



**RESISTANCE TO REVOLUTION IN *KOLHATYACHA POR* (AGAINST ALL
ODDS) BY KISHORE SHANTABAI KALE**

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Abstract

*Kishore Shantabai Kale is known for his outstanding autobiography *Kolhatyachapor*, published in 1994, translated as *Against All Odds* by Sandhya Pandey (2001). It is an autobiography that documents the life of Kishore Kale growing up in the marginalised Kolhati community in Maharashtra, where the community's traditional occupation was Tamasha. The present paper attempts to analyse Kishore Kale's work, which employs a specific process of resistance that brings together revolution and aesthetic elements, primarily through the use of unflinching realism and vivid symbolism (e.g., the Tamasha stage, the act of chirautarna, and education as liberation). The paper is mainly to draw attention to Dr. Kishore Shantabai Kale's fight against all odds, which is a part of their life and how he shapes their career and becomes a doctor. Dr. Kishore Shantabai Kale's autobiography, *Against All Odds*, exposes his exciting journey. It demonstrates how resistance may become a revolution for those who have lost their identity and hope through perseverance, which may provide insight into how to live a meaningful life by conquering various challenges.*

Keywords

Challenges, Resistance, Revolution, Identity, Meaningful-life, etc.

Full Article

Introduction:

Kishore Shantabai Kale's *Kolhatyache Poris* is a popular Marathi Dalit autobiography. It is a powerful Dalit autobiography that exposes the brutal realities of caste, gender and class oppression in Indian society. Born into the Nomadic Kolhati community, traditionally performers and marginalised as untouchables, Kale narrates his journey from an illegitimate child, abandoned by his mother, to becoming a medical doctor after overcoming numerous obstacles. Kishore Shantabai Kale wrote *Kolhatyacha Por (Against All Odds)* "To reveal the plight of the *tamasha* dancers of this community in Maharashtra. In the process, he brought to light a lifestyle and a world that most of us were unaware of" (Kale, *Against All Odds*). The *Kolhati* community was originally a nomadic Rajasthani tribe that migrated to western Rajasthan. They first earned their livelihood by performing acrobatic acts. Later, they accepted the more lucrative work of singing and dancing. The girls of the community were trained in dance and music and were forced to entertain men to earn money.

Meaning of Resistance: Resistance refers to the act of opposing, fighting against, or refusing to accept something. It can be physical, emotional, social, or political, etc.



Social Resistance: Social resistance is the collective action, opposition, or noncompliance by individuals or groups against dominant power structures, social injustices, and oppressive, cultural, or political norms. It acts as a mechanism to challenge inequality, promote change, or resist unwanted reform when people or groups oppose social norms or injustice. protesting unfair rules, standing against discrimination, and cultural resistance (protecting traditions).

Social Resistance in *Against All Odds*: Social resistance means opposing unfair social systems, traditions, and discrimination imposed by society. It happens when individuals or communities refuse to accept injustice, inequality, or oppression. Social resistance is not loud or political; it is lived, personal, and survival-based. *Against All Odds*, the autobiography shows how lower-caste communities are trapped in a rigid caste hierarchy. Resistance here refuses to accept caste-based limits. The narrator's very desire for dignity and education becomes an act of rebellion. Wanting a better life is treated as "going against the system."

Resistance against Poverty and Exploitation: In the present autobiography, the Kolhati community faces hunger, hard labour, Lack of resources and social negligence. Yet, they continue struggling for survival and self-respect. This daily struggle itself becomes a silent resistance; they refuse to completely surrender to suffering.

Resistance against Social Humiliation: *Against All Odds* shows that the insults, exclusion, and social discrimination are a part of the Kolhati community imposed by the so-called specific community. Kishore Kale talks about the plight of women in his community. The Kolhati community forces its women to dance to attract male attention. Young, teenage virgins are given to men in a ceremony called 'Chira Utarna' with all the trappings of a wedding, but none of its sanctity. The man pays a fixed price for her virginity. As long as he visits her, she does not dance on stage and does not see any other man. But if she is abandoned by the man, she has to go back to the stage and earn money, which is appropriated by her fathers and brothers (Kale, 4-5). Instead of accepting humiliation as destiny, the narrator develops self-awareness and anger against injustice. That emotional refusal to believe "we deserve this" is a powerful form of resistance.

Resistance through Education: Education is one of the strongest forms of social resistance in this autobiography. By pursuing education despite poverty and social barriers, the protagonist breaks expected social roles, challenges the idea that certain castes "belong" only to manual labour, but they can prove themselves if society provides equal status for their upliftment.

