

A study of leadership factor in the select characters of Sharankumar Limbale's *Bahujan*

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the leadership factor in the select characters of Sharankumar Limbale's *Bahujan* novel. The method employed is Textual Analysis. The methodology used is The Leadership Framework propounded by the NHS Institute of Innovation and Improvement, University of Warwick. This is executed by analysing the character sketch of all the characters that are leaders in the novel and evaluation of these characters with the help of the framework. My primary text is the fictional Marathi novel, *Bahujan* by Sharankumar Limbale. This research will assist in understanding the different leaders from various strata of the society.

Keywords: Marathi Dalit literature, Sharankumar Limbale, *Bahujan*, leadership factor & Marathi fictional novel

The novel *Bahujan*

The novel on which the research is done is *Bahujan*, a Marathi novel scripted by Sharankumar Limbale, the famous Marathi Dalit writer. This novel was first published in 2006. It deals with the Contemporary Dalit issues. The setting of this novel is a slum termed as 'Garibi Hatao Jhopatpatti' that is alongside the link road of two villages, Acchalpur and Dharangao. There are two gangs in this slum; they are 'Bhaichi Gang' and 'Mamachi Gang'. They are led by Ananth Kalshetty and Nagnath Balshetwar respectively. They compete with each other to be the best in the slum by exploiting the people living there. There are also religious tensions involved in this. Hindus, Muslims and Dalits are always pitted against each other.

The novel takes an interesting turn when the 'Garibi Hatao Jhopatpatti' is declared as an electoral constituency. Kalshetty, Balshetwar (leaders of the gangs), Swami Ragvendra (Acchalpur's religious leader), Sathanand Kamble (political leader) and many others fight against each other to be

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the Supreme leader by winning the constituency. The most interesting factor is the Leadership one. Everyone wants to be the “leader”. There is a mad race for this. Religious, social, personal, caste matters are made as platforms for success, betrayal and most importantly weapons for votes.

The Leadership Framework

The Leadership Framework is developed by the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement of the University of Warwick Campus. This framework assists in critically analysing the role of the leaders in depth. Effective leadership requires individuals to work with others in teams and networks to deliver and improve services. The framework elucidates multiple parameters that aid understanding the different facets of leadership.

Character sketch of the leaders in the novel in a nutshell

1. Ananth Kalshetty –

Ananth Kalshetty is the leader of the *Bhaichi Gang*. The members of his gang are Usman, Aaglaway, Raghu and Bhavdya. He was a great propagator of the Hindu religion. To be able to maintain his clout in the slum he used to employ religious tactics. He was the senior in age. Even Balshetwar used to listen sometimes to his advice. Three riots occurred in the slum which was spearheaded by Ananth. Muslims, Hindus and Dalits were pitted against each other because of these riots. In the end however, Ananth is murdered by his aide, Usman in a court.

2. Nagnath Balshetwar –

Nagnath Balshetwar is the leader of the *Mamachi Gang*. The members of his gang are Saavlya, Bunty and Pintya. Though he was of Hindu religion, he did not differentiate between the different religions. Instead, he tried his best to promote harmony between the various religious groups. But when he saw that Ananth was gaining a foothold in the slum, he tried to keep close to the Dalit and the Muslim community. His love interest was Zahira who was a prostitute in Mumbai and was bought by Nagnath. She was Muslim and Nagnath loved her a lot. Nagnath was incapable of bringing both the Muslims and the Dalits on the same page. Even his fate was the same as that of Ananth. He was murdered in police custody.

3. Swami Raghvendra –

Swami Raghvendra is the Swami of a temple in the Acchalpur village. He was earlier a Sanskrit teacher in a primary government school. He used to teach the Sanskrit Vedic texts in the temple premises for the people. Slowly, his teachings attracted a lot of people towards the temple.

Thereby, the temple authorities converted him into a Swami which helped in increasing the flow of the devotees in the temple. This then aided in the growth of the temple revenue. Gradually, he made his presence felt in the political arena well. Corruption was rampant in the temple earnings. He was the Godman. But in the end he is arrested from a hotel in Delhi as he leaves the village in disguise.

4. Sathanand Kamble –

Sathanand Kamble was the head of the *Shiv Shakti* party. He was a Dalit. Though the majority of the party members were disinterested in making him the party President but they had to do so as the population of the village mainly comprised the Dalit people and they wanted the Dalit vote bank. Even though Kamble was the party Head, he was just an acting President, the face of the party and a dummy leader. In the end, he is killed by his own party members.

