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DEPICTION OF MORALITY COMPLEX IN *THE OUTCASTE* BY SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE

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ABSTRACT:

This paper aims at delineation of the interrogation of social codifications and conventions in the name of morality and immorality. This is the basic issue associated with the human existence in the society that compels him to feel isolated and degraded. The present narrative of the self by a Dalit writer Sharan Kumar Limbale entitled Outcaste puts a question mark on the construct of morality. The author of this most talked about autobiography experiences alienation and a sense of rootless existence as he does not fulfill the criteria of morality. Since childhood he feels a morality complex inside. He used many tropes that designate his Dalithood, the hunger and the anger, which are the basics of Dalit consciousness.



KEYWORDS: Complexity, codification, convention, hunger morality, alienation.

INTRODUCTION :

Sharankumar Limbale is one the leading figures in Dalit Literary Movement. He is an poet, writer and critic of Marathi literature. He was born on June 6, 1956, and his schooling took place in his small village from Kolhapur District. He has to his credits 40 books in Marathi and most of his books are translated in English. The present Book from the literary the genre, autobiography titled *Outcaste* (2003) in English was also translated from Marathi by Santosh Bhumkar. This is one of the master pieces of Dalit Literature in English translation which is an emerging body of literature from the arena of Indian Writing in English today.

Nowadays, autobiography has become an outstanding and distinctive form of literature. Actually literature is an outcome of synthesized thoughts, ideas, views, opinions, perspectives and emotions of a writer. It is realization of his experience. Any individual, sensitive and sensible, always strives to express himself in different ways. The autobiography provides a tremendous scope to satiate his desire to unfold the world within him or her. Thus the autobiography helps fulfill the natural urge of self revelation. In general, writing an autobiography gives the man an opportunity to tell one's own life story at full length in one's own words.

The writer shares his life experience with the reader through the recording of significant past memories narrated in a coherent sequence. He depicts how he created his life in the manner he chose to mould it through his struggle, tears, ups and downs, sufferings, sorrows, trials and tribulations in his life

and surrounding. The autobiographer presents himself through autobiography. He creates a meaningful outline out of his past experiences through introspection and self analysis. These past experiences states much about Who is he? What did he do? How did he achieve his goal? What obstacles he had to face? How did he overcome the challenges? The writer's answer to these questions involves him in the process of self realization and self unfoldment.

The writer becomes aware of his true self before actually writing an autobiography. In other words, an autobiography, in fact, is born when the writer becomes conscious of his true self. An autobiography makes the unseen world transparent wherein the writer's subjective personality becomes visible to others. In English literature, the genre of autobiography has been defined in different ways. Linda Anderson rightly remarks the same and says, "An autobiography is a public exposure of a private self." (Anderson 07) Autobiography is an outstanding form of introspection and self revelation. Self accounting and self reflection are integral parts of autobiography. Liberating the writer's personality and throwing a great search light on his life are the objectives an autobiographer strives to accomplish. Autobiographies facilitate the writer to present a living person by creating a logical sequence of his past experiences. Richard G. Lillard makes it clear. He says "By making original observation from his vintage points, an autobiographer makes himself seem to be a living person. By using reference points of base period that he has found in his particular environment of time and space, he makes history come alive around himself." (Lillard 01) Self analysis enables the autobiographer to find the essence of one's life beyond the temporal existence. This helps the writer to transcend the historical circumstances. The writer's detachment and objectivity are needed for creation of a truthful autobiography.

The Outcaste by Limbale appeared on scene in English translation in 2003. Before, its appearance in English language, the autobiography in its original Marathi language became the most trustworthy, representative voice of Dalits in Indian Society. It has carved a special place for Sharankumar Limbale as an author, an artist of first rank caliber. Through the autobiography he laid bare the life of the depressed classes in the society.

The Outcaste depicts the story of the whole section of a Dalit group addressed to be the low caste people through the narrative of life and experiences of the author, Sharan Kumar Limbale. A sense of disillusion and alienation is predominant in the mind of the author's recalling his birth and upbringing. Hanmanta Limbale, a village Patil, by virtue of his caste and socio-economic power establishes physical relationship with Sharankumar's mother –Masamai. He sexually exploits her and deserts her even before the birth of Sharankumar. This misconduct of the village Patil was socially accepted because of his high caste but the untouchable Masamai and her child was not accepted by the society. This was the great paradox generated by the caste system which made Sharankumar live an ostracized life full of poverty, hunger, exploitation and so on.

Towards the concluding part of the autobiography, the author has left a very poignant, basic question unanswered by the establishment, the question of morality. He writes: Why has this complex of moral establishment been created at all? Who created morality and immorality? Why? if my birth and life are being branded as immoral, what morality do I follow? (Devy xxiii) At the very beginning of the autobiography, Sharankumar narrates the wicked paradoxical notion of the caste system which generated differences and tagged low castes with negative notions like untouchables, wrong doers, and bastards. He exposes the contrasts and contradictions created by the caste system through his own example. He says 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. I am an akkarmashi (half-caste). I am condemned, branded illegitimate... My father had privileges by virtue of his birth granted to him by the caste system. His relationship with my mother was respected by society, whereas, my mother is untouchable and poor. (Limbale ix) The caste system not only proved him illegitimate but also destroyed his identity. In Indian society, the grip of the caste system is so tight that it cannot be unscrewed from the minds of the people. It is a wicked ruse of the caste mechanism that it not only divided society into castes and sub-castes but also created caste hierarchy into different castes. The strict observance of the caste ties made Indian people more caste

conscious and as a result of this each caste and sub-caste attempts to maintain its supremacy over the other caste. The wicked mechanism of the caste system engaged them in a tussle of maintaining their status at a given place by strictly following the customary practices and predetermined restrictions of the caste system.

