

**CASTE, EXPERIENCE AND CREATIVITY: A CULTURAL
PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LIFE AND
LITERATURE OF OM PRAKASH VALMIKI**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I, Aparna Vyas, declare that the dissertation entitled "Caste, Experience and Creativity: A Cultural-Psychological Analysis of the Life and Literature of Om Prakash Valmiki" is submitted in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University and is my original work.

Aparna Vyas
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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for the award of the degree of Masters of Philosophy in this University.

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to explore the relationship between caste and creativity traditionally studied from psychometric approach in the Indian creativity literature in Psychology. The psychometric tradition undermines the complexity of the Indian context where caste in interaction with other contextual dimensions makes the reality more complex. The treatment given to caste in Indian creativity research is rooted in the narrow conceptualization of context in western creativity studies. Caste is reduced to merely a variable with the purpose of quantifying creativity in relation to it. This trend not only results in the incomplete theorization of caste but also gives a partial picture of the nuances that caste may bring in the germination of creativity. The outcome is the labeling of caste groups as having differential levels of creativity. Reacting against such trend the present study emphasizes on experiential life of an individual to study the nuanced aspects of the relationship between caste and creativity. The relationship between the two was studied on the plane of Dalit literature. The focus of the research was on the life and literature of Om Prakash Valmiki. Using the cultural-psychological approach, the conceptual machineries of Vygotsky, Zittoun and Engestrom were used to analyze the literature and life of Valmiki. The analysis of the process of crystallization exhibited the contradiction between the material and form in Valmiki's famous story '*Salaam*'. The specificity of the process was found in the artistic effect of the story which was intended to create hope for the future on the plane of hopelessness. The creation was found to give the caste based experiences back to the caste ridden society in the very form that poses challenge to its hegemonic roots. The processes of transitions were analyzed to bring out the making of a Hindi Dalit writer. During the processes of transitions which were followed by the rupture in Valmiki's life, he acquired many resources that led to the creation of Dalit literature. Mainstream Hindi literature, Marathi Dalit literature and theatrical devices were found to be the cognitive resources while works of Phule, Ambedkar and Marx were used by Valmiki as symbolic resources. The development of his identity as Hindi Dalit writer was the result of the broadened horizons of social experiences. His identity was gradually reified after every literary creation. During the process he became the subject of the cultural- historical activity of Hindi Dalit

writing and the distinctiveness of the outcome, the literature of Valmiki, was the result of the specificity of mediating artefacts, unique relationship with the community, unique way of conforming to the rule of Hindi Dalit literary sphere and his distinct place in the division of labour. The analysis of the life and literature of Valmiki provides a perspective to look at the relationship between caste and creativity from the lens of experience. Lived experiences are broadened by social experiences of an individual as s/he goes through the process of transitions. This defines the path of the process of crystallization. The outcome of the process becomes distinct as it results from the unique relationship of the subject with other constitutive dimensions of a cultural historical activity.

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CHAPTER- I

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The wounded snake its hood unfurls,
 The flame stirred up doth blaze,
 The desert air resounds the calls
 Of heart-struck lion's rage.
 The cloud puts forth its deluge strength
 When lightning cleaves its breast,
 When the soul is stirred to its in the most depth
 Great ones unfold their best.

-The Song of the Free by Swami Vivekananda

The poem expresses the essence of a literary movement that emerged in Indian literary scene as a result of the recognition and reaction to the hundreds of years of subjugation and humiliation. Dalit literary movement voices the experiences that have been marginalized for centuries, i.e. experiences of hunger which, in the words of Limbale (2003), “was written in our lot from the moment of our birth.....A woman becomes a whore and a man thief. The stomach makes you clean shit; it even makes you eat shit”(p. 21). Such experiences force them to sacrifice all their self-respect “just for a morsel of food”(Pawar, 1982, p.72). The literary movement questions the humiliation inflicted on the human beings by other human beings in the name of the most degraded practice of untouchability which “compelled the untouchables to tie an earthen pot around their neck so that their sputum does not fall on earth and pollute others. Another such practice was the compulsion to tie a broom behind them so that their footprints would be erased before others set their eyes on them”(Kumar, 2010, p.130). This literature featured by the tone of revolt has its origin in the experiences of doubly oppressed Dalit women who suffer as being Dalit and being women in such a society where “three interlocking systems of caste, class and patriarchy create a multidimensionality, simultaneity and intensity of

oppression, which is destructive to the experience of Dalit women”(Velaskar, 2010. p. 37).

The humiliation associated with the identity of belonging to the lower rung of the caste based hierarchical society has not vanished even after Independence. It appears in different form and penetrates into the Indian society under the veil of modernity. As Ajay Navaria writes,

In this world of the utter anonymity in the city, there's happiness all around- unending eternal. This anonymity forever colors our rainbows... But here in the familiar world there are the same snakes. The same whispers, the same poison-laden smiles. Our 'quota is fixed'. I got promoted only because of the quota....that's it. Otherwise....otherwise, maybe I'm still dirty. Still lowborn. (Navaria, Upmahdvi, p.177, translated and cited in Brueck, 2014)

The literature which voices these experiences of humiliation is often negated on the universal standards defining the notion of the literature. The creative assertion in the form of short stories, poems, autobiographies does not find place in academic discussion on the Indian experience of creativity. In the section dealing with Indian cultural experience of creativity in the *International Handbook of Creativity* (2006), the Indian scholars limit the creative experience to the realm of spirituality. In such depiction, the creativity that emerges in the lap of poverty, deprivation and marginality does not find any expression. Discussion of the Indian literary creativity completely negates the presence of strong Dalit literary movement in India where caste experiences are at the core of creation. Dalit literature not only challenges the established dominant notions of literature but also prepares the ground for change in the caste based hierarchical structure of the Indian society.

Negation of this aspect of literary creativity actually emerges from the incomplete theorization of caste in the creativity literature of Psychology. Caste which serves as a variable in the creativity studies in India finds place in the list of the correlates of creativity. The trend owes its origin to the psychometric tradition of the creativity research in India. The outcome of such trend ends up theorizing the relationship between caste and creativity in terms of the categories of more and less or on the dimensions of superiority or inferiority. Certain groups are rendered to be more creative than other

groups on certain dimensions of creativity. This incomplete theorization is also the outcome of the neglect of diverse discourse on caste available in other disciplines. It actually becomes the source of problem when without understanding the nuances that caste brings to the creativity, caste groups are labeled as being more or less creative.

Overall, in such an approach towards the relationship between caste and creativity, the role of the context is undermined. The complex interaction between caste and other contextual dimensions is taken into account only to the extent of computations of numerical values denoting the correlation and interaction effects.

The trend of the creativity research in India which results in the maintenance of such relationship between caste and creativity is actually the reflection of incomplete theorization of the context in the creativity research. Environment, culture and society are the terms employed in the field of psychological studies in order to theorize the context. Specifically, in the dominant discourse on creativity, the context enters in a way that is subject to many limitations. Conceptualized on the basis of the dichotomy between the individual and context, it is reduced to facilitating and impending factors.

The present study takes into account such considerations regarding the relationship between the two. It attempts to look at caste not merely as a variable leading to 'more' and 'less' levels of creativity. The attempt has been made to relate the two with the thread of experiences. Outside the four walls of laboratory and beyond the scope of quantifying creativity, there lies the complexity of the experiences that prepares the ground of distinctiveness in creativity. Caste does not function in isolation. It interacts with the other contextual dimensions as class, gender, region etc. The dialectical relationship between such complex context and the agency is marked by the processes of transitions that an individual passes through. In the transitional processes, his/her identity gets continually redefined. He/she comes to acquire the specific mediational tools. He/she gets engaged in the specific meaning-making process. The whole transitional process paves a unique path for the process of crystallization. The distinctiveness of the creative product that emerges becomes obvious as the creator becomes a participant of the cultural-historical activity leading towards the creative outcome.

The very foundation of the whole process is the experiential life of an individual. The journey from the lived experiences to the social experiences is the indispensable part of the process. Relationship between caste and creativity is, thus, construed from the lens of the experiences that an individual belonging to the specific caste accumulates. The whole process is illustrated by analyzing the literature, specifically a short story, and the life of a Hindi Dalit writer, Om Prakash Valmiki. The course that the analysis takes is from the process of the creation of the literature of Valmiki to the transition of his identity as a Hindi Dalit writer. The analysis finally culminates in the explanation of the unique place of Valmiki in the cultural historical activity of Dalit literary creations.

The short story of Om Prakash Valmiki is analyzed and then synthesized to illustrate the process of crystallization of literature. The course of his life is looked at to map the process of transitions. It is aimed at exploring how during the course of his life he acquires the resources that become the tools to act on the caste based experiences gained in the context replete with complexities. The distinctiveness of his writing has been highlighted on the plane of Hindi Dalit literary sphere which is made enriched by his writings.

The most crucial aspect of the present analysis is the exploration which is intended to exhibit how caste based experiences gained in the complex reality of Indian context, are returned to the context in the form that, in turn, poses the challenge to its very hegemonic foundations.

Literature Review

(a) Creativity Research: Traditions and Limitations

A quick glance at the history of creativity reveals the evolution of the creativity research traditions. As per Simonton (2001) it had been initially associated with divinity. The doctrine of Muses in Greek mythology and belief in the existence of guardian spirit of Roman mythology demonstrate the close association between divinity and creativity. The development of this concept in Nineteenth century is indebted to three major movements - namely **evolutionary theory, statistical methods and clinical science**. In the 20th

century prior to the World War II, creativity was studied but only as a peripheral research topic due to the rise of schools in Psychology. Psychoanalysis studied the primary processes; Gestalt psychology paid attention to the restructuring of the problem and on insight; Skinner wrote articles on literary creativity and aesthetics but all these strands represented the study of creativity as peripheral research topic. It was only after World War II that creativity research mainstreamed and **quantitative techniques, humanistic psychology, cognitive advances** and **evolutionary psychology** during the 20th century helped in mainstreaming the creativity research.

The mainstreaming of the creativity research is very well evident from the three annual reviews demonstrating growth in the research inquiry in creativity. Since the first *Annual Review in psychology* on creativity appeared in 1981 by Barron & Harrington (1981) that focused on creativity and intelligence, the extent of research inquiry can be assessed in the *Second annual review of Psychology* on creativity (Runco, 2004). It covered the structure suggested by Rhodes on creativity studies focusing on person, product, process and press and various disciplinary emphases- behavioral, biological, clinical, cognitive, developmental, economic, educational, historical, organizational, psychometric, social; followed by the current trends in the field.

Attention towards the major drawback of creativity research traditions has been drawn by Glaveanu (2014) as he points out the limited conceptualization of context in the studies of Psychology in general and creativity in particular. The very understanding of concept of context in creativity studies is guided by either “flat theorizing , one-dimensional and over concerned with intra-psychological factors,” or by “3D models trying to articulate the Psychological, the spatial (socio-material), and the temporal” (Glaveanu, 2014, p. 382).

Sternberg (1988) seems to propose the solution of the problem of this limited conception when he voices the concern to investigate creativity in different forms as it is available in the real world and points out,

Creativity, like food, is real, exists in many different forms, and provides sustenance. It is time, then to go out in the real world and start sampling from the nourishment provided by the master chefs producing feats of delicacies all over

the world. By continuing to ourselves in a bland diet, as we have done in our infancy, we never learn the full range of our tastes and foods that can be enjoyed when consumed, never mind learning how to cook these dishes and improves on them in our homes. (p.440)

The concern expressed here gets embodied, in the form of the *'International Handbook of Creativity'* (2006) where these varieties of tastes and approaches have found place as it covers sixteen perspectives on creativity emerging out of different countries marked by their unique cultures in the light of recent studies and research. But the purpose of the presentation of the culturally diverse perspective is again in the direction of to explore creativity on a cross-cultural plane. And this is the trend Glaveanu (2010) criticizes saying, "Although quite consistent in their findings, most cross-cultural studies have been criticized for using a 'Western (American) framework in defining and measuring, there are still hardly any high quality emic approaches to creativity" (p. 151).

This limited conceptualization of the context, culture and the environment is grounded upon the notion of Individualism and society being a collection of autonomous individuals, an idea deeply rooted in western understanding of self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Belief in the autonomy and freedom is of primary importance. Beliefs, values, opinions of others are considered as intrusions in one's personal space. "From Plato's discussion of "pure ideas", the Christian celebration of human soul, through contemporary cognitive psychology, we have held the individual self in highest regard" (Gergen, 1999, p. 6).

In such conception individual and society are completely separated from each other. In the words of Kenneth Gergen (1999) such connection is based on "the two world problem: Out there vs. In Here". These two worlds are 'psychological world of the self (which perceives, deliberates and decides), and at the same time a material world (that which exists outside our thoughts)' (p. 8). Gergen's view is also consistent with the stand that Shweder (1990) took against the dominant western understanding of the subject matter of Psychology which "assumes that its subject matter is central (abstract and transcendent = deep or interior or hidden) processing mechanism inherent (fixed and universal) in human beings, which enables them to think" (p.4). This container view of

mind emphasizes that whatever exists inside, is pure and whatever exists outside, seems to be contaminating the valuable 'inside'.

Bradley (2005) offers the explanation for the success of such model of individualism in the field of Psychology.

The reason that methodological individualism has had such great success in Psychology is partly because it naturalizes a form of rationality consonant with the 'enlightened self-interest' promoted by market economy and partly because this perspective is so long standing that we habitually see the world through individualistic lenses. This is another way of saying that individualism makes common sense: the mind of the individual is the stadium for the exercise of reason, the home of memory, the house of responsibility, the source of subjectivity, the parent of personality, the citadel of choice."(p.110)

He goes on proposing the conceptualization of the "mental sphere" in such a way so that "our inherent sociality" may be recognized. It directly leads to the realization that "reason is culturally produced discourse, memory is a collective achievement, responsibility is relational, personality is a form of narrative." (p. 111)

The individualistic trend leading to the reduction of culture, environment and context into the certain facilitating and impending factors is a major drawback in the literature of creativity and Glavenau (2010) draws attention towards this as he reviews the creativity literature basing it on the distinct paradigms, "HE, I and We paradigms" (Ibid.), in which different strands of creativity research operate. Each of the paradigm that he discusses is reflects a distinct trend of creativity research in order to address the limitation of the earlier one. "He paradigm" takes the strongest individualistic stance in the conceptualization of creativity. It looks at creativity in the mythological light especially based on guardian spirits in Greek and Roman mythology who bless only selected people with the power to create. These were the creators who were differentiated from others on two dimensions- exclusivity and disconnection. As Glaveanu (2010) writes, "Creativity is from this perspective "exclusivist" because only few are chosen for it (initially by God, later on by their biology), and the very few that are must, as a prerequisite, stand apart from the masses because of their capacities" (P.4). Within the same paradigm, this mythological viewpoint which associated creativity with divinity was replaced by the emphasis intellectual abilities and eminence and Galton (1869) was considered the father-

figure of the “*modern He Paradigm*”. Glaveanu (2010) explains that in this paradigm the social and cultural structures are actually considered the effect of the genius and eminent people rather than the forces that shape creativity. Although the “He paradigm” contributed to dissociate creativity from divinity, it emphasized the notion of ‘great creators’ and this notion of exclusivity was further challenged by “I Paradigm”. “I paradigm” had its roots in the individualistic western society. It advanced the research traditions of creativity as creativity was seen as the property of ordinary persons. And since the Guilford presidential address creativity research got the new agenda- study of the creative personality. Creativity is supposed to be related to the psychology of the individual now. And cognitive sciences/neurological approaches, psychometric investigations, clinical/psychoanalytic perspectives grounded in “I paradigm” made research inquiry methodologically sophisticated. But the research trends in the “I paradigm” were challenged on the basis of the maintenance of the clear cut dichotomy between inside and outside. Reaction against the attribution of creativity to the sole property of the individual reflected in “I paradigm” led to the development of the “We paradigm” of creativity which includes the enquiry of the socio-environmental factors of creativity. T. M. Amabile reacting against the trend of conceptualizing creativity “as purely a product of individual talents and traits” proposed the *Social Psychology of creativity* (1983) and developed it fully in her work on *Creativity in Context* published in 1996. She being dissatisfied with the predominant view on creativity especially in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s wrote that “creativity is the quality of the person; most people lack this quality; people who possess the quality – geniuses- are different from everyone else, in talent and personality; we must identify, nurture, appreciate, and protect the creative among us- but aside from that, there isn’t much we can do” (p.3). She focused on the micro socio-environmental factors as contrast to the macro socio-environmental forces studied by Simonton (1980). While the work of Simonton has been on the social, cultural and political forces as fame, eminence, originality and productivity, researches by Amabile have taken into account the immediate and micro level factors surrounding the task as rewards, deadlines, surveillance, evaluation etc.

But even in the social psychology of creativity “individual remains the major study unit and the social is frequently reduced to a set of external influences that simply constrain or

facilitate. Undoubtedly much more has been done in this direction in order to justify the name “social psychology of creativity.”(Glaveanu, 2010, p.150).

The better understanding of socio-cultural forces in the field of creativity has been offered by systemic approach to creativity by Mihalyi (1988, 1999) who proposed the connection in the creative production between a *person* (with his/her genetic pool and personal experiences), a *field* (social system) and a *domain* (system of symbols, related to the idea of culture). The advantages that systemic and ecological frameworks offer are described by Glaveanu (2010)

First and foremost, they contextualize creative acts and give a more comprehensive account of how creativity takes place in all its complexity. Second, they are much better equipped to investigate both historical creativity (initially the He-paradigm) and everyday creativity (looked at by the I-paradigm). Third, on a practical note, they open a new world of opportunities for influencing creative behavior now conceptualized as less dependent on innate abilities and personality traits. (p.8)

Based on these advantages offered by systemic view of creativity Glaveanu (2010) emphasizes the development of the cultural psychology of creativity. The cultural psychological framework challenges the dichotomy of self and culture and focuses upon the dialectical relationship between the two. Creativity emerges from this continuous interaction. The framework is based upon the work of Russian Psychologist Lev Vygotsky who started his work on creativity in his dissertation *‘Psychology of art’* (1971) and then developed his theory of creative imagination in two papers “Creativity and imagination in Childhood” (2004) and “Creativity and Imagination in adolescence”. Dealing with the concept of creative imagination Vygotsky (2004) talks about combinatorial or creative activity which is an extension of the reproductive activity of the brain which “combines and reworks the elements of this past experience and uses them to generate new propositions and behavior”(p.9). It is this ability to combine elements to produce a structure, to combine old in new ways that is the basis of creativity. This creative activity makes the human being oriented towards future and he gets involved in the creation of future altering the present. Creative imagination is the basis of all cultural life and is the basic component of all creations i.e. artistic, scientific, technical, literary etc. Therefore, he describes creativity as a rule not exception. Products of imagination

follow a circular path. The elements for their construction are taken out from reality and then are subjected to the processes of dissociation and association and are attached to the emotional tones. After they are reworked upon, they acquire material form and return to the reality but as an active force with the potential to change the reality. Emphasizing the role of context Vygotsky (2004) associate the creativity with the human need to adapt to the environment and creation is always based on the lack of adaptation which leads to needs, motives and desires.

Glaveanu (2010) proposes the richer understanding of creativity based on the works of Winnicott (1971), Gruber and T. Zittoun (2007) exploring the where, how and when aspects of creative imagination. Winnicott (1971) talks about the potential or transitional space or inter-subjective plane and proposes that creativity emerges from the relationship between self and other. How aspect of creativity is explained by the research of Gruber (1998) who talks about the notions of dialogue and dialogicality. The notion of “symbolic resources” (Zittoun, 2007) reveals when creativity emerges. The main thesis of this conception is that whenever people find themselves facing a discontinuity, a break or rupture of their taken-for-granted ordinary experience (of their inner self, of the relations with others or the environment), they engage in processes specific to “*transitions*” and resort to symbolic resources to elaborate meaning and externalize the outcome.

(b) Creativity Research in India: Incomplete Theorization of Caste

The creativity research in India is mostly rooted in the western tradition of individualism. The research tradition is predominantly psychometric in nature that blindly uses the western tests poorly adapted in Indian context. According to Raina (1991), “The tests developed here lack a conceptual framework and carry no theoretical support, except for the fact that they are poor imitations of American tests” (as cited in Mishra 2006, p.445).

Such situation results in the disruption of the “*epistemic triangle*” of psychology because of the imbalance of its vertices representing the theoretical, conceptual and factual investigations. Describing the reasons behind the disruption of the triangle, Machado, Lourenco & Silva (2000), warns us against taking the vastness of the literature for the real growth being made in the discipline and cites Loftus (1996) to support their

argument who points out, "...But I have developed a certain angst over the intervening 30 something years – a constant nagging feeling that our field spends a lot of time spinning its wheels without really making much progress."(Loftus, 1996, p.161)

The imbalance in the three pillars of strong research edifice is clearly visible in the scenario of creativity research in India. With the poorly adapted tools in hand, computing correlations becomes the sole objective of researchers. When examined from the lens of Vygotsky (1971) the trend reflects the tendency of the Indian psychologists' preference to weave the web of correlations in order to have the understanding of creativity. There can be observed a clear cut analogy between what Vygotsky points out about how artistic emotions are treated by psychologists and the treatment of the notion of creativity in Psychology, specifically in Indian context.

Artistic emotions are not collected by the psyche as if they were a handful of seeds thrown into a bag. They require a process of germination and growth, and a psychologist may be able to discover the auxiliary and secondary aspects of this process, such as warmth, moisture, chemical additives and so forth. But after his investigation, the psychologist will know no more about the process of germination than before he began. (p. 206)

The same can be said about creativity as the Indian psychologists have been successful in creating the web of correlations around the concept but the nuances of these relationships bring, have remained largely unaddressed. The 'social' in the whole process is reduced to have facilitating or impending creativity, but the dialectical relationship between the individual and social has been neglected. Each new study seems to add and establish certain parameters of creativity but investigation into the very process of the 'germination' has not been conducted. Variables are treated within the four walls of laboratory, but what emerges when variables are seen outside the confines of laboratory setting is not considered appropriate to study.

In the Indian context marked by the complex interaction of caste, class and gender, this very interaction in relation to creativity is reduced to numerical values denoting the correlational aspects and interaction effects. The distinctiveness in creativity that caste can lead to in its complex interaction with class and gender is reduced to the quantification of creativity in the categories of 'more' and 'less'. The treatment that caste

receives as a variable in creativity studies is the reflection of the limited conceptualization of context in specific to Indian creativity research.

