

Socio-Cultural Study of *Dalit Brahmin*

Dalit social life is expressed through dance and music which is full of fiery spirit, spontaneity and humour without the inhibitions and rigid classical structure that characterizes Hindu mainstream aesthetics. A Dalit song celebrates life but laments their life conditions, while frankly exposing the realities of life, in a style full of humour and sensual zest, by using simple instruments and vocals. In modern times, Dalit poetry and writings by social and political activists have taken centre stage amongst the educated activists from dalit community. Much has been discussed regarding Dalits, Dalit writers, aesthetics of Dalit literature, socio-cultural perspective, Dalit activists and the difference between the Dalit literature and Non-Dalit literature. This chapter revolves around the socio-cultural study of Sharankumar Limbale's short story collection *Dalit Brahmin*. It describes how Dalit culture in matters of education, sexual exploitation of Dalit women and financial independency is different from other cultures. *Dalit Brahmin* is the collection of stories entitled "Ganapati Festivities", "Autobiography", "Progressive", "Government's Son-in-Law", "Sudha", "Steps", "Sunita", "Sore", "Dark Womb", "War", "Procession", "Cow Slaughter" and "Ratna" which revolve around the different aspects of the Dalit life.

Of these thirteen stories, "Ganapati Festivities" is the first story in which there are many examples of cultural clashes between the dalits and upper castes. In this story, Limbale tells about things mainly related to cultural clashes, cultural changes, and communal riots in the name of religion and caste. Story begins with the talk about the relationship between a father and a daughter. In this story, a dalit family lives near the Brahmin families. They had chosen to live in the high caste locality to keep their children away from the bad influences of the hutments. Clashes between Hindus and

Muslims are visible through the festival of *Ganapati* and *Moharrum*. Narrator belongs to dalit family and his close friend Sameer Joshi belongs to Brahmin family and both are neighbours. In the story, Dinesh Kamble does not believe in Hindu Gods, Goddesses and rituals. He believes in Ambedkar's philosophy while on the other hand the narrator follows both *Hinduism* and Ambedkar's philosophy. As both have the different beliefs, so there lie the ideological clashes. One day, the narrator and Sameer Joshi were attacked by some unknown persons while returning to their homes in the night. In the scuffle, Sameer Joshi got a knife wound on his arm. Sameer Joshi is reproached by his family and his community and *mahar* community is blamed for the attack:

Keeping company with a mahar has made you also a mahar. Hey, Brahmins and mahars have nothing to do with each other. They have been traditionally enemies of each other. Probably it is your mahar friend's conspiracy. How is it that he escaped unhurt without even a scratch and only you were stabbed? He must have staged the attack to eliminate you (Dalit Brahmin 66).

Narrator gives voluntary contribution for the Ganapati festivities because he is afraid of the boys who collect the voluntary contribution. If he refuses, then the boys would rag and tease his daughter. Dinesh Kamble does not give the voluntary contribution for the Ganapati festivities because he has no belief in these festivities and cares a little about the threat. During these festivities, Dinesh Kamble's family lives out of the town. It shows the social predicament of dalit.

The church bell rang

Everyone entered in

The ajan heard from Mosque.

Everyone entered in

The bell of temple rang

Some people entered in

And some stood out (Dalit Brahmin 65).

This is the example of discrimination. The same kind of situation is there in the Limbale's another famous work i.e. his autobiography, *The Outcaste*. In *The Outcaste*, Limbale says, they had a constant fear of entering a Temple. One day Sharankumar and his friend Parshya entered the temple when the recitation of Holy Scriptures was going on. Parashya's father had seen him entering the temple. He became angry and shouted, "I will break your leg if you behave like this again. We are supposed to say our prayers from the steps outside our entering a temple will make God impure. We are expected to behave responsibly. The untouchable must not enter a temple" (Outcaste 62).

Limbale represents the pitiable condition of dalits. Communal riots start between Hindus and Muslims. Some Muslim people met the Narrator. The Narrator tells the Muslim people that he is not a Hindu but a *Buddhist*. In this story, one observes that the communal riots, cultural clashes, and cultural changes are all based on the name of the religion and the name of caste.

