

FORCED MIGRATION AND TRIBAL IDENTITY: ANALYSING THE VALMIKI COMMUNITY THROUGH AMBEDKAR'S LENS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19638081>

ABSTRACT

Out here, life for the Valmiki group hasn't changed much over time - they're still boxed into the lowest rungs because of old systems that never really let go. Though labelled as Scheduled Castes by law, they've long been stuck doing backbreaking cleaning jobs handed down like inherited sentences. Because of caste cruelty baked deep into daily life, many had little choice but to leave villages behind, chasing survival in city edges where odds aren't better. Forced moves keep happening - not by desire, yet pushed along by lack of money, threats, and silence from those meant to protect rights. Moving cities doesn't reset status; instead, new places repeat old patterns of invisibility and blocked chances. Generation after generation ends up caught - on the move, yet going nowhere. Out of Ambedkar's core ideas - ending caste, living by constitutional ethics, and exposing how untouchability works - the journey of the Valmiki takes shape here alongside wider struggles for fairness. Because he saw money-based oppression tied tightly to shame and exclusion, moving cities did not free the Valmiki people; instead, it carried old power lines into new spaces. Where tribal roots meet low-caste reality shapes their story in ways that break flat labels like 'tribal' or 'Dalit thought'. Looking closely at history and society, this piece draws from existing records plus

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deep reflection on Ambedkar's ideas. Not by choice do Valmiki move - their journeys come from pressure built into caste systems. Movement shaped this way ties back to long-standing hierarchies deciding who works where. Real fairness means more than adding them to current plans. It requires reshaping how work links with caste status, matching what Ambedkar imagined: equality without hierarchy. Ideas here rest on legal rights written in the Constitution, efforts joining multiple struggles, and power growing from within communities themselves.

KEYWORDS: *Valmiki Community, Forced Migration, Tribal Identity, B. R. Ambedkar, Social Justice, Caste Discrimination.*

1. Introduction

People move for many reasons, yet their choices often depend on deeper forces. Not every journey follows money, violence, or ruined land. When entire groups are pushed out because of fixed social roles, movement shifts meaning. It becomes less about where you go, more about how your place is decided before you act. Among India's Valmiki people, stepping away isn't freely picked - it unfolds from lifelong positioning within hierarchy. These communities stretch through multiple regions, present but separated. Their tasks - cleaning streets, handling refuse - are handed down without consent. Birth decides labour here, never skill or desire. Caught between caste roles, jobs stuck at the bottom, and living on society's edges, the Valmiki people face layered hardships. While some Dalit groups moved ahead - sporadically, through job quotas or city work - their progress skipped the Valmiki entirely. Instead, they live within a hierarchy Ambedkar once named "graded inequality," where even those lowest down get pushed lower by internal rankings. Customs rooted in tribe-like ways, stories passed mouth to ear, gatherings shaped by shared belief - all these exist alongside a label forced upon them: untouchable. That mix makes their sense of self anything but straightforward. Starting with B.R. Ambedkar means starting where thought meets resistance. His work lives across law, power systems, and freedom thinking - sharp tools for reading Valmiki struggles. Untouchability, to him, was never just a custom

gone wrong; it held up the whole design of Hindu society. Rather than patching caste, he demanded its end - clear, unsoftened. Rights written into constitutions mattered more than rituals changed. That stance gives us lenses: one to see why displacement hits hard, another to grasp how tribe shapes being. The Valmiki's movement, their sense of self - it all comes clearer through his voice. Not as suggestion. As reckoning. Looking at how the Valmiki group faced displacement shapes much of this work, tied closely to ideas from Ambedkar on fairness. Each goal adds depth, building a fuller picture without standing alone. Thought runs through every part, connecting movement, city life, and lower-caste struggles in modern India. What emerges feeds ongoing academic exchange, grounded not in theory only but real shifts after colonial rule ended. Ideas take form slowly, shaped by people's journeys and long-standing injustice.

2. Research Objectives

This study is guided by the following four primary objectives:

Objective 1: Looking back, the Valmiki group moved many times because old systems trapped them in tough jobs based on their social rank. One reason stands out: they were stuck doing work others avoided, passed down like a family burden. Over time, living apart from mainstream villages pushed them further into corners of society. Left behind by support structures meant to help, each new generation found itself drifting toward city edges. Space grew tight where they settled, yet options faded just as fast. Being ignored by services deepened the cycle. Movement was less about choice and more about survival.

