

REFLECTION OF SOCIAL EVILS FACED BY GIRL CHILDREN CITING FROM TAMIL SHORT STORIES

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Abstract In our villages when a female child is born, we are accustomed to cover the private areas because we consider the female child as a woman. If you ask who a child is “International conventions define children as aged 18 and under individual. Governments may define ‘child’ by age and other criteria’s. ‘Child’ and ‘childhood’ are also defined differently by different cultures. ‘A child’ is not necessarily delineated by a fixed age. Social Scientists point out that children’s abilities and maturities varies so much that defining a child’s maturity by calendar age can be misleading” ([www.zapmeta.co.in/ws?q = who is child labour](http://www.zapmeta.co.in/ws?q=who+is+child+labour), accessed on 7.2.2015). In day to life we see female children facing so many problems. Mother thinks when a female child born, it is a very big problem. So, the mother wants to evacuate the fetus in the uterus bag itself. Escape from the womb only becomes a chance to survive for the girl child. After escaping from the womb they are being abused in various forms like Physical, Mental, Sexual, and Emotional abuse. In this regards, I have taken about 9 Tamil authors, who have contributed about the Social Barriers of children.

Psychological or Emotional abuse: (Gender variation) In ‘Punar’, a short story written by Ambai. The story begins with the inception of two characters, a life of a boy and a girl and what life has to offer them. Sabari (a girl child) was instructed by her mother on how to speak and how to react. “You are grown up. Why do you play with Murali? Did you fly a kite? That is a game of male child. You should read books”². (Ambai, punar, page.115) When Sabari was studying only 3rd Std, her mother asked her “Sabari I heard you talk something about sex, sex is a filthy word to speak. Go and do pooja”³ (ibid.116). “Learn to cook. Who will marry the one who does not cook. Cut and keep the recipe ready”⁴. (ibid.) Furthermore the story described about dos and don’ts. The authors further describes about the many advertisements that are telecasted on the media, right from hair removers, to the lounge and saree women are expected to wear. Adverts on soap, shampoo, powder, nail polish, bindi’s and what not. Ambai also describes how the woman of the modern world should be and how they are expected to wear good clothes. If a girl is working in the reception she has to wear good and attractive sarees. Ambai goes on say that preferable job for woman is teaching job. Here Ambai elaborated the women world. In the story the author say that woman are considered as

“Women thou art a home maker
Women thou art an object of beauty
Women thou art submissive
Women thou art a listener of a resolution
Women thou art Goddess
Women thou art a useful one
Women thou art the giver of happiness
Women thou work only for needful things
Women thou art to be protected
You women”⁵ (ibid.118)

Ambai listed out how a child grows according to the society. Society expects certain qualities from the girl child. So woman is not born but she is generated. Sabari at the age of 17 had fallen love with Logi who was her playmate. She loved him and handed over herself to him and she became pregnant. Murali’s age was 18. Ambai elaborated the situation of the labour pain. Logi simply sat and watched what was going around him. But Sabari who admitted to give happiness to Logi was suffering. Lost sentence of the story was “A baby was born”. In this story Sabari and Logi were brought up according to the parent’s wish. Later, without their parent’s knowledge, they were physically united. If Sabari had had a chance to mingle with boys in school days she would not have been like this. She would have known the opposite sex and how far she would have had the relationship with them. She would have understood the male world. She would not have given much importance to the feeling of the body. If she had learnt sex education she would have known the physiological function of the body.

Education: In Malan’s ‘ThappukKanakku’ and R. Nadarajan’s ‘Ayesha’ talk about the Education of Female children. These two stories depicted about two children. “Emotional abuse does not happen in the home. Children can be emotionally abused by teachers and other adults in the position of power over the child”⁶. (www.asca.org.au/about-resources/types-of-child-abuse.aspx, accessed on 3.2.2015)

Janani, (she) had good knowledge at the age of four. She was a hyperactive child. Always doing something and speaking without a gap. She always kept questioning her grandfather in the story line, But her parent restricted her not to speak too much. One day a question was put before Janani by her teacher. “A week has seven days. so, how many days for two weeks? The answer was $7 \times 2 = 14$. But

Janani said $2 \times 7 = 14$. The answer was correct. But the way she said, was not accepted by the teacher. She said one week had one Sunday, one Monday, one Tuesday. So two weeks had 2 Sunday, two Monday... and so on. That's why Janani said $2 \times 7 = 14$ ⁷. (Malan, Thappukkanakku, page 81) The Teacher didn't accept the way she replied. So the teacher asked Janani to change her way of answering for which Janani refused.

