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## **MOBILITY OF PROFESSIONS AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE**

**P. Mohan Rao**  
**Assistant Professor**  
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### **Abstract**

Ambedker's social reform movements carried a significant place for the Dalit community in general and for Dalits of Maharashtra in particular with educational avenues created by the architect of the Indian constitution. Dalit become socially conscious about the circumstances and social problems of untouchability and caste discrimination. "The period from 1920 to 1956 was influenced by the writings and political activities of Dr.BR.Ambedkar he argued the case of untouchable from the boundaries of the villages to the round table conferences he fought powerful forces ranging from the upper caste Hindu gatekeepers to god for their rights. The entire Dalit society felt the impact o Baba Sahebs work. Dr.Ambedkar launched the social liberation movement for equal rights and opportunities of the deprived and down trodden sections of society. The education that the Dalit youth received in the post independent period they became educated and got financial independence and left their traditional professions and mobilize one profession to another with help of education they reached high position.

### **Keywords**

Ambedkar - social reform movement, Social emancipation, Self-realization of Dalits, Dalit became consciousness, Self-esteemed, Search for self-Identity.

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## **MOBILITY OF PROFESSIONS AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE**

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Earlier Dalits had no land and no education. So they had to depend on people from other castes, especially the dominant castes. Poverty, illiteracy, and slavery overruled them. They suffered for ages and were exploited. Dalits were inspired by the thoughts of the revolutionary Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jothirao Phule. They became educated and got financial independence and left their traditional professions.

Marathi Dalit writing considers Mahatma Jotiba Phule as a pioneering champion of the downtrodden. Mahatma Phule's contribution towards the Dalits is outstanding. Phule expressed his views on Dalit education frequently in his writings. He emphasized on the need of education of Dalits and he believed that education for Dalits was the only weapon. He realized that if a Dalit was educated, he could educate all the members of his family. Phule criticized about atrocities against the Dalits.

He took a strong exception to cultural oppression by upper castes. He believed that social work would generate a solution to the multiple problems of Dalits. Phule thought relevantly for Dalit education. He worked in every possible way for the betterment of Dalits, throughout his entire life. He had immense faith in education, and through his mission called "SatyaSodakhSamaj", he campaigned for the cause of the downtrodden.

Phule's wife Savithri Bai also struggled tirelessly for the education of Dalits. It was during the twentieth century that Ambedkar continued Jotiba Phule's struggle for social emancipation. In fact, Ambedkar considered Phule as one of his gurus. In order to lodge a strong protest, Ambedkar burnt publicly Manusmriti which professed the caste system. Ambedkar severely criticised the Manu Dharma Sastra as Manu imposed a number of restrictions on the Dalits. Ambedkar campaigned for the cause of all the Dalits in the society. Through his speeches and writings, Ambedkar tried to awaken the consciousness of Dalits. He presented Round Table Conference in the Parliament of India to ensure the equal opportunities for Dalits in the Society. He wanted to literate the lower caste people to make them free from Brahminical dominance.

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Later, in the Indian Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar incorporated the principles of education, freedom, and brotherhood and thus tried to liberate Dalits. Ambedkar prioritized the Dalits' cause in constitution. In this way, Mahatma Phule, Savithri Bai Phule, and Dr. Ambedkar inspired Marathi Dalit Writings. They devoted themselves to the liberation of the Dalits from the slavery. They honoured Dalits. They even made some legal amendments to give Dalits equal status.

An autobiography of Dalits is a more complex signifier. The Dalit discourse is yet to contribute to the Dalit movements. Dalit autobiographical writing is a means of self-assertion. Dalits have been inspired by Ambedkar's ideology. The Dalit movements do not adequately acknowledge the contribution of Dalits to the movements. The autobiographies, therefore, continue to be meaningful for several generations in a caste-driven society, for different readers in different social formations. No matter how specific they are referentially, they are major intercultural texts. Testimonies can be interpreted as a powerful moral medium to protest against the adversaries both from writing and outside. Dalit autobiography testimonies could be seen as a political initiative to engage with social patriarchy.

Dalit autobiographical personnel narratives are a kind of protest against the exploitation by the state. Dalit autobiographies are also the statements of protest against their exclusion from the public sphere, literary gatherings, academic gatherings, publishing sphere and other spheres of recognition like political parties. Sharmila Rege argues that Dalit writers want their autobiographies to assert themselves and their various concerns through the act of writing their autobiographies. They have a sort of protest by writing their stories themselves.

Let us turn now to Bama's autobiography which is an account of her spiritual journey from being a childhood devotee to become a nun. Her *Karukku* has opened the mirrors of Dalit literature to other nearby states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka. The title too is very carefully thought out and is aptly chosen for content. Her explanation of the title creates an interest in the readers and they are aptly substantiated by the content of the text. *Karukku* is a Tamil word which means 'palmyra leave' which has a very sharp edge like a sword. She explains the intended pen on the title "Karu" which means a seed that connotes 'freshness' and 'newness'. It is metaphorically used as a double-edged sword. She refers to it as the word of God. For the word of god is viewing and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing to the discussion of words and spirit of joints and narrow and discarding the thoughts and intentions of the hearts (*Hebrews 4:10*). So her autobiography is a doubled-edged sword. It cuts across many boundaries and brings out intimate truth.

Bama's Autobiographical novel *Karukku* (1992) discusses various stages of the writer's life and her parents' social and economic conditions. Bama explains funny reflections in a caste divide village in Tamil Nadu. She assumes that her community depended on upper caste because of untouchability, poverty, slavery, hunger, injustice, casteism, etc. When she is in third class, an elderly person from her community, a Paraya, brings some *vadas* for Naickers. He holds the parcel by its string so that the fingers do not touch him so as to avoid pollution directly. These caste Hindus behave in such a manner because poverty, bondage, slavery force them to depend economically and socially which becomes an inheritance in the name of tradition. This tradition

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is passed from one generation to another. The Parayas are no independent income. So they depend upon the upper caste.

Her grandmother worked as a servant for Naickers family. When she worked in the field, even small children, born the other day, would call her by her name because they belonged to the Naicker family, and this grandmother, like all the other labourers, would call the little boy *ayya*, master. It is due to lack of education that Dalits woman are not able to come out of their poverty and marginalized conditions. This lack of education makes them ignorant and innocent as there is no independence source of income.

Dalits would go to the woods or mountains to gather fire woods and sell it for earning some money. They would work in the lands of the upper caste people throughout the year. They would always depend on upper castes money. They didn't have their own business. This was the reason that the system of discrimination continued for long historical periods. Most of them lived below the poverty line.

Even the upper caste people were given their drinking water was disquieting to watch. The neighbor women would pour out the water from the height of four feet, while Paddi and the others received and drink it with cupped hands held to their mouths. She always felt terrible when she watched this because of the caste system. They treated to the Dalits untouchables. Her grandmother worked as a slave, she would go to the neighbours' family. She could sweep out the cowshed, collect up the dung and dirt, and then bring home the leftover rice and curry from the previous evening.

