

# Gender Disparities leading to violence in Sivakami's The Grip of change

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"The True spirit in preventing caste system lies in destroying the belief of Sastras were sacred"

-Dr.B.R.Ambedkar

**Abstract-** The main goal of this paper is to find out about the Gender inequality and the role of women in society. We displayed the inequality rights between Male and Female through Sivakami's The Grip of Change. Gender inequality is occupied most societies around the Globe hence India is no exception. Consequences of this, in India Gender problems, Caste discrimination, Masculine brutality, Untouchable are visible. The critical hurdle to education is caste disparity that has spread its root to almost all corners of India. In my point of view that all the parents provide a better environment, equal rights and education to their children who grow up without confront inequality in society. In India, most of the time women rights are dominated and suppressed by the role of Patriarchal society, Child marriage, Son preference and Economic inequalities. Sivakami's novel The Grip of Change not only voices the plight of an exploited Dalit woman but it also records the waves of 'Change' with the Dalit consciousness, providing a kind of remedy for the ailments in the society. Caste is the most demoralizing aspect in woman's identity, which is already located at the periphery of a male dominated society.

**Keywords:** Gender inequality, Caste disparity, Women rights, Caste system in India and Male domination.

Palanimuthu Sivakami is a leading Indian novelist-cum-politician and is the first Dalit woman to write a full length, semi-autobiographical Tamil novel 'Pazhaiyana Kazhithalum' (The Grip of Change) which was a trend-setter in Dalit writings and took the field of Dalit Literature by storm. Sivakami is a celebrated Tamil writer and is also credited for being the first Dalit woman I.A.S officer in Tamil Nadu. She was also been awarded the President Award in 1995 for her short film "Oodaha" which was selected by the Panorama.

In The Grip of Change Sivakami mainly discussed the predicament of Dalit Peoples' life. Dalits can be defined as socially oppressed, culturally neglected and economically exploited people for centuries together in India. The Dalit women writers like Bama Faustina, Urmila Panwar, Baby kamble, Meena Kandasamy and P.Sivakami have become a milestone in the arena of Dalit feminism by projecting Dalit women issues in their writings.

In The Grip of Change, Sivakami applies a self-critical and deconstructive technique and exposes the deploring realities of Dalit Patriarchy. The novel The Grip of Change not only voices the plight of an exploited Dalit woman but it also

records the waves of 'change' with a Dalit consciousness, providing a kind of remedy for the ailments in the society. Caste is the most demoralizing aspect in woman's identity, which is already located at the periphery of a male dominated society. Sivakami mentioned caste disparity through the character of Thangam as:

Ungrateful whore! Even if she was hurt, she was hurt by the hand adorned with gold! A Parachi could have never dreamt of being

touched by a man like me! My touch was a boon granted for penance performed in her earlier births!.... (31)

These lines are expressing caste disparities leads to violence against lower caste woman Thangam, who is expected to yield for upper caste male chauvinism.

The caste discrimination changed her life into very sad and sorrowful life. The Exploiting masculine brutality occurred in Thangam life. Her husband's relatives spread the rumor, that she is Paranjothi's concubine. Paranjothi's wife sends her brothers to reveal their upper caste domination power:

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 hair and dragged me out to the street. They hit me, and flogged me with a stick stout as a hand.... 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 call me a whore. (6)

Thangam feels that no one try to stop their violence and even her own community people also maintained silence. Sivakami mentioned it as the expression of men brutality on women. Initially Thangam was abused by Paranjothi Udayar, this makes her to settle in Kathamuthu's home for her secure life. Earlier he gave shelter to Thangam, later once again her 'body' is abused. It happened by Kathamuthu's rich and influential Dalit Panchayat Leader position, which leads him to do so. Sivakami highlights in this place, about Thangam's insecure life under her own community Panjayat Leader Kathamuthu.

