. Postmodernism and subalternism provide academic respectability to such racist and

prejudicial studies, many of which are directly against the interest of the nation. Ilaiah of course, chooses not to mention the significant cooperation among so-called caste Hindus and Dalitbahujans in the development of much of Hindu sacred literature. There is no mention that a large part of Bhakti literature was contributed by Dalits.¹³⁶ Instead, like a typical formulaic 'Breaking India' activist he sees India as a patient afflicted with diseases like caste, untouchability, sati and patriarchy, and the Bible and Church as a miracle cure.

Conclusion

Social issues like discrimination, consumerist greed, and exploitation are universal in nature and India is no exception. If anybody says that India does not have any issues, they are living in denial. Our gurus and leaders throughout the ages recognized it, and reformed Indian society from within, one evil at a time. Post-Independence, affirmative action to assist the underprivileged, became a founding principle of our constitution. As a belief system, Hinduism has undergone numerous reforms from ancient times up to the recent past, and all of this happened without the intervention of any foreign power claiming to be the dispensers of human rights. But modern human rights activists are not interested in reforming Hinduism. They have a deep seated hatred for the Hindu identity itself and have garnered huge amount of international support in their activism against Hinduism.

Ilaiah belongs to this camp of self-proclaimed revolutionary social warriors who see Hinduism itself as the evil plaguing India. The solution he envisages for India is Christianity. He wants a Christian India without Hindus and Hinduism, and masks his racist activities as social justice activism in support of the underclass. According to him, Hindus must pay, now and in the future as well, for what he sees as the crimes of their forefathers. If generations need to pay for sins of their fathers, would Ilaiah, based on the principle of parity, agree that Christians have to account for the cultural genocide they have unleashed world over – whether it was the brutal colonization of the Americas, or the Spanish inquisition, or the Goa Inquisition or the Rwandan genocide?

Every society has traditions and norms that have evolved through practical experience of trial and error. An excessive sense of victimhood can rob the youth of confidence and constructive energy, leading to anger and unreasonable expectations. Politicians, social scientists and social leaders have a responsibility to inspire right values in younger generations in order for them to grow into successful, well-adjusted citizens of the modern world. As a Shepherd, he should guide the nation for the betterment of humanity, but not so for him. He is but one, of a large group of individuals engaged deeply in undermining dharma and the national integrity of India. There are probably thousands like him, if not millions, funded and fed by the larger global Hinduphobic ecosystem, working round-the-clock like a well-oiled machine, intent on destabilizing India and fomenting discord among communities.¹³⁷ The authors hope that this critique of Kancha Ilaiah's scholarship goes some way in raising awareness amongst dharma-minded individuals and also to humanity at large.

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Notes

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12. (Ilaiah 2000b)
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15. (Ilaiah 2002:viii-viix)
16. (Ilaiah 2009:xxvi)
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21. (Ilaiah 2000a)

22. (Ilaiah 2015)
23. (Ilaiah 2002:xi)
24. (Ilaiah 2005)
25. “Institutes like IITs and IIMs should be closed down.” DNA India. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-institutes-like-iits-and-iims-should-be-closed-down-1023204>).
26. (Ilaiah 2000a)
27. It is a misconception that Hitler used the Swastika as the Nazi symbol, which is based on the Hakenkreuz or Hooked Cross, a Christian symbol. See: “World Hindu Council of America Initiative Urges New York Senate to Differentiate Between Swastika and the Nazi Hakenkreuz.” India New England News. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://indianewengland.com/2020/07/world-hindu-council-of-america-initiative-urges-new-york-senate-to-differentiate-between-swastika-and-the-nazi-hakenkreuz/>).
28. (Ilaiah 2005)
29. (Ilaiah 2005)
30. (Ilaiah 2016)
31. (Ilaiah 2000b)
32. Methodology and methods are interdependent but distinct ideas. While methodology deals with assumptions, principles and ethics, methods have more to do with specific techniques for data gathering, analysis and reporting. See (Neuman 2006:2)
33. (Ilaiah 2002:vi)
34. (Ilaiah 2020)
35. The only two explicit reference to India in the Bible are in Esther 1:1: and Esther 8:9.
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36. (Ilaiah 2002:97)
37. (Ilaiah 2002:76)