She writes in the beginning of the second chapter. Every Dalit experiences such humiliation and discrimination from the moment she breathes first. They believe that they came to them naturally as rains in the rainy season and sun in the summer. One can not oppose these acts of suppression without knowing the basic freedom and human rights which she possesses in a democratic country like India.

When she was in the seventh class, every day after school, she would play with the other children of her street before going home in the evening. There were two or three children who were related to her and the rest of the boys and girls always played together as group. One day, they were playing under the big neem tree in front of the school, hanging like bats upside down from its branches. After a while, they started another game. When they were playing the game, she came running from a distance at a top speed. She could touch the coconut growing there. The coconut fell at her touch. It was not a fully ripened coconut, just a green one without so much water in it.

The next morning at assembly, the Head Master called out her name. "You here showed us your true nature as Paraya," he said. "You climbed the coconut tree yesterday after everybody else had gone home, and you stole a coconut. We cannot allow you inside this school. Stand outside." (*Karukku: 1992*) She was in agony because she had been shamed and insulted in front of all the children because of the low caste.

Vol. 3 Issue 5 (October 2017)

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Another important issue in the lines of Dalits which is discussed in *Karukku* is “the act of naming”. Names do play an important role in every one’s life. But in the case of a Dalit, it has very different role. The name sometimes proclaims the caste and class. The names are not fashionable or good to every so. They are moved at by the upper caste villagers. Bama in the book has narrated a lot of incidents related to names wherein she describes how each one is named based on his or her talent and peculiar quality. A lot of affection is evident when the people in the community call each other by their names.

“The names you heard along only streets would really surprise you. People’s baptismal names given at Church were one thing. The names we used in the street were quite another. One child name was Munkovam, short temper. A woman was called midday masalas because one day she ground masala at midday, and made curry.....Certain child who was now dark-skinned and plump was named Murugan, spring pig. There was a woman who leaked all over her legs when she revealed herself. She was called Kazhinja, Leaky. A small girl who went off to practice swimming in the well, but could only manage to float, was promptly named Medenda, Floater. I could go on, Konnavaachi (Starter), Deaf-one, Dumbo, Crazy, Severiyaa (Xavier), Black-ant Manacchi (Flat nose), Uzhamuki (Running nose), Green nose, Needle-bum. All sorts of names like that.”(*Karuku: 1992.P.7-8*).

Naming is a part of the life of Dalits, and Bama has narrated this very realistically and ordinarily. It happens in each and every generation. “My mother in her village is called “Bodi” (Shaven-head) because my grandmother used to always shave her head in her childhood. These names continue even now. They call me ‘Cheemidi Mukku’ (Running nose) because I used to have a cold and a running nose always, even in summer in my childhood.”(*Karuku: 1992. P-8*) This is how the names are coined in villages. No one gets offended. This is reality and ordinariness that Bama narrates throughout the book.

This has been treated as “routine” by M. S. S. Pandian in his essay titled “Writing Ordinary Lives.” I do not agree with the idea of the “routine”, stereotypes and monotonous while referring to Dalit autobiographies because this is the life of the Dalits which will never change.

When she completed eighth class in her village, she went to high school in a neighbouring town. She was very surprised when she saw the school there. The children who attended it and the clothes they wore were very fine. So she felt new sky and was almost fearful. She realized the importance of education and began to work hard with her studies. The children were living in the hostel were the same age. They wore smart clothes and possessed all sorts of things like jewels and wrist watches. She thought it was so because they were probably from the upper caste families and why Bama was humiliated was because of her poverty. Teacher played an important role in Dalit students’ life. The Dalit students were severally punished. “I don’t want to be beaten by teacher, I want to study well and I want to be clever. We prayed all sort of things like that.” (*Karukku: 1992: p77*) There were lot of discriminations in the school for low caste, low class and soon, the triple oppresses of a Dalit girl child started in the school. Though Bama was the topper in the class, she had to face a lot of humiliation.

Vol. 3 Issue 5 (October 2017)

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“The PT Teacher would ask all the Harijan children to stand up either at the assembly, or during lessons. They write down our names, and then ask us to sit down again. We felt nearly two thousand children hanging our gods in shame, as if we had done something wrong” (*Karukku: 1992: P-18*). Bama found that wherever she went, there was painful reminder of her caste and untouchability. The financial grants and special tuitions that the government offered the Harijans were more of a humiliation because it singled out her caste identity.

Even though against all these odds, Bama was awarded a prime for studying first among all the Harijan students of the district who took the government S.S.L.C. Exams that year. It was impossible for a Harijan to study. She felt a certain pride and a desire to prove that they could study as well as others and make progress. Bama used to work a lot like machines during Christmas and Easter, when she was admitted into the hostel of a convent in the next village. “It was a hostel which demanded quite a high fee, and I felt untouchable to stay there although they fed us well. It was really big school. Both in the hostel and in the school, the children wore all sorts of fine clothes, and they kept nice things to eat in their rooms.” (*Karukku: 1992:62-63*) So she thought they must all be upper caste children. She had no money either. She thought she would study hard and make good earning. She worked really hard. At her village everyone had said she would gain good marks in the eleventh year public examinations. She was passed out this.

Dalits are mad to work like machines during those days. Comparatively, it was a very huge loss for Dalit women to get educated. They lacked the support they needed from their family. The fact that their daughter was studying further increased their worries because it was a difficult task for them to get a husband in the same caste. This is one of the reasons why Dalit girls were not encouraged to go for higher studies. “Then, they said it would be difficult for me to find a husband in my community if I went for further education. So they wrote off to a few places to find out about teacher training. (*Karukku: 1992: P-64*)

It was against all these odds that Bama completed her under-graduation during her college days. She did not wear fine clothes. She didn't have fine slippers. Another fact was that, all of them came to college wearing all kinds of fine clothes. It humiliated her because of her poverty. When she completed her B.Ed. and completed her education, she went to work at her first place. Life became comfortable enough. It was really good to earn enough money every month and to become financial independent. She could go wherever she wanted to go. She could buy and eat whatever she wanted. She could ever have a few pieces of jewelry made for herself. She became aware that if she had a little money in her hands, she could gain some authority, status, and prestige. She realized that those who had the cash to spend could always afford to live in comfort in her community. However, hard toil never seemed to make them have so much cash in hand. They worked so hard that they were themselves out like pot shared. They lived in poor conditions. They didn't have own property nor land nor even a decent house to live in. In such conditions, they worked only for the rich. How can they even hope for luxuries? Even at the end, she could find to live a life of moderate comfort. She realized that if only the children on her street acquired a little education and found jobs, they could live themselves. It was this train of thought that she became a nun and entered a convent. There was a desire in her heart to help other children to settle

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themselves. As she was born into the same community, she really wanted to teach such children. But she entered the convent before. They did not care for poor Dalits children. So she left teachership and joined the religion order. The convent did not know the meaning of poverty. There was food of all kinds. There were always abundance of fruits and a variety of vegetable. There were comfortable rooms to live in that convent. Convent life had changed her fundamentally.

