

ISSN: 2349-2147



Modern Research Studies

Editor-in-Chief
Gyanabati Khuraijam

**An International
Journal of
Humanities and Social
Sciences**

An Indexed & Refereed e-Journal

www.modernresearch.in

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**Volume 3, Issue 2
June 2016**

pp. 460–475

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The Unheard Voice of a Marginalised Dalit through Self Narration in Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*

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Abstract: Dalit Literature is one of the important streams of the Indian literature which was started by such authors who experienced caste and class based discrimination in their life which has been keeping them in the suppressed and marginalised condition since their birth. These authors, through their literary creations, give voice to suppressed and marginalised people who are unable to move with the pace of modernisation due to domination of hegemonic power of society. They opt for their native dialect for expressing the pain, agony, frustration and suffering of these marginalised groups in the form of autobiographies. Omprakash Valmiki is a distinguished name of this literature and his notable autobiography *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* leaves a deep impact in the mind of every caste and class reader. The autobiography represents the suffering of a whole marginalised Dalit community through the narration of the author's own life and hardships. The aim of present paper is, firstly, to illustrate the term 'Marginalisation' and 'Dalit' separately, and, simultaneously, it presents an overview regarding Dalit Literature and its relationship with marginalisation. Secondly, the author of the paper has opted Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*, translated from Hindi to English by Arun Prabha Mukherjee, as a case study to explore the hardships of

marginalised Dalit community, through Valmiki's experiences, in this globalised world where every man has a privilege to enhance his identity but the discrimination of superior class and caste desist marginalised people to join the mainstream.

Keywords: Dalit literature, hegemonic power, autobiography, Joothan, untouchable, hardships.

The first and foremost aim of every literary author is not only to highlight the social issues but to upgrade the condition of society through the awakening of consciousness. They select a certain social issue as an aspect for their literary creations from the contemporary society which assists human beings' conscience to eradicate the evils of society, and create a healthy environment for everyone to get a quality life with some hope and aspiration. Although, every author's aspect for portraying the lively image of society is different to one-another but the aim remains the same –to correct the psyche and deeds of human beings for the betterment of humanity. These legendary creations with a unique aspect leave a deep impact in the minds of the people for a long time. Indian literature, like other country's literature, is also having such type of authors who create creations in their respective vernacular languages and attract the perception of every class reader through the opted aspect for their writings. Some prominent Indian literary writers, like Bankim Chandra got fame for his romances in the imagination of Scott; Rabindranath Tagore wrote about upper-class gentry of Bengal; Sarat Chandra for middle-class life; and Munshi Premchand presented the condition of Indian peasants and humble workers. They selected their mother tongue as the medium of expression for their writings. These writers attract worldwide attention after translating their writings into other languages.

Marginalisation is one of the most crucial issues of the modern world. The term marginalisation refers to categorisation of individuals or groups who come under the margin of the societal parameters. These people get unfair and unjust treatment from the majority and stronger groups of society without doing any misdemeanors. This kind of attitude of a specific caste and class for marginalised people separates them from the mainstream society and compels them to remain in marginalised condition, from where these people are unable to connect their lives with the pace of modernisation. Some authors opt for this issue after observing the bleeding heart of marginalised people as an aspect for their writings.

The history of marginalisation starts from the stratification of a society on the basis of class, caste, sex, community, economic power and so on that divides a particular society into several strata. The marginalised groups have existed more in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, known as Third World Nations, than developed or First World Nations. Peasants, workers, laborers and other weak groups who are denied access to “hegemonic power” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 215) are the representative of this group. Marginalisation is a term which is used in post-colonial and postmodern period, and since 1970 onwards this term has become an area of study in history, anthropology, sociology, human geology, and literature.

The deplorable condition of dalits is considered as an outcome of marginalisation. There is a stream of literary authors who always indulge themselves in portraying the pathetic condition of dalits with different hues of kindness, humanity and sometimes with agony. The literature of or about dalits is known as ‘Dalit Literature’. This literature, which has come in shape at the very first Dalit literature conference accomplished in Bombay in 1958, is now one of the most important literary movements in the history of Indian literature which had emerged after independence. It got worldwide recognition after establishing an organisation of Dalit Panthers, which was influenced by “Black Panthers, who were engaged in a militant struggle for African Americans’ rights in the United States” (Mukherjee xii), by the Marathi writers cum activists in 1972. Like ‘Black Panthers’, the aim of this literary movement was to protect the rights of human beings and

