

Defying Shadows: Exploring Women's Resistance in Sharankumar Limbale's Hindu: A Novel

Ms. Suvarna Prakash Dhule¹, Dr. Grishma Khobragade²

¹PhD Research Fellow, ²Associate Professor and Head

^{1,2}Department of English

¹University of Mumbai

²B.K. Birla College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Kalyan

ABSTRACT

World literature often embraces literary works that narrate diverse human experiences that transgress the boundaries of nations throughout the globe and enhance cross-cultural understanding. It challenges the dominance of Eurocentric canons and provides space for marginalised literature that largely focuses on identity, power, marginalisation, dignity, resistance, and social justice. Sharankumar Limbale's novel *Hindu: A Novel* comes under the umbrella of Dalit Literature. Dalit Literature emerged as significant genre of world literature which highlights issues like caste and gender atrocities, marginalisation and resistance which are parallels to recent global concerns.

This paper documents the systematic humiliation and discrimination of women and their struggle to establish dignity, liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice, which underlies human rights globally. Similar to Indian culture, Indian women do not constitute a monolithic category; the lived reality of women in India is dictated by complex religious doctrines and their intersectional framework, where identity markers such as caste, class, and gender play important roles. Brahmanical Hinduism's Brahmanical patriarchy, endogamy, and misogyny make women vulnerable; they face different types of injustices in patriarchal society based on gender, caste, outcaste location, class, religion, and rural-urban divides, which create multiple layers of discrimination against them. However, women find their own ways to resist inequities in society based on their daily experiences and the social context. The paper attempts to find out the complex interplay of intersectional injustices faced by women characters in Sharankumar Limbale's *Hindu: A Novel* (2010) by textual and discourse analysis methods.

This study analyses the female characters through the critical lens of Intersectionality and Dalit Feminism, interrogating how the different lived experiences of female characters shape their unique struggles and modes of resistance against injustices. *Hindu: A Novel*, depicts the injustices towards women in Achalpur due to the obscurantist Brahmanical approach towards women and how women stand to fight against the orthodox beliefs of the Brahmanical Hinduism (Vedic religion) and its new incarnation in society. This study argues that Limbale's narrative of women's struggles and their resistance for social, political, and cultural dignity places the novel firmly within the realm of world literature.

Keywords: Women, Brahmanical Patriarchy, Injustices, Resistance, Intersectionality, Dalit Feminism

1. INTRODUCTION

World literature comprises works that depict a variety of human experiences crossing geographical boundaries of countries and promote inter-cultural understanding that question the supremacy of Eurocentric literary traditions and create space for marginalised literatures, which predominantly explore themes such as dignity, identity, power, marginalisation, resistance, and social justice. Sharankumar Limbale's *Hindu: A Novel* is categorised as Dalit Literature, a significant genre of world literature that addresses issues such as religious fundamentalism, caste- and gender-based oppression, marginalisation, and resistance. These themes resonate with contemporary global concerns in several ways. Religious orthodoxy is a global phenomenon that is a counter-cultural response to modernisation, diversity, and recognition of human rights through strict and homogeneous interpretations of religious scriptures that try to control all aspects of life. These interpretations of religious codes govern social norms, political life, economic transactions, and cultural duties, and even influence the legal frameworks of modern, democratic societies. It has impacted individual behaviour and the collective psyche of particular groups of people. Similar to Indian culture, Indian women do not represent a homogeneous group; their lived experiences are shaped by the complex intersection of identity factors such as caste, class, outcaste social location, religion, and rural-urban distinctions, resulting in multiple layers of discrimination.

