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SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE'S *THE OUTCASTE* (*AKKARMASHI*): PORTRAYAL OF A DALIT'S LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Like other Dalit autobiographies Sharankumar Limbale's The Outcaste reveals the self of a dalit, he has to suffer because of the hypocrisies and the prevalent traditions of the upper caste (Patil). In spite of the provisions in the constitution which safe guard the interest of the Dalits, they have to suffer because of the well defined social hierarchy based on caste, has existed in India from the time of antiquity. The present paper will bring out the life of the Dalits in the post independent India, the economic discrepancy, prevailing caste system, identity of a dalit and practice of untouchability

KEY WORDS: *Outcaste, Untouchable, Identity, Dalit*

DISCUSSION

India is known for its curious type of rank framework. It has stratified the general public differencing people into upper positions and lower standings. This division has certain religious authorizations, in view of which sociologists clarify ideas, for example, 'virtue' and 'contamination' (Louis Dumont). These approvals help the position framework to recharge its authenticity even after they have been tested over the long haul. Raj Kumar accepts:

The caste system - with its myriad variations of super ordination and subordination, its confusions and contradictions, rites and rituals, vices and virtues, dogmas and doubts, professions and protests - is able to sustain itself across different regions of India in Varying degrees of rigidity. (Kumar,115)

The untouchables, today known as the Dalits involve most reduced spot in the social heirarchization and have been enduring methodical disregard and

segregation in the Indian Society for a long time. With the rise of Dalit writing, which is a piece of Dalit freedom development (Dalit Panther,1972) , the Dalits are currently aware of their being and are prepared to investigate and challenge the authority of the upper positions and classes. Self-portraying stories establish a huge section of Dalit writing. A portion of the noticeable Dalit self-portrayals are; Omprakash Valmiki's *Jhoothan* : A Dalit's Life, Laxman mane's Upara, Bama's Karukku, Narenra Jadhav's Outcaste; A Memoir, Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* and so forth. Most [of these stories are stories of individual sufferings of the Dalit journalists combined with their relational reaction and network sentiments which they involvement in a Hindu society.

Sharankumar Limbale (1956) is an author of Marathi language, a poet, and a literary critic. He has written more than forty books, but he is well known for his autobiographical novel *Akkarmashi*. *Akkarmashi* has been translated into many languages of Indian and in English as well. Santosh Bhoomkar has translated it

into English and got it published by Oxford University Press with the title *The Outcaste* in 2003. Limbale's critical work *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations* is accepted as one of the most important work in Dalit literature. The title *The Outcaste* signifies the position of Limbale in contemporary Indian society of 1960s. Society considers him an untouchable, a half caste, and an impoverished man because Limbale was born as the illegitimate son of higher caste Patil and a landless, poor untouchable mother who belongs to Mahar caste.

The objective of the present paper is to bring out the portrayal of a dalit in general with the account of Limbale's *The Outcaste*. It will focus on the situation of the Dalits in an independent India on three major issues; discrimination on the basis of caste, identity crises and economic disparity. Limbale's *The Outcaste* is a frighteningly candid story of his childhood and growth as a person of an outcaste. It is the shattering experience to see in Limbale's graphic depiction of the want and the woes of a Dalit child and later his saintly forgiveness, compassion and detachment. It is this aloofness, and the ability to turn away from the personal, that makes *The Outcaste* a distressing life narrative. In the middle of the narration of humiliation and hunger, Limbale suddenly assumes the tone of a philosophical questioner, who is trying to deconstruct the cosmos:

Bhakaari 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 the seven circles of hell. Man is only as big as a bhakari, and only as big as his hunger. 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 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. (Limbale,50-51)

The opening pages of Limbale's *The Outcaste* portrays the grade school life of Sharankumar which make him mindful of being a distant/a Dalit as he has a place with the Mahar people group. Here, unconsciously he acknowledges the contrast between the higher station understudies and him (an understudy of Mahar people group) as a result of isolation and forced separation

each perspective like dietary patterns, dressing even in the diversions.

The Wani and Brahmin boys played kabbadi. Being marked as Mahar we couldn't join them. So Mallya, Umbrya, Parshya, all from my caste, began to play touch and go. We played one kind of game while the high caste village boys played another. The two games were played separately like two separate whirlwinds. (2)

The segregations and contrasts towards the Dalits are conceived out of the Indian rank framework. The common station framework in contemporary India is so profoundly established that it can't be crushed in spite of the different sacred arrangements of defensive segregation approaches. Dalits still endure the shame of distance, even after even after standing separation has been announced an offense under law. Standing framework pursues certain religious authorizes and forces numerous forbiddances by thinking about the higher position as hallowed or the Masters and Dalits as unapproachable or profane, the specialist organization. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the prime designer of Indian constitution who advocated for the Dalits likewise believes position framework to be the purpose behind isolating people. By citing Ambedkar Zakir Abedi referenced:

