

Tribhuvan University

Writing Back in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or A Portrait of The
Writer As a Young Wife*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in English

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November, 2022

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Letter of Recommendation

Lav Shrestha has completed his thesis entitled “Writing Back in Meena Kandasamy’s *When I Hit You: Or A Portrait Of The Writer As a Young Wife* under my supervision. He carried out his research from June 2022 to November 2022. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Writing Back in Meena Kandasamy’s *When I Hit You: Or A Portrait Of The Writer As a Young Wife*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Lav Shrestha has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Acknowledgement

This thesis is submitted to the Central Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kirtipur for the partial fulfillment of Master's Degree in English.

I heartily appreciate the enthusiastic participation of all the respondents who definitely share the credit of the completion of this dissertation.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Pradip Raj Giri, Lecturer of Tribhuvan University for his insightful support and guidance. Without his constant support, motivation and guidance, it would not have been possible to complete my dissertation paper with precision and efficiency. Therefore, my utmost respect from my core of heart is dedicated to him and would continue forever.

Lav Shrestha

Abstract

*This paper reveals the efforts of Meena Kandasamy's biographical novel When I Hit You: Or A Portrait of a Writer as a Young Wife to criticize misogynistic views experienced by the author. She narrates her own experience through the character of Wife who endures several predicaments that include domestic violence, restriction and humiliation from her Husband as well as people around her. Since the novel depicts the real story of a woman and written by a women herself, she is entitled with the authority to manifest her bodily experience in an unbiased manner as well as make a commentary on her behalf. In analyzing the text, the researcher applied a feminist literary criticism approach primarily with the concept of Helen Cixous's *écriture feminine*/women's writing that argues about the necessity of women to write about herself to see the independence of the main character at once the narrator in voicing her feminine world such as happiness, desire, and her freedom to represent herself through her own words. In addition to its application, Elaine Showalter's theory of gynocriticism is used to analyze feminine writing from women's perspective. The findings show that the wife who has considerable class and power remain very vulnerable when faced with caste and patriarchal domination.*

Keywords: misogyny, *écriture feminine*, protest, feminine voice, gynocriticism.

Writing Back in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or a Portrait of a Writer as a Young Wife*

When I Hit You: Or a Portrait of a Writer as a Young Wife by Meena

Kandasamy is a biographical novel published in 2017 narrates of a couple of unnamed characters from different backgrounds. The wife who is also the narrator is middle class woman and works as a young writer, whereas the husband is a professor who comes from a higher class and caste. As the marriage unfolds, the husband starts oppressing his wife strategically in multiple ways which ultimately leads the wife to escape and leave her husband. This paper aims to uncover wife's effort to challenge gender inequality that prevails in her surrounding along with the motive behind the oppression of the wife. The approach that will be used to address the issue of misogyny, gender and wife's resistance is Elaine Showalter's approach of *woman as writer* by focusing on the position of a female author as an autonomous entity, emphasizing rights and power of women's perspective and experience. In its application, the concept of *écriture féminine/women's writing* by Helene Cixous will be applied to see the main character's agency and independence in voicing the world of her femininity.

A few academics have studied *When I Hit You: Or a Portrait of a Writer as a Young Wife* by Kandasamy and presented their findings from a feminist angle. For instance, Mr. Chaitra Pandurang Naik discusses these issues when a modern Indian woman is taught that she is nothing more than a woman and that she has no right to speak up against marital rape, abuse, oppression, or a violation of her fundamental rights. Evidently, he contends:

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 women's oppression 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 challenges the male domination of society. (5)

Fundamentally, his analysis foregrounds the intention of the author in revealing the toxic side of patriarchal norms and values where physical domination towards women is a detrimental problem for women and deserves a decent priority. He sees the wife character as a minority victim of patriarchal norms and values which works against a woman. According to him, Meena Kandasamy conveys the truth about Indian women in the twenty-first century as well as myths about love marriage and marital rape in her work. In addition, he also incorporates the social construction of Indian society from its inception to contemporary period where, women happen to struggle for their mere existence.

In addition, Niranjana Majhi, a freelance researcher, highlights the problems of domestic abuse in Kandasamy's memoir and praises her bravery for asserting it and for vividly describing the reality of her experience. He claims:

This book is replete with domestic violence but there is no visible marks- no bruises, no blood, no broken bones. Here violence plays like the background scene of a movie, present but not visible. In this novel she is talking about her own story in first person voice. She is not shy of portraying those ignored and untouched areas which are generally considered taboo in the society. She has openly articulated those forbidden themes which she has experienced in her marital life. (2)

Nirajan's analysis focuses on the elements of domestic violence endured by the wife from her husband and her firm courage to depict her experience without sugarcoating anything. In other words, the honesty in portraying her pathetic married life by mentioning some very dark events has been extremely worth coming from a female author. To illustrate, the author has explained her bodily experience of torture and violence vividly that leaves reader completely heartbroken. Thus, the act of giving physical violence to the wife becomes one of the ways to impose her with the supremacy of patriarchy.

