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EDGE OF ENDURANCE A STUDY OF SHARAN KUMAR LIMBALE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
*THE OUTCASTE*

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Abstract

The label marginalisation is an acculturated term that can be recognised in numerous extents. A group of individuals belonging to one segment circle reliant upon their profession and occupation are omitted from the mainstream conducts of the society, and are considered as marginalised people. They reside at the outer edge of society which weighs down their socio-economic and cultural existence. Marginalization is the harassment and prohibition practiced by a group, consequential from an injustice of domination of possessions and power structure inside the society. The majority culture in India advanced about Savarna discourses nurtured by the caste system. Caste dogmas were magnificently employed to determine Brahminic supremacy and dalit expressions were referred to as the 'other'. Sharankumar Limbale's autobiography *The Outcaste* criticises the hegemonic caste system that authorizes operations of the Mahar community in Maharashtra. It chronicles the biographer's proclamation from an illegitimate child to a well-recognized writer, as a voyage from 'negative consciousness' to a fully grown-up 'dalit consciousness'. This study concentrates on Limbale's enrolment in protest and portrayal of socio-cultural life of the Mahars from the Gramscian approach to comprehend the dalit cultural stratagem of struggle and rebellion of the 'mainstream' culture.

Keywords: Dalit, Hegemony, Brahminism, Exploitation, Subaltern

One of the utmost prevalent descriptions of the post-modernist epoch was the inauguration of literatures of the outcast, as a chief literary dynamism. The expression 'Dalit' connotes the downtrodden. The unruffled works which is involved to the socially under privileged and which affirms socio-political reputation of the underdogs, is acknowledged by this name. The Dalit movement was in full drift in Marathi, Gujarati and Kannada literature by writers under the assistance of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.1950's literature of social realism turns

out to be a prevailing attribute in Modern-day literature. It was an extension of the advancing literature of the 1930's and 1940's, but categorically more literature by revolutionary and radical in its attitude. Literature, then stimulated to the subjugated and to the oppressed. In the scholarly Indian phenomenon, post modernism turns up as a response to media- manoeuvred and market-channelled realism; feedback to the modernism of the sixties of the existential agony, of the difficulty of identity and of the disturbance of the idealist, but

it permitted with it the tendency of progressive literature of protest and objection. Nowadays calamity in India is the variance between pragmatism and pervasiveness, and as a consequence, a considerable number of authors are in the practice of recognizing a configuration of problem-solving inside the traditional system, enthusiastic sufficient to engender and endure an indigenous administer of modernisation, which does not demand handy external resolutions, and is in bestow with original requirements and attitudes.

The Outcaste is an assessment of Dalit existence as an untouchable and low caste. Sharankumar Limbale authenticates the hypothesis of Dalit identity which absolutely controlled by the caste system in India. The Outcaste discourses the anxieties of Dalit society where their caste moulds their destiny. The low castes are abused and considered as untouchables and demolishes their life to deprivation. It deciphers the Dalit practises and manifestations who are ignored by the prevalent classes of the society. Limbale communicates his anguish over his shattered identity dishonoured as half-caste born to an untouchable Mahar mother and high caste Patil father.

Dalit literature introduces familiarizes a new world of tradition in literature; expands the extent of articulations and abuses the capability of the language of the untouchables and underprivileged masses. The Department of English at the University of Pune coordinated Dalit and African American literature in a subject designated 'Literature of Protests'. Also, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi has acknowledged the favour for a proficient chair in Dalit studies from the Ford Foundation. The syllabus curriculum of the Telugu non-compulsory paper for the UPSC exam has 'Dalit Literature' as one of the indispensable parts of study. Professor Gangadhar Pantawane declares that, "To me Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, soul and Holy books, teaching separatism, Fate and Heaven because they have made him a slave he does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution" (Pradeep 53). It is apparent that the grievance of social

stability and the control of Hindu religion are the causes behind the emergence occurrence of Dalit writings. As every single writing is the spontaneous flow of consideration.

Dalit authors belong to a literal, social, historical and political contingent that ranges throughout India from Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh to Punjab. It might be assumed that Dalit literature managed to achieve an established foundation within the mid-twentieth century, but its feature was authenticated in the early nineteenth century. moment, Dalit pens bear their own erudite foundations and publish several journals. They too have a number of political associations. The most prominent association is 'Dalit panthers' movement, which has espoused much of its studies from America 's Black panthers' movement, begun in 1970s. Dalit Literature, a literature about the Dalits, the tyrannized class underneath Indian estate system forms an important and distinct part of Indian Literature. It arose into elevation and as a collaborative voice after 1960, starting with Marathi and soon appeared in Hindi, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil languages, over through tone- narratives, like runes, short stories and most importantly autobiographies known for their practicality and for its donation to Dalit politics.

