



UNTOUCHABILITY AND ELITIST ETHOS: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF BYAPARI'S *THE NEMESIS*

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Abstract

The present study examines the interplay of untouchability and elitist ethos within the caste-ridden socio-political landscape of India as presented in Byapari's (2023) novel The Nemesis. Byapari's autobiographical work, rooted in the lived experiences of Dalit communities, critiques systemic oppression, social hierarchies, and the cultural mechanisms that perpetuate exclusion and inequality. The study uses Weber's (1922/1978) and Ambedkar's (1936/2014) sociological criticism in explaining the way in which the novel characterizes dominant elitism as well as the dehumanizing nature of untouchability. The study offers a subaltern interpretation of the novel that identifies the nexus of three issues: the power, class, and caste and the way in which the voice of the subaltern counter-narrates the structural violence and the use of agency. The study reveals how The Nemesis challenges the entrenched hierarchies of caste and class, shedding light on the intricate mechanisms of social exclusion and the ways in which elitist ethos reinforces untouchability. By exploring the intersections of caste, class, and power, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the sociological implications of untouchability and the role of literature in challenging dominant ideologies. The findings of this study have significant implications for social justice, equality, and human rights, highlighting the need for continued resistance against the perpetuation of untouchability and elitist ethos in contemporary Indian society.

Keywords: Untouchability, Elitist Ethos, Caste System, Dalit Literature, Social Exclusion, Power Dynamics, Resistance, *The Nemesis*(2023)

1. Introduction

The India's centuries-old social stratification, the caste system, has ruled over the lives of millions for centuries, placing the Dalits untouchables. Despite Constitutional bans and progressive legislation, caste-based discrimination persists in subtle guises, ensuring systemic exclusion, economic deprivation, and cultural stigmatization. Untouchability dates back to the time of the Aryan invasion of India in about 1500 BC. The indigenous people were despised by them as being racially and culturally inferior. The term untouchability refers to a profoundly ingrained social practice in some countries, especially in relation to the Indian subcontinent. It speaks of the systematic marginalization and discrimination against some groups of people, formerly referred to as Dalits or Scheduled Castes, because of their alleged inferiority and lower social standing.

Untouchability is a deeply rooted social phenomenon in the Indian context and perpetuates exclusion and marginality of certain groups. The practice is enshrined within the spectrum of the caste system, where people are allocated their specific social hierarchies right from birth. In spite of constitutional provisions and legislative steps that create the way for the abolition of untouchability, it remains in existence in various forms. Untouchability includes not only physical touching but also social, economic, and cultural forms of exclusion of various



types (Deliege, 1999). Elitist ethos denotes those cultural and social values that ensure the domination of some groups over others (Bourdieu, 1986). In the case of India, the elitist ethos is very much connected to the caste ethos, in which it is the upper castes that most dominantly represent the cultural and social normalities (Ambedkar, 1936/2014). An elitist ethos is the one that values the constant reproduction of social exclusion because of the development of boundaries between groups and the legitimation of ruling and dominant groups over others. It means the elitist ethos, as reaffirmed through the practice of education, media, and cultural institutions in general, fosters dominant norms and values.

The present study captures these issues as present in *The Nemesis* by Manoranjan Byapari published in 2023. Byapari's *The Nemesis* (2023), a semi-autobiographical narrative, emerges as a searing critique of this enduring oppression, offering a visceral account of the intersections between untouchability and elitist ethos. Byapari elucidates aggressive dynamics of caste violence, psychological effects of internalized inferiority, and resilience of downtrodden communities through Jibon's life. *The Nemesis* deconstructs hypocrisy of India's socio-political life of castes in the novel and subverts dominant discourses of privilege and power. Re-configuring Dalit subjectivity, the novel disassembles caste apartheid stereotypes and constructs a new imagining of social justice for India today. The ritual ideology of impurity and purity which underpins the system of untouchability supports caste domination and exercises segregation in the guise of spatial, occupational, and symbolic violence. The life of Byapari graphically illustrates these facts: Dalit people are denied entry into temples, common amenities, and subjected to humiliating work, and their own humanity is appropriated by upper-caste privilege.

