6.1 SUBALTERN / DALIT AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Subaltern autobiography is a product of subaltern consciousness. It is a socio-cultural document of pains and pangs. In Indian context, it is “Dalit consciousnesses reflected in confessional creativity. More than literary, it has a social documentation of the society in which the author dwells”. [Mulate.1999. 14] “On one hand, it is Dalit conscious documentation of author and on other hand; it has history of the society.”[46] The autobiographer creates awareness among the society of the social situations social movements, and even revolts against social injustice. It is a pathetic condition of subaltern society which needs national consciousness. It is the conscious revolt against the slavery and subalternity imposed upon the author and hence his society. Subaltern autobiography aims at digging out the social evils that are responsible for the humiliating life of the society in general and writer in particular. It intends to discover roots of pains and destroy them for the betterment of future generations. It motivates the society to raise dissonant voices against humiliation and injustice. Manu made Hindu society ethics, morals, adopt double standards. It treats one as upper-caste and the other as lower-caste. By raising the voice against injustice and being mouthpiece of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, they become Ambedkarite autobiographies too. They run revolutionary tradition of Dalit Movements and awake the society. The present thesis has analysed the dissonant voices in the subaltern autobiographies by Laxman Mane, Sharankumar Limbale, Laxman Gaikwad and Kishor Kale from a Post-colonial prespective.

6.2 THE POST-COLONIAL BACKGROUND

Post-colonial theory emerged after 1980 out of Imperialism of the West Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak and Homi Bhabha contributed their theories and awarded the World of the imperial rule of Europe exploiting the remaining World. The concepts like ‘marginal’, ‘the other ’and ‘subaltern’ directly show its co-relation to India. In the Post-colonial picture, Europe remains at the center and rest of the World on the circle. Europe remains powerful by holding the central position and the other World becomes marginal, powerless and receives humiliation and suffering.
6.3 APPLICATION OF THE POST-COLONIAL THEORY IN INDIAN CONTEXT

In Indian context the post-colonial theory is to be co-related to the upper-caste people in the village, lower-caste people living outside the village outskirt and some tribal castes living outside of the outskirt of the village. Cruelty of the Europe on the East and cruelty of the upper castes come close to the humiliation of the Dalits in India. Alok Mukherjee rightly points out the inner difference and co-relation of Post-colonial and Dalit Picture-

…the village becomes the metropolis and Dalits exist literally on the periphery. Dalit settlements are not only apart from the upper-caste Hindu settlements; they are actually outside the boundary of the village. This physical segregation signifies other separations. Dalits do the work, live the life, eat the food and wear the garment that the upper-caste Hindu will not. They draw water from a separate well and cremate their dead in a separate space. Dalits are the upper-caste Hindu’s ‘other’. But this ‘other’ is not only separate and different like the member of another ethno-cultural, religious or linguistic group. This ‘other’ is a part of Hindu society, and yet apart from it inscribed in that apartness and difference is inferiority. Dalits occupy the lowest place in the Hindu hierarchical order. [Limbale, 2004. 2]

6.4 REFLECTION OF THE POST-COLONIAL SUBALTERNITY IN AN OUTSIDER, THE OUTCASTE, THE BRANDED AND AGAINST ALL ODDS

This co-relation between post-colonial theory and Dalit theory invited this study where the few Dalit autobiographers raise dissonant voices against the cruelty and injustice imposed upon them. They tell their life story, as their sorrow doesn’t allow them to be cooled. The boiling rage comes in such a spontaneous way; it breaks, demolishes and destroys the existing social setup. It hammers severely upon the Manusmruti which rejected honour and heroism to some castes and bestowed it on a few castes and causing inequality. It raises words as severe weapons to deconstruct and reconstruct the society on the basis of equality, fraternity and liberty. It becomes the social reforming mechanism in the hands of awakened, socially conscious, sincere creative hands. They expose the system inhumanly looting them in the name of religion, caste, inferiority, untouchability, customs, traditions, ethics,
moralities, superstitions, etc. Keeping ‘subaltern’ and the ‘other’ impact in mind, this critical study has carried the dissonant voices raised in An Outsider by Laxman Mane The Outcaste by Sharankumar Limbale, The Branded by Laxman Gaikwad and Against All Odds by Kishor Kale.

