



Reconfiguring Dalit Feminism: Caste, Gender And The Politics Of Illegitimacy In *Akkarmashi*

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Abstract

This paper offers a comprehensive exploration of the reconfiguration of Dalit feminism through an in-depth analysis of caste, gender, and the politics of illegitimacy as represented in the Marathi novel *Akkarmashi*. By centring the narrative on the lived realities of Dalit women, whose identities are intricately shaped by the intersecting structures of caste-based oppression and patriarchal gender discrimination, the study foregrounds the necessity of an intersectional approach to feminist theory. The novel's treatment of illegitimacy is examined not simply as a marker of social stigma but as a complex, multifaceted site of resistance where marginalised women assert agency and reclaim their identities against normative societal frameworks. Through this lens, *Akkarmashi* reveals how illegitimacy becomes a form of political assertion and self-definition within communities often excluded from mainstream feminist and social justice conversations. This paper thus contributes to expanding the conceptual boundaries of Dalit feminism by emphasising the nuanced negotiations of identity, social exclusion, and empowerment that occur at the crossroads of caste and gender hierarchies.

Key words : Dalit feminism, illegitimacy, caste, gender, sexual politics, representation, Dalit literature

Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* occupies a decisive place in Dalit literature because it refuses to narrate Dalit feminism, illegitimacy, caste, gender, sexual politics, representation, and Dalit literature's

caste oppression as a generalised condition of suffering and instead exposes the specific ways in which caste, gender, sexuality, poverty, and illegitimacy converge in the making of Dalit life. The autobiographical narrative is not merely the story of a marginal subject seeking recognition; it is a deeply unsettling account of how the caste order reproduces itself through the regulation of women's bodies, the denial of kinship, and the social production of illegitimacy. In this sense, *Akkarmashi* is not only an autobiography of exclusion but also a profound commentary on the gendered structure of caste power. In the opinion of Raj Kumar, "the caste system with its myriad variations of super-ordination and sub-ordination, its confusions and contradictions, rites and rituals, vices and virtues, dogmas and doubts, professions and protests - can sustain itself across different regions of India in varying degrees of rigidity". (Kumar, 115)

The text forces readers to confront the fact that the stigma attached to Dalit identity is neither accidental nor external to the social order; rather, it is foundational to the very logic of that order. Limbale's narration makes visible what caste society depends upon but refuses to acknowledge: the exploitation of Dalit women, the violence of caste patriarchy, and the precarious life of the illegitimate child born within a system that denies him both fatherhood and belonging.

At the heart of *Akkarmashi* is the figure of the Dalit mother, whose body becomes the site where caste domination and sexual exploitation intersect. Limbale repeatedly presents his mother not as a passive victim but as someone trapped within a brutal economy of survival, where food, shelter, and protection are exchanged under conditions of structural coercion. One of the most important lines in the text states that "*the Dalit woman's body is a site of violence*," a formulation that captures the novel's central insight: Dalit womanhood is not simply oppressed, but made vulnerable by the very social structures that claim to organise family, morality, and purity. In another instance, the narrator remarks that Dalit women are "*beaten, raped, and humiliated with impunity*," a statement that exposes the caste order as a system that authorises violence while disavowing responsibility for it. These lines are not incidental expressions of suffering; they are theoretical statements embedded within autobiography, showing that Limbale's narrative is both personal testimony and social critique. By placing such violence at the centre of the text, *Akkarmashi* frames the question of Dalit identity through the gendered body of the mother.

The title itself, *Akkarmashi*, meaning "illegitimate" or "outcaste," signals the text's radical refusal of normative kinship and legitimacy. Illegitimacy in the novel is not merely a biological or legal condition; it is a political and social category imposed through caste hierarchy. The narrator's uncertain paternity is not an isolated family secret but a symptom of a broader structure in which upper-caste men desire Dalit women while denying them dignity, recognition, and rights. The child born from such a relationship is then forced to live as the embodiment of social contradiction: biologically connected to power, yet socially expelled from it. The illegitimate child becomes the living proof of caste hypocrisy. Limbale, therefore, transforms illegitimacy into a critical lens through which the violence of caste legitimacy can be examined. He writes:

"The high caste people look upon my community as untouchable, while my own community humiliated me, calling me 'Akkarmashi'. This humiliation was like being stabbed over and over again. I have always lived with the burden of inferiority" (Limbale X).

