

## **‘Invisible Yet Static’: An Analysis of Structural Violence with Reference to Kilvenmani Massacre, India**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Violence remains one of modern society’s most pressing global public health issues. As a result, the current study’s objective is to examine the text, *The Gypsy Goddess*, in the concept of Structural Violence, which is one of the most lethal forms of violence, from a broader perspective in terms of political, economic, gender and health aspects. The methodology of the study incorporates a documentary text, *The Gypsy Goddess* by Meena Kandasamy, which aids with the illustrations of actual records and a survey of the victims of the Kilvenmani massacre, which happened in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, in which poor agricultural peasants were burned alive by wealthy landlords. The study’s major findings offer a comprehensive look at the physical and psychological causes and consequences of underlying Structural Violence processes worldwide with reference to the select text. According to the text, the study’s findings suggest that structural violence contributing factors are multifaceted and systemic. Besides, it reveals that people’s collective efforts, combined with modified legal interventions, can help combat Structural Violence by creating awareness and providing impoverished communities with adequate services and resources.

*Keywords:* Gender, Kilvenmani massacre, legal interventions, politics, structural violence

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Secular customs have long been ingrained in Indian culture. It is built on a synthesis of many spiritual cultures and traditional movements (Hariharasudan & Pandeewari, 2020). The goal of social structures is to

achieve social harmony. However, due to the caste system's social and cultural practices, violence has become institutionalized over time. The use of legal means to address vices done in the name of caste is useless. Even in liberal economic and political settings, India's profoundly ingrained and violent socio-cultural and economic practices have survived. People acquire traditional morality conventions rather than the self-reflective and rational moral ideals of modern times since people are raised with caste notions and feelings imposed upon them by sectarians. Individuals granted or forbidden rights and benefits depending on their position in communities have varying degrees of favor with the prevailing culture throughout history (Eldridge & Johnson, 2011).

Caste-based social discrimination and economic marginalization are deeply embedded in Indian society (Mosse, 2018). Caste-based violence and massacres have a long history, and the idioms of purity and impurity, mainly as they apply to the lower castes, continue to legitimize them (Gorringer et al., 2017). The marginalized groups of southern Indian society, formerly Untouchables and now referred to as Dalits, account for one-fifth of the total Indian population and face severe discrimination and prejudice across all social spheres due to their position in the caste hierarchy (Pankaj, 2019).

Violence against Dalits is unlikely to impact the country's collective consciousness (Yadav, 2017). Ironically, as Nandy (2006) points out, violence against

Dalits becomes more visible in the public sphere as part of daily life, and the Indian public sphere begins to form around the "principles of forgetfulness" (p. 7). As a result, society does not regard inhuman acts such as untouchability as unethical. As customary norms governed intercaste relations, even unfair norms were accepted without question. Discriminatory behaviors, such as untouchability or living in secluded locations, were not imposed but regarded as common sense.

One such powerful historical incident of Dalits' brutality is the Kilvenmani incident, which took place on December 25, 1968, in the village of Kilvenmani, Tanjore district, Tamil Nadu (India), in which landlords set fire to agricultural laborers' huts in response to their strikes and demands for higher wages. The Kilvenmani incident is widely regarded as one of the first and most heinous crimes committed against Dalits in post-independence India (Teltumbde, 2008). It has been a somber reminder of how oppressed people are treated when they demand what is rightfully theirs since the dawn of time. The Kilvenmani incident is inextricably linked to politics, gender, and caste issues, making it more than just a class conflict (Kanagasabai, 2014). Caste influences people's daily lives and is viewed as a structural problem in society, affecting the socio-economic status and government entitlements for the poor and marginalized, resulting in Structural Violence (Pankaj, 2019; Wessler, 2020).

Structural Violence is an important theory for identifying the determinants of

fundamental crimes against humanity that lead to human insecurity, poverty, group violence, non-peaceful democratic power transitions, diseases and health-related issues, and economic decline. As a result, this paper focuses on Structural Violence in social, political, economic, and gender aspects concerning renowned Indian writer Meena Kandasamy's historical fiction *The Gypsy Goddess*. Kandasamy's work reflects a largely voiceless community whose voices are often shunned and ignored. Therefore, writing about Dalit experiences, according to Gowthaman (1994), must be an Indian and Tamil version of global oppressed people's literature.

Accordingly, *The Gypsy Goddess* is a powerful, lyrical account of Kilvenmani and its aftermath that defies many established rules while remaining brutally true to its original concept – recounting a horror that had been relegated to non-existent pages in mainstream Indian literature (Muralidharan, 2018). Besides, it was chosen as the independent newspaper's debut of the year and nominated for several awards, including the International Dylan Thomas Prize. It has also been translated into several languages all over the world.

