



Pains and Sufferings of the Dalit Community as Depicted in Omprakash Valmiki's *Jhoothan*

Mr. Pramod¹ & Dr. Shailendra²

1. Research Scholar, Department of English, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut
pkpramod45@gmail.com
2. Associate professor, Department of English, MMDC, Khekra

Abstract: *The autobiography of Omprakash Valmiki's 'Jhoothan' throws light on Dalit's life which is full of struggle and humiliation. It is a saga of promoting human dignity and assertion of being a human being like others. The present paper aims to throw light on the pains and suffering of the Dalit community as portrayed in Jhoothan. Valmiki's personal history is an edifying story of casteism winning in our society. The casteism is so much imbued in our society that it cannot be gotten away and Valmiki endured indistinguishable emergency due to that. It was a awesome assignment for Valmiki to be in sense with his self from the broken self. They have been enduring within the title of the caste framework. Their life is checked with disfavor, mortification, dishonor, concealment and segregation. Jhoothan is a collection of memoirs by Omprakash Valmiki in which he has investigated the issues of misuse of Dalits.*

Introduction: The term 'Dalit' a derivative of Sanskrit word 'Dal' which means to be crushed and destroyed, refers to the poor and downtrodden. According to Ghan Shyam Shah, "Dalit includes those termed in administrative parlance as Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward classes" (Shah, 8). Customarily, within the Hindu social arrange, they are set at the foot of the pecking order, considered Ati Shudras or Avarna and are treated as untouchables. Dalits are a blended populace of various castes and in Hindu society, Dalit state has been generally related with occupations respected as customarily debased such as calfskin work, butchering or expulsion of waste, creature carcasses and human squander. In preindependence India Dalits remained exterior the town and worked as manual workers and sweepers. They were isolated and prohibited from full cooperation in Hindu social life. Shockingly, indeed after autonomy, separation against Dalits still exists in rustic ranges in schedule things such a get to to eating places, schools, sanctuaries and water sources, in spite of the fact that it has to a great extent vanished in urban zones and open circles. Basically, "caste is a lived social experience in India more than a prescribed mode of social stratification" (Davy XV). In spite of the enormous changes brought approximately urbanization, industrialization and globalization, the bleak reality of caste tradition still looms huge over the Indian social arrange and has not appeared any considerable signs of diminishment.

As compared to the term 'Harijan' given to the untouchables by Mahatma Gandhi, the term 'Dalit' found a prepared acknowledgment among the untouchable communities all over India. It communicates Dalits' mindfulness approximately themselves as persecuted individuals and means their resolve to request freedom through a progressive change of the framework that denies them the openings to enhance their part. Bishop A.C.Lal considers "the word 'Dalit' as a beautiful word because it transcends narrow national and sectarian frontiers"(Lal,xiii). Arjun Dangle, a Dalit writer does not consider Dalit as a caste but rather ' a realization'

which “is related to the experiences, joys, sorrows and struggles of those in the lowest stratum of society” (Dangle, 264).

Significance of the Study: Collection of memoirs makes a difference the Dalit scholars to speak to the issue of caste more intricately than any other scholarly classes. It is set up that personal history offers the philosophy of marginalized issues which are hushed for a long time. Valmiki must be acknowledged for his sort determination. In spite of the fact that there are different classes of composing, it is critical or vital to look at the dialect and introduction which shapes the idea of what the creator needs to precise. Valmiki’s choice of personal sort is quite deliberate. It presents a survey of the oppressive caste system totally different ways. The creator in this sort is able to communicate a sense of not fair his involvement of torment, battle and enduring but includes the common condition of the full Dalit community.

About the Story: “Joothan: A Dalit’s Life”, is one such autobiography with a Dalit protagonist. It is an autobiographical account of Valmiki. The experiences portrayed in Joothan cannot be found in any other literary work, especially which represents his dwelling place, his home town ‘Barla’, his birth in Chuhra community, his struggle for his education, corporeal and psychological harassment, his conversion into a speaking subject, recorder of the oppression and exploitation he endured, not only as an individual but also as a whole for his oppressed community. These things were never represented in the archives of Hindi literature.

