

Agricultural Strike and Massacre in Meena Kandasamy's the Gypsy Goddess

R. P. Aafia Mole*

Student, Department of English, Malankara Catholic College, Kanniyakumari, India

Abstract: The article deals with the tragic incident of kilvenmani massacre and the involvement of political parties. Massacre, rape, labours strike and all forms of brutal violence are involved during the time of agricultural strike. Meena Kandasamy throughout the novel tells about the Dalit agricultural labourers, who live in an inhuman condition. The unrelenting oppression and heart breaking atrocities inflicted upon them by their ruthless upper caste landlords are unpredictable. In this paper I would like to describe how the communist party evolved and what are the changes one can bring out on the issue of caste discrimination.

Keywords: communism, violence, caste discrimination, trauma, Kilvenmani massacre.

1. Introduction

A novel The Gypsy Goddess gives a limpid picture about the class discrimination in the village Kilvenmani in Nagapattinam district. The lower class people have to face all the cruel atrocities from the upper class Brahmin people, in the name of class and also by means of caste. In the essay Annihilation of Caste B. R. Ambedkar tells about the caste discrimination of higher class people towards the poor people, they were asked to stay away from them. All the basic rights were denied for these people, for getting equal rights they struggled a lot. Although Brahmin people consider these people as sin if they come in front of them, they consider it as a bad omen. The word 'Dalit' literally means oppressed, downtrodden, crushed or broken to pieces and it directly refers to the untouchable people. Ambedkar said that untouchability came in to Indian society around 400 AD due to the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and Brahmanism. The religious scripture Manu smriti describes four varna system of the society based on their occupation. According to the Hindu mythology, Brahmin was born out of Brahma's head, Kshatriya was born out of arms, Vaishya was born out of abdomen and Shudra was born out of feet. As per the mythology Shudras are made out of feet that's why they are considered as slaves. Thereby Shudras are recognized as an inferior part of the society. This concept made Ambedkar to burn the book Manu Smriti. Caste system consists of two different concepts Varna and Jati, the word Varna literally means colour or class, this word first used in Vedic Indian society. There are four types of classes in Indian society Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The other concept Jati which means birth, there are four varnas but

thousands of jatis in Indian society. The anthropologist Louis Dumont described the ritual rankings that exists within the Jati system as being based on the concepts of religious purity and pollution. Jati have been existed in India among Hindus, Muslims, Christian and also among the tribal people. Some people believes that Jati is a secular social phenomenon others consider it as an occupational segregation. In order to overcome from all bitter situations, Indian government provided education for the Dalit people. Dalit is also known as the scheduled caste or untouchables. The ancient caste system of India has resulted in the social and economic oppressions of the Dalits. In India almost 25 % population belongs to the downtrodden, oppressed and socially exploited group. Dalits have been oppressed by the upper caste people, even today Dalits and members of the other backward castes are not only deprived of basic opportunities but also tortured and exploited by the members of the higher class people. Often they do not have access to basic amenities like clean water, housing and enough food, apart from these if they do not have education facilities, it will affect their life to get adequate jobs just like other populations. Despite having similar rights and duties they are grounded and deprived of basic human standards of living. In order to overcome all those problems Indian government attempted to provide education for low class people. Furthermore, it also has been the greatest challenge for the Indian government to reduce the social effects of the caste system. The first reason for the suffrage of Dalit people is due to the historical background of the caste system.

