

RAISING THE VOICE AGAINST THE ATROCITIES: A CRITICAL STUDY OF P SIVAKAMI'S TAMING OF WOMEN

Yash Raj^{1*}, Dr. Siva Nagaiah Bolleddu², Dr. P Venkata Ravi Kumar³, Kola Aravind⁴

Dept. of English, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (Deemed-to-be University)
Vaddeswaram, Guntur – 522502

Corresponding Author Email I'd: itsyashraj@gmail.com

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Abstract

Since time immemorial, Dalits are subjugated and dominated at the hands of upper caste people. They are deprived of all the basic facilities and above all they are not given equal space in the society which they deserve. They are ostracized and pushed to the periphery of the society because of their belongingness to the lower strata. The condition of the Dalit women is even more pathetic and one needs to lay emphasis on how they survive and lead their lives in these horrible circumstances. But in spite of that second sex tries to resist and fight against the atrocities which are the focal point of the paper.

Keywords: Oppression, relegated, gender biasness, sense of alienation, objection, bold disobedience.

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INTRODUCTION:

The best part of Dalit women resides in remote localities amidst paucity of basic amenities and backwardness. Most of them are daily wage laborers, agricultural workers and some tries to engage them in the menial job to run their household but it also doesn't help their cause because they are paid very less as compared to the men. Anupama Rao in her book *Gender and Caste* (2005) writes

"Caste relations are embedded in the Dalit woman's profoundly unequal access to resources of basic survival such as water and sanitation facilities, as well as educational institutions, public places, and places of religious worship. On the other hand, the material deprivation of Dalits and their political powerlessness perpetuate the symbolic structures of untouchability, which legitimizes the upper caste's access to Dalit women for sexual exploitation"(11)

P. Sivakami, in her work, *The Taming of Women* (2012), depicts the aforementioned point through her work. Sivakami vividly describes the societal biasness which has hampered the growth of Dalit women in their own backyard. They have to suffer a lot due to this gender biasness which they have been experiencing every day. Sivakami doesn't portrayed the dark side of the coin only, but she has also laid emphasis on the brighter side of the coin as well by depicting the resilience and never say die attitude of the Dalit women.

P. Sivakami's *Taming of women* portrays the 'war' between men and women in contemporary society. The protagonist, Periyannan used to reside in a poor village. He always used to crave for money and power and never cared for his family women especially his wife Anandhayi and ailing mother. The work portrays the evil nature of Periyannan who used to beat his wife and other women. He wanted to lead his life on his own terms thus paying less respect to anyone.

Taming of Women by P.Sivakami unleashes the horrific condition of Anandhayi who suffers at the hand of her husband Periyannan. There are many incidents in the texts which informs us about the trauma and pain of Anandhayi. The opening chapter of the novel depicts the pathetic condition of female protagonist Anandhayi. While Anandhayi was pregnant Periyannan had taken another woman to sleep with him into his room. This shows the inhuman attitude towards women by men in their house. Periyannan pushed Anandhayi not taking care of her condition.

"Periyannan came down and pushed aside Anandhayi not taking care of her pathetic condition. He was blind folded due to his lust towards another woman Lakshmi" (4)

Sivakami depicts the sympathetic situation of the women in this novel. Vellaiamma was the mother of Periyannan. She lived by using her own finances. If anyone advised her to take a rest and live by son's earning, she would burst into a rage. "Periyannan mother never used to demand anything from his son because of his attitude. He never took care of his old ailing mother and this infuriated his mother as well. She decided not to live on the mercy of her son."(63). After getting a big building contract, Periyannan had thrown a bundle of currency at her feet and insulted his own mother, this act of his testimonies the above mentioned argument which depicts the in obedient nature of Periyannan.

Vellaiamma shouting at her if she had ever seen this much money before in her lifetime. She longed for death to come and take her life. Her husband's memory hit her most of the time. Her husband committed suicide by drinking yergum poisonous plant milk) and she could not forget how she was beaten and slapped by her husband.

