



Intersectional Reading of P. Sivakami's *The Grip of Change*: An analysis of Structural-Cultural Violence in Dalit feminist framework

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Abstract

This paper offers an intersectional reading of *The Grip of Change* by P. Sivakami through the lens of a Dalit feminist framework, foregrounding the interlocking structures of caste, gender, class, and cultural power that shape lived experiences of violence. The novel is examined as a narrative site where structural violence—manifested through institutionalized caste hierarchies, economic deprivation, and patriarchal control—converges with cultural violence, which normalizes oppression via tradition, morality, and social silence. By centering Dalit women's voices, the study reveals how reformist politics and progressive rhetoric often reproduce exclusion when they fail to address gendered caste realities. Sivakami's portrayal of women negotiating agency amid coercive social norms exposes the limitations of male-centric Dalit movements and upper-caste feminist discourses alike. The analysis demonstrates how everyday practices—marriage, sexuality, labor, and community governance—become mechanisms that legitimize domination while obscuring accountability. Employing intersectionality as a methodological tool, the paper argues that resistance in the novel is neither linear nor purely emancipatory; rather, it is fraught, situational, and deeply embodied. The study contends that *The Grip of Change* articulates a distinctly Dalit feminist epistemology that challenges homogenized notions of social justice and demands a rethinking of violence beyond physical harm to include its structural and cultural dimensions.

Keywords: Dalit feminism, intersectionality, structural violence, cultural violence

Introduction

Feminism is a call for gender equality. It has emerged in several waves underlining the importance of political, social and economic equality between the genders (Hewitt, 2012). However, feminist movement has had many sub-movements which at times advocated not different, but opposite ideas. One such example from Indian setting is Dalit feminism. It came out of the understanding that Dalit women have not received the attention of the feminist scholarship and activism as they should have received due to their oppression being intersection in nature. They are subjugated not only by gender stereotypes, but also caste and class dynamics. There has been an increasing agreement that Dalit women have different tales to tell, which is why their autobiographies, biographies and novels became an academic resource bringing to light the multiplicity of discrimination these women get victimised by. Their writings are perceived as a critical tool to examine the differences in the lived experiences of Dalit women with that of non-Dalit. This research paper examines one such writing titled as *The Grip of Change* by P. Sivakami. This work has been analysed in this paper to explore the answers to two critical research questions. First, how far the experiences of Dalit women come



within the theoretical paradigm of structural and cultural violence and second, how are the intersections of caste and gender visible in the Dalit women's writings. Together these two questions attempt to substantiate the Dalit feminist standpoint which has popularised the notion of multi-layered intersectional oppression shaping Dalit women's lives (Rege, 1998).

The Grip of Change is a semi-autobiographical Tamil work authored by Palanimuthu Sivakami. It was originally written in Tamil and later translated into English under the title *The Grip of Change*. The central focus of the work is Thangam, a woman from Paraya community which is a Dalit caste. The work has captured the length and breadth of what constitutes a life of a Dalit woman. Her life is a tale of violence of most brutal kind. It is a significant work that offers a poignant examination of the intersection of caste and gender oppression experienced by Dalit women in India. Sivakami, a prominent Dalit writer and activist, uses her narrative to explore the pervasive injustices faced by women of her community, providing an intimate and powerful critique of both social and personal dimensions of oppression (Bhongle, 2002). This section attempts an analysis of the text from an intersectional lens under several themes.

Intersections of Caste and Gender in *The Grip of Change*

Sivakami's work provides a compelling account of how caste and gender intersect to produce a unique form of oppression for Dalit women. The book vividly illustrates the double jeopardy faced by Dalit women, through the character of Thangam, who experiences discrimination not only because of her caste but also due to her gender (Springer, 2013). Through personal anecdotes and reflective commentary, Sivakami details the daily struggles and systemic barriers imposed on Dalit women, highlighting the compounded nature of their marginalization (Sivakami, 2006).

A central theme in *The Grip of Change* is the critique of patriarchal structures that perpetuate gender inequality and limit the agency of Dalit women. Sivakami's narrative exposes the ways in which traditional patriarchal norms restrict women's roles and opportunities within both the Dalit community and broader society. The personhood of Thangam is reduced to her body and the body is abused repeatedly after her husband passes away by her relatives, her employer who was a man from upper caste and her protector, a Dalit leader Kathamathu. Sivakami describes the oppressive practices of forced marriages, domestic violence, and restrictions on women's education and employment, illustrating how these patriarchal practices intersect with caste-based discrimination to reinforce systemic oppression (Sivakami, 2006).

