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**INDIRA R. PARTHASARATHY'S *THE RIVER OF BLOOD*: THE STORY OF A REVOLT  
AGAINST OPPRESSION**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper highlights the theme of a revolt against Oppression in Indira R. Parthasarathy's *The River of Blood*. It is basically written in Tamil language, it is a major language in South India and it was published in 1975. Gopal is a protagonist, who revolt against oppression. He is an educated and his father belonging a Naidu and mother belonging to a Brahmin. He studied in Delhi but he return to small village of Tamil Naidu and a member of Kissan movement, he could not tolerate injustice and he fought for dalits and peasant classes. The novel ends with a tragic.

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Indira Parthasarathy's *The River of Blood* (*Kuruthipunal*) was published in Tamil in 1975, he is a scholar, creative writer, literary critic, cultural historian and thinker, he is an author of nine plays. He received many awards like Sahitya Academy Award in 1977, Sangeet Natak Academy Award, Saraswati Sanman and Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad Award. His plays, short stories and fiction have been translated into Russian, Spain, France and Middle East languages. K.N. Subramanyam has translated *The River of Blood* into English, The novel is based on the Keezhavenmani carnage of 1967 in which 42 Harijans were burnt to death in the landlord and peasant clashes. To the agrarian problem, tinged with untouchability, Indira gives a psychological dimension which is unique aspect of the action; he also beautifully highlighted political aspects and corruption in the modern society.

*The River of Blood* is a story of revolt against oppression; Indira Parthasarathy narrates many incidents in the novel. The capitalist and landlords suppress laboures, poor harijans and tribes in India but tribal leaders and communists revolt against oppression. In the novel Shiva and Gopal are good friends, they were classmate at Delhi, Gopal left to Delhi, he settled at Tiruvurur. He was an active communist comrade, he struggles for social justice but novel ends with tragic his dream could not come true. Shiva wants to meet Gopal, he travelled to Trivuvurur. Gopal was somewhat of an odd fellow, his father had been Naidu and his mother had been an Iyengar woman. She was a temple Archaka's daughter, both were classmates at Kumbakonam College; they had fallen in love with each other. They were married under civil license and ran away to Delhi without the knowledge of parents and relatives. While he was travelling to

Tiruvarur by bus, passengers were talking about many matters. Indian society always exploits women, in the cinema poster heroines were depicted with big breasts and many magazines illustrate their pages with women having big breasts. The prostitution was very common in the Indian lodges, when he was staying in the lodge a person came and knocked the door, when he opened the door he asked, "Tell me if you want. It is getting late you see. What bread do you want? Brahmin girl or Malayali?"

"Brahmin girl are available?" "If you need. I can bring one here still I?"

How much?"

If she stays the whole night, twenty-five rupees.

You need not pay me commission separately".

"It is a kind of social service for you?" (Parthasarathy 26).

Gopal was an educated, he stays in a village he wears Lucknow kurta and pyjam but Tamil nadu people wear dhoti. He met Kanniah Naidu, a village landlord, cunning, he enquired about Gopal's family background. Gopal reveals of his family background, his village was Karuppur of Kumbakonam. Tanjavur district, he is belonging to Santhanakrishna Naidu family. Indira Parthasarathy narrates the Indian Higher Education system, "In those days only the Brahmin boys will go to college to study. Your father was the first among the Naidus in this region to reach out for higher education" (Parthasarathy 31). Kanniah Naidu asked for his residence in the village. Gopal replied he was staying in Ramaiya's house and taking meal at Vadivelu's shape. Ramaiya is tribe and Vadivelu is a harijan, Ramaiya is a communist Camrad. Kanniah Naidu is an unmarried; he was reputed to be a great womanizer. He would be about fifty years of age but no one would estimate his age at more age that thirty five. He was well; his name was linked with all sorts of women. He had many rowdies, among them was Poonkavanam, he was a big rowdy. Parthasarathy speaks Indian Education System, "Education these days is like this. It has no relevance to life as we live it. They don't seek to teach us what we ought to know" (Parthasarathy 43). Kannian Naidu is a feudalist; he

always troubles to others in the village. His father Tirumalai was a cunning and womanizer.