This denial has been explained by Ambedkar (1936/2014) and Bourdieu (1986) as structural violence, a routine denial of rights and dignity by hierarchized institutions. *The Nemesis* extends this thesis further in demonstrating how caste is not only very much present but also residual element in neoliberal elitism. Socio-political context of postcolonial Indian neoliberal economy and internal migration of the book offers the background against which one can illustrate how caste gets re-articulated to facilitate newer exploitation, grounded in historic prejudice and capitalist inequalities. This duplicity is the source of the paradox of development: in the midst of the era of globalization, caste continues to rip its social fabric apart so that the Dalits are perpetual outsiders in their homeland. Elitist ethos, the ideological and cultural machinery remapping to legitimize caste privilege, is what the novel attempts to turn on its head. Byapari describes how dominant castes appropriate religion, education, and the state to naturalize privilege, positioning Dalit insurgency in the universe of a desecration of social order. Such is the vision offered by *The Nemesis's* Brahminical elite, who summon moral worth narratives as they seek to make economic exploitation and cultural erasure more palatable. Weber's (1922/1978) symbolic power and place accounts for hierarchies are applicable here since the novel prescribes how caste elites employ social norms in attempting to continue dominating. For instance, upper-caste characters in the novel police Dalit mobility, weaponize language to humiliate, and co-opt state machinery to suppress dissent.

Byapari's (2023) portrayal of these dynamics challenges the myth of caste as a benign cultural tradition, reframing it as a violent ideology that thrives on dehumanization. Through this lens, the novel interrogates the complicity of institutions, from academia to media, in sanitizing caste oppression and silencing Dalit voices. Dalit writing, such as in *The Nemesis*, is a counter-hegemonic production that re-appropriates narrative subjectivity from the narratives of caste. The autobiographical mode of Byapari, heavy with raw immediacy, overcodes individual trauma and social memory to leave us with a richly textured Dalit resistance

narrative. Jibon, the protagonist of the novel, is precisely such a doubled figure: his struggle with identity, location and survivance forms the wider Dalit experience of living in an unfriendly universe. His transgressive act, educational, union, or cultural re-appropriation of pride, is one that is somehow subversive in its bid to reverse subaltern fatalism. That is going beyond expounding Guru's (2016) argument that Dalit literature resists epistemic violence in representing subaltern experience.

Byapari's (2023) work, steeped in urgency and moral clarity, compels readers to confront the ethical imperative of dismantling caste. This study employs a sociological lens, drawing on Weber's (1922/1978) perspective of power and Ambedkar's (1936/2014) critique on caste, to analyze how *The Nemesis* interrogates untouchability and elitist ethos. Through close textual analysis, it examines the novel's depiction of structural violence, the psychology of oppression, and the emancipatory potential of resistance. The study also engages with broader debates in Dalit studies, exploring how literature serves as both witness and catalyst in the fight for social justice. By situating Byapari's work within the canon of Indian Dalit fiction, the study underscores its contribution to global conversations on inequality, human rights, and decolonization.

1.1. Research Objectives

- To analyze the portrayal of untouchability and elitist ethos in the novel *The Nemesis* by Manoranjan Byapari
- To explore the socio-political context in which the novel is set, and its influence on the themes of untouchability and elitist ethos

1.2. Research Questions

- How does *The Nemesis* depict the experiences of untouchability and elitist ethos through its characters and plot?
- In what ways does the socio-political backdrop of the novel *The Nemesis* influence the manifestation of untouchability and elitist ethos?

