

# Exploring the Ignominy of the Dalit in Om Prakash Valmiki's Joothan

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## Abstract:

Literature has been studied and read for its own reasons since the beginning. Every day, new ideas are developed that offer fresh methods for studying literature. It served as a potent vehicle for writers to voice their outrage at the inexplicable actions of their fellow citizens. Literature not only amuses us but also informs us of past customs and traditions that were being practiced now.

Om Prakash Valmiki's Joothan: A Dalit's life is his autobiography, which tells us about the suffering in his society. Dalit autobiography is a literary genre that describes a person's life; it is a pretty unique experience. In his autobiography, Valmiki describes his humiliating life and the harrowing tale of how he had to survive by eating leftovers. He receives insults for meal leftovers simply because he was born into the Chuhra caste. He had cost prejudice because he comes from a poor income. Due to his religion, the so-called upper caste Hindus rejected his request for human rights. His schooling had been awful, agonizing, and incomprehensible. The purpose of the paper is to examine the description of the suffering that Valmiki underwent.

Key words: Joothan, Om Prakash Valmiki, Chuhra, Ignominy ,Autobiography

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## Introduction:

Om Prakash Valmiki wrote his autobiography in Hindi, and ArunPrabha Mukherjee later translated it into English. Contrary to non-dalit autobiographies, Valmiki's autobiography is rife with unpleasant memories. It draws attention to the suffering, humiliation, and exploitation of the helpless society throughout a millennium. In his autobiography, Om Prakash tells the story of oppression and subjugation. His panic attacks turn this autobiography into a painful story.

In the guise of caste and culture, Hindus from the high castes abused their own kin (the low caste

communities). Instead of lending them a helping hand so that they may live a life of respect and dignity, they mocked their poor economic and social situation.

Similar organ human beings were treated differently because of their birth in a typical society, which is completely out of our control. From his early years in school until he became a great writer, Valmiki was plagued by the high caste Hindus' obsession with caste distinctions. Despite the fact that nature had not discriminated against them, man overcame it and established his own order.

This paper's main goal is to explore a memoir as a story of suffering. In addition to its main goal, the study aims to critically analyze the autobiographer's traumatic experiences. To investigate the causes of the people's backwardness, which they had incurred as a result of caste systems.

All Dalit autobiographical writings are thought to be the account of suffering. Because of the difficult environment, Valmiki was able to develop into a successful person. Every dalit autobiography demonstrates social ascent. Valmiki endured more suffering simply as a result of his affordable birth. The memoir contains a lot of upsetting events. The title itself is quite suggestive, therefore Mukherjee purposefully left it unaltered in the English translation.

### **Valmiki says:**

“Caste is a very important element of Indian society. As soon as a person is born, caste determines his or her destiny. Being born is not in the control of a person. If it were in one's control, then why would I have been born in a Bhangi household? Those who call themselves the standard-bearers of this country's great cultural heritage, did they decide which homes they would be born into? Of course, they turn to scriptures to justify their position, the scriptures that establish feudal values instead of promoting equality and freedom.”

The phrase "joothan" refers to the food that is still on the diner's plate after eating. The Chuhra caste of Dalits had to endure this joothan because of their extreme poverty. Regarding this Joothan, Valmiki encountered some highly offensive situations. The high caste in the village, Tagas, employed Valmiki's mother to labour there. Every afternoon, she would receive leftover roti, especially those prepared with husk and flour and five seers of grain for every two animals. In addition to the leftover meals, her basket would also contain scraps and rotis.

The Chuhras would wait outside the home with a large basket for the leftover food during wedding rituals at Tagas. They would place the filthy pattals in the Chuhra's baskets after finishing their meals.

In order to eat the food on the leaf-plates, they would bring it home. taking pleasure in the little vegetables, sweet crust, and short pieces of police. Pooris would be made outside in the sun. On difficult days, these dried Pooris were a lifesaver. Only at wedding ceremonies in Tagas would the community be provided with this delectable food.

Despite the fact that it was leftover, it nevertheless served as sustenance for them. Valmiki would think back on those painful memories as he grew older. Seeing the regular social situation causes him to cry. Remembering his past days Valmiki narrates his words :

I feel amazed when I look back on those days and the things that I learned to tolerate. How much my ability to tolerate hurts flung at me has taken out of me!

Even after many years, Valmiki was unable to get over those unpleasant and humiliating incidents. His memories of the wounds were very recent, and he could still see the mirror scratches made by an iron. All those degrading, inhumane encounters left a lasting impression on him that scorched his life to the core.

Teacher, a civilized, logical, and educated person always sets an example for moral behavior in society. Parents and teachers both contribute to a child's personality development. Due to their love and affection, encouragement and instruction, and ability to help pupils stand on their own, instructors are largely remembered by their students. Francis Bacon in his essay 'Of Studies' stated: “Reading makes a full man; conference a ready man and writing an exact man.”

He describes a difficult and embarrassing event he had in school. Calling him, the school's headmaster requests his name. In response, Valmiki reveals his possessions to the scavenger caste of Chuhra. Upon learning about Valmiki's caste, the headmaster instructed him to build a broom out of a few of the trees of twigs and sweep the entire ground until it was as clear as a mirror. While the other pupils in

his class were studying, he spent the preceding three days sweeping and cleaning the ground. On the third day, while he was attempting to avoid the headmaster's stare, the headmaster snatched him up, jumped on his

neck, hauled him out of class, and the school's principal degraded Valmiki. The professors

and students utilized all available means to expel him from school after they insulted him. They were beating like animals.

Furthermore, the cruelty did not cease here; in fact, it continued to worsen as he grew older. He describes an instance of his teachers abusing him. In the school where he was pursuing his degree, a physical education teacher was terrorizing students. At the time of prayer one day, Ram Singh, a classmate of Valmiki's, was up to no good. Ram Singh was called Kala Dogra by the physical education teacher, who reprimanded him. All the boys laughed heartily at this word. Leaving all the students the physical education teacher was beating Valmiki's cousin very badly. He used vulgar language for both Valmiki and his cousin.

- In the case of Valmiki, caste-based treatment never changes. He endured anguish whenever he revealed his caste. His ascent through society served as a reminder that, contrary to popular belief, one's genius is unaffected by one's birthplace but that, in India, the caste system had killed off many abilities. He is given the chance to complete apprenticeships. His father congratulates him and remarks that you have managed to escape the caste system by conquering all of the obstacles.

## **Conclusion:**

By the above discussion it can be concluded with these words that this autobiography is full of painful things suffered by the author himself. He got insulted for the leftover food which he had been survived by the upper class Hindus. He had gone through many bitter experiences in his life only

because of his birth in low caste i.e. Chuhra. His struggle with the condition and caste biased mentality proved that a caste doesn't identify a person's capability. What matters in life is only knowledge, ability, good behaviour, social and moral characters of a person. All these things are very important for every successful person. This autobiography shows the ignominy of Valmiki in every step of his life. Further, this paper will help you to understand the detailed study of Om Prakash Valmiki's Joothan.

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