
SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE'S THE OUTCASTE AKKARMASHI: AN UNTOLD PLIGHT OF A DALIT SUFFERER

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Abstract: In a country like India, caste plays a vital role in the formation of the personality of an individual. Caste factor ensures an individual identity here. A man feels dehumanised in case of his not belonging to any specific caste, If he is an outcaste, he suffers from humiliation, exploitation, suppression oppression, indignity in the hands of upper caste people. In *The Out Caste : Akkarmashi*, Sharankumar Limblale, the protagonist faces the same atrocity. This book is his autobiography which shows his sufferings and pain. He poignantly postulates further deepening his own agony, saying high-caste people look upon my community as untouchable, while my own community humiliated me, calling me AkkarmashiIt is the pain of millions in India. His mother is the keep of a Landlord, belonging to a privileged class and he is not considered as a legal child of his father, having no claim on the property and sir name of his father. He is not even accepted in his own caste. He feels like a fish out of water because man without social identity is just like a rudderless boat. Limbale delineates what it is to be a son of deserted woman, how painful and agonizing is the process of growing up in a society in which sexual exploitation and casteism are the prevalent trends. This autobiography created a new trend in Post- Independence India.

Keywords: Dalit, Akkarmashi, Exploitation, Sufferer, Caste-System, Highclass Society.

Introduction: Dalit (oppressed or broken) is not a new word. It was used in the 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of depressed classes, a term the British used for, what are now called Scheduled Castes. If the fourth world emerges in the world map then its literature would be the Dalit Literature. Contemporary mainstream literature may not find it suitable but this literature in the realistic reflection of those oppressed classes. The primary aim of Dalit literature is the liberation of dalits. Dalit struggle against casteist tradition has a long history. In modern times because of the legacy of Mahatma Phule and Babarao Ambedkar Dalit literature got impetus in Maharashtra. Dalit youths found inspiration in the movement of blacks in the distant land of North America; their black literature and Black Panther became the role models of sorts for them. This protest gained its first expression in the form of a new literature called Dalit Literature. While dealing with the trends of Dalit literature the writer makes a humble attempt to point out the core issues of its ideology. Dalit literature questioned the mainstream literary theories and upper caste ideologies and explored the neglected aspects of life. It is based on experience. These writers make use of language of the out castes and under privileged in Indian society. Feeling of shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope are the stuff of Dalit literature. The expression of the Dalit writers have become sharp because of the anger against the age old oppression.

The word 'outcaste', as per The Concise Oxford Dictionary's definition, means 'a person who has no caste, esp. in Hindu society' or 'a person who has lost his or her caste.' In case of Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste Akkarmashi*, the unification of these two definitions- a person who has lost his or her caste esp. in Hindu society- is more befitting and appropriate. An outstanding autobiographical endeavor, *The Outcaste Akkarmashi* tells of an untold plight of one of the worst Dalit sufferers who is none other than the protagonist himself. Limbale acknowledges very bitterly, "My mother is an untouchable while my father is a high caste from one of the privileged classes of India. Mother lives in a hut, father in a mansion. Father is a landlord; mother, landless. What is more, he poignantly postulates further deepening his own agony, "High-caste people look upon my community as untouchable, while my own community humiliated me, calling me Akkasrmashi...It is the pain of millions in India".

True that this personal pain is not personal in itself but of the millions of his likes who remain unnoticed and unacquainted. It is because unseeability and untouchability are the hallmarks of the identification of the mute sufferers who drag their lives out of the mainstream society. Sad to say that as many as more than thirty crore Dalit, if estimation is true, are accursed to live a marginalized life. They are required to be brought back to the Centre from the periphery for the harmonious social structure. Isn't it improper that on the one hand the technological innovations have brought about tremendous worldwide changes and a sizeable majority of Dalit population in India is naturally forced to live cats and dogs life on the other? Pejorative and derogative connotations labelled against Dalit, such as Chandal, Rakshas, Malechhh, Antyaj, Panchama, Harijan, Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe and so on, aggravate their woes and agony to a great extent. **Dr. Ambedkar**, in his book '**Ostracized Bharat**', writes, "**Dalithood is a kind of life condition that characterized the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of Dalit people by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of the upper castes Brahmnical ideology.**"(97) De facto, it is the Brahmnical ideology that Kancha Ilaiah, a Dalit activist and writer of a wide repute, terms as 'intellectual goondaism'. In his recent book '**Post- Hindu India**' **Kancha Ilaiah** explicitly views, "**Though the concept of 'goondaism' appears to be modern, it existed all through even since the Indian society began to operate as a civil society**"¹. He holds Lalit class people (upper castes people) responsible for keeping their hegemonic attitude that causes damaging effects to the very interests of productive Dalit masses. **Kancha Ilaiah** continues, "**In India, the modern democratic state has been seized by the intellectual goondas**"... who "**have done more damages to the socio-economic, political and civil societal life processes in India than the street goondas could do.**"² However, economic crisis is supposed to be the root cause of social evils to a great extent. It breeds many a problem.

