

HUMILIATION AND THE CRISIS OF IDENTITY IN AKKARMASHI (THE OUTCASTE)

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ABSTRACT

Akkarmashi (The Outcaste) by Sharankumar Limbale offers a thorough examination of identity crisis and humiliation in the context of caste persecution. The autobiography depicts the real-life struggles of a Dalit person caught between social isolation, caste, and illegitimacy. Limbale demonstrates how humiliation affects selfhood and identity development profoundly via poverty, discrimination, and denial of social membership. The protagonist's fight for respect, acceptance, and dignity in a strict caste-based society is highlighted throughout the narrative. Akkarmashi emerges as a potent critique of caste hierarchy and its effects on human identity by highlighting the psychological and social ramifications of marginalization.

KEYWORDS: *Humiliation, Identity Crisis, Akkarmashi, The Outcaste, SharankumarLimbale, Dalit Literature, Dalit Autobiography, Caste Oppression, Social Exclusion.*

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INTRODUCTION

Humiliation is commonly understood as a socio-psychological condition marked by feelings of degradation, inferiority, and loss of dignity. But in the context of Dalit experience and literature, humiliation is more than simply an individual's emotional response; it is a structural and institutionalized form of caste oppression embedded in social, cultural, religious, and economic institutions. Dalit literature demonstrates the deliberate exploitation of power relations and caste hierarchy to uphold humiliation.

Humiliation has a psychological impact on identity, self-worth, and mental health. Dalit tales demonstrate how daily discriminatory behaviours socially cause these effects. Dalits frequently experience discrimination, verbal abuse, uneven access to education, and exclusion from social and religious settings starting in childhood. These encounters create a social memory of damaged dignity in addition to shaping individual identities.

In caste system, humiliation takes the form of both physical and metaphorical violence. Physical manifestations include social segregation, forced labour, caste-based atrocities, and penalties for breaking caste rules. These are systemic behaviours that uphold caste domination rather than individual occurrences. Equally important is symbolic violence, which operates via societal norms, cultural ideals, and religious convictions that legitimize inequity. Caste distinctions are frequently portrayed as natural or divinely approved by ideas of karma, ceremonial purity, and hereditary hierarchy, which encourages Dalits to internalize inferiority.

Humiliation is exacerbated by financial hardship. Many Dalit populations are confined to disadvantaged and exploitative labor systems due to unequal access to land, education, jobs, and resources. Reliance on dominant caste groups for a living limits social mobility and perpetuates power disparities. Under such circumstances, shame becomes entwined with survival, influencing day-to-day experiences and reducing avenues for resistance.

Dalit literature and autobiographical works offer a crucial foundation for comprehending these realities. They record caste prejudice, marginalization, and resistance from the viewpoint of individuals who encounter them as ways of self-representation. Dalit autobiographies highlight oppressed perspectives and provide an intimate perspective on humiliation, in contrast to dominant narratives that frequently hide caste reality.

These stories show how humiliation functions in both private and public settings. It may be found in everyday social interactions, religious institutions, businesses, and education. In addition to overt discrimination, Dalit authors document covert forms of exclusion include denial of dignity, avoidance, and verbal abuse. By doing this, they reveal the various ways that caste borders are upheld.

Crucially, Dalit autobiographies are more than just stories of hardship. They show how humiliation is created and justified and critically analyze the social and intellectual underpinnings of caste discrimination. They also represent assertiveness and opposition. Dalit writers question prevailing societal narratives, recover control over their past, and turn personal tragedy into collective witness.

In order to comprehend the Dalit experience in all of its psychological, social, cultural, and economic facets, humiliation becomes an essential framework. Dalit autobiographies serve as both crucial social documentation and testimonial literature, shedding light on the ongoing fight for social justice, dignity, and acknowledgment as well as the permanence of caste-based degradation.

One of the most potent accounts of caste-based humiliation and identity crisis in Dalit literature can be found in Sharankumar Limbale's autobiography *Akkarmashi*, which Santosh Bhoomkar translated into English as *The Outcaste*. The work reveals the complex reality of caste discrimination, illegitimacy, exclusion, and psychological anguish; it is more than just a personal story. The autobiography is fundamentally about a "suffering self" who, in a rigorously hierarchical caste society, constantly fights for acceptance, dignity, and a solid identity. The living paradox of belonging everywhere and nowhere at the same time is embodied in Limbale's existence.

