

## Dehumanization of Dalit: A Critical Study of Sharankumar Limbale's "Akkarmashi"

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### Abstract

Sharankumar Limbale's "Akkarmashi" reflects the social issues like dehumanization, poverty, caste-based discrimination, untouchability, pathetic condition of Masamai, Shantamai, other women and their children, especially Sharan, the protagonist, who faced number of humiliating experiences caught in the dilemma of his belongingness of Mahar or Lingayat. This different social experience has disturbed the protagonist. This leads him to raise many questions, in fact, the series of questions is another key feature of their raised consciousness. Sharan contradicts himself with the blood that is flowing in his body. He is trying to get rid of the self-disgust. "Who am I?" This question makes the hero uneasy. Mahar, Masamai is the mother of the protagonist and his father is *Hanmanta Limbale*. However, since Masamai is the keep of *Hanmanta Limbale*, *Hanmanta Limbale* is not ready to accept the Sharan. Therefore, the question "Who am I? Mahar or Lingayat? Or Lingayat Mahar?" All this is dehumanizing for the Sharan, his family and society.

**Keywords-** dehumanization, poverty, discrimination, untouchability, exclusion, marginalization.

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### Introduction

The question "Can this blood be drained out of my body?", is enough evident to understand the self-degradation. It is nauseating for Sharan. The orthodox society denies the equality and justice for the Sharan. Therefore, Limbale says in the preface, "My existence has been degraded as illegitimate child". If a woman's footsteps go wrong, she becomes an adulteress, however, men continue to enjoy his position in the society. He does not commit adultery. But the woman is treated as adulteress with lustful eyes. Masamai has to take care of the baby born out of extra marital relationship.

The protagonist is disturbed by the extramarital affair between his mother and Patil. Masamai also considers Sharan as stigma on her character. This has forced Sharan to live with his grandmother Shantamai and Dada. Initially he thought that Dada was his grandfather but later on came to know that Dada is Mahmood Dastgir Jamadar. All this makes Sharan uneasy.

Masamai had given birth to Sharan, Ngai, Pami, Nirmi, Vani, Suni, Indira, Shrikant and Sidram. But each one of them was born of different father. When Sharan found that Ngai is flirting with Patil's son, Nandu, he started beating her. This his attempt to control and maintain his social dignity. However, Masamai rejected his

claim to control Nagi. The narrative depicts the agonies of depressed, distorted and dehumanized section of the society. The hero of the narrative isn't just a fighting against the predominance and primitive persecution but he became an object of disregard and scorn among the Dalits for being an *Akkarmashi* (an illegitimate child). He was forced to go through the agonies of dejection.

### **The Process of Exclusion**

Increased understanding is the greatest sign of their developed character and rationality. An individual can't help himself in contradicting the existence of servitude and embarrassment, yet emphatically goes against such circumstances. The upper section contrived many tactics and values to marginalize and restricts Dalits from the participation. These strategies were rejection, humiliation, insult, beating etc. Sharan gives a piercing portrayal of his life. Brahmin, Marwadi and Maratha boys were playing Kabaddi. While Dalit boys were sitting at a distant from them. These two groups were based on caste. These boys make two separate rounds for lunch, one of upper caste and other one for Dalit. Afterward, the excess food of the upper caste boys was given to the Dalit kids, which were eaten with extraordinary delicacy by the Dalit kids.

### **Degradation**

Brahmins, Marwadi and Maratha boys maintains front position while Dalit boys were asked to sit at the last position, near the threshold. There is a feeling of separation and degradation while executing the routine activity. The sitting position of Mahar kids in the classroom, ban on their entry in to the temple, restrictions on the use of main roads of the village are some of the signs of degradation. These process of treating Dalit were maintained and executed in the school. when the school was held in the Marwadi's mansion, Mahar boys sat at the threshold. Such oppressive circumstances are usually tracked down in this narrative.

### **Hunger the Greatest Truth**

Sharan acknowledges consistently that the greatest misfortune of Dalit life is hunger. Where the upper caste group is enjoying all the resources. Shantamai ate a roti made of jowar grains excreted by the cow. when the creatures ate more, grains like jowar, it would likewise arise in the form of waste. Taking out the grains from the manure and using it as a food, is showcasing their pathetic condition. Resting without eating had turned into the destiny of these family. Everyone in the family sleep without food. Nobody even awakened them to eat. Since there were no rotis. Dada used to consume the appetite by smoking beedi. To meet this challenge many Dalits families, sell unlawful alcohol and Ganja. Hunger-stricken Sharan's family carried on with a loathsome life. Burglary and hunting are another means of satiating hunger. They wander along the banks of the river and streams to extinguish the fire of the stomach, catches crabs, fish and hares. Taking out honey from beehives. The Mahar has to use the water from the last section of the river. The awfulness of yearning and the numerous incidents of insult, beating and rejection made *Akkarmashi* a distinct.

Limbale said, " I always felt half-fed..... I was ashamed of my food and felt guilty while eating it". p.3. Thus, the food didn't match the social standards. In fact, it

is degraded. Feeling embarrassed about one's food was a blow on his status. Mahar were invited at last in the village feast. This kid used to pocket the food as much as they can. There are many incidents of beating for stealing food from the feasts. This illustration denoted the barbaric treatment they got. It likewise shows their low position, starvation, and disgrace.