6.5 LAXMAN MANE’S AN OUTSIDER

Laxman Mane comes from Kaikadi caste, considered ‘outsider’ in the post-colonial context. It is peripheral, marginal, no place of it’s of own, so no identity. In the Indian caste system, it is outside of the village ‘outskirt’. Laxman Mane’s autobiography An Outsider is a record of pain and pathos.

He rejects all the evils, caste based values, being awakened. His consciousness and commitment make him to progress in his life against all the odds of life. In An Outsider, Mane rebels and revolts against social cruelty humiliating his caste. It is his sincere attempt to knock at the doors closed for him. His is the plea for justice, revolt for honour and revenge against caste-based suffering. Mane exposes reality to open the eyes of the world that has never seen such exploitation taking place on outskirts of Indian villages. He wants to start debate on the social ostracization of tribal castes and bring them justice. His revolt is for existence.

The major concerns of An Outsider are ‘suffering, rejection and revolt’. Suffering caused due to hunger, poverty and illiteracy. Superstitiousness, slavery of caste and Jat-panchayat humiliated Laxman Mane and his society. This suffering is due to social system imposed upon Laxman Mane. Indian caste system offers separate occupations to the people and bound them into a closed system where they had to bear and suffering. Manu in his Manusmruti designed Indian society in such a way where Kaikadi society was to live on the left for the leftovers of the upper castes. They were kept landless, homeless, hungry wanderers in search of livelihood. Hunger brought them humiliation. Insecurity of women’s life and their suffering due to rigid slavery imposed upon them is heart breaking.

The other major concern is ‘Rejection and Revolt’ which seems the awareness emerged to Mane and his community. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s life and works remained inspiration and guidelines for the backward castes of India. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Nomadic Tribes, Other Backward Castes and Special
Backward Castes got, ray of hope and walked on the path of freedom. The awakened activists in India spread light of education, which resulted in a great social change. This social change came in Kaikadi community due to the education taken by Laxman Mane. It gave him awakening and he realized the root cause of his suffering. He rejected caste system, which is a stigma and accepted casteless, humanity based society. He rejected his traditional faith in superstitions exploiting his community. He refused humiliated life. This power of rejection is his great positive thinking that made him a great social activist in Kaikadi community and the backward class in general. Dr. Anil Surya rightly comments-

_Upara describes the journey of fighting against and social stigma of ‘untouchability’ with sometimes victory, sometimes defeat like Laxman Mane, the childhood of Kaikadi community passed on the back of donkey causing instability. ‘Wandering’ was the means to meet livelihood. The childhood filled with humiliation due to untouchability and casteism. Due to untouchability and casteism, nobody cared and loved Kaikadi community. Indian culture gave only outsiders to Kaikadi community. Untouchables and casteism kept man away from man. One man kills the other. Laxman Mane in his An Outsider clearly states that the caste institution is enemy of liberty, equality and fraternity. [1996. 118]_

Laxman Mane, being educated, well versed with caste and its evils revolted against upper-castes for the demand of democratic cardinals - fraternity, equality and liberty. He has thrown away slavery that was inhumanly treating him. He broke Jat-panchayat, Kaikadi value system, Hindu value system boldly and fearlessly waked on the footprints of social reformers. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s views and visions are adopted by him. Finally, he embraced Buddhism in 2006. Mane’s An Outsider proved a social document as a mirror of his society and himself. The humiliated protagonist is converted into a strong social activist. So, An Outsider has become now ‘Insider’. Being outsider, he pierced his sorrow and took the crop of sympathy, and human rights. His sincerity in narrating reality and exposing Jat-panchayat and its traditions, show his courageous rebel against himself and his society. His modesty has not left him. His revolt took him towards self-respect. His fighting was for self-existence. His voice was against social slavery imposed upon him without his sanction. His cry is for equal rights. His dissonant voice is for justice. Very politely, the protagonist pleads his case in the court of humanity. An Outsider presents the inside view of his society in particular and Indian society in general. He seems to be the intellectual, humanistic advocate of his society. He
exposed bitter reality and opened the eyes of the upper-castes who felt shameful of their guilt. His movement of liberty knocked the Band Darwaja [Mane.1984] to be opened where he was imprisoned, made him dumb, deaf and blind. He rejected to be the three monkeys of Mahatma Gandhi and allowed his eyes to see naked reality, his mouth to shout against slavery and his ears to listen his people and their complaints. He has opened the storehouse of pain and pathos very consciously for the identity as ‘a human being’. Laxman Mane in his autobiography seems an activist in social reformation, intellectual advocate pleading case of his community. He proves instrument for social change and a bond between Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s philosophy and his society.

