

Role of Brahmanical Patriarchy in Suppression of Women in Sharankumar Limbale's *Hindu*

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Abstract: The paper endeavours to bring out the difference between varna and jati (caste). It highlights the role of brahmanical patriarchy in the stratification of same stock of people into varnas and castes. It throws light on how women, especially upper caste women are contrived in the process. It underlines how women are looked down upon with contempt in the brahmanical texts. The paper closely looks at *sati*, enforced widowhood and girl marriage as instruments employed by brahmanical patriarchy, at the expense of women to maintain stability in caste. The dubious nature of mainstream Indian feminism is exposed in contrast to Dalit feminism. The role of brahmanical patriarchy is analyzed in detail with respect to Sonali and Surekha Mane, the upper caste women.

Index Terms – Brahmanical Patriarchy, Varna and Caste, Endogamy, Sati, Sharankumar Limbale, Hindu.

I. INTRODUCTION

Varna and *jati* like religion are patriarchal institutions designed to uphold the supremacy of men in a hierarchical order. They are sustained by contriving, conniving, controlling and suppressing women. Like breathing is indispensable to live, women are indispensable to sustain *varna* (colour based class system) and *jati* (caste). Through women, they are carried forth from one generation to the next. According to *Dharmashastras*, a child's virtue of class and caste are determined bilaterally i.e., by father and mother. Therefore not any woman can promulgate a particular class and caste. Rather, it could be done only by women of same class and caste. In a broad view, it can be said that *varna* disintegrated into *jati*. Hindu texts speak of caste far lesser than *varna*. Unvaryingly, all the Hindu texts were written by Brahmanas, who are at the top in *varna* as well as caste hierarchy. The ideal hierarchical social system that Brahmanas coveted to produce was *varna* system, with only four recognized divisions, apart from the unrecognized group *avarna*. Despite their repeated herculean efforts, *varna* system failed miserably. The system that they intended to create not only failed miserably but it literally backfired. Backfired in the sense, not even Brahmanas have escaped the curse of caste. They are hierarchically divided among themselves. Castes were formed by repeated intermarriages between *varnas* and their resultants, which were banned by the Hindu texts, with varying degrees of punishments.

The degradation of *varna* into castes has benefitted *shudras* the most. Since *shudras* were in the bottom rung of the *varna* system, injunctions against them were quite harsh and they had to lead a life devoid of humanity. The injunctions of Manu serve a classic example of this view. In a nutshell, *shudras* were Dalits of *varna* era. After the formation of castes and with the advent of untouchability associated with beef-eating the status of *shudra* castes raised above untouchable castes. The untouchable castes were relegated the position, duties and rulings of *shudras*. Most of the social norms followed against Dalits, were once followed against *shudras*. The existing contempt against Dalits in India, were once against *shudras*. Though there are a set of unwritten prohibitions against Dalits, which is quite uniform throughout the length and breadth of the country, they are nowhere to be found in the *shastras* or *smiritis*. In addition to that, *Dalits* or erstwhile untouchables were not even mentioned in the pages of the Hindu texts. Untouchability and untouchables are post-textual phenomena. The implicit rules of commission and omission with regard to Dalits were indeed imitative of the prescriptions of the Hindu texts with respect to *shudras*.

II. RELIGION, CASTE AND BRAHMANICAL PATRIARCHY

A close analysis of Hindu texts would reveal that *Brahmanism* is the underlying principle, in a larger sense. Stratification of same stock of people based on descent and occupation is the essence of *Brahmanism*. But a keen analysis would reveal that '*Brahmanical Patriarchy*' is the base of Hinduism. Uma Chakravarthi defines *Brahmanical Patriarchy* as follows:

. . . a structure unique to Hinduism and the caste order. The term 'brahmanical patriarchy' is a . . . unique structure of patriarchy, by now dominant in many parts of India. It is a set of rules and institutions in which caste and gender are linked, each shaping the other and where women are crucial in maintaining the boundaries between castes. Patriarchal codes in this structure ensure that the caste system can be reproduced without violating the hierarchical order of closed endogamous circles, each distinct from and higher and lower than others . . . In sum, brahmanical patriarchy implies the model of patriarchy outlined in the brahmanical

prescriptive texts, to be enforced by the coercive power of the king, or those who act on behalf of the king. (34-5)

To understand brahmanical patriarchy, it is pertinent to understand caste in the first place. A caste is an endogamous unit. A caste can exist without a specific occupation tied to it i.e., despite its members pursuing different trades a caste will continue to exist. However, in the absence of endogamy a caste ceases to exist. Dr. Ambedkar after a great deal of research concludes that “. . . the superposition of endogamy over exogamy means the creation of caste” (Anjaiah and Rao 25). The origin of caste in India is an ancient phenomenon that goes before Christ. The oldest secular source available related to the context dates back to 300 B.C. Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador during his visit to India observed and recorded in his book *Indica*, the practice of endogamy and an occupation tied to each caste group. Uma Chakravathi explains how brahmanical patriarchy perpetuates caste through endogamy and subordination of women as follows:

Caste as a system of discrete units within a larger system of production makes endogamy (the rule enjoining marriage within a specified group that is, caste) a crucial element of the caste system and this in turn affects gender. Caste cannot be reproduced without endogamy and it is for this reason that endogamy has been regarded as a tool for the manifestation and perpetuation of caste and gender subordination. (27)

Brahmanical patriarchy relies exclusively on women for the reproduction or perpetuation of castes. The Hindu structure of marriage forms the fundamental basis of caste system and inequality among classes and castes. Brahmanical patriarchy by controlling the sexuality of women succeeds in its mission of engineering social stratification and sustaining it. The systems of arranging marriages, which reinforces endogamous marriages and thwarting love marriages, which reinforces exogamous marriages have been the chief sources to perpetuate caste and prevent the social taboo of intermarriage. Brahmanical patriarchy has been very much concerned about the sexuality of upper caste women. It is because by controlling the sexuality of upper caste women, the purity in terms of bloodline of upper caste men can be ensured. By forbidding any contact of upper caste women with lower caste men, its ideal can be translated into reality. On the other hand, it is least bothered about the sexuality of lower caste women. The only concern of brahmanical patriarchy in connection with the sexuality of lower caste women is they can at no cost be the first wives of upper caste men. It allows upper caste men to cohabit with a lower caste woman but it is quite stringent in its injunctions against an upper caste man marrying a lower caste woman. Uma Chakravathi throws light on this subject as follows:

Under brahmanical patriarchy women of the upper castes are regarded as gateways-literally points of entry into the caste system. The lower caste male whose sexuality is a threat to upper caste purity of blood has to be institutionally prevented from having sexual access to women of the higher castes, so such women have to be carefully guarded. Miscegeny, or pratilomic varnasamkara (the mixing of castes) or hypogamous relationships, represents the break-down of the elaborate edifice of social order, epitomized in the anxiety about kaliyuga a time when families are broken, rites are forgotten and women are defiled. When women and lower castes do not conform to the rules, that is kaliyuga. This mythical dystopia represents the ultimate degeneration and inversion of the moral order. (35)

III. BRAHMANICAL TEXTS AND WOMEN

Brahmanical patriarchy must have encountered a great deal of exertion, generation after generation, to exhort women to assent to their norms. And that should have been the reason behind for it to be skeptical on women. Uma Chakravathi quotes the views of Brahmanical patriarchy as follows: “They are likened to kings, and creeping vines, in that they will embrace whatever is beside them. They are adulterous by nature and insatiable: according to a story in a *Jataka* (I.155), ‘as greedy cows seek pastures anew, women [unsatiated], yearn for mate after mate’ ” (70). The idea that all women are promiscuous by nature was first put forth by Manu in plain words and later it was reiterated by other texts such as the *Mahabharata*, and the *Ramayana* in subtle manner. It is quite evident from the following verses of *Manusmriti*, that nobody ever in the world had degraded women as Manu had degraded women:

Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; thinking that it is enough if he is a man, they give themselves to the handsome and the ugly.