This study aims to demonstrate the violence inherent in globalization and provide a theoretical approach to preventing and eliminating globalization's structural violence. It seeks to investigate how incidents of violence and trauma are presented in the text and how such examples are incorporated into a sociological understanding of structural violence. By

examining the interconnectedness of various forms of violence and the special purpose of the narrative, the article intends to add to an interdisciplinary viewpoint that emphasizes the dialogue between literary studies and its sub-discipline of narratology, on the one hand, sociology on the other. The study aims to understand the numerous and frequently conflicting processes that create and maintain inequality for individuals and communities on several levels. Besides, the study also focuses on the historical origins of present inequality.

A literature review is crucial in research since they aid in familiarizing with the current knowledge in a given topic and the field's boundaries and limitations. Violence is unquestionably a complex process involving significant ambiguity in destroying and creating order (Imbusch, 2003; Weart, 1998). According to Mills's (1959) observation, an individual's life and history of society are inextricably linked. Similarly, one cannot be studied without understanding the other to understand the complexities of violence. As the world becomes interdependent, Structural Violence impacts everyone's quality of life (Christie, 1997). How society's resources are distributed affects its living standard and survival chances. A more equitable distribution will lengthen society's average lifespan in most circumstances. People suffering the consequences of inequitable distribution are examples of Structural Violence or violence built into the social order (Høivik, 1977). Aside from low socio-economic position, improper criminalization

was also a significant issue; nevertheless, the most powerful factor was judicial violence, which reinforced the marginalized people's negative opinion of the legal system (Khosro et al., 2016; Watts & Hodgson, 2019).

The social structure is considered a 'social fact' in which specific sectors of individuals' actions are restrained due to inbuilt structures (Hinsley, 1967; Nafziger & Auvinen, 2002). Inconsistent power relationships in social systems result in unequal life chances, causing individuals or groups to suffer by preventing them from achieving their basic needs (Thomason, 2015; Vorobej, 2008). According to Mun and Fee (2010), identity modifications will eventually necessitate structural changes. It will subsequently influence how an individual perceives another because they have many other things to think about. It will result in the formation of a new type of identity. Thus, race and ethnicity are only components of the structure formed by people's acts and those who choose to believe them (Mun & Fee, 2010). According to several studies, literature offers an extraordinary opportunity by focusing on individual experiences of indigence and accommodating the multiplicity of voices that articulate and voice these experiences (Kehinde, 2021; Moore, 2006).

In terms of the scope of this study, the analysis is primarily focused on the historical record of the massacre that occurred in Kilvenmani village in 1968 to oppressed sections, as documented in Meena Kandasamy's book *The Gypsy Goddess*. This article begins with

a definition of structural violence and examines the political, economic, gender, and psychological dimensions of structural violence in the chosen text. Accordingly, the current study is organized to investigate the considered text based on the theoretical framework of Structural Violence, followed by methodology, discussion, and conclusion.

### **Theoretical Background**

The term "Structural Violence" was first used in 1969 in an article by Johan Galtung, a European peace studies researcher, in which he uses the term "Structural Violence" as one of the six dimensions of his six-fold typology of violence. In his words, Structural Violence is a "process with ups and downs" (Galtung, 1969, p. 3), with mistreatment serving as a functional centerpiece around which the violent structure thrives. Several critics argue that Galtung's work is still compatible with modern theory and practice and that this method is especially well suited to analyzing our present situation and collective past. The social order, which he saw mirrored in a society's status hierarchy, was a primary cause of the violence that impeded human development. The privileged members of a society have greater access to resources due to Structural Violence, while the disadvantaged members have limited or no access to resources (Galtung, 1990). Galtung proposes calculating the number of avoidable deaths as one way to define Structural Violence. For example, Structural Violence occurs when people die due to a lack of food or shelter when both

are available elsewhere. His concept of Structural Violence has the advantage of encompassing poverty, starvation, subordination, and social exclusion in the definition of violence. It allows for the theorization of unequal access to power and resources as a form of violence, shifting the focus of violence away from isolated incidents and toward a broader range of social interactions (Dilts et al., 2012; Y. Winter, 2012).