“Joothan: A Dalit’s Life”, bargains with severe encounters of Valmiki, as a Dalit within the society, particularly within the school and Connect College. Like all other town, the town of the hero is partitioned into a few quarters or divisions of distinctive castes such as Taga, Jhinwar, Muslim Tagis’ and Chamars’ which encompassed his Basti (ghetto). Valmiki’s house was adjoining to Taga’s house. The town lake close Basti made a division between the Chuhra’s home and other castes. On the edge of lakes ladies, youthful young ladies, more seasoned ladies, men, children were seen taking shits not stressing approximately uncovering their private parts in open. On the other side one can witness bare children, pigs, pooches and day by day battles as a part of their day by day way of life. Individuals spend time in talking about the fights that happened within the town. It appears as on the off chance that they examine something in a circular table conference. A genuine picture of the lower caste business is depicted.

Valmiki’s family lived in this Chuhra Basti. He was the youngest one in the family. Everyone in his family did some or the other work like cleaning, agricultural work and general labour under Taga’s, still they found it difficult to feed their hunger for a day. Nobody was paid for their work. The Chuhras were seen below the sub-human level and they were simply used as a material until their work was done.

Dalit Life and Everyday Violence: Om Prakash Valmiki begins his autobiography by stating, “Dalit life is excruciatingly painful, charred by experiences. Experiences that did not manage to find room in literary creations. We have grown up in a social order that is extremely cruel and inhuman. And compassionate towards Dalits.” (Jvii) Valmiki describes how his entire community depends on the leftover food thrown out by the upper castes in return for their hard but unpaid work. The entire community had to depend on the mercy of the upper castes who, instead of paying labour, exploit them. The title of the autobiography ‘Joothan’ literally means food left on an eater’s plate, usually destined for the garbage pail in a middle class, urban home. However, such food would only be characterized ‘joothan’ if someone else besides the original eater were to eat it. Valmiki, gives a detailed description of collecting, preserving and eating joothan. He was assigned the work to guard the drying joothan from crows and chickens. They used to relish the dried and reprocessed joothan. These memories of the past burn him with renewed pain and humiliation in the present.

Throughout the novel, Valmiki repeatedly narrates his experiences of pain as exclusion due to the continued practice of untouchability. He writes, “*I was kept out of extracurricular activities. On such occasions, I stood on the margins like a spectator. During the annual functions of the school, when rehearsals were on*

for the play, I too wished for a role. But I always had to stand outside the door. The so-called descendants of the gods cannot understand the anguish of standing outside the door.” (Jhoothan 16)

In another instance, he states how he was continually kept out of the chemistry lab ‘on some pretext or the other’. He tried to talk and complain to the principal about this. But no action was taken against the teacher instead he was not able to conduct any experiments for the entire year. He writes, *“Not only did I do very poorly in the lab tests in the board exam, I also got low marks in the oral, even though I had answered the examiner’s questions quite correctly.”*(Jhoothan 65)

In Joothan, Valmiki describes the harsh reality of his childhood in the village in the Barla district of Uttar Pradesh. He writes about the ill treatment done to him when he was at school just because he was an untouchable. He writes, *“I had to sit away from the others in the class, and that too on the floor. The mat ran out before door....sometimes they would beat me without any reason”* (Jhoothan 2). There was another instance when he was in Class VI. He was asked by the head master to sweep the classrooms and the playground. He states, *“The playground was way larger than my small physique could handle and in cleaning it, my back began to ache. My face was covered with dust. Dust had gone inside my mouth. The other children in my class were studying and I was sweeping. Headmaster was sitting in his room and watching me. I was not even allowed to get a drink of water”* (Jhoothan 5).

Joothan: Metaphor of Poverty, Pollution and Humiliation:

“During a wedding, when the guests and the bariats, the bride-groom’s party were eating their meals the chuhrus (the caste that the author belong to) would sit outside with huge baskets. After the baratis had eaten, the dirty pattals or leaf plates were put in the chuhras baskets, which they took home, to save the Joothan sticking to them the little pieces of pooris, bits of sweetmeats, and a little bit of vegetable were enough to make them happy. The Joothan was eaten with a lot of relish. The bridegroom’s guests who didn’t leave enough scrap on their palttals were denounced as gluttons. Poor things, they had never enjoyed a wedding feast. So they had licked it all up. During the marriage season, our elder narrated in thrilled voices, stones of the baratis that had leaf several months of Joothan”.

