

**Comparative Study of Munshi Premchand's *Sadgati* and Sharankumar  
Limbale's *Akkarmashi* with Reference to Dalit Literature**

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## Declaration

I declare that the work presented in the Dissertation entitled ‘Comparative Study of Munshi Prachanda’s *Sadgati* (Deliverance) and Sharankumar Limbale’s *Akkarmashi* (The Outcaste) with reference to Dalit Literature’ being submitted to the Department of School of Languages, Doon University, Dehradun for the award of Bachelor in English is my original research work. The Dissertation embodies the results of investigations, observations, and experiments carried out by me. I have neither plagiarized any part of the dissertation nor have submitted same work for the award of any other degree/diploma anywhere.

Muskaan Mittal

SLE-1075 Date: July 21, 2022

## Certificate

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled 'Comparative Study of Munshi Premchand's *Sadgati* (Deliverance) and Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* (The Outcaste) with reference to Dalit Literature' submitted by Muskaan Mittal has been done under my supervision. It is also certified that the work in this Dissertation embodies original research and hard work of the candidate. The assistance and support received during the course of investigation and all the sources of literature have been fully acknowledged.

Dr. Chetana Pokhriyal  
(Supervisor)

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## Abstract

This dissertational work tries to understand the perspective of two authors, Munshi Premchand and Sharankumar Limbale belonging to the opposite ends of the caste hierarchy. The work tries to compare their perspective and the changing worldview with respect to their works; namely *Sadgati (Deliverance)* and *Akkarmashi (The Outcaste)* respectively. The paper also highlights the need for a separate Dalit consciousness that gives voice to those who have been silenced in the process of subjugation and victimization. The empathic viewpoint of Premchand and the first-hand narrative of Limbale bring forth the actual plight of those at the margins of society. The paper also looks at the theme of social dominance and physical aggression met out on Dalits and the need for subsequent assertion.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

The plight and horrors of the untouchables and other marginalized societies cannot be described more appropriately than through the words of the victims themselves. India is a country that has a very age-old, odd, and typical caste system that bisects the society into two parts- the upper castes and the lower castes. This bisection is done based on caste, surname, profession, religious beliefs, rites, rituals, and virtues. The Dalits are often referred to as untouchables and hold the lowest place in society. Dalits are the people who have been exploited mentally, socially, physically, and politically for ages. The moment a child takes birth in a Dalit family he/she gets a tag of 'an untouchable.' Along with that, all sorts of humiliation and hunger becomes his lifelong companion and a legacy that he inherits. The truth of Dalit reality only comes into highlight when a person belonging to a lower caste narrates it. This is because it is he who has seen, faced, and suffered the barbarous treatment given to them by the people who were a part of the four-fold varna system.

### Dalit Literature

Dalit literature began in 1960 and came out as a voice against the discriminatory practices that were imposed on marginalized communities, Dalits. Dalit literature is the literature of Dalits, which is produced by the people belonging to this community and is written to make the masses aware of the harsh and heart-wrenching incidents experienced by them. The Dalit texts portray the sights of inequality, racism, casteism and untouchability in Indian society. It briefs about the horrific historical incidents that lead to the mental and physical breakdown of the people of the Dalit community.

It was one of the most dominant and crucial literary phenomena in post-independence India which was striving hard to reinstall the dignity and nobility of the communities that have suffered the wrongs for ages. One of the main features of Dalit literature is to bring to the fore discrimination, prejudice, brutality, and rejection faced by the Dalit community in India. The word 'Dalit' was first ever used by Mahatma Jobita Phule to refer to the outcaste or the untouchables who were excluded from the four-fold varna system of Hinduism. The term 'Dalit' in general is derived from the Sanskrit word 'dalita' which means broken, scattered, or split. The people belonging to the lower caste were called Dalits because they had fractured identities and fractured religious beliefs. In an interview, Dr. Sharankumar Limbale has described Dalit literature-

Dalit Literature was expressed in order to change the society. It majorly spoke about life problems faced by people, their rights, justice, equality, freedom and fraternity. The literature was about human rights. Dalit literature attracted attention because no one was able to deny the truth of experience because the victim, the protagonist, in such literature is alive. For example, if we talk about Akkarmashi, my autobiography, no one can tell me that I am not Sharankumar Limbale and this work is imaginary. The people who would say that Dalit literature was fictional, full of lies and was a wrong depiction of reality were rendered speechless. Dalit autobiographical writings brought forth the truth in Dalit literature. (Limbale)