Sivakami has also criticized the self destructive tendencies of Dalit community by exposing caste hierarchical order existing in Tamil Nadu. She says:

Even amongst the lower castes, hierarchy existed- Pallars were agricultural laborers, Parayers were drummers and menials, and Chakkiliars were cobblers. The first grade- the Pallars- were absent in Puliya. The Pallars considered themselves superior to the rest. The Parayers considered themselves higher than the Chakkiliars, who in turn considered themselves superior to the Para-vannars, the washer community. The Para-Vannar men washed clothes for the lower castes and the women worked as midwives for them. Similar to almost all other human communities, the women were considered to be lower than the men. Everyone established their worth by pointing to those beneath them. (63)

Every caste people considered themselves, which belongs to upper or lower caste. Nobody considers that they we are equal and living together without any dissimilarity. Such variations separated and ruined people's unity life. In all community, woman is considered only as 'object'. They only lived under male domination and submitted their whole life to family hierarchy.

Some places the lower caste people made their life by themselves, which is that under living suppressed by upper caste people. They don't feel it is less their dignity and sense. i.e, Kathamuthu and Thangam goes to police station giving petition on Udayar. Before they go to police station, Kathamuthu advised her that, when she reports Inspector she calls him 'Ayya' and she must fall in Inspector's feet.

Kathamuthu feels through this way of respect gives favorable action in Thankam case. But Thangam forgets his instruction. He remembered symbolically through this lines "please give your petition as you prostrate yourself at your saviour's feet"(21). The Inspector, who is upper caste man doesn't expect the foolish kind of respect from poorest people. But poorest people yielded their self-esteem and worth for pursuing their demands and fulfill their needs.

The Inspector doesn't like anyone talk about Caste. So when he refused Kathamuthu had talked about caste disparity. Although Kathamuthu's outlook on caste disparity and told Inspector:

I hope I haven't annoyed you, but tell me a place where caste doesn't exist. Just because you and I don't talk about it, doesn't mean it's not there. It will persist till you and I die. In fact, caste will be around for generations yet to come. We can't ignore it. (79)

The caste variations are revealed everywhere. Sivakami points out a notable incident for revealing such caste system, between Naicker(upper caste man) and Kathamuthu (lower caste man). "Naicker invariably commented to others, Poor fellow, he belongs to a lower caste. Can't you tell from his speech?..." (18). Naicker's command passed Kathamuthu by someone. He replies him, that "Yes, he speaks the truth, I belong to a lower caste. So what?... (18).

Kathamuthu confronted Naicker, and delivered furious words, like:

If I ever come to your store again, slap me with your chappal. I'm never going to cross your threshold again..... Why are you touching me Naicker? Isn't it a sin if you touch me?.... (19)

Naicker passed his time joyfully with Kathamuthu's comical nature of speech. They belong to different caste even though their relationship travelled smoothly. But later Naicker's upper caste's untouchable mannerism made Kathamuthu commit such violence.

In earlier days untouchability occupied even school also. Government established schools to provide free and equal education for all children without any partiality. But people ruined Government's aspiration by their caste disparity. The author mentioned:

That's the Panchayat union school, meant for everyone. It has become a Parayar school, filled only with our children. The upper castes don't send their children there, because our children go to that school. Even the teachers call it by that name (29).

The upper class people influenced in economic level by the hard work of low class people. Even some of rich and influential men seemed in low community, who doesn't help to improve their own community people's predicament life. The author noticed Pallar, Parayar, Chakkiliyar, Paravannar are belongs to low community people and they faced impoverished life. The novel's narrator Gowri asked Puranic stories from her Periappa. He told her:

The son was on his way to visit a prostitute- that is his mother- he saw a calf running towards a cow for milk..... His blind desire for sex vanished, like clouds before the rising sun. He fell at her feet. She embraced him and kissed him on his forehead..... (134)

It is a Puranic stories. But author mentioned this story related with people's poverty life pushed them into immoral prostitution work to attain their daily life needs.

Kathamuthu's daughter Gowri is the narrator of the novel. She was being educated, against her community patriarchal brutality and pursue for women's freedom. Education gives awareness to her, for protesting against her early marriage, "The sufferings that my mother underwent in her marriage! I don't want to be tortured like her by some man" (124).

Sivagami gives examples from his own experience to substantiate her argument. From beginning to the end the novel *The Grip of Change* serves as an eyes opener and draws attention to violent realities, sexual assaults, psychological torments, and economical exploitation along with the message that a democratic approach is essential to eradicate such discriminatory ideologies from the social fabric.

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