

## PATHOS AND PROTEST IN SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE'S THE OUTCASTE: AKKARMASHI

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**Abstract:** *Pathos and Protest are the main aspects of Dalit literature. For many ages, the Dalits have been oppressed, humiliated, and exploited by the higher castes as well as suffered by utter poverty. In Sharankumar Limbale's autobiography The Outcaste: Akkarmashi, he portrays the pathetic situation in which the Dalits were discriminated, humiliated, exploited and how they lived in utter poverty. Limbale was born out of the illegitimate relationship of upper caste man and untouchable mother and it is also the main reason for his pathos. Though he belonged to discriminated caste and though he lived in utter poverty where he hadn't got proper two times of meals still he never gave up his study. He became aware of his pathetic situation and protest against it. His whole autobiography is based upon the account of incidents of the pathos of his life and the way he protests against upper-caste humiliation, discrimination, marginalization, and exploitation, as well as his protest, can be seen through his struggle to establish his identity and struggle for food and to overcome poverty.*

**Keywords:** *pathos, protest, the outcaste, akkarmashi, resistance, hierarchy, hegemony*

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Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* is an autobiographical work based upon his birth and upbringing as an 'Akkarmashi' (illegitimate) and Dalit. It is first published in the Marathi language under the title 'Akkarmashi' in 1984. 'Akkarmashi' is a Marathi word that means 'illegitimate child'. He puts his life in words that he lived as an untouchable, as a half-caste, and as an impoverished man. Limbale was born out of an illegitimate relation between a Dalit woman and an upper-caste man, consequently, throughout his life he suffered the agony of being illegitimate. It is also a narration of poverty, hunger, humiliation, and his reactions to the social setup.

The author was born out of an illegal relationship of his Dalit mother and upper-caste father, and he was considered as an illegitimate Dalit Child, which was double pathos for him. In his village, the Dalit community discriminated against, humiliated, oppressed and exploited by the upper caste people. The author also has experienced such kind of discrimination and humiliation from his early childhood when he used to go to school in a temple, every different caste girls and boys sit according to caste hierarchy inside the temple and *Mahar* boys sit at the entrance amid the footwear. His classmates teased him as baseborn who eat their oxen. And it was not only his condition. It happened with every Dalit community at a different level. His Dalit community humiliated and exploited by the upper caste and his own community humiliated him by calling him an "akkarmashi" which means

“an illegitimate child”. This humiliation makes him feel inferior to everyone. He always lived with this burden that hunts him his whole life.

Sharankumar Limbale’s autobiography is also the narration of his protest against the humiliation, exploitation and oppression he had endured as a Dalit as well as Akkarmashi. He also suffered due to poverty and hunger and struggle for food and tried to come out of his pathetic situation. In the autobiography, the author has shown his protest against social hierarchy, discrimination, marginalization and exploitation by the upper caste as well as his humiliation as Akkarmashi. Generally, protests are followed by disapproval, anguish, resistance, rebel and violence. In the autobiography, the author’s protests are followed by his anguish, agony and sometimes he depicted rebel also but there is no violence in the autobiography. In his autobiography, his protest shown when he became anguished and sometimes he tried to rebel against his humiliation and discrimination but as a helpless poor Dalit child, he was unable to do anything. But most of the time his protests are shown by his philosophical questions.

At the very beginning, Limbale’s protest can be seen against discrimination where the Dalits were not allowed to enter the temple and he and all students of the Dalit caste had to sit at the entrance of the temple amidst the footwear. The works of untouchables which were beneficial for upper caste people were allowed but not untouchable people. Their works don’t pollute the Hindu caste or God but their presence, touch or even shadow could pollute. The author describes that his teacher asks the Dalit boys to smear the floor and wall of the temples with the cow dungs. He depicts caste discrimination and ill-treatment of upper caste towards the lower caste and untouchables which led to developing some kind of revolt and anguish against upper caste and even Hindu religion God which discriminates a man from man or denied for everything. Such kind of anguish develops in the mind of Dalit from their early childhood. He describes that while the smearing they enter in front of God and afraid off but his friend, Parshya recklessly pissed on God. It shows some kind of protest against the Caste system and Hindu religion or God who made them live discriminated life which proves from the following line “Though branded as untouchables we too are Hindu by faith. We too are human beings. High-caste children from the village may visit the temple. Yet we are forbidden. There is a saying, ‘Children are the flowers of God’s abode,’ but not us” (Limbale 4).

