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Om Prakash Valmiki as the Spokesperson of Class Consciousness in *Joothan*

Tribhuvan University

Om Prakash Valmiki as the Spokesperson of Class Consciousness in *Joothan*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Tuk Bahadur B.K. has completed his thesis entitled “Om Prakash Valmiki as the Spokesperson of Class Consciousness in *Joothan*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from September 2015 to May 2016. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Om Prakash Valmiki as the Spokesperson of Class Consciousness in *Joothan*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Tuk Bahadur B.K. has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

Om Prakash Valmiki as the spokesperson of consciousness speaks on working class position by identifying the exploitation and ways of striking them in his *Joothan*. The research work analyzes the Indian society from the viewpoint of commodity culture which is used to describe capitalism. Within today's culture everything has become a product to be bought and sold in the market place. Commodity culture also infers the naturalization of this system to the extent that we cannot imagine another way of living. Here, commoditization is used to represent the exploitation of the common people in division of society. Valmiki tries to show the class consciousness by taking the issues of binary between the upper and the lower people through *Joothan*. Valmiki, as a spokesperson, has represented miserable condition, alienation and many others that has to be faced by the working class people. However, his lifetime actions clearly lead towards the path of conflict along with other characters for the welfare of working class people.

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I. Om Prakash Valmiki as the Spokesperson of Class Consciousness in *Joothan*

This research work explores the class consciousness in the society through the history of culture, context and situation in *Joothan*. Here, the writer shows a common phenomenon of commodification and victimization of women as well as the situation of the commoners and the upper people in Indian societies is the key issues of this research. It explores the evils of capitalism in the society. The research also aims to analyze the common class situation of the Indians and their being supported by the capitalists. The research presents the negative effects of capitalism socio-economically and it excels the effects of the upper people in the lower people. Women are even more suffering. There is a general attitude of males that women are like a plaything or an object. On the one hand they are victimized from sexual abuse and dominated by male society and dominated by the upper class people on the other. In this respect women are double marginalized in India. By highlighting the female characters, Valmiki presents the result of struggle and consciousness in readers.

In *Joothan-A Dalit's life*, Om Prakash Valmiki writes, "One can somehow get past poverty and deprivation but it is impossible to get past caste"(18). With this statement, Valmiki highlights the rigidity of the caste system that has resulted in the socio-economic oppression of thousands of people across India over centuries merely because of the "lower caste" to which they belong.

Joothan, encapsulates the pain, the humiliation and the poverty of the "untouchable" Chuhra community of Uttar Pradesh, to which the other belongs. The untouchable or Dalits who were social outcaste not only had to rely on the Joothan of others but also had to relish it. It was their compulsion to live a miserable and pathetic life. They belong to laborer and in spite of their faithful duty they had to live a

difficult life. Moreover they were treated worse than the animals. The credit of difficult works goes to them. Males were employed in difficult works like harvesting, building houses, disposing dead animals, collecting garbage etc. And women and children also had to perform their assigned task strictly. Valmiki expresses the realities which is delineated by Arun Prabha Mukherjee, translator from Hindi into English:

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. (7)

In *Joothan*, Valmiki describes the harsh reality of his childhood in the village in Barla district of Uttar Pradesh. He writes about the ill treatment that he underwent right from the early days when he gets admitted at school. It is all because of being untouchable. He describes the hardships and trauma when he was asked to spend three days sweeping the school courtyard instead of accompanying his classmates belonging to the higher castes in the study class.

Karl Marx has defined the labor or proletariat as individuals who sell their labor power for wages. He asserted that labor physically build bridges, craft furniture, grow food and nurse children. Deserving the above qualities, women were always considered to be the second grade citizens. They were seen and behaved just as helper to men. The traditional view often praised the role of the women as wives and mothers ignoring their contribution of labour. But as individuals they were assigned of a very low social position. They are not identified as labor who could bear the same hardships of this labor. But if we analyze the history of India from medieval to Eighteenth century, the study of woman as a part of economic life was insignificant or

trivial which reflects the social and economic life of them. Even though, some information is available in respect of the kinds of work that women did.

The book touches upon a lot of issues which are relevant everywhere, not just in India but also all over the world. A woman becomes deeply unhappy being abusive marriage and feeling unable to escape because she knows that she has no financial freedom. Because of which, a happy marriage turns unhappy when catastrophe strikes and they find themselves against the wall with no money and no place to go. Similarly Valmiki lived such a life which was really troublesome and miserable. In course of getting education from school, he heard a holy story from his teacher who was telling interestingly with a great enthusiasm. But in the case of Valmiki it turns different and at this point he writes:

There is a story which is narrated by a teacher in the book *Joothan*. He is narrating a story of Drona's poverty where his son Ashatthama got the flour dissolved in the water, in lieu of milk. The story has been written in an epic named *Mahabharata* by Vyasa.

Valmiki was listening very attentively the story of Drona, . . . I will write an epic on your body.' He had rapidly created an 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. (21-23)

Master Saheb became furious when he listened the questions of the boy who wanted to know the answer. But he was about to response the boy as he asked no questions but wanted his daughter's hand. It is a main duty of a teacher to satisfy his pupils,

guide them and civilize them. But such institutions do not work properly in case of providing education and justice to the untouchables.

Joothan profoundly raises the voice of resistance from the side of labourers. Valmiki continuously struggles and calls for the rights of his entire community people. After the declaration of independence in 1948 A.D., India promised to eradicate untouchability from the constitution, but it was not in practice as it declared rather it remained only in words. Because of such false promises given to the untouchables the writer writes:

We need an ongoing struggle, and a consciousness of struggle, a consciousness that brings revolutionary change both in the outside world and in our hearts, a consciousness that leads the process of social change the rigidly and narrow-mindedness of casteist India, which is as relevant today as it was in the early part of the last century. (96)

Despite many of his unpleasant moments, the novelist never gets tired with the existing problems. He is determinant and launches many awareness campaigns for the betterment of his people dreaming to be true and real in coming future.

