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MS MILITANCY: THE POETRY AS A POWERFUL RESISTANT NARRATIVE

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ABSTRACT

Women have been victimized in the patriarchal and caste-based society on a greater level. Their unheard and untold stories of atrocities and traumas are brought to the mass by Meena Kandasamy. She is a writer with a lot of aggression and a lot of rebellion, and her uncontrolled emotions for the subjugated community gets highly reflected in her writings. *Ms Militancy* (2010) is a violent as well as powerful poetry collection by Meena Kandasamy where she explores the social reality of our society and problematizes the camouflaged dissemination of power through her intensely inquisitive poetry. The paper intends to study how *Ms Militancy* in Dalit literature becomes a strong resistant narrative through the resurrection of the humiliated, tortured, and exploited groups in society. Meena Kandasamy's war of resistance is against institutional patriarchy and the caste-based Brahmanical Hindu society.

KEYWORDS

Keywords: Dalit literature, patriarchy, Brahmanical Hindu society, voiceless.

INTRODUCTION

The poetry of India embodies the collective perception of India's people. Meena Kandasamy mentioned in one of her interviews that in Indian society we have two major problems: one is the pain of patriarchy imposed on us in the name of tradition, culture, language, and religion; the other is that we are a caste society, which leads to suppression. Indian writers in English aimed to improve Indian society, and they had no qualms in depicting the real situation of women in Indian society. They attempted to portray the marginalized sections of society; the main problems covered in their writing included untouchability, gender issues, and Dalit issues. The French, American, and Marxist revolutions served as major influences on post-colonial Indian English. The writings of Meena Kandasamy are significant in this context because they not only brought up Dalit issues but also to a significant extent qualify her as a Dalit Feminist writer.

In the post-colonial era, female authors of Indian English literature mostly concentrated on the problems women faced and the atrocities committed against them. They emphasized the social advancement of women in their writings. After centuries of marginalization and alienation, finally, through the writings of these relentless, powerful "women" writers, women discovered their voice. Meena Kandasamy's works demonstrate that being a woman writer and being a Dalit woman writer are two entirely different things. The truth is that Dalit women in Tamil Nadu suffer three types of victimization, and the younger Dalit women are unwilling to accept this forced social injustice. They want the entire world to be aware of their situation. They desire to rebel and take revenge.

Kandasamy's poetry is a representation of her deep origins in Dalit and Indian English literature. It is visible in the poet's effort to grant women an identity by communicating to readers about women's empowerment and the psychological pressures on women in one way or another. She works hard to improve her triple-victimized neighborhood. Meena Kandasamy has always tried to depict the tragic situation of the subaltern. She once remarked, "My poetry is naked, my poetry is in tears, my poetry screams in anger, my poetry writhes in pain. My poetry smells of blood, my poetry salutes sacrifice. My poetry speaks like my people, my poetry speaks for my people." (Kandasamy 4-5)

Ms Militancy, questions the dominant pattern in modern Indian poetry and displays the poet's strategy for giving women an identity through its full-blooded and extremely creative poems. Kandasamy's perspectives regarding caste and gender-based society get highly reflected in her writings. The paper intends to provide space for Dalit women to raise their voices and come out of the male-dominated world. For every woman, there is always a need to establish self-identity, Dalit women are the victim of triple oppression, that is class, caste, and gender prejudice existing in the society. Through the powerful deconstruction of mythological characters, the poetry shifts the perception of society and the paper strongly underlines the fact that women can be a rebel anytime to resist the violence meted out to them. The epics' key characters

are taken up by Kandasamy, who highlights their unique qualities by portraying them to the readers as everyday people. The essay examines her poems from the same collection, including "*Back-Street Girls*," "*Dead Woman Walking*," "*Fire Walkers*," "*One-Eyed*," "*Moon Gazers*," and "*Princess-in-exile*," as a potent political weapon against Brahmanical patriarchy and as a compelling resistive narrative.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