Bama in *Karukku* has described the painful life of herself as well as of her community. Her perseverance to get education is exemplary. I have tried to argue that she too has mentioned that it is education that has helped her understand her state of life and it is education that has helped her show the reality to the world and to aim to come out of it. She has aspired to educate her own community by making them understand the realities of Dalit poverty and dependency and thereby to come out of the bondage. They set financial independence with the help of education.

According to the ancient *dharmashastras* of the Hindus, Dalits are labourers doing menial work. This hierarchy is primarily a class system and the development of a society based on class is a world-wide phenomenon. The social, political, economic and religious restrictions laid down by the caste Hindu in their religions were implemented by the Hindus. Thus it followed the duties allotted to particular Dalits by the caste Hindus. So the life conditions of these untouchables were shameful. They had no land to till nor could they follow any profession other than the menial work ordered by high caste. They were treated like animals and they had to accept leftovers from the Hindu caste people. Hindu tradition forbade them to wear good clothes or ornaments or even foot wear, and prescribed severe and humiliating punishment for violating these orders. Even for a basic necessity like water, they were helplessly dependent on the good will of the people of higher castes.

Dependency became inheritance in the name of tradition and the Dalits had no way to come out of the oppression. This tradition passed from one generation to another. After centuries of suppression, the Dalits were in struggle for emancipation under the liberation movements established by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who believed that only education could bring about change in the oppressed lives of the Dalit. Education is the means of realizing one's life's desire which will help in developing one's personality and improving one's status in all respects. Education has direct association with the socio-economic and political status of Dalits with the help of education the Dalit are able to come out of their poverty, depending slavery, bondage.

In the case of Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste: A Memoir (2002)* discusses the story of Narendra Jadhav's parents' journey from a small village in Ozar in Maharashtra to Mumbai. Narendra Jadhav tells the story of his family struggle for equality and justice in India. At the beginning of out caste, 20 years old Damu the chief protagonist of the story is addressed contemporarily as "Mahar". Mahar is Damu's caste, stigma destiny. It talks the world that he is the lowest of the low in the Hindu *chaaturvarnasyam*, the system of four castes. He is so low that his touch pollutes. He is an untouchable. The place is Damu's ancestral village in Western Maharashtra, the date is March 1st, 1930, when Damu was a young man doing his yeskar duty. The Mamledar as senior revenue official was to visit the village for a routine inspection. Damu was running barefoot out of breath as he

Vol. 3 Issue 5 (October 2017)

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arrived the Mamledar' tonga because an honourable person was arriving. Later Damu patiently waited outside the house of Patil, the village headman, to escort the Mamledar back, because of his low caste according to the Hindu chaaturvarna system. He knows clearly the dangers of village duty. When police man came looking for him, He told that a dead body was floating in an abandon well near the village. He has been told to sit guarding the body till the *Fauzdar* and police party came to inspect to seen the body.

Patil, the village chief had already received the news in the evening. Damu stayed up the whole night by the well guarding the corpse, because of his lowly position. He did not have a respectful profession because he was illiterate. He depended on the mercy of the upper caste people to guard the village traditions duties and all their needs. Even if they get angry and beat him he has no choice but to obey them. Damu stands facing the *Fauzdar*. The police chief ordered to get the body out. But Damu refused to do the task of getting the body out and cried out:

"I will die but I will not bowdown before you  
Come on, beat me all you can and kill me  
Let the world know that a helpless. Mahar was  
Killed doing his duty, see the entire village is  
Witwitnessing your atrocities". (*Outcaste* 9)

Hearing this dialogue of Damu, the *Fauzdar* thundered, "You lump of dirt! Are you going to jump or do I have to whip you?" At these words, Damu remained silent. Seeing that the *Fauzdar* was enraged, he was not going to do it. The *Fauzdar* and constable started scolding him with abuses. They charged at him overflowing with abuses. That must be why *Fauzdar* enraged. In those days, the oppressive power and prestige of the *Fauzdar* were tremendous and a Mahar was a mere wisp of straw.

Seeing and hearing all this was a shock to Damu's young mind. He was questioned himself Why Iam doing these meanial job? Why I was cursed, and their shouting, whose dead body? Whose well? Why I should have to be guard the dead body. The *Fauzdar* threatened because he was the lowest poor Mahar doing yeskar duty. He refused to carry out the village traditional duties. He would throw away the miserable crutches of traditional village duties because he was aware of his rights as a human being. As he participated in Baba Saheb Ambedkar's Social Movements, he was reluctant to perform yeskar duties. (*Outcaste: P-6*)

Then Damu's journey was from a small village in Ozar in Mahrastra to Mumbai to escape persecution and reclaim human dignity. So he left his village and went to Mumbai. He recollected his village life of Ozar. He first realized that he was untouchable when he was a child. He was told he could not drink water straight t from the well because the water would get polluted. The child Damu was touched to observe strict rules regarding the taking water.

He grew up into the Mahar household and challenged the daily indignities inflicted on him. He refused to perform the annual yeskar duties when his turn came, to announce deaths and tend to the carcasses of cattle in the village, and run as a human pilot foaming at the mouth ahead of the carriage of government officials, singing their praises, in return for being allowed to beg for left over from house to house (*Outcaste: 16*).

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Around 1919, he participated in Dr. Ambedkar's social movements. He was reluctant to doyeskar duties. He recollected about the influence of Ambedkar in his Memoir. Ambedkar was the light of their life. Ambedkar's slogan was to 'educate, unite, and agitate', and inspire them to fight against the Atrocities. He asked the Mahar to educate their children. His speeches at the Mahad Satyagraha brought about a revolution among the untouchables. Their thoughts and behavior began to change. They began to take part in meetings and conference in large numbers. Dalit youth and women's organizations were formed and Dalit women began to speak with vigour at meetings and conferences. They went on processions and became active in the movements and its struggles. We cannot forget that Dr. Ambedkar's liberal views on Dalits and Dalit Women were a motivating force (*Pawar and Moon 158*). The liberation movements started with the speeches of Ambedkar. His speeches changed their lives significantly. He stressed more on education, moral education and self dignity in his speeches. He urged the untouchables to do away with the humiliations and enslaving traditions of village duties like carrying away dead cattle. "It is utterly disgraceful to sell one's human rights for few crump of bread. We will attain self-elevation only if we learn self-help, regain our self-respect and gain self-knowledge," Baba Saheb said.(*Outcaste: 22*)

Ambedkar talked on child marriages, cleanliness among the Dalits, responsibility of parents to encourage their children to send them to schools, morals, etc. So he was inspired by Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar's speeches to standup and reclaim his dignity. He wanted to fight back against injustice. So he looked back on his behaviour with the *Fauzdar*. He worked in Bombay slum and knew the freedom and dignity of "touchability". In the city, all thought illiterate and despite the disadvantages of his Mahar Caste, he began going to the railway station, doing all sorts of odd jobs. Slowly people knew him and it became easy for him to get works. A man called Gangaram hired him to sell newspapers. On the first day, he earned five *annas*. Then he began a new phase in his life. He sold newspapers among the customers. He also worked for the Great Indian Peninsula (GIP) Railway as a daily wage labourer, but he would get work only for fewdays. He would have to wait every day to be called. While all the other workers were offered work at 11 *annas* per day, he returned home frustrated and hungry. Later, he found some work in Thane where a new railway line was being laid. He had to work with cement and concrete. They dug large ditches for electricity poles and filled them up with cement. The Saheb entrusted four men and women to help him and arranged for a boat to ferry them across Kalyan. His job was to get the work done and give a report to his boss. So he maintained cordial relations with the workers.

