

Decadence of Nanjan Mooppan:

An Anecdote Of A Modern Demon In D. Rajan's *The Downfall Of Demon*

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Abstract:

Nanjan Mooppan epitomized immortality in the short story written by D. Rajan. All the deeds of Nanjan Mooppan brought the downfall of his “empire” which was bound to be shattered because of his excessive indulgence in pleasure and luxury. His treacherous means of gaining fame and creating havoc in the society was put to rest at last. The paper deals how the decadence of Nanjan Mooppan brought a great turmoil both in his home and in his village. Further it also deals with the repressive cult of male chauvinism through the character Nanjan Mooppan.

Key Words: marginality, illiteracy, soothsaying, brutality, gender, modernity.

In D. Rajan's *The Downfall of a Demon*, Moopanis considered to be a demon, and it is well validated by his activities which are depicted in the story. He is a headman of the village who is expected to take care of the people with a lot of compassion and love. On the contrary, he had become a headache for the people. He tried to exert his dominance over the people by claiming to have control over the Parvatha goddesses through his supernatural powers. His presence made people shiver. “The elder can make even a roasted chicken fly!” proclaimed by

Paraya women. (31)

As we all know, the villagers of India are not literate and consequently are away from the modernity of the society. Dwellers of village are not well aware of the scientific inventions in the field of medicine; which is well exploited by Nanjan Mooppan. He is always summoned by the people when someone is ill. Mooppan used to make his presence felt by displaying his occult powers on full swing. Such was his devilish aura that people used to decorate their houses if Mooppan is slated to come their place. These things were done to please him so that he doesn't vent his anger on the helpless people. "They decorated the courtyard of the house with festoons of young palm leaves and hibiscus blossoms." (32) Villagers used to appease him thoroughly and did not leave a stone unturned for the same.

"A pot of palm toddy, a rooster and some rice flakes were kept ready near a stool for the elder. At the precise hour, the mooppan appeared in the arena, clad in a red cloth, another red cloth wrapped around his head, and a flaming torch in hand. Upon his arrival, even boisterous children quietened down. Chattering vaaluva women fell silent. All eyes were on the mooppan." (32)

In every society there is a rebel who tries to go against the norms of the society, and consequently is either successful or the protest is forcefully suppressed. The same happened with this girl who did not pay heed to Mooppan's order and disregarded his command. She breathed her last after three days. No one knows how she died, no one even dared to bring the same into police's knowledge but readily accepted that she met her end due to Mooppan's curse. Since

time immemorial this superstitious attitude of the Indian villagers are being observed. They are happy to live and endure the wrath of some upper caste people but will not take a step against it. Whether we call it as their superstitious attitude or their frightened attitude but the need of the hour is that government should peep into these matters at the earliest and take necessary steps.

Another event of the story depicts the pain inflicted on women of the society. The stigma of patriarchy is still prevalent in the society and writer takes a dig of that as well. Mooppan tied the knot with four women but never took care of them properly. To make matters worse, he always asked them to hand over him whatever they used to earn to fulfil his thirst of toddy. Writer lucidly portrays the tyrannical behaviour of Mooppan towards his wives. One incident from the story depicts the disrespectful behaviour towards women. “ Once, one of the wives failed to give the Mooppan any money. When questioned, she came up with some excuse. He cursed and gave her a mighty kick. She never opened her eyes again”. (35) This is not new for the Indian readers who have been reading novels, dramas, poems, short stories and other genres of literature. The stark representation of agony, pain, humiliation, their inegalitarian position in society and freedom which is always trampled under the boots of male dominated society is always portrayed in the above mentioned genres of literature. The writer here tries to raise the question when this is going to change?

In Indian mythology it is said that good always conquers the evil and the same happened with Mooppan as well. His devious means of frightening people and getting benefitted ultimately came to an end. With the improvement in medical facilities in the state no one went to him for

the treatment which meant that gradually he lost the opportunity to scare them through his occult powers. A demon king was losing his grip of domination which shattered him deeply. To make the matter worse banning of the toddy shop fueled his anger more.

“For some time now, the mooppan had not been singing or dancing. He grew irritable with everyone. There was a reason. Because of the advent of vaccination and modern medicine, the pox did not visit the village as often as before. Even if someone caught it, they did not approach the mooppan. They did not accept his black magic or his words any more.” (37)

There was another reason. “Prohibition had been imposed. All toddy shops were shut. The right to be happy with a drink was taken away.” (37)

The modern demon- Nanjan Mooppan did not die at the hands of God or Goddesses but at the hands of advancement. Development is the key if people from rural background have to be emancipated from the demonic clutches of superstition, illiteracy, poor health facilities, casteism, exploitation and many more. Writer has tried to essay the importance of development which could be considered a boon for the rural society.

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