POEM ANALYSIS

Ms Militancy includes poems from the margins; the poems of rebellion and resistance. It challenges the dominant mode in contemporary Indian English poetry and criticizes the male-dominated framework. The poems, *Back-Street Girls*, *Dead Woman Walking*, *Fire Walkers*, *One-Eyed*, *Moon Gazers*, and *Princess-in-exile* are discussed and analyzed in this paper. Kandasamy reveals women's psychological pressures, emotional trauma, and the revolution in resisting them. She declares - "This tongue allows me to resist rape, to rescue my dreams. It is not man-made...My language is dark and dangerous and desperate in its eagerness to slaughter your myths." (Kandasamy 8-9)

She tells the tale of Karaikal Ammaiyar, a Dalit woman who is sexually molested by males, in "Dead Woman Walking." Despite her beauty and "the magic of my (her) multiplying love," Karaikal Ammaiyar, a mythical person, was deserted by her merchant husband to wed "a fresh and formless wife." In her husband's eyes, she was a sage because of her love for Lord Shiva. The poem depicts the anxieties and adversities of the deserted and exploited womenfolk. Through Karaikal Ammaiyar, Kandasamy voices the agony and pain of abandoned women. Her pain is visible in the line, "I wept in vain, I wailed, I walked on my head, I went to god" (Kandasamy 17)

In contrast to the exploiters, who get away with no one holding a grudge against them, the Dalit women in the poem are made to carry the scarlet letter of shame and disgrace. The poem describes how these women pass away even though they are still physically alive.

"Back-Street Girls" defines women's independence, which had previously been reserved for men only.

This specific poetry defies all the rules and gives women independence and space, and it is addressed to the moral police. They have a voice and can make choices. Like men, they can act according to their will and are not destined to follow the code of institutions or those rules set up by the male-dominated society. Women in Kandasamy's works are free-spirited, fancy-free, and liberated to the point where they are allowed to play many roles, including sluts, bitches, witches, gluttons, and shrews. Behind the barricades of culture and tradition, they cannot be restrained. They are now the ones who pick up and "strip random men," as the men can no longer choose them as spouses and enslave them. The poem finishes by

reminding the reader that "We (women) are not the ones you can sentence for life." (Kandasamy14) Meena Kandasamy is a rebel at heart, and this is the freedom she wishes for her women.

"Firewalkers" is another potent depiction of the hardship of low-class women who are taken advantage of by upper-class individuals, and in this instance, Kandasamy criticizes the conservative belief of the community in making sacrifices to the deity Maari. In the poem's context, the goddess Maari is portrayed as an exploitation figure who delights in the suffering of her devotees, in addition to the conventional beliefs. The followers are referred to as "dream-chasers, the fire walkers" and Marri mentions that she needs blood to soak her hair (Kandasamy 22). They consent to have their bodies whipped and burned. Maari in "Firewalkers" is the Dalit community's cruel oppressor. The poem "Moon-gazers" illustrates the undeniable superiority of non-Dalits over Dalits. The poet brings up a scenario in which the teacher mentions a bird that keeps watch over the moon all night long in a classroom. When a young child enquires about the bird's activities on new moon days, she judges the question asked by the girl as impertinent and mocks at it. She never rises beyond the depths of the teacher's boundless eyes. Every member of the Dalit community shares this fate as their lot in life. They are rendered utterly defenceless, always expected to comply without protest, and taught to live a quiet lifestyle with no outward indication of their existence.