In the Indian context, Vedic religious scriptures dominate religious discourses through different nomenclatures, such as Brahmanism, Hinduism, Brahmanical Hinduism, and the recent naming of the Sanatan religion. The foundation of Brahmanical religion lies in the four-fold hierarchical division of men, with Brahmin men at the top, followed by Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra men in descending order. Women are excluded from this religious hierarchy. They do not have any social status, and their stature depends on the social position of the man they control. Their conduct is restrained by the religious norms of endogamy, patriarchy, misogyny, and physical and psychological atrocities by the religious patriarchy. Hindu religious scriptures give importance to sons, and there is a strong belief that if a couple is blessed with a male child, the forefathers and father of that family will definitely go to heaven after death. In other words, the male child opens the gates of heaven for other male family members. In this connection, the *Rigveda Samhita* states, "Never, Gods, may this (my ancestry), abiding above in heaven, be excluded (from it); never may we be in want (of a son), the cause of joy (to his progenitors), entitled to libations of the Soma. Heaven and earth, be conscious of this (my affliction)" (*Rigveda*, 1.105.3). Similar religious norms are recapitulated in supplementary religious texts such as *Taittiriya Samhita* describes, "A Brahmana on birth is born with a threefold debt, austerity [study and contemplation of scriptures, performance of penances etc] to the Rishis, performance of sacrifice to the Vedic deities, of offspring to the ancestors. He is freed from his debt who lived as a pupil, who performs sacrifice and has a son; this [debt] he returns by these givings, and that is why the givings have their name" (*Taittiriya Samhita*, Verse 6.3.10.5). *Shatapatha Brahmana* verse says, "Verily, whoever exists, he, in being born, is born as (owing) a debt to the gods, to the Rishis, to the fathers, and to men" (*Shatapatha Brahmana* 1.7.2.1). In this connection, *Manusmriti*, the religious code of conduct of the Vedic religion, provides detailed information on these rules and regulations. It states:

6.35. When he has paid the three debts, let him apply his mind to (the attainment of) final liberation; he who seeks it without having paid (his debts) sinks downwards.

9.138. Because a son delivers (trayate) his father from the hell called Put, he was therefore called put-tra (a deliverer from Put) by the Self-existent (Swayambhu) himself. (Laws of Manu 205, 354).

The above religious teaching demonstrates that there are three important duties of men to get a place in heaven for their ancestors: the study and contemplation of Vedic texts, the performance of Vedic sacrifices, and the fulfilment of progeny for the future enhancement of the family. These duties are assigned only to men, and women are restricted from performing them. In this regard, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his book *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India* discussed Manu ordains on women:

XI. 36. A woman shall not perform the daily sacrifices prescribed by the Vedas.

XI. 37. If she does it she will go to hell. (Ambedkar 431)

Women are not just allowed to perform sacrifices; Manu prevents them from receiving the aid and services of Brahmin priests.

IV. 205. A Brahman must never eat food given at a sacrifice performed by a woman.

IV. 206. Sacrifices performed by women are inauspicious and not acceptable to God. They should therefore be avoided. (Ambedkar 431)

Women's participation in sacrifices during religious rituals is prohibited because of biological and physiological phenomena (e.g., menstruation). Brahmanical Hinduism's religious beliefs and traditions have made women mere unified objects in the hands of men who can trade them as commodities. Their social, economic, political, religious, and cultural presence is confined to men in the family and society. Vedic religious doctrines, practices, and institutions often reinforce patriarchal norms and prescribe distinct, often subordinate roles for women, emphasising on their obedience, chastity, and domestic duties. These roles limit women's autonomy and justify unequal treatment within families and society. These justifications are restated through religious scriptures such as the Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Manusmriti, which advocate laws that govern socio-cultural life and institutionalised inequality against women. These codes of women's oppression were perpetuated in the name of sacred norms, customs, and traditions of the Vedic religion. Religious patriarchal societies often resist reforms aimed at gender equality, maintaining traditional interpretations that uphold patriarchal control and restrict women's participation in religious and public life. Vedic religious codes restrict women's participation in socio-cultural spheres and promote various forms of injustice against women, such as gender, caste, outcaste, and class. These intersections of injustice compound discrimination against women. These are the rules prescribed in Manusmriti for women and followed by subscriber of Brahmanical Hinduism as their religious doctrine:

2. ON NATURE OF WOMEN

II. 213. It is the nature of women to seduce men in this (world); for that reason, the wise are never unguarded in (the company of) females.

II. 214. For women are able to lead astray in (this) world not only a fool, but even a learned man, and (to make) him a slave of desire and anger.