The reigning ideology incorporates the interests of the dominant and exploitative class, who owns the means of production and distribution as opposed to the wage-earning working class. Those who live with it (ideology), they seem natural and enevitable in the eyes of the commoners but their hidden motive is maintaining the position, power and economic interests of the ruling class. Hence, the problem with the interests model does not lie in the view that ideas are the product of interests itself, which is, of course, very possible (although it is more difficult to determine just what proportion of our ideas are products of interests in this way surely not all of them and to explain just how it is that interests should assert themselves in the process

by which ideas are formed). The problem is that it is not simply formed in the pursuit of interests. They are, in fact, illusory or false, supposed to be ideas that go against the interests of a large number of those who hold them. How do ideas of this kind come to be accepted? Marx and Engels's answer starts from the claim that:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. It seems to have adopted a view of those who live under the domination of the ruling class as passive victims, taking their ideas from those who control the 'means of mental production' like obedient chicks, with no critical reflection on their part as to whether the ideas are either true or in their own rational interests. (82)

Marx and Engels do, however, attempt to make their claim more plausible by what they have to say about the nature of mental production. It is, they write, the most significant development in the division of labour that mental and manual labours become separated:

Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and manual labour appears. . . . From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. (12)

The separation between mental and manual labour, Marx and Engels maintain, does not really lead to the formation of autonomous ideas; the ideologists who produce ideas are still part of the ruling class whose interests their ideas represent.

Nevertheless, it offers an explanation as to why such ideas should be accepted by those, the dominated classes, whose interests they go against. The ideologist, on this view, is like a bribed referee: able to influence the outcome of a game all the more effectively for the fact that he is falsely believed to be impartial.

Cultural Marxist like Theodor Adorno, Lucaks are well describing about cultural phenomena. Adorno and Horkhimer on their essay "*The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*" is the critique of mass culture under the capitalist system, where the production of culture is similar to that of an industry producing automobiles. They argue that the welfare purpose of mass culture is just a superficial slogan. Culture industry is mass deception because it "perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually a promise" (230). They create the mass culture using their ideology. They take the help of mass media only to deceive us. They create a kind of fashion and rule as the hegemonically. They transmit such ideology that we give our concern to be ruled by capitalist. Eventually we become to realize that mass media consumption of the daily products and the money is the most necessary in our society. When almost all the people or the mass believe, it becomes the mass culture through which they deceive. On the level of appearance capitalism spread the slogan that mass culture is there to create the global village to get entertainment to become sophisticated, to become modern and to experience a glorious life. But in the level of reality these slogans are not there rather mass culture is launched by capitalist to deceive the people to earn money.

Neo-Marxist Theodor Adorno sees art and reality standing at a distance from one another. This distance is affected by the means of formal laws that literature bears. The formal laws he proposes are; Procedures and techniques, in modern art, dissolve the subject matter and re-organize it. An art, should explore the image and essence of reality rather than the “photo graphic reproduction” (1034). Adorno valorizes a work of art to present the contradiction between the appearance and reality. Whereas, Lukacs, who wants to present photography of the society. For Lukacs art has to reflect the dialectical totality of a society where as Adorno insists on the works formal laws and the distance between art and reality. Art never represents the real society. Artist or author only presents the surface things in art which is possible but they never represent the internal parts of the social things. So that, Adorno believes that there is gap between reality and appearance.

Marx's chief work breaks off just as he is about to begin on the definition of class. This omission was to have serious consequences both for the theory and the practice of the proletariat. For on this vital point the later movement was forced to base itself on interpretations, on the collection of occasional utterances by Marx and Engels. In Marxism the division of society into classes is determined by position within the process of production. But what, then, is the meaning of class consciousness? The question at once branches out into a series of closely interrelated problems. First of all, how are we to understand class consciousness? Second, what is the function of class consciousness, in the context of the class struggle? This leads to the further question: is the problem of class consciousness a ‘general’ sociological problem or does it mean one thing for the proletariat and another for every other class to have emerged hitherto? And lastly, is class consciousness homogeneous in nature

and function? And if so, what are their practical implications for the class struggle of the proletariat?

In *History and Class Consciousness* Lukacs argues that Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* is one of two books of its era that marks the "theoretical rebirth of Marxism." To understand this statement in its fullness we must perceive of *The Accumulation of Capital* as depicting the concrete totality of capitalism from the proletarian revolutionary perspective of the conditions of its overthrow. In other words, not only does it brush the rust off of the weaponry of volumes two and three of *Capital*, it puts them to use as historically necessary theoretical weapons for new historical conditions of the practice of class war. This rust removal has not been without its controversy in its time or since. The controversy has mostly centered on several aspects of two sides of the dialectic to the argument of Luxemburg's book: on the one hand, that Marx's diagram of enlarged reproduction cannot explain the actual, historical accumulation of capital since it includes only capitalists and workers. Neither of whom can as a class be the purchasers within the totality of capitalist society necessary to realize surplus value and thus accumulate as it capital, thus necessitating the sale of surplus product to non-capitalist social strata, i.e. necessitating imperialism ; on the other hand, insofar as capitalism both tends toward universality and depends on the destruction of non-capitalist social organizations, its tendency guarantees the elimination of its dependency, bringing its end all the more nearer as it realizes itself.

Similarly, Benjamin's collection of essays *The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* describes the changed experience of art in the modern world and sees the rise of Fascism and mass society as the culmination of a process of debasement, whereby art causes to be a means of instruction and becomes instead a

mere gratification, a matter of taste alone that is, by making art into the instrument by which the false consciousness of the mass man is to be overthrown. According to him:

Traditional works of art maintains, have an aura of uniqueness, privilege, distance and permanences about them, but the mechanical reproduction of, say, a painting, by replacing this uniqueness with a plurality of copies, destroys that alienating aura and allows the beholdersto encounter the work in his own particular place and time.

(58)

Benjamin argues that the mechanical production can make a work of art lose its aura but by that it can reach in the hands of the underclass people.