Madara Chennaiah, an eleventh century cobbler saint who lived in the administration of Western Chalukyas was one of the first Dalit penning down the atrocities of dalits, also considered as the 'Father of Vachana Poetry'. When the first meeting of 'Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha' (Maharashtra Dalit Literature Society) had in Mumbai, a progressive movement steered by social thinkers like Jyotirao Phule and B. R. Ambedkar. Although Dalit notation in Indian languages has flourished for several decades, the shift to English is recent. Chandra Bhan Prasad, an intelligencer is rightly directed out that English is the medium to connect Dalits of India. His Dalit Diary, a collection of columns written for an English review, sold out within six months of its publication, as it reveals the scale of Hindu society. Harijans is the term used by Mahatma Gandhi which is meant by 'Children of God' but, deposited in lowest social status. In the history, the Harijans suffered from social separateness and

limitations in count to extreme poverty. They were not allowed into the temple to worship God with others, nor use the same resource what others use. Social discrimination developed among the Harijans and groups of Harijans. They must not interact with lower- order Bhangis, who were described as outcaste.

As stated by the Victor Premasagar, the term Dalit articulates the weakness, partiality, poverty, oppression and humiliation in the administration of the upper castes in the Indian society. The National Commission for Scheduled Caste, observing that the term Dalit was used trading with the official word Scheduled Castes, called the word Unconstitutional and inquired State Governments to end its usage in 2008. After the order, Chhattisgarh Government stopped the official use of the term 'Dalit'. The Cambridge dictionary describes the word 'marginalie' as to treat someone or something as if they are not important'. The marginalised people feel insecure due to their alienation from the society which leads to social unrest in the livelihood. The ostracized sections of the society are barred to exercise the power in the society.

In Maharashtra dalit literature become apparent as a protest against the 'mainstream' literature. Limbale states in the book *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature*, "Ancient and modern Marathi literatures do not portray the actual life and struggle of the Marathi people: rather, they reflect the influence of the erotic and romantic aspects of Sanskrit and English literatures" (Limbale, 26). Search for identity has been one of the principal intentions in dalit literatures. Laura R. Brueck put forth views in this consideration: "Since its origin as a modern form of social resistance literature in Maharashtra in the 1970s, Dalit literature has been principally concerned with community identity formation" (R. Brueck, 151).

Limbale's autobiographical novel depicts his pitiable position of not having an identity, a home, place in family and society to be appropriate. High caste society considers his community as untouchables, whereas his own community disgraced him by labelling him 'akkarmashi'. Limbale

felt like shrouding his identity similar to a piece of leprosy. He admits, "I was a split and lost personality as far as town, language, mother and father, caste, and religion are concerned" (Limbale, 6). Though, the autobiography terminates with his proclamation and records his deep-seated protest and struggle in forbearing the denouncing identity of a bastard and low caste Mahar forced imposed and misappropriated by the Hindu texts.

Limbale's choice of the title 'akkarmashi', means 'bastard' or 'illegitimate child' is veritably emblematic of his plight. The author summons up his childhood days of never-ending poverty as a dalit surviving in the Maharwada community. The condition was similar that people of his estate were forced steal, supplicate, sort grain from soil, cost dead creatures and eat them in order to assuage their hunger. The narrator cites multiple incidents of people suffering from hunger, no way set up in Indian literature ahead. The author's eating discarded peels of bananas collected from the request ground design is one of the true filmland of dalit mourning. Limbale's mother Masami's comment, "Leftover food is nectar" (Limbale, 3), and the author's use of unfamiliar imagery, "My stomach was like a way to the graveyard that continuously swallows the deads" (Limbale, 2). It gives the impression extraordinarily out of the way truth of dalit dilemma.

Dalits- subalterns- are sufferers of upper caste domination that establishes their economic manipulations. Rajni Kothari notices in the introduction to her book entitled *Caste in Indian Politics*, that is "When villagers were more or less locked into their traditional occupations, those from the lower status groups were entangled in the material relationship of dependency upon prosperous castes of higher castes" (Kothari, XXVI). The Mahars were victims of economic exploitation by the upper castes. Their displacement from the centre of the village appears a strategy to deprive them of material facilities and drive them to menial professions. They were destined with an agreement termed 'padewarki', or 'baluta', which means working on an annual agreement and receiving grains with the least cash return. Ithal Kamble, who work like a dog on Hanumant Limbale's farm, was

given a poor salary of only seven or eight hundred rupees a year. Santamai cleaned the village street, went more or less begging, and often massaged the bulgy stomachs of the pregnant woman to make her livelihood. Whenever an animal died in the village, its possessor came to the 'Maharwada', to summon to take away the carcass of the animal with the only payment of the hide.