Another scholar Manik Mandal in his research has looked upon the text through the prism of violence and its traumatic effects on the psychology of the wife character. In this regard he points out that,

Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017) shows us a sterling picture about the painstaking experience of women across the world. Meena as a spokesperson of these marginalized classes in our society harshly criticizes them in this novel. She presents how throughout the world women have regularly subjected to face abuses, all sorts of violence and forced to stay silent within the four walls of the house. (12)

In this respect, Proshant Chakroborty writes in one of his articles about Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* that It is a book that lingers in your, imagination and consciousness. According to him, the book is a kind of manifesto and it should be read by everyone and especially the women because the book is a kind of inspiration to them telling all the women how to cope up with life partaking violence, trauma, trouble and disruption. His analysis gives us a perspective to take the courage of the wife to go through extreme predicament and win over it as an inspiration to collect courage against all the odds present in life.

Likewise, the article published Jayshree Paul of *LiveWire* articulates Kandasamy's semi-autobiographical novel as a phenomena of Marriage and Intimate Partner Violence where it foregrounds the issue of loss of identity of the protagonist.

Kandaswamy, particularly, portrays this loss of individuality in such a manner that we witness the transition of two individuals in love into one, demanding selfless love. Selfless love subtly transitions into ownership, as the wife becomes the husband's asset. So much that he decides to respond to her emails, delete her emails and sign off emails with both their names. Soon, she is completely cut off from the social world and [...]. The protagonist is bound to feel trapped, lose her sense of self, making her marital home an emotional and psychological Gleichschaltung. (1)

According to the article the act of restricting the wife from her profession and social circle is one of the ways to confine her identity within the premise of household. It it's the patriarchal idea to impose a unique identity determined by male or husband in this case. It becomes a norm to identify a wife by the name of husband and blur her own identity that she once had.

Furthermore, the article also focuses on the layered complexity of emotions experienced by a violent victim who suffers excruciating agony but is unable to take any meaningful action. From the article:

The most predominant question invoked in a discussion of domestic or intimate partner violence is 'why didn't the woman leave, why did she endure the abuse for so long', minimizing if not ignoring the reality of abuse. Abuse often coexists with affection, and perpetrators take seeming accountability the next moment, birthing a ray of hope, hope that change is possible, hope that love is enough, hope that this is the first and last time. And in no time, they

find themselves in a loop. Kandaswamy has brilliantly showcased this complexity in relationships of romance and intimacy with their inherent power dynamics. (1)

According to the aforementioned lines, the subordination of woman does not always prevail in brutal way. However, certain steps are integrated in order to put a woman into a fallacy that she is being entitled with love and affection while carrying out certain violent acts. Consequently, a woman cannot decide if she is a victim or not. To illustrate, the above mentioned lines mentions exactly similar event where the wife character gets into a trap of her husband and his contradicting treatment towards her.

In this work, the researcher considers that there hasn't been a sufficient analysis of the novel from a misogynistic standpoint after carefully reading the other articles that are relevant to this literature. The biographical fiction portrays the main character as a victim of the pervasive misogyny within her society, regardless of academic standing or financial security. Despite the constricting conditions she is in, she is able to break free and assemble the courage to speak out against them and convey through her own words

Feminist literary criticism is the method employed in this study to analyze the issues of misogyny, gender, and women's resistance in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or a Portrait of a Writer as a Young Wife*. Focusing on the status of a female author as an autonomous entity and highlighting the rights and influence of women's views and experiences, feminist literary criticism uses Elaine Showalter's (1977) approach of the *Woman as Writer*. Since feminist literary criticism is divided into two types; one that sees women as readers and another that sees women as writers, the theory used in this study is feminist literary criticism that precisely uses latter approach propounded by Elaine Showalter in 1977.

Elaine Showalter's *gynocriticism* refers to the kind of critique mechanism that concentrates on female centric analysis of women's literature. It centers on female identity, subjectivity, experiences and female language while seeking to create a female framework for the assessment of literature. Furthermore, the notion is associated with feminist attempts to get women into the tradition of writing which had otherwise always been systematically dominated by men. According to her:

In contrast to this angry or loving fixation on male literature, the programme of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the nearly visible world of female culture. (217)

In its application, feminist literary criticism is inseparable from gender-based analysis. Therefore, the idea of *women's writing* by Helene Cixous will be applied in this study to examine the main character's authority, agency and independence in speaking the world of her femininity.