2. Literature Review

The India's caste system, the stratified social hierarchy derived from prehistoric Brahminical scripture, has long been a preoccupation of sociologists. Weber (1922/1978) explained caste as a strict order of status that legitimized social stratification by religious rationale and occupational segregation. Weber's account talked of how the caste acted as a closed system limiting mobility and reinforcing inequality through the vehicle of ritual purity norms. Thereupon, Ambedkar (1936/2014) decried caste as an apparatus of violence and claimed that untouchability, keeping people out of social, economic, and religious life, was the essence of Brahminical exploitation. Ambedkar's (1936/2014) classic, *Annihilation of Caste*, positioned untouchability not only as a social curse but as a political instrument of hegemony to keep out Dalits from being human and citizens. These initial theories encapsulate caste's twin character as cultural legacy and means of domination, a duality that continues to serve as the root of modern-day controversies (Deliege, 1999). Post-colonial India saw the continuation of caste discrimination despite constitutional safeguarding prompting critical examination.

Reinforcement of caste in contemporary institutions refers to the inability of liberal reforms to eliminate structural inequalities. Even more recent studies indicate the manner in which neoliberal policies trigger caste inequalities in the disguise of contract labor and privatization and thereby further intensify Dalit economic insecurity. The caste system thus remains an ever-evolving, dynamic system of oppression, the fruits of which cannot be rectified by surface-level legal remedies. Dalit literature, as a counter-narrative to Brahminical



hegemony, has been in the vanguard of chronicling caste violence and empowerment. Valmiki's (1997) autobiographical *Joothan: A Dalit's life* and Bama's (2000) *Karukku* laid the groundwork for this genre, foregrounding Dalit lived experiences through raw, unflinching prose.

Ganguly (2009) described that in the last 20 years, Dalit life stories have become more popular due to the Dalits' growing public profile in India and their loud calls for a more equitable political and social structure. This can be usefully placed not only in the current global context of the spread of stories and witness accounts of human rights violations in other countries, but also in the context of a developing discourse in the Indian public sphere about the nature of Dalit personhood, a concept that is far more nuanced than legal subjectivity and abstract citizenship. Kumar (2015) brings to the fore the manner in which modernity is nourished by untouchability in the form of insidious practices such as digital apartheid, residential segregation, and differential discrimination at work. Urban migration, for example, has been read as an escape from caste rule but aids in replicating caste rule in the city, too, with Dalits confined to slums and jobs in the informal economy.

Pap (2020) described that the term Dalit has multiple implications and sub-textual layers that it tries to convey. It is a socio-political and culturally aware term. The Dalits in Bengal have been classified as sub-subaltern. Despite going through multiple dramatic upheavals, Bengal has, strangely, developed a kind of hidden apartheid around the caste issue. In terms of literary productions, the Dalit issue has hardly been addressed by any scholarly endeavor here. The literary practices of the Dalits date back almost a century, but it wasn't until the end of the 20th century that they began to take proactive steps and develop into full-fledged forms in the 21st century. Dalits in Bengal are the victims of exclusionary politics throughout history and social discourse, unlike those in Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, and Punjab. The meta narratives created thus far have also fallen short in presenting Dalits in prominent positions and statures.

These works challenge the erasure of Dalit voices in mainstream literature and academia, a form of epistemicide (Guru & Sarukkai, 2019). Byapari's *The Nemesis* (2023) extends this tradition, blending personal trauma with collective resistance. His portrayal of Dalit protagonists navigating urban exploitation and rural caste violence critiques the intersection of caste and class in neoliberal India. Scholars like Ganguly (2009) argue that Dalit literature disrupts dominant historiographies by centering subaltern perspectives, transforming individual suffering into a collective political statement. This literature not only documents oppression but also re-imagines resistance, as seen in Jibon's defiance in *The Nemesis* against dehumanizing labor conditions. Byapari's work, particularly *The Nemesis*, has been analyzed through the lens of critical sociology and Dalit studies.

