

SHARAN KUMAR LIMBALE : *THE OUTCASTE* – INTRODUCTION

Structure:

6.1 What is an Autobiography?

An autobiography is a glimpse into a person's life. The term 'autobiography' consists of three words 'autos', 'Bios' and 'Graphe' which mean "self", 'life' and 'to write' respectively. In other words, the term 'autobiography' refers to self-life-writing/narrative. Until twentieth century most commonly used term was memoir. Diary, travelogues are also the forms of self-writing. Conventionally written rather at a late stage of adult life by a publically renowned person, an autobiography tells the story of the author's life from birth to the present chronologically. Besides being retrospective in nature, autobiographies are introspective too, infused as they are with the author's personality and perception of himself/herself and the world. Though autobiography is an old genre, it paired well with the theories such as structuralism and post structuralism because of their preoccupation with self-representation and served as a fertile ground for reconsidering the divide between fact and fiction, challenging the possibility of presenting a life objectively. This is against the conventional notion of the factuality of autobiography. Autobiography has attracted writers, readers and critics, for it reveals the hidden aspects of the writer's self and succeeds in establishing the writer's portrait in the public eye.

Autobiography is basically the recreation or reconstruction of one's own life. While an autobiography embarks upon 'real life' and 'real events', it may not be called an objective or pure version of the life being told. First, memories are not only fragmented but they are also leaking, and second because selection of these facts and realities is conditioned by varied internal and external exigencies. An autobiographer offers a carefully selected and highly constructed version of his or her life. An autobiographer is always purposive in revealing what (s)he is and how (s)he became what (s)he is. This is invariably one of the reasons why the writer feels compelled to tell her/his life story. Most often than not autobiography is a medium for the writer to make sense of some significant experiences of his/her life or fulfill some psychological need. Great writers like Mary Rowlandson, Elizabeth Ashbridge, and Frederick Douglass wrote their stories as a way to make sense of what they had experienced. Second, an autobiographer argues for the relevance of their life story as a lesson for some larger public good. Third, one may write an autobiography to testify the discovery of self-knowledge to oneself. And fourth, people may do so to re-define themselves in their own terms or free themselves from limiting social definitions or images created about them. The last category turns an autobiography into a re-presentation of the self, a protest or subversion. In all these cases an autobiography is a representation, recollection, reproduction and reinterpretation of the past to draw out new meanings and understand life.

Thus, an autobiography is descriptive, subjective and interpretative. Autobiography is not really 'about' the facts and events related; it is about how the

writer chooses to interpret and make sense of these events. What readers are to draw from the autobiography of an author are the tensions and the drama of that struggle to make meaning and to find self-knowledge. As a first person account, an autobiography easily achieves the readers' empathy eliciting their interest in analyzing how the writer has used storytelling to explore the questions about the self, and the social, economic and political forces that affect that self.

Essential Elements of Autobiography

Since an autobiography includes the internal and external details of the writer's life, the very first essential that we can draw about autobiography is that it is fairly an expression of his/her individuality. Placed at an intersection of the private and public life, it narrates how self and society affect and get affected by each other. W. B. Yeats, the great poet rightly believes that autobiography is the self that the writer remakes. Thus, the art of autobiography involves a process of recollection and reconstruction of the writer's life.

Secondly, though social historiographing is an important element of an autobiography, it is the author's self that remains always at the center. The truthfulness of an autobiography lies in the fact that it must be author-centered. The element of truth is a seminal aspect of an autobiography so much so that many autobiographies have the word 'confession' in their titles. Both Augustine and Rousseau titled their autobiographies as *Confessions*. Sometimes authors get engrossed in giving details about others which causes distraction. Incidents, events or the persons are usually discussed in reference to the author alone. Hence usually the autobiographies are titled as or have the words similar to My Life or My Story. Thus self-referentiality forms the axis of the language and the narrative structure in an autobiography.

Thirdly, an autobiography is a person's life lived in particular time and space. It deals with both the personal and the public life of the writer. It has to be contextualized in the historical reality. These factors are considered as the soul of an autobiography. But an autobiographer's job is essentially different from that of an historian. Histories are written in continuum but autobiographies are episodic in nature. Many autobiographies have chapters that read like short stories and have titles. Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* and Kamala Das's *My Story* are such examples. Following a strict order of chronology is not necessary on the part of an autobiographer. Thus, it is expected to be a factual record of the author's life history, but it is a truth which is subjective and just as literature emerges from life but the truth of literature remains imaginative, the reality in an autobiography is an individual perception of it.

Fourthly, autobiography always faces the problematics of truth because of the inherent human nature. It is always a carefully sifted, corrected and revised edition of author's life. Therefore, it cannot be a pure or simple record of his/her existence. Olney observes, "[Autobiography] cannot be a pure and simple record of existence, an account book or a log book; on such and such a day at such and such an hour, I went to such and such a place A record of this kind, no matter how minutely exact, it would be no more than a caricature of life." Sometimes imagery is more powerful than realistic details. Thus, every story depends upon its convincing sincerity.

Fifthly, an autobiographer has to be neutral while dealing with his life. (S)he is an actor as well as a spectator of his/her story. (S)he has to remain judicial to dissolve his ego. Sixthly, contemporaneousness is also considered an important element of an autobiography. Though it deals with the personal life with its focus on the inner life of the author, external forces too cannot be avoided. It is so because the author's selfhood is shaped by these external factors. The author contextualizes his/her self within the milieu and the moment. An individual's self-identity is established through his/her communal/ social/public life. Indian autobiographies are, therefore, much more influenced by the contemporary social, religious, political and even economic conditions of the nation.

Memory is the major element of autobiography. Reconstruction of past is essentially based on memory. An author possesses a sharp memory. The powerful memory enables an autobiographer to dive deeper into his farthest past and recollect the emotions at a point of time and place that has become a part of his/ her being. Through his/her memory the autobiographer recollects the incidents related to a particular time and place and relives them in kind of flashes of the past. Memory can neither be retained in its original form nor can it be retrieved in its completeness; it is always manipulated by a person. For an instance, a person cannot relate his night dream as it is in the morning. He relates it with some fiction. It happens because of fragmentations and vagueness, which are the essential nature of memory. It becomes then the reason of conflict as well. Conflict too is counted as the major element of an autobiography. This conflict is as much between the internal and the external as it is within.

Thus, the essential aspects of an autobiography are problematic of truth, subjectivity, selfhood, identity, individuality, conflict, confessionality, contemporaneousness etc. Hope these elements of autobiography will serve as your tools in the understanding of the text that forms a part of your course.

6.2 Indian Autobiographies

Tracing the history of western autobiographies to the 18th century, we find that originally autobiography was a favourite genre of the public figures and were largely written by men. And works theorizing autobiography primarily treated men's life and writing as universal. Until the mid 1970s little work was done on theorizing women's autobiography. Since then autobiography has attracted major attention of writers, readers and critics. For a long time it was believed that Indian women took to life narrative only after decolonization but lately a vibrant tradition of women's life-writing in colonial India has been unearthed. Significantly most of the early autobiographies have come from women in India. Most of these women autobiographies were written in the vernacular. Russundri Devi, an ordinary woman, wrote her autobiography titled *Amar Jeevan* in 1866. Though written in vernacular, many of these have been translated in English and Hindi. The women who wrote autobiographies were not always educated and privileged; this genre provided them space to speak out their suppressed selves and assert their identity. Often these self-explorations revealed deep artistic beauties. Some of the other notable Indian women autobiographies are *The Autobiography of an Indian Princess* (1921) by Suniti Devesi, *Indian Calling* (1934) by Cornelia Sorabji, *With No Regrets: An Autobiography* (1943) by Krishna Hutheesing, *An Indian Girl* (1950), *My*

Reminiscences (1982) by Renuka Roy, *Daughter's Daughter* (1993) by Mrinal Pande and *The Black Rose, The Revenue Stamp* (1976), *Shadows Of Words* (2004) by Amrita Pritam. However, the most widely popular autobiographies have come from men. Though Babar's *Babarnama* and Jahangir's *Tuzk-e-Jahangir* also fall in this category, most celebrated have been Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* that appeared as a series in the weekly Gujarati magazine *Navjivan* during 1925-28, Jawaharlal Nehru's *An Autobiography* also known as *Towards Freedom* (1936) and Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* 1951. Independent India has seen autobiographies largely coming from politicians, players and personalities from film world and literatures. However, some autobiographies have also come to be written by very ordinary people. *A Life Less Ordinary* by a maid servant Baby Halder is one such example. The purpose of this autobiography is quite similar to that of the Dalit autobiographies which have been written by the outcaste people as a protest against their centuries old exploitation, marginalization and subjugation.

6.3 Caste System and Dalit Autobiographies

Caste system has been the most unique feature of Indian society. Though there exist different theories about the emergence of caste system, the one known as 'Varnavyavastha' related to Manu is most popularly quoted. The metaphysical connotations were warped to suit the vested interest of some, which gave caste system a hierarchical character. The hierarchical phenomenon of four castes evolved itself in a self-perpetuating way by acquiring an inherited character (by birth) primarily based on forbidden inter-caste marriages. This system, however, left out a few who along with the fourth varna, Sudra came to be treated as untouchables. Deprived of entering into educational institutions and temples, perversity of untouchability resulted in huge economic inequality so much so that despite economic progress, constitutional amendments and protection, to be low caste also come to form the lowest class. The term 'Dalit' came into vogue in 1930s and 40s as a Marathi/Hindi translation of the British category of the Depressed Classes. It became widespread with the rise of Dalit Panthers in 1972, as an alternative to the Gandhian term 'Harijan' and the colourless governmental use of the term 'Scheduled Castes'. Earlier in 1920s i.e. in the pre Ambedkar period, there were attempts to re-name the so-called depressed classes. Jyoti ba Phule used the term 'Adi Sudra'. The names of the most Dalit movements started with the prefix-'adi' which meant pre-historic/pre-Aryan. But the word 'Dalit' was popularized by the Dalit Panthers Movement when they adopted this term as an act of confident assertion.

The word Dalit which is used both as an adjective and as a noun is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dal' which means to grind (grain), to split (pulse) open, to crush. The root meaning has been carried over metaphorically. The term 'Dalit' actually applies to a person who has been broken or torn to pieces and has been oppressed, crushed, trampled upon, exploited and deprived. It is a very comprehensive definition that includes the tribals, the so-called criminal tribes, women of all classes, and farm workers who work for extremely low wages or as bonded laborers. Guy Poitevin also includes in this category children without guardians, those born out of wedlock, physically handicapped when not treated like

human beings. The term 'Dalit-bahujan' was also coined for suppressed class. It is thought that the term 'Dalit' should not remain confined to describing the status and situations of the untouchable alone but should also be for those who are victims of poverty and pollution. Dalit Panthers, in their 1972 manifesto described 'Dalits' as "the members of scheduled castes and tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless, the poor peasants and women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion."

Dalit literature is a literature of protest, pain and agony. It is written to serve the purpose of social intervention and transformation. Its beginnings can be traced to the undocumented oral folklores and tales of the past decades. Dalit Literature as a genre was established in the 1960s and 1970s when there was a spurt of Dalit writings published in Marathi and Gujarati. Maharashtra remained the epicenter of such literary activities primarily under the influence of Babasaheb Ambedkar, who belonged to this area and worked on the strategy of "educate, organize and agitate". He was one of the three chief ideologists of the period, the other two being Gandhi and Savarkar. Though Gandhi did a lot to uplift the untouchables, whom he named as "Harijans", Ambedkar differed from him believing Gandhi was not ready to go far enough and take the problems of Dalits head on to emancipate them, for his reluctance to offend the high castes. C.B. Bharti says, "The aim of Dalit Literature is to protest against the established system which is based on injustice and to expose the evil and hypocrisy of the higher castes. There is an urgent need to create a separate aesthetics for Dalit Literature, an aesthetics based on the real life experience of life." The caste or varna system in India has segregated thousands of untouchables from mainstream culture often reducing them to a subhuman existence. After centuries of suppression, they engaged themselves in a struggle for emancipation under the liberation movement spearheaded by Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar. With the de-notification of 1952 especially related to nomadic communities, along with other landless communities and untouchable classes, there was seen a major change as the neo literate amongst them started raising their voice against social injustice and economic inequality. Self-articulation and self-awareness in its wake generated a movement, which in literature came to be known as Dalit aesthetics.

Dalit aesthetics coincided with the essentials of autobiographical writings as these were best suited to their poetics and politics, though Dalit also wrote short stories, poems, ballads, novels, biographies, dramas, historical writings etc. In whatever genre they chose to write in, they expressed themselves. The self-reflexive themes chosen by Dalit writers are the natural outcome of their experiences. In these, they create their own sphere of influence. Written from the margins, they aim at moving to the center. This has certainly created a new world of experience in the Indian literature. Dalit literature owes many of its features to Afro American literature as the untouchables of India and the blacks in America saw similarities in the phenomenon of race and caste. Self-reflexivity in writing in the case of both was activism for generating consciousness. For them speaking for self was speaking for community.

The first major Dalit autobiographical work is Daya Pawar's *Baluta (Social Claim, 1978)*. Sharan Kumar Limbale's *The Outcaste*, Laxman Mane's *The Outsider*,

Sidhlingaih's *Ooru Keri* and Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* are some of the major male Dalit autobiographies whereas Bama (*Karukku*), Shantabai Kamble (*Majhya Jalmachi Chitarkatha*), Baby Kamble (*Jeena Amucha*) and Urmila Pawar (*Aidan*) are considered as famous Dalit women who wrote about their plight and their works have been translated into English from various regional languages.

6.4 Sharan Kumar Limbale

Sharan Kumar Limbale is one of the iconic Dalit writers writing originally in Marathi, who along with Valmiki and Naimsharay in Hindi has cast a considerable impact on the shaping of Dalit literature in India. A universally known name as an author, poet, literary and social critic and Dalit-activist, Limbale has produced a large corpus of books that number around 44. His autobiography, *Akkarmashi* established him as a successful Dalit writer. His most outstanding contribution to Dalit literature and Dalit literary criticism is his treatise titled *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*. During his formative age, besides Baba Saheb he was also influenced most by Dalit writers who are well-known in his state, like Namdeo Dasal, Daya Pawar and Baburao Bagul.

His other works include *Dalit Panther* (1989) *Hindu* (2005). (2010), *Bahujan* (2007), *Dalit Brahmanya* (1997), *Chhuacchut* (2008). *Manvantar* (2009), *Sanskrutik Sangharsha* (2009), *Hindu: a Novel* and *O* (2015).

Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature is a seminal book of literary criticism on Dalit literature, which attempts at theorizing its content and craft. Divided into six chapters the book takes up the issue of form and purpose, Ambekarism and Marxism besides exploring the similarities and dissimilarities between Dalit and Afro-American Literature. Finally it probes the aesthetics of Dalit literature distinguishing it from the aesthetics of the Bahamanical mainstream literature. Unlike the beauty principle of the mainstream writings Dalit writings re-create the ugliness of Dalit life and rest on the axis of the politics of intervention and protest. As life affirmation these writings present the filthiness of their experiential reality most suitably in the filthy language that Dalits speak. They reject the pleasure and entertainment principle in favour of transformation. Capturing the seamy side of the Dalit life they aim at making words their imperishable tool to expose the cruelty and hypocrisy of the casteist hegemony, assert the identity of a Dalit reeling under centuries-old oppression and suppression, stir and sharpen the consciousness of complacent Dalits and shock the high class readers to relook at history and recognize their humanity.

6.5 Glossary:

Retrospective: dealing with past events

Introspective: self-analyzing, self-examining

Exigencies: an urgent need or demand

Self-referential: making reference to oneself

Chronology: arrangement of events or dates

Contemporaneousness: occurring in the same time, contemporary

Fragmentations: The process or state of breaking

Vibrant: active, strong

Metaphysical: philosophical

Hierarchical: arranged in order of rank

Aesthetics: set of principles related to an artistic work or movement

Self-reflexive: image of itself

Complacent: uncritical satisfaction

6.6 Comprehension: Activity for students:

- i. What is an autobiography and what are its essential features?
- ii. In what ways a Dalit autobiography is different from a mainstream autobiography?
- iii. What is Dalit Consciousness and Dalit aesthetics?

6.7 Suggested Readings:

Prasad, Amar Nath. *Dalit Aesthetics*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2007.

Babu, Mini. "The Dalit Vision and Voice: A Study of Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi*." *The Criterion* 3.4 (Dec. 2012): 1-6. Print

Dheriya, Ajit. SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE'S *THE OUTCASTE* (AKKARMASHI): PORTRAYAL OF A DALIT'S LIFE. *IJELR*. 3.2. 2016 (April-June): 337-41. Web. Jan.10. 2017. <<https://www.ijelr.in/3.2.16B/337-341%20AJEET%20DEHARIYA.pdf>>.

Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations. Trans. Alok Mukherjee. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007. Print.

Valmiki, Om Parkash. *Joothan*. Trans. Arune Parbha Mukherjee. New Delhi: Samya, 2003. Print.

6.8 Summing up

In this lesson the genre of autobiography has been introduced focusing on the major elements that need to be paid attention to while analyzing an autobiography or self-writing. Some of these essential aspects of an autobiography are problematic of truth, subjectivity, selfhood, identity, individuality, collectivity, conflict, confessionalism, contemporaneousness. Though autobiography is a neutral genre, it was so predominantly used by men, popular in public life that women autobiographies remained largely ignored till the second half of the twentieth century. Similarly the autobiographies by those in margins remained eclipsed but these have become an important tool in the hands of activist writers who have used them to make the personal political. Dalit autobiographies are distinguished by abandoning the pleasure and entertainment principle and adopting a purposive stand for social transformation. That is why many of them become more than the writings of the self; they serve as testimonies and are referred to as testimonio.

THE OUTCASTE : A Detailed Introduction

7.0 Introduction

Before analyzing the text, an introduction to the major characters and the line of the story will enable the students follow the critical analysis of the major themes in it, which will be taken up in the lessons that follow.

7.1 Introduction to *Akkarmashi* or *The Outcaste*

Akkarmashi, written in the dialect of Marathi Dalits, was published in 1984, which brought Limbale immediately into limelight. Written when he was hardly 25 year old, it was in his own words, “the story of his life, an expression of my mother’s agony and an autobiography of my community”. He revised it in 1990 and again in 1999. These revisions may have been the result of the need of the author to reinterpret his past as he grew and as his vision of life evolved. It might be because he wanted to incorporate some such events as he might have failed to recall or could not or did not incorporate in his autobiography for reasons best known to him. On the invitation of his mentor, Prof. Nemade, Santosh Bhoomkar undertook to translate it in English. The translator incorporated the changes up to the second revision in it. He, however, declined Limbale’s request to incorporate the changes made in the third edition, which according to the translator were not only many but also changed the basic spirit. English translation published by Oxford University Press has given the work universal readership.

The Outcaste came as the cry of an anguished soul of a person who was born a half caste in a caste-ridden social set-up. Having been born a bastard to a Dalit woman, the narrator, in his self-writing, takes up varied questions simultaneously. He portrays the humiliation of a bastard and the ordeals he faced to form an independent identity, the oppression of Dalits especially Dalit women and their rampant sexual exploitation, constricting religious division within Indian society, the resistance to the upward mobility of Dalits, limitations of conversion and the reservation system in eliminating discrimination, subversion by Dalits, consolidation of Dalits into power group in their struggle for equality, superstitions prevailing in Dalit community, the evil of drinking, child marriage etc. The autobiography also brings into foreground how the caste system though disrupting the familial cohesion cannot end the basic human needs of Dalits to form relationships and family.

7.2 Major Persons in Sharan Kumar’s life:

Santamai: Santamai is the writer’s maternal grandmother, who brought him up first in a hut and later under the shelter of the village bus stand. She was a poor Mahar woman who was married to a man in village Teerth. He remarried and deserted Santamai for not giving him a son. Consequently she returned to the village Hanoor with the writer’s mother Masamai, who was her only child. She lived amidst gross poverty and whatever little she earned she did it through sweeping the village streets, lighting bonfire, begging, and acting as a midwife. She collected cow

dung, made cakes and sold them to substantiate her income. She was also involved for some time in the business of brewing and selling illicit liquor. During the harvest season she would wash cow dung in the river water to retrieve undigested jowar grains and would dry and grind them into flour to make bhakarīs for herself. She also took in a Muslim named Mohamood Dashagir Jamadar (Dada) man, who was himself deserted by his wife for his sterility. She was a stoic lady, who doted on the writer and after a dispute with her daughter over the child moved away from her daughter to live in the bus stand. To see the writer get education and earn respect was her greatest ambition. She was a devout lady who worshipped Hindu deities Ambamai and Luxmi, bathed daily and went on fast on every Tuesday and Friday. She sprinkled cow's urine to purify her hut and children. She made sacrifices for her daughter and grandson but would never complain. Full of maternal instincts she would often offer her dried up breasts to her granddaughter crying because of hunger. She sometimes drank and even boxed Dada but some vulnerable aspect of her life was related to Imam, which either the author did not know or does not want to disclose. She was also superstitious and used home remedies to save her children from diseases. She was full of stories such as the one related to the three skeptics, which she narrated to the writer to subdue the rise of rebellious spirit in him. Though deserted by her husband, she wore a kumkum mark on her forehead till her husband died. She mourned over his death and also attended his funeral. In short, both economically and emotionally she was the anchor of the writer's life till he became independent. Though an outcaste, out of the fold of Hinduism, she followed Hindu beliefs and saw education as a means of redemption from the inhuman poverty and degradation Dalits were compelled to live under.

Masamai : Masamai, the mother of the writer was the only child of an untouchable Mahar woman named Santabai. She was brought up in poverty by Santabai, who survived by sweeping the village streets, acting as a midwife, begging and brewing illicit liquor to survive. Masamai was a beautiful woman married to a man named Ithal Kamble, who was a poor farm worker of Hanmanta Limbale, a Patil of the nearby village of Baslegaon. Hanmanta though ostensibly helping Kamble was interested in Masamai and, therefore, Kamble was forced to divorce her. He took away her suckling baby Suryakant and four year old Dharma. Though Masamai tried to live a conscientious life, she could not remarry. She even turned down the offer to join a singing group. As a revenge for ruining her married life she made a subjective decision to become a keep of Hanmanta Limbale, who kept her like a pet dove in a rented house in Akkalkot. They lived happily till she became pregnant. But after the birth of the writer, he took another woman. Masamai returned to her mother and started living in a hut but unlike her mother she refused to be a sweeper or beggar.

She was a tough lady who opted to be a whore to another rich Patil Yashwantrao Sidramappa/ Kaka and bore him nine children as a subversion of monogamy. She even cracked a tough bargain by persuading him to transfer two acres of land in her name. She brewed and sold illicit liquor and ganja to men but refused to be sexually exploited by them not even when Kaka insisted her to sleep with Hanmanta. She was a woman who had learnt to make subjective decisions and hence sided with her daughters in all their actions. The writer was her child but she

could hardly love him perhaps because he reminded her of her desertion by two men. The writer felt as if he was her step son but later he came to realize her helplessness. He remembers only one incident when she understood his pain. When her husband returned in a sick state, she nursed him but did not attend his funeral. Thus we find Masamai was a victim of casteist feudal system but struggled to survive on her own terms.

Dada/Mahmood Dastagir Jamadar: Dada was born to Dastagir Jamadar and his first wife. He was married to a woman from Barhampur but his wife left him for not being able to give her any child. A story goes around him. It was that he was posted as a village Kotwal under the village chief Jagannath Patil in the state of Hyderabad. Once when communal riots had broken out, after a meal hosted by the village chief he happened to remove his cap and seeing his tonsured head, the soldiers stripped him to check his identity as a Muslim by confirming his circumcision. Having confirmed his religion when they were about to shoot him, Jagannath saved him. Since then he had lived with Santamai in village Hanoor, which was situated on the border of Maharashtra and Karnataka. Though he was not the legal husband of Santamai, the writer saw him as his grandfather. Mahmood also loved him as his grandson, told him bedtime stories and worked hard as a porter after he lost his job under village Panchayat of lighting the village lamps. He worked hard to provide for him and Santamai even when his body became frail and weak. The writer describes him as an old man with fallen teeth, white hair with a face a mesh of wrinkles. He was proud of the writer when he went away to seek higher education and in elation called him his tiger. The writer also held him in great esteem and learnt to respect Islam through him. It was for him that in the city Dada even dissembled his identity as a Muslim. However, once Sharan vent out his anger on him, for he felt extremely embittered when he overheard him saying that he cared for him only because of Santamai. Dada was so possessive of her that any reference to Imam would turn him bitter. When drunk he would go violent, would tear his currency notes, throw away coins and wallow in gutter. Even though he was the main provider of the family, he is presented as living on the margins of Santamai's life.

Chandamai : Chandamai was the eldest sister of Santami. Like her, Chandamai was also deserted by her husband for her sterility. She lived with Santamai, the writer and Dada. She was very affectionate and kept a cat that she loved as her child. The writer treated and called her as his great granny. Every day she would wake him up early morning to give him a cup of black tea with jaggery and when he returned from school she would offer him roasted dry meat. Sometimes she would cook for him her stored preserved meat and bhakari fried in animal fat she had extracted from the meat. She was fond of peanuts and used to collect and store them for use during the rainy season. Dattumama, the son of her and Santamai's younger sister was a regular visitor to her. He brought for her gifts of peanuts, chilies, onions and meat he had stolen. He would poison some animal to send her a whole sackful of meat. Once she had a fight with Masamai over her cat and the latter's fowls. She was compelled to send her cat away but before doing it she asked the writer not to kill the cat as it was a sin. In fact, she was driven more by her love for it than the Hindu belief. Her eyes were in tears and her house looked gloomy. Soon after she brought another cat and could be seen cuddling it like a baby but the

cat was again taken away. When she died the writer was married and lived in the city but the news filled him and his wife with deep mourning. In short, she was a picture of a woman who starved for motherhood.

Parshya, Mallya, Harya and Manakunna: They were the friends of the writer. All of them were untouchables and were his companions in many adventures and misadventures. Parshya was the son of Mahar chief, Rambaap, who was a very submissive person. Unlike his father Parshya was rebellious by nature. Under the caste oppression he avenged himself by entering the temple, drinking from the upper caste wells and once even pissed on the God's idol. He was also Sharan's companion in reporting to the police against the village tea stall vendor for his casteist practices.

Harya was a dark and ugly boy who was weaned off from school to support his family by grazing the village chief, Grimallya's cattle. He had a crush on a fair and beautiful Wani girl named Shobhi. He was too shy a lover to even look into her eyes but when she was married off, he felt like a fish out of water. He went to Bombay to make a living and returned with a beautiful Maratha wife by cheating her. He told her that he was also a Maratha and owned land and a mansion in the village. Soon the girl came to know of the reality and ran away. He was remarried to his niece, who after a few months was lured by the son of Jagannath Patil. She was caught red-handed and locked into a room. Harya informed his sister and her husband that she had drowned in a well and died. When both of them came weeping, he opened the door but was so angry that he wanted to cut her nose and breast but was prevented from doing so. Thereafter they lived together. The violence in Harya could also be seen in the way he used to cut away the testicles of the pigs these boys would kill, roast and eat. These actions of Harya show him as a repressed man who displaces his frustration on those weaker to him. His intention to cut nose and breast of a woman are manifestations of gross acts of honour killings, which stem from woman being regarded as the family honour and man's property.

Mallya had been Sharans classmate from village school up to BA and ate from the same plate. He worked hard and got a job in a bank. He lived in the city in a comfortable house with his mother and family. The writer was a bit jealous of his upward mobility when he visited him in the city once. Actually the distance between them was caused when the marriage proposal of the writer and Mallya's sister was rejected due to "impurity" of the writer's blood. The writer eventually married Mallya's cousin Kusum, the daughter of his uncle named Maryappa Kambale.

Maryappa Kambale has been described ironically by the writer as "A saint-cum-villain" and "a victim of alcoholism" (106). Maryappa, an outcaste like the writer, had converted to Buddhism. His eldest son was involved in Dalit Movement and was against the writer's marriage to his sister because he held that the writer drank and visited prostitutes. Maryappa was a big drunkard. Though he promised to give his daughter to the writer in marriage, he dilly dallied it because his family had reservation on the issue of the writer's mixed blood. The writer kept pampering him by giving him some of his scholarship money for his liquor or fare till he got married. Though the writer married according to Bhuddhist rituals, he was not allowed to lead a married life by his in-laws. Maryappa also objected to the writer's

talking to the relatives of Dada for their Muslim background. Thus we see that conversion did not always remove man-made distinctions and bias.

