

**DALIT ISSUES IN JHOOTHAN BY OP VALMIKI**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Omprakash Valmiki's Joothan as a story about the hegemony that is placed on persons of lower caste and class in Indian culture. The word "joothan" in Hindi literally translates to "food left on the plate," which is something that, in an urban home belonging to a middle-class family, is typically thrown out. However, in order for such a meal to be referred to as Joothan, it must first be enjoyed by another individual. Because Joothan is an Old English word that means "filthy," the name evokes both the sense of ritual cleanliness and contamination. In Joothan, Omprakash Valmiki discusses the theme of the perpetual humiliation that Dalits endured at the hands of Indian society, regardless of the location in which they lived. This humiliation is the result of the way that beliefs of Dalit inferiority have entered the minds of upper caste members. Over the course of centuries, members of the upper caste have gathered an incredible lexicon of idioms, symbols, and physical insults directed at the Dalit. This has resulted in this humiliation. It is deeply established in the literary and aesthetic sensitivities of those who belong to upper castes. Joothan makes his plea for the promissory note very loudly, adding his voice to the clamour of other Dalit voices demanding that they be given their rightful place in the spotlight. In the book Joothan, which is a manifesto for the radical reform of society and human awareness, the author poses perplexing questions to the book's readers about their own humanity and urges them to take part in the fight for the liberation of all people around the world.

Keywords: *Liberty and Humility, Hegemony, Untouchability*

INTRODUCTION

Omprakash Valmiki, a well-known Indian author, has provided evidence that the so-called "higher caste" in India is responsible for the subjugation and dominance of the general population. This study focuses on the ways in which the upper caste oppresses the scheduled caste by using a variety of tools, including as custom, law, religion, civilization, and the language of the ruling class. In his work Joothan, the author includes a character who is a member of a group of people who are considered to be peasants, labourers, or minorities. Even though Omprakash's exam was about to begin, Fauz Sing makes him work planting sugarcane on his field. Omprakash is the main character in this story. His inability to speak is backed up by a number of issues, all of which contribute to him feeling even more inferior. Examples of this behaviour include the head teacher, Kaliram, acting inappropriately at school, working unpaid hours for Tyagi's family, and excluding him from extracurricular activities at school. In every one of these scenarios, he is dealt an unfair hand. The people of Valmiki, who not only had no choice but to rely on Joothan but also took pleasure in their dependence on him,

went through agony, shame, and destitution, all of which are portrayed in the title of the book. Valmiki gives a detailed account of how to gather Joothan, how to store it, and how to use it. His memories of being assigned to guard Joothan and drying him from ravens to chicken, as well as the realisation that Joothan had been dried and processed again many years later, cauterise him with fresh feelings of humiliation and anguish. This book is, in a sense, an autobiographical portrayal of Valmiki's life, beginning with his untouchable birth and upbringing in newly independent India in the 1950s and continuing through his pride in being a Dalit today. It spans from the time of his untouchable birth and upbringing till the present day. On a different level, Jonathan is also a record of the condition of the people who are currently usually referred to as "erstwhile untouchable" or "exuntouchable."

The issue of who holds power in Indian society is brought to light by a comment that Douglas Bom made about Jonathan Per. The author argues in his criticism of Joothan Boom that Valmiki's use of the phrase "One can somehow get past poverty and deprivation but it is impossible to get past caste" exemplifies the rigidity of the Indian caste system, which has resulted in the socioeconomic oppression of thousands of people across India over the course of many years simply because they are members of a lower caste. The author's criticism of Joothan Boom can be found here. The author's untouchable Chuhra community in Uttar Pradesh is shown here in all their misery and despair, which are brought to life in this novel. The treatment meted out to those in scheduled castes was even more severe than that meted out to animals. The author illustrates how his present is terribly harmed by his past by jumping from memory to memory rather than following a straight pattern, as Bom continues: Despite the distances he has traversed to become one of the most well-known authors in Dalit literature, the author reveals how his present is profoundly damaged by his past. Valmiki reminisces about his childhood in the village that is located in the Barla area of Uttar Pradesh. He describes in his writing the harsh treatment he faced at school due to the fact that he was seen as untouchable. He describes the agony he felt when he was told that he would have to spend three days scrubbing the school courtyard rather than going to class with his colleagues who belonged to a higher caste and learning alongside them.