II. 215. One should not sit in a lonely place with one's mother, sister or daughter; for the senses are powerful, and master even a learned man.

IX. 14. Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; (thinking); '(It is enough that) he is a man', they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly.

IX. 15. Through their passion for men, through their mutable temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however, carefully they may be guarded in this (world).

IX. 16. Knowing their disposition, which the Lord of creatures laid in them at the creation, to be such, (every) man should most strenuously exert himself to guard them.

IX. 17. (When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) bed, (of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice, and bad conduct. (Law of Manu 69, 329-330)

3. IDEAL LIFE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

V. 151. Him to whom her father may give her, or her brother with the father's permission, she shall obey as long as he lives and when he is dead, she must not insult his memory.

V. 154. Though destitute or virtue, or seeking pleasure elsewhere, or devoid of good qualities, yet a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife.

V. 155. No sacrifice, no vow, no fast must be performed by women, apart from their husbands; if a wife obeys her husband, she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven.

V. 150. She must always be cheerful, clever in the management of her household affairs, careful in cleaning her utensils, and economical in expenditure. (Law of Manu 195-196)

4. DENIAL OF WOMEN'S INDEPENDENCE

IX. 2. Day and night women must be kept in dependence by the males (of their families), and, if they attach themselves to sexual enjoyments, they must be kept under one's control.

IX. 3. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence.

IX. 5. Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling (they may appear); for, if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on two families.

IX. 6. Considering that the highest duty of all castes, even weak husbands (must) strive to guard their wives.

IV. 147. By a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house.

V. 148. In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent.

V. 149. She must not seek to separate herself from her father, husband, or sons; by leaving them she would make both (her own and her husband's) families contemptible. Woman is not to have a right to divorce.

IX. 45. The husband is declared to be one with the wife, which means that there could be no separation once a woman is married.

IX. 46. Neither by sale nor by repudiation is a wife released from her husband. (Law of Manu 327-28, 197, 335)

The harshness of these laws for women shows that Manu believed that women were disloyal to their husbands by nature and that they needed continuous supervision. He ordered women to treat their husbands as 'God and worship them'. In other words, women are not allowed to make decisions without their husbands' consent. Before that, they must obey the orders of their father, brother, and other elder family members and take part in domestic work to fulfil the desires of the men in the family and society. It is the religious duty of husbands and other family and society members to restrict their wives and women from families and society from having thoughts of freedom. Women do not have the right to divorce and become mere objects in the hands of men, sold or repudiated but not released from the clutches of men until death. However, Manu permits men to give up their wives, sell them, and remarry them. Furthermore, the ritualistic notion of purity secludes women and creates a special space for men to operate in the religious sphere.

Thus, women's positions become secondary due to the presumption of pollution of their bodies. Their social position is attached to the caste of the men who control them, creating a multiple hierarchy of oppression. A large group of women outside the caste system are termed outcaste women, who are persecuted because of their socio-cultural background. The rural-urban stratification of women adds more dimensions of injustice against women in India. Multiple identities are attached to women, such as women associated to Brahmin castes, Kshatriya castes, Vaishya castes, Shudra castes and outcaste. These intersections of identities determine the ferocity of patriarchal dominance of them. In this regard, Nivedita Menon in her article "A Critical View on Intersectionality" observes, "Each identity emerges or rather, is called into being, in particular contexts in such a way that at that moment it is not simply an intersection of two or more identities but an unstable configuration that is more than the sum of its parts..." (Menon 31). Brahmanical Hinduism's patriarchy, endogamy, and misogyny make women more vulnerable in society.