The central character of the Tamil classic *Silapathikaram*, Kannaki, serves as the inspiration for the title poem of this collection, Ms. Militancy. She has remained devoted to her spouse Kovalan, who is dating dancer Madhavi. Kannaki accepts her husband after he returns from Madhavi, despite the fact that she is severely hurt by his betrayal. By Tamil cultural standards, Kannaki, who we find to be very true, faithful, and devoted, supports patriarchal dominance. Later, the same Kannaki expresses wrath at the passing of her husband. And thus, demonstrates that, in a patriarchal, male-dominated culture, she is a courageous, forceful revolutionist rather than a helpless, timid, or submissive woman. Kandasamy addresses her fellow women to be courageous, resistant, and revolutionary like Kannaki, one of the militant women that Kandasamy portrays in her poetry. The brief poem "One-Eyed" depicts the horrible circumstances that Dalit women must endure. The poet uses many brutal acts against Dalit women as an example and uses lifeless objects to show the true nature of humanity. The pot, glass, and water quench a person's thirst, but the teacher, doctor, school, and press notice the rule-breaking and show little concern for the requirements of ordinary people. Humans are incapable of understanding one another. When Dhanam swallowed the forbidding water at the expense of her left eye, her world was "torn in half" (41). The practice of untouchability is a topic of discussion in the poem.

The chaste queen, Sita, is the main character of "Princess in Exile," however Meena Kandasamy's Sita is no longer chaste. Kandasamy exhorts her female followers to defy social conventions dictated by men and to have the fortitude to take revenge. Since the day she was abducted, Her Sita has mastered the skill of disappearing. Her ongoing "walkout" is a form of retaliation against her husband for failing to act quickly to save her. Sita, apart from being the wife of someone, has her own identity. The poet has a strong sense of independence. By giving them an identity that is completely different from their original one, she demystifies Tamil Classical Myths and Characters. She has pushed herself to the front to speak for her community as a woman by using strong language and rebellious writing. She affirms the process, her gender, caste, and regional identities through the shared spaces of her socio-aesthetic practise while also transcending them. She does this by using words, metaphors, and images as subversive tools. The work of Kandasamy is "art for life's sake" rather than "art for art's sake." She is a militant spirit in many aspects. The way she takes the effort and courage to take up the myths and characters, examine them from her perspective and demystify the women to grant them an identity is highly revolutionary in the Indian context.

WHEN DALIT WOMEN WRITE...

Dalit is not a caste or religion, but rather the reality of living in the lower classes of society. Despite the atrocities of enslavement and physical abuse, they sang lyrical songs about their gods and their life even though history has rendered them speechless. The Dalits created a distinctive and distinct cultural landscape from that of the majority. Dalit literature is a new genre in Indian literature, and its authors have worked hard to make Dalit issues more widely known. Initially, they were underestimated but through perseverance, they fought for the world and rebelled to bring their works to the forefront. The main topics of discussion in Dalit literature included the division of the Dalits, social oppression, class dissemination, the conflict between landlords and laborers, violence against women, the growth of social and political awareness, and the betrayal of Dalits by major political parties. The compositions stayed firmly rooted in the ground and were devoted to upholding their integrity. They are violent, rude, sensual, emotional, and intimate. They are spoken in their native dialects. A woman belonging to a Dalit community is a "Dalit among the Dalits". For them, writing is a form of healing. P. Sivakami's "*The Taming of Women*", Bama's "*Karukku*", "*The Prison We Broke*" by Babytai Kamble, "*Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha*" by Shantabai Kamble are some of the writings rooted in the painful experience of violence.

VOICE OF THE GENDERED SUBALTERN

THERE IS A GROUP THAT STANDS ALONE, AND THAT IS WOMEN. WHEN WOMEN WRITE, THEY WRITE FROM THE MARGINS.

Resolved rage over being marginalised cannot be discounted from the canon of international literature. The majority of Dalit women's writings are anarchic pearls of wisdom and rage against their tumultuous inferiority. In a society that expects them to be silent, they speak against systemic oppression by taking control of narratives and providing independence and freedom of expression to the subjugated women.

