
JOOOTHAN: OMPRAKASH VALMIKI

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Abstract

Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography Joothan: A Dalit's Life details his experiences growing up in a Dalit household. Valmiki has revealed his own motivation for writing the autobiography in the foreword to the Hindi edition. He claims that Dalit people endure "excruciatingly painful, charred by experiences" lives. "Life events that were not able to be included in works of literature"

Keywords: Dalit's Life, Omprakash Valmiki, published, experiences.

Introduction

Dalit literature is Joothan: A Dalit's Life, written by Omprakash Valmiki and first published in Hindi in 1997; Arun Prabha Mukherjee translated it into English in 2003. The untouchables are a group of uneducated people who make up the lowest caste in Indian culture. Based on his own experiences, he describes the hardships endured by the Dalits, a caste that is not entitled to education or food but whose ritual duties include sweeping roads, cleaning cattle barns, disposing of dead animals, working in the fields during harvests, and performing other physical labour for the upper caste, including the Tyagi Brahmins. Yes, Joothan: A Dalit's Life is an autobiography written by an untouchable person and about an untouchable person, but it is also an autobiography for everyone. The author, Valmiki, is filled to the brim with indignation at the human suffering he endured in Joothan: A Dalit's Life.

In Dalit literature, the most important thing is not skill or aesthetics but rather the straightforward presentation of real-life experiences. In his teachings, Valmiki lays out the framework of his life's events. For many centuries, the people of India have been silenced; his tale gives them a voice. He has paved the way for us to learn more about marginalized communities and the people who live in them. Their narrative is under-represented in popular literature. A Dalit boy's rise to fame is chronicled in Joothan: A Dalit's Life, an extraordinary account of an uncommon Indian adventure. The narrative of Omprakash Valmiki's metamorphosis into a speaking subject is recounted, along with his courageous battle to endure a life of constant tyranny. The Subaltern can talk, as seen by Joothan in Valmiki. The narrative of this miraculous change from being mute to speaking is told in Joothan: A Dalit's Life.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. Vadivelraja R (2016) "A Voice of Protest against Racial Marginalized through Dalit Literature" was published in the "International Journal of English Research" by the author. This research delves into the fight for Dalit autonomy as expressed in Dalit literature, the most avant-garde artistic expression of the Dalit people. The phrase "Dalit," a pejorative term for a group of individuals who are compelled to work in filthy occupations such as shoemaking, butchering, sweeping, disposing of garbage and animal carcasses, guiding scavenging, etc., has just been introduced. By bringing the Dalit heritage back into the spotlight, we want to make a significant point: the name "Dalit" conjures up images of oppression and subjugation anytime it is heard.

Chintha Syam Sunder (2015) "The Meaning of Dalit and its True Perceptions by Indian Society and Dalit

Writers through Translations: An Analytical Study" was published in the "International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature." The author of this study explained the presence of Dalit literature by citing all of the existing literatures throughout the globe. This research posits that individuals of many social classes, castes, creeds, cults, and societies create literature in order to express themselves.

Dr. Darshini Dadawala (2016) was published in the "International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities" with the title "Dalit Literature - Concept, Origin and Features." This research delves into the origins and fundamental significance of Dalit literature. In light of the historical injustices and oppressions endured by the Dalit people, the scholar sought to provide an interpretation of Dalit literature. All forms of oppression, including but not limited to caste discrimination, marginalization, subordination, and injustice, were attempted to be included by the researcher. With these considerations in mind, the researcher has shown the significance of studying Dalit literature and its development. The fundamental goal of Dalit literature was to provide a voice to the voiceless. Its motivation to speak up for the rights of the oppressed helped it secure a prominent position in the expansive literary genre.

Farah Siddiqui (2014) published an article in "European Academic Research" titled "Dalit Literature: Issues and Trends." Through a historical lens, this research sought to illuminate the development of Dalit literature, tracing its origins and identifying its driving forces. The researcher made an effort to clarify many key concepts related to Dalit literature, such as "downtrodden," "untouchable," and "Shudra," so that readers might better understand the hardships endured by this community, which mostly consists of indigenous people, impoverished farmers, and women. This research proved that class prejudice manifests itself in a variety of forms, including the exploitation of Dalits in educational institutions, public spaces, and elsewhere.

