



P. SIVAKAMI'S NOVELS: A MIRROR TO DISCREPANCY IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT:

Sivakami's novels are a milestone to create awareness among women especially dalit women for their rights in their society as well as their society. Primarily her novels are imbued in the colours of bewildering issues doing naked-dance with full jollity in the Indian society. Whether is financially or socially they are always at the loose end of it. They try to procure care and attention but they garner only the hopeless sympathy which is useless for them. Her works like 'The Taming of the Women' and 'The Grip of Change' are destroyer of the patriarchy standing tall with their roots so deep that it is very difficult to measure and destroy as well.

But this research is well designed and organised with the sole aim to reach to the source of the roots of this evil of patriarchy and explode it with the vehement energy and willingness of the dalit women. This research shall throw light to scatter the dark secrets of the patriarchy within society and family as well. Many works have depicted the lives of the dalit women but till date no solution has been got for their salvation. Sivakami here makes her desperate efforts to give vent to the suppressed tongue of the dalit sisters of her community across the county.

KEYWORDS:

MANLINESS, MARGINALIZATION, GENDER, DISCRIMINATION, PATRIARCHY, DALIT, FEMINISM, SUPPRESSION.

INTRODUCTION

Sivakami in her novels which are the mirror to the naked dance of the men exposes the duplicity of the male world through some major characters. Kathamuthu, a very diplomatic character from her novel 'The Taming of the Women' is the symbol of the patriarchal force working in the community. He is a community leader besides being a father to a beautiful girl named Gauri. He can't accept the uncontrolled behaviour of his daughter so he makes all his efforts to bring her under the control of the patriarchy by not allowing her to live her life in her own way.

She is a spontaneous kind of girl very much attracted to Nature and its beauty in such a way that even a tiny wild flower roused her appraisal for natural beauty lying deep in her heart and visible through her eyes but the society which gives no importance to women and their desires suppresses her desires too in a cruel way. She loves to beautify herself but her this attitude falls prey to the very codes of the social decree. Kathamuthu, her father has a deep faith in the authority of the patriarchy does not approve of her wild nature thereby suppresses her natural inclination towards the beauty of life. Gawri here presented as the victim of the male cruelty and indifference towards the human rights of the women especially dalit women. Thus Sivakami contrasts the life of a woman with that of a man who is freer and enjoys his life in his own way but for a woman it is not possible to live her life in her own way.

THE ROLE OF GENDER IN SIVAKAMI'S NOVELS

Enjoying the status of the First Tamil Dalit novel, 'The Grip

of Change' proves itself as a supreme kind of distinct creative piece of writing in which readers find a panorama of various shades of feminine consciousness across the social sphere. Through this novel, the author presents not only the status of the women in the society but also illustrates the highly corrupted Dalit leadership. This work introduces to us a very major character Thangam who is such a special one to be categorized into both as a modern feminine character as she raises voice against her high caste perpetrator. She is a traditional female character as she bears Paranjothi Udayar as well Kathamuthu's exploitation silently. Dalit women are victims of widespread exploitation, violence and indecent, suffering, injustice and inhumane treatment. Most often violence against Dalit women is used to punish them. This system has gone far ahead to become a vigorous mechanism to control women. This is the reality of the society and is very well depicted in the novels of Sivakami whether it is through Thungam or Gawri. Thangam is a poor woman bearing no fruit of child in addition to being a widow. Thangam means 'gold' but in this novel, she is mishandled for the lust of the men. Thangam was only a smoke of cigarette blown away once being used by the male for their pleasure as she was denied to have the rightful share in her husband's property due to her childless state. Paranjothi Udayar, a landlord, one day seeing Thangam alone in the fields, seduced her for having sexual intercourse and threatened her not to reveal this secret to anyone otherwise she will face adverse result. Thangam was frightened and kept her mouth locked and became his mistress. With the last hope she went to Kathamuthu

known for his leadership in the community accorded with the political influence. He helps her but in return for physical pleasure. However Kathamuthu managed to bring justice to Thangam but ultimately entrapped her sexuality and kept her at his home as his third wife. Thus Thangam is used as an object of sex everywhere in the society.

TIMIDITY AND BOLDNESS OF WOMEN

Sivakami's novels show both the timidity and the boldness of her women characters. The Taming of Women by presents the horrific condition of Anandhayi who becomes a victim at the hand of her cruel husband Periyannan. Anandhayi faces the trauma and suffering for being the part of the female world. The novel depicts the pathetic condition of female protagonist, Anandhayi going through her pregnancy. Even in this situation Periyannan had brought another woman to have sexual pleasure into his room. This clearly points out the crude aspect of marriage life because he does all this when his wife is present in the house. Periyannan is so cruel that he beats Anandhayi without taking any care of her pregnancy as it would have harmed her. But he was busy in his own life enjoying all the pleasure that he could receive even at the cost of his wife. Sivakami shows how much dangerous life a woman goes through in such a society.