In the introductory remark, Laxman Mane had appealed for a social debate on the issues of the Kaikadi community and hence the Tribes and Nomadic Tribes’ life, for which he wandered in Maharashtra and awakened them. He is not simply a classical writer, but proves a great social reformer. Being writer, speaker and an activist, his pen continuously reflected reality. He raised issues of his community, which were sounded in the constitutions of India. His autobiography opened and welcomed the Tribes to enter into the village and occupy the internal position of village structure.

6.6 SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE’S THE OUTCASTE

Sharankumar Limbale is the representative of sorrow and suffering of his community. He raises a strong protest against his hyphenated identity. His suppression is out of humiliation caused by caste and Akkarmashi identity for which he is not responsible. He is suffering from the ‘Akkarmashi’ identity imposed upon him. His unrest and anger is against this identity stigma that has made his life unbearable full of pain. Untouchability of cruel type is borne by him as a bastard child. Though he knows his father, his father rejects his name and honour, which Sharankumar must get by birth but couldn’t.

Limbale, suffered being mahar and basard. The Negroes suffered as a community but Limbale’s suffering is individual as ‘Akkarmashi’ and common as ‘Mahar’. At a time, he is fighting world war and civil war and still, he has not lost hope. He has been fighting for casteless society. Surya Anil rightly comments-
Sharankumar Limbale’s autobiography makes the journey through - ‘Keep’s Child’ and Untouchable Mahar, the double pain. Akkarmashí has already the problems of untouchability and casteism, but for Sharankumar, it has inner caste conflicts. Such double humiliated journey is Akkarmashí. Akkarmashí is a question raised against the culture and the society that goes on immoral ways and supports untouchability and casteism. Akkarmashí is a question that makes the society restless. Sharankumar tells the significance of bread in Akkarmashí. He explains how bread empowers and how it humiliates and creates untouchability. In the present autobiography, Limbale has presented unjust, humiliation and the ugliness of untouchability. In Akkarmashí, the stinging, social satire is presented. [1996.119]

Sharankumar Limbale was born to a Mahar mother and Lingayat father who lived in Maharwada. His father rejected fatherhood to him, who was responsible for breaking married life of Sharankumar’s mother ‘Masamai’. Later on, being divorced from Ithal Kamble, she had to shelter herself under the comfort of Lingayat Patil. She is sexually exploited, becomes pregnant and bore Sharankumar, who was refused by Patil. For bread, Masamai became keep of ‘Kaka’, (Yeshwant Patil of Hanoor), another Lingayat community upper-caste landlord. From one man to another man, Masamai is passed not for lust but for livelihood. Bearing eleven children from three husbands, who have not taken responsibility, except Ithal Kamble, she had to do hard work to survive her children with the help of her mother ‘Santamai’ and aunt ‘Chandamai’. She even sold local wine and suffered from the verbal sexual comments and touch of the customers from the village. In such critical conditions, she sent Sharankumar to school and supported his schooling.

Being aware of his the fractured identity due to caste, Sharankumar suffered in school and college days. His own Mahar people, among whom he grew up, humiliated him on the name of Akkarmashí. Education made him to realize his mother’s exploitation due to poverty. He also realized the cruelty of upper-caste men, who were never controlled by the community in which they dwell. The Outcaste is painful picture of a humiliated child Sharankumar and humiliated mother ‘Masamai’. G. N. Devy rightly points out in her preface to the first print of Akkarmashí, where Sharankumar Limbale writes-

