

## **CASTE CONFLICT AND STRUGGLE IN COOMARASAWAMY'S: THE DANCE OF SHIVA**

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### **Abstract**

Ananda Kentish Coommaraswamy, an art critic and philosopher, was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka on August 22, 1877 to Muthu Coommaraswamy, a Tamilian and Lady Elizabeth Clay Bevy of Kent, a British. After graduation in Geography from the University of London he exhibited keen interest in art, architecture of India, archaeology, philosophy; religion and mysticism. He wrote illuminating articles on metaphysics and iconography. M.P. Pandit, an eminent critic, observes in *Indian Poetics*: "His studies in the interpretation of Indian painting, sculpture and the inner spirit of Eastern art, - the Chinese included - are not chauvinistic essays but expositions in the service of Universal Art" (p.310)

He became the Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon. On account of his eminence in various fields, he was appointed as the curator of Indian and Mohammedan Art in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1917 and later on promoted as the Fellow for Research in Oriental-Indian, Persian and Muslim Art in the same institute. He discovered Thorianite also. In 1947, he passed away in Needham, Massachusetts. Ananda Coommaraswamy, though delved deep into the Eastern culture and the Vedas, has not held extreme views. He has tried to synthesize those cultures of the East and the West with a view to bringing peace, prosperity and bliss to mankind.

### **Introduction**

Ananda Coommaraswamy's *The Dance of Shiva* a collection of fourteen essays on varied themes like Indian art, culture and mysticism, was published first in 1918 by the Sunwise Turn, New York. The title essay "The Dance of Shiva" is the sixth one in the collection which deals mainly with the philosophical interpretation of the iconography of South Indian metal images of Sri Nataraja. According to Dr. Kamil V. Zvelebil "The essay is beautiful, and has contributed in a very important manner to Western understanding of Indian art with tremendous intuition, Coommaraswamy has grasped the philosophical essence of Shiva's dance, and even in some seemingly minor points, he has foreseen the results of later research"

The concept of Shiva as the Divine Dancer is expressed by the name Nataraja which means "the King of Dance" and "King of Dancers" and hence Shiva is attributed with several names like Natesa, Nateswara, and natyapriya.

The Tamil inscriptions refer to him as "Atavallan" which means "the one who excels in dancing". The God of Chidambaram is known as "Kuttapperumanatikal" which means "the Supreme Dancer". The iconographic term used for the dance performed by Shiva at Chidambaram is "ananda-tandavam" and this means "the dynamic dance of bliss".

It is also called "Panca-Krtya-Paramananda-tandavam" and this means "the dynamic dance of highest bliss symbolizing the five actions". The other terms used for this dance are: 'sadatandava' (the dance of ceaseless cosmic process), and 'Gauritandava' (dance witnessed by GauriSivakami) of all the terms used, the name "anandatandava" ("the awesome dance of bliss") is in common parlance. The Tamil term 'tandavam' means 'leaping' 'jumping' and it is derived from the root 'tandu' (to jump, leap across, jump over, and dance).

Caste is not an ordinary word. It consists the immense rude life of human beings. It splits human beings

such as Brahmin, Kshadhriya, Vaishiya and Shudhra according to that causes of professional. This is the main reason for developing caste system in this country. It has kept a set of ferocious rules and regulations. It splits human beings as higher caste people and lower class people. The first one is that Brahmin chants mantra in temple and gives useful advice to king only. He works both temple and kingdom. The second mentions that Kshadhriya must fight in the battlefield and secure the nation, people, and kingdom. The third is that Vaishiya come working under the professional of trade and commerce. The last indicates that Shudhra should do the serve to all caste people. This barbarian caste division is portrayed by Brahmin.

Brahmin, Kshadhriya and Vaishiya have been living as joyful and superior position in society. Their generation has got a good education and wealth but Shudhra's life style is different from others. His generation never gets equal rights at all. They are suppressed by all higher caste people. This society pictures them as poor people till twenty first century. Shudhra must work in the burial ground. This society gives a bad name to him that name is 'Thotti'. He lives besides the burial ground and this society treats him as untouchable person. The frightful caste division is organized by Brahmin in society. This ferocious caste system is only helped to live joyfully to three upper class people not only lower class people.

