



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Victimizers – Victims of Their Own Values A Study of the Tamil Movie – *Pariyerum Perumal B.A. B.L. a Line on the Top*

J.Sujana

Research Scholar

Dr.G.Sheela Swarupa Rani:

Research Supervisor/ Rtd. Professor

Dept. of English Language and Literature

Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam

Tirupati-517502

Andhra Pradesh

Abstract

This research article examines the intricate dynamics of victimization and the perpetuation of caste-based discrimination as portrayed in the Tamil film *Pariyerum Perumal B.A.B.L.* Directed by Mari Selvaraj and produced by Pa.Ranjith. This film serves as a powerful critique of the deeply entrenched value systems that shape the behaviors and attitudes of individuals, particularly in the context of caste hierarchies in India. The study argues that victimizers, those who perpetuate violence and discrimination, are themselves victims of the value systems they have internalized over generations. These values, often seen as ethical by the individuals who hold them, are, in fact, responsible for creating and sustaining societal divisions. The article explores how *Pariyerum Perumal B.A.B.L.* illustrates the brutal realities faced by Dalits and highlights the psychological and emotional toll of systemic oppression. The protagonist, Pariyan, a Dalit law student, endures numerous humiliations and violent acts, which are emblematic of the broader societal challenges faced by marginalized communities. The film's narrative exposes the moral and ethical contradictions of those in power, revealing how their actions are driven by a distorted sense of superiority and entitlement. Through this cinematic lens, the article sheds light on the necessity of challenging and reevaluating these destructive value systems to foster a more equitable and humane society. The film's portrayal of the victim-victimizer relationship serves as a call to address the underlying causes of discrimination and to promote values that uphold human dignity.

Keywords: Caste Discrimination, Victimization, Value Systems, Ethical Relativity, Oppression, Systemic Injustice.

The word 'ethics' is etymologically derived from the Greek word *Ethos* for custom, habit or usage. These habits shape the personality of a person -the way he thinks and behaves. These become his value system, as he grows up in such an atmosphere where every one practices a set of rules handed over to them from generation to generation. These values may be ethical in the person's own view. But when these values come into contact with the values that are not similar to his own, depending on his personality, these may or may not create conflict in his mind. These values may or may not be in line with the universally accepted core ethical values like "trust worthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship ". Still there might be a tendency in the people to take the values he is brought up in as ethical.

In the post-modern world where everything is relative, even the values become relative. However, certain values like integrity, being kind and loving your neighbor as yourself never change. Ultimately, treating human being as human being is the utmost value one can have to make this world a better place to live in. But this concept is always used by victims all the time seeking justice, never needed by the victimizers. A cry for help and a cry for values seem to be the portion of victims. Vasantha Surya the translator of Chudhamani Raghavan's *Yamini* in the preface, commenting on the stand of Ragavan says ' for her in this society every one is a victim'. This includes everyone including the people who are victimizers in the eyes of victims.

Viewing, victimizer as a victim is not that palatable to the victims. However one has to admit that even the victimizers are victims of their own values. However hard they try, they cannot come out of this value system which is so ingrained in their system. They are brought up in certain values and they believe these values are true and ethical so that these values dictate their behavior. Talking about the values and behavior, Stephen Covey in his *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* says

Principles are the territory. Values are maps.... Correct maps will infinitely impact our personal and interpersonal effectiveness far more than any amount of effort expended on changing our attitudes and behaviours.

As these values of the victimizers are not set properly they affect their personal and interpersonal effectiveness. They affect each and every transactions in their life relationships.. whether it is gender, caste or class. As long as the people are fed by the values that inculcate the superiority of one section the exploitation goes on and the victimizer and victim relationship remains the same. The victimizers are hardly conscious of their own victimhood. A better society is possible when the victimizer comes out of the shackles of their victimizer i.e. their own value system. Talking about the victimizers and victims in the cases of child abuse Linda Nauthan in her article "Psychologists should help victimizers understand their past" says

Both were victims, I thought. They were different only in the way each responded to the trauma. They were different only in the coping strategies they developed to help them survive their abusive childhoods... If our abusive clients encountered early childhood trauma and then committed their own

aggressive behaviors, we need to help them look at their past and understand how it led them to their self-defeating and destructive behaviors without blame or shame.

