

An Interview with Sharan Kumar Limbale

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Sharankumar Limbale is one among the most renowned Dalit writers in India. He was born on 01 June 1956.. Most of his writings are in Marati and translated into English and other languages. Limbale got his BA degree in English in 1978, MA in Marati in 1990 and PhD degree in Marati in 1996 from Shivaji University, Kolhapur. He is a good academician as well as a writer and he occupied so many positions in YCM Open University and now he is the Regional Director of the Regional centre in Pune of Y C M Open University, Nashik. He is an illustrious writer and his writings mostly rest on the Dalit struggle and identity. He wrote fourty books so far and he was known for poetry, short stories, including his autobiography *The Outcaste* (2004). His autobiography is written in Marati language and translated into Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Punjabi, Malayam languages. Any how, it caught the attention of the world especially of the translated one into English by Santhosh Bhoomkar. He got many awards and won the wider acclaim from the public for his literary talents. He is also known for the critical work *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Studies* (2004) which is the most resource book on Dalit criticism after Arjun Dangle's *Poisoned Bread* and Kancha Ilaiah's *Why I am Not A Hindu*. He is a member of many academic and cultural organisations and many scholars did and engaged in active research on his writings. His interviews are found in well known publications and literary journals. The aim of the present interview is to know the internal and external criticism that Limbale had after his polemical personal narrative *The OutCaste* (2003).

Q.1. Shall I know more about you?

Limbale: Today I am a professor and regional director in Yashavantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University. This is a state university of Maharashtra. This is my professional status. In literature I am an eminent dalit writer. I used all forms of literature. My major work is available in Marathi, Hindi, English, Malayalam, Tamil, Gujarati, Kannada and Punjabi. I have written forty four books and got fourteen awards for my literary contribution.

Q.2. How did your family members react to your autobiography?

Limbale: I write my autobiography at the age of 25 years. At this time my children were small. so they can not react to my life story. Today they are grownups. I am well known author. So they get benefits of my fame and reputation.

Q.3. You stated that your history is the history of your mother and Grand mother. How did they respond after the book is published?

Limbale: My mother and grand mother are illiterate. When they knew about my book they became angry. They thought that I had defamed them. They felt that I had insulted them. Today every thing is normal.

Q.4. Comparatively with your mother and grand mother, you spoke less about your wife in the book. How would she support you in hard times? Is there any discussion on this issue with in your family?

Limbale: - The span of my autobiography is my childhood. My wife entered in the last phase of this book. So I can not talk about my wife in detail. I want write about my pain and pangs. I want write about the sufferings of my community. So I can not give importance to my personal life. I am writing for social cause.

Q.5. *Out caste* speaks about your job in Telephone Dept. Can you say more achievements of you which are not found in your work?

Limbale: I was telephone operator in P & T Department in the central government. I spent my six years in this department. I did not stop my education. I was an external student. Afterward I joined all India radio, Sholapur as announcer. Meanwhile I completed my P.G. Degree and joined Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University as assistant editor. I got Ph. D and applied for the post of reader. Because of my literature and writing I got new post. Now by carrier advancement scheme I become a professor. I have struggled in my whole life to go ahead and survive everywhere.

Q.6. What kind of experience you have after the outcome of your book into the public domain?

Limbale: When my book came out and I became star. I got publicity, fame and name. I became spokes person for my cry and problems. I became an icon for forth coming generations to write for social justice. My life changed by my book. I become bold and confidant in my life.

Q.7. How did your friends react about the incidents that you mentioned about them?

Limbale: Some friends became happy and some unhappy. I do not care anybody. I care only my commitment to society and movement.

Q.8. What was the internal criticism (by Dalits) you got for your autobiography?

Limbale: Many dalit people are welcomed my autobiography but some people from my caste bitterly criticised my work. They thought that I had showed black side of our society. It is not necessary. Because of my book they shamed and irritated. They wanted to hide their shameful past. I attacked in my writing on my ugly history

Q.9. What was the external criticism, especially by non-dalit critics ?

Limbale: External people welcomed my book. They accepted my writing as master piece of literature and tool of progressive movement.

Q.10. Can you speak more about the experiences of otherness in schools and colleges that you studied, the public places you visited, the places where you worked etc.?

Limbale: My autobiography speaks about this in detail. My autobiography is a statement of my war against injustice.

Q.11. Can you compare the discrimination that you experienced in your childhood days and that of today is the same?

Limbale: Yes. Still there is discrimination in every field of life. Our ministers are also facing such type of experience. Former president K. R. Narayan was also unhappy in his chair. He expressed his bitter feelings in his interview.

Q.12. Do you feel that Dalits are still under clouds of discrimination?

Limbale: Yes. In rural areas the Dalits are harassed by upper caste people and in urban life the upper caste people are torturing the educated dalits in many way. Dalit officers can not get their powers. They can not get good positions. They can not get houses on rent at town places.