condemn any kind of exploitation and discrimination which is deliberately imposed on the weakest section of society on the basis of class, caste, race, sex, and occupation by the higher authority. The coined word Dalit is derived from 'Sanskrit' language word *dal* which means to be crushed, grinded, oppressed as well as destroyed, and it is used for such kind of sections of the Indian society which are in the margin of the social stratifications. These people are known as Schedule Castes, Schedule Tribes, and Other Backward Classes in modern Indian administrative perspective. The formation of the term *Dalit* can be easily understood by the complex *Vedantist* kind of caste system that divides the Hindu society into four categories, *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, and *Shudra*, on the basis of castes. These four categories are further divided into numeral sections based on *jati*, *upjati* or caste based schism. The following *sukta* or verse of *Rig Veda* describes the supremacy and birth of a particular caste:

Brahmanoasya mukhmansit,
Bahu Rajnyah kritah,
Uru tadasyayad Vaishyah,
Padabhyam shudroajayat. (As cited in Prasad and Gaijan 01)

The meaning of the above *sukta* discloses that the Lord Brahma finds a distinctive place in Hindu society according to Hindu mythologies because He is considered as the Lord of creation and the whole charismatic world is the outcome of His creation. The *sukta*, moreover, depicts that a particular caste has been originated from a specific body part of the Lord as *Brahmins* were born from the face, *Kshatriya* from the arms, *Vaishya* from the thighs, and *Shudra* from the feet of the Lord. In the hierarchical caste structure, *Brahmin* find the first place who is "performers of rituals and keepers of sacred texts, the *Vedas*, the *Smritis* and the *Puranas*", second place for *Kshatriya* who is "rulers and warriors, patronized the *Brahmins* and commissioned the rituals, including the *yagna* rituals of animal sacrifices and gifts to *Brahmins*", the *Vaishya* gets third place who are "the cultivators and traders", and the last place, fourth, for the *Shudra* who are "servants and performers of menial tasks" (Mukherjee xv) like sweeping the streets, leather works, butchering, disposing the carcasses of animals, and removing the human excreta. The people of this fourth category do not

have the privilege to participate in auspicious ceremonies of Hindu social life and keep themselves out of the upper castes' colonies, temples, schools, eating places and water sources because it is believed that their mere presence in such places can contaminate the environment. This caste has always been victimised by the anger and fury of the three higher castes, and the behaviour of these three castes has become worst for the lowest *jatis* and *upjatis* of the *Shudras*.

It is true that only those people can understand the pain and suffering of others who have experienced it in their lives. Therefore, the movement of Dalit literature has been started by such kind of literary writers who belong to the lowest caste of society and witnessed the time immemorial victimisation since their childhood. This movement condemns the social system which is merely based on the hollowness of the caste and snatches away the basic right, to live liberated. The chief motive of this movement is to protrude these people from their suppressed plight and give a loud voice to break their voiceless Dalit position so that they can breathe in the fresh air of social, political and cultural environment. Eminent Dalit short story author Baburao Bagul exhibits the worth of Dalit literature as:

Dalit literature is not a literature of Vengeance. Dalit Sahitya is not a literature which spreads hatred. Dalit Sahitya first promotes man's greatness and man's freedom and for that reason it is an historic necessity.
(Bagul 56-57)

There are a few prominent personalities who have pensively worked on the alarming condition of socially ignored castes and classes to connect the life of these people with the mainstream society. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi are known as an oasis for the deserted and frustration of the lowest caste and class. Dr. Ambedkar, a notable leader of Dalit in the beginning of twentieth century, led an arousing zeal in them to identify their right and privilege which should be acquired by proper and accurate endeavors. He strongly opposed the *Vedantist* kind of stratification that strengthens caste based discrimination and believes that the teachings of Hindu religion are responsible for the gloom fate of the untouchables. He had burnt a copy

of *Manusmriti*, an ancient Hindu text, in a bonfire in his rage against caste based discrimination because Manu, who was the ancient sage who described the *Bhangi* or Dalit as “descended from *Chandala*, said to be the offspring of the union of between *Shudra* male and the *Brahmin* woman” (Magdum 11), and his texts have formulated the laws of untouchability in the society. Gandhi's extra ordinary efforts for uplifting the deplorable condition of untouchables would not be forgotten. He gave a fresh name – *Harijan*, the children and followers of God – to these people on the national level.