There is another story entitled "Autobiography". Here in this story Limbale focuses his mind on the problems of Dalit writers, problem of publishing and different views about Dalit literature. Narrator thinks about Dalit writing and he observes as to how a Dalit writer becomes famous over night when he writes autobiography. When a writer gets fame, how his life style is changed. This is the example of cultural change in this story. Narrator wants to be a famous writer one day. So he starts writing his

autobiography. He is a beginner in this field so he meets some experts and consults the experts. Experts give some suggestions related to autobiography. In the beginning, he meets Professor Balasaheb Kamble who sees the manuscript and gives the remark:

It would be difficult to print such a big book. You need to cut it down and omit repetitions. Make it racy and readable. If the number of pages increased, the price would increase and not many readers would be able to afford it. Meet me next Sunday morning” he said (Dalit Brahmin 29).

It was the first experience for narrator. After some days, he meets Professor Balasaheb Kamble once again and discusses on the manuscript. Professor Kamble informs the narrator that his manuscript is good but his personal experiences are not enough and he should add some shameful incidents and experiences may be from his friends and surrounding area. Then the narrator consults another expert named Dr. Khanolkar who belongs to high caste while Professor Balasaheb Kamble belongs to the dalit community. This shows the ideological clash. Professor Balasaheb Kamble says: “We should not approach writers who belong to the high castes. We should stick only to Dalit writers. Does any Brahmin writer ever request a Dalit writer to write a foreward for his book?” (Dalit Brahmin 30)

This is the case of professional rivalry between a Dalit writer and a non-Dalit writer. Narrator is not satisfied with Professor Balasaheb Kamble so he meets another expert who belongs to the dalit community whose name is Advocate Bansode and who has completed his Doctorate Degree on Dalit literature. Narrator tells Advocate Bansode that he has met Professor Balasaheb Kamble. At this, Advocate Bansode gets angry because he does not like Professor Balasaheb Kamble. He says to narrator:

Professor Kamble is an ardent supporter of *Hindutva*. He has no moral right to take the good name of Babasaheb Ambedkar. It is our duty to expose these *Hindutva* acolytes. Such people are the hidden enemies of the Dalit movement,” Advocate Bansode shouted, his face livid with anger (Dalit Brahmin 31).

After some days Narrator met Professor Kale who was an editor of a magazine. Professor Kale already knew that narrator had met Advocate Bansode and, therefore, he got angry with the narrator because he also didn't like Advocate Bansode. About Advocate Bansode, he comments that “Advocate Bansode is a Marxist. Babasaheb Ambedkar was always opposed to Marxist thought. That's why he chose *Buddhism*. We should keep away from these Marxists.” (Dalit Brahmin 31). This shows the ideological clashes among dalits themselves.

In the end, narrator sent his copy to *Kesari Magazine*. It was not Kale's Magazine. Professor Khanolkar was the publisher of this Magazine. Professor Kamble, Professor Kale and Advocate Bansode also used to take advice from Professor Khanolkar. Professor Khanolkar shares with the narrator that he has also written about Dalits but nobody acknowledged his contribution for Dalit literature. In this story, Limbale talks about the Dalit literature, Dalit autobiography, problems of Dalit writer, problems of publishing, different views about Dalit literature and clashes between different ideologies among the Dalit writers themselves and among the Dalit and upper caste writers.

In the story “Progressive”, Limbale talks about the condition of a boy who lives in a village but now he is living in a hostel. How different is the hostel life and the life of the village. Narrator tells about his childhood and says:

Our Childhood was a deplorable one in many respects. Compelled to live in squalid shanties on the outskirts of the village, often uncertain if two square meals would come one's way every day, forced to occupy a secluded corner in the classroom, the supercilious behavior of the high caste villagers. It was impossible to conduct oneself with a modicum of self-respect in these dehumanized conditions. The various castes were firmly entrenched in clear cut boundaries (Dalit Brahmin 14).

Om Prakash Valmiki and Bama also talk about untouchability and about the discrimination in the society. In the preface to his autobiography, *Joothan*, Om Prakash Valmiki writes: "Dalit life is excruciatingly painful, charred by experiences. Experiences that did not find room in literary creations. We have grown up in a social order that is extremely cruel and inhuman. And compassionless towards Dalits" (Joothan vii).

In his story "Autobiography", Limbale describes many things. Narrator was the student of Dr. Khanolkar and was active in his class and other activities. Dr. Khanolkar was a writer and narrator was also interested in writing. Narrator goes to Dr. Khanolkar's house and discusses with him about Dalit writings and he encourages him about Dalit writings. Narrator's two stories were published with the help of Dr. Khanolkar in the Sunday edition of *Kesari* newspaper. Narrator tells him his story of life and he hears his story very carefully. Narrator tells him about truth of his life as such:

Sir would listen attentively to every word I spoke. Every word of mine was like the peeling of an onion, only here I was unfolding the hidden layers of my own life. "Sir, I am a child of a prostitute. I do not know who my father is. I received my education from my mother's earnings. When she got a customer,

we were able to eat that day. Why do only Dalit women take to prostitution, sir?" I asked him (Dalit Brahmin 16).

