

## DALIT AUTOBIOGRAPHY – DALIT LIFE AND CASTE DISCRIMINATION IN SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE’S OUTCASTE

G.D Suresh<sup>1</sup> & Dr. G Umamaheswar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar & Assistant Professor, Department of P G Studies in English, Government Arts College (Autonomous), Chitradurga, Karnataka, India

<sup>2</sup>Research Guide & Associate Professor, Department of English, Vijayanagara College, Hosapete (Affiliated to VSKU), Karnataka, India

Received: 15 Mar 2023

Accepted: 26 Mar 2023

Published: 31 Mar 2023

### ABSTRACT

One important subgenre of Dalit writing that offers first-hand accounts of caste-based persecution and resistance is Dalit autobiography. The *Outcaste (Akkarmashi)* by Sharan Kumar Limbale, a landmark work in Dalit autobiography, is the subject of this essay. This study attempts to illustrate the importance of Dalit autobiographies in portraying the sufferings of the disadvantaged and opposing systematic caste discrimination by looking at the theme components, narrative style, and political and social influence of Limbale's work.

**KEYWORDS:** Dalit Literature, Outcaste, Sharan Kumar Limbale, Dalit Autobiography, Social Justice

### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of autobiographies by Dalits The late 20th century saw an increase in social and political consciousness among Dalit populations, which is when Dalit autobiography first became popular. The Dalit Panther Movement and the work of social reformers like B.R. Ambedkar came together during this period. Autobiographies that chronicled the experiences and hardships of Dalits became more prevalent as a result of the socio-political environment that provided them with a platform to advocate for themselves.

Dalit autobiography is a literary genre in which members of oppressed communities more especially, those classified as members of India's 'Dalit' or 'Untouchable' caste tell about their unique experiences and life narratives. Not only are these autobiographies personal accounts, but they also provide as a window into the larger socio-political issues that Dalits face. They provide a genuine voice to the daily realities of Dalit people by giving a first-hand description of the oppression, prejudice, and structural obstacles they encounter.

Autobiographies by Dalits are significant because they may question established myths, highlight injustices, and describe living on the periphery of society. It acts as a means of identity assertion and resistance, challenging historical silences and distortions.

Colonial and Prior to Independence Periods Dalit reformers and intellectuals made early attempts to record their experiences, but discrimination and the social hierarchy were firmly established throughout British colonial authority. Although not exclusively auto biographers, individuals such as Jyotirao Phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar established the foundation for the expression of Dalit experiences and complaints. In his works like "Thoughts on Linguistic States,"

Ambedkar offered a critical examination of caste and its effects.

Age of Post-Independence- The Dalit movement's influence and the social reform initiatives started by Dr. Ambedkar and other leaders contributed to the increased awareness of caste issues following India's independence in 1947. Dalit autobiographies became more popular at this time and were a potent societal criticism weapon. Some writers, such as Sharan Kumar Limbale, started telling their personal tales in a way that brought attention to the structural aspects of their challenges, going beyond a simple personal complaint to a more comprehensive socio-political critique.

Dalit autobiographies have developed further in the last few decades, mirroring shifts in social dynamics and the increasing prominence of Dalit perspectives in popular discourse. In this period, the subjects that are investigated have become more varied; a number of writers have tackled intersectional problems including gender, class, and regional differences within the Dalit population.

## **HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF DALIT AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

Historical Background of the Dalit Experience Historically situated at the base of the Indian caste system, the Dalit minority has experienced structural subjugation and marginalization in society. Dalits experienced extreme prejudice, financial hardship, and social exclusion in the past. They sometimes had to work at low or demeaning jobs and were shut out of mainstream social

The Dalit Experience in Historical Context, Historically situated at the base of the Indian caste system, the Dalit minority has experienced structural subjugation and marginalization in society. Dalits experienced extreme prejudice, financial hardship, and social exclusion in the past. They suffered exclusion from mainstream social, educational, and religious norms and were frequently forced into menial and demeaning jobs. Dalit autobiographies arose under the backdrop of historical Dalit persecution.

Significant Persons and Movements, Dalit experiences were shaped in large part by influential individuals such as B.R. Ambedkar, who fought for social justice and Dalit rights. Dalit authors and activists were able to express their stories because of his support for social reform, political representation, and education. The writing of autobiographical works that offered political and personal insights into the Dalit experience was further sparked by the Dalit literary movement, which gained traction in the 1960s and 1970s.

Being first-hand narratives of the systematic oppression that the Dalit group in India faces, Dalit autobiographies are an important part of Dalit literature. *Outcaste* by Sharan Kumar Limbale is an important work in this genre that offers a direct and intense look at prejudice based on caste. Published in 1984, *Outcaste* portrays the larger socio-political issues that afflict Dalits in addition to the author's personal problems. The article examines Limbale's *Outcaste*'s main ideas, storytelling devices, and literary significance in relation to Dalit autobiography.