### Dalit Writers

One of the very famous Dalit writers is Bama. She was born in 1958. She is also recognized as Bama Faustina Soosairaj. She is a Tamil Dalit novelist, a teacher and a feminist. She came into highlight with her autobiographical novel Karukku (1992), which chronicles the joys and sorrows of Dalit Christian women in Tamil Nadu. Another Dalit writer is Namdeo



Laxman Dhasal was another very renowned Marathi author, poet, and Dalit activist. He was one of the main architects of the Dalit Panthers in 1972. Dalit Panthers is basically a social movement with an aim of destroying the caste hierarchy in Indian society. Dhasal was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from Sahitya Akademi in the year 2004.

Omprakash Valmiki, another renowned Dalit writer, was born on 30 June 1950. He was an Indian Dalit writer and poet. He is well known for his autobiography, *Joothan*. *Joothan* was considered a landmark in Dalit literature. He is a Dalit child who was tormented, abused, and harassed everywhere in society. Another famous Dalit writer is Anita Bharti. She is an eminent poet, author, critic, and activist for Dalit and women's rights who has been at the forefront of conveying Dalit women's perspectives.

#### Four-fold Varna System

In Hinduism, there is a varna system that defines the social class of a person. Our society is divided into four Varnas namely- Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Marginalized classes, backward tribes, and Dalits are excluded from this four-fold varna system. A community that belongs to any one of the four varnas is known as 'Savarna' whereas communities such as backward castes, tribes, and Dalits that are not included in any of these varnas are known as "Avarna". The first Varna, Brahmins, included the Vedic priests, Vedic teachers, and Vedic scholars. The second varnas, Kshatriya, comprises the kings, great warriors, and administrators. The third varna, Vaishyas, comprises the business class people, merchants, and farmers. The last and the fourth Varna, Shudras, comprises the service provider and the labourer masses of the society. The rights and privileges enjoyed by the higher caste.

## ‘Untouchability

Untouchability was given birth directly to the hierarchal caste system. Untouchability is an execution of blacklisting people of a certain group who are referred to as 'untouchable'. These people belong to the 'grounded' or 'base' communities i.e., the ones that are not a part of the four-fold varna system. The people whose occupations and life habits involved polluting activities like washerman, fisherman, sweeper, etc were considered untouchables. The condition of Dalits was far more miserable than that of the creatures of the society. Untouchability is present in almost every orb of life and is practiced in an endless number of forms. At the village rank, Dalits are banned from utilizing wells used by non-Dalits. They were prohibited from going to the barbershop. Also entering temples was strictly prohibited for them. They were beaten to death if caught entering the temples or touching any religious thing. While at the level of job recruitment and employment Dalits were paid less and were instructed to do the pettiest and menial work. Even at school, Dalit children were asked to work for upper-class children and were told to eat separately.

## Social and economic status of Dalits

The Dalits hold the lowest position and status in the traditional and hierarchal structure of India. The Dalit community was given the tag of "untouchables." This community was banished from the four-fold varna system of Hinduism. They were considered 'Panchama' which means belonging to the fifth varna. As per the constitution of India, 'Scheduled Caste' is the official term used for the Dalit community. The people of this community earn their living by doing menial manual labour which is not even enough to satisfy their hunger. One-third of India's Dalit population still lives below the poverty line and is landless. In earlier times, these people were not allowed to drink water from the well which was reserved for the upper castes nor were they allowed to use the same streets

which were meant for the upper-class people. They used to live on the outskirts of the village as they were not allowed to share living in a common village with the upper-class masses. These marginal communities lived under constant fear of getting humiliated, exploited, raped, tormented, and, thrashed by the upper-class masses of India. The reason behind the state of immense oppression and degradation was the lack of resources in every sphere of social, economic, and political life. They are totally dependent on the predominant castes for their livelihood. The authority of the upper-class masses on the extensive lands and resources lead to the degradation of Dalits. Due to their control over the land masses, Dalits lost their means of livelihood and got deprived of the three basic amenities of life- food, shelter, and clothing. Their deficiency of knowledge made them believe all the superstitious and senseless myths formed by the so-called upper-class masses. This was where mental and behavioural discrimination took birth.