He argues that in order to resist the influence of bourgeois art such as cinema, telephone, radio, television, etc. revolutionaries have to become producers in their own artistic spheres. Aesthetician Marxist celebrate the loss of aura of art, because of the mechanical reproduction which was initiated by the bourgeoisie to fulfill their interests but it became harmful for the bourgeois themselves. Because the art becomes accessible for the proletarians and the proletarians got the golden opportunity to be united against capitalism and launch a mass revolution against the bourgeoisie through the capturing of means of reproduction.

Benjamin further concentrates on the issue of how capitalism become reproductive for the capitalism itself. The massive use of mechanical reproduction proved the capitalists the chance to distribute their ideology and to collect a lot of money deceiving the common public. But Walter Benjamin claims that because of the mechanical reproduction the common individuals become successful to understand the ideology of capitalism. Slowly and gradually because of which in the course of time the common individuals began to react against the capitalism. In this way the

mechanical reproduction gave the chance for the common individuals to understand the domination of capitalism.

Then, Raymond Williams is another dominant Marxist as well as cultural critic of late 20th century who positively responds the development in art and literature. He examines the various aspects of literature in his book *The long revolution*. He disproves the idea that any art activity is purely creative or an artist creates something entirely new.

To explore the question of authenticity of artist's creativity, he discusses and examines how Plato and Aristotle had treat art as imitation. Different theories of imitation and creation are brought into effect in order to explore the relation between art and reality. The opinion on the relationship of art with reality have been different according to people and time. Some have criticized art as false, illusive, fictitious, irrational and expression of raw emotions whereas some claim art super reality.

William insists that art like another communication is social activity and can't be set apart from reality. Moreover, he criticizes the tendency to glorify the rural spaces as more natural and empty of any exploitative mechanism. And He says there is no such world or place with all round equality and happiness. The society is based on the hierarchical order and the lower had always to serve slavishly to the upper. The relationship of power changed in the later systems but this transformation is no more than the shifting of physical power to economic power. Many revolutionary Marxist have nostalgia for a mythical Edenic society or primitive communalism. But for Williams, this is futile since this is a pure myth. So such nostalgia, he believes, instead of strengthening the resistance against exploitation, hinders the movement for change in dominating pattern. William claims that there is no time and place one city is totally corrupted and another village is totally peace or harmonious. In the Middle

age, Church became dominant with theocracy at the center. In the name of religion and theology, laborers were more exploited than earlier. In Renaissance, landlords destroyed jungle and village so as to commence their trade and business. There was conflict between the landlord and the land-less people. The former brought division among the latter one, and eventually exploited them. By eighteenth century, art was under the grip of bourgeois. That art glorified and presented the beautiful picture of landlords or higher class people. Art mystified the social reality by using the image of landlords, who were, then accepted as patrons. So none of the period and place remained unexploited from past to the modern time, either in the village or in the city explained through his book *The Country and the City*.

Valmiki's *Joothan* deals with the people of labour class who leave their village to get good job in the city in the name of being rich and respected. The protagonist and other characters seem to be wandering in city areas in search of good job. They wish to bring pleasure and happiness in family life. All these characters intend to improve their economic condition with a great effort. But all the dreams will be in vain. In the novel, Valmiki, his Mama(maternal uncle), and brother Sukbir enter to the market in search of good work and salary. Valmiki works in different palces like ordinance factory quitting his college education and his Mama and Sukbir work as sweeper and cleaner respectively in city areas. But what they wish turns upside down. The entire worth of their work becomes valueless. They are not paid, rather they are beaten, cursed and exploited from their masters in one or the other way. So, It's a universal tendency of the culture that working people are unable to fulfill their interests by creating a gap between them. Despite the evils of capitalism valmiki wanders far dreaming to be rich and respected.

Neo-Marxist advocates the class conflict and consciousness in a human being that is cultivated by the phenomena. "An economically poor person gets tempted to be sophisticated life style of the rich in the focal point" (Ahmed 42).

In introductory part I have emphasized my claim on the basis of the novel. I get the novel as satire on the Indian commercial culture and class consciousness. Novelist expresses his story continuously on the basis of contemporary situation of India. So, we can easily draw the new issue, not only reformative novel but we can analyze as commercial culture class struggle. This is bitterly satiric one. Major character and minor characters is also round in vulgarity for the sake of aristocratic principle.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with an introductory aspect of the study. It incorporates the thesis title clarification elaboration, introduction to the playwright's background, works, themes etc. The second chapter is textual analysis, delves into the theoretical modality that is to be effectively applied in the analysis of the novel. While doing thesis research I have derived the tool that is satire and bringing the textual evidence and at the same time applying the theoretical tool with that very evident I have proved the thesis Umriger's novel as a satire of commercial society of India. While dealing with the thesis, Marxism and its use in art and literature will be the helping hand when proving the title of the thesis.

The third chapter concludes the research work. Some critics are brought in the introduction part and second chapter in short. It gives the extra force to hypothesis. Class consciousness and class struggle as a theory applied to literature that suggests literature must be studied and interpreted within the context, culture and author.

II. Commodification of Human Subjectivity in Valmiki's *Joothan*

This project explores the issues of commodification of human subjectivity in Valmiki's *Joothan* where most of the Dalit characters are dominated by upper class people who are in the top position of society and through the use of capital they determine the status of commoners. In Marxist word, Bourgeoisie (a class of citizens who were wealthier members of the society) always puts the proletariat in margin by the use of capitalistic ethos, where proletariat never reacts because they cannot do anything even recognizing this class binary of the society.

Marxism today is capable of influencing whole world by furnishing strong ideological basis especially for political movements. Marx was the most advanced economist, sociologist and supreme ideologist who formulated the most revolutionary and scientific theories in the time of tremendous socio-economic changes resulting from the scientific discoveries and establishment of large scale production industries. Marxism treats literature as expression of socio-economic life and judges it on the basis of how far it has fulfilled this function.