The novel asks an unsettling question: who is truly illegitimate—the child born of caste violence, or the social order that requires such violence to maintain itself? This question becomes especially significant when read through the lens of Dalit feminist theory. Dalit feminism emerged as a necessary intervention because mainstream Indian feminism often treated womanhood as a universal category while overlooking the specific and intensified oppression experienced by Dalit women. In many dominant feminist frameworks, gender is discussed apart from caste, as though the experiences of Indian women can be understood without considering the social structures that determine access to purity, respectability, domesticity, and sexual control. Dalit feminism challenges this tendency by insisting that caste is not an external context but a constitutive force in shaping womanhood itself. Sharmila Rege's formulation of a Dalit feminist standpoint is crucial here because it argues that knowledge must begin from the lives of Dalit women, whose experiences reveal the hidden operations of caste patriarchy more clearly than abstract universalism ever can. From this perspective, *Akkarmashi* becomes a foundational text not simply because it narrates Dalit life, but because it exposes the epistemic authority of the marginalised woman's experience.

In addition to sexual exploitation, *Akkarmashi* foregrounds the harsh material realities of Dalit life, particularly poverty and hunger. The narrator repeatedly describes the struggle for survival, emphasising the economic marginalisation of Dalit communities. One striking moment captures this condition: "*Hunger is bigger than man. Hunger is more powerful than anything*" (Limbale, 2003).

Uma Chakravarti's concept of Brahminical patriarchy further illuminates the novel's politics. Chakravarti argues that caste and patriarchy are inseparable in Indian social formation, and that the control of women's sexuality is central to the maintenance of caste purity. Women's bodies are regulated to preserve lineage, inheritance, and ritual hierarchy; therefore, the Dalit woman occupies a uniquely violent position within this structure. She is outside the protective logic of caste endogamy, yet deeply embedded in the sexual economy that sustains it. *Akkarmashi* dramatises this condition with painful clarity. The Dalit mother is desired, used, and discarded; her labour is necessary, but her body is never permitted respectability. The narrator's own illegitimate status is thus not only a family matter but a social fact that reveals the dependence of caste legitimacy on the exploitation of Dalit women. The novel's moral force lies in its refusal to romanticise or normalise this violence. It insists that caste legitimacy is built on sexual coercion, denial, and silence.

One of the most striking features of *Akkarmashi* is its refusal to present Dalit suffering in a sentimental or consoling register. Limbale does not offer the reader a narrative of uplift in which pain is transformed into easy triumph. Instead, he writes from within humiliation, hunger, shame, and anger. His prose repeatedly returns to the material conditions that define Dalit existence: hunger, social exclusion, labour, abuse, and the impossibility of stable belonging. The power of the text lies in its ability to make these conditions visible without converting them into spectacle. The narrator's mother and other Dalit women appear not as symbols but as historical and social subjects whose lives are marked by coercive intimacy with power. When Limbale writes that Dalit women are vulnerable because their bodies can be used to satisfy the desires of dominant-caste men, he is naming a system in which sexual access and caste superiority are intertwined. Violence against Dalit women is therefore not an exception to the caste order but one of its principal mechanisms.

This paper argues that *Akkarmashi* configures Dalit feminism through the concept of illegitimacy, showing how the illegitimate body becomes a site of critique against caste patriarchy. Rather than seeing illegitimacy as a mark of shame to be overcome, the novel transforms it into an epistemological position from which the violence of social legitimacy can be exposed. The narrator's marginality becomes a form of insight: he sees the caste order from below, from the perspective of those whose bodies and lives make that order possible while remaining unrecognised by it. In this way, *Akkarmashi* performs what Dalit feminist theory demands: a shift from abstract talk about equality to the recognition of caste-gendered embodiment as the ground of political analysis. The novel demonstrates that to speak of Dalit women is not merely to add women to an existing story of caste oppression, but to rethink the story itself.

This paper offers a comprehensive exploration of the reconfiguration of Dalit feminism through an in-depth analysis of caste, gender, and the politics of illegitimacy as represented in the Marathi novel *Akkarmashi*. It critically interrogates how the novel disrupts and challenges dominant feminist discourses that often marginalise or overlook the unique experiences of Dalit women. By centring the narrative on the lived realities of Dalit women, whose identities are intricately shaped by the intersecting structures of caste-based oppression and patriarchal gender discrimination, the study foregrounds the necessity of an intersectional approach to feminist theory.