Every time the dominant classes attack and exploit the weak, they violate their women. The sexual exploits of the men among the wicked exploiters draw legitimacy from their authority, wealth, society, culture and religion. But what is about the exploited
woman? She has to carry the rape in her womb. That rape has to
be borne, fed and reared, and this rape acquires and lives a life.
My autobiography holds in it, the agony of such a life. My
experiences are my words, what will remain if you take experience
away from a life, a living corpse. [2005.xxiv]

With this clarification and confession by author himself, the matter becomes
clear that The Outcaste has a long and lengthy suffering and strong rejection to the
existing Hindu society setup and revolt against all, who reject and humiliate him by
calling half caste, Akkarmashi. His sorrow knew no bounds. Having humiliation at
heart, he rages and revolts to blast the inhuman system that caused suffering in his
innocent life. He brings Hindu caste-system on the anvil to hammer heartlessly to
break it. It is his strong argument, sensibly raised for self-respect and self-existence.
Dr. Janardhan Waghmare rightly calls Akkarmashi, a Dukhayatra (Journey of
Sorrow). Dr. Waghmare states-

Akkarmashi: a word is completely filled with boiling humiliation.
There must be poison of hundred big black scorpions hidden in it.
Hearing such word, there would raise fire of thousands of pains in
the mind of such man. Such man would severely fight against not
only society but fate also. He had to raise anger in such a way,
which would tear out the ears of him. It remains unheard by the
society, on the other hand, society laughs inhumanly at him. In
such ridiculous laughter, the rage of such man neutralizes. The
social satirical laughter and one’s own deep angst continuously
falls upon his the ears. Form such a stream, a lifelong, unending
pain flows. [1992. 93-94]

Limbale’s Akkarmashi is an ‘Autobiography of Pain’. It simply is not the tale
of Outcaste; it is story of excommunicated man’s own caste. ‘Akkarmashi’ is
supposed to be illegitimate child having no social identity. In such man’s mind revolt
and rage of existing society is understandable. Dalit Autobiography is a self-history,
which is completely filled with untouchability where ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ both are
rejected in relation to Sharanakumar. He realizes the inhumanity imposed upon him
and his society. So, naturally his revolt is against that society which made his
existence ugly and has taken away his right to live fear free honorable life. Dr.
Waghmare calls Akkarmashi “a war document where author is at war with
civilization.” [97] It is - “irony of fate.” [98] He further states, “To be Akkarmashi has
poured acid upon - Akkarmashi, untouchability and poverty.” in the life of Limbale.
[99]
There are three stigmas of - Akkarmashi-identity, untouchability and poverty’, which have tortured the author. Realizing the roots at the roots of Hindu society, he has revolted against it. He has repeatedly questioned about his existence and self-identity. His autobiography is an interrogation raised upon culture, which humiliated him, shows his scientific point of view. Out of this humanistic understanding he rebels against dehumanization of human life. He wants to demolish inner walls in the society that separate man from man. Without thinking what the results would be of his autobiography, Limbale has hanged his life on the entrance of this nation, so as to be seen by the insiders and the outsiders. Dr. Waghmare states that sincerity and faithfulness in describing details lays the strength and greatness of Limbale as an autobiographer.

Sharankumar Limbale raised Akkarmashi, untouchability and poverty as the major concerns of his autobiography while describing his fractured identity, as The Outcaste he became violent against the slavery imposed upon him. His voice reached to its top and his dissonance threatened the silent streams working under untouchability. He exposed the evils of caste system and pleaded his case before the humanistic readers of the world. He has exposed Hindu culture to expose its poisonous attitude by making one ‘an upper’ and the other ‘a lower’. This imbalance caused inequality and slavery among the subalterns, downtrodden, backwards and today’s Dalits. Being aggressive and coming on the front foot, Limbale has swept hundreds of question to the society that believes in the unbelievable rules and regulations of the Hindu society. His digging of the life and society gives him pain. It is not more than the stigma stamped on his forehead as Akkarmashi. Under the shadow of this search for identity, the themes of untouchability and poverty come. Greater than untouchability and poverty, he feels the sting of fractured identity. His greatest sorrow is that he is rejected even by the people among whom he lived and suffered with him. Mukund Rajpankhe states in his Poem-

Manuchaya utarandisi tyanchi julaleli naal aahe
Majhayach mansana maza wital aahe. [2001.25.]

