

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The loud voice of protest is heard in Dalit writing today with reverberation and rage. The materialization of Dalit literature has a great historical impact in India. It has hit a crucial point which arouses their awareness for creating their individuality. It has given sufficient motivation and approach to the writers, elevating the characters from the nomadic, tribal and marginalized communities.

What Gangadhar Pantwane says about Dalit literature is quoted in the book *Dalit Literature: A Critical Exploration* by Prasad in the following manner:

To me, Dalit is not a caste
He is a man exploited by
the social and economic
traditions of this country.
. . . he does believe in
humanism. Dalit is a symbol
of change and revolution. (2)

The main function of Dalit writing is to awaken in every reader a consciousness of the oppressed Dalit, and to share the Dalit experience as if it is his own.

A nation does not prosper only on fertile soil, dense forests and ever flowing rivers. It is the healthy mindset of the people which makes a nation. A society is made up of both men and women from all segments. If women from whichever section of society is weak and exploited, it is not a healthy society. And when a society is healthy, then the

nation will march ahead. To fulfil these dreams women in general and Dalit women in particular need to be empowered for the development of the nation.

Dalits have to design their own destiny. They have to endure the pain and struggle a lot and continue to fight. It is indeed a hard and Herculean task to obtain freedom and equality, but to achieve equality they have to believe in equality, practice equality among themselves and then fight for equality. A Dalit writer records the experience of the Dalits and the pain of their burden and creates history through language. Sivakami and Imayam both beautifully brought out the radiance and elegance of the language as they describe the Dalit's struggle for emancipation, their personality, poverty, status and their place in the society, and their passive resistance against injustice. They have brought out all these in such a realistic and telling manner that the visibility of the Dalit subaltern and the political salience of embodied difference for Indian politics reflect the success of Dalit claims to human recognition. Thus they struggle for their recognition, voice and freedom and the literature written by them becomes a symbol of change and revolution.

The present study entitled “From Limits to Liminal Spaces: A Study of Select Works of Sivakami and Imayam” analyses the works of both the writers Sivakami and Imayam which are available in English translation namely *The Grip of Change* (2006), *The Taming of Women* (2011) and *Cross Section* (2014) of Sivakami and Imayam's novels *Beasts of Burden* (2001) and *Arumugam* (1999).

The main concern of these two writers is to portray the life led by the people as it is in a very realistic manner. Their own experiences as people belonging to the Dalit community help them in the realistic portrayal of the happenings and characters. The language used by these writers also is the language spoken by the people in their day

today life. Hence the portrayal of the sufferings and struggles of the Dalits is not something removed from reality but lived experiences.

The ultimate aim of Dalit literature is independence. Co-existence is a part of Dalit culture, which in reality is never accredited to them. It is also about women's emancipation, as it deals with the experiences of Dalit men and women in various social institutions such as the village community, the family, the educational system and the work place.

In the Author's notes of the book *The Grip of Change* Sivakami states, that she has used a language that has life. In her language, the nature of the Dalits is portrayed and the characters move from page to page as if they are real beings full of flesh and blood. Both writers Sivakami and Iyamam have thrown light on the customs, language, rituals and traditions of the Dalits signifying the culture and roots they stick on to.

The second chapter "Silence of the Sidelines" discusses how patriarchy prevails over and makes itself evident in various forms of discriminations, inequalities, hierarchies, inferior status and position of women in society. The harm caused to the Dalit women by violent patriarchs does not stop at the act itself; it has long-term and multiplying effects which are social, psychological and physical effects which are not being addressed. Outside of the social movements and organizations working with the community, little supportive or counselling mechanism exist to deal with caste-and-gender based violence meted out to the Dalit women. The writers also point out that to achieve all these things, time is needed. The result is that the lives of many Dalit women are underwritten by layers of trauma as they are deprived of their rights and dignity. They are like flowers born to blush unseen wasting their fragrance in the desert.

Both Sivakami and Iyamam highlight poverty as one of the major reasons for their condition that leads to sexual exploitation of the Dalit women. They not only represent the subjugation of the Dalits but also point out how they are capable of transgressing and thereby creating conditions for their deliverance. Many of Sivakami's stories are based on the agrarian rural milieu. As a Dalit woman novelist and with her first hand knowledge of the experiences of the Dalits, she talks about the lower socio economic class with its trials and tribulations and their struggle for power across genders and class even among their own peers. Sivakami focuses her attention on Dalit leadership and highlights domestic violence faced by the Dalit women. Her concern that women should wake up from their slumber, rise up and work towards their progress in a united manner is revealed in all her writings. Similarly Iyamam also has brought out through his works how the Dalits are relegated to a low level and suppressed. The condition of the women is still work as they suffer at home due to partriarchal domination.