The novel's treatment of illegitimacy is examined not simply as a marker of social stigma but as a complex, multifaceted site of resistance where marginalised women assert agency and reclaim their identities against normative societal frameworks. This redefinition of illegitimacy challenges conventional social norms and offers a powerful critique of how Dalit women's identities are constructed and constrained within both caste and gender hierarchies. Through this lens, *Akkarmashi* reveals the ways in which illegitimacy becomes a form of political assertion and self-definition within communities often excluded from mainstream feminist and social justice conversations.

Furthermore, this paper situates *Akkarmashi* within the broader context of Dalit feminist literature, highlighting how it expands the conceptual boundaries of Dalit feminism by emphasising the nuanced negotiations of identity, social exclusion, and empowerment that occur at the crossroads of caste and gender hierarchies. It argues that such reconfiguration is essential for understanding the dynamics of power and resistance in Dalit women's lives, offering new insights into the politics of marginalisation and the potential for transformative feminist praxis. The study also underscores the limitations of dominant feminist frameworks that fail to adequately address the intersectional realities faced by Dalit women, thereby advocating for a more inclusive feminist discourse that recognises caste as a critical axis of oppression alongside gender.

By engaging with *Akkarmashi*'s narrative strategies and thematic concerns, this paper contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation on intersectionality, identity politics, and social justice. It demonstrates how literature can serve as a vital site for articulating and contesting marginalised experiences, enabling Dalit women to reclaim their voices and reshape feminist praxis. This research thus not only enriches the understanding of Dalit feminism but also illuminates the broader implications for feminist theory and activism in contexts marked by complex social hierarchies.

To provide a structured analysis, the paper first contextualises the socio-political landscape of caste and gender oppression in India, followed by a detailed examination of the novel's portrayal of illegitimacy as resistance. It then explores the intersectional framework that underpins Dalit feminist thought as represented in the text, concluding with reflections on the transformative potential of such narratives for feminist scholarship and praxis. This approach ensures a comprehensive engagement with the novel's thematic depth and its critical intervention in feminist discourse.

The detailed analysis of *Akkarmashi* centres on its critical reconfiguration of Dalit feminism by engaging deeply with the intersecting oppressions of caste and gender, and the politics of illegitimacy as lived and narrated by Dalit women. The novel foregrounds the protagonist's experience of illegitimacy not as mere social stigma but as a potent site of resistance and identity reclamation. This narrative strategy challenges dominant feminist discourses that tend to marginalise Dalit women's unique realities, thereby disrupting mainstream feminist frameworks that often universalise women's experiences without accounting for caste-based hierarchies.

In *Akkarmashi*, illegitimacy functions as a multifaceted symbol: it exposes the entrenched caste prejudices and patriarchal norms that exclude Dalit women from accepted social identities, while simultaneously serving as a form of political assertion. The protagonist's illegitimate status becomes a lens through which the novel critiques normative social structures that police purity, legitimacy, and belonging, particularly within caste contexts. This redefinition of illegitimacy allows Dalit women to assert agency, transforming a marker of exclusion into a site of empowerment and self-definition.

The novel's narrative intricately portrays how Dalit women navigate the dual axes of caste oppression and patriarchal subjugation, highlighting the necessity of an intersectional feminist approach that recognises these simultaneous structures of domination. *Akkarmashi* expands Dalit feminist theory by emphasising how identity, social exclusion, and empowerment are negotiated at the confluence of caste and gender hierarchies, thus providing a more nuanced understanding of resistance that goes beyond singular frameworks of oppression.

Moreover, the text situates Dalit women's struggles within broader socio-political realities, illustrating how their lived experiences contest both casteist and patriarchal power dynamics. Through its thematic focus and narrative form, *Akkarmashi* challenges the limitations of dominant feminist paradigms that overlook caste as a critical axis of oppression. It thereby advocates for an inclusive feminist praxis that integrates caste analysis alongside gender, enriching feminist theory with perspectives rooted in marginalised voices.

The novel's contribution to Dalit feminist literature lies in its capacity to articulate the politics of marginalisation and survival through the lived realities of Dalit women, offering critical insights into how social exclusion can be resisted through reclaiming identity and agency. By positioning illegitimacy as a form of political self-assertion, *Akkarmashi* not only contests normative social frameworks but also reimagines feminist resistance as inherently intersectional and context-specific.

This analysis underscores the importance of literary narratives like *Akkarmashi* in shaping feminist discourse and praxis. The novel serves as a vital site for contesting dominant narratives and amplifying marginalised voices, demonstrating how literature can contribute to social justice by illuminating complex power relations and enabling transformative feminist interventions.

