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Study of Feminism in Meena Kandasamy's When I Hit You

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Abstract :

In the present world we all are talking about different waves of feminism, radical feminism, but we are not given equal importance, status to woman. Indian women writers have voiced their concerns from last five decades against a number of atrocities and gender inequalities that have mated out to them.

Gender denotes socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women. It is decided by cultural, social, political and economic forces which influence social behavior of men and women. The discrimination based on the gender of a person is perpetuated through social-cultural and psychological mechanisms prevalent in society.

Expectations and dreams are not always fulfilled....and marriages are not always successful and the fairy tale setting do not always consummate this is harsh reality that comes out in meena kandasamy's novel "When I Hit You : or A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Wife".

This paper mainly explores the issues of the modern Indian woman who always reminded that she is nothing but only a woman she has no right to stand up against marital rape, abuse, oppression, violation of her fundamental rights.

Key words : oppression, violation, marriage, feminism.

'Sex' is a biological term whereas 'Gender ' is a psychological and cultural term. It is widely held that while one's sex as a man or woman is determined by anatomy, the prevailing concepts of gender, of the traits that are conceived to constitute what is masculine and what is feminine in temperament and behaviour are largely, if not entirely, social constructs that were generated by the pervasive patriarchal biases of our civilization (Abrams and Harpham, 2009. p. 101).

In the work of Meena Kandasamy, we can see very strong gender bias attitude of the society. The novel gives us a very heart rendering psychological description of protagonist. Though she is treated worse than an animal. But still she musters courage to fight against all odds.

Dalit Women Writers in Dalit Literature:

Indian dalit women writers emerged from 1970s onwards. They express their unspoken and bitter experiences in their own dialects. Dalitwomens writing in Indian literature challenges the tradition of so-called mainstream literature of the higher caste and dominant aesthetics, language and dictions. Their expression about oppressed and subjugated sections is very realistic picture of Indian society of the present day. Dalit woman authors contribute to social and moral values through their writings to awaken marginalised dalit women who are serving under triple exploitation such as; caste, gender, and poverty from generation to generation.

So, the newly enlightened group of the dalit woman writers starts writing through new consciousness to challenge the established norms. Through such endeavours, dalit woman literature becomes the powerful revolutionary and philosophical activity that asks for the bottom level to the civilized life. She wants to root out the established social code, values and structure which are against humanity and democratic values. Their writing is closely connected with the concept of humanity.

Meena Kandasamy as a feminist writer in Dalit Literature:

Meena Kandasamy is one of the major dalit woman writers from Tamilnadu state. She developed her career as a poet, novelist and a translator in Chennai. Two of her poems- *Mascara* and *My Lover Speaks of Rape* won the first prize in pan Indian poetry contest. As a dalit woman writer Meena Kandasamy dreamt of the casteless India, she contributes various books and research articles in various journals, such as *Biblio*, *Communalism*, *Combat* and so on. She has published *When I Hit You* (2017), it has some autobiographical elements. After translation of Periyar's views on untouchability, Meena Kandasamy engaged in translating, she indicates the thoughts of Periyar on the rights of women.

Study of Feminism in *When I Hit You*:

Meena Kandasamy has given the real picture of Indian woman of 21st century and the misleading facts about love marriage and marital rape in her work *When I Hit You* or *A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*. In one of her interviews she says "And the more familiar the strange becomes the more and more strange the familiar appears. That's how the once upon a time fiery feminism becomes a bettered wife. By observing but not doing anything by experiencing but not understanding. By recording but not judging".

India being a male dominated patriarchal society, derived income of their basic rights as human being. Woman was denied along with many other rights, the right to education and the decisive power about her own life and was not even considered worthy of treating as a human being equal with man, rather she was and still is, viewed as the 'other' of man. The issues like the patriarchal family

structures the custom of polygamy, endogamy, child marriage, an equal share in the family property, the 'purdah' system, state of permanent widowhood etc have contributed a great deal as the obstacle for the free development of a woman.

Gender issues has often been taken up as a subject by the Indian writes in their literary works. However, the issue of marginalization and oppression of Dalit woman was not discussed by and large. Dalit women who continue to remain voiceless

even today.

Some contemporary Indian literary artist like Meena Kandasamy voice out their concern regarding the 'sexual politics' and the 'gender inequality' in her writings.

The status of woman in india has still not been able to escape the ruthless clutches of power and establishment. Nature has not been that much partial as the people in this country are for women.

Indian woman are the primary underdogs of an exploitative society where the law of the jungle persists: the more powerful thrive at the expense of the less powerful. That law, since time immemorial has put men before women. Dowry deaths have shocked them out of their placid stoicism.

As Meena Kandasamy stated: "a good writer knows not to be a sensationlised story of a very real, everyday crime." The main point is not the simplistic take away of abused women learning to walk away soon or why, as one ignorant blogger writes , 'she (meena) does not just admit she made a mistake? Perhaps it doesn't work with her feminist image': it's that being hit, held down on harangued is never, ever the woman's fault.

At the end of the day, women are only human, and many men purposefully prey on that Touting her stance as a survivor and gender rights and community fighter then, Meena Kandasamy powerfully challenges this tired social hypocrisy.

The strongest smartes women can be the target because they are individuals before they are women: reacting in entirely normal, acceptable ways.

The novel becomes a meditation on the art of writing about desire, abuse and trauma.

She knows that writing can be her salvation but "how could I open up to stranger who buy the fiction performed for their benefit?": Becomes her answer she includes chapter epigraphs from Anne Sexton, Kamala Das and Elfried Jelinek. "art creates the Suffering in the first place" thus, thinking herself to feminist writers beyond caste, race or culture, even beyond language difference

Conclusion :

The struggle of the women and their existence in the caste stricken land from ancient time to present is existing in the land of India. Meena Kandasamy is not just protesting against the womans appression but also contextualizing her subaltern identity. Her writing uproots and articulates the wholesome emotions, pains, deprivation, captivity, humiliation, anger and their agonizing survival with oppressed taboos. Meena Kandasamy through her novel challages the male domination of society.

This book seems like to our future selves that we are on our own. It is a warning: that it is easy for a once upon a time a feminist to get trapped in an abusive marriage. It is also possible for her to rationalise and try make sense of her abusive partner's violence like our narrator says,

"He can be kind, I know he can, I've seen how tender he is with the homeless boys in town, but with me I know he will always chooseto be cruel." She is told time and again by her husband that it is her feminism thatis the problem and not his abusive behaviour.

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