This alternative interpretation of feminist poetry draws comparisons to the concluding stage of Gynocriticism. The basic idea of the "body" of the third-world woman takes it closer to Spivak's essay's assessment of the "subaltern." The subaltern is able to converse. (1985) By first-world feminists, Spivak draws attention to the triple oppression that these women experience, including the patriarchy, dominance, and race. According to Spivak, "subaltern" people should prefer writing their own bodies and stories. The diffuse traces of anguish and pain that are frequently hidden by the façade of empathy displayed by the prevailing existing socio-political discourse are reclaimed by Kandasamy's attempt to unearth the imprinted voices from history and to reread them. Kandasamy attempts to problematize this covert circulation through her very probing poetry. Kandasamy ably dramatizes and clarifies the multiplicity of conformity. In the poem Backstreet Girls, Kandasamy makes an attempt to promote a sense of sisterhood within society as a whole (in this case, of sex workers), declaring aloud "to the moral police" that: Tongues loosened, we drink suns. We strip unsuspecting males sure as sluts. Our thoughts are on loving ourselves. Yes, we are all pals, my dear. Meena Kandasamy questioned all the injustices via her poetry and thought about the suffering, anguish, violence, and limitations of being a Dalit. Since Kandasamy aims to poeticize women's real-life experiences, her poetry transcends the personal. Meena Kandasamy speaks to the Dalit people and considers the struggle for self-identity among Dalit subaltern women. Reading Meena Kandasamy's TOUCH and MS MILITANCY, Dr. Simmi Gurwara's study of the poetics of caste and culture looked at Kandasamy's raging expression and distinctive mode of resistance to continuous injustices, abuse, and social and cultural exploitation as well as her fight to upset the applecart in order to remake and reorganise the alternate histories and narratives.

Touch is a significant work by Kandasamy discussing untouchability in society, caste, and class consciousness. Here, this paper only focuses on the Tamil mythological women characters who gradually attain the power to resist violence. These characters are presented as assertive and arrogant. The paper also acknowledges the space Dalit literature owns in the literary world. Besides these ideas, the paper strictly examines how resistance is established in society by these women in

the light of the Subaltern theory. Apart from the cultural perspective, this particular paper examines the personal struggles and survival of women characters from Hindu mythology. Research has been done earlier on the demythification of women characters; a unique kind of deconstruction is done there. This paper intends to shift the perspectives of society by proving the fact that Dalit women can stand for themselves, speak for themselves, and resist violence themselves. The idea of the gendered subaltern is discussed in the paper to justify the notion that Dalit women are subjugated in Indian society and even today, they strictly, fearlessly represent the voices from the margins. The paper aims to examine how *Ms Militancy* in Dalit literature becomes a strong resistant narrative through the resurrection of the humiliated, tortured, and exploited groups of society and how Kandasamy explores social realities and problematizes the camouflaged dissemination of power through her intensely inquisitive poetry. For her, the war of resistance is against institutional patriarchy and the caste-based Brahmanical Hindu society.

As the title implies the goal of this paper is to examine *Ms Militancy* the poetry of resistance against caste and gender norms imposed on Dalit women using subaltern theory and how the gendered subaltern has an undying desire to obtain equality and take back their proper position in the world.

In the context of subaltern theory, specifically addressing the gendered subaltern, here we are analysing how *Ms Militancy* becomes a powerful resistance narrative. The groups within society that are under the dominance of the elite class are referred to as subalterns by Antonio Gramsci. Workers, farmers, and other groups who had no access to authority or power make up the subaltern class. At the same time, women have been doubly suppressed, silenced, and subalternate, first based on nationality; the other, based on gender. The idea of subaltern studies is progressively growing beyond peasant insurrection, colonial studies, postcolonial studies, and gender studies. Subaltern theory aids in voicing the social, cultural, religious, and political marginalization, oppression, and exploitation of the downtrodden and exploited. The term "subaltern" refers to a broad range of theoretical positions, including postcolonialism, Marxism, Deconstruction, Phenomenology, imperialism, poststructuralism, and colonialism. Literature, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, politics, cultural studies, and other disciplines examine distinct perspectives in various eras and contexts as part of subaltern studies. Popular in postcolonial literature, the idea of the subaltern emphasizes how colonial power and imperialism used brutal tactics to marginalize and silence native peoples. Postcolonial studies examine and address this discourse, which is influenced by Eurocentric ideology in the colonies and which characterizes and treats the locals as "weird" and "inferior" people. One of the branches of postcolonialism is subaltern literature, which addresses oppression, marginalization, the subjection of the lower and working classes, gender discrimination, disdain for women, poor classes, and racial prejudice.