Objective 2: Starting from displacement, the shift among Valmiki's reshapes tribal belonging in quiet ways. Through upheaval comes a test - customs bend under new borders. Because movement is rarely chosen, traditions either fade or dig in deeper. Where people once knew themselves by lineage, papers now assign labels. Yet meaning clings to ritual, even when law ignores it. From this clash grows uncertainty about who decides identity - the village or the office.

Objective 3: Start by using B.R. Ambedkar's ideas - not just caste destruction but also how laws need moral grounding - to see

why Valmiki moved against their will. Look close at oppression built into society, not as accidents but design, when tracing where they went and why. Peel back layers of silence around work, land, voice, seeing displacement not as isolated event yet rooted in long refusal to treat people as equals. See law not only rulebook rather promise unkept across generations shaping flight. Watch dignity become a pattern broken again each time power reshapes who belongs.

Objective 4: Start by using B.R. Ambedkar's ideas - not just caste destruction but also how laws need moral grounding - to see why Valmiki moved against their will. Look close at oppression built into society, not as accidents but design, when tracing where they went and why. Peel back layers of silence around work, land, voice, seeing displacement not as isolated event yet rooted in long refusal to treat people as equals. See law not only rulebook rather promise unkept across generations shaping flight. Watch dignity become a pattern broken again each time power reshapes who belongs.

3. Theoretical Framework: Ambedkar's Lens of Social Justice

Few thinkers have shaped how we see caste like B.R. Ambedkar did in South Asia. While others tried fixing it using old beliefs, he saw caste as something deeper - tied into religion and law, built on unequal ranks and stripping dignity from people at the lowest levels. At its core, his famous work *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) cuts straight to the heart of the problem: real change means tearing down the whole structure, not just softening a few harsh edges. From start to finish, that book stands unmatched in clarity and courage when facing India's rigid hierarchies. What stands out in Ambedkar's thinking is how he saw constitutional morality - not just as rules on paper, yet as a living force. It means democracy runs best when fed by fairness, unity, and freedom baked into the constitution, instead of habits passed down through generations. He viewed India's founding charter less like a contract, more like a tool meant to crack open old hierarchies built on caste belief. Where public opinion leans heavily on tradition - often shaped by bias against lower castes - the weakest bear the brunt, quietly, repeatedly. Once real constitutional values give way to crowd-led norms, damage

spreads unevenly. What makes Ambedkar's take on untouchability key here is how it lines up with what Valmiki's face today. Not just about old religious taboos, he saw it instead as rooted in economics - basically a system built to lock people into lifelong, inherited jobs paying almost nothing, especially work others refused. Because of this setup, even after India legally banned untouchability through Article 17, Valmiki groups still find themselves pushed into cleaning roles by social pressure. Their lack of job choice, which drives many to move in search of survival, looks like the same economic engine running beneath new laws. So long as this pattern holds, the structure lives on - even if names and rules have shifted. What stands out most is how unequal rankings shape differences within Dalit groups. Caste structures do more than suppress the lowest communities - they build layers even among those oppressed, turning some against others. At the base sit the Valmiki, shut out not just by dominant castes but at times by fellow Dalits too, especially when better-organized factions repeat patterns of shutting people out. These divisions make it harder to form a single political voice across Dalit communities, shaping what support systems and laws need to address.

4. Historical Context of the Valmiki Community

From dusty lanes to quiet corners of villages, the Valmiki people carry names like Balmiki or Chuhda depending on where they live. Not every story about their beginning lines up neatly - one tale links them to the ancient poet Valmiki who wrote the epic Ramayana, a bond some hold close while others question it fiercely. Yet across time, what truly shaped their place in life wasn't legend but work handed down through generations. Cleaning streets, handling trash, doing tasks shunned by many - that became their daily reality under India's rigid caste system. Seen as outside the fold by dominant groups, they faced exclusion simply because of the jobs they did. Though myths speak of sages and scriptures, lived experience told a different kind of truth. Back then, British-led counts of people put Valmiki identities into strict boxes, locking their job-linked status into official files that shaped policies long after India became independent. Even though those rulers claimed to dislike harsh caste traditions, they still depended heavily on Dalit sweepers to keep military zones and government hubs clean. This