The intention of the author is to elicit in the reader a sense of empathy for the disadvantaged Dalits, while at the same time posing the question, "Why is my caste the only identity I have?" This one question encourages thought and introspection from the reader. Caste is a social and political category that has historically played a significant role in India's history. It makes little difference whether this is a political stunt or a disagreement over the policy of reservation for government positions and educational opportunities in order to assist socially and economically disadvantaged sectors of society. There are undercurrents of religious dogma and social stratification present in everything. Because of this, the book Joothan reveals to the reader the rigidity and narrow-mindedness of caste-based India, which is just as important today as it was in the early 20th century.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the ache, mortification and dearth of the invulnerable which the author belongs to.
2. To study the writer's struggle and to convert the disgrace of his untouchability into pride in his Dalit's identity through autobiography.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This essay examines the functioning of caste divides within the sociocultural context of the Indian caste system, focusing particular attention to individuals who belong to lower castes and the challenges they face. It is an endeavour to go into Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography in order to study his representation of caste and how a Dalit rebels against and fights back against the oppressive society. This analysis will be done in order to better understand Omprakash Valmiki.

It describes how the autobiography educates people about the caste system and enlightens readers on the oppression and segregation that the so-called suppressors and oppressors truly engage in. Additionally, it explains how the autobiography raises awareness of the caste system. It investigates and acknowledges the reasons behind the Dalit literature, as well as the extent to which Joothan links one Dalit sufferer to other victims. In addition to this, it makes use of his autobiography as a tool in order to obtain an understanding of how he has organised a resistance movement against this harsh communal structure that promotes caste-based discrimination. In general, it is vital to note how his work acts as a voice for his entire community, speaking out against the injustice and unfairness that have long been a part of their culture, and how it frequently serves as a representation of a shared trauma in his group. Speaking out against the injustice and unfairness that have long been a part of their culture is crucial since it has long been a part of their culture.

DATA ANALYSIS

This article examines the ways in which the topic of caste is presented in regional writings that have been translated into English from their original languages. The unconventional Indian autobiography "Omprakash Valmiki's, Joothan: A Dalit's Life" shook the foundations of canonical writing. The study methodology that was utilised was called content analysis. This is demonstrated by the narrative style in and of itself. It is one of the earliest Hindi books published in India after the country's independence that identifies itself as Dalit literature. This study makes an effort to summarise "Joothan: A Dalit's Life" in a way that is clear and easy to understand. The summary is crucial in order to have a clear image for the analysis. This is because reaching the conclusion that regional works are more direct and elaborate caste issues in a true way requires having a clear image.

"Joothan: A Dalit's Life" is an example of this type of autobiography that has a Dalit protagonist. This story is an autobiographical account written by Valmiki. The events that are described in Joothan cannot be found in any other literary work. This is especially true given that it depicts his residence, his hometown "Barla," his birth in the Chuhra community, his struggle for an education, physical and psychological abuse, his transformation into a speaking subject, and a recorder of the exploitation and oppression he underwent both as an individual and as a collective for his oppressed community. Joothan is the only literary work to do so. These concepts were never brought up in any of the works that make up the canon of Hindi literature.

The book "Joothan: A Dalit's Life" delves into Valmiki's distressing encounters with society as a Dalit, notably during his time spent at school and Inter College.

The hamlet that belongs to the protagonist is divided into a number of different quarters or sectors that each represent a different caste. These castes include Taga, Jhinwar, Muslim Tagis, and Chamars, and they all surround the protagonist's Basti (slum). The residence of Taga was found in close proximity to that of Valmiki. The Chuhra household was kept separate from those of other castes by a pond that was located close to Basti. People of all ages, including women, young girls, elderly women, men, and children, have been seen defecating on the edges of ponds without giving a second thought to their privates. On the other side of the wall, one may observe children, pigs, and dogs as well as people going about their daily lives while entirely naked. The disagreements that took place in the neighbourhood are currently the subject of a significant amount of discussion. As they appear to be having a discussion about something, they appear to be sitting around a round table. The style of life of the lower castes has been shown in an accurate manner.

