



An Analysis of Violence and Trauma in Meena Kandasamy's Fictions

Himmat sharma¹, Tanu Kashyap², Ashu Vashisht³

Amity institute of English studies and Research^{1,2} , Govt. Degree college Jammu and Kashmir³

Abstract: Pain and violence are so interwoven into the human existence, they actively shape human lives on the personal level as well as national politics. These are painful events that result in individuals being injured either physically or psychologically or both, and structures that are oppressive and all pervasive but not without their cultural, historical, political contexts. As a form of communicating first and second person experiences, literature being inherently reflexive and subversive has provided the basis for elucidating their causes and effects. This paper will thus focus on selected contemporary Indian women's writings where the issue of violence and trauma is explored highlighting the role and importance of the post-colonial Indian women's writings as important sites for examining more nuanced aspects of violence and trauma within the framework of systemic oppression of the communities to whom the Indian women belong. Prominent among these is Meena Kandasamy who is well known for dispensing the core of literature, activism, and feminism entwined together. In an unapologetic manner, Kandasamy writes about topics that are normally hushed up – caste atrocities, oppression, wife abuse, inferiority of women and more. Her novels such as *The Gypsy Goddess* and *When I Hit You* remain testimonial texts that unveil violent existence and trauma in India. With her powerful critique of patriarchal and casteist oppressive systems, Kandasamy turns the experience of pain – personal and political – into a blueprint for change.

This paper seeks to understand the manner in which author discusses and incorporate violence and trauma, not simply as concepts of focus, but as structural elements of Kandasamy's novels. The Kilvenmani massacre is reconstructed in *The Gypsy Goddess* through an epic historical stylization while Kandasamy's fragmentationist narrative form succeeds in embracing the Dalit suffering. Unlike trauma that can be treated or forgotten, the novel does not conform to well-trodden literary



strategies, instead reproducing ontological confusion and, therefore, challenging the audience to re-experience the harm done by a colonial estate. However, *When I Hit You* focuses on the individual and proximate facets of trauma to provide the reader with an insight into the story of a physically abused wife. Here, the author uses confessional discourse as well as metafictional gestures in order to stage a realistic representation of the emotional and psychological effects of intimate partner abuse. Transformative aspects of the protagonist's character evolution from the victim to the liberated individual speak about the role of narrative as the act and process of empowering people and putting into practice.

In positioning Kandasamy's works within the analytical field of this paper, this paper employs the theoretical benchmarks of feminist literary theory, trauma theory, and postcolonial criticism. Explaining that her novel is examine representations of violence and trauma, the paper focuses on her invocation of polyphony, metafiction, and non-linear temporality. In addition, it demonstrates the extent to which Kandasamy empowers the silenced through countering oppressions of discourse constellations that enskill complicity into women's speech.

This study thus maps Kandasamy's literary production in relation to the socio-political dynamics of contemporary India to stress the function of literature as an act of contestation and sincerity. Those interested in social justice and reform would know that fiction when it comes to Kandasamy has broken free of its beauty to become a powerful tool in advocating for change. In this book, Kandasamy not only maps out oppression, but also unearths resistance and creates a roadmap for change and hope out of violence and abuse.

Gendered violence and trauma as explored in the stories of Kandasamy are not only the geographies of hopelessness, but also the sites which symbolize change. The fiction novels she has written over the years compel the audiences to engage with cold, hard realities regarding culture's participation in creating, maintaining, and endorsing systems



of oppression. Therefore, Kandasamy reinvents the writer as an activist and attempts to connect the writing, personal and political, private and public domains. This paper views itself as fitting into the existing literature on both feminist literature and indeed, trauma studies by offering a critical discussion of the thematic and the narrative inventions of Kandasamy. The dissertation claims that she turned literature into a lobby for the voiceless, a source of social memory, and an agent of social change. If the private and personal is translated to public and political, then Kandasamy's fiction not only gives voice to the voiceless but can also make the readers hear and accept the cause of the marginals.