A prominent genre of autobiography evolved among Dalits in response to the demand for first-person accounts that shed light on the experiences of oppression based on caste. Dalit autobiographies provide us a glimpse into the life of those who are caste disadvantaged, in contrast to typical autobiographies that frequently mirror prevailing social views. From early works that concentrated on personal hardships, the genre has developed into more complex narratives that tackle systemic problems and shared experiences.

The nature of caste discrimination: Social exclusion is one of the main ways that caste discrimination manifests itself in Outcaste. In Limbale's story, different incidents involving social exclusion on account of caste are related to him and his group. Denying them access to fundamental social interactions and services, including temples and public areas designated for upper-caste people is a clear example of this ostracism. According to Limbale, social exclusion reinforces a community's marginalization by having an impact on not only individuals but whole groups. It is evident how widespread caste-based discrimination is and how it affects social integration when people are denied entrance to public areas and social events.

Humiliation and verbal abuse, Another important aspect of caste inequality that Outcaste portrays is verbal abuse. A lot of the insults and disparaging remarks spoken about Dalits are detailed in Limbale's testimony. This verbal abuse is a tactic used to dehumanize people based on their social status and maintain caste hierarchies.

The use of derogatory language and epithets not only mirrors social perceptions about Dalits but also feeds the cycle of discrimination and humiliation. In addition to demonstrating how this type of violence adds to the larger experience of caste discrimination, Limbale's story effectively conveys the emotional and psychological effects of such torture.

Limbale outlines physical violence as a glaring example of caste prejudice in Outcaste. The autobiography describes incidents of Dalit physical violence at the hands of upper-caste people. Social structures are upheld and opposition is suppressed by the use of violence.

The physical abuse Limbale endured serves as a stark reminder of the seriousness of caste-based prejudice and the extent people would go to in order to preserve their social mores. Such violence's savagery draws attention to how caste discrimination is systematic and affects Dalits in India' physical and physical health

Employment and Economic Opportunities in Economic Exploitation Dalits frequently encounter major obstacles while trying to get work and other financial possibilities, demonstrating the extent to which caste prejudice persists in the workplace. In Outcaste, Limbale writes on his family's financial struggles brought on by their caste. The difficulties encompass restricted opportunities for lucrative employment and abusive working environments. Limbale's story demonstrates the relationship between caste-based prejudice and economic disadvantage. Dalits' ability to get beyond the poverty line is restricted and is reinforced by their lack of access to opportunities and resources.

## **UNETHICAL WORK PRACTICES**

The narrative provided by Limbale further clarifies the mistreatment of Dalits in the workplace. The systemic exploitation ingrained in the caste system is shown in his description of the difficult and sometimes dehumanizing working circumstances that Dalits are subjected to. Due to caste-based discrimination, these exploitative activities are a direct effect and add to Dalits' overall socioeconomic disadvantage.

## **DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION**

Education Access One important topic that Outcaste addresses is educational prejudice. The story of Limbale draws attention to the difficulties Dalits have in obtaining high-quality education. These obstacles include institutionalized biases in educational institutions, insufficient infrastructure, and societal prejudices.

Limbale's personal battle to complete his education in spite of many barriers serves as a metaphor for the larger struggles Dalits have when trying to further their education. The prejudice encountered in school environments upholds the caste order and the socioeconomic divide between castes.

Through Limbale's story, systemic prejudices in the educational system are shown in addition to access concerns. In addition to the curriculum's frequent exclusion of or misrepresentation of Dalit viewpoints, these prejudices also show themselves in the discriminatory actions taken by educators and administrators. Limbale's experiences with discrimination at school emphasize the necessity of institutional changes to remove prejudices and guarantee fair access to education for everyone, regardless of caste.

## **CONCLUSION**

Sharan Kumar A strong and unwavering depiction of caste oppression may be seen in Limbale's *Outcaste*. The autobiography provides an in-depth understanding of the systemic structure of caste oppression by examining social exclusion, verbal and physical abuse, physical violence, economic exploitation, and discrimination in education. In addition to illustrating the negative effects of caste discrimination on individuals, Limbale's story emphasizes the necessity of societal and structural change to overcome the system's ingrained injustices.

## **REFERENCES**

1. *Limbale, Sharan Kumar. Outcaste (Akkarmashi). Translated by Santosh Bhoomkar, Oxford University Press, 2003.*
2. *Rege, Sharmila. Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonios. Zubaan, 2006.*
3. *Zelliot, Eleanor. From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement. Manohar Publishers, 2005.*
4. *Guru, Gopal. Caste and Democratic Politics in India. Seagull Books, 2008.*