When Thangam's husband passed away, she claimed her right over her husband's land to ensure her survival. But, in return, due to her vulnerability as a childless widow and poor Dalit, she was raped by her brothers-in-law who did not want her to get the land which legally belonged to her. Hence, this narrative is a powerful tale that, through numerous such illustrations, explains how Dalit women are subjugated not only by the people of upper castes but also by the men and women of their own castes. Despite the pervasive nature of oppression, Sivakami's novel is also a powerful testament to resistance and personal agency. The narrative showcases her determination to defy societal constraints and assert her autonomy. Sivakami's pursuit of education and her involvement in social activism reflect her resilience and commitment to challenging the oppressive systems that seek to confine her (Shailaja, 2018). In this novel,



Sivakami's inclination towards education is visible in the character of Gowri, Kathamathu's daughter who seeks to walk on the path of education constantly and challenges the internal patriarchy in her home with her constant questioning of her father's abusive ways. Gowri's story of resistance is both a personal triumph and a broader commentary on the potential for individual agency to effect social change (Sivakami, 2006).

Sivakami's work extends beyond personal narrative to offer a broader social critique and political analysis. The novel situates her experiences within the larger context of Dalit activism and feminist movements, emphasizing the interconnectedness of personal struggle and collective action. Sivakami's reflections on her activism and social critique underscore her commitment to addressing systemic injustices and advocating for social reform. Her narrative contributes to a broader understanding of the ways in which personal and political struggles intersect and inform each other (Rani, 2019).

The cultural and literary contributions of *The Grip of Change* are significant. Sivakami's use of language and narrative style reflects her engagement with both traditional and contemporary literary forms. Her writing is marked by a blend of personal reflection and critical analysis, offering a unique and powerful voice within Dalit literature. The novel's impact is evident in its contribution to the growing body of Dalit feminist literature, which seeks to illuminate the complexities of caste and gender oppression and advocate for social justice (Sivakami, 2006). The reception of Sivakami's novel highlights its importance in contemporary discussions about caste and gender. The book has been praised for its honest portrayal of personal and social struggles and its contribution to feminist and Dalit literature. Scholars and critics have recognized the work for its incisive analysis and powerful storytelling, which challenge prevailing narratives about Dalit women and offer new perspectives on resistance and agency (Sivakami, 2006).

Representation of Dalit Women's Identity and Agency

In *The Grip of Change*, Sivakami offers a nuanced representation of Dalit woman's identity, emphasizing the complexity and dynamism of Dalit women's experiences. Through her personal narrative, she challenges the reductive and often stereotypical portrayals of Dalits in mainstream discourse. Sivakami's detailed accounts of her experiences and observations reveal the multifaceted nature of Dalit identity, which encompasses both the pain of marginalization and the strength of resistance. Her portrayal of Dalit women as resilient and self-determined individuals serves as a counter-narrative to prevailing depictions that often undermine their agency and complexity (Sivakami, 2006).

Sivakami's narrative techniques and literary style play a crucial role in shaping the impact of her novel. Her use of vivid imagery, personal anecdotes, and reflective commentary creates a compelling and immersive reading experience. While Udayar, an upper caste man, feels scared and ashamed after her liaison with Thangam comes to light, Kathamathu proudly shows his relationship with Nagamani, his second wife and a woman from upper caste. This shows how Dalit women, at best, are received as concubines in the upper caste circles and even though there are such relationships, they are hardly acknowledged. By blending personal and political reflections, Sivakami effectively conveys the emotional and intellectual dimensions of her



experiences. Her writing is characterized by a raw honesty and a poignant expression of both personal and collective struggles, which enhances the book's power as both a personal memoir and a political statement (Sivakami, 2006).

Sivakami's novel has made a significant impact on Dalit feminist discourse by highlighting the specific challenges such as physical violence and mental cruelty faced by Dalit women and advocating for an inclusive feminist framework. Her narrative contributes to the broader feminist movement by addressing the intersectional nature of oppression and calling for a more nuanced understanding of how caste and gender intersect. When Udayar's association with Thangam comes out in open, Udayar's brother and brothers-in-law brutally beat her and almost murder her. The hypocrisy of this caste-gendered oppression becomes even more clear when Udayar utters following words to criticise Thangam for filing a complaint against him, "Ungrateful whore! Even if she was hurt by the hand adorned with gold! A Parachi could have never dreamt of being touched by a man like me! My touch was a boon granted for penance performed in her earlier births. . ." (Sivakami, 2006, p. 45).