The Chuhra Basti was a family estate that belonged to the Valmikis. He was the youngest of the members of the family. The entirety of his family did their part, in some capacity or another, to assist Taga with his domestic responsibilities, which included cleaning and general chores. In spite of this, they had a difficult time finding enough food to fulfil their appetite for even a single day. No one was compensated for the work that they completed. The Chuhras were considered to be lower in status than subhumans, and they were solely used as a resource up to the point where their duty was finished.

Throughout his memoirs, Valmiki stressed how important it was to receive a proper education. He was given permission to enrol in a fundamental elementary school, despite the fact that pupils from the Basti, Chuhra community were not allowed to attend. He begged the headmaster, telling him, "I will be forever in your debt if you teach this child of mine a letter or two" (2). The headmaster agreed to help. "Gandhiji's uplifting of the untouchables were resounding everywhere," despite the fact that the classroom doors of government schools had begun to open for untouchables, "the mentality of the ordinary people had not changed much" (2). The nation had been independent for quite some time. Their lower caste background followed them around at every step and caused problems for them. The members of the higher caste who taught him routinely beat and otherwise mistreated him. Valmiki makes the assertion that the sanctity of the Hindi language would be brought into disrepute if she were to parrot the teacher's insults. (4). It was expected of him to clean the schoolyard for the entire school day. It had a big influence on Valmiki's character since his father raised his voice when he heard Valmiki sweeping the schoolyard. This caused his voice to reverberate throughout the building and had an effect on Valmiki's personality.

A gathering for the purpose of demanding that they be compensated is held in the neighbourhood once every harvest season. They persist in being concerned about the Tyagis, who are members of an upper caste, but it serves them no purpose. Following the conclusion of the conference, all of the resolutions that they voted to accept will be null and void. In exchange for their labour, they will receive some grains, any leftover roti, and occasionally scraps. The joothan was savoured to its utmost during the time of year devoted to weddings. And yet, none felt any animosity, guilt, or regret for what had happened. When they sought for further compensation for the labour that they had already completed, they were met with the comment, "you are taking basket full of joothan and on top of that you want food for your children." These words slashed through the centre of Valmiki's being like a razor. Valmiki saw for the first time the characteristics of the Mother Goddess Druga in

his mother as she angrily threw the basket in front of a Tyagi named Sukhdev Singh. Some Chuhra were forced to ingest it despite the excruciating pain they were in since they had no other options for how to stay alive.

The admissions office gave Valmiki a very hard time about her application. His family was already in the midst of a significant financial struggle when he lost his brother. During this time period, he had a profound knowledge of literature, which helped him achieve first place in his class. Because of this, he experienced a boost in his confidence. After listening to Mahabharata's story of Dronacharya and Ashwathama when he was still in school, he gained the nerve to challenge his instructor. The educator stressed Ashwathama's low socioeconomic status by pointing out that the student did not receive milk but rather flour that was prepared by combining water and milk. When Valmiki saw that Ashwathama had been given flour and water mixed together as a substitute for milk, he asked his instructor from a higher caste, "But what about us who had to drink *ma*?" Why is there no mention of us in any of the epics? Why didn't an epic poet even bother to include our life in the work that they did? The attention of the whole class seemed to be focused on me, as though I had presented an argument that was without merit. "Darkest Kaliyug has descended upon us so that an untouchable is daring to talk back," Master Saheb shouted at me.

The words "However much you study...you will still remain a Chuhra" were spoken to Valmiki quite frequently by Tyagis (32), who was the teacher of Chuhra. These words gave him the impression that studying would be difficult, but his father's reassurance that he could "improve the caste by studying" (59) helped him keep his feet on the ground. As a direct consequence of his father's words, he had a surge of confidence and was further inspired to work hard in his academics. The history of his tradition saw a substantial transformation as a direct result of the effects of education. The ancient rite that belonged to Valmiki's caste was able to be deciphered by him. During the wedding season, the Chuhra are required to visit Tyagi's residence on a door-to-door basis in order to collect gifts while also offering *salaam*. It had been brewing inside of Valmiki for some time: the realisation that this practise amounted to nothing more than begging. The discomfort that Valmiki had with upholding such a legacy was observed by Valmiki's father. In regard to the wedding of his oldest son, he came to the conclusion that he wanted to break with this custom. His education was the sole factor that made any of this feasible.