It is due to the predominantly psychometric tradition in the field of creativity in India, that the creativity and caste relationship has been superficially studied limited to the measurement of creativity, not at the level of conceptualization, and caste has been described as a single factor affecting creativity along with other socioeconomic factors and has been regarded as a correlate of creativity(Sharma,1983). Mishra and Tripathi(2004) and Mishra, Shrivastav and Misra (2006) cite many such studies conducted between 1980s and 1990s.(Ahmad, 1980; Bhousakar, Sansanwal & Sharma, 1984; Dutt, 1988; V. Kaul, 1981, C. Misra, 1987; Chaudhry & Bindal, 1986; Ali, 1987; Dhillon & Mehra 1990, Kauser,1986; Gupta 1995, James 2001). Following this tradition most of the studies have ended up concluding the lower level of creativity among the lower caste people and the interpretation of the outcome is on the shaky ground of deprivation. Most of the studies looking at deprivation end up establishing its direct and monotonous relationship with psychological functions. Pointing out the trend of associating deprivation with psychological functions Mishra and Tripathi (2004) have elaborated on the basic premise of the trend saying,

From a meta-theoretical perspective, most of the studies are rooted in an empiricist and naïve behaviorist assumption which supposedly allows one to directly link deprivation or poverty to psychological functions. Deprivations and social disadvantages distort and disorganize these processes and lead to poor performance. The assumption of one-to –one correspondence or isomorphism between poverty/ deprivation and psychological functions, therefore, constitutes the basic premise. This is partly congruent with the position that cognitive and personality development demands an optimal level of environmental /experiential support. Since impoverished children come from severely restricted environmental conditions, it is posited that they would have a lower level of performance as compared to their non-deprived counterparts. Such differences have frequently been documented in performance on tasks involving a variety of cognitive processes, personality dispositions, and skills. The results show that the average performance of deprived and disadvantaged groups constituted on the basis of caste, SES, residential background, quality of schooling, and degree of prolonged deprivation, is lower than that of their non-deprived counterparts. Significant effects of this kind indicate the reliability of differences more than the size of effects. The explanations of obtained differences are largely offered post hoc. The situation demands serious attention.(pp.187-188)

In creativity research such trend gets reflected in the conclusion, “ high SES and low deprivation are positively related to creativity, particularly on verbal measures. The low caste status and residential disadvantage were negatively related to creativity. The low- and middle-SES children scored significantly lower than the high-SES children. However, the disadvantaged students could benefit from the creativity development program”(Mishra, Shrivastav & Misra, 2006, p.442)

The partial theorization of caste in such manner results from the neglect of the discourse on caste emerged in other disciplines. The role that caste plays can be easily narrowed down by calling it merely a sociological tool, but sociology of caste actually gives the broader understanding to study it psychologically. Jodhka (2012) in his short introduction ‘Caste’ points out the possibility to study caste from various perspectives as custom, ritual, religion etc. He addresses the issue majorly from the perspective of inequality and deals with it at the level of tradition, power and humiliation. Pointing out the major drawback of the studies on caste Mishra (2004) writes that usually caste has been treated as a genetic attribute in psychological studies. Such conceptualization actually ignores the wider discourse on caste taking place in different disciplinary and non disciplinary fields. In the recent compilation of the articles on caste published in EPW, different disciplinary (Sociology and social anthropology, politics, economics, history, law and philosophy), class and gender perspectives have found expression. (The Problem of Caste, 2014)

(c) Re-conceptualization of the relationship: When a variable is studied out of the confines of laboratory.

The present research is a step towards the attempt of re-conceptualization of the relation between caste and creativity. The relationship under study here is not based on the reductionist *more* and *less* categories or the distasteful quantification of creativity. The relationship does not aim at labeling certain groups *more* and *less* creative than others on some shaky grounds. Instead the relationship is featured by the distinctiveness that caste based experiences gained in the complex context introduce in the germination of creativity. Used as material, these experiences lead to the creation of the art in which caste remains at the heart of creation. Outside the confines of the laboratory, the power

relations that are inherent in hierarchical structure of caste and the humiliation such structure brings to those placed at the bottom of the social ladder , all become visible.

The recognition and rejection of the oppression associated with caste system comes forward in many different forms. The Dalit folk tradition gives voice to the suffering brought about by oppression.

The folk songs of the Musahars , considered as ‘Dalit among Dalits’, give us the glimpse of their experiences - ,

Bachpanmein baba kailangawanawa
 Sainyakahe rope chaladhanawa
 Rope humgelijamindarkebadhariya
 Jamindarpapinirkhaibadaniya
 (While young, father got me married
 My husband says, let’s go to plant paddy....
 To plant paddy I go to the zamindar’s field
 Zamindar, the sinner, ogles at me)
 – A folksong of Musahar women. (Quoted in Arun Kumar, 2006, p.4282)

According to Arun Kumar (2006),

In songs where they ridicule and challenge the dominant, where they resist repression, one can witness their complete world view and read a script of change and reordering. Performances of folksongs make them a living tradition also in the sense that the changing time and culture too are acknowledged and incorporated, as is evident from several musahar songs about education or revolution, thanks to the impact of the Naxalite movements since the early 1970s. For a community that can still count its members with a college degree on fingertips, delving deep into its oral resources is a necessity in order to know what the community thinks and desires and how the community has thought and what it has desired historically. (p.4287)

It is only by bringing the caste outside the laboratory that we can appreciate the social vision of anti-caste intellectuals *Tukaram, Kartabhajas, Phule, Iyothee Thass, Ramabai, Periyar, Ambedkar* as discussed by Gail Omvedt (2011) in ‘*Seeking Begumpura*’. The social vision of a society founded on equality and justice was offered by these intellectuals. The vision was based on their lived realities that they experienced in caste-ridden India. Omvedt (2011) writes,

There is no need to reinvent India; what has to be done is to turn to the India ‘reinvented ‘ by or envisioned by dalit- bahun intellectuals and leaders. The

alternative to Ram-Rajya and Hindu Rashtra is the *Bali Rajya* of Phule, the Begumpura of Ravidas, the *Dravidastan* of Periyar, the 'Buddhist commonwealth' of Sakya Buddhists of Tamilnadu. These were formulated as ideals and as frameworks for specific socio-economic policies and programmes at the same time as the privileged castes-led national movement was explicitly or implicitly looking to Ram Rajya." (p.31)

Such is the broad spectrum of creativity that becomes visible once the creativity in relation to caste is approached from the lens of qualitative methodology outside the laboratory. In the present study, the focus is on one of the most significant rays of the spectrum: literary creativity.

(d) Domain specificity and literary creativity

In the literature of creativity it has been established that there is no overarching view of creativity and it is essentially domain specific. In a study, creativity researchers have described three general thematic areas – creativity in empathy/ communication, 'hands on' creativity and math /science creativity. These three general thematic areas actually correspond to nine domains namely, science, interpersonal relationships, writing, art, interpersonal communication, solving personal problems, mathematics, crafts, and bodily/physical movement (Baer & Kaufman, 2004). According to them these three areas of creativity include creativity in the areas of interpersonal relationships, communication, solving personal problems, and writing; art, crafts, and bodily/physical creativity; creativity in math or science respectively.

Although there may be great overlap among these areas as another study by Baer & Kaufman (2005) suggests that even if students report themselves creative in general terms, at the same time they also identify the area in which they are creative.

Views regarding the domain specificity of creativity can be found in the work of Vygotsky (2004) where he talks about the expression of creative imagination in different domains according to the developmental stage. That is why free-floating and comparatively impoverished imagery of the child finds expression in drawing (artistic creativity), and more enriched creativity of adolescent finds expression in writing (literary creativity). As the child grows, domain of creativity becomes the space where creative imagination is expressed but the specific domain which is finally adopted by

individual depends how the specific culture interacts with the culturally-shaped self to drive the interest in a specific domain. This is why,

“No invention and scientific discovery can occur before the material and psychological conditions necessary for it to occur have appeared. Creation is a historical, cumulative process where every succeeding manifestation was determined by the preceding one....This explains the disproportionate distribution of innovators and creators among different classes. The privileged classes supply an incomparably greater percent of scientific, technical, and artistic creators, because it is in these classes that all the conditions needed for creation are present.” (Vygotsky 2004 p.30)

Domain specificity theory forms the basis of the distinction between the literary creativity and other forms of creativity. While the creative imagination is the basic component in all domains of creativity, literary creativity depends upon domain specific skills related to the use of language, metaphors and symbols etc.

In India many studies have been conducted in the field of literary creativity. Various studies are cited in Mishra, Shrivastav & Mishra (2006). These are followings- Avasthi (1984) conducted a study on the twenty Hindi poets and concluded that creativity is an emotion centered process. Analysis of the creativity of Rabindra Nath Tagore was done by M.K.Raina (1997) whose network of enterprise was found to be characterized by variety, abundance dynamism and cyclicity. Another study of Jnanpith awardees by Raina, Shrivastav and Mishra (2001) demonstrated that most of the awardees were prodigies.

It is obvious that most of the studies on literary creativity are either person centered or process centered. Even if they take into account the process, the socio-environmental forces have not been dealt with taking into consideration the dimension of caste because most of them focus on the literary creativity of well- known poets and writers. So, the present study focuses on the Dalit literary creativity within the cultural psychological framework to study the nuances of the relationship between caste and creativity.

(e) Dalit literary creativity

Dalit literature is the focus of the present study as it is the creative assertion of Dalit writers who challenge power relations which place them at the lower strata of society.

Dalit literature grew in 1970s drawing the vitality from the teachings of B. R. Ambedkar. It was the outcome of the dissatisfaction that Dalit writers had with upper caste writers who never took discriminatory practices into account as “rarely did a writer take up an untouchable character and treat him realistically, like an ordinary human being full of vitality, hope as well as despair”(Raj Kumar, 2010, p.129).

The role of the Jyotirao Phule and B.R. Ambedkar has been crucial in this regard who gave Dalits a new perspective to see the reality, showed how power and power relations are used to maintain the hierarchy and how the people placed at the lower level social hierarchy internalize the notion of purity and pollution. From Maharashtra this Dalit literary movement also moved to the other parts of the country namely Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh.

Due to inhuman treatment and atrocities caused by differential civil rights, social rights, political rights, cultural rights and gender (Pattern of atrocities drawn by Sukhadeo Thorat on the basis of the regional studies of Karnataka(1973-74, 1991), Orissa(1987-88),and Gujarat(1971and 1996) and all India study by action aid, Delhi, in 2001 focusing on residential segregation, denial of access to and discriminatory treatment in basic public services and discriminatory restrictions on public behavior in his book *Dalit in India Search for a common Destiny*, 2009, p,129-149.)

The experiences of marginalization in almost every sphere of life made Dalit writers assert their opinions and their assertion found creative expression. The *Outcaste* by Limbale (2003); the *Outcaste* by Narendra Jadhav (2003); *Fakira* by Annabhau Sathe (1974); *Jevah Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti-*(2000) (When I robbed a Caste) and *Maran Swast Hot Aahe* (Death is becoming cheap) by Bagul (2008) ; *Taral Antaral* by Kharat (1981); *Baluta* by Daya Pawar (1982); *Jeena Amucha* (The Prisons We Broke) by Baby Kambale (1990); *Aaidan*,(The weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman’s Memoirs) by Urmila Pawar, (2003); *Kolhatyacha Por* by Kishore Kale (1999); *Antasphot* by Kumud Pawade (1995); *Athavaninche Pakshi* by Sonkambale (1993) are some of the writings laden with the anguish resulting from the caste based discrimination in the Marathi language. Dangle (2009) edited the *Poisoned Bread*, the collection of the selected Marathi Dalit writings.

Nagraj's *Flaming Feet* (2010) deals with Dalit movement in India and elaborates on the specificities of Kannada Dalit literature.

Mohandas Namishray (2014) has recently penned the history of Hindi Dalit literature in which he traces the development of Hindi Dalit literature before and after independence. Om Prakash Valmiki, Mohandas Namishray, Jay Prakash Kardham, Ajay Navaria, Kanval Bharti, Surajpal Chauhan, Kusum Viyogi, Tej Singh, Shyauraj Singh 'Bechain', Mata Prasad, Purushottam Satyapremi are the writers who are active in Hindi Dalit literary field.

The Dalit literature is criticized and also undermined using many socio- linguistic parameters. Limbale (2004) discusses some of the factors that are used to undermine Dalit literature-

- It is propagandist.
- It lacks artistic finesse.
- Writers affect a pose when they write.
- It does not possess neutrality and objectivity.
- It is univocal.
- There is no individual in Dalit literature.
- It is resentful.
- The language was not far from the hegemonic definition of literary language.

Om Prakash Valimki (2001) divides the critics of Dalit literature in three categories. There are many who negate the overall existence of Dalit literature. Others are of the view that not only Dalits but non-Dalits can also write the Dalit literature. Third group are of those Dalit critics who consider it inappropriate to bring out the experiential life of Dalits as part of the public discourse. Valmiki (2011) also brings out that Dalit literature is criticized because it does not follow the basic standards set by the mainstream literature. He quotes Mudrarakshas who questions the standard parameters of quality because they have been subject to the changes with the changing times. As per him, Kabir never followed the standard norms of Sanskrit language and never used the Brij or Awadhi language, dominant medium of writing in his time.

As a matter of fact, Dalit writers set their standards for the aesthetics of Dalit literature that are based on the notion of *art for life sake* instead of *art for art sake*. Limbale (2004) defines Dalit literature “as literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits”(p.30). Reacting against patriarchy, Dalits produced the autobiographical accounts, novels, plays, poems. As per Limbale (2004), Experiences of the Dalits expressed in their literature are unique and distinct from those of upper-castes as they are centered on the search of the self-respect, attack on the tradition and a religion that is opposed to this self-respect. Although Dalit literature is charged against being propagandistic but then Dalit writers ask immediately which literature is not propagandistic? It lacks artistic finesse which is set by the dominant group. Dalit writers cannot be neutral and objective because the questions they raise are of their own and of their society. These are the questions regarding their intense lived and felt experiences. It sounds univocal because of the similar experiences of untouchability and having a similar foundation of Ambedkarism. These are the experiences shaped by the Dalit consciousness that give them a way to view life from a different vantage point. It is resentful because it is the suppressed irritation of many years. Dalit literature rejects the maxim of *Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram* but regards it necessary to see the life in its untruth, unholy and unbeauty of reality from the eyes of Dalit writers. Tarachand Khandekar as quoted in Raj Kumar (2010) states,

It is a man who can make and unmake anything. Dalit literature believes that nothing is permanent. Everything is subjected to decay. With every decay there is resurgence, new creation. It, therefore, does not accept the maxim ‘ Satyam Shivam Sundaram’. On the other hand it proclaims that nothing is true which is not applicable for man’s sublime freedom, nothing is good if it is not useful for man’s welfare, nothing is beautiful which is not useful for the beautification of mankind. (p.133)

Om Prakash Valmiki (2009) also in his *Mukhyadhara aur Dalit Sahitya* exploring the reality of the mainstream brings out how upper caste literature of Premchand is not capable to capture the reality and experiences lived by Dalits. The metaphors, phrases and language are not specific to Dalits but represent the upper caste mentality about Dalits portrayed as helpless victims. Valmiki (2011) also writes that the very aesthetic tradition on which Hindi literature is based is borrowed from the Sanskrit and western

literature. So the parameters drawn regarding the standards of literature are incapable to capture the essence of Dalit literature.

As a matter of fact, the charges against Dalit literature seem irrelevant when we explore different dimensions of Dalit creativity.

- Linguistic and Metaphorical basis of Dalit Literature

The social assertion which is based on the values of life and is colored with the shades of intense emotions, is expressed in the language that is “*crude, impure and uncivil*”(Mukherji, 2004, p.12) because darker reality of life cannot be portrayed in the pure, civilized and refined manner. Only by means of this language characterized by the “*jaggedness of word, the granulated structure, the roughhewn expression, the scarcely muted anger*”(Reema Anand as cited in Kumar,2010, p.134) Dalits will be able to convey their Dalitness, to convey experiences of marginality. The metaphors used by them emerge from the very setting where the lower caste people struggle to survive. Their experiences of marginality and deprivation lead them imagine *roti* when they look at the moon. Instead of capturing the beauty of the dew drops, they create images of tears.

- Culture and imagery

The specific linguistic and metaphorical tools shape their imagery which Dalit writers draw from their environment. Water, tree, air, democracy are portrayed in Dalit literature from an altogether different angle. In upper caste literature where tree becomes the symbol of beauty, in Dalit literature it becomes the symbol of projecting experience of hunger and deprivation-

“The tree in sight starts eating its own fruit, licking its tongue

Disease comes to the body that desires it

The point being an excuse

A fart shakes the pipal tree

The worm-like awareness of being, sitting smug inside the belly, becomes furious.”

(Gopilatha in Namdeo Dhasal, 2007,p.17)

- Discursive and Literary creation of Central Characters from the Minor Dalit Characters

Karna, Shambhuk, Unglimaal, Eklavya are some of the Dalits portrayed as minor characters in the upper caste literature. These characters have been discursively constructed as central characters in Dalit literature. Selected poems in *Bas Bahut Ho Chuka* (1997) *Sadiyon Ka Santap* (2012) by Om Prakash Valmiki construct the Dalit characters as the symbol of Dalit assertion. Tryambak Sapkale constructs the character of *Angulimal* getting violent at the treatment received from the unjust society-

“I tried to catch hold of this turning world.

My hands were brushed off.

I fell.

The world laughed.

Pointing its fingers at me.

Tears dried

Feet froze.

Gathering all strength

I laughed at this world

Ha...ha...ha...ha...

The world trembled at my laugh.

Hey, I said, how come

You rabbits, spawn aren't laughing anymore?

Those fingers that were pointed at me

Will become fingers in the garland around my neck.”

(Quoted in Zelliot, 1992, p.296)

- Emotional-Motivational Features

Significant role played by emotions in the development of creativity has been discussed by Moran & John- Steiner (2003) in the light of the findings of other creativity researchers. As per them, Russ (1993) calls emotions “as discipliner for staying on task, a rewarder for completion and the recognizer of the right solution.” Csikszentmihalyi (1996) sees them “as an early distant warning system of problems and also as positive reinforcement for engaging in the creative process” and for Lubart & Gertz (1997) act as “a bridge between cognitive faculties generating metaphors and concepts”(p.33). Emotions are at the core of Dalit literary creation. Intensity of emotions can only be portrayed by those who were forced to repress their emotions for centuries. And that’s what gives Dalit writings uniqueness which non-Dalit writers cannot portray as discussed by Nagraj cited in Kumar (2010), “Usually anger, pity, and melancholy are the dominant feelings in the literature on Dalits written by non-Dalits. Many a time even the value system of the Dalit World is interpreted wrongly. In creative writings such babysitting for other groups and classes is very awkward.”(p.134).

Experiences of marginality, deprivation, discrimination provide them motivation to write even in face of severe criticism of their writings. The emotions of anger and frustration which result from these experiences find expression in their writings. Marginality make them experience the tormenting realities of life, subject them to the subordination and humiliation, impart them the caste based social identity but interacting with the agency such marginality gives them the radical perspective which makes them question the rationale behind the construction of hierarchical social structure.

(f) Marxism and Ambedkarism: The Basis of Dalit literary Criticism

The creation which literary creativity leads to is literature and definition of literature itself is time and context bound. As Limbale (2004) writes, “The act of imagination called art is impermanent and ever changing. Literature changes with changing culture. Unless the yardsticks change, the relationship between literature and criticism will be fractured.”(p.107)

Any literary theory gives us the perspective to read literature. Even within the same literary theory tradition depending upon the strand that we are proceeding with, there may

be variations in the interpretation of the same literature. That is why Dalit writers have developed the Dalit literary criticism which is the combination of Marxism and Ambedkarism representing class and caste consciousness respectively. From this combination they get the very basis of Dalit literature- Dalit Consciousness. The key points of this Dalit consciousness are-(with special reference to Hindi Dalit literature) by Om Prakash Valmiki.(Brueck, 2004)

1. Welcoming the vision of Dr. Ambedkar on questions of freedom and independence;
2. Being for Buddha's rational, intellectual perspective and concepts of no-god and no-soul, and being against the hypocrisy of Hindu law and custom;
3. Being against the caste system, against casteism, against communalism;
4. Being against social divisions, and in support of brotherliness;
5. Taking the side of independence and social justice;
6. Supporting social change;
7. Being against capitalism in the financial sector;
8. Being against feudalism and Brahmanism;
9. Being against supremacy;
10. Disagreeing with the definition of 'great poetry' by Ramchandra Shukla.
11. Being against traditional aesthetics;
12. Taking the side of a caste-less, class-less society; and
13. Being against hierarchies of language and privilege' (p. 31).

Dalit Literature is the account of the sufferings and pain tolerated by lower castes people in India. Dalit word can encompass all the lower castes in India who have been subjected to the humiliation and atrocities for centuries. They may be Mahar and Mang of Maharashtra or Valmiki or Chamar of Uttar Pradesh or may belong to the lower strata of society from any other state but they all belong to the oppressed class. The I in their autobiographical denote the We of entire Dalit community. A number of experiences are shared by the Dalit groups but these are distinct from the upper or middle class experiences gained in the society which is caste ridden. So the literary standards to evaluate this literature should be based on the theory which is capable to capture the essence of the literature.

(g) Specificities of Hindi Dalit Literature

Two major studies conducted on Hindi Dalit literature by Hunt (2014) and Brueck (2014) base their work on the analytical framework of counter public propounded by Nancy Fraser. As Hunt (2014) points out,

The concept of counter public thus gives us an analytical framework through which to name and examine the processes relating the fields of Dalit literary production to the wider Hindi public sphere. Thus, while the idea of the counter public is imposed at the analytical level, it speaks to the purposes and active strategies employed by the Hindi Dalit writers themselves, sometimes out of necessity and sometime out of clearly articulated intentions.(p.20)

Brueck (2014) also talks in the same vein when she points out,

In particular, American scholars Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner have developed the alternative category of the counterpublic, defined by its conflicted relationship with the socio-cultural structures and products of the hegemonic public sphere. This model of the counterpublic social space as the site for the construction of alternative and oppositional interpretations of culture and identity is the most productive for our understanding of the institutions, actors and activities of Hindi Dalit literary sphere. (p.26)

Hunt (2014) maps the development of Hindi Dalit literary counter public in the framework of Bourdieu and talks about the two subfields of the counter public discourse- Hindi Dalit pamphlet field and autobiographic field. She elaborates on the specific features and objectives of both while describing how power relations shape the development of the latter. On the other hand, Brueck (2014) majorly focuses upon the literary strategies adopted by Hindi Dalit writers to fulfill the political objective. Exploring the specificities of Hindi Dalit literature she reacts to the prevalent trend in which “little emphasis, however, has been given to the strategic aestheticization of that experience in the construction of Dalit literary narratives, or to the varying textures of Dalit literature penned by individual authors.....the revolutionary potential of Dalit literature is as much aesthetic as it is political.’ (Brueck, 2014, p. 8) In this connection, on the basis of the analysis of the short stories of Valmiki, Kardham and Navaria she attempts to delineate the specific aspects of Hindi Dalit literary writing such as combination of melodrama and social realism, heteroglossia etc. She deals with specific features of the writing of Ajay Navaria whose literature expresses the theme of alienation.

Besides, she distinguishes between the male and female Dalit writing in Hindi Dalit literary sphere comparing the short fiction of Naimishrai and Meghwal.