The dearth of money forces a man to drudge and to clean shit for satiating his hunger. Hunger drives one to do some immoral and unethical deeds as well. Most of the time it is felt that economic crisis is shrewdly created by the Lalit class people in the various forms of exploitation, by flexing their muscles and displaying the power of wealth. **Dr. Amartya Sen** rediscovers that the reason behind starvation is nothing but the unequal distribution system. It is not that equal distribution of the needful is not possible. Status quoism is deliberately kept up by the Brahmnical mind setup.

Again, it is hunger that drives Masamai to satisfy the physical desire and sexual deliberation of the Patil of Baslegaon, Hanumanta Limbale, whose son the protagonist himself is. Sarankumar Limbale avers, "My mother was once the keep of Hanumanta, whose son I am and at present she is Kaka's kept woman"(31/TO). An already married Masamai divorced her own husband Ithal Kamble because her alluring beauty caused a lust Hanumanta to get attracted towards

her, and she was infatuated by him. Limbale very rightly remarks, "To be born beautiful among Dalits is a curse." (37/TO)

The Outcaste Akkarmashi depicts the awfulness of hunger with intense feelings, creating pathos and sympathy among readers. Such depiction of hunger is really rare in other literary work. Originally written in Marathi by Sarankumar Limbale and later translated into English by Santosh Bhoomkar, the narrative leaves an indelible impression on the mind of readers for its exemplary portrayal of the protagonist's plight. 'Murdahiya' a Dalit Hindi autobiographical recently launched by well-known Dalit writer Tulsi Ram, also deals threadbare with the harsh realities of the life of Chamar Community he also belongs to. But the intense depiction of hunger shown in The Outcaste Akkarmashi has outclassed the same in 'Murdahiya'.

However it is due to his being an illegitimate child that Limbale felt humiliation and denial of self-dignity right since his early boy hood. He had to suffer a lot and felt dehumanized almost every time, everywhere. It is the identity crisis that compels him to be assertive for caste identity. Frankly speaking, his mother's sleeping with the high caste Patil of Baslegaon happens to sow the seeds of indignation in the young mind of the protagonist at the prevalent social behavior of Indian society. And like fish out of water he feels about himself among the people of his own community as well as others. The binding nature of the bitterness of casteism makes him realize that man without social identity is just like a rudderless boat. Expressing his extreme hatred towards the very idea of untouchability, he poignantly remarks, "We hated the very idea of untouchability. With our education there grew in us a sense of pride. Casteism made us bitter". (76/TO) Education is a liberating force while illiteracy is a binding stigma. Real self-esteem is enjoyed by the qualified. Realization of unusual inner strengths depends on self-dignity and self-esteem. Only the spread of education among the uneducated or illiterate Dalit people can make them free from the bondage of life. Good education also brings an independent social recognition to an individual. Limbale has 'realized the self-esteem had unusual strengths...' (76/TO)

He asked a number of pointed questions throughout his narrative that remain unanswered and unresponded till date. He recalled his schooling days and felt alienated as he had been unlike other children. Not to speak of the social environment even the school environment was poisoned with discrimination between child and child belonging to different socio-economic background with various caste identities. He found himself in the school just like the garbage thrown outside. "There is saying, 'Children are the flowers of God's abode' but not us. We are the garbage the village throws out. There were so many caste faction in our school... We had grown up like aliens since our infancy." (5/TO) Limbale is absolutely right when he remarks that 'It is man who is hindrance to religion' or caste. From birth to death in the caste ridden Hindu society there is no escape from rites and rituals on various occasions such as after-birth celebration, marriage ceremony, after-death ceremonial rites and rituals and so on. Religious dogmas and spiritual fascist forces cause disintegration in the Indian social setup.

In lack of caste identity even the village barber Ishunath refused to have his hair cut or shave his head. Even Shivram, owner of tea stall, displayed social discrimination in his small shop, "There was a small tea shop in our village owned by Shivram where separate cup and saucer were kept for Mahars and Mangs... Everywhere we were condemned... our caste had been thrust upon us even before we were born' (76/TO). To his utter dismay, he failed to enjoy the social harmonious life in lack of caste identity and socially valued hierarchy. It seems that he was not even a human being, not to speak of his being a social being at all. Limbale expressed his agony

very indignantly, "But a man is recognized in this world by his religion, caste or his father. I had neither religion nor a caste. I had no inherited identity at all" (59/TO)

Hutton is of opinion that caste is a good institution which has proved its worth and should be reformed not rooted out ...the broken poisoned finger should be amputated, not that whole hand. **"Limbale could not get certain papers signed for school because he (sarpanch) could not properly identify his caste by his mother or father and they could not accept his grandmother as his guardian she lived with a Muslim".³**