38. “Romila Thapar: ‘Who were the Aryans?’ is a less important question than what it meant to be ‘Aryan.’” Scroll.in. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://scroll.in/article/912945/romila-thapar-who-were-the-aryans-is-a-less-important-question-than-what-it-meant-to-be-aryan>).
39. (Ilaiah 2019b)
40. Ayyappan is a Hindu deity worshipped predominantly in southern India. The most prominent Ayyappan temple is at Sabarimala in Kerala, which in 2018 became the site of a heated and deeply divisive dispute between Hindu practitioners and traditionalists on the one hand and social justice activists on the other hand. For more details watch the video (Rajiv Malhotra Official 2018)
41. (Ilaiah 2019b)
42. (Ilaiah 2018c)
43. (Ilaiah 2002:75-76)
44. (Devi and Subrahmanyam 2014)
45. (O'Malley 1970:331)
46. “Were there any female authors in the Bible?” Grunge. Retrieved June 22, 2022 (<https://www.grunge.com/595583/most-impactful-women-of-the-bible/>).
47. See: (Fleischer 1981)
48. “Brahminical gods under caste scrutiny.” bangaloremirror.indiatimes.com. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (<https://bangaloremirror.indiatimes.com/opinion/views/brahminical-gods-under-caste-scrutiny/articleshow/52625856.cms>).
49. (Ilaiah 2002:77-78)
50. Modern studies suggest that a number of factors may have contributed to the collapse of the large urban centres of Harappan civilization:
 - *Climate change* – See for example: Marris, Emma. 2014. “Two-hundred-year drought doomed Indus Valley Civilization.” Nature. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.nature.com/articles/nature.2014.14800#b1>).
 - *Drying up of the Ghaggar-Hakra River* – See for example: “An Ancient Civilization, Upended by Climate Change.” The New York

- Times. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/an-ancient-civilization-upended-by-climate-change>).
- *Earthquakes* – See for example: Prasad, Manika and Amos Nur. 2001. “Tectonic Activity during the Harappan Civilization.” Retrieved October 16, 2021 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/253859373_Tectonic_Activity_during_the_Harappan_Civilization).
 - *Infectious diseases like leprosy and tuberculosis* – See for example: Schug et al. 2013. “Infection, Disease, and Biosocial Processes at the End of the Indus Civilization.” Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3866234>).
51. Elst, Koenraad. 1999. *Update on the Aryan Invasion Debate*. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://voibooks.bitbucket.io/ait/ch47>).
52. Hindu mantra texts are replete with different dhyana shlokas for different rupas of the same deity, and also how a deity is conceptualized and its associated iconography has been continuously evolving over the ages.
53. “Ashtalakshmi.” Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.artofliving.org/in-en/ashtalakshmi>).
54. *ghanṭāsūlahalāni śaṅkha musalē chakraṃ dhanuḥ sāyakaṃ hastābjairdhatīm ghanāntavilasach Chītāṃśutulyaprabhāṃ | gaurī dēha samudbhavāṃ trijagatāṃ ādhārabhūtāṃ mahā pūrvāmatra sarasvatī manubhajē śumbhādidaitiārđinīm* || - Dhyana Shloka: Devi Mahatmyam Ch 5
- For original Devanagari text see: “devI mAhAtmyam: pa~nchamodhyAyaH.” sanskrit.safire.com. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (<http://sanskrit.safire.com/pdf/DURGA700color.pdf>).
55. “Colonialism/Postcolonialism.” Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.routledge.com/ColonialismPostcolonialism/Loomba/p/book/9781138807181>).
56. This is a play on the Sanskrit word *vikhandan*, taken from the Hindi translation of *Breaking India* called *Bharat Vikhandan*. Vikhander is used here in the sense of one who breaks or destroys. See: (Malhotra 2014)
57. (Ilaiah 2002:viii-viix)
58. “OBCs form 41% of population: Survey.” Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/OBCs-form-41-of-population-Survey/articleshow/2328117.cms>).