Focus of the Study: The Life and Literature of Om Prakash Valmiki

Based on the findings of these two studies majorly the present study attempts to trace the process of the construction of the literature of Om Prakash Valmiki and the process of becoming a Hindi Dalit writer. The study of the processes is based on the cultural psychological frameworks Vygotsky, Zittoun and Engestrom. The study is oriented towards the aim of exploring how caste based experiences become the basis of the whole construction and how within the caste based setting which is made more complex by the specificities of gender, class, region and time, the writer mobilizes diverse resources which facilitate the process of transitions. Based on this analysis an attempt has been made to show the distinctiveness of Valmiki's creation in the framework of CHAT.

The present study applying cultural Psychological approach to literary creativity attempts to explore the creative processes and the influence of caste specific experiences in shaping the creative imagination of Dalit writer Om Prakash Valmiki whose autobiography *Joothan* has been one of the most celebrated Dalit writings. Om Prakash Valmiki belonging to the 'Chuhra' caste of Barla village, Muzzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh sharing his painful experiences of belonging to the lower strata of society writes, "Experiences that did not manage to find room in literary creations. We have grown up in a social order that is extremely cruel and inhuman and compassionless towards Dalits"(Valmiki, 2003, p.vii)

The selected writings by Om Prakash Valmiki are-

Autobiography: *Joothan* (1997)

Collections of stories : *Salam* (2000), *Ghuspethiye*(2004)

Collections of poems : *Sadiyon k Santap*(1989), *Bas Bahut Ho chuka*(1997).

Out of these works *Joothan* and his short story '*Salaam*' which appears in the short story collection *Salaam* have been selected for the content analysis.

Rationale

To address the limited conceptualization of the context resulting from the dominance of psychometric tradition in the Indian creativity studies is the basic rationale to undertake the present study. The focus is specifically on the incomplete theorization of caste that results in its 'more' and 'less' category based relationship with creativity. In order to study, the nuances in the relationship of caste and creativity the discourse of Dalit literary creativity is taken into account. It is the form of creativity which emerged as a reaction against the portrayal of Dalits in upper caste literature as helpless victims of the 'circumstances' which act as villains to suppress them. Joining the caste and creativity with the thread of experiences, lived and social both, the life and short story of Valmiki are studied qualitatively. Through the cultural- psychological analysis of the life and literature of Valmiki the process based relationship between caste and creativity is explored.

Objectives

To study the process based relationship between caste and creativity and discursively situating Om Prakash Valmiki, a Hindi Dalit writer and his literature.

Research Questions

1. How is the relationship between caste and creativity conceptualized in psychological studies?
2. How can the relationship between caste and creativity be re-conceptualized in Psychology?
3. What are the cultural- psychological mechanisms that are at work in construction of the literature of Valmiki?
4. What are the cultural-psychological processes that are at work in the making of Valmiki as a Hindi Dalit writer?
5. What accounts for the distinctiveness in the literature of Valmiki that distinguishes him from other writers in the Hindi Dalit literary sphere?

Theoretical Framework

The present research draws its theoretical grounding from the framework of cultural psychology. Under that broader umbrella, the conceptual frameworks of Vygotsky and Zittoun have been selected for the content analysis of the life and selected works of Om Prakash Valmiki with an intention to look into the creative imagination of his works and the path his creative imagination takes to develop giving him the identity of a Dalit writer. The central concern in the whole analysis has been the experiences pertaining to the caste of Valmiki since the study is based on the reaction against the tendency to treat caste as merely a correlate of creativity. In this direction the study tries to map the direction in which these caste experiences lead Valmiki to construct the literature in which caste is at the heart of creation.

Vygotsky (2004) looks at creativity as *a rule and not an exception*. Focusing on the process of the creative imagination he discusses its origin, its development and then its embodiment as an active part of reality. On these lines he not only discusses the mechanism of creative imagination but also differentiates between the nature of creative imagination at different stages of life- specifically of childhood and adolescence. According to him, the raw material on which creative imagination works is supplied from life. The raw material is the experiences gained in the specific environment which serve the basis of any creation. Here the idea of the dialectical relationship between the individual and environment is implied. Every creation is guided by the needs that are created before the creator within a specific location in terms of time and place. These needs are addressed on the basis of the possibilities existed in the environment. Accumulated experiences consist of the elements of reality which are reworked by the creator. Vygotsky emphasizes the role of both, firsthand experiences and social experiences which actually broaden the scope of the former and individual becomes capable of imagining which he had not experienced directly. The process of the reworking consists of the dissociation and association steps. Elements are dissociated from their very context and then are associated by means of the “law of common emotional sign” which means elements that generate same emotion within the creator are combined together. The content, thus generated, has an effect on the emotions of readers

because of the law of the emotional reality of imagination. For example, even when the characters of the story can be fictitious, the emotions they give rise in the audience are real. Creations have effect on the consciousness of the people because every creation has its own internal logic which establishes a relationship between the creation and the world. This is the power of the internal logic that elements that seem to be completely unrelated with each other on surface are held together. And, this whole process is called the process of crystallization which ends when the creative imagination gets embodied and becomes the active part of the reality, “the real basis and motive force of creation.”(p.41) “The agony of creation” when the drive to create is not compatible with the capacity to create is the result of this feature of imagination. It always attempts to complete a full cycle. Originating from reality, it goes back to reality in a transformed way in order to actively modify the reality now.

The internal logic of the creative work in the present study has been used as a link which takes us to the next most important theme related to the work of art: the creation of aesthetic reaction among the audience by the artistic effect. In this regard, the lines on which Vygotsky analyses the short story ‘Gentle Breath’ by Bunin have been followed to analyze the short story written by Valmiki. According to Vygotsky, the two important aspects which enter the analysis of a short story or novella are the material and the form. Following the terminology of the formalists, he considers plot as the material which is the very basis of the work of art. These are the events and characters that the short story is all about. Material is, in his words, “all that existed prior to the story can exist outside it or is independent of it.”(p.145) The form is considered as the subject of the story. This is actually the way the material is treated by the author of the short story or “arrangement of this material in accordance with the laws of artistic construction.”(p.145) Instead of looking at the form as a ‘*shell*’ which contains the material, it should be considered as an *active principle* aimed at the processing of the material and subsequently, overcoming it. Locating these two terms used in the analysis of the short story in the broader context of the other forms of art, he points out, “The plot (material) of a story is in the same relationship to the narrative of which it is a part as individual words to a line of verse, the scale to music, colors to painting. The subject (form) is in the same relationship to the narrative as verses to the poetry, a melody to music, a picture to the art of painting” (p.146). He regards the short story or

novella as “a pure form of writing, whose main purpose is the formal treatment of the plot and its transformation into a poetic subject” (p.147).

The author of the short story gets engaged into the process of the rearrangement of the material and gives it a new form in order to make the story toned with a distinct emotional significance. The process is the same when a musician rearranges the simple series of sounds in order to transform them into a melody which, in turn, starts possessing the power of exercising an effect upon the audience and addressing their emotions. Vygotsky also distinguishes between the anatomy and the physiology of the short story. The former is the static scheme and the latter one is the dynamic scheme of the short story. The anatomy is related with the structure of the material, the disposition scheme or the material of the story in the chronological sequence. The physiology is related with the purposeful construction of the ‘composition scheme’ or the rearrangement of the sequence. The method used by Vygotsky (1971) in the analysis of the *Gentle Breath* by Bunin is the one used by “the critics of verse when they try to establish the rules of the rhythm that govern certain word arrangements”. (p,150)

The dynamic scheme is always guided by some purpose of the author. And to assess this purpose Vygotsky recommends the turn from analysis to synthesis. Here the purpose can be linked to the concept of the ‘internal logic in a creative work’ that connects it with the external world as well as with the emotional realm of the readers. The title, the climax, “the manner in which author narrates the events, the language he uses, the tone, the mood, his choice of words, his construction of sentences, whether he describes scenes or gives only a brief summary, whether he transcribes the dialogues of his characters or just tells us what they said ”(Vygotsky, 1971, p.158) are all the aspects which the author uses to create the emotional effect. But the most important aspect with which Vygotsky deals with is the contradiction between the material and form. This is what makes a piece of art as *‘heavier-than-the-air-machine’*. The author deliberately uses the content and material that prevents him constantly from reaching his goal but by creating a specific form he overcomes the material and creates the intended effect. The purpose of the ‘dynamic scheme’ or the specific form given to the short story is “the neutralization of the first impression by an event and its transformation into another, in contrast to the first.”(Vygotsky, 1971,p.155). It is due to this contradiction between the material and the

form that the piece of art exercises an altogether different effect on the audience as compared to the one produced by the events had they been presented in their natural chronological sequence. We observe here the clear connection with the theory of creativity when he calls the disposition scheme or selection of the events to compose a short story is itself a creative act. This disposition scheme is followed by the purposeful construction of the composition scheme. This is also the part of the whole process of crystallization when the imagination gets embodied and becomes available for not only the creator but the audience as well.

Thus, it is the dialectical contradiction between the two that is responsible for the true psychological meaning of aesthetic reaction to the art.

The contradiction between the two elements and their subsequent resolution, termed as ‘catharsis’ by Vygotsky (1971) is the most important part of the aesthetic response to art. Such effect is created by the artist’s ability to introduce two contrasting elements and then providing the audience with the resolution of the two. The law of catharsis that he regards as the ‘psychological weight’ of an aesthetic response, he applies successfully to different forms of art namely literature, theatre, sculpture and architecture.

As the artist produces boldness and delicate propel from stone, he obeys the same law as that which forces him to propel upward the stone that gravity pulls to the ground, and to create in a Gothic cathedral the effect of an arrow shot into the sky. The name of this law is catharsis. This law, nothing else, compelled the master of Notre Dame in Paris to place atop the cathedral ugly and horrifying monsters, the gargoyles, without which the cathedral is unimaginable.(p.238)

The very role of art, according to Vygotsky, is not limited to the communication of feeling only as the theory of contamination by Tolstoy suggests. The art stands with a crucial and complex relationship with life. Such relationship gets manifested when art expresses the principle of antithesis given by Plekhanov as it “releases an aspect of our psyche which finds no expression in our everyday life.”(Vygotsky, 1971, p.244) Its relationship with life can be better located in “the miracle in another Gospel the transformation of water into wine.” He states this relationship more clearly when he writes, “One of the great thinkers said once that art relates to life as wine relates to grape. With this he meant to say that art takes its material from life, but gives in return something which its material did not contain.”(p.243) He calls art as an “expanded social

feeling or technique of feelings”. Systematization and organization of the social feeling is the task that art performs. When the act of “overcoming the feeling, resolving it, conquering it” is performed, only then the art takes birth. That is why making and perceiving of the art, both requires creativity. Whether it is the creation or the aesthetic response of catharsis, the course that these take is not from personal to social but **social to personal**. Even when it gets personal it does not cease to be social. An artist creates taking the material from the life. The emotions and experiences he gains in the course of social interactions. He reworks on them and thus materializes and objectifies emotions which, later, in the form of art, become the tools for society. When this work of art helps a reader to find his own unique catharsis the social emotion embodied in art becomes personal. But even at this stage it becomes personal without ceasing to be social since it provides the reader an opportunity to identify with cultural elements. In a nutshell, when artist creates, his personal experiences gained in specific social context become the part of the social circle and when an individual perceives art he (through the catharsis that the work of art performs) becomes the part of that social circle. In the words of Vygotsky,

Art is the social within us, and even if its action is performed by a single individual, it does not mean that its essence is in individual. ..The social also exists where there is only one person with his individual experiences and tribulations. This is why when the action of art , when it performs catharsis and pushes into this purifying flame the most intimate and important experiences, emotions, and feelings of the soul, is a social action. But this experience does not happen as described in the theory of contamination (where a feeling is born in one person infects and contaminates everybody and becomes social), but exactly the other way round. The melting of feelings outside us is performed by the strength of social feeling, which is objectified, materialized, and projected outside of us, then fixed in external objects of art which have become the tools of society....emotion becomes personal when everyone of us experiences a work of art; it becomes personal without ceasing to be social.(p.249)

Moreover, Laying the principles of the cultural psychology of Creativity, Glaveanu (2010) proposes the possibility of using the work of Zittoun (2007, 2008) to explain the ‘when’ aspect of creativity. The conceptual framework of Zittoun has been used in the present study in order to explain the making of a Hindi Dalit writer. Drawing upon her work the unit of analysis which has been used here is the pair of rupture- transitions. Ruptures, according to her, are the events and situations of life that pose a challenge for the taken for granted reality of an individual. These ruptures are considered

psychologically significant only when the individual concerned perceive them as such. She proposes the analysis of these ruptures after the levels of explanation of the world given by Doise. Thus she distinguishes ruptures as related to “intra-psychic, interpersonal relationships, one’s relationship to a social group or to a societal state.” These ruptures are followed by the processes of transition – “through which the person engages in restoring some sense of personal integrity, regularity, and continuity, and reduces uncertainty.”(p.348) under the processes of transition she discusses three interdependent processes- identity redefinition, knowledge and skills and meaning making. Each of this process of transition is facilitated by the specific resources. Individual mobilizes social resources (mobilization of the social networks and social knowledge) in order to aid the process of identity redefinition. In the same way cognitive resources are used to assist the process of learning. Third kinds of resources which Zittoun (2007) emphasizes most are the facilitator of the meaning making process individual is engaged in. these are the symbolic resources. By the term symbolic resources she means how people make use of the cultural artifacts or elements as developmental resources in the face of situations loaded with uncertainty. Three important conditions that she delineates for any cultural element to be considered a symbolic resource are-

- Intentional use of the cultural element at least partially deviant from its *‘aboutness’*.
- Use of the cultural element should be “beyond the immediate cultural value and meaning of that cultural element.”(p.344)
- Inclusion of cultural elements ‘that require an “imaginary” experience- the creation of a sphere of experience beyond here and now of the socially shared reality”(p.344)

Zittoun (2007) also makes it clear that the feature that any element can be used as resource does not make it a symbolic resource. Instead, “It is rather the fact of being used that turns a cultural device into symbolic resource.”(p.344)

The symbolic resources mediate in the three basic psychological processes: intentionality, inscription in time and distancing. About the intentionality, Zittoun writes, “Symbolic resources are cultural elements which, when used by the person, become about something

else with some intention.”(p.346). The use of symbolic resources is located in time and *‘the knitting of past and future into the present’* is required for the use. The levels of distancing that Zittoun proposes are based on the work of Valsiner (2004). Each successive level of distancing represents the experience in distant manner-

from an embodied state, to contained and fixed emotional patterns; from those, to a labeled situation; from the latter, to categories grouping various experiences of self and the world; and from categories to orienting values. Symbolic resources offer such distancing possibility, because they create an imaginary sphere where personal, unique experiences meet culturally elaborated versions of other people’s comparable experiences.(p.348)

These symbolic resources are called generative when used ‘across a wide range of modality of uses’. They enhance or transform the understanding of the individual about self, about other and about the world as well.

Zittoun also talks about the reflexivity in the use of symbolic resources. Here the dimension ranges from degree zero use to the reflective use. Degree zero use is related with the simple appreciation of a cultural element. In quasi use, individual possesses a vague sense that using that cultural element actually affect him/her. During intuitive use, the individual may not be clearly conscious about it still he acknowledges the effects of having specific cultural experience. Deliberate and reflective, which Zittoun collectively calls expert use of symbolic resources, are related with active search for a cultural element to use it as a resource and reflection about the uses of the cultural elements and the changes the use of the very element cause, respectively.

The processes of transitions are thus facilitated by means of these symbolic resources. Zittoun(2007) proposes to study the process of transitions by means of the semiotic prism having the four corners representing the subject, the other, the symbolic object and the subject’s sense of symbolic object. The model addresses both the intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics. The former ones are represented by the vector between the person and the person’s-sense-of-the-object and the latter ones are represented by the person-to-other and person-to-object-vectors.

Based on the works of the scholars who have emphasized upon the importance of the social embeddedness of the individual, Zittoun (2008) proposes to locate the semiotic

prism within the specific setting which accounts for the frame of activity of the individual. The frame consists of the larger societal context in which social interactions actually take place.

According to her, “Change can be seen as linked to the reconfiguration of the elements constitutive of the semiotic prism, and of their respective relationships- a change of the relationship of the person towards the other , the transformation of the sense of situation for the person, and consequently, of the object for him/her. Through such reconfigurations, something radically new can also emerge.” (2008,p.168)

Thus she proposes to look at the change in the setting or frame as rupture and the processes leading to the transformation of the semiotic prism reconfiguration should be seen as the processes of transitions.

Moreover, to look at the creation of Valmiki’s literature in its distinctiveness, third generation cultural historical activity theory has been used. Hardman (2008) has used the third generation CHAT (Engestrom, 1987) to study pedagogy in its complexities. Here the approach has been aimed at pointing out the distinctiveness of Valmiki’s creation in the larger context of the cultural historical activity of Hindi dalit writing. In the framework, different dimensions like rules, community and division of labour influence the activity as the subject works upon the raw material, termed as object, by using certain tools and resources, termed as mediating artefacts. Activity system provides an analytical framework that helps us understand “how socio- cultural factors impact on developmental trajectories”(Hardman, 2000 p.65). Specificity of any activity lies in its emergence and evolution within as well as between the six dimensions. As third generation activity theory incorporates the notion of power relations, the system has been used here to get a deeper understanding of the cultural historical activity of Hindi Dalit writing with the specific focus on Valmiki.

Method of the Study

For the present study, qualitative analysis has been used since it suits the purpose of the study. The life and works of Om PrakashValmiki have been looked at from the cultural

psychological perspective. The deductive approach of the content analysis has been used as themes have been derived from the well-established theories of Vygotsky, Zittoun and third generation CHAT framework by Engestrom. The themes have been represented by the direct quotes from the respective scholars because it provides the nuanced understanding of the used theme as well as the in depth insight into the data itself.

The themes using the conceptual frameworks of Vygotsky , Zittoun and CHAT are identified. Selected quotes from Vygotsky have been used in the first section to organize the analysis. In the second section, in order to make the process of transition obvious, the entire content of his autobiography has been divided in two sections, before and after relocation. The division of the content is followed by the depiction of the process of Valmiki's transition into a Hindi Dalit writer using the semiotic prism denoting the unique relationships among the subject, other, object and the subject's sense of object.

The processes, brought out in the two sections are located within the framework of 'Cultural Historical Activity theory'. Hindi Dalit literature is seen as a cultural historical activity and different aspects of this activity are analyzed. In the analysis Valmiki has been looked at as both the 'subject' and as a creator of distinctive literature.

Themes and lenses drawn from Vygotsky's framework to analyze the work of Valmiki are the followings-

- Creativity as a rule not exception
- Dialectic relationship between individual and environment
 1. Needs created before the individual
 2. Possibilities existing outside individuals to address the needs
 3. Complexity of the environment
- Process of crystallization
 1. Accumulation of experiences
 2. Experiences broadened by social experiences
 3. Reworking on material : process of dissociation and association, law of the common emotional sign

4. Effect on the consciousness of the people : law of the emotional reality of imagination, Internal logic between the work and the world
- Techniques used during the process of crystallization
 1. Contradiction between the material and the form
 2. Neutralization of an effect by means of another opposite effect
 3. Catharsis: the introduction of the two contrasting elements and their subsequent resolution
 4. Use of the brittle material making the piece of art as ‘heavier-than-air-machine.’
 - Art representing the complex relationship between the life and the art itself
 1. Principle of antithesis followed by art
 2. Capability to turn the ‘*water into wine*’
 - The course from the creation of an art to the performance of aesthetic reaction is ‘social to personal’.

Themes and lenses drawn from Zittoun’s framework for the analysis of life are the followings-

- Ruptures: Changes in the setting or frame (Relocation)
- Processes of transitions:
 1. Identity Redefinition : Facilitated by Social Resources
 2. Knowledge and skills: Facilitated by Cognitive Resources
 3. Meaning making : Facilitated by Symbolic Resources
 - I. Conditions for a cultural elements to be called symbolic resource
 - II. Use of symbolic resource: Aboutness, Time orientation, Level of mediation
 - III. Generativity of symbolic resources
 - IV. Level of flexibility in the use of symbolic resources

- Reconfiguration of the semiotic prism

Themes drawn from Cultural historical activity theory (third generation activity theory by Engestrom) are the followings;

Elements included in the activity are -

- Subject
- Mediating artifact
- Object
- Rules
- Community
- Division of Labour

CHAPTER- II

LITERATURE OF OM PRAKASH VALMIKI: A PROCESS OF CREATION

“Creativity is present, in actuality, not only when great historical works are born but also whenever a person imagines, combines, alters, and creates something new.... Creativity is a rule not exception.”(Vygotsky, 2004, p.10-11)

According to Vygotsky, creativity is the very basis of our existence. It makes people future oriented and fulfills the need of getting adapted to new situations and circumstances. If this is so, then determination of the level of creativity into the categories of more or less and judgment of the product on the dimensions of superiority or inferiority cannot be regarded sufficient to reflect the essence of creativity. Though standards are necessary to judge the creativity of a specific product, the question arises who sets these standards and with what purpose these standards are set. The present research is an attempt to explore some of these aspects of creativity by looking at the creativity of a Dalit Scholar whose literature is part of the Dalit literary movement. Though literature which came out of this movement is undermined on the basis of already established notions about literature in Hindi, It is argued here that every piece of literature is constructed from the material of accumulated experiences. Depending on the different identities and roles that individuals play in society, each of them has somewhat different material to work on. This distinctiveness of the experiences in life and its unique reworking results in the distinct kind of creation. “New possibilities become actualized through creative efforts, then crystallized into personalities(internally) and creative products(externally) at the individual level, and as expanded by Cole and Scribner(1974), into the institutions at the cultural or social level.”(Moran & John Steiner, 2003,p.6)

Caste experiences the very basis of Dalit literature, forms the soul of it.. The experiences are neither gained nor represented identically by all. Besides, these are gained in the

specific cultural historical context. These complexities of the experiences find expression in the writings of Valmiki.

The question which needs to be reflected is how these experiences result in the creative product, which in this case happens to be Dalit literature? How do these experiences give rise to a distinct kind of creativity? How does Valmiki rework on these experiences so that they become the active part of reality? The answer of all these questions lies in the stepwise analysis of the whole process. The answers that we get from analysis provide are further substantiated by the process of synthesis that makes us aware about the psychological value of the artistic elements.