He talks about the condition of his family and tells about the women exploitation. He tells about three levels of exploitation of a Dalit woman, firstly as a woman, secondly as a poor and thirdly as a Dalit. Anumpa Rao remarks on the condition of Dalit women:

Caste relations are embedded in the Dalit women's profoundly unequal access to resource of basic survival such as water and sanitation facilities, as well as educational institutions, public palaces, and places of religious worship. On the other hand, the material deprivation of Dalits and their political powerlessness perpetuate the symbolic structures of untouchability, which legitimizes the upper caste's access to Dalit women for sexual exploitation (Kumar 218).

The story portrays the situation of Dalit women and the way they are surviving in the society. It shows as to how in narrator's locality people use vulgar language. These things represent Dalit culture and how they are different from other people. He was too poor to fulfill his desires and even basic needs. In this story, he says about his poverty:

The students of the night college were loitering on the road. Leaning against the lamp was a couple kissing and embracing each other. I got sexually excited. I was tempted to kick and chase the boy and to get intimate with the girl. But it was of no use. No one loved me due to my abject poverty (Dalit Brahmin 18).

During the last year in college, narrator was very sad and worried because he was afraid of retreating back to the same living conditions in his village. He was fed up with his village life. Dalit students presented the portrait of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to Dr. Khanolkar on the day of his retirement. But whenever the narrator and his friends visited Dr. Khanolkar's home they didn't find the portrait of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his house. This is the example of the ideological clashes between dalit and upper caste. One day, narrator's friend Keshav tells him that Khanolkar's novel is to be published and his novel is about dalits. When Professor Despande was speaking on Dr. Khanolkar's new book, he read a quote from the novel and this quote was exactly what the narrator had told Dr. Khanolkar. Now he was very angry with Khanolkar and tells his friends that this is the real story of his personal life. After the publication of the book Khanolkar became a famous writer. Everybody was praising him. Narrator's views about the writer got changed. He says: "I am of the firm opinion that every writer is basically a thief. He steals the experiences of others and then writes about them" (Dalit Brahmin 22). In this story, the narrator narrates the situation of a dalit student and his exploitation by a teacher. The same situation happens in Om Prakash Valmiki's autobiography *Joothan* where he says that even though he was a good student he was given low marks in the practical test due to which he failed his board examinations and his career was brought to a doom. This shows as to how dalit students are surviving in the society. In this story, Limbale tells about the difference of cultures. On the one side is narrator's village life and on the other side is his college and hostel life. This story revolves around many things like memories of childhood experiences, poverty, love, casteism, and culture.

In “Government’s Son-in-Law”, Limbale tells about cultural clashes between the majority and the minority, politics and condition of dalit. In the story, dalit people are at loggerheads with the upper caste people. The narrator observes:

I took Waghmare for tea during the recess. Try as I might, I could not fathom his caste from his accent or department. I had spoken despairingly about the Brahmins to see if he would assent and confirm my surmise that he was a dalit. Two months later, we came to know that Waghmare was a Brahmin (Dalit Brahmin 57).

Here we see the clash of identity between minority and majority. Narrator tells that Waghmare’s name created confusion whether he is a dalit or a Brahmin. In this story, one sees the cultural clashes between dalits and upper caste people:

There used to be Laxmi Pooja in our office every Thursday. I was opposed to this. All the high caste staff banded themselves against me. I refused to pay my contribution for meeting the expenses of the Pooja. When I tried to hang a photograph of our Dalit leader, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on the wall of our office the following day, everybody opposed vehemently. Deshpande said, “As Ambedkar was not a national leader, his photograph could not be displayed in the office” (Dalit Brahmin 57).

There are two groups in the office. One group represents the dalits and other one represents the high caste employees. Dalit people are against the Brahminical system. They believe in Babasaheb’s philosophy whereas upper caste people don’t believe in Babasaheb’s philosophy. In this story we see the cultural clashes and the establishment of supremacy on the one hand and the question of saving one’s identity on the other. When both groups quarrel on the question of the worship in the office,

narrator says that he will approach dalit anther while the other group threatens to call *Shiv Sena*. There is the clash between *Shiv Sena* and dalit panther. Dalit people threaten that if *Laxmi pooja* is performed in the office they will invite the *Buddhist* monk to recite prayers. The atmosphere in the office becomes very hot and tense. A group of curious onlookers gathered there. Sensing the determination and unrelenting stand, “it was decided to discontinue the pooja. I there upon agreed to take Ambedkar’s photograph home” (Dalit Brahmin 58).