Hanmanta Limbale: Hanamnta Limbale was a Patil and the chief of village Baselgaon. He was married, had a family and lived in a mansion. He is a representative of the upper class patriarchal and feudal order and exploited both the poor farmers and labour especially beautiful low caste women whom he kept as keeps. Socially respectable, he violated their dignity and disowned those born out of such relationship. This shrewd man ruined their familial cohesion to satisfy his lust. Masamai is one of his victims and Sharan was one of the bastards he gave birth to. He came every year on a religious mission to village Hanoor during Shraavan festival. During one such visit he accompanied Yashwantrao Patil to Masamai's house. There he got drunk and stinking of liquor made the writer sit in his lap and tried to feed the half asleep child. This meeting, however, ended in his mother's fury at Yashwantrao for forcing her to sleep with Hanmanta.

Yashwantrao Patil called Kaka by the writer was an influential man of village Hanoor. His wife, son and mother lived in a mansion. He had many women as keeps and the writer's mother was one of them. Sometimes the writer as a child considered him his father. He fathered nine of Masamai's children and was compelled by her to transfer two acres of land in her name. He bought many books for Sharan and even arranged a priest to perform marriage rituals according to Hinduism. His relationship with Masamai reveals his upper caste hypocrisy.

7.3 Brief Summary of *The Outcaste*

Starting from the night of his birth Sharan weaves the story of his life as a patchwork of memories which do not form any linear order. Sharan was born to Masamai, a Dalit living in Maharwada on the outskirts of village Hanoor. His birth was considered as accursed for first. He was born at midnight out of an illicit relationship forced on his mother by Hanamant Limbale, a rich Patil of the nearby village and second because his birth was not welcomed even by his father, forcing Masamai to return to his mother and become a concubine of another Patil from whom she gave birth to nine children. The names of these were, Nagubai, Nirmala, Vanmal, Sunanda, Pramila, Srikant, Indira and Sidram. Masamai had two sons earlier from her husband Ithal Kamble, who under the pressure of his master not only deserted her but also took away their two sons named Suryakant and Dharma. The first born of Masamai was Bhanudas, who did not live long. As a living evidence of her helplessness, the mother largely ignored Sharan, who was brought up by his maternal grandmother, Santamai and the Muslim man, Mahmood Dastagar Jamadar. The writer calls him Dada and loved and respected him like his grandfather. Santabai too was deserted by her husband for not being able to give him a male child. When he married again she returned with her daughter and the only child, the writer's mother and swept the village streets, begged and did all menial works to earn, which was never enough to fill their bellies. Santamai took Dada as her man, for he stood by her like a member of the family and was the only provider when Sharan's grandmother lost her job. The three along with the elder sister of Santamai, Chandmai, also a deserted wife allegedly for her barrenness, lived in a hut till Santamai after a dispute with her daughter over the child author,

took shelter in the bus stand, which became their home. Living amidst poverty Santamai and Dada made sacrifices to feed the writer and to see him educated.

In his early days the child Sharan shirked from school but after two years he was registered in the village school. The environment at school was casteist. The low caste students were isolated, humiliated and bullied by students from upper caste. Segregation of the Dalits was almost absolute. He had some friends but Parshya and Mallya were closest to him. The environment in the school was a reflection of the casteist social system that prevailed in Hanoor or for that matter in the rest of the nation. The child suffered from acute hunger and craved for leftover food and even indulged in petty thefts like other Dalits. Humiliation at the hands of upper caste girls was most disturbing often making them think of rape. The first love of adolescent Sharan was a poor young girl from another subcaste who had hardly reached her puberty but she was soon married off. He was admitted to high school on scholarship when after many efforts he could get the village Sarpanch accept his identity as Sharan Masamai Limable. But the question of fatherhood and naming generated in him an identity crisis. He felt that he was neither accepted as a Mahar nor a Limbale. Thus he belonged to neither caste. All through his childhood he looked for a father and pined for his mother's love and care. The writer faced financial hardship in getting admission in the college because in spite of working hard Santamai and Dada could hardly raise funds for that. The writer enrolled himself in M.A. in a college in Sholapur and got involved in Dalit Movement. As he pursued education, he became self-confident but with it he also grew conscious of poverty and filth that prevailed in Maharwada. He was slowly alienated from his family despite the sacrifices they made for him. Prospects of his getting married were thwarted because of his illegitimate birth and his association with Dada, who was a Muslim. After much difficulty the writer managed to appease Maryappa Kamble with money to get his consent to give him his daughter, Kusum in marriage. Sharan offended his relatives by refusing to marry according to Hindu rituals. That was the second open defiance, first being his unsuccessful attempt to get police action against the tea stall vendor for his casteist practices.

Though married, the parents of his wife would not allow their daughter to spend time with him or go with him. As the third act of open defiance he threateningly took her away. He took the job as a telephone operator in Ahmedpur and started living amidst the high caste, dissembling his identity as an outcaste. Psychologically and principally he was attracted towards the Dalit Movement but was extremely conscious of the insecurity amidst caste animosities that prevailed. He was ashamed of the poverty of Santami, Dada and Vani when they visited him. He was torn between Dalit consolidation and insecurity in the riot-ridden environment. He felt disgusted with the pictures of Hindu deities, implying his alienation from Hinduism. To get over the pain of dissemblance he got himself posted in Latur but to his great dismay he failed to get a decent accommodation. Living in Bhima Basti was almost torturous to him with cremation ground at the back and the front street a veritable public latrine. The writer returned to his village when his wife was to deliver their third baby but the filth prevailing there nauseated him. Restless and uncomfortable in the caste-ridden filthy environment the writer returned to Latur to receive the news of the birth of his third child and ruminated

over the possible rituals to be performed by him on the death of Masami, Santamai and Dada, unable as he was still to resolve the communal dilemmas and decide what his identity was.

7.4 Glossary:

Deserted: Abandon (a person, cause, or organization) in a way considered disloyal

Devout: religious, having deep religious feeling

Vulnerable: unprotected, ill-protected

Disclose : reveal, make known

Circumcision: action or practice of circumcising a young boy or man

Cuddling: hug, and hold in one's arms

Avenged: take revenge for

Bias: prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair

Cohesion: unity, togetherness

Simultaneously: at the same time

Concubine: a woman who lives with a man but has lower status than his wife

Animosities: hatred, enmity, dislike

7.5 Activity for Students**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Discuss some instances of Sharan's open defiance.
2. What were the main factors that created his identity crisis?
3. What change came in his response to his village after he was educated?
4. Why did he get himself transferred from Ahmedpur?

7.6 Summing up:

The lesson discusses some most important persons in life of Sharankumar Limbale. We understand that Sharan was closer to his grandmother than to his own mother. She gave birth to over a dozen children but largely ignored them. She supported herself by becoming a concubine and selling liquor through illegal means. Sharan suffered from want of her love though Santamai and Chandamai loved Sharan. His life as an untouchable was full of difficulties but the writer was able to pursue education by the dint of his hard work, and the financial help from the government as Santamai and Dada never had enough to support him despite their labour and sacrifices. As he grew he became alienated from his village and his own people but was conscious of his liabilities towards them in case of their death.

THE OUTCASTE : An Analysis-I

8.0 Introduction: The lesson aims to present an analysis of the text in a way that the students are able to understand the major thematic concerns of the writer as well as major aspects and events of his life in a way that they are able to critically evaluate them and are able to answer questions related to them.

8.1 Thematic Analysis of the Text: Part I

The Outcaste is one of the two best known works of Limbale. It was written originally in Marathi and appeared as *Akkarmashi* in 1984. Though a number of Dalit autobiographies had been published earlier, *Akkarmashi* had to face challenges not because of its tirade against the caste system but also because of almost appalling confessions it carries. It is distinctive because it is the voice of both an untouchable and an illegitimate child. Now the concept of single mothers is on the rise and the govt. forms are accepted without the name of the father but three decades ago the situation was not the same as it is now. More than that, being an illegitimate child, termed as 'harami' or 'bastard', has been socially stigmatizing. Unwedded mother's abortion is not yet legalized. These conditions combined with the untouchable caste and poverty of the author presented mammoth material and psychological hurdles in the path of his life.

This autobiography truthfully presents struggles of Dalits both at individual and collective levels. It reveals the author's growing understanding of his mother's compulsions making him understand how consensual sex may also be a form of rape – a definition which was constitutionally amended only a couple of years ago. In that sense Limbale's autobiography raised several complex questions, when it was published. The whole life story is narrated with its gross realities also in reaction to the public discourse of the eighties triggered by the establishment of the Mandal Commission in 1979 for reconsidering reservation policy, and the caste and racial conflicts that were damaging the social fabric especially in Maharashtra, the writer's native state at that time.

As an illegitimate son of a Mahar mother and a Patil father, brought up by his grandmother and Muslim grandfatherly figure, who lived with his grandmother, Sharankumar Limbale grew up to realize that he neither had an inherited identity nor his circumstances allowed him one till he was mature enough to assume an identity of his own, as a telephone operator. Even then amidst caste and communal divisions and the animosities of the 80s he could hardly determine which side to ally.

Narrating a medley of circumstances based on memory and re-memory the author recreates the dirt and squalor, poverty and hunger, and the conflicts and dilemmas of almost twenty five years of his life with such poignancy and urgency that *Akkarmashi* becomes a powerful voice of an outcaste. Questioning social decency and moral propriety of the dominant Hindu system the writer narrates the

agony of himself, his mother and his whole community. Read in the context of the times, when it was written, it seems to redefine how even 'consensual' sexual liaison between a high class man and an untouchable woman is no less than a rape and this rape was the general lot of many a Dalit women. It also testifies how 'a home' is built without a house, how criminality is a means of survival, and dirt, nakedness and licentiousness a sheer helplessness of an untouchable and outcaste. Often these are subversions under extreme duress of social discrimination and economic penury. The autobiography defying chronological ordering of the life incidents of the author truthfully represents the growth of his consciousness. The childhood consciousness of hunger as want of food expands to include lust, dogmatism, social injustices and inhumanities, ending with nearly twenty five year old author in dilemma which religion and ritual will govern three most important persons in his life, his mother, grandmother and grandfatherly figure Dada on their death. It serves as a significant comment on the religious dogmatism, caste restrictions overwhelming the human concerns even beyond life.

The text of this self-writing runs over 16 pages divided randomly into sections, which follow no thematic or chronological scheme or pattern. It is episodic in nature and, therefore, it is difficult to summarize it into a coherent whole. Nevertheless an attempt is being made here in this lesson to draw out some of its some major concerns of the author as reflected in the text in order to make you understand some basic facts of the author's life. Within the life story of the writer are embedded the stories of his mother, grandmother and his grandfatherly figure Dada.

The narrator was born to a Dalit woman from Mahar community whom he refers to as Masamai. His mother was married to a man named Ithal Kamble, who was a poor farm worker of Hanmanta Limbale, a Patil of nearby village Baslegaon. Hanmanta though ostensibly helping to Kamble was interested in his wife and, therefore, Kamble was forced to divorce Masamai and take away her suckling baby Suryakant and four year old Dharma. The mother had three alternatives: to surrender to Hanmant as a concubine or become a prostitute. Though Masamai tried to live a conscientious life, she could not remarry. She turned down the offer to join a singing group, another alternative open for Dalit woman. As a revenge of ruining her married life she made a subjective decision to become a keep of Hanmanta Limbale, who kept her like a pet dove in a rented house in Akkalkot. They lived happily till she became pregnant and thus was born the narrator.

His birth was considered inauspicious as he was born at midnight. His father abandoned him and his mother. Though born to Masamai, he received little love and care from his mother. He lived with his grandmother Santamai, who had only one daughter, the narrator's mother and since she could not give her husband any son, she was deserted as soon as his second wife had become pregnant. Santamai in order to survive performed pretty odd tasks. She swept the village streets, went around begging, acted as a midwife etc. to make her two ends meet, but could hardly succeed. She was a stoic hardworking lady who would get up early in the morning, would go around the village to gather dung with broken chapals, dragging her feet with a sack on her back. She was often accompanied by the child Sharan, who also helped her collect dung and make dung cakes to sell them to

supplement their meagre earning, which was never sufficient to satisfy their basic need of food let alone clothing and a house. They were dressed in tatters and their nakedness was their circumstantial compulsion. When the author was a baby, her grandmother would tie him on her back and sweep the village streets. She also lit bonfire, collected madder leaves for the pipes of villagers, smear village platform with dung and sometimes even took files to the town office on foot for a distance of ten miles. Having been forsaken by Hanumanta, for other woman Masamai had returned to Hanoor, but hardly gave him any love and affection. Therefore, besides starving for his mother's attention, Sharan reeled under acute hunger despite the fact that he always got the lion's share of the food available to the family. He hardly had a complete fill. Hunger was so gnawing that food became almost an obsession for him. Poverty drove Santamai to glean undigested grain of jowar from the cattle dung, wash them in the river, dry and grind them into flour to make for her a bhakari. And all this she did while singing. The child, though offered dry bhakarries, imagined these as spicy but on eating these felt as if he had eaten dung. This made him understand the extreme poverty and sacrifice Santamai had made for him.

Poverty also drove Dalits to weddings like excited wolves and vultures and wait for long hours for their turn, swallowing their saliva, greedily hearing the sound of consumed food, so much so that their stomachs entered their ears. They accepted the leftover foods without any qualms because they were starving and also because they could not afford anything more than bhakarries or chutney; leftover food was like nectar. While all Dalit would accept the leftover food, Masamai would not go. Therefore, the child Sharan was often carried away with the desire to steal some food/kheer for his mother. Once the narrator remembers how his grandmother was overjoyed when he and his Dada collected soiled flour. This encouraged the child to collect jowar from the mound of grain kept near a corpse and collect money thrown over the dead. But his efforts brought him only retribution from his grandmother, who asked him to throw the grain in the river, leaving the child question and wonder at what makes the grain untouchable when it could fill many empty stomachs.

The narrator remembers many instances when his grandmother, Dada and sisters would sleep without food but would give to him the little food there was in the house. Though old and weak, Dada too worked hard. He used to light village lamps in the evening till there was a Muslim Sarpanch. He was replaced by a Hindu, when Girmallya was elected. Even Santamai as a village sweeper was sacked. Then he became a porter and carried loads besides doing all odd jobs for the drivers and the shopkeepers at the bus stand from morning till night. The last bus driver often shared their liquor with him. Frustrated Dada would get drunk, throw away his coins and tear his currency notes, abuse the new Sarpanch and wallowed in the gutter. When drunk he would quarrel with Santamai, throwing her into hysteria. Their quarrels sometimes got physical as Santamai would box him. To avenge himself he would refuse to eat and ask her, "Did the Imam visit you?" This depressed the child Sharan into tears. Such conditions of poverty and verbal and physical violence prevailed in almost every home in Maharwada.