Because of Janani's attitude her parent were shocked. Her father said "If she grows up, she will ask questions. Question that will raise against our traditions and beliefs. She will be hurt because she thinks differently. She has to live according to our custom. Otherwise, she will get restless and others also will become restless"⁸ (ibid .82). Since she is a girl child, she should have had the tendency of adjusting and accepting traditions. She should not have had the thought of questioning" her father said. This story dealt about the problem of contemporary educational system. Our educational system is like a one way traffic. "There is no scientific study in the department of science, history, linguistic's, this educational system helps to generate skilled labours for wealthy people"⁹. (l.s.kanagaraj, school education, page.84) We have to encourage the girl child when she thinks differently. For that, we have to change our educational system to be practical. If we had given space for Janani she would have become a great mathematician.

'Ayesha' a different story about a 15 year old, studying 10th Std. She had an attractive way of answering questions. Ayesha raised the question to the teacher and got them irritated. But Ayesha solved the problems in mathematics. She was clever and a voracious reader. This trend turned into a problem for her.

1. She solved 11th Std (Home work) Mathematical Problem and got caught by the teachers. Teachers embarrassed her for no reason, by not appreciating her smartness. Her aunty said "Her birth time is bad. Ayesha was often beaten by her"¹⁰. (R.nadarajan, Ayesha, page 89)
2. She was instructed to write answer according to the notes. Ayesha asked the teacher "If the notes are wrong what should we do mam?"¹¹. (ibid.92) That's why she was again beaten by her Chemistry teacher.
3. Because of not studying in tuition, she was victimized by history teacher. One day Ayesha asked her history teacher "who changed the King Asoka to Buddhism?" . The teacher answered "one Monk". Again Ayesha asked the teacher "what is the name of the Monk?" The teacher was not able to answer to the question. So this time Ayesha, a Muslim girl replied 'Upaguptar'. The teacher got angry, because Ayesha's intelligence

got her furious. The teacher might have thought that Ayesha had tested her IQ.

She was very smart and intelligent. She read many books like 'The Truth of the Magnets' and 'The most dangerous man in America. But the Teachers encouraged Ayesha to study only prescribed text so that she could get more marks in the final. Generally the teacher's attitude is "I will be the one to ask questions. I am concerned about you. You should not ask question. That is impertinent"¹². (cha.madasamy, where is my place?, page 87) In school, teachers chatted in the staff room about sarees and so on. Classmates were always making jokes and often burst into laughter. But Ayesha was not able to adopt into the system. "Emotionally abused children exhibit a range of specific signs.

1. Feel unhappy, frightened and distressed.
2. Behave aggressively and anti socially or they may act too mature for their age.
3. Experience difficulties with academic achievement and school attendance.
4. Find difficult to make friends."¹³ .(www.asca.org.au/about/resources/types-of-child-abuse.aspx, accessed on 7.2.15)
5. Ayesha would have undergone this kind of panic. She was embarrassed by teachers, friends and relatives. She could not be a normal girl. She might have found difficulties to move with other girls. She did not have an opportunity to mingle and make other friends. One day she committed suicide by inhaling Nitrogen oxide. She wanted to feel the numbness in her body. That's was the only way she would not be able to feel the pain when she was beaten up.

The end of the Ayesha's life teaches about the obstacles faced by students during the learning process. If the educational system changes, the method of teaching, may get better. Many scientists dislike the classroom teaching. A Scientist one who has strong thinking ability boycotts the manner of sitting and listening.

So, teachers should accept children as they are. Ayesha a Muslim girl, who came from tightened society, her death was unacceptable and unfair. Her teacher was also a parent. So, they should have looked after her as their own child. Our educational system has been designed to memorize the book and recite poems. But, it does not encourage the creativity of the students. Student, who has memory power, will shine. Student, who has originality, will not be able to reach the goal. Having spoken to the teacher, her eyes were closed forever.