Dalit people are against the *Ganeshotsava*. They succeed in stopping the annual practice of celebrating *Ganeshotsava*. Now the upper caste people are angry with dalit tpeople. Despande is the head of the office. He gets Dinesh Kamble transfered. Now narrator and his friend are afraid because they are not feeling comfortable in the office because Dinesh Kamble was the main leader of dalit people in the office. In the office, Despande do not behave properly with dalit people. Narrator meets the activists of Dalit Panthers.

At the appointed time, they would be anywhere in sight, making us extremely stupid particularly if we had threatened that a massive morcha would show up. Unreliable chaps! They would promptly turn up to collect our subscriptions. These DalitPanther chaps should realize that ours was not a private fight. Our struggle was much more fundamental the installation of Dr. Ambedkar’s photograph and agitation to stop Laxmi Pooja (DalitBrahmin 60).

In this story, Limbale tells the reality of the activists of DalitPanther and how they are doing politics in the name of dalit. At the end, Dinesh Kamble comes to help dalits in the office and he tries to solve their problems. Joshi threatens the narrator that his working in the office is going to be very difficult. Lastly, Joshi writes a note as: “You dalits have now become the privileged sons-in-law of the government because

of the reservation policy” (Dalit Brahmin 61). This story revolves around many things such as majority and minority clash, politics, dalit condition, reservation policy, cultural clashes between the dalits and upper caste.

In the story “Sudha”, Limbale tells about corruption in the college atmosphere and difference of identity and interests between dalit teachers and upper caste teachers, and the difference between hostel boys and local boys. There are the girls belonging to different cultural and economic backgrounds. In this story, narrator is a teacher in a college and his job is not permanent. Professor Avinash Swami is the Head of the department and Professor Kamble and Ms. Kulkarni are working in the same college. In this story, the character uses their surname and the surname is the indication of the caste they belong. Narrator tells his first hand experience in the class:

On the left side were seated the boys from the hostel in their garishly coloured clothes and smiling at me in fraternal solidarity. In the middle row were the city kids, well fed and smartly dressed. They would be a year or two in the college as their fathers generally had their future careers already mapped out for them (Dalit Brahmin 41).

Narrator and Kamble belong to Dalit community and on the other side Ms. Kulkarni and Avinash Swami belong to upper caste. In narrator’s class there are the girls belonging to different cultures and areas ranging from villages to cities. Some girls belong to high castes and others belong to lower castes and this story portrays the cultural clash among them.

On the last bench of the girls’ row were the girls, regarded generally as ‘flirts’ who were out to have a rollicking time with boys. Their usual time- pass was in hotels at the expense of some rich guy. College life was just an interlude

before their wedding. In the middle of the girls row, two or three Dalit girls separately, distinguished by their dark skin. Despite their humble and impoverished family background, they made valiant efforts to keep up appearances. Ahead were seated the studious girls, the scholars, who were keen to take up promising careers (DalitBrahmin 42).

The narrator feels excited while he teaches Dalit literature to the students because he belongs to the dalit community and he is very wellaware of Dalit literature and dalit people's condition. When he teaches Dalit literature to his students some of them are happy and some do not feel so. Those students who are dalit, they feel affiliated and those who belong to upper caste feel uncomfortable as they are not interested in the pangs of dalit life. This is the question of cultural belongingness and struggle between them for the supremacy and the dominance. Narrator says about Dalit literature:

The revolutionary movement, unleashed by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar marked a significant awakening in Indian society. This was very pronounced, especially among the dalits. For the first time in their history, dalits have learned to read and write and to free themselves from the oppressive shackles of slavery and drudgery. From being mute and passive sufferers, they have been able to give vent to their pent up feelings and to express in strident and purposeful words, their hopes and desires through literature written by Dalitwriters (Dalit Brahmin 44).

Some students of narrator turn against him because they don't like Dalit literature. Professor Avinash Swami is also angry because he doesn't like narrator's way of teaching. He asks narrator to give up the class and tells him that Dalit literature shall be taught by Kulkarni madam. "There are students of various castes

and communities in the class. Don't teach the remaining lessons on Dalit literature. Madam Kulkarni deal with them. Cover the rest portion (Dalit Brahmin 46).

