



## Fractured Identity in K. A. Gunasekaran's *The Scar*

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### Abstract

This article entitled “Fractured Identity in K. Gunasekaran’s *The Scar*”. Focuses on fractured identity of society through in the fiction *The Scar* by K. Gunasekaran. Dalit Autobiography has turned out to be not only a part of the Dalit history but also an important node of Dalit Literature. It is a typical act of the Dalit writers to achieve a sense of identity and mobilize resistance against different forms of oppression. This study seeks to examine the status and sufferings of dalits and their survival in the caste Hindu society in the wrote of K. A. Gunasekaran’s Tamil autobiography ‘Vadu’ it which is available in English Translation as *The Scar* (2009) by V. Kadambari. By writing his autobiography Gunasekaran thus challenged the tradition formulated and propagated by mainstream writers. Not only it is a record of his experiences, but it is also a documentation of a certain time .It talks about his life up to his graduation. The narrative evokes a mixed culture of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. This autobiography shows the curse of untouchability that creates psychic and physical wounds in the minds of the so called outcastes. The paper examines how life narratives could be used for our understanding of their hurdles of faced challenges by the Dalits and the caste hegemony.

**Key words:** Dalit, Auto Biography, Fractured Identity, untouchability.

The Dalit autobiography plays a vital role in the upliftment of dalits. It brings out the true evidences of discriminating in people in the name of caste and it also highlights the duality of the society in treating the fellow men. The author evidences the double standards of Indian villages’ cruelty and caste consciousness. K.A. Gunasekaran duels in the subject casteism which is widespread in every parts of Indian villages,

especially in the villages of Tamilnadu. The social structure of India has been built up by the rules of casteism. An Indian can convert to any religion but he cannot change or convert to other caste because he has to carry his caste name along with his religion. For instance If a Hindu - scheduled caste Adidravida person converts to Christianity, he has to carry his own caste to the other religion. He could be acknowledged as Converted Adidravida Christian. This is the reality of the Indian caste system. Thus, the narration of K.A Gunasekaran encapsulates how the people of scheduled Caste have been treated by the three major religions of India: Hindu, Muslim, and Christian. The novels deals with the immeasurable agony endured by the underprivileged. The author exhorts the caste conscious of south Indian village by his casual style of narrating the incidents and thrown a light on the cruelty and the trauma of a south Indian village. It also creates an awareness on the importance of education in lifting the underdogs. Gunasekaran unearths the caste pride and prejudices through his vernacular style of writing. Thus, *The Scar* has been considered as a first modern dalit tamil autobiography. It sketches the life experience of parayar, pallar, andchakiliyar communities of Elayankudi, Ramanadhapuram.

K.A. Gunasekaran's *The Scar* could be categorized as an autobiographical narrative. *The Scar* is originally from Tamil language, and it was translated into English by V. Kadambari. English translation helps the readers to be connected with the other nationals. However, the translation of regional language works into English is not easier. English translation also helps the author as well as the work to reach the world audience and to receive appreciation from the other nations' academicians. he problem a translator face is; Particularly to find equivalents in an alien language like English needs a lot of knowledge, efficiency and scholarship. It is very complex to translate, Unless the translator is able to elicit the implicated meaning between the lines, he/she cannot render it successfully, in the target language. The translator of this book states, "Vadu is written with the vision to change hardened hearts" kadambari (xix). She has devoted all her times in the process of translating this work. Through the translation of this work she attained, the "quest for understanding human nature and search for methods of societal change, at a time when caste and discrimination seem to be more crude now than ever before" (*The Scar* xix).

*The Scar* sketches the reality of dalit paraiya community. The paraiya community could be identified only when they play drums in the village demi goddess festivals, otherwise none could identify their castes. The paraiya community folks used to hide their community from upper caste people because if anyone found as dalits during the festive seasons, then the situation of dalits would become more horrible. If a dalit man

or woman caught up or identified, then their situation would become worse, and they would be treated not lesser than an animal. They would be defined from entering the temple.

K.A. Gunasekaran hails from the Dalit community, formerly considered as Untouchables in India. As a Dalit, he had experienced discrimination and exploitation at various levels—physical and psychological. His education and self-determination to overcome all forms of discrimination motivated him to experience life beyond the limitations imposed upon him by his low cast status.

The scar is an important work for Dalit assertion and emancipation. It reiterates the fact that Indian villages are doubly caste-conscious and cruel. Therefore, the emancipation of the Dalits, says K.A. Gunasekaran rests in better education for the community. The narration unfolds the pain and anguish suffered by the author since his childhood. It expounds on how the dalit community has managed to traverse and work around differently with Muslim, Hindu and Christian communities.

The novel is a graphic and confronting narrative of the life experience of a *Paraya*—an a boriginalagri cultural community and one of the Dalit communities formerly known as Untouchables—from Elyankudi village in Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu. The Dalits lived in by small conditions in the village so TamilNadu. They were segregated from the upper-caste residents and forced to live in filthy enclaves, away from the main land. The narration begins with the author's recollection of his days in the surrounding villages near Elayankudi.

Gunasekaran describes the life led by him and the upper caste Muslim people living in Elyankudi, a big village market place in Ramanathapuram district. As a son of a teacher, Gunasekaran was respected by the Muslim community and was given special access into their home and the mosque. He often went along with his Muslim friends to the mosque for prayers. Similarly, Gunasekaran frequented the *Rasoola Samundram*—inhabited by the *Parayars* and *Chkiliyars (Arundathiyar)* only. His friend, Wilson, taught him to play the 'harmonium'. Along with Kalairaj and Dr. Muniyandi, Gunasekaran staged plays during Christmas. The other religions did not discriminate him as his own. The Christians and Muslims are friendly and helping.