Ambedkar strongly states that Brahmins have succeeded "to idealize the real and realize the ideal". "Caste is divine, Caste is sacred". Caste system is not merely division of labour, it is also division of labourers. (Abedi,204-05)

Dalits have been segregated being stepped polluted. A Dalit gets the tag of 'distant' completely on his introduction to the world in the low position and all types of embarrassments become the heritage that he acquires. Limbale portrays occurrences where Mahars are not permitted to enter the sanctuary, not contact the open well or attract water from it to extinguish their thirst in spite of all around burrowed by them. Limbale states "the spade and scoops of Mahars were utilized to burrow the well. The Mahar gave their perspiration for it... They the Mahars, are the motivation behind why there is water in the well. However at this point the equivalent Mahars are not permitted to draw water from it, not notwithstanding drinking water." (80-81) There are sure authorized conventions to which the Dalits are constrained to pursue and to which they can't defeat inside the casing of Caste segregation. Limbale portrays the treatment of higher standing Shivram for a Dalit Rambaap in a scene of Shivram's coffee bar in his collection of memoirs. He composes:

Rambaap used to drink water as well as tea and he had to wash the tumblers too before he

put them back in their place. He had to put the money for the tea on the ground or drop it from a height into the hands of the owner because for a Mahar or Mang to hand money directly to anyone was a sin. When Rambaap noticed me watching him do all this, he said, 'We are low castes. What you have seen is a long tradition that has come down to us from our forefathers. What can we do about? How can we go against the village customs?' (76)

Most significant issue with respect to the fowls of standing framework is the treatment of the Dalit ladies in the general public. The lip services of higher rank individuals are obvious with respect to Dalit ladies. At one spot higher standing individuals keep up separation from the untouchables so as to keep them from getting sullied by contact and yet they consider Dalit ladies as products, articles to delight their desire. Upper standing individuals explicitly abuse Dalit ladies and are constrained to satisfy them for the sake of philanthropy. Limbale amidst portrayal of his personal history depicts the circumstance of Mahar ladies as:

People who enjoy high caste privileges, authority sanctioned by religion, and inherit property, have exploited the Dalits of this land. The Patils in every village have made whores of the wives of Dalit farm labourers. A poor Dalit girl on attaining puberty has invariably been a victim of their lust. There is whole breed born to adulterous Patils. There are Dalit families that survive by pleasing the Patils sexually. The whole village considers such a house as the house of Patil's whore. Even the children born to her from her husband are considered the children of a Patil. Besides Survival on the Charity of a Patil what else can such a household expect? (38)

Limbale has depicted disgraceful picture of Dalit ladies by portraying his mom Masamai. Life of Masamai was demolished by Hanmanta Limbale, a Patil who made Masamai to separate from her Husband Ithal Kamble, which later on made Masamai a keep of Hanmanta so as she can't wed again as man does. Sharankumar Limbale portrays the oppression of sex in context of his mom as: "Ithal Kamble remarried. A man can eat paan and spit the same number of times as he prefers, yet the equivalent isn't feasible for a lady. It is viewed as wrong if a lady does that. When her celibacy is lost it can never be reestablished" (36) . Further he talked about the reason for being a courtesan of a higher rank Patil as to spare her youngsters from starvation. Limbale composes:

Masamai and Satamai are not the only examples. They sold themselves to be loved and cared for by someone. They hadn't sold their bodies to appease their lust. Do we exist just for the sake of hunger? Beyond hunger lies a vast life. There is life beyond bread. And yet I had no experience of life beyond this ghetto. (64)

The following concentration in Limbale's *The Outcaste* is on the Identity of a Dalit. When all is said in done a dalit is recognized by the jobs relegated to him by the general public, the jobs here represents the modest works and as a specialist co-op to the higher standing with no wages. A Dalit resembles a captive to the upper standing individuals they can arrange him/her as indicated by their desire and Dalit needs to execute the equivalent with no disdain. Also the basic examination of Limbale's *The Outcaste* characterizes the personality in reference to four noteworthy viewpoints. First by birth, second by dad's name and finally by the standing to which he/she has a place.