The writer has made many confessions in his autobiography. These confessions include those of theft and sexual adventures. He has at various places

narrated how his hunger was almost insatiable and it made him steal food of others. He, however, later finding others in trouble had a sense of regret too, showing his sensitivity to the suffering of others. Hunger dominated the life of Dalits so much that it hardly afforded them a choice between filth and food. A piece of meat dried up in the sun with flies swarming over it was a welcomed luxury. Dalits depended on joothan and consumed it as a feast. This practice of the high caste doling out their leftover food was followed in schools too under the nose of teachers. Similarly, begging was a common practice and usually women and girls were engaged in it.

The autobiography begins with the description of a picnic expedition with clearly marked caste boundaries. The incident runs a full one section. Their starvation almost put the dogs, flies, vultures as their competitors. If bhakari was their staple food, meat was their prime nourishment. Skinning the dead animals was assigned to some family of their community on annual contract basis for a small amount of remuneration. It was welcomed because it provided the entire Maharwada with ample meat. Even children of the family contributed to skinning. There was a great excitement among people for this. The meat of the dead animal was shared by the entire community. Santamai saved some, preserved it and used it to extract fat for consumption during hard times. Similarly 'kheer' was hardened into lumps. Peanuts, a luxury was sealed off by Chandamai, Santamai's sister for consumption during rainy season. The narrator is also told a story of how a woman used the animal fat to set her hair to allure a rich man. With swarm of flies hovering over her, she walked through the bazaar and dogs pulled at her hair, when she slept outside the house of the man she was attracted to, expecting him to come to her. Such descriptions are presented in a manner that shows a complex attitude of the author, of humour and empathy to the unhygienic way of Dalit life amidst the squalor of Maharwada.

Often poverty made Dalits steal and poison the cattle. The nephew of Santamai named Dattu visited her elder sister, Chandamai, who having been forsaken by her husband for her barrenness lived with them. He was a thief and would steal chilies, onions and peanuts from the fields and bring his plunders to her. Whenever she asked him to bring meat, he would poison an animal to death and send her a whole sackful of meat. The author also describes thefts he indulged in. The adult narrator compares these thefts to those of black-marketers to underline the insignificance and the human compulsions behind them and the difference between hunger and greed.

Poverty accustomed them to filth. The author remembers how as children he along with his Dalit friends played in garbage, defecated there with pigs poking around or brushing their backs and how he always left his bottom unwashed as a small child. They didn't have soap to clean themselves or wash their clothes. Stones were their scrubs. Streets were their open latrines. In a Dalit Basti even in big cities like Latur women defecated in open in full view of men passing by. The caste system divided the river bank in the village. The lowest end of the river was prescribed for the use of Dalits. The narrator describes how once while cupping water to drink from the river he accidentally swallowed the shit of a child. They could not drink water from the wells they had dug. They were dressed up in tatters, often unable to hide their nakedness. The writer tells how the only clothes in his school times were

his underwear, which he took as his shorts, and shirt which was dirty because of long use and cleaning the slate. He also describes how once as a mature boy he noticed a man peering at her grandmother's nakedness through her tattered blouse. He was filled with deep rage at that time.

Poverty was the biggest obstacle in seeking education. Children could ill afford to study as often they would be called from school to take food for their fathers. Many of them were made to drop out because the family needed to employ them to feed themselves. Only a few could continue with school and still fewer reached college. The writer tells that there were only two of his age-mates who graduated. The narrator's grandmother and Dada wanted him to study. The narrator also describes how their circumstances hampered their performance at school. The picnic expeditions ending in an assignment on a write up on their experience during picnic is used by the writer to highlight how the most fascinating part of it was consumption of leftover food and watching girls' lips consume delicious food. The child Sharan could hardly think of how to begin his essay on picnic when the only joy he could remember about the picnic was watching the girls and consuming the leftover food.

Poverty often pushed the Dalits into crimes. Besides lying, stealing, poisoning cattle in expectation of food, Dalits brewed illicit liquor to supplement their thin income. The narrator describes in detail how even children male as well as female, were engaged into this business and how police was bribed. Any police raid would deprive them of their morning cup of tea. The narrator describes how a cup of liquor sold paid for their morning tea and if there were no customers, they would go hungry. So customers were like Gods to them. Both Santami and Masami ran their liquor business as efficiently as men. They had different furnaces and different customers. Children were also engaged in this and were, thus, introduced to drinking very early. Often the narrator got tipsy testing the liquid he was sent to bring for preparing liquor. He also narrates an episode of his ten year old sister getting drunk when she accompanied another woman to get the raw stuff. Everybody took to drinking – men and women, tender boys and girls. Drinking away their agony was one way of their survival. He understood very early how drinking, which was accessible like tea to them, invited quarrels. The narrator describes how his Dada would come drunk and fight. The narrator was also a witness to wife-beating. Muley Bhimsya sold his house land, and his possessions for liquor. The streets connecting the village to Maharwada were full of drunkards most of whom were high caste. They accepted liquor from the Mahar women but would not accept water. They considered these Mahar women untouchables but would sleep with them.

Description of drinking and the high caste man's lewdness is repeatedly narrated to point how Dalit women suffered rampant rapes. Their poverty propelled them into becoming whores or look for rich men, often even outside marriage. Masamai depended on it for her survival. She was a concubine of a rich Patil whom the author referred to as Kaka and gave birth to nine children from him. She was a tough woman and though largely helpless to protect herself, she made subjective decisions. She negotiated with him for their children, which was a tough task but she managed to get two acres of land transferred in her name. Sharan writes in

detail how his mother entertained Kaka and was greatly disturbed if he stopped visiting her. She used her children to send him messages and would even quarrel with her rival women. She sold liquor to men, entertaining them at her hutment. Men were often riotous after getting drunk and would vomit, which infuriated Masamai but she would clean the premises to entertain them on the next day. The narrator saw she also sold ganja to men in order to earn money. Later he tells us how his father Hanmanta during one of his stays at his village for Shiva puja was brought by Kaka to the mother of the narrator and compelled her to sleep with him. Though not married to him Masamai through her relationship with only one man, Kaka, created a subversive version of monogamy for herself. The mother resisted the pressure and put her foot down to preserve this dissemblance. This was the only moment when he observed her vulnerability. By juxtaposing it with the moral hypocrisy of high caste men, the writer has redefined rape.

Poverty compelled Dalit women to act in a manner that the hegemony would term as immorality but which was their human compulsion. Santamai deserted by her husband took in a Muslim man deserted by his wife for his infertility. They too formed a family, which was a subversion of the hegemonic nuclear or extended family. Santamai with this Muslim man, his elder sister, Chandamai, deserted by her husband for her barrenness, Masamai with her nine children living in their own huts formed a unique version of family till due to a dispute over the writer with Masamai, Santamai and Dada moved out of their hut and took shelter in a bus stand, which became their home. The public spaces used as homes involve a clear though compulsive elimination of the difference between homing and unhoming, the private and the public. They had only rags to sleep on and a clay-stove, a box to put flour in and less than half a dozen utensil to cook and eat in. The author's description poignantly points out the homelessness. Dada even frail and aging in body worked as a porter and after a hard day could hardly earn enough to fill in their bellies.

Though wanting food and shelter, the narrator tells how he was loved by these two. Santamai laboured and made sacrifices to feed the author. Similarly Dada would do anything for him. He narrated him stories while going to sleep. It was their biggest dream to see him educated. Santamai felt proud to see him shouting slogans during Independence Day or Republic Day processions. When he was to join a college, there was no money. Both of them tried sincerely to raise money for his education. When once the narrator returned with six of his friends on a festival, they offered their rags to boys but themselves spent the night sitting in cold. Although the narrator received parental love from them, yet he always felt a void in his life for the lack of love for his mother. The only incident which he narrates when his mother gave a feeling of being close to him was when she was pressed by Kaka to bed with Hanamanta. That moment brought her close to him, for he was in agony over the question of his fatherhood too but this stray incident failed to confirm her love and concern for him. In fact, the entire autobiography can also be read as the author's maturation into an understanding of his mother's compulsions in giving birth to ten illegitimate children. All through the narrative he can be seen searching for a father – his biological father, Hanamanta, Yashvantrao to whom his mother acted as a wife and who often acted as his father, missing Ithal

Kamble, the official husband of his mother who fathered two of her mother's sons before she divorced her, and the childless Mahmood, whom he rather regarded as his grandfather.

The Outcaste is not only a moving tale of the author's sufferings as representing the agonies of all the untouchables and their dehumanization and humiliation under the hegemony of caste, it is also a touching account of the evil of patriarchy that reduces women, especially of low caste, into sexual objects resulting in the birth of illegitimate children. It is what 'Akkarmashi' suggests. The narrator is a half caste because his mother is a Dalit Mahar and his father a high caste Patil. Since his father is a Patil, he should take his name but since he is the result of an illicit relationship, he is a bastard. Thus he suffered acutely due to the confusion over his identity. The author became conscious of it when he was admitted to school. Initially he would run away from school because there was little encouraging happening in the school, which was housed in a temple with Dalit children seated at the entrance and during rainy season when it was shifted, they were seated amidst the footwear below the platform. But when he started attending school for four or five days a week, the teacher registered him as a Patil, sarcastically calling him Patil of Baslegaon. When Hanmanta got to know of it, he came with rowdies threatening him at gunpoint. He tried even to bribe him and later pleaded with him but the teacher did not give in. Thus the person who came to his help to get his father's name was his teacher Bhosale. When he was to be admitted to high school in the neighbouring village of Chungi, the fellowship form needed signature of his parents and the Sarpanch. By then the maturing author understood the situation. He had a lot of bitterness for Hanmanta Limbale, who had wrecked his mother's life. His mother had lived all her life mortgaging herself to one owner after another. But though the Sarpanch signed for others, he refused to sign on Sharan's form and approve the name Masamai Hanmanta Limbale as his guardian's name for the obvious reason of saving the prestige of the high caste Patil. He even turned down the teacher Bhosale's suggestion of naming Santamai Rama Balshankar as his guardian because she was living with a Muslim. But on his insistence Sarpanch approved the former. The whole episode disturbed the young Sharan so much that he broke into tears with bitterness, humiliation and anger over the illegitimacy of his birth. His persistent questions were about his father and his abandonment. He feels his mother was clamped like Kunti and, he therefore, identified himself with Karma. This allusion is used several times in the text. Though, thus, named and even consoled by his mother with kisses and hugs, his bitterness was so overwhelming that the next day he declared his parents dead to his fellow students who knew it was not correct. The illegitimacy of his birth did not stop haunting him all through his life.

His outcaste status became a blocking stone in settling his marriage alliance, and was aggravated by the fact of Santamai's association with Dada, a Muslim. Once in bitterness because of his alienation, Sharan even insulted him (62-63). He felt as if he would explode with rage when Nagi, his half sister also abused him saying that he had no connection with them because he had a different father. Similar bitterness was caused when he overheard Dada telling Kaka that he looked after Sharan only for Santamai's sake. Thus we see that the narrator was

considered neither a part of the Patil clan nor the Mahar clan. He was the son of Masamai but lived with his grandmother. He had a great deal of sensitivity for his sisters but got little concern from them. His friends at school and college treated him well but alienated themselves in the matter of marriage. Such moments shattered him. Nevertheless, he continued to harbour in his heart a great deal of respect for Dada and concern for his half sisters.

As the narrative weaves more episodes of his life and identity crises, bitterness and rage intensifies. Marriages of his sisters were settled under the dual compromise owing to their low caste and illegitimate status. Most of them were married even when they were hardly in their puberty. With the exception of one, no marriage was fruitful. Both Massamai and Santamai would request their customers or friends to find an outcaste match of similar hybrid birth for him but of no avail. Mallya's mother, who was very fond of him otherwise, turned down the proposal because of the impurity of his blood. Masamai's Mang friend also a concubine to a Patil had an outcaste daughter, who had turned a singer and went around with a drummer but this alliance also failed to mature. This clearly shows how different was the fate for an outcaste illegitimate boy and girl. The narrator managed his and one of his sister's marriages by repeatedly obliging Maryappa Kamble and paying him money for liquor. Even when married to Kusum, his in-laws especially Kusum's mother blocked possibilities of consummation of that marriage. He was accused of drinking and visiting prostitutes. His family was considered immoral. At last Sharan took his stand and forcibly took Kusum away to have a home of his own.

Though it was very difficult to pursue education, yet Sharan's education after a reluctant start took off with the help of stipends given by the government. As he grew we find that traces of moral turpitude became dimmer. When in class tenth, he found thirty rupees. Though his needs exceeded his resources, and he was instigated by his friend Pirjade to keep twenty for himself, and there was a temptation also to go for a movie, the narrator as a model of honesty handed entire money to the headmaster, who appreciated him in the assembly. The narrator admits that education instilled in him a great deal of pride and confidence. It propelled him and his friend Parshya to rebel against their treatment as untouchables. One day they reported to Police against Shivram, the tea stall vendor who not only served them in a separate cup and saucer but also forced them to wash and place it back. But as the policeman was used to avail free services at the stall, he began to threaten them with imprisonment. It was when Shravan counter-threatened to report against him to the Prime Minister, he was alarmed but the effort turned in a fiasco with Shivram's assertion that allowing these boys in his stall would take away all his customers. Calling them sons of bitches he mocked at them to come to his house to be served in his plates. The boys walked out dumpfounded. Later Kaka also threatened them.

Santamai's efforts to pacify him with her stories of greater injustices and humiliation in case of defiance and deviation left him feeling as if gagged and beaten. As he moved to the city and came under the influence of the teachings of Ambedkar, his anger started brewing in him the lava of rage. At the same time the rumours about the withdrawal of reservation facilities for the untouchable made him acutely anguished. We find there are several forces acting on his psyche at this

point of his life. He was advancing intellectually. There was setting in him a sense of alienation from his family. He was becoming publically conscious of acknowledging them as their own for their poverty. Dada hailing him in pride as his tiger hardly filled him with pride. He was acutely conscious of his security when living in Ahmedpur as a telephone operator. He was ashamed of his grandmother whom he had considered no less than Jijabai. The filth of his home nauseated him. He did not want to disclose his identity as an outcaste to his neighbours. Dada sensing it also introduced himself as a Lingayat. All these give the reader a feeling that he was becoming a 'Sanskitized Brahmin'.