(I) Dialectical relationship between Valmiki and his environment

“Every inventor even a genius is always the outgrowth of his time and environment. His creativity stems from those needs that were created before him, and rests upon these possibilities that, again, exist outside him.”(Vygotsky, 2004, p. 30)

Om Prakash Valmiki was born on 30 June 1950 at Barla village of Muzaffarnagar district in Uttar Pradesh. He belonged to the Chuhra *jati* of the construed as so called lower caste. Chuhra is another term used for defining Bhangi community which is placed at the lowest rung of the social hierarchy in accordance with the historical records (Crooke,1975). In *‘The tribes and castes of North Western India’* W. Crooke traces the origin of Bhangi caste and its various sub-castes on the basis of many historical records and legends associated with their origin. He discusses in detail the origin of the tribe, tribal legends, tribal organization, tribal council and caste discipline, marriage rules, initiation, marriage ceremonies, divorce, birth ceremonies, death rites, religion, social rules and occupations. He points out the various similarities and differences among the sub castes. But this account actually presents the description of ‘Lal begi Bhangi’ since it is one of the most well- known and well researched sub-caste among Bhangi community. Hutton (cited in Valmiki, 2008) defines Bhangi as the caste of sweepers and scavengers all over India except the South. In his research ‘Safai Devta’(2008), Valmiki talks about the Valmiki caste of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Western Uttar Pradesh, who began using Valmiki as their surname instead of Chuhra, Lalbegi, Balhar, Mussali etc. According to him, people

belonging to these castes were engaged in scavenging and pigs played a pivotal role in their lives. This point is further emphasized in Valmiki's Joothan (2003),

“Pigs were a very important part of our lives. In sickness or in health, in life or in death, in wedding ceremonies, pigs played an important role in all of them. Even our religious ceremonies were incomplete without pigs. The pigs rooting in the compound were not the symbols of dirt to us but of prosperity and so they are today.” (P.13)

The Valmiki caste was actually unrepresented in the political activities of Uttar Pradesh as well as in other states. The political scenario of Uttar Pradesh during 1950s was characterized by the awareness against the caste based oppression. S.B. Hunt (2014) in *'Hindi Dalit Literature and Politics of Representation'* whereby she traces the political movement in the Uttar Pradesh region in 1950s. As per her it was a period when Ambedkar's movement was rising in North India and SCF, which was established in Uttar Pradesh in 1944 and was highly supported in the primaries of Agra, Allahabad, Kanpur, Rae Bareilly and Sitapur. Uttar Pradesh had witnessed Dalit agitation twice, first on July 1946 and second just before the Independence between 26 March and 14 May 1947. R.P.I. provided Dalits with an ideological alternative to Congress and was successful in bringing the caste based discrimination from religious discourse to the center of national debate. Along with the political changes the scene of Hindi dalit pamphlets was also undergoing many changes. Political changes affected the discourse of pamphlets. Now, the pamphlets were more focussed on the contemporary political scenario rather than Adi Hindu ideology. Post Ambedkar's religious conversion in 1956 Dalit literary pamphlets became “unproblematic amalgamation of the traditions of the Kabirpanthis, Ravidasis and Buddhists by Dalit activists.”(Hunt, 2014, p. 47)

Although, there was great social awareness among Dalits but the influence of RPI was largely limited to the Chamar *Jati* of Uttar Pradesh. And other *Jatis* being unaware of their rights were still struggling with the caste discrimination. Bhangi or Valmiki was one of these 'Jatis'. Valmiki (2003) explicates,

Babasaheb's message hadn't reached the Mehtar Bastis at all . Whatever little had trickled in, had come packed in a castiest mould. Whenever I talked about it with a Mehtar (Valmiki), he looked at me in surprise. They

had respect for Babasaheb, but his followers had not been able to win their minds and hearts. They were Mehtars, placed at the very bottom of the social ladder. This feeling prevented them from joining the movement. They were suspicious of the Dalit leadership.(p.109)

Valmiki was brought up in an environment where caste formed the bases of life, his childhood was charred by humiliation and insult. He draws the picture of his locality which was at the outskirts of the Barla village separated by the well built houses of Tagas by a pond. The pond was used by Tagas as a sewer.

On the edges of the pond were the homes of the Chuhras. All the women of the village, young girls, older women, even the newly married brides, would sit in the open space behind these homes at the edges of the pond to take a shit. Not just under the cover of darkness but even in daylight. The purdah-observing Tyagi women, their faces covered with their sarees, shawls around their shoulders, found relief in this open- air latrine. They sat on Dabbowali's shores without worrying about decency, exposing their private parts. All the quarrels of the village would be discussed in the shape of a Round Table conference at this same spot. There was muck strewn everywhere. The stench was so overpowering that one would choke within a minute. The pigs wandering in the narrow lanes, naked children, dogs, daily fights, this was the environment of my childhood. If the people who call caste system an ideal social arrangement had to live in this environment for a day or two, they would change their mind. (Valmiki, 2003, p-1)

It was the time when government had opened the doors of schools to everyone but the mindset of the people was still rooted in then, legitimized caste based hierarchy. Students from the lower castes were always humiliated. The upper castes of the village had a sense of superiority because of being higher in the caste ladder. For them, it seemed their birth right to make Chuhras work for them without remunerated.

Untouchability was so rampant that while it was considered all right to touch dogs and cats or cows and buffaloes, if one happen to touch Chuhra, one got contaminated or polluted. The chuhras were not seen as human. They were simply things for use. Their utility lasted until the work was done. Use them and then throw them away. (Valmiki, 2003, p. 2)

Tagas were well versed with the dynamics of the hierarchical system and that was apparent in their treatment of the Chuhras, they were not even called by their names. "If a person were older, then he would be called 'Oe Chuhre'. If the person were younger or of

the same age, then ‘Abey Chuhre’ was used.”(Valmiki, 2003, p.2.). Sweeping was considered as the only fate of the community. The reaction that villagers gave at the complaint of Valmiki’s father against the school teacher bore the testimony of this attitude towards the community. “Hey, if he asked a Chuhra’s progeny to sweep, what is the big deal in that?”(Valmiki, 2003, p.6)The same mindset reflected in the way the teacher treated Valimiki and forced him to make a broom and clean the floor of the school. “Go. Climb that tree. Break some twigs and make a broom. And sweep the whole school clean as mirror. It is after all your family occupation”(Valmiki, 2003, p.4).

Valmikis were called pork eaters by the Tagas. Besides, it was their duty to dispose off the dead cattle of the village. If delay or refusal came from their side, they were threatened.

“In those days it was Chuhras’ responsibility to dispose of dead cattle in the village 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....the person whose animal had died would be in great hurry. He would come into the basti and shout. He would start swearing if there was a delay.”(Valmiki, 2003, p.33).

Overall, the mindset of the Tagas, as depicted by Valmiki, seemed to be guided by the notion of pollution.

On the other hand, the Chuhras community of the village was trapped in the web of various superstitious believes. Pig worshipping and belief in Bhakht healers were strongest among them. Describing the details of the rituals performed during healing of a sick person, Valmiki (2003) writes,

When anybody got sick in basti, instead of treating them 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 so on. All the ceremonies were performed at night. When the disease was prolonged or got serious, then puchha or exorcism would be performed by calling a bhagat, a kind of sorcerer, who would be accompanied by a drummer who played the dholak, and two or three singers.(p.40)

The acceptance of the rituals like Salam by Chuhras denoted the internalization of the upper caste dominance as natural. Even when there was a reaction or so called revolt, it was suppressed by violence and oppression. The people of his community had to tolerate

the violence inflicted on them by policemen as a result of the refusal to work without payment. (p.39)

This was the larger context and the local environment in which Valmiki was grown. Living in the society which discriminated people on the basis of their birth, Valmiki was made to feel the need to “improve” his caste by studying. It was the belief of his father that caste could be improved only by studying and he was always encouraged by his family. Being the youngest child of the family, he was always motivated to study. His sister-in-law gave her only ornament to sell in order to let Valmiki continue his school education. Even at times when he was completely discouraged by the circumstances and felt like a puppet in the hands of hollow values and rituals of the society, the aim to improve the caste had always been with him. “It seemed that studying wasn’t going to be possible for me. But Pitaji’s face and words kept coming before me: ‘You have to improve the caste by studying’”(p.29). When he recited Geeta to his father, his father “had been ecstatic. He was really happy. He had felt that his life had been worthwhile, that his caste had improved.” But from that juncture his mind was replete with philosophical questions and he had no one to answer them. He had realized that he cannot escape his caste at all. “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, 2003, p.58). And now another need was created before him by the society – search of his identity.

“But something came to a boil inside me, and I wanted to say, ‘ 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 human being... I have seen and suffered the cruelty of Hindus since childhood. Why does caste superiority and caste pride attack only the weak? Why are Hindus so cruel, so heartless against Dalits. (Valmiki, 2003, p.41)

He took refuge in the literature to assert his identity. Accessibility to the school library, continuous encouragement by father, activity of reading the stories with his mother, encouragement and assistance provided by Hindi teacher, humiliation and insults by the English and science teachers- all the circumstances acted cumulatively to develop his interest in Hindi literature. Besides, the superficial nature of the Hindi poetry came before

him when he witnessed the reality of the village life and found it quite opposite to the romanticized view of the same.

This farce had gone for an hour. All the ten men who had been beaten were groaning with pain. Their screams had made the birds in the trees take off, but the paralysis had struck the villagers who could not express their empathy. My mind was filled with deep revulsion. Then an adolescent, a scratch had appeared on my mind like a line scratched on glass. It remains there still. The poem by Sumitranandan Pant that we had been taught at school, 'Ah, how wonderful is this village life'....each word of the poem had proved to be artificial and a lie. What happened that day had caused a storm inside me. Perhaps the seeds of Dalit poetry were germinating inside, preparing to sprout at the right time. (Valmiki, 2003, p.39)

The possibility that literature had for him was further explored by him in the light of the experiences and resources that he gained while he was in the city. In Roorkee, while canvassing for a friend, he got to know about the lives of other Dalits. In Mumbai he became the part of Dalit movement and Dalit literary movement. These were the very conditions which prompted him to write.

“Psychology long ago established a law according to which the drive to create is always inversely proportional to the simplicity of the environment”(Vygotsky, 2004, p.30).

Valmiki addressed the needs that were created before him depending upon the possibilities that existed outside him by writing literature.

“Everything that imagination creates is always based on the elements taken from reality, from a person’s previous experience (Vygotsky, 2004, p.13)....Every act of imagination starts with this accumulation of experiences. All things being equal, the richer the experience, the richer the act of imagination.”(Vygotsky, 2004, p. 15)

The complexity of the environment in which Valmiki was placed gave him varied experiences of life that led him to look at the life and the world from a different vantage point. He lived his caste while experiencing rampant untouchability. He witnessed Tagas humiliating ways with the lower castes. He experienced discrimination at school whereby he was ostracized, compelled to sweep the school premises, was made to sit outside the classroom, scolded by the teachers and beaten by the peer group for almost no reason. He expresses his anguish by saying “The boys would beat me in any case, but the teachers

also punished me. All sorts of estrangements were tried so that I would run away from the school and take up the kind of work for which I was born. According to these perpetrators, my attempts to get schooling were unwarranted.”(p.3)

He was teased because of his clothing. He was not even allowed to touch the hand pump and was intentionally kept away from the extra-curricular activities. Quoting Valmiki (2003) again,

“On such occasions I stood on the margins like a spectator. During the annual 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.”(p.16)

The superstitious beliefs held by his own community people and the stereotypes held by the so called upper caste people continuously effected the course of his life. Caste always played the crucial role in all his social interactions.

But the complexity of the environment is not just limited to it. As a matter of fact, it was the dialectical relationship between the environmental forces and the individuality, socially embedded itself, that the course of life followed the path from oppression to assertion. The action from the environment became the impetus for him. His reaction, in turn, served as a stimulus for the counter- reaction. During early years the reaction was in terms of the anguish felt by him whenever he encountered discrimination and oppression. His helplessness marked the anguish he felt at the maltreatment he was subjected to by his teachers and peer group. As he was growing, his reaction to such situations turned from the sense of helplessness to the sense of anger. Relocation to the city gave a new shape to the dialectical relationship he shared with the context making the role of agency more predominant. It is within this dialectic that needs and possibilities got sharply defined. The very transition of the need to “improve” the caste into the search of identity is the result of the changing pattern of the dialectical relationship. During this journey, he accumulated the material to work on- experiences. Not only was the dialectical relationship, at every step, mediated the availability of the tools but was also mediated by the symbolic tools that were available to him. That is why, initially Valmiki read the

literature that was available in the school and in college. But later he actively searched for the literature which resonated with his experiences. On this symbolically mediated dialectical plane that he amassed experiences rooted in his caste based identity given by the environment hierarchical social system.

(II) Social Experiences

These experiences got broadened when he came in touch with the '*Mighty minds of the past*'. The product of the creativity, his literature, was based not only on what he had lived through but also on the reality which he looked at from the eyes of all the eminent scholars he read.

Imagination takes on a very important function in human behavior and human development. It becomes the means by which a person's experience is broadened, because he can imagine what he has not seen, can conceptualize something from another person's narration and description of what he himself has never directly experienced. He is not limited to the narrow circle and narrow boundaries of his own experience but can venture far beyond these boundaries, assimilating, with the help of his imagination someone else's historical or social experience. (Vygotsky, 2004, p.17)

He accessed the literature of Saratchandra, Premchand and Tagore from the school library. In the Indreash Nagar library he read Gandhinama and the biography of Dr B.R. Ambedkar by Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu which changed the course of his life. He went on reading the works of Ambedkar which got him interested in the political activity of the college. Besides, he got opportunity to see the lives of Dalits closely while canvassing for his friend in Roorkee. In Ordnance factory Khamaria, Jabalpur he read Marxist literature. He also got interested in theatre. The phase is marked with the development of his inclination towards social realism. In Bombay he read Pasternak, Hemingway, Victor Hugo, Pierre Louis, Tolstoy, Pearl Burk, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, Remain Rolland, Emile Zola. It was during this period that he came in the contact of Marathi Dalit literature which inspired him a lot.

In fact, the experiences of people (whether in real life or through literature that he read) who were fighting against discrimination, widened the scope of his experiences. Dalit consciousness that he acquired through the intellectual traditions of Phule and Ambedkar enabled him to make sense of the deep power structure operating behind the caste ridden

reality of Indian society. The symbolic meaning contained in his poems and the experiences of all the characters in his short stories are the reworked outcome of the broadened circle of his experiences. The reworked outcome, Valmiki's literature, stands on the foundation of accumulated and widened experiences.

(III) Process of Crystallization : Creation of the short story 'Salaam'

The process of crystallization is based on the complex process of the creative imagination or combinatorial activity. It begins with the perception of the external and internal and leads to the transformation of the imagination into reality. Every creative product fulfills a circular path to be called creative.

“Every act of imagination has a very long history. What we call the act of creation is typically only the climactic moment of birth that occurs as a result of a very long internal process of gestation and fetal development.”(Vygotsky, 2004, p.25)

The accumulated experiences of Valmiki provide the basis for the elements drawn from the reality. This accumulation is a long process since only after “adolescence the quality and variety of the material and the combination created” out of this material become worthy of any creation. Valmiki devoted himself to Dalit writing after adolescence when his experiential life improved on the dimensions of quality as well as variety.

The process of crystallization which is all about the unique combinations constructed from the material of experiences can be illustrated by analyzing a short story by Valmiki. The purpose here is to trace the path that was taken by creative imagination of Valmiki in order to write the story.

(a). Combinatorial Activity

One of the famous short stories written by Valmiki is 'Salam' which deals with the theme of a ritual sanctioned by Hindu ideology and internalized by the community of Chuhras. According to the ritual, bride and bridegroom of a Bhangi community are supposed to go door to door in the locality of upper caste to ask for gifts given as a charity. The story has a remarkable resemblance of his own life incident when he had to accompany his friend Hiram who was forced to go for Salam after his marriage. But this would be a very

naïve explanation of the process of creation. Combinatorial activity leading to the process of crystallization functions in a complex manner. The effect that has been created in the story and the elements that are the foundation of the story are actually really diverse. Every character of the story Kamal Upadhyaya, Harish, Harish's bride, Harish's father, tea vendor, Rampal, one of the most influential persons of the village, Jumman, Harish's father in law, every situation that is introduced in the story, and every inanimate object portrayed in the story, are all the outcomes of the complex reworking of the elements that Valmiki has drawn from his own symbolically mediated life experiences.

Each character seems to be the fusion of different combinations of the characteristics of the people from his life. For instance the main character Kamal Upadhyaya represents his own childhood confusion regarding the caste system, sense of superiority that Brahmins have regarding their upper status in the society, sense of modernity that Valmiki himself developed after coming to the city, etc. Another main character Harish seems to represent Valmiki's own introverted self, his reactionary self, submissiveness of Hiram etc.

Situations like where Harish was insulted by Kamal's mother and his mother's attempt to convince Kamal regarding the legitimacy of the caste system seem to be the fusion of a number of otherwise unrelated situation of his life; like his own bonding with his mother, his insult by his friend's father who was a dhobi and who refused to wash his clothes etc. Even the inanimate objects like handpump, lamppost, tea pan are very well woven within the fabric of the story. These otherwise neutral objects acquire a new connotation within the story.

(b) Process of Reworking : Dissociation and Association

All the above elements dissociated from the very context in which they actually took place now get associated to build the form of story. Their association is not based on the physical or any other superficial similarity. The very bases of their association are the emotions that these strands arise in the author. The images that these experiences created in the mind of the writer were internal manifestations of the emotions of the anguish and anger and the story these images create is the external manifestation of the same. This

external manifestation takes place because of the nature of creative imagination's drive to get embodied objectively, the last step in the process of crystallization.

So, the emotions which actually bind the elements of the story 'Salam' are 'anguish' and 'anger' which Valmiki had experienced every time he encountered caste discrimination in his life and at the helplessness as he finds himself incapable of 'improving his caste' even after getting educated. The law at work here is the "law of common emotional sign". The pattern according to which these elements are fused with emotions are woven into the fabric of the story which again gives the glimpse of the changing pattern of the dialectical relationship between him and his environment. Here it is the anguish of Kamal Upadhyaya at the pitiable condition of the village, at the caste discrimination practiced in the village and the anger at the behavior of his mother towards his friend. The same emotions are felt by Harish who finds himself unable to answer the questions asked by Kamal and by Jumman, Harish's father in law who begs before the upper caste person of the village.

The interplay between the two opposite emotions not only binds the distinct elements together but also serves a very important purpose. Through this Valmiki discharges the responsibility to describe the reality of the Indian society from his own point of view. Characters are not blind to the reality. They are not just victims but they are capable to react. That is why although a number of times characters are portrayed as expressing the emotion of anguish, the significant aspect of the story lies in the portrayal of the resistance and assertion exhibited by the characters. The story evolves here two opposing directions- the anguish of the characters at the situation in which they are and the assertion of their own agency. And at the end of the story although determined to fight against useless ritualism reinforcing caste discrimination, both Kamal and Harish are left astonished at the behavior of a boy who was not ready to have food because it was cooked by a Muslim. The author achieved the artistic effect by the same process of contradiction discussed in detail in the analysis of the same story.

The whole process of reworking consisting of the dissociation and association of elements by means of the law of the common emotional sign ends at the stage where the creative imagination of the author gets crystallized in the form of short story. As a matter

of fact the “product of crystallized imagination”(Vygotsky, 2004, p.10) becomes the active part of the reality with the capability to change the reality. Characters of Kamal and Harish are fictional but the emotions they arise in the readers are real. And that is how the law of the emotional reality of imagination starts operating and the story gains the effect on the consciousness of the people.

(c) Discursive Construction of the Internal logic

Valmiki portrays the images or characters and situations of different shades in his short stories. All the combinations of these images that Valmiki’s works are replete with are not at all created arbitrarily. The creation of the images and thereby the literature is guided by some logic and due this logic literature is capable to have a profound effect on the social consciousness of the people. “A work of art is able to have such an effect on people’s consciousness only because it has its own internal logic...the logic results from the relationships the work establishes between its own world and the external world”(Vygotsky, 2004, pp.23-24)

The laws of the common emotional sign and emotional reality of imagination explain that the logic behind this is the emotional tones that bind all the images together and thereby affect the audience. But this approach conveys half the story. This emotional combination of elements leads to the construction of the “unified Dalit identity”(Hunt,2014). **The discursive construction of a unified Dalit identity on emotional plane** is the internal logic of his works. By using the emotionally charged images, he creates “an imagined singular Dalit identity”(Brueck 2014). His literature establishes a link between its own world and the external world. The pain of Valmiki as well as his characters becomes the pain of the entire Dalit community. Because of this logic only, he got heartwarming response from Dalits for a few pages of autobiographical notes he wrote for the magazine, “A stream of letters began to arrive for me as soon as the book came out. Responses came even from far flung areas. The Dalit readers had seen their own pain in those pages of mine” (Valmiki, 2003, p.vii). The same is true for his works short fiction. His works have such a great impact of the social consciousness of people because the content not only gives them the tool to look into their own life but also broadens their minds by the medium of social experience. This is the active role played by his creative

imagination crystallized in the form of his literature. Due to the logic of emotions and thereby, creation of a Dalit identity, his or his characters' feelings and journey become the feelings and journey of the larger Dalit public, 'I' or 'He' becomes 'We' bearing all the emotions that 'I' or 'He' generates and starts identifying with the identity that is discursively constructed.

This creation is purposefully achieved in Valmiki's works by conscious selection of some elements and elimination of others. As Hunt (2014) points out, "the existence of jati based affiliations among Dalits in the village is downplayed in Valmiki's *Joothan* in favor of the promotion of the inclusive Dalit identity."(p.196) When the *jati* issues have been dealt in *Joothan* they have not been given much weightage. In the same way, although, his characters come from different Jatis but the humiliation they suffer, the caste oppression they deal with, the rebellious tone they adopt bind them with the single thread of a unified identity, Dalit. The content or the images laden with emotions and charged with Dalit consciousness enable a Dalit reader to identify with them and to look into the very nature of the power relations that are otherwise taken for granted in the name of fate and duty.

The internal logic of **'the discursive construction of a unified Dalit identity on emotional plane'** binds all the elements that seem to be unrelated with each other on a surface level. "Juxtapositions of features that are far removed from each other and seemingly unrelated, but that, however, are not foreign to each other but united by this internal logic"(Vygotsky, 2004, p.24).

Whether these unrelated elements are in the form of episodes that run parallel in the autobiography or stories; or characters from different strata of society or characters of same strata dwelling in the different background, picturesque representation of all these is intended to create an emotional plane leading towards the construction of Dalit identity. In his autobiography, Valmiki continuously switches his position from personal to social or vice-versa. In this process even those episodes which are concerned with his family relationships (p.24 to 26), although, appears disconnected from the whole narrative that he creates, help in the construction of Dalit identity when seen in the larger context of the whole narrative. Here the reader starts realizing how the social context is reflected in the

bonds formed within the family. In the same way, in his story ‘Salam’ when he represents the anguish of Kamal Upadhyaya, a Brahmin, who is able to empathize with Harish, his Dalit friend, and thereby successfully creates the unified identity. In his story, ‘Sapna’ the whole politics in the name of religion culminates in anguish and anger of Gautam who was not allowed to sit in the front row of the temple as he belongs to lower caste. In ‘Bail Ki Khal’ the Dalit identity is depicted through two very different incidents; one when the protagonists who are Dalits skin a dead ox and the other when they attempt to save a calf hit by the truck. He tries to portray two opposite sides of Dalit characters, one that is imposed by the larger social structure and another that is reflected in the sense of humanity they possess. But even these two opposite sides are united by the same internal logic.

The very internal logic that is established by Valmiki in his literature is purposeful. Here it seems to serve two purposes. First purpose, as Brueck (2014) suggests, is the contribution to the Dalit counter public sphere.