Gopal has started a revolution in the village, when Kanniah sent his rowdy Poonkanvanam to vacate Vadivelu's tea shop. Vadivelu painfully speaks, "They are trying to shift me from this place, do you know?". This shop they say, is right on the road and as such an encroachment. They say it is obstructing the bus route. They want me to vacate this place" and Gopal replied, "Who is he to ask you to move?" (Parthasarathy 46). Gopal was so angry, he declared revolution against a feudalist. In India feudalist always exploits poor and harijans, Vadivelu was an illegitimate son of Kanniah Naidu, and feudalists keep many mistresses in every village.

Shiva is a good friend of Gopal, he came to village with all luggages. Gopal introduced Shiva to Ramaiya. He portraits Indian city people's nature, they are cunning, town hotel keepers are thieves and they became prosperous because they have to feed poor eaters. Parthasarathy do not believe in existence of the god speaks, "God also sleeps all the time in his temple. He doesn't seem to lift a figure against all the injustice that happens in the world. But we feel morally strengthened by our belief that he is out to help us sometime or other" (Parthasarathy 56). The god creates distinguished away overselves. Indian society is caste based; they named the streets on the caste basics. There was a Kisan movement in the village, the landlords were very clever they knew how to suppress labours. Their argument was that, Pariah should not educate, they do not want provide facilities to them. Ramaiya knows the cruel idea of landlords he expresses, "This is exactly what he is afraid of! He is afraid that the harijan who has gone beyond the primary classes will begin to argue with him on law points about his rights and privileges" (Parthasarathy 62). Politicians and Officers are like itchy palms, politics spoiling the society's harmony, uneducated people in India have been kicked like a football in a game by the politician and landlords. Gopal declared a revolution against the landlord Kanniah Naidu; he is progressively thinking that they want to start to a primary school and a middle school.

One evening Gopal without notice to Ramaiah, he met the landlord Naidu and discussed many matters. The political parties came to power with an agenda of bringing social justice in the society but Kannaiah would not agree to bring out a social justice. Gopal remembered of two important things in the world, two of the questions were: "All the people of the world equal and the American Negro equal to the American Whitemen" (Parthasarathy 68). Kannaiah Naidu wants to suppress the communists in the village, because the communists support to the pariahs. He expresses his angry and the present situation in the village, "These Pariahs who till yesterday accepted whatever was paid to them and worked as slaves in our fields, are now making trouble and refusing to work. Who is responsible for state of Affairs? This village had remained an ideal one with no quarrels. Now there are quite a number of quarrels and arguments and strikes. The fields are laying fallow because of the recalcitrant peasants. Bastards! I feel irritated when I think of communist" (Parthasarathy 68), but the communist people struggle to bring out an equality in the village. When Gopal talked on behalf of Vaidivelu and requested him not to drive away from that place because he is a poor innocent fellow. Gopal revealed the hidden facts and nature of Naidu people, "Vaidivelu told me that he was related to you in the same away" (Parthasarathy 72). Naidu was so angry he threatened to Gopal, "I will break you bones, and skin when you alive. Do you understand"? (Parthasarathy 72). But Gopal was very bold he started a revolution very boldly, he was not afraid of Naidu's threaten. He spoke very boldly, "you are in your house. You have got your men around you. I have come alone and you dare talk to me like this. Is this courage? Is it manliness? " (Parthasarathy 72). He went out, it was quite dark outside. He felt a great mountain falling on him; he was being pressed down into the earth.

Ramaiya and Shiva sharing their ideas, Shiva speaks reality of Indian labour class and the nation, "Our nation will not progress, unless of tyranny and oppression" (Parthasarathy 76). Naidu is an unscrupulous bastard, he would not afraid of killing anybody. Palani is an activist, he brought the bad news about Gopal, he was beaten up and fallen

unconsciously. Palani went to Thavur and brought doctor Kanakasabai, he was a communist, he always involved in the revolution. He treated Gopal, he recovered immediately. The whole village people know that Kannaih Naid is behind the incident but nobody had dared to speak openly.

