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## Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan*: A Case Study Of Untouchable From The Subalterns' Perspective

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**Abstract:** The narrative of the Dalit Literature is a harsh portrayal of the Subalterns particularly to the people who have stigmatized identity in Indian society. Omprakash Valmiki by his Autobiography *Joothan : A Dalit's Life* (1997) pays tribute to the Dalit organic intellectuals who help to nurture the growth of a Dalit consciousness. The endeavor of this paper is to present the veracity of the society that dismantling anti-Dalit hegemonic discourse. The Theory of Subalterns discusses the condition and status of deprived class in Indian society. Thus, *Joothan* unfolds a task of celebrating, honoring and recognizing marginalized groups. The magnificence outlook of Indian Constitution lies in Justice that provides Equality to the underrated people. Article 17 of Indian Constitution asserts on the Abolition of Untouchability and Right to Equality.

**Key Words:** Dalit, Untouchable, Subaltern, Indian Constitution Article 17, Abolition of Untouchability.

A Subaltern is a one who has degradation ranking in a social, political, cultural, financial and other hierarchy. It also refers to the people who have been marginalized, depressed or oppressed. The textual and contextual discourse of subalterns emerged in the post-colonial studies. The transformative power of the text *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* (1997) had visceral impact of admonitions. The Readers of English texts can found the relevancy of Gayatri Spivak Chakrobarty's famous essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. The text *Joothan* enumerates another explanation to Spivak's essay that can the predominant society provide the comfort zone to the marginalized people to speak up about their torment, neglects, miseries, anguish, oppression, pangs and humiliations?. In the post-colonial texts and pre-colonial texts the disparity between the dominants and menials is visible with the evidence of experiences. By presenting the cultural, psychological and social reading of particular class and community, Omprakash Valmiki through his autobiography wants to redefine the principles of holistic development of society.

A saga of untouchability, humiliation and torments are experienced by Omprakash Valmiki, a renowned personality of Hindi Literature, who underscores on the dominance of high class of society in the humdrum of Indian life. He expresses Dalit Literature plays as a pivotal role in the struggle for social justice. His notable works are: *Sadiyon ka Santaap*(1989), *Bas! Bahut Ho Chuka*(1997), *Ab Aur Nahi*(2009), *Salaam*(2000) and *Ghuspathiya*(2004). His Autobiography *Joothan:A Dalit's Life* (1997) narrates the story of Caste and class

discrimination. The text is a magnum opus in the field of Dalit Literature. The life of downtrodden people was precarious for food, shelter, financial status, dignity and social justice. *Joothan* unfolds that: they were deprived of education, social position, political involvement, cultural engagements, medical treatments and they were not getting proper wages for their venture, proper meals and social liberty. Scramble for food, wages, badly treatment of high class were penetrating points of their survival.

*Joothan* is a challenging fiction that defines the monopoly and hierarchy in Indian Social system against the vulnerable class. Even in the post-independent India the status of deprived class is unequal to prosperous class. An Autobiographical elements of the text mark it as Dalit oriented literature that underscores the worst condition of marginal and subaltern. In school episode, one incident from Valmiki's childhood days how hard it was to enroll in primary school for elementary education. Child Valmiki enumerates the bad tempered, ill-treatment and swore of teachers in school days:

'The Chuhra wants him educated...Go..go'(pp 6)

'I was not even allowed to get a drink of water. I swept the whole day' (pp 6)

His headmaster called him: 'chuhre ka, mother fucker' (pp-5) and deployed him for the cleaning and sweeping of school playground and deprived him from education because he should choose the work for which he was born. All these were stratagems and torments for the child to run away from the school. The boorish behavior of teachers in the school were challenging for the boy. Through this spectacle society learns that the revolt, rejection and protest among the marginal groups are agitated by the sufferings of upper class. Spivak's subaltern means oppressed class and generally those of inferior rank. The text *Joothan* defined itself as an attempt to allow the writer finally to speak within the jealous pages of elitist discrimination and history in so doing to speak for, or to sound the muted voice of the truly oppressed.

According to Spivak, it is difficult for the reader to recover the voice of the subaltern and establish their view point. Colonialism and post colonialism both oppressed and tormented the Dalit and it is difficult for the subaltern to articulate their suffering, pain, agony, trauma, pangs because there is no space from where the subaltern subject can speak. It laid stress on the deafness arises out of Spivak's theory of subaltern silence which attributes an absolute power to the hegemonic discourse. Spivak's silencing of subaltern refers to the deprived class in post colonial India. Spivak's question: 'can the subaltern speak?' is ambiguous. This is because we don't know who asks this question—the subaltern or the superior imperialist. Subaltern has not lost its voice and the discussed autobiography *Joothan* is an instance of it. The post colonist's text contains a native voice. The colonial text's hybridity in the words of Homi Bhabha means that subaltern has spoken. The subalterns in colonial era have become intellectuals in postcolonial period. Both the colonized and marginalized have now spoken---thanks the Native/Regional writers in the postcolonial era. *Joothan* articulates exploitative tendencies of pro cultured people. The scolding of teachers, terrible suffering of village life like a hell, the privilege of Taga's and so on smeared the entire text into a Dalit oriented text. It is the temerity of the writer who spoke about famished condition of 'chuhras' in the reference of Dronacharya's dire poverty. Where who offered flour mixed water to his famished son Aswatthama in lieu of milk. Moreover, in this episode, the psychological cultural reading of the text offers a thought provoking disparity between higher and lower class as follows as author questioned:

'...what about us who had to drink mar?...why did not an epic poet ever write a word on our lives?'(pp-23)

'you dare compare yourself with Dronacharya' (pp23)

The feudalistic mentality imprinted not only on the back (swishes of stick) of the writer but also on the nerve of his brain. There was no question of idealism to imbibe anything with starving stomach in that so called cultured society. The theme of this autobiography is to bring in light the status of subaltern as hopeless, timid, meak and not only secondary but also to express the excruciating pain of themselves.

In Indian context, the term Joothan is a hindi word. It means leftover food or an ort meal on a plate. The title of the text is 'Joothan' and the subtitle of the text is 'A Dalit's Life' that contextualizes; the oppression, terrible pain, harm and compassionless attitude towards the oppressed class. It harshly indicates the view that Dalit is only for to take Joothan. The spark of revolt generated in the writer by the protest of his mother against Taga's tantrum. She refuses to take the Joothan from Taga's house. The entire text is based on resistance against privilege class. Author's mother's resistance is the sole voice of the whole expression in this text. Mother like a Durga Goddess has agitation in her refusal. The incident of his mother's life had changed the whole scenario of the society and the writer's living perspective too. The ecriture of the instance from own personal life recounts the tormented picture of the erudite.

To conclude, the voice of rejection, revolt and discrimination is reconciled in our Indian constitution. Indian constitution Article 17 stresses on the Abolition of untouchability. Untouchability is known to be a socially, culturally constructed concept that puts down specific disadvantage and underrated people simply based on their origin and menial work. The Right to Equality is as a fundamental aspect of our constitution and it serves a significant role in establishing economical, social and cultural fairness in our society. The Right to Equality is the foundation of all other rights and benefits. To eliminate disparities, to sublime the position of subaltern, to elevate the condition of culturally underrated people, to reduce inequalities, in this context Article 17 is significant for the social justice. Indian constitution Article 17 asserts eradication of untouchability that is important for the equal justice and that is the benchmark of equality. It gives equal position to all in our country. Article 17 has magical transformation of Indian society in the reference of deadening silence of untouchables. It brings a drastic change and radical transformation in Indian society.

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