Omprakash Valmiki's (June 30, 1950–November 17, 2013) *Joothan*, considered as a milestone in Dalit literature, is an account of his unpleasant experiences, tyrannies and struggles which he faced from his birth to nurturing, from every phase and place of his life, which made him realise his marginalised dalit identity. He randomly paints his life experiences in the autobiography which are connected to each other through the dalit consciousness. The term *Joothan*, literary meaning is scraps left in its master's plate after taking his meal destined for garbage or for the pets, reveals the deplorable condition of *dalit* caste whose life is based on the mercy of higher caste people and has been compelled to accept *joothan* for their livelihood in the previous centuries. The author's detailed illustrations regarding collecting, preserving and eating *joothan* highlight the starving condition of marginalised *Bhangi* community. Martin Macwan has divided it into three classes, the first is “a food that which is fresh and not half-eaten; second that which is fresh but spoiled by eating, especially children's leftover; and third, stale food left from prepared earlier in the day” (Franco 261). The autobiography of Valmiki not only exhibits his painful experiences in different parts of India like Barla, Dehradun, Ambernath, and Chandrapur in Maharashtra but it highlights the unheard voice of the dalit and *Bhangi* community who faces a lot of exploitation, humiliation and oppression in every step of life due to domination of higher castes.

The sensibility of dalit literature fascinated other Indian dalit and non-dalit authors to join its mainstream, and they created commendable literary creations in the form of autobiographies. N.S. Suryavanshi's *Things I Never Imagined* (1975), Daya Pawar's *Baluta* (1978),

Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste: A Memoir* (2003), Bama's *Karukku* (1992), Vasant Moon's *Growing up Untouchable in India* (2001), Sharankumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* (2003), Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* (2003), Aravind Malagatti's *Government Brahmana* (2007), Baby Kamble's *Prison We Broke* (2008), and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* (2008) are the best examples of prominent writers with their notable dalit autobiographies which reveal the pain and frustration of dalits and shakes the consciousness of every class and caste reader through the torments of dalits which they face since their birth.

The autobiography begins with Valmiki's compassionate explanation about the poor marginalised social condition of his *Chuhra* community, through the filthy, unhygienic and not properly ventilated atmosphere of the residing colony. The locations of muddy houses of his community are "not only apart from the upper caste Hindu settlement; they are actually outside the boundary of the village" (Limbale 2). The unhealthy and decaying odour due to going out for latrine in the open space by the inhabiting people of the colony, the roaming of pets in filthy lanes, poor drainage and heap of animals' dung makes the atmosphere of the colony unhygienic and germ-infested which leads life-taking diseases in the colony. Valmiki writes about it, "There was much strewn everywhere. The stench was so overpowering that one would choke within a minute. The pigs wandering in a narrow lane, naked children, dogs, daily fights, this was the environment of my childhood" (01). Mulk Raj Anand, one of the founding fathers of Indo-Anglian literature, has portrayed, just like Valmiki, the atmosphere of the outcaste's colony, in pre-independence scenario, in his classic novel *Untouchable* (1935) which indicates that the marginalised condition of outcaste has remained untouched in post-independence scenario also. Although untouchability was legally abolished when independent India adopted its Constitution on 26 November 1949 it is still prevailing in India as a curse after the independence of almost sixty nine years. Anand exhibits the contaminated surrounding of colony,

A group of mud walled houses that clustered together in two rows under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, but outside their boundaries and separate

from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather-workers, the washer men, the barbers, the water carriers, the grass cutters and other outcastes from Hindu society. A brook ran near the lane,[...], now soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up[...]and the biting, choking, pungent fumes that oozed from its sides[...]And altogether the ramparts of human and animal refuse that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which lay within it, made it an 'uncongenial' place to live in. (Anand 1)