Parthasarathy portraits Indian police department, they would not give justice to common people and they are always in favor of landlords and capitalist. When Gopal was beaten up by Naidu, Shiva and Ramaiya have been discussing about register the case in the police station but Ramaiya said, "Naidu has the support of money, the authorities and the ruling party. Under these conditions the police would not deal justly with us, it is certain" (Parthasarathy 87). Shiva and Ramaiya have been talking about social justice and educated must start a revolution where there is an injustice in the society. Ramaiya, Shiva and Gopal are representatives of a social justice Ramaiya is an uneducated, he inspires educated to start revolt against social bad evils, he said, "How long can intellectuals close their eyes to the injustice that happens all round them? On some occasion involvement is bound to come. At all levels we have bribery, corruption, small mindedness, self-interest, ambition for power, caste feelings. My God, what wretched this is?" (Parthasarathy 88). Naidu beats Gopal then they would carry him to Papathi's house. Kanakasabai, Ramaiya took him to Tiruvarur Government Hospital. The whole village talked about this incident but Naidu has spread the canard that he was not in the village since two days before that evening. Naidu is like Hitler, he may buy his witness both with money and his influence with the ruling party. The upper caste people always exploit lower castes, economically, socially, religiously and sexually, lower caste women had a double oppression and they are commodity of sex. Vaidivalu is a harijan, he was a son of one of the concubines of Naidu's father. That was like throwing a stone on his glass house of caste dignity, it might even construe as a social problem.

Gopal recovered gradually, he had decided to lodge a complaint against Naidu. But the Sub-Inspector replied negatively about the case, he is not ready to take action on Naidu. He is not ready to

take a complaint; he took the statement from Gopal. In India Government officers are always in favor of the rich, capitalists, religious leaders, wicked people and upper caste people, the rules and regulation protect only scoundrels. Ramaiya angrily speaks, "I knew fully that it can happen. All the rules and regulations in this land are for the protection of the rich only" (Parthasarathy 96). The sub-inspector did not take a complaint, everyone was upset. Naidu continued his cruelty in the village, his men pulled down Vadivelu's shop and Naidu's men abducted Vadivelu and Papathi. The Police Sub-Inspector along with police arrived to the village and demolished Vadivelu's shop. In India nobody would question to police, they have their own law and imposed the section 144. Nobody will question enforced section 144, police made a lathi charge without provocation upon the innocent crowd. The police men are coolies of the rich people in India; they accept money from rich people. Ramaiya inspired the mob, "If we don't show our strength now, it is better we cast off our dhotis and begin to wear saris from now on" (Parthasarathy 104).

Naidu is very clever; he brought harijans from neighboring villages and began harvesting under the protection of the police battalion. Nobody would raise the question or argue the police or Naidu; if anybody questioned, the police would shoot down without any mercy. Naidu used unparliamentarily words to Ramaiya and Gopal but they laterated. Naidu falsely complained against Gopal, who went to Papathi's house and tired to seduce her, Naidu has created many eye witnesses to prove the case. The pariahs attack on him, luckily he escapes, he speaks, "I shall have them killed like pigs" (Parthasarathy 112). Tirumalai Naidu is a foreign return; he has a sister called Pankajam. She had a charm at her own; she is about thirty five years of age. She makes herself up as a girl in her first bloom and she is a keep of Kannaih Naidu. Vadivelu and Papathi were hidden in Tirumalai's house. Gopal went to Pankajam's house shared his love feelings to her and he romanced with her. She was quiet happy and reveals the fact that Naidu hides Vadivelu and Papathi in her house. While they have been in romance mood Pankjam's brother Tirumalai and Kattayyan disturbed them, Kattayan kicked violently

at the belly of Gopal and he was unable to breathe and he fell on the earth. Ramaiya, Shiva and Kanakasabi rescued Gopal and took him to hospital. Ramaiya wanted to release Vadivelu and Papathi but there was a tragic, when they wanted to release Tirumalai who killed a poor fellow Kattayan. Vadivelu and Papathi had been released from Pankajam's house. The incident had twisted that Gopal hid Vadivelu and Papathi in his lover's house Pankajam and Ramaiya killed Kattayan.