5. Ranjana Kadam –

Ranjan Kadam is the Head of the *Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat*, i.e. Women's Savings' Group. She used to work in the Mill and the group that was formed was in this mill. She is from the Dalit community. She is instrumental in spearheading the women in the slum to start bank accounts savings. The children of the women working in the mill were given special attention as their savings led to the start of a school for the slum children. Ranjana was heavily influenced by the Ambedkarite thoughts and all her protests were the impact of this. She along with the other women in the mill used to fight against the caste oppression in the slums. Men also supported this cause. In the end we can see that she is elected unanimously in the election by getting votes even from the Hindu and the Muslim communities apart from the Dalit community.

Application of the Framework on the leaders of the novel

1. Ananth Kalshetty –

Ananth was better at demonstrating personal qualities. He was well aware of his strength and weakness. He was better than Nagnath in this manner. He recognized and articulated his values and viewpoint clearly. He had an interest in women. Therefore, any women either in the slum or village that he liked, he used to abduct them with the help of his gang, had sexual relations with them and sold them in the Mumbai Red Light area. He even started his own Brothel adjacent to Usman's hotel.

He was capable of managing himself. He never relied on his gang members. He could take up any task alone and would be most of the time successful. He strived in developing himself; he used to seek the advice of

Swami Raghvendra. He always analysed the faults in his expeditions and corrected them. He even let his team members follow his pattern. He used to walk the talk. He was of bad character therefore his ethics and values are doubtful.

He worked well with others. He used to create opportunities for his gang members to develop themselves. The hotel of Usman was started because of the capital given to him by Ananth. He did not seek the views of others except that of Swami Raghvendra who was a failure. Trust issues were always there in his gang. He never employed any strategies to manage the conflict that aroused among his gang members.

He had to struggle hard to manage services. Ananth's planning hardly supported him in his execution. Whatever he planned would become a mess most of the time. When he planned to kidnap the famous dancer of the slum with the help of his gang members, the dancer fled the slum with her family to a different city by her careful execution of the plan. Ananth could not manage his team members. He was murdered by his most trustworthy member, Usman.

He did not improve the services of his gang members. Instead, he used to extort money from them. He did help in setting up the hotel for Usman. But he grabbed the profits; thereby, instigating Usman to murder him. He could not demonstrate political and social awareness. He was unable to gauge the electoral tendencies of the slum people because of which he lost the election. He was a total failure in evaluating the impact of his actions.

He had no vision. Whatever came his way, he grabbed it and tried his best to win. But here too he was unsuccessful. In the later stage of his life he could not wield his power and shunned even by the public in general. Delivering the strategy was a problem for him, as his plans failed him. He hardly collected the entire information that is to gauge the war field and then strategize. He never established a climate of trust and transparency which would have led to the discussion of the plans openly.

2. Nagnath Balshetwar –

Nagnath could not demonstrate personal qualities well. His base was very firmly rooted in ethics and values but was not able to convert the strength and abilities into productive results. He was definitely aware of his values and principles. Many of his own qualities went against him. He respected other religions. Though he was a Hindu he listened to the viewpoints of Muslims and Dalits and tried to solve their problems. He was unsuccessful in this because neither his gang members thoroughly supported him nor his biggest rival, Ananth Kalshetty led his plans to fructify.

Even Nagnath was not able to gauge his own strengths and limitations. He tried his level best to understand how these things were different from those of other individuals and groups. But, he cannot do it by himself. Instead, his love interest, Zahira helped him to fully realise his potential; though it was rare to find him heeding to her words. He was unclear with his emotions. His emotions would come in between his decisions and he would go on acting stupidly in many cases. He was not at all prejudiced.

Whenever there was any discord between any religious or caste communities then it would be Nagnath who would attempt to uncurl it. When there was a hue and cry for the erection of a Masjid in the slum, it was Nagnath who tried to pacify the Hindu crowd. This was taken as an opportunity by Ananth who then went on instigating the Hindus which resulted in riots. This also paved the way for the construction of a temple in the slum.

He tried to obtain feedback from his gang members. Not all of them supported this. They were doubtful of his intentions and therefore would divulge only necessary details. Nagnath then had to himself obtain the entire information which then assisted him in his plans of taking hafta or monthly fees from the slum dwellers. He would erect a shabby tinned roof for the people and then exhort money from them. Hence both of them would be pitted against each other most of the time. The police took advantage of the situation.