2. Discussion

Meena kandasamy criticises the Indian society, the untouchable agricultural labourers were segmented and ostracized from their place. The upper class landlords have plenty of money and also power, by using their power they brutally kill the poor class people by making them work hard in their agricultural fields. They face umpteen of hardships in their life span, all the people were scared to raise their voice. The historical person Ayyankali raise her voice for the voiceless people for their freedom, just like Ayyankali, Gopalakrishna Naidu fight for Dalit people, he follows the path of Gandhi's adamancy and most of his self-righteousness and a wee bit of his desire is to save humanity. Kandasamy points out that, the

*Corresponding author: aafiamolerp@gmail.com

legal institutions are politically motivated and it was controlled by the upper caste Hindus. Even the judicial authorities and legal institutions are casteist in their approach towards the lower caste people, however they try to push them out and support the upper caste landlords. The charred bodies of the dead are counted mercilessly by the policemen. The way these burnt dead bodies of the Dalits are thrown mercilessly reminds one of the gruesome realities of the Nazi regime where the dead bodies of the Jews were treated in the similar way by the Nazis, Adolf Hitler imprisoned all the Jewish people in the Nazi concentration camp and treated them cruelly, similarly the incident which happened in the village Kilvenmani. Kandasamy uses the dark humor in this novel because she equates the value of one dead body of an upper caste person with forty four dead bodies of Dalits. Caste remains an important aspect of one's identity even after death. The high court associates the sense of honor with landlords but never see the Dalits through the same lens. In the court the justice is served only to the upper caste people by the upper caste judge. This exposes the lack of representation of Dalits in the state machinery, despite the efforts by the forefathers of the constitution of India. While one look upon to the present circumstances of Dalit people, one could understand, what are the troubles faced by these people even today, especially women. One who is called as untouchables, were not allowed to take water from the public tank; although they have no permission to attend the temple while the higher class Brahmin are attending a rituals In temple, umpteen of restrictions were kept upon them, none of them considering them as human. According to Christian theology God created human, he did not created any caste or class discrimination, for him everyone are equal; he saw everyone as human so he loves each and every one equally, he also teaches everyone to love each other. Jesus experienced human, especially Dalit so he sacrificed his life for everyone. The parable of Good Samaritan is seen as a significant and providing a life giving message to the marginalized Dalits and a challenging message to the upper caste people. In this century too the torture towards dalit people continues. A 55 year old Dalit Sikh woman was tortured, stripped and tied in to a tree in Ram Dwali village, Punjab because her daughter eloped with a Brahmin man. Even today inter caste marriage is a great problem in our country. In Karnataka seven Dalits were locked in a house and burnt alive by the upper caste people. BBC news reported that, the Indian Dalit man was killed for eating in front of upper caste men. Since today the cruel atrocities against Dalit people are continuing. Issues like untouchability and casteism are still common in the rural areas, the reason for this is the deep rooted tradition of casteism. Not only adults, children are also facing such kind of subjugation in the society. In all the government schools provides a mid-day meal for all the students, Children of scheduled castes have been asked to sit separately and eat. Ambedkar also faced such kind of discrimination in his childhood, he and other untouchables are segregated and given little attention by teachers and they are asked to sit outside of the class. If they need water someone from a higher caste pours water to them from a height as they are not allowed to touch.

Scheduled caste girls are asked to clean the toilets and children that belong to the minority community are asked to sit at the back of the class. According to the Indian Constitution Article no 13, the state shall not deny equality to any person before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. Article no 14, denies discriminating any citizens based on their religion, race, caste, sex and class. Article 17 states that, untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. According to the Civil Rights act of 1955, if anyone practices untouchability they will be charged with heavy punishment. In 1989 the Indian government enacted the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Today caste discrimination is one of the worst human right abuse in this world. People from lower caste often will not say which caste they are from, because they are scared of other people. Caste-based discrimination has also been described as a hidden apartheid. These people are considered as impure, upper class people did not share anything that belongs to them and they did not keep any physical contact with outcaste. Dalit people are forced to do worst jobs such as, manual scavenging. There has been a spate of suicides at Indian universities, as the abuse they have suffered has made their lives untenable. In New Delhi, 17 year old Dalit boy was killed by upper caste members of his village in Uttar Pradesh. Because he attend the temple when the upper caste people doing their rituals.