Structural violence is the primary and most significant notion in any study of violence, but it is a frequently overlooked concern in post-conflict and transitory societies due to the confined domain of actions in which dominating processes usually operate (Lee, 2019; McGill, 2017). According to Biebricher and Johnson (2012), Structural Violence is the emergence of a distinctly new liberal formation of late-modern capitalism, widely referred to as “neoliberalism.” Health, economic, gender, and racial injustices are all examples of Structural Violence. Culture, politics, symbolism, and everyday violence are all instances of derivative forms. Homicides, suicides, mass murders, and war are all highly stimulated by Structural Violence (Lee, 2019). It is the most violent and powerful cause of other forms of violence (Butchart & Engström, 2002). Internal armed conflicts and human rights violations are inextricably linked to the global presence of Structural Violence (McGill, 2017).

Paul Farmer categorizes Structural Violence by gender, ethnicity or race, and socioeconomic status. He believes that each

of these identities impacts how Structural Violence affects a person’s life (Farmer, 2004). Furthermore, he claims that racial classifications have been used to deny fundamental rights to many groups, thus playing an essential role in human inequality and suffering discourse. Those who live in poverty, according to Farmer (2004), are most likely to be victims of Structural Violence. Over time, it causes pain by systematically trapping people in poverty and material susceptibility (Bornstein, 2005). It should also be noted that Structural Violence has a significant impact on the health determinants of marginalized people’s lives, especially people living in poverty. Some physicians, one among them is Dr. Norman Bethune, have been regarded as national heroes in China and the father of “Social Surgery,” and have even identified Structural Violence as a cause of preventable premature mortality and morbidity among children (Zakrison et al., 2019). Patriarchy, social stratification, and power dynamics define society and are part of women’s violence. Feminist anthropologists admit that reduced Structural Violence shares a core concern about oppression with feminism, as patriarchal barriers take many forms, ranging from direct gender-specific violence (e.g., female infanticide and rape) to Structural Violence resulting from economic inequalities caused by the “masculinization of wealth” (Hariharasudan, 2020; McKay, 1996; Reardon, 1985).

The study of Structural Violence allows for the development of a more socially critical approach to the problem. It opens a

new horizon on the issue, challenging the narrow, individually focused interpretation of violence prevalent in much of psychology and criminology (Whittington et al., 2020). The global system is structured in such a way that many of its members die systematically more than others because of unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities—in other terms, the existing global system demonstrates a high level of Structural Violence (Alcock & Köhler, 1979). Often subtle, the oppression is multigenerational and normalized by those who experience and perpetuate it (Klaus, 2012; Kotze, 1978). As Winter points out, Structural Violence mainly relies on invisibility language, assuming that its persistence over time and across generations is a product of its invisibility (Y. Winter, 2012). It is engrained in pervasive social structures and normalized by stable institutions and consistent experience while “normalizing the abnormal,” as it is almost imperceptible (Zakrison et al., 2019). Indeed, Galtung described it as “as natural as the air around us,” emphasizing its hegemonic nature of it and how it is accepted as normal: “Structural Violence is silent and unseen; it is essentially static, like the calm waters” (Galtung, 1990, p. 296). This acceptance allows Structural Violence to appear as peaceful coexistence among groups while the oppressed suffer in silence because of the denial of basic respect for their humanity (Eldridge & Johnson, 2011; Hirschfeld, 2017). Structural Violence can only be reduced if production and distribution systems are more equitably organized. As

Galtung and others have proposed, we would be able to stop violence if we could merely “see” it, as Galtung and others have proposed. The following section discusses structural violence’s political, economic, gender, and psychological elements in the selected work.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Structural Violence has received surprisingly little attention, and even when it is mentioned, residual hierarchical preconceptions tend to minimize its significance, most commonly by focusing primarily on local issues while neglecting the impact of more significant political and economic linkages (Chapman & Berggren, 2005). In addition, the study of violence has traditionally been fragmented across divergent fields of study, with little cross-disciplinary collaboration, creating a barrier to decoding the underlying processes that lead to violence and hindering research and prevention efforts (Lee, 2019). According to Fu (2015), Structural Violence is a valuable concept for considering how inequalities are caused by structural and systemic relationships rather than individual or interpersonal problems. Another study contends that the best way to study Structural Violence is through “real-life” examples that examine the experiences of those affected (Sen, 1982).

