

## Portrayal of Subaltern's Voice Through Self Narration in Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*

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### Abstract

*Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography Joothan, which was translated from Hindi to English by Arun Prabha Mukherjee, is a landmark in Dalit literature, and leaves a deep impact in the mind of every class and caste readers. The author depicts the subaltern condition of his dalit community through self narration which is woven with his gloomy experiences like humiliation, discrimination and exploitation in the different parts of India due to the hegemonic power of certain groups of Indian society. The purpose of self narration is not only to present his agony against the hegemonic power and its discrimination but to raise the suppressed voice of subalterns. The aim of present paper is, firstly, to illustrate the term 'Subaltern' and 'Dalit' separately, and, simultaneously, it presents an overview regarding Dalit Literature and its relationship with subalternity. Secondly, the author of the paper has opted Omprakash Valimiki's Joothan: A Dalit's Life as a case study to trace the subaltern condition of dalits. The paper also portrays the hardships of the author for making his individual identity in this modern world.*

**Key Words:** - Dalit, Discrimination, Hegemonic power, Self Narration, Subaltern.

The first and foremost aim of every piece of literature is not only to amuse the society but to correct it through highlighting the social issues which are not fruitful for mankind as well as humanitarian perspective. Every literary author selects a different social issue as an aspect for his creation and tries to awake the consciousness of its readers for creating a healthy environment of society with certain hopes and aspirations for better life. These legendary creations with a unique aspect leave a deep impact in the mind of people for the long time. Indian literature, just like other country's literature, is also having such kind of authors who not only try to eradicate the social evils from society through their workings but to inspire the mind of people for creating an enhanced society without prejudice the fundamental rights of its inhabitants. 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, have selected their native dialect as the medium of expression for their writings. These writers attract worldwide attention after translating their writings into other languages.

The issue of 'Subaltern' is one of the crucial issues of the post-colonial studies because societies have always been categorised since time immemorial and subalternity is the consequences of these categorizations. The etymological meaning of subaltern is below the rank. The British Military officer used this term for their junior subordinates. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* explains the term subaltern as, "an officer in the British army below the rank of captain, especially a second lieutenant (p. 1434)." Some thinkers use this term for marginalized groups and the lowest classes. They explain subaltern as, "a person rendered without agency by his or her social status." (Young, Robert J.C., 2003) The history of subaltern is not clearly explained but Marxist philosopher and theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) who entered post-colonial studies after the influence of Subaltern Studies Group, a group of South Asian historians who were exploring the role of non-elite actors in South Asian history, used this term for the very first time in a non-military sense. But there is a lot of contradiction among scholars regarding it. Some scholars believe Gramsci, "used the term as a synonym for proletariat, possibly as a codeword in order to get his writings past prison censors, while others believe his usage to be more nuanced and less clear cut." (Morton, Stephen) Moreover, Antonio Gramsci's subaltern classes present the subordination of class, caste, and gender which are lower rank of human beings in the rigid stratification of South Asian sociology. Subaltern classes cover peasants, workers, laborers and other groups who were denied access to "hegemonic power". (Ashcroft p. 215) Subaltern is a term which is used in post-colonial theory and since 1970's onwards this term is regularly used as a reference to colonized people in the South Asian subcontinent. And now, this term has become an area of study in history, anthropology, sociology, human geology, and literature. Thus, Antonio Gramsci used subaltern for those groups of society who are victims of hegemony of the upper and ruling classes. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains subaltern's emotion in reality in her most famous essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak? (1985)" that the subaltern cannot speak until their conditions may not be historically improved. According to her subaltern is not a classy word for the oppressed. She explains:

[.....] everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern- a space of difference. Now who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subalterns. (de Kock, p.23)

In literature, subaltern is a non-western and post-colonial concept which is generally used for downtrodden belonging to the lower caste and class, weak sex and economically

poor groups in the rigid social stratifications of the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, known as Third World Nations. Peasants, workers, laborers and other weak groups are the representative of this group. The progressive historians started the Subaltern Studies as a project for revising Indian historiography on the basis of subaltern perspective. The main aim of this project was to collect strong and authentic historical evidences for covering maximum aspect of Indian history. For this thing, they collected and compiled large number of colonial and post-colonial India's social, economical and religious issues based on peasants and insurgencies. On the support of this project Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak comments, "The most significant outcome of this revision or shift in perspective is that the agency of change is located in the insurgent or the 'subaltern'" (Spivak, p. 330)

The historical background of Indian society unfolds that subaltern issues have been inseparable part of this society when the categorization and marginalization establishing here severely. The history of subaltern starts in India with the invasion of Aryans. Aryans conquered most of the part of Northern India and enslaved the inhabitants. Aryans used the word out-caste or the subaltern for these enslaved people and driven out those people to the Southern parts of India. Due to the domination and superiority of Aryans, this subaltern class was compelled to do menial jobs like cleaning human excrements, sweeping roads etc. Aryans, for making their powerful impact, enforced racial, physical and spiritual exclusiveness on their society.