Dasari Praveen and Dr. B. Raju (2015) published an article in the "Journal of English Language and Literature" with the title "Dalit's Voice: A Voice from The Margin." There has been caste-based prejudice for a long time, and this research included the impacts of Dalit literature on Dalits and society. According to the researcher, Dalit literature has had a significant impact on modern theories of psychology, sociology, and logic. From a Dalit point of view, this work portrays Dalit sensibilities, experiences, and personalities.

Main Section

The dreadful living conditions of the Chuhra people are described in great detail at the beginning of *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*. One of the worst things about that area to live was the awful sanitation and lack of basic public services. People and swine lived side by side because there was nowhere else to go. The writer's character was shaped by his formative years spent here. Omprakash Valmiki acknowledges in his introduction that his friend Rajendra Yadavji proposed the title *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* for his autobiography. The Hindi term "joothan" refers to the leftovers from a meal that are often thrown away in middle-class urban households. But for food to be considered "Joothan," it must be consumed by more than just the initial consumer.

Untouchability was one social evil that the writer saw as a child; the 'chuhra's' were servants of the upper-class Tagas, who mistreated them in many ways. He explains that at an era when "untouchability" was common, touching a Chuhra was considered a sign of contamination, even if it was OK to touch other animals like dogs, cats, cows, and buffalo. People did not consider the Chuhras to be human (*Joothan 2*).

Moving on, the narrator details the challenges he encountered while enrolled in school. The writer used to be the target of endless teasing from the upper-caste lads. His clothing were rags, and they used to make fun of him for it. No one was any different in this regard, not even the principal or instructors. Household and public sweeping was traditionally the responsibility of the Chuhras. They felt obligated to do it. Consequently, the school's headmaster requested that the writer do a school-wide cleaning. The Dalits

thought it was pointless to send their children to school. The writer's father faced open resistance from other Dalits when he requested that they take his children to school. They reasoned, "What's the use in sending him to school?" "When did a crow transform into a swan?"(6).

Therefore, apart from their homes, the Dalit children were subjected to torture and cruelty wherever else. The author had the good fortune to be born into a loving and supportive family. He overcame the challenges of being a Dalit because to the love and encouragement he received from his family.

Even as a young boy, the author knew that education was crucial to his future. He always achieved the highest grade because of his intelligence. The writer became a more educated person as a result of reading and writing. He dove headfirst into reading. He felt more confident after his findings. After the test, he was chosen to be the class leader and his seat was relocated to the front of the room. The author enjoyed school even if some instructors were rude. The reason for this was that the Tyagi community comprised the majority of both the pupils and the professors. At several points in his memoirs, the writer discusses the prejudice they encountered while attending school. "When we were thirsty during the exams, we couldn't drink from the glass," he explains. We had to cup our hands in order to sip water. Lest our bare hands come into contact with the glass, the peon would pour water from a great height (16).

The word "Joothan" is also introduced to us at this moment. The chuhras enjoyed eating the "joothan," or leftovers, from parties and weddings. They would devour them and even save some for when circumstances were tough. "What kind of life was that?" the author asks. Day and night, we toiled tirelessly, but all we got in return was joothan" (10).

From his early years until his adult years, Valmiki couldn't shake the societal issues that the chuhras had to endure. The author has a lifelong dream of attending elementary school in well ironed uniform. No matter how low-caste the Chuhra lad was, the dhobi still wouldn't wash his garments. In light of this, the author came to the realization that although poverty and suffering may be overcome, caste cannot. While reminiscing on his time in school, the author brings up both the instructors who supported him and those who mistreated him. As a result of the persisting practice of untouchability, Valmiki chronicles his suffering and isolation on several occasions. Extracurricular activities were not open to me, he says. I would often find myself standing on the periphery, observing from a distance. I, too, would wait outside the door at school gatherings while the play was being rehearsed, wishing I might have a part. Those self-proclaimed "offspring of the gods" just don't understand the pain of being a doormat (16).

By the time he reached the tenth grade, he was dead set on doing well in school so that he could go into college. Forced physical work, however, was imposed on him on the night before his math's test. He was instructed by a Tyagi to spend a whole day planting cane. He was embarrassed and tormented. His profanity "set my mind aflame," he explains. That day, my inner being was consumed by a fire. In my heart, the memories of the Tyagi's' atrocities still burn with an intense, crimson intensity" (57).