Furthermore, Literary narratives that branch out to tell stories about violence against marginalized people gain even more credibility: they mitigate amnesia by allowing readers to “remember,” and they also challenge official State and Judiciary

narratives, allowing “alternative truths” to emerge. This method is likely to inform future “lived experience” research, assisting in developing a more refined understanding of Structural Violence. *The Gypsy Goddess* by Meena Kandasamy serves this purpose as it provides a witness description of events, criticizing landlord violence, police complicity, and unspeakable violence perpetrated against women and children through the statements of survivors of the Kilvenmani massacre. A sense of necessity drives the evidence, a strong desire to tell the story and not forget it. The disposition of Ramalingam exemplifies this, a massacre survivor who says, “I want you to write this all down and put it in the papers and tell the truth to the whole world. Let everyone read about what happened here and let them burn with anger” (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 182). The text’s mix of letters, statements, documents, digressions, novelistic narration, and metafictional intrusions is intended to involve both the writer and the reader in transmitting the massacre “the truth to the entire world” (Menozzi, 2021, p. 175). As a result, the study’s methodology focuses on the theoretical framework of Structural Violence’s primary areas of politics, economy, gender, and health by connecting them to real-life events in Kilvenmani, Tamil Nadu, with the text *The Gypsy Goddess* serving as documentary proof.

### **The Political Aspect of Structural Violence**

Structural Violence is a group phenomenon,

not an individual one. It arises and resides within collective social entities, even when there is no obvious perpetrator in the sense of a visible, active agent intent on causing harm (Fink, 2010). It could be an entire society imposing its power and values on ‘inferior’ societies or specific groups within societies exerting control over others, consciously or unconsciously (Brady & Burton, 2019; Vorobej, 2008). Similarly, in the select text, Maayi, an older woman who survived the massacre, perfectly encapsulates the incident:

We were told about the tax-free lands that local kings showered on the Brahmins. We were told that Marx had written about this. We were told that because we worked with our hands, we were the working class. We were also told that because we worked and because they hated work, they hated us. (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 69)

Besides, she recounts how her people were not allowed to sit with members of higher castes, how they were forced to carry *serattai*, a coconut shell, to the tea stall because they were not served in tumblers, and how they were forced to stare at the ground without catching the gaze of any members of the dominant caste. Finally, Ramalingam describes how the Cheri men, women, and children were forced to prostrate at the mirasdar’s feet until the practice became ingrained, and people fell without hesitation like palm trees severed at their roots (Kandasamy, 2014).

The regular operation of dominating global political institutions results in irrevocable human, societal, and environmental disasters through self-amplifying feedback loops that our predominant ideologies and metrics register as social benefits (Singer & Clair, 2003). Due to the much longer histories of political mobilization of subaltern groups in South India, they may conflate correlation with causality (Gupta, 2013). Peasant oppression in Kilvenmani results from a socially authorized caste hierarchy that coincided with the appropriation of common land and the expropriation of Dalits. The people of Kilvenmani describe how, on paper, they oversaw the land, but in practice, they continued to do menial tasks, utterly unaware of their financial worth. These descriptions of caste as having one set of people who read books, one set of crooks, one collection of misbehaving people, and one group of enslaved people encapsulates the oppressive political ideologies' coercion of caste (Kandasamy, 2014).

Structural Violence can occur without the intent to kill; for example, it can result from a desire to increase one's wealth and power. Political repression can be used to perpetuate Structural Violence, in which those in power gain benefits at the expense of those with less political power (Johansen & Jones, 2010; Stewart-Harawira, 2005; Whittington et al., 2020). When Structural Violence occurs, some actors can execute and/or prolong social arrangements that cause harm to others while providing them with disproportionate benefits (Srikantia,

2016). The fact that the more advantaged classes have collective negotiating power over how and where resources are allocated causes suffering among the lower strata of society. This viewpoint of Structural Violence corresponds to the massacre that occurred in Kilvenmani, where wealthy landlords tried to bully the poor peasants back to work by imposing crippling fines, using the police to intimidate them, and savagely assaulting women because of the peasants' demands for their rightful wages and better working conditions, which resulted in the killing of innocent agricultural laborers.

According to Farmer, the poor of the world are disproportionately victims of Structural Violence, and their lives are determined mainly by bureaucrats, politicians, and destructive policies and programs like a structural adjustment. The origins of the conflict can be traced back to a more extended period in which feudalism survives in postcolonial India's capitalist state as a remnant of a previous, pre-capitalist form of exploitation that has been reframed as tools of "modern" structures like the Police, judiciary, state, and forcible economic development. *The Gypsy Goddess* reflects Gopalakrishna Naidu, a wealthy landlord and leader of the Paddy Producers Association, who makes direct threats and warnings while the police, under the shadow of politicians, ignore or fabricate cases, and close murder cases as mysterious deaths in accordance with the landlords' orders. It also depicts how landlords are permitted to possess firearms with full



licenses and how they hire henchmen under police protection. The cases of Ratnam and others in Kilvenmani demonstrate that Police also practice untouchability and are waiting for their vengeance as they recount their plight “Killing us in custody, opening fire on our meetings.... We had not suffered as much even under the white man’ police” (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 226). Inspector Rajavel’s macabre tabulation of charred corpses of Kilvenmani massacre victims exemplifies the brutality of political repression and the plight of poor peasants as follows: “Male, age not known, nobody can identify a body; height 4’10;” marital status not known; protruding tongue, body burnt below the hip, hand flexed at the elbow, blackened blood all over the body” (p. 151).