The autobiography's main focus is the author's broken identity. Limbale, who was born to a Mahar mother (a Dalit lady) and a Patil father (a dominant caste person), has a difficult and unclear social standing. His mother's community does not completely welcome him, nor does his father's caste. Because of this transitional life, he lives in what he refers to as a "nowhere community," where dignity is consistently denied and identity is continuously questioned. Because of his illegitimate birth, he is socially stigmatized as a "bastard," a term that causes him to suffer shame for the rest of his life. As a result, *Akkarmashi* explores identity fragmentation and social exclusion in great detail in addition to being a story of caste oppression.

Limbale has endured humiliation since he was a little child as a constant and inevitable reality. A school picnic is one of the most important instances where caste discrimination is clearly established. Caste identity is used to divide children, and ideas of contamination and purity even dictate simple customs like sharing meals. While Dalit pupils are ostracized and viewed as inferior spectators, upper-caste professors and students dine together. Limbale remembers how

Dalit children were fed leftovers as a mark of their low social standing. These incidents demonstrate how humiliation is routinely ingrained in educational settings, which are supposed to advance equality.

Akkarmashi illustrates the glaring discrepancy between legal ideals and social reality, notwithstanding the Indian Constitution's formal abolition of untouchability and caste prejudice. Caste ideology is deeply ingrained, as seen by the persistence of caste-based segregation in public institutions, schools, and daily interactions. Education frequently perpetuates the same systems of humiliation rather than acting as a tool for freedom. Limbale's story demonstrates how Dalit children are raised in a culture that normalizes discrimination and systematically denies them respect.

The depiction of Limbale's school, which was housed in a temple, provides a startling illustration of institutionalized humiliation. In the classroom, seats were arranged according to a rigid caste system. Dalit children were forced nearer the door, next to abandoned shoes, while upper-caste students occupied the front rows. The spatialization of caste discrimination, in which physical space itself becomes a social rank marker, is symbolized by this layout. Dalit children have a profoundly ingrained dread of punishment and humiliation, which shapes their conduct and self-perception. Limbale's admission that he was afraid to touch his teacher's footwear illustrates how respect and shame coexist in a system that is incredibly unfair.

Dalits experience physical assault and verbal abuse in addition to institutional marginalization. Dalit students are often humiliated by teachers and upper-caste people using disparaging words. Limbale describes incidents in which he was physically punished for not completing prescribed work and humiliated because of his caste status. The normalization of caste-based verbal abuse in school settings is shown in the usage of derogatory terms like calling him the "son of a bitch." The idea that Dalit bodies are weak and disposable in the social hierarchy is further reinforced by the physical assault committed by males from higher castes.

Additionally, the autobiography effectively conveys the psychological effects of persistent humiliation. Limbale's experiences with physical assault and verbal abuse at the hands of upper-caste guys have left him with a persistent sense of insecurity and fear. Because he expects to be humiliated in every social setting, even everyday conversations become causes of dread. His self-image and emotional world are shaped by this ongoing exposure to violence, which creates a profound psychological burden.

Beyond schools, spatial segregation permeates the village's larger social milieu. The Maharwada, Limbale's neighborhood, is portrayed as a place of poverty, neglect, and marginalization. The Maharwada is physically and figuratively isolated from the main hamlet, surrounded by trash, animals, and subpar dwellings. The larger caste geography of rural India, where Dalit villages are forced to the periphery of habitation and dignity, is reflected in this division.

Another effective example of caste-based hierarchy is the availability of water. Water is distributed in the community according to a rigid caste system. While Dalits are compelled to consume tainted water downstream, upper-caste households have access to clean water upstream. This access hierarchy represents the uneven allocation of fundamental resources. The regular humiliations placed on Dalit existence are highlighted by Limbale's statement of drinking water contaminated with pollutants. Caste-based exclusion even shapes natural resources like water.