In the long established social pyramid, there is no room for those living on the periphery. In the social pyramidal structure Brahmins who form the least number of the total population sit on the top. Just below them come Kshatriyas, further followed by Vaishyas. Shudras stand on lowest stratum. Among the conventionally recognized four Varnas, outcastes have no place at all. The pain of being out of the caste system is very deeply felt in the following lines, "The life of man who suffered not only through this caste system but also the pain of not even being allowed into the caste system. He was an outcaste, below everyone else." (96/TO)

In India, caste plays a key role from electing a village Sarpanch to forming the government, state and central. For strong social bastion one must be the essential part of a particular caste or class, lower or middle or higher so that he/she might not only exercise his/ her franchise with pride but also live a societal life properly. It is not hidden from us that the political game in India is played following the caste and class equation. The significant role of caste identity can be understood even from this fact that one's self-respect always remains on the wane in case one fails to be worthy to assert oneself with no identity crisis. Limbale found himself between what-to-do and what-not-to-do situation in absence of his social and caste status. He wanted to know asking a volley of questions, "She (Masamai) will die blemished, an object of someone's lust' but what about us? Will anyone marry my sisters? Will society accept us? When we die, will people from the Maharwara undertake our funerals?" (64/TO). It is a matter of fact that if the question of caste identity gets its proper solution only once, many social diseases are supposed to be easily cured. But it seems to be a pipe dream in the existing socio-political circumstances of India. Limbale, knowing the cruel rigidity of caste system in the Hindu society and the riotous attitude between Hindus and Muslims, took a peaceful refused under the calm and serene shadow of Buddhism. Having taken inspiration from the revolutionary move of Dr. Ambedkar, who, along with thousands and thousands of Dalit (who failed to share the social interests of the mainstream society), adopted Buddhism at Nagpur in 1956, Limbale not only embraced Buddhism but also took active participation in the Dalit panthers movement to awake the people of his likes. He explicitly revealed, " I was afraid of my caste because I could not claim my father's caste and religion. In a sense I was not a Mahar, because high caste blood ran in my body. The agony I lived through is my own as much as that of my village." (82/TO)

When there came time for marriage, he could not even married to an outcaste girl because his blood is not pure; he was not wanted anywhere. Eventually a drunkered who had offered Limbale his daughter would allow her to leave after the wedding because of Limbale's background. He expressed a dig at Hindus' social modes and behavior. Limbale was dead against solemnization of his own marriage, following Hindu rituals and customs. As did he opine, " I don't believe in Hindu ritual. We are going to be wedded according to Buddhist rituals." (99/TO)

After having got a job as a telephone operator, Limbale faced a lot of problems in finding a house on rent in a new town for his accommodation. Casteism chased him there as well like his foe. In his own words, “ I faced the problem of finding a house in a new town and my caste followed me like an enemy... Every town and person was caste conscious. This casteism has dehumanized me everywhere.”(106/TO)

When Kusum, his wife informed him that she had given birth to a male baby, Limbale, as if predetermined, christened his child with Annarya. This is really a culmination of his anger and indignation at the hegemony of the elite of the Indian society. He avowed, “ I got news that my wife Kusum had a baby boy. I have already thought of a name for him. It was Annarya.”(112/TO)

Limbale wants the coming generation not to suffer the brunt of caste discrimination and oppression because caste is a prominent status marker in the Hindu society. However, the Outcaste Akkarmashi tells an untold tale of a Dalit who rose from penury to privilege. The struggle of the protagonist instills in other Dalits radical thoughts to wage a silent war against the rotten stinking caste system that has maimed and paralyzed the cordiality and harmony and the sense of togetherness among the people in general.

To conclude, such as noteworthy autobiography has not only helped, enriched and strengthen the sensibility and consciousness of Dalit literature but it has also created a new trend in post-Independence India. Now Dalit literature is not confined to the India subcontinent alone but it has attracted the global attention towards it by setting up its analogy with the Afro-American Black Literature in many respects as well as forming the essential part of the world literature.

It is true that the Dalit literature created or being created with the sympathetic point of view can't exactly express the same intensity of atrocity mated out to the worst sufferers. This can be easily analyzed after going through the two different views being expressed below by the two stalwarts of modern Hindi literature belonging to Dalit and Lalit class respectively:

Omprakash Valmiki remarks “ **How will you understand the pain of the horse, his emotions towards his master once he is tied to the Khunta after a whole day long labour, hungry and thirsty?**”⁵ is a straight forward reply to **Kashinath Singh's** view ‘**It is not necessary to be a horse to be able to write on horses.**’⁶

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6. Kashinath Singh (2011) , Rehan Par Regghu . Raj Kamal Prakashan (P47)
N.B: ‘TO’ used in the paper in the bracket refers to The Out caste (Akkarmashi) and the
digit before it is the page no.