Marxist philosophy believes that it is man's social being that determines his consciousness and it is that consciousness which determines the nature of his literary work. Orthodox Marxist theory of art insists that the primary function of art is to serve the working class representing their feelings and heightening the class struggle. The common belief of all Marxist critics is that literature can be best understood within a large framework of social reality. A society comprises different kinds of classes from bourgeois to proletariat and the history of a society is a series of struggle between these classes, according to Marxism, Marxist philosophy reflects the true picture of the external social reality. Marxist literary approach justifies the inseparable relationship between art and reality.

Marxist theorist distinguishes from other approaches in the way in which they prioritized the materiality of culture, the way in which it is produced, distributed and received as a concrete social practice. For Marxist the economic mode of society is crucial because it is economic system which frequently though not always determines how art will be constructed. The relationship between economics and literature is both the central concern of Marxism and subject of most heated debates. Much of the works of these thinkers are focused on the hardships of the working class people. However, a wide gulf between the rich and the poor is still in different societies of the world as the working class people's work is ceaselessly repetitive and unrewarding.

Valmiki has shown caste discrimination in *Joothan*. He has depicted his bearings and sufferings in *Joothan*. There is caste discrimination in India. In another country it is but in a different way. It is existed in India since ancient period. Someone has related it to religion and Hinduism but as well as scholars think there is no connection between caste and religion. It may be understood by the below excerpt:

Caste has nothing to do with religion . . . it is harmful to both spiritual and growth. Varna and Ashrama are institutions which have nothing to do with castes. The law of Varna teaches us that we have each one of us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. (54)

Valmiki presents his bitter experiences right from his childhood. His early days at school were much more difficult than the last days. He describes a case that took place when he was studying in class Eight. One day, Valmiki's teacher named Brajpal sent Valmiki and his friend to bring a sack of wheat from his house to living place. As they reached to the teacher's home, they were welcomed with open arm. The men had already left for the field. Women and children were at home. When the elders turned at home in the evening, all of them started to have meal at the same place. As soon as

they had finished their meal, they (Valmiki and his friend) were asked a question which revealed their real identity. And then they were insulted, cursed and even tied with rope to the tree. The people of the upper caste behaved with them as they have raped an upper class girl. Here, the novelist depicts caste as a means of exploitation and reign over the untouchables. Regarding this Valmiki asserts:

I answered his question, 'We are of the Chuhra caste.' Both exclaimed together, 'Chuhra?' Lifting a heavy stick from underneath the charpai, the elder hit Bhikhuram on his back. He had a lot of strength and Bhikhuram crumbled. Obscenities began to rain from the elder's mouth. His eyes were fierce and his skinny body was harbouring the devil. We had dared to eat in their dishes and sit on their charpai, a crime in his eyes. I was standing below the porch, frightened. The elder was screaming and his voice had drawn a crowd. Many people suggested that we should be tied to a rope and hung from the tree. (51)

The notion of caste system has not been changed even if the lower caste people got education. They were behaved worse than the beasts. They had no value in the society. An animal was worshiped in those days but person who belongs to the lower caste had no place in the society. Fauza was shouting and swearing, "Abey Chuhreke . . . Just because he has learnt to read a little he has gotten above himself . . . Abey, don't forget who you are . . ." (57).

When Valmiki was ill-treated in the upper class society, he began to curse himself being born into a Hindu family. Though it must be recognized that there never has been a common Indian Culture, that historically there have been three Indians, Brahmanic India, Buddhist India and Hindu Indian, each with its own culture. It must be recognized that the history of India before the Muslim invasions is the history of a

mortal conflict where Bhima is her favorite character, Umrigar said, "because of the dignity with which she lives a life where there is little to be dignified about" (76). The writer based her portrait of Bhima on a servant her family employed in India; the novel is dedicated to this servant and to "millions of others like her." *The Space Between Us* provides the reader with a glimpse into contemporary Parsi and Hindu life in Bombay. It also examines social inequality, showing how medical care, housing and education are allocated in a system that serves the rich and poor differently between Bramanism and Buddhism. Valmiki asserts:

But something came to a boil inside me, . . . 'Neither am I a Hindu.' If I were really a Hindu, would the Hindus hate me so much? Or discriminate against me? Or try to fill me up with caste inferiority over the smallest things? I also wondered why does one have to be a Hindu in order to be a good being...I have seen and suffered the cruelty of Hindus since childhood. Why are Hindus so cruel, so heartless against Dalits? (41)

Valmiki met a girl named Savita. She invited him at her home for a cup of tea. He asked to Savita when he saw an SC candidate who was given a cup of tea in another pot. He enquired:

'You had given him tea in a different cup?' 'Yes, the SCs and the Muslims who come to our house, we keep their dishes separate,' Savita replied evenly. 'Do you think this discrimination is right?' I asked. She felt the sharp edge in my voice now. 'Oh...why, are you mad? How can we feed them in the same dishes?' 'Why not? In the hotel...in the smess, everyone eats together. Then what is wrong in eating together in your home as well?' I tried to reason with her. Savita defended the

discrimination as right and justified by tradition. Her arguments were infuriating me. However, I remained calm. According to her, SCs were uncultured. Dirty. (57)

After she is humiliated by Sukhdev Singh Tyagi, her act of defiance sows the seeds of rebellion in the child Valmiki. The Joothan is dedicated to her and Valmiki's father, both portrayed as heroic figures, which desired something better for their child and fought for his safety and growth with tremendous courage. Valmiki's father's ambitions for his son are evident in the nickname, Munshiji, that he gives Valmiki. Reses on their shoulders to become the first high school graduates suffered by them and other Dalits. Valmiki questioned himself that what is Dalit? The answer can be explained as members of the scheduled castes and tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion. To reach before the conclusion it can be said that Valmiki suffered a lot in his lifetime. He had bad experience of the life. Therefore, that one of the most powerful moments of the text is Valmiki's mother's overturning of the basketful of Joothan after she is humiliated by Sukhdev Singh Tyagi.