This paper has also aimed to show through a close analysis of two of Kandasamy's fictions, *The Gypsy Goddess* and *When I Hit You*, how her fiction intervenes in the politics of gender violence today and exemplifies how the aesthetic can intersect with the activist. He conceives of violence and trauma not only in the harsh reality that is seen but in their cause and effect, individual and sociopolitical consequences. This double concern makes her works not only emotionally and spiritually moving but also timely and still very much relevant to present discourses of advocacy, equality, justice and human rights particularly to those of women. Meena Kandasamy's Violence and trauma as a part of contemporary Indian literature and global feminism.atic and narrative innovations. It argues that her works exemplify the potential of literature to serve as a platform for marginalized voices, a repository of collective memory, and a catalyst for systemic reform. By turning private struggles into public discourses, Kandasamy's fiction not only amplifies the voices of the oppressed but also fosters empathy, understanding, and a collective commitment to justice and equality.

Through a detailed exploration of *The Gypsy Goddess* and *When I Hit You*, this paper demonstrates how Kandasamy's fiction bridges the gap between the aesthetic and the activist, offering a model for how literature can engage with pressing social issues. Her portrayal of violence and trauma is not confined to their immediate manifestations but extends to an examination of their structural underpinnings and long-term repercussions.



This dual focus renders her works not only deeply impactful but also profoundly relevant to ongoing debates about social justice, human rights, and feminist advocacy.

In Meena Kandasamy's exploration of violence and trauma represents a significant contribution to contemporary Indian literature and global feminist discourse. Her work is subversive and subverts the dominant culture to reveal how deeply violence is institutionalised and women and other such marginalised beings despite oppression, fight back. Thus, replacing personal suffering with political demand Kandasamy confirms the significance of the literature as the agent of social change and exposure.

Introduction

Some of the common themes that include violence and trauma are habits of human history and drama. These are generally described as occurrences leading to severe physical, emotional or psychological injury, and they certainly leave long-term effects within those affected. Fiction relates such aspects as violence and trauma to understand structural, historical, and individual victimization.

Violence in the Indian context, whether of caste, gender or communal, is almost as seamlessly entwined with the nation's very political fabric. Such an invisible and taboo subject as trauma suddenly becomes powerful when it is articulated in literature. Many of the contemporary writers have come up to be very crucial writers whose work brings to bear many of these questions in very powerful ways and I would count Meena Kandasamy as one of those writers. Hailing Kandasamy's works of feminism, activism and Literature, Kandasamy's work represents interesting depiction of how systematic violence is intertwined with personal traumas.

Particularly, this paper explores Kandasamy's novels with regards to violence and trauma betraying a distinctly feminist narrative. This paper discusses the ways in which she uses narration to subvert power relations that reinforce patriarchy and how she gives a voice to



the suppressed. Thus, through analysing her works this study helps to add knowledge of how literature can be used as instruments of social resistance and change.

Violence and Trauma: Intentional and unintentional harm forming the Violence conceptual framework POWER, physical assault, and systematic barriers such as sexism. Trauma as understood by Trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth is the psychological impact of such violence with features of memory weighing, emotionless and recurring distress. Violence and trauma are the major issues of concern in most societies and the gendered aspect of these experiences is explored from a third wave standpoint.

It is in Kandasamy's works where such theoretical frameworks can be applied. Her stories are not only focused on the direct impact of violence on women's lives but also on the systems that bring about that violence, and the long-term damage that it may cause. They put at the center of their stories the voices of survivors, counteract the culture of victimization, and fight for justice.

Analysis of Kandasamy's Works

1. The Gypsy Goddess: Narrating Collective Trauma

In her novel, *The Gypsy Goddess*, Meena Kandasamy tells fictional but historically originated story of Kilvenmani massacre of 1968 in order to establish that Dalit labourers were burnt alive for demanding wages. Her use of fragmented and accosted narrative together with the multiple voices of the survivor's instrument undermines sequential and coherent narrative; the manner that we associate with testimonial and trauma as a collective. This approach is a form of preposterous about the state of the world – the dehumanising and persistent process of the systemic harm and perpetration of violence against the minorities.

The polemics like caste system, gender injustice, oppression of the lower castes and voice of the displacement are served by Kandasamy very descriptively and sometimes



disturbingly. The novel applies this by denying the readers the opportunity to get closure or justice, like it is in most cases with the Dalit victims. What Kandasamy successfully does is to deny the reader clear resolution to the narrative while insisting on the timelessness of the aftermath of such horrors: the war crime becomes a perpetual demand for justice, and a cruel reminder of the societies that must be built in order to guarantee one.