But Madam Kulkarni was not interested in Dalit literature. Professor Avinash Swami's character is not good as he has illicit-affairs with his students. One day Kamble tells narrator that in our college a new teacher Mrs. Rane is going to join who has been the student of Professor Avinash Swami. This story revolves around the cultural clashes between Dalit students and high caste students and on the other side between Dalit teachers and high caste teachers. These ideological and cultural clashes between Dalits and Non-Dalits are evident in almost all the stories of Sharankumar Limbale.

"Steps" is a symbolic story. In this story, Limbale discusses the hierarchical and stratified Indian Society and the place of Dalits in it. Limbale talks about the condition of a Dalit teacher, condition of girls, corruption and problem of unemployment. Ajay is protagonist of this story who belongs to a dalit community and he is an educated person. He is B.A., B.Ed., still he is unemployed and he tells about the condition of the people of his community:

Would that I were never educated. I would have worked in some menial post under some high caste person and would have suffered mutely all the injustices that would be heaped on me. Education arouses one's self-respect. Why are we discriminated against in every sphere of human activity? We are segregated and forced to live in shanties beyond the village boundaries in dirty and desolate surroundings. In a temple he has to be content to stand near the last step. In school the Dalit student has to sit outside the class on the steps. If we go to the home of a high caste person, our place is again near the steps (Dalit Brahmin 206).

Limbale and Om Prakash Valmiki talk about the discrimination in their autobiographies. Bama also tells about the discrimination in her autobiography *Karukku*. In this story Ajay represents the dalit community in the story and talks about the way dalit people are surviving in the society. Corruption is the one of the main causes of the problems of dalits in our society. Joshi is the secretary of education society. His son is the Headmaster and his daughter-in-law is also employed in the school. In the school, Ajay and Nivrutti both represent dalit community. Nivrutti is the peon in school. In this story we see the condition of dalit teacher and dalit peon which is the reflection of the condition of dalits in society wherever they go. In the story, Ajay gets job on the condition of teaching without pay for one year and he agrees to this condition because of the unemployment. Joshi's behaviour was not good to Ajay. He doesn't like Ajay and Ajay doesn't like him. Ajay comes to know about the existence of the ghost in the school. Jaya, a student of this school, committed suicide by jumping into the school well. One day, Nivrutti tells the truth of Jaya's suicide case.

Sir, he is having an intimate affair Rupali in there. Sir, He is the killer of Jaya. He has called Jaya in the same day used her sexually before he lets her go. He had raped Jaya repeatedly to satisfy his lust and then flung her in the well. Jaya's family was very respectable and they wished to avoid any scandal. The panchnama was done here and the body was also buried here itself. Now this Rupali. She is a flirt and promiscuous. Both of them must be having a steamy and rollicking time. Why do you want to come in their way? (Dalit Brahmin 216)

In this story, Limbale tells about a dalit teacher who is afraid of a ghost who lives in the school. He tries to search a room on rent but nobody gives room because

he belongs to dalit community. At last he had to live with his own community. This story shows that dalit remains a dalit in the eyes of upper caste people whether he or she is a student, teacher, man or a woman.

In Limbale's story "Sunita", the author highlights cultural clashes, communal riots, love affairs, casteism, corruption and politics of caste and religion. In this story, the narrator is a college student and his family is economically well to do. His family participates in his village politics. Sunita is also a college student and both the narrator and Sunita are classmates. They belong to same village but their caste is not the same. The narrator belongs to dalit community and Sunita belongs to an upper caste. Both are good friends and both love each other. One day a man comes to know about the love affair between Sunita and the narrator and he tells her father about it. Now her father who is the Deputy *Sarpanch* of the village, gets angry with Sunita. He tells Sunita: "You have insulted us by your shocking behaviour, moving about the town with that low caste boy. We send you to college to get education or to play games of love?" (Dalit Brahmin 84)

In this story the love is not the problem but the problem lies with the caste. Narrator goes to Sunita's home and says that he loves Sunita and wants to marry her. Now upper caste people turn against him and his family. They discuss the matter in their community where it is discussed that: "Today if one girl is defiled and we keep quiet, it will open the floodgates and our daughters and sisters will be polluted" (Dalit Brahmin 85). The villagers decide to take strong action. Mob attacked on the narrator's house. Now narrator and his family try to save their life from the mob. In the beginning his elder brother is killed by the villagers. After his elder brother, his father and four brothers are killed by the high caste people. Narrator, his mother and sister get escaped. Somebody informs the police and police starts investigation. "The

district police superintendent says this incident arose out of a love affair. It should not be given a communal angle” (Dalit Brahmin 86).

The dalit leaders reach on the spot and say that this incident was result of a conspiracy against dalit community and attack on dalits is communal and pre-planned.

