

Domestic and Social Endurance of Women in Sivakami's *Anandhayi*: A Study of Patriarchy, Resistance, and Translation

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Abstract—This paper examines the domestic and social endurance of women portrayed in Sivakami's novel *Anandhayi*. It highlights the struggles, oppression, and challenges faced by women in a patriarchal society where husbands often exercise physical and emotional dominance over their wives. The women in the novel are left with little choice but to submit to patriarchal norms and social expectations. The study also emphasizes the importance of translation in introducing the works of eminent Tamil writers to a wider audience. Translation serves as a bridge between cultures, enabling readers from different linguistic backgrounds to appreciate Tamil culture, traditions, values, and literary richness. Furthermore, Sivakami's contribution to Tamil literature stands as an inspiration for aspiring writers and translators. The translation of such significant works encourages English language students to engage in translation studies and promote cross-cultural understanding.

Index Terms—Patriarchy, Endurance, Domestic Violence, Resistance, Translation, Feminism

I. Introduction

Shashi Deshpande observes that women's writing emerges from the conflict between a woman's perception of herself as a human being and society's perception of her as merely a woman. This conflict shapes women's experiences and becomes a central theme in feminist literature.

Sivakami, a prominent Dalit-feminist writer, former IAS officer, and social activist, has made significant contributions to Tamil literature. Her novel *Anandhayi* (2000) presents a realistic portrayal of the lives of rural women in India. Through her characters, Sivakami exposes the oppressive social structures that restrict women's freedom and agency. The women in the novel are subjected to various forms of discrimination and are compelled to conform to male-dominated societal norms.

II. *Anandhayi*: The Embodiment of Sacrifice and Endurance

Anandhayi is portrayed as a devoted wife, mother, and homemaker who dedicates her life to the welfare of her family. Despite her unwavering commitment, she receives little affection or support from her husband, Periyannan. Periyannan represents patriarchal authority and male chauvinism. He engages in multiple extramarital relationships, including a secret affair with Muthakka, a distant relative who assists

Aanandhayi during pregnancy. His actions reveal his selfish nature and complete disregard for his wife's emotional and physical well-being.

Although deeply hurt by her husband's betrayal, Aanandhayi suppresses her emotions and suffers silently. Even during pregnancy, she is subjected to physical abuse and humiliation. Her submission reflects the traditional expectation that women should remain patient, obedient, and self-sacrificing.

III. Periyannan: A Symbol of Male Chauvinism

Periyannan, a road-construction contractor, spends most of his time away from home. During these absences, he neglects his responsibilities as a husband and father while pursuing relationships with other women. Whenever he returns home, his visits are primarily intended to assert authority rather than provide emotional support. He treats Aanandhayi as a subordinate rather than an equal partner and often blames her for every problem within the household.

Despite being solely responsible for managing the home, raising five children, caring for her elderly mother-in-law, and working in the fields, Aanandhayi is frequently subjected to violence and criticism.

IV. Vellaiammal: The Voice of Experience and Support

Vellaiammal, Aanandhayi's mother-in-law, serves as a moral anchor throughout the novel. She openly criticizes male domination and provides emotional support to Aanandhayi during difficult times.

Having endured similar hardships in her own marriage, Vellaiammal understands the suffering of women. Her husband was an alcoholic who frequently abused her. These experiences shape her compassionate attitude towards Aanandhayi.

She encourages Aanandhayi to focus on her children, property, and personal strength rather than depend emotionally on a husband who constantly neglects her. Through her wisdom and resilience, Vellaiammal emerges as a symbol of female solidarity.

V. Women's Shared Experiences of Oppression

Apart from Aanandhayi's story, the novel presents several subplots that reveal the widespread nature of women's suffering.

VI. Vadakathiyaal and the Impact of Alcoholism

Vadakathiyaal's husband spends his earnings on alcohol and frequently assaults her. His addiction forces the family into poverty and prevents their daughter Poongavanam from continuing her education.

Through Vadakathiyaal's experiences, Sivakami highlights how alcoholism contributes significantly to domestic violence and economic instability within families.

VII. Education and Patriarchal Control

The novel also addresses the denial of education to girls. Society views female education as unnecessary because daughters are expected to marry and leave their parental homes.