The life in Cheri is not an ordinary one. Gunasekaran brings out the caste ridden society of Thovoor. He narrated the story of Michel Amma while referring to the caste problem of Thovoor village. Michel Amma was a government teacher who helped the other financially to encourage him in his school education from Pallar community have fallen love with a Udayar boy when she was in a school. Knowing this, her

parents in got her betrothed to a boy of their own community. The Udayar boy was infuriated and followed her while she was about to take bath in the canal. He stopped her and enquired about her engagement with other boy. He asked, “After having promised me that we will be husband and wife, are you trying to cheat me by marrying another?” (26). In return she asked him, “Will your people allow me to live if I get married to you”? (35). He made several attempts to convince her to elop with him but she refused. She said, “Even if we elope, your people will destroy my parents and my entire clan. Forget me and marry a girl in your own caste and live in peace” (12). Finally, he became very ferocious and slit her head from her body by using the sickle which he had kept in secret. He got trail of fourteen years of imprisonment and now he is working as a peon in Kilanchunnai Hospital. Intercaste marriages were taboo in such a cast society.

This fear of intercaste marriages have been deeply stricken with the lives of cheri people as it involves violence and suffering.. Even the love between the own caste has been questioned. Thangarasu and Tamilarasi of Thovoor cheri were in love with each other since their school days. They managed to keep their love very secret, as it may attract antagonism. After finishing their schoolings, Tamilarasi stopped her studies due to financial issues, it was very common among the cheri people to stop their girls from going to higher education because of financial strains. However, Thangarasu pursued medicine in Madurai Govt. Hospital where he was greeted by everyone with due respect. His fellow students and everyone in the medical college greeted him for singing a song very well. He melancholically sang a Bharathiyar song: “Kannama, kannamma, kannama, kannama” everyone in the auditorium congratulated him, and wished him for the first prize, “You would win” (35). He admired that day because none looked after his caste, and they greeted him whole heartedly. The people of his Thovoor village invariably call him” Doctor Thambi” while they went for treatment. The same people when they meet him in the markets or bus stands, they call him as Muniuyandi. He notices the different in attitude among the people. He tells about their behaviour to his machan – (brother in law) how the people of upper caste behave differently when I off from the hospital. “Ok Muniyandi, we will go. Would you like us to take a message for Karrupan? See you then Muniyandi . . .” (38). When the people met him at Elayankudi, They would demean him. They address him: “What Muniyandi! When did you come from Madurai? When are you likely to come to Marandai?” (36). Later on, he was appointed as N.S.S. Cultural Secretary for the college. He has been highly appreciated by the Principal and staff members for being studious and smart.

Thangaraj volunteered himself in all the college activities and performed well in all the college competition and he ranked first in Tamil poetry writing. On seeing, Meera, a faculty from the same college made him the Secretary of Bharathi Club . This has become history in the college, he is the first person who obtained this position from a lower caste. From that day he regularly performed well at all the college functions. Until this time, no student belonging to the oppressed class had held such posts in the history of the college. Even though knowing that he is a boy from Dalit community, Professor Meera invited him to her home and served him food. He was introduced to renowned writers, and gained many chances to meet many intellectuals and academicians and reviewers of Tamil Nadu. He learned how to poof-read the books. He read many tamil writers works with the help of his professor Meera, who too was a poet. Some of the renowned people he met V. Subramanian of Congress Party, Professor Solomon Pappaiah, Abdul Rahman, Thothatri and TamizhAnnal , K.R. Bala, Professor N. Dharmarajan, Poet, the assembly speaker, K. Kalimuthu.

Gunasekaran first experienced caste-stratification while in school. A school clerk would enter the class and ask:

How many in this class are *Parayars*? he would ask. Put up your hands! How many are *Pallars*? Stand up, I will count. Look, all of you should come to the office after class to pick up your scholarship forms which should be filled up within a week's time .... They would reinforce caste identities by labelling us *Pallar, Parayars and Chakiliyas...The .scar* (5)

To finance his education, Gunasekaran's father appealed to some of the rich Muslims. As his father was illiterate, he had to approach Karnam, the village headman (VAO) for his signature. He was often humiliated by the headman and in return for the signature, was obliged to perform various menial tasks.

Delineation of Poverty plays a vital role in Dalit biography. None could pen without describing the poverty of dalits in their autobiographies. Being a poor means being a dalit and vice-versa. .K.A.Gunasekaran, *The Scar* is a no exemption. Poverty all through his autobiography continues to haunt him.

Though his father was a teacher but his salary was insufficient for family expenses. Moreover, their life was so miserable during the rainy days, the roof was pouring with rains, his mother used to place pots to avoid the rain water flooding the house. His father went for fishing to earn more to meet his family expenses.

He also managed to earn few more by reading and writing letters to the illiterate Muslim women of his village. They had untold economic problems.

He has not elucidated only on poverty, starvation, and caste bigotry but he also exhorted the love and case which he had received from his family. Thus, this autobiography is also a reminiscence of folk arts and society.

This study throws light on certain facts which could be followed in eradication of caste and creed in the society. The value system could be initiated among the parents because the terms and practices of casteism has been transmitted from one generations to other generations mainly due to parents, and their casteist ideologies. The parent has to give off all the caste connotation and teach their children about secularism and equality. An educational step up teacher plays a vital role in changing the configurations of students mind from the glitches of casteism. "Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of everyone. The education department is not a department which can be treated on the basis of quid pro. Education ought to be cheapened in all possible ways and to the greatest possible extent"(Ambedkar, 40-41). They have to teach the social values to their students, and to teach them to treat the fellow human with all love. The third, peer groups of the students who are very important in developing casteism. Such peer groups have to be educated and organized to observe social values among them.

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