Limbale’s direct protest again can be seen when he and his friend, Parshya enters the Ithoba temple and stands before the god as a protest. It was his protest against the god, who created the world but discriminated man from man. He protests because god created one upper caste and one untouchable. Though they all were created by the still Dalit were not allowed to enter the temples, their entering in the temple could make God impure. Limbale raises philosophical questions which show his protest against god. He says,

God discriminates between man and man. He makes one man rich and the other poor. One is high caste, the other untouchable. What kind of God is this that makes human beings hate each other? We are all supposed to be the children of God, then why are we considered untouchables? We don’t approve of this God, nor this religion, nor this country because they ostracize us. Why

are we ostracized? Why are we kept away from other human beings? Why are we kept out of our own selves? Why this discrimination between one human being and another? After all isn't everybody's blood red? (Limbale 62)

Limbale describes some kind of protest in his refusal to going to the village just to eat. It is one kind of protest against the humiliation in the wedding for food. On the occasion of the wedding ceremony of the prestigious village families have exited Dalit just because of the wedding feast. But once in the wedding feast, Limbale ate greedily as soon as served and asked more for his mother and about to leave but Girmallya noticed, humiliated him and abused him by saying, "Son of Bitch,"... 'If you didn't want it why the hell did you take it? Don't let me see you more than once at any feast after this. The scum! They eat as much as they want and still crave for more to take home" (Limbale 9). This humiliation makes his anguish and he decides not to go for the wedding feast. After that when he asked Kheer which they were sneaked out from the wedding. His mother said that take his plate and go. But he refused to go to such a feast and felt awkward about going to the village just to eat. It shows some kind of protest against the humiliation he got at that wedding.

Limbale raises the philosophical question against the custom as protest and shows his disagreement against it. He disagrees with the custom of putting a handful of jowar grain which is going to be a waste. He knew the pathetic situation of poverty and the value of grain so he raises the philosophical questions and asked that, "Why don't they too eat the jowar connected with the rites for the dead? It too was food. Why should such jowar not be touched? If eaten, it would at least fill the stomach. If sowed there would be a whole crop of it" (Limbale 12).

There was upper-caste hegemony on the water of the village river and it was considered that Dalit's touch would pollute the water and not only the water, Dalit's presence and even shadow were also considered inauspicious in every sense. The high caste people villagers have used the water upstream of the river. Then downstream the Kumbies and shepherds used to collect water, bathe and washed their clothes and also animals and at the last Dalit had to use such polluted water. And there was also a different part of the river bank reserved for the Mahar and Mang. Once Limbale's grandmother denied giving the water to his friend from the Mang community and scolded him by saying, "Don't give him water in that vessel. If he touches it, he'll defile it. He disagreed with that thought as a protest he raises the question and says,

Is one's caste more important than one's friend? Is caste more important than thirst? Wasn't Arjya a human being? If so, how could he make water impure by merely touching it? ... Different parts of the river bank were reserved for Mahar and Mangs. Where were we to drink water from? Even water was its own enemy here. Our minds were divided like separate reservoirs of water. No, our minds were divided they were also contaminated. (Limbale20)

It shows the protest against the blind tradition which had been following since the ages in the name of religion and karma. He also raises question against morality, which divides a man from a man just to emphasise their hegemony. The Dalits were also human

being but it was just their blind belief which led them endure such discrimination and humiliation. And such thought of discrimination was filled in their mind from their birth.

Dalit people used to dig and built the well. Just because of them there was water in the well. But the same Dalit people were not allowed to draw the water from the same well. Mallya, Parshya and the author one by one go down and drinks water. It was also a kind of protest as they were not allowed to drink water from the well and though it considered a sin still they drank water from it. Limbale describes an incident of his life where he protests against untouchability. Dalit people even hadn't the right to walk on the road. If there were upper caste people they had to move aside and let them go first. Once the author and his friend, Parshya were walking on the road and Shobhi, who belonged to the upper caste, she asked them to clear the path and let her move and insult them by saying that now *Mahar* became bold and their touch will make her water impure. It shows the protest against the practice of untouchability, and ill-treatment of the upper caste towards the Dalit community which they had been endured for many ages without any protest because there was constant fear because the whole upper caste villager could be against the Dalit, ostracized them and could denying for their provisions. But the author and his friend Parshya dared to protest against their insult and humiliation by asking her questions asked her to prove what she believes.