Limbale's mother Masamai was a sufferer of foul village politics. To be born good-looking and beautiful amongst the Mahars is a misfortune or one can say a curse. Both Chandamai and Masamai were manipulated sexually by the high-caste village Patils. Hanumanth Limbale schemed with the 'Caste Council' to divorce Masami from her husband, her breastfeeding babies and finally compelled her to be his keep. Constrained by the cobweb of caste ideology Masami's husband Ithal Kamble couldn't safeguard his companion. The author manifests, "The upper caste men in every village had made whores of the wives of Dalit from labourers and Masamai was one among them" (Limbale, 37). Pushing one out of work was very common in society. When Ram became the Sarpanch of the village, he begun making decisions in contradiction to the dalits. He removed Dada from commencing his work and assigned his own persons instead. After the loss of his job, dada turns into an alcoholic and violent.

The dominance of the upper castes founded by the establishment of caste faces challenges because of the functioning of hegemony. The Mahars admitted their harassment as the inevitability of destiny and learned to adopt their discrimination. They lived in the turmoil of society and were barely aware of their rights. The author himself once received a rebuke from his family members for protesting Patil's son's sexual liaison with Negi, his sister. The abuse of dalit women in the hands of Patils was believed as legitimate, appropriate, and normal. Girls from dalit Mahar families were often offered in the service of the temple. Such girls were known as Devdasi, which means maidservant of God. Devdasis were over and over again subjected to sexual harassment by the preachers. The babies born to the Devdasis were believed to be impure and were constrained to

survive on begging. Limbale's rollcall of protest in the autobiography reads as, "What sort of life had she been living, mortgaging herself to one owner to another and being used as a commodity? Her lot has been nothing but the tyranny of sex" (59), is suggestive of the professing dalit consciousness in him.

Untouchability goes hand in hand with the dalits. Limbale critiques in his book on Dalit literary criticism, *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*, "Dalit literature is born from the womb of untouchability" (Limbale, 29). Untouchability was methodically experienced in the village Limbale was brought up. The higher caste community certainly not dined with the Mahars or exchanged food. The Mahars were not permitted to pull water from public wells in case if they do it would 'pollute' water. At any time, a dalit chances to come to cities to rent a room, one encounters uncomfortable questions regarding his caste identity from the house owner. Limbale recalls: "I went to Latur. I faced the problem of finding a house in the new town and my caste followed me like an enemy. Latur was such a big place with huge buildings, houses, and bungalows, but I was turned away wherever I went" (Limbale, 106). Nevertheless, the Mahars, except the author and his friend, never objected. They were accustomed to drinking tea in separate cups allocated for them or standing calmly in the line of the dalits while taking water.

Ambedkar remarked: The education received by the Untouchables in the army... gave them a new vision and a new value, they became conscious that the low esteem in which they had been held was not an inescapable destiny but was a stigma imposed on their personality by the cunning contrivances of the priest. (Ambedkar, 189). The occurrence of 'lower-caste' intellectuals, the universalization of interaction, the explosion in the number of English and vernacular newspapers, journals, books, magazines, and the erosion of mainstream cultural tradition flagged the way for the liberation of dalit voices. Education has been one of the main causes responsible for this. Anand Teltumbde put forth his views on this matter, "In the life world of Dalits that embedded their exploitation..., there was no shock and therefore no

stories until the last century that awakened them from stupor" (Teltumbde, XIX).

Though, the route of education was not easy-going for them. Limbale's autobiographical novel exposes the adversities Mahar students face in academic bodies. The headmaster was not willing to permit him to admit to the school. He was beaten numerous times by the upper-caste pupils. Teachers overlooked him and repeatedly maltreated him with dirty words like: "You son of bitch, come on, start writing! You like eating an ox, don't you?" (Limbale, 4). He commits to the memory of a school picnic, where upper caste boys engage in playing with teachers, while the narrator, and his dalit friends were busy playing touch and go amongst themselves. Their indelicate food taken from the home was difficult enough to protect them from hunger and shame.

Antonio Gramsci relies on that the strain against the force that propagates subalternity needs to be pointed against the ideological facade; henceforth, the appropriate strategy is not an anterior attack, although a 'war of position' on the ground of 'civil society'. In *The Prison Notebooks* Gramsci stresses the resistive nature of the subaltern consciousness. The subordinated castes' metaphors, representations, expressions, and tone upwelling from their centuries-old encounter of exploitation and prejudice. The Outcaste uncovers Limbale's interior trauma as well as the communal voice of the dalits. Socially structured walls could not prohibit Limbale from receiving his education and finally publishing his story. His drinking tea from the cup of the upper castes, attainment haircuts from the barber reserved only for the upper castes, and intentionally entering the temple are some occurrences of overpassing the caste boundaries. His query to Sobhi is, "Your water gets impure if we touch it, if that's so then why doesn't this river turn impure? If a human being becomes impure by our mere touch, then why didn't your colour change to green or yellow, as it happens when someone is sick or poisoned?" (Limbale, 71), communicates his definite anger and voice of opposition. His endeavour to problematize the existence of God: "What kind of God is this that makes human beings hate each other? If we are all supposed to be the

children of God, then why are we considered untouchables? We don't approve of this God nor this religion or country" (Limbale, 62), counterparts the opinion of Tatitya Kamle in his fiction novel *Hindu a Novel* Limbale reads as: "Why do you stay in a religion that does not allow you to enter the temple? Why do you stay in a religion that does acknowledge your humanity? Why do you stay in a religion that does not allow you even water?" (Limbale, 87)