The emotional impact of this tabulation is significant, as human remains are treated as non-living artifacts, denying them their identity and individuality and hence their freedom to live. Gilligan describes these deaths as “non-natural” and attributes them to the stress, disgrace, discrimination, and dehumanization of lower social status (Gilligan, 1996; Menozzi, 2021). Kandasamy offers specifics of the court’s ruling to highlight how guardians of the law collaborated with the wealthy and were thus biased in another instance of analyzing the judiciary’s part in exacerbating the injustices meted out to Dalit farm laborers. To give just one obvious example, survivors of the massacre describe how the court rejected their testimony, claiming that everything they said was faulty, deceitful,

contradictory, reeking of falsehood, lacking credibility, and an afterthought. They are accused of inconsistency by the Special Additional First-Class Magistrate, who uses his command of the English language, which “could shoot like darts, [and] curl and coil around itself” (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 248). On the other hand, the victims struggle to put the unspeakable into a partially coherent narrative, but most fail, and the official institutions are dissatisfied with their versions. “There could be no hope for justice in a land where ninety out of a hundred judges were revengeful, casteist, and selfish” (p. 249), Ramalingam says, recognizing that the High Court judges were better at defending the landlords than their defense lawyers and that all the accused were acquitted while many villagers whose loved ones were killed in the massacre were imprisoned.

The use of power and influence by dominant groups to prevent subordinate groups from changing organized relationships and practices that benefit their interests is highlighted in these cases. As a result of coercive practices aimed at shaping needs in ways that materially help those in irrational positions of power, subordinate groups are forced to obey the dictates of dominant ideologies, whether through illogical scarcity or emotional constraint. The workers’ struggle at Kilvenmani is depicted as an aberration or exception in Kandasamy’s novel through these incidents, demonstrating how subjugation and suppression of agricultural

laborers are pivotal to India's politics and economy in relation to structural violence.

### **The Economic Aspect of Structural Violence**

Economic systems also influence the way of caste hierarchies function. The inability to break the cycle of discrimination is exacerbated by socially regulated wages and social rules that determine who is excluded based on gender, caste, or age. South Asia, known for its poor economic status, has 69 % of the world's population but suffers from 96% of its Structural Violence (Cross, 2013). Kandasamy's story offers a graphic description of how capitalism operates on the edges, where employees are kept in de facto slavery and bondage, live in great poverty and starvation, and are exposed to hyper-exploitation at the hands of the local rural elite, who generally conceal from the outside world. Unjust economic power structures create conditions in which certain social groups have more capital than others, and the materially wealthy exploit the less fortunate. *The Gypsy Goddess* exemplifies how the government has framed all laws to protect the ruling class and their political and economic interests. For instance, to protect the interests of the ruling classes, the Pannaiyal Protection Act and the Land Ceiling Act reduced agricultural laborers to the status of daily wage-earning coolies. For every peasant protest, the landlords use their economic power to take turns in retaliation, a code of honor that allows them to swap and circulate their rowdies to steal goats,

chickens, brass vessels, paddy stores, and even small scraps of money carefully hidden by women.

Disparities in economic power are the root causes of modern slavery; individuals from low-income countries are being subordinated to slavery and human trafficking in return for a higher standard of living. In response to poor peasant demands, angry landlords deprived them of work in their lands and throughout East Tanjore. The shopkeepers deny goods to the Cheri people on the orders of the landlords, depriving them of their basic needs. The peasants, who describe this as a complete social boycott, recall how Gopala Krishna Naidu reduced them to enslaved people by demanding fines, refusing to give them work or loans, and how they starved and persevered through those trying days of hunger, fear, and fortitude. These sorts of incidents appear to be the catalyst for the massacre, in which local criminals brutally murder innocent Kilvenmani residents after they begin protesting the landlords for their rightful wages. Any effort to ameliorate living and working conditions is confronted with violence and persecution, with modern forms of enslavement and expropriation justified by religion and caste. Among other forms of cruelty, landlords used public whipping and forced feeding of *saanippaal* (cow dung mixed with water) to punish laborers. Kandasamy's words perfectly capture the hushed agony of the poor peasants:

How would this world know about the rapes and murders of agricultural workers that take place behind the

fifteen-foot-high compound walls of landlords? The same landlords who massacre a whole village and walk away with honors? (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 86).