Sexual Abuse:(Gender Perversity) Bama's short story 'Thavani' (Half saree) depicted about the village girl Chellakkili, who had just finished std five. Her

parent wanted her to continue the studies. But, the deceptive land lord persuaded her father not to continue the study in her home village and advised him to let her stay and do small domestic work in his daughter's house in order to continue her studies without any disturbance. Her father agreed. But, later poor chellakkili's father Irulappan could not make it possible to visit her. They thought that she was in good atmosphere. One day they came to know that Chellakkili was dead. The innocent Chellakkili's parents were stunned. "She was beaten up with a wooden stick for not finishing the work earlier and she fainted and died."¹⁴ (Bama, Thavani, page 67). Since the Land lord wanted to hide the truth, he gave Rs.1000 to chellakkili's parents. Furthermore the land lord said that how much of love his daughter had for chellakkili, that she bought a new saree for Chellakkili. Once Irulappan had a chance to overhear the truth, he got vexed and committed suicide by hanging himself on the tree with the thavani (saree) which the land lord had given.

Without any rest Chellakkili worked hard. But, sometimes the land lord's grandson misbehaved with her. "Sexual abuse is a form of child abuse in which an adult or adolescent abuses a child for sexual stimulation"¹⁵.(en.wiki pedia.org/wiki/child sexual-abuse,accessed on 9.2.2015) Chellakkili was sexually, physically and emotionally affected. Even though the truth had been revealed by the villagers, Chellekkili's parents were not able to take any step against the land lord's family. If Irulappan had been educated he would have approached the media or political party or some community members to exhibit the incident to the public and would have gathered many people to fight against them until he had got justice. But, due to ignorance he punished himself by hanging.

Physical abuse:(Punishment) 'Sathiyangal' was written by S.Tharman. This story dealt about physical abuse of Sivakami. "Physical abuse involves physical aggression directed at a child by an adult. Most nations with abuse laws consider the deliberate infliction of injuries, or actions that take place on the child at obvious risk of serious injury or death to be illegal. Burn, rough treatment that could cause physical injury can be physical abuse".¹⁶ (www-help guide/org/articles/abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect-htm,accessed on 4.2.2015)

Sivakami is a small child in this story. Even now in villages this peculiar trend is prevailing. That is persons who are not guilty of stealing, he/she has to prove the fact by dipping their hands into boiling pot of oil. Little Sivakami was victimized by her neighbours. She was blamed for stealing Rs50 from her home. Actually the money was taken by her(Neighbours) son. But, unknowingly she blamed sivakami. Iyyammal who was sivakami's mother put her own child to prove the child guiltless. The girl

child sivakami was made to bury her hands into the boiling pot and she had, but to suffer.¹⁷ (s.Tharman,saththiyangal,page106)

Generally many sivakamis are suffering in the world. Since there is lack of awareness and ignorance that parents do not know about the value of a girl child. Parents think that since they begot the child, they have every right to punish them. It is an abhorrent act. The society disgusts the birth of girl child. Since many welfare schemes are implemented by the government. Girl child is considered as non rational one. Though literature portrayed children as goddess, in real life they are being treated as illegitimate survivors.

Child labour:There is no universally accepted definition of child labour. Poverty is widely considered as the prominent reason. "The young child is an important participant in the construction and reconstruction of culture"¹⁸(ww-zap meta.co.in/ws?q=who is child lobour.accessed on 7.2.2015) But, girl children from various age groups, are facing inequality issues. The Government order is that each and every child should study till the 8th Grade. They must write samachir exams.'Arumbu' was written by Melanmai Ponnuchamy. He depicts problems of child labor. And the story line is about Children of Unhealthy mothers and fatherless children who struggle to survive in a village.

Lakshmi was working in the match box company, forgetting her age, games, joy and feelings that a young child below 10 years could have. Suddenly due to a government order the manager had compelled her to wear half saree at an age while she was still thumb sucking.¹⁹ (melanmai ponnusamy,Arumbu,page,76) According to the government law, under age children ought not to work. If she did not work, her family would feel hungry. She went early in the morning without seeing sun rise and returned in evening without seeing sun set. The Government cannot meet every need of the poor. The solution for the problem seems endless.