The Constitution of India gives the right to equality to every citizen of India through which every citizen, in any religion, caste and class, is equal and everyone has the equal rights. Even it opens the door of free and quality education for every child. But dalit children are restricted to get admission in school and somehow, if they get admission, they face different types of discrimination in their school through the domination of higher castes. Valmiki exhibits the hardships of his community for getting admission in the school through his sufferings. Valmiki's illiterate father, Chotan, wished to facilitate his son with proper education because the family of the writer believed that education is the only medium through which his caste could be improved and rehabilitated. Valmiki gets the admission in a school after the frequent visits and requests of his father, and with the help of Master Har Phool Singh. But instead of learning, Valmiki faces a lot of humiliation and exploitation there. He used to "sit away from the other in the class, that too on the floor" and sometimes he "would have to sit away behind everybody, right near the door. And the letters on the board from there seemed faded" (2-3). He had to wait for other person's, who belonged to higher castes, mercy for getting water to quench his thirst because he did not have privilege to take water directly from the pot and other sources. Valmiki further depicts the account of discrimination when he was forced by his teacher to sweep the school and its huge compartment instead of attending the classes which he was doing for three days until

he was caught by his father. It is not an easy task for a dalit to raise his voice against any injustice in the chauvinistic society of higher castes. But the writer's father takes a bold step against the discrimination which his son was enduring in the school. Valmiki gets influenced by his father's intrepid action and remembers it for the rest of his life, as a lesson, not to give up in front of difficulties and fearlessly raise the voice against every injustice and discrimination. He displays his father's fury against this injustice,

Pitaji snatched the broom from my hand and threw it away. His eyes were blazing. Pitaji who was always taut as a bowstring in front of others was so angry that his dense moustache was fluttering. He began to scream, 'Who is the teacher, that progeny of Dronacharya, who forces my son to sweep?'(6)

The writer depicts another exemplary action of boldness of his mother in a big function of the village. This episode is directly related to the title of the autobiography, and left a deep impact on the child Valmiki's mind. There was an awkward custom in the writer's village, Barla, in which the people of *Chuhra* community used to render their manual services in any big functions or rituals like marriage, and in lieu of these they received the remaining *joothan* from the plates of the guests in their respective baskets as a reward of their services. They did not have the privilege to get the fresh food directly from the kitchen. Once in a function Valmiki's mother asked the head of the family, Mr. Sukhdev Singh Tyagi, to get some more food for her hungry children but he said in abusive words, "You are taking a basketful of *joothan*. And on the top of that you want food for your children. Don't forget your place, Chuhri. Pick up your basket and get going" (11). These words pierced Valmiki's heart like a sharp dart, and made him annoyed till the last breath of his life. Like a lioness his mother made vacant her basket in front of Sukhdev Singh Tyagi and roared in her rage, "Pick it up and put it inside your home. Feed to the *baratis* tomorrow morning" (11). She left the door of Sukhdev Singh Tyagi in her full pace and never turned up again in her life. This action is the outcome of suppressed revolt of *Chuhras'* against Tyagi's hegemonic power which exploits and humiliates them in every step of life.

Apart from these people who did not miss a chance to humiliate Valmiki physically and mentally, there were some people who always tried to motivate him and appreciate his works and qualities. The writer recalls through his past memories how his pals like Sukkhan Singh, Shrivankumar Sharma, and Chandrapal Verma, from the hegemonic group, augmented his crushed moral as well as soothed his wrenched emotions. Valmiki became the monitor of the class when he got first rank in his section in the half-yearly examinations and his seat got shifted from the last row to the first row. This act increased his confidence and helped him to summon his energy in the pessimistic milieu. But there were some teachers like Omdutta Tyagi, Narendra Kumar Tyagi, Brijpal Singh, who were not supposed to be a teacher despite of their formal credentials and qualifications, and treated him badly for his small errors and never gave credit to him for his excellent performance so that he “would run away from the school” (03) and perform the menial jobs which his caste has been doing since time immemorial. They kept out Valmiki from extracurricular activities of the school. Due to dirty intention of his own teacher he could not pass twelfth standard practical examination. He further recollects the difficulties of *Chuhras*,

During the examinations we could not drink water from the glass when thirsty. To drink water, we had to cup our hands. The peon would pour water from way high up, least our hands touch the glass. (16)

The author portrays the condition of hunger and hopelessness of his marginalised caste in the autobiography through the example of his family. It used to happen several times in the author's house when no one could be able to get food to satisfy his hunger. Valmiki's mother boiled the begged small amount of rice in a big pot with mere water. Once the rice had boiled mother gave *mar* or rice water to the children for drink. This is the expression of extreme poverty and starvation that the children like *mar* more than milk, and the value of *mar* was more than cow's milk for them because perhaps they have not got milk in their life. This situation became worse in the rainy season because marginalised villagers did not get labour in agriculture, home and other

sectors for earning the wages. Valmiki paints the gloomy picture of his colony during this season as,