The workers appreciated this and always cooperated. This project was complete a few days later. Their file returned to the Kurla car shed. He got some odd jobs like cement loading from the truck and taking those inside the warehouse, carrying water, etc. Then he talked with Gora Saheb that he wanted to work. The next day, he had to be examined by a doctor and on 1st November 1924, he became a regular worker of the GIP Railway. First, he joined as a temporary worker and with great difficulty. He was paid 18 rupees per month. Then he became a regular worker. He received 20 rupees and 8 *annas*. He worked with William Saheb and was explained his duties very patiently. He put his heart and soul into his work and learned much in just few days.

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He was transferred to the main railway station called Victoria Terminal. William Saheb was also working there. He was very happy to see him. Damu had worked under him for two years at Bori Bundar. When a train came to the station, he asked the driver if there was any problem. There was some problem with the engine. He solved the problem and became friendly with all the drivers. They chatted and joked and had good time. So his pay rose to 27 rupees per month. He was promoted to the post of electric motor mechanical in his new job where he had to inspect every train that reached there overnight. He learned to operate the train as he had to drive the inspected train to the station. There he handed the charge to the driver who worked with him in the previous department. Even though he was an untouchable and illiterate, he earned a square meal for his family. So it looked as if his good days finally arrived.

He was married for two years and all was going well. He had a good job in the railways and his mother also worked there. His wife took care for the first time since coming to Mumbai. It was around 1929, when he came home and told Sonu that there was a strike in the GIP Railway and consequently lot of people would lose their job. He also lost his job and was in a desperate state because there was pressure from his mother for accepting the Yesker duty in his village. So, he participated in Baba Saheb's movements to stand up against injustice at all costs. Then all returned to Kurla from Mumbai. There were no jobs and they didn't have money to pay rent. So he faced problems because of his poverty and he struggled for existence. They did not have enough money for meals. So buying medicines or taking his wife to a doctor was out the question. Sometimes, he found an odd job in another town. There was not much regular work available and even odd jobs were hard to find with the help of the local leaders. He was able to get a job in the United Mills in Parel. He was excited to get a fulltime job after searching for work for years. Then he was soon promoted. Skill rather than speed was more important here. In this new job, the machines moved at high speed and the operator had to concentrate on the levers. So he was paid 2 rupees extra for this job. Unfortunately, he lost his thumb. So he faced difficulties to overcome his poverty. So he wanted to dedicate his life to Baba Saheb's social movements. "With the inspiration of Ambedkar at least I could do was uplift at least one family my own. I vowed to give my children the best possible education and raise them with the spirit of public service (*Outcaste: 146*).

Then he participated in Baba Saheb's movement. There were lots of works to be done. Ambedkar announced a change of strategy in the struggle. The efforts were for securing respect, independence and equality with others through education. Damu wanted his children to grow up and have a dignified life, not to be treated as inferior without any respect in society. His four sons Janu, Sudha, Dina, Chotu and two daughters Leela and Trusha achieved high position. Janu was selected to become an I.A.S. Officer. Deena was a successful broker even though he was illiterate. His children reached higher positions. Narendra Jadhav studied Doctoral Degree in America. He was recipient of national scholarship from the government of India. Then he joined the IMF representing our country. So the author narrates the story of his journey from poverty and suffering towards self-sufficiency and self-esteem with the help of education.

Vol. 3 Issue 5 (October 2017)

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Sharan Kumar Limbale's *'The Outcaste'* is generally an autobiography which insists at lengths upon the condition and mechanism of oppression of the individuals and their community, and upon the accessibility to school and education as the essential way towards employment and social mobility in modern urbanized setting. That allows for an escape from the grip of traditional repressive system.

Limbale expresses his deepest anguish over the helpless condition of the Mahar women. They suffered for ages because of lack of education and without culture, property, self-respect, and dignity. Limbale elaborates the wrong-doings of the upper caste people who had property and land belonging to their ancestors. These upper caste people exploited the lives of the Dalits at times and this ruined the married lives of the women. The Patils and Zamindar of the village often kept untouchable women as their whore. The Mahar women relied on them solely. They are always sat the mercy of Patils, the entire Dalit house hold calls these houses as the houses of Patil's whore and their son's as the son's of Patil's whore (*Limbale: 50*).

His mother, Masabai, was a Mahar. She was a landless woman and agricultural labourer whereas his father, Vithal Kamle, was a landlord and village chieftain called Patil. Kamble was working as a bonded labourer and was a very poor man. They worked as grass movers and never had enough food. After moving the grass, they had to carry the bundles down four miles away. They had to sell the bundles for getting some money to buy things for their daily meal. Sometimes, they collected and sold twigs and faggots. Hanumantha Limbale Patil helped him during hard times, but while helping Kamble, Patil's intension was quite different. This rich man was out to ruin a poor man's family.

Kamble was working as a bonded labourer on a yearly agreement in the agricultural land of Hanumantha Limbale, the Patil of the village of Basalegaon. He was forced to depend on the landlord's mercy because of his poverty and landlessness. His poverty was his sad lot and he was worried about his food. Masabai is the protagonist in Limbale's *Akkarmashi*. She was harassed by the upper caste Patil of the village. Her entire life took a different turn. She had physical relation with upper caste people and bore many children. Her marriage to Vithal Kamble broke up when Hanumatha Patil forced his attention on her and their caste *panchayat* order the husband to desert Masabai. Taking her two sons, she was then forced to seek refuge with Hanmantha Limbale and later with different upper caste Patils. Masabai changed men like clothes. All the men in her life deceived her. Masabai, however, used this as a strategy for survival. She bore Sidram Patil's nine children and took care of all of them. Masabai led a very pathetic life and, despite her difficulties, she educated Limbale, which is something praiseworthy. Limbale suffered from the caste system because he was an outcaste below everyone else. He suffered from hunger both physically and mentally because he didn't have 'pure blood' and no one would accept him. At times, his anger would become emotional. He questioned himself and became rebellious because of the existing social circumstances. The pain and suffering of Sharan Kumar was not because he was untouchable or because he was poor but because he was rejected within his own community. His own community boycotted him. This added fuel to fire. It troubled him psychologically. His pain of being rejected perplexed him and he was traumatized by the bitter and harsh social experiences.

