

Depiction of Caste and Untouchability as a Root Cause of Discrimination in Daya Pawar's *Baluta* and Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste*

Tufan Bhaskar Awatale¹, Dr. Nikita Mishra²

¹Assistant Professor, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Bramhapuri, Chandrapur

²Assistant Professor, G.W. Arts and Comm Nagbhid,

Email- nikita_rn291@rediffmail.com

Abstract-

For centuries Untouchables were treated inhumanly and worse than animals, by Savarna Hindus. Several movements were made to fight against caste injustices. But it was Dr. Ambedkar who made them realize that they too are human beings like all other upper caste people. Taking inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar's works and words a new literate generation of untouchables started writing poems, stories, and autobiographies. This writing was a new movement in contemporary Marathi literature in Maharashtra, its motto was not art for art's sake instead it was art for life's sake. This literature is referred as Dalit literature and sometime Ambedkarite literature. Dalit writers realistically portrayed the caste system and untouchability as being soul cause of discrimination in their writing. The scope of Dalit literature is vast. For the sake of convenience for the present paper, the genre of autobiography is taken in which we could find a full sketch of life, and from vast Dalit autobiographies two Dalit autobiographies are selected. These are Daya Pawar's *Baluta* and Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste*, which was originally titled *Akkarmashi*. Both narratives delineate caste injustices and atrocities on the *Mahar* community. Both autobiographies were primarily written in the Marathi language and later on they were translated into many other Indian and foreign languages. In 2015 Jerry Pinto translated *Baluta* into the English language with the same title. While Sharankumar Limbale's work *Akkarmashi* is translated into English by Santosh Bhoomkar in 2003.

Keywords- *Baluta, the Outcaste, Caste discrimination, Untouchable, Dalit, slavery,*

Depiction of Caste and Untouchability in Daya Pawar's *Baluta*

Daya Pawar's Autobiography *Baluta* is a landmark in the history of Dalit Literature. It paved the way for many other Dalit writers to write in this literary genre. While dealing with his life experiences he has exposed his victimization and humiliation due to his untouchable Caste.

Caste-based Nomenclature

The earlier name of Daya Pawar which was given by his parents was *Dagadu*. This name is caste-indicative and humiliating. If we just glance over the names of untouchables before their historic conversion to Buddhism led by Dr. Ambedkar we could find out such names as *Kacharu, Karu, Satwa, Zingru, Botaru, Sadkya, Sukya, Jogya*, etc. These names of untouchables were predefined by Caste System. *Brahmins* were named Vidyadhar, *Shatriyas* were named as Balram, *Vaishyas* were named as Lakshmikant whereas *Shudras* and untouchables were given shameful names as mentioned above.

Discrimination in School

Ancient Greek philosopher Plato defines education as a means to achieve individual and social justice. But this justice was a mirage to Indian untouchables. until the arrival of British rule and revolutionary movements by Mahatma Jyotirav Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Like all other untouchables, Daya Pawar faced so many problems in his school life. He was not allowed to sit with upper-caste *Maratha* students. His mere touch could pollute them; he had to carry a granary sack for his sitting. The caste System denied him access to common drinking water and he had to go to *Maharwada* to quench his thirst. Even the teacher was not free from caste bias. His behavior was the same as that of other villagers.

Humiliating treatment in village rituals and festivals

Traditionally *Mahars* were art lovers. They were part of Tamasha, the village theater. They were experts in singing and playing musical instruments. When festivals were celebrated in the village untouchables were asked to entertain upper-caste people without giving them a paisa. There was a custom that on *Padwa* Untouchables must give music free of cost.

Balutedari another form of slavery

The *Balutedari* system was a practical application of the caste system based on the division of labor. There were twelve *Balutedars* in the village system. Here Brahmins were

top level and Mahar and Mang at the lowest level. The work of the Mahar people was to guard the village, send messages, catch criminals, remove the dead bodies of animals, cut wood, and beat drums in festivals. He was a loyal and obedient servant of all villagers. He was asked to perform all menial and unhygienic work. These people were paid very less *baluta*.