Sivakami presents some other characters too to depict the pathetic situation of the women in this novel. Vellaiyamma, the mother of Periyannan, has also been presented in the same light to bear witness of the violence upon women by the male of the family. He himself never took care of his old ailing mother who took care of him when he was young one and this infuriated his mother as well. She decided not to live on the mercy and favour of her dog-like son with no respect for her. Sivakami's depiction of presumable facts brings the Dalit life-style in rural society polarized by caste and social hierarchy. When the question of dalit women is concerned, the struggle is completely different from the Upper Caste men and women, and even it is different from the problems of Dalit men. Women are women whether they live anywhere as their fate is the same. The oppressive system leaves none of them behind from getting escaped and crushes down the warmth, delicacy and tenderness in them. They are defeated and destroyed almost at every stage by each and every man. Meena Kandasamy asks a question in this response, "If the system does not allow a woman to marry a man because he is from another caste ... is it not a direct oppression of her sexuality?" Gowri and even the novelist – P. Sivakami focuses on the major events and incidents in the lives of the Dalit and the women are portrayed with that true and vivid picture of victimized society. They are doubly marginalized as they remain silent victims of even the Dalit men.

Vaishali Shivkumar writes: Through Thangam, the novelist gives a thorough picture of Dalit women's silence and their being victimized by the Upper Caste Hindus as well as they are sexually exploited by their own caste men equally. Body and misuses of the bodily pleasures become a central motif of the novel and yet the novelist does not glamorize

sexuality by smattering the text of the novel with careless elopements and gauche marriages. The majority of the description part in the novel focuses on the incident which takes place with Thangam and her body. Her body bears acknowledgment to the difficulties faced by Dalit women. (359) She is a widow and so she becomes a 'surplus' woman when is harassed by her brothers-in-law. Women can be the instruments to be relished, of entertainment or pleasure for the men of their own caste as well as the men of the Upper castes but they cannot raise their voice against this kind of crimes such is the decree of the social god. Men and women of different castes can fall in love but when it comes to the act of meting out punishment the society punishes the woman only and not the man as he is exempted from it for being masculine power. Especially, when the love-affair or physical suppression is done on the Dalit woman, she becomes the victim for the man who misuses her as well as the victim of the society. Thangam described the torment to Kathamuthu that she has gone through. My husband's relatives spread the story that I had become Paranjothi's concubine. That's why Paranjothi's wife's brothers and her brother-in-law, four men, entered my house last night.

They pulled me by my hair and dragged me out to the street. They hit me, and flogged me with a stick stout as a hand. They merely killed me. No one in the village, none of my relatives, come to help me. I begged for mercy, but they wouldn't stop. They abused me and threatened to kill me if I stayed in that village any longer. They called me a whore. (6, Sivakami) Kathamuthu asks her whether she is speaking is truth or not; what actually she has done without thinking about her 'feminine' qualities. How can she speak everything in front of a man who is almost new to her except his name and fame? Still with shame and fear she accepts the truth, "Udayar has had" (7, Sivakami) her but that is not the complete truth. She speaks the truth of events to Kathamuthu, Sami, is there anywhere on earth where this doesn't happen? I didn't want it. But Udayar took no notice of me. He raped me when I was working in his sugarcane field. I remained silent; after all, he is my paymaster. He measures my rice. If you think I'm like that, that I'm easy, please ask around in the village. After my husband's death, can anybody say that they had seen me in the company of anyone, or even smiling at anyone? My husband's brothers tried to force me, but I never gave in. They wouldn't give me my husband's land, but wanted me to be a whore for them! I wouldn't give in. ... (7, Sivakami) Trying to explore inter-caste sexual relations, P. Sivakami highlight how patriarchy gets diluted on its way down the caste ladder. In the affair between the Dalit Kathamuthu and the caste Hindu widow Nagamani, she earns a right place by being "installed" as his wife in his home. On the other hand, when Paranjothi Udayar forces himself on Thangam, at best engages her as a mistress (concubine).

She is not brought within the confines of a socially approved relationship because of her being outcaste. When everybody in the family gets asleep in the afternoon, Thangam – Who is lying in the kitchen – is again raped by

Kathamuthu. She groans, "You are like a brother to me ... a brother" (93, Sivakami). Thangam's eyes remain shut as she cannot face a man, who was once compassionate and sympathetic towards her, becomes full of lust and destroys herself psychologically – again into pieces. Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement "one is not born woman, but, rather, becomes one" suggests the construction of "woman", definitely the agent of which is the other gender (8, Butler). This is the simple reason why according to Beauvoir, the "woman" becomes the second sex/ gender. Beauvoir, Butler and Foucault talk about the question of power in the society. Thus Sivakami's works are a true mirror to the discriminatory practices of the society ruled by the patriarchy which looks upon women as mere objects of pleasure. Women are no more than slaves for men.

CONCLUSION

This research paper has made its efforts to bring to the light the dark lives of the dalit women full of burning anger at the fate of their lives. The marginalized Dalit women are easily beguiled into being the victims of the so called higher patriarchal system of society. This shows that there is a long path to plod for the safety and security of the poor women. Many more efforts are needed to scatter the dark clouds of black vapours; gender, caste, and patriarchy are in the sky. These clouds darken the lives of the dalit women upon whom no Sun of the human life and its sustainability shines. This shows the way the down-trodden and suppressed people get a shabby life style to lead in the social system of hierarchy because of that. Caste, gender and patriarchy are nothing but cruel elements destroying the inner calm and serenity of the dalit women. This cruelty has no sympathy for the

feministic emotions. Violence and discrimination are the rewards women get in their lives. Abuses are the partners for the women like Gowri and Thangam as they are marginalized because of caste, gender and patriarchy and its consequences. Thus the writer has done a great deed by writing her novels which prove their utility and purpose for the women of the dalit community.

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