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He was utterly confused. Sometimes, he behaved in an eccentric manner. The existing social circumstances were responsible for Limbale's suffering and torturous life.

There were many factors in Dalit life for which they suffer. Hunger is one of the most important factors in Dalit autobiography. Limbale narrated his school experiences to show how he suffered because of hunger. Once as a child, Limbale was going on a school trip along with his classmates. During lunch hour, their teacher distributed the leftover of the upper caste children's lunch to Limbale and his friends. In order to satisfy their insatiable hunger, Limbale and his friends ate the leftover like hungry vultures. Untouchability is another significant factor in Dalit autobiography. It is also one of the reasons why the upper caste people tortured and troubled the untouchable. At last, he found salvation in Buddhism.

When he was attending school regularly for some days, the teacher asked him his father's name. He did not know his father's name because his mother was not married to Hanumantha. So he faced painful experiences in school days. When he completed his school education, he went to high school in a neighbouring village, Chungi. They asked his father's and sarpanch's signature for scholarship. Getting the signature of the sarpanch was always a problem because his mother was not married to Hanumantha. Though he faced such hurdles, he studied hard and stood second in the final school exams. He passed with merit and was greatly admired. After that, going to college was a big problem because of his poverty. His grandmother borrowed money from many people in an insulting manner.

Then he was admitted to Dayananda College in Sholapur for his college education. His mother and he were suffering a lot of because of poverty. They did not have even proper clothes. With the help of his friend Mallaya, he studied upto B.A. in spite of facing such hurdles. He got a telephone operator at Ahamedpur and got financial independence. He was able to escape from his poverty and oppression and became a professor of economics with the help of education.

Siddalingaiah's *Ooru Keri (2003)* has been originally written in Kanada. He describes various stages of the writer's life. He speaks eloquently in the context of the socio-economic dimensions through the lens of his own life in the contemporary social system. Autobiography, as commonly understood, presents the facts by a person from the circumstances of his life. His family and he might represent socio-economic conditions of his community through his autobiography.

Poverty and caste humiliation were the most prominent Dalit issues. Poverty that struck Siddalingaiah family was beyond his comprehension as a boy. "It was amusing to watch the two men trundle on the bullocks. While the third followed them swimming a whip and making them plough. A strange agony gripped me the movement I realized that one of the men carrying the yoke was my father" (*Siddalingaiah 2003:2*).

It was really a shocking sight for the child Siddalingaiah. This sight naturally saddened the boy. He was incapable of thinking about the intensity of poverty that affected his family at this stage. As a child, he could hardly understand the crux of the problems. Therefore, economic misery appeared to him almost peripheral.

Siddalingaiah grew up like any other Dalit boy. He was socially humiliated and economically oppressed, but he was incapable of understanding as to why his family suffered from

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poverty. He was in the grip of anger and frustration and ultimately awareness led him to become one of Kannada literature's most influential Dalit writers. First of all, his parents were very poor. They earned from working as labourers, but this was not enough to maintain the family. His mother would sometimes go to the forest to collect firewood and sold those at the Shandy to earn some money when two sisters were born in his family. His father found it difficult to take care of his family. He started going farther and farther away to look for work. He came only for three to six months. Meanwhile life in the village became tough. His father, burdened with debt, left his family because of poverty. His mother and his two sisters faced the difficulties in those days. So his mother's family migrated from Magadi to Manchanabele. When he completed second and third standard at Magadi and Manchanbale, he joined a Government primary school. At that time, a teacher called Andalamma worked in the school. She would bring food and also bring books and pencils for him because of his poverty. He was the son of an utterly poor man. His father was poor and illiterate. He depended on others. He was an employee in Rajan Mills. He got work at least for few days in a month. But after the workers' strike, the owner closed down the mill. It closed for many years. His life became miserable. He had trouble finding a day's meal. Then his father got a job as a wood cutter. He earned some money, but it was not sufficient to run the family. So he became a debtor. He made loans, but spent money like flowing water. He did not repay them because he could not find any job. He was beaten by the agents of the money lender. His mother also could not find any job. So his family was socially humiliated and economically oppressed, but he was incapable of understanding as to why his family suffered from poverty. As to Nagaraj Says "A Dalit story without poverty and caste humiliation would be false" (*Nagaraj 2003: 111*).

Then his mother worked in the Dalit hostel in Srirampuraas a sweeper. The hostel warden would give food to her. His mother used to bring home the food they gave her in the morning and night. It solved the food problem.

So he describes his painful life that he experienced within his community, the harsh reality of poverty and dependency. He would eat and go to the school. The high school was near the hostel. Gangamalaiah, one of his father's elder brother, taught him to speak in the public. He could learn more. He went to several libraries and read a lot of books and journals. He could gain some knowledge. Gangamalaiah had also thought him how to rehearse a speech. He could gain some confidence. He gave speech in his colony and in Manchanabele, everyone listened to his speech.

Hostel life gave him some courage and new experience. Three hundred students were staying in hostel. They came from various places and spoke Kannada in different ways. The students participated in extracurricular activities in the hostel. It gave him a new experience. Before, he was in the grip of anger and frustration and ultimately awareness led him to become the most influential Dalit writer in Kannada literature. There were open libraries in many places. He started visiting them and read Kannada news papers and magazines. He visited those libraries and got knowledge. He went to Seshadripuram frequently and visited public library there. He read Basavaraja Katliman's novel "Towards Freedom". This library helped him a lot. A student called Basavanna, his hostel mate, gave him the book, "Avatara Purushudu Ambedkar (Ambedkar the Messaih). He read the whole book and wrote a lot of songs and poetry at that time.

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He studied up to 10th class in Srirampuram and then he joined the Government Arts College at Tirupati. He got a seat in the Dalit hostel on Mahtama Gandhi Road. This changed his life. The food arrangement at the hostel was excellent. They gave rice and chapati every day. They were served non-vegetarian food twice a week. He started eating well and his appearance changed. He visited the central library in Cubbon Park daily and read all the books. He made good use of the library during this period. When he studied in the high school, he participated in the inter-college debate. He won many books and prizes in debate. During his college days, he did some part time job. Bangalore University had launched “earn while you learn” scheme to help the students. It helped the poor students to support financial assistance. When he was in M.A Course in Kannada, he became a direct disciple of Dr. G. S. Shivarudrappa. As he had not paid his hostel fees, he was thus not in a position to take his exams. Dr. K. Murali Siddappa paid his fees and made all possible arrangements for him to write the exams. Nevertheless, he was awarded a gold medal in his post-graduation. In spite of such hurdles, he joined as a lecturer in the Kannada Department and became financially independent. Even though Siddalingaiah was born of an illiterate couple, he conquered poverty and dependence on others through education. So his journey from poverty and suffering ended. He came out of oppression and got self-sufficiency and self-esteem with the help of education.

