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Shadows of Caste: Conflict And Discrimination in Dalit Life (With Special Reference to the Outcaste – Akkarmashi)

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ABSTRACT

Caste serves as a profound, lifelong stigma that affects every aspect of Dalit life, not only as a social order. The article "Shadows of Caste: Conflict and Discrimination in Dalit Life" examines the various ways that structural injustice, exclusion, and humiliation impact Dalit life in India. The study, which centers on Sharankumar Limbale's The Outcaste (Akkarmashi), explores the psychological, emotional, and social traumas that caste-based discrimination inflicts on those compelled to dwell on the edges. Limbale's story serves as an unvarnished lens through which one may observe how caste permeates the fundamentals of existence, including childhood innocence, familial ties, educational settings, interpersonal connections, and the fundamental need for dignity.

The argument takes place in two interrelated dimensions: the intimate, visceral experiences described by Limbale in his autobiography, and the larger, social patterns of caste conflict and discrimination. The article illustrates how caste violence is both a personal tragedy and a social historical consequence by combining the political and the personal. According to the study, Dalit autobiographies serve as potent testimonials of resistance, memory, and truth in addition to being life tales. They force readers to face the living reality of individuals who suffer the brutality of caste and show how caste is becoming more and more entrenched in daily life.

KEYWORDS: Caste Conflict, Caste Discrimination, Dalit Autobiography, Social Exclusion, Caste Violence

In India, caste continues to exist as a structured, dynamic system that determines a person's access to opportunities, respect, and a sense of belonging rather than as a fading relic of the past. For Dalits, caste permeates every aspect of life from birth, influencing everyday activities, family dynamics, societal interactions, and the pursuit of identity. Caste does not disappear by legislation, despite the Indian Constitution's pledges of equality. Social memory, commonplace encounters, genetic biases, and physical segregation all contribute to its survival. Dalit autobiographical writing becomes an important form of truth-telling in this environment of dwindling liberties and growing silence. It compels the country to face the facts it frequently rejects. One of the most compelling autobiographies is Sharankumar Limbale's The Outcaste (Akkarmashi), which depicts the shared suffering of Dalits throughout generations as well as the struggle of one person's struggle.

Born to a Dalit mother and a landowner father from a dominant caste who refuses to acknowledge him, Limbale's narrative begins with a shattered sense of self. Poverty, hunger, humiliation, and ongoing insecurity all influence the narrative. However, it is a reflection of the systematic marginalization of a group rather than only a particular story. Readers are introduced to the many forms of prejudice and caste struggle that shape Dalit existence through Limbale's memories conflicts that unfold both within the self and in the outside world. The autobiography demonstrates that caste is both an internal burden passed down through the generations and an exterior system of oppression. Through his experiences, the social significance of caste is revealed, showing how hardship, violence, and exclusion have become accepted as commonplace occurrences.

The unadulterated animosity Dalits encounter from ruling caste groups is where the conflict starts. Limbale describes a number of instances when Dalits are made to feel inferior, including being refused access to water sources, being made fun of for their caste, being physically segregated in settlements, and being degraded in public areas. Much of this animosity manifests in commonplace ways, such as gestures, words, looks, refusals, and silences, as opposed to overt physical aggression. These continuous yet subtle reminders are effective social control systems. Limbale illustrates how casteism persists in everyday encounters, discussions, educational settings, and daily routines in addition to structures. Growing up in such a society, a Dalit youngster internalizes feelings of inferiority and dread before realizing the reasons behind them.

In Limbale's narrative, institutional discrimination plays an equally important role. Teachers reinforce caste hierarchies by making disparaging remarks or treating Dalit children differently; schools become places where Dalit children are marked and controlled. The lack of employment possibilities perpetuates a cycle of poverty and labor throughout generations. The attitudes of employees who discriminate against and abuse Dalit candidates sometimes perpetuate the same inequalities within government organizations that are intended to empower the marginalized. Limbale's society shows that caste-based oppression endures because it is deeply ingrained in the functioning of institutions that are supposed to be neutral. Caste awareness has an important effect on the way the administrative, educational, and social welfare systems function.