Such a shameless justification of raping a poor Dalit widow reveals how these women are on the one hand, considered untouchable and on the other, abused sexually to satisfy the bodily hunger of upper caste men. The caste and gender privilege which he enjoyed gave him the liberty to tag what was, in reality, the rape of Thangam as a pollution for his name because of her caste. He was more concerned that this might be used by his political rivals in defeating him in the next elections. The victim, Thangam, on the other hand had no agency over her body and narrative due to the disadvantage she was a part of due to her status as a poor Dalit woman. By foregrounding the voices of Dalit women and their experiences, Sivakami's work challenges mainstream feminist theories and promotes a more inclusive approach to feminist activism and scholarship (Sivakami, 2006). The educational and social implications of Sivakami's novel are profound. The book serves as an important educational resource for understanding the experiences of Dalit women and the broader social dynamics of caste and gender. It provides valuable insights for educators, activists, and policymakers working to address issues of social justice and equality. By presenting a detailed and personal account of the challenges faced by Dalit women, Sivakami's work contributes to a greater awareness of the need for systemic change and the importance of addressing both caste and gender discrimination (Sivakami, 2006).

The legacy of *The Grip of Change* lies in its contribution to both Dalit literature and feminist discourse. Sivakami's novel has set a precedent for future writers and activists to explore and document the experiences of marginalized communities. Her work encourages ongoing dialogue about the intersections of caste and gender and supports the continued development of Dalit feminist literature. The impact of her narrative will likely influence future discussions and scholarship, as it provides a foundational text for understanding the complexities of Dalit women's lives and their contributions to social change (Sivakami, 2006).

Sivakami's novel provides a critical examination of the social norms and institutional failures that perpetuate the oppression of Dalit women. Through her personal experiences and observations, Sivakami highlights how deeply entrenched societal norms reinforce caste-based



and gender-based discrimination. The book delves into how institutional structures—such as education, law, and healthcare—often fail to address or exacerbate the marginalization of Dalit women. In her novel, when a complaint is filed against Udayar, police assist him in framing Thangam as a thief to render her complaint ineffective. Sivakami's critique is particularly sharp regarding the systemic neglect and bias within these institutions, which often ignore or dismiss the needs and rights of marginalized groups (Sivakami, 2006).

Amidst her critique of social norms and institutional failures, Sivakami's novel also celebrates personal resilience and collective solidarity. Her narrative underscores the strength and solidarity of Dalit women as they navigate and resist systemic oppression. For example, Sivakami's portrayal of community support and mutual aid within the Dalit community highlights how collective efforts can counteract individual struggles and contribute to broader social change. This emphasis on resilience and solidarity offers a hopeful and empowering perspective, suggesting that while systemic change is crucial, the power of collective action and personal fortitude plays a vital role in challenging oppression (Sivakami, 2006).

The impact of her novel extends to contemporary social justice movements by providing a critical framework for understanding and addressing caste and gender-based discrimination as she covers the role of law enforcement in depth in dealing with issues of violence against Dalit women. Sivakami's insights into the intersectionality of oppression inform current discussions about social justice, equity, and human rights. Her novel serves as a resource for activists, scholars, and policymakers working to address systemic inequalities and promote social reform. By integrating personal experience with political critique, Sivakami contributes to the development of more nuanced and effective strategies for social justice (Sivakami, 2006).

Sivakami's work also makes a notable contribution to fiction. Her approach to storytelling—combining personal narrative with political analysis—offers a distinctive model for fictional writing. Her novel is semi-autobiographical as many of the incidents are inspired by her own life. This blend of personal experience and social critique enriches the genre, demonstrating how autobiographical works can engage with broader social issues while providing intimate insights into individual lives. Sivakami's innovative narrative style and critical perspective advance the genre and provide a model for all such writers who seek to address complex social and political issues (Sivakami, 2006).