Through their passion for men, through their mutable tempers, through their natural heartlessness they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded. (*Manusmriti* IX.15-16 qtd. in Chakravathi)

As the entire spirit of endogamy depends on women, Manu cautions men to guard their women at any cost. The brahmanical texts endorse this view of Manu as they are quite afraid of the power of women. It is women who can make or mar their design of endogamy. By not conforming to the brahmanical patriarchy, they can enter into exogamous relationships. In doing so, they topple whatever brahmanical patriarchy had built and intend to build. Manu by using the term ‘guard,’ he implies the act of conditioning women to the norms of brahmanical patriarchy right from their childhood. He also implies the duty of educating women of the social injunctions against such acts of omission and coercing her to conform to brahmanical patriarchy. The fear exhibited by the Brahmanical texts is well explained by Uma Chakravathi as follows:

From the textual evidence it is clear that while advocating conformity, the brahmanical texts are a powerful admission of the power of non-conforming women, or the power of all women to not conform, and thus to break the entire structure of Hindu social organization. For when women are corrupted all is lost. In the brahmanical texts it is clear that the upper caste woman is the object of ‘moral panic’. Through the recalcitrance of women, the established property and status order, sought to be established and then consolidated by the repeated invocation of the need for the lower castes and women to conform to the brahmanical injunctions, can be subverted. To prevent such a contingency women’s sexual subordination was sought to be institutionalized in the texts and enforced by the power of the state/king. (67)

Brahmanical patriarchy has not only incited fear in the minds of women, but it has also created ideal archetypes such as submissive wife and loving mother. These images were reinforced with myths, legends, tales, songs and poems, apart from tying cultural importance to chaste women. It had intentionally valorized the image of chaste and submissive women and projected models of such women to be emulated in real life too. Thus it has produced models such as Sita, Draupathi, Gandhari, Shakuntala so on and so forth. And at the same time, it had not failed in producing evil women based on archetypes and their destruction such as Surpanakha, Kaikeyi, Kooni (Manthara), Putna and so on.

IV. SATI, ENFORCED WIDOWHOOD AND GIRL MARRIAGE

Brahmanical patriarchy had employed three kinds of horrendous techniques against women to perpetuate caste. In order to remove the threat of widows as competitors to unmarried women and to prevent them from transgressing the boundary of their caste, *sati* or *suttee*, the system of burning a dead man's widow along with him in the funeral pyre was invented and practiced. Later, another system evolved, which yielded similar result- total invisibility of widows, which is enforced widowhood. The widows are allowed to live but as an embodiment of contempt, ill-luck and ill-omen. Widows were tonsured continually for the rest of their life to prevent them from being a source of allurements to men, which would corrupt the morals of a caste group. In the advent days of endogamy, *sati* was practiced by brahmanical castes and it was emulated by *kshatriya* and *vaishya* castes. Enforced widowhood should have substituted *sati* during the reign of Buddhist Ashoka, who banned the rituals of animal sacrifice and was intolerant towards other obnoxious practices of brahmanical castes. During and after Pushyamitra Shunga's rule, enforced widowhood was followed by brahmanical castes, whereas *suttee* was followed by *kshatriya* and *vaishya* castes.