Kishor Kale's *Kolhatyache Por* (1994), A Marathi autobiography, narrates the miserable and sorrowful life of a tamasha dancer and her son in the Kolhati community at the hands of their family members. The *Kolhati* community was originally a nomadic Rajasthani tribe that migrated to western Rajasthan. They first earned their livelihood by performing acrobatic acts. Later, they accepted the more lucrative work of singing and dancing. The girls of the community were trained in dance and music and were forced to entertain men to earn money.

Kishor Shantabai Kale wrote *Against All Odds* to reveal the unknown life of a Kolhati dancer and her illegitimate child. He has described the Kolhati dancer's and her child's first-hand experiences. The wellbeing of the Tamasha dancer and her son was never considered by the parents of the Kolhati community. They endured cruel treatment to make money. Thus, the Kolhati dancer's and her son's lives were made miserable and critical by the parents of the Kolhati community. The parents had relied entirely on the income of their sister and daughter. They made them join the Tamasha party against their will. To fulfil their material goal in the Kolhati community, the parents bravely took their son away from her mother. In order to gain greater advantages, Kishor Kale was taken away from her mother, Shanta. At the Tamasha party, the



Tamasha dancer and her son were given less credit. In the Kolhati community, parents deliberately prevented their daughters from getting married and to set in their lives.

Kishor was always conscious about his continuation of study in a critical situation. He always went to his school by avoiding many obstacles. He was asked to do many works on behalf of a family member. But sometimes he refused their order and continued his study. He denied working in the house and tried to study. He did not care about the trouble in his study. In the course of time, he was encouraged by Gawali Guruji, who was Shantabai's classmate. Here, Kishor, an illegitimate small child, lost an innocent life and worked hard for their parents. He was frequently beaten and harassed on trivial issues in the family. But he never stopped his hard work and study. He hoped for a better life and studied in a critical condition. It was his continuous attempt to liberate himself from the clutches of his parents' slavery.

He was always curious of his own education in such a terrible condition. He came to know that his destiny would not change without his education. So he was continuously struggling for the completion of his education. He did not bother about the obstacles that came in his path while getting an education. He did not have sufficient books and notebooks during his schooling. Everybody refused to give him money to buy books and pencils at his grandparents' house in Nerla. Kishor did not lose his confidence in his every hurdle and controversy. He studied day and night and appeared for the primary board exam at Salsa. Despite his awful state of education, he was constantly inquisitive and aware of it. He realised that without his education, his fate would remain the same. As a result, he was constantly fighting to finish his schooling. He didn't care about the challenges he faced while pursuing his studies. He didn't have enough books or notebooks for his studies. At his grandparents' home in Nerla, no one was willing to offer him money to buy books and pencils. Despite all of the challenges and criticism, Kishor maintained his confidence. He put in a lot of study time and went to Salsa to take the primary board exam.

He was frequently beaten and harassed on trivial issues in the family. But he never stopped his hard work and study. He hoped for a better life and studied in a critical condition. It was his continuous attempt to liberate himself from the clutches of his parents' slavery. Once, Kishor was sent to the flourmill with a small bin of grain. Actually, he had come straight from school and was hungry. Nobody was there to take care of Kishor. There was a big crowd at the mill, and Kishor was late for home with the flour with him. So he walked with the bin of flour on his head as fast as he could. As he passed the gutter, he heard pigs snoring and fighting in the dark. In the dark, he stepped into a pothole and fell hard on the ground. He was injured on his knees in his fall. Nobody bothered of Kishor for injuries and falls. He had to serve in the house during dinner time. While supplying food in the house, he fell with the filled plates and food scattered all around. On this occasion, Popat Mama started beating Kishor for his mistake of dropping plates. Thus, there were many occasions in Kishor's life when he received beatings and humiliation on trivial issues in his grandparents' house.

When Kishor was in class five, the work of household was increased. He didn't have much time to study. He had tasks to complete around the house, on the farm, and in the fields. On holidays, he had to take the cattle out to graze. He occasionally skipped class to carry the livestock as instructed. Sometimes, he used to miss school and follow the order to carry the cattle.

Kishor used to save enough money from his tour on Jalsa party to buy the books and keep the remaining money safe in his school bag at Barshi. For that he had done all kinds of works in Jalsa party. Once, Kishor did not find the money that he kept in his school bag. So he blamed his grandfather for that incident. But Kishor was abused by his grandfather for blaming him.