Culture foundation is one the numerous stratagems implemented by dalit movements in its outburst against the social exclusion. "Among the Dalits, there is a powerful movement for cultural autonomy. which reflects their long-standing disenchantment from Brahmanical caste-Hinduism." (Sing, 71). Dalit literature endeavours to criticize the Savarna discourses by characterising dalit culture, vernacular, food, attire, ideology, philosophy, superstitions, behaviours, code of conduct, ethnicities etc. Zene studies this and conveys his views: "Over the years, Dalit authors have performed very much like Gramsci's 'integral historian [who] must record, and discover the causes of, the line of development towards integral autonomy, starting from the most primitive phases" (Zene, 91). Limbale's autobiography talk about the God and Goddess for instance Khandoba, Masoba, and Mariaai whom the Mahars worship adore. Sharankumar recalls, "Every year our village suffered from an epidemic of cholera. We called it Mariai's wind, believing it to be the curse of the goddess" (Limbale, 46). The author cheerfully manifests on the festival Vitthoba. Dalit culture turn out to be adulterated in the course of time as it in many modes absorbed and replicated the 'mainstream' culture. Santamai refuse to eat on Tuesday on the name of the Goddess Ambabai and similar on Friday for the Goddess Laxmi. A spot in her room was committed for the Goddess Ambabai. Dalits regularly begged offerings on the name of the Goddess. A Dalit critic Gopal Guru perceives it: As the social history of Dalit contention shows, frequent efforts have been made to destabilize the tyrant through imitating the tormentor's cultural symbols; the subalterns seek to provoke the master through the imitation of the master's lifestyle. Imitation refuses the dominant a special handhold

over the cultural power that drifts from cultural symbols. Thus, the development of negative consciousness is the preliminary subjective condition required to challenge the hegemonic class. (Guru, 95)

Limbale ascends the turbulence of his lived familiarities in an infiltrated language. The Mahars' family disagreements, fear, anxiety, anger, use of explicit unambiguous expressions, drunkenness, pictures of the family relationship, unworldly village life, use cow dung paste in daily domestic household etc. have been represented painstakingly. The superstitious attitudes of the Mahars, consequential from illiteracy and poverty acquires literary illustration. When Masamai conceive a new baby Chandamai uttered: "A ghost could follow our footsteps" (Limbale, 19), and she abided many safeguard precautions to save the new-born. The Mahars trusted in black magic and somebody would toss stones at the Maharwada, Santamai used to abuse the stone palter because there was trust that "such abuse afflicts the one who performs black magic" (Limbale, 48). Several renowned Dalit critics like Baburao Bagul, Namedeo Dhassal, Arjun Dangle etc. are of the outlook that dalit writers should part with myths and symbols coupled with fortune, Hindu gods and goddesses, and Hindu culture too. They sense that they should avail yourself of new words, myths, and symbols in their own literature in harmony with their Dalit ideologies.

Dalit writer Om Prakash Valmiki adhere to, "Karna, Eklavya, Shambuk, Sita have become the symbols of Dalit's desire to live and protest. The burning conditions of Dalit life have been projected with the help of myths from Ramayana and Mahabharata" (88). Limbale surviving a well-read author has exercised several myths to bring out dalit isolation, exclusion, and question of identity in a persuasive way. Due to the abnormal environment of his birth, he could categorise himself with Karna, the disadvantaged and overlooked lowborn personality of the Mahabharata, "I was growing like Karna in the Mahabharata" (Limbale, 37). Massami has been portrayed as Sita or as unwedded mother Kunti. He has engaged Buddhist myth in his indication to Mayadevi, mother of Siddhartha. In novel alterations are deliberately equipped and

made by humans who, having acquired a deep recognition of their assessment and worked hard at cultural makeover, triumph in arranging fellow humans and encouraging them with the same beliefs and merits so that they can authenticate a new social order. Dalit literature is not merely literature; it is coupled with a movement that ambitions to produce a socio-cultural revolution in India. Consequently, in Limbale's own language, "We are the vanquished. We are fighting another battle against convention. Though we may be defeated in this, there will be yet another battle in which we never surrender" (Limbale, 92), the offset cultural remark in his narrative is strongly emphasized the edge of their endurances.

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