



REFLECTION OF CASTE, GENDER AND PATRIARCHY IN MEENA KANDASAMY'S: *TOUCH*

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ABSTRACT

Caste, gender and patriarchy, these concepts are related with inequality, injustice and exploitation. Caste hierarchy, divided the society in to four groups: Brahmins, Kshetriya, Vaihsa and Shudra. Caste hierarchy not only divided the society into four groups it also divided each group works and duty. Caste gets human being by birth. Human being never escapes from the caste system. In this computerised- technological and global era Indian government see the dream of make in India and digital India caste, still the casteism, gender inequality and patriarchy exist in Indian social system. Such things are indicated now days also, in each and every field such in education and employment. Unless and until we do not remove caste and gender name from the list of educational certificates and employment advertisement, the mentality of casteism, inequality and indifferences will not be ceased from Indian social system. Now day's educated people have become more conscious about the caste consciousness. But this caste consciousness does not dare to stop the casteism and gender inequality.

Key words: *Radical Feminism, Intellectual Progress, Inferiority Complex, Secular.*

INTRODUCTION

In fact, caste factor is not a natural phenomenon rather it is created for the convenience of the few (Brahmins). Among the powerful section of the existing social order, Brahmins were the privilege over the all others. A conspicuous issue is that each group of the Indian people had been kept separate from each other. Every caste had been considered superior to the lower castes and inferior to the upper castes. This caste hierarchy and caste discrimination had been applied to them (except the Brahmins) throughout the ages. The lower castes were considered

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as untouchable human beings. The dalit thinker and writer Moon, the origin of caste in Hindu holy texts:

The birth of caste hierarchy is from the Brahma; Brahmins are born from the mouth of Brahma, Kshatriyas from the arms of Brahma, Vaishyas from the thighs of Brahma and Shudras from the foot of Brahma. (Moon 87)

The Brahmins considered themselves as the mediators of god and goddesses to welfare the human beings. The caste hierarchy assigned the work for each caste of the society. For instance, Teaching and Learning were a profession of the Brahmins only, Protection and Security was the responsibility of work of Kshatriyas, Commerce and Business was to be dealt with the Vaishyas and Shudra had been confined to serve all the upper sections against none of the wages. Shudras' survival was dependent on the mercy of the upper caste groups. Caste created inequality in an Indian social order and shaped the narrow-minded among the higher castes exploited the lower castes socially, economically, mentally and politically. Consequently; violence, injustices, and corruption by the upper castes manipulated the Indian society. The status of woman in all the castes was like Shudras. Woman and Shudras were supposed to be a slave. Woman was kept away from social, educational, economic and political kinds of freedom. Though the upper caste woman had several freedoms to take decision but Dalit woman did not have any kind of liberty. Her social life was very miserable and sorrowful. She was supposed as a sub-human being and inferior to the male counterpart. She was three-timed oppressed based on caste, patriarchy and poverty. Dr. Ambedkar points out the condition of dalit women:

Throughout her life, the Indian woman had to depend on the male counterpart. 'This is only another way of saying that, turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have economic reform unless you kill this monster.' (Ambedkar, 58)

Caste had been the devil in Dalit woman's life. The intellectual work was given to the upper castes and the physical work to the non-Brahmins. At the same time, the dirty works used to be given to the lower castes against which they didn't receive any wages. Therefore, Dalits did not have any source of their livelihood. They had been made to survive a pitiable life.

The caste hierarchy still exist from ancient period to now-a-days. The conspicuous caste hierarchal phenomenon still works in the contemporary social system. The devil of caste is working throughout the life of the existing Indian people. It is widely supposed that the Indian social order is secular but on the other hand, the Indian social system is based on the caste hierarchy. It has been created the anti-social and anti-national impact in so-called secular India. Therefore, there is a lot of unemployment existed and also we find the

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intellectual, mental, political, economic, and social and sexual exploitations. The manipulation of all these elements is found in the writings of Kandasamy. She depicts these facts in her poem, *Fleeting*. She says:

*Caste perennially remains
a scheming bulldozer
crushing only the Dalits-
And renewing, revoking our bitter past. (Kandasamy 47)*