59. (Ilaiah 2002:x-xi)
60. "Adivasis are not Hindus. Lazy colonial census gave them the label." Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://theprint.in/opinion/adivasis-are-not-hindus-lazy-colonial-census-gave-them-the-label/618051>).
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63. The below four Acts very clearly define the scope of Hinduism.
 - "The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955." High Court of Punjab and Haryana. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (https://highcourtchd.gov.in/hclsc/subpages/pdf_files/4.pdf).
 - "The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956." Tripura Commission for Women. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<http://tcw.nic.in/Acts/Hindu%20adoption%20and%20Maintenance%20Act.pdf>).
 - "Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956." National Commission for Protection of Child Rights. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (http://www.ncpcr.gov.in/view_file.php?fid=423).
 - "The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 (HSA)." National Commission for Women. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<http://ncwapps.nic.in/acts/TheHinduSuccessionAct1956.pdf>).
64. See *Introduction* of (Ilaiah 2002:x-xii)
65. (Ilaiah 2002:110)
66. (Ilaiah 2009:237)
67. (Ilaiah 2009:239)
68. "Why did Hinduism create the images of many Gods as against the universal ethic of mono-theism?" (Ilaiah 2002:71)
69. (Ilaiah 2016)
70. (Ilaiah 2009:182)
71. "If you see a snake and a Brahmin, kill the Brahmin first" – E V Ramaswamy Quoted from Barnett, Marguerite Ross. 2015. *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*. Princeton University Press. PP 71.

72. "Indians and Cows: A Complicated Bond." *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.newindianexpress.com/magazine/voices/2021/jul/11/indians-and-cowsa-complicated-bond-2327432.html>).
- See also: "Aurochs genetics, a cornerstone of European biodiversity." pp 8. *rewildingeurope.com*. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (https://rewildingeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Aurochs-genetics_summary_final.pdf<https://www.newindianexpress.com/magazine/voices/2021/jul/11/indians-and-cowsa-complicated-bond-2327432.html>).
73. (Malhotra and Neelakandan 2011)
74. (Sastri and Kalyanasundaram 2019:88)
75. "No evidence for warfare or invasion; Aryan migration too is a myth: B B Lal." *NewsGram*. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.newsgram.com/no-evidence-for-warfare-or-invasion-aryan-migration-too-is-a-myth-b-b-lal>).
76. See: Sengupta et al. (2005). "Polarity and Temporality of High-Resolution Y-Chromosome Distributions in India Identify Both Indigenous and Exogenous Expansions and Reveal Minor Genetic Influence of Central Asian Pastoralists." Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1380230/>).
- See also: Underhill et al. (2009). "Separating the post-Glacial coancestry of European and Asian Y chromosomes within haplogroup R1a." Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2987245/>).
- See also: Tamang and Thangaraj (2012). "Genomic view on the peopling of India." Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3514343/>)
77. (Narayanan 2019:19)
78. Trautmann, Thomas. 2005. *The Aryan Debate*. Oxford University Press See also: Bryant, Edwin. 2001. *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate*. Oxford University Press.
79. Staal, Frits. 1988. *Universals studies in Indian logic and linguistics*. University of Chicago Press. pp. 47.
80. Finger, Stanley. 2001. *Origins of Neuroscience: A History of Explorations Into Brain Function*, Oxford University Press, 66.

81. (Rajiv Malhotra Official 2017)
82. “FAQ: What is HIST series?” Infinity Foundation. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://infinityfoundation.com/faq/>)
83. (Ilaiah 2009:188)
84. For example in the popular the Guru stotram we see the following lines:

tsarvaśrutīśīroratnavirājita padāmbujaḥ | vedāntāmbujasūryoyaḥ tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ ||

Salutation to the noble Guru, whose lotus feet are radiant with (the luster of) the crest jewel of all Srutis and who is the sun that causes the Vedanta Lotus (knowledge) to blossom.

Another example is from the Bhāgavatam:

gurv-arthe tyakta-rājyo vyacarad anuvanam padma-padbhyām priyāyāḥ pāṇi-sparśākṣamābhyām mṛjita-patha rujo yo harīndrānujābhyām

To keep the promise of His father intact, Lord Rāmacandra immediately gave up the position of king and, accompanied by His wife, mother Sītā, wandered from one forest to another on His lotus feet, which were so delicate that they were unable to bear even the touch of Sītā’s palms. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.10.4)

85. For example, Adi Shankara’s teacher Govinda Bhagavatpada; in modern times, Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON.
86. For a detailed commentary on Paduka Puja and its spiritual significance see: “Sandals’ Splendor – Glory of Guru Padukas.” chinmayamission.com. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (<https://www.chinmayamission.com/sandals-splendor-glory-guru-padukas/>).
87. “Valmiki Ramayana: Ayodhya Kanda 113.” sanskritdocuments.org. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (https://sanskritdocuments.org/sites/valmikiramayan/ayodhya/sarga113/ayodhya_113_frame.htm).
88. *karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana mā karma-phala-heturbhūrmā te saṅgo ’stvakarmaṇi |* (Bhagavad Gita 2.47)
- You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.
89. (Ilaiah 2002:28)
90. (Ilaiah 2002:85)