The socio-political context of this study is framed by the complex interplay of historical legacies, institutional structures, and contemporary policy environments that collectively shape the experiences and outcomes relevant to the research focus. Central to this context are the prevailing power dynamics embedded within governance systems, social hierarchies, and cultural norms, which critically influence access to resources, representation, and decision-making processes across different societal groups. These dynamics are further complicated by ongoing social movements and advocacy efforts that actively challenge existing inequalities and seek to reform entrenched structural barriers.

A significant feature of this socio-political landscape is the persistence of disparities deeply rooted in intersecting identity markers such as class, ethnicity, gender, and other social categories. These intersections produce differentiated impacts on communities and individuals, often exacerbating vulnerabilities and limiting opportunities for marginalised populations. Policy frameworks operating at local, national, and international levels demonstrate varying degrees of responsiveness to these disparities, shaped by political ideologies, economic priorities, and the capacity of institutions to implement inclusive measures. The historical context of marginalisation and resistance plays a crucial role in informing contemporary debates and shaping the policy discourse surrounding the subject matter, highlighting how past injustices continue to influence present-day socio-political realities.

Moreover, the socio-political environment is characterised by a dynamic tension between forces of continuity and change. While institutional inertia and established power relations tend to perpetuate inequalities, emerging social movements and advocacy networks mobilise to contest and transform these conditions. This dialectic is reflected in the evolving policy landscape, where progressive reforms coexist with persistent gaps in equity and representation. Understanding this tension is essential for comprehending how structural and systemic factors condition the phenomena under investigation.

This study situates itself within this broader socio-political milieu by critically examining how these layered and intersecting factors shape the lived experiences, opportunities, and outcomes related to the research focus. By unpacking the mechanisms through which inequalities are reproduced or contested, the study aims to illuminate pathways toward more equitable and inclusive outcomes. Such an understanding is vital for informing policy interventions and social practices that address the root causes of disparity rather than merely their symptoms.

The socio-political context provides the necessary backdrop against which the research questions are framed and analysed. It foregrounds the importance of considering historical trajectories, institutional power relations, and contemporary policy debates to fully grasp the complexities inherent in the study's focus. This contextualization not only enriches the analytical framework but also ensures that findings and recommendations are grounded in the realities of the socio-political environment, enhancing their relevance and potential impact.

Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* can be productively read as a narrative site where Dalit-feminist epistemology is materially staged rather than merely thematised. The text brings together the autobiographical, the testimonial, and the political in a way that displaces the middle-caste woman as the

default subject of Indian feminist discourse and centres the Dalit woman as the epistemological ground from which caste-patriarchy can be most radically exposed.

Through the figure of Masamai, the narrator's mother, and the narrator's own status as *anakkarmashi* (illegitimate one), Limbale inscribes illegitimacy not as a moral failing or a private shame but as a structurally produced caste-gender condition—a condition that, in Rege's terms, "begins from the lives of Dalit women" and produces a standpoint that is both embodied and emancipatory.

At the level of narrative form, *Akkarmashi* refuses the redemptive arc of respectability that often governs mainstream feminist and anti-caste writing. Instead, Limbale insists on living with and narrating the illegitimate body: the body of the Dalit woman, the body of the illegitimate child, the body of the Dalit intellectual who writes from the "outside" of Brahminical legitimacy. This persistence with illegitimacy—as narrative stance, epistemological position, and political refusal—allows *Akkarmashi* to reconfigure Dalit-feminist politics in ways that move beyond simple victim-to-agent typologies and instead foreground the critical-political purchase of stigma itself.

Illegitimacy in *Akkarmashi* operates at multiple, overlapping levels: genealogical, sexual-caste and political. The condition of illegitimacy in *Akkarmashi* is not merely personal but structural, as the narrator states, "My existence itself is a question" (Limbale, 2003). This highlights the deep crisis of identity produced by caste-based sexual exploitation. The narrator's parentage is never fully clarified; he is marked as the child of an upper-caste man and a Dalit woman, a union that is institutionally unacknowledged and socially condemned. This illegitimacy is not neutral; it is produced by the Brahminical order's insistence on caste endogamy, purity, and the control of Dalit women's sexuality. As Sharmila Rege argues, the Dalit woman is excluded from the respectable category of womanhood precisely because she is outside the bounds of caste-endogamous marriage and its sexual-reproductive economy. In *Akkarmashi*, this exclusion is not only structural but also intimate: the narrator's very body is the testament to a violent, one-sided transaction between caste and sexuality.