2. When I Hit You: Personalizing Violence

When I Hit You is a powerful and painful fictional narrative that peels the disguise off an abusive relationship. Told through the point of view of the hero, this novel offers the reader a very realistic and exposing look at the psychological and emotional abuse common in toxic marriages. The first and utter violation is of women's bodies and Kandasamy narrates this without any restraint from the culture of silence that surrounds partner violence.

It can be recognized that metafictional techniques play an important role in the novel, with focuses on the process of writing as healing and self-enabling. Finally, the medium of storytelling in the specific case of the protagonist regives the woman her voice and organizes her suffering into a discourse of song freedom. Speaking as a voice of Amma, Kandasamy focuses on the problem of patriarchy as a social ill of contemporary Tamil society and names existing legal systems' inability to address gender-based violence as a failure. It is her private socio-political narrative as well as the global call for the change, which makes Her work such a powerful message to the reader in any given social context.

Discussion

Through her narrative and poetic literature; Meena Kandasamy's writing has the potentiality of challenging and erasing violence and post-violence. By doing so, she rejects dominant paradigm oftentimes silencing or mocking oppressed groups'



experience. In doing so, her narratives also fall under the category of resistance whilst insisting on the require systemic changes that can unsettling endemic systematic oppressions.

Telling her story in unconventional, innovative ways and using highly charged, even sensationalised descriptions, Kandasamy is one of the most important writers in contemporary Indian fiction. Her novels are protean, they do not fit into the conventional categories, the plots are fragmented and timelines are non-linear, reflecting the world of trauma. This stylistic choice also reflects the psychological split effected by violence and, because the images require work to decipher, forces the spectators/students/readers to deal with the topic of oppression.

While Sri Lankan women writers have overwhelmingly used the thematic mode of violated women, what separates Kandasamy is her dual fold approach to violence and trauma both at the individual and collective level. „crimes related to tragedy of caste poisoning that *The Gypsy Goddess* ponders, *When I Hit You* chronicles violence of an altogether different kind – the domestic one. Altogether, these works represent the relation between the private anguish and social injustice proven once again that traumatic history of a person is not an isolated experience, but rather it is rooted in socio-political context.

She became a leading voice of the feminist critique as the raw reality of patriarchal power that sustains both private and public forms of violence is now widely depicted. In so doing, Kandasamy underscores the ways in which survivors reclaim victim subject positions and turn them from object narratives into subjects' ones. In her work, oppression is woven into themes whereby she seek to question the silent acknowledgement of the society in assisting oppressors of all categories including cultural beliefs, the law, administrations among others. Moreover, through this literature, Kandasamy does more than report violence; he mobilises hope and defiance in the face of violence among the people. Her characters are typically embodied experiences of



suffering and infuse their rebellion, narrative, or artistry back into their own personages. The process of transformation from the position of the victim to the role of a powerful activator is an important cliché to emphasize the possibility of individual salvation as the force initiating social changes. More generally, this volume – and Kandasamy's writing – offers a potent reminder of the different faces of violence, and the rich possibilities of healing. Due to this, her narratives fit within the literature that encourages empathy, awareness and activism against injustice and politics of exclusion. Therefore, in the attempt of constructing a whole new discourse, Kandasamy offers a different education model to both literature and society where literature moves from a mirror to a potential change agent that challenges injustice by attempting to change society.

Conclusion

Focusing on violence and trauma in her novels, Meena Kandasamy offers smart critique of oppressive systems and a testimony to a human spirit. Her works are inspiring readers to face the realities they never want to face, fight for justice, and equality. In doing this, Kandasamy alters the function of literature as a text since the problems that her character faced become stories in the public domain. Such narratives are critical in this work because that increased empathy, understanding, and action. Again and again, Kandasamy employs considerable writing talent not simply to gain literary accolades; they provide potent reminders of societal prejudices as well as on-going structural unfairness. Her focus on subjugated populations and the experience of suffering does more than contribute to the bibliographic tradition—it inspires argumentation about the need for change. Her uniqueness of being able to combine the private with the public makes works relevant precisely as instruments of advocacy and change. This research supports the idea that literature as a Kandasamy's production is the most crucial to create the society with more tolerance and equal opportunities. It invites further exploration of how storytelling can illuminate the complexities of human suffering and resilience, encouraging readers to actively engage with issues of justice and systemic change.



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