



OMPRAKASH VALMIKI'S JOOTHON : A REMARKABLE RECORD OF A RARE INDIAN JOURNEY

Anu Nagar

Department of English (Phd. Research Scholar), Sunrise University, Alwar, Rajasthan

Email - nagaranu93@gmail.com

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Abstract

Omprakash Valmiki, a famous Indian writer, has shown how the so-called "upper caste" in India dominates and suppresses the populace. This study focuses on how the upper caste controls the scheduled caste by many machinery such as tradition, law, religion, culture, and language of the dominant group of people, who are truly in power. In his work Joothan, the author defines a character from the family of minorities, labourers, and peasants. Omprakash, the protagonist, is forced to seed sugarcane on Fauz Sing's land regardless of the fact that his examination is arriving. There are several evidences to support his muteness, which adds to his subaltern status. Dalit writing has made social equality and political involvement a literary theme, completing the unfinished task of economic equality. Man cannot attain total equality without achieving equality on these three concerns. This impeccable equality is fought for in Dalit literature.



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Introduction

Joothan, a work of Dalit literature by Omprakash Valmiki, was initially published in Hindi in 1997 and translated into English by Arun Prabha Mukherjee in 2003. It is a narrative about growing up as a 'untouchable' outside of a normal hamlet in Uttar Pradesh in the 1950s. Joothan is a bizarre record of a rare Indian journey, one that took a boy from extremely atrocious socioeconomic conditions to prominence as an author and social critic. Told as a series of piercing vignettes, Joothan is also a remarkable record of a rare Indian journey, one that took a boy from extremely wretched socioeconomic conditions to prominence as an author and social critic. Valmiki highlighted the bias they faced at school at several stages in his book 'Joothan.' "We were not allowed to sip water from the glass during

the tests," he claims. We had to cup our hands to sip water. The peon would pour water from a great height, so that our hands didn't come into contact with the glass" (J16).

In the newly independent India in the 1950s, Om Prakash Valmiki narrates his life as an untouchable, or Dalit. "Joothan" refers to food dribble left on a plate that are meant for the trash or animals. For decades, India's untouchables have been compelled to accept and consume joothan, a name that symbolises the suffering, humiliation, and poverty of a group condemned to dwell at the bottom of the social pyramid. Despite the repeal of untouchability in 1949, Dalits continued to experience discrimination, economic hardship, violence, and mockery.

"Dalit existence is brutally unpleasant, burned by events," Om Prakash Valmiki opens his memoirs. Experiences that were not able to find a place in literary works. We grew up in a society that was really brutal and inhumane. "As well as sympathy for Dalits." (Jvii) Valmiki tells how his whole tribe relies on the higher castes' leftover food in exchange for their hard but unpaid labour. The whole population had to rely on the compassion of the higher castes, who exploited them instead of paying them. 'Joothan,' the title of the book, literally means food left on an eater's plate, which is normally headed for the trash pail in a middle-class, metropolitan household. However, such meal would only be classified as 'joothan' if it was consumed by someone other than the original consumer. Valmiki describes how to gather, preserve, and consume joothan in great detail. He was given the task of keeping crows and hens away from the drying joothan. They used to love joothan that had been dried and reprocessed. In the present, these recollections of the past sting him with fresh sorrow and shame.

Valmiki was lucky to have a family that encouraged him to study so that he might escape the life that the rest of the society was living. The work is dedicated to his mother and father, both of whom are shown as heroic individuals who sought something better for their kid and battled valiantly for his safety and development. Valmiki's father's dreams for his kid are reflected in the nickname he gives him, Munshiji. In reference to this, Valmiki relates an episode in the book in which the headmaster forced him to clean the school's playground. "Just then, my father walked by the school," he says. When he noticed me cleaning the school grounds, he immediately came to a halt. 'Munshiji, what are you doing?' he inquired.

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 chuhra 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 stories of the baratis that had leafed for numerous months in Joothan in ecstatic voices.

The concepts in the passage is quite similar. The teacher's naturalness in requesting the 'height caste' student to gather the remaining food and distribute it to the Mahar pupils is the most remarkable and crucial of these comparisons. The verse, in addition to implying poverty and famine, also implies that the Mahars are filthy. Although the writers' class sameness and communities appear in all of these pieces, particularly in Akkarmashi, which may be taken as a witness to rural poverty. In the context of accepting leftover food, it is caste identity and the cultural aftermath that are foregrounded. When used in regard to anybody other than the stigma and prejudice those results from it, Joothan or leftover food bears the idea of ritual contamination, which distinguishes the Dalits from the other underprivileged categories of 'have-nots' in Indian culture. And it is the Dalits' affiliation with ritual defilement that is used to explain and justify the caste system's inhumane treatment of them.

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.

