



A Study on the Domestic Violence in Yuma Vasuki's *Blood Ties*

C. Vellaiammal^a, Dr. T. Jayakumar^b

^aAssistant Professor of English, Government Arts College for Women (Autonomous), Pudukkottai- 622 001. Research Scholar, Periyar E.V.R. College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli- 620 024. Tamil Nadu.

^b Research Advisor & Associate Professor, Department of English, Periyar E.V.R. College (Autonomous), Trichy- 620 023. Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli – 620024. Tamil Nadu.

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Abstract

Yuma Vasuki's *Blood Ties* exposes domestic violence. The story depicts the joint family of three brothers and their widowed mother. The novel depicts a vivid picture of the rude problems faced in every family life through the characters, situations and incidents. The novel is set in a small town in rural Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Domestic, Violence, Tamilnadu.

1. Introduction

In *Blood Ties*, Amma, Akka, Thambi and Anna are the ill-fated victims of Dinakaran's violence. Dinakaran exercises his powers as the head of the family, repeatedly betraying his daughter and young sons and terrorizing his wife. The terror Dinakaran unleashes against his family is unbelievably brutal and sadistic, beyond all imagination, matched only by his emotional poverty.

We come across the terror Dinakaran infused towards the family from the beginning. Whenever Amma hears the horrible screech of his rustic bicycle as it approaches the home, Amma's disgust makes her cower and hide in a corner. Since her marriage, she has never lived a happy life, and in the novel, there is no reference that Amma spoke even a single word to her husband. Dinakaran is a typical male chauvinist who never allows her to speak. He considers her only as a 'thing' meant for battering. He does not care for his sons and daughter.

On the other hand, Akka matured beyond her years; she sacrificed her childhood for her family. Her tenderness towards her brothers and the generosity of her spirit amazes even her father. Vasuki receives all her father's battering, and remains quiet.

The character of Dinakaran is not entirely black and white, though, at times, it comes dangerously close. He comes from a family of alcoholics – his mother his brothers drink a lot, and they lose their dignity in the end. Dinakaran is a victim as much as a victimizer – a victim of alcoholism.

After the death of their eldest child, Amma loses her faith in her husband and repeatedly moans for not providing proper treatment to him. He is a typical drunkard and a male, so he can do whatever he likes. Owing to his intoxication, he does not know what he is doing, and at the same time, he shows his superiority that there is no one else to question him.

This is not the first time Amma is suppressed like this. Even Patti, the mother of Dinakaran is also a victim of this oppression in her days. When Amma goes to her house out of the fear of her husband's battering, Patti asks her son Dinakaran, "That footloose woman who has fled, why have you not gone and dragged her back by her hair?" (BT 57). Patti's remarks "If you are like this, how will these children prosper? If they also become uncontrollable like her what will we do? If my husband were here, would he have allowed any woman to step outside the house? Wouldn't he have broken her leg and burnt it on the stove?" (57) reveal how the older generations were suppressed in their days, and as a continuum, they try to impose and continue in the present generation. Patti blames the younger generations and asserts that it is not appropriate to give power to the woman in a family. This wailing is nothing but the outcome of a widow's sufferings and age-long oppression. In her *Powers of Tamil Women*, Susan S. Wadley observes that "The widow is considered to be inauspicious in Indian society. The widow is the most inauspicious of all beings" (154).

It is not only that Dinakaran's wife suffers from this assault, but his daughter Vasuki is also a victim of battering. Whenever he beats Amma, Akka will also be the receiver. The story emphasizes the harm of alcoholism, which destroys the family and culture. It is this alcoholism that slowly and perniciously ruins Dinakaran's ability to think and reason, to feel true affection. There are moments of clarity and tenderness towards his children, which are very precious to the children. These are all too brief that it lasts only till the next drink.

Vasuki, the Akka is very obedient and does her duties sincerely to her father despite his battering: "Every morning, she washed her Appa's piss-wet lungis, his Vomit-covered shirts and his dhotis soiled by rolling in wet mud or in the sewers in his regular drunken state ... she was ready to be anyone's slave. Indeed she was already one. But her brothers must live" (BT 158).

This is her tendency, and without knowing this, he continues his usual task of beating her mercilessly. She even advises her father: "reduce your drinking a little! Your health is deteriorating so fast. And you do not eat properly!" (BT 212). Hearing this, he is shocked, and "Appa stared at her face. In the dark, he could only see a shadowy figure. She had never spoken so boldly and advised her father before. Why, she had never even stood close to him and boldly uttered a few words" (212).