Sengupta (2019) explains how the Byapari narrative challenges the elitist culture present within urban life, in which caste privilege masquerades as meritocracy. The step-by-step transition of the protagonist from rural marginalization towards urban activism traces the bigger Dalit struggle for visibility within upper-caste-dominated areas. These studies bring forward *The Nemesis* as a sociological work that mediates between literary fantasy and empirical fact, providing evidence of the flexibility of caste to modernity. Lastly, more recent studies deal with the transnational use of caste and untouchability by transnational diasporic and diasporic groups. Rao (2020) maintains that caste discrimination still exists in Indian diaspora and therefore it is difficult to construct multicultural inclusivity narratives. Byapari suggests direction via the representation of characters within transnational labor markets where race, caste, and migrant positionality overlap in *The Nemesis*. All of these reviews provide



enough gap to critically analyze *The Nemesis* using Weber's (1922/1978) & Ambedkar's (1936/2014) sociological views about Dalit community.

3. Theoretical Framework

Weber's (1922/1978) concept of rationalization, the shift from traditional value systems to impersonal bureaucratic efficiency, helps explaining how caste oppression is institutionalized under the guise of procedural neutrality. His concept of *verstehen* or interpretive understanding permits a sensitive analysis of how subaltern figures internalize and subvert structural injustice, uncovering the irony of modernity: though it envisions progress, its bureaucracies frequently intensify hierarchies. The novel satirizes judicial and administrative regimes that validate caste violence in the guise of rationality, confirming Weber's thesis that contemporary institutions are instruments of domination not liberation. His conception of the 'iron cage' of bureaucracy further illuminates the dehumanizing consequences of institutionalized power, as individuals in *The Nemesis* are stuck in a cycle of disempowerment despite the avowed neutrality of system structures. Ambedkar's (1936/2014) *Annihilation of Caste* offers a seminal critique of the Hindu social order, contending that caste is not just a division of labor but a division of laborers, perpetrated by religious sanction and graded inequality.

His contention that caste is the 'very negation of democracy' is shared in the novel's description of systemic dehumanization, where Dalit characters are subject to violence and exclusion under a repressive hierarchy. Ambedkar's focus on education, political mobilization, and aggressive resistance also resonates with the struggle of the protagonist in *The Nemesis*, in which defiance and claims for dignity are methods for confronting systemic oppression. The novel's representation of Dalit resistance tracks Ambedkar's understanding of collective action as a strategy for overturning caste hegemony, validating his contention that emancipation depends on structural change as well as subaltern assertion. Byapari's narrative thus serves as a literary extension of Ambedkar's critique, exposing caste not just as a social hierarchy but as a mechanism of structural violence. The elitist ethos theory further complements this analysis by critiquing the concentration of power among privileged groups who control wealth, education, and institutional roles. In *The Nemesis*, ruling elites reproduce inequality in the guise of meritocracy, employing institutions to legitimate their dominance while keeping subaltern voices at bay.

The novel lays bare how elite dominance perpetuates caste and class hierarchies, laying bare the illusion of claims of meritocracy that conceal systemic exclusion. This view highlights the play among power, caste, and class, projecting how institutional framework reenacts oppression and not justice. By combining these theories, the research presents a subaltern analysis of *The Nemesis*, emphasizing how subaltern characters perform counter-narratives to address structural violence. Their resistance in terms of defiance, solidarity, or restoring dignity shows the conflict between systemic oppression and subaltern agency, confirming the necessity of transformative social justice. Collectively, Weber's bureaucratic rationalization, Ambedkar's anti-caste analysis, and elitist theory offer a complete framework to examine the novel's engagement with power, dehumanization, and resistance.

4. Textual Analysis

4.1 The Portrayal of Untouchability in *The Nemesis*

Byapari's *The Nemesis* presents a profound exploration of caste-based oppression, interrogating its systemic entrenchment through the theoretical frameworks of Weber's bureaucratic rationalization and Ambedkar's anti-caste critique. The novel's protagonist articulates the inescapable nature of caste subjugation with the lament, "The weight of my caste



hung heavy upon my shoulders, a burden I could never shake off” (Byapari, 2023, p. 66). This sentiment encapsulates Weber’s (1922/1978) concept of rationalized domination, wherein caste hierarchies are perpetuated under the veneer of social order and tradition. The exclusion of Dalits from public institutions temples, schools, and wells exemplifies how modernity’s bureaucratic systems, far from dismantling oppression, institutionalize it through seemingly neutral mechanisms. Weber’s ‘iron cage’ metaphor finds stark resonance here, as the protagonist’s lived reality reflects how rationalized structures deepen inequality rather than mitigate it, rendering legal prohibitions against caste discrimination ineffective in practice. The novel thus challenges the myth of progress, revealing how ostensibly emancipatory systems often replicate the very hierarchies they claim to dismantle.

