



EDUCATION AS A TOOL OF RESISTANCE IN OM PARKASH VALMIKI'S *JOOOTHAN*

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Article info

Article Received: 10/3/2023

Article Accepted:29/03/2023

Published online:31/03/2023

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.11.1.239](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.11.1.239)

Abstract

Many critical interpretations of Om Parkash Valmiki's *Joothan* are navigate by view that the autobiography depicts the Dalit people's trauma so passively isolated by the upper-class thinking that they so powerless to resistance, demanding their rights and need the change. Pointing towards the flawed understanding of this reading, this paper argues that resistance is a medium occurred in different forms in the novel. Om Parkash Valmiki is considered a founding father in Dalit Literature. His autobiographical book *Joothan* (1997) is a milestone work that starts a Renaissance in Dalit literature. This book explored the class, caste, education and myth in the Dalit community. His voice is an increasing awareness voice, mounting rebellion against the Upper class and Dalit ideology. His rejection of marriage and cutting animals represent the resistance in the Dalit community. This paper argues that radical opposition to the dehumanizing Upper caste ideology as Om Prakash develops in. This paper also emphasizes how resistance helps society by making their voice visible. It demonstrates the suffering and violence of Dalit people and how they are deprived to get an education.

Keywords- Resistance, Dalit Community, Dalit Renaissance and Education

Introduction

The pain of Dalit community faced for many years in undoubted unbearable. The dehumanization, humiliation and mental trauma they suffered for centuries leave deep hole in the mind that how one human being is so heatless and cruel towards another human being. One stand with aghast that how these downtrodden are put into outskirts of society. Their pain, trauma and limitless pain now came into main center when some of the Dalit writers talks openly about violence and pain in their books. Their autobiographies, biographies are presented to the readers to make them aware how will they fill if they would be in place of Dalits.

Literature presents the dark and bright side of the society, which reflects all the real side in the society. It has power to give voices of those people who are unspeakable for so many reasons as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Ranjit Guha also mentioned. Dalit literature not only deals with Harijans, Mallas, Chambhars, and Mangs, but also those who suppressed this people in their personal greed. Dalit Literature or study has roots before times before Kabir and Dr Ambedkar, Ravidas and Adi Hindu Mahasabha through their ideology and works, they create a consciousness among Dalit people. Dalit authors are not only represents their pain and trauma, but community voices through their works. The deprecate people suffers because

of lack of education, land and food nourishment. They got maltreated by the upper caste people. The people who lived in village, Basti faced more problems than any other area because they got exploited by the zamindars, and didn't get anything in return after working hard for zamindars.

Most people of our basti suffered everything in silence. Honour and prestige had no meaning for them. Being threatened and controlled by the higher-ups was on everything occurrence for the basti dwellers. (1)

The aim of this paper to express how Dalit writers uses autobiography as tool to express the trauma of Dalit people or community faced. The research paper is an attempt to show the resistance of Dalit people or community against injustice, violence and deprived rights on education. Barbara Harlow writes, "If resistance poetry challenged dominant and hegemonic discourse of an occupying or colonizing power by attacking the symbolic foundations of that power and erecting symbolic structures of its own resistance narratives go further still analysing the relations of power which sustain the system of domination and exploitation". Valmiki portrays the picture of Basti or village people who faced discrimination on their daily basis in *Joothan*. He asserts:

'We did all sorts of work for the Tagas, including cleaning their homes, agricultural work, and general labor. We would often have to work without pay. Nobody dared to refuse this unpaid work for which we got neither money nor grain. Instead, we got sworn at and abused. They did not call us by our names. If a person was older than we were, then he would call us "Oe, Chuhre." If the person was younger than we were or of the same age, then he would use "Abey, Chuhre." (53)

In the book, *Joothan-A Dalit life*, Om Parkash Valmiki writes "One can somehow get past poverty and deprivation but it is impossible to get past caste" (72). With this quote Valmiki express how caste system is deeply rooted in the society even though ones tried hard to rid off it. The novel *Joothan*

highlights that the situation of the Dalit is not from economic only but socio-political as well as the administrative built. The book is a story of a Chuhra boy who wanted to get away from the ancestors lives of trauma, but to build a name, to get and education, to help the other people from the society. It is a struggle of Valmiki from being born in poor family to get education and marry by choice by deconstructing the societal norms.