Trough this extract, valmiki goes on to give a detailed deception and eating the joothan after reprocessing it, during the hard days of the rainy season. The memories of his childhood associated with Joothan, often come back to haunt him and cause him renewed point and humiliation. At the first blush, the passage seems to be giving a glimpse of the scale of poverty and suffering due to hunger in valmiki’s community.

When the guests and bariats, the bridge-party, groom’s were eating their meals at a wedding, the chuhrus (the author’s caste) would sit outside with large baskets. To keep the Joothan from adhere to them after the baratis had eaten, the filthy pattals or leaf plates were placed in the chuhras baskets, which they brought home. Little pieces of pooris, bits of sweetmeats, and a smidgeon of vegetable were enough to make them happy. The Joothan was enthusiastically devoured. Those who didn’t leave enough brawl on their palttals were called gluttons by the bridegroom’s guests. They had never been to a wedding dinner before. So they’d lapped everything up. During the wedding season, our elder recited stones of the baratis that had leafed for numerous months in Joothan in ecstatic voices.

Another facet of the Dalit’s connection to pollution is their participation in the so-called ‘unclean’ occupation. As a result, some jobs are usually associated with persons who are believed to be beyond the pale of humanity. Indeed, the connection between the Dalit as a symbol of pollution and the polluting occupation is cyclical. What is the source of work pollution? Because Dalits are the ones who perform them why are the Dalits deleterious the environment? Because they work in polluted environments.

Valmiki’s mother approaches the landlord with a request for some fresh food for the children. ‘You’re taking a basketful of Joothan,’ says the landlord. Furthermore, you need nourishment for your children. Keep in

mind where you'll be staying. Pick up your basket, Chuhri, and begin walking. Giving of Joothan is therefore a procedure that assures that Chuhras do not forget their 'place,' and that the caste system and power structure are preserved. Giving of Joothan is not simply a charitable deed for the poor and hungry, but it also has a cultural/ symbolic connotation. It's also a way of depriving the Dalit of her humanity, dignity, and feeling of value, as well as committing her to a life of servitude.

Conclusion: it is quite clear to us that the Dalit writers through their autobiographies delineate their traumatic experiences they have faced in the in the Brahmin centric caste based society. Though, the situation has been improving with the passing of time. But, even after more than six decades of India's independence Dalits are still struggling for freedom, dignity and justice. Day in and day out Dalits are humiliated, killed, Dalit Women are raped, discriminated and various other human rights are violated. Incidents like beating, torture, arson, usurpation, molestation, rape, killing, and so on of the Dalit people by the caste- Hindus have become a regular feature of caste- ridden Indian society. Dalits are not safe anywhere in India.

Reference:

- Limbale, Saranakumara, and Alok Mukherjee. *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies, and Considerations*. Orient Longman, 2004
- Omvedt, Gail. "Ámbedkar and After: The Dalit Movement in India." *Dalit Identity and Politics*. Ed. Ghana Shyam Shah, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2001. 143-59.
- Shah, Ghanshyam. "Introduction: Dalit Politics." *Dalit Identity and Politics*. Ed. Ghanashyam Shah. New Dehi: Rawat Publication, 2001. 1-40.
- Valmiki, Om Prakash. *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*. Trans. Arun Prabha Mukherjee. Kolkata: Samya, 2003.
- Valmiki, Om Prakash. "Writing and Responsibility". *Journal of literature and Aesthetics*.8 (2008): 13-16.
- Valmiki Omprakash (2003), "Joothan: An untouchable's Life", Columbia University Press, New York, pp.xxxvi.
- Y. Jayanthi & R. Raajitha (2021) "Narrative of Pain in the Consciousness of Marginality : A study with special reference to Arjun Dangle's Poisoned Bread"; ISSN: 2321- 4708