Every community has made its culture on the basis of living and thinking. Dalits' social thinking and writing emerged out of the authors' social stratifications. Dalits are displaced and remained as fugitives due to caste atrocities like burning huts. In observing these events, the Dalit writers felt to be of as well as for. Their creative writings documented their lives, social and political events which play a key role in the study of literature, and who are sample contemporary documenters of social crises or the social reality. House Structure shows the status of their society. In relation to Dalit autobiography, Joothan, community of Bhangi haven't a concrete house or

home. They were lived outside the village, the place reserved by upper caste people. A high wall and a pond segregated their brick houses in the village from the Chuhrabasti, or cluster of shanties. Upper caste men and women of all ages came out and used the edge of the pond as an open-air lavatory, squatting across from the Chuhra homes in broad daylight with their private parts exposed. Regarding to this, Valmiki writes:

There was muck strewn everywhere, the stench was so overpowering that one would choke within a minute. The pigs wandering in narrow lanes, naked children, dogs, daily fights, this was the environment of my childhood. (3)

In the rainy season, these narrow lanes of the Basti filled up with muddy water mixed-in with pig's excrement; flies and mosquitoes thrived. Everybody's arms and legs became dirty and developed itchy sores. There was one drinking well in their basti for about thirty families, and despite a guard wall around it, it became full of long worms during the rainy season. They had no choice but to drink that water, as they were not permitted to use the well of the upper caste folks. Their homes were made of clay that sprang leaks all over. During heavy rains, the ceilings or walls often collapsed, as it did for Omprakash's house more than once. One season most of their homes collapsed; as always, there was no outside help or insurance, and they had to rebuild on their own. In this circumstances Omprakash lived and grown up. Education was free and open for all in India including upper caste people and untouchables in post-independence. Each one was made equal by the constitution of India. In these circumstances, Omprakash Valmiki's father begged admission for his son to Master Harphool Singh. After several days of begging, Omprakash got admission but he was not allowed to sit on chair or bench. He had to sit on bare floor; behind everybody.

There was no fair treatment and security for a Dalit student in the government and non-government schools. Regarding to this, Arun Prabha Mukherjee said:

While the education system is indicted as death dealing for Dalits, Valmiki pays tribute to the Dalit organic intellectuals who help nurture the growth of a Dalit consciousness in him. While one of these is his father who has the temerity to name the headmaster a Dronacharya, another is Chandrika Prasad Jigyusu (means 'curious' and is an acquired identity after shedding a caste-based one) whose rendering of Ambedkar's life is put into Valmiki's hands by his friend Hemlal. Like Valmiki's Hemlal, too, has shed his stigmatized identity as a Chamar by changing to Jatav. (54)

Giving education and influenced by R. Babasaheb, Ambedkar Omprakash rejected old tradition of Hindu society and opened the door of Buddha religion. Omprakash was very particular on the education of his men and women. Yet, Dalits were still considered inferior either in education or in life style. Thus, every person is important in a society. But, Dalits were not given chances to think and work towards personal and national progress. Across the country, different communities have widely varying food habits. It is also well known that food is closely linked to ideas of the sacred and the wicked, and must vary along the scale of social diversity. As far as Dalits food is concerned, in Joothan, Bhangi- Chuhras are far behind than other people in India. Omprakash gave a detailed description of collecting, preserving and eating Joothan which left on an eater's plate, is the food of Bhangi community. It, according to Martin Macwan, is divided into three types, "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" (261).

This kind of Joothan collects from the upper caste society where Bhangis serve. Whenever there is a festival or marriage in an upper caste society, the Bhangis and Chamars expect to be given more food; so they go and collect it; alternatively, someone will ask them to come and collect the food. Regarding to this, Valmiki memorized the wedding of Tyagi's daughter, where narrator's mother works hard as a cleaner and demands more than just leftover from the wedding feast for her children. The pieces of poories are one of the preferred foods which were collected from the wedding season. It was useful during rainy season. Pieces of poories soaked in water and then boiled. The boiled poories were delicious dish when it was mixed the chili powder and salt. In 1962, there was a flood and due to non-stop rain, Bhangi community suffered a lot. Their house began to leak, wall collapsed and roof began to slide. Therefore, there was no work and eating food for a long time. At such time the dish of Mar was favorite among the Chuhras. Mar means a liquid made by the mixture of salt, rice and water. Regarding on this, Valmiki said, "the taste of those salted gram, the feeling of content that they provided has not come my way again, even in five-star hotel food" (22).

This Mar or rice water was as good as milk to them. Whenever rice was cooked at home, the narrator got very excited. Because it gives energetic power while drinking the Mar. Especially, Bhangis are meat eaters and they ate some special dishes like Manda- oily piece of meat, and Bhatwa.

It is said that the work is the identity of its society. In relation to the Joothan autobiography, the work of Bhangi was mostly engaged to clean the latrines of upper class society. Traditionally, Chuhras were cursed to sweep the roads, clean the cattle barns, get shit off the floor, dispose of dead animals, and work in the fields during harvests, carrying death-news and perform other physical labour for all upper caste

people, including the Tyagi, and Brahmins. During Omprakash's childhood, his entire family worked hard including cleaning, agricultural work and general work, yet they did not manage to get two decent meals a day, not the least because they often didn't get paid for their labour and instead the labourers were abused. Most of the families of Bhangi worked at farm-harvest. The poor Dalits should work in the field of Tagas in the hot sunshine in order to earn food grains for survival. Most of the harvesters are the Chuhras and Chamars. They wore cloths scarcely and their daily wages were not given properly; rather, they got whatever Tagas gave including leftovers. In addition to this, Dalit women were assigned to clean the cow-dung. It is more difficult in winters. During the rainy season there was no work for them, however, they were living in poverty a long time. They were doing anything which included harvesting lentils, cutting sheaves of wheat in the midday sun, and transporting them via bullock carts, each person got one out of 21 parts produced—about two pounds of wheat—as wages. For the rest of their labour in the cowshed, they got paid in grain and a leftover roti each day (made by mixing the flour with the husk since it was for the chuhras), and at times scraps of leftovers from their employer's plates, or Joothan. In relation to the Superstition, a person who feels unwell in Bhangi basti, instead of treating him with medicine, people tried things like getting rid of the evil spirit that was deemed to be the cause by tying threads, talismans, spells, and on. If disease was prolonged or got serious, they called bhagat for pucha or exorcism. The pucha is a ceremony of bhagat or baba which makes a person free from the control of ghosts and spirits. Such ceremony edifies the god which is known as Paun. God Kalwa, Hari Sinh Nalwa and Others also worshiped in the Dalit society. Goddess Madaran is among the most important ones. Bhangibasti had strange ideas about ghosts and spirits. If there was someone feels sick, a bhagat or baba would be called instead of Doctor.

