



CONSIDERATION FOR COMPASSION OF DALITS IN SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE'S
THE OUTCASTE- AKKARMASHI

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ABSTRACT

The Outcaste – Akkarmashi has a significant and massive influence on the society as it depicts first hand experiences of author himself. Sharankumar Limbale depicts a true and realistic picture of the darker side of the Indian society. Here the darker side indicates nothing but the worst culture of our Indian society in discriminating people by their caste. The novel narrates the dehumanization of Dalits. Their suffering includes inequality, discrimination and indifference towards them and their culture. They are ill-treated for which they do nothing. The author describes about his pathetic situation of not having an identity in his own society. The author has put in words the life he lived as an untouchable, as a half-caste, and as an impoverished man. Thus the novel leaves a deep impression on the human mind. People are respected for their designation and neglected for their caste. Lower caste people suffer a lot by many means like poverty, education, status etc. only because of their caste. The best way to find out the sufferings of the Dalits and the other marginalised sections is through the words and emotions of those who have lived through the experience and who have the education and talent to write about it. Such is the autobiographical novel "The Outcaste".

Key Words: Discrimination, Scavengers, Marginalised.

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INTRODUCTION

India is a land of "Unity in diversity". The high mountain ranges, vast seas, large river-irrigated lands, countless rivers and streams, dark forests, sandy deserts, all these have adorned India with an exceptional diversity. Among the people there are numerous races, castes, creeds, religions and languages. The term "Unity in diversity" refers to the state of togetherness or oneness in spite of presence of immense diversity. The word 'oneness' has now become outdated. Nowadays dominance among the people has become the predominant factor to sustain

oneself in the society especially in castes. India is identified as the birthplace of Hinduism and Buddhism, the third and fourth largest religions. About 84 percent of the population identifies as Hindu, according to the "Handbook of Research on Development and Religion" Edited by Matthew Clarke in 2013. There are many variations of Hinduism. The one who takes the least position is Dalits. The autobiographical novel "The Outcaste" deals with the sufferings of Dalits.

Dalit means "broken people." They were formerly known as "untouchables." They live at the

bottom of India's rigid social order known as the caste system. A fifth group was created to perform tasks considered too menial or degrading to be performed by caste members. Dalits are so low in the social hierarchy that they are outside of the caste system and considered "outcastes." They are the manual scavengers, the removers of human waste and dead animals, leather workers, street sweepers and cobblers. The mere touch of a Dalit was considered "polluting" to a caste member. Thus, the concept of "untouchability" was born. The literal meaning of the word *Dalit* is one who has been trampled under feet or who has been oppressed, exploited, insulted, humiliated and thrown outside the pale of civic society, i.e., turned into an untouchable, riff-raff of the society.

"Akkarmashi" is a landmark in Marathi Dalit literature written by Sharankumar Limbale in Mahar dialect in 1984. It was translated into many Indian languages and is translated in English by Santosh Bhoomkar. The novel depicts first hand experiences of author himself. Sharankumar Limbale depicts a true and realistic picture of the darker side of the Indian society. Here the darker side indicates nothing but the worst culture of our Indian society in discriminating people by their caste. The humiliation of the Dalit community at the hands of a privileged class is focussed by the author. The paper concentrates on the sufferings of Dalits. They are named as outsiders. Outsiders always stand out of frame. They are not considered in society and treated equally. They need to move out for their daily wages. Their children also move out to work to satisfy their hunger. The author states that,

"There is a saying, 'Children are the flowers of God's abode', but not us. We are the garbage the village throws out". (5)

Sharankumar, the protagonist of the novel, is born to an untouchable mother and a high-caste father, the caste which is one of the privileged classes of India, so he is of mixed blood. Half of him belongs to the village, whereas the other half is excommunicated. His umbilical cord is uncertain to some caste. He said that he was growing like Karna in Mahabharata. (37) In the

acknowledgements to the contemporary classic, Limbale asserts:

"My history is my mother's life, at the most my grandmother's. My ancestry doesn't go back any further" (ix).