The family to which Valmiki belonged was predominantly Hindu. It did not look as though he had any genuine interest in paying respect to any of the Hindu deities. His father confronted him with a demanding line of questioning, "Munshiji... Hope you haven't converted to Christianity.¹¹" The inquiries made by Valmiki, which began, "Neither am I a Hindu," were the same ones that Ambedkar posed. Do you believe that, if I were a true Hindu, the Hindu community would hold such contempt for me? Or harbour preconceived notions about me? Or do you try to fill every little thing with caste inferiority, no matter how trivial they may be? I have spent my entire life bearing witness to and suffering the terrible practises of Hindus. Why do caste dominance and pride only target those who are weak, and why are Hindus so callous and unforgiving towards Dalits? (2003) The Vlamikos

This issue has plagued him ever since he was a young child, and it continues to bother him to this day. Regardless of the cost, he did not even consider changing his religion. Because he wanted to be authentic in his identity, he did not feel any shame in acknowledging his Dalit origin.

The fact that Valmiki was the first person from his town to turn up for a board exam gave him a sense of accomplishment. He had just been thinking about his father's constant nagging at him to improve his "caste" by doing well in school. The Tyagis' family made their initial visit to Basti to offer their congratulations to Valmiki. The most important factor in bringing about this kind of change is education. His Basti people were motivated by this tragedy to place a higher importance on education for the children who would come after them. When Valmiki enrolled in his Inter-College, he did so in an effort to extricate himself from the dark abyss that was his suffering.

It was only during this time that he became aware of the caste movement, which motivated him to develop into a person who was powerful both physically and mentally. Following the completion of each book, he came to the conclusion that "a new word, 'Dalit,' entered my lexicon." This word is not intended to be used in place of "Harijan;" rather, it is an expression of the rage felt by millions of untouchables.... As I dug more into this information, I found that my anger was becoming more focused. I started having discussions about it with my other college friends and I let my teachers know that I had my reservations. This reading gave me the courage to do what I needed to do.

The fact that he started hanging out with Valmiki and the Jatvas was seen unfavourably by the people who lived in Indresh Nagar. He was troubled by the possibility that his education may be derailed once more. He was so dedicated to completing his degree that he didn't care how much it would set him back financially. Because of circumstances beyond his control, he was forced to give up his college education and begin working as an apprentice in the Dehradun Ordnance Factory. He joined without having any prior understanding of the mission; the only thing he was aware of was that he shouldn't be continuing the centuries-old practise of his ancestors. The choice that Valmiki made to work for the corporation was well received by his father. The words "At last you have escaped the caste" were spoken to Valmiki multiple times by his father (77). This letter was intended to convey our condolences to Valmiki's father, who was ignorant to the fact that "caste follows one right up to one's death."

During the latter part of his life, Valmiki went to Jabalpur in search of education. While he was there, he worked as an apprentice in an armoury. He gained new insight as a result of the novel circumstances and locations in which he found himself. His fellow students at the training institution gave him his first exposure to Marxist literature. Valmiki's efforts to establish a theatre company with these Marxists resulted in the performance of a number of plays within the Institute's theatre. After that, he began penning poems, short stories, plays, and even poetry, and he also began directing and playing. It was only the beginning of his interest with the theatre. In the meantime, Valmiki came to the conclusion that he wanted to take the AIME examinations; however, he did not have enough money to cover the charges, and as a result, his ambitions to continue his study were once again derailed.

During his time in Jabalpur, Valmiki went through a process that resulted in a tremendous transformation. Current events were always a topic of discussion between him and his friends. He was active in the community and attended cultural events and lectures. At this crucial juncture, he shown a deep interest in literature and started to think about it from his own point of view. He was less interested in the craft of fiction writing and more concerned with social issues. During this interim period, the operations of the Dalit Panthers had already gotten under way. He contacted the "Naybharat Times" in Bombay with a paper concerning Dalit concerns. The attitude of some of the students towards him shifted as a result. Because he had compassion for Dalits, they had begun investigating his caste. he had compassion for the Dalits. During this period, he was given the opportunity to read Dalit literature in Marathi. Dalit writers in Marathi literature posed a challenge to the preconceived notions of the genre. The sound of their speech invigorated and stimulated him. Reading Dalit literature caused a significant shift in his conception of what literature was and what it could accomplish. After a few days, he was transferred to Chandrapur in the state of Maharashtra. On December 27, 1973, Valmiki tied the knot with Chanda, the sister of his second bhabhi.

