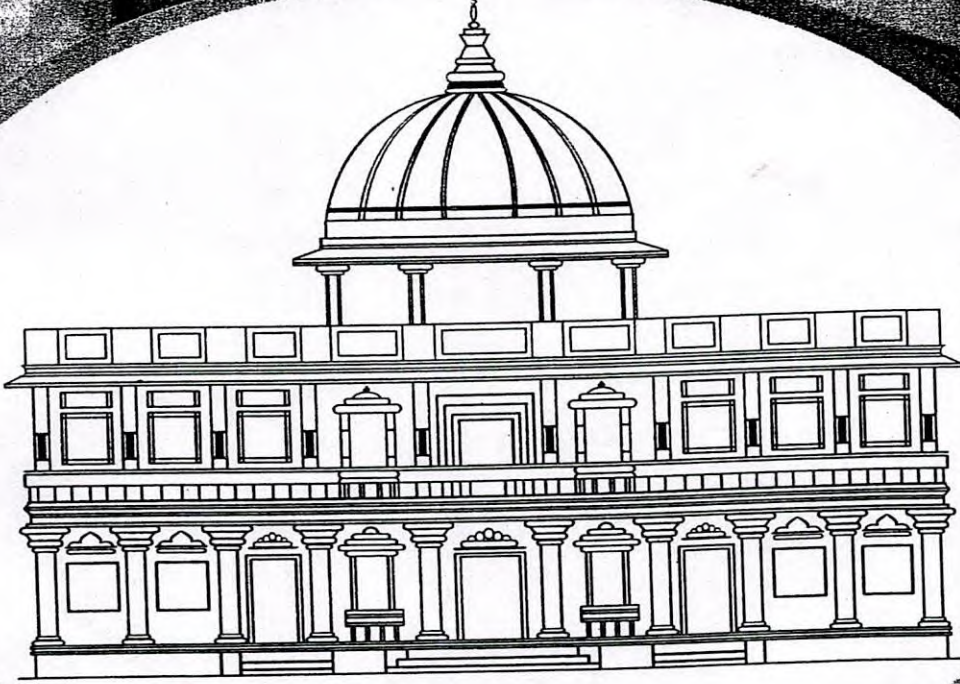


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# The Reflection of Caste Based Indian Society and Culture in Sharankumar Limbale's Memoir entitled 'The Outcaste'

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## Abstract

*The present research paper tries to show the reflection of Dalit oppression and their culture in the caste based Indian Society. The Dalit people were exploited and received ill treatment by the upper caste society which was based on 'Chaturvarnya' social System in pre-independence India. Though they were human beings yet their rights were totally denied by the upper caste people in the form of not allowing the Dalit to enter at certain places and ceremonies. It is the reflection of norms and rules set up for the Dalit to live a life. They were not allowed to raise a voice against the prevailing social division. They were forced to live under grim situations causing the suffocation and suppression of Dalit community. Through the spread of education people like the writer found a new and emancipating way of life. The people of high cast society in that contemporary Indian society lack the humanity and the sympathy about Dalit which was burning issue of that Society.*

**Keywords** - The Dalit People, the Dalit Writing, The Exploitation and Oppression of Dalit People, Casteism, Alienation and Identity.

## Introduction :

Sharankumar Limbale is an outstanding Dalit writer in Marathi literature. His original Marathi memoir entitled 'Akkarmashi' was translated into English as 'The Outcaste' by Santosh Bhoomkar and published in 2003. Sharankumar Limbale is a very famous Marathi writer and critic who wrote the book entitled 'Towards the Aesthetics of Dalit Literature'. The memoir entitled 'The Outcaste' is full of autobiographical elements starting from the memories of childhood to a man searching for his own existence and identity in the conservative and biased Indian society. It is an introspection of his own life suffering from alienation which more hurt him till the end.

In the pre-independence India the Dalit were considered as the untouchable people. Broadly speaking they were illiterate, ignored, downtrodden and ostracized people who were treated worse than animals by the so called upper caste society. They were the victims of customs practiced by the people ruling over the caste based Indian society. They were poverty stricken and basically deprived of their rights as human being. They were also getting inhumanistic treatment by the high caste people. They were denied their rights which made their life full of agony and despair.

The division of people according to the caste was the main reason for the exploitation of the people from

ng the people still they were not able to eat sufficiently. They were deceived by not giving suitable amount of money for their perseverance and work by the ruling people in the divided social system. Another important aspect related to the life of Dalit people was the lack of education which leads to ignorance in their life. Trough the study of characters in this memoir we came to know that there are many uneducated persons and friends of the narrator who have left the education due to the extreme poverty and work for bread and butter. The writer of this memoir Sharankumar Limbale like Dr. Bhasaheb Ambedkar knows the importance of education which has the potential to emancipate the poor people from the rigid shackles tighten around them.

The narrator of the memoir has one question that is of identity and being ostracized by his own society. He suffers from alienation due to knowingly absence of his father. The absence of existence of father in the school documents was a big problem for him which was unanswered and unacceptable according to the norms of the caste. It is the caste discrimination which suffered him a lot. The untouchability was the serious problem of society in the colonial India. An incident in the memoir captures the picture of serving food to the Dalit students by the high caste students without touching to the lower caste students. It appeals to these students and also makes them aware of deliberate social discrimination existed between them and other students. The leftover food was distributed among the Dalit students. These things represent the inner traumas of Dalit people.

The social discrimination was so inhumanistic in this memoir which prevented the Dalit to enter at the public wells and temples. The women belonging to Dalit community were succumbed to the physical hunger of the upper caste people. The narrator's mother Masamai represents such exploitation which have no legal value and accordance as a wife by the upper caste society. The protagonist and the other characters

have been treated as untouchables like their forefathers. They are the victims of caste based society which also made their life miserable and hellish.

Due to the knowledge and education the narrator and his friends became conscious about the ill treatment given to them by a tea shopkeeper as there were different objects placed for Dalits to drink the tea. The unequal treatment given to them at the tea shop raised their voice against the prevailing social system. Though our constitution is based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity still the poor people experienced such kind of ill treatment and denial of their rights as human being. In the wedding ceremony of high caste people the Dalit people were allowed to eat at the end which was the result of prevailing social discrimination of 'Chaturvarnya' social system in the past.

The culture means the way of living. It reflects the life of people. The rituals, customs and Gods are different according to the different castes or the religions. The one question that severely disturbs and surrounds the narrator is the existence of his father. He was struggling hard for getting the identity as a son of Hanmanta Patil. The marriages even in socially divided society are matched with people of either equal caste or religion. The society considers the hero of the memoir as an illegitimate child because the difference between the caste of his mother and father. Here narrator suffers a lot due to the social discrimination existed in that Indian society. This cross-cultural and difference in his parent's caste gave him a new identity as 'The Outcaste' in his own Dalit community. His identity according to caste was not sanctioned by the society. As per the prevailing marriage culture the narrator did face a lot of problems in getting marry with a girl from the Dalit community. His sisters also suffered from the same problem which was baseless and meaningless for the educated people like the narrator. In the period when the British were ruling over India the life of human being was impossible