If it arose out of a love affair only the boy would have been attacked, and the annihilation of the family would not have taken place. This entire village had turned killers. They believed that one girl had become polluted because of her love affair with a dalit. They feared that whole village would be polluted. It was this apprehension of ‘total defilement’ that was main reason for the vicious attack. The Dalit locality was living in great terror (Dalit Brahmin 86).

Narrator’s family and other dalits of the locality are afraid of the villagers. Villagers decide that those dalits who are alive will also be killed. The narrator approaches to dalit organizations for support. For a few days the village remains the centre of hustle and bustle for media and people of both the communities but of no special use for the narrator and his family. Now Limbale feels helpless. A Journalist asks a villager the question “what would happen next?” He replies ironically:

What’s going to happen! The accused will sell a couple of acres of their fields to fight the case and ultimately they will be released. In such cases the accused got free. After some time the remaining victims would be eliminated. They have influence in high places, right up to the minister” (Dalit Brahmin 87).

In the end, some dalit leaders come in cars for support with their blue dalit flags. They console the narrator and his mother. They told him that your father and your brothers have become martyrs for the cause of dalits. One day, the narrator meets Sunita in a bus. He tells Sunita that she is responsible for all this tragedy. She defends

herself saying that she is not responsible for the entire drama. Now she appears more cruel and vicious than the killers. He starts a branch of a dalit organization in his village and decides to fight against injustice with blue flags.

The story “The Sore” is about the superstitions among the dalits, their beliefs, their cultural norms, lack of awareness, and condition of women and role of religion in their life. The religious issues get represented in the expression:

I had been dedicated to the goddess whose temple was at Chivari. My name is Kachrau. The circumstances of my birth were unusual. My mother is squalid and vulgar in behavior. Her occupation is picking up dried twigs and selling the same as firewood. She used to carry this load on her back and her belly was swollen. She roamed like this and one day she delivered me near the filthy, dirt place which was at corner of the patil’s house. As I was born in a place where rubbish was heaped, she named me Kacharu, which literally means rubbish. Everybody called me by the still more derogatory name Kachrya (Dalit Brahmin 193).

Kacharu, the protagonist in the story, belongs to a poor dalit family. His father was a tantrik. He died of a snake bite. Kachrau was born after the four years of his father’s death. Kachrau’s mother narrated to him a story that he was born as a result of the boon of Goddess Laxmi after the four years of his father’s death. In the early days of his life he used to go to school in the morning and in the afternoon he used to beg the food from house to house. After some days he left the school. His mother taught him how to recite the *aarti* and taught him the art of begging. Now he is trained in this art for collecting leftover food, grains and other types of food items offered by the high caste people. The story describes how Kachrau survives:

We used to attend the Chivari fair because mother used to carefully save money for it. We would offer a goat or a chicken as sacrifice. This time I took the decorated halgi musical instrument. I was also to be installed and made a guru. As the school I had closed, my school bag, remained in a corner collecting dust. Every day I would go to a different village, because the same households would not give me food daily. I would bring pieces of bhakri, flour, salt in plenty which kept mother in good spirits (Dalit Brahmin 194).

This story represents the cultural beliefs and superstitions of Dalit people. Yellya lived outside the village because he was suffering from the sore of leprosy. One day, Kachrau's mother sees the sign of sore in his body. His mother was worried about his sore. Children come to know about the sore and remain away from him. Kachrau remembered Yellya. Kachrau's problem increases day by day. People cannot tolerate a person with the sore in the society because they believe that a sore is the result of wrath of God to a person and anybody who helps such a person will also incur the wrath of the God. His neighbour says to his mother that Kachrau will not live there. Kachrau and his mother are very sad. His entry is banned in the temple. People were afraid of him and even his mother avoided touching him. His neighbours shift him out of the *maharwada* where Yellya lives. Kachrau thinks that the only way left to him is suicide but he is helpless. Bhimsha, the neighbour, claims that he is the son of Yellya. Kachrau's and Yellya's problems are same. Now Kachrau comes to know the reality of the story of his birth. He goes to Yellya's hut and he asks Yellya about their relationship. Yellya tells Kachrau that he is his son. Kachrau is illegitimate son of Yellya and he was not the gift of the Goddess Laxmi. Kachrau kills his father. After some days when Kachrau comes home he finds his mother dead. Kachrau sees the sign of sore in his mother's neck. In this story we see the peculiarities of dalit

culture, lack of awareness and condition of dalit women and role of religion in shaping their views. Limbale describes similar kinds of situation in his autobiography *The Outcaste*. He narrates his childhood experiences:

They carried Bhakaris with them and that meal could not fill his stomach. Whenever there was any feast in their community all the children would run and would eat greedily. The spicy smell of the food attracted them and they ate the leftovers it was a sought of nectar to them. His also tells us that the children of their community had to work in order to fill the stomachs of their families, his friend Harya was made to work by his father (The Outcaste 1).