The deplorable condition of *dalits* is considered as an outcome of subalternity. There is a stream of literary authors who always indulge themselves in portraying the pathetic condition of *dalits* with the different hues of kindness, humanity and sometimes with agony. This 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 the most important literary movement in the history of Indian literature which had emerged after the independence of India. 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-American' rights in the United States of America" (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 authorities. 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 cased based schism. 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. (Prasad and Gaijan, 01)

The meaning of 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, *Brahmins* 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 *Vaishyas* gets third place who is “the cultivators and traders”, and the last place, fourth, for the *Shudras* who is “servitors and performers of menial tasks” (Mukherjee, xv) like sweeping the streets, leather works, butchering, disposing the dead animal carcasses, and removing the human excreta. The people of the fourth category do not have the privilege to participate in Hindu social life’s auspicious ceremonies 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 pure environment. This caste always has been victimised by the anger and fury of the three higher castes and the behaviour of these three castes have become worst for the lowest *jatis* and *upjatis* of the *Shudras*.

It is true that only those persons can understand the pain and suffering of others who have experienced it before in their lives. Therefore, the movement of Dalit literature has been started by such kind of literary writers who belong to the subaltern caste and witness of the time immemorial victimisation since their childhood. The chief motive of this movement is to protrude these people from their subaltern plight and provide a loud voice to break their voiceless subaltern position so that they can breathe the fresh air in 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)

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 faces from his birth to nurturing, from every phase and place of his life which make him realise his dalit and subaltern identity. He randomly paints his life's experiences in the autobiography which are connected to each other through the subaltern consciousness. The term *Joothan* reveals the deplorable condition of subalterns whose life is based on the mercy of higher caste people and has been compelled to accept *joothan* for their livelihood for previous centuries. The author's detailed illustrations regarding collecting, preserving and eating *joothan* highlight the starving condition of subaltern *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 very 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 whole subalterns who face a lot of exploitation, humiliation and oppression in every step of life due to domination of higher castes. In this regard, the present paper is an effort to trace experiences of Omprakash Valmiki through his celebrated autobiography *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*, translated from Hindi to English by Arun Prabha Mukherjee, and explore the impact of subaltern caste in his life. The paper also illustrates the author's consistent endeavours to enhance his identity in the present world.

The autobiography begins with Valmiki's melancholic explanation about the poor social condition of his subaltern *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." (Limble, 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." (*Joothan*, 01) It is a matter of great irony that India is having its constitution which gives right to equality to every Indian, and the practice of subalternity is prohibited according to it but it is still prevailing in India as a curse after the independence of almost sixty eight years.

The author also exhibits the hardships of his subaltern community for getting admission in the school through his sufferings. His illiterate father, Chotan, wished to facilitate his son with proper education because the author's family 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, requests and begging of his father, and ultimately with the help of Master Har Phool Singh. But instead of learning, Valmiki faces a lot of humiliations and exploitations 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 caste, mercy for getting water to quench his thirst because he had not have privilege to take water directly from the pot and other sources. Valmiki further explains 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 subaltern 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 remember it rest of his life, as a lesson, that not to give up in front of any 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 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 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 subaltern *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, physically and mentally to Valmiki, there were some people who always tried to motivate him and appreciate his works and qualities. The author reminisces how his pals like Sukkhan Singh, Shrivankumar Sharma, and Chandrapal Verma, from the hegemonic group, augmented his crushed moral as well as gave soothing to his wrenched emotions. Valmiki became 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 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 subaltern caste is doing for 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 caste in the autobiography through the example of his poor family. It used to happen several times in the author’s house when no one could be able to get the food for satisfying 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 got milk in their life. This situation became worst in the rainy season because people did not get labour in the 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 subaltern position reflects through his attentiveness in the lesson of Dronacharya which was narrated by a teacher in eighth standard. The description was written by the famous sage

Vyasa in the epic *Mahabharata* based on Dronacharya's utmost poor condition who 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 exhibited 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 is still existed on the back of the writer which reminds him 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 in the literature. And, due to their subaltern plight, this discrimination neither finds place in any epic, sacred books nor does any distinguished author explore it through his creation.