Despite being given rotis to eat, the narrator declined. He declared his refusal to consume it, knowing full well that the rotis were supplied not in good faith but in an effort to coerce them into working more and harder. Tyagi became enraged by the writer's rejection and resolved to physically assault him. But he got away from the torture scene in some way. Even his father felt irritated as he recounted the whole thing to him. The narrator's father believes that education is the best way to rise in one's caste. However, the author has a different opinion. The writer's father was unaware that education cannot change one's "caste," as he puts it. Only by being born into the correct caste can it be made better" (58).

Despite the terrible conditions, the writer recounted the experience of taking the board examinations. They used oil lights and lanterns as there was no power. On top of that, the neighbours were so noisy that it was hard to focus. Regardless of the narrator's enthusiasm for education, none of them cared. Everyone expected

him to abandon his studies and take up the chuhra's menial tasks. They wanted him to conform to their standards of behaviour, which included cleaning public spaces and burying animals. During this time, he started reading the writings of Saratchandra, Rabindranath Tagore, and Premchand.

Valmiki managed to get decent scores on his high school final test despite all the obstacles. Witnessing his name printed in the newspaper brought him immense joy. A member of the Chuhra community achieved a first: passing the test. The whole basti was in fact celebrating at the moment. In particular, the author acknowledges Chamanlal Tyagi, who came to offer his congratulations on the author's well-deserved accomplishment. Thanks to this modest gesture of a tyagi from a higher caste, the narrator gained faith in the power of education to elevate one's social standing. While growing up, the narrator was introduced to the Bhagavad Gita. Despite being too young to fully grasp the profound philosophical concepts discussed in the book, he was grateful for the opportunity to study it.

Valmiki continued his education after clearing the board test. He choose to study science as an elective. Even at this late date, his humble origins were already the object of mockery. He describes Omdatta Tyagi, a teacher who was "caste minded" and used pupils' caste as an excuse to humiliate them. The so-called progressive maths instructor is also named by him. He was afraid of losing his caste if he took water from a chuhra's hand, despite having a post-graduate degree. Education had failed to change the people's depraved attitude, as the writer makes abundantly evident.

Valmiki channelled his pent-up rage and resentment into his academic pursuits. He encountered fresh challenges in the shape of Brajpal, his chemistry instructor, while he was in the twelfth grade. His aspirations of doing well on the test were shattered. The notion of a student from a caste that was considered "untouchable" did not sit well with this instructor. Thus, he chose to subject the narrator to mental anguish by preventing him from participating in lab exercises. "I felt that whenever I went to the lab for practicals, Brajpal would keep me out on some pretext or the other," the narrator states (65).

Among those who did not do well were the writer's name when the results were released. Despite doing well in every other class, he was unable to pass the chemistry lab exam. A huge roadblock to his pursuit of further study was thrown in his way by this turn of circumstances. "I no longer felt interested in studying," he said. Decisions on what to do next eluded me. The world seemed to be closing in on me" (66). Their mother was taking in the narrator's elder brother Jasbir while he worked in Dehradun. He was the driving force behind his academic pursuits. The words "Come on, let this village go to hell" were his way of assuring him. Visit Dehradun and enrol at a school there. I can help you get into DAV College. To what end are you fretting? Next year, you will undoubtedly pass" (66).

He enrolled at Dehradun's DAV College. Things improved significantly. Conflicts with the Jatava community did not disturb the writer, even if they occurred sometimes. He became familiar with Dr. Ambedkar's works during his time in Dehradun. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's tireless fight to end untouchability served as an inspiration to the narrator. He was profoundly indebted to his buddy Hemlal, who had requested that he read Ambedkar's biography. In addition, the author did not correct his misunderstandings of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings until he read that book. While reading Ambedkar, he came to the realization that Gandhi had prevented the Hindu minority from becoming a majority by rebranding the untouchables as Harijans, rather than helping them integrate into mainstream society. He had turned the heads of the Harijans, but the higher castes were still furious with him for protecting their interests! My naiveté regarding Gandhi was utterly dispelled by the Poona Pact incident. What had broken Ambedkar's spirit was the Poona Pact. (72)

His speech goes on as follows:

"I learnt a new word, 'Dalit,' which is not a replacement for 'Harijan,' but rather the outcry of the millions

of untouchables." (72).