Kishor passed the sixth standard exam. After that, he was accepted into the seventh grade. He had another year to stay at Nerla. Nerla's school lasted until the seventh grade. Grandfather had little interest in Kishor's education at this time. Instead of going to school, he would advise



Kishor to work in the fields or join the jalsa party. Kishor was terrified and hopeless when he thought of his grandparents. When he was alone, he also quarrelled with himself. In his life, he often felt uncertain. He thought that every parent wished that her child should learn and achieve a respectable place in society. On the other hand, Kishor's position was something different. Nobody wanted Kishor to study and settle well in his family. Kishor was admitted to class VII at Sonpeth. So he was grateful and happy. The work of Kishor at Sonpeth was not easier than the work he did at Nerla. Mostly, it was troublesome for Kishor at Sonpeth. Here, Kishor had to go through physical as well as mental harassment

The struggle of Kishor in his childhood is one of the major aspects of this narrative. He had to live an undignified life while getting an education. Kishor felt nervous when his mother Shanta discriminated between Deepak and him. He got a secondary position in each and every activity in the family. Once, Kishor was caught while eating fruits all alone. As a result, he was scolded by Krushnarao Wadkar. He asked Kishor for the account of the household and yelled for not providing records: "You will be true to your caste, what can you be put thieves. Nothing and nobody can turn you into anything else" (Kale, 139). It was routine for Kishor to bear beatings and abusive words in his childhood in the family

The twelfth class was a crucial year for Kishor. He studied hard despite his innumerable difficulties. He surpassed every kind of obstacle that came in front of him while studying in the twelfth class. He was supported by Nagin Mausi from Parbhani, who was a wife of MP. His hard work helped him to get admission in Grant Medical College for MBBS. But it was once again difficult for Kishor to complete the course of MBBS. The days he spent during his education in MBBS were crucial and terrifying. He received every kind of harassment and exploitation in those days. He was helpless during his medical education on all sides. Kishor took immense efforts to adjust in medical college and its hostel. Kishor's life in the hostel was made difficult by the other students. They teased him constantly and played practical jokes on him. Hostel mates looked down upon Kishor due to his birth in the lower community. He was constantly ill-treated at the hostel. He had not received a dignified life during his education at the medical college. He had to work at the clinic while learning in Medical College. Sometimes he bought shirts and fabrics from Mumbai and sold them in Ambejogai and Parali to complete his need of money.

He received a regular scholarship, which was not enough to fulfil his needs. Financial problem was a major problem for Kishor during his medical education. In the course of time, he got the financial support from his friend and managed to complete his education. He was shocked by knowing the critical condition of Jiji, who only supported Kishor at his childhood at Nerla. He came to visit Jiji and wanted to cure her from her disease, but the family member from Nerla did not allow Kishor to take Jiji for treatment to Mumbai. They were fearful of the property of Jiji. So they were not pleased to send Jiji with Kishor for Mumbai. Kishor had gone through several problems while completing the education of MBBS.

He also supported her mother in her illness by providing money, which was received in the form of a scholarship. Besides, he helped Deepak to complete his twelfth class in critical condition. He had to take up several part-time jobs during his education. The burden of work and study made Kishore weak and thin. Fortunately, his friend Prasad interfered and saved him. Thus, the life of Kishor was full of troubles and hard work. Kishor did not forget Jiji who was his care taker in his childhood. He was indebted of Jiji in his childhood in different ways. So he intended to cure her of her disease at Mumbai J. J. Hospital. But Jiji was so influenced by his grandparents that she could stay with Kishor for treatment. Kishor tried to cure Jiji at his ability but Jiji did not want to live with Kishor. Jiji was a supporter for Kishor for his every need and obstacle during his childhood. He projected the pathetic and pitiable condition of the Tamasha dancer as: I was furious, not just with Jiji but with every Tamasha dancer who is bound to her father and brothers.



They are like birds in a cage who have forgotten what life outside the cage is like. They cannot survive outside because their fear kills them. (Kale, 191) It had been a very long and very tough journey for Kishor to live a dignified and successful life. He came across every hurdle and pitfall in his way of life. His close acquaintance with *tamasha* dancers and stay with them made him realize a darker truth of life. He says, “And most of all the sadness and despair of the woman behind their laughing facades affected me deeply and made me very depressed. For the women and for me, life seemed to hold no hope of happiness. In fact, their lives were sunk in a deeper darkness than mine” (Kale, 114).

In spite of all his difficulties and traumatic life, Kishore continued his education and became a doctor. He realised that education could create awareness among the people of his community. He desperately wanted to shake the Kolhati community out of their helplessness, and he went from village to village, sangeetbari to sangeetbari, talking to them, encouraging them to send their children to school, to give themselves a chance to come out of their mired existence. Wherever he went, Kishore found the community responding to his call (*Against All Odds*, p.x). The scenario is changing, and the condition of the Kolhati community has improved. “In the six years since the book was first published,” according to Kale, “Most of the *Kolhatis* have stopped dancing” (Kale, xi).