The powerful section of the Indian society never wants to eliminate the caste hierarchy from India. For the welfare of select few, the caste system is maintained through every one of the possible means. As a result, a lot of welfare policies have been implemented by the Indian government but beneficiary of the fruits of the policies is the upper caste section only. In the name of such policies, Dalits are deceived and at the times they are deprived of the help of cunning endeavors. On the other hand, due to 'Dalit Movements' the awareness is sprouted in Dalits. They were being aware of their own conditions at the time. They are disclosing the conspiracy of the upper caste sections through their writings. For instance, Dalit writer and thinker Kamble describes the realistic social condition of Dalits in the following words:

*Near about thirty-five thousand, Dalit violence, cases are registered per year
in India, apart from this unregistered numbers may be more. (Kamble 20)*

Though dalits are adverse socially and economically but they are emotional and broad-minded human beings. However, a lot of cases are registered in the police stations concerned against atrocity, so many dalits do not want police cases and court matters because they have no any economic and political support. If they are aware of the political circumstance and hold, they would once again revolt against the ruling section. Therefore, dalits are deprived of power, such as political, cultural, educational, and moral and economic. Kandasamy describes Dalits' helplessness and dispossesses circumstance in her poem, *Prayers*:

*In an arid land of human minds
caste, yet again authored a tragedies
enough reason to think some God (Kandasamy 57)*

The artificial causes of the depravity of dalits are being talked, and conveniently they are made unaware of the truth. In the process, the lower castes are treated as they are the outsiders in the region, called India. The castiest political leaders neglect deliberately the issues pertaining worst existence of dalits.

The radical feminist, and Indian Dalit poetess, Mrs. Meena Kandasamy indicates the casteism, gender inequality, injustice and exploitative attitude of human being's mind in her

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Touch anthology. In her well-known poem, “Ekalaivan” we find casteism and inequality in the following poetic:

*Besides, fascist Dronacharyas warrant
Left-handed treatment. (Touch, 44)*

Kandasamy reveals modern Dronacharya’s treatment to the Dalit candidates. *Dronacharya* was /is the symbol of an ideal teacher who has given good knowledge of human values to the each and every candidate without any indifference among the pupils. Without any intentions, hopes and expectations he donated his archery knowledge to his all pupils. But the untouchable *Ekalaivan* learnt archery knowledge only by observing the acts and actions of pandvas without attending the class. By birth *Ekalaivan* an intelligent child. This brilliance of *Ekalaivan*, Dronacharya didn’t like extra ordinary intelligence and his bright future in an archery field. The only reason was that, he belonged to lower caste.

Dronacharian knew that untouchables / Dalits are emotional; they are not practical so to discourage and to lose the confidence of *Ekalaivan* Dronachrya demanded the left-handed thumb, because the left-hand thumb plays vital role in archery, without any thinking *Ekalaivan* donated his left thumb to Dronachrya. For an incident the same Dronacharian was the symbol of good teachers is also present in this modern India who never wants the intellectual progress of lower caste student. They always want saturation instead of intellectual, economic and social progress of Dalits. The caste discrimination and inequality, inferiority complex and injustices are indicated in Omprakash Valmiki’s autobiography *Joothan*:

Whenever I dared to ask my schoolteachers to answer my doubts, I got punished. They beat me up, gave me lower marks in the examinations. The taunts of my teachers and fellow students pierced me deeply. ‘Look at this Chuhare ka, pretending to be a Brahmin.’ (Omprakash Valmiki, 62).

Whatever the problems and predicaments occurred in the life of Omprakash Valmiki in his student life. It was very horrible experiences in an independence India. In early 1960-70 this untouchability existed in the democratic and secular India.

Instead of casteism, patriarchy is more dangerous to Dalit woman. Dalit woman is being exploited physically and psychologically in the male dominated society. They are being exploited twice, firstly from their own family members and secondly from the upper caste people. In the following poetic lines Kandasamy indicates it:

Two severe syllables
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implied in her presence
Perpetuate the assault.... (Kandasamy, 58)

Dalit woman caught between casteism and patriarchy. It indicates the psychological and physical harassment of Dalit woman. Even though they are being assaulted and scolded from the male side. Male used to talk with obscene language. Kandasamy's touch anthology indicates the modern Dalit revolution, in each poetic word, there indicates revolutionary language which inspires the readers to protest exploitations and injustices, self-centeredness and corruption.

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