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## Agonies and Broken Minds in *The Outcaste* (Akkarmashi)

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### **Abstract:**

The socio-economic, religious and psychological frameworks of the ideology shatter Dalit lives. They have to face the life with discriminations and humiliations in every section of their daily routine even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Though India is undergoing the currents of meta-modernism or post-post modernism, the dalits have not freed from the discriminative system. Each day comes with the horrifying experiences for them through which their agonies always pursue them. They and their so many generations have been destructed by the superstitions, illiteracy, ignorance, traditions and suspicious mindsets. The present paper attempts to deal with the agonies and broken minds in Limbale's autobiography 'The Outcaste' (*Akkarmashi*). The members in autobiography depict heartbreaking experiences of the innocent dalit women and children of the society who have been deprived of the right of coexistence and brotherhood.

**Keywords:** dalit, agony, abandonment, poverty and untouchability.

### **Introduction:**

The *Outcaste* is an autobiography translated into English from Marathi '*Akkaramashi*'. *Akkaramashi* was published in 1984 when Limbale was 25 years old. It is a Marathi word that denotes illegitimacy. It literary means a child born from the illegitimate relationships. Limbale is *Akkarmashi* in autobiography that he is born from the illegitimate relationships of upper caste father belonging to *Lingayat* community and lower caste mother belonging to *Mahar* community in Maharashtra. The children born from such relationships are not accepted by the society and they are treated badly as other. Limbale reminds that "high caste people look upon my community as untouchable, while my own community humiliated me, calling me *Akkarmashi*" (Limbale, ix). It is the offspring of the societal sufferings with many agonies. This autobiography is the story of the untouchable people who are humiliated by both touchables and untouchables and live the impoverished, illiterate, ignorant and ostracized life. So this paper attempts to deal with the agonies and anger of the untouchable or dalit people who are the broken people and deprived of the essence of meaningful life.

Sharankumar Limbale is the representative of the communities which are awakened after the education became open to all. The downtrodden children from the villages, from in and out of the boundaries of villages and from unknown communities benefitted at some extent by the 'equal opportunities' promised by the Constitution. These misfortunate children came out of the hell of social nudity, social exclusion, social discrimination and social

injustices to shape their social consciousness and sense of human being. They developed their ambit of knowledge and understandings by the inspiration of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. The youths from these communities came out in the mainstream to give an outlet for their agonies and anger through writings. Limbale is one of these children also who gave the voice for his sufferings unknown to the literature. He exposed all the cultural politics of the Indian society through his autobiography which is the story of a protagonist whose community and family face the discriminations meekly.

The story speaks the agony of the son of a keep who is consumed only by the wild lust of the upper caste men. The sorrow of the story stirs the social infrastructure whose ideology is based on the consciousness of the social being. He brings the attention of the readers towards injustices of the landlords which are sanctioned by the social system. The sanctioned humiliations snatch the essence of the lives of the women of dalit and poor communities. He writes that “every time the dominant classes attack and exploit the weak, they violet their women. The sexual exploits of the men among the wicked exploiters draw legitimacy from their authority, wealth, society, culture and religion. But what is of the exploited woman? She has to carry the rape in her womb. That rape has to be borne, fed and reared. And this rape acquires and lives a life. My autobiography holds in the agony of such a life. My experiences are my words. What will remain there if you take experience away from a life? A living corpse”.(Limbale, xxiv) He accurately explains the innocent lives which are the victims of the social agonies and these agonies are by the caste. Caste never goes off though it is tried to conceal. The whole life is controlled or enclosed by the caste. The annihilation of the caste system can be possible by denouncing religion and this autobiography interprets this.

The dalits have their humiliations due to poverty, untouchability, illiteracy, ignorance and superstitions. Limbale faces everything but lives the harder life than the untouchables or dalits. He is exploited or suffered not only by the upper caste exploiters but also from the ‘exploited dalits’ and it is due to his being *Akkarmashi*. He is doubly oppressed human being. This is not the story but the stories within story of the struggled reality of the socio-culturally broken family. The stories within story are of Limbale himself, his mother Masamai, his grandmother Santabai, Chandamai, his step-sisters and brothers, poor people of the community and those who help them from the community.

### **Agonies of Masamai, Santabai and Sisters:**

The poverty-stricken reality, unhygienic atmosphere, ignorance, illegitimacy, superstitious mentality, crimes and quarrels have been represented through the dalit autobiographies. But the surroundings and directionless lives in autobiography let to contemplate the readers. This becomes so pathetic when the reader reads pitiful conditions of Masamai, Santabai, Chandamai, Dada (Jamadar), Nagi, Nirmi, Bani, Pami, Suni and Indira. The lives of these innocent people, cursed by the destiny, have been proceeded in the massive social infrastructure of impoverished reality. These lives are ‘like the maggots living in the garbage’ (Mulate, 185). These people have the strong affinity with each other because of their agonies are same.