### About the authors and their works

One such victim of this very painful and extremely torturous experience of discrimination based on caste was the Marathi author, literary critic, and poet Sharankumar Limbale who was born on June 1, 1956. He was a member of the Mahar community. He is one of the most celebrated authors of Dalit literature. He was considered as an '*Akkarmashi*', a half-caste, as he was an illegitimate son of Hanmanta Limbale, an upper-class Patil, and a poverty-stricken woman, Masamai of the Mahar community. He penned down more than 40 books. Sharankumar Limbale has undergone dual discrimination- the first type of discrimination was done by the upper-class people of the society based on his caste and another discrimination was done by his community members by calling him an '*Akkarmashi*' or branded illegitimate son. "High caste people look upon my community as

untouchable, while my own community humiliated me, calling me *akkarmashi*". (Limbale 1)

The *Outcaste (Akkarmashi)* is an autobiographical work of the Marathi author, Sharankumar Limbale that describes his torturous experiences of caste discrimination, his fractured identity, and the painful incidents of destituteness from the very early phases of his life. *Akkarmashi* was published 1991 when he was 25 years old and his book brought him the status of a successful writer. Limbale has described this work as a tale of his 'burden of inferiority' (Limbale, x) and a tale of pain that is suffered by millions in India. The *Outcaste* is a disturbing narrative of Sharankumar Limbale's life and discloses the heart wrenching incidents of millions of people of lower strata. This autobiographical work of his gives a deep sense of knowledge to the readers about his journey from the very childhood to an adult as an "outcaste". Through Limbale's narration of his childhood days, we come to know about how hunger breaks down a person, both mentally and physically. Also, starvation is the only thing that leads him to cross all the boundaries to satisfy it. Not only has he described the brutality of starvation but also the extremely pitiful condition of women belonging to the Dalit community. The women of Limbale's village, along with his mother Masamai, were subject to sexual exploitation. They were forced to satisfy and please the men of the upper classes. Through this autobiographical work, Sharankumar Limbale has revealed the true faces of the so-called noble gentlemen of the upper-class society and has disclosed their hypocrisy. Also, he goes on explaining his miserable circumstances of not having an identity, a place to reside and a place of belonging.

On the other hand, is Dhanpat Rai Srivastava, a Hindi-Urdu story writer, novelist, and dramatist. He is popularly identified by his pen name Premchand. The term Munshi is an honorary prefix to his name. He was born in a rich Kayastha family on July 31, 1880. He wrote extensively on the plight, sorrows, and sufferings of the caste hierarchies in the

late 1880s. He penned down more than twelve novels and more than three hundred short stories. Munshi Premchand was very sympathetic towards the Dalits communities. According to several writers, Premchand gave a lifelike portrayal of the Dalit lifestyle and Dalit consciousness in his works but on the other hand according to Hindi-Dalit writers his works were not capable enough to give a truthful representation of the heart-sinking everyday experiences which were faced by the members of Dalit communities.

In his short story *Sadagti* (Deliverance) Munshi Premchand portrays the struggles of a tanner named Dukhi, who belonged to an untouchable community. He was in dire need of meeting Ghasi Ram, the local village priest to set up a perfect date for his daughter's engagement. He was forced by the priest to work beyond his capabilities and physical strength which finally led to his death. Premchand describes how Ghasiram, a local village priest takes advantage of his higher and evident position in society and exploits the helpless and feeble tanner to death. We also witness through Premchand's portrayal how the lives of the untouchables do not even matter to the priestly classes. Towards the end of this short story, we witness Dhukhi attaining his freedom. He attains his deliverance when Ghasiram pulls the tanner's corpse himself and leaves him on the outskirts of the village. According to Hindu mythology, one can only receive deliverance when some rituals are done by a representative of God i.e., A priest. On the other hand, Dhukhi receives deliverance from the shackles of the brutal and unjust practices that took place in the name of the caste system. Also, along with his death, he receives freedom from the hardships he was facing as an untouchable. Also, we witness him getting deliverance from his suffocating title i.e., an untouchable given to him. He left for his final abode exiting behind all the brutal actions and titles.

## Literature review

The field of Dalit literature has a very wide spectrum. A countless number of researches have been published in this field. Before delving into the contrasting analysis of the perspectives of the writers of opposite social statuses it is essential to look at some of the important contributions to the field of Dalit Literature. BR Ambedkar desired Dalits to be fearless citizens highlighting their primary human rights equivalent to that of the touchables. Ambedkar highlighted that “political power was a means to achieve all-round social uplift, improvement, and progress” for Dalits. On the other hand, Mahatma Jotiba Phule nudges Dalits to break the manacles of "inherited slavery". Not only this many Dalit writers like Sharankumar Limbale, Om Prakash Valmiki, Bama, etc have contributed majorly to the field of Dalit literature by writing their autobiographies and many other texts. Many questions like what was the reason behind the dominance of higher-class people on lower-class masses. Or what was the mental state of the marginalized communities? Theories explaining the rise of Dalit Literature are particularly common and include themes like subjugation, dominance, abusive lifestyle and sexual assault.