Uma Chakravarti's analysis of Brahminical patriarchy helps clarify why this transaction is so central to the functioning of caste society. Chakravarti shows that caste-endogamy is secured through the strict regulation of women's sexuality, such that the control of women's bodies becomes the mechanism through which caste purity is maintained. Upper-caste men may exploit Dalit women sexually, but the legitimacy of the caste order is preserved by disavowing both the woman and the child produced by such encounters. *Akkarmashi* dramatises this logic by narrating how Masamai, forced into a relationship with a Patil (upper-caste landlord) to secure food and protection for her children, is treated as polluted and immoral while the same man remains free of any stigma. The narrator's illegitimacy is thus not a personal accident but the effect of a systemic contradiction: the caste order both consumes and discards the Dalit woman, producing a child who is structurally outside the category of legitimate subject.

Rege's formulation of the Dalit feminist standpoint is crucial for understanding how this illegitimacy becomes epistemological rather than merely ontological. Rege argues that a Dalit feminist standpoint begins from the lives of Dalit women and takes their embodied experience as the starting point of knowledge production. This standpoint is emancipatory because it refuses the universalist claims of middle-caste feminism, which often treats caste as a secondary or additive axis of oppression. In *Akkarmashi*, the narrator's perspective—mediated through his mother's suffering—enacts this move precisely: the text does not begin from the respectable middle-caste woman but from the Dalit woman whose body is the site of caste-sexual violence. The illegitimate body of the narrator becomes the embodied locus of this standpoint, registering the hypocrisy of caste-respectability and the violence built into the categories of family, nation, and womanhood.

The text also insists on the materiality of illegitimacy. Illegitimacy is not only a discursive label but a lived condition of hunger, humiliation, and social exclusion. The narrator describes how his family is segregated in the village, how he is denied access to common spaces, and how his very name becomes a marker of

shame. These everyday violences are not separable from caste; they are produced by the sexual-caste economy that governs women's bodies. When the narrator writes about his mother's forced relationship with the Patil, he is not only narrating a family secret but also exposing the political economy of caste sexuality: the way Dalit women are used as objects of consumption while being denied the status of subjects. From a Dalit-feminist perspective, then, illegitimacy is not a private stigma but a public mechanism of caste domination—one that the text renders visible through its steadfast attention to embodied, material suffering.

Dalit-feminist theory has long emphasised the double discrimination faced by Dalit women: the simultaneous oppression under caste and patriarchy that cannot be disaggregated into separate axes. In *Akkarmashi*, this double discrimination is staged in Masamai's life and in the narrator's own experience of being marked as illegitimate. The text shows that Masamai's oppression is not only a result of upper-caste exploitation but also of how her body is policed within Dalit patriarchal structures. Upper-caste men use her for food and protection, yet the same men brand her as polluted and immoral, while some within the Dalit community also displace their own shame onto her. This double movement—the desire for and the disgust at the Dalit woman's body—produces what can be called a crisis of subject-formation for the Dalit woman. She cannot become a respectable subject because that category is itself predicated on her exclusion and sexual-caste defilement.

Rege's analysis of Dalit women's exclusion from male-led anti-caste movements helps clarify why this crisis is so profound. Rege argues that many anti-caste movements have been dominated by Dalit men, whose claims to dignity often rely on controlling Dalit women's sexuality and reproducing patriarchal norms. In such movements, the Dalit man seeks to become a pure subject by disciplining his woman, thereby reproducing the same logic of control that Brahminical patriarchy imposes on all women. In *Akkarmashi*, this dynamic is not fully resolved; the narrator's relationship with his mother is marked by both profound empathy and moments of internalised shame. At times, he feels the weight of stigma that attaches not only to her but to himself as her illegitimate child, revealing how the logic of respectability has infiltrated even the Dalit male subject.

Chakravarti's work on caste and sexuality further illuminates how this crisis is produced. Chakravarti shows that caste endogamy relies on men controlling women's sexuality and reproduction, such that the purity of the caste is maintained through the policing of women's bodies. Dalit women, positioned outside this system, are both necessary and abjected: necessary because their bodies are used for sexual-caste exchange, and abjected because they cannot be incorporated into the respectable order. *Akkarmashi* dramatises this contradiction by narrating how Masamai is forced into a relationship with the Patil to secure basic survival resources, yet she is treated as immoral for doing so. The narrator's illegitimacy is the direct product of this contradiction: he is the living embodiment of caste violence—an identity produced by the system that is rejected by the same system.