Another incident of protest against untouchability can be seen where the people of the upper caste treated Dalit even worse than animals. Barbers in the villages were used to shave the buffaloes in the villages but deny to shaves the Dalit though they had money to pay. Once a barber denied shaving Limbale's head, as a protest, he asks philosophical questions to himself and says, "How could this barber, who used to shave buffaloes in the village, refuse to shave my head?" (Limbale 22). It is the kind of protest which shows that he disagreed with the practice of untouchability. They had to walk for miles to distant villages to shave their head. The direct protest against it can be seen when Shrimantanna registered a complaint in the police station against the barber. Since then the barber started to shave Dalit's head.

When the author and his friend of his community got the education and started hating the idea of untouchability. They developed confidence and walked with pride in front of high caste villagers. It was also a kind of protest which shows that they disagree with the thought of untouchability and they are not going to consider themselves untouchables. But the upper caste people didn't like their confidence and if they enjoy their self-respect. There was a separate cup and saucer for tea and a separate aluminium tumbler to drink water outside Shivram's tea shop were an insult to all Dalit community. They had to hold the tumbler and the giver carefully poured water into it, without any contact between both of them. They had to put money on the ground or drop it from a height into the hands of the owner just because they were considered untouchables. It was a long tradition that has come down to them from their forefathers. And no one dared to go against the village customs.

Limbale loathed the low esteem which was imposed on the Dalit by the upper caste. Here his protest against inequality can be seen when he says, "But someday we ought to

rebel. How long can we mutely suffer all this? How many times are we going to be born and live thus against our wish? Some time we ought to reject all this” (Limbale 76).

Limbale and his friend wanted to established equality in the hierarchical caste society. Here his direct protest can be seen when he and his friend decide to make a complaint against Shivram in the police station. They go to Shivram’s tea shop Faimya, a worker in the tea shop takes the money and pours the tea into the cup from a height without any contact. Then Limbale and his friend directly go to the police station. But as they were poor helpless Dalit instead of arresting Shivram police starts to threaten them by saying, “I will put you both in prison” (Limbale 77). But though, Limbale was scared and his eyes were almost in the tears. He says to police that “If you arrest us, you ought to arrest Shivram too”, even, though he didn’t know how to write chief minister and prime minister he said, “We are going to write to the prime minister”(Limbale77).Thus he tried to protest against inequality. But just because he was poor and helpless Dalit, his protest suppressed by upper-caste hegemony and police administration.

Limbale’s protest against his backward caste and Hindu religion begin when he shifts to the hostel at Chapalgaon. Though Limbale was born into Mahar caste and Hindu by religion when he was small he was fascinated by the namaz of his grandfather who was Muslim, after some time his grandmother’s prayers of Ambabai or Laxmi’s impression was on him, then he moved with the recital of mantras from the scriptures of his Kaka, who was upper caste Lingayat. But when he shifted to the boarding school at Chapalgaon all those impression gradually fades away and the influence of Buddhism begins to cast on him. He was very much influenced by the Abedkari movements. He starts to say ‘Jai Bhim’ instead of ‘namaskar’ and with respect to Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar he starts to say ‘Babasaheb’. Limbale’s protest can be seen when he says,

My youth had assumed a new meaning and significance. The blood flowed like hot lava through my body. My mind burned with myriad thoughts in silent protest. Babasaheb filled me with reverence. I felt I was meeting my mother of the last seven births. I burned within myself whenever I heard news about the atrocities against Dalits. It made me very impatient. (Limbale 86)

At the time of his wedding, he decorates the community hall with the icons of Buddha, Phule and Ambedkar. He wants his wedding ceremony should be conducted according to Buddhist rituals, but his Kaka wanted to according to traditional Hindu rituals. In the wedding when Kaka’s priest come and utters the mangalashtak he doesn’t accept that marriage just because he doesn’t believe in Hindu rituals. Then he performs his wedding ceremony according to Buddhist rituals.

Limbale portrays the protest of Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra. Limbale describes that thousands of Panthers were arrived from all over Maharashtra to join the march to Legislative Assembly with demand to change the name of Marathwada University to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar University.

Limbale's protest can be seen through his rejection of going to the village feast. Though Limbale was poor and they hadn't to eat in their home still at the very young age he feels his self-respect is bigger than his food. When his grandmother and sisters came from the village wedding and he asks for food his mother denies and asks him to take his plate and go for the village feast but he refuses and says that he "feels awkward about going to the village just to eat" (Limbale 9). Death of animals was auspicious for Dalit just because they got enough to eat but over time Limbale and his friends develop an aversion to dead animals and as a protest, they used to piss on the dead animal when they started to skinning and threw soil and dung to no one should eat it.