The dominant group of people had created such a social system which gives meaning to one's existence only in relation to one's caste. The caste system does not allow intermarriage. Any attempt of endogamy is unlawful and punishable. The same tragedy took place with Sharankumar. He suffered the twofold humiliation of being an untouchable and being a half caste. On the one hand, he fell the victim of his father's domination and on the other hand, he fell the prey of the intact and rigid norms of the caste system. He was neither accepted by his mother's caste-Mahars nor by his father's caste - the Patils. He got humiliated at the hands of both the high and low castes. This double victimization of Sharankumar was result of the malevolence of the caste system. Consequently, his double victimization inscribed a permanent mark on his psyche which ultimately developed sense of inferiority and 'Otherness' in him.

He narrates his predicament. The high caste people look upon my community as untouchable, while my own community humiliated me, calling me 'akkarmashi'. This humiliation was like being stabbed over and over again. I have always lived with the burden of inferiority. (Limbale x) In the caste ridden society, the force of discrimination manifests itself in various forms at various places including schools, wells, temples, and other places of socio-religious gatherings. Sharankumar started facing it right from his childhood. He narrates his early school life experience where he observed premature shades of discrimination between the high and low caste children. It was the beginning of the malevolence of the caste tyranny which followed him throughout his life. He recalls the event 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 Bunyan tree. We the Mahar boys and girls were asked to sit under another tree. The high-caste ones said a prayer before eating, which did not make any sense to us... The high caste boys and girls were eating together. The girls sat close to the teachers. They were all chatting and we sat like owls watching them. (Limbale 2-3)

The school is a learning place where human values are supposed to be inculcated in the young minds of the children but Sharankumar experienced that the seeds of discrimination were sown right at the school by his teachers and classmates. His teachers abused him by calling 'You, son of a bitch' (Limbale 4) and his classmates insulted him by calling a 'Mahar'. Sharankumar experienced dishonour at school, village temple and even at the village river. He experienced the caste tyranny even in the school. He tells that low caste boys were not allowed to sit with high caste pupils. They had to sit at the threshold amidst footwears. He recalls humiliation experienced at school Our school where the pupils come from high castes like Wani and Brahmin, was run in the temple of Ithoba. The girls sat in a separate section. Further, down the temple hall sat boys and girls from the cobbler community, and then at the entrance gate sat we, the Mahar boys and girls. (Limbale 4) The delicate and vulnerable psyche of the low caste children was consciously tortured by inflicting degraded life experiences on them in the name of the caste system. Right from the early age, they were restricted to the thresholds and forced to be among the footwears.

In a general sense, children are considered as beautiful flowers in the God's garden but the caste system had never considered low caste children like flowers. They were left open to grow up in the company of "garbage heaps, dogs and pigs." (Limbale 5) They were thrown into the dungeon of ignorance and insanity. They were exposed to the outer world just like "the garbage thrown out." (Limbale 7) Sharankumar experienced all this persecution and realized the worthless existence of the low castes. Sharankumar suffered the burns of casteism right from his childhood. He experienced everything which a dalit boy was bound to suffer in caste ridden Indian society. He could not experience love, comfort, care and warmth in his life. This persistent negation and hatred was the result of the malevolence of the caste tyranny and high caste power politics. The low castes had been categorized as useless beings and thrown at the lowest rung of the four-fold social order. The Dalits were physically strong but socioeconomically weak. Their moral courage was intentionally damaged by the invariable

physical attacks and socio-religious restrictions. They were frequently insulted, demoralized and even attacked for no valid reason. These insults and attacks were the sources of self satisfaction and proving domination for the high caste people but, on the contrary, they severely affected the minds and hearts of the low castes. They were compelled to live under fear of attacks and death.

Due to their caste restrictions, they were bound to bear it meekly. Sharankumar underwent such an atrocious attack by the high caste boys' from his school. He narrates the incident During the short interval the other boys threw stones at me and teased me calling aloud 'Mahar'! That made me anxious. One day a group of boys crowded around me like a whirlwind. Mallya had already escaped. One after another they advanced towards me like charging bulls. I felt suffocated. It was like the sky pressing down on me. Ramya Jalote hit me in the face. My mouth opened, gasping for breath. After that the boys run away. For many days after this event, whenever I saw Ramya Jalote, I was scared." (Limbale 7)

The Dalits were lawfully pigeonholed individuals made to undergo innumerable atrocities at the hands of the high caste people. The caste system had stamped them as wrongdoers and attached all negative notions to them. They were always under suspicion for any mishap and were brutally beaten up without undertaking any investigation. The same kind of atrocities and murders are still being continued. This is the worst example of the malevolence of the caste system. Sharankumar recalls the violent attack on his community by the high caste Patils. He says;

Whenever an animal in the village died, the villagers grew annoyed. They consider the Maharwada responsible for it. They tied us to a pole and beat us like animals. They accused us for having poisoned the animal. Our women and children cried and shrieked. All the men in the Maharwada were very badly beaten. The village then ostracized the Maharwada for a few days. We wouldn't get any work on the farms. We were denied any provision at the shops though we had the money and were ready to pay. We had reached a dead end. Such humiliation was agonizing.(Limbale 78)

CONCLUSION

In Indian society, the caste system had crushing effect on low castes under who live under lumber of inferiority, weakness, ignorance and high caste domination. The wicked system offered every right to the high castes with which they took everything good for them and left all filthy for the low castes. They persecuted low castes at different level and in different forms. They had created local hierarchies to dehumanize Dalits. At the same time they invented the social codes that favour the privileged sections in the society in the name of god and morality, spirituality which are the abstract concept that have devastating effects on the lives of the lay man in the society.

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