This crisis of subject-formation is also reflected in the narrator's own struggle to find a place within dominant literary and political discourses. On the one hand, he resists the romanticisation of Dalit suffering and the expectation that Dalit literature should please upper-caste readers. On the other hand, his very act of writing—of narrating his mother's trauma and his own illegitimacy—places him in a precarious position between the village's caste order and the metropolitan literary world.

By reclaiming “illegitimacy” as a critical standpoint, *Akkarmashi* refuses the redemptive project of making the Dalit woman legitimate within an existing caste-patriarchal order. Instead, the text insists on the epistemic value of illegitimacy—the position of the one who is structurally outside the categories of citizen, family, and respectability, yet can expose their violence most clearly. This move aligns with Rege's argument that a Dalit feminist standpoint is more emancipatory than other standpoints because it begins from the lives of Dalit women and takes their embodied experience as the ground of knowledge. In

Akkarmashi, this standpoint is not abstract; it is materially staged in the narrator's body and in his mother's life.

The narrator's illegitimacy allows him to see the caste order from a position of double alienation: alienated from the upper-caste order that consumes and disavows his mother, and alienated from the Dalit patriarchal norms that sometimes displace shame onto her. This double alienation produces a critical distance that enables him to expose the contradictions of caste society. For example, he narrates incidents of upper-caste violence against Dalits, including sexual violence against Dalit women, and insists on their political significance. These narratives are not merely testimonies of suffering; they are acts of political critique that show how caste domination is maintained through sexual-caste violence.

From a Dalit-feminist perspective, this critique is crucial because it shows that caste and sexuality are inseparable. The sexual regulation of Dalit women is not a cultural side-effect of caste; it is the very mechanism through which caste hierarchy is reproduced. In Akkarmashi, this inseparability is dramatised in the way the narrator's illegitimacy is both a personal and a political fact. He is not only the child of a Dalit woman and an upper-caste man; he is the product of a systemic violence that cannot be reduced to individual blame. The text thus refuses the moralising logic that would blame Masamai for her immorality and instead exposes the structural violence that produces her situation.

This reconfiguration of illegitimacy as a critical-political standpoint also has implications for how we read the text's testimony. Rege argues that the Dalit feminist standpoint is a standpoint of embodied knowledge, where the thought begins from the lives of Dalit women, and these lives are present and visible in the results of the thought. In Akkarmashi, the narrator's testimony is not only about his own life but also about his mother's life, which is rendered visible through his narration. Masamai's body, which is marked as illegitimate and polluted, becomes a site of testimony that delegitimises the caste order. The narrator's act of writing transforms her body from a site of shame to a site of witnessing and critique.

Through this theoretical lens, Akkarmashi configures Dalit-feminist politics in three key ways. First, the text theorises caste and sexuality together, showing how the sexual regulation of Dalit women sustains caste hierarchy rather than appearing as a separate "axis" of oppression. Second, it reframes illegitimacy as epistemic leverage, turning stigma into a standpoint that exposes the hypocrisy of caste-respectability and the limitations of universalist, humanist feminism. Third, it centres testimonial narration as a form of political resistance, in which the narration of sexual-caste violence transforms the Dalit woman's body from a site of shame into a site of witnessing and critique.

These reconfigurations have important implications for how we read Dalit literature and Dalit-feminist theory. Akkarmashi shows that the Dalit feminist standpoint is not merely a theoretical position but a material and narrative stance that can be enacted through autobiographical writing. The text insists on the value of the illegitimate body, the body that is outside the legitimate subject positions of the Brahminical order, as a source of emancipatory knowledge. This knowledge is not redemptive; it does not seek to redeem the Dalit woman into respectability. Instead, it insists on the politically critical purchase of stigma itself, showing that the illegitimate body can be a site of resistance and critique.

In conclusion, Akkarmashi can be read as a foundational text for rethinking Dalit-feminist politics from a caste-gender epistemological perspective. By foregrounding illegitimacy as a structurally produced condition and reclaiming it as a critical-political standpoint, the text exposes the violence built into the categories of respectability, family, and nation. It also shows that Dalit-feminist politics must begin from the lives of Dalit women, whose bodies are both the site of caste-sexual violence and the ground of emancipatory knowledge. In doing so, Akkarmashi reconfigures Dalit-feminist politics as a politics of illegitimacy where the marginalised body becomes the centre of critique and resistance.

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