Ambedkar’s (1936/2014) critique of caste as a religiously sanctioned system of exploitation is central to understanding the novel’s depiction of Brahminical hegemony. This is starkly illustrated when the priest declares, “You are a Chamar, a scavenger, a defiler of sacred spaces” (Byapari, 2023, p. 25), a statement that lays bare the dehumanizing logic of purity and pollution underpinning caste. Ambedkar’s argument that caste operates as a division of laborers, is vividly embodied in the novel’s portrayal of Dalit labor as both economically exploitative and socially stigmatized. The protagonist’s eventual rejection of shame that he is a charmer, but he is not ashamed, signals a rupture in this ideological apparatus, aligning with Ambedkar’s vision of resistance through self-reclamation and collective solidarity. Byapari thus not only critiques caste’s material dimensions but also underscores its psychological violence, illustrating how liberation necessitates both structural and epistemic defiance.

The economic foundations of untouchability are further exposed through the novel’s depiction of Dalit labor as cyclical and unrewarding. The line, “We worked all day, yet hunger gnawed at our insides” (Byapari, 2023, p. 37), poignantly captures the paradox of productive labor met with perpetual deprivation, reinforcing Ambedkar’s thesis that caste is a mechanism of material oppression. This exploitation is sustained by institutional collusion, as elites wield control over the police, the courts, and the politicians in their pockets, a dynamic Weber would attribute to the rationalization of power under bureaucratic capitalism. The novel’s critique extends to the internalization of oppression among the subjugated, exemplified by the resigned acceptance of crumbs that fell from their tables, a phrase that lays bare the psychological grip of caste hegemony. Yet, the narrative also gestures toward resistance, particularly through education, as Sankar’s literacy becomes a threat to the Brahmins’ power, affirming Ambedkar’s emphasis on knowledge as a tool of emancipation.

Intersectional oppression emerges as a critical theme, particularly in the gendered exploitation of Dalit women. The metaphor “Ma says girls grow as fast as banana palms” (Byapari, 2023, p. 65) underscores how caste and gender intersect to accelerate cycles of violence and precarity. The novel’s resolution, however, pivots toward hope, with the protagonist envisioning a casteless future and Sankar’s words igniting the fire of revolt. This aligns with Ambedkar’s utopianism and Belsey’s (2013) conception of literature as a site of ideological struggle, positioning *The Nemesis* as both a critique of structural violence and a manifesto for subaltern resistance. Byapari’s (2023) narrative transcends despair, positioning literature as a weapon of resistance:

Our stories remained untold, relegated to the margins of history, but within us burned the flame of resistance. Babua was usually quite cheerful, but for some reason...he suddenly said, "Let's say I die, let's say a bullet hits me on the chest After all, every day, someone or the other, known or unknown, dies The that.

There's no certainty that I won't die the same way today or tomorrow Nanu responded, None of us has the certainty. (p.145)

In *The Nemesis*, Byapari introduces untouchability not just as social exclusion but as a ubiquitous regime of psychological and physical violence that suffuses all dimensions of Dalit life. The chilling portrayal in the novel "As an untouchable, I was born to serve; as an untouchable, I was destined to be shackled by the chains of caste for all eternity" (Byapari, 2023, p. 15), exposes how caste works as a social determinism, resonating with Ambedkar's (1936/2014) theory of caste intended to place people in hierarchical positions forever. The observation of the protagonist is "Even in death, we are denied dignity, relegated to separate burial grounds" (Byapari, 2023, p. 78), illustrates how untouchability takes its dehumanizing logic beyond life itself, institutionalizing taboos that continue through generations.