built a system where such workers were used without question, yet forced to live apart from others in isolated neighborhoods marked by authorities. After independence came promises written into law, yet little changed on the ground. Though Ambedkar shaped a constitution banning untouchability and setting aside spots for Scheduled Castes, those gains often stopped short for the Valmiki people. Local hierarchies held firm, officials looked away, and old jobs kept pulling them back. Even when laws like the 1993 ban on manual scavenging appeared, followed years later by stronger rules in 2013, the work did not vanish. Instead, many Valmiki households found themselves tied to tasks that defined both their survival and their stigma.

5. Forced Migration: Patterns, Causes, and Consequences

5.1 Structural Drivers of Migration

Pushed out of their homes, Valmiki groups didn't leave by choice. Layered forces pile up until staying becomes impossible. Violence tied to caste ranks high among them, along with fear of being shut out socially. Cities erase or ignore existing neighborhoods under the banner of progress. When public cleaning programs fall apart, so does backing from official bodies. Machines taking over street sweeping jobs cut off income - no new work shows up in return. Out beyond the village edge, Valmiki groups once lived in clusters apart, cut off from shared wells, temples, even burial spaces. When someone dared claim basic rights, harm often followed - pushing families to move again and again. Research across regions such as Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, along with parts of Uttar Pradesh reveals a steady loop: after violence tied to rank, people shift toward cities. There, life unfolds in makeshift lanes, unapproved plots, crowded corners - spaces that mirror old rejections under fresh skies.

5.2 Urbanization Without Mobility

Most Valmiki people who move to cities do not gain better status or income. Research shows these migrants often land jobs in unofficial cleaning work, hired temporarily or by the day, missing out on job security, unions, or government support programs. Usually living close to landfill sites, wastewater facilities, or zones with factory pollution, their neighbourhoods face serious health risks tied to dirty surroundings. Such locations keep alive a separation

shaped much like what they knew back in villages. City life without movement upward defies old ideas that moving to towns breaks down caste lines. Not here - for the Valmiki people, cities remake hierarchy instead of removing it. Work roles split along caste lines, neighbourhoods stay divided, shame sticks to jobs seen as dirty. Even with steady pay, dignity lags behind - something Ambedkar pointed out long ago. Their lives today echo what he once cautioned: money alone won't set you free.

5.3 Tribal Identity Under Pressure

Out here among the Valmiki people, songs echo old stories, prayers rise in familiar tones, while rituals circle around the presence of Valmiki Maharaj. It's through these acts that pride takes root, shaping who they are when outside labels try to define them differently. Yet sudden movement - no warning, no time - severs ties woven into places thick with memory and meaning. Once gone, those spaces fade, making it harder to pass down what once flowed naturally from elder to youth. Without steady ground beneath their feet, young ones grow uncertain, carrying both loss and confusion like extra weight. Out here, the Valmiki people see themselves as something unique - part culture, part kinship network - but official records just call them Scheduled Caste, which muddies things. Even though those labels bring certain rights on paper, they squeeze diverse histories into one narrow box labeled Dalit, leaving little room for what makes Valmikis different. When folks in these communities try to align more closely with groups classified as tribal, walls go up: laws do not bend easily, and politicians often push back hard. Identity, it turns out, gets tangled fast when real life refuses to fit clean government slots.

6. Ambedkarite Critique of Valmiki Forced Migration

Starting with Ambedkar's thinking shows how the Valmiki story of displacement challenges mainstream ideas about fairness. Though often praised, policies built on personal rights and jobs miss what really holds back oppressed castes. Because they ignore deep-seated hierarchies, such fixes change little where it matters most. Instead of patching up old systems, he insisted on tearing down beliefs and laws that keep caste alive. His view? Real equity cannot grow unless those roots rot away first. For those who follow