Leaving only a few fortunate ones who could get education, and thought and acted progressively, there largely prevailed a sort of fatalism to their plight amongst Dalits. Leaving only himself and one of his friends, Mallya, stagnation prevailed in their life and a sense of inferiority was internalized under the coercive casteist conditions. Nobody dared to break those chains. Stories of revenge wreaked by the high caste were circulated to curb any spark of resistance. A similar incident occurred in the narrator's life too. As an adolescent boy, Sharan had a crush on a girl named Shewanta, who had hardly reached her puberty. The narrator's feelings were so strong that the narrator sways into poetry while describing them. When Santamai came to know of it, first she pacified the narrator by promising to ask for Shewanta in marriage for him but later narrated him the story of Rohidasmaina and of the cruelty of Mahars, concluding that if they would cut them to pieces, there would be left no one to care for them and they would force women to sleep with them. The mature Sharan realized how the roots of injustices against the low caste went deep into history and how the tears of Santamai were epics of survival and fortitude. At such a point he felt her to be no less than Jijabai telling stories of valour to young Shivaji.

The life of Dalits was marked with violence – both inter caste and intra-caste. Though the author has largely refrained himself from directly narrating any inter-caste gruesome violent incidents except of skinning of animals, and has much concentrated only on the sexual violence against Dalit woman, the world of Dalits was violence-ridden. They were openly abused and thrashed over any act of defiance. This made many of them resort to subversive methods of taking revenge. Parshya pissing on Bhutalsidh temple, later Sharan entering into the inner sanctorum and prostrating before the deity are some of such incidents. Duttamama's thefts are also subversions.

Revenge often led him to want to rape Kaka's old mother as he had seen him, through the door slits, taking his mother. Untouchability instilled in them deep anger almost suffocating them. Once slighted by a girl named Shobhi both Parshya and Sharan got enraged and wanted to rape her. She had insulted them many a times at school too. For them she was a symbol of the caste that had degraded them for centuries. But they were frightened over the story told by Damuanna once. The story was told to make them understand how even looking lasciviously at a high caste woman was considered a serious crime and how a Dalit boy's audacity resulted in the sexual assault of women of whole Maharwada. Once the whole village went to court against Dalit men who were imprisoned and when they returned, they came back only to find their women having been raped. Unable to

lash out at their oppressors often Dalits transferred their frustrations on each other and grew violent. The fight between Chandamai and Masamai over the former's cat eating up her fowls and between the two sisters Chandamai and Santamai, were ignited by their helplessness over their poverty. In fact, Dalit children grew up amidst blood, killings, abuses and skinning of dead animals that has been described in a gruesome manner. Manakunna, Harya and the narrator would kill pigs. Manakunna would capture its legs and Harya removed its testicles. They roasted and feasted on its meat, with its eyes bulging out. If the pig was pregnant Manakunna would keep it in his yard. The narrator sums up the whole phenomenon of scapegoating as "As a habit sow eats a piglet in the litter".

Masamai's alienation from her son Sharan also amounted to psychological violence. She took care of her sick ex husband when he returned but did not go to attend his funeral. She would carefully groom Sharan whenever Hanmanta was in the village to shame him into acceptance of his son, would serve him liquor as she would do to any customer but would not let him touch her. The writer has, thus, described the peculiar stoicism of his mother though he always felt like a stepson to her. We find him caught up in a mesh of contradictory emotions of lure and loathing for his mother. In fact, the whole self-narrative seems to be an effort on his part to negotiate his identity as an illegitimate outcaste, which eventually leads him to reinterpret his past in order to understand his mother, to recover from the sense of shame she gave him by bringing him into this world as a bastard.

Shame and fear have been portrayed as an imminent part of a Dalit's life. A sense of shame always kept them within their limits. This exposes how Dalits instead of or even in spite of understanding much of their helplessness to their unhygienic conditions, looked up to the values of the high caste. Purity, chastity, fidelity within patriarchy were imposed on women and Dalits also imposed these values on their women. Hence Dalit women suffered under triple hegemony. First they were exploited by rich high caste men. Second, they were also the victims in the hands of their husbands. Third, deserted by them they suffered from stark poverty. Santamai, Chandamai and Masamai – all were forsaken by their husbands but they remained psychologically attached to them. While Santamai mourned over her husband's death and assumed a widow's posturing, Masamai tended her sick dying husband with full devotion, and though she did not go for the funeral, she did mourn his death for a while. However both Santamai and Masamai eschewing a sense of shame openly flouted the social patriarchal norms. There is no dearth of examples in the text of untouchable women openly transgressing and violating these norms. This leads many to question the writer's treatment of women.

Santamai lived with a Muslim man while Masamai entertained a Patil. But unlike these tough mothers, the narrator suffered from a sense of shame, shame on being an untouchable and a bastard. Acute consciousness of his illegitimate status instilled in him a sense of alienation too. As a child it made him refuse to go to the village feast, as he was afraid lest anyone of his schoolmates should see him and tease him. Even when hunger compelled him to steal, he was filled with shame and remorse. Though the author had a tender heart, as he got acculturated to urban ways, his sense of shame got the better of him. He felt deeply ashamed of acknowledging his grandmother, ashamed of admitting to his friends that he had no

house and that the bus stand was their sheltering place. He was ashamed of Dada bidding him farewell with assurances of not to worry about money. He dissembled his caste while living on rent in a high caste neighbourhood at Ahmedpur. He was afraid of losing his prestige once his secret was out. When Dada, Santamai and his sister Vani arrived there he was ashamed of their utter poverty. "We were ashamed" (105). He confesses, "I was a Dalit who had become a Brahman by attitude". The writer comes to understand that merely daily taking bath, brushing teeth, wearing clean clothes and living in a clean way doesn't rid one of the stigmas of Dalithood. So the author felt himself like a nowhere man. He was uncomfortable with the unhygienic condition that prevailed in a Dalit Basti, but would not find a house to live in the locality of the high caste, or Muslims. Living in Bhimnagar in Latur, situated as it was besides a cremation ground, he found burning flesh a great disturbance. He himself felt burning within. Invariably we find that as the author grows, the sense of shame is combined with a great deal of anger and protest, the consciousness of his degradation generated in him, which intensifies with unending experience of want and deprivation. We see his rebellion at his wedding when he refuses to solemnize his marriage according to Hindu rituals. In fact, finding a wife was to him a mammoth task and his preference for Buddhism and a Buddhist marriage ritual even when his entire family left the Pandal, was a pragmatic decision. He again rebelled when he defied his mother-in-law, who didn't let his wife be with him. He would get up at night and ask her to give him money to go to prostitutes. At last he forcibly took his wife along.

Poverty loosened the sexual codes among Dalits. While the author weaves a recurrent narrative discourse on the rape of Dalit women, he tells various such instances what Dalit women looked for and took men irrespective of their caste. He is also confessional in tone while narrating his own sexual drives underlining how libido worked on humans without the distinction of caste and gender. This also led to child marriages, which were hardly successful. All the sisters of the author were married before even puberty. Leaving only that of Nirmi, all marriages failed. Though the narrator has presented many women of his community leaving their husbands, there is hardly any outcaste man presented as having extramarital relationships. It is invariably always a high caste man who exploited the low caste women.

Dalits were not only illiterate, they were superstitious too. When epidemic of cholera broke out in the village, they took it as the curse of the Goddess. They sacrificed a male buffalo to appease Mariyai while Potraj danced before the Goddess. Santamai prayed to Goddess Ambabai and smeared their foreheads with ash from the clay store. Parshya's father was believed to practise black magic. There prevailed a custom of dedicating children to God. They vowed that if a daughter is born they would name it Luxmi and if a son was born he would be named Laxman. There was also a custom of dedicating children to God Khandoba and a boy thus is called Wagya and a girl Murli. A girl dedicated to God never married and was called Devadasi. Ritual of throwing children from temple top was performed as gratitude to the Goddess for fulfilling some wish. Epileptic attacks were considered as a punishment by Goddess Luxmi. Pilgrimage to Chivart offered terrible scenes with thousands of Potrajs with painted faces beating their drums inviting the Goddess to

possess them. Possessed women danced to the beats. Their foreheads were smeared with ashes from the deity to return them to normal. Uncountable animals were sacrificed filling the temple yard with blood. A live goat was skinned and made to walk in front of the deity. It was believed that when the pilgrimage ended ghosts would arrive. A ghost deity was carried away in palanquin. The author believed all this to be nonsense but his skepticism evoked a story of three men from Santamai. These men stayed behind but to see by midnight palanquins arriving one by one. The man hiding in the tree fell down scared and died. The ghosts smelling human flesh were allowed by the deity to eat the one in front of him, frightening the one behind to death, for he thought the Goddess meant him.

8.2 Short-answer questions: Sample Answers

1. Describe the conditions that prevailed in Maharwada .

Ans. Maharwada was the locality of poor untouchable Mahars, situated on the outskirts of village Hanoor on the borders of Maharashtra and Karnataka. The village was sharply divided into caste lines. Wani, Brahmin, Marwai, Muslim, Marath, Teli, fishermen, goldsmith and all teachers formed the upper class whereas Mangs and Mahars were among the low caste. Even among the latter two there was a big divide and they had different sources of water and considered it a contamination to drink from each other's. Maharwada has been described a heap of rubbish and garbage almost representing those who live there. People were extremely poor and lived in filth. Pigs and dogs roamed about. Hunger was their constant companion. Hunger largely drove them to be non-vegetarian. They were happily involved in the business of skinning dead animals. Though the remuneration was nominal, it provided the entire Maharwada enough meat to satisfy their hunger.

Mahars lived in huts and to sustain themselves also got into brewing and selling illicit liquor. The road leading to Maharwada was full of high caste drunkards who could be polluted by the touch of untouchables, would neither offer them water nor drink water from their houses but would throng to Maharwada in search of sex, liquor and ganja. The moral constraints were loosened. Men as well as women drank, had sex outside marriage and used violence on each other. Nevertheless, women's suffering and victimization at the hands of the upper caste men, and the bastards born out of such liaisons put these women at a greater disadvantage. Mahars were considered as outside the fold of Hinduism and were not allowed to enter the inner precincts of the temple, yet they believed in Hindu deities and followed Hindu rituals. Early, unstable marriages and broken families were a common lot. Illiteracy and superstitions prevailed on a large scale. There were only a couple of young men who were able to make their way up.

Q. 2 Describe the impact of education on Sharan.

Answer: Sharan as an outcaste child lived in utter poverty but his grandmother wanted him to be educated. He was sent to school but for first two years he would always run away from school. There was nothing encouraging in the school environment. Since he was an untouchable, he was made to sit at the temple entrance and was asked to smear its walls with dung paste. Once he felt too shy to ask for the teacher's permission to attend the nature's call and soiled his shorts, which was, in fact, his tattered underwear. He was teased, mocked at and bullied by

the upper caste boys. When his attendance improved, he was registered as a student but there arose a controversy over his name. It was again raised when he was to fill a form for stipend in the high school. His teacher Bhosale, whom he called guruji, came to his rescue. He could go to Sholapur for his higher education after a great deal of difficulty as neither Santami nor Dada could manage to raise money. The environment in the college again reminded him of his caste alienation. He got involved in Dalit Movement and came under the influence of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and after completing M.A. took job as a telephone operator.

He was a carefree child but his education sharpened his consciousness of society and refined him slowly. Earlier he was so obsessed with his hunger that he hardly realized the suffering of others but gradually he became conscious of the sufferings of others. He often stole food but gradually we see in him a sense of regret. When in high school once he came upon thirty rupees, instead of coming under the pressure of his friend or his own needs and temptations, he deposited it with the head teacher. His honesty was publically lauded in the assembly. His education instilled in him a new confidence and accompanied by one of his friends he reported to the police against the caste discrimination practised by the village tea stall vendor. Though their effort did not transform the environment, it did give his character a great boost.

His education made him conscious of the larger world and the greater evils that affect it. He was able to compare the petty thefts with those of the big thugs, the blackmarketers. He became aware of the vote bank politics. His understanding of life and evils in it became intense. He came to realize the evil of communalism. The text is full of the philosophical ruminations of the author. His formal education combined with what he learnt from his own experiences and observation of the world made him wiser. He came to understand the true spirit of religion. Nonetheless his education also set in him a sort of alienation as he became uncomfortable in the dirty surroundings in his village. He took to dissemblance of his caste identity. He felt ashamed of the poverty of his grandmother, Dada and Vani. His own self profiting upward mobility is contrasted to that of one of his friends Mallya, whose mother's plight improved unlike that of the writer's. The cases, however, are the author's justification for the continuation of the reservation system that came into question in 1980s.

8.3 Glossary:

Mammoth: huge

Consensual: which people in general agree with

Ally: a state formally cooperating with another for a military or other purpose.

Medley: a varied mixture of people or things.

Dilemmas: a difficult situation or problem.

Poignancy: the quality of evoking a keen sense of sadness or regret; pathos.

Liaison: contact or association

Licentiousness: sexually unrestrained; lascivious; libertine; lewd.

Subversions: to overthrow (something established or existing).

Duress: compulsion by threat or force; coercion; constraint.

Discrimination: an act or instance of discriminating, or of making a distinction.

Penury: extreme poverty; destitution.

Dogmatism: unfounded positivizes in matters of opinion; arrogant assertion of opinions as truths.

Coherent: logically connected; consistent

Inauspicious: boding ill; ill-omened; unfavorable.

Abandoned: unrestrained or uncontrolled; uninhibited

Stoic: free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submit without complaint to unavoidable necessity.

Meager: deficient in quantity or quality; lacking fullness or richness; scanty; inadequate

Gnawing: persistent, dull pains; pangs

Obsession: the domination of one's thoughts or feelings by a persistent idea, image, desire, etc.

Qualms: an uneasy feeling or pang of conscience as to conduct; compunction

Corpse: a dead body, usually of a human being.

Retribution: requital according to merits or deserts, especially for evil.

Hysteria: an uncontrollable outburst of emotion or fear, often characterized by irrationality, laughter, weeping, etc.

Remuneration: reward; pay

Empathy: the psychological identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another.

Monogamy: marriage with only one person at a time.

Dissemblance: dissimilarity; unlikeness.

Vulnerability: weakness

Hegemony: leadership or predominant influence exercised by one nation over others, as in a confederation

Elimination: the act of eliminating

Void: useless; ineffectual; vain

Mortgaging: a conveyance of an interest in property as security for the repayment of money borrowed.

Harbor: any place of shelter or refuge

Hybrid: a person or group of persons produced by the interaction or crossbreeding of two unlike cultures, traditions, etc.

Instigated: to cause by incitement; foment

Fiasco: a complete and ignominious failure.