## Research Gap

While a plethora of work has been done in the field of Dalit literature, my dissertation aims to look at the contrast between the perspective of Sharankumar Limbale and Munshi Premchand who belong to the two opposite ends of the social ladder of our society. I wanted to lay emphasis on the difference between the thought processes of both revolutionary writers. Also, many critics have laid emphasis on comparing writers of opposite strata but no one has compared Limbale and Premchand's perspectives.

## Objective

The objective is to compare the point of view of the upper-class writer aka Munshi Premchand and a writer who was born as a Mahar aka Sharankumar Limbale.

## Research Methodology

This research has been divided into three chapters.

Chapter 1 deals with the introduction part of the entire dissertation, laying extreme emphasis on the background of Dalit Literature, untouchability, the four-fold varna system, and the socio-economic status of Dalits. The latter half deals with the introduction of Sharankumar Limbale, author of *Akkarmashi* (The Outcaste), and the introduction of Munshi Premchand, author of *Sadgati* (Deliverance). This chapter also comprises a basic idea of the text I have selected. Chapter 2 lays extreme emphasis on the social dominance and physical aggression imposed on Dalits and other marginalised communities; comparison of the perspective of two revolutionary authors namely Sharankumar Limbale and Munshi Premchand.

Chapter 3 deals with the conclusion of this paper

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## CHAPTER II

### Social Dominance

Upper-class or higher class is a term that refers to a community or group of people who has occupied the highest rank in society. These people have limitless access to the natural resources of the environment. Centuries back, when prejudice against Dalits and other marginalized communities was at its apex, the higher caste people were referred to as the purest because they included the Vedic scholars, Vedic teachers, and religious priests (brahmins). These individuals had authority over a large amount of the total assets and, had a significant amount of political power. This political power and the control over the major part of the assets led to the dominance of upper caste masses over the lower-class masses. These are the two major factors that split up the two classes. The materialistic circumstances in which an individual matures up and lives have an everlasting influence on their personal and social identities. These materialistic circumstances influence both- the way they judge, assume, and feel about their social environment and the main aspects of their social conduct. One of the major reasons behind the discrimination is the desire of people of upper-class society to showcase their superiority. People take pride in dominating people who are weak and unresourceful. They use the power of their money to rule over the weaker sections and enslave them. they think that their money can buy the whole society including self-respect, honour, rights, and services.

Sharankumar Limbale showcased the tear-shedding experience of the Mahar, an untouchable community. He begins by describing that his community was mourning poverty and starvation. He mentions that hunger makes men a thief and women a prostitute. From the very beginning, he is haunted by his identity crises. He is seen questioning his caste as he was an illegitimate son of an upper-class village Patil and an

untouchable. He faced biases as a student in his school. Boys of the upper-class society welcomed Limbale into the school by throwing stones at him. He was called the son of a witch by his teacher. The children in his class were seated according to their position on the social ladder of society i.e., "We Mahar boys had to sit on the floor whereas the other boys sat on the raised platform" (Limbale, 5). Discrimination by the high-class led Mahars and other Dalit communities to question and doubt their purity. He says, "I never touched my teacher's chappals as I was afraid of tainting their sanctity". (Limbale 5)

Discrimination was also done concerning water. Just like their lowest position on the social ladder, they have access to water at the lowest. The upstream water was used by the high caste villagers to wash their clothes and pots, the downstream water was meant for the shepherds and kumbies for bathing, washing clothes, and washing their buffaloes. Post that "The water at the lowest end was meant for them" (Limbale 7). Here, Limbale has tried to tell the readers that the status of animals was much higher than that of Dalits and other lower-class masses.