The translator of this book Arun Prabha Mukherjee, also express how this book enlighten her in a different way, "Joothan had a visceral impact on me because in writing his life story of being born in the Chuhra caste and growing up in Barla in North India, Valmiki spoke of the realities and contradictions of my society that had been shut out with thick walls of denial"

Resistance portrays not only the position of the condition of the voices of Dalits after the independence but also suggests the significant steps to be taken by the Bolsheviks. It is a kind of voice which is stepped out from all the odd norms. This form of resistance is born out of social injustice, oppression and political marginalization. The idea of Education is always considered complex in the 1950s. The education system was also divided according to the class of the people. During that time, it was impossible to imagine a lower class or a Dalit boy can get admission and education. This idea comes from the Mahabharata story of Dronacharya and Eklavya when Eklavya was deprived of archery because of his varna. It is the same story repeated in Valmiki's case when he got admission his headmaster kaliram was unhappy that how can a Chuhra boy can sit in the same room as others. "Kaliram, called me to his room and asked: Abey, what is your name? Omprakash," I answered slowly and fearfully. Children used to feel scared just encountering the headmaster. The entire school was terrified of him. "Chuhre ka? All right. See that teak tree there? Go. Climb that tree. Break brome twigs and make a broom. And sweep the whole school clean as a mirror. It is, after all, your family's occupation" (56).

Another episode of resistance, is recorded by Valmiki in *Joothan* when he asked questions to his teacher in the classroom:

Master Saheb 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 any epic poet ever wrote a word on our lives? (79)

Valmiki always put practical question to understand why there are no texts written on them. The teacher was angry that how can a boy from Chuhra community can ask such questions. This are not just a question of Dalit community boy, but from his childhood Valmiki resisting the all the odd norm that created for them such as breaking the rules of asking questions, sitting in the same class as other as mentioned in the *Joothan*.

The whole class stared at me. As though I had raised a meaningless point. Master Saheb screened, 'Darkest Kaliyuga has descended upon us so that an untouchable is daring to talk back.' The teacher ordered me to stand in the murga or rooster pose. This meant squatting on my haunches, then drawing my arms through my inner thighs, and pulling down my head to grasp my ear, a painful constricted position. Instead of carrying on with the lesson he was going on and on about my being Chuhra. He ordered a boy to get a long teak stick. 'Chuhre ke, you dare compare yourself with dronacharya...Here, take this, I will write an epic on your body.' He had rapidly created and epic on my back with the swishes of his stick. That epic is still inscribed on my back. Reminding me of those hated days of hunger and hopelessness, this epic composed out of a feudalistic mentality is inscribed not just on my back but on each nerve of my brain. (23)

Valmiki passed his seventh class with good marks and stand fourth in the class .But his achievements creates jealousy in the upper caste family, when Brajesh, an upper caste boy followed him, throw his books in the dirt and said 'You will remain a

Chuhra.....however much you study" (83). It express how community is structed when one tried hard to achieve something but the sackless of society pull the person down.

After the schooling in his native place, Valmiki joined another school for higher studies, he shared that how he was continuously kept out from the chemistry class due to his caste. Valmiki was good in studies but the discrimination by his chemistry teacher Brajpal Singh's made him to scoreless in the exam. He complained about it to everyone but nobody little care about him because of his caste and lower status. The whole year he was out of the class and couldn't conduct any experiment, He writes, "Not only did I do poorly in lab tests in the board exam, I also got low marks in the oral even though I had answered the examiner's questions quite correctly."(65). When his result announced, he was not only fail in a subject, but the spirit of a young boy who carries so many dreams in the eyes, also died that day. This incident of failure creates a deep hole in his mind and heart which made him to left his family and go to Dehradun for re-examination. But Dalit discrimination doesn't while changing the places, but it a lifelong discrimination which will only end when the Dalit person dies. At first the principal of D.A.V College, Dehradun refused to give him admission in the college, but after several days of pleading and begging he got admission in the college but the pain he felt during that times also mentioned in the autobiography, "Running around for my admission, I went through bouts of total hopelessness. My self-confidence had been badly shaken by failure. I felt that life had nothing left for me" (68). But it is not like that the big city admission bring joy and colours in the life, he was humiliated there also, beaten by high school kids who think Dalit people should outside the society. But at the end Valmiki learnt how to survive it, tolerate it and be a brave soul in spite of hurdles and obstacles. Valmiki says, "... I learned to tolerate. How much my ability to tolerate hurts flung at me, has taken out of me." (131). From being the first educated child in his community to become to give a new direction to Dalit life, Valmiki aware the people about human rights, protest and expression of pain, hierarchy on the base of caste

and class. Valmiki's struggle described as a life of challenges involved in the experience of reclaiming the Dalit identity not only for himself but for the whole community. It doesn't only give discrimination in the upper and lower caste, but also how there are so many layers in the Dalit community also. Through the education he wants eradicate the myth against Dalit people and express their culture Infront of the whole world.

To reach before conclusion it can said the Valmiki faced a lot of humiliation, exploitation and violence in his life. Therefore, the one best form of resistance start when he stooped participating in orthodox ceremonies as well as resisting against teachers teaching in the class. *The Joothan* dedicated to his father and mother who inspired him to resists against all the odd norms that created for Dalit community. Valmiki's father ambition for his son to get education, to study hard and no to do the ancestors jobs structured for them is created as nuance that how education is important for downtrodden to make their voice audible. *Joothan* not only inspire Dalit community but it gives a strong message all the people of marginalized community to wake up, to get education irrespective of hardship and to make their pain visible and put it in the centre.

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