



CASTE STRUGGLE AND CASTE ABUSES IN DOWNTRODDEN LIFE

(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO OMPRAKASH VALMIKI'S JOOTHAN)

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ABSTRACT

Downtrodden Life strongly articulates burdened status in Indian social system. Indian higher caste society use to tell Indian downtrodden as a Dalit. Etymologically 'Dalit' word comes from Sanskrit root word 'dal', which means in Hindi 'Dal' it means in English to crack open, to spilt, to crush, to grind. It has generally been using as a verb to describe the process of processing food grains and lentils. It's symbolic usage; still as a verb and it has been seen in descriptions of conflict and conquering of opponents. Maharashtrian social reformist Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Indian Constitution architect Dr. B. R. Ambedkar are the two towering figures in the pantheon of Dalit history, have been remained as the first social campaigner in the early decades of twentieth century to define the extreme oppression of untouchables such; as suffering, frustrations, expectations and groaning of the entire cosmos. The name donated by Gandhiji with an apparent goodwill had been used the specific word for downtrodden such as; Harijan which evoked the people of God but on the real ground downtrodden had been surviving the discomfort and conflict life in Indian caste hierarchical social system. To look upon downtrodden Indian higher caste people have been using the various names and labels as a state wise and region wise to describe the untouchable communities all over India such as; Achut, Pannchamas, Shudra, Atishudra, Avarnas, Antyajas, Asparshyas, Pariah and etc. Apart from this, Indian government assigned the designation to downtrodden such as; the Depressed Castes, Scheduled Castes, Schedule Tribe, Nomadic Tribe and Other Backward Castes. By identifying as Downtrodden, Omprakash Valmiki defines them, as an identity that is born in a historic struggle to dismantle the caste system, responsible for their untouchable status, and to rebuild society on

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the principles of human dignity, equality and respect. The identity of caste as one of the central questions to underlines the dominance of higher caste Hindu point of view in all walks of Indian life, whether it is literary expression, education and political governance.

Key words: *Process of Processing Food Grains; Struggle to Dismantle the Caste System, Suffering, Frustrations, Expectations, Groaning.*

INTRODUCTION

Omprakash Valmiki, was widely adopted as a caste name by the Chuhra of Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh under the influence of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform and movement in the northern India. Arya Samajists used to tell that Chuhra caste people are one of the descendants of Valmiki who was a creator of Sanskrit *Ramayana*. In *Joothan*, Omprakash Valmiki narrates that how Christian convert Sewak Ram Masihi. They used to come to meet his neighbourhood to teach alphabet to one and all Chuhra caste children. Consequently; Valmiki's increasing breakup from Chuhra rituals to Christianity which makes his father worry about convert into Christianity.

Hindi word *Joothan* literally means food left on the eater's plate usually destined for the garbage container in a middle class urban home. However, such food would only be characterized 'Joothan' if someone else besides the original eater were to eat it. The word carries meaning of ritual purity and pollution as 'joothan' means polluted. The title *Joothan* binds pain, humiliation and poverty of Valmiki's community which did not only trust on Joothan but also realised it.

The author, Omprakash Valmiki's encounters with his various school teachers that indicates, how downtrodden are abused verbally, physically and publically without understanding the social responsibility he use to mock and scold Chuhra students. He forgets that he was one of the teachers who shares good knowledge with student and one of the responsible persons of government appointed teacher servant. In this way the higher caste people's mentality and their taunts for Chuhra, author has mentioned this thing in the following given words, he says:

'Whenever I dared to ask my schoolteachers to answer my doubts, I got punished. They beat me up, gave me lower marks in the examinations. The taunts of my teachers and fellow students pierced me deeply. 'Look at this Chuhra ka, pretending to be a Brahmin'. (Valmiki, 62)

Valmiki places his and his friends' encounters with upper caste teachers in the context of Brahmin teacher Dronacharya's tricking with his tribe disciple 'Eklavya' into cutting his

thumb and presenting it to him as part of his gurudakshina and for teacher's tribute. This was one of the famous incidents in the *Mahabharata*. By doing this, Dronacharya ensured that Eklavya, was one of the better students of an archery skill, but could never compete against Arjun, the Kshatriya disciple. Indeed, having lost his thumb, Eklavya could no longer perform archery. But now day's higher caste people are used to tell Eklavya as the example of an obedient disciple rather than the Brahmin Dronacharya was a fraudulent and caste biased teacher.

When Omprakash Valmiki's father goes to school and calls the school headmaster as a Dronacharya of his son, here he links the twentieth century caste relations with two thousand years' baseless mythical story which underestimate lower caste's intellect. By showing this, author reveals the higher caste domination and the subjugation of lower caste, in this sense Valmiki portrays Dalits' articulation towards the deconstruction of caste hierarchy and rise Dalit suppression from the cherishment of myths and oppressors would get real slap which Dr. Amedkar already mentioned in his writing which mentions in his following words. He says:

'I asked them [our Hindu friend], 'you take the milk from the cows and buffaloes and when they are dead you expect us to remove the dead bodies. Why? If you carry the dead bodies of your mothers to cremate, why do you not carry the dead bodies of your 'mother-cows yourself?' (Ambedkar, 143)

Joothan is full of similar riddles that shock the reader out of the artificial normative of the high caste value system that denies the claims of the Dalit speaking subject, a subject which has come to voice after centuries of enforced namelessness and voicelessness, by bearing the witness to these routinized atrocities, and passing judgement on them, Valmiki brings them into a new discourse of human rights and justice. He says these things in his following given words, he says:

Why does caste superiority and caste pride attack only the weak? Why are Hindus so cruel, so heartless against Dalit? (Valmiki, 41)

Caste egoism and caste superiority divide Indian society generally into two groups; the lower caste and the higher caste. 'Caste struggle' is one of the parts of Dalit life. Dalits never get anything easily without struggle; they have to face many problems to achieve success and to survive comfort life. Higher caste never likes the successes of lower caste. Behaviour of higher caste people point out the caste mentally which plays vital role as caste discrimination, from generation to generation these things are present in their veins and blood. The narrow minded mentality of higher caste people has become one of the obstacles and disease before national development and national integration. Omprakash Valmiki is belonging to Chuhra caste which is supposed to be an untouchable in UP state now days also. Consequently; the

author, Valmiki states his insulting and inexpressible experience in his following words, he says:

'All right....See that teak tree there? Go. Climb that tree. Break some twigs and make a broom. And sweep the whole school clean as a mirror. It is, after all, your family occupation. Go... get to it.' (Valmiki, 04)

What were the things of discriminations and manipulations of human values which were going on from thousands of years ago are also present now days but its nature has been changed slightly. Now a day, schedule castes and schedule tribes people are considered to be use and through things in each and every field such as; social field, political field, economic field and etc. During election period upper caste political people show an offer to lower caste people in the form of money and wine only for the sake of their votes, after victory in an election they never take any care and responsibility of lower caste people.

Omprakash Valmiki's *JOOTHAN* is an autobiographical novel. This novel has been disclosed that how Brahmanical strategy plays slow poisoning role through educated people who are supposing themselves as higher caste people. In this novel teacher harasses lower caste pupils mentally, psychologically and physically he never tells upper caste pupils to clean class room but he always forces to lower class pupils to clean the class room. These types of many incidences Valmiki has been told in his autobiography *JOOTHAN*.

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