Individuals from the marginalized sector are systematically excluded from full participation in civic and social life because of these overarching social and economic factors and are compelled to live lives shaped by stigma, isolation, homelessness, and denial of rights (Kelly, 2005; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015). Poverty, for example, is characterized by a state of extreme, structural, systemic, and long-term economic deprivation, which usually results in powerlessness. It can also be compared with the views of Indian economist Amartya Sen (Nobel Laureate), who demonstrates that mass deaths during famines are caused by a lack of purchasing power among the poor, who cannot afford to buy food that is already available in their countries (Sen, 2003). The stories of Karuppaayi, a pregnant woman who survived by eating handfuls of mud, and poorly paid laborers who were hungry enough to smoke out rodent holes and steal back the grains of paddy stolen by rats, show the depth of poverty that arose because of their low economic status.

Evans (2018) also claims that socio-economic inequalities based on unequal access to land and other resources were at the heart of apartheid as a political project that aided the continuation of economic deprivation. “Even an old jute sack is a luxury in this season, our children sleep like mice with their heads inside old cardboard

cartons so that the cold does not bite their little noses” (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 75), they say, describing how drops of water continue to trickle down their thatched huts’ roofs. Regarding land distribution, the landless agricultural laborers who till the soil have no rights and own nothing, not even the land on which their tiny mud-walled huts stand, not even a change of clothes. People symbolized the inhumane level of subjugation huddled under a blanket of the night sky while landlords constructed cement shelters for their cows. The text also emphasizes the enduring violence of caste oppression, the struggle for land reform, and the disastrous consequences of economic development policies like the Indian government’s 1960s “Green Revolution,” a state-led plan to industrialize agriculture that pushed the poor further into poverty: “We have been swindled in the name of gods, in the name of religion, in the name of caste. Now, we are being swindled in the name of development” (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 93).

### **The Gender Aspect of Structural Violence**

Gender inequity is a form of Structural Violence. The social structures and institutions of gender are inextricably linked (Anglin, 1998; Montesanti, 2015). Galtung (1969) exemplified gendered Structural Violence as “when one husband beats his wife, there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance, there is Structural Violence” (p. 187). Structural Violence against women has become a

global epidemic, causing chaos in women's physical, psychological, sexual, and economic lives (Rani et al., 2019). Women are victims of "Structural Violence," which includes rape, physical assault, stalking, domestic violence, psychological violence, unintended pregnancies, induced abortions, and sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV, gynecological issues, and other forms of problems caused by the social structures (Sangeetha et al., 2022).

With approximately 35 million women "missing," India has one of the lowest sex ratios in the world. Indian women face outdated and repressive governance structures, an inefficient legal justice system, weak law enforcement, and male-dominated sociopolitical structures (Ahammed, 2019; Anderson & Ray, 2015; Reardon, 1985). Kandasamy's text illustrates the incidents of Tranquebar reeling from the shock of witnessing the sixty-fifth rape in three weeks, the landlords' gang rape of a fourteen-year-old girl, Thangamma, a pregnant woman pummeled by a gang of twenty armed men, and Anju being brutally beaten and torn apart her red blouse, which symbolizes communism and burns it in front of everyone, and Veerapan's young daughter, traumatized by rape, stopped speaking for no apparent reason, women struggle to make a meal out of scraps. The long wait for women to draw water from wells highlights the plight of women. Maayi claims that the police atrocities against female workers are so heinous that they are impossible to write. She describes how women were always stripped naked in

front of everyone before being killed, "Poor women they shriveled in shame. The ones who died from the beatings were silently buried. The ones who survived swallowed their shame and some poison" (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 85).

The best way to understand the health of poor women is to look at it from the perspective of Structural Violence (Mukherjee et al., 2011; Sinha et al., 2017). The most egregious example of a lack of concern for women's survival is childbirth. Because of socio-economic factors, marginalized women are more likely to give birth to low-birth-weight infants, and their newborns have a higher infant mortality rate (Shannon et al., 2017). Chronic stress associated with being treated differently by society is identified as the cause of these persistent differences in birth outcomes (Braveman et al., 2001; Christian, 2012; El-Sayed et al., 2015; Witt et al., 2015). According to the World Health Organization Africa (2017), nearly 300,000 childbirth-related deaths occurred worldwide, the majority of which occurred in low and middle-income countries and the majority of which were preventable.