The Bhangis were believed that bhagat or baba is the mediator of god and being influence of god he talks to the ghost. When he caught the insatiate soul he demands pigs, roosters, rams and liquor for offering to the gods. Such hungry god and goddess worshiped in every house of Bhangibasti. They are different from Hindu deities and could not found in any Purana- epic like book. But these are worshiped in any family or clan where there is birth, festival, wedding, or funeral ceremony. Due to the loss of Sukhbir, their family was disturbed. Therefore, Jasbir went to Adampur and works in the construction company. After some time this company moved to Bagdogra, Bengal. It was heard that Jasbir works at Bengal by mother who sinks in the ideas of Bengali myth, "...idea of Bengal was based on folk myths about black magic and casting of spells, about women who transformed a man into a ram with their magic and tied him up in their courtyard" (Valmiki 23). Thus, there was a firmly belief on the existence of ghost. Omprakash narrates, when he was at Dehradun, during summer holidays, he felt sick with dysentery, which took a longtime to get better. Therefore, he comes back to village before the school re-opened. His father tried to show a number of quacks but the physical condition of Omprakash did not improve. As a result he became awfully weak. Finally, his father called out the Bhagat from Kendki who examined and said to his pitaji, "Why do you bother about doctors and medicines . . . He has become possessed by a spirit" (Valmiki 42). Being observation all the Bhgat starts his puja and mantras to relieve Omprakash from the control of spirit. He makes frightening sound and to flashed the whip in the air and on his back. It was not tolerable to him, therefore, he shouted on the Bhagat and said to his father, "He will kill me if you don't stop him.' I don't have any spirit sticking to me" (43). In this way, Omprakash saved his life from superstitious people.

Dalit literature can be explained as the literature of protest of untouchables. It is a protest against all forms of exploitation based on class, race, caste, or occupation. In the novel, Valmiki himself has stated the motive behind writing the autobiography. According to him "Dalit life is excruciatingly painful, charred by experiences. Experiences that did not manage to find in literary creations" (vii). The high cast Indian writers presented Dalits as 'mute' and pathetic characters unable to act speak their oppression and alienation. The mainstream literary Canon neither praised the role of Dalits nor tried understand the sentiments, feelings of Dalits. That did not provide proper place. Through this book, valmiki proves that the Dalits, the voiceless can also speak. So, the novel has been a story of the marginal transformation of the Dalit's muteness into voice.

Dalit literature has many qualities, which distinguish it from mainstream literature. It has a fiery strength, an authenticity, a sense of social mission and an expressive vigour and vibrancy. It is a literature that calls for a change in the attitude of society towards certain basic issues concerning individual relationship, social organization and caste based discrimination. Its message is clear and resounding. Its quality of literary expression is also of high order. The Dalits are treated worse than animals by the high castes. Their presence is usually banned from upper-class localities. They continue to face physical violence, including mass killings, rapes, and other cruelties by high caste landowners. When they ask for their wages and freedom, they are ill-treated and punished. Dalits struggle against these injustices using political as well as cultural means. Dalit literature thus becomes one of the major tools for showing their resistance .Ashok Boyar writes: " The Dalit writers have to be a spokesperson of his community. He carries the burden of his society on his shoulders.

He is a bard, and can even be the prophet to lead his people to the Promised land"
(64).

Unlike in the dominant Hindu tradition, Valmiki pointedly denigrates and wants no parts of – widow remarriage was even in the 60s an accepted norm in his community. He describes in some detail how their gods were utterly different from Hindu gods and how different their religious rituals were. He also describes lots of family drama and interpersonal politics in his community, not shying from reproach where it is due, especially on their rank superstitions. He writes about their jobs, sufferings, and everyday struggle for dignity, acknowledging that the women had an ever rawer deal than men.

Many Hindu writers and poets had written about the charms of village life, observes Valmiki, but its 'real truth' depicting the 'terrible suffering of village life has not even been touched upon by the epic poets of Hindi.' He also recounts other changes that were beginning to take place. The young men of his community had begun to refuse to work without wages. This soon escalated into an open confrontation with the upper caste men who couldn't tolerate their nerve, and even got the local police to beat them up. Valmiki calls this a turning point of sorts; young man began departing from their *basti* to nearby towns and cities. After explainings all events in detail, valmiki comes with some questions; why Savarnas Hindus hate Dalits and Shudraa so much? The Hindu who worship trees and plants, beasts and birds, why are they so intolerable of Dalits? Today caste remains a pre-eminent factor in social life. As long as people don't know that you are a Dalit, things are fine. The moment they find out your caste, everything changes. The whispers slash your veins like knives. Poverty, illiteracy, broken lives, the pain of standing outside the door, how would the civilized Savarna Hindus know it?