The Hindi Dalit literary counterpublic- defined previously as the combination of printed and circulated literary texts, literary and activist institutions, media outlet, writers, critics, and readers of Dalit literature, as well as the shared spaces of public performance in the form of literary conferences, readings and organizational meetings- provides a shared space where in theory any Dalit has right of access and may freely express his or her commonalities and differences.(p.31)

Through his writings Valmiki contributes in the enrichment of this counter public discourse. And secondly, as Hunt suggests, by creating unified identity, he challenges the very authority of the established Hindi literary tradition to portray the life of Dalits. As Hunt writes (2014), “the newly formed Hindi Dalit counter- public positioned itself in direct opposition to the mainstream Hindi literary field and prepared to launch its attack simultaneously to gain entry to the established Hindi literary world and to challenge the established Hindi literary figures’ authority to represent Indian society and the Indian nation.”(p.152)

(IV) Artistic Effect: The heart of the process of crystallization

Not only are the construction of internal logic is a purposeful act performed by the author, but the very emotional treatment given to the material is aimed at achieving the artistic effect on the part of the author. Such artistic effect results in the aesthetic reaction by audience. This psychological analysis of art by Vygotsky can be considered as the significant part of the process of crystallization and gives insight into the very complex laws of common emotional sign and the emotional reality of the imagination. The author gains the artistic effect by playing with the elements and attached emotional tones resulting in the dynamic scheme of the story which, in turn, becomes the basis of the effect produced on the minds of the people. The complexities of the process are illustrated here with the specific focus on the short story Salam.

(a) Creative act of the selection of elements

First and foremost, the events which form the material of the story are purposefully selected by the author. This very process of selection marks the creativity of the author. Analyzing the Bunin's story 'Gentle Breath' Vygotsky (1971) writes about the creative selection of the elements.

A painter portraying a tree cannot paint its every leaf, but gives a general impression by means of spots of color and draw a few leaves here and there. In the same fashion, the writer selects only those events that characterize best and most convincingly the real life material with which he is dealing. Strictly speaking, we already step outside the limits set by this selection when we begin to apply our own viewpoints about life to this material.(p.159)

The same logic can be successfully applied to the Valmiki's selection of the events incorporated in the story. The selection is colored with his own viewpoint of the life that he had developed in the dialectical relationship with his environment.

The material on which Valmiki bases this story is the following- Harish and Kamal are best friends. Harish belongs to the Dalit community but Kamal is from a Brahmin family. When , in childhood, Kamal invites Harish to his home, Kamal's mother welcomes him. But as soon as she comes to know from Harish that his father is a sweeper, she gets really angry with Kamal and slaps him. She scolds Harish too and insults him. She tries her best

to convince Kamal that he should not be friends with Harish since he belongs to the lower caste, Kamal refuses to obey her. Then finally, she permits him to bring Harish home but on one condition, the dishes to serve anything to Harish will be kept separately from all. They grow up together and Kamal always ask Harish to come out of the inferiority complex of belonging to a Dalit family since such notions, according to him do not have any place in modern society. On the occasion of Harish's marriage, Kamal goes to the village with him and actively participates in all the arrangements of marriage. As he is habitual of having tea in the morning, he goes in the search of a tea shop. There , he asks the tea vendor for a cup of tea , who requests him to wait a little. But as the conversation between the two goes on, tea vendor comes to know that he has come in the 'Barat' of Chuhras. At this he refuses to make tea and starts creating scene. Other villagers also start gathering there and favor the tea vendor. Finding that nobody is ready to listen to him, he comes back from there. Back at Harish's place another situation arises. Harish's father refuses to send his son for the ritual of *Salaam*. Harish also agrees with him on this. Upper caste Ranghad people threaten Jumman, Harish's father in law but he bows down in the feet of Ballu Ranghand saying that son-in-law is not ready to go for Salam. On this Harish and Kamal look at each other and shake hands as if showing that no matter what, they will stand by each other. But next moment they were left shocked by the conversation between the old man who is convincing a boy to have food but the boy is not ready to eat roti since it had been cooked by a Muslim.

(b) Disposition Scheme of the Story

The material presented above can be listed in a chronological sequence as it is related with main characters of the story. For this purpose disposition scheme or static scheme has been divided into three parts- Kamal Upadhyaya, Harish and other characters and situations.

Kamal Upadhyaya

1. Family background of Kamal
2. Kamal's reaction to Harish's insult
3. Kama's advice to Harish to overcome the inferiority of being a Dalit

4. Arrangements of the marriage of Harish by Kamal
5. Kamal's conversation with Harish regarding the condition of village and need for tea in the morning
6. Kamal's search for the tea shop
7. Kamal's meeting and eventual insult by the tea vendor
8. Kamal's insult by the village boys
9. Kamal and Harish tacit assurance to be with each other.

Harish

- A- Harish's insult by Kamal's mother
- B- Conversation with Kamal regarding the atrocities on Dalits
- C- Conversation between Harish and Kamal at night in the wedding
- D- Harish's refusal to go for Salam
- E- Kamal and Harish tacit assurance to be with each other.

Other Characters and situations

- a- Barat's stay in the veranda of the school
- b- Conversation between Harish and Kamal interrupted by an old man
- c- Ranghand's boasting about not letting a Chuhra having tea at the tea shop.
- d- Jumman's insult by Ballu Ranghand
- e- Episode of the old man and the boy who refuses to eat roti made by a Muslim

For the purpose of showing the events' specific arrangement in the form of the story, disposition scheme has been given specific symbols here. It is notable that the event in which Harish and Kamal both participate appear in both schemes.

(c) Incongruity between Content and Form

A close look at the material of the story hints at its brittleness that is the foundation of the contrast between the material and the form of the story. According to Vygotsky (1971), these two important concepts are essential to be analyzed while dealing with the short story- form and material. The former deals with the events "that existed prior to the story, can exist outside of it or is independent of it" (Vygotsky, 1971, p.145). The latter is the artistic rearrangement of these events.

A work of art always contains a certain amount of contradiction, a certain inner incongruity between the material and the form. We can say that the author intentionally chooses a difficult material which will resist his efforts to say what he wants to say. The more brittle and hostile the material, the more suitable will it be for the author. The form given by author to this material is not intended to reveal the feeling hidden in the material itself...On the contrary, its purpose is to overcome these properties.(p.160)

Here the stand that Vygotsky takes regarding the relationship between material and form is in contrast with the opinion of R.C Jadhav(2009) who talks about the indivisibility of the two and adds that, “ In literary criticism , though the content oriented and form oriented positions seem to be separate, in actual criticism, they go hand in hand, or at least they should.”(Poisoned Bread, p. 305)

It is obvious from the disposition scheme of the story that Valmiki uses brittle material which actually makes it difficult for him to attain the desired outcome, i.e. the discursive construction of the Dalit identity on an emotional plane. First, he assigns the role of the protagonist to Kamal Upadhyaya , a Brahmin. He is the one who is introduced in the first paragraph along with Harish. He keeps an eye on the all the arrangements. He is being insulted by the tea vendor, Rampal and village boys. Even the flashback about the Harish’s insult by Kamal’s mother portrays the inner conflict of Kamal. In the scenes where he does not actively participate, the narrator makes the audience feel his presence as the narrator presents his confusion several times. In sum, he is the one who occupies most of the space in the whole narrative. Secondly, most of the incidents of the story do not seem to be directly related to the custom of *Salaam* the story is named after. Instead, all of them have been charged with the tone of caste oppression and subordination which is apparent through following instances. Barat is not allowed to stay within the school premises. Hand pump is intentionally made out of order. The old man insists Kamal to tell his caste. Kamal is insulted at the tea shop by the people as they assume him to be a Chuhra, the caste to which actually Harish belonged to. Jumman is insulted by Ballu Ranghnd. Thirdly, the last episode of the story between the old man and the boy is toned with the wider debate of injustice and inequality. And lastly but of crucial significance, the material given in the disposition scheme seems to create anguish among the readers and invokes sympathy for the characters.

But the story is intended to be about the custom of *Salaam* as the title suggests. Apart from the anguish represented by the theme of caste based oppression, the story also deals with the anger aroused at the moments when resistance has been portrayed by the author. Then how does the narrator manages to make this short story as “heavier-than-the-air-machine”? (p. 227, Vygotsky,1971)

(d) Form of the story

The brittleness of the material has been molded by the author in order to make this flight possible. The answer lies in the composition or dynamic scheme or the form of the short story.

“A true work of art reminds us of a heavier-than-air-machine. It is always made of material much heavier than air, and from the very outset seems to oppose any effort to make it rise. The weight of the material counteracts its rise and drags the structure to the ground. Flight can be achieved only by overcoming this tendency to fall.” (Vygotsky, 2004, p.226)

In order to get the ‘form’ of the story all the events must be arranged in the order they are placed by Valmiki in the story.

Composition scheme

4-Arrangements of the marriage of Harish by Kamal

a - Barat’s stay in the veranda of the school

5C-Conversation between Harish and Kamal at night in the wedding

b -Conversation between Harish and Kamal interrupted by an old man

1 - Family background of Kamal

6 - Kamal’s search for the tea shop

7 - Kamal’s meeting and eventual insult by the tea vendor

8 - Kamal’s insult by the village boys

3B - Conversation with Kamal regarding the atrocities on Dalits

A - Harish's insult by Kamal's mother

2 - Kamal's reaction to Harish's insult

D -Harish's refusal to go for Salam

c - Rampal's boasting about not letting a Chuhra having tea at the tea shop.

d - Jumman's insult by Ballu Ranghand

9E- Kamal and Harish tacit assurance to be with each other.

e - Episode of the old man and the boy who refuses to eat roti made by a Muslim

As it is obvious from the composition schemes, the author actually plays with the sequence of the events in order to give the story its current form. He rearranges the events in specific order but to ascertain the function of this rearrangement, we need to move from *the anatomy to the physiology of the story*.

(e) Analysis to Synthesis: The Physiology of the Story

He does not address the theme of caste oppression by means of the custom *Salaam*, as is generally suggested about the all Dalit literary fictional or non-fictional narratives. He does not even go the other way round, i.e. the theme of caste oppression has not been used to highlight the custom itself. Because in former case the custom loses its value as it is reduced to the level of a means to address a broader debate and in the latter case the value is laid upon only on the custom and the wider debate becomes subsidiary. As a matter of fact, he integrates both by giving specific form to the story and binds all the incidents of caste oppression given in the story with the thread of the symbolic meaning he gives to the *Salaam*. *Salaam* here symbolizes the boundary that is drawn between the upper and lower caste of the society. As Valmiki (2003) writes in his autobiography, "*The deep chasm that divides the society is made even deeper by this custom.*" (p.33) The symbolic meaning of *Salaam* is also consistent with the Brueck's analysis of Dalit short stories as she mentions the main tool to create the desired effect is melodramatic realism (Brueck, 2014). By the realistic description of the custom, the narrator creates the moral polarization, here between the Ranghads and Chuhras of the village. The boundary that the custom creates between the upper and lower castes has been drawn by Valmiki, first,

when the Barat of Chuhras is intentionally made to stay outside the school in the verandah; second, when Kamal assumed to be a lower caste is insulted outside the tea shop; third, when Harish is insulted by Kamal's mother, the boundary between the two best friends is again made salient; fourth, the boundary that is created by the boy between his and the cook's religion. On one side of the boundary are the upper caste having the sense of superiority about their so called upper caste status while on the other side are the people driven to be on the lower strata of the social ladder who just bow down, serve and salute the upper caste people as in case of Jumman who keeps his *pagdi* symbolizing honour and self-respect at the feet of Ballu Ranghand.

The integration of the custom and wider debate of injustice comes forth, when creation of the boundary symbolic of caste based oppression is disrupted again and again by the composition scheme when he introduces resistance on the part of the characters of the story. The narrator, by representing all these events which leads to the generation of a boundary, seems to infuse readers the anguish felt by the characters in the story. But "the neutralization of the first impression provoked by an event is transformed into another in contrast to the first." (Vygotsky, 1971, p.155) First resistant voice of the character is heard just after Kamal takes pity at the condition of the village and the old man inquires about his caste. Here Harish comes forward and resists. Just after Kamal's insult by the tea vendor and Rampal, narrator introduces the flashback where Harish tells Kamal atrocities on Dalits and Kamal, in response, asks Harish to overcome the inferiority complex. As soon as he is insulted by the village boys who tease him by calling Chuhra, again the flashback of Harish's insult by Kamal's mother is introduced which represents angry reaction of Kamal to the incident as well. On the one hand, Harish in-laws are busy in the preparation for the custom of 'Salaam', on the other hand resistance comes from the side of Harish and his father, eventually supported by Kamal also. Just after the insult of Jumman by Ballu Ranghad, the attention of the reader is sought to observe the confident face of Harish. After that Harish and Kamal look at each other, shake hands as if assuring that they are ready to abolish such foolish and caste oppressive kinds of practices. Every time narrator replaces the oppression with resistance and anguish with anger. And rather than sympathizing with the characters, readers start empathizing with them.

Here the story verifies the formula given by the Vygotsky to evaluate a piece of art. The narrator introduces the two opposite elements together. He transforms the emotions laden in the material of the story into their opposite ones. And what is more, he leads this contradiction towards its resolution. The affective contradiction between the anguish and anger represented by the themes of oppression and resistance gets resolved when at the climax he turns them into the emotion of hope. That is why instead of arousing anguish and anger specifically, the narrator aims at arousing hope.

It is again notable here that at the climax narrator uses this strategy to take the story to higher level when he represents the main characters discouraged and battered to see the boy who refuses to eat roti as it was cooked by a Muslim. Starting from the theme of oppressive practices and discrimination against the lower caste of the society, he portrays the reality of the society beyond the boundary of caste and associates it with the broader context of inequality and untouchability. The whole story is seen in the new light by a reader because now the narrator neutralizes the anguish of the characters by transferring the anger among the readers. Although it seems that resistance is transferred from the characters to the readers, as a matter of fact, the overall effect that narrator attempts to create is of hope. The peculiarity of this emotion is that it gets created on the plane of hopelessness and in the face of the discouragement of the characters. At the climax the author does not intend to say that nothing can be done, although the first impression seems to be this only. Instead, he attempts to leave the writer with hope and the title *Salaam* symbolic of the subordination and low status of a community becomes the symbol of the 'good bye' to such discriminatory practices.

Finally the author is successful in establishing the internal logic of the whole story 'the discursive construction of unified Dalit identity as opposed to the oppressed one portrayed by the upper caste writers. The characters of Harish and his father possess Dalit consciousness. Characters are not the passive agents or the victims of the circumstances. They acquire Dalit consciousness. Dalit writers distinguish Dalit literature from the literature on Dalits on the basis of the Dalit chetna the characters of the story possess. Brueck (2014) quotes Spivak's concept of 'strategic essentialism' to describe this strategy. She writes,

Dalit chetna is a rendering of strategic essentialism for the political purpose of intervening into the mainstream literary-cultural sphere and claiming a small space for Dalits, in which they have the power to determine, by means of this essentialist concept, what authors and what texts may also share the space. This is the powerful tool in the battle for self-representation and the authority of Dalits over their own literary and political voices.(p.66)

The narrator skillfully and successfully uses the Brahmin protagonist for this purpose. He is driven to the threshold of marginality and is made to experience the agony that practice of untouchability and discrimination creates. And the outcome is the Dalit identity, an individual who knows the experience of being an untouchable, who know the grief of being marginalized and in spite of this, he is not ready to compromise with his honour and self-respect. He is very well aware of the forms of oppressions and dominations hidden behind the customs like *Salaam* and is progressively making efforts of breaking the caste hierarchy.

It is by the form of the story that Valmiki destroys the properties of the content which would have left the reader anguished, had the events been presented in the order of the disposition scheme. The story is a work of art that, “forces us to move simultaneously to the right and the left, simultaneously to lift and drop weights simultaneously to move one group of muscles and their opposites.”(Vygotsky, 1971, p.213)

It seems to be perfectly fit on the standard that Vygotsky delineates for a piece of art saying, “ a work of art always includes an affective contradiction, causes conflicting feelings, and leads to the short-circuiting and destruction of these emotions. This is the true effect of the work of art.”(Vygotsky, 1971, p.213)

(V) The relationship between the work of art and life

The dialectical contradiction between the content and the form not only makes the story a piece of art but also successfully depicts the relationship between life and art.

“One of the great thinkers said once that art relates to life as wine relates to grape. With this he meant to say that art takes its material from life, but gives in return something which its material did not contain”(Vygotsky, 2004, p.243)

The elements and the emotions come from the life based on which the whole story has been constructed by Valmiki. The creative selection of the elements is reworked by means of combinatorial activity. In the same way, the emotions that Valmiki experiences in his caste based environment, anguish, and the one that again he received from the environment as a source of symbolic resources, anger, are returned to the life, but in a different form. Here, the author returns the reality that it did not contain- hope. Through the artistic treatment that he employs in the story, he turns the '*water into wine*'. Following the principle of antithesis, the story gives to the life that writer does not get from the life itself. This not only demonstrates the relationship between the life and art but also fulfills the very condition for any act to be called a piece of art. The condition is to overcome, resolve and conquer the feeling that an artist receives from the life. Valmiki does not portray the caste oppression and resistance as it is.

“A sincere feeling taken per se cannot create art...To do this we require the creative act of overcoming the feeling, resolving it, conquering it. Only when this act has been performed - then and only then is art born.” (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 248)

The excellence of his art lies in the way he resolves and conquers the anguish, transforms it into its opposite- anger represented in terms of resistance and finally resolves it in the form of hope. This is the way that a work of art takes birth. This art not only becomes the subject to aesthetic reaction on the part of the audience but also assists the writer to strike a balance in his relationship with his environment at critical points of life. The same function that this art serves for the reader by means of performing catharsis for him, it executes for the artist as well and in the form of the crystallized imagination the writer enriches the reality actively. In this context, Jadhav (2009) suggests that leading the life of an untouchable “is painful enough; it can be equally painful to recreate it on the mental level” (p.311).But as a matter of fact, art performs a liberating function. When Valmiki writes, the art that results actually “systematize, or organize, social feeling and give relief to painful and tormenting strain....Thus art arises originally as a powerful tool in the struggle for existence.” (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 243) It becomes the tool for him and many others to fight against the caste based injustice. The caste based experiences are returned to the caste ridden society in terms of an art that challenges the very existence of such

society. It enables us to envision a new future. The enrichment of the reality that takes place actually stems from the twofold functions of Dalit literature as suggested by Raj Kumar while discussing the work of Punalekar(1988). The two functions are ‘demolition’ and ‘reconstruction’. “On the one hand, it is keen to destroy what is considered as ‘deadwood’, the decaying components of the existing social and cultural order; on the other hand, it is anxious to transform the social reality in the direction of total freedom, equality and human dignity”(Raj Kumar, 2010, p.139)

“Art is the organization of our future behavior. It is a requirement that may never be fulfilled but that forces us to strive beyond our life toward all that lies beyond it.”(Vygotsky, 1971, p.253)

It is through the art created by Valmiki that he looks into the future- future as a Dalit writer wants it to be- a dream of the future oriented towards the values of humanity instead of the maxim of *Satyam, Shivam Sundaram* established in literature. The course that the anticipation of this ideal future takes is never personal to social as it appears to be. But actually the exact opposite is true in this case.

“Art is a social technique of emotion, a tool of society which brings the most intimate and personal aspects of our being into the circle of social life. It would be more correct to say that emotion becomes personal when everyone of us experiences a work of art; it becomes personal without ceasing to be social.”(Vygotsky, 1971, p.249)

When Valmiki depicts his experiences by means of combinatorial activity in the form of the experiences of his characters, the emotions that he infuses into the elements are gained in the dialectical interaction with the environment. These social emotions portrayed artistically in literature becomes personal when the reader experiences the work charged with these emotions. But even at this point these emotions do not cease to be social as the reader is in interaction with the product of crystallized imagination of the author now playing the role of the cultural element for the reader.

The unique combinations of the elements drawn from the reality and reworked by the use of specific tools and resources leads to the formation of the internal logic of Valmiki’s literature. The path that the process takes has been illustrated by the analysis of his short

story 'Salaam' which brings out the nuanced aspects of the construction of Valmiki's literature. Some of these aspects are the interplay of the two contrasting emotions of anguish and anger representing the theme of oppression and resistance respectively, creation of the hope for better future on the plane of hopelessness and the dynamic contradiction between the form and material. His fiction is the part of the vast realm of Hindi Dalit literature oriented towards the modification of the traditional values usually attached to the literature. This novel art is based on the conceptualization of a new man oriented towards the creation of the casteless society. The prospects that such literature contain are very well explained in the words of Vygotsky.

“It is hard to imagine the role that art will play in this remolding of man. We do not know which existing but dormant forces in our organisms it will draw upon to form the new man. There is no question; however, that art will have a decisive voice in this process. Without new art there can be no new man.”(Vygotsky, 1971, p.259)

CHAPTER- III

LIFE OF OM PRAKASH VALMIKI: PROCESS OF TRANSITIONS AND LITERARY CREATIVITY

The previous chapter dealt with the creation of literature by using the process of crystallization aimed at the discursive construction of a unified Dalit identity on the emotional plane. The present chapter explores Valmiki's own journey in the development of literary creativity. The course of his life is seen from the lens of Zittoun. An attempt is made to map the ruptures and processes of transitions facilitated by mobilization of social, cognitive and symbolic resources. How did the child who faced caste based discrimination develop into the adult having the identity of a Hindi Dalit writer? How did the child and the adolescent who was deeply interested in literature, who was deeply touched by the characters portrayed by Sarat Chandra, proceeded to write, "Literature can only imagine hell. For us rainy season was a living hell. This terrible suffering of village life has not been touched upon by the epic poets of Hindi. What a monstrous truth that is?" (Valmiki, 2003, p.24)

To analyze the process of the making of a Hindi Dalit writer (OmPrakashValmiki) and in order to map the individualized trajectory bounded by the larger context of the village and city, the analysis proceeds the following way. In the first section, the excerpts from Valmiki's Joothan have been listed out. The selection of the excerpts is made to include most of the significant events in his life. The presentation of the content in the form of selected excerpts is intended to organise the events of Valmiki's life during the different periods of relocations. The second section elaborates on Valmiki's life before relocation and addresses the most crucial rupture in the experiential life of Valmiki. The limitations of the transitional processes followed by the rupture have been discussed. In the third section the emphasis has been laid on the process of transitions that follow the rupture resulting from his relocation from village to city. Levels of the use of the symbolic resources have been discussed in both sections along with the analysis. Impact of the change in the frame of activity from village to the city has been examined by mapping the modifications in different dimensions of the semiotic prism. The structure of the

reconfigured semiotic prism reflecting his identity as a Hindi Dalit writer has been discussed. Finally, Hindi Dalit writing has been looked at from cultural- historical perspective and distinctiveness of Om Prakash Valmiki's activity of Dalit writing has been located in the third generation activity theory of Engestrom.