Weber's (1922/1978) views how this system sustains itself in terms of rationalized structures of domination. The geographical segregation of Dalits-their exclusion from cremation grounds, wells, and temples-is what Weber would call the 'routinization' of caste discrimination into ordinary practices. These systems of exclusion are legitimized by religious sanction "You are a Chamar, a violator of sacred spaces"; (Byapari, 2023, p. 25), showing how classic authority gets institutionalized into so-called immutable social laws. The novel's depiction of untouchability thus fits Weber's explanation of how certain groups preserve privilege by monopolizing access to social as well as sacred spaces.

However, *The Nemesis* at the same time uncovers the contradictions within this system through acts of resistance. The ultimate statement of the protagonist that "I am a Chamar, but I am not ashamed" (Byapari, 2023, p. 120) is the turning point when internalized oppression yields to identity assertion, reflecting Ambedkar's philosophy of caste eradication through emancipation from within. This shift is what Ambedkar described as the first step towards deconstructing caste, the rejection of its ideational roots in the minds of the oppressed. The novel's analysis of untouchability proves to be critique, laying bare the horrors of caste while confirming the possibility of its transcendence by collective awareness and action.

The Nemesis reveals the internal contradictions in caste oppression through the actions of its protagonist, who subverts the ideologically built-in stability of the system. The refusal of the protagonist to do degrading work like the symbolic rejection of scavenging is an echo of Ambedkar's statement that caste hierarchies are dependent on the willingness of the oppressed. Byapari enacts this tension when the protagonist confronts a dominant-caste employer openly, saying, "I will starve but not eat your leftovers" (Byapari, 2023, p. 45), an instance that shatters the normalized order. These acts of transgression, while small in themselves, build on one another in ways that Gramsci would call a 'war of position,' eating away at caste's legitimacy from the inside. The climactic assertion "I am a Chamar, but I am not ashamed" (Byapari, 2023, p. 120) embodies Fanonian self-reclamation, in which internalized shame is replaced by collective pride.

The novel frames identity not as a static label but as a political act paralleling Dalit feminist critiques that link caste to gendered oppression. Byapari's protagonist embodies what Gopal Guru terms dalit subjectivity, where self-definition becomes a tool against epistemic violence. The dual role of the novel as critique and manifesto is seen in its pairing of brutality (e.g., lynching scenes) with utopian solidarity among oppressed communities. The ultimate allyship of landless laborers by the protagonist "We are not your beasts" (Byapari, 2023, p. 180) resonates with Ambedkar's vision of Bahishkrit Bharat (Excluded India) as a counter-public.

4.2 Elitist Ethos in *The Nemesis*

In *The Nemesis*, Byapari exposes elitist ideology as a complex system of power preservation that merges traditional caste hierarchies with colonial structures of domination. Weber's (1922/1978) theory of rationalization helps unpacking how the Brahminical elite in the novel maintain control, as evidenced by the protagonist's observation: "The Brahmins and the Baidyas, they were the rulers of us" (Byapari, 2023, p. 23). This religious authority transforms into a bureaucratic apparatus of oppression, manifesting in practices of spatial segregation and ritual exclusion that Weber would identify as institutionalized status-group privilege. The novel particularly highlights this through the enforced prohibition as they were not allowed inside the temple, demonstrating how sacred spaces become tools of social control. These mechanisms align with what Ambedkar (1936/2014) termed 'traditional domination' (p. 47), where caste norms acquire sacred inviolability, creating what he described as a system of 'graded inequality (p. 47) a pyramidal structure of oppression where each caste group perpetuates hierarchy upon those below it.