Though this cannot be applied to all victimizers, only the idea of taking the past into consideration to understand the victimizer is used as a lens to prove the point, how the victimizers become victims of their own past brought up.

Against this concept, the present paper tries to see a Dalit oriented movie *Pariyerum Perumal B.A.B.L.* from this point of view. *Pariyerum Perumal B.A.B.L.* is a Tamil movie produced by Pa Ranjith and directed by Meri Selvaraj. It is the first movie from Pa –Meri Selvaraj and is a “disturbing caste drama”(Purushothaman). This is a film constructed on the factual observations of the Director. Archana Nathan notes

Selvaraj, an aspiring lawyer-turned-filmmaker, drew from his experiences in Tirunelveli while writing *Pariyerum Perumal*. “The characters, including that of Perumal, have been constructed combining many such people that I’ve met and observed,” he said. “I drew a basic sketch of the story and let these characters then interact and live with each other.”

Karthikeyan Damodaran, in his article, “Pariyerum Perumal : A Film that talks Civility in an Uncivil Casteist Society” also observes how the film show cases the reality that is happening even today and how this caste system pervades the university and college campuses which are supposed to be centres of learning and unlearning. “Among other things, the film showcases how the campuses in Tamil Nadu are widely demarcated among the student population based on caste.” He also observes how the non-Dalit caste shown in the film opposed the idea of them apologizing Dalits. “The film also faced protests from Thevars because it features one scene where a Thevar is forced to apologise to a Dalit.” Damodaran remembers how his

..colleague and a sociologist, Hugo Gorringe pointed out that the director here is seeking to make a point about civility against caste rather than reproducing the Thevar Magan (1992) logic of a highly masculine and supremely violent man telling people not to be violent at the very end.

These reflect the value system the non-Dalits permeate themselves in. The director is successful in showing “civility against caste” or “civility in an uncivil casteist society”. This uncivility is the values permeated by the non-Dalits. They in fact remain helpless victims of their own values that looks uncivil in the civilized world.

Pariyerum Perumal B.A.B.L. is a film that focuses on a Dalit boy who wishes to do B.L. so that he can be of use to his community who are often become victims due to their inability to afford an advocate. He bears all the humiliations of non-dalits -urinating in the pond where they take bath, killing his beloved dog by placing it on railway track, beating him and urinating on him when he goes to attend the wedding of one of their relatives on invitation. But he could not tolerate when his father was stripped half naked and beaten in the

college by non-Dalit boys. For the reason of being friendly with the non-dalit girl Jyothi Mahalakshmi (Jo), a plot is laid against him to murder him as the way his dog was murdered. He could come out alive from this plot courageously. The words he utters to the girl's father sound meaningful and prominent at this juncture. He says, 'the smile the girl smiles at his father and the word 'dad' she utters very lovingly are only his alms given to him'. Had he told what they did to him on that wedding day to his daughter, his daughter would have spit him on his face.

The Dalits in the film are victimized but the protagonist's courage, assertiveness and self respect puts the non-Dalits to shame. The non-Dalits here are the victimizers who are incapable of behaving like humans. They remain incapable in several aspects like , respecting fellow human beings, behaving with dignity, thinking nobly, and leading a respectable and peaceful life as they are afraid that their place might be taken away by the people whom they consider inferior to them. All these spring from the values they harbor from childhood onwards. There are several incidents in the movie which show the values of non-Dalits which are far away from that of human beings. The incident, non-Dalits coming and urinating in the ponds where Dalits take bath; killing the protagonist's dog without reason; beating and urinating on the protagonist when he goes to their wedding; beating and stripping protagonist's father when he comes to visit his son in the college; bribing a person to kill the protagonist – all these show the values of these non-Dalits. As the movie is shown – giving the rating for the movie as 16+ , it is said the film shows “Strong violence, strong foul language , moderate drug abuse” . In the film it is the non-Dalits who use violence and foul language .

Further the movie also displays honour killings which again reflect the value system non-Dalits harbor. The person hired for killing considers these cold blooded murders as service to community when he says “Kula saamikku seiyyara sevai”. The person who hired for this honour killings is regarded as Maistry Nittam's grandson. When he was offered money to kill the protagonist, saying he is in love with the girl of their caste, the words uttered by the hired killer show the values they are brought up in.