Nagnath could never manage himself. He was an emotional fool. Many people took advantage of this. He would render loans to people and would hardly take it back. People of the slum liked this factor in him so were able to trick him into getting money. This turmoil of emotions in him had a very meaningful impact on the people of the slum. He could not be relied on for the completion of any commitment. This was because of his incapability to fulfil his target. Even if he reached to complete his goal then the police would catch him.

His health always went for a toss. As he used to exhort hafta from the slum dwellers and face the rival Mamachi gang, there would be guaranteed fights. In this, he would be injured constantly. If he was arrested by the police then he would face torture in the jail. The police would resort to third degree violence on him to extract information from him. If his team members would get caught then he would be definitely caught red – handed as his members were never able to hide his whereabouts.

He would seek opportunities for personal development. He would organise events that led to harmony between rival communities. Even if

these events were unfruitful, still he would go ahead with the plan. When elections were around the corner, he increased these activities so as to get votes from various communities, vote - banks and channelize it for his victory. He was reluctant to change his mistakes. It was felt as if rectifying his mistakes was against his manhood. Therefore, whenever Zahira would correct him, he would shout at her.

He would do his best in taking his gang members on the same page and move forward. But this was mostly not possible as his team members were unsure of their own abilities. He treated each of them equally. Even after this his team members were unhappy as he would reprimand them if they were wrong and this was not acceptable for them. His communication with the people of the slum was good as he appreciated their religious and cultural backgrounds.

He promoted equality and diversity by contributing to the funds of temple and Masjid development. His working with others was always a problem. If you want the desired results then you have to bring your members on the same page. This was done by Nagnath but then your team members must also trust you for this which was absent in the case of Nagnath. He would build his relationship with others, but in vain. So, questions of maintaining the relationship are out of debate.

He would empathise with others. This quality in him assisted in letting people trust him. This factor in him also made him not differentiate between people of other religions. He would take into account the needs and feelings of others; but would reciprocate according to his wishes which were disliked by many. He attempted to be a good role model for others. But for this people should heed him and take him seriously. This hardly happened. He was, after all, the leader of the gang. Why should he act according to the whims of others?

He gave encouragement to others. He created opportunities for his gang members to engage in decision – making but his members would not be interested. Therefore, they could never challenge him constructively. He acknowledged the roles, contributions and expertise of others. For election campaigning he fully trusted his members who did their level best in putting him in good light. But he was murdered in the police station and all the efforts by his members to win him the elections went in vain.

Managing services was a great obstacle for Nagnath. His plans were not properly heeded. Therefore, even though he set direction. It never materialised. He was incapable of evaluating the impact of his actions. So, his vision was never ever communicated effectively. He never

influenced others. His strategizing was very weak as it did not produce the desired results.

3. Swami Raghvendra –

Swami was overconfident about demonstrating his personal qualities. He assumed to be the best and would do the actions of others. He was well aware of his strengths and effectively channelized them to his benefit. He was a Sanskrit teacher in a government primary school. He used his talents to get entry into the temple premises as a teacher of Vedic texts. As the Vedic texts were in Sanskrit, he was in a better position to interpret them. As he was a Sanskrit teacher, the people did not question his teachings. Thereby, he went on to win the trust of the people of the village of Achalpur.

He analysed his merits and demerits and went on to become the Pujari of the temple. Because of his influential teachings, the people would perform pujas or spiritual activities only from him and were gradually stopped from going to other pujaris. Thereby, he became the chief Priest of the temple and the other pujaris were sidelined. He was not emotional and was a very practical man. His activities in the temple brought more people to the temple. He encouraged them to make heavy monetary contributions to the temple as doing so would help them to rise in the eyes of God. People would heed him.

This brought heavy revenue to the temple fund. He then later even went on to take charge of the temple finance. The chief Financier of the temple fund was not given any importance as he had influence over the people. Therefore, if the devotees came to know that he had disappointed Swami Raghvendra then he would not be able to live peacefully in the village. The other pujaris were helpless in this matter.

Swami would obtain feedback from the people and analyse it carefully. He would see to it that if there is any opportunity to make money then he would not hesitate to do so. People from outside the village would come to listen to his preaching on the Vedic texts. By this his clout extended to the people of far off areas as well. He helped himself a lot. He would distribute his workload among the people working for the temple effectively. Therefore, his temple activities went on smoothly. Nobody dared question its functioning.