The story of Masamai stirs the sensitive minds because she has to face the unbearable and unimagined bleak reality. Vitthal Kamble, her husband, abandons her keeping three sons with him. He abandons her on the strong suspicion of the illegitimate relationships with landlord Hanmanta Patil. Vitthal and Masamai work in the farm of Hanmanta. After Itthal's abandonment she lives with Hanmanta Patil as a keep but he also leaves her when she becomes pregnant by him. He leaves her because he wants to maintain his dignity and prestige in society. He wants to keep his identity safe instead of taking care of the life of Masamai. She enters into the hell of struggles. The struggles and agonies never end in her life. She again lives with Yeshwanta Patil as his keep. She gives birth to eight children by him. She has to live with the drunkard people in the *Maharwada*, has to face the illicit and lustful touches and contacts of the people who consider her as a prostitute. Her mind always breaks every day. The most shocking is that Yeshwanta Patil also leaves her but uses her as his commodity thereafter. Limbale sets fire in the minds of the readers by interpreting the psychological condition of his mother who lives her life by tearing her chastity and essence of life by the cruel social system.

Santabai, Limbale's grandmother, also lives her broken and abandoned life. She also has been left by her husband by the reason that she only gives the birth to daughters. He wanted his sons but it is not possible by her. In her abandoned life she has to work as a sweeper in the village. She works with honesty. Instead of blaming the sorrows, she courageously fights against her destiny. She has to take care of her daughter Masamai, Chandamai, Jamadar and grandsons and granddaughters. She works hard still she has to eat the food prepared by the grains collected from the cow dung. It is indeed a stigma to the so-called great culture that a human being has to collect the food from cow dung. It is the tragedy of the society that in spite of the hardwork, one has to be deprived of the food. She also takes care of Jamadar whose she is a keep. He is not of her caste and religion but takes his care honestly as her blood relative. She also faces quarrels and conflicts with him many times in a day still prefer to love each other and it is her compromise in the life. The struggling women with the broken destiny exhibit the supreme example of compromise and commitment to love each other who themselves are the shelter in the difficult situations of life.

Though Masamai and Santabai are abandoned and treated cruelly by their husbands, they set an example of the humanity in the so-called civilized society. They nurse their husbands and cry by drowning deeply for their demise. The husbands had left them by the meaningless reasons still they show the affinity with them and it is the supreme example of humanity that has been learnt in society that itself treated them inhumanely. Limbale, his mother and Santabai have to suffer the tremendous psychological trauma when Itthal Kamble's (Limbale's father) mother confesses that she was responsible for Masamai's abandonment by Itthal. She tells by looking at sisters and Limbale that "All of you should have, in fact, been born in my house. Had that happened my house would have been really complete. It is all disrupted because I was vulnerable to people's gossip. I am responsible for the whole trouble. I am the culprit".(page, 69). This confession shatters all and they become totally broken because only one suspicious mind and suspicious gossip had destructed their

essence of life. This gives a lesson to the readers that the prejudiced minds always become calamity for the families.

### **The Nature of Agony and Anger in Limbale's Life:**

This autobiography is the deep contemplation over the birth, caste, religion, adultery, illegitimacy and its consequences. This also narrates the factors which are responsible for the agonies of the life of dalits. So he candidly states that "I have put the life I have lived as an untouchable, as a half caste and as an impoverished man" (Limbale, i). It means that he has decided the order of his agonies and sorrows. He puts forth his agonies through the narration of his illegitimate birth, untouchability and poverty.

Limbale considers his illegitimate birth as 'the first factor responsible for his agony' (Meshram, 87). The Indian social system and culture give the recognition to any birth when it is taken place with the label of any caste. It does not consider the birth pure or respected if it is through the illegitimate relationships though a mother is innocent in this regard and she is a victim of the lust of upper caste people. The cultural politics of the society in this autobiography is that it does not accept the illegitimate children as one on the basis of humanity with a question of purity offered by the Shastras to upper castes. Even the lower caste people also are very stubborn and prejudiced in this case. Limbale broods over the condition of children who live unknown, unheard and depressed life though they are not responsible for their birth.

Limbale's illegitimate birth always haunts and disturbs him. He has to face humiliating experiences every time everywhere in the village and schools. He suffers a lot when the school teacher humiliates him while filling up the freeship form. The teacher asks his father's name and when he tells his father's name the whole class and teacher himself laugh at him. He also reminds the incidence of the Sarpanch (Village Chief) who also denies signing over the freeship form. He reminds that "I went to the sarpanch with seven or eight other boys for his signature on freeship application form. The village chief signed everyone's form, except mine. I was annoyed".(Limbale, 59). His agony and annoying minds lets contemplate him that "can anybody guarantee that he is the offspring of the father whose name is added to his name? Has anyone seen who sowed his seed? Has anyone seen the intercourse of his parents that resulted in his birth?". (Page, 59).