I murder for the honour of our women. It is my offering to God. if something goes wrong, I end up in jail. Use this to get me out of prison. Use this to take me out. Ok.

(2:04:34 – 2:04:43)

In his review M.Sugantha also points out this honour killings, by very subtly pointing out these honour killings as (dis)honour killings.

The director also effectively shows us how (dis)honour killings are passed off as accidents and suicides (one of these references the infamous Kausalya-Shankar killing). We get a character, an old man who is a hired killer, who proudly describes the murders that he commits for caste as “Kula saamikku seiyyara sevai”.

Kirubhakar Purushothaman in his review of the film entitled “Pariyerum Perumal Review: Mari Selvaraj film is disturbing caste drama” also points out the heinous value system that encourages this (dis)honour killings

Pariyan's story is intercut by portions of an ageing serial killer. He hunts down lower-caste guys if they fall in love with girls from upper castes. Not just killing; he does everything despicable to hold the caste pride high. In a scene, he is seen shaving off a girl's hair so that the guy who is after her would stop pursuing. And Pariyan ends up on his hit list, and what happens next makes up for the intense drama.

This is a clear example of how inhuman actions are considered honour killings by a section of people in the society. These for them are ethical values and must be honoured and any one comes in between must be eradicated. It shows how helplessly they are chained by these inhuman values. The victimizer becoming a victim of his own values and blindfolded by values that cannot treat human being as a human being is quiet evident here. Further they glorify the act. Back stabbing here is passed for a skill where the hired killer helped by the victim in two incidents very subtly kills them.

The only character in the movie, the father of the girl seems to be reasonable. He seems to realize his mistake. But he knows it is difficult to cross this wild gulf. He is afraid that if the people of his community know, they would kill his daughter too. Sugantha observes in his review

In a scene, we get to see a high-caste father tells his daughter's low-caste boyfriend that he shouldn't see her because the men in his caste would kill his daughter as well.

The civility shown by the Dalit protagonist stands against the uncivility shown by non-Dalits. The civility of the protagonist in showing patience; in not revealing the ill treatment he got in the hands of the girl's father and cousins to the girl, and in leaving people without killing them amidst the killing and plotting and hypocrisy of non-Dalits show his values. He puts the girl's father to shame with his civil behavior, when he says it is only because he has hidden the truth (about the ill treatment he was given) from the girl, she could still show the respect to her father. Perumal's conversation with Jo's father, after he successfully reverts the murder plot against him, shows his moral stand:

Are you even human? I came to your house because she invited me. You lock me up, beat me, urinate on me! Hasn't your rage settled down? You have sent an old man to kill me! (He spits) Is this your valour? Hey, remember how your daughter smiled at you today! How fondly she called you “dad”? That affection is the pittance I doled out to you. You think you are the protectors of your pride, honour and shit like that! I have protected !! Had I told your daughter all this... she would have spat on your face and hung herself. That's why I put up with everything. What now? If you think only in my death you will be the father...she believes you are! Come. Kill me...After killing me...if you still don't trust

your daughter..go kill her too! What is your problem? How am I inferior to you? I tell you now. My hands held the plough, but it also wielded swords! That's exactly why I will stay right here! I will study what I like! Do what you can! Leave. (2:20:18 to 2:21:43)

Jo's father knows his daughter likes to be with Perumal but he couldn't offer her hand to him. A barrier obstructs him. Chained by his own values, he becomes helpless. Again very mild yet powerful words from Perumal reflects the gap between these two. The conversation between Jo's father and Perumal reflects the non-Dalit (Jo's father) being in chains and the self assertive, open and frank Dalit (Perumal) with human values. When the girl's father asks, why he hasn't revealed the truth to the girl, the reply Perumal gives keeps him higher than his opponents in terms of values he has.

Jo's father : Son, I am going to ask you something. Answer me frankly.

Perumal :Yes sir!

Jo's father :We did all that to you. Why didn't you talk about it to my daughter?

Perumal :Do you know something? Your daughter likes you more than me."Nobody has a father as good as mine" she says. That's why

Jo's father : Thanks. I know... my daughter likes you as much as she likes me. I also know that she wants to be with you. Son, my daughter is so obsessed with you. Don't you feel the same about her ?