Starving was their daily activity. Many times, they had to sleep hungry and managed by swallowing their saliva. Santamai, his grandmother made 'bhakari's (chapatis) from Jowar grains collected from dung. Hunger made marginalized Mahar an animal murderer as they gave poison to kill them for the sake of appeasing their hunger. Limbale illustrates events where Mahars were not allowed to enter the sanctuary and are not allowed to come in contact with the open well or draw water from it. Limbale states

The spade and scoops of Mahars were utilized to burrow the well. The Mahar gave their perspiration for it. They the Mahars, are the motivation behind why there is water in the well. However, at this point, the equivalent

Mahars are not permitted to draw water from it, not notwithstanding drinking water. (Limbale 80-81)

Limbale portrays the treatment of higher standing Shivram for a Dalit Rambaap in a scene of Shivram's coffee bar in his collection of memoirs. He composes:

Rambaap used to drink water as well as tea and he had to wash the tumblers too before he put them back in their place. He had to put the money for the tea on the ground or drop it from a height into the hands of the owner because for a Mahar or Mang to hand money directly to anyone was a sin. When Rambaap noticed me watching him do all this, he said, we are low castes. What you have seen is a long tradition that has come down to us from our forefathers. What can we do about it? How can we go against the village customs? (Limbale 76)

Not only this, one of the major forms of social dominance is the sexual dominance imposed on the women of the lower-class community. He mentions that the women of his community were doubly marginalized- on the basis of gender and caste. They were powerless and were bound to be sexually harassed by the men of the upper-class society, which lead to her discrimination by her own community.

To be born beautiful among the Dalits is a curse. There is a famous saying that neighbour's wife is always more beautiful than one's own. Everyone in the village chases a beautiful woman. Masamai was beautiful and she suffered for it. (Limbale 37-38)

Masamai, Limbale's mother, is one of the victims who has to suffer male dominance at each and every phase of her life. Itthal Kamble, her husband worked on the farm of Hanmanta Patil. Patil helped Kamble in his times of need. He had the intentions of using

Masamai for quenching his sexual desires. Hanmanta Limbale baited Masamai and had an illegal relationship with her. He even offered her a rented place at Akkalkot where he could easily approach her to fulfil his lust. After Masamai was forced to divorce her husband, she was asked to take care of her offspring whereas Itthal Kamble was allowed to remarry. Limbale discovers it weird that in Hindu society a man is unrestricted to treat a woman like “paan” which he can feast upon and spit as many times as he likes, but the same is not possible for a woman.

It was a kind of revenge to live openly with the same man who had uprooted her from her family. Hanmanta Limbale now possessed her like a pot dove. They lived happily. Masamai became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Who is the father of this boy? Hanmanta did not want any of this to happen, but who can disown a child? A child is a reality. (Limbale 36)

After his birth, Hanmanta abandoned Masamai only to compel her to have contact with other individuals a result of which she gave birth to more children after Sharankumar. “We were all of one womb and one blood. We shared a common mother but different father” (Limbale 38). Limbale delivers the emergencies of character and dependably looks puzzled concerning his existence and reality. Birth describes the qualities and personality of a person in the very primary stage however, Limbale believes that his introduction to the world is the revile for him since he originated out of a sexual connection of his mom with Hanmanta, Limbale pens:

My first breath must have threatened the morality of the world. With my first cry at birth, milk must have splashed from the breasts of every Kunti...  
Why did my mother say yes to the rape which brought me into the world?

Why did she put up with the fruit of this illegitimate intercourse for nine months and nine days and allow me to grow in the foetus? (Limbale 36-37)

Limbale displays the character development of an individual by his/her father's name but his biological father didn't acknowledge Sharankumar as his seed. Later on, Sharan turns into an adult with no name of his father. In an episode, once Sharankumar Limbale wanted an endorsement from the Sarpanch, he addressed Limbale's personality,

“The Sarpanch was in a real fix about how to identify me. But I too was a human being. What else did I have except a human body but a man is recognized in this world by his religion, caste, or his father. I had neither a father's name, nor any religion, nor a caste. I had no inherited identity at all”. (Limbale 59)

“My forefathers were Lingayat. Therefore, I am one too. My mother was Mahar. My mother's father and forefathers were Mahar, hence I am also a Mahar. From the day I was born until today, I was brought up by my grandmother, Santamai. Does this mean I am Muslim as well? Then why can't the Jamadar's affection claim me as Muslim? How can I be high caste when my mother is untouchable? If I am untouchable, what about my father who is high caste? I am like Jarasandh. Half of me belongs to the village, whereas the other half is excommunicated. Who am I? To whom is my umbilical cord connected?” (Limbale 38-39)

The caste establishes the status of every individual in society. It is only the caste that tells the history and past incidents of the forefathers. The construction of an identity of a person is not possible without history because it uncovers the person in modern society

with his spiritual and traditional sanctions. With the above lines, we come to know that Limbale has suffered identity problems concerning caste too.