Excerpts from *Joothan* by Om Prakash Valmiki (2003)

Before Relocation

- “I have not forgotten the courage and fortitude with which my father confronted the master that day. Pitaji had all sorts of weaknesses, but the decisive turn that he gave my future that day has had a great impact on my personality.” (p.6)
- “Those words of Sukhdev Singh Tyagi penetrated my breast like a knife. They continue to singe me to this day.”(p.11)
- “All the women were overwhelmed by her affectionate gesture. I embraced bhabhi and cried. At that moment, I missed my brother deeply. The memory of that day continues to empower me.” (p.14)
- “By the time I reached class eight, I had read Saratchandra, Premchand and Rabindra Nath Tagore. Saratchandra's characters had touched my child's heart very deeply. I had become somewhat of an introvert, and reading had become my main passion.”(p.16)
- “I had begun to read novels and short stories to my mother in the faint light of the wick lamp. Who knows how often Saratchandra's characters have made a mother and a son cry together? This was the beginning of my literary sensibility. Starting from Alha, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to Sur Sagar, Prem Sagar, Sukh Sagar, Premchand's stories, Kissa tota maina...whatever I found, I, the son of an untouchable illiterate family, read to my mother.”(p.16)
- “‘We don't wash the clothes of Chuhra- Chamars. Nor do we iron them. If we iron your clothes, then the Tagas won't get their clothes washed by us. We will lose our roti.’ He had answered me point blank. His reply crushed me. I came back without saying a word. My heart was very heavy. I had lost faith in God.

- One can somehow get past poverty and deprivation, but it is impossible to get past caste.”(p.18)
- “ ‘Chuhreke, you dare compare yourself with DronacharyaHere , take this, 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 of a feudalistic mentality is inscribed not just on my back but on the each nerve of my brain.” (p.23)
 - “What had happened had caused a great fear to sprout in my mind. The image of Pitaji who loved his cousins was replaced in my head by that of a cruel tyrant.” (p.26)
 - “My heart had felt very heavy that day. It seemed that studying wasn’t going to be possible for me. But Pitaji’s face and words kept coming before me: ‘You have to improve the caste by studying.....I haven’t forgotten Pitaji’s hopelessness to this day. ‘Abey Sohro, if my children learn a few letters , how does it bother you?’”(p.29)
 - “Many such incidents of my childhood are sprawled inside me, bearing witness to the dark days of my past.”(p.33)
 - “That day something broke inside me. I skinned the bullock under chacha’s guidance. I felt I was drowning in a swamp. I was being drawn into the very quagmire that I had tried to escape from. The wounds of the torment that I suffered with Chacha on that hot afternoon are still fresh on my skin.”(p.35)
 - “Bhabhi said to my mother, ‘Don’t make him do that work....We can bear hunger....Don’t drag him in this dirt.’ Those words of bhabhi shine like a light in the darkness for me to this day. I have come out of that dirt, but millions are living that horrible life even today.”(p.36)
 - “This farce had gone on for an hour. All the ten men who had been beaten were groaning with pain. Their screams had made the birds in the trees take off, but the paralysis had struck the villagers who could not express their empathy. My mind was filled with a deep revulsion. Then an adolescent, a scratch had appeared on my mind like a line scratched on glass. It remains there still. The poem by

Sumitranandan Pant that we had been taught at school, ‘Ah , how wonderful is this village life’...each word of the poem had proved to be artificial and a lie. What happened that day had caused a storm inside me. Perhaps the seeds of Dalit poetry were germinating inside, preparing to sprout at the right time.” (p.39)

- “Such was life. These were important times for me. Those days, I wanted to run away from them. Today they are my strength. They provide me solace.”(p.43)
- “Lying in Ma’s lap, I think the blood vessels in my brain would have burst. The vortex of pain and disgust that I was caught up in at that moment had soiled my innermost self.”(p.46)
- “A comment he made that day is still etched in my mind like a scratch on glass, ‘Abey brother-in- law, progeny of Chuhra, let me know when you die. You think you are a hero. Today I am going to draw oil from your tresses.”(p.47)
- “It was such ideal teachers that I had to deal with. Moving from childhood to adolescence, when my personality was being shaped , I had to live in the terror-filled environment. How have those who have never suffered the needle pricks of hatred and jealousy feel my pain? Who have never endured such humiliation, how will they know what it feels like? Dreams, like sand dunes, do not make a sound when shattered.”(p.48)
- “The incident in Muzaffarnagar has remained fixed in my mind, like a question mark. This experience at the age of twelve or thirteen has been painful for me. That woman’s image, seen for barely a second, appears repeatedly before my eyes, along with the two wolves that kept tearing her all night. I have often wondered if there was anything of her left after the night’s ordeal.”(p.55)
- “Fauza ordered. I told him repeatedly that I had to study for my paper tomorrow, but he was adamant. He geld me by the elbow and dragged to the field. He threatened me to do the work or else. My mind was set aflame by his swearing. A fire had engulfed my innards that day. The memories of these crimes of Tyagis continue to smoulder deep inside me, emitting red hot heat.”(p.57)
- “This turn of events had put a horrendous barrier in my path. I no longer felt interested in studying. I couldn’t make up my mind as to what to do next. I felt surrounded by darkness. My family seemed to be in mourning. Pitaji had become

very quiet after telling me how sorry he was. I felt very down, unable to put my mind to anything. That was terrible time for me.” (p.66)

After Relocation

In Dehradun

- “Many boys in the class would make fun of my country looks. Since I was new in college and unfamiliar with its ways, I kept quiet. Even otherwise I was quite used to taunts and neglect. I feel amazed when I look upon those days and the things I learnt to tolerate. How much of my ability to tolerate hurts flung at me has taken out of me!” (p.69)
- “My reading of these books had awakened my consciousness. These books had given voice to my muteness. It was during this time in my life when an anti-establishment consciousness became strong in me.” (p.72)
- “The deeper I was getting into this literature, the more articulate my rage became. I began to debate my college friends, and put my doubts before my teachers. It was this literature that had given me courage.”(p.73)
- “The canvassing provided me with the opportunity to see the lives of the people at close range. I heard their stories of deprivation...How innocent were these people, totally uncomprehending of the meaning or value of independence. But then, had independence truly reached them? The pimps of the rulers were exploiting them for their own ends.” (p.75)
- “The first day I wore it to college, the boys began to tease me by calling me a jamadar. Although the sweater did protect me from the winter cold, the taunts of the boys were more piercing than the cold. Many a time I determined not to wear it. But finally I made up my mind. I decided to see how long they would go on taunting me.”(p.76)
- “I had begun to dream of self-reliance. I found it hard to forget the days of my life in extreme poverty. The technical education promised me to earn two meals a day. I began to receive a monthly stipend of one hundred and seven rupees a month during my apprenticeship, which seemed like a princely sum to me.” (p.78)

- “Books were my greatest friends. They kept up my morale. I started tutoring in the evening at a couple of homes after returning from the factory. I would keep myself busy so as not to get in mama’s way.”(p.79)
- “I asked Surjan if we could leave. I was feeling stifled, and found it difficult to keep standing. The sacrificing of animals in the name of the Shakti puja, the offering made to mother goddess Durga, had disturbed me greatly. The buffalo’s head hanging from the post was hovering in front of my eyes. Its headless body lay at a short distance.”(p.80)
- “Amongst all our deprivations, there were some delicate tendrils that linked us. Our train left for a new and unfamiliar world. All the familiar faces had been left behind. What remained with us were a few memories.” (p.82)

In Jabalpur, Khamaria

- “I was introduced to a new world after entering the Training Institute’s residence. There were a lot of things new and strange....It was a lively place. The residence’s evening brimmed with excitement. Just as a thicket began to resound with the chirping of birds at the sunset, the hotel came alive with singing and music, sports, laughter, spirited conversation and many other activities after sundown.”(p.82)
- “Really, who else but a farmer can know the cost of roti? Right from my childhood, I have considered roti an immensely valuable thing. Those who wasted it seemed criminal to me.”(p.83)
- “The days in residence were days of fun for some. For me, these were the days of building my selfhood.”(p.83)
- “There were some students who had Marxist leanings, and I started to read Marxist literature after coming into contact with them. Gorky’s mother, especially, shook me up. I had also become acquainted with Chekhov’s short stories. I joined these Marxists in forming a theatre group. We rehearsed in the hostel. We staged many plays in the institute’s auditorium.”(p.84)
- “I also began to write short, one act plays and to stage them. I did both acting and directing. It was the beginning of my involvement in theatre”(p.85)

- “Jabalpur changed me. My speech patterns changed. My manners also changed. I made friends who were deeply interested in contemporary issues and constantly argued about them. I took part in seminars and cultural functions. I became involved in Jabalpur’s literary life. I also began to develop my own views on literature. I was more attracted to social realism than to aestheticist and formalist types of writings.”(p.85)
- “I had spent the last two years keeping extremely busy. My training was proceeding well. On the matter of ‘caste’, hostel life wasn’t too bad. At times, however, the students from Delhi and Muradnagar passed remarks.(p.86)
- “Leaving Vijay Bahadur Soul in Jabalpur, I went to Bombay. It was a time of heartbreak. We had been inseparable during the last three years. Vijay’s eyes were also filled with tears. My relationship with Vijay was deep. I felt incomplete without him. For me Vijay Bahadur soul was even more important than my kith and kin.(p.87)

In Mumbai

- “I was greatly excited when I saw the library. It was in this library that I read Pasternak, Hemingway, Victor Hugo, Pierre Louis, Pearl Buck, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, Romain Rolland and Emile Zola. It was here that I read the entire works of Rabindranath Tagore and Kalidasa.”(p.88)
- “Making the Ganwai brothers my starting point, I sent an essay on the problems of Dalits to Navbharat times, Bombay and they had published it. This essay aroused a lot of controversy.”(p.90)
- “The words of Daya Pawar, NamdevDhasal, Raja Dhale, Gangadhar Pantavane, Baburao Bagul, Keshav Meshram, Narayan Surve, Vaman Nimbalkar, and Yashwant Manohar were igniting sparks in my veins. Their voices exhilarated me, filled me with new energy. My reading of Dalit literature was beginning to change my notions about what is literature.(p.91)
- “Along with the technical education of our training, this world of literature was filling us with a new consciousness. We experienced the bitter and insurmountable realities of life even during the fun-filled days of hostel life. Our

- classmates ran off to the cinemas and picnics as soon as the classes were over. We spent long hours debating life's serious problems. We joined all those activities that accelerated social transformation.”(p.92)
- “Patil would go to this temple twice a week. I had no interest in religion. Ambedkar and Marxist literature had changed my consciousness.”(p.93)
 - “She started to cry, as though my being an SC was a crime. She sobbed for a long time. Suddenly the distance between us had increased. The hatred of thousands of years had entered our hearts. What a lie culture and civilization are.”(p.98)

In Chandrapur, Mumbai

- “The country was resounding with J.P.’s movement. I had written some good poems at last, poems that weren’t just rhymes, and people had begun to recognize me as a poet through my poems in Navbharat, Yugharm, NaiDuniya. I had also begun to write a column in a Chandrapur weekly called Janpratinidhi.”(p.100)
- “It was in this part of the country that I came across the marvelous glow of Dalit consciousness. The self-fulfillment that I experienced in connecting with the Dalit movement was truly experience for me. The deeper my involvement became with the movement, the further off my friends moved away from me. In their eyes I had wandered away from the right path and was bent on destroying my talent and creativity.”(p.100)
- “Buddha’s philosophy on human freedom had attracted me. He says that there is no such thing as the unchangeable in a constantly changing universe. The human being alone matters. It is karma and wisdom that takes a person towards transcendence. Nagpur’s Dikshabhumi is a place of pilgrimage for Dalits. It is here that I met Bhadantanand Kaushalyayan. Kaushalyayan had removed my doubts on Buddhism through sustained argument.(p.100)
- “I felt ensnared in a bizarre situation. Very alone. There was no one, either in my family or in the outside world with I could unravel the knots inside my heart. Even Swarnlata bhabhi had abandoned me to my own devices.”

- “How dare I flout the rules of our caste, our community? Education did not mean that one should stop obeying the hallowed customs of our people. Every letter of Jasbir left a wound.” (p.102)
- “I had refused point blank. I don’t believe in worshipping any deities. Pitaji had been angry. My disbelief was an attack on his faith, and he wasn’t willing to forgive me for that...He remained angry until the very end. I was absolutely determined not to give in.”(p.103)
- “I had always dreamt of carrying out social work among the Dalits and during my time in Chandrapur I was able to put my plans into practice. In Maharashtra, the groundwork done by Dr. Ambedkar and Jyotirao Phule had inspired thousands upon thousands to join the struggle. This intellectual revolution provided a new dimension to my writing.”(p.105)
- “I began to boycott these religious celebrations. I searched for theatre people who were keen to work for change. We staged many Dalit Plays. One of these was Mumbai Nagri by DayaPawar.”(p.110)
- “I hadn’t been granted the privilege to carry Ma’s and Pitaji’s biers. He whom they had struggled so hard to make something of had become so distanced from them. It is a grief that I hide deep inside my heart.”(p.111)
- “I believed it was more meaningful to write about the travails of the ordinary people than to sing about the glories of the past.”(p.112)
- “A huge rally was staged at Bhadravati, and thousands upon thousands of people came to the rally. I too addressed the rally. Most of the speakers had spoken in Marathi. I spoke in Hindi. This was a new experience for me. The crowd was simmering with anger. At this moment I experienced my belonging to the Dalit movement intensely. I wrote a poem entitled ‘Vidrup Chehra’(crooked face), and it was published in many magazines and newspapers.”(p.113)
- “Along with poetry and drama, I was also beginning to turn to short story form. I had always been a reader of short stories, and I began to write them myself around 1978-1979.”(p.122)

- “I had been in Chandrapur for almost thirteen years. When I was leaving Chnadrapur, I felt as though I was leaving home. Chnadrapur had given me so much.”(p.123)
- “The stings this surname has made me endure are hard to describe. Why talk about the others when my own have caused me unspeakable anguish. It is easy to battle against the outsiders; the most arduous battle has to be fought against one’s own.”(129)
- “Why is my caste my only identity? Many friends hint at the loudness and arrogance of my writings. They insinuate that I had imprisoned myself in a narrow circle. They say that literary expression should be focused on the universal; a writer ought not to limit himself to a narrow, confined terrain of life. That is, my being Dalit and arriving at a point of view according to the environment and my socioeconomic situation is being arrogant. Because in their eyes. I am only an SC, the one who stands outside the door.(p.134)

Excerpts from Valmiki’s autobiography Joothan are divided here in two parts: before relocation and after relocation. The changing pattern of the dialectical relationship between the individual and his environment is visible here. While in the first section environment has predominance over the agency, in the latter section it is the agency that occupies the center stage. To trace the pattern of changes in the dialectical relationship between Valmiki and his context, the psychological analysis of his life has been done by using the unit of ‘rupture-transition’. Rupture, in Zittoun’s words, can be assumed to be based on the idea that, “in a situation of regular functioning, a disruption of the usual processes catalyzes adjustment and calls for the production of newness.”(Zittoun 2008, p.165) The rupture was followed by the transitions characterized by the three interdependent processes involved; Identity redefinition, knowledge and skills and meaning-making. Valmiki mobilized the social, cognitive and symbolic resources to address each of these processes. The process of transition was eased especially by the use of symbolic resources which offered him the ‘*distancing possibility*’. In brief, the analysis of the life of Valmiki on the lines drawn by Zittoun focuses on finding answers to the questions - How the rupture was followed by the process of transitions? How processes of transitions were facilitated by the use different resources, especially symbolic

resources? How did the whole process enable him to have an identity of a Hindi Dalit writer and contribute in the process of crystallization?

Before Relocation: Village as the frame of activity

Being the youngest and the most pampered child of his family, Valmiki was always encouraged to study by his parents and family members. His father, especially, had been very supportive in this regard because he believed that education was the only means by which caste can be “improved”. Valmiki received his primary education from Sewak Ram Masihi who used to teach the children of Chuhra community in his neighborhood. As he says, “I learnt my alphabet in Master Sewak Ram Masihi’s open air school, a school without mats or rooms.”(Valmiki, 2003, p.2) In this school ‘*without mats and rooms*’, he didn’t mention even a sign of discrimination as all the students there belonged to the same Chuhra community. It was only after the argument between Masihi and Valmiki’s father that he got him admitted to the Basic Primary School by making a request to Master Harphool Singh, “Masterji, I’ll be forever in your debt if you teach this child of mine a letter or two” (Valmiki, 2003, p.2). In the school he had to face caste based discrimination which he describes in detail. He was made to sweep the whole school which was not actually the usual work for him, “I swept the whole day. I had never done so much work being pampered one among my brother”(Valmiki, 2003, p.5) The retaliation from his father at this juncture gave his future a new turn and left a deep impression on his mind. Further, he describes an incident when his mother retaliated against the maltreatment of Tyagi. These two incidents worked as an illuminating force in the life of Valmiki which was darkened by caste oppression till an early age. Due to the weak financial condition of his family, he could not get admission to the school after class fifth. “There was no question of taking admission given the circumstances of the family found itself in. how could one think of studies when one didn’t even have food.”(Valmiki, 2003, p.13) He got admission in the schools when his bhabhi offered her only ornament to sell in order to continue his studies. He made progress in his studies, as he writes, “I had stood first in my section in the half yearly exam. My results bolstered my self-confidence. I was made the class monitor after the examination and my seat was moved from the back of the class to the front.”(Valmiki, 2003, p.16). In spite of this he

continued to face caste based discrimination in school. He was not allowed to participate in the extra-curricular activities. Moreover, “All the teachers were Tyagis, and among the students too Tyagis were in majority. Noone could afford to say anything against them. During the examination we could not drink the water from glass when thirsty. To drink water, we had to cup our hands. The peon would pour water from the way high up, lest our hands touch glass.”(Valmiki, 2003,p.16)

Living in such circumstances, he mentions one cultural element that provided him solace-literature. He borrowed books from the school library and read them to his mother. He was greatly influenced by the characters of Saratchandra. He mentions that reading became his passion and books became his best friends. This actually made him introvert by nature.

The basti people used to call me the quiet one. Perhaps because I did not speak as much as they did. They minded my reticence. I did not participate in their day-to-day activities either. I was absorbed in my books. It was during these days that I read Premchand, Saratchandra and Rabindra Nath Tagore, borrowed from the school library. I was gradually developing a taste for literature and also begun to try my hand in verse.(p.59)

The caste based discrimination disrupted his adjustment not only within the school setting and but also outside it. It led to the ruptures in his experiential life. The literature was the means to get solace amidst all this. At this stage, literature as a cultural element was used by Valmiki intuitively on the dimension of reflexivity. He was able to appreciate literature that he was reading (degree zero uses), also had a sense that literature had an effect on him (quasi use) and was also capable of acknowledging the effects provided by the literature (intuitive use). As soon as he started to write verse or was about to take it to the next level of reflexivity, the cultural element itself became the very source of an intrapersonal rupture as he observed the contradiction between the realities per se and that of portrayed in literature. “The poem by Sumitranandan Pant that we had been taught at school, ‘Ah , how wonderful is this village life’each word of the poem had proved to be artificial and a lie. What happened that day had caused a storm inside me.”(Valmiki, 2003, p.39)

At this point of his life the transformation of identity, knowledge and meaning making constituting the process of transition can be located in the semiotic prism.

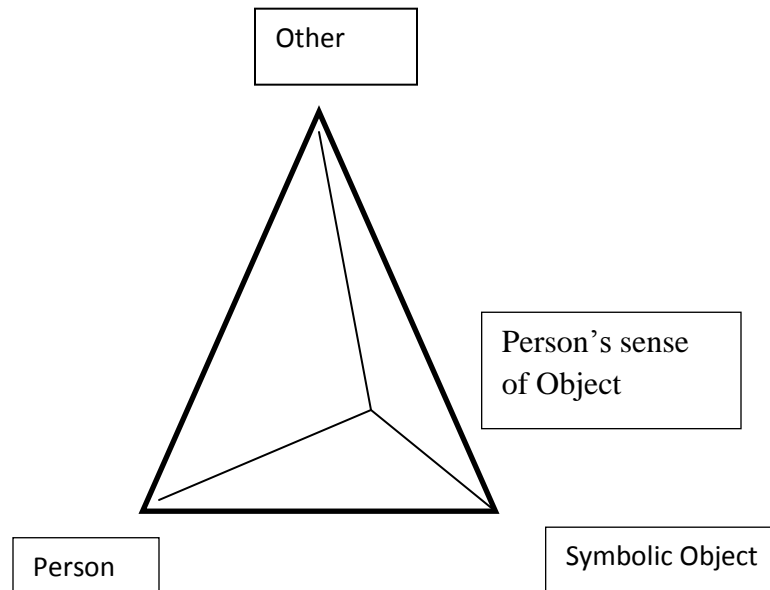


Figure- 1
Semiotic prism proposed by Zittoun(2007)

In the semiotic prism given above, Valmiki has been placed at the left side of the triangle, the ‘others’ are placed at the top of the triangle and symbolic object, literature, has been placed at the right side of the triangle. Valmiki’s sense of the literature has been denoted by the forth corner of the prism. Interpersonal dynamics are represented by the Valmiki-others and Valmiki-object axis, while intrapersonal dynamics are captured by the vector which connects Valmiki with his sense of object. The socially shared meaning of the literature has been represented by the Valmiki-other axis and acknowledgement that he receives from others has been represented by the other’s sense of the literature. Most importantly, three dimensions of the transition process have been represented by; Identity by the Valmiki-other axis, knowledge by Valmiki-object axis, meaning-making by axis that connects Valmiki to his sense of literature.

Valmiki occupies the place of the person and literature is the symbolic object. The ‘Other’ is divided further into three categories: Valmiki’s own community including his family and Basti people; upper caste Tagas community; and community of the school

including teachers and children. A glance at the prism makes it obvious that the sense that Valmiki possessed about literature was mediated by the socially shared understanding of the literature. In the category of other, as far as Valmiki's own community was concerned, people were not literate. They neither valued education nor had a sense what change education could bring about. Valmiki's father who was aware about the significance of education, considered it as merely the means to "improve" caste. Such understanding of the value of education was rooted in the internalization of the dominant discourse on caste. So there was no one in the surroundings having a taste for literature. Tagas and the school community seem to adhere to the dominant view of literature. It becomes obvious when Valmiki mentions that there was not even a single book on Ambedkar in his school. He developed the sense of literature from the books that were available in the library and the definition of literature which was taught to him in the school. Immersed in his readings, he cried with the characters of Saratchandra but experiences portrayed there could not resonate with his inner voice created by means of the reality of caste based discrimination that he had to undergo. The upper caste person was amazed at his capability to read Ramayana and his father felt as if he had "improved" his caste when he read Geeta to him. No one was aware of the turmoil generated by the conflict that he found between the reality he was experiencing and the literature he was reading. No one was there to answer his questions. The literature, a cultural element that could potentially be used as the symbolic resource turned out to be the cause of rupture in his experiences since it was not capable of voicing the suffering of the people of his caste. He mentions the same thing when he questions his teacher, "So Ashwatthama was given flour mixed instead of milk, but what about us who had to drink mar? How come we were never mentioned in any epic? Why didn't an epic poet ever write a word on our lives?" (Valmiki, 2003, p.23)

He was witnessing and experiencing the caste based discrimination and was able to see the discrepancy between the reality and its portrayal as he was getting educated. The transition that was taking place enabled him to contest the teacher on the topic of Dronacharya and to question the relevance of the custom of Salam. His identity was getting redefined as an educated adolescent; he was acquiring the knowledge and skills of mainstream Hindi literature and starting to make sense of the reality he was surrounded

by in the light of his identity and skills. This intrapersonal rupture can be considered the major step towards the making of a Dalit writer and his literature.