Worse than Animals

Daya Pawar compares his wretched life with animals and regrettably asserts that these animals are freer than his community. These animals have the liberty to wander everywhere but are not untouchables. These animals can drink water from rivers and tanks. Their urination and defecation don't pollute water bodies but the mere touch of *Mahar* pollutes it. Even after the death of these animals, untouchables are called upon to remove their carcasses.

Observance of Untouchability in Private and Public Places

Daya Pawar met with caste-based discrimination wherever he went, whether it was the home of Upper Caste or at the marketplace. There was a bazaar on every Thursday of the week at taluka place. All the family members of Daya Pawar were coming here. His mother was selling chicken eggs. But this marketplace was not free from caste bias. Traditionally the places of sellers were decided following caste hierarchy. Mahar people were sitting near the temple of *Mariaai*. Their place never changed. Caste discrimination was observed in hotels too. They were not allowed to sit with *savarnas*. Tea was served in a broken cup and it was compulsory to clean the cup by them.

Caste chased the protagonist both in the village and city

As pointed out above caste system was not just a division of work but it was a division of workers. Every caste had its work. The untouchables had to perform the most degradable and despicable works. Daya Pawar experienced all this victimization in his village. But when he went to the city with new aspirations and hopes caste chased him here too. Daya Pawar was offered a job as Clark cum Laboratory Assistant at Veterinary College, Parel. His work was to collect and prepare dung for examination and to clean the skin after the postmortem of animals. When Daya Pawar ponders over his job he admits that a high caste person could never accept this dirty job but he ought to do it to fill his stomach. This job reminds him of the same practices of his community in the village. Though Daya Pawar shifted from a rural area to urban background his lot is not changed.

Omnipresence of Caste

Daya Pawar in his autobiography *Baluta* depicted every aspect of life as predominantly occupied by caste discrimination. From birth to death and even before birth and after death caste is everywhere. Once a worker of *Satyashodhak Samaj* was having heated arguments with God in Maruti Temple at Aurangpur, and people gathered around him. Daya Pawar enters there and mixes with the crowd. Maratha people sense the presence of untouchables in the temple area, God was polluted. They abuse Daya Pawar verbally and physically. In the search for jobs, most of the untouchable families shifted to Mumbai. When a Dalit person died in the village, the Maratha people just observed the scenery from a distance but no one dared to give a shoulder to the deceased one. Not just the living person but even dead bodies met with caste injustices. When *Baban's* father dies in the village we witness this tragedy.

Depiction of Caste and Untouchability in Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste*

Sharankumar Limbale's autobiographical work *Akkarmashi (The Outcaste)* was published in 1984 when Limbale was twenty-five years old. In society, he was always abused and mocked. From his child age, he experienced inhuman treatment by upper-caste people.

Protagonist born with a stigma-Untouchable among Untouchable

Sharankumar Limbale's mother *Masamai* belonged to the *Mahar* caste. She was married to *Ithal Kamble* who was working at the farm of *Hanmanta Limbale* who belonged to the *Lingayat* caste. *Hanmanta Limbale* was fascinated by *Masamai*. He made a shrewd plan that *Masamai* divorced from her husband and become a concubine of *Hanmanta*. The narrator was teased as *Akkarmashi (Outcaste)* as he was the illegitimate son of a high-caste *Lingayat* man and a low-caste *Mahar* woman. He always felt ashamed about his being.

Humiliation at school by teachers and other students

The protagonist had high esteem for his teacher. He looks at him as King Rama. He dared not to touch the footwear of the teacher as his mere touch could pollute his beloved teacher. But his teacher was not concerned about this. He behaved like *Dronacharya* of

Mahabharata. In this epic, Guru Dronacharya asked Eklavya to give his thumb. Limbale compares his teacher with Dronacharya for his treating him inferiorly. The teacher who ought to teach liberty and equality to his students was himself caste-biased. When there was recess time students of the upper castes were used to tease and humiliate the protagonist in front of the teacher. They were using abusive language and were shouting at Limbale as *dhed*. The teacher never scolded them. As mentioned above *Mahar* community at that time was performing degradable works like removing dead animals from the village area. The meat of these dead animals was consumed as food, otherwise, it was waste but this community was utilizing it to live their livelihood.