There was an ironic post-marriage tradition in the *Chuhra* community in which subaltern bride and bridegroom had to move around from door to door to do *Salaam* or saluting in order to show their respect to 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 has made by the higher group of society who has wanted to dominate the subaltern groups just for to expose their sovereignty over them. The author persuades his father not to pursue such kind of old tradition which drags his community in the hell of subalternity. 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" of subaltern caste "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 for pursuing his XII standard. His subaltern 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 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 glamorous 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 it 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 awaken of 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)

After a few years, 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 this place, "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) He was pleased to see the scenic beauty of hostel which was situated the fascinating foot of Ambarnath hill after getting selection in Ordinance Factory Training Institute Ambarnath. The institute had an enriched library having 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 here 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 with 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 evils but, actually, they could not overcome from this

practice. He reminds the incident, regarding Professor Kamble who got tea in the different cup which did not resemble with others due to his subaltern caste, which proved the author wrong about the life of metropolitan cities. It shows that merely the mode of treatment for subalternity has been changed in different places but the condition has been 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)

The author unfolds the memories of Chandrapur in the autobiography where he was transferred from Ambernath. He involved in Dalit Panther Movement and started a literary magazine named *Him Jharna* from here. 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 class seventh and all the students removed that from their text book, because Dr. Ambedkar belongs to a subaltern caste, on the direction of a Brahmin teacher. The author wrote a poem entitled Vidrup Chehra in order to show his protest against this act.

There are so many critics of Valmiki as well as Dalit Literature who believe that this literature is merely propagandist and exaggeration of bad experiences of life, and refused to accept it as the main stream of Indian literature. Limbale responds about it, “if Dalit literature appears to be propagandist, it is because it presents Dalit writers’ anguish and their questions.” (Limbale, xix) Valmiki defends that this literature is not only the overstatements of bad experiences but it is the consciousness of dalits for their hereditary rights and liberties which had been exploited by the upper castes for the sake of the basic needs of the life. This literature is the awaking voice of dalit’s dormant consciousness and consciences, which is the outcome of “rebellion against the suppression and humiliation suffered by the Dalits in the past and even at present in the frame-work of the *Varna* system. A feeling of rebellion is invariably accompanied by an extreme psychological commitment” (Muktiboth, 267), for making a new social order based on the ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. This aspect of Dalit literature gives it a unique place in the world of literature. Valmiki shares his concern,

Dalit consciousness does not just make an account of or give a report on the anguish, misery, pain and exploitation of Dalits, or show a tear-streaked and sensitive portrait of Dalit agony; rather it is that which is absent from “original” consciousness, the simple and straight forward perspective that breaks the spell of the shadow of the cultural, historical and social roles of Dalits. That is Dalit consciousness, “Dalit” means

deprived of human rights, those who have been denied them on a social level. Their consciousness is Dalit consciousness. (Valmiki, 29)

Valmiki also portrays the other bitter experiences like the consisting occurring difficulties for getting education, domination and suppressing attitude of higher castes, mental and physical assaults, low wages, exhausted condition in landlord's agriculture fields, ill-economic condition of family as well as the ill-treatment of society for subalterns 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 the practice of subalternity through proper actions.

*Joothan* does not only depict the bitter experiences of Valmiki but it represents the voice of whole subalterns which has been stifled since the stratification took place in Indian society on the basis of class and caste. He tries to awake the consciousness of society for enhancing the identity of subalterns through the portraying of his isolations, insults, ill-treatment from society, discrimination, humiliation and an object of ridicule for higher caste and class. He 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." (*Joothan*, vii) He further illustrates 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. It is clearly visible in the every episode of the autobiography that the author has indulged to track the reasons of his subaltern caste. His experiences, accurate attitude, fondness of books and literature, and optimistic efforts help him to realise that mere formation of the constitution is not the solution of abolishing the subalternity in the context of Indian society but it is essential to eradicate this practice from the psyche, behaviour, actions and attitude of every Indian. In this way the right to equality would be efficacious in the Indian society in its real sense through which all human beings, without considering their caste and class, will take the breath in the fresh air of Independent India.

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