"Periyannan got angry and in the same condition he thrashed Anandhayi and abused her. Anandhayi was not able to bear the pain. The strong hands of Periyannan blew her away."(65).

The author had described not only Periyannan as a chauvinist, but the other male characters also. Vadakathiyaal came over to work for Anandhayi at home and in the garden. Anandhayi was shocked to see Vadakathiyaal son's behavior. "Her ward threatened her by saying that if I kick you once all your teeth will be broken at once" (104).Vadakathiyaal suffered under the men in her family. She was not accorded respectability by her husband, her son and other men from her own family "She was always beaten up and was always threatened that she would face severe consequences if she doesn't bog down . She didn't forget the miseries that she had to face."(105). Vadakathiyaal expressed her grief to Anandhayi about how she was being whipped by her brother-in-law. This shows that women are facing spontaneous hindrances and disturbances from the men in the society.

It was not that the men from high strata exploited the women from lower strata. The issues presented through the text are that irrespective of the class the corruption and exploitation

predominantly is present at every level. It has been observed that women are forced to tie a knot at the very early age. They have no option but to comply with the societal norms and they don't dare to go against it.

Anandhayi was also suffering at the hands of her husband Periyannan. Periyannan as described in the earlier passages used to dominate and subjugate her and she used to listen and bear the abuses hurled on her. But gradually she started to raise her voice whenever poked. Periyannan used to stay outside the house for weeks claiming that he is busy with the business and other stuff. Everyone knew that he is having an illicit affair with Lakshmi so does Anandhayi as well but she never used to protest against the same. But she decided to bring a complete full stop of the ordeal when Periyannan started accusing her of having an illicit relationship in his absence. Anandhayi didn't take this blame in her stride and hit back at Periyannan.

"... Things are strewn about this house and you don't seem to be interested in setting them in order. Did your secret lover get you this skirt? Hey stop those words, eh? And if I don't? I'll chop your hair off... You are a fine one to talk. You're the one who has a bitch around the house, and you accuse me of having a lover?" (117).

Since time immemorial it has been observed that a woman has to lead her life on the earnings of her husband. She is totally dependent on her better half for all the essential things. In the case of Anandhayi as well she is dependent on Periyannan. Anandhayi was not keen on taking extra from Periyannan but he always used to chide and insult her for the same. Anandhayi used to fume from within but never raised her voice initially. But one fine day she decided to stop the constant abuse and insult that was being hurled on her for quite some time now.

"Give me money... I have to go to Vahidha's. She spoke extra loud knowing that the children had left for school. Why? Ah, you used me, didn't you? For that. ... Only the hen that lays egg knows the pain. Not you... You shut your gob, and give me respect. Kala is pregnant again. I cannot face my son-in-law. I have no money now You want to give, give, or else get out. I shall sell my nose ring and take care of the expenses. (167)

Anandhayi was suffering at the hands of her husband as depicted in the aforementioned paragraph and was ready to lead her life alone rather than having a company of any other man. This foregrounds the strong nature of Anandhayi who knows that if it happens it is going to be very tough for her and her children but she has a firm believe that she would be happy to do so. The portrayal of Anandhayi could be taken as an inspiration for many Dalit women who are trying to lead their lives amidst a lot of uncertainties. One has to take control of their life and should have a lot of patience to get things done according to their own wish.

"You are saying new things. As if I did not get my share of kicks and blows. Didn't I stick with one man? Of course, you will say I had no other option because of my children. Even if I was separated from him, I would have stayed alone, never looked at another man". (216)

The scenario of the living conditions of women is changing drastically. There are numerous examples which are the testimony of the fact that Dalit women are trying their best to have an equal position and identity in our society. P. Sivakami's *Taming of Women* is one of the examples of those courageous efforts and protests where Dalit women have started to question the norms of the society and especially have tried to challenge the set rules of the patriarchal society. Dalit Literature off late has tried to give the confidence and boost to the voice of women who are trying to fight against the atrocities which they have been enduring since ages.

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