

False Consciousness, Rooster Coop Syndrome Causes and Consequences in

Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Scavenger's Son*.

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Abstract

The paper aims at an investigation of the novel *Scavenger's Son* by focusing on the concept of false consciousness. The research paper tries to illustrate how the dominant ruling class keeps its hold on the working class people by imposing false consciousness among them. It brings up the discussion on the false consciousness and its pragmatism. This paper also tries to expose, how the socio political institutions like religion, government and meritocracy act as a power centre, which regulates the law. The novel *Scavenger's Son* unveils how the social institutions create a rooster coop syndrome among the downtrodden; the ugly faces of the social institutions and the measures by which the working class tries to free from the dominance of the ruling class are discussed.

Key Words: *False Consciousness, Rooster Coop Syndrome, Remedial Measures, Radicalism.*

Issues of inequality are one of the significant subjects that moves around the world economic, political and social relations based on class, caste, race and gender. In particular, in India the study of untouchables now known as dalits is a most important trend. The novel

Scavenger's son by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai is considered as a revolutionary novel still today. It came out in the year of Indian independence, 1947. The foundation of the novel is the unforgettable experience of his life. The novel is about the three generations of scavengers, who are forced to remain as the scavenger by the society. The author through his experience sketches the reality of the social structure and order which enforced the downtrodden to do the hereditary jobs against their will.

This research paper tries to illustrate the elements which are helpful for the dominant upper caste to keep up their status quo and degrade the downtrodden. By using Marxist critical theory as a tool to evaluate the novel it results in the concept “false consciousness” as referred by Engels. This concept is relevant with the rooster coop syndrome, referred by Aravind Adiga in his work *White Tiger*. Both concepts illustrate the tricks used by dominant ruling class to make the proletariat to believe that the system works for them.

This paper discusses deeply about the socio- political institutions like religion, government and meritocracy act as a power centre which produce the law. The law structures the social order. Here there is a need to quote Marx's words about consciousness, “can we speak of men possessing g “consciousness” which is itself a “social product”. Hence the realms of ideology, politics, law, morality, religion and art are not independent but are an efflux of a people's material behavior. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.

In the novel *Scavenger's Son* the plot starts with the last days of Ishukkumuttu, father of the principle character Chudalamuttu, and ends with the death of his son Mohanan. This novel is the story of three generations of scavengers. This research paper tries to cull out the reasons behind false consciousness and rooster coop syndrome prevailing among the working

class. The author in the process of narration has given the remedial measures and narrates the evolution process of downtrodden to get rid of the false consciousness.

The portrayal of the principle character Chudalamuttu is taken for the consideration. He has a different plan. He does not want to remain as a scavenger. He takes off his father's job unwillingly to replace his father, he is appointed as a scavenger in Alleppey municipality. The government authority which maintains the Alleppey municipality never allows the scavengers to change their job or to uplift the status. The institution forces them to do their hereditary job without proper wages. This shows how the social institution is against the downtrodden. When the scavenger's move towards the formation of union, the news have shaken the hearts of the big shot of Alleppey. They spoil the union by Chudalamuttu, who become a puppet of the dominant class. He betrays his own clan for his own profit.

When the scavengers are inflexible in the formation of union, the president of Alleppey municipal and the overseer Kesava Pillai realize the desire to have a union has taken root in the heart of scavengers. The authority felt the situation is out of their control. So, to bring back the control on scavengers, they planned to create a union which is easily controlled by them. The authority invites Sanyasi to perform inaugural ceremony. The Sanyasi counsels the union of scavengers and sweepers of Alleppey to pray god, not to drink toddy adding to that he says their superiors have felling of sympathy for them. During the occasion the authority offers dothi for every members of the union with special dinner. Through this event Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai exposes the hidden agenda of the dominant class to have a hand in union to continue their dominance on the scavengers. He records how the dominant classes and the social institutions are natural alliances when it comes for their common interest.

In the novel the principal character Chudalamuttu is a fine example of rooster coop syndrome. It describes the oppression of working class. Roosters are cooped in a slaughter

house, when they are slaughtered by one by one they smell the blood and see the organs of their own brothers and they know they are next, yet they do not try to escape from the coop they do not rebel. But the reason behind their passiveness is the consciousness which created by the authority which gives them a notion that accepting it as a fate. Chudalamuttu has a plan that he does not want to continue as a scavenger. He is aware of that the union will give him a status of leader of scavengers and sweepers but it will make him remain as a scavenger. So he joins hand with the authorities, knowing that it will affect his own clan.

Behind this betrayal there is a bitter experience he has faced in his life. His father Ishukkumuttu died of starvation and his corpse was not buried properly in the graveyard. He buried his father in the night soil depot. Due to his economic condition he could not pay even five rupees for the burial fee. Next day the corpse was dragged out by the dogs. This event hardened his heart. This makes him to move towards the power centre, even though it is the enemy of his clan. The urge that he does not want to be a scavenger isolates him from his people. He believes his superiors can release him from the hateful work. So he joins hands together with overseer and president to demolish the union. He makes a chaotic situation among the scavengers during the formation of union. He acts as a puppet in the hands of ruling class.

Later other scavengers try to form another association under the leadership of Pichandi. He knows about the action plan of the authority and Chudalamuttu. On hearing this Chudalamuttu thinks that he is relieved from the pressure of authority but Kesava Pillai the overseer forces him to do disruptive action against the formation of the union. By the idea of Kesava Pillai Chudalamuttu circulates fake news about Pichandi, that he has committed a theft in Reddiyar's house. The news spreads rapidly like fire and the fellow scavengers believe the deceptive words of Chudalamuttu. So Pichandi runs away from Alleppey, leaving

his wife and children. He has a hope that his fellow scavengers will take care of his family. But they are left alone and his family scattered and ruined. This is not a new scene for them. The scavengers have seen many families ruined in the night soil depot. Chudalamuttu failed to keep up the faith of his clan. He lost all his moral values by being allied with power centre. As like a rooster in the coop, Chudalamuttu is comfortable even though his people are suffering. He never thought that he is going to be the next victim.

Chudalamuttu's dreams vaporized, when cholera spreads all over the Alleppey municipality. He cannot experience the complete happiness that he becomes a watch man in the cemetery. Both Chudalamuttu and his wife Valli becomes victim of the horrible diseases. He left his only son Mohanan alone without any security for his future. His asset and money are hoarded by the overseer and the president. The next generation scavengers are aware of the exploiters and exploited, adversaries and allies. When they are politicized the false consciousness has changed in to class consciousness that leads them to a counter politics and culture against dominance. In this novel Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai spear heads the revolutionary uprising of down trodden against the dominant class. The character Mohanan son of Chudalamuttu immolates the new big building in Alleppey municipal which belongs to the president. He takes a personal revenge on president for hoarding his father's money. The author has registered the real scenario of Kerala politics in forties, which has had a profound impact on working class.

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