Ambedkar's (1936/2014) view lays bare the economic aspects of this elitist ethos. The complicity of the British colonial government "The British sahibs didn't care about us" (p. 67), reflects Ambedkar's critique of how power systems appropriate caste for domination. The novel illustrates how colonial modernity did not destroy but bureaucratized caste domination, producing what Weber could term a 'patrimonial bureaucracy' in which upper castes were intermediaries. This blending of native and colonial power resulted in what the protagonist recognizes as systemic poison "The caste system is a curse" (p. 50), wherein elitism becomes both religiously sanctioned and administratively practiced.

The lines "We were fighting for our rights, for our dignity" (p. 120), posits this elitist culture through what Ambedkar envisioned it as education and political mobilization. The character's transmutation from victim to revolutionist realizes Ambedkar's vision for the eradication of caste hierarchy through deliberate abandonment of its ideological underpinnings. Byapari; thereby, offers elitist ethos not as cultural heritage but as what Weber would classify as a rationalized system of exclusion, sustained by both sacred taboo and colonial-era bureaucratic habits, but susceptible to being countered through collective insistence on Dalit agency.

Social and economic disparity has been a universal theme, strikingly inscribed in the socio-political context of *Nemesis*. There are vast social and economic differences between the higher castes and the lower castes; the latter are poverty-stricken, illiterates, and hence marginalized. Due to his birth in a lower caste, the protagonist, a Dalit, is discriminated against and oppressed by individuals of higher castes. It is a denial of employment, education, healthcare, and a life above poverty. The elitist culture depicted in *The Nemesis* represents a pernicious convergence of caste stratification, colonial capitalism, and religious legitimation, forming what Weber (1922/1978) would identify as a 'closed status group' that monopolizes both economic and sacred capital. This systemic oppression is vividly captured in the protagonist's account: "We were not allowed to go inside the temple, we were not allowed to touch the holy water" (Byapari, 2023, p. 45). This dual exclusion exemplifies Ambedkar's (1936/2014) conceptualization of caste as simultaneously an economic and ideological apparatus. The mechanism of what Weber termed 'social closure' becomes evident as Brahminical elites convert religious purity into economic privilege, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of dispossession that the novel starkly portrays: "The rich get richer, the poor get poorer" (Byapari, 2023, p. 78).

Ambedkar's framework reveals how this elitist system employs Hindu scripture as ideological justification for exploitation, as seen when characters observe: "They used the scriptures to justify their cruelty" (Byapari, 2023, p. 50). This religious sanction serves to naturalize what is fundamentally an economic system of labor oppression. The protagonist's political awakening, encapsulated in the declaration "We were fighting for existence itself" (Byapari, 2023, p. 120), embodies Ambedkar's insistence that caste eradication requires both material struggle and ideological confrontation with religious orthodoxy. The novel thus exposes elitism as a dual system: it employs spiritual authority to validate economic oppression while utilizing material power to enforce religious dominance.

A Weberian analysis of patrimonial bureaucracy helps illuminating colonial complicity in sustaining this structure. British rule's alliance with upper castes created what Weber might characterize as a 'hybrid domination', where traditional caste privilege merged with colonial capitalism to produce extreme inequality. The protagonist's journey from oppression to revolutionary consciousness reflects Ambedkar's vision of education and political awakening as tools to dismantle this entrenched elitist order. The resistance depicted in *The Nemesis* emerges as a direct challenge to elitist culture permeating both historical caste hierarchy and colonial power structures. Weber's (1922/1978) theory of domination provides insight into the protagonist's transformation from oppressed victim to revolutionary, as evidenced by his assertion: "We were not fighting for independence, we were fighting for existence itself" (Byapari, 2023, p. 120). This represents a fundamental rupture in the legitimacy of caste-based authority. The novel demonstrates how Brahminical elite dominance, maintained through religious justification and economic control, constitutes what Weber would classify as 'traditional domination,' where inequality is sanctified as divinely ordained.