In India, from the Upanishadic down to the present age 'Varna Vyavasta' continues to be the cornerstone. It was, no doubt, hierarchical because it always "differentiated between higher groups and lower groups. The caste system is one expression of this social hierarchy" (Kuppuswamy 5). There have been persistent attempts to make this structure more open and flexible. Non-vedic creeds of Jainism and Buddhism had been such great socio-religious movements which challenged almost all the canons of the Brahamical concepts and the rigid social norms. By emphasizing a moral principle of conduct for the individual rather than ritual duties, Buddhism disengaged itself from the hierarchical independence of the caste system. Kosambi rightly said "there was the most social of religion" (105). India had a long tradition of literary protest that has changed considerably with time i.e.as man's relation with his surroundings have changed; simultaneously the very spirit of literary protest and dissent has changed. In the medieval age, attempts were made to break the caste system. The Bhakti movement of medieval India embodied a revolt against the inequality inherent in caste as well as against the intellectualism of the traditional path of salvation (Moksha). Saints and poets of medieval period raised their voice against idolatory, the rigours of caste and showed in their writings the futility of such practices. They believed in love that transcends all barriers. This initial literature echoes the need for social change and freedom from the bondage of caste apartheid. In the modern age, one can discern corresponding artistic and religious renaissance created a great resurgence in literature, music, painting and sculpture. Literary protest is related to the real life and the world around it. But it does not confine to it alone. It transcends through the subversive use of language, symbols, and images. Literary protest is multi -dimensional as it upholds certain values in a specific environment and is concerned with the ironies, contradictions, and paradoxes inherent in the

expression of dissent, protest and freedom. A protest writer does not necessarily; seek inspiration from religion, philosophy, or the socio-political system. Among many protest writings, the writings of the backward classes in India call for minute attention. There is a deep sense of anguish, injury and resentment in their protest movements. Their ideologies are double-edged, expressing on the one hand "feeling of dissatisfaction, and protest with the existing situation (with an awareness of relative deprivation)" and on the other "working out a positive programme for removing the malady" (Malik 254).

Joothan is considered as an epic of the Dalits sufferings- Life Experiences of Pain, which have been narrated with various experiences. The power of Dalit autobiography's narrative agenda is its use of the author's life-experiences of pain as a means of cultural assertion. By writing about his own experiences as a Dalit, Omprakash Valmiki reveals two objectives in his autobiography. One is to challenge the basis of caste discrimination. The other clear narrative agenda of this Dalit autobiography is to expose the reality behind the institutional narrative that caste functions as a significant force in the public sphere of modern India. Regarding to this, Surajpal Chauhan addresses this issue in his autobiography *Tirskrit*:

In this country, the pain and insult of being born as a Dalit can only be known by a person who has experienced it. Today, everyone is crying out in the whole country that there is no racism and that things have changed in the towns and villages in these thirty-five years. I would really like to discuss with these people an incident which took place in 1987. (5)

Thus, Dalit autobiography composed a challenge to this institutional narrative by presenting what he claim is factual experiences of untouchability from the writer's

own life. During Omprakash's childhood, his entire family worked hard, yet they did not manage to get two decent meals a day, not the least because they often didn't get paid for their labour and instead the labourers were abused. He narrates the incident of season of harvest. At such time, entire family and neighborhood used to go to the field of Tagas to reap the crop. It was very hard and painful task to cut the sheaves of wheat in the midday sun. It was agonizing to work in midday sunlight and warmth earth ground. Instead of such atmosphere, the roots of cropped wheat pierced their feet like spikes. The work at mustered and gram lentils was more difficult than the crop of wheat. The leaves were sour and stick all over the body during harvesting such work. Due to this the Chuhras were suffered through a lot. The harvesting would often lead to argument in the fields. Omprakash described: 'Most of Tagas were exploited the Chuhras and Chamars at the time of giving money. Whatever they got, they took after protesting a bit. They kept fretting after coming back home, cursing the Tagas. But their protests died when confronted with hunger' (Valmiki 8).

Every year the Bhangis and others make criteria towards harvesting, but every criterion has been collapsed during the harvesting season. Finally, they got one sheaf-less than one kg grain- for cutting of twenty-one as wages. It means a day's income wasn't worth even a kilo-gram of wheat. How this pain- suffering works done by the Chuhras and Chamars. Due to economical background, Omprakash dropped his school. During these days he suffered a lot. He becomes noisy having seen his schoolmate passing by with books in their hands. Omprakash and his elder brother, Janesar went to farm at early morning and collecting grass for his buffaloes. It was a work for them to beware of buffaloes during that time. The responsibility of pig has also given to them by their parents. Like Indian cow, pig was an important part of Bhangi lives. At any ways like in sickness, in life or death, in any feast or wedding

ceremonies pig played a vital role in their lives. Even their religious ceremony could not fulfill without pig. Though it was symbol of dirty, but for them the existence of pig was a way of prosperity and a sign of richness. One day, Omprakash was coming home after grazing the pig. At the way of home, he met Sukkhan Singh who asked him, 'why have you stopped coming to school? Aren't you going to study further?' (Valmiki 13-14). He just shook his head in refusal. Thus, he returned home with miserable feeling. As soon as he comes to home, he said to his mother, 'Ma, I want to go to school' (Valmiki 14). By seeing tear his mother too cried. At last, because of his Bhabhi he has started his education.

The narrator goes on to describe the hardships he had to face in the education. The Chuhras were always entrusted with the task of sweeping the homes and public places. It was considered as their duty. Hence the headmaster of the school asked the writer to sweep the school. The Dalit people felt that it was a waste of time to get their children educated. When the writer's father asked his fellow Dalits to send their children to school, they blatantly refused it. According to them, "What is the point of sending him to school? When has a crow become a swan?"(6).

Thus, the Dalit children were tortured and abused everywhere except in their own home. The writer was fortunate to be born in a household where everyone loved and cared for him. The support and encouragement he gained from the family enabled him to face the dangers of being Dalit.

Right from the early stages of his life, the writer was conscious of the importance of studies. He was bright and hence he always stood first in class. Reading and writing made him an enlightened being. He began to read voraciously because of which his level of confidence in every field increased gradually. He was selected as the class leader after the examination and his seat was moved from the back of the class

to the front. Though some teachers behaved in an unfriendly manner, the writer loved going to school. This was because most of the students and a majority of teachers belonged to the Tyagi community. The writer talks about the discrimination that had to face in the school at different points in his autobiography. He says, "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, lest our hands touch the glass" (16).