The writer's life took a turn for the better when she became acquainted with Hemlal. It was a tie that made the narrator more determined to succeed in life. The narrator got involved in several college activities over this time. Much to the dismay of his loved ones back home, the writer found himself swept up in the midst of the anti-English protests in Dehradun. Even his uncle forbade him to stay at his place because of all the late nights he spent "working" at college.

He became enraged and made a threat to return Valmiki to the community. Once again, Valmiki was determined not to slack off on his schoolwork. Therefore, he made up his mind to comply with his uncle's orders. From the bitter winter weather to the heartless reception he received from the wealthy, chaste Hindus of Dehradun, he endured much hardship throughout his time there. But after he had employment, his time of hardship diminished. After accepting an apprenticeship position at the Ordnance Factory, he dropped out of college. His father gave him a supportive reaction when he told him he had gotten the job. "Finally, you have managed to escape the 'caste!'" he said. (78).

No one can get away from the complex caste systems that the upper-class society has set up, as the author is well aware. "Caste follows one right up to one's death" (78), he explains. Having secured employment, Valmiki was overjoyed since it heralded a life of independence. During his apprenticeship, he started receiving a monthly stipend of 117 rupees, which, to him, was a wonderful figure. Despite everything going on, Valmiki never stopped reading. "Books were my greatest friends," he declares grandly. Their encouragement was crucial" (79).

The author passed a competitive test after completing a year of training at the Ordnance manufacture. This led to his transfer to Jabalpur for more education. "The new surroundings and the new environment gave me new experiences," he adds, confirming that it was very novel for him. With its enormous size, the hostel could comfortably house 500 students. Ten to twelve pupils would share one of the enormous classrooms. The pupils hailed from all around the nation" (84).

He also came into touch with Marxist principles in the new environment. Reason being, the school housed a large number of pupils with Marxist tendencies. When the author came into touch with Marxist literature, he or she began reading it. Marxism in Gorky's *Mother* and Anton Chekhov's masterful short tales were especially appealing to him. In an effort to preserve the Marxist legacy, the author became so engrossed in the concepts presented in these works that he joined a theatrical company. Along with poems, he started creating short one-act plays, which he would eventually produce and even perform. As a result of his bravery and doggedness, the writer—a destitute Dalit boy—was evolving from an unattractive duckling into a magnificent swan. "Jabalpur changed me," he claims. There was a shift in how I spoke. Even my manners evolved. People I befriended had a strong interest in current events and would engage in heated debates about them. Seminars and cultural events were among my participation. I got entangled in the literary life of Jabalpur. Additionally, I started to form my own opinions about books. Rather than literature with an aesthetic or formalist bent, I was drawn to social realism. (85)

Applicants were invited to apply for the draughtsman training program at the Bombay Ordnance Factory Training Institute at this time. After submitting his application, the writer was invited to Bombay to participate in an interview. Mr. Thomas, a senior instructor at the institution, made a generous donation that allowed him and his family to relocate to Bombay despite their terrible financial position. The vibe of Bombay, and the hostel library in particular, quickly became familiar to Valmiki. From Boris Pasternak to Hemingway, Victor Hugo to Pierre Louis, Tolstoy to Dostoevsky, Oscar Wilde to Emile Zola—he read it all in that library. Here he read Kalidasa's and Rabindranath Tagore's whole works. While he was in Bombay, he delved more into Dalit literature, especially Marathi Dalit literature. Daya Pawar, Nemdev Dhasal, Gangadhar Pantavane, Baburao Bagul, Narayan Surve, and Vaman Nimbalkar's remarks were

causing a fire to ignite inside him. The writer was energized by their ideals, and the inspiration to fight for the dalits and other oppressed masses, to whom he also belonged, came from their works.

The author spent his infancy in a modest hamlet, and in terms of untouchability, the residents of Bombay were no different. The borders of touch ability and untouchability were the dividing lines in his community, he explains. When I saw educated individuals in a major city like Bombay engaging in such conduct, I felt a boiling cauldron of anger spring up inside of me; the situation was that terrible in Dehradun and Uttar Pradesh overall (95).