Gagged: to restrain by force or authority from freedom of speech; silence

Coercive: serving or tending to coerce.

Wreaked: to inflict or execute (punishment, vengeance, etc.)

Refrained: to abstain from an impulse to say or do something

Gruesome: full of or causing problems; distressing

Prostrating: to lay flat, as on the ground.

Imminent: likely to occur at any moment; impending

Fidelity: strict observance of promises, duties etc.

Transgressing: to violate a law, command, moral code, etc.; offend; sin.

Pragmatic: of or relating to a practical point of view or practical considerations.

8.4 Short-answer questions: Activity II for students

1. Describe the environment that prevailed in the village schools.

2. Describe the superstitions that prevailed among the untouchables.
3. Comment on the relationship between Masamai and Sharan.
4. Discuss the relationship between Sharan and Dada.
5. Discuss how the world of Maharwada followed a different moral code.

8.5 Summing up:

Village Hanoor is a reflection of the entire Indian society where caste and religion define human life. The life of the writer exposes these two evils through his pains and agonies, and travails and tribulations. The autobiography narrates the individual life as well as the life of all Dalit people. The writer has represented the evils that prevail in their world in a manner to raise pertinent questions on the powers that regulate and control their life and the greater evil that exist in the larger world. Be it greed or moral turpitude, the helplessness of Dalits is juxtaposed to the willful acts of the upper caste who also happen to be the upper class. Even amidst helplessness and gross poverty, Dalits exhibit their strong belief in interpersonal relationship, hard work and retain undaunted belief in themselves, which reiterates their claim to be considered as humans.

THE OUTCASTE : Analysis of the Text-II

9.0 Introduction: This lesson examines the structure and narrative style, followed by sample answers and a list of possible questions as student activity.

9.1 Analysis of the Text: Part II

The structure of the book *The Outcaste* is divided into three parts. First part is an acknowledgement by Sharankumar Limbale in which he declares that his autobiography is a tale of burden – burden of being half-caste and untouchable, and the years of humiliation of being branded as illegitimate. It is the tale of the author's coming to an understanding of how his mother's 'immoral act' of accepting to be a whore of a Patil was nothing less than a rape.

This one and a half page note from the author reflects not only his pain of being an outcaste and an illegitimate child that his autobiography illustrates, but it also reflects the tone and tenor of the text. The underlying irony bordering on satire is clearly evident here. The acknowledgment by the author is followed by a note by the translator, Santosh Bhoomkar, who narrates how he undertook translating this work when he was asked by his mentor Prof. Bhala Chadra Nemade. He also tells that he declined the request of Limbale to incorporate changes he had made in the third edition of *Akkarmashi* in 1999 because it was so different from the original. *Poonha Akkarmashi* had included and dropped many names, lost its boyish flavor and was polemical in spirit; it needed a new and different translation. He also acknowledges Mr. Mini Krishanan for her help in enriching this translation as well as Sudhakar Marathi for his suggestion.

The text is preceded by Introduction by G.N Devy, who places the autobiography of Limbale in the social context and the literary tradition it appeared. Discussing the socio-economic dimensions of the reality of caste over time, it discusses the emergence of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, his influence, the formation and expansion of Dalit Panther Movement and the evolution of Dalit literature of which autobiographies were a significant part. He also compares the Afro American Literature to Dalit Literature, discussing how caste maladies in India were quite similar to the problem of race faced by blacks in the U.S.A.

The Outcaste follows no scheme of chapterization. These chapters are unnumbered and untitled. Spanning over about twenty years the autobiography gives the readers glimpses into varied lived experiences of the author exposing to them his inner turmoil, anguish and dilemmas. The life story is presented in a non linear/chronological order. While narrating his inner life, the writer weaves a story not of his life but of his self, which is shaped by certain incidents in his life that left a deep impact on him. Hence, the incidents and experiences are selective making the narrative episodic in nature. As the author's mind flashes back, memories crop up. Hence, sometimes a chapter is based on one full episode but often the memories digress and overlap within a single chapter. These digressions owe themselves to fragmented nature of memories. Sometimes the memories emerge following the logic

of association of ideas but invariably they are not linked. Fragmentation is the natural law of memory and the salient feature of this narrative too.

For example, look at the first chapter; it is based on a single episode of picnic excursion. The reader can see a link between the first and the next part because the second relates to the author's memories about his primary school. He remembers his first day at school run in a temple. He tells that on Saturdays he was given the duty of smearing the walls with cowdung paste. From this he goes on to describe one particular day when he accidentally entered the temple sanctorum unconsciously. Entering the temple unconsciously evokes the memory of another one when he did it consciously. When he had entered the temple with Parshya, the latter had pissed on the God's idol though to his sense of utmost penitence, reflecting his initial belief in and fear of Hindu Gods. These incidents are chronologically jumbled up. He tells the reader how school was housed in a mansion when it rained but either in temple or mansion the outcasts were seated either at the entrance or the platform foot wares. He also remembers how the Independence and Republic day processions of the students went around the village making his granny proud. She, elated to see him shouting slogans, started sweeping the streets with greater vigor. The chapter discloses his favourite pastime of sitting beside the river and swimming in it. He remembers how once while drinking from their end of the river, which was the lowest one, he happened to swallow a lump of shit. The shit he swallowed is contrasted to the delicacies of food eaten by the high and the rich and also offered to them after wedding feasts.

The narrative shifts from water to food offered to them at the end of weddings. The narrative which had been shifting from one incident to another after a few lines within a paragraph episodically following the principle of association of ideas comes to take a slower pace as the author takes care of describing their occasional expectations of delicacies which stand in contrast to the dry bhakaris they were obliged to consume in their gross poverty. The slower pace of the narrative accentuates the impact of expectations. The narrative's pace is further slowed down as it gives way to reflection and rumination over his hunger to philosophize it through a parable of human hunger ending with a mature reflection. Here, we clearly find that the point-of-view of the child and the mature author merge.

Since an autobiography is exploration of not what the writer is but how (s)he became what he/ she is, the self of the author is represented in continuum. Hence, there is a reflection of how the consciousness of self and society grows with the physical growth. But this growth does not reflect in a linear manner. The mature consciousness and the undeveloped consciousness overlap in the process of recollection and reinterpretation of some past events that stand apart from the whole lot of memories. Thus the element of truth is constructed selectively. The autobiographies usually exhibit different levels of the author's consciousness and even if the autobiography follows a chronological pattern, these perspectives become visible incoherently. It is because an autobiography is both a recollection and reinterpretation of the past events of the author's life. This results in plurality of perspectives of a single person.

Besides this plurality of the Author's perspectives, *The Outcaste* reflects the perspectives of people other than the author too. Chief among them is the lot of his

grandmother whose stories with social perspectives dominate the author's narrative. Such multi-perspectivity is incorporated by a witty use of direct and indirect forms of narrative and reflective passages. There are several stories embedded within the story of the writer. Most of the stories come from his grandmother. Her story about Rohidasamma or three skeptical people are social discourses to keep Dalit defiance under check. The reflective passages embedded within the narrative of life are important segments that help the readers understand the author and analyze both his perspective on self and society. They give deep insight into the inner recesses of his mind.

Since the life of a Dalit holds little aesthetic charm especially amidst the dirt, filth and squalor that he is forced to live in, its crudity has to be represented in a crude language. Sharan Kumar Limbale has included the abuses which are a part of Dalit oral discourse, and also translated them for non-marathi readers. Nevertheless, Limbale's discourse acquires poetic overtones especially when he is swayed with powerful feelings. It becomes figurative and often these comparisons besides reflecting the linguistic embellishments offer a glimpse into his mindset as a sensitive human being. Look at example from the first chapter: "My stomach was like a graveyard that continually swallows the dead. My mother Masamai used to shout angrily, "what is it you have, a stomach of Akkallot. There seems to be gizzard in your stomach" (1-2). Here the author has not only intensified the acuteness of hunger by comparing stomach to a graveyard but he has also merged two points-of-view – his mother's and his own as a child as well as of an adult man.

We find that the text is peppered with imagery and mythological allusions. The imagery is elemental too. Animal imagery such as "hungry vultures", "excited as wolves" and plant imagery as "tree as tattered like us" or "I was a cactus tree" underline the writer's consciousness of his degradation and dehumanization. Use of metaphors like "Maharwada meant a heap of jowar grain at the resting place of corpse; each person was like a grain"(12) underline the coarseness and isolation of their life besides the acute sense of hunger that Dalits suffered from.

Dalit autobiographies are assertions of Dalits for an identity of their own as full citizens of India and respectable human beings. Hence, these images along with interrogative sentences are used as much against the hegemony of caste and hypocrisy of the upper caste as against the apathetic system of governance. In fact, these build up the discourse of protest against their historic degradation, discrimination and dehumanization. They are blistering exposition of how caste has infected not only the social fabric but has also seeped in and corrupted the administrative system, which in spite of constitutional amendments has sustained itself. Therefore, while the images make explicit the intensity of injustices, interrogative structure of sentences reinforces the discourse of protest.

Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* can be read as a protest against the social and public system. Like a typical Dalit writing it deviates from the individualistic tendency of the genre because it is written as a testimonio. Since its tone is that of protest, it virtually raises several questions. Some of these questions are addressed to the inner self, revealing his dilemmas while some are meant for the reader to accept the wrongs done to Dalits and illegitimate children. There are also such interrogative statements that are more of emphatic statements than questions.

It serves as a rhetorical device, which can be termed as interrogative rhetoric. The first chapter interrogatives show the inner dilemma: “Dare I offer my chutney-bhakari to my teacher? Would he eat it?” (2) or “How should I start writing the essay my teacher had asked for” (4). Compare it with “we know we should not steal, but then how could we feed ourselves? Who steals out of habit? (21) or “ Why did my mother say yes to the rape which brought me into the world. . . whose son am I, really?” (37) “Who am I” (39). The questions stemming from uniquely personal existential condition start becoming impersonal: “Is it man who is a hindrance to religion or is it the other way round? Is the premise of religion greater than man’s? Is religion made for man or man made for religion? Does man cause religion to degenerate man? Can’t man exist religion in caste? (34-40). These reflections also acquire a philosophical tone. As we progress we find philosophical musings laced with an acute sense of poverty and hunger: “...there was quite a lot for me to gather. That jiggery which see us though for from days of tea. Somehow we had jiggery but what about tea powder? This problem is seemed like a baby obstructed in its mother’s womb refusing to come out” (45). The obsession with the reality of his birth as an unwanted child is reflected abundantly. However, personal dilemmas still continue: “Are we ever going to be lucky enough to wear good clothes and nice food to eat? What immoral link did we have with this mansion? Where do we stand in the line of this Patil caste? We were born to a Patil and yet we couldn’t claim to belong to this mansion. Why are its jaws locked? Why is its tongue tied?”(55) or “I am an alien. My father is not Mahar by caste. . . . My father lives in a mansion, my mother in a hut, and I am the street. Where shall I die? Where are my roots exactly?” (62).

All questions are not reflective of personal dilemmas. Often these questions become forceful statements: “why did my mother not abort me when I was a fetus? Why should a child suffer for the sins of its parents” (64). Similar assertive affirmatives appear as questions: “Why are such customs laid down for Mahars only? How can an illiterate person be on the jury? How many ballot papers are bought with just a cup of tea? For what kind of power? For what kind of transformation”(96).

One can see that the issue of caste both at the individual/collective level comes to encompass the issues of class too, underscoring the writer’s justification for the continuation of the reservation system: “How is a person born with caste? How does he become untouchable as soon as he is born? How can he be criminal by birth? . . . To appease their hunger they steal, beg, fetch dead animals, and eat them? . . . If one had enough, why would one steal,? Why would one suffer at the hands of police?” (82-83). We find the questions not only come as a volley but there is also a replacement of the third-person personal pronouns with indefinites, which reinforces impersonalization. Similar impersonalization is achieved by substitution of 1st person singular with 1st person plural pronouns.

Religious divisions too become his concern: “. . . so why does not a human being from other religion love a human being from another. Why does religion hinder then? Why is man imprisoned by conventions?” (102). Caste often intersects religion in his concerns: “What kind of religious burden do we carry like a porter his load? Why is this burden of religion thrust upon us? Why can’t we discard it? How

man has lost himself under this huge tree of caste, religion, breeding, family?" (105). Such interrogatives subsume the individual within the general. But concluding the autobiography with the question of death, he has tried to shake the readers out of the slumber of life ridden with divisive past. The dilemma that began with the dilemma of his birth as a Ligayat/ Mahar eventually gets immersed in the question of right and wrong. Thus, we find that the interrogative syntactical structures, forming an important part of the text serve multiple functions. They form the protest embedded within the narrative of pain and agony; they reflect the personal dilemmas as well as the growth of the writer's consciousness, and poignantly question the unitary conception of human identity by highlighting its plurality and complexity through the realities of his birth and his lived experiences.

Such has been the preoccupation with reading Dalit literature as protest literature that the use of imagery in Dalit aesthetics has been largely overlooked. In fact, in a Dalit writing the visual, literary and political intersect each other. Images imply figurative use of language. A study of the imagery used by Sharan illustrates how it attributes literariness to his style. The images he predominately uses are related to animals, food, trees, plants, fire, lava and foetus. Animal imagery is generally used to denote the hidden animal instincts. The comparison of Dalits to wolves and vultures, the two species of prey, foregrounds their obsession for food while the reference to pigs and dogs as their companions reflects their degradation and dehumanization. The imagery of tattered tree and the cactus plant speaks of their social alienation and the inner thorns of agony over it. The images concerning the foetus are reflective of his obsession with his own birth. Images of fire are used to reflect the brewing anger : " I was mentally aflame . . . amidst a conflagration" (83), " blood flowed like lava" (86), "I am burning within" while "my tongue itself is circumcised"(90), expresses his inability to let it out. He compares his mother's breaking down into tears as the "explosion of lava", while the tears of his grandmother during her story telling are described as epics. We find the writer also employing elemental images of water: "sky fell into river. I was transformed into water"(26). These images refine the crude language that the writer employs to recreate the bitter social realities of Dalit life, besides giving peep into the inner life of the writer.

9.2 Use of Myths in *The Outcaste*

Gangadhar Pantawane said, "Dalit is not a caste; Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution." Since caste which was initially the basis of division of work was transformed into an identity, becoming inherited in character, Dalit literature through representation of self, community and society came up as literature of resistance and subversion. Since myth and history have contributed to enrichment of literature, these two also become important in Dalit literature. Dalit Literature has been an effort to write social history from below and, hence, is a significant part of subaltern literature. It is an effort to move from margins to center. Similarly myths, which are "truth" as believed, have been a popular literary device to reinforce hegemony as well as to subvert it. In Dalit literature we find myths being used in a unique way. Often these are used to expose the religious dogmatism and hypocrisy of the upper castes and highlight the condition of the downtrodden. Often these myths are derived from the *Ramanyana* and *Mahabharata*, the two most famous

epics of religious importance for Hindus, which these writers often reverse and subvert.