### **Abusive Language**

When the teacher requested Sharankumar to write an essay. Teacher scolded at Sharankumar with the words "“You, son of bitch’ come on, start writing! You like eating an ox, don’t you?”. p.4. The harmful language was exceptionally embarrassing. It is detaching Mahar boys from others and decreased their affiliation for education. These boys are referred as creature, similar to vultures and bull. This had harmed his confidence as well as debased him. Sharankumar was unable to maintain neatness. The messy propensities for Mahar young men and women separates them from others.

### **Division of Work among the Untouchables**

While assigning the work, guidelines of varna system were followed strictly. The creator has assigned the work for being Mahar. As a trade-off for this work, the upper castes offer jowar or other accessible grain. To dispose the dead animals, to clean the roads are some of the works assigned to these people. Masamai worked as sweeper, untrained nurse, sell liquor, while dada is a porter, cleaning the chimneys. The division of the various work is demeaning the dignity of labour. To quench the appetite and because of outrageous destitution, sacks of additional meat, which were called 'chanya', were dried and kept. Their food is also degraded. The scarcity of food forced them to eat carcass.

### **Distressing Memories of Village**

The village is associated with bad memories. The villagers used to insult him, subordinate him through the cannons of caste. The village memory was associated with marginalization. The village became a symbol of inhuman experiences. He was frustrated when Kaka disowned his claim to interfere over Nagi’s affair.

### **Orthodox Traditions**

It customary among the Mahars to dedicate their first child to the God or Goddesses such as Ambabai, Yellamma, Lakshmi, Khandoba, Masoba, Mariai, Satvai, etc. by naming the child as Waghya, Murali, Jogin, Potraj and Devdasi. These Devdasi marries to the God. These dedicated women used to live with the man she loved, and the children born to them were considered impure.

The Potaraj beat drums and invited the goddess to possess men and women. Some women tremored with the spirits of different deities. They also made sacrifices of roosters, goats, or buffaloes. The woman would cry in a horrendous voice. Nobody is talking of depression and anxiety. Ghost stories were frequently told and carried from generation to generation. These stories were the cause of fear. This indicates the depression, anxiety, and stress in their life. It was also considered a source of earning for the family as it helped the family get food.

## **Caste Identity, Prejudices and Resignation**

Harya married a Maratha girl, lying about himself as he is a Maratha, having a farm and mansion. However, once she discovered that he was Mahar, she ran away.

Many Dalits tend to not disclose their caste identity. Some of them hide books and photographs of Ambedkar due to fear. Some of them greet each other with 'Namaskar' instead of 'Jaibhim'. There was a tendency to take interest in devotional songs of Lord Shiva and live as a Linga. They sought to keep their caste identity a secret because it was a marker of their degraded status. Many house owners deny renting their house to Mahars and Muslims.

Most hostel boys were the Dalit. It is one of the facilities available to them to sustain education. These boys started to say 'Jaybhim' instead of Namaskar. It marked their Dalit identity as followers of Ambedkar. Sharankumar was talking about *Dalitsthan*, a separate state for Dalits. This was because of the degradation, humiliation, and recurrent threats. It also indicates his detachment caused out of recurrent rejection, beating, and low belonging. This religious degradation and inhuman treatment forced him to resign from the religion as well as state.

## **Graded Inequality and Untouchability**

A Dalit cobbler denied to mend Shantamai's footwear, because she was a Mahar. Similarly, the barber refused haircut. A separate cup and saucer were kept for Mahar. These are examples of degradation in which the higher caste rejected services to the lower ones. This degradation and inequality among the caste groups of Dalit excludes each other.

High caste individuals pour water from a height to avoid direct contact with Mahars. Dalit were supposed to wait for the courtesy of high caste just to fetch water. It deprived these people.

Mahars were held responsible for the death of an animal in a village. Suspected Mahars were tied to poles and beaten badly. This was done to make Mahars accept the terms and conditions stated by the dominant society. It took place when they reached a dead end and there was no other alternative to survive than poisoning animals.

## **Lack of Supportive Nexus**

Rangoon became a prostitute and died due to the stove exploding. Nobody was there to enquire about her death. The lives of these women were secluded. Similarly, Vani's husband Jumma, Rangoon's son disappeared but no one had the time to search since everyone was struggling for basic needs of food, shelter, and clothes. The lack of supportive nexus cut them off from mainstream society.

It became difficult for Shantamai and Dada to raise money for Sharan's higher education. The family did not have any credit. It becomes a matter of humiliation when the moneylender stared at Shantamai's breast. Sharankumar felt ashamed and disgusted.

## **Inclination towards Inclusion**

The helping attitude of Sharankumar was an effort for acceptance. However, Shivappa created a fuss when Sharankumar helped his wife to put the load down.

When Sharankumar returned the thirty rupees sincerely, it gave him name and fame at school level. It helped him to be positive and sincere. Sharankumar, Mallya and Shirole passed final exams and the family celebrated it by drinking country liquor including Shantamai, Dada; Sharankumar himself drank liquor. This success boosted his confidence for further education.

Education and social movement made them conscious about their dignity, self-value, poverty, and the treatment given to them. This increased understanding made them introspective to understand the rationale. Dada used to call little Sharankumar 'cub' and this was the only image used by Dada for Sharankumar. It indicated the power they craved for. Both had a very strong attachment with Sharankumar.

## **Conclusion**

Sharankumar Limbale encounters many incidents of hardship and agonies. This autobiography, 'Akkarmashi' provide us with the aggravation of being Akkarmashi. The conventional, caste-oriented society, the unbearable parts of persecution, the appalling torment of appetite has not only reflected Sharan but a lower section of the society. This represents the rigid standards, values, and orthodox custom, unavoidable situation that demeaned the Dalit and humanity at last.

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