Untouchability is the second responsible factor for the agonies and doomed fate in this autobiography. Untouchability is the blot on the Indian society though it has the sanction by the religion. The Indian society offers legacy of the caste to the children only by the father's caste according to the religious norms. But Limbale has become dalit by the caste of his mother though his father belongs to the upper caste. This untouchability brings the series of sorrows and humiliations in the lives of dalit people. The discriminative society has crushed many generations of dalit communities by the name of caste and kept dalits unprivileged up to many years. This autobiography again narrates that the demon of untouchability is not practiced by upper castes only but by the lower caste people also discriminate among themselves. Casteism is also found in the story that the *Mahar, Chamar*

(Cobbler) and *Matang* (all are dalits) discriminate among themselves as one upper and other lower. Limbale has clearly pointed out this and considers this as the factor of agony for dalits.

He becomes annoyed and mentally disturbed when he observes untouchability among the untouchable communities. He reminds his experience of playing with his village friends Arjya who belongs to Mang (Untouchable) community. He writes that “Shantamai shouted, why do you play with that boy? Is there no one else in the whole village to play with? Don’t give him water in that vessel. If he touches it, he’ll defile it. Go away”. (page-20). She again warns him that, “if you play any more with the Mang boys, I will stop feeding you. You can then go to Mangwada. Are you born from the seed of a Mang that you keep their company”.(page-20). This incidence clarify that only the upper caste people do not discriminate but it is also the practice among the untouchable castes also and it gives tremendous agonies to the child mind of Limbale.

He also throws light on the discriminative mindsets of the teachers who treat differently with the upper caste students and dalits. The incidence of the school trip deeply hurts his mind and of readers also when he narrates the treatment of the teacher with both community students. He reminds that “The Wani and Brahmin boys played kabbadi. Being marked as Mahars 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. Play over, we settled down to eat. Boys and girls from the high castes like Wani, Brahmin, Marwari, Muslim, Maratha, Teli, fishermen, goldsmiths and all the teachers, about hundred or so sat in a circle under a banyan tree. We, the Mahar boys and girls, were asked to sit under another tree. The high-caste ones said a prayer before eating, which didn’t make any sense to us.” (Page, 2)

The untouchability is deeply rooted in the minds of Indian people. There is the superiority complex among the both touchable and untouchable castes who themselves are recognized as dalits. Limbale from his childhood has been disturbed by the treatments of the Barber and tea shop owner. He thinks that the Barber himself is the dalit or untouchable person but he considers himself superior to Mahar and Mang people. He narrates Barber’s treatment that “he shouted, Don’t stand here. I am not going to shave your head. I showed him my money in order to convince him. A customer from different village who was getting his hair cut felt some sympathy for me. He asked me to sit down and take my turn. At that the barber, Ishunath, got wild, ‘He is a Mahar. Let him go’. How could this barber, who used to shave buffaloes in the village, refuse to shave my head?”(page-22).

The third factor responsible for the agonies of dalits is poverty. The poverty is hereditary for dalits. The poverty-stricken reality of dalits is due to the Chaturvarna system that has brought the severe casteism in the society. The dalits are considered as the slaves and born for the service of upper caste people only. They had not the social, economical, political and educational rights. They were deprived of the right to education because religion has denied education. The *Smritis*, *Puranas* and *Shastras* have codified that if the education is taken by the dalits will harm the religion and religion will be in danger. The several

generations of the dalits have been spent the lives in the service of the upper castes. While serving the upper castes, they had not the proper and appropriate provision of earning and they had to live to feed their stomach only. It continued till many centuries. They have to work the menial works due to the lack of the education. They do not possess the land and property and have to live on whatever the upper caste provide them. Due to their lifelong poverty-stricken conditions they are humiliated cruelly by the every facet of the society.

He has observed that the dalits are not capable to bear the expenditures on the education and clothing of their children. He looks at other children and psychologically becomes disturbed by comparing other boys. But his mind always compromises and it gives strength to make adjustments. So, he tells the experiences of hostel where he lives with his room-mate Mallya that “we had all entered the college together with seventy generations of the utter poverty behind us. Mallya’s maternal uncle gave his old clothes. Mallya gave me a pair of trousers and a shirt from that lot. We had these altered by the tailor. But we had to use those clothes as they covered our nakedness at least”.(page, 83).

So the dalits in autobiography are the victims of fate that they took birth in the lower castes and unfortunate though born as human being. Their agonies are due to the cultural and religious norms those are purely based on discriminations. These discriminations are so hard that it cannot be possible everywhere in the world because the Indian society has many castes within castes and they never live as an equal. The dalit communities are discriminated by the caste, impoverished economic conditions, powerless political conditions and divided gender. Each stage of their lives is full of the agonies and they face it courageously and sometimes they have to be militant. Limbale’s autobiography is the complete encyclopedia of the dalit lives which have been struggling in agonies and anger.

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