5. INTER-SECTIONAL INJUSTICES TOWARDS WOMEN IN SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE'S HINDU: A NOVEL

The central story of Sharankumar Limbale's *Hindu: A Novel* is set in the typical Indian village called Achalpur. The name of the village itself symbolises non-mobility; achal means 'not ready to move or accept change' in the four-fold caste division (Varna system) and caste system propagated by Vedic religion as religious traditions. This village is separated on the basis of the Vedic religious notion of caste and outcaste. However, the earlier identities of the village during British colonial rule, such as Hangman's

Hill, where the British hanged many Indians during the British Raj, and feudal system as the Bara of Rambhau Kavale, the large house of the feudal of the village of Achalpur, are challenged by Tatya Kamble, an outcaste Ambedkarite social activist and known as “the village of Jalsakar Tatya Kamble”. He enlightens the village people through his Jalasa, a dramatic performance of exploitation and resistance. His works and recognition of the village in the name of Dalits infuriated the caste members of the village. Furthermore, Milind Kamble and Raosaheb Kasbe’s discussion revealed that Tatya Kamble, a Buddhist will claim for the reserved seat of a Patil after the retirement of Rambhau Kavale, Maratha caste member often identified itself as part of Kshatriya Varna. Tatya Kamble’s challenge to Rambhau Kavale’s social status and the spread of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s ideas through jalsas enraged the people in the village. The caste members of the village decided to kill Tatya Kamble and the conspiracy of Tatya Kamble’s murder is scripted in the village temple and carried out by the youths of caste society on the occasion when Dalits celebrate the anniversary of Dr. Babasaheb’s conversion to Buddhism. After this incident, the youths who involved in the murder of Kamble were jailed and how their family members particularly women suffering in caste society represented in the fictional narrative of Sharankumar Limbale.

The novel depicts the physical and psychological injustices faced by female characters in a male-dominated society and how women’s resistance challenges religiously sanctioned patriarchy and women’s subordination. The fiction highlights gendered violence against female characters because of their sexual orientation. This violence is not only physical but also psychological and structural, manifesting as sexual abuse, domestic violence, and systemic denial of human rights and dignity. The denial of women’s participation in the political sphere can be viewed through the character of Rama Babar. She “was unmarried. She devoted her life to the movement... Though Rama Babar was dark-complexioned, her features were attractive. Her unmarried status was the most discussed facet of her personality” (Limbale 3). Although, she was an educated, unmarried Dalit woman who devoted her life to Dalit movement and she leads Dalit movement through actions and speeches. Her talent, outspoken quality, and social activism were ignored by the people, and her marital status and sex life were major public concerns. Her glamorous looks, informal behaviour and outspoken on different issues gave rise to many rumours. This indicates that when women transgress the boundaries of the patriarchal system, they are always looked down upon in the social system, and everyone has access to making their opinions about them. In contrast, men’s unmarried status is celebrated, appreciated, and sometimes worshipped and put forth as a strength of their personalities in society.

Women's bodies are often treated as commodities in financial dealings between men. Milind Kamble recalled the incident when he took ten thousand rupees from Sitaphale for his transfer and failed to do so. Sitaphale came to recover his money from Milind Kamble after seeing that he was unable to pay the money he demanded sex from his wife, Lakshmi, “Sitaphale had come to my house: ‘Return my money or let me sleep with your wife.’ He had grabbed Lakshmi’s hand. I showed him out of the house, but Lakshmi had sat up all night, crying” (Limbale 16). Through these incidents, Limbale shows how women are victims of patriarchal attitudes towards their bodies as objects and commodities. However, in Hindu mythology, the goddess ‘Lakshmi’ is revered as the deity of prosperity, yet in this scenario, Milind Kamble’s wife, also named ‘Lakshmi,’ is being objectified as a commodity in a deal between two men.

The novel exhibits that women are treated as subordinate member of society through the incident of Gopichand and Manikchand, members of the Vaishya (trader) caste, who searched for Milind Kamble to take him to the party when Milind Kamble suggested that they should not force him to go along with them. At that time Manikchand replied, 'Are you a woman that I would force you?' (Limbale 8). It showed that they do not seem to consider women as human beings and recognise their liberty to choose. After a while, when Milind Kamble opposed the rape of Dalit women by Gopichand and Manikchand in their farmhouse. Gopichand hit Milind Kamble with his fist and roared, "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" (Limbale 20). Gopichand's dismissal of caste concerns in the context of sexual violence reveals how patriarchal power often overrides caste hierarchies to assert male dominance over women's bodies. The commodification of women's bodies is also visible in the words when he said to 'look at the bodily features of captured women.' Furthermore, it is also observed in another event when Manikchand takes Shaila Satpute, his office accountant, to his farmhouse. Milind Kamble asked him where they are going, he replied, "Don't you see the package?" (Limbale 154). Here, woman existence labelled as package or commodity that provides physical pleasure to men. This indicates that men's attitudes towards women reduce them to sexual objects, irrespective of caste distinctions. These events exposed how Brahmanical patriarchy perpetuates caste and gender-based violence by normalising male entitlement to women's bodies.