Evidence suggests that maternal mortality is much higher in poorer strata due to a lack of proper medical assistance: limited access to maternity services; inadequate HIV services; long distances to facilities; lack of basic information; and lack of emergency obstetric care and others (Aguirre et al., 2019; Caprioli, 2005). It is demonstrated in the text in the case of Chinnamma, who died of septic shock

caused by an agricultural sickle cutting her umbilical cord during childbirth. The case of Kunjammal's child, who was suffocated in the mud after being wriggled by an insect that fell into the cradle, suggests that strict work constraints were imposed, allowing women to take shorter breaks to attend to their children's needs. It proves to be the mounting evidence that women working hourly jobs bear a more significant burden than men due to hazardous working conditions in terms of hypertension, injury risk, the severity of the injury, absenteeism rates, and time to return to work after illness (Clougherty et al., 2010; Sue, 2010). The text depicts not only their enslavement but also the daring, strong bond that keeps their spirit alive and fearless:

The Police punish them by making them kneel and walk a few miles on their knees until they have no choice but to crawl. These blows do not break them. They are bold beyond the bruised skin and the bleeding knee. The jails are full of fighting Madonnas. They are not afraid of arrests. (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 92)

The preceding passage highlights the bravery with which women oppose their oppressors and risk their lives to retain their dignity and strive for their right to a brighter future, contributing to the establishment of a distinct space for them by echoing the Dalit feminist movement's key objectives. It is evidenced from the text that gender-based Structural Violence is common in the select text.

### **The Health Aspect of Structural Violence**

Human health is integrally shaped by various circumstances, as has long been acknowledged. Bacteria and viruses are pathogens, but so are a wide range of social, economic, and political forces operating at diverse spatial dimensions (Herrick & Bell, 2020). Structural Violence frequently has a long-term negative impact on public health, such as lower life expectancy and increased suffering (Srikantia, 2016; Wright, 1942). The term "Structural Violence" is similar to the term "structural determinants of health," which was popularized by the World Health Organization's (2009) Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. As defined by the CSDH, the structural determinants of health cause social stratification and social class divisions while also representing an individual's socioeconomic status within "hierarchies of power, prestige, and access to resources" (De Maio & Ansell, 2018, p. 10). Individuals from lower socio-economic groups also have a more extended untreated illness period, linked to more severe illness and poor treatment outcomes (Addington et al., 2004; Croudace et al., 2000).

Structural Violence impacts the disease's diagnosis, staging, and treatment, as well as its associated pathologies. These disease course and outcome determinants are shaped by social forces influencing infection risk (Farmer et al., 2006). Likewise, the text of Kandasamy exemplifies this with her detailed portrayal of the plight of agricultural laborers who live in deplorable conditions, do not own land, are in debt,

and lose their young children to starvation and their elderly to disease due to a lack of adequate food and medicine. When children began to die regularly, the media labeled them “mystery deaths,” while the victims claim, “It was a mystery to people who didn’t know about starvation, only the children of toilers and collies died, not the children of landlords” (Kandasamy, 2014, p. 268). Galtung’s theory of Structural Violence is relevant here because it reminds us of the severe psychological and mental health drawbacks that marginalized people face in authoritarian social environments. The victims were unable to be transported to a hospital, and doctors refused to visit the Cheri, according to Pattu. Letchumi claims that all the injured men were only given turmeric as a treatment and that the Anjal Aluppu Marundhu, a cheap herbal powder for pain, fever, chills, and cold, was their only source of medicine.

According to several studies, discrimination based on socio-economic status has been linked to poor mental health, reduced neurological responses, and chronic stress-related psychological issues. One such condition is schizophrenia, a mental illness characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech, difficulty thinking, and other psychological and physical symptoms. Faris and Dunham (1939) hypothesized that rather than schizophrenia being a result of belonging to a lower socio-economic group, belonging to a lower socio-economic group may result from schizophrenia. Kandasamy does an excellent job of articulating the psychological state of

the massacre survivors. For instance, “A Survival Guide,” Chapter 13 of *The Gypsy Goddess*, is a collection of true stories about survivors’ traumas. As each of these traumas is unspeakable, personal, and thus untransferable, the character of Maayi is used as a link among all these seemingly disconnected narratives. She narrates Letchumi’s strangeness, who believes her dead friends are still alive inside her, and lives her life as a hallucination, Karuppaiah, terrified by the incident, refuses to speak and kills himself when his memory fails him, Packiyam, who refuses to allow a stitch of cloth to cover her body, remained naked throughout the day as a result of the memory of being beaten up naked by the landlords, the collective memory of a desperate mother who hurls her one-year-old infant out of the blazing shack, only to be apprehended by leering mobsters, chopped into pieces, and thrown back haunts the people of Kilvenmani even today, and the list goes on.