Political manifesto clearly points out that, the Kilvenmani village is moulded with communism and the encounter of Marxism ends up with a terrible violence and bloodshed. Communist party campaigned among the labors for the growth of their party, they organize union for laborers to demand fairer wages for them. In response to this, landowners create their own union to curb their demands and instead of them, they bring labors from outside. Communism stand as a back born for labors to raise their voice for their survival. However, their one and only aim is to hoist their red flag, day by day communist are growing stronger Communist put dangerous ideas in to the head of untouchables. These people are the first victim of communism, because they are uneducated people, so easily anyone can brainwash these poor people. Gandhiji says that "It is better to be violent, if there is violence in our hearts, than to put on the cloak of non-violence to cover impotence". Communism teaches the people and opens every one of them eyes and gives them the strength to defend themselves, makes them realize about the power of communism and tells them about the importance of devoting time for the cause of revolution. Today many possibilities are there to hold meetings, print posters, gather rallies and hoist red flag with pride because of the single minded devotion comrades have built the cadre base of the party among the proletariat. Without fear they can do whatever they need in the political party. The British banned all meetings of the peasant union under the Defense of India Act so that, at the beginning they held secret meetings at the cremation ground and teaches the people about the troubles and the history of revolutionary struggles. They trained the people to think fearlessly and give them courage to face the struggles and also teach them about the martial art of silambattam. Silambam is a weapon based Indian martial art from Tamil

Nadu but traditionally it is used among the Tamil community of Sri Lanka and Malaysia. The tragic end of 44 people are not regained back. The atrocities faced by women by the hooligans and police force by the advice of landlords are not described through words. The terrible conditions of Kilvenmani village reveals everyone to be courageous, Kilvenmani massacre opens up every one of them eye to fight against the landlords. Women did not have any freedom to show up their talents and power, even today low class women struggling a lot to overcome all the obstacles in front of them. The image of women can be compared to the sea goddess, women also have an aggressive face, and she bow her head until her femininity is questioned. She also know to burst out like the sea goddess. God created men and women without any difference but men created their world as patriarchal. A women's rights activist and a lawyer Jacqui Hunt say that, As a consequence of gender, caste and class inequalities, Dalit women and girls are subjected to multiple forms of subjugation, exploitation and oppression. Sexual violence including rape and gang rape has been perpetrated against them by men from dominant castes as a mechanism that reinforces India's deeply entrenched structural hierarchies. Women's bodies are being used as a battleground to assert caste supremacy and to keep women in their place. (206)

3. Conclusion

India is the largest democratic country in the world, yet a

section of people are living a life of suppression, unendurable and in tolerate sufferings. Dalits are suffering from caste based violence in the hands of dominant caste people due to their social economic and political status. They are considered as easy available for all forms of violence. The Kilvenmani massacre is considered as one of the most violent crimes in post independent India. Yet, the true democracy has not been achieved. One can wonder how much aboriginal blood of dalits will flow under the bridge before the dream of Ambedkar. The dream of all the people are burned in to ashes in the Kilvenmani massacre. There is no role for expectation and hope, people expect that, they can change the mind of upper class people and they hopefully awaited for better India but all their dreams are shattered.

References

- [1] Kandasamy, Meena. *The Gypsy Goddess*. Harper Collins, 2014.
- [2] Herrero, Dolores. "Dreams turned into Ashes: An Analysis of the Dreadful."
- [3] Event of Kilvenmani through the Lens of Meena Kandasamy's novel *The Gypsy Goddess*." *Psychosocial Rehabilitation* 24, pp. 5, 2020.
- [4] Dubey, Prachi, and Chitra Charu. "Study of Postmodernism and Politics in the Novel of Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess*." *Smart Moves Journal Ijellh*, vol. 7, no.2, pp. 5 -6, 2019.
- [5] Fernando, Antony. "Fifty Years after Caste Violence, Kilvenmaani Village"
- [6] "Waiting for Daylight." *The New Indian Express*, Express News Service, www.newindianexpress.com. Accessed, pp. 5, 2018.