1) Caste Discrimination in Everyday Life

In *Joothan*, discrimination begins from the smallest details of life. Dalits are not treated as equal human beings; they are treated as impure bodies. Their homes are separated from the main village. They are expected to serve the upper castes. Even water, seating, and food are regulated by caste.

Valmiki shows that **caste is not only a social system—it is a system of control**. It decides where you can sit, what work you can do, and how you must behave in front of "upper" people.

2) Caste and Humiliation in Childhood

One of the strongest parts of *Joothan* is the description of Valmiki's childhood. He is humiliated from an early age and learns that caste is inherited like a curse.

A shocking example is when he is forced to sweep the school premises instead of studying. This shows the caste mindset clearly: Dalit children are not seen as learners but as labourers. The school becomes a place of oppression rather than education.

Even teachers participate in discrimination. Instead of protecting him, they reinforce caste hierarchy. This proves that caste prejudice is deeply embedded in institutions.

3) Education as a Site of Violence

Valmiki's autobiography reveals how education—supposedly a path to equality—becomes a place of cruelty for Dalits.

He is made to sit separately. He is insulted in front of other students. He is punished unfairly. This discrimination is not occasional; it is systematic. It is meant to break Dalit confidence and keep them out of social mobility.

Valmiki's struggle for education becomes a form of resistance. His determination shows how education can also become a weapon against caste oppression.

4) Caste and Forced Labour

In *Joothan*, caste decides occupation. Dalits are expected to do "dirty" work: sweeping, cleaning, removing dead animals, and serving upper castes. This is not choice; it is forced social duty.

The memoir shows how caste discrimination is closely tied to economic exploitation. Upper castes maintain power by forcing Dalits into unpaid or low-paid labour. This is why caste is not only a social problem but also an economic structure.

5) Food, Pollution, and the Symbol of Joothan

Food becomes one of the most painful symbols in the text. The practice of giving joothan to Dalits reveals the cruelty of caste ideology.

Upper castes consider Dalits "polluted," yet they feel no shame in feeding them leftovers. This contradiction exposes caste hypocrisy. The act is meant to humiliate, to remind Dalits of their "place" in society.

Valmiki makes it clear: **joothan is not charity—it is domination**.

6) Psychological Violence and Loss of Dignity

Joothan is not only about physical discrimination. It also shows the psychological impact: shame, fear, anger, and wounded self-respect.

The narrator constantly struggles with the feeling that society wants him to believe he is inferior. The most tragic part is that caste discrimination tries to enter the mind of the oppressed.

But Valmiki refuses to accept inferiority. His writing itself becomes a reclaiming of dignity.

7) Resistance and Dalit Consciousness

The memoir also highlights the rise of Dalit consciousness through education, Ambedkarite ideology, and social movements.

Valmiki's journey is not only personal; it represents the collective struggle of Dalits against caste oppression. The text shows that resistance begins when one refuses to accept humiliation as fate.

In this sense, Joothan is not just a story of suffering—it is also a story of awakening.

Conclusion

To conclude, *Joothan* exposes caste discrimination as a total system of oppression—social, cultural, educational, economic, and psychological. Valmiki shows that caste is not only practiced in villages; it exists in schools, cities, and modern institutions as well.

The power of *Joothan* lies in its honesty. It forces readers to confront the reality that caste discrimination is not a past issue—it is a continuing reality. The autobiography becomes both literature and testimony, making *Joothan* one of the most important texts in Dalit writing and Indian social history.