Family structures are another setting where conflict arises. Limbale's birth itself is a representation of the conflict between castes. He represents the collision of two unequal worlds, having been born to a Dalit mother and a superior caste man. His feeling of belonging is shaped by his father's rejection of him, which leaves him with a permanent wound. The family is treated differently by the Dalit community as well since they are related to an upper-caste man. Conflict arises constantly as a result of this broken identity. Limbale's transitional position between privilege and deprivation, acceptance and rejection, and belonging and exclusion heightens his feeling of unfairness. His simple presence serves as a reminder of the caste system's duplicity, as superior caste men take advantage of Dalit women while rejecting their offspring.

Another dimension of violence is created by the conflicts between Dalit and dominant-caste groups. Limbale's village is a battlefield of power, where dominance is upheld by physical intimidation, cultural authority, and property ownership. Dalits are supposed to obey, serve, and keep quiet. Even small assertions are penalized. The personal story demonstrates how caste functions as a fear-based system that stifles opposition and requires obedience. The ruling castes brutally respond against the Dalit community's attempts to exercise rights over land, water, or honor, reinforcing the idea that the social

order must not be upset. Limbale effectively conveys this conflict by demonstrating how societal peace is an illusion when it is based on uneven foundations.

Conflicts exist within the Dalit community itself, which is an unpleasant but unavoidable reality. Limbale does not romanticize his neighborhood. Rather, he recognizes the inherent hierarchies, jealousies, and divides that exist among marginalized communities. Because caste discrimination produces scarcity—a lack of opportunity, resources, and respect—these conflicts arise. Communities can occasionally turn against their own members under such circumstances. Limbale demonstrates how internal conflicts reflect the psychological harm caused by systemic oppression rather than negating the necessity for unity. A community that is crushed from the outside frequently breaks apart from the inside. However, the greater truth that all Dalits suffer under caste is not lessened by these distinctions.

The psychological struggle that most haunts Limbale in Akkarmashi is the internalized oppression that molds his awareness. The autobiography illustrates how caste permeates the self: the young man fights inferiority, the adult fights to regain dignity, and the child feels humiliation without understanding why. An intense need for acceptance, a want to flee one's birth, and a painful knowledge of being labeled as "other" are all signs of internal struggle. Writing itself becomes an act of healing and assertion as Limbale's path toward self-recognition progresses. He defies the caste system's attempts to silence him by sharing his life story. By reclaiming agency, his words turn individual pain into community witness.

As the narrative develops, it becomes evident that caste strife is a lived pain as well as a societal problem. Limbale employs emotion, language, memory, and the body as grounds of resistance. His narrative speaks for millions of people who go unnoticed while having comparable circumstances. The narrative emphasizes that caste is a system that molds a person's whole emotional universe in addition to being a form of discrimination. Throughout the work, the themes of hunger, humiliation, and desire recur, demonstrating how psychological suffering and material scarcity are intertwined in Dalit existence. Akkarmashi emphasizes how caste functions concurrently through denial of humanity, exclusion from spaces, and lack of resources.

Akkarmashi and other Dalit autobiographies play an important role in contemporary Indian literature. They record history that is obscured by official narratives. They oppose sanitized interpretations of Indian society that ignore inequity and praise advancement. The political power of human narrative is embodied in Limbale's work; speaking the truth from the margins turns into a kind of resistance. His writings force readers to reconsider the systems of privilege and discrimination ingrained in Indian society. Dalit life-writing challenges society to address the violence it normalizes by revealing the caste system's workings.

Akkarmashi's study of caste conflict confirms that Dalit experiences are regular results of a systemic system rather than singular occurrences. There is conflict on the street, at home, at school, at work, and even within oneself. Discrimination manifests itself in both overt and covert ways; it can be yelled or whispered, but it is always present. According to Limbale's story, comprehending caste necessitates hearing from people who are affected by it in addition to theoretical information. His story provides a glimpse into a life characterized by suffering as well as fortitude, resiliency, and inventiveness.

In the finale, the writer comes to the conclusion that the tyranny shown in Akkarmashi is not limited to the experiences of Limbale, Maharashtra, or a certain caste. It tells the tale of India's longest-lasting injustice. Reading Dalit memoirs forces one to face a reality that contemporary society frequently attempts to hide: the caste system still forms the foundation of this country. Limbale transforms anguish into witness and quiet into eloquence through his writing. His existence becomes both a chronicle of

persecution and an appeal for change. Even while caste's shadows are far-reaching, the voices emerging from them have the ability to completely change the course of history.

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