Munshi Premchand lived in the early 20th century, when discrimination based on caste, creed, religion, skin colour, and rituals was at its apex in the society. In his story, *Sadgati* (Deliverance) Premchand portrays the social dominance and supremacy of the upper-class masses on a farmer named Dhukhi, a Chamar, an untouchable community. He is represented as a sub-human in the story. The caste hierarchy has pushed Dhukhi to accept his fate and destiny that he has been on earth to be exploited. He goes through many social dominances in the story. Dhukhi sees Ghasiram, the local village priest as a sacred figure and respects him from the bottom of his heart. The social ladder of the caste system shapes the Dalit's ways of viewing the members of the upper castes. The lower position of Dalits and other marginalized communities compels them to pay unconditional respect to the upper-class masses. At the very beginning of the story, Dhukhi lies down on the floor with his hands stretched in an upward direction the moment Ghasiram came out of his room. These actions of the protagonist signify the unquestioning inferiority of a Dalit to a Brahmin. The extremely cruel and over-intelligent Brahmin knew that the poor farmer won't be able to give any monetary gift to him so ordered him to do all the petty works like cleaning the veranda, giving fodder to the cows, and chopping wood, which proved to be deadly for the innocent man. Dhukhi was dominated and suppressed by the priest's wife many times. She calls him 'Son of a bitch's bad luck' (Premchand 8) when he asked for fire for his 'beedi' (cigarette). She reminds him that he belongs to a chamar caste, a caste that is perceived as untouchable in society.

Even when he gets burnt in the process of getting fire from the Brahman's wife Panditayin] for lighting his beedi, he does not get angry, upset, or irritated. Instead, he blames himself for violating the sanctity of a Brahman's house and thinks that this 'punishment' was well-

deserved. Another event of social dominance was seen when the priest asks his wife to provide some food to Dhukhi. She instantly refuses to cook food for him by saying, "Let's forget the whole thing as I am not going to kill myself cooking in the weather like this". (Premchand 11)

Events of mental dominance were witnessed Chikuri, a Gond (an untouchable community) tells him to ask for some food from the Brahmin's house. To this Dhukhi replied, "How can you expect me to digest a Brahmin's food Chikur?" (Premchand 11). Sites of social dominance were very evident when Dukhi fails to chop the chunk of the log. Ghasiram shouts at him and begins insulting him. Not only this, he threatens the feeble "untouchable" about fixing an inauspicious date and time for his daughter's engagement. Under the scorching and killing heat of the sun, the much exhausted Dukhi attempts hard to dice the log. He strikes the log with all his remaining strength but all his efforts fail. Hunger, thirst, helplessness, and despair give Dukhi an immense sense of anger and he begins to hit the trunk time and again. Finally, his lifeless and strengthless body tumbles onto the parched ground. The Brahmin tries to wake him up but it was too late. The portrayal of the barbarities directed at Dukhi does not end here. It is rightly said, "A life that is spent in humiliation ends also in utter indignity"

At the end of the story, the dead body of Dukhi becomes a burden for him. The other Brahmins of the village also asked the priest to dispose the departed body as soon as possible because they cannot tolerate the matter that an untouchable's body is lying on the way to the village well.

And it's beginning to stink already. Wasn't that bastard a tanner? Those people eat everything, clean or not, without worrying about it. No all sorts of foods disgusts them! They're all polluted. (Premchand 18)

This conversation between the priest and his wife portrays the mentality of the so call leaders of the hierarchal social ladder of our society. Because he could not touch it as it belongs to a marginal caste, he waits for the people of ‘Chamar Basti’ (a colony where people of the marginalized community live) to come and carry away the untouchable corpse of an untouchable man. People of Chamar community rejected to move the body because they were afraid of the police. This can also be seen as the first step against the humiliation of upper-class on the weaker sections. Finally, at night the pundit drags the dead body along the muddy road and throws it where lie the carcasses of dead animals.

“Out there in the field, jackals and kites, dogs and crows were picking at Dukhi’s body. This was the reward for the whole life of devotion, service, and faith,” reads the last line of *Sadgati*. (Premchand 19) Hence social dominance is a key feature of suppression and humiliation imposed on the marginalized communities. Both Dukhi, a fictional character, and Sharankumar Limbale a real-life sufferer falls prey to the social dominance imposed by the hierarchal society.