Limbale, in *The Outcaste* has also used myths as tropes to project his psychological traumas and the condition of his mother. These, however, assume a representative character. The writer has predominantly used myths from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. At the outset of his autobiography he states that though they were excluded from the folds of Hinduism, they were Hindus in their beliefs. Hence, invariably we find references to Goddess Luxmi and Amba besides other deities like Ithoba, Yallama, Masaba, Khoklai, Bhutalsidh. There were a lot of temples in the village but amidst this plurality Dalits' position was the same i.e. outside the temple entrance.

There are references to Ambabai, Luxmi and Shiva. Though Dalits were not allowed to enter into temples, Dalits worshipped these deities. Many of them vowed themselves in their name and followed rituals of their own. These can be read as the assertion of their identity as Hindus. There are references to the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The narrator tells us how Yeshwantrao Sidhamappa Patil, whom the author referred to as Kaka and to whom his mother was a whore, brought him such religious texts to read. Clearly acculturation of the outcastes to hegemonic beliefs is imprinted into their consciousness as we find that the writer while narrating his past often refers to mythological characters to draw analogies.

The family of the writer follows many Hindu religious beliefs. His mother would not eat beef. The sister of his grandmother, Chandabai forbade him to kill a cat for it is sinful. Santamai used cow's urine to purify her hut and children by sprinkling it on them. She even used it as a medicine. The writer's reference to cow brings out the hypocrisy of the upper caste who worship it like a mother but after its death instead of cremating it like their mother hand it over to Mahars to dispose it off. Such references are, however, a few. Most of the times the myths referred to are analogous in nature. He refers to his mother "siting on a torn rag quilt like a Yama." (22). Though the primary purpose behind is to the point out the anger brewing in her that would burst out on him, there is a subversion by degendering and dethroning the deity, which is a common practice in oral discourse.

Most predominantly the writer refers to the myths of Karma and Kunti. He often compares himself with Karna for his illegitimate birth and abandonment: "At such moments I felt a kinship with Karna. I felt we were brothers. Many times I felt I was Karna myself because like him I too was drifting with the flow of river." (60). This analogy once goes overboard to represent the cruelty of his birth: "With my first cry at birth, milk must have splashed from the breasts of Kunti" (37). Here, Kunti is neither the mother of the writer nor the mother of Karna but the archetypal mother, the very instinct of motherhood. Throughout his life up to his maturity he felt himself disowned by his mother, brought up as he was by his grandmother and the Muslim man who lived with her. However, he compares his mother not only to Kunti for abandoning her illegal son but also to Sita. Charged with adultery, his mother is described as "Sita lost in the Dandakaranya." (30). This comparison is a clear subversion, for unlike Sita, who could preserve her honour, Dalit woman's chastity is often lost in the jungle of lust of high caste men and gross poverty.

We find that he draws comparisons mainly from the *Mahabharata*. To express his inner fragmentation owing to parentage, caste and religion he calls himself a Jarasandh. His use of myths also acquires a deep philosophical and metaphorical significance as it does when he seeks his step father (his mother legal husband who had divorced him) and step brothers. He refers to blind folded Gandhari and blind Dhritrashtra to present the battleground of his life “We battle with ourselves as if we are our own enemies. All this because we were controlled by caste.” Clearly the battle of Kurukshetra has been metaphorically represented as a battle within. Yet again he says, “We are vanquished. Though we may be defeated in this, there will be yet another battle in which we never surrender” (92). Clearly the writer underlines the constant battle that goes on within Dalits for their identity, while another battle is waged by them against the evil of untouchability. The writer, throughout his narrative, exhibits a lot of concerns for his sister, which often develops into a sort of patronage. Once he hits Vani for eating banana skins discarded in the streets inviting the anger of his mother: “I was quiet like the accused in a court of law with the Bhagwat Gita in his hand” (22). Clearly here the judge is the mother and he is docked in the court of law with his truth. He is made to realize that greater truth lies beyond his truth.

Limbale continued to read and acquire education in spite of hardships. As a result we find that his language-use is polished. The abuses are also translated into English for the understanding of the readers, attribute the local colour as well as recreate the flavor of Dalit register. But his scholarship best reflects in his erudite style with which he handles these myths and tries to convey the essence behind the mythical narratives.

However, as he grows independent and comes to understand gross social realities he gets alienated from Hinduism. The iconic images of Hindu deities hung on the wall look queer to him. Living in the Hindu upper caste locality dissembling his Dalit identity, he feels himself captivated in a lakshagraha, which is largely his own making. The allusion here is again a subversion aimed not to describe himself as a Pandav or the Hindus as Kauravas but to highlight the inferno of caste dissemblance he had entered into. Here we also find that instead of aligning himself with Hindu deities and mythological characters, he looks for analogies from the life of Buddha. He wishes for the dream that Maya Devi had at the birth of Siddhartha. The mythological icons are slowly replaced with living icons of Baba Sahab and Phule. Hence, the use of myths and icons not only testifies his erudite style but also reflects his deep mental anguish over his identity crisis besides reflecting his transition from a Hindu to an Ambedkarite and a human. They serve as his arguments to approach these epics as recording of the perennial human circumstances and predicaments.

9.3 Glossary

Incorporate: take in or to contain, include

Maladies: a disease or ailment.

Digression: a temporary departure from the main subject in speech or writing.

Excursion: a short journey or trip, especially one taken as a leisure activity

Smear: coat or mark (something) messily or carelessly with a greasy or sticky substance.

Sanctorum: Holiest part of the temple

Idol: an image or representation of a god used as an object of worship.

Penitence: the action of feeling or showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong; repentance.

Linear: arranged in or extending along a straight or nearly straight line.

Skeptical: not easily convinced; having doubts or reservations.

Allusion: an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference.

Blistering: extremely fast, forceful, or impressive

Testimonio: something that serves as evidence

Emphatic: expressing something forcibly and clearly.

Rhetorical: relating to or concerned with the art of rhetoric.

Subversion: the undermining of the power and authority of an established system or institution.

Tropes: a figurative or metaphorical use of a word or expression.

Analogy: a correspondence or partial similarity.

Queer: Strange, odd

9.4 Activity for the students:

1. What is the role of memory in an autobiography? Discuss it in the context of *The Outcaste*.
2. How has the author used myths in his autobiography? Discuss their significance.
3. What is meant by Dalit aesthetics? Comment on the aesthetics as reflected in *The Outcaste*.
4. Discuss how the growth of the writer's consciousness is reflected in the images he uses.
5. Comment on the use of interrogatives in the autobiography *The Outcaste*.

9.5 Summing up

What the writer says is as important as is how he says it. The writer does not write without a purpose and, therefore, the content is selected and presented in a way so as to achieve optimum effect. Limbale's primary purpose is to speak for himself, his mother and his community but his erudition and polished style is reflected in the way he uses language and structures the text. The events of his life are presented in a nonlinear manner, which is true to the nature of memory, and, hence, accentuate the realistic impact. The use of myths and imagery reflects his inner reality as well as his erudition. His text combines the descriptive, dramatic and reflective modes of narration. An interrogative discourse is used to give voice to his anguish, dilemmas and mental growth both at individual and collective level while the reflective passages mirror his view of the world and life. The dramatic mode of narration provides multiple voices and points-of-view.

THE OUTCASTE : Major Critical Aspects

10.0 Introduction: This lesson examines the text as a typically Dalit autobiography and the central issue of identity in it. It is followed by a list of possible questions as student activity.

10.1 *The Outcaste as a typical Dalit autobiography.*

An autobiography is a self-life narrative and a Dalit autobiography is a self-life narrative by a Dalit. Though it is generally accepted that the term 'Dalit' should not remain confined to describing the status and situations of untouchables alone and should also be used to refer to those who are victims of poverty and pollution, and suppression and social discrimination, yet it has largely come to refer to those from the low caste. Unlike the mainstream autobiographies, a Dalit autobiography is a writing of protest, pain and agony. It is written to serve the purpose of social intervention and transformation. It is a subversive tale recreating the reality of hunger and squalor. It is aimed to protest against the established system which is based on injustice as well as to expose the evil and hypocrisy of the higher castes. It is also an assertion of the human as well as political rights of equality of the Dalits. That is why the autobiography by a Dalit invariably serves as a testimonio. Besides being the story of the external and internal conflicts, its individual concerns intersect those of the community or society.

Though Dalits also wrote short stories, poems, ballads, novels, biographies, dramas, historical writings etc., autobiography best suited their purpose. In whatever genre they have chosen to write in, they have represented themselves and their community. The self reflexive themes chosen by Dalit writers are the natural outcome of their lived experiences. In these, they create their own sphere of influence. Written from the margins, they aim at moving to the centre. Here personal becomes political. This has certainly created a new world of experience in the Indian literature. Hence, Limbale keenly felt an urgent need to theorize a separate aesthetics for Dalit literature, an aesthetics based on the grossly dehumanizing experiences of life. Since when a Dalit writes about his/her life, he/she speaks for his/her community, collectivism intersects individualism.

Autobiographies are written usually at a terminal stage of adult life but this autobiography like many other Dalit autobiographies is written in the prime of youth. These autobiographies exhibit how in the life of these Dalits come such moments when they become acutely conscious of themselves because of the extreme injustices that are meted out to them, which triggers the processes of simultaneous retrospection and introspection in them. At such moments they try to analyze their life and the social conditions in a manner that would resolve their inner dilemmas and strengthen them to assert for their individual as well as collective rights. This stage of mind is what is described as Dalit consciousness. Limbale was born as an illegal son of a high caste Patil and a poor, landless, untouchable Mahar mother. He was neither accepted as a Lingayat nor as a Mahar. He was brought up by his

devout Hindu grandmother (a devout untouchable but excluded from the folds of Hinduism) and the Muslim man who lived with her. Love and concern of these two was a seminal sustaining force in his life. So the writer was unable to identify himself either as a Hindu or Muslim. He could not get fellowship papers signed as a ward of his grandmother by the village Sarpanch because she lived with a Muslim, and for obvious reasons they could not accept his last name after his high caste father because his mother was his concubine. Though on the intervention of his school teacher Bhosale he got a name on official papers, the same communal and caste lines blocked the prospects of his marriage and even disappointed him within Dalit organization. The impurity of his blood and corrupted upbringing gave him a sense of fractured identity. His later adherence to Buddhism and his political activism did not resolve those dilemmas. The autobiography that seminally deals with the conflict arising out of his illegal birth ends with the writer on the birth of his third child facing the existential questions of rituals at funeral that he at an age of twenty five/ twenty six is likely to perform on the death of his mother, grandmother and the Muslim man whom he regarded as his grandfather. The questions arise in his mind are put to the readers to see through what is seemingly a fractured self, for they underscore the fragmented social structure: “ Why this labyrinth of customs? Who has created such values of right and wrong, and what for? If they consider myth birth illegitimate what values am I to follow?” (16).

We find that *Akkarmashi* or *The Outcaste* as a Dalit autobiography is an act of assertion and resistance. It is different from the main stream autobiographies, which are generally written by eminent personalities towards the end of their lives and who have got much to evidence as a lesson before the world. On the contrary, Dalit autobiographies are penned at an early age, a stage of self-evolution when Dalit consciousness takes grip of the soul. For Sharankumar Limbale the assertion is made at three levels: caste, religion and patriarchy. The former takes precedence as an obsession. Often the narrative moves from the first person singular to the first person plural subjectivity while advocating the cause of the untouchables but the dilemma of illegitimacy remains largely on the individual level, though his nine siblings of the total eleven are illegitimate too. His desire to see his elder two legitimately born brothers also underlines his desire to follow a patriarchal line. As a young child he is most conscious of the hunger and poverty he is subjected to. As an adolescent he is disturbed most by his illegitimacy but as he grows his consciousness of communal divisions becomes paramount along with the hegemonic prescriptions of wrong and right.

Dalit autobiographies differ from the main stream autobiographies also by moving away from the nationalist aesthetics to the communal one. In Dalit autobiographies the nation is distrusted, and the focus shifts to community within the nation. The community becomes the sub-nation to challenge the hegemony of the monolithic nation. *The Outcaste* too presents the nation divided on caste and communal lines. The village of Hanoor with the two worlds within it becomes a microcosm of the nation. The discourse on reservation and the violent resistance to the movement of the Dalits from the margin becomes the epicentre of the later part of the autobiography: “Those who say that facilities must be cancelled must first face casteism themselves.” (90). As a Dalit writer he represents not only his own destiny but he also reflects on the destinies of larger collectivities at a level lower to

the nation in an effort to complete the partially written national histories. With continuous bombardment of questions, the narrative does not settle into linear design. Each question releases more questions whose answers are not easy to find. In *The Outcaste*, Sharan Kumar poses the same questions to the readers: "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 untouchable? We don't approve of this God, nor this religion, nor this country because they ostracize us."

In a Dalit autobiography we find the slow dissolution of the individual self while the inner dilemmas are hardly resolved. On the contrary, in the mainstream autobiographies, the self of the narrating persona gathers resolution and visionary insights. Sharan Kumar, the main protagonist of *The Outcaste* also suffers from the problem of identity crisis. Being the product of inter-caste breeding, he keeps questioning himself about his real self. The path of the Dalit self-realization is very complex because it never seems to culminate on a defining note. Although as a Dalit and a bastard the writer may fail to reach a clear resolution, the autobiographical self is necessarily a winner, a survivor and an achiever. We see him growing into a self confident, self-reliant and sensitive human being. His assertions may be bitter pills like unromanticized personal realities of hunger, dirt, illiteracy, superstitions, violence and crime, his story of growth may lack the heroism and glamour but it certainly works at transformation which is as much inner as it is external.