In the third chapter "Voice of the Voiceless" the researcher has pointed out how these people who have been oppressed and suppressed for a long time struggle to find out their voice. The kind of oppression that the Dalit women face in the multilayered and complex social setup and how they have failed to get acceptable responsibility in the women's movement are also discussed in this chapter. The Dalit women have no security in this kind of society and whether literate or ignorant, she has to depend on her men-folk. Through her novels Sivakami portrays the condition of the Dalit women in the society. Women like Gowri, Kanagavalli, Nagamani, and Thangam, in *The Grip of Change* suffer at the hands of Kathamuthu. However, Gowri emerges as a courageous woman with an indomitable human spirit resisting oppression. Like Kathamuthu, Periyannan of the novel *The Taming of Women* oppresses and suppresses women and takes control over

Anandhayi and Lakshmi and his daughters Dhanam, Arul and Kala. Iyamam's *Arumugam* and *Beasts of Burden* also deal with the sufferings and pain these people undergo.

Being poor and unemployed, the Dalits are discriminated by the society. The sufferings of the women is still greater because they are women, because they are poor, and because they are Dalits. Sivakami's novels gleam with the spirit of hope and change as they try to accelerate the morale embedded deep inside the heart of the Dalits. In this chapter the Dalit characters of Sivakami are compared with the characters of writers like Om Prakash Valmiki, Tony Morrison, and Alice Walker who also have expressed their concern over discrimination in all their works. The discrimination between the upper caste and lower caste, the Black and White people and their oppressing conditions in the society are also revealed. Oppression and injustice are gifts given to the untouchables unasked.

In chapter four "Braving the Barriers", the researcher examines how Dalit literature is not only a literature. Which talks about the silence and attempt of the Dalits to find a voice but also a literature of hope which talks about their protest and resistance.

The novels are narrating the caste and class struggles while consciously foregrounding the community connection with in the caste driven society. The sense of collectivity that emerges positions the Dalits in their subalternity at the same time advocating towards social reform and human rights. Once the awareness is gained, the knowing subaltern would seek an ethical approach to land, labour and community. In the postcolonial context of development the genre of novel becomes an indispensable tool to incite public debates about the ethics of development and the question of human rights for

all classes of people. The Dalit woman is surcharged with creative potential, self awareness and thirst for liberating the lower class from the clutches of caste discrimination.

Sivakami and Iyayam in their works apart from revolting against the caste oppression, celebrate their Subaltern identity also. In the beginning Iyayam gives a testimony of his life. Dalit literature not only voices the trials and tribulations of the community but also tries to give solution to the problems. A few things like becoming aware of their condition, getting education and fighting for their cause in unity would help them to find solutions. Earlier Dalit literatures were being written in regional languages and remained obscure to the people who did not speak the languages, but now translation has increased the reach of Dalit literature. Translation has not only enabled people living in different regions of the country to know about the plight of these people, but also allowed the writers to discuss their problems so that base of solving them can also be given.

The untiring efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, the ceaseless campaigns of social reformers and the subsequent measures of political and social forces have borne fruits. The legal protection for the 'Dalits' provided in the constitution laws of the country and the declaration of political rights to them have certainly lifted their social status. The Hindu castes have been officially classified and graded and the untouchables, the coolies and the oppressed people are given all the rights enjoyed by their fellow human beings. The doors of education are opened to them. It can be stated with certainty that, Anand's novels have contributed their mite to this process of change of attitude of the people, and the 'untouchables' are now called Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The social changes, the political measures and legislations have greatly altered

the situation of the 'Dalits' largely. It is all due to the efforts of Gandhiji and novelists like Mulk Raj Anand that such welcoming changes have taken place.

Dalit literature has emerged with so many writers talking about different issues in their works. Many writers are talking about gender-related issues, which had been ignored earlier. Many Dalit women writers are writing about their social position in patriarchal social setup that exists within their communities and outside. Now, they are articulating themselves in various forms and writing about oppression related to class, gender, religion etc. other than caste. It is encouraging that more and more Dalit writings are now being translated into English. In the mean time, Dalit studies have been introduced in several universities in India and abroad. Though the occurrences of opposition against various forms of injustice were noted even earlier, yet such opposition continues more conspicuously now and the untouchables and Dalit section appears to follow these with more strength, determination, political support and defense of law. Obviously, they have acquired a different identity, but they have still to go a long way towards becoming a part of democratic society to be evolved so that their unique identity of Dalits or Scheduled Class gets dissolved in that civil society; which is supposed to be still in the process of making. Today, Dalit writers have their literary foundation with ideology and have political support also. Thus, the output of Dalit literature is growing day by day. And, we can hope, one day, it will establish itself as the most significant part of world literature. Both writers Sivakami's and Imayam's texts are replete with references to and the tropes and images of story-telling textually and the processes of signification narrative in short.

Narrative hybridization is achieved through the merging of three distinct registers in the both writers – Sivakami and Imayam – the mythic, the historical and the

immediate. The individual creates the language of the self, which interacts with and draws upon the language of the tribe/community and, finally, the language of history.