The frame of activity in which the process of transition was taking place was the village till this point. The others, the object, the person and all the vectors of the semiotic prism were defined by means of the traditions, customs and setting of the village itself.

After relocation: City as the frame of activity

After the intrapersonal rupture and during process of transition, Valmiki was confronted by another setback. He failed in 12th board examination due to the poor marks in the practical examination in chemistry. He found his whole world getting engulfed by darkness. The failure in the examination put a great hurdle in his life and the continuity was disrupted again. This setback led him to leave his village and get admitted to the DAV College Dehradun. This relocation changed the frame of his activity and also forced him to make new adjustments. Here the atmosphere was not the same as in village. He was made fun of because of his country looks. But he had just one way to deal with the things- to remain quiet. Remembering those days he writes, "Since I was new in college and unfamiliar with its ways, I kept quiet. Even otherwise I was quite used to taunts and neglect. I feel amazed when I look upon those days and the things I learnt to tolerate. How much my ability to tolerate hurts flung at me had taken out of me!"(Valmiki, 2003, p.69) Soon he got adjusted to the new environment as he got socialized with Surjan's friends as well as his own classmates

With the change in the frame of activity which was the city, the elements constitutive of semiotic prism and their respective relationship underwent many changes. Extended family members with whom he was staying and the friends that he made also got added to the 'other' dimension. His friends Bhukhanlal, Gopi, Hemlal were all interested in social work. The most important event that occurred here was when he was given a book on Ambedkar's life in the Indresh Nagar library by his friend Hemlal. For the first time in his life he got access to the knowledge about Ambedkar's life. He expressed his amazement saying,

Despite my twelve years of studying in Tyagi Inter College ,Barla, this name had not come to my knowledge in any way or shape. The college library also did not have a single book on Ambedkar. I had never heard this name from a teacher's or a scholar's mouth. There would be speeches on republic day when the narratives of devotion to the country were repeatedly told, but they never included the name of the maker of the constitution. All the media of communication had been unable to inform people like me about this name.(Valmiki, 2003, p.71)

The life struggle of Ambedkar shook him up completely. Discussing the immediate effect of Ambedkar's life he writes,

There was nothing special in the opening pages. But the further I went into the book, I felt as though a new chapter about life was being unfurled before me. A chapter about which I had known nothing. Dr. Ambedkar life long struggle had shaken me up. I spent many days and nights in great turmoil. The restlessness inside me had increased. My stone like silence begun to melt. I proceeded to read all of Ambedkar's books that I found in the library.(Valmiki, 2003, p.72)

It was the effect of this literature that he became active in social and political life of his college. The level of reflexivity in the use of this cultural element reached the level of 'deliberate use' as he actively searched for the other works of Ambedkar and started using them as a resource. In this process, His identity was getting redefined as he says, "A new word Dalit entered my vocabulary, a word that is not the substitute for 'Harijan', but an expression of rage of millions of untouchables. A new direction was opening for me.....The deeper I was getting in this literature the more articulate my rage became" (Valmiki, 2003, p.72) Along with the new identity came the knowledge and skills necessary for the identity. He started debating with his friends on contemporary issues and became politically active in his college life. He witnessed the life of the Dalits closely when he went to canvass for his friend in Roorkee. Now he started making sense of the reality that surrounded him from the lens of Ambedkar. He writes,

The canvassing provided me with the opportunity to see the lives of people at close range. I heard the stories of deprivation. Most of the people did not understand the true meaning of democracy or the value of one's vote. They couldn't grasp the importance of stuffing a piece of paper in the ballot box. How innocent were these people. But then, had independence truly reached them? The

pimps of the rulers were exploiting them for their own ends. (Valmiki, 2003, p.75)

The activities he got engaged in and the struggle that he was ready to undertake showed his transformed understanding of the reality. The power structure operating under the veil of caste system came on the surface. The process of transition did not end here. The very change in the frame of activity after coming to the city led to more relocations. After each relocation he found himself in a slightly different frame of activity and the process of transition continued. His identity got sharply redefined, he acquired knowledge and skills, could make sense out of his past experiences. The whole process was being facilitated by the use of symbolic resources at each stage.

After this, the next relocation occurred when he joined the ordnance factory Dehradun as an apprentice. For this he had to abandon his college education. His slightly redefined identity, enhanced knowledge and skill and sharpened meaning-making ability helped him to make adjustment even in the face of friction with the members of his extended family. Books, again, proved to be his best friends that boosted his morale at this stage.

After the one year training at Ordnance Factory Dehradun, he got opportunity to go to Jabalpur for further training. These were the days, according to him, when his selfhood was getting built. 'The new surroundings and the new environment gave him new experiences.' (Valmiki, 2003, p.84) His social circle got broadened as he came in touch with the people from diverse backgrounds over there. Especially, he shared his room with many boys who hailed from completely different backgrounds. These roommates were from Dehradun, Muradnagar, Kanpur and Pune.

Ambedkar's writings already had an influence on him and here in Jabalpur after coming into the contact of the students who had an interest in Marxist literature, he got access to the Marxist literature as well. He got interested in theatre and started writing poetry. "There were some students who had Marxist leanings, and I started to read Marxist literature after coming into contact with them. Gorky's Mother, especially, shook me up. I had also become acquainted with Chekhov's short stories. I joined these Marxists in

forming a theatre group. We rehearsed in the hostel. We staged many plays in the Institute's auditorium." (Valmiki, 2003, p.84)

His personality, speech patterns and manners underwent a change. The transformation of identity was facilitated by the social network he formed there. The social network consisted of the people who were primarily interested in contemporary issues. The cognitive resources were provided by the seminars and cultural functions he attended. And most importantly, symbolic resources here helped him in meaning making-process and became the soul of his writings. They enabled '*distancing process*' and he started developing his own views on literature. He was 'more attracted to social realism than to aesthetic and formalist type of writings.' (Valmiki, 2003, p.85) By now he had started using symbolic resources at the highest level of reflexivity' - reflective use.

The most important relocation occurred when he moved to Bombay for further training of two and a half years. As a matter of fact, this was the place and time which contributed the most in the process of transition. At Ambernath Hill where he received his training, he got the opportunity to read Pasternak, Hemmingway, Victor Hugo, Pierre Louis, Tolstoy, Pearl Buck, Tugenev, Dostovsky, Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, Romain Rolland and Emile Zola. He could read the entire works of Rabindra Nath Tagore and Kalidasa here. He met people from different backgrounds and states and got more interested in theatre. Theatre became a regular weekend activity for him. He also started a drama group in the hostel. He wrote his first essay on the problems of Dalits which became the point of controversy. Most importantly he started reading Marathi Dalit literature which actually broadened the consciousness aroused by the works of Ambedkar and Phule.

It was during these days that I was introduced to Marathi Dalit literature. Dalit writings were changing the face of Marathi literature. The words of Daya Pawar, Namdev Dhasal, Raja Dhale, Gangadhar Pantavane, Baburao Bagul, Keshav Meshram, Narayan Surve, Vaman Nimbalkar and Yashwant Manohar were igniting sparks in my veins. Their voices exhilarated me, filled me with new energy. My reading of Dalit literature was beginning to change my notions about what is literature. (Valmiki, 2003, p.91)

Ambedkar, Marxist literature, Phule and Marathi literature actually changed his consciousness and prepared the ground for him to be a Dalit writer.

The process of transition acquired a new direction when he started participating in Dalit movement after he was appointed at the Ordnance Factory Chnadranganar. It was the time he started writing and also started a theatre group named *Meghdoot Natya Sanstha*. His poems were published in *Navbharat*, *Yugharm* and *NaiDuniya*, He also started writing a column in *Janapratidinidhi*, a Chandrapur Weekly. Moreover, Dalit movement and Buddha's philosophy continued to influence his consciousness at this time.

I came across the marvelous glow of Dalit consciousness. The self-fulfillment that I experienced in connecting with the Dalit movement was truly a new experience for me. The deeper my involvement became with the movement, the further many of my friends moved away from me. In their eyes I had wandered away from the right path and was bent on destroying my talent and creativity..... Buddha's philosophy on human freedom had attracted me. He says that there is no such thing as the unchangeable in a constantly changing universe. The human beings alone matters. It is Karuna and wisdom that takes a person towards transcendence.(Valmiki, 2003, p. 100)

Now the reconfigured semiotic prism gives us the idea of the transition process that led to the development of the meaning of literature to Valmiki, his identity as a Dalit writer and creation of his Dalit literature. The findings of two recent studies have also been included here. First ,by Sara Beth Hunt who describes the structure of the Hindi Dalit literary sphere by distinguishing between the Dalit pamphlet literature and autobiographic field. Secondly, by Laura R. Brueck, who discusses how the literary techniques adopted by Hindi Dalit writers enable them the representation of Dalit consciousness.

The reconfigured semiotic prism have been described by Zittoun *as* "reconfiguration of the element constitutive the semiotic prism and of their respective relationships- a change the relationship of the person towards the other, the transformation of the sense of the situation for the person and consequently, of the object per se"(p.168)

Valmiki is there at the Person's place. At the top of the triangle at 'other' place, initially there were Valmiki's community, upper caste Tagas and School community. The socially shared meaning of literature was mediated the Valmiki's sense of the literature, represented by the vector connecting the person with the person's sense of the object. Now as the result of the change in the frame of activity, which initially was the village comprising all its customs, traditions and cultures but now in the city with an altogether different atmosphere, the elements were reconfigured. At other's place, people whom

Valmiki came into contact in the city -- all his friends with whom he discussed about the contemporary issues and formed theatre groups-- were added. The social resources along with the cognitive resources (knowledge and skills acquired by the Hindi literature, theatre, Marathi literature) and symbolic resources (literature of Ambedkar Phule and Marxists) not only transformed the relationship with the 'Other'(the communities from the village) but also mediated Valmiki's notion of literature.

The reconfigured semiotic prism provides the nuanced understanding of the process of redefined identity of Valmiki as a Hindi Dalit writer. The cognitive resources that he mobilized can be located the findings of Brueck (2014). She elaborates on the three specific features of Hindi Dalit writing namely, social realism, melodrama and heteroglossia. Valmiki's use of literary rhetoric in his writings are driven by the cognitive resources. Standard Hindi that he uses to portray Dalit consciousness was acquired through an in depth study of mainstream Hindi literature. He talks about his bent towards the social realism in his autobiography. The aesthetic convention of melodrama can be attributed to his experience resulting from his involvement in theatrical activities in the setting of the city.

Study by Hunt (2014) gives us more understanding of the dimensions of the prism as the genres chosen by Valmiki to present his writings are those that are accepted in the field of Hindi mainstream literature and contain more symbolic value as compared to the works of Hindi Dalit pamphlet writers. She considers it as one of the agreed upon strategy by the members of the Hindi Dalit literary sphere who can be placed at the top of the prism in the category of 'Other'. This socially shared meaning of literature now also influenced and got influenced by the Valmiki's sense of Dalit literature.

In the act of creation of the Dalit literature the cultural elements that Valmiki mobilized as symbolic resources were the works of Ambedkar and Phule as well as the Marxist writings. Beyond the immediate cultural value of symbolic resources, the creation of literature within specific genres served two purposes here- entry into the Hindi literary mainstream and authority over the Dalit literary mainstream.

As Hunt (2014) argues, “Entering the urban middle classes opened up a new range of possibilities for these Dalit writers, including access to the middle class habitus, or cultural practices and values, as well as the ability to both consume and produce middle class cultural commodities, particularly literature circulating in the mainstream Hindi public sphere.”(p.134) Autobiography, short stories and poems, examined from the perspective of Bourdieu by Sarah Beth Hunt, are characterized by the relatively more symbolic capital as compared to the other forms specifically adopted by the Hindi Dalit pamphlet writers. On one hand, this symbolic capital has been used by Valmiki, to have a better position in the Dalit literary sphere itself .“Thus having a ‘saleable’ name, or name recognition in Hindi literary field, inscribes a Hindi Dalit author with significant symbolic capital, which they then use to further secure their cultural authority over the field of Hindi Dalit literature.”(Hunt, 2014, p.165) On the other hand, it becomes the means to attack on the exclusionary treatment of Hindi literary mainstream. “Gaining mastery over literary practices and sensibilities held in esteem by the mainstream means that Hindi Dalit writers are better able to challenge the exclusionary practices of the Hindi literary world on its own terms.’ (Hunt, 2014, p.169)

The soul of the symbolic resources was not lost in the process of creation but used by Valmiki at the reflective level of reflexivity. The capability of distancing that works of Ambedkar and Phule and Marxist writings eased, they emerged in the form of the fictional characters of his stories. Beyond ‘here and now’ on the plane of fiction’ Dalit identity was created and significance of the creation lays in the fact that even on the plane of fiction it was still rooted in the very reality of Indian caste ridden society.

These resources were the major forces behind the reconfiguration in the semiotic prism. It was the outcome of the process of transition that Valmiki acquired the identity of a Hindi Dalit writer, made use of the acquired knowledge and skills and got engaged in the meaning-making process. This is the reason why all the incidents of childhood and adolescence that he described in his autobiography and the experiential life of all the characters of his short stories, are portrayed from the perspective and more specifically, from the unique vision of a Dalit writer.

Dalit Writing as a cultural- historical activity

Literature emerges as the individual gains experiences in a cultural historical frame of activity in which the process of transitions take place. By the transitional processes , horizons of the lived experiences get broadened. The specificity the process of crystallization gets mediated and defined in the course. The ‘ruptures’ that are followed the process of transitions are located in the experiences the individual gains in the complex interaction with the context. And these experiences form the very basis of the process when the combinatorial activity works in the embodiment of creative imagination. Transitions in an individual’s life effect the whole selection and dissociation- association process. The individual gives rise to unique combinations. Once crystallized as an active part of reality, the product of creativity helps the writer reify his identity as a creator with his own distinctiveness.

This dialectical interaction between the macro and micro, cultural- historical roots and process of transitions make a piece of literature unique. Dialectical relationship between individual and environment located in a specific time and setting, different kinds of resources that an individual mobilizes, different identities that he is supposed to assume in the society- all these make the material provided by the reality as well as the process of crystallization very **complex and distinct**. This can be seen as the basis of distinctiveness which Limbale (2004) points out between the writings of the Brooker T. Washington and Du Bois, the creator of Black literature. In spite of belonging to the same time and location ‘Washington’s book reflects an appeal to tradition, while DuBois’s work expresses a revolutionary consciousness against tradition.’(Limbale, 2004, p.88)

Putting it specifically, experiences, acquired, reworked and modified in this way, give rise to a distinct kind of creativity. The context of creation the black literature, even after having striking similarities with that of Dalit literature as traced by Limbale (2004) is held as distinct from Dalit literature. The former originated on the grounds of the miseries associated with the ‘colour’ while the latter is a reaction against the anguish generated by the practice of ‘untouchability’. Kasbe (2009) makes the distinction between the two by calling the Black suffering natural as well as cultural and Dalit anguish predominantly cultural and man-made. The point made by him supports the argument of the present

study. *“There is a mutual relationship between literary creation and experience, experience and culture, culture and politics.”*(p.300)

Writing of Dalit literature, in particular, can be seen from the lens of Cultural historical activity theory. The outcome of the cultural historical activity of Hindi Dalit writing is the Hindi Dalit literature. The Hindi Dalit literature is itself the body of the diverse products of crystallized imagination. Each of the products is the outgrowth of specific process of crystallization mediated and defined by the unique process of transitions a Dalit writer passes through. The transitional processes serve as a mediator by which lived experiences get broadened by the social experiences. These are the specificities which not only distinguish the Hindi Dalit writing from Dalit writing of other languages but also serve the very basis of the variations between the writings of Hindi Dalit writers.

Following the above argument the distinctiveness between the writings of Dalit literature in different languages can be obviously marked. Differentiating Dalit literature from the mainstream only on the basis of rough language and specific styles does not work at all. As Brueck (2014) suggests, *“This attitude is a holdover from the rhetoric of the early Marathi writing of the Dalit Panthers. Yet to remain struck in an analytical framework of difference while reading newer Dalit literary prose in languages like Hindi, far removed from the early virulence of the Panthers’ poetry, is to willfully ignore the ways contemporary Dalit writers engage a particular politics of style in the construction of Dalit Chetna”*(p.81). The Hindi Dalit writing is distinct from Marathi because of the complexity of the whole cultural historical process in general and the transitional processes in the lives of the writers, in particular. The distinction that Brueck makes between Hindi literature and Marathi Dalit literature can be seen in a new light when approached in this way.

The cultural historical roots of the emergence of the Dalit writing makes us see Dalit literature as a body of literature emerged as a reaction to the hegemonic portrayal of the Dalit from the eyes of so called upper castes with their specific and universal notions of literature. Valmiki gets engaged in the process of Dalit writing as he passes through the various processes of transitions. These processes pave a unique path of the process of crystallization for him. So, in spite of the caste based complex experiences that are at the

heart of Dalit literature, the complexities and specificities in the process of transitions make his literature distinctive.

The distinctiveness in the works of Valmiki is attributed to the unique and specific process of crystallization mediated by the transitional processes. This is the path that his Dalit perspective turns into Dalit vision of his own, a condition presumed essential for a Dalit creation by Muktibodh (2009). This is the course that makes him to live the life in totality and represent it in the form of literature. As Muktibodh(2009) points out, “Life is lived totally, at all levels and in the totality of experience. When a view of life is experienced by a writer, in its multiform, distinct totality, he could be said to have had a ‘vision’ of his own point of view.”(p.271)

What is more, variation exists even between the writings of the two Dalit Hindi Dalit scholars. The clear-cut comparison can be made between the narrative style of Valmiki, the focus of the present study and of Ajay Navaria whose narrative style finds much attention in the analysis of Brueck (2014). According to her, Navaria’s writings are distinct from other Hindi Dalit writers as these are, “characterized by the structural innovation, including obfuscating language that creates a sense of alienation, as well as regular constructions of flashbacks, sequences of both narrative and traumatic memory, and liminal temporalities”(p.125). On the other hand, she places Valmiki along with other Hindi Dalit writers as he makes use of the techniques like “interweaving of conventions of realism and melodrama , a privileging of the narratives of atrocities and injustices located in a rural or village context, differentiation of language and register to evoke differing levels of political consciousness, and a fidelity to Ambedkarite political philosophy in the construction of Dalit Chetna”(Brueck, 2014,p.125). Most of these techniques have been located in the reconfigured semiotic prism of Valmiki and the course of their development has been discussed. Navaria’s techniques to create a narrative are distinct from Valmiki because of his specific process of crystallization taking shape during the process of transitions. Distinct from Valmiki, in Navaria’s fiction, resistance in terms of acquired modernity of the Dalit characters is followed by the theme of oppression portrayed by the introduction of the flashbacks as vivid descriptions of caste based discrimination. By means of this ‘affective contradiction’ he

questions and attacks the hollowness of the modernity itself. This leads to the generation of alienation. The distinctiveness of his writings resides in the contradiction between content and the material in its unique manner. The uniqueness is in his ability to portray this sense of alienation on the plane of modernity. This is his own way by which he makes his work of art as ‘heavier-than-air-machine’. The distinction even in the treatment of alienation by Navaria becomes clear in the analysis of Brueck (2014) when she writes, “Navaria’s characters are alienated from themselves,; from their past, their origin, their family, and often even their present. His stories explore alienation within the Dalit character who, by all appearances, has achieved the ideal of modern casteless identity.”(p.127) The sense of alienation constructed on the plane of modernity brings on surface the hypocrisy hidden behind the ‘pseudo equality behind of a secular modernity’(Brueck, 2014,p.125). And this is the very aim that is achieved by presenting “the personal costs of such social and political transformations, both of individuals and communities. The road to freedom of modernity is not without sacrifice.”(Brueck, 2014, p.143)

The distinctive way in which Dalit women writers exhibit their creativity in the form of their fiction establishes the importance of the uniqueness of their experiences which serve the material of the process of crystallization. And these are the experiences which each Dalit woman writer gains in the course of her own transitional processes and in the specific dialectical relationship with her environment. Making an assertion that ‘*Dalit Women write differently*’ Brueck (2014) describes how female Dalit writers in the sphere of Hindi Dalit literary creation portray females as “the loci of resistance, subverting their normative roles as rape victims”.(p.177) She goes on to elaborate on the distinctiveness of the Dalit women’s writings as they portray the picture of reality resonating with their own experiences. It is in contrast to the writings of Dalit males who, specifically in the rape narratives, erase the identity of woman reducing it to the helpless victim. They take away the authority of revenge from the victims. But on the other hand, as Brueck (2014) suggests keeping the focus on Meghwal’s writings, Dalit women writer “reinserts women’s subjectivity, both as victim who actually suffered an attack and are fundamentally changed because of it and as victors who hold the power of retribution in their own hands.”(p.170)

Cultural Historical Activity of Dalit writing: The specific ‘Dalit Vision’ of Om Praksh Valmiki.

Now keeping in mind the specific features of the writings of Valmiki as evident from the analysis, the writing has been looked in terms of a cultural historical activity. The framework not only gives sense of the complexity of the process of creation of literature by Valmiki but also accounts for the distinctiveness it possesses.

Here, the framework of CHAT (Third generation activity theory by Engestrom) proposes the production of the Hindi Dalit literature as a culturally historically rooted activity. It captures most of the nuances of the production of Dalit literature, here specifically of Om Prakash Valmiki, in the light of the findings of Brueck and Hunt as well as the analysis done earlier from the standpoint of Vygotsky and Zittoun. As the attempt has been made to locate the creation of the literature by Valmiki, he has been looked at as the subject who is engaged in the writing activity.

Subject: Valmiki engaged in the writing process is the subject in the whole activity system. He has his own assumptions regarding the nature and role of the literature. The notion about literature is not an idea developed overnight by him but, as discussed in the section of the analysis based on Zittoun’s framework, is evolved as a result of the processes of transitions he has undergone throughout his life. These processes not only shaped his idea of literature but also enabled him to continuously reify his identity as a Hindi Dalit writer. These helped him acquiring new knowledge and skills to be used later and making sense of his own circumstances and the environment how was placed.

Instrument: Instruments include the tools through which the process of creation is continuously mediated. Based on the kinds of resources that Valmiki mobilizes, tools can be of two kinds- cognitive and symbolic. Cognitive tools provide him with essential knowledge and skills for writing. Here these include- standard Hindi literature, theatre, Marathi literature. Symbolic tools facilitate the process of ‘distancing’ from ‘here and now’ and enable him to create his own symbolic resources used at the highest level of reflexivity- reflective mode. Here these are the works of Ambedkar, Phule and Marx.