In the case of widowers, brahmanical patriarchy was quite lenient. Widowers, the surplus men cannot be burned along with their dead wives for the simple reason that they are men and men are indispensable and the most valuable asset to a caste. The system of hierarchical divisions was devised by men along the hierarchical lines. It highly benefits men at the top of the order. A system of marrying widowers to girl-children, if they insist upon marrying was devised. If widowers did not insist upon marrying celibacy was imposed on them. Dr. Ambedkar comments on the advantage of imposing celibacy on widowers in the preservation of caste endogamy as follows:

. . . if the surplus man [widower] remains in the group as an active participator in group activities, he is a danger to the morals of the group. . . . If he observes genuine celibacy and renounces the world, he would not be a menace to the preservation of Caste endogamy or Caste morals as he undoubtedly would be if he remained a secular person. But as an ascetic celibate he is as good as burned, so far as the material wellbeing of his Caste is concerned. (Rodrigues 249)

It is quite clear that brahmanical patriarchy is quite lenient towards men of the upper castes in the preservation of caste endogamy. The abhorrent face of brahmanical patriarchy was exposed by Dr. Ambedkar, when he was just a student of 25 years old, through his paper entitled "Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development" presented at the University of Colombia in 1916. Dr. Ambedkar discovered the mechanisms employed by brahmanical patriarchy to perpetuate caste and enumerated them in his research paper and concludes as follows:

I am justified in holding that, whether regarded as ends or as means, Sati, enforced widowhood and girl marriage are customs that were primarily intended to solve the problem of the surplus man [widower] and surplus woman [widow] in a caste and to maintain its endogamy. Strict endogamy could not be preserved without these customs, while caste without endogamy is a fake. (Rodrigues 252)

In the case of *shudras* and Dalits, there was no such necessity for *sati* or enforced widowhood. Endogamy was forced upon them. Dr. Ambedkar throws light on how *shudras* and Dalits became endogamous groups as follows:

. . . the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and have become self-enclosed units called castes. The question is: were they compelled to close their doors and become endogamous, or did they close them of their own accord? I submit that there is a double line of answer: *Some closed the door: Others found it closed against them.* (Rodrigues 257)

Among *shudra* castes and Dalits, either widow remarriage with her brother-in-law in if she has no children or forced cohabitation by her brother-in-law if she has minor children or were followed. In the case of widows with major children, widowhood was enforced on her sans tonsure as against the case of upper caste widowhood.

Brahmanical patriarchy did not allow upper caste women to take up any sort of profession despite her need to subsist her children after the death of her husband. Daily chores of the household are the only task allotted to them. In the event of their husband's death, they were prohibited to go back to their natal home. Upper caste widows had to live in their husband's household until their death and rely on their in-laws for all their needs and their children's needs, if any. To be precise, widow remarriage was prohibited to the upper caste women.

V. PINK FEMINISM VS DALIT FEMINISM

Dalit feminists, who emerged in 1990s, laid bare the role of religion and caste in suppressing women in India. Prominent among them are Sivakami, Bama, Sukirtharani and Ku. Umadevi. Theorists of Dalit feminism systematically exposed the role of 'Brahmanical Patriarchy,' a term coined by Dalit feminists, in suppressing women in all walks of life in India. Dalit feminism is a stark contrast to Indian mainstream feminism, which always has been receiving a red carpet welcome in the academy. On the other hand, Dalit feminism is swept under the same carpet.

Indian mainstream feminism has been approaching women issues with parochial outlook. Thralldom of religion and caste has neither emerged in their narrative in the process of addressing the plights of Indian women nor in the process of devising the *modus operandi* to empower them. Indian feminists have been discussing women issues with self-imposed oblivion to caste

and religion. Without criticizing religion, caste and family, the patriarchal institutions, they criticize men, who harass women, husbands with extramarital affairs, husbands, who are indifferent to their wives' physical needs and engrossed in their profession, fathers, who arrange loveless marriages and sons, who are indifferent to the emotional needs of their mothers. Theorists of Indian feminism too hold sacrosanct view on religion, caste and family. They are dubbed by Dalit feminists as pink feminists.

VI. ROLE OF BRAHMANICAL PATRIARCHY IN LIMBALE'S *HINDU*

The role played by brahmanical patriarchy in the suppression of women in Sharankumar Limbale's *Hindu* is worth considering. Sharankumar Limbale is the most prominent Dalit ideologue of 21st Century. He came to the forefront by the publication of his autobiography *Akkarmashi* in 1984, which was translated into English from Marathi as *The Outcast*. Another notable work *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies, and Considerations* (2004) by Limbale is the manifesto of Dalit literature. His novel *Hindu* which appeared in 2010 in English is the translation of his Marathi novel. It deals with the socio-political, cultural and economic confrontations of Dalits with the caste-Hindus.

