

Scratch on the Glass: A Study of Trauma in Omprakash Valmiki's Autobiography

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Abstract

In this paper, focuses on the social trauma and its causes, and its effects on victims. I try to keenly insight the mind and understand the mental sufferings of the victims. Trauma to Dalits' community- emotional, hierarchical, and social and casteist discrimination, untouchability, inhumanity, physical, psychological and mental social stigma- is not rare incidents in Indian society but routine incidents if we deeply study the society. Dalits are discriminated by acquaintances rather than strangers or alien in the same country. Casteist, brutal Indian social structure are potentially traumatizing forms of victimization that can lead to increase psychiatric and psycho physiological symptoms in targets. This paper distinguishes traumatic harassment and stress on Om Prakash Valmiki's experiences from childhood to adulthood.

Introduction

This is the major gap between abroad and Indian culture. Indian society and culture are widely different to western society and culture. Those people belong to upper castes; they consider their culture and castes more superior and social dignity to lower castes. India is a place where intellectual people are living in caste and culture conscious. India's great thinkers and

social reformers only talked about brutal social discrimination and untouchability but they could not work at root level due to social pressure. The racial, color and hegemony system has spread in the entire world. White skin people because of color exploit black skin people. The entire world is the victim of this cruel discrimination of class and color. Nevertheless, the Indian society has other types of discrimination that called castes system. The person of upper castes is living in the mythologies of illogical superiority. They treated them in that cruel, inhuman manner that animal is more superior to these people. Mulk Raj Anand rightly says that in his novella *Untouchable* the outcastes' colony is a group of mud-walled houses where the ramparts of human and animal refuse that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery that lay within it, made it an uncongenial place to live in.

Trauma is a psychological mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time. A person mentally suffers due to the brutal and hierarchy social structure in a personal experience. The other is 'trauma', a term which has its origin, of course, in notions of wounding, and which in the late nineteenth century becomes central to the psychology of Janet, Freud, and others. There are many types of discrimination in the whole world. Babasaheb Ambedkar's thoughts are the inspiration for Dalit consciousness underlies the creation of Dalit literature. It is consciousness against slavery, inequality, injustice and inhumanity. He draws the attention of Values of equality, freedom, justice and inherent to this literature.

What does apparently find in the autobiography of Om Prakash Valmiki is trauma. He writes few pages before starting the main incidents of his life. In his autobiography,

he says it is not easy to write and recollect all that traumatic life because when he remembers, he breaks and cries out. He feels very difficult to write down all traumas and tortures, which perpetuated, on the unreasonable basis. Nevertheless, Om Prakash Valmiki inculcates the dare to present his wounded life not using that abusive words and language. In short, the all past life is trauma for Valmiki. He starts his autobiography through describing the social structuring of Indian villages. He reflects the true harsh reality of Indian society. The social structure seems a stigma because the structure is hierarchal and the lowest suffers the most. The question arises that why the lower castes are living in inhuman, derogatory, disrespected life in the 21st century. The rays of the UNO's pity could not touch the miserable and inhuman conditions of Dalits' lives.

A Dalit writer uses his autobiography as a tool to describe life of untouchable. Gradually, he starts to jot down each traumatic incident throughout his life. It described that post-independence the government schools had opened for the untouchables but the mentality did not show a special change. The kids of *Tyagis* called to Valmiki *Oye Chuhre*. Sometimes the beating had happened without any reason. Valmiki says that life was a torment and made him introvert, irritated and crabbed. In those days, untouchability was in its peak time and the uses of public properties banned for the untouchables. Valmiki himself states that when he tries to touch the hand pump for drinking water, he gets beatings by the upper castes boys even by the teachers also. It is not easy to make space in the school. It gave Valmiki the unending trauma and wound. Valmiki writes that he saw the cruel image of the teachers that cannot erase from his memory until death. One day the headmaster shows his biasness and cruelty on him. He orders the Valmiki to sweep the floor of the school: "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. (p. 5)” Can we imagine what is going on inside the mind of fourth standard child? The internal upheaval and ebb are taking place and such an event no less than a trauma. This incidence happens again and every student making fun of him. “He screamed: “Go sweep the whole playground - otherwise I will shove chilies up your ass and throw you out of the school. (p. 6)” This time his father was passing by the school and he saw Valmiki sweeping the school courtyard. He went to school and spoke to him, and comes to know the reasons of sweeping; he has enraged and confronted the headmaster with courage. Nevertheless, the headmaster was like a beast and disrespected his father in front of Valmiki. “The headmaster had roared, “Take him away from here. The Chuhra wants him educated. Go, go – otherwise I will have your bones broken. (p.7)” Valmiki was enduring the pain of torments and getting mental sufferings. This was the childhood life – such a traumatic life – of Valmiki. Everywhere dishonor, ill treatment and abusive language for the lower castes like Valmiki in that time. The bad situation did not change after the childhood rather it was increased:

Sukhdev Singh pointed at the basket full of dirty leaf plates and said, “You are taking a basketful of joothan. And on top of that you want food for your children? Don’t forget your place, Chuhri (p.13) Pick up your basket and get going.” Those words of Sukhdev Singh Tyagi’s penetrated my breast as a knife.They continues to singe me to this day. (p. 12)