Ambedkar's views, pushing Valmiki people to move against their will isn't a glitch in the system - rather, it's how things play out when caste remains a core framework shaping India's structure. Even though laws say otherwise, seeing the Valmikis still tied to cleaning jobs shows something deeper: the way caste habits seep silently into labor and daily life, just like Ambedkar once called 'endosmosis'. Though rules exist on paper, old hierarchies reappear through hidden channels. Out here, where streets still echo old injustices, doing right by the Constitution means more than passing laws. It requires tearing down what pushes Valmikis into leaving their homes just to survive. Not merely banning manual scavenging or name-calling across castes - important as those are - but opening doors that actually lead somewhere: real jobs, schools worth attending, shelter that doesn't shame. When government falls short - and it does - the promise cracks under weight of habit, power staying put while dignity gets delayed. That kind of neglect? From an Ambedkar lens, isn't oversight. Feels closer to surrender. Starting with faith, Ambedkar's turn to Buddhism mirrors what the Valmiki people now live through. Not just belief but rebirth - carved around devotion to Valmiki Maharaj - as a way to stand tall when caste tries to shrink you. Dignity grows here, not handed down but claimed outright, like water drawn from your own well. Freedom isn't only laws or wages; it lives in how one carries memory, pain, and name. Shame taught across generations - that weight must break before any real change takes hold. That inner shift? It hums beneath every song, ritual, and gathering where Valmikis say who they are without asking permission. Thought alone won't dismantle centuries, yet refusing old names is its own quiet revolution.

7. Policy Implications and Recommendations

Start here: turning Ambedkar's vision of fairness into real steps for the Valmiki people means looking closely at overlapping struggles. Because rights live in law books does not mean they reach homes - policies must bridge that gap. One way forward lies in centering lived experience when drafting reforms. Another opens by honouring how caste, gender, work, and location shape disadvantage differently. What matters is designing actions tied firmly to India's founding promises - not just ideals, but enforceable claims. Each proposal grows from seeing patterns others overlook - the quiet

erosion of dignity across generations. Start with strong follow-through on the 2013 law banning manual scavenging, alongside serious efforts to help Valmiki families shift away from sanitation jobs through job training, new income options, and cash aid. Such initiatives need feedback from those directly affected, while tackling deep-rooted shame that blocks fair chances in different lines of work. Forced migrant Valmiki groups in cities face unique risks - housing rules should reflect that. Settlements already occupied by Valmikis need official recognition instead of constant threat. Before any clearance happens, secure new homes first; tearing down shelters with nothing ready deepens harm. City housing plans must open doors to these communities, guarded by real penalties against exclusion. How space is controlled often mirrors who gets left behind - and change starts where they live. Starting anew, schools need to tackle getting kids in and keeping them there. Money troubles, shame from society, plus how caste weighs on a child's mind - these block Valmikis' learning paths. Giving scholarships helps. So do hostels. Training staff matters too. Yet none of it sticks unless deeper habits in schools shift away from caste bias. One way to start is by acknowledging that the Valmiki community's sense of culture and belonging deserves official standing. Support should come through resources aimed at keeping traditions alive, along with honouring key celebrations and places held sacred. Instead of waiting for permission, steps can include working directly with Valmiki groups when shaping public policies. Since Ambedkar stressed respect within legal frameworks, actions taken ought to uphold identity rather than demand its erosion.

8. Conclusion

Pushed out again, the Valmiki people do not move by choice. Their journey unfolds under pressure, shaped less by hope than by force. Seen through Ambedkar's ideas about fairness, their uprooting ties back to deep systems built on caste. These structures survive laws meant to stop them, resisting change because they live inside daily life - work, relationships, beliefs. He did not call for fixing caste. His demand was clearer: destroy it. That clarity cuts closest to truth when facing what the Valmikis endure. Still, handing out extra aid while leaving untouched the rigid jobs, shame, and separated neighbourhoods shaping Valmiki existence won't fulfil what the

Constitution pledged - true equal standing and brotherhood. When the Valmiki people honour Valmiki Maharaj, hold tight to their own ways, stand tall in who they are, such acts echo defiance; Ambedkar surely would have seen them as saying no to being stripped of worth by caste. What India wants to become shows in how it treats the Valmiki people. Though written long ago, Ambedkar's dream feels pressing now - where rank at birth means nothing, work comes from will not bloodline, and fairness moves beyond paper into life. For this group, what matters is fair treatment instead of handouts, legal claims rather than aid programs, unity over mere acceptance.

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