It is important to note that the term "pollution" does not relate to a lack of cleanliness. Announcing the news of a death or epidemic, as well as the pounding of wedding, burial, and celebration drums, are all considered polluting since they entail unlucky occurrences such as death and touch with animal skin. Along with Limbale, one encounters this irony in the logic of pollution in the following lines:

I used to clean clothes, bathed every day and washed myself clean with soap and brushed my teeth with tooth paste. There was nothing unclean about me. Then in what sense was I untouchable? A high caste who is dirty was still considered touchable. (11)

These lines include a variety of motifs and emotions. One, there is misery in being bound by a set of laws that contradict all logic and reason. Sarcasm comprises a appraisal of religion, rituals, and caste on one level, but it also reflects a feeling of helplessness in understanding one's powerlessness to change the dreadful cycle of pollution and caste despite poor sanitation on another. The following epigraph expresses certain feelings:

All I knew was that I didn't want to follow in the footsteps of my forefathers, who had been in the same line of work for thousands of years. Pitaji had received a letter from me advising him of my plan to drop out of college and study this technical job at a government firm. He was overjoyed. He kept repeating himself. At the very least, you've avoided "caste." But, until the day he died, he had no idea that "caste" followed him all the way to the grave. (12)

What is it about caste that makes it so tough to be expelled? The explanation is that caste is justified by the intellection of pollution, and the question of power is disguised inside the ideology of pollution. The way caste is expressed in the public arena is via the use of neutral, benign phrases like "rituals" and "custom." The power dynamics that caste entails are obscured by this sanitized portrayal. And it is here that Dalit life narratives play a decisive role in presenting a counter-narrative. This component is effectively revealed in Valmiki's life storey. The act of offering leftover food to the Dalits, known as Joothan, is an exercise of control by the higher castes. When all of the guests have eat at the wedding of the landlord's daughter.

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.

Saptarishi Mandal's book *Three Studies on Law and the Shifting Social Space of Justice* contains three studies on law and the shifting social space of justice. 'For those who live it, the human meaning of caste is power and vulnerability, privilege and oppression, honour and humiliation, abundance and hunger, reward and deprivation, security and fear,' says the author. Although Berreman considers this formulation to be diametrically opposed to the pure/polluted dichotomy. I'd like to propose that the two approaches to understanding castes are really complementary. Any endeavour to provide security justice for the Dalits, whether via legislation or otherwise, must confront the pollution and power matrix. (21)

Valmiki Further writes:

I was barred from participating in extracurricular activities. On such situations, I stood on the periphery like a bystander. During the school's annual events, while the play was in rehearsal, I hoped for a part as well. However, I was always required to stand outside the door. The so-called gods' descendants have no concept of the agony of standing outside the door. (16)

The lack of a Dalit vision or voice may be seen in today's national and worldwide Dalit liberation programmes. Through the medium of life histories, this article attempts to recapture that vision and voice. The text's writers speak for themselves, and as a result, they are turned into creators of new modalities of knowledge and knowing. Akkarmashi by Shrankumar Limbale and Antasphot by Kumud Pawde are two texts that are comparable to Joothan in terms of portraying sorrow and anguish. Joothan was released in 1997 and was initially written in Hindi. The term 'Joothan' refers to what a person leaves on her plate after she has done eating. The term has a 'pollution' meaning associated to it. In 1984, Akkarmashi, a land mark in Morathi, was published. Akkarmashi is a derogatory term for someone who is an outcast or has been born illegitimately. Antasphot, the third work, was released in 1981 and is similarly written in Morathi. It is said to be the first Dalit woman's storey to be published. Antasphot simply translates to "outburst." However, the author (Pawde) understands the term "thoughtful outburst" rather than "emotional outburst." For the purpose of this paper. This leads to the perception of the three texts as an unified storey with a polyphony of voices.

The Dalit life storey is a powerful rebuttal to the communication's beliefs on justice. Essentially, the storey portrays the Dalit as a person endowed with reason, dignity, and human rights. Invoking the imagery of the 'human person' as envisaged by current Human

Rights Paradigm, the tales have a modernist and global approach. Even when speaking in universalism's terminology, the subject gives fresh cultural meaning to concepts like deprivation, exclusion, and rights. The accurate recognition of these cultural meanings is critical to the success of both national and international campaigns for Dalit Human Rights.

Conclusion

Finally, this essay might be seen as a contribution to a larger conversation on Dalit justice in modern India. Reservation or distributive justice is the fundamental mechanism through which the Indian state views justice for Dalits. As the life narratives show, the /dalits' concerns about justice extend well beyond distributive justice and include so-called 'non-cognitive' themes such as fear, impotence, violence, and humiliation. The tales support Irish Young's assertion that reducing the concept of justice to resource distribution alone is a mistake. When it comes to justice, the notion of distribution should be specifically confined to tangible items, such as objects, natural resources, or money, for young people.

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