Additionally, he recounts a family that, mistaking him for a Brahmin, became rather fond to him. They welcomed him with open arms and bestowed special privileges upon him since they assumed his surname, Valmiki, was that of a Brahmin. After Savita, Kulkarni's daughter, fell in love with Valmiki, she changed her mind when she learnt he was a dalit. The writer's mind was profoundly affected by this occurrence, which opened his eyes to the fact that being born into a high caste is the only guarantee of love, respect, admiration, and privilege. The fact that the Brahmin girl's affection was for a chaste Hindu and not for Valmiki as a person demonstrates that the Dalits are not considered human beings.

After accepting an appointment at the Ordnance plant in Chandrapur, Valmiki departed from the location with many mental scars. While he was a student in Chadrapur, he got swept up in the powerful Dalit Movement currents. It was in this region of the nation that he supposedly encountered the "wonderful glow" of dalit awareness. I had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for personal growth via my involvement with the Dalit Movement. Many of my friends distanced themselves from me as my engagement with the movement became stronger. They thought I had strayed from the straight and narrow and was hell-bent on stifling my own originality and skill. one hundred.

Despite Pitaji's objections, Valmiki eventually accepted Chanda as his daughter-in-law and the marriage took place around this time. Their early days as a married couple were fraught with difficulty due to the writer's lack of a home allotment in the government colony. However, the matter was resolved quickly, and Valmiki and Chanda began a blissful married life.

Providing dalits with self-dignity was the primary goal of Valmiki's later social activity. This is how he joined the Dalit Panthers and began fighting for the dalit identity that Dr. Ambedkar had proclaimed, along with many other prominent figures. the book detail the hardships the author endured while advocating for Dalit rights. The controversy his last name caused in literary and social circles is another topic he covers. While most Dalits would like to keep their caste a secret, Omprakash Valmiki had the audacity to preserve it as a surname, a direct challenge to the centuries-long dominance of the higher castes in Indian society. This surname is now an integral part of my name, he says with pride, praising the surname.

Without it, Omprakash is nothing. "Identity" and "recognition" are powerful concepts in and of themselves. The family of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was Dalit. A Brahmin instructor of his bestowed the moniker Ambedkar on him, which denotes a Brahmin caste name. Its connotation changes drastically when combined with "Bhimrao," however, and it becomes his identity. Without 'Ambedkar,' the word 'Bhimrao' today is meaningless. (132) In his last section of his autobiography, Valmiki emphasizes how caste is still deeply ingrained in their lives. Those in higher social strata enjoy this advantage, while those in lower castes, such the Dalits, face social disgrace because of it. Freeing these helpless individuals from the chains of tradition requires immense bravery and power. The depressing caste system is discussed by Valmiki in his own words:

In Indian society, "caste" plays a significant role. "Caste" decides a person's fate the moment they are born. No one can choose when they are born. I was born into a Bhangi family; why would that have happened if it were something anybody could change? Were the families into which these so-called heirs of our nation's

rich cultural legacy able to choose? However, rather than encouraging equality and freedom, the texts they use to back up their argument reinforce feudalism. (134)

So, Joothan is more than simply a reminiscence. What makes a Dalit's life story unique is the way it is structured such that the social order that moulded it may be studied and understood. The narrative perfectly captures the misery, shame, and poverty that Valmiki's people went through since they had to depend on Joothan to feed themselves. He relives his history in the autobiography.

How "his story" becomes a part of history is told there. He feels increased shame and agony as a result of dwelling on the past. "Valmiki moves from memory to memory, showing how the present is deeply scarred by his past despite the great distance he has travelled to get away from it" (xxxii), as Arun Prabha Mukherjee put it in the introduction (vii). With Joothan's help, we can see how historically marginalized people gain a foothold. This means that Dalit authors like Valmiki are not only creating new works of literature but also developing new theories and methods of literary analysis. They have succeeded in two ways: first, by challenging the dominance of the upper-caste literary elite; and second, by creating and publishing their own discourse in small, Dalit-run periodicals.

CONCLUSION

Furthermore, I believe that the goal of Dalit writing is to attain its own mission, which is the relentless pursuit of truth—the whole truth, not just a partial one. Living truth, social truth, and most importantly, written truth. Discourse on anvil is an exhaustive search for the truth of Dalit writing across time and space, across socio-geographical contexts on the Indian subcontinent, and by writers of diverse linguistic backgrounds, political leanings, and genders. Omprakash Valmiki proudly keeps his surname "Valmiki" throughout his life, even if he faces criticism from his family members. It goes without saying that it has become a well-known brand, particularly in the field of Dalit Hindi literature.

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