Akka heard Appa calling her from the backward and ran to see what he wanted. He had a metal ladle in his hand that he had found in the thatched roof. That was the only thing that he could find in his hurry. When Akka came close to him, he jumped and grabbed her hair and rolled it in his fist... (220) and the ladle repeatedly fell on her head with full force... From the well, Appa dragged her by her hair to Chittappa's house, hitting her all the way. On her head, on the nape of her neck, on her legs... The blows that assailed her legs could not make her speak. The edge of the ladle had cut her head and it was bleeding heavily. She was unconscious. (221)

Further Yuma Vasuki writes, "...she had her palms together in supplication but she also moved them from one side to another to say no. With all his strength, Appa caught hold of her hair and rolled it in his fist. Chittappa held her two hands together. Akka's howling seemed to mix with the air without touching anybody's heart". (152) This clearly shows the height of brutality of Dinakaran.

In *Blood Ties*, when Amma gives a complaint against her husband, the police at first consider that she is a beggar as:

She kept thinking of her missing son. She had no one to support her or help her look for him. Her darling son was an orphan somewhere... The head constable caught hold of Amma who nearly fell. He pulled up the bench for her to sit on. 'No, no, Annachi', she protested and, with great difficulty, sat on the floor. She could not bend her right leg. She adjusted her sari over her chest. A strand of hair was stuck on the thick viscous blood on the bondage. The head constable concluded that she must be a beggar-woman who had got hurt. (295)

Later on, the police said, “Women should not come here!... “You should not come here. Walk slowly and go home. When the boss comes, he will be angry, he reprimanded her in a gentle tone” (296).

The head constable, who wants to help her by some means, is also a part of the male-oriented society, which makes him ask a series of questions: “How can a housewife go to a police station? Won’t the people on the street, the people of your village say things like that? I think you should go home without letting anyone know that you came here. If you are born a woman, you have to put up with such things!” (BT 300).

These words show how the male-dominated society imposes tortures and untold sufferings on women, but it expects her to accept them without opposing them.

Further, Amma brings out the reality of the Hindu traditional sacraments when she says, “They pulled and broke my thali! I do not know where it fell and what happened to it. My father had the thali made for me... I have come with faith in you. Don’t let me down. You will prosper” (300). She continues out of her sufferings that, “I have my faith in you like I have in God. I will go somewhere and survive with my children. I can wash dishes in a few houses and survive with some kanji for the stomach” (301).

Amma is well aware of her house and society; since she went to the police station, she will be ‘unwelcome’ in the house. Mukhaideen Bhai, who provides petty jobs to her, is angry with her and stops sending betel-nuts to pack and Chittappa says, “Will a woman from a good family step out of the house? She is a whore, a woman of no character: that is why she went to the police station! If she had been my wife I would have killed her long ago! But alcohol has made my elder brother a feckless, blind man. That is why he is still letting her be”. (317)

In *Blood Ties*, the women characters do not possess even their basic education, and they suffer a lot. Through the river Yuma Vasuki symbolically represents the notion that all human beings must be respected and every human being to be loved, respected and cared for. *Blood Ties* portray the miserable conditions of women in a male-oriented society and the author’s concern for their betterment. Their humanism reinforces their forte in man and enables them to direct their art against all kinds of evil forces, which degenerate man as humanism is a synthesis of Eastern and Western thoughts derived from Marx, Buddha and Gurunanak’s philosophy.

2. Conclusion

In *Blood Ties*, the dark corner is where Amma spent almost all her life with her husband Dinakaran. When Amma and her children leave their house after the death of her husband, it shows that woman has no place in her husband’s house after his death. Society visualizes a woman as a mother or grandmother, a daughter or sister, and a wife. Here Amma submits herself to better her children, and her revolt against her inebriated husband is quite emphatic. Amma’s revolts are against the established system or submission before it is weighted in terms of concern for others, at the cost of the self. The role and idea of women depicted by the novelist give us an insight into the cultural values, changes and concepts of tradition in Indian society. The different ways of women’s behaviour reveal to us the significant cultural aspects of the same society. Women express cultural values such as being husband-focused, family-oriented, submissive, upholding religious traditions, capable of sacrifices. They also protest against the exploitation and oppression in a male-dominated society. Thus, the novel present the issues of gender discrimination and the subjugation of women on various grounds.

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