In an interview, Sharankumar Limbale described the social dominance in the field of literature when asked why Dalit literature should be separated from the other literature. He says that people keep on asking this question again and again. He mentions that literature is the mirror of society and if untouchability is practiced in society, then it will be discussed in literature as well. He goes on to mention that if keeping Dalits on the outskirts of the village is fine then why is there a problem if we separate out literature. He further explains that when Dalit writers went to the publishers for getting their articles and stories published, they face immense domination from the publishers. They faced rejection and were asked to learn language, grammar and writing skills properly.



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Department of English (Doon University)

### Chapter III

#### Comparison of the perspectives of the two revolutionary writers-

#### Sharankumar Limbale and Munshi Premchand

It is rightly said that only a person who has gone through particular discrimination can understand its pain and suffering. He is the only one who can narrate the accurate incidents related to it. Sharankumar Limbale and Munshi Premchand, are truly revolutionary Indian authors. Both of them wrote immensely about casteism, racism, and oppression of Dalits but there is a stark contrast between them. One belongs to the upper-class community and the other belongs to a lower-class community. They share common genres and themes but their experiences and writing patterns are very different from each other. One was born with a golden spoon in his mouth and the other was born with the burden of discrimination on his shoulders. One had the name of his father as his legal identity and the other is a sufferer of identity crises as he is an illegitimate son of Palit.

Munshi Premchand was born in a well-to-do Kayastha family. His descendants were landowners. Gur Sahai Rai, his grandfather, was a village Patwari (accountant of a village) and Ajaib Rai, his father, was a post office clerk. He witnessed upper-class dominance on the lower-class masses and wrote intensively about it. But his works were based merely on his observations. He wrote about the oppressive rituals visualized by him. He has never been a victim of the pathetic treatment and harassment of the upper-class masses. He wanted to make people aware of hardcore truths of the society and its inhumane practices. His upper-class position in society leads to criticism of his work. Along with it, his upper-class identity questions his acquaintance with the misery of subjugation in Indian society.

Premchand's perspective of writing the story was quite genuine and simple. Through his works he wanted to give an account of the unjust practices taking place in society. He wanted to portray how social dominance ends up overburdening the weaker sections of society and what impact they leave on their lives. He portrayed how social dominance and physical aggression end up taking the lives of the innocent people of the weaker sections. Also, his perspective was to make people aware of the harsh activities taking place in society. By writing works he wanted people to sympathize with the weaker and to stop the suppression of the weaker masses

His story *Sadgati* was written from a general perspective siting scenes of subjugation based on caste and untouchability. In this story Ghasiram, a local village priest takes advantage of the opportunity and orders Dhukhi to do all the physical labour in his house. Dhukhi who was ill and empty stomached was ordered to chop a giant log of wood. However, Dhukhi remains unsuccessful in chopping it. When the priest spots him sleeping near the chunk of wood, he begins abusing him. Also, the priest blackmails him by saying that Dukhi's actions would be responsible for the fixation of an inauspicious date and time for his daughter's engagement. Out of anxiety and out of wrath at the mockery of his fortune he begins to hit his axe on the log which ends when he finally collapses and dies. His death makes the priest uncomfortable and leads to his criticism by his neighbours. Later, no one came from the untouchable community to take away the dead body. The criticism increased with the spread of the foul smell of the dead body. This made the priest take action by himself. Finally, at night the pundit drags the dead body along the muddy road and throws it where lie the carcasses of dead animals. Dukhi finally acquires sadgati or deliverance. The term is used ironically as for a Dalit this is how deliverance is achieved.

Some authors and critics do not include Premchand's work as a piece of Dalit literature. This is due to the lack of Dalit consciousness and experience in his works. Dalit writers and critics like Kanval Bharti, in 'Dalit Literature and Premchand', have denied Premchand's writings on Dalit issues as part of Dalit Literature, and it is denied based on a lack of Dalit consciousness in his writings.

Bharti debates:

"I am not saying that Premchand was against Dalits or that I am against Premchand. Only that when evaluating Premchand as part of Dalit literature, it should be according to Dalit consciousness and thus, Dalit writers' remarks on Premchand are based on and show respect for the authority of Dalit consciousness." (Bharti,239)

The renowned Dalit critic Raj Kumar banishes Premchand among others as an appropriate writer to write on Dalit issues based on his non-Dalit identity. As say

"Even the most progressive and revolutionary-minded writers like Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, T.S. Pillai, V.S. Khandekar, and several others who have tried to describe the sentiments of Dalits are not acceptable; only a Dalit by birth can have the sensitivity and experience to be a genuine Dalit writer". (Kumar, in Ahmad and Upadhyay, 133)

On the other hand, Sharankumar Limbale, one of the most prominent Dalit writers in India was a victim of the inhumane oppression of the upper-class masses. He wrote about his experiences as a member of the Dalit community. He writes about real-life happenings and the real-life oppression of the lower castes. One of the prominent themes of his writings was to portray the pathetic and unenviable life of a poor Community.