The most disturbing effect of such Structural Violence and muted pain was that they had no viable means or mediums to express and ameliorate the trauma they had experienced within the existing social order (Van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2009). Due to a lack of socially sanctioned ways of expressing their problems, lower caste members’ marginalization and trauma were regularly perpetuated and intensified as they repressed their outraged protestations and assimilated their worthlessness and lack of self-defeating beliefs. Such domination disempowers the victims by instilling a profound sense of loss and amplifying their

disgrace, humiliation, and vulnerability, thereby exacerbating their inner breakdown (Gee & Ford, 2011; Weinstein et al., 2017).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current study's findings suggest that understanding this type of violence should lead to a reconsideration of social movements and social change to reduce structural harm significantly. The Indian government is secular and seeks to prevent religious dominance through various means. The Indian Constitution protects fundamental rights based on these secular values. However, this is not to argue that these rights are not violated in Indian society. Indeed, because such violations occur regularly, a constitutional process is required to prevent them. Realizing that such rights exist makes us more aware of their infringement and allows us to intervene when they occur.

In a pluralistic society, expanding religious freedom and promoting non-violence instead of simply adopting official neutrality is the most significant way to foster secularism. Our responsibility is to guarantee that the new generation respects and appreciates its religious traditions and those of other religions in the country through value education. The words of Maulana AbulKalam Azad, India's first Education Minister, demonstrate this clearly:

Our language, our poetry, literature, society, our tastes, our dresses, our traditions, and the innumerable realities of our daily life bear the zeal of common

life and a unified society... our social intercourse for over 1,000 years has blended into a united nationalism. (Azad, 1944, p. 25)

Accordingly, the only way for people to avoid and assist marginalized sectors in dealing with Structural Violence is to become aware of the constraints imposed by their social structures. Accordingly, the researchers' current study utilizes spatial information provided by real-life textual examples to influence readers' perceptions of the victims' experiences and, more specifically, to potentially impact readers' identification with these people's struggles for freedom against the dominant world. According to the literature review, no study has dealt with the Kilvenmani Massacre. There is a rare depiction of real-life examples of structural violence in the existing literature, which typically concentrates primarily on theoretical issues. The current research fills a significant gap in the field by providing a unified text synthesizing knowledge on various violence aspects. The present study is noteworthy because it examines the broader relationship between political, economic, gender, and health aspects of Structural Violence with reference to the real-life massacre depicted in the text, *The Gypsy Goddess*, thus making it unique.

Furthermore, Structural Violence has received scant attention. Even when the concept is invoked, residual, dominant social assumptions minimize its significance, often focusing only on local aspects while

ignoring the impact of broader political and economic relationships. The text's analysis focuses not only on the surface of Structural Violence as a corpus in which Structural Violence elements can be detected but also on the psychological impact on people at a social level can be understood. As a confessional narrative, the study, through the text, verifies the truth of centuries-old socio-cultural norms that have become sacred in societies where inequality, inhumanity, subjugation, and victimization of women in the name of culture and religion are justified and practiced in everyday life. As the name implies, Structural Violence refers to structural harm because institutions and other structures cause it and violence because it results in injury and death (D. D. Winter & Leighton, 2001). The study's findings conclude that, while the contributory factors to Structural Violence are complex and systemic, people's collective efforts, combined with modified legal interventions, can help combat Structural Violence by providing impoverished communities with access to adequate services and resources and transforming lives in a disenfranchised community.

## CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes the urgent need to pay close attention to Structural Violence, which has the potential to cause a wide range of harm to people, particularly women and marginalized sectors. The study's novelty is using real-life textual examples to influence readers' perceptions of the victims' experiences, potentially affecting readers'

identification with the victims' lives under dominant hegemony. Accordingly, from the theoretical application of the present study, *The Gypsy Goddess*' investigative elements allow Kandasamy to confront readers with brutality, frightening hostility, legal discrimination, and an unfair and intolerable reality that no traditional realism novelist could have conveyed with such intensity, letting readers connect with the victim's and community's historical understanding. Furthermore, the researchers believe that expanding Structural Violence research is a promising way to support efforts to improve well-being and promote equality among marginalized groups. However, the study has some limitations in that it only examines Structural Violence among marginalized communities. The current study's limitations provide scope and recommendations for future research concerning Structural Violence among migrants, transgender, refugees, lesbians, and gay and bisexual individuals, as there is little knowledge about Structural Violence pertaining to them.

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