He was invited by many organisations both inside and outside the village. He was called to inaugurate, to give lectures and even give advice. He promptly acted on all of these. He became a well – known figure. People were so mad at him that they would take the decisions only after consulting him. Swami charged for all of these and people did pay

him. With all the earnings he got he bought a car and would travel only in that. He made a comfortable house near the temple and it consisted of all the amenities.

His ethics were questionable. He would order his men to harm those who did not listen to him or not follow his plans. He ordered Ananth Kalshetty to murder the brother of Sathanand Kamble as the latter was a Dalit and Swami was fearful of his rise in the political arena. He never valued nor respected the diversity of religion or caste. He instigated his devotees to go against the Muslims and also the Dalits. He interpreted the Vedic texts accordingly. The people who were his devotees did not see the logic behind this and would blindly follow whatever he said.

He was the dominator and would ensure that people were under him. Therefore he was the centre of his actions. He never let anyone control him. Instead he controlled others according to his whims and fancies. He had interest in women and would utilise the temple funds in them. This angered the chief Financier of the temple. The latter would warn him but Swami would not listen. He even plotted to kill Swami. But he fell into his trap and was murdered eventually by the men of the Swami.

His management of the services was brilliant. He did this by employing the appropriate person for the job. Swami always ensured that he had trusted people on his side. He amassed a lot of wealth through temple work and maintained his clout by killing people. He directed people effectively but in the end we can see that he was caught for his illegal work of killing people, having illicit affairs with women and also amassing wealth which was unaccounted for.

He was effective at maintaining himself in the beginning but was not able to sustain himself in the end. His own devotees deserted him after knowing his dirty work. He lacked proper vision and therefore was not able to succeed in the longer run. Therefore, even though he was great in strategizing in the beginning, he failed in the end.

4. Sathanand Kamble –

Kamble was a total failure in demonstrating his personal qualities. It would be better to say that he was a dummy leader. He was elected to the post of the chief of the Shiv Shakti party not because of his abilities, but because of his caste. His party was only interested in the Dalit vote bank. Since the Dalit comprised a major population of the slum and the village combined.

All the decisions of the party were done by the members of the higher caste. He was not even aware of the same. He realised his party's decisions only after the execution of the same. He was called to

inauguration programmes. Therefore, people thought that he was an influential person. But only his party members and he himself knew the truth. He was not able to do anything because of his caste. Still, he never stepped down as he was happy with the post he was in and always lived a life of the rich through the money of the party.

He was neither emotional nor prejudiced; as he knew that his ideas were paid heed to, he never attempted to interfere in the affairs of the party. The party members made plans. The other heads of the party ordered their followers for the execution of the same. Therefore, Kamble never had any workload. All the workload was on the rest of the party members. He never challenged himself. He never went in search of opportunities to better himself.

Because of his position he was held responsible for the mistakes of the party. Being the face of the party he could not escape the wrongdoings of his party members. He was made the scapegoat. He did not possess the qualities of a leader. Therefore, people did not follow him, instead he followed them.

He was indeed concerned about the problems that the Dalits faced but since he was just an acting leader he could not do anything for them. When there were riots in the slum and the villages, he could not direct his party members to stop them. His party members themselves were responsible for the death of the Dalits in the slum and also the villages. Therefore, the Dalit community in the slum and the villages looked at him with contempt.

He could never work in the team. He never tried to develop contacts. He was a failure in making and maintaining the relationships. So he was trapped in a false bribery charge that was initiated by some members of the party. He was later arrested. Though he was released on bail, he was murdered by his own party members for want of a new leader and also gathered votes from the Dalit community on sympathy by fooling them that Kamble was murdered by the rival groups.

Kamble never managed services as his works were done by the people of his party. He never had to look after the affairs of the party. He never got feedback for his actions since people did not care about him. He could not set directions nor create a vision. He was an utter failure in the name of a leader.

5. Ranjana Kadam -

Ranjana demonstrated her personal qualities very well. Ranjana was very firm on her values. People trusted her for her values which they knew would never change under any circumstance. Her principles were rock

solid. She strived to learn from her experiences. She was well efficient in managing herself. As she was the head of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group, she organised and managed her team very well.

She continued in her personal development. She always saw to it that she was professional in her work and left no stone unturned. She always took feedback from both her team members and also the slum people from where she hailed. She acted with integrity. Everyone loved her for her honesty, except, obviously, her rivals. She was able to understand the problems in the mill and also the slum.

