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## WOMEN MARGINALITY IN P.SIVAKAMI'S THE GRIP OF CHANGE

### Article Particulars

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### Abstract

*The Grip of Change has a significant and massive influence on the society as it depicts first hand experiences of Dalit women. P.Sivakami depicts a true and realistic picture of the darker side of the Indian society. Here the darker side indicates the worst culture of our Indian society by discriminating people for their caste. Specifically women suffer a lot due to marginalization. Accessing the values of life, Dalit people are always suppressed by the higher hierarchy of caste. The protagonist of the novel Thangam faces many problems in life for her survival as a Dalit woman that too as a widow in this discriminated society. Dalit should be only laborers for upper caste fellows. They should abide their masters' words as such. Dalit people are denoted as downtrodden, outcaste, untouchables.... God never differentiate people and there is no difference in His creation, but people divide themselves by caste. Dalit have no dignity or respect especially women in this patriarchal society. The paper concentrates on the sufferings of Dalit women. Women are thrice marginalized: Economically, Gender based and caste based. It represents the entire Dalit community where there is no voice to shout and no hands to rise.*

**Keywords:** Dalit, Gender, Caste, Marginalization, Discrimination, Patriarchal.

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### Introduction

The present paper deals with marginalization of women with regards to P.Sivakami in her novel *The Grip of Change*. Women are second- grade gender in this patriarchal society. The case is too worse with Dalit women, because they are twice marginalized; as a Dalit and as a woman. The cruel subjugation by the upper caste results in shame for Dalit. Dalit literature itself is the first hand experiences of Dalit community. It is really pathetic and sympathetic to know that a literature has come into existence just to bring out the sufferings of a particular community into light.

*The Grip of Change* highlights the longing of Dalit to resolve them in this society with their own appraisals among other communities. P.Sivakami, an important Tamil writer, is critical of the Dalit community. She works hard for the upliftment of her own community

and wants to do some justice for her people by creating awareness. She said that the ruling classes which form this elite section have no regard for the poor and the recent increase in prices state that, even schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme does not result or work towards empowering the poor but enslaving them.

The word 'Dalit' refers to all the exploited and disadvantaged people, but in its particular sense, it is used as synonym only to those who are socially oppressed, who being excluded from the mainstream of the society, have been living under the stigma of untouchability since centuries. The novel brings forth the real sufferings of a Dalit woman. The protagonist of the play is Thangam, a poor widow belongs to parayar community suffers not only for being a Dalit but also for being a woman. She faces triple marginalization viz. economic oppression, gender subordination and caste discrimination. She is victimized even by her own community men as she has no support. In the patriarchal society she is raped, threatened and beaten up. Thangam is misused by everybody who wants. There is no word or no support for her by anybody. She seems to be a public property that can be used by all.

Thangam is left uncared even by her family members after her husband's death. So, she works hard for her survival in Udayar's sugarcane field. One day she is raped by her master in sugarcane field. As a poor woman that too as a Dalit woman she is unable to expose it out or complaint against the upper caste Udayar. Udayar has good wealth, power and political background. So, Thangam remains silent and just worry for her downtrodden life and weeps always. Udayar takes this as very good advantage and uses her whenever he wants. One day Udayar's brother see Udayar and Thangam together and conveys the news to Kamalam, Udayar's wife. Her brothers beat Thangam cruelly for her adultery until she bleed.

Thangam is unable to tolerate after the incident and goes to Kathamuthu, the parayar community leader and seeks help. Instead of giving a solution for the ravishness by the upper caste man, he advises her to choose a man and marry from her own caste. Further Kathamuthu said:

"Upper caste women commit adultery, is that addressed in the panchayat? Can we punish those women? They beat her up because we are lower caste, poor, and have no protection" (38)

Thangam finds no right solution for her problem and trouble. She thinks that her leader would help her but now she is helpless. Finally, Thangam strengthens her mind and with brave files a complaint against Udayar in police station. As she files complaint, the matter is leaked to everyone in the village. Udayar's wife and her brother are so angry and abuse Thangam for her act. Thangam's act enraged Udayar. He never thought that a lower caste laborer would betray him. He said that the poor Dalit woman should be grateful for a man like Udayar to have touched her, instead she betrayed him. Also he said:

“Ungrateful whore! Even if she was, hurt by the hand adorned with gold! A parachi could not have ever dreamt of being touched by a man like me! My touch was boon granted for penance performed in her earlier births! And then the dirty bitch betrays me! How can I face the world with my name thus polluted” (31)

The above quoted words clearly state that the upper caste people think only of their prestige in the society as the name gets spoiled but not the life of the affected woman. Udayar's words flow spontaneously just to degrade Thangam but didn't worry for the incident happen. Lower caste people are not able to fight against upper caste because they need to go and work only in their fields. On the other hand, people are not united with each other. They divide by groups among themselves.

At a certain point upper caste people in rage plan to take revenge and hire workers for their fields from the neighboring village and pay more for them, than the usual. Policemen enter the village and make the situation too worse instead of preventing the cruelty. Kathamuthu talks in favor of Thangam and demands Paranchothi Udayar a sum of twenty thousand rupees as compensation for Thangam. Udayar first denys but later accepts to offer ten thousand rupees. As she gets some support from her own community people especially through Kathamuthu, she feels happy and consoles herself. So, Thangam believes her leader to the core as she is innocent but he deceived her. One night Thangam is offered arrack by Kathamuthu's wife and later he physically abuses her and forces her to settle down in his house as his third wife. Thangam is not interested in that but she is forced. Not even a word can be uttered against them. Finally she should accept and live there by saying that's her fate. The state of Dalit has no drastic change so far.

In August 2012, Gulf News reporter Nilima Pathak questioned Sivakami; Could you site some recent examples regarding discrimination against Dalits? She answered that,

1. Due budget share is not allotted to Dalits and whatever is assigned, is not fully spent. The state governments are not bothered about monitoring such irregularities.
2. Often, cases of atrocities against Dalits are not registered and only a few accused are punished.
3. The media grew suspicious when a batch of 20 people from Tamil Nadu got through Public Service examination from Ambedkar Colony in Arur in Dharmapuri district. People recommended a probe to find out whether the question paper had been leaked! In contrast, a couple of years ago, when more than 30 persons had passed the same examination from Ayakudi, near Palani, the village was honored for its achievement.

Caste discrimination prevails the same till date. Gradual development can be seen but the state of living is unchanged for Dalit women. On the whole, men see women as an object not as a living being. Women also have their own well and wish, expect respect, dignity and happiness in life. The worst thinking of men can be changed only when women stands independently. Women should have the will power to live boldly

and raise questions against men, when he goes wrong. Women need to work and earn for their living and should not be fearful. Education and earning would change the life of women and make her happy.

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