Vasanth Moon’s story *Growing Up Untouchable* is about his vastior neighbourhood. He along with his community struggled against poverty and deprivation. Moon’s autobiography presents us a powerful personal and collective memory of caste oppression and struggle in India in the 19th century.

The Hindu caste system, which forms the backdrop of Moon’s narrative, operated on a graded hereditary scale of professions. Brahmins were at the high position and Dalits at the low position because they didn’t have their own land. Dalits were also relegated to work that was considered ritually unclean such as, the disposal of dead animals, upkeep of crematoria, cleaning of latrines and tanning of leather. The Dalits existed literally as outcastes living in the margins of villages in Indian society where the upper caste Hindus were also feudal land owners or had control over land in the form of temple trusts. Dalits depended on upper caste Hindus because they wanted to work. Firstly, he eloquently describes growing up in Dalit slum in the city of Nagpur in central Maharastra Model Mill. The writer discusses the various stages of his personal life. Before he was born, his grandfather worked as a tailor at Dhantoli. He was living with the neighbours. He migrated to Kamathi because of his poverty. Sadasiva lived at Kamati for seven years. He came again to live in Badri. His wife Kemalaja worked in the mill while he managed the household. Later Sadasiva proposed to marry his daughter off to Waman. He thought that his daughter would have good life. His mother was a widow. He had four daughters and one son by his first wife his father was driver for the Parsis at a wage of 250 rupees per year. It was not a small amount at that time, but he became addicted to drinking alcohol. She left her drunken husband and returned to her father with her two children. Before the death of her father, she had never put a foot outside the house for work. She was unusual manual labour.

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She would not get any work in house because of caste system which moon describes with aching poignancy. As he reveals, “Now our days hunger began he started going hungry for two days at a time, at a first time we were troubled by pangs of starvation. However, once the body gets the habit of fasting. Hunger is not felt. Hunger slowly begins to die” (*Growing Up Untouchables 2000: 75*).

His mother left her husband and returned to her father and two children. Purna, leaving her young children in the care of her neighbours, set out in search for work. His mother went out daily to look for work and came back only at seven or eight in the evening. Occasionally, she would earn one or two rupees. When his grandmother died, their situation was very miserable. Laxman took the control of the house. They were forced to live on the varanda in grandfather’s house in Maharpura. The heat and rain brought both trouble and joy. Taking taste of all this, he returned to the house. Dark had fallen, his mother had not yet come. His little sister was sitting quietly often bringing water from the tap. The neighbour woman inquired “Bapu, hasn’t your mother come”? He would only shake his head. Many times, they would have to go to sleep without food.

Moon remembered the strong sense of collective responsibility for the children in the community. There were mothers who went to work leaving their small boys and girls in the care of some trustworthy neighbour and there were the aged teachers, uncles and elders, who kept watch over the confide neighbourhood (*Growing Up Untouchables: 2002: p -118*).

When he passed fourth grade examination and joined fifth class, his mother didn’t have even a rupee. His uncle Hari got him admitted to the Patwardhan High School. His uncle paid the school fees and bought text books, note books, pencils, slates and other equipments for him as it was impossible for his mother to manage all this. During his school days, he didn’t have sufficient clothes. With the help of his community, he got financial support for his education. Moon rejected the scholarship of Harijan Seva Sangh because of the caste implication of the word Harijan. His economic situation was very bad because his mother didn’t have regular work, but they never left the community. Atmaram Patil had just built the house beside the Mahar community. He sat on the steps of his home. He was filled with anxiety and melancholy. There was no food in his house. His sister would fetch the water and washed the clothes. She has stopped the school from the third standard because of their poverty. Maroti Bagade, a youth from the Samanta Sainik Dal, saw his sad face and brought him a whole bag of hot chick peas. He brought those chick peas to the house and both of them fulfilled their hunger.

During those days, he started to roam in the colonies. He collected cycle tubes and earned a few rupees from selling them. When he was in middle school, he collected all kinds of iron goods, the printed match labels, the sheet of spoiled labels, and matchbox and cigarette packets for sale. At that time, the militants of the Dal became aware his economic misery. They gave him food. Many Samatha Sainik people gave him food and they also helped him by providing books and note books for his education. They began to live as tenants in Radhabai’s house.

His mother used to say, “People would also tell me take your children to the Gudi, but I never did. I said I will endure day’s poverty but I won’t give my children to their religion”. They faced such poverty but he was educated. While he was a college student, he used to go to Calcutta.

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There was a settlement named Santragachi. People from various castes and communities from all over India lived there in the railways quarters in Santragachi near their house. There were many speakers of Tamil, Telugu, Malayali, Bengali and other languages. There were one or two houses of Marathi speakers. His friend Anutai could clearly speak South Indian Languages such as Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam as well as Bengali.

During that time, the people of his community participated in many activities like sports and wrestling everywhere in Nagpur. Samata Sainik Dal overcame obstacles like conducting wedding in the community. Later, many sports activities went on in the community in Nagpur. The boys of his community participated both in sports and wrestling. The hostel was established around 1925 by Nanasahab Govaiin Nagpur. Many activities went on there in the community. Moon describes his childhood experiences in middle school that consisted of fifth through eighth class. While he was studying in the ninth class, a teacher called Vaidya was teaching Marathi in sixth class. He would teach very well and instruct the students to memorize poems.

He was crazy for memorizing poetry since childhood. At that time, all students were enthusiastic in playing poetry games. In his class, there was a very smart boy named Aravinda Buse who was always first in the class. This boy had a note book of poems. Vasant also collected poems from many books, but he could not achieve such proficiency as Buse. Vasant, Buse, and Baskar Joshi were the boys in their class to represent the school in poetry contest. While he was studying in the middle school, he wasted much time in playing games. He would do the homework exactly whatever the teacher had given. He had a quick intellect but he did not study. Because of this he failed the three months and six months examinations. During his examination time, he dared to try copying. However, just as it is said that stealing to fulfill one's hunger is no sin, his only aim was to pass from one class to another and, to come first, he used this dangerous method for the final examinations. This was the secret of his success in examinations. During his time, Bokil Master had written the algebra and geometry books for middle school and the arithmetic book was written by Ozha. These three books served him from fifth to eighth class. In ninth class, the only optional subjects were arithmetic and Chemistry. So he sold old books and bought the new books. He could not spend much money on books and note books because of his poverty.