Another prominent theme was to showcase the miserable condition of women in his society. He gave a detailed description of his quest for identity in the novel.

Sharankumar is a mutinous writer who discloses the actuality of Hindu society. Via his pen, he illustrates how non-Dalits have devastated society. His autobiography proved to be a mirror for Dalits. Sharankumar Limbale, in *Akkarmashi*, criticizes society and its evils. His main aim was to use his words as a weapon and to make society aware of true Dalit experiences. He wanted to bring forward the hypocrisy of the so-called high-class people. He states that on one hand, the so-called upper castes refuse to come in contact with the untouchables and on the other hand they use the "untouchable" women for quenching their thirst for sexual desires. Another perspective of Limbale was to tell the world about the ills his mother has through.

“We were all of one womb and blood. We shared a common mother but different fathers...I was born from her affair with Hanmantha Patil.

Masamai had Nagubai, Nirmala, Vanmala, Sunanda, Pramila, Shrikant, Indira and Sidram from Kaka, whose name was Yeshwantrao Sidramappa Patil, the head of the village named Hanoor.” (Limbale 18)

These lines describe his mother's condition as a sexual slave. Another perspective of writing the novel was to describe his fractured identity. Due to his fractured identity, the narrator suffered his whole life. To be precise, he had no identity nor did he have a home or a place of belonging. He could not get specific papers signed for school because he could not properly identify his caste by his mother or father, and they would not accept his grandmother as his guardian because she lived with a Muslim. Post that he could not even get wedded to a girl outside his caste as his blood was impure and he was not wanted anywhere.

In an interview, Limbale said that writers of the mainstream literature do not have any particular perspective but they have B.R Ambedkar's perspective of abolishing classicism. He continues his debate by saying that people keep on throwing stones at them in the form of authors like Premchand and Kabir. He mentions that people begin discussing Premchand the moment he and other Dalit writers start speaking. he also says that this activity takes place to side-line and ignore them. Further he goes on mentioning that he does not want anyone's pity and all he wants is his rights as an Indian.

"I never touched my teacher's chappals as I was afraid of tainting their sanctity"(Limbale 5).

“Even when he gets burnt in the process of getting fire from the Brahman’s wife, Panditayin for lighting his beedi, he does not get angry, upset, or irritated. Instead, he blames himself for violating the sanctity of a Brahman’s house and thinks that this ‘punishment’ was well-deserved.”

(Upadhyay in Ahmad and Upadhyay172)

It is not necessary that social dominance takes place in the form of physical torture. It can take place in a behavioural manner also. This is evident from the mental health of both- Limbale and Dukhi. The discrimination was so brutal that it had an everlasting scar on their minds and hearts. The discrimination made them believe that they are impure and polluted. We can justify this statement

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## Conclusion

The paper deals with the comparative study of *Sadgati* (Deliverance) by Munshi Premchand and *Akkarmashi* (The Outcaste) by Sharankumar Limbale and the main objective was to compare the point of view of the upper-class writer aka Munshi Premchand and a writer who was born as a Mahar aka Sharankumar Limbale.

Premchand's perspectives were way more different than that of Sharankumar Limbale and any other Dalit writer. This is because he has not gone through the anguish and harassment faced by any other Dalit Writer. He wrote about Dalits out of pity and sympathy. Premchand showcased the ills imposed on Dalit community and other marginalized communities. He wrote about Dalits and their experiences from a distance but on the other hand, Limbale described even the minute details of his mental and physical health as a Dalit. He cried for his freedom and rights in his autobiography. He described how his fractured identity led to his mental breakdown. Not only this, he mentions that not a lot of things have changed in society since the 20th century and people in India still undergo discrimination based on caste, creed, sex, and religion. On the other hand, Premchand through his fictional character Dukhi describes the wrongs done to the lower-caste people. Through his everyday observations of society, he brought out the complexities an individual goes through when social dominance is imposed on him. Through this paper we can site out the major difference in the thoughts of the writers. Also, through this paper, we can point out the differences between actual social dominance and fictional social dominance. This is because of the lack of Dalit consciousness that Premchand was unable to describe the harassment scenarios with accurate preciseness.



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