Brahmanical Hinduism upholds patriarchal interests by endorsing endogamy, caste-based marriages, and fostering misogynistic attitudes towards women. Women's roles are viewed as subordinate, confined to domestic duties, and to continue the family lineage. Within the patriarchal family framework, men control the economy, and women's participation is limited in the family and society. Following the murder of Tatyia Kamble, the so-called upper-caste men were imprisoned, and their women's lives were significantly impacted as they lacked a source of income to support their family. It showed "The wives of the jailed men were in a foul mood. Their lives were in shambles and they had been publicly disgraced. No one gave them a loan in the absence of the head of the household. Their creditors were after them. Their families were on the brink of ruin" (Limbale 33-34). The creditors pursue these women not for money but for their bodies, seeking to satisfy their sexual desires. This highlights the vulnerability of women, as their bodies are seen as the only means of repaying debts in the eyes of men.

The novel also illustrates that caste women (identity associated with caste of men they belong) are not free from gender and caste violence either. They must obtain permission from the male members of their family for their every actions. Otherwise, they are physically or psychologically tortured by their families and society. Sonali is a daughter-in-law of the Kavale family from Achalpur. She lives with her mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law, Kashibai and Parvatibai. Sonali received guidance on household chores and ritual-based instructions from them. Their presence in the house is passive, but they are active agents of the Brahmanical Hinduism and its patriarchy. One evening, Sonali heard songs and went on the roof without permission to see where the sound of the songs came from. It was the sound of Tatyia Kamble's 'Ambedkari Jalsa. Suddenly her husband Prabhakar Kavale comes up on the roof and bursts out angrily at her, "Watching the Mahars dance! Are you Mahar too?... Sonali was on the verge of tears. She felt like one of the trapped wild partridges...Sonali went downstairs quietly... (Limbale 49). These events indicate that women do not have the freedom to make small decisions to go roof of the house and see what is

happening in their surroundings. Their existence always depends on the wishes of the male members of their family. Gender and caste based discrimination have forced women to become subhuman in society. Women's bodies are represented as objects that satisfy men's sexual desires and had influenced on the male characters in the novel, leading them to view women primarily as sources of sexual arousal. Women regularly encounter structural and psychological injustices when they appear in public spaces. For instance, when Prabhakar and his friend visit the bara, "Sonali avoided Jagannath Pandit's gaze. She felt he had lecherous eyes" (Limbale 45). This illustrates how the objectification of women's bodies have become normalised in Indian society. The irony lies in the name Jagannath, a form of Lord Vishnu, a major deity in the Brahmanical Hinduism, which includes Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh, among others. Additionally, the surname Pandit, meaning 'priest or someone with profound religious knowledge', showed his attitudes towards women in society.

Caste system and its codes often impose injustices on women. The caste system and Brahmanical patriarchy are interlinked and provide advantages to men in Brahmanical Hinduism through endogamy, male dominance over reproduction, and the control of female sexuality. The codes of Manusmriti are covertly and overtly propagated through various Vedic religious narratives and followed as the norm of religion by people. It controlled women's behaviour, and their deviations from religious codes were heavily punished by the followers of the Vedic religion. In this connection, Uma Chakravarti, in her book *Gendering Caste: through a Feminist Lens*, writes:

Under brahmanical patriarchy women of the upper-caste 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, represent the breakdown 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. (Chakravarti 34)

The caste system and its violence protects endogamy and functions as a mechanism for enforcing strict boundaries for women within caste, ensuring that marriage and sexual relations are confined to members of the same caste. This violence operates as both a deterrent and punishment for those who challenge endogamous norms, thereby preserving caste purity and social hierarchy. Caste norms intensify control over women's sexuality, linking caste violence to patriarchal mechanisms that regulate female autonomy and reinforce male dominance in caste system. Women often bear the burden of this enforcement, as their bodies symbolise 'caste honour and purity'. Violence, such as physical assault, sexual violence, and social ostracism, is used to control their choices and prevent transgressions of caste system.