We are also introduced to the term 'Joothan' at this point of time. The 'Joothan' or the leftover remnants of food from weddings and other feasts were relished by the Chuhras. After working hard day and night, the price of their sweat was Joothan. The social problem faced by the Chuhras haunted Valmiki's mind since his childhood right up to his adulthood. As a child, the writer always wished to go to school in neat ironed clothes. But the Dhobi refused to wash clothes for a low caste Chuhra boy. Thus the writer realizes that one can somehow get rid of poverty and deprivation but it is impossible to get past caste. While talking about his memories in school, the writer talks about a number of teachers who encouraged him and also about the ones who ill treated him. Vakmiki repeatedly narrates his experiences of pain and exclusion due to the continued practice of untouchability. He writes:

I was kept out of extracurricular activities. On such occasions, I stood on the margins like a spectator. During the annual the anguish of standing outside the door functions of the school, when rehearsals were on for the play, I too wished for a role, but I always had to stand outside the door. The so-called descendants of the Gods cannot understand the anguish of standing outside the door. (13)

Valmiki reveals a significant incident that occurred when he reached in the tenth standard. He was determined to study well in order to get good marks which would fetch him an opportunity to study in a college. But on the eve of his mathematics examination he was made to do forced manual labour. He spent one whole day sowing cane under the instructions of a Tyagi. He felt humiliated and tortured. He says: "My mind was set a flame by his swearing. A fire had engulfed my inwards that day. The memories of these crimes of the Tyagis continue to smoulder me, emitting red hot heat" (57).

III. Representation of Class Division in *Joothan*

This present research work has analyzed the Indian society from the viewpoint of Commodity culture which is used to describe the culture of capitalism.

In our society we don't find all the people having the same economic level because we don't find the equal distribution of wealth in the society. Every society is a platform where exist a variety of socio-economic classes. It is the social, economic and other factors that determine a certain class in the society ; it is range of income , nature of occupation, governing or governed, social conditions and values that locates the upper superior to the lower or the working class. The lower class people seem to be more or less dependent upon the upper class people. It is all dew to the widening gap between the poor and the rich. Capitalism forms a common belief in the mind of the common people that they could not think more about them and it also leads to the extent that they cannot live a prosperous life without it. By establishing such illusions or consciousness, ruling group takes many benefits placing the others in marginal position. If we go through the history of human civilization, there, we find different forms of exploitation in one or the other way which still prevails. In the medieval era, Church was at the center that exploited the people in the name of religion. During Renaissance there was a conflict between landless and the landlords. The landlords wanted to expand their trade by destroying the jungles and village. By eighteenth century, art was under the control of rulers which praised and glorified them. So, no place and period remained unexploited past to modern time.

Valmiki's novel, *joothan* can be examined from the perspective of existing two different classes: the working class and the middle class along with the conflict between two different socio- economic conditions. Valmike, a representative of the working class raises the voice against the evils of capitalism despite many of his

unpleasant conditions. The protagonist and his community people have to suffer frequently from the hands of Tagas (Hindu and Muslim). He is victimized cruelly and inhumanly being born in Dalit family right from his childhood to the youth. He has to endure many physical and mental punishments and defames without any particular reason. Apart from him other people are also deprived from their basic facilities like food, shelter and clothes. Despite their hard labour from morning to evening, they could not get the price of their work. In this respect, *Joothan* is the chronicle of such events. Valmiki's mother works for collecting *Joothan* and sweeping the public places but she has to face many difficulties while solving hand to mouth problem. There are other male characters who are victimized from the same fate. Valmiki's brother (Jasbir) and his Mama go to city in search of good job and salary in contrast to the village area. They leave for town and work in road Construction Company in Dehradun whose income can hardly manage only snake, tea and rotis. They get a little amount of money that was insufficient to pay off their loan and solve the basic needs. Such experiences are depicted vividly in the novel.

The rulers never think of untouchables as people who have to eat, sleep and live a prosperous life. They think that if we behave well, our status will descend or go do. Valmike being conscious of such evils he constantly involves in different activities that fill the consciousness in the mind of people. He says "Ambedkar and Marxist literature has changed my consciousness" (87).

Joothan raises the voice of underestimated Dalit females. Capitalism behaves female as an object. The treatment specially done upon Dalit females is like that of animal. They are cursed, raped and exploited inhumanly without any reason. One of the most powerful events that took place when Valmiki's mother opposes to collect *Joothan* from Tyagi's home, as a result she was ill-treated and beaten mercilessly from

the hands of upper class males. Other characters are also equally victimized by male. The male characters who are supposed to be superior, use their power to mistreat and cheat the females to fulfill their interests. In the novel, almost all the female characters are shown inferior and loneliness unable to get proper place and respect as equal as man. In this way, gender and power play a prominent role to subordinate and isolate females. Through the presentation of female characters, the novelist considered the novel about the division, use and effect of power rather than the gender divide.

Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* is originally written in Hindi and later translated into English. It is a vivid and sensitive portrayal of a Dalit youth's struggle to survive with dignity in a world that humiliates and subverts his every attempt at emancipation and progress. Omprakash has witnessed many bitter practices which he had to face during his childhood and youth simply because of his being a boy from the Chuhra community. Valmiki presents his experience when his spouse was going to Dehradun by train. In course of the journey they happened to talk with a prosperous looking family which belonged to higher caste. As soon as they knew the identity of the writer, then, there was a mute silence. Valmiki writes, the journey had become very painful. (133)

In this way caste has been used to exploit the people. Dalits are not seen as people and they are cheated and treated differently than others. Hence, Valmiki calls for the equal existence of people which turns the existed practice of the society. As Sarah Beth, in *Dalit Autobiographies in Hindi: the Transformation of Pain into Resistance*, says, "Dalit individual uses his narrative to raise his voice for those who are silenced by caste oppression" (134). Omprakash points out that he grow up in those days of the post independent India when people in general were not ready to accept the right even to primary education for the people of Dalit community.

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