His knowledge of Marathi was good even in childhood. After passing eighth class, he faced the question of what to take as an electric. Most of the brahmin boys would be put in the A Class, which was English Medium. In the B Class were the Marathi medium students. He felt like taking science class. His thought was that if Brahmin students took it why could not he? Any way, he took algebra and chemistry together in 1949. Nearly 90 percent of the students failed in chemistry. He also obtained low marks in chemistry and, from that night onwards, he started studying for algebra and chemistry. He prepared well and passed with distinction in Mathematics and Chemistry. For the optional subject, he took manual training that was carpentry. He was short in height and weak physically. The carpenter's plane for making wood smooth was heavy and difficult for him to lift. Still he took the subjects. He decided he might as well learn wood work with the other students. So he changed classes. He got only twenty-nine marks in the matriculation exams and he failed. He got more marks in manual training than the other subjects. With the grace

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marks in Marathi, he passed the matriculation exams. He was working in the mill continuously. Many people from the Mahar community worked there. Nilkanth Ranteke was a supervisor and also an organizer of the union. If he went with his mother to the mill, he would go and sit by him. He would cross-examine him on his studies. In 1949, he joined in college. After completing the two years in Intermediate, he joined B.A. Degree. All the students studied upto B.A. in Marathi. However, during his college days, he learned how to criticize religious ideas after studying Lokahitawadi's Shatpatre and Agarkar essays. Y.B. Kolte and Madav Gopal Dashmukh were his Marathi teachers in his college from the first year through the M.A. classes.

Agarkar's reformist ideas had a strong effect on his mind. "The season of five people" or "the Foolishness of the Wise or our care of corpses" and other Agarkar essays had a turn to his thinking and use a language. The voice of the Brahminical hitavadi cursed Brahmin practices was helpful to us in our religions. His Marathi teacher Kolte would give us an awareness of the ordeal of the social reformers. In those days, he read Agarkar and Lokahitavadi essays. Later, he read Ambedkar's analysis of social reforms. He had studied many writers and poets in the college syllabus at that time. In Narayan WanamTilak's "the flower of the forest," the lines "without darkness even the light of the sun is dim, without sorrow the idea of happiness seems in vain". These poems had great impact on his mind.

After he appeared B.A. supplementary examinations, he got the employment in the office of the Deputy Account General in the Post and Telegraph department. Later, he registered for M.A. in Marathi. He wanted to become a Marathi professor. So he applied for Marathi at the M.A. level. He studied hard as he wanted to get more marks. He studied day and night. He took the second year M.A. exams. Three years later, while he was employed, he was an external student. He received third rank in the exam. However, he wanted a degree and he overcame discrimination and poverty. He got financial independence through education.

The study of Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* (2003) gives us a clear picture of his childhood days at home and in the basti, and his experience in the village school as well as his later life. He describes extremely wretched socio-economic conditions of his childhood experiences. He was born into the Chuhra caste (Bhangi) whose ordained job was to sweep the roads, clean cattle shed, dispose of dead animals, work in the fields during harvest season, and perform other physical lessons for upper caste people including the Tyagi Brahmins. The Tyagi's did not call them by name, except calling them out as 'Oe Chuhre' or 'Abey Chuhre'. Upper caste people could even touch cows and stray dogs, but touching a Chuhre caused instant 'pollution' to the Tyagis. During his boyhood days, his entire family worked hard, but they did not manage to get two decent meals a day, not the least because they were often not paid for their labour and instead got sworn at and abused.

The Chuhras were forced to live outside the village reserved for upper caste people. A high well and a pond segregated their break house in his village from the Chuhrabastior cluster of shanties. Upper caste people of all ages here used the edge of the pond as an open-air lavatory. Squatting would be seen across from the Chuhra homes. There was much stinking everywhere. The stink was so over-powering that one would choke within a minute. The pigs would be

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wandering through the narrow lanes, naked children, and the dogs' daily fights. This was the childhood environment. In the rainy season, these narrow lanes of the basti would fill up with muddy water mixed with pigs' excrement. Flies and mosquitoes thrived. Everybody's arms and legs would become mongy and develop itchy sores.

There was one well in their basti for the purpose of drinking water for about thirty families. Its water was 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 people. Their houses were made of clay that leaked all over during heavy rains. During one rainy season, most of their houses collapsed. There was no outside help or insurance and they had to rebuild their houses on their own.

In 1975, Dalits in Maharashtra were encouraged by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his movements. Ambedkar's slogan was "Educate, Organise, Agitate" reached most of the educated Dalit youth. So they took up education and politics seriously. His introduction of reservation policy which was criticized by many in the beginning helped the poor and Dalits. So the Dalits were able to show interest towards education.

Gandhiji worked for the upliftment of the poor and the new anti-discrimination laws on the books. During his childhood days, he faced a lot of caste discriminations and also the problems of untouchability, poverty, inferiority complex and so on. Gandhiji's uplifting of the untouchables was resounding everywhere. "Although the doors of the government schools had begun to open for the untouchables, the mentality of the ordinary people had not changed much. I had to sit away from the others in the class, that too on the floor. The mat ran out before reaching the spot I sat on. Sometimes I would have to sit way behind everybody, right near the door. And the letter on the board from there seemed faded" (*Valmiki - Page -2*).

Even the teacher looked for excuses to punish him, he writes, "So that I would run away from the school and take up the kind of work for which I was born." In fourth grade, a new head master arrived. Who thrashed him almost daily and one day asked him to take a broom and sweep all the rooms and the play ground in school. The helpless boy spent two full days sweeping hoping it would soon be over. The third day, he went to the class and sat down quietly. After a few minutes, the Headmaster's loud thundering was heard, "Abey Chuhre ke, where are you hiding ... your mother..." He had begun to shake uncontrollably. A Tyagi boy shouted, "Master saheb there he is, sitting in the corner." The head master had pounced on his neck the pressure of his fingers was increasing. As a wolf grabs a lamb by the neck, the head master dragged him out of the class and threw him on the ground.

The Headmaster screamed and said, "Go. Sweep the whole play ground.... Otherwise I will shove chillies up your arse and throw you out of school." Frightened, he picked up the three-day-old broom, only a cluster of thin sticks. Tears were falling from his eyes. He started to sweep the compound while his tears fell. From the doors and windows of the school rooms, the eyes of the teachers and the boys saw this spectacle each pore of his body was submerged in a abyss of anguish.

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Obeying the head master's order, he cleaned all the rooms and the verandas. Just as he was about to finish, the head master came to him and said, "After you have swept the rooms, go and sweep the play ground." "The play ground was way larger than my small physique could handle and in cleaning it my back began to ache my face was covered with dust. Dust had gone inside my mouth. The other children my class were studying in his room and watching me. I was not even allowed to get a drink of water. I swept the whole day" (*Valmiki 4-5*). As it turned out so, his father was passing by and saw him sweeping the grounds. Overcome by sobbing and hiccups, the boy told his story. Father snatched the broom and, with eyes blaring, began to scream, "Who is that teacher, that progeny of Dronacharya who forces my son to sweep?" All the teachers stepped out, including the Headmaster, who called his father's name and roared back, "Take him away from there... the Chuhra wants him educated... Go, go.... Otherwise I will have your bones broken." (*Valmiki-6*)

On his way out, his father declared in a loud voice, "I am leaving now.... But this Chuhra will study right here..... in this school and not just him, but there will be more coming after him". His father's courage and fortitude left a deep and decisive mark on the boy's personality. His father kicked on the doors of other upper caste men whom he had worked for, hoping they would support him against the Head Master. But the response was the opposite. He was plainly told, "What is the point of him sending to school? When has a crow become a swan? They if he asked a Chuhra's progeny to sweep. What is the big deal in that? When his father had all but given up, one village elder yielded to his Tearful beseeching and intervened to get the boy reinstated. A close call or else he would have ended up illiterate like rest of his family. He faced such hurdles in his childhood days. He never forgot the courage and fortitude.