She analysed the problems and tried to bring about change in the slum with the help of her team members. Seeing the work done by her and the team is going to be beneficial for the entire slum, the men folk of the slum too helped her in her endeavour. The women group saw to it that there was no school in the slum. Therefore, the children would waste their time and loiter here and there. There were chances of them developing bad habits and ruining their health. Moreover, they feared that the male children would grow up and become ruffians whereas the girl children would grow up and become prostitutes. Hence, sensing the problem they came together to create a school for the development of the children.

Ranjana knew her strengths and weaknesses. She did her best in limiting her faults and working towards the growth of her merits. She was not an emotional fool. She never did her work with prejudices. She is able to garner feedback and analyse and act accordingly. She listened to people from various castes, religions and work backgrounds. Differentiation was never done by her. All this work produced a lot of workload which she was able to distribute among her colleagues and work together.

Her plans were flexible enough to change according to the situations and also the patterns of others. She was committed enough to see that the responsibilities that she undertook with the help of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group, were brought to conclusion. Seeking opportunities for the welfare of the people was always in her mind. It was tough but she was able to change the behaviours of the people working under her.

Ranjana took appropriate actions if any time there was a danger or compromise on the work ethics and values. Her rapport with others was always looked on with envy by her rivals. She developed networks by partnering with the educated people, social workers and also different party people; though she was looked at with suspicion when she stood up for election. She built her relationships with others and maintained it. She

encouraged contribution wherein an environment was created for others to contribute their part for the progress of the slum.

She actively sought the views of others. She empathised and was very well aware of the needs and feelings of others. Her effective communication with others helped her to gain trust. She instantly became a role model for others to emulate. Acknowledgement of the work done by others, were never missed by her. She recognized the common purpose of the team, was willing to lead the team and involved the right people at the right time.

Service management became a bit tedious for her when some of her team members especially, Surekha Mane, betrayed her for the growth of Mamachi gang. She held people responsible for their work; even if it was a good work or a bad work. Calculation of benefits and risks were done meticulously by Ranjana. She provided guidance. Performance of the work of Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group was done periodically and actions were taken accordingly.

She improved the services of the people. Superstitions were rampant in the slum. People followed stupid practices. They even did not consult the doctor for treatment of diseases. Instead, they would follow the rituals and customs of the villages they come from. Ranjana and other members of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group came forward and conducted various activities for the same in the slum. They went door to door to spread awareness among the people.

Ranjana was assaulted by the members of the Mamachi gang. Her right hand was amputated because of the assault by Bunty from the gang of Nagnath Balshetwar. This actually propelled the people to heed the work of Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group more actively than before. Thereby, Ranjana was always a headache for the rival groups. When she stood up for election, other leaders were afraid of her winning the election.

She set direction for the women of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group effectively. She identified the contexts for change by being aware of the range of factors which were to be taken into account. She applied knowledge and evidence gathered for the improvement of the people. Therefore, people from various religions and castes supported her even though she was a Dalit.

Ranjana made decisions using her values and was therefore able to make good decisions. She was influenced by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. His vision was also her vision. His philosophy of Buddhism was religiously followed by her. So, she was able to formulate a vision for her

slum people. She demonstrated confidence, self – belief, tenacity and integrity in pursuing the vision. She was able to frame, develop, implement and embed the strategies of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women’s Savings’ Group meritoriously. No wonder she won the election with a clear majority.

Conclusion

Some of us possess better qualities than others to be a leader. The leadership qualities in human beings must be properly channelized so that effective results are produced. A proper check and balance between different layers must exist otherwise there would be disruptions as seen in the novel *Bahujan* by Sharankumar Limbale. Take off the brakes of enforced control and people will choose chaos rather than order. The good intentions of the few are overborne by the innate evil of the many.

There has always been a mad race for being the Leader. People do many things to be a leader. To know who is the proper leader - a person who has genuinely worked for the welfare of the people -, it is necessary to analyze many factors for the same. The NHS Leadership Factor helps in doing exactly this. This framework has actually helped in analyzing the leaders of the novel sans their social, cultural and religious factors.

By applying the frameworks on the leaders - Ananth Kalshetty, Nagnath Balshetwar, Swami Raghvendra, Sathanand Kamble and Ranjana Kadam, I come to the conclusion that only Ranjana Kadam has proved to be the effective leader.

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