Role of Language and Expression in Dalit Feminist Autobiographical Writing

In *The Grip of Change*, Sivakami's use of language and expression is integral to conveying her experiences and critiques. Her choice of language reflects the lived realities of Dalit women, capturing both the emotional weight and the socio-political implications of her narrative. When Thangam's sister-in-law finds out that she has been beaten up by upper caste men, she justifies the treatment that she received in following words –

“They beat her up. Good! Why did they leave her alive? That whore thinks too much of herself. She thinks that she's very beautiful. That's why she went after that Udayar. When she loses her shape, he'll throw her out, and she'll be in a state worse than a dog's” (Sivakami, 2006, p. 41). The use of raw language as above can be seen in her novel. Such statements disclose how Thangam is victimised due to her caste status by her own family, and they fail to understand



her plight even though she was assaulted by Udayar, not that she willingly entered into a relationship with him. In other words, Sivakami employs a direct and unembellished style, which serves to underscore the harsh realities of caste and gender oppression while also giving voice to the personal and collective struggles of Dalit women. Her language is not merely a vehicle for storytelling but also a form of resistance, challenging dominant discourses and asserting the validity of Dalit experiences (Sivakami, 2006). For instance, instead of standing up with her when Udayar's men dragged her on the streets after assaulting her and threw her at a corner, the men of her family commented,

"She deserves this and more! She seduced Udayar...shameless bitch...ignoring all of us she found succour in him!" (Sivakami, 2006, p. 39)

This displays the interaction of dual patriarchal institutions with Dalit women's lives making them the most vulnerable group with the least amount of support. Sivakami's narrative is rich with symbolism and metaphor, which she uses to deepen the reader's understanding of the complexities of caste and gender oppression. For instance, she often employs metaphors related to domestic spaces, such as kitchens and homes, to symbolize the confinement and control experienced by Dalit women. These symbolic elements enhance the emotional resonance of her narrative and provide a means of critiquing societal norms and expectations. Through this use of metaphor, Sivakami effectively conveys the broader implications of her personal experiences, linking individual struggles to systemic issues (Sivakami, 2006).

Sivakami's evocative writing style and her use of powerful imagery play a crucial role in fostering empathy and understanding among readers. By presenting her experiences in a vivid and relatable manner, she invites readers to engage deeply with the issues she addresses. Her writing enables readers from diverse backgrounds to grasp the realities of caste and gender discrimination, bridging gaps in understanding and fostering a sense of solidarity. This emotional engagement is essential for creating awareness and driving meaningful discussions about social justice and reform (Sivakami, 2006).

Through her novel, Sivakami challenges and redefines historical narratives about Dalit women and their roles in society. Her narrative confronts historical marginalization and exclusion, presenting a counter-narrative that highlights the agency and resistance of Dalit women. Here, the women are not mere victims of violence, they also know the language of retaliation and protest and the novel seems to be filled with such glimpses. Gowri, Kathamathu's daughter, is the torchbearer of such resilience in the novel. When she reaches the age of thirty-one and becomes a teacher after completing her doctorate, her father forced her to marry. To this, she strongly argues,

"The sufferings that my mother underwent in her marriage, I don't want to be tortured like her by some man." (Sivakami, 2006, p. 169).

Gowri's character in the novel is a strong blow to the patriarchal and casteist domination which keeps Dalit women suppressed. It is her education that gave her financial strength which ultimately enabled her to take her own decision regarding the choice of marry. Sivakami's work, therefore, not only brings out the plight of Dalit women but also their strengths and courage. By reclaiming and articulating their histories and experiences, Sivakami contributes



to a more inclusive and accurate understanding of Dalit women's contributions and struggles. This redefinition of historical narratives not only provides a more nuanced view of the past but also informs current discussions about social justice and equality (Sivakami, 2006). The treatment that is meted out to Dalit women is completely different from that of upper caste women. Infact, the standards of judgement differ too. At one instance, Kathamathu says that, "Upper caste women commit adultery, is that addressed in the panchayat? Can we punish those women? They beat her up because we are lower caste, poor, and have no protection." (Sivakami, 2006, p. 55). Equality, therefore, seems to be a mirage for Dalit women as they are oppressed in every way possible. Sivakami's written expression, thus, brings out the differences between Dalit and non-Dalit women quite well. While the expression of older generations of Dalit-women is conformist, the tonality of younger Dalit girls, represented by Gowri, is non-conformist. This reflects the transformative impact of education on the underprivileged group, the Dalit women.