Ms Militancy speaks the language of the subaltern through the Dalit women portrayed in her poems. Reinterpreting Hindu and Tamil mythology, old scriptures, and well-known folktales are how Kandasamy plans to unleash sexual politics and power. Sita is treated unfairly, Kannaki is betrayed, and women's sexuality is restricted for the sake of tradition. Through the poems, a search is made for the plight of women, particularly Dalit women, who suffer from terrible brutality as a result of double colonization and are looking for their identity, independence, space, and freedom. The paper thus highlights the intensity of strength Kandasamy provides to her female characters to resist the atrocities and violence, to become the voice of the voiceless. Meena Kandasamy utilizes her verse as a kind of violent struggle against the caste and gender structures that are deeply rooted and pervasive in her country.

We all are living in this society so it is necessary to have a realization on the issues faced by the Dalit community, specifically the women belonging to the Dalit community. We should be conscious of the severity of the brutality Dalit women experience in our democratic nation. They are raped, killed, and even burned alive in India, even today. There is a need to understand how women are destined for violence, assaults, and traumas, and how they are forced to perform gender roles without questioning the system. There is a rebel in every woman out there and here, Kandasamy's women are to a very great extent, unstoppable! So the research paper addresses the strong female characters of Tamil epics and their revolution for resistance.

CONCLUSION

Dalit women have marked their presence in Dalit literature and their works stand as a powerful weapon to fight against their subjugation. Meena Kandasamy's poetry as an "angry young woman" is rife with unending militant assaults against the status quo, social mores, and cultural customs that have been utilized for years to justify and then minimize Dalit oppression on various levels. The other poetry book by Kandasamy, "Touch," is characterized by artistic sensibilities and warm, passionate human relationships that speak to the unchangeable caste systems that degrade the underdogs to the point where even touching them is considered offensive to those in the upper castes. The poems of Resistance in *Ms Militancy* by Kandasamy remain a reminder of the never-ending rebellion of women who fight for self-identity even in contemporary Indian society. In this setting, Dalit women's works question the social order by highlighting the fact that all social practices are heavily founded on caste and gender. Discrimination persists in our society today. In many respects, the Dalit feminist perspective aids the feminist voice in challenging the mainstream worldview and patriarchal critical discourse. The perspectives of Indian feminism, Dalit activism, and marginalized women writers are all widened through their work. The National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW), All India Dalit Women's Forum, Maharashtra Dalit Mahila

Sangatana, and the Christi Mahila Sangharsh Sanghatana, an organization of Dalit Christian women, were among the organizations that made claims for Dalit women's identity and raised their issues in the 1990s. Women have been beaten, detained, and tortured, during recent brutal search and raid operations on Dalit communities in Bihar and Tamil Nadu. In Laxmanpur-Batge, Bihar, women were raped and maimed before being slaughtered by Ranvir Sena members in 1997. The national commission for Women of India has documented several incidences, one of which is this one.

Malayalam writer and critic Satchidanandan says that Rohit Vemula's suicide is an 'institutionalized murder'. Being a Dalit in India is challenging, being a Dalit woman in India even today is triple marginalization.

Githa Hariharan's latest book, *I Have Become the Tide*, is an appeal for an open, progressive society where oppression by caste is prohibited, dissenting voices are not silenced, and forms of resistance and rebellion have rejoiced. Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* and Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* are influential Dalit texts with a strong Dalit Feminist Stand. Contemporary Dalit women writers like Radhamani, Regha Raju, and Sathi Angamali are bringing out the concerns of Dalit women through their works. Kandasamy writes for the women of the Margins, the women who are not represented yet, those women who were betrayed, suppressed, silenced, raped, killed, and even burned alive. She wants her fellow women to resist violence, raise their voices, and never leave the war for equality.

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