The lanes filled up with mud, making walking very difficult. The mud was full of pig's excrement, which would begin to stink after that rain stopped. Flies and mosquitoes thrived like clouds of locusts. It became extremely difficult to go outside. Our arms and legs would get smeared with dirt. The feet became mangy. The space between the toes filled up with reddish sores. Once these sores started to itch, they would itch non-stop. (19)

The restlessness of the author regarding the poverty and his helplessness to get rid of this marginalised position reflects his attentiveness in the lesson of Dronacharya which was narrated by a teacher in eighth standard. The description was written by Vyasa in the epic *Mahabharata* based on Dronacharya's utmost poor condition that was not able to get milk and, therefore, used to dissolve water in the floor in order to feed his hungry son Ashwatthama. Valmiki was empathising with the poverty of Dronacharya during the description because he found no difference between the condition of the character and his own. In this regard he inquired to the teacher, "So Ashwatthama was given flour mixed in water instead of milk, but what about us who had to drink mar? How come we were never mentioned in any epic? Why didn't an epic poet ever write a word on our lives?" (23). These questions exhibit the consciousness of the author for the subject of equality. Instead of the answer, the teacher shouted, "Darkest *Kaliyug* has descended upon us so that an untouchable is daring to talk back ... *Chuhre ke*, you dare compare yourself with Dronacharya... Here, take this, I will write an epic on your body" (23). The teacher's inscribed epic through teak stick still existed on the back of the writer which reminds him of the feudalistic psyche of hegemonic power and frustration of hunger and hopelessness. The above incident reveals that Dalits do not find any place in the society as well as literature. And this discrimination neither finds place in any epic, sacred books nor does any distinguished author present it through his creation.

There was an ironic post-marriage tradition in the *Chuhra* community in which the bride and bridegroom had to move around from door to door to do *Salaam* or salute in order to show their respect to the dominant group and receive some gift like old clothes, vessels, grain, pulses and sometimes cash from them. But quite often newly married couple received abusive words like, “The stomachs of these Chuhras are never filled” (31) in place of the gift. Marriage is an auspicious ritual in every religion because it unfolds a new inning of life. It looks very awkward that the couple, who should have begun their life with best wishes and benediction from the elders, get the gift of humiliation and embarrassment from the society. This act leads to a matter of great insult and mortification in the respect of a bride who has left her home with the expectations of new life and moves around door to door for *salaam*, and become the victim of anger and disregard of higher groups. Valmiki shows his agony against the tradition, “It is caste pride that is behind this centuries-old custom. The deep chasm that divides the society is made even deeper by this custom. It is a conspiracy to trap us in the whirlpool of inferiority” (33). This conspiracy was made by the higher group of society who wanted to dominate the lowest group just to expose their sovereignty over them. The author persuades his father not to pursue such kind of old tradition which makes his community down. He breaks the fetters of this reprehensible tradition of *salaam* in his brother's wedding and desist his brother-in-law to follow it. He argues in this regard, “The bridegroom goes from door-to-door at his own wedding. It is awful. The bridegrooms of the higher castes don't have to do that...This bride will also go door-to-go after she arrives in Barla...” (32).

The author shifts from his native place to Dehradun pursuing his XII standard. His lowest caste and failed certificate in XII standard examinations from Tyagi Inter College, Barla create hindrance to get admission in D.A.V. Inter College, Dehradun. After doing continuous visits, somehow he gets admission in the college but he faces once again the castigation based on his marginalised caste and poverty which he had faced in his village. The students' comments on his dress which was neither properly tailored nor according to the fancy life of a city college led him in the gloominess of inferiority. He recalls the moment

of frustration, “Many a time I felt that I wouldn't be able to complete my education. My Self-confidence had been badly shaken by my failure. I felt that life had nothing left for me” (67-68). But he summons his energy and gives direction to the constructive way. He indulges himself in the studies which helped him to transform his feeble personality completely. He used to go to the library of Indresh Nagar, where he inhabited, and studied the literature of eminent authors. Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu's *Dr. Ambedkar: A Biography* and some other books on Dr. Ambedkar awakened his restless consciousness against fundamentalist Hindus and their narrow-mindedness. He acknowledges, “The deeper I was getting into this literature, the more articulate my rage became. I began to debate with my college friends, and put my doubts before my teachers. It was this literature that had given me courage” (72-73).