Object: Hardman(2008) quotes Engestrom to have an understanding of the term ‘object’- ‘the raw material or problem space at which the activity is directed and which is moulded and transformed into outcomes with the help of physical and symbolic, external and internal mediating instruments, including both tools and signs”(Engestrom,1987, as quoted in Hardman, p.73). Experiences are the very basis or serve as the raw material upon which Valmiki acts. Depending upon the distinctiveness of the experiential life and the specificities in the use of the same instruments each piece of Dalit writing claims its uniqueness and distinctiveness from others. Valmiki’s distinctiveness is evident in the interplay of the two emotions leading to the emergence of hope on the plane of hopelessness.

Rules: Valmiki’s actions are guided by means of the agreed upon rules in the field of Hindi Dalit literature. Brueck(2014) points out the major rule followed in Dalit literature in the light of the Spivak’s concept of ‘strategic essentialism’. Dalit Chetna is the main ingredient of the literature of Valmiki as well as other Hindi Dalit writers. As Brueck (2014) explains,

..anyone who does not espouse the normative demands of exhibiting a carefully defined Dalit Chetna is excluded from the public persona of the Dalit literary sphere.....The strategic essentialism in defining the concept of Dalit chetna is , perhaps, a preliminary, conscious, and calculated initiative to establish a public space for Dalit literature that, once established, will hopefully allow the boundaries of that space to be opened to embrace many more diverse understandings of the Dalit experience.(p.69)

Dalit ideology, that is the basis of gaining entry into Dalit literary networks and consequently into the literary sphere as suggested by Hunt, can be seen as a rule itself. The Dalit ideology that gives preference to the authenticity of the Dalit texts and assumes that only Dalits are capable of producing Dalit literature, is informed by the very concept of Dalit Chetna itself. The distinctive construction of this Dalit consciousness is evident in the analysis of the literature of Valmiki as he discursively constructs the unified Dalit identity on emotional plane.

Community: The community mediates the writings of Valmiki can be further divided into three categories. First, there is the community of the people who participate with him in the writing process. This community is essentially hierarchical in nature as obvious

from the study of Hunt (2014). Valmiki is among the Dalit writers who form the inner circle of the Dalit networks. He had been one of the key figures who played a major role in setting down the rules of the Dalit literary sphere. Second, the broader Dalit community which the works of the Valmiki claims to represent also influence and gets influenced by Dalit literature. Here, Valmiki seems to be in conflict between the true portrayal of Valmiki community he belongs to and the responsibility of mirroring the experiences and sufferings of the entire Dalit community. Third, there is a community of Hindi literary mainstream. As the literature of Hindi Dalit writers, here specifically of Valmiki, reacts against the hegemonic conventions of the Hindi literary mainstream the role of this community reacting against Dalit literature cannot be neglected. It is the process of reaction and counter reaction between the two that prepares the fertile soil of rationality upon which the edifice of the Dalit literature, specifically of Om Prakash Valmiki, has been built.

Division of Labour: The division of labor comes on surface in two ways. First, in the form of the hierarchy between the experienced and new Dalit writers and Secondly, in the form of the relationship between the writer and the reader. As obvious from the work of Hunt(2014), the writers are placed in the web of power relations by means of the cultural and symbolic capital they hold. Valmiki is among the writers who form the inner circle of the literary networks but still not dependent on the network for the publication and other ends. Writers having authority in the field have an additional responsibility of carrying out “a subtle process of initiation, in which the young writer learned the ideological stance of the group on key issues.”(Hunt, 2014, p. 142) This process is about the preparation of the ideological orientation of the young Dalit scholars. “Hindi Dalit writers in Delhi who do not conform to either the ideological foundations of the ‘inner circle’ or fail to recognize their authority over the field of Hindi Dalit literature are kept at the margins of the autobiographic Dalit literary network and thus are excluded from the literary contacts, publication opportunities and status the group now holds.” (Hunt, 2014, p.144)

Secondly, as in any other literary field, in Dalit literary the responsibility to prepare the ground of action lies with the writer. The achievement of his unique catharsis in the

writing depends on the reader. It is the intersection between the two that the meaning of the literature gets defined. And this is the basis of the different response to the writings of Valmiki from the different strata of the Indian social ladder

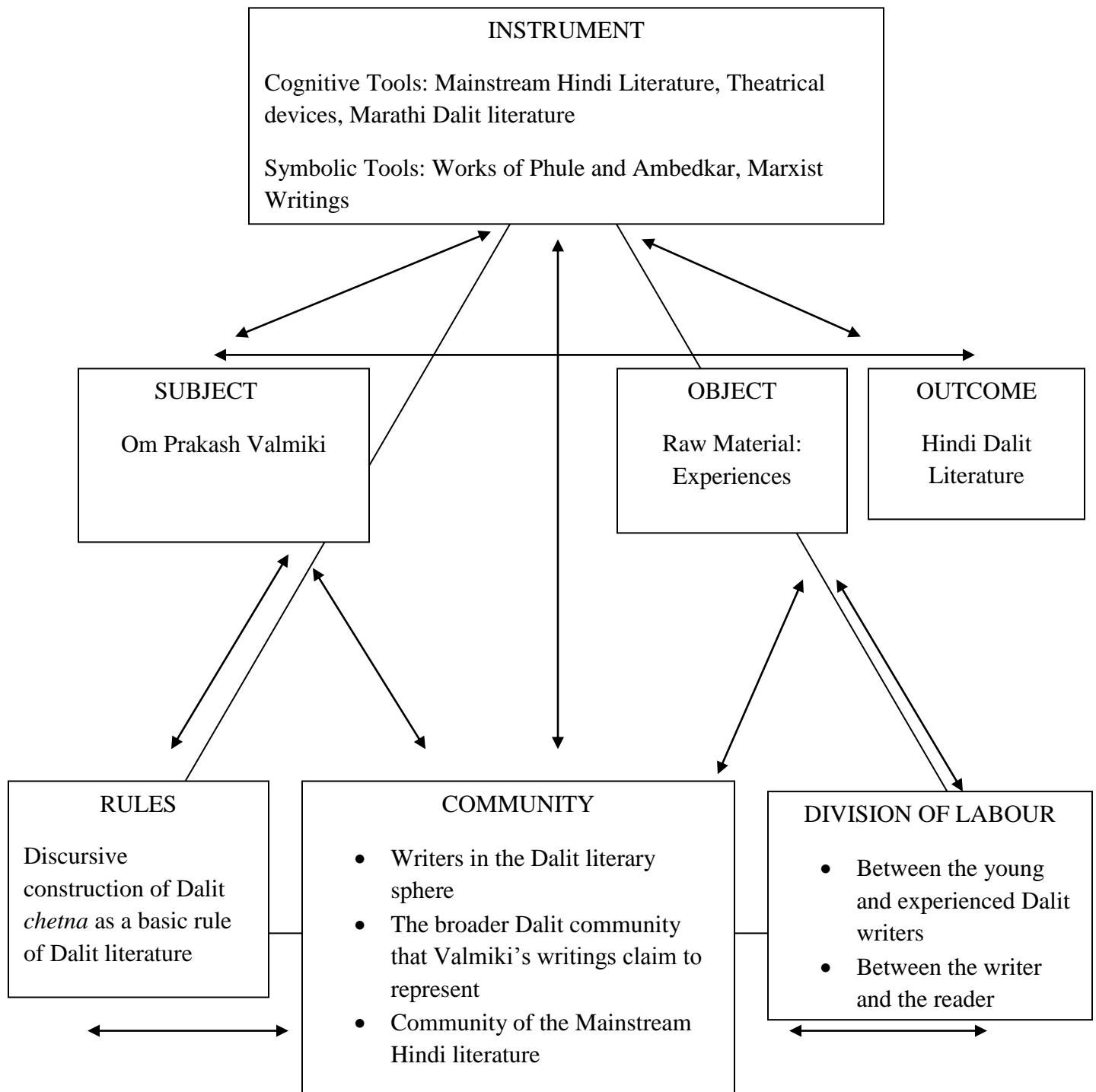


Figure- 2

Creation of the Hindi Dalit literature by Valmiki from the perspective of third generation CHAT theory by Engestrom(1987)

Caste and creativity revisited

Sundar Sarukkai (2012) distinguishes the lived experiences from vicarious ones on the dimension of *freedom; freedom to be a part of experience, the freedom to leave anytime if the experience is not satisfactory, to modify the experience, if necessary, to suit one's needs.* (p.35) He points out that it is the lack of freedom that is at heart of the lived experiences. In the analysis of the life and literature of Valmiki, here, instead of the clear-cut dichotomy between the two, we come across the continuity between the two. The analysis suggests the complementary fashion in which both kinds of experiences work to become the very basis of the literature of Valmiki. In the dialectical relationship between Valmiki and his context, his lived world gets expanded as he goes through the transitional phases. The predominance of the caste ridden village environment to the predominance of the agency in the context of city is the journey which defines the essence of his creativity. Under the influence of social experiences, using Vygotsky's terminology', he is capable to see the reality from his own '*Dalit vision*'. In the journey of the transition of the '*Dalit perspective*' into the '*Dalit vision*', the soul of the lived experience is not lost. Even in the cultural setting of a city, the caste continues to work under the veil of modernity. The 'authorship' that Valmiki gets is distinct as it is characterized by the very '*ownership*' of his own '*lived experiences*'. As a Dalit writer, he portrays his vision developed out of his part of the '*ownership*' of the experiences of oppression and resistance. And here lies his distinct creativity that stands on the foundation of his caste based '*lived experiences*'- reworked by the tools that he acquires in the journey from the lack of freedom to realization of the lack of freedom.

This complementary relationship between the lived and social experiences is the basis of the '*Dalit vision*' that Valmiki develops. The distinction that Muktibodh(2009) makes between the Dalit perspective and Dalit vision and the way Sarukkai (2012) defines lived experiences substantiate the present analysis. The lived experiences give rise to the Dalit perspective and social experiences turn them into unique '*Dalit vision*' of the Dalit writer. This is why every Dalit can have *Dalit perspective* based on his first hand experiences but it is the '*Dalit vision*' developed by social experience that leads to the creation of Dalit literature.

Thus the process based investigation of the relationship between caste and creativity on the plane of the Dalit literature results in the complex relationship between the two. The journey of Valmiki from the caste based lived experiences to the social experiences, from the 'Dalit perspective' to the 'Dalit vision' points at the complex reworking of caste based experiences. Caste is not the isolated part of the reality of Indian context. The interdependency of the agency and Indian context makes it the indispensable part of the creation that gets objectified as the active part of reality.

CHAPTER- IV

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The review of creativity literature provides an insight into the narrow conceptualization of 'context'. The conceptualization in mainstream literature is rooted in the dichotomous nature of individual and context. With every successive paradigm in the field of creativity, the dichotomy got weaker. But the role of context got reduced to facilitating and impending factors. The reflection of the trend can be observed in the Indian creativity studies which are psychometric in tradition. It comes on surface in terms of the incomplete theorization of caste as construed in relation to creativity. Within such research tradition, caste is treated as any other variable that can be introduced into and eliminated from the study to control its impact on creativity. Studies inclined towards such a methodology result in the monotonous and linear relationship between caste and creativity and end up concluding differential level of creativity among the different caste groups. The conceptualization of the relationship has been on the basis of the categories of 'more' and 'less'. It is also evident from literature review that such conceptualization of the relationship between caste and creativity is based on the naively assumed direct and monotonous relationship between deprivation and psychological functions. Caste is taken into account in relation to creativity but the neglect of the academic discourse on caste in other disciplines is one of the major setbacks in the field of creativity research in India.

Attempting to address the limitations of this trend, the present research took into account the Caste as a source of specific experiences. The study proposed to bring the experiential aspect of life at centre stage in relation to creativity. The experiences gained in such context where caste based identity continuously interact with the other identities of the person were found to be the very basis of creativity. The relationship between the two was conceptualized not on the basis of 'more' and 'less' categories but on the dimension of distinctiveness. Instead of reducing caste in terms of a variable having linear relationship with the creativity, it was studied on a plane where creativity emerged from

the recognition and reaction against the power relations associated with caste based hierarchy. The plane of the study was Dalit literature. The experiences that Dalit literature portrays, do not find expression in the Indian experience of creativity. Taking that limitation into account, the life and the literature of a Dalit writer Valmiki were analyzed. The analysis was aimed at showing how caste specific experiences gained in the extremely complex social context were used by Valmiki to create his literature. For this purpose, the process of crystallization, process of transitions and cultural historical activity of Dalit writing were mapped. The conceptual machineries were drawn from the works of Vygotsky , Zittoun and the CHAT by Engestrom. The method adopted for analysis was the qualitative content analysis.

The complex context in which Valmiki was brought up and led his life was found to be the source of experiences. Dialectics of his agency and the environment were the source of the specific needs that arose before him. The need to “improve” the caste, a dream given to him by his father, actually demonstrated the conflict between the modern thought regarding the value of the education and the very internalization of the caste based hierarchy. Such need sought for the reaction against the caste based oppression by being the part of that hierarchy. The creation of this specific need reflected the predominance of the environment over agency. Valmiki was growing up and observing the conflict between school education and the reality outside the school. The criticality of thought grew in the face of this incongruity. The dialectical relationship between Valmiki and his environment was marked by the changing pattern as he grew up first in the village Barla darkened by the caste discriminatory practices and then in the space of city where he came in touch with the light of Dalit consciousness. Experiences accumulated in this context served as the raw material for his creation and the process of crystallization took place.

The process of the creation of literature was demonstrated by analyzing the famous short story ‘*Salaam*’. For the creation of the short story selective elements were taken from the reality. The selection of specific elements out of the host of experiences was itself a creative act. Then elements taken from the experiences were subjected to the process of dissociation and association. The emotional tones that were attached to these

combinations were not arbitrary. These are the emotional tones of anguish and anger denoting the oppression and resistance respectively. By such creation he established the internal logic between his work and the external world. The internal logic had been the **‘discursive construction of the unified Dalit identity on an emotional plane’**. Even the elements that seemed to be detached and disconnected from each other got connected by this logic.

It was found out after the analysis of his story that in spite of using the brittle material that prevented him to discursively create this internal logic, he was successful in establishing the same. The specific form he gave to the story fulfilled this purpose. By introducing the element of resistance just after the element of oppression, he neutralized the effect of oppression by resistance. The interplay between the emotions of anguish and anger finally reached at the climax when he destroys the effect of the two on the plane of hopelessness. The true virtue of the story came out as he created the hope for the better future against the background of hopelessness. By introducing the scene when the child refuses to eat *roti* cooked by a Muslim chef, he portrayed the hopelessness regarding the internalization of the notions of purity and pollution. But the very setting of the portrayal against the friendship crossing the boundaries of caste, he succeeded in the creation of hope.

By such artistic reworking on his experiences, he demonstrated the complex relationship between the life and the art. He not only intended to infuse specific emotions into the readers but also to give to the life that it initially did not possess. The caste specific experiences that he gained were transformed by him in the form that made visible the operation of power structure behind them. On the plane of the short fiction, the creative reworking of the experiences gave the lens of hope for the future based on the humanity instead of the age old maxim of *Satyam Shivam Sunadaram*. The course of the effect produced by him was found to be from social to personal. The very emotions acquired in the caste ridden context were given to the reader in a form that they could find their own catharsis. The very course of the flow of emotions prepared the ground for the change.

The next step of the analysis was to explore the path of the broadening the caste based experiences by the social experience. For this the course of Valmiki’s life was looked at

from the lens of Zittoun. The aim of the analysis was to show how in the course of his life he came to acquire such tools leading to the creation of Dalit literature. For this content analysis of *Joothan* was done. Excerpts representing the life events that left a deep impression on his mind were selected. The whole content was divided into two parts. These parts comprised of the experiences that he had before relocation and after relocation. It clearly showed the transition of a poor *Valmiki* boy who used to be skeptical about the future of his education and life into a Dalit male enlightened by the wave of Dalit consciousness and finally into a Hindi Dalit writer. At initial stage before the relocation his frame of activity was his village, *Barla*. The notion that he had about literature was mediated by the community he belonged to and the tools he had with him. The cultural element 'literature' at this stage became the source of rupture in his life that remained unaddressed for a long time, at least till his relocation. It was after relocating to Dehradun that city became the frame of his activity. Here he came across the works of Ambedkar. These works gave him a new lens to observe the taken for granted reality. Then after each relocation resources got added to his repertoire. He proceeded to read writings of Phule and Marxist literature. The intellectual tradition of Phule and Ambedkar gave his writing a new turn. He started reading Marathi Dalit literature in Maharashtra. The virulence of their writings gave him the tone of resistance. He came in contact with people who were interested in contemporary issues. His social circle got broadened. He became interested in theatre. After getting appointed in Chandranagar, he actively participated in Dalit movement and devoted himself to the writing of Dalit literature.

The life that took the path described above resulted in the reconfiguration of the semiotic prism. Initially, as the subject his notion of 'object' literature got defined by the 'other' comprising of his own Chuhra community, the so-called uppercaste Taga community and the community within the boundary of the school. The cultural element, Hindi literature, that was available to him became the very source of rupture in his experiences as he observed the contradiction between rural life portrayed in the literature and the one lived by him and the members of his caste. After relocation, when city became his frame of activity, the semiotic prism started reconfiguring. At each relocation, his social circle got broadened; his cognitive resources enhanced and the symbolic resources started operating. The social circle redefined his identity as a Dalit. The cognitive resources,

Hindi literature, Marathi Dalit literature and theatrical devices, gave him the necessary skills. The symbolic resources, the works of Phule, Ambedkar and Marx enabled the process of distancing from 'here and now' and he started making sense of the reality in a critical manner. As the result of these three processes, he achieved the identity of a Hindi Dalit writer which got reified further after each Dalit creation by him.

The creation of the Valmiki's literature was seen as part of the cultural historical activity of Dalit writing. Due to the specificities of the process of transitions he went through, he got engaged in the cultural historical activity of Hindi Dalit writing which comprised diverse processes of crystallizations resulting in the various products of crystallized imagination. These products of crystallized imagination were seen as the creative transformation of the caste based experiences into the Dalit literature. In the larger realm of Dalit writings the distinctiveness of Valmiki's creation was marked by the specific transitional processes in his life. As a subject he acted on the object 'experiences' by using specific tools and resources that are both 'cognitive and symbolic'. The act literature creation was influenced by the community (the dimension of 'other' in semiotic prism), the rules that governed the realm of Dalit literature and the division of labour that existed in the Hindi Dalit literary sphere. As a matter of fact, the distinctiveness of the activity emerged as a result of the specific transitional processes which were found to be the basis of the distinctiveness of the creation. It is due to the specific transitional processes leading to the specific path of the process of crystallization that each Dalit writer becomes the participant of the cultural historical activity of Dalit writing in his unique way. The process of the creative transformation of caste based experiences takes different paths in different writers. This can be regarded as the cause of the variations in the writings within the Dalit literary stream.

In a nutshell, the lived experiences of Valmiki had been dominated by the caste based humiliation and the tone of anguish. These experiences were broadened by the social experience having the tone of resistance. The path of acquiring the social experiences was featured by the specific process of transitions. These processes of transitions provided him with specific tools and resources that further facilitated the process of crystallization. The emerged creative product completed the circular path and got objectively embodied

as Dalit writing as an active part of the reality. The product of his crystallized imagination was influenced in the unique relationship with the community, the distinct way of following the established rule and the unique position of each one in the division of labour that existed in the realm of Hindi Dalit literary sphere.

This is how the caste based experiences were returned to the reality in the transformed way and challenged the roots of the hierarchical structure of the society. Valmiki's own creation thus gradually reified his identity as a Hindi Dalit writer that maintained the emotional and motivational plane/structure.

The inference regarding the relationship between caste and creativity was drawn from the analysis of the life and literature of Om Praksh Valmiki. The relationship between the two was found to be featured by the complex process connecting the two with the thread of experiences. Distinctiveness of the creation could be attributed to the variations at each step in this process taking place within the individually, materially and symbolically mediated dialectical relationships in each case. Here the caste based context was construed not in terms of certain facilitating and impending factors but the dynamic part of the personality of creator which got embedded in the product of creation.

The limitation of the study is that it deals with the life of one Dalit writer. Although it presents a nuanced picture of the relationship between caste and creativity and attempts to see the relationship from the lens of experiential aspects of the Valmiki's life, these nuances may be more intensively studied by the comparative study of the writers belonging to different castes. The dimension of gender in relation to caste can also be explored by this comparative approach. Although the study banks upon a representative text, Valmiki's autobiography, to trace the process of the making of a Hindi Dalit writer, it could be made more intensive by substantiating the analysis of life using the interview method. Besides, the process of creation of Valmiki's literature has been the focus of the study that can be applied to poetry and short fiction both. But the artistic effect Valmiki's poems are laden with could not been looked at.

The future prospects of the study lie in looking at the relationship between caste and creativity beyond the conventional psychometric approach. The qualitative approach

offers the opportunity to study the visions of Dalit intellectuals. To study the course of life of Dalit intellectuals and specific visions of an egalitarian society they propose, may open a new path to establish the specificities that each of the visions comprises as a result of unique processes of transitions and crystallization. Moreover, the approach may also be used to trace the distinction between Dalit literature in Marathi and in other languages by emphasizing the distinctiveness of dimensions and the relationships among the dimensions within the cultural- historical activity framework.

As the present study attempts to bring to surface the experiential aspects of caste in the emergence of creativity, it has important implications for the Indian education policy. In Indian classrooms diversity of experiences is sacrificed against the dominant classroom approach towards creativity which is still guided by the dichotomized understanding of intelligence and creativity. Such understanding limits creativity to certain sets of personality factors. Besides, the performance based classroom approach prevents the experiential life of the child from being a part of the classroom discourse. Students are trained in cramming and reproducing the crammed material on the examination table within the specified period. The distinctiveness that caste in interaction with other contextual dimensions can bring into the realm of experience should be represented in the school setting. The suggestion here is that instead of having dominant notion of the experience, specificity of a child's experiences must be valued and nurtured. Such task is a big challenge in a classroom setting where teachers are pressurized only to focus on the completion of curriculum and have to deal with more than 50 students simultaneously. In such a setting distinctiveness in experiential life is seen as a drawback, the unexpected and unique questions of the children are suppressed and the silence of the child is misinterpreted as his/her incompetence.

This challenge can be countered by creating 'constructive ruptures' in children's experiences and providing them with various resources to address them. The ruptures can be created by allowing for questioning of the dominant resources and culture itself. Educational policy can be successful only when learners' different experiences resulting from the various contextual dimensions are given space rather than using the context of these experiences as a means to label them. Caste does not make anyone more or less

creative. It makes the reality more complex when it interacts with contextual dimensions. And such nuances can be captured, valued and utilized by adopting an approach that emphasizes the distinctiveness of the individual experiences rather than dominant delineations of creativity or the lack of it.

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