Since ancient period, Brahmin's son is only applicable to work the same professional. Kshadhriya comes under this same concept. Caste system could help mainly to live peacefully about three generation. This society could not make a new way to abolish this caste division. They would not like to give a correct self-respect to all. They think that three upper class people must taste only the joyful life except Shudhra. Brahmin gets a superior intelligence in mentally. He has made the bad division to live only particular people in society.

Dravidian is first generation of human being in this world. He had been using a great culture in this world. This existence is proved by the historical evident. Mohanjadharo is a great example of Dravidian's culture and identity. They had built a finest house and street. They had used some worthy ornamental, gold and silver. This historical event showed how Dravidian lives peacefully and depicts the great talent of

architect. He never makes any caste division in ancient time but Brahmin has broken the immense identity of Dravidians. Brahmin calls Dravidians as Dalit.

Caste system splits the habitual life of Dravidians. By bearing him, he is first and foremost generation in this world. His color compares with black. He has lived with nature and its circumstances. He has followed a great culture before coming Brahmin. Brahmin introduces the arrogance caste division to suppress Dravidians and capture the whole country. Dravidians works so hard in field at any place. He would not think to ruin everything in the world. He thinks that each and every people must live equally in the world.

Brahmin represents as a cruel man for introducing the caste division. He has written one book that name is Varanasiramam. It indicates that how four caste people bear from the organs of Brama. It notes that Brahmin bears from the Brama's tongue. He is only suitable to learn education and serve some rituals to God. He concludes that his born is usually helped to give some useful ideas to king. He teaches only education to the higher caste people in India. This caste system rejects Dravidians and treats them as slavery.

Kshadhriya bears from Brama's chest. He represents as warrior and must fight in the battlefield. His aim is only secured nation and its people from other country. Vaishiya appears from Brama's thigh. His works compare with trade and commerce. The three caste people never meet any struggle situation in society their life compares with so colourful. They have got equal rights and worthy life in society. This happily life is against Dravidian or Shudhras only. Shudhra is only fit to do the last rituals of death of human being. These rules ignore him to get equal education, rights and power. This caste system indicates that Shudhra bears from Brama's leg and so he must serve to all people.

Not only Brahmin shows the variation in education but also food. He has made a different set of rules and regulations to take food to all caste division. Brahmin never takes any non-veg dish. He takes only vegetables and fruits. The food system imprints strongly as vegetarian. Kshadhriya and Vaishiya follow the same food style but never call as vegetarian. They have used a set of food system. This food system is another reason for developing caste system. Shudhra's food system is varied from everything. This system

is connected into all people's blood. This rude system has been following by all caste people till this today.

This caste system has happened clearly in the great epic of Mahabharadham. In this epic, education is only suitable to higher level people. It shows clearly one example of how Brahmin oppresses the Dravidian. Duronachariar is a great master in teach archery. Pandavas is responsible to Brahmin family. Egalaiavan represents as Dalit man in this epic. When Duronachariyar teaches that art to them, Egalaiavan has crossed them. He wants to learn it but Duronachariyar rejects him because of his caste.

Egalaiavan makes one beautiful doll of human being like as Duronachariyar and prays him daily morning. He hides besides a tree and watches that learning. He learns everything without help of the great master of Dhuronachariyar. When Dhuronachariyar walks into the forest, a deer is hunt by arrow. He thinks that this deer is haunted by a well versed archery. His name is Egalaiavan. As soon as Egalaiavan sees Dhuronachariyar, he prays him. Dhuronachariyar asks him how he learns that art. He replies that Dhuronachariyar is his master. He explains all incidents clearly. At the end, Dhuronachariyar asks his thump for his tuition fees. Egalaiavan cuts suddenly his thump and give to him. This play shows the reality and existence of Dravidians. This epic portrays Dhuronachariyar as arrogance man. He thinks that Dalit people would not become as great archery in society. In archery, Egalaiavan is a great student than Arjuna.