Perumal : I don't know. Before I could understand it, you tore me to pieces. But your daughter is very lucky. She can say what she feels openly, anywhere. I have to die so many times, before I can say what I feel.

Jo's father :Sorry! You are a good person. ...

(2:25:46 to 2:27:28)

The movie doesn't end the way commercial films end with the marriage of Perumal and the girl. They go in different directions. The dialogues towards the end shows the pitiable condition of the society that divides the people in the name high and low, pure and impure, white and black. In the society every one is a victim. From this perspective, even Jothi Mahalakshmi's father, cousin, brother and the murderer who belongs to their community are also victims. Victims of the values , the values that are handed over from generation to generation. In the last song in the movie – reflects how the child like mind that doesn't understand the differences set by the society. Their minds are corrupted by their parents who have been corrupted by their parents. The so called values are passed on from generation to generation.

High and low

I don't comprehend

Impure and black

I don't understand

You and I are not the same

Our parents said so (2 :30:05 to 2:30:25)

As they are brought up in such an atmosphere, they become victims of this value system. This can only allow them to think Dalits as unworthy as dogs. In their eyes there is no value for Dalit's life. Just as one can take off the life of a dog easily, they can take off the life of a Dalit. This value system makes them urinate in the pond where Dalits take bath, beat them and urinate on them as easily as they can do it on dogs, call them by their caste name in derogatory way, mock at the reservation privileges they get, make fun of their parents, and even go to the extent of killing them to safe guard their so called honour. They are so vicitimized in their own customs and values that they become blind to human values which help a person to become a human to treat another one with respect.

Even Jo's father sounds helpless. He doesn't know how to cross this wide gap between Dalits and Non-Dalits. He puts the responsibility on time in his conversation with Perumal

Jo's father : Sorry! You are a good person. You will become all that you wish to be. Study well. I can only say this for now. What else can I say? Lets see. Things can change tomorrow. Right. Who knows? (2: 27 :21 to 2: 27 :41)

The protagonist fit reply to this

"I know sir

As long as the way you are and expect me to be dog you want me to be. Nothing will change. Everything will stay the same." (2 : 27:42 to 2:27 :58)

This shows the stand of non-Dalits towards Dalits. Things change when people change. As long as the Victimizers remain as victims of their own value system things remain the same.

Works Cited:

1. *Pariyerum Perumal B.A.B.L.* Directed by Mari Selvaraj, Performances by Kathir, Anandi & Yogi Babu. Amazon Prime
2. Raghavan, Chudamani. *Yamini*. Trans by Vasantha Surya. Introduction. Madras :

Macmillan, 1996.

3. Covey, Stephen R. *Seven Habits of the Most Effective People*. London : Butler and Tanner, 2004.
4. Purushothaman, Kirubhakar . “Pariyerum Perumal Review: Mari Selvaraj film is disturbing caste drama.” Rev. of *Pariyerum Perumal B.A.B.L*,by Mari Selvaraj. *India Today*. 28 September 2018 UPDATED: October : Web
5. Suganth, M. “Pariyerum Perumal Movie Review.” Rev. of *Pariyerum Perumal B.A.B.L*,by Mari Selvaraj.*Times Of India*. Updated: Sep 28, 2018, 02.09 PM IST Web
6. Ramanujan, Srinivasa. “Pariyerum Perumal review: caste away.” Rev. of *Pariyerum Perumal B.A.B.L*,by Mari Selvaraj.*The Hindu*. 28 September 2018: Web
7. Damodaran, Karthikeyan. “Pariyerum Perumal : A Film that talks Civility in an Uncivil Casteist Society.” *The Wire* . 12 October 2018. <https://thewire.in/film/a-film-that-talks-civility-in-an-uncivil-casteist-society>
8. Nathan, Archana. Mari Selvaraj on his sleeper hit ‘Pariyerum Perumal’: ‘I want to use art to generate a debate’ 3 oct 2018 *Scroll.in*. Web.<https://scroll.in/reel/896799/mari-selvaraj-on-his-sleeper-hit-pariyerum-perumal-i-want-to-use-art-to-generate-a-debate>
9. Nauth MS, Linda. “Psychologists should help victimizers understand their past”. *The National Psychologist*. July 27, 2020 <https://nationalpsychologist.com/2020/07/psychologists-should-help-victimizers-understand-their-past/107543.html>