In another story Veera Velachamy's "Lakshmi odi pogiral" was contemplated on the problem of child who did domestic work. Lakshmi wanted to live in her small house and liked to enjoy the village atmosphere. But she was compelled to do the work of baby sitter in a urbanized area. She hated the situation. She liked to play with her brother rather than to play with a small baby. Due to poverty her mother had forced her to be in her work place. Lakshmi in the story loses her brother, her mother gets sick and also she has no work in the field. So the family total burden sets on Lakshmi. She tries to run from the present urban atmosphere. At the end of the story she gets ready to run but she has no destination.²⁰ (veera.veluchamy, lakshmi odi pogiral, page.124)

In S.Tamilselvan short story's 'Subbuththai' had worked in match box company and met her family needs. She had to take care of sick mother and her baby brother. She requested the manager to give Rs.5 for hospital expense. Her entire thoughts were filled with sadness. She had no chance to play like other children. She always kept thinking about her mother and brother who was sucking his mother's breast. Though she was a small child she was consoling her mother with her scabied hand and encouraged her mother not to cry.²¹(s.tamil selvan.subbuththai.page.72) She had no idea of enjoying the childhood. She didn't have a thought of studying. She had no curiosity of reading books. She led her life according to destiny's chance. But she didn't face violence, arguments and wishes. Being a small child she was not able to think about the other side of the world.

Child Poverty: Poverty destroys our desire and aesthetic sense. In C.Su Chellappa's short story 'Margali Malar' dealt about desire and poverty.

In the month of Margali (December) each and every house is decorated with kolam and pumpkin's flower. Satchu's mother was not able to buy pumpkins flower. Because, she managed to subsist on a meal day. Her daughter was allured by pumpkin's flower in the morning. She asked her mother to buy and lay the flower in front of her house. Her mother wanted to fulfill her daughter's desire by getting Rs.5 from neighbor. But nobody was ready to give.²² (c.su.chellappa, margali malar, page.760). Satchu was not accepted by other children only because of poverty.

Her mother did not have that money, and was not able to buy the flower. Satchu stole one flower from another entrance of the neighbor's house because they laid three and more flowers. Since she had stolen the flower, she was called a thief (thirudi). On seeing her stealing, they followed to catch her but she flew from them and ran. Unfortunately she fell and hurt herself. In the bed everyone came and gave a pumpkin flower to her. She did not accept the flower and threw them to the ground. Society's imbalanced economy affects the child. Child poverty is to be condemned.

Conclusion: Girl children are to be safeguarded. Each and every day they face problems which cannot be identified, even if identified cannot be rectified. Most of the girl children are physically, emotionally or sexually abused. Due to poverty children have been working in the Match Box Companies and also being engaged in domestic work. Unawareness, Illiteracy, Negligence is the reason for the problem. The Survival problem for the girl child is right from her inception and through her phase of childhood. Due to gender variation, the heroine of the 'Punar' short story gets into suffering physically. Ambai alluded sex education in her story. Through 'Thappu Kannakku' and Ayesha stories, we are able to identify how intelligent children and the fact they being Girls, they are not accepted by the teachers and their family. Society is not bothered about the knowledge that the girl child possess. If society allows them to think differently, many social problems will be uprooted. Educational system should be revived and reconstructed. Sexual abuse, caste system and poverty led chellakilli to lose her life. In 'Thavani's story, the author talks about how the society neglects girl child easily. Even though Sivakami was not found guilty she was punished by her mother. Physical abuse is common threat in the girl's childhood period. 'Arumbu', 'Subbuthai' 'Lakshmi Oodi Pokiral' teach us the value of education to the girl children. Usually the girl child takes the responsibility of family after the death of the father or takes care of the mother with chronic sickness. 'Markali Malar' depicted about child poverty. Due to poverty, the child's desire was destroyed. In childhood itself if they get to know the imbalance prevailing in the society, their childhood desire and aesthetic sense are crushed even before they grow.

There are still so many areas where children are engaged in the Savoury making industries, Children that sell flowers on the street, Child Bonded laborers, engaged in stone quarries and children engaged in the brick making industry whose lives still remain unexposed in the Literature and are yet to be researched.

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