“Dark womb” is story about superstitions, tradition, ritual, greed, sacrifice, revenge, and untouchability. In this story, Bali is the main character and whole story revolves around his life. Bali was a wood cutter. He belongs to a dalit family and his father’s name is Chokha. Bali works morning till night and it is the daily routine of Bali. His wages are not fixed. People used to give him flour, wheat, grain and food. Krishna, the mason, under the influence of the drink tells Bali that her mother was buried under the house of the Patil. Krishna does not belong to Bali’s village. Krishna tells the whole story of construction of the house and death of her mother to Bali:

I built Patil’s mansion. You know how? I would lay brick upon brick and raise a wall. At night mysteriously it would crumble by itself. This happened day after day after day. The walls of the mansion just would not hold up. We became tired as there was no sign of the construction progressing. The patil summoned a conjuror. He was an expert in the occult and knew black magic remedies. You know what he said? There was an evil spirit lurking at the site. Unless it was pacified the mansion would not be completed. The conjuror said that juggernaut, that is an act to pacify the evil spirit must be performed. You

know how this juggernaut was to be done? The conjuror said that the only sure way to do juggernaut in this particular case was to dig a big hole and then bury a pregnant mahar woman alive in it. Do you know who was the victim? The young woman who was buried alive was none other than your mother. She was pregnant again after you were born (Dalit Brahmin 108).

The news spreads in the village that Bali's mother has run away with someone to the city. Patil gives a piece of land to Bali's father as a gift. Patil's name was Narayanrao. Varsha, the daughter of Patil got married last year and she is in the early stage of her pregnancy. Bali regularly visits Patil's mansion. But now his attitude towards Patil and his family gets changed. Patil's mansion seems to him like a jail where her mother is kept captive. He decides to take revenge from the Patil. He thinks that his daughter will be suitable for the revenge of her mother. He thinks that he will kidnap Patil's pregnant daughter and would bury her alive and would build a hut over that place. This was the wish of Bali. He feels angry with his father because he thinks that his father is greedy and, therefore, he is silent on his mother's death. When he comes home in the evening he asks his father about his mother's death then his father tells the whole story about his mother. Now Bali's opinions changes about his father and realizes that if his father had tried to take some action Patil might have killed his father and he would have become an orphan. When he tries to kill Varsha he remembers his mother because when his mother was killed, she was also pregnant. So he could not fulfill his wish to take revenge. In this story we see that the dalits are more humane and compassionate than the so-called upper caste people. The story depicts as to how much vulnerable dalits are and particularly the women of this section. The story also exposes the inhumane and baseless superstitions prevalent in the society.

The story “War” describes many problems related to dalit people. This story centres around the themes like—role of education, sexual exploitation of women, exploitation in the name of caste, helplessness of dalit people and their changing situation. In this story, Bhagwan is the main character and whole story revolves around him and his family. Bhagwan is injured in the India-Pakistan war. Due to this situation he was discharged from the army. Now he is doing his job in the bank as an ex-serviceman. Government gave him some land as a gift. His family members including his father Sadashiv, his sister Bhagirathi, his wife Ranjana and his only son Bharat all live in Sultanpur. Bhagwan who belongs to a dalit community is employed as the *mahar* of Deshmukh. Sadashiv’s job was to do all menial domestic chores of Deshmukh family. This same kind of situation describes Arjun Dangle in his famous book *Poisoned Bread* about dalits:

The living conditions of these untouchables were shameful. They had no land to till nor could follow any profession. They did menial work ordered by the higher castes, come rain or shine. Treated like animals, they lived apart from the village, and had to accept leftovers from the higher caste people, in return for their endless toil. Their physical contact was said to ‘pollute’ the upper caste—even their shadow was said to have the same effect (Dangle xxi).

This is the situation of dalit women that they are sexually exploited while working in the fields and households of the landlords. Same thing happens with Bhagirathi, the sister of Bhagwan, who becomes pregnant from Deshmukh’ son. When Bhagwan comes to know about it, he decides to make her the wife of Desmukh family against their wishes. Desmukhs makes Bhagirathi nude in front of whole village and dalit hutments are torched, killing many. Bhagwan’s eyes are taken out and left to

suffer. His orders to the dalit children for parade symbolise the continuous and unending struggle of dalits.