The consciousness of caste is paramount to caste discourse in *The Outcaste*. With caste are associated the other social maladies. Hunger and unending poverty form the major discursive pattern. The keener the sense of deprivation, the sharper gets the discourse. The whole course of the narrative like the course of an untouchable's life, is woven around hunger, starvation, desire and struggle for food. The writer during his childhood never had enough in spite of the hard labour put in by her grandmother and Dada. He lived in stark poverty. The sacrificing grandmother would often sleep without food. She would collect dung of the animals with undigested jowar grains in it, would wash them in the river and grind them into flour for her bhakarries. When she left the hut owing to her differences with her daughter over the writer, the public bus stand became their home. The narrator remembers the tattered underwear he had worn to go to school. Even the grandmother wore a tattered blouse. Maharwada where they used to live was a heap of garbage: "Heaps of garbage, tin sheds, dogs, and pigs were our only companions" (5). Hunger often compelled them to steal and accept with gratitude the leftover food: "Leftover food is nectar" (4). Hunger makes him even philosophically tell a tale of the how stomach fails to be satiated: "He (man) started selling himself for his stomach. A woman becomes a whore and a man a thief. The stomach makes you clean shit, it even makes you eat shit." (8). Justifying petty criminal acts like stealing food, poisoning the animals of the high caste the he writes, "Who steals out of habit? The poor steal for the sake of hunger. If they had enough to eat would they steal? Black marketers became leaders, whereas those who are driven to steal by hunger are considered criminals" (21). The filth and dirt that they live in is so degrading that the writer often uses animal imagery to describe themselves. These

dark aspects of Dalit life hardly offers the writer the scope to entertain the reader. The dimension of beauty is reworked by Sharankumar as Dalit aesthetics, which revolves around the bitter ugly realities of Dalit life.

Usually Dalit autobiographies do not take up the gender issue as sensitively as this autobiography does. It can be read as an expression of collective experiences of Dalit women's hurt and degradation, of their encounters with the hegemonic caste-gendered structure. In fact, the growth of the writer is reflected in his understanding of the history of Dalit women's rape: "They sold themselves to be loved and cared for by someone. They hadn't sold their bodies to appease their lust just for the sake of hunger?" He learned to exercise a restraint on his anger and desire to rape women of those who exploited or humiliated him to avert the rape of more Dalit women.

Limbale mocks at the double standards practiced by the high class men. His criticism often becomes satirical. High caste men would not touch the low caste, would not even serve them water let alone drink it from their portion of the river or their well but would engage them in digging of their wells, graze their cattle, sweep their houses and accept liquor brewed by them, consume it in their houses and sleep with their women to satisfy their lust under the cover of darkness. The writer does not hesitate to expose the fatalism, superstition and other evils that characterize the Dalit community which is also fractured into sub castes, as closed as are the upper classes. When he became marriageable, the proposals of marriage were slyly turned down either because of his caste, illegitimacy or his and his grandmother's association with a Muslim man.

Since a Dalit autobiography is an expression of pain and protest, it subverts the prevailing system. The writer as a child, being weak, employed secretive strategies such as entering the temple sanctorum, watching his friend pissing on the idol or prostrating before the idol. Later the defiance becomes open. He escorted by one of his friends reports to the police against the tea stall vendor for his alleged caste discrimination. Though this effort remains unsuccessful, it does succeed in registering a protest. His refusal to follow Hindu marriage rituals offends his family and people. When he becomes a telephone operator, his insecurities mount amidst the caste clashes and we see him making compromises. But his inner turmoil mounts on the injustices done in the name of caste, class and religion. Throughout the text this anguish gives birth to his protest, which reflects in the interrogative rhetoric. Sometimes the questions are isolated but often they run longer. They strengthen the writer's statements and tirade against the abusive hierarchical casteist system. These relate not only to his existential question of "Who am I?" but his alienation as a bastard and an untouchable.

Limable's autobiography presents a Dalit's struggle to survive amidst grave hardships and sustain interpersonal relationship though their poverty and helplessness often puts them against each other. He investigates their life in a manner that evils like superstitions, child marriage, alcoholism, criminality, and loosening sexual mores seem to form a vicious circle, which is very difficult to break. As a typical Dalit attitude, the only way to come out of it is to seek education and self-reliance. This autobiography exemplifies and reinforces Dalits' insistence on education as the panacea of their problems. It becomes a part of their movement in

the hope to bring about a revolution through literature, by including their experiences. Autobiographical narratives constitute a significant segment of Dalit literature. The writer too fought his redemption and self reliance and as he became literate, his confidence increased and he fought on his own to be able to lead a life of his own. Thus, *The Outcaste* is a typical Dalit autobiography raising crucial issues of caste, class, religion and gender. It is not a mere writing; it is a part of larger Dalit activism. It is a blistering attack on the caste system which has dehumanized the untouchables as bahiyas, the outcaste. The text questions the system of governance that despite constitutional amendments and democratic principles has been unable to root out the problem of casteism and communalism.

10.2 Identity crisis in the protagonist of *The Outcaste*

Identity is defined in various ways. In social psychology, identity is the cluster of specific internal and external features that make a person. It refers to how a person views himself or herself in relation to other persons, ideas and nature. The influence of parents and home and society plays a major role in shaping the identity. It is also the spirit and the need of the times that affect a personality. Besides, there are biological/genetic traits within the character, the inner drive and motivation which equally contribute to one's identity. Nation, religion, caste, parentage, gender and profession are the most important markers of a person's identity.

The autobiography of Sharankumar Limbale, *The Outcaste* takes up the central human question of "Who am I?" but raises this question amidst the material conditions of casteism. The writer attributes socially local implications to this timeless universally philosophical question. By using the title *The Outcaste*, he has questioned the ancient hierarchical caste system propounded by Manu, which divided Hindu society into four classes but kept some out of this caste system. Caste includes two types of social categorization namely varna and jati. Jati is based on endogamous birth determining a precarious social grouping. The word 'outcaste' traditionally refers to expulsion from caste because of some ritual offence. It also referred to a child born out of the union of a Brahman mother and Sudra father. Thus, the word assumed wider implications to refer to the people outside the four varnas, those who along with the fourth group were considered as untouchables. Identity issue in the post modern times also came to be associated with recognition and acceptance of the constitutional and human rights of a particular people living on the margins.

Limbale's *The Outcaste* deals with the issue of the problematic of identity in its multifarious implications. Identity is not a unitary concept; its plurality is widely accepted now. In the present text the issue of identity is paramount. First, it presents caste as playing a significant role in the making of a person's identity. The work portrays the world of Mahars, situated on the fringes of the village Hanoor. Maharwada was the world of the untouchables and outcastes who were forbidden to enter into temples and homes of upper caste people. Their water sources were separate. Even their wells and part of the river were different. They could dig the wells for the upper caste but could not drink from it. The Mahar midwife could deliver a child, a Mahar woman could be the concubine of a high caste man but would remain untouchable socially. Though considered as outside the fold of Hinduism they followed Hindu faiths and rituals: " Though branded as

untouchables we too are Hindus by faith. We too are human beings” (4). Santabai, the maternal grandmother of the writer was a deeply religious woman. The writer describes her as a devout worshipper of Goddess Ambamai and Luxmi but she had taken a Muslim man. Her mother would not eat beef ostensibly for keeping her relation with a high caste Hindu but one day the writer saw her carrying a plate of beef covered with the corner of her sari. Their non-vegetarianism was an existential choice. The Mahars were kept on the fringes and any offence could result in their further ostracism, which meant no work, no food and would often result in the thrashing of their men and raping of their women.

The question of identity becomes all the more problematic for those born out of the relation between a Mahar woman and a Patil man. Traditionally the outcastes were those born as a result of relationship between a Brahmin woman and a Sudra man. The matter became worse if the mother belonged to lower caste the father from a high caste. The writer taking up the issue of the identity of ten such children through his search for an identity speaks for all such outcastes who struggle for an identity in this patriarchal casteist world. He associates himself with Sanatbai and considers himself a Hindu but would often refer to a Hindu with a sense of detachment, which is almost satirical: “Hindus see the cow as their mother. A human mother is cremated but when a cow dies they need a Mahar to dispose it of” (14). To avenge his degradation and humiliation he would subvert the system by entering the temple and prostrating there. And when getting married, to the utter dismay of and offence to his family, he refused to follow the Hindu rituals. Though he preferred Buddhism to Hinduism at that juncture we find that he associates himself mentally to religious philosophies rather than following them ritually. In the initial part of the autobiography we find him seeing himself as Karna of the *Mahabharata* and his mother as Kunti or even Sita but in the latter part the images from the life of Buddha emerge: “When I was small, Dada’s namaz fascinated me. Later Santamai’s prayers to Ambamai or Luxmi fascinated me. Now Buddhism began to cast spell on me”. Since these relationships cannot be compartmentalized and defy linearity of occurrence, the writer emerges at the end of the autobiography as a strange democratic medley.

To be Dalit in a caste ridden society is a curse but to be an interracial illegitimate in Dalit society is be doubly accursed. Conventionally interbreeding of people who are of different racial types has been punished with untouchability. The author questions the validity of stigmatizing someone as an outcaste is based on the legitimacy or illegitimacy prescribed on the basis of endogamy and exogamy. The former refers to the marriage within social group whereas latter means marriage outside a social group. The illicit relationship of a high caste man with a low caste woman carries no stigma for the man but the low caste woman is treated as a whore. The children of such interbreeding are considered as outcaste and thereby are socially detestable and unacceptable in marriage by any community. Masamai took another man and left her son to face the pangs of the immorality of his birth throughout his life. The birth of such a boy is not celebrated. The stigma of being an illegitimate keeps his soul anguished. He poses such questions to himself as “why did my mother say yes to the rape which brought me into the world? Why did she put up with the fruit if this illegitimate intercourse for nine months and nine days

and allow me to grow in the fetus? Why did she allow this bitter embryo to grow? How many eyes must have humiliated her because they considered her as a whore? Did anyone admire me affectionately? Did anyone celebrate my naming ceremony? Which family would claim me as its descendant? Whose son am I, really?" These questions clearly reveal the state of the mind of the Sharan.

Name of a person is his/her first identifier. The writer's first name was not a problem for the writer but since the second name of a person identifies him/ her with his/her father in a patrilineal society, the entire society was in a fix about his identity. His teacher Bhosale came to his help twice. He got the second name after his father's family, though he remained unacceptable to his family. But the denial of Sarpanch of identifying him shattered Sharan. He raises a very philosophical question as to why he cannot be considered as a human being. He observes, "But I too was a human being. What else did I have except a human body?" People mocked at him and his teachers sneered at him. The author too internalizes his grandmother's conviction of endogamy to assert his right as the son of a Patil but to the agony of his soul finds himself either robbed of or repelling it:

My father and his forefathers were Lingayat. Therefore, I am one too. My mother's fathers and forefather's were Mahar, hence I am also a Mahar. From the day I was born until today, I was brought up by my grandfather Mahmood Dastagir Jamadar. My grandfather in the sense he lives with my grandmother, Santabai. Does this mean I am a Muslim as well?...I am like a Jarasandh. Half of me belongs to the village whereas the other half is excommunicated. Who *am* I? (38-39)

For the writer the problem aggravates because of his unacceptability even by the outcaste: "I am an alien. My father is not a Mahar by caste. In Maharwada I felt humiliated as I was considered a bastard; they called me *akkarmashi*. Yet in village I was considered Mahar and was teased as offspring of one" (62). It was for him a double expulsion. Hence the issue of identify was tortuous for him and he felt like a cactus plant. "I was afraid of my caste because I could not retain my father's caste, and religion. In a sense I was not a Mahar, because high-caste blood ran in my body. Could I drain out blood from my body? My own body nauseated me" (82).

Starting with his identity crisis as far as the identity of his father and his naming is concerned, the self-narrative first focuses on the caste identity but only to realize how this intersected with religion. Even when dissembling his caste and religious identity in Ahmedpur living amidst high caste people, he felt restless. The pictures of Hindu gods looked queer and he felt guilty about taking a house on rent in this locality. He was an alien there too: "I didn't feel that the people who revered these icons and consecrated thread were my people. I used clean clothes, bathed everyday and washed myself clean with soap, and brushed my teeth with toothpaste. There was nothing unclean about me. Then in what sense was I an untouchable?... (107). The writer clearly underscores the concept of purity and hygiene in his discourse on untouchability. The use of the myth of Karna and Jarasandh too refers to his fragmented identity. Mahars refuse to give him their daughter in marriage because he is an outcaste and even the Dalits following Buddhism isolate him for his association with a Muslim man. It is with great

difficulty that he gets married to Kusum and it needs full rebellion to be able to form his family with her.

He wants to be a part of Dalit Panther Movement but his impure blood and his association with a Muslim man alienates him from this movement as he finds the man-made division of religion affecting the people within the movement. He remarks, "But I too was a human being. What else did I have except a human body?" 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 untouchable? We don't approve of this God, nor this religion, nor this country because they ostracize us." Sharan is very much critical of identifying a person by his caste, religion or by his father's name. He puts forth these questions to all narrow minded people. Finally he realizes that there is nothing meaningful in any religion. He turns towards humanism and feels that it is only humanism that can give one the sense of real identity. His autobiography raises many questions about the social markers of identity underscoring the possible resolutions of those conflicts in human subjectivity.

10.3 Activity for the Student

Attempt these Questions in about 1000 words each :

1. Discuss the attitude of Limbale to the women as reflected in *The Outcaste*.
2. Comment on the narrative style of writer in *The Outcaste*.
3. Justify the title of the autobiography *The Outcaste*.
4. Discuss *The Outcaste* as a protest narrative.
5. Trace the development of the selfhood of the writer as projected in *The Outcaste*.

Suggested Long Answer Questions :

1. Comment on the rising consciousness of Sharan as a Dalit.
2. Comment on the social evils that prevail in Indian society on the basis of the reading of *The Outcaste*.
3. Discuss how *The Outcaste* is the struggle of Sharan to seek an identity through his search for a father and love of his mother.
4. Draw a pen portrait of Sharan's mother.
5. In what way is *The Outcaste* the writer's argument for the continuation of the reservation system.
6. There are different stories embedded in the story of Sharankumar Limbale in *The Outcaste*. Give arguments.

10.4 Summing Up

An autobiography is not just the story of the writer's life; it is the story of 'becoming'. Limbale's *The Outcaste* is also the story of Limbale's becoming what he is. Therefore, the events are as significant as how they are presented. The story of an individual testifies the pains and struggles of the entire Dalit community. The narrative shifts from 'I' to 'we' and 'me' to 'us'. The structure and the style reinforce what he says in his autobiography. A study of structure, myths and the use of interrogatives are important means to understand the growth of his selfhood. It leads us to understand his aesthetics, which is not to beautify and embellish but to intensify and authenticate the crudity and cruelty that mark their life. All this is done with an aim to assert the humanity of Dalits, to shame the high caste for

degrading and dehumanizing them and to justify why governmental intervention is a must to enable Dalits to enter into the mainstream.