Sonali and Surekha Mane are the best examples of caste and gender oppression in this novel. Sonali danced with Dalit boy highlights her father's insecurity and sacrificed Sonali's life to preserve his own and his community's honour and caste privilege within the endogamous marriage system. Her father tells her, "You have humiliated us by dancing with that Mahar boy" (Limbale 49). Male students from the college alerted Sonali's father, functioning as agents of moral policing and exhibiting their male dominance over women. The hurriedness of Sonali's marriage by her father is nothing but keeping himself free from

fatherly duty and, through the Kanyadaan in marriage, handing over his daughter to men to fulfil his religious duty. This exchange of women from one patriarch to another in the name of marriage is nothing but a means of securing their male lineage and maintaining caste endogamy. She was forced to marry into the family of Rambhau Kavale, where women's roles are confined to the household. She is just like the ornamental dolls, child-producing machines, and her role is limited to household chores only. The women in this house are treated like slaves who act according to their masters will. On the contrary, they are religiously taught that they are compelled to protect the family's dignity through their modest behaviour. They are constantly under the surveillance of men and older women of the house and seem like prisoners. Sonali's in-laws' house is big like a mansion (bara) and is surrounded by high walls, making it impossible to see what is going on in the outside world. Even if she wanted to go on the roof of the house, she had to seek permission from her husband or an elder in the family. Women's surveillance is not just limited to the family; other members of the caste also keep an eye on her behaviour. Any deviation from religious codes was interrupted by the men in the village. It is observed when Surekha Mane and Mangesh Kamble are in conversation, it provokes Sadashiv More. He called Narendra Patil to intervene, and at that time, Patil burst out at them: "Have you no shame? Have you lost it completely? You stood by the roadside talking for a whole hour. You have become a loose woman because your husband is in jail?" (Limbale 140). It shows that religious norms of patriarchy in society provides men access to closely monitor women's behaviours and enforce the norms of endogamy and patriarchy on them.

In Brahmanical Hinduism, widows are often subjected to austerity, social exclusion, and restrictions on their personal freedom. They are generally considered inauspicious and face societal stigma. They are often excluded from auspicious ceremonies, festivals, and family rituals, reflecting their marginalisation and their survival depending on their husband's family. Brahminic religious scriptures place several restrictions on these widows. David Brick in his book *Widows Under Hindu Laws* states:

...widows were also faced with a stark choice between two seemingly grim options. On the one hand, they could live on after their husbands, but as stigmatized and socially marginalized persons, adopting a mandatory lifestyle of harsh asceticism, according to which they had to keep their heads perpetually shaved, observe a demanding regimen of vows and fasts, and eschew pleasurable things such as festivals, flavorful foods, dyed garments, and jewelry. Or, on the other hand, they could kill themselves by ascending their husbands' funeral pyres in a celebrated act of wifely devotion known since the colonial period as sati. (Brick 2)

The religiously justified injustices towards women reduced them to living corpses in society. Modernity, scientific advancement, and democratic constitutional values have changed the lives of women, especially widows, in society, but forms of injustice have also shifted towards them. In the novel, Hema Pandit, a widow, has wish to contest elections for the post of Sarpanch (head of the village). It shows, "Some people had proposed Hema Pandit's name for the sarpanch's post, but others had objected, saying a widow could not be considered for this job, so her name had been withdrawn"(Limbale 104). It demonstrates how traditional biases continue to restrict widows' participation in public life. Furthermore, Dalit women in Indian society are subjected to inhumane treatment because of their 'outcaste' social position, which is considered 'polluted' according to Brahmanical Hinduism. Dalit women are predominantly targeted by men of the dominant caste through caste and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, abuse, and

harassment. Thus, violence against women intersects with multiple factors. In this regard, S.J. Aloysius et al. in their research article “Why Intersectionality is Necessary”, notes:

In this process, three sets of actors continually exert influence and pressure on Dalit women. One is dominant caste men under whom Dalit women work as labourers and with whom they interact on a daily basis, who force the women into submission and subservience to dominant caste male authority. On the one hand, the weak bargaining position of Dalit women regards labour and livelihood, and on the other, the dominant social, economic, and political status of dominant caste men, grant the latter leverage to exert a dominating influence on the former. Secondly, dominant caste women, who are already conditioned by patriarchal ideology, rely on the strength of their male counterparts’ economic, social, and political positioning to influence or pressurise Dalit women into patriarchal ways of thinking and acting. Thirdly, Dalit men, specifically Dalit women’s husbands and male relatives, are subjected to patriarchal influences and pressures in similar ways. They, in turn, exert male control over women. (Aloysius et al.173-174)

Draupadi is a female Dalit character from the Mang caste, whose work is to sweep the Achalpur village. The name itself refers to the famous female character in the epic Mahabharata of the Vedic religion, who was lost in gambling by her husbands. In the fictional narrative of Sharankumar Limbale, Vishnu Pujari, the temple priest, has an eye on her and tries to rape her in the temple’s premises. After her denial, Vishnu Pujari becomes enraged and decides to take revenge on her by killing her. He spreads rumours that Draupadi is practicing black magic in the village, causing evil to all villagers. Believing on story of Vishnu Pujari, villagers go to Mangwada, Dalit ghetto to kill her, “Draupadi was busy...they grabbed Draupadi by the hair and dragged her outside...blows and kicks rained down on Draupadi. Her sari came off...she was stripped naked...And they forced the naked Draupadi to walk around the village” (Limbale 146). Vishnu Pujari unfairly blamed Draupadi for social problems or targeted as scapegoats for broader caste tensions and encourage men to violence and social ostracism on her. Draupadi’s negative portrayal frames her as immoral, impure, or socially deviant and justifies physical violence and social exclusion. She becomes a victim of caste- and gender-based injustice.

Thus, Sharankumar Limbale’s *Hindu: A Novel* portrays multiple intersections of injustices against female characters and depicts women’s resistance to caste discrimination and patriarchal norms in society. The word resistance defines as “the act of fighting against something that is attacking or refusing to accept something” (Cambridge Dictionary). In the Indian context, women are assigned a sub-human position in the Vedic religion and are subjected to the caste norms of endogamy and patriarchy as a tradition of religion. However, they opposed patriarchy, which restricted their dignity and freedom. The female characters in the novel often challenge the traditional roles imposed by Brahmanical Hinduism. Their acts of resistance include asserting autonomy over their bodies, questioning caste system and gender subordination, and rejecting submissive roles in social, political, economic and culture sphere of society.

6. WOMEN REGISTANCE REFLECTED IN SHARANKUMAR LIMBALE’S FICTION HINDU: A NOVEL

Female characters in novel actively develop their own methods of resisting social injustices through everyday actions and lived experiences. Sonali was an independent thinker since her college days. She loves literary writing, reads short stories and novels, and writes poetry. Her poems were published in a local magazine called Sunday, in which “a young poets asked a million questions” (Limbale 40). She had

learned Bharatnatyam (a dance form) and also liked folk dancing. In her college's annual function, she dances with a Dalit boy named Rohit Kamble, suggesting that Sonali is an open-minded girl who opposes traditional women's duties. After her marriage, she rejects the male dominance of her in-laws' family. She went to the roof of the house to watch what was happening in the surroundings and showed her courage to transgress the boundaries drawn by patriarchy. Moreover, Sonali visits the Dalit ghetto to meet Rohit Kamble. Her walk from the feudal mansion (bara) to Bhimnager to meet Rohit Kamble signifies her rejection of the Laws of Manu (religious code of Brahmanical Hinduism) and its patriarchal norms.