Historical and Social Context:

Kale’s story must be situated within the broader context of Dalit autobiography, a body of writing by oppressed caste communities that seeks to voice experiences usually silenced by dominant caste literature. Dalit writing often functions as a resistance narrative, uncovering hidden histories of violence, exclusion and exploitation. In Maharashtra, the Kolhati community, a nomadic and denotified tribe, has historically faced layered discrimination both for their caste status and for the gendered exploitation embedded in their performing traditions. Women in these communities often worked as dancers in *tamasha* troupes, a practice that, over time, became entwined with prostitution and reinforced gendered injustice.

Resistance through Autobiographical Voice:

One of the most significant forms of resistance in *Against All Odds* is the act of narrating one’s life at all. Autobiography itself, especially by an illegitimate Dalit child, counters the erasure of subjectivity that caste and gender hierarchies enforce. Kale, rejected by both mother and father, uses his voice to reclaim identity and dignity. “My mother managed to free herself of the binding ghungroos, but I, like a little broken bell, was dropped...” This quotation highlights not only personal suffering but also the social stigma of illegitimacy itself, a systemic barrier upheld by caste and patriarchal norms. In recounting lived experience without apology or romanticisation, Kale resists a culture that seeks to silence subaltern voices. His narrative style challenges dominant literary and cultural conventions that often marginalise or stereotype Dalit lives.

Resistance to Social Norms and Gendered Exploitation:

While the revolution in Kale’s narrative is personal, much of the resistance in the text targets gendered oppression within his own community. Critical readings note how women in Kolhati community, including Kale’s mother and other dancers, endure not just caste oppression but patriarchal exploitation that commodifies their bodies and labour. Kale exposes the paradox of communities oppressed by caste discrimination yet perpetuating internal hierarchies that subjugate women. He writes about women being treated as sources of income and sexual objects, denied autonomy and dignity.

This internal critique is significant; it shows resistance not only to the dominating caste system but also to intra-community injustice. By refusing to romanticise his own culture, Kale’s



autobiography pushes for a transformative revolution, one that demands gender justice as part of social emancipation.

Ambedkarite Influence: Resistance as Liberation:

Several scholars situate Kale's resistance within Ambedkarite philosophy, which advocates social equality, self-respect and structural transformation for Dalit communities. *Against All Odds* aligns with this vision by reconstructing identity not as a reactive stance against oppression but as a visionary site of empowerment. Ambedkar's emphasis on education as a tool of liberation is mirrored in Kale's life; his pursuit of a medical degree despite immense challenges represents a break from fatalism to self-determined transformation. In Kale's narrative, education becomes a revolutionary force because it enables the oppressed to imagine and enact a life beyond social limitations.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the autobiography *Kolhatyacha Por* (Against All Odds) powerfully presents the struggle against deep-rooted social traditions and the courage required to challenge them. *Against All Odds* is an influential documentary on individual and group resistance to the forces that want to marginalise and suffocate the voice of subaltern Indians. Through the interweaving of caste, gender, identity, and aspiration, Kishore Shantabai Kale's story shows that revolution does not always have to be violent or systemic in the conventional political sense; rather, it can be a revolution of self-reclamation and consciousness.

In resisting social norms, celebrating personal agency, and critiquing structural injustice, Kale's autobiography contributes to a larger Dalit emancipatory tradition that reshapes how we understand resistance not merely as opposition, but as transformation from within. The narrator wants to awaken his community from the age-old habits and customs through his journey of life. The narrator's struggle to achieve overall liberation Dr. Kishore Kale's resilient outlook on life and his use of optimism to overcome all of his challenges. It is clear that the author found his strengths, cultivated a strong sense of self-worth, and made use of his network of support to overcome the most trying circumstances. Dr. Kale's capacity to overcome a variety of challenges in his social and personal life. This has helped him to develop a strong, resilient mindset that allows him to grow from stressful and painful situations through self-healing emotions and hope. The life story of Kishore Shantabai Kale reflects the harsh realities faced by individuals born into the Kolhati community, where oppressive customs, poverty, and social discrimination restrict opportunities for change. The resistance to revolution in the narrative comes from rigid societal structures, cultural expectations, and the fear of breaking long-established traditions.

Despite these obstacles, the author's journey demonstrates that determination, education, and awareness can gradually challenge such resistance. Kale's personal struggle symbolises the fight against injustice and the desire for dignity and equality. His story shows that while society may resist transformation, individual courage and persistence can initiate meaningful change. Ultimately, *Kolhatyacha Por* highlights the importance of questioning oppressive traditions and striving for social reform. The narrative encourages readers to recognize the power of education and resilience in overcoming barriers, suggesting that even in the face of strong resistance, revolution and progress are possible through continuous effort and determination.

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