In ancient period, Dravidians has prayed the God of Lord Shiva. This is proved in the civilization of Mohanjadharo. Shiva lives in the burial ground. He has twelve arms. He is called as another name of Bhairava. Dravidian has built a big temple to Shiva. Before coming Brahmin, Dravidian has been praying the Lord Shiva. Not only he prays Shiva but also Kaali who is a wife of Shiva. Dravidians never make any bad caste system at all. Both Brahmins and Dravidians pray the same god but Brahmins thought is slightly different from Dravidians. This caste system helps to break up the great identity and culture of Dravidians.

Shiva lives in the burial ground. He burns the human body and smears ash on body. Not only he burns the body but also recreates or purifies the soul to next generation. In the dance of Shiva, Coommaraswamy explains three dances of Lord Shiva. The first dance happens in kailashin evening. He

dances with semi-gods. All the other gods gather round Him to play the accomplishment to the performance. It is called as Sada Tandavam. The second dance appears in the burial ground in midnight. He dances with kaali and demon in night. It is called as Gauri Tandavam. The last dance is called as Anandha Thandavam. It happens in Chidambaram. Lord Shiva's behaviour is closely related with Dalit people activities. His way of life compares with Dravidians. This is proved by the dance of Shiva.

In fact, Dalit is symbolized of Lord Shiva. Dalit burns the human body in the burial ground. He does the last important death rituals of human. He lives besides the burial ground. Lord Shiva does the same activity and so Lord Shiva compares with Dalit. This society prides the worthy activity of Dalit. He is symbolized as God in this world. This truthful activity has been abducting by Varanasiramam is created by Brahmin. Dalit is not a lower caste people. He is an incarnation of Lord Shiva. This society must change their thought and decision. They treat Dalit people as human being and not as slavery.

Whoever participate the last ritual of death of human being portrays as a great man said by MahathmaGandhiji. Dalit does the last ritual of human being. Now he is called as great man in society. His activity is superior then others. He is only getting the great job of Lord Shiva. The other caste people pray the Lord Shiva daily. They chant his name reluctantly and sing his song everywhere. They believe that Lord Shiva is a famous and favourite God of them but never give correct self-respect to Dalit people. Both Lord Shiva and Dalit do the same activity in the burial ground. The higher caste people treat Dalit as slavery in this present time.

At the end of this part, Dravidian is symbolized of Lord Shiva. As this society believes in divine activities, they make the great epic of Mahabharadham and Ramayanam. They believe much truly in God. Dalit is closely related with Lord Shiva so he is another image of Lord Shiva. Coommaraswamy should concentrate more attention this kind of theme. He gives a clear explanation about Dalit whoever is suppressed by the higher caste people are called as Dalit. They use him as ornamental. If they want to do the last ritual, they use eagerly him. As soon as they use him, they ignore and avoid from the other activities.

If the reader believes the norms and rules of Brahmin, Dalit people never come under the caste division. He is an incarnation of Lord Shiva in this world. Dalit is symbolized of Lord Shiva. The reader remembers the activities of Lord Shiva in the burial ground. Dalit does the same activity in the same place. He is not a lower caste people. He bears as Lord Shiva. If the readers believe in Lord Shiva, they must give correct self-respect to Dalit people. They treat Dalit people as human being. Coommaraswamy wishes to ruin the arrogance of caste system and treat all people as human being.

This system paves to create another bad habit in society. The Untouchability has appeared at that time. It splits people as higher caste people and lower caste people. The higher caste people would want to differentiate from others. They suppress the lower class people. They ridicule about poor man's behavior, life style and resistance. In this present time, these rude activities happen usually in school and job. Some students never mingle with the lower class people at all. They think that the lower class people do not study very well and their food system is slightly different from others. They even never touch upon any things of the lower class students.

### Conclusion

If the lower class students do some mistakes, the teacher will give the hard punishment. The teacher imprints that the lower class students are only fit to be hard workers. He concludes that students are not much interested to learn education and everything. This society is ignored them by their caste. By caste division, the lower caste people lose everything in this world.

### Works Cited

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