6.1. Rape of a Dalit Woman

Brahmanical patriarchy has made men to see women as mere objects of sex. In the novel *Hindu*, after murdering Taty Kamble in cold-blood, the caste-Hindus set fire to the hutments of Dalits, who desert their settlement out of fear for life and take refuge in the fields of Gopichand and Manikchand. Without taking their plight into consideration, Gopichand and Manikchand, who belong to mercantile caste, drag a newly-wed Dalit woman and rape her in their farm house despite her pleadings not to harm her. Milind Kamble, a Dalit, who is in the company of Gopichand and Manikchand tries to save her by saying that she is a Dalit, who has sought refuge in their field and it is unethical to harm her. To that, he was physically replied with a box on his face by Gopichand. In his verbal retort, Gopichand reveals how brahmanical patriarchy has moulded the mindset of men.

Manikchand had his arms tightly around her and Gopichand took off her sari. She tried to protest. I screamed, 'Arre, she is a dalit woman. She came to hide in your fields to save her life, and now you are killing her!' Gopichand's fist hit me hard. Everything went dark in front of my eyes. He was roaring: 'She is a woman, a young woman. And we are men. We wouldn't have spared her even if she were from our caste. You pimp, why do you see caste everywhere, even in sex? See, how fair she is.' Gopichand pushed me out of the bedroom. Somehow I managed to stumble out. I was ashamed of my weakness. (*Hindu* 20)

Though Milind Kamble is a man, some of the ideals of Dalit movement is still intact in him despite he has severed his relationship with the movement and its activist; hence he tries to save women in distress. Regardless of him being a lecher, he does not force himself on women. He goes to prostitutes but he is against the notion of assaulting women's modesty.

6.2. Victimization of Sonali

Sonali, an upper caste woman is fond of music and dance. She was married off to Prabhakar Kavale. She is a city girl but after her wedding she lives in her nuptial home located at a village, where she has to seek the permission either from her husband or her in-laws to get fresh air in the terrace. She was hurriedly married off by her father by putting an end to her education. The reason for such act of her father is due to the fear that his daughter would heap shame on him by transgressing the caste and enter into exogamous marriage with a Dalit boy with whom she has presented a dance performance at annual function of her college. The seed for his suspicion was planted by the caste-Hindu boys, who could not tolerate the idea of a caste-Hindu girl dancing with a Dalit boy. They sent the pictures of Sonali and Rohit, a Dalit boy dancing together to Sonali's father, Baliram Patil. Moreover, the diary in which she wrote poem addressed to an imagined lover fell in the hands of her father. Baliram Patil mistook it and he stopped her education once for all and married her off hurriedly.

A few savarna students were mad with rage when they saw the photographs of Rohit and Sonali published side by side. Sonali praised Rohit's performance in her interview, much to the dislike of those savarna students. They were very angry. 'If she was so keen to dance, she should have danced with us,' they said. 'We would have danced with her. She has insulted us by dancing with a dalit boy.' The savarna boys sent photographs showing Rohit and Sonali dancing together to her home. Sonali's father, Baliram Patil, was very perturbed by the photographs. The idea of a dalit boy having danced with his daughter riled him. . . . Sonali's diary of poems fell into her father's hands, and he misunderstood her. He put an end to Sonali's education. Now, like a kite whose string has snapped, she lived under the weight of terrible mental tension. Sonali, a city girl, came to the village after her marriage. (*Hindu* 40)

Sonali's dance performance was highly praised in the newspaper. Immediately after the performance, the audience shouted "once more" again and again" (*Hindu* 39). She became instantly popular in the campus, but it abruptly came to an end by her father's decision. Sonali's father, in his hurry arranged marriage between Sonali and Prabhakar. She being a city girl should have aspired to settle down in the same city or in a much bigger city. She would have dreamt of marrying a professional. She would have aspired to take up a profession for herself. Her father has shattered all her aspirations and dreams by arranging marriage with Prabhakar, who is neither a graduate nor a professional. He wastes away his time by ogling women along with his friends in his village. She got tied up to the nuptial home, which to her is like a prison.