All through his account Limbale presents the emergencies of character and dependably look baffled with respect to his reality. Birth characterizes the personality of an individual in an absolute first stage yet Limbale trusts that his introduction to the world is the revile for him since he was conceived out of an ill-conceived sexual connection of his mom with Hanmanta.. Limbale composes:

My first breath must have threatened the morality of the world. With my first cry at birth, milk must have splashed from the breasts of every Kunti... Why did my mother say yes to the rape which brought me into the world? Why did she put up with the fruit of this illegitimate intercourse for nine months and nine days and allow me to grow in the foetus? (36-37)

Limbale portrays character development of an individual by his/her Father's name. It is amazing that upper position Hanmanta Limbale had Masamai "like a pet pigeon" (36) yet would not like to acknowledge her tyke. He didn't recognize Sharankumar as his posterity. Later on Hanumanta left Masami and Sharan turns into a youngster who has no name of his dad. The general public remembers one regarding his dad as opposed to a person. In an episode when Sharankumar Limbale needs an endorsement from Sarpanch, he addressed on Limbale's personality:

The Sarpanch was in a real fix about how to identify me. But I too was a human being. What else did I have except a human body but a man is recognized in this world by his religion, caste, or his father. I had neither a

father's name, nor any religion, nor a caste. I had no inherited identity at all. (59)

Limbale's *The Outcaste* it is the caste with lends him his identity. The caste designates the position of every person in the society. It is the caste only which tells the history, about the forefathers. The construction of an identity of a person is not possible without the history because it locates the person in contemporary society with his religious and traditional sanctions. Limbale suffers identity crises with reference to caste too. He Writes:

My forefathers were Lingayat. Therefore I am one too. My mother was Mahar. My mother's father and forefathers were Mahar, hence I am also a Mahar. From the day I was born until today, I was brought up by my grandmother, Santamai. Does this mean I am Muslim as well? Then why can't the Jamadar's affection claim me as Muslim? How can I be high caste when my mother is untouchable? If I am untouchable, what about my father who is high caste? I am like Jarasandh. Half of me belong to the village, whereas the other half is excommunicated. Who am I? To whom my umbilical cord connected? (38-39)

With every one of these references the inquiry emerges why Sharankumar Limbale is in such a difficulty as to his personality? Why he has endured the circumstance of without being a character? It is because of the having a place of his mom to a dalit network. She has been persecuted and explicitly abused on account of being a dalit which further destructed the life of her own tyke (Sharan), who endured the embarrassments and insults of higher position individuals just like an ill-conceived distant (outcaste) of the general public.

Next, major issue in Limbale's *The Outcaste* is the economic deprivation of a Dalit. The Dalits are landless and follow the traditional occupation, which hinders any kind of economic upliftment in the life of the untouchables. They work as labour in the fields of high caste for a small amount of grain. By such prevailing oppression the Dalits have to face hunger and starvation. For them food is god. A Dalit agrees for any type of work to fill his/ her stomach. Limbale in his *The Outcaste* writes:

Every bus meant bread and butter for us. We waited at the bus stand for a bus as a prostitute waits for her customers. The Moment I saw a bus at a distance I became excited hoping that this bus would provide at least a few annas and Dada could buy me a cup of tea. (41)

Further Limbale writes about the pathetic situation of the Dalits because of hunger:

Our village has provided us with bread so we owe much to them. They did provide bread but in exchange satisfied their lust with our women. I can bear to think of Masami caught between bread and lust. Who will rescue my mother? She will die blemished, an object of someone's lust.(64)

With this current Limbale's *The Outcaste* additionally proposes the inquiry on the Hindu standing framework and its religious assents, which avoids the Dalit from the standard of the general public announcing them as the untouchables. Dalits have been dealt with more regrettable than creatures; they are abused in each conceivable ways under the terminology of being outcaste. Limbale questions:

How a person born with his caste? How does he become untouchable as soon as he born/ How can he be a criminal by birth? From his feet Brahma gave birth to a vast low-caste community. Since then the community has been living as untouchables. (82)

Further he also questions:

What kind of religious burden do we carry like a porter his load? Why is this burden of religion thrust upon us? Why can't we discard it? How has man lost himself under this huge tree of caste, religion, breeding, family? (105)

In a nut shell by questioning the society, Limbale wants to mark out the Dalits' life in the post independent India of sixties which is full of humiliations and sufferings. It highlighted the hypocrisies and mentality of those who call themselves higher castes; despite of safeguard measures in the Indian constitution the Dalits have been exploited and oppressed due to their low caste, they are socially frail, economically needy and politically powerless. However with the course of time the conditions of the Dalits have improved due to reservation policies. Now they are becoming economically independent and professionally strengthened their position under government patronage but question remains the same till when will they remain downgraded and unaccepted socially? When will the society overcome from the stigmatized identity of the Dalits? These questions are still unanswered even today.

Toward an end it is all around seen that collection of memoirs is the enlivening cognizance of Dalit personalities from his minimization. It tends to be said that it's an inclination for freedom of humankind from all sort of concealment. Like the other Dalit scholars Sharankumar Limbale requires the humanism, humankind for the Dalits. He represents the uniformity

and human pride of the untouchables. By his collection of memoirs, he needs to set up a populist society which is casteless and boorish, where an individual perceived as a person not by his position or some other differential measures.

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