

Rising of Dalits: We Will Rebuild Worlds

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Meena Kandasamy

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Meena Kandasamy: Voice of the Voiceless

"They tried to bury us but they didn't know we were seeds" said anonymous. "Angry young man" is a phrase often used to describe male youth who stood against all the social injustices. But how often do we see an angry young woman comes out of her family, social, and cultural and gender cocoon to fight the injustices imposed on her?

Here we see an angry young woman, Meena Kandasamy. She can also be called as a voice of the voiceless. She is vehement angry with the two thousand years old suppression by the upper caste community on her community, Untouchables or Dalits.

We Rebuild Worlds

In the poem, "We Rebuild Worlds", she recollects the sufferings of the Dalits. Like the phoenix rising from the ashes, she hopes that one day, Dalits will build their world from the remnants of their hardships.

In the slightly modified words of Langston Hughes,
Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am,
And be ashamed-
I, *too*, am human.

Complex Beings

Human beings are the most complex animals on earth, they enjoy the luxury of being called as “the intelligent species”. They have something that no other animal or plant species have on this earth, the sixth sense. In every species, survival of the fittest is common, every animal family has its own alpha and determination of alpha is not predefined but determined only after birth. Only in human, alpha is predetermined even before birth through family, gender, race, caste, creed and complexation. And in modern day India one thing still prevails, caste.

Dalits

Dalits mean “oppressed” or “suppressed” in Sanskrit. Dalits are the people who belonged to lower caste. They are oppressed on the basis of their birth. They are denied their basic rights and made to do menial jobs for their livelihood for generations. Some of the outrageous practices are imposed on them such as two tumbler system. They are not allowed to enter the temples. They are not allowed to take water from public pumps. Every village has an outcaste colony. Dalits must reside in those colonies. They are not allowed to enter the lanes of higher caste colonies. They must call out their arrival to avoid ‘polluting’ the higher caste people.

One of the atrocious practices is the shadow of a Dalit person must not fall on higher caste person. The children of these high castes are not allowed to play or befriend lower caste person. The Dalits are not given proper jobs nor sufficient amount of salary to run the family. The young Dalit girls and boys who fall in love with the higher caste persons are killed in the name of honor killing. When the Dalits try to fight their oppressors, they are beaten up and killed mercilessly. The caste segregation begins from the time of birth till the time of death. It is irremediable curse that follows the generations.

Pioneers of Dalit literature

Mahatma Pule, Savitribai and Dr. Ambedkar are the pioneers of Dalit literature. They brought socio – Cultural Revolution through their writings. Many followed their footpaths and Dalit literature was established as an important aspect of Indian writing. Though higher caste authors touched upon the untouchability and caste discrimination, they gave minor reforms and solutions and largely supported the continuation of this evil practice. So, it led to the emergence of Dalit literature and writing which stressed upon their identity and challenged the higher caste writers. They unapologetically expressed their anger in their words and lashed out the caste based patriarchal society. One such writer is MeenaKandasamy. She established herself as Dalit writer who cries out against this depraved institution in her writings.

Ilavenil Meena Kandasamy

Ilavenil Meena Kandasamy (born 1984) is an Indian poet, fiction writer, translator and activist who is based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. Most of her works are centred on feminism and the Caste Annihilation Movement of the contemporary Indian milieu.

As of 2013, Meena has published two collections of poetry namely, *Touch* (2006) and *Ms. Militancy* (2010). Two of her poems have won accolades in all-India poetry competitions. From 2001-2002, she edited *The Dalit*, a bi-monthly alternative English magazine of the Dalit Media Network. She has also represented India at the University of Iowa's International Writing Program and was a Charles Wallace India Trust Fellow at the University of Kent, Canterbury, United Kingdom.

Apart from her literary works, she is vocal about various contemporary political issues relating to caste, corruption, violence, and women's rights in more ways than one. She has an influential and regular social media presence, through her Facebook and Twitter handles. She also writes columns for platforms like *Outlook India* and *The Hindu*, occasionally. This was primarily brought to light during the beef controversy at the Osmania University in Hyderabad in 2012.

Beef Eating Controversy

In this poem “We will rebuild worlds”, Meena Kandhasamy like Kali, the destroyer of evil forces wants to destroy the evil forces of casteism. She tells how the passion of Dalits is murdered by the higher caste people. She tells, “but the crimes of passion/our passion/ your crimes/ poured poison and pesticide through the ears-nose-mouth” (12-14). Higher caste people committed barbarous act passionately like pouring acid on Dalits or hanging them publicly to protect their caste. She also accuses, “you wanted / to teach / other boys and other girls / the lessons of / how to / whom to / when to / where to / continue their caste lines” (15-17). The children of higher caste people are encouraged to continue the caste fanaticism by promising heaven when they die. They attain peace in these sadistic acts. Due to their cruel acts, the Dalits are reduced to voiceless whispers and are treated lower than animals.

Learn to Fight with Spontaneity

She believes, “We will learn/ how to fight/ with the substantial spontaneity/” (31). Their counterfeit smiles seek to sell out the Dalits into soulless worlds. Writer warns that Dalits one day will singe their many skins like caste, race etc. They will burn their filthy rich skin which the higher caste people hope to carry into their death. She hopes, “So / now/ upon a future time/there will be a revolution.” (33-34). There will come a revolution. Dalits will learn to fight for their rights. They will express their anger and encourage the coming generations to show their anger until the caste system is got ridden off. The thunder and lightning is the indicator of the approaching storm. The wrath of these dalit writers is also an indicator of the revolution of the Dalits. Dalits will never rest. “It will begin / when the oppressors will wince/ every time they hear our voices and their sparkly silence will never be taken for a sacrament.” (49-50).

Two Questions

Dalits will ask two questions, “India, what is the caste of the sperm? / India, what is the cost of life?” (53-54). Their words will flood the whole nation in rage. They will fight for their

ancestors. They will fight to give a better place for their children to live in. They will fight to live, to be treated as humans equally.

In the Minds of Uneducated and Educated

This caste system dwells not only in the minds of uneducated but also in the minds of educated. City is considered as the place where caste discrimination is not or less practiced. The couples who cannot beget children seek for sperm donors from their castes. Though the donor's identity is kept anonymous, their identity is still sought out for the identification. The practice of carrying their caste as sur-name is considered as pride. The villagers discriminate others only on the basis of caste. But the city people discriminate others not only on the basis of caste but also on the basis of class. Hence, the fellow dalit is discriminated by the person from the same community.

The Dalits are denied the freedom to be educated. The practice of communal reservation is targeted now more than never. Dalits are considered as thieves and are accused that they are stealing the seats of 'deserved' person. Their freedom of expression is suppressed. However, more Dalits question this outrageous practice which gives hope for the future where every human is treated equally.

The Dalits should no more be denied of their basic rights of education and respectful living. Everyone must start to consider Dalits as human beings. Every good change begins with a fight and revolution. Everyone must revolt against this evil system and must create a better place for the generations to come which is cruel free and everyone is treated equally. It is moral and social responsibility of every man born on this earth.

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