Ambedkar's (1936/2014) views the revolutionary potential within this resistance. The political awakening inspired by figures like Gandhi and Bhagat Singh echoes Ambedkar's conviction that caste oppression demands not merely religious reform but radical revolution. The protagonist's odyssey mirrors Ambedkar's dual strategy of ideological critique and political mobilization against what he termed 'graded inequality' (p. 47). When the novel's characters engage in civil disobedience and armed resistance, they actualize Ambedkar's vision of destroying caste through direct confrontation with its institutional foundations.

The novel *The Nemesis* lays bare the vulnerability of caste hierarchy by acts of resistance that deconstruct what Weber called the status honor of ruling castes their socially imposed prestige. For example, when the protagonist denies performing ritualized toil, stating, "I will starve but not eat your leftovers" (Byapari, 2023, p. 45), the action undermines the Brahminical purity-pollution concept that is crucial for caste-based labor exploitation. This is echoed by Ambedkar's own critique in *Annihilation of Caste*, where he asserts that caste exists on the basis of 'graded inequality' and not merit, making it always unstable when faced with group resistance. The novel's portrayal of non-cooperation like boycotting segregated wells follows Ambedkar's work where Dalits reasserted public resources taken away from them, undermining elitist myth of innate superiority.

The story discloses that internalized oppression maintains caste dominance until times of collective awakening. A turning moment scene shows a Dalit character's epiphany: "We are not your beasts" (Byapari, 2023, p. 180), a rejection of dehumanization enshrined in texts such as the Manusmriti. This connects with Ambedkar's reading in castes in India, where he recognizes endogamy as the mechanism of enforcing caste boundaries, commenting that its breakdown would disentangle the system's logic. The novel's depiction of military opposition—e.g., armed rebellions against caste violence—corresponds to Ambedkar's later



call for Dalit self-defense, which he explicated in his 1942 speech: 'Political power is the key to all social progress'. Such acts uncover the system's dependence on submission; when rebellion takes over from submission, the elitist structure collapses. The peak of *The Nemesis* the hero's pronouncement, "I am a Chamar, but I am not ashamed" (Byapari, 2023, p. 120) illustrates Ambedkar's vision of 'manuski', dignity of human beings.

The novel's conclusion, in which characters form solidarity between sub-castes, is a testament to Ambedkar's insistence that caste annihilation demands the erasure of 'graded inequality' by way of unity for the oppressed. By presenting resistance as both negation (of caste norms) and affirmation (of person-hood), *The Nemesis* actualizes Ambedkar's revolutionary thesis: "A just society is not built on the ruins of human dignity" (p. 89). The elitist ideal gets its strongest challenge in these acts of rebellion, which unveil the vulnerability of a system built on internalized oppression. The novel's portrayal of resistance, from non-cooperation to military struggle, illustrates how the subaltern can disrupt what Weber would refer to as the 'status honor' of ruling castes. To sum up, *The Nemesis* shows resistance as both negation of elitist prerogatives and assertion of Dalit humanness, in accord with Ambedkar's revolutionary vision that real equality entails the total destruction of elitism based on caste.

5. Conclusion

Byapari's *The Nemesis* emerges as a profound sociological critique of the enduring structures of caste-based oppression and elitist hegemony in Indian society. Through the protagonist Jiban's navigation of hostile literary circles dominated by upper-caste gatekeepers, the narrative lays bare the insidious mechanisms of social exclusion, cultural appropriation, and symbolic violence that perpetuate caste hierarchies despite constitutional prohibitions. The account accurately identifies internalization of oppression in subordinated groups showing self-downing inclination and tension. While Jiban's opposition to elitist culture by artists like Srijata, indicates how the overlap of caste and class naturalizes power disparities through locations claiming to defy intellectual and cultural advancement. Byapari's autobiographical work, rooted in the lived experiences of Dalit communities, critiques systemic oppression, social hierarchies, and the cultural mechanisms that perpetuate exclusion and inequality. By exploring the intersections of caste, class, and power, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the sociological implications of untouchability and the role of literature in challenging dominant ideologies. Byapari's work stands as a testament to the transformative power of storytelling not merely as a reflection of society but as a revolutionary force capable of envisioning and enacting a more equitable world.

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