In spite of these circumstances, Dalit survival tactics are based on adaptability and tenacity. In order to escape starvation, the autobiography emphasizes how Dalit children frequently scavenge, gather food, trap animals, and eat whatever is available. Starvation and poverty are structural elements that characterize Dalit living rather than transient

circumstances. In this way, hunger turns into a medical ailment as well as a social indicator of marginalization.

Humiliation is exacerbated by economic exploitation. The Mahar community's members are given menial and humiliating jobs including sweeping the streets, skinning dead animals, and getting rid of corpses. These professions are socially mandated responsibilities linked to caste identity rather than just economic roles. Such work is frequently underpaid or substituted with grain and spare resources, which perpetuates social inferiority and economic reliance. Therefore, rather than being a source of empowerment, labor itself turns into a place of humiliation.

The autobiography also reveals the hypocrisy of morality based on caste. Dalits are denied basic dignity and punished for even small infractions, while upper-caste men sexually and socially abuse Dalit women. Double standards control interactions between castes, giving dominant castes advantage without responsibility. Particularly vulnerable are Dalit women, who frequently fall prey to sexual exploitation by upper-caste males in the absence of social protection or justice.

Humiliation is further reinforced by religious marginalization. Dalits are seen as unclean in places of worship and are not allowed to enter temples. They are even prohibited from performing acts of devotion, so they must pray outside the walls of the temple. Limbale challenges the validity of a religious system that restricts access to spirituality on the basis of birth. Such exclusion demonstrates the ideological use of religion to uphold social control and caste hierarchy.

Akkarmashi's examination of illegitimacy and identity disintegration is among its most important features. Being an illegitimate kid exacerbates Limbale's identity dilemma. He has a Dalit mother and a superior caste father at the same time, yet none of them completely accepts him. This unclear identification causes ongoing inquiries in social, professional, and educational contexts. When his parentage is questioned, even formal procedures like job applications or admittance paperwork become embarrassing.

Constantly being questioned by society further undermines his sense of himself. "Who is your father?" is one example of a question that becomes a tool of exclusion, depriving him of dignity and validity. His wider social marginalization is symbolized by the lack of a solid family identity. The intensity of Limbale's existential crisis is captured in his contemplation on his birth, where he wonders if anybody recognized or celebrated it.

Caste discrimination also makes marriage and social acceptability hard. Limbale's experiences negotiating marriage show how social interactions are influenced by caste purity. When families find out who he is, they reject him, highlighting caste endogamy and the fixation with "pure blood." His psychological pain is exacerbated by such rejection, which strengthens his feelings of alienation and self-doubt.

In the end, Akkarmashi offers a potent indictment of societal morality, religion, and caste. Limbale challenges the validity of a society that upholds inequality via hereditary mechanisms and denies dignity based on birth. His autobiography is an intellectual critique of caste ideology in addition to being a chronicle of misery. Through his story, he reveals how caste functions as a totalizing system that controls human relationships, identity, work, and territory.

There are two interrelated components to the autobiography at a deeper level. The first is collective, reflecting the pain of the Mahar community as a whole and, consequently, other Dalit communities that endure comparable types of humiliation and marginalization. Limbale's inner turmoil as an illegitimate kid battling for identification and respect is reflected in the second. Together, these two aspects produce a whole story of humiliation in which individual suffering and societal injustice collide.

CONCLUSION

Akkarmashi (The Outcaste) by Sharankumar Limbale offers a thorough knowledge of caste experience and humiliation as intricately linked and socially generated realities. The autobiography shows that humiliation is a persistent societal situation based on caste hierarchy, birth-based identity, and social exclusion rather than just an individual's emotional reaction. The agonizing paradoxes of inclusion and exclusion in a caste-ridden culture are shown by Limbale's broken identity as a "outcaste." His story illustrates how poverty, social rejection, caste shame, and illegitimacy all contribute to a lifetime identity and identification issue. Akkarmashi depicts humiliation as a characteristic of Dalit daily life via experiences of hardship, prejudice, and symbolic degradation. The book reveals caste as a comprehensive system governing identity, labor, dignity, and social interactions, going beyond individual suffering to depict the collective state of Dalit communities. In the end, Limbale documents suffering and identity fragmentation while turning these experiences into a potent act of resistance by claiming voice, selfhood, and social critique, confirming the unbreakable link between the fight against humiliation and the quest for equality and human dignity.

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