Om Prakash Valmiki states that when he had passed the fifth class then he had to took admission in inter school but the circumstances were not good in home. The financial

problems create hurdles in his education. He portrays that he could manage the money somehow but the environment at school was not cordial and harmonious. There, in the school, students of the upper castes make fun of Valmiki and sometime mistreat with him. Every incident was creating a home into his mind and they converted into trauma in his later life. He cannot think about such heinous and brutal events, which took place in his school life. He describes an incident in which he got crazy and not getting the way to repent. Money problem was a big issue in his family. One day, Valmiki's father was busy in selling pork and was not free to do any other works. One person came to his home and had to do his family's religious customs and a sacrifice of piglet- *pashubali*. Valmiki's father sends him with a piglet of eight-ten kilogram on his head along with that person. Then the internal guilt and haplessness of Valmiki, disturbs in his present life; even he was not able to do the sacrifice of piglet but he had done:

Seeing me standing quietly, the man roared, "Hey, why don't you start?" I said to him, "You do it yourself. I won't be able to." "I can't do it—what do you mean? I have given you the money. You will have to do it." There was anger in his eyes. I tried to prepare myself, but I could not gather the courage. The man roared again. With trembling hands, I put the knife in the piglet's chest and pressed. It screamed loudly. My eyes had closed. When I increased the pressure a bit, the knife went in about an inch, and a fountain of blood erupted. The man shouted, "Go in farther." But the knife would not go in any deeper. The man took hold of the handle and increased the pressure. My clothes, hands, face—all were sprayed with blood. Though the knife had penetrated its heart, the piglet had not died. Stupefied, I held on to the knife that had plunged into its heart. (p. 54)

How did he complete the task of *pashubali*? The above-mentioned inhuman custom was not easy for Valmiki. When he thinks of it, he cannot stop tears into his eyes. Such memories have changed into traumas and psychic wounds. Similarly, one day any male person was not at Valmiki's home. One Taga came to his home to inform that his ox had died. Valmiki's mother knows that they have to lift the corpse of ox and they will get a good amount of money from selling skin of the dead animal. His mother sends a message to him because he was at inter-school. Valmiki comes hurriedly and talks to his mother. He has to go with his uncle to pick the dead animal. He rejected at once but his mother insists him and makes aware about the bad economic situation of the family. He agrees to go with his lazy uncle. There what happens with him unforgettable and his soul tremor? The unwillingness of Valmiki was:

My hands were trembling as I held the knife. I entrapped in a hard place. Chacha taught me how to ply the knife. That day something broke inside me. I skinned the bullock under Uncle's guidance. I felt like I was drowning in a swamp. I drawn into the very quagmire that I had tried to escape from. The wounds from the torment that I suffered with Uncle on that hot afternoon are still fresh on my skin. As the hide was being skinned, the blood inside me was congealing. It took us several hours to skin the hide. Chacha spread the hide on the ground and the dry soil absorbed its blood. He then tied the hide in a sheet and carried the bundle on his head. Our home was about two miles away. Uncle had to walk fast because of the weight. Knife in hand, I was almost running behind

him. We took the paved road to Basera, and soon we were getting close to the bus terminal. Chacha set the bundle down and said, “Now you take it from here. I am tired.”(p. 41)

A teenager boy’s soft and holy soul was hurting due to social system. He wanted to do study and get a good job. In contrary, he had to do the menial job, which he did not know how to do in his progressive and learning period of life. Valmiki could not able to free himself of traumatic incidents and feels of himself that he had killed and sold his conscience with the skin of the dead animal. He nauseates when he thinks of it.

Conclusion

India is a great land where skin and racial discrimination not found. We can see white or black people upper castes and lower castes. In the modern time, we have no socio-political pressure on us to maintain and sustain Manu’s social structure. Now we are responsible to continue this system. Every person can change his/her caste or category. We are not slave. We are lucky because in Indian society there is no skin or color discrimination. However, reservation is the hard hurdle to change their castes because we want to take individual benefit due to caste system. The forgoing study of Om Prakash Valmiki’s *Joothan* autobiographical work with special attention to his social concerns and their implication for his art has brought to certain conclusions. It contains a brief incident of trauma that has faced by Om Prakash Valmiki. The autobiography portrays a terrifying society where few people have

privileges and the remaining is living in inhuman conditions. Those are on periphery and margins have to bear the torments of the privileged sections. Many incidents described by Om Prakash Valmiki; the incidents became traumas for him. He cannot forget that ill-treatments based on castes that are unreasonable and irrational. He feels his mind has clutched into the cruel and brutal attitude of the upper castes and cannot emancipate himself, indeed, impossible to get liberty of the traumatic life. “The longer we live, the more inevitable it is that we will experience trauma. Trauma is the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual’s ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness, diminishes their senses of self and their ability to feel the full range of emotions and experiences” (Karen Onderko). Om Prakash Valmiki had to live the traumatic life because of the inequality in the Indian society.

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