“Procession” is the story that revolves around Divakar, a dalit who lives in Devgad village near Nagar with his mother Kashi. Divakar passed the secondary school certificate examination under adverse circumstances and wished to study in the college in Bhimnagar. His father is not alive so their condition is very miserable:

No child from the maharwada was able to complete his school education, because their parents could not afford it. Discontinuing school education in the middle was of no use. So Dalit parents opted to put their children to work in the fields doing odd jobs. If these jobs were not available they would wander about the village like vagrant animals (Dalit Brahmin 157).

In this story dalit people are shown surviving against the exploitation and lack of education and other facilities for the dalit children. With the passage of time, Devgad is changed as it is having all the facilities like electricity, roads, dispensary and post office. But one thing that is not changed is the discrimination on the basis of caste:

Devgad had also changed but what was constant was the hostilities between the castes. Devgad faced water scarcity every year during summer. There were only two wells. One was to be used only by the high castes, the other well was for the untouchables, the dalits. The village hoodlums would throw shit in the Dalit well and foul it. This year they had thrown the carcass of a dog in the dalit’s well (DalitBrahmin 158).

After getting education Divakar is totally changed. He thinks that all are equal—nobody is high or low. Divakar tells this incident to his hostel friends. They

become angry after this incident and decide to protest against high caste people. Divakar comes with his friends in village and start procession. They go to the well of the high class people and drink water. Divakar and his friends go to temple. Divakar becomes the leader of dalit people. Now they decide to celebrate Ambedkar *Jayanti*. This is a new starting for the dalit people because they are becoming aware of their rights. The protest against exploitation and inhuman treatment is the right weapon for their liberation. In this story, the author underlines that education is important and it can play great role in changing the static and defunct cultural moorings. Jyotiba Phule's views was about education are quite crucial as he observed, "... education and science were weapons of advance for the exploited masses, was in contrast to all elitist theories that sought to link western science and eastern morals and argue that Indian could maintain their (brahmanical) traditions while adopting science and technology from the west for material development" (Omvedt 28).

The story "Cow slaughter" revolves around the activities of Yakub, the butcher and Shekhar, a Hindu activist. The story shows as to how people sensitize the matter to give it a communal colour. Narrator notices the change in culture, changing eating habits and spread of education among the erstwhile uneducated sections:

The weekly market on Wednesday would fetch him about five hundred rupees, but its mutton would give him at least a hundred or hundred rupees more. The number of meat eaters had also increased. There was a current saying to the effect that mahars made books expensive and Brahmins made mutton expensive. The mahar caste which was not literate had taken to education in a big way and Brahmins who traditionally were strictly vegetarians had now taken to meat eating (Dalit Brahmin 163).

In the story “Ratna”, Limbale shows the treatment of woman as a commodity that is targeted in each and every kind of clashes among different power and pressure groups. She is not treated as a human being having feelings and emotions. Ratna is main character in this story. Ratna and the narrator grow up together. When they were children they used to play husband and wife in the games of childhood. The major obstacles in their union are the higher economic status of Ratna’s family and the one-sided attraction of Ganya, the dangerous rowdy fellow of the village who tries to molest her. Limbale describes:

He was smitten over Ratna and had started to molest her. He used to forcibly sit in her hut for hours on end. Ratna’s mother was mortally afraid of the hoodlum. Ratna suffered on two counts. Her mother harassed and beat her because she was friendly with me. Secondly, Ganya’s uninvited advances. I was very worried that Ratna would carry out her threat of suicide if the situation became critical (Dalit Brahmin 105).

Dr. Beena Agarwal tells about the position of women in her paper “DalitFeminism: A Quest to Redefine the ‘Self’ and ‘Identity’ of Women”. Her words about the position of Dalit women as doubly marginalized are very significant in this regard: “They are “Dalit of dalit” because their humanity is crushed under the burden of patriarchy as well as under the burden of caste prejudice. In the double marginalization, their identity remains shrouded and it is reduced to cipher” (Randhawa 167).

In almost all the stories, the cultural clashes based on religion, culture and caste prevail throughout. Limbale discusses the condition of woman and how she is being exploited by patriarchy. He concentrates his argument on the double exploitation of woman as being a woman and being a dalit amongst dalits. He depicts

the miserable condition of dalits in his short story collection. In a society divided on the bases of religion, language, caste, creed, culture, gender and ethnicity, dalits are still considered untouchables in our country.

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