Sharankumar Limbale was the illegitimate child of an upper caste man and an untouchable mother. As there was no love between his parents, he was an unwanted child of both his father as well as his mother. As a protest, he raises philosophical questions for his belongingness and says, "Did anyone admire me affectionately? Did anyone celebrate my naming ceremony? Which family would claim me as its descendant? Who son am I, really?" (Limbale 37). It shows that he was seeking his belongingness and his protest to establish his identity in his family as a son. Limbale shows his protest against accepting his father's name. He never wanted to record his guardian's name as 'Masamai Hanmanta Limbale' just because Hanmanta Limbale had forced her to divorce her husband then he took advantage of her pathetic situation and exploited her and then deserted her. He states that everyone identifies him as an illegitimate child, "But I too was a human being.... But a man is recognized in this world by his religion, caste, or his father" (Limbale 59). Limbale suffered a lot for his identity and this agony led to his protest against his parents. He describes his open rebellion protest toward his parents when his teacher in his high school asked him about his mother and father he replied that both are dead.

Sharankumar Limbale has describes the protest against women's exploitations. At the very beginning, he writes that he regards the immorality of his father had privileges which granted him by his birth in the upper caste. Limbale's protest can be seen at the very beginning in the author's notes. He writes regarding the exploitation of his untouchable mother by his upper-caste father,

His relationship with my mother was respected by society, whereas my mother is untouchable and poor. Had she been born into the high caste or were she rich? .... It is through the Dalit movement and Dalit literature that I understood that my mother was not an adulteress but the victim of a social system. I grow restless whenever I read about rape in the newspaper. A violation anywhere in the country, I feel, is a violation of my mother. (Limbale IX)

It shows that Dalit women had been exploited for many ages by the upper caste but now the Dalits get educated and become aware of it. Now they started the protest against such exploitations. Limbale's mother was deserted by her husband then she was exploited by the upper caste Patil, Hanmanta Limbale and after Limbale born he started avoiding them and he didn't accept their relationship. After that, she comes with her mother, Santamai and starts living in Hanoor where she is kept by Kaka, Yeshwantrao Sidramappa Patil, head of the

Hanoor village. Whenever Kaka visits their home he behaves like his father but when he lingered Kaka's mansion with the expectation that if he noticed he would invite in but when he noticed he shuts the doors. It makes him rage and in that rage he says, "Whenever Kaka visited us he behaved as if he were our father. Then why did he behave like a stranger now? Why didn't he speak to me? It was difficult for me to think of Kaka as my father. I was angry with him. I felt like raping his mother someday" (Limbale 46). It shows some kind of rebellion attitude towards the exploitation of Dalit women. Upper caste people keep the relationship with untouchables women but when it's come to take responsibility of their relations or people of that family they deny and even don't accepts such a relationship. This shows that Dalit women get exploited by the upper caste people and though Dalit became anguish and tried to rebel against it as poor helpless untouchables they were unable to do anything like that. Their protest was always got suppressed.

At the conclusion, Limbale have depicted personal as well collective pathos in his autobiography, "*The Outcaste: Akkarmashi*". Limbale expressed his personal pathos as he suffered as *akkarmashi* means illegitimate son, lived utter poverty, endured discrimination, humiliation, exploitation, and oppression of upper-caste as well as he portrayed collective pathos of Dalit community as they had to lived outside of the village, they had to do minimal job for their survival, they lived filthy life. They were discriminated, humiliated, oppressed, excommunicated, and exploited by the upper-caste. Limbale says, "My agony was not limited myself alone" (Limbale 79). He depicted some incidents of humiliation and exploitation of his life which is also applicable to whole Dalit community. Since India got independence though there is little relaxation in untouchability and discrimination in a physical sense, it still lies in the mind of upper caste and class people of urban areas and the backward rural area still have continued the practice of upper caste and lower caste. There are still many backward classes who live such filthy lives. Still, there is superiority and inferiority that exists in society.

There are different types and nature of protest like protest march, street protest, picket, etc. and their natures like mild, aggressive, violent, nonviolent of an individual or mass demonstration. Mild nature of protest can be seen in his autobiography. Limbale's protest followed by his individual statements of disapproval and objections towards the long traditions, religions, and custom which discriminated, humiliated, oppressed and exploited Dalit for the many ages. Most of his protest can be seen through his rhetoric and philosophical question asking for morality. There is little depiction of violence against the Dalit Panther Movement in which thousands of Dalit joined the march.

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