Valmiki joined Ordinance Factory Dehradun as an apprentice for making his identity and get rid of financial crisis. After completing one year training there, he further got selected for Ordinance Factory Training Institute, Khamaria in Jabalpur and stayed there for almost two years. In this place he came into contact with the students who were “deeply interested in contemporary issues and constantly argued about them” (85), and formed a theatre group after getting influenced by Marxist learning. He said about Jabalpur, “Jabalpur changed me. My speech patterns changed. My manners also changed... I took part in seminars and cultural functions... I also began to develop my own views on literature. I was more attracted to social realism than to aestheticist and formalist types of writings” (85). From here he got selected to Ordinance Factory Training Institute Ambernath. He was pleased to see the scenic beauty of the hostel which was situated at the fascinating foot of Ambernath hill. The institute had an enriched library with huge collection of classics, and Valmiki “read Pasternak, Hemingway, Victor Hugo, Pierre Louis, Tolstoy, Pearl Buck, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, Romain Rolland and Emile Zola” and “the entire works of Rabindranath Tagore and Kalidasa” (87-88). He acquainted himself with the prominent writers of Marathi Dalit literature like Daya Panwar, Namdev Dhasal, Raja Dhale, Gangadhar Pantavane, Baburao Bagul, Keshav Meshram, Narayan Surve, Vaman

Nimbalkar and Yashwant Manohar who made him mesmerised for Dalit literature and its sensibility. In between all these things, he encountered the practice of untouchability, which was not expectable for him, in the metropolitan city like Bombay where people predict themselves modern and broad minded about social issues but, actually, they could not overcome from this practice. He reminds the incident, regarding Professor Kamble who got tea in a different cup which did not resemble with others' due to his marginalised dalit caste, which proved the author wrong about the metropolitan cities' life. It shows that merely the mode of treatment for untouchables has been changed in different places but the condition has remained untouched. He inscribes in the autobiography,

My village was divided along lines of touchability and untouchability. The situation was very bad in Dehradun and in Uttar Pradesh in general at this time. When I saw well-educated people in a metropolitan city like Bombay indulging in such behaviour, I felt a fountain of hot lava erupting within me. (95)

Valmiki unfolds the memories of Chandrapur in the autobiography where he was transferred from Ambernath. He got involved in Dalit Panther Movement and started a literary magazine named *Him Jharna*. He cites one incident which took place in 1984 in Malkapur of Amrawati district and exposes the dominance of *Savarnas* or upper caste. There was a chapter on Dr. Ambedkar in the seventh class and all the students removed that from their text books on the direction of a Brahmin teacher. The author wrote a poem entitled "Vidrup Chehra" in order to show his protest against this act.

Valmiki also portrays the other bitter experiences like the consistently occurring difficulties for getting education, the domination and suppressing attitude of higher caste for labourers, the mental and physical assaults, the low wages for dalits, the exhausted labour condition in landlord's agriculture fields, the ill-economic condition of family as well as the ill-treatment of society for dalits in the autobiography. These experiences seldom let his moral down in his life but he always indulges to find the possible ways to get rid of this

situation through books and its teachings. It is visible in the every episode of the autobiography that he did not accept these worst experiences as his fortune and raised his voice against it through proper actions.

The autobiography is not only an account of a marginalised author's bitter experiences in the Hindu chauvinistic caste society but it represents, through his isolations, insults, ill-treatment from society, discrimination, humiliation and an object of ridicule for the people of upper caste and class, the pain and suffering of whole marginalised Dalit communities who bear these disgraces since their birth in every step of life. Valmiki writes about the Hindu society in the preface of the autobiography, "We have grown up in a social order that is extremely cruel and inhuman. And compassionless towards Dalits" (vii). The author lucidly expresses that people gave him sympathetic, respectful, positive and normal treatment until or unless they did not recognise his caste. But once identifying his caste their attitude suddenly got changed and they detached themselves from him. Valmiki's own efforts and optimistic attitude helped him to understand the reasons for the deplorable condition of his marginalised caste. Through his experiences, fondness of books and literatures he realises that mere formation of the constitution is not the solution of abolishing the marginalisation in the Indian society but it is necessary to eradicate this practice from the psyche, behaviour, action and attitude of every Indian. In this way every human being, whichever caste and class he or she belongs, will breathe in the fresh air of twenty-first century, and no one will be a victim of any discrimination and injustice which would be based on social stratification.

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