This suggests that due to his being "half-caste growing up in the Mahar community," he limits himself to the ancestry of his mother and grandmother.. Limbale brings forth this rift between the two castes at the very outset: "My mother lives in a hut, father in a mansion. Father is a landlord; mother landless. "My father had privileges by virtue of his birth granted to him by the caste system"(ix). Limbale expresses his anguish against all the repression prevalent in Indian society. Projecting his mother as the victim of the social and economic system, he questions: "Had she (Limbale's mother) been born into the high caste or were she rich, would she have submitted to his (Limbale's father) appropriation of her?"(ix).

Dalits are not able to satisfy even their basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. Hunger is more powerful than man. A single stomach is like the whole earth. Hunger seems no bigger than your open palm, but it can swallow the whole world and let out a belch. There would have been no wars if there was no hunger. What about stealing and fighting? If there was no hunger what would have happened to sin and virtue, heaven and hell, this creation of God? If there was no hunger how could a country, its borders, citizens, parliament, Constitution come into being? The world is born from a stomach, so also the links between mother and father, sister and brother.

Dalits lay inside the bus stand. This village bus stand had large windows, the front almost open. Its roof was made of tin. The rain dripped in through the holes in the roof and drenched them. The chill wind made them shiver. The rainy season is full of chill and its too hot during summer. As it is open space, it is not suitable for any of the occasions. Every night becomes a threatening war and barrier for their sleep. The author used to sleep under the bench while it rains. Each and every day of their life is an adventurous act throughout. There is no solution and an end for the struggle.

Education is also not left over. Dalit children face continuous hurdles in education. They are made to sit in the back of classrooms and endure verbal and physical harassment from teachers and other students. The effect of such abuses is confirmed by the low literacy and high drop-out rates for Dalits.

Dalits live as slaves for years together. They should have rights to do anything on their own. Once, a Dalit youth dared to look lasciviously at a high-caste woman from the village and was considered a serious crime. The whole village turned against the young man and attacked the Maharwada. Later the whole village went to court against young Dalit men who were sentenced to prison for a year. When they returned after serving their term, every man's wife had had a baby. The Dalit women had been raped when their husbands were in prison. A village always acts atrociously like this against Dalits. No peace and rest in their life.

"We know what we are, but know not what we may be" is a quote by William Shakespeare. Accordingly the people don't know what would happen for them the next. They would be punished even if an animal died in the village.

Villagers grew annoyed and tie Dalits to a pole and beat them like animals. They accused them of having poisoned the animal. Women and children cried and shrieked. Then after that they would not get any work in the fields, so they need to starve for food. They would reach a dead end. Thus the author says, "This, my history, made me restless like the young shivaji". (79)

Dalit literature has emerged as a good solution for projecting their own community's sufferings. In the words of Janardhan Waghmare: "Emergence of Dalit literature has a great historical significance in India. It is generic in the sense that all other marginalized and oppressed groups of people are under its sway and sweep. It has struck a keynote awakening their consciousness of their identities. The author affirms that Dalit literature is not meant for entertainment of the readers but to provoke them into rethinking their society and its ethics and aesthetics. Dalit literature is

the cry for humanity. Limbale enters into the realm of philosophy of poverty and says,

"Bhakari is as large as man. It is as vast as the sky, and bright like the sun. Hunger is bigger than man. Hunger is more vast than seven circles of hell. Man is only as big as a bhakari, and only as big as hunger. Hunger is more powerful than man. A single stomach is like the whole earth. Hunger seems no bigger than your palm, but it can swallow the whole world and let out a belch"(50)

Thus, only through education sufferers can uplift themselves rather than complaining others. "Self help is the best help" is a famous proverb. As per these words only Dalit community can help and shout for themselves to prove their knowledge and get equal status in the society.

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