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REVERBERATION OF REPRESSIVE POWER AGAINST WOMAN ACROSS CENTURIES: A
CRITICAL READING OF THE NOVEL *SUGANDHI ENNA AANDAL DEVANAYAKI*

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The loudest cry of women is often marked as her silence. It is a paradoxical statement, but in the long run of the development and improvement of humanity, women could cry only behind the walls, and the male chauvinistic society celebrated her silence across centuries. Voice of women against the hardest repressive power is not of an age, it started vibrating centuries ago. When every rules, value systems and doctrines of a society made its foundation according to the ideologies of men, the lives of women couldn't find a place in the main part of the history. When epics and mythical stories celebrated the quality of woman and womanhood, those characters were also under the control of heroic powers and such celebration didn't take place in the real society. Instead of that women were suppressed as a mere object for seeking physical pleasures and she was denied of education, personal opinion, decision making and suffrage for a long time.

As a result of untiring and invincible spirit woman could acquire education, employment, and many exposure to decide anything in her life. Even though society has improved to a great extent, physical and mental torture against women is still continuing. In the post-modern age many writers are exploring such areas of marginalisation, identity crisis and social discrimination. Through such works people can understand the various trauma which they undergoes based on gender, class, race, religion, colour, nationality and social status.

Sugandhi Enna Aandal Devanayaki is one such novel written by T.D. Ramakrishnan, an established contemporary Indian novelist and Translator. He is well-known for his other novel *Francis Ittikora* along with this. He has honoured with Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award and Vayalar Award. Ramakrishnan, who lived in Tamilnadu for the most part of his career, is also deeply associated with Tamil Literature. He introduced several Tamil novels to the people in Kerala and has won E.K. Divakaran Potti Award for the best translator. *Alpha* was his first novel which is written as a science fiction, but the story of *Sugandhi* took him to the mount of fame and acceptance as an amazing novelist.

The novel *Sugandhi Enna Aandal Devanayaki* is set in Sri Lanka and the plot develops through the civil war between the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam). It records the history of atrocities on women. The novel revolves around a film making crew in Post-War Lanka who comes there to make a film on Rajani Thiranagama. She was a human rights activist and feminist and she is best known for her contribution to *The Broken Palmyra*, a book she co-authored with three other members of the University Teachers for Human Rights, Jaffna and it documented the atrocities committed allegedly by LTTE, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), and the Sri Lankan forces on Tamil civilian population in Jaffna. In 1989, Sri Lanka's Northern Province lost one of its most prominent human rights defenders following the death of Rajani, who was gunned down by the Tamil Tigers.

When the novel begins, Peter Jeevanandam, the Indian script writer is coming to collect details for his movie. He is the narrator of this story. He goes to the D.P. (Divine Pearl) which is the secret centre of Sri Lankan army, where they have imprisoned the LTTE activists. The crew has come to make a picture entitled as "Woman behind the fall of Tigers" in the production of Transnationals Picture. But later his story goes behind

Sugandhi, and he cannot complete his dream film on Rajani. From the DP he meets Thamizholi, who was the woman chief commander of Viduthalai Tigers. She was suppressed mentally and physically during the Sri Lankan imprisonment. She was still very adamant with her sparkling eyes like a tigress confined in a zoo.

Sugandhi was her co-activist and Peter had met her before, but now nobody knows about her. When Peter asks Thamizholi about her, she says that Sugandhi was associated with the 'Karupp' magazine for sometimes. In his search he found out that Sugandhi had written stories and poems under the pen name 'Eazhathachi' and the magazine was stopped by killing Sivachidambaram, the publisher and head of Sri Lankan refugees. There was an advertisement regarding the publication of Sugandhi's autobiography and the magazine was stopped for stopping the publication of her life. The autobiography entitled as "Penporaaliyin Vaazhaki Kurippukal" couldn't reach the society, but Peter could find out its first chapter alone and it was dedicated to him, her lover Peter Jeevanandam.

Sugandhi was her name in Iyakkam and the name given by her parents was Aandal Devanayaki. She was born and brought up till three years in Colombo as the daughter of Rathina Sabhapathi who was a Tamil Professor at Colombo University and Kanakaavalli, a gynaecologist in the Castle Street Hospital. She had a brother named Soorya Jyothi. Sugandhi don't remember the face of any of them. Her memory starts from the cruel murder of the three on 1983 July 4. Unexpectedly a group of people killed her father, mother and brother and burned the car Sugandhi, the little child was thrown away and she laid unconsciously between hundreds of corps. After that she was brought up in a refugee camp in Colombo and in the surrounding places. Her life in the refugee camp was witnessing very cruel and inhumane treatments. There was no proper food and refugees were sleeping in the plain floor, and the Sinhala camp officials tortured her mentally and physically. And her unfortunate childhood made her a viduthalai activist. She thought Iyakkam was a revolutionary organization, but she was wrong. She was treated more horribly there than from the Sri Lankan camp.

But more than fifty percentage of this novel talks about the 'story of Devanayaki' which was published in the web magazines such as 'Meenakshi Rajarathinam, Karupp' etc. The story of Devanayaki which was found out from the palm leaves which thousands of years old and written in the Pali language is again retold in such magazines by the Meenakshi liberal activists. The story of Devanayaki begins in the closing century of first period of A.D. from the Kanthaloora Shaala in Thiruvananthapuram. She was the eighth queen of King Mahendra Varma. But Devanayaki became the queen of Raja Raja Chola, and lover of his son later. Ten she comes to Lanka to take revenge on Sinhala king Maheendan, but she was failed and murdered brutally. And the Chola king attacked Lanka and defeated the Sinhala King, but couldn't find anything about Devanayaki. Still she is worshiped as great Tamil rebel and revolutionary activist.

This mythical character of Aandal Devanayaki becomes a mythical past of Sugandhi, the Aandal Devanayaki. Through the life of Sugandhi (the myth and real) and many other characters like Poomani Selvanayagam, Juliet, Gayathri Perera, T.D. Ramakrishnan shows the various women characters with powerful will and courage but defeated under the repressive power of men such as Maheenda, Mahendravarma, military officers, the Sri Lankan president Mahindra Rajapakse etc.

So this novel connects the story of women across centuries and shows how the repressive power against them was reverberating through out these years. It is the story of thrice marginalised group of people based on gender, race and class. T.D. Ramakrishnan has tried to lighten the darkest history in the world's most horrible genocide and political unrest.

Work Cited

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