Structural and Cultural Violence in Dalit women's lived experiences

The work by Sivakami showcases violence against Dalit women in every possible form – verbal, physical, financial, sexual and psychological. Violence is a common factor in all their lives making it intergenerational and cultural trauma. Despite of the changes in social and political ecosystem, Thangam, the main character, has been mercilessly beaten down by the men and women of upper castes and of Dalit community as well. This is not a case of direct violence, and the novel distinguishes between direct, structural and cultural violence through numerous examples (Galtung, 1990). Direct violence is visible violence in which the victims and the perpetrators of violence are identifiable, whereas structural violence is where people are harmed by social structures such as patriarchy. Further, cultural violence refers to those aspects of a culture which justify structural violence or grant it legitimacy. Time and again, in the work, Sivakami has numerated the instances of structural and cultural violence against Dalit women, and Thangam, in particular (Galtung & Höivik, 1971).

Thangam was passing from an upper caste street when Kamalam, Udayar's wife, started abusing her for walking down an upper caste street despite being a Paraya. Her brother and brother-in-law, afterwards, joined Kamalam and assaulted Thangam when she asserted her right of walking over the street (Sivakami, 2006, p. 21). However, the culprits were never held accountable for their crime. Infact, several justifications were given to defend their actions by the people of both Udayar and Paraya community. Thangam was Udayar's servant. She worked at his fields and her state of helplessness as a widow made her economically dependent on the money that she used to receive from Udayar for her labour in his field. It was the field itself, where she was sexually abused for the first time and even though she resisted, the abuse continued. The Dalit men and women and the people from upper castes all blamed Thangam for the assault and assassinated her character by calling her a whore for seducing a man from upper caste (Sivakami, 2006, p. 39). It seemed that her caste identity was more important as a factor for delivering justice than the actual incidence of crimes committed against her. The work presents a classic case of structural and cultural violence because entire structure of family system, patriarchy, police and administration have a role to play in the subjugation of



Thangam.

Intergenerational Trauma in Dalit Women's lives

Sivakami's *The Grip of Change* also offers significant reflections on intergenerational and cultural dynamics within the Dalit community. Through her narrative, Sivakami explores how the experiences and struggles of previous generations influence the lives of contemporary Dalit women. She reflects on the cultural practices, traditions, and societal expectations that have historically shaped the experiences of Dalit women and examines how these cultural elements perpetuate or challenge existing forms of oppression. By situating her personal story within a broader cultural and generational context, Sivakami provides insights into how cultural heritage and historical experiences contribute to ongoing social issues (Sivakami, 2006). For instance, when Gowri sees Thangam in a state of misery and comprehends that her situation is a result of her position at an intersection of caste and gender, she thinks that 'I also belong to the same caste as that woman. How can I be sure that I won't be beaten black and blue like her?' (Sivakami, 2006, p. 23). Her entire childhood is spent in constant state of fear from her father, Kathamathu, who abuses her even for wearing flowers in the hair (Sivakami, 2006, p. 24).

Her work highlights both the continuity and change in the experiences of Dalit women across generations. Sivakami acknowledges the persistence of certain oppressive practices and norms while also recognizing the shifts and advancements achieved by her generation and those to come. In the work, Gowri represents the advancement. However, it is to be noted that only Gowri stands as an example of cultural shift. This could happen because she came from a family which although was Dalit but was influential politically. Her father was a known leader of Dalit community. This dual focus on continuity and change underscores the dynamic nature of social progress and the ongoing struggle for equality. Sivakami's reflections on generational experiences offer a nuanced understanding of how societal changes impact Dalit women and how they continue to navigate, and challenge entrenched social structures (Sivakami, 2006). The trauma inflicted upon these women by the societal and political structures is intergenerational. And no other than Dalit women themselves pass this over to the next generation.

Dual Patriarchy and Dalit Women

Dalit women are subjected to the patriarchy of their homes and of the upper caste as well. Patriarchal practices regulate the conduct of women in such a way that male-domination prevails. The *Grip of Change* makes a point that Dalit women aren't subjected to the control of the men of their community alone, but also of the upper-caste men and that too with a sense of the caste superiority. Thangam is subjected to sexual and physical violence by the upper caste men of Udayar family on the suspicion of an alleged romance with an upper caste man, which, in reality, was rape. Further, when she reaches out to Kathmandu for help and tells her narrative of being assaulted on her own street, she loses the agency on her victimhood too. Kathamathu takes charge of the narrative, and he changes the location of the assault from the Paraya street, where it happened, to the upper caste street while filing the complaint (Sivakami, 2006, p. 21-22). We can observe here that what Kathamathu has done is giving the crime against Thangam



a castiest hue. This illustrates how Dalit women, as victims of violence, do not possess agency even over their victimhood. Dual patriarchy, therefore, makes their victimization considerably severe.