Poongavanam's education is discontinued due to financial difficulties and patriarchal attitudes. Similarly, Maariyaaye is forced to stop attending school after attaining puberty. These incidents demonstrate how gender discrimination limits opportunities for women.

VIII. Neelaveni: A Victim of Social Double Standards

Neelaveni, the sister of Kangaaniammal, is portrayed as a beautiful woman whose life is marked by exploitation and social stigma.

During her youth, several men, including her teacher, take advantage of her innocence. However, society blames only Neelaveni while excusing the men responsible for her suffering. Her experiences expose the double standards that govern male and female sexuality.

Despite being a victim, she carries the burden of shame, while the men involved continue to enjoy social respect and acceptance.

IX. Domestic Violence and Female Submission

A recurring theme throughout the novel is domestic violence. Women are often treated as their husbands' property and subjected to physical abuse.

Aanandhayi tolerates Periyannan's violence because she has nowhere else to go and feels responsible for the welfare of her children. Her endurance reflects the difficult realities faced by many rural women who remain trapped in abusive marriages due to social and economic constraints.

At one point, overwhelmed by despair, Aanandhayi contemplates suicide. However, the sight of her sleeping child prevents her from taking this drastic step. Her maternal love becomes the source of her strength and survival.

X. Lakshmi: Rebellion Against Patriarchy

Lakshmi enters Periyannan's life as his mistress. Unlike Aanandhayi, she is outspoken and unwilling to tolerate oppression.

Initially deceived by Periyannan, Lakshmi eventually realizes that she is merely an object used to satisfy his desires. When she begins to resist his control, Periyannan responds with violence.

Unlike Aanandhayi, Lakshmi fights back physically and verbally. Her rebellion challenges traditional expectations of female obedience. However, repeated abuse, confinement, and social isolation gradually destroy her spirit.

Unable to escape her suffering, Lakshmi ultimately commits suicide. Her tragic end reflects the devastating consequences of patriarchal oppression.

XI. Male Chauvinism and the Objectification of Women

The novel exposes the deeply rooted patriarchal belief that women exist primarily to serve men. Men enjoy social freedom and sexual privilege, while women are expected to remain loyal, obedient, and chaste.

Periyannan's behavior illustrates this double standard. He maintains multiple relationships without facing social condemnation, whereas women are harshly judged for even minor deviations from accepted norms.

Through various characters, Sivakami demonstrates how women are often viewed as objects of male desire rather than as individuals with rights and aspirations.

XII. Sivakami's Command over the Tamil Language

One of Sivakami's greatest strengths lies in her powerful use of language. Drawing from personal experiences and observations, she vividly portrays the realities of Dalit women's lives.

Her narrative style effectively conveys themes of oppression, injustice, resilience, and survival. The use of imagery, symbolism, and metaphor enhances the emotional impact of the novel and enables readers to connect deeply with the characters' experiences.

XIII. The Importance of Translation

Translation plays a crucial role in making literary works accessible to a broader audience. It allows readers from different linguistic backgrounds to engage with the cultural and social realities reflected in regional literature.

A successful translator must possess a thorough understanding of the author's socio-cultural context as well as the historical background of the text. Through translation, significant literary works can transcend linguistic boundaries and contribute to intercultural dialogue.

The translation of Sivakami's works introduces global readers to Tamil culture, traditions, social issues, and feminist perspectives. It also encourages students and scholars to undertake translation studies and promote regional literature internationally.

XIV. Conclusion

The women in *Anandhayi* belong to different age groups and social backgrounds, yet they share common experiences of oppression and suffering. Despite these hardships, they support one another emotionally and demonstrate remarkable resilience.

Vellaiammal provides guidance and strength to Aanandhayi, while Aanandhayi sympathizes with Lakshmi despite viewing her as a rival. These relationships illustrate the importance of female solidarity in resisting patriarchal oppression.

By the end of the novel, little changes in the external social structure. Periyannan continues to exercise authority over women, and patriarchal values remain firmly entrenched. However, Aanandhayi undergoes an internal transformation. Though she continues to endure hardship, her perception of her husband and her circumstances changes significantly.

Through *Anandhayi*, Sivakami powerfully depicts the unequal treatment of women and exposes the mechanisms through which society silences and marginalizes them. The novel remains an important feminist text that highlights the struggles, resilience, and endurance of women within a patriarchal social order.

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