Valmiki was able to set his strategies into motion while he was staying in Chandrapur. He has a keen interest in participating in Dalit community duty. His motivation came from individuals like Dr. Ambedkar and Phule, who laid the foundation for the Dalit revolution and drew a large number of supporters. His compositions benefited from this new point of view as a result. Ambedkar's quest for Dalit selfhood is credited with significantly boosting the levels of self-assurance held by a big number of Dalits. In an effort to launch a significant uprising, the activists and leaders of the Dalit Panthers attempted to integrate Marxism and Ambedkarism as their guiding political philosophies. The recent increase in Dalit political influence was noticeable over the entirety of the state of Maharashtra. However, the memory of this incident was no longer present.

Marathi Dalit literature was brought to a wider audience by writers who came from the Dalit Panthers movement. In comparison to Marathi literature, the Dalit literary genre evolved into a more influential and forward-thinking form over time. It was a modem in every sense of the word, including the literal ones. The tensions within the country continue to rise to dangerous levels. The divide between Dalits and non-Dalits, which had been becoming wider, was not being addressed by anyone who looked to be making an effort to do so. Valmiki was a regular participant in gatherings that addressed issues pertinent to the Dalit community. He was not confined to the state of Maharashtra only. He started to get increasingly involved in the movement as it progressed. The more actively he joined in the rebellion, the more suspicion was created that he was aiming to overthrow the control of the higher caste. This is because the higher caste has traditionally held power. The majority of these untrustworthy people were of Savarna ethnicity.

The chance meeting between Dr. Sukhvir Singh, a scholar, critic, and poet in Hindi who works as a reader at Shivaji College at Delhi University, and Valmiki took place by complete accident. In addition to this, he did not approve of the surname "Valmiki." He suggested that he change his surname to "Khairwal" instead of his own name. He was concerned that, in addition, his identity might be revealed to the public. A significant number of Valmiki's friends and acquaintances persuaded him to change his surname so that he could better defend himself against upper-caste jokes. At one point, he participated in a conference where he delivered a

talk titled "Buddhist Literature and Philosophy." As soon as he reached the microphone, a spectator shouted, "How can a "Valmiki" be allowed to speak on Buddhist literature and philosophy?" Are you not ashamed of yourself? (131) This made Valmiki laugh, and he also saw it as an opportunity to learn something new.

A gathering of Dalits hailing from the five neighbouring states was held in Chandigarh. During the session, Dr. Dharmvir had instructed the group to refrain from removing it. It has become your badge of identity," and Dalip Singh had praised him on his last name during the conference, which motivated him a great deal. Both of these things happened at the conference. During the ensuing session of the conference, his remarks brought up a few points that sparked a significant amount of debate regarding the surname Valmiki. During the conference, there were a few Sikhs who were engaging in animated disputes with one another. No matter what you say, a Chuhra will always be a Chuhra. It doesn't matter. No matter how high an officer he may rise in the ranks, he will never be able to change his caste (131). In the end, the social structure was such that one's caste played a vital role in proving one's superiority, respect, and worth in the community. This was due to the fact that castes were assigned to people based on their birth order. It was not an easy assignment to finish the battle in a single day and emerge victorious.

The majority of Valmiki's acquaintances and family members requested that he conceal his last name from them. They thought that by looking at his surname, they might determine his caste. During one of the gatherings he attended, he discussed the reputation that his family name had earned him in the local community with Dr. Dharmir.

CONCLUSION

Valmiki has taken great delight in disclosing some of the most sensitive challenges, which for a very long time have been kept hidden from public view. Despite the fact that the circumstances have shifted, he has the impression that there is still something or someone upsetting him. By their own nature, Dalits are accustomed to a form of "intimidate syndrome," but in the case of Valmiki, it is exactly the opposite; by speaking up on behalf of his community through autobiography, he is able to emerge from the cocoon and confront the actual world in which caste exists. The drive that Valmiki had to write gave him the confidence to speak out against bigotry and injustice. In light of current events, it is necessary to admit that Dalits are no longer seen to be victims of oppression. As Dalits have progressed in society, they have profited from the ongoing study of Dalit literature, which has contributed to their advancement.

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