(As, they have connected their umbilical cord with Manu, my own people have maintained untouchability with me.)

This sorrow doesn’t remain isolated to Sharankumar Limbale alone. Every subaltern has a separate sorrow having some similarities and differences. Every Dalit
felt urge for democratic principles to be effectively implemented, in the existing society based on Manu made basement. Mahatma Gandhi was asking to rebuild the nation on the same basement to which, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had refused by saying, that there would be a new footing and new building, where there would be no walls of difference. Even A. H. Salunke stated to have our own heads on our own bodies. What use is there of changing the body and keeping the old Manu made brain on it. The modern revolutionaries have firmly decided to walk on the new ways in search of fraternity, equality and liberty.

Both Laxman Mane and Sharankumar Limbale strengthen this movement by writing their autobiographies. They have bravely and sincerely portrayed their life so as to realize society their humiliation and dissonance. They have shown the Dalits their Dalitness as Dr. Badasaheb Ambedkar said to realize the slave his slavery and he would revolt against it. They have clearly opened the eyes of the society by showing the wickedness of society towards them by humiliating them as backwards, untouchables, and Akkarmashi to Sharankumar. If it is to be lodged, the responsibility is of the religion that tortured them and gave inhuman treatment.

6.7 LAXMAN GAIKWAD’S THE BRANDED

The Branded is one of the significant autobiographies written originally in Marathi. After winning the Sahitya Akademi Award, it was translated in English as The Branded. Uchalya means pilferer. It is a severe satire on social inequality and a candid account of the author’s life account brought out in the Uchalya community. Uchalya is a criminal community branded by British Government. They are considered-born criminals and are denied of all decent and lawful means of life. The author realizes that the higher castes and classes have fully exploited the miserable and helpless situations of Uchalya community for their selfish purposes.

The present work of art is the faithful reflection of reality. It exposes number of tricks of stealing. The downtrodden community living utter dark life is brought into lime light by this book. It is the document of a so-called criminal community that suffered in Maharashtra. The present effort intends to find out the reasons of their inhuman suffering. The author is a social worker and is fighting for his community’s
development. The autobiography mirrors the journey of the protagonist called thief to a social worker fighting for the rights of his community. It probes into the psychology and sociology of his community. It’s the demand of the author to get the social standing to his community and bring it to the main stream culture where they would be living respectable life. It’s protest against injustice done to the Uchalya society. It investigates how injustice was mated out on this community. It exposes agony and rebels to have equal, dignified, moral life in Indian social setup.

6.8 KISHOR SHANTABAI KALE’S AGAINST ALL ODDS

Against All Odds is a character sketch of a refugee, refused by society and deprived of his parents’ love. He was born to a Kolhati dancer and became a doctor. The protagonist says, that the society has given him certificate calling him illicit child. A girl who was about to become a teacher is made a dancer that broke her sweet dreams. A young girl in Kolhati community is considered as a cash crop. She is sold as a dancer and then humiliated keep. Either brothels or tamasha theaters become the fate of Kolhati women. Against All Odds is a tale of suffering of a mother - Shantabai and her child named Kishor. The children born to such women rarely get the father’s name. Usually, they are the victims of the lust of so-called elite class and rich upper class men. These men never allow their names to be used at the place of ‘father’ due to the fear of defame of their status in society.

Kishor Kale wrote this autobiography not only to expose his poverty and humiliation but he has definite intention. He intends to awaken his society. He also dreams to uplift his social class under the influence of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Kishor Kale searched the reasons of his downtrodden identity. His attempt in his autobiography is to throw light on –

1. Agonies of a fatherless child.
2. As a result of it, a lot of humiliation – at home, in the community, at school, college and in the society.
3. Barricades ill practices of the society Jat-panchayat, superstitions, traditions, like chira utarana, etc.

5. Kishor’s protest (though mild) against – above all practices through – education, service to society, inter caste marriage, appeal to stop verdicts of Jat pachayat- dancing that leads to prostitution etc.

The study would be of great help to those who would like to come out of the life of drudgery. It would also help the young researchers to see the literary works against the postcolonial backdrop and feel the pain and suffering of the subaltern at the hands of the imperialist power structures and their agencies.