His family fell on even harder times when his eldest brother and wage earner had a high fever, and without access to clinic, he died. Valmiki had finished fifth grade but there was severe poverty. They did not have enough food to it. He could not continue with school. He dropped out and began looking after buffalo's in the field, watching with a heavy heart his school mates going to school. Over the protest of others, his brother's widow pawned a silver anklet, the only piece of jewelry she had, to pay for Valmiki's school fees. Valmiki sat in the last row in school. He continued to face severe discrimination even though he consistently did well in his studies. His memories of school suffered with pain and humiliation, beginning from taunts and beatings by schoolmates and teachers in 'terror-filled' color activities to his exclusion from extracurricular activities like school plays. During his exams, he was not allowed to drink water from a glass when he was thirsty. He had to cup his hands, and the peon would pour water from way high up, lest our hands touch the glass. "At times I feel I have grown up in a cruel and barbaric civilization" (*Valmiki P-48*). He does remember fondly a couple of boys who befriends him and did not let caste came between them.

In 1962, he was admitted to eighth class when he passed seventh class with good marks. He was harassed by upper caste people because of his low caste background. When he was going to school, Suraj Bhan Taga's son Brajesh followed him and called, "Abey Chuhare Ke", stop, the school was not very far from there, and he came near Valmiki and said; "Chuhra you really have sprouted horns you became arrogant, even your stride has changed, and hungry voice he said, 'I hear you

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are clever in your studies. He planted one end of stick in Valmiki's stomach. Let me also see me how bright you are you will remain a Chuhra, however, much study. He pushed Valmiki with the stick. Valmiki managed to prevent himself from tailing out his bag had fallen on the ground. He picked up the bag. Brajesh put it on his stick, and twinkled it around. Valmiki begged him, his books will be scattered.....he asked to return his bag.... his answer books will rip. Brajesh could not careless and twirling it hard, he threw the bag for away. When Valmiki ran to pick it up, Brajesh started laughing loudly. Valmiki's bag had fallen into the muddy ditch on the side of the road. His clothes were soiled in his attempts to fish it out. Valmiki's feet were smeared with mud and the books and note books in the bag were soaked. He burst into tears.

He washed his hands and feet at the school tap and dried the books and note books in the sun. His heart felt very heavy that day. It seemed that studies were not going to be possible for him because of his low caste background. Caste was the root cause of all these problems. Valmiki's father insisted a lot on improving his caste status. Through the education of his child, can caste be wiped away with education? For that matter, can anything on this earth take away the caste you are born in? Caste is like wheels to a vehicle called life. Blessed is the one who is born in an upper caste family and woe to a person who is born in the lower caste. Caste discourages and makes a person a slave or a boss. It creates imbalance in society. Every problem has its roots in this monstrous caste system. Valmiki remarks; "He (my father) seldom asked me to do anything by way of help because he wanted me to be able to focus single-mindedly on my education. He constantly said that I should improve my "Caste" by getting an education. He did not know that "Caste" cannot be improved by education. It can only be improved by taking birth in the right caste."(Valmiki p-58) The indignities and discriminations were faced by Valmiki. Even though he could not change his mind, he was able to concentrate on his studies.

During the time when he was studying in ninth class, the financial situation of his family was not good. Each member of his family had to work hard for the sake of a few paise. In those days, he never had all the textbooks. He had to borrow books from his friends. It was the same story about clothes. He worked whatever he could get and he ate whatever he was given. In those days, it was the Chuhra's responsibility to dispose of dead cattle in villages. Wherever one worked, the disposal of the employer's dead cattle was a part of the job. No wages were paid for doing this work.

Discrimination from peers, colleagues and fellow students hurt Dalit students a lot. Most of the dropouts occurred in villages due to this reason. Similar incidents have been found to what happened to Bama. She had to pass through upper caste houses to go to school. She was blamed for plucking flowers in their houses many times, even though she did not look at them. And some upper caste women made her work in their houses before she went to school. Valmiki also had to work in the fields of upper caste men on the day of his exam.

"Study at night..... come with me.I have to sow cane". Fouza ordered. I told him repeatedly that I had to study for my paper tomorrow, but he was adamant. He held me by the elbow and dragged me to his filed. He threatened me to do the work or else. My mind was set flame by his swearing". (Valmiki-57) For studying, he was mocked at by both the upper caste and by his own

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community. His village people would say to his father, “Why are you making a nincompoop or your son by letting him study? He will belong neither at home nor in the outside the world. Educated people are generally quite foolish, any way”(59). But he never got discouraged by such statements. He too had begun to realize the responsibility and carrying his study .During examination time, he faced lot of problems. There was no electricity in his house .He had to study in the light of a lantern in the street. He appeared the tenth class examination. When the result was announced, he was very happy to see his name in the paper. His father invited the whole people of his basti to a feast in order to celebrate his results. Then he took science in class eleven. In Intermediate, he passed all the subjects except chemistry. He secured good marks in all subjects. He left his village and went to Dehradun to study there. He was admitted to DAV College. He felt humiliated from the time his friends teased him about his poverty. When he was studying in Dehradun, he did not have good clothes to protect himself from severe cold. He used to wear his uncle’s sweater which looked big and funny to him. His friends used to make fun of him. He was very much humiliated when his friends called him “Abey Chuhre” (5 – Valmiki).

Later, he abandoned his college education and joined the Ordinance Factory, in Dehradun as an apprentice. His technical education enabled him to be self-reliant. After one year training at the ordinance factory, he attended a competitive examination and he was selected for further training. He had to go to Jabalpur to join the Ordinance Factory Training Institute, Khamaria. This selection opened new doors for his progress. This training institute changed lot of his speech pattern and his manners also changed. He took part in seminars and cultural functions. He became involved in Jabalpur literary life. When he completed two years there, the ordinance factory training institute of Bombay invited him for the application of the draftsman training. Then he was selected in the written examination and was asked to come to Bombay to appear in the oral test with the help of his friend Vijay, who gave him some money to attend the interview in Bombay. Later, he was selected for further training in Bombay. Then he was appointed at the ordinance factory at Chandrapur. This made him financially independent. Subsequently, he was in theatre groups and performed many plays along with his friends such as Meghadut, Natyasastra. He also began to write a weekly column in Jana Prathinidhi.

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