In addition, Parvatibai and Kashibai, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law of Sonali, seem submissive at the beginning of the novel. However, they are courageous and silent observers the events around them. When Sonali is questioned by Rambhau Kavale about her visits to Rohit Kamble's home. Sonali's confident answers infuriated Rambhau, and he picked up a stick to beat Sonali, saying:

'Get out of my way. She has smeared our faces with coal tar'. Now Kashibai also raised her voice: 'You sent my son to prison for the sake of false prestige and now you want to beat up his wife. Come, beat me first'. Listening to Kashibai's impassioned voice, Parvatibai also came forward, leaning on her stick for support. 'Kill all three of us and live by yourself in this bara... 'It is fine by you when your son commits a crime. Why shouldn't it be so if this girl commits a crime?...Prabhakar went to jail for killing a Mahar, enhancing the family's prestige. Now you can kill our daughter-in-law and go to prison, enhancing the family's prestige even more.' (Limbale 86-87)

Sonali, who benefits from modern education, asserts her distinctiveness by breaking the strict patriarchal rules. She, along with Parvatibai and Kashibai, exposes the false egos of the men in their family. Although Parvatibai and Kashibai bring a traditional ambience, they support Sonali's love for Rohit Kamble. Moreover, Surekha Mane's love for Mangesh Kamble, eloping with him to Mumbai, is a refusal of Brahmanical Hinduism's patriarchy and caste-endogamy. It is a revolt against the Vedic religion and its philosophy, which prevents women from making decisions for themselves. Sonali's leaving to meet her lover, Rohit Kamble and Surekha Mane's join Mangesh Kamble to go Mumbai with him are the acts of direct violation of the patriarchal norms that forbids women from even 'stepping outside' the house.

Surekha Mane's character depicted as a strong woman who defies patriarchal norms to live her life after her husband's imprisonment. She is compelled to enter the prostitution to support her family. She moves fearlessly through the village and leads a group of women to confront Rambhau Kavale at the bara, demanding answers about her husband's release, and physically confronts the men there. When Madhukar Kavale learns about her involvement in the "business" and began to question her, she boldly responds, demonstrating her defiance against hypocritical patriarchy saying, "I hear you have gone into "business". 'My husband is in jail. How am I to run my household?' ...She had seen many naked men by now and was therefore no longer afraid of the male species" (Limbale 66). It exhibits that Surekha Mane challenged social status of men sanctioned by religion to them and stand against their injustices towards women in society.

Finally, Rama Babar's resistance against gender and caste discrimination cannot be ignored. She is a well-educated, unmarried Dalit woman who has devoted her life to the Dalit movement. She is the only woman in the story who sits in socio-cultural meetings with men and discusses the political future of her

community as well as society, and her mere presence in these meetings questions male authority. She is a powerful woman who fights for justice and dignity and does not follow the Brahmanical Hinduism and its patriarchal codes. Her decision to remain unmarried defies societal norms and asserts women's independence. In other words, her lifestyle and work challenged patriarchy and caste discrimination, opposed gender and patriarchal norms, and advocated equality, fraternity, and justice through her work and actions in society.

7. CONCLUSION

Sharankumar Limbale's novel *Hindu: A Novel* navigates the intersection of injustices towards female characters and their resistance to them. It also highlights how Brahmanical Hinduism and its patriarchy regulates the sexuality and control liberty of so-called upper-caste women and normalises violence against Dalit women. Thus, the violence experienced by women is deeply intertwined with caste, outcaste, class, and gender inequalities, resulting in heterogeneous experiences of injustice that are often ignored. Women's resistance is depicted through their struggles against the Brahmanical patriarchy, which is interlinked with caste. The female characters portrayal in the novel defy the social and domestic roles advocated by Manu, and their stand to fight against the orthodox beliefs of the Vedic religion and its new incarnations in society exhibit the ways of struggle against women's subordination in society. In conclusion, this study argues that the narrative of women's struggles and their resistance to social, political, and cultural indignity places the novel firmly within world literature.

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