Sivakami's *The Grip of Change* opens with the hysterical ranting of a woman Thangam, who has been violently abused. She peppers her account of beatings at the hands of upper caste men with proverbs and aphorisms. Sivakami offers multiple voice within the ravings of the abused woman in order to foreground the Dalit condition. The reference to their local god, who she believes, will avenge her humiliation is the mythic voice. The historical voice is subsumed into these two when they express the poor Dalit's inability to go to court to claim her dead husband's share of land.

The final chapter concludes by saying how the Dalit writers Sivakami and Iyamam have manifested in their masterpieces, the despair and dejection of the people, the fear and torments faced by the women, the self-centered attitude of the leaders, the incurable need for a revolutionary leader, the submissive servitude of the Dalits, their anxiety about their future, the carnal desire of men and women, the prejudice imposed on the lower caste women, the habit of being blind to the crimes and sins of the upper caste men and women and the burning flame of intra-Dalit strife.

Though the novelists have explored the darker side of the marginalized society, both writers presented the brighter side also. They have given even the solution for the persisting plague of the caste-discrimination, slavery, intra-Dalit strife and poverty, which should consist of Dalit unity, intra-caste marriage, good leadership and education. And they indicated the inevitability of accepting and welcoming change in the lives of the Dalits and also in the society. The novels have laid down a path of hope to be travelled by the Dalits.

Thus the thesis provided an insight into the issues of Dalits, their submission and their poverty. It also illustrates how women of low caste are victimized and how they are harassed at the work place. Sivakami's characters like Kathamuthu, Periyannan, Gowri, Anandhayi, Thangam, Lakshmi, etc., and Iyamam's Arokkyam, Savuri, Peter, Sahayam, Mary, Joseph, Arumugam, Dhanabhagam, Bhagam, Chinnapponnu, Dharmamoorthy etc., have been analyzed. Both writers works serve as a great source of inspiration for the oppressed sections of people to get new and fresh energy to live with a sense of honour and dignity.

The writers firmly believe that only through education Dalits can fight against injustice and exploitation. They feel that social, political and economic discrimination can be overcome only when Dalits become empowered through education.

The empowerment of the Dalits is not entirely in the hands of others but in their own hands, that is through education and unity. Dalits are in quest of their identity and this quest for identity and recognition has always been their unfulfilled wish which has been disturbing them as a primordial image in their dream. This in turn is known as collective unconsciousness. Only when this dream is realized and becomes a reality, the Dalits would become empowered. Sivakami, who directed by the superego of her conscience, has become an empowered woman and has achieved independence from the traditional slavery. Through his realistic portrayal of the characters, writer Iyamam also has talked about the need to bring about a change in the thinking and attitude of the Dalits.

Literature has always been used by writers as a weapon to fight against the traditional social order, norms, way of life, hypocrisy outmoded customs, as well as the

political system. Protest in literature has always existed. Though Dalit literature is written in different Languages, different geographical backgrounds, there is a common denominator – suffering. Hence dalit is mobilizing resistance which is to fight against all forms of oppression which they have been experiencing for ages. These Dalit youths found inspiration in the movement of blacks in the distant land of North America; their black literature and Black Panther became the role models for them. This protest expanded its first expression in the form of a new literature called Dalit Literature. The highest purpose of Dalit writing is not beauty of craft, but realism of experience. The most significant attribute is that Dalit literature displays Dalit consciousness. It is a belief in rebellion against the caste system, recognizing the human being as its focus. Ambedkarite thought is the inspiration for this consciousness. Sometimes Dalit literature has been criticized as being propagandist. Today Dalit Literature includes not only the writings about Indian suppressed people but also other groups throughout the world that are relegated to a secondary position by the honored class

Earlier, discriminations on the basis of caste and gender were prevalent. Dalits were not allowed to enter temples, tea shops, schools, and in upper caste settlements. In spite of these deprivation and exploitation, Dalits attempt to claim their rights of education and employment. However, they are often encountering strong resistance from the upper caste people, resulting in the inhuman assault, torture, rapes, massacres and other forms of atrocities. Though the socio-economic life of the Dalits is improving, the cases of humiliation and discrimination of Dalits have been accounted in the literature. The caste animosity throughout the narrations is heartbreaking. They made deep impact on the lives of the authors. It is the actual behavior toward members of another group and

involves excluding or restricting members of one group from opportunities that are available to other groups. Indeed, all these authors advocated education and self-reliance.

Freedom or independence is not given, but achieved. It is time that the Dalits realized this with their hopes and dreams in their eyes and heart. All they have to do is to step forward without fear, welcoming the change of getting their dream fulfilled and their becoming empowered. Dalit literature serves as a lighthouse in directing the Dalits. It is not only a literature of protest but also of humaneness. The popularity and acceptance of Dalit literature itself signifies the progress of the Dalits at large.

The present study offers scope for further research in the following areas:

- A Comparative study of Imayam / Sivakami with other writers regarding the themes and narrative techniques.
- Empowerment of Dalits
- Man – Woman relationship in the works of Imayam / Sivakami.
- Characterization
- The Dalit characters and non- Dalit characters.