Baliram Patil has arranged for his daughter's marriage in a hurry because he became apprehensive that he may fail in his duty as a patriarch of his family by not 'guarding' his daughter. If he fails to guard his daughter from entering into exogamous marriage and that too with a Dalit, then he would be subjected to every sort of ridicule by caste-Hindus. In his view, a Dalit and an obnoxious substance that any human refuses even to touch are one and the same. The idea of his daughter marrying such a person is quite abhorrent to him. In accordance with brahmanical patriarchy, he arranged the marriage, even if his daughter had to suffer for the rest of her life. His daughter's aspirations and dreams mean nothing to him.

6.3. Revolt of Sonali against Brahmanical Patriarchy

Sonali in her college days started to like Rohit Kamble due to his dancing skills and his pleasing behaviour and appearance. She was least bothered about his caste. A woman, who has not internalized patriarchal dogma, will be unconcerned about the dos and don'ts of patriarchy. Similarly, Sonali too has not internalized patriarchal codes. At the first meeting after her wedding with Rohit, she was shocked to see him with an axe, in search of her husband to avenge his father's murder. At her behest, Rohit disengages himself from the thought of avenging his father in the old fashioned way. This obeisance of Rohit to Sonali's words astounds Rambhau Kavale, Sonali's father-in-law and sparks a doubt in his mind. Rohit's compliance to her words impresses her the most. She sees Rohit as the only person in the world, who respects her and listens to her words. Although Sonali is married she, slowly but steadily, falls in love with him as against the norms of brahmanical patriarchy.

Sonali was desperate to meet Rohit but she can never have that chance as caste norms have even distinctly separated their places of living. At midnight, she steals herself out of her nuptial home and goes to Rohit's home. As an uninvited and unwelcomed guest Sonali meets Rohit amidst the protest of Rohit's mother. Her act of stealing herself away from her nuptial home and her meeting with Rohit, a Dalit boy transgresses the codes of brahmanical patriarchy out rightly. In pre-British India, she would have been punished with death, legally. Sonali expresses her love for Rohit in such a manner.

She knocked. Rohit opened the door. Startled, Savita Kamble got up too. Both were frightened by the sudden knocking at such a late hour. They found Sonali at the door, standing like a mountain. 'Sonali, is it you?' 'Yes.' 'Why did you come?' 'To see you.' 'So late at night!' 'Because I can't meet you during the day' 'But what if they found out?' 'Let them.' 'Go back.' 'I won't.' 'Prabhakar is a murderer. I can't live with him.' 'What do you plan to do?' 'Suicide. I came here because I wanted to see you before dying.' 'Have you gone mad?' 'Yes. I am mad for you.' (*Hindu* 85)

The night watchman reports her nightly visit to Rohit's house and brings him. Sonali is caught red-handed. But she not perturbed even minimally. In the enquiry that follows in her nuptial home by her in-law, she defiantly says that she would again go to the Dalit settlement to meet Rohit and would lead her life in her own terms.

'So what do you intend to do?' Rambhau asked.
'I will do whatever I feel like', Sonali responded.
'Will you go to the Maharwada?'
'Yes, I will.'