The reality in India is that, the rich person expects that poor people to quarrel among themselves and to killed each other, the poor and the innocent are being killed. Ramaiya and his followers were nerves, the message reached to the Police station and the Police Sub-Inspector arrested Ramaiya on the charge of murder of Kattayam and sent him to jail. The revolution was totally stopped in the village, because Ramaiya was arrested, Gopal was admitted in the hospital, Kanakasabi and Shiva were busy with court and Police Station to release Ramaiya on bail. Gopal led the revolution against Naidu. Naidu is cunning; he has decided to drive out Gopal and Shiva from the village. He complaints against Gopal that he had seduced Papathi, who is a harijan girl and Gopal is a born fair skinned Brahmin women. He threatened him. "Before nightfall you and your friend should peacefully, respectably leave this village. If you don't go away. I don't know what will happen. I warn you-go away. Leave immediately (Parthasarathy 158). Shiva addressed painfully to farmers, the condition of India, "If we stand united, nobody could do anything against us. If we are destroyed, we would have shown to the world that the law in this country is only to protect the rich" (Parthasarathy 160-161). The revolution is not possible in India like Russia because we have so many caste distinctions.

The revolution turned into violence, many partisans had assembled with poles, sickles, swords and clubs, they shouted slogans louder and they moved towards peasant's quarters. Gopal motivates revolutionaries, police were guarding them. They did not allow entering into the main road, they demanded Palani's release, they demanded more and more but the situation was not controlled by the police. Police were released Palani

that is the first victory of the farmers, Palani said, "Comrades, this is our first victory in this struggle of ours. If we stand united, nothing will stand in our way. That we attacked the police and eye-opener to Naidu" (Parthasarathy 169). Shiva met advocate Sundaravadanam at Nagapatlinam to release Ramaiah.

Parthasarathy talked about neo-colonist, Indian laws are helping to rich only, and poor people always suffer. He strongly comments exploitation in India, he said. "These brown sahibs are worse than the white sahibs and we have to keep within their laws and fight them the best. We can" (Parthasarathy 180), everybody talks of justice, law, democracy but nobody helps, everyone exploits. Parthasarathy speaks of the leaders, leadership come from the villages under genuine village leadership but city leaders are likely to be phony. The great revaluation should take place in villages and that should be led by villagers. The city people struggled for only increase the wages and they called it a struggle and revolution. One who struggles for permanent changes is called a revolution; temporary struggle is not called a revolution.

The revolution takes turn, Pankajam and Papathi abducted by Naidu, late Papathi has been killed. The harijans were begun to struggle against Naidu, they mattered, "He will cultivate his fields with harijan blood instead of river water" (Parthasarathy 202). Kanniah Naidu's plan was becoming slowly clear to Gopal, he had Papathi murdered so that he might attribute that murder to Gopal. She had pointed him out in the presence of many as having seduced her. In front of Papathi's house, the two parts of her bialy lay separate, the blood had congealed. Shiva has been arrested; most of leaders were arrested and kept in the jail. The Sub-Inspector came along with an arrest warrant and arrested Gopal, Vadivelu, Palani, Ammasi and others. The small village has many big leaders; they were all arrested and kept them in jail.

The novel ends with a tragic, Naidu sets a fire to everything but the police are just looking. Naidu's men marched to the cheri entered the houses of the harijans and began to beat up everyone, male, female and child. Naidu's men

were cruel, he narrates a painful, heart breaking condition of the horizons, Naidu's people are very cruel, they behaved like devils, "His men set fire to the heap and are not allowing anyone to escape, man, woman or child. If a move tries to escape, they are thrown back into the fire" (Parthasarathy 223). The Policemen are just watching like blind and dumb. The poor harijans had been burning in the fire; Parathasarathy ironically speaks "Naidu's form took *Vishwarupa* –cosmic shape (Parthasarathy 224). Gopal noticed that the water running in the channel was red, it was clear water but now it was tinged red, bloody red, the blood of harijanas. The Vedas said that the fire purified anything but the fire burned the innocent harijans. The novel ends with a tragic; many harijanas burnt mercilessly by the landlord Kanniah Naidu, present day many poor people burning in the fire by capitalists.

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