There was a separate seating place for Dalit students. They were not allowed to seat with upper-caste students. Usually, the school was held either in the temple of *Vithoba* or *Mahadeo*. Inside the temple, the boys and girls of the upper caste sat while the children of the Dalit Caste sat near the door of the temple. They were not allowed to enter the temple to have *the darshan* of God. Every Saturday teacher used to give menial work like cleaning and decorating the school to Dalit students.

Separate colonies and water resources for Untouchables

Houses of different castes were located in particular directions and areas of the village. The water sources of the Dalit community were also far away from the water resources of the Upper classes. They were not allowed to fetch water from their resources. Even their touch could pollute the water tanks and rivers. A tank of water was also divided according to the caste system. On the upper side tank upper caste people used to fill the water, and high caste women used to wash the clothes. Then just beside *Kunbi* and *Dhangars* used to fill water. then buffalos and domestic animals were washed and at last untouchables, communities were allowed to fetch water. Animals were more respectable than Dalits. This sequence of watersheds in which water is allowed to fill reminds us of the caste hierarchy.

Discrimination in Temple and Hotel

As already mentioned Dalits were not allowed to enter the temple instead they had to pray from a distance. God was getting defiled by their entry to the temple. Even in hotels caste rules were practiced. In the village there was Shivram's hotel, here Dalits were not allowed to sit with other customers, and separate utensils were used for untouchables though they were paying as much as other customers.

Untouchability among Untouchables

Untouchables were suppressed by upper-caste Hindus. But even among untouchable castes, there was caste bias. Some untouchable castes were supposed to be superior to other untouchable castes. They had never had cordial relations instead there was rivalry and discrimination. This aspect of untouchability is aptly narrated by Sharankumar Limbale in his *Outcaste*. Once his grandmother Santamai was moving around her footwear was broken. She went to Chambhar across the stand to repair her footwear. But he rejected to repair her footwear as she belonged to Mahar Caste.

The hypocrisy of upper-caste people

Upper-caste people have a double standard regarding caste rules. A mere touch of untouchable pollutes them. But untouchable women are exceptions to this norm. His biological father seduced Masamai to satisfy his lust. But he was not willing to give his name to his son born out of an immoral relationship. They were not taking food or water from untouchables but liquor made by untouchable Santamai and Masamai was welcomed by them.

Rejection in Life and Identity Crisis

Being an *Akkarmashi* (*Outcaste*) protagonist's proposal of marriage was rejected many times. He faced many challenges in getting married and the same disgrace in the office at Ahmadpur where he worked as a telephone operator. He could not get a room on rent. Even after submitting herself to upper caste *Lingayat*, his mother remains low-caste *Mahar*, and the protagonist becomes even inferior to caste. Initially, he was rejected by schools as he was missing the name of his father. It was Bhosale teacher who enrolled the name of Sharankumar's biological father in the school roll.

Conclusion

Both the protagonists suffer this caste discrimination only because of their *Mahar* caste, supposed to be the low of the lowest in the caste hierarchy. To get birth in an untouchable family is a curse as it inflicted severe degradation. It is evident in *Baluta* and *The Outcaste* that this injustice is practiced everywhere from school to the temple, from houses to offices, from villages to cities, and from untouchables to untouchables. Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* reveals the hypocrisy of Upper caste men when they sexually exploit untouchable women as their concubines but they hesitate

to give their name to the child borne out of this relationship. Both narratives narrate caste and untouchability as the root cause of discrimination. In his Aesthetics of Dalit Literature Sharankumar Limbale gives more importance to lived experiences (*anubhav*) of Dalit writers to mere speculation and imagination about the problem of untouchability(*anuman*) by non-Dalit writers.

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