91. In the *Hanuman Chalisa*, Hanuman is described to as *gyana-guna-sagara*, or ocean of wisdom and virtue. See: "Significance of Hanuman Chalisa." www.artofliving.org. Retrieved November 15, 2021 (<https://www.artofliving.org/in-en/hanuman/hanuman-chalisa-lyrics-meaning>).
- Hanuman is a knower of nine vyakaranas and is said to have learnt the shastras from Surya. See commentary of Swami Sivananda: "Hanuman." www.dlshq.org. Retrieved November 15, 2021 (<https://www.dlshq.org/religions/hanuman/>).
92. See (Manoharan 2020) on Periyar EV Ramasamy's appropriation of Ravana as a Dravidian hero who fights hegemonic Brahminical nationalistic narratives that celebrated Rama as an ideal.
93. (Ilaiah 2002:81)
94. (Ilaiah 2009:101)
95. *tvam etad adhārayaḥ kṛṣṇāsu rohiṇīṣu ca | paruṣṇīṣu ruṣat payaḥ ||* - Rg Veda 8.93.13
- English Translation - "It is you that keep this bright milk in the black, red, and spotted cows."
- "Rig Veda 8.93.13." www.wisdomlib.org. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/d/doc837112.html>).
96. "Yama: Hindu God." britannica.com. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yama-Hindu-god>).
97. There are more than one hundred references to *jihad* in the Koran. Some verses are explicit in their description of what all *jihad* entails. See: "164 Jihad Verses in the Koran." answering-islam.org. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (https://answering-islam.org/Quran/Themes/jihad_passages.html).
98. "63 Nayanmargal." pradosham.com. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (<http://www.pradosham.com/nayanmargal.php>).
99. Madabhushini Narasimhacharya. *Sri Ramanuja*. Sahitya Akademi, 2004. p. 11.
100. (Jha 1942:189-198)
101. (Ilaiah 2002:24)

102. (Dharampal 2000:29-30)
103. Traditionally these communities were involved in the disposal of corpses.
104. (Dharampal 2000:54)
105. (Ilaiah 2009:191)
106. See (Malhotra 2013:284-287) for a detailed explanation.
107. (Ilaiah 2009:73)
108. For example, pork is banned in Muslim countries. Horse-meat is banned in the US and UK.
109. Emissions from livestock make up fifteen percent of global emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide). See: "Rising meat consumption, climate change and pandemics: Untangling the multilevel connections." orfonline.org. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/rising-meat-consumption-climate-change-and-pandemics-untangling-the-multilevel-connections-68346>).
110. "A Vegan Diet: Eating for the Environment." pcrm.org. Retrieved October 28, 2021 (www.pcrm.org/good-nutrition/vegan-diet-environmen).
111. (Ilaiah 2002:40)
112. (Ilaiah 2002:16)
113. "Religious tolerance was advocated in Europe after centuries of wars between opposing denominations of Christianity, each claiming to be "the one true church" and persecuting followers of "false religions." Tolerance was a political "deal" arranged between enemies to quell the violence (a kind of cease-fire) without yielding any ground. Since it was not based on genuine respect for difference, it inevitably broke down.... I found that while most practitioners of dharma religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism) readily espouse mutual respect, there is considerable resistance from the Abrahamic faiths.... The idea of "mutual respect" poses a real challenge to Christianity, which insists that salvation is only possible by grace transmitted exclusively through Jesus. Indeed, Lutheran teaching stresses this exclusivity!" (Malhotra 2011)
114. Based on the list of questions in (Malhotra and Neelakandan 2011:188)
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117. (Natarajan 2010)
118. "Discrimination within the Church." The Hindu. Retrieved October 16, 2021 (<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/Discrimination-within-the-Church/article14388130.ece>).
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137. See (Malhotra and Neelakandan 2011) for details on how this Hinduphobic and anti-India ecosystem thrives and prospers with the tacit support of certain influential individuals and their foot-soldiers in academia, activism and different walks of life.