'How dare you!' Rambhau Kavale picked up a stick to beat Sonali. (*Hindu* 86)

6.4. Conspiracy against Sonali

Brahmanical patriarchy makes caste-Hindu men to contrive ill-natured schemes against women of their own fold apart from Dalits. Whenever the authority of caste-Hindu men are defied by Dalits and women from their own ranks and files, their devious minds are set in motion to oppress in the case of Dalits and suppress in the case of women from upper castes. Rambhau Kavale, the upper caste patriarch of Achalpur, in devising a conspiracy against Sonali with his octogenarian father comes to the conclusion that it would be dangerous to send Sonali back to her natal home as she may turn as a witness against her own husband in the murder of Tatyia Kamble. They arrive at the following conclusion: "'She [Sonali] came to this house alive. Only her corpse will be allowed to leave this house'" (89). Even if his son is convicted for the murder of Tatyia Kamble, they plan to get Sonali married to Sudhakar, who is a retard and is the younger brother to Prabhakar. They plan to get Prabhakar married to another girl after he serves his term in the prison on conviction. They joke that Sonali can well remain as Prabhakar's wife though she is married to Sudhakar. 'If Prabhakar has to do time in jail, we will marry her to Sudhakar. Prabhakar can be married off again after he comes out of prison. So what if he will have two wives' (89)? The custom of a widow marrying her brother-in-law followed by lower castes in the society was looked down upon by the upper caste Hindus. But they now plan to adopt the same custom to serve their end. It is quite clear that brahmanical patriarchy would stoop to any extent to protect its interests and maintain its authority over Dalits and women of upper castes. These men, who are embodiment of brahmanical patriarchy, are not even perturbed slightly at the idea of demoralizing and upsetting the morality of a woman of their own fold.

6.5. Surekha Mane's Rebellion against Brahmanical Patriarchy

Surekha Mane is a natural rebel against brahmanical patriarchy. After her husband's arrest in the murder case of Tatyia Kamble, her attitude and her outlook takes a U-turn altogether. Since she has to subsist, she indulges in prostitution. She is least worried about the caste of her customers. Dalits employed in government services too are her potential customers. Surekha Mane tries to seduce Kasbe Guruji, a Dalit teacher in a bus. But she fails in her attempt. "Every time the bus swerved, Surekha Mane's body clung to Guruji's like a creeper. Kasbe Guruji shrivelled in his seat. 'Could you sit properly?' 'Don't you love it?' Surekha Mane moved away from Kasbe Guruji (37). She openly admits to caste-Hindu men that she is indulged in prostitution to earn her living. The narrator comments on how Surekha Mane got rid of her fear for men as follows: "She [Surekha Mane] had seen a lot of naked men by now and was therefore no longer afraid of the male species" (*Hindu* 66).

Surekha Mane is attracted to Mangesh Kamble, an assertive Dalit youth. She flirts with him in public unabashedly. This irks Sadashiv More who runs a ration shop in the village. He too is the customer of Surekha Mane but he cannot even stand the idea of an upper caste prostitute flirting with a Dalit boy. He brings Narendra Patil, an aged upper caste patriarch to the scene. Surekha Mane humiliates him and files a false complaint of sexual harassment against Narendra Patil, which lands him in jail. Surekha Mane is even more attracted towards the Dalit youth, Mangesh Kamble, who punches on the face of Narendra Patil in defiance of the norms prescribed by brahmanical patriarchy, when the latter questions about his morality. This makes her to elope with Mangesh Kamble and by doing so she gives a humiliating blow on the face of brahmanical patriarchy. She is least bothered about the consequences. Her husband out of shame commits suicide. But it never perturbs her conscience.

VII. CONCLUSION

Surekha Mane emerges like Sonali as a liberated woman but on different scale and dimension. Sonali is shown to rest her head on Rohit's shoulder at the hospital as soon as her husband is declared dead indicating her union with Rohit. The upper caste women in contrast to Dalit women defy brahmanical patriarchy robustly. Dalit women on the other hand are portrayed by Sharankumar Limbale as passive victims of brahmanical patriarchy. The author of the novel *Hindu* indicates time and again that the downfall of brahmanical patriarchy can be realized only through exogamy promulgated by upper caste women. As caste is perpetuated through endogamous marriage of upper caste women, the same can be done away through exogamous marriage of upper caste women.

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