The influence of *The Grip of Change* extends beyond literary and personal spheres to impact cultural and academic discourse. Sivakami's reflections on duality of patriarchy in Dalit women's lives contribute to broader discussions about the role of culture in social justice and identity formation. Her work has been instrumental in shaping academic research and cultural studies related to Dalit literature, feminist theory, and social justice. By providing a comprehensive analysis of cultural and generational issues, Sivakami's work informs and inspires ongoing scholarly and cultural debates (Sivakami, 2006).

Contribution to Feminist and Dalit Discourses

The Grip of Change makes a significant contribution to both feminist and Dalit discourses by integrating intersectional analysis into its narrative. Sivakami's work offers valuable insights for feminist scholarship by demonstrating how caste and gender intersect to shape experiences of oppression and resistance. Additionally, her novel enriches Dalit literature by providing a personal and critical perspective on the social issues facing Dalit women. By bridging these discourses, Sivakami's narrative promotes a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of social justice and feminist theory (Sivakami, 2006).

Sivakami's *The Grip of Change* compellingly represents Dalit women's agency and their active role in challenging and negotiating their social realities. The novel emphasizes the dynamic ways in which Dalit women assert their identities, resist oppression, and seek to transform their circumstances (Kumar & Kumar, 2024). Sivakami's narrative highlights the resilience and autonomy of Dalit women, presenting them as active agents in their own lives rather than mere victims of oppression. Her accounts of personal and collective resistance demonstrate how Dalit women navigate and resist the constraints imposed by caste and gender systems. This representation challenges stereotypes that often depict Dalit women as passive or helpless, instead showcasing their strength, resourcefulness, and determination to assert their rights and improve their conditions (Sivakami, 2006). The work begins with the plight of a Dalit women, Thangam, and ends with the resilience of another, Gowri. The structure of the narrative arrangement, thus, compels reader to take Dalit women as suffers, protestors and most importantly holders of autonomy. Thus, her work has contributed in producing the marginalised perspectives of Dalit women. This expands the horizon of both feminist and Dalit discourses. The narrative also explores how Dalit women negotiate social spaces and navigate complex social dynamics. Sivakami provides insights into the strategies employed by Dalit women to assert their presence and gain agency within various social contexts, including the family, community, and workplace. By detailing these negotiation processes, Sivakami sheds light on the ways in which Dalit women challenge traditional norms and push for change within their environments. This aspect of the narrative underscores the active role of Dalit women in shaping their own experiences and contributing to broader social transformations (Sivakami, 2006).

Sivakami's emphasis on Dalit women's agency significantly impacts feminist and Dalit



literature by enriching the discourse on empowerment and resistance. This is visible in her attempt to bring out the instances of not only upper caste patriarchal control, but also that of Dalit patriarchy. Sivakami's analysis is not merely a critique but also a call for systemic change. Her narrative advocates for comprehensive reforms across various sectors, including policy, education, and social norms, to address the systemic issues faced by Dalit women. By exposing the failures of existing systems and highlighting the need for change, Sivakami's work serves as a powerful call to action for policymakers, educators, and activists to address the root causes of oppression and work toward a more equitable society (Sivakami, 2006).

Conclusion

Reading of *The Grip of Change* reveals that Dalit women's writings are not simple sob stories. They are revelatory. The single lens of gender is insufficient to address the plight of Dalit women. Additionally, they are not only portrayed as victims in the works authored by Dalit women. They also enable the readers to engage with the assertion of political agency by Dalit women in their struggles with caste and gender prejudices. Dalit women's writings uncover what remains unexposed by mainstream Dalit and feminist scholarship individually. P. Sivakami has made remarkable contribution by showing the uniqueness of Dalit women's lives experiences through Thangam, the central character. One of the abusers of Thangam was a Dalit leader and this enables the readers to critically assess the role of Dalit politics in accommodating the cause of Dalit women. The sexual exploitation involves victim shaming by even the women of Dalit community. This shows how deep rooted the cultural and structural violence is in the lives of these women. Dalit women's writing is not merely a written word, it is a reverse writing of the caste-gender narratives from a point of view which has been erased, silenced and ignored for a very long time and P. Sivakami's contribution is transformative in developing a Dalit feminist standpoint.

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