Cixous has different focus of thoughts about role and women as an entity. She applies Derrida's reasoning by deconstructing patriarchal thinking through text using feminine writing and reading of texts in different ways. Cixous thinks that the masculine writing method is rooted in the male genital with the libido being wrapped in the phallus. The masculine way to write is self-oriented, even what is considered meaningful is only related to male or father, the phallic owner. In this regard Cixous asserts:

Men still have everything to say about their sexuality, and everything to write. For what they have said so far, for the most part, stems from the opposition activity/passivity, from the power relation between a fantasized obligatory virility meant to invade, to colonize, and the consequential phantasm of woman as a “dark continent” to penetrate and to pacify. Conquering her, they’ve made haste to depart from her borders, to get out of sight, out of body. (877)

Helene Cixous in *women’s writing* propounds a distinct focus of thoughts about role and women as an entity. She believes that the male genital, which is pervasive in sexuality, is the source of the masculine literary style. Even what is considered relevant in a masculine writing style is exclusively male-related. For socio-cultural reasons, masculine writing is more considered superior than feminine writing. In contrast to males, who are viewed as positive, active, and in complete control of their subjectivity, Cixous rejects masculine writing that holds binary opposition and consistently places women in a negative position as the object, passive, and the other.

Consequently, Cixous entitles woman with an authority to illustrate her experiences through written manifestation. According to her, “To write is an act of not only realizing the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her back her goods, her pleasure, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under sea” (880).

A fundamental starting point for the researcher to understand the novel's representations of femininity, sexuality, and extreme sexism is the feminist literature criticism, in this case of women as authors. Women's resistance, gender power dynamics, and the author's (Meena Kandasamy) criticism are all examined in this critique in an effort to highlight the gender unfairness that the wife witnessed.

In her book *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous thinks that writing is a revolutionary act that must be carried out by women. In regard to the essentiality of writing by woman she says: “And why don’t you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it” (876).

Writing is something that every woman should do, according to Cixous. In order to share insights about their femininity and about the benefits they might not be aware of, women must include themselves in the text and write both for themselves and for other women. A good writer is a lady. When a woman writes, she will infuse the text with unconsciously acquired knowledge and insights to help readers grasp what women are truly like. Thus, Cixous’ concept of *women’s writing* will be used to see the independence of the main character who is also the narrator in voicing the world of femininity such as happiness, desire to fight, feelings, body, and authenticity as a woman.

One of the text's main themes which have already been mentioned is the freedom with which the wife character can express and define everything that is associated with her feminine environment. Her writing becomes a space where the Wife can reject and counter all negative prejudices that are often addressed to her, especially if they succeed in escaping marriage. In other words, the Wife presents a counterargument to sociocultural initiatives that view and uphold the practice of subjugation to women as something positive.

The analysis in this study is concentrated on identifying how the text represents misogyny in the context of her own experience who is a representative of a women belonging to an Indian society. The study will be conducted by examining the viewpoint of the main character as she observes and reacts to misogyny that results in her being subordinated as an Indian woman.

Misogyny manifests itself in diverse ways; sexual discrimination, objectification and commodification of women and mental and physical violence and the threat of violence. What informs men's action do not play into policies on equality and without a clear focus on how and why men perpetrate forms of dominance over women and how their thinking can be influenced the process of ensuring equality or rather that daughters are equally valued as sons is incomplete. (1)

As a feminist writer, the wife character draws attention to and criticizes the trend of contemporary people around her who still regard women as belonging to the inferior class. The wife's criticisms are inevitably linked to her surroundings, which frequently fail to uphold and enforce gender equality. This is apparent when the wife compares the bitterness she experiences in Indian modern era. This can be seen in the following statements made by the wife :

Old-school feminists will speak about economic independence. A woman is free if she has the money to support herself. With a job, she will find her feet. If she has a job, it will miraculously solve all her problems [...]. Abstractions are easy, but my story, like every woman's story, is something else. (37)

The aforementioned remark makes the comparison between the bitterness felt by women in the past and the bitterness felt by the wife in an effort to illustrate how the present Indian age has not changed at all for women. The emphasis of the "old-school feminists" phrase followed by an explanation of the friendly environment at the time to victims of violence, contrasted with her as a modern Indian feminist becomes one of the points the text wants to convey that apart from Indian modernity, rapid economic growth, and many efforts has been put to guarantee gender equality in the past few decades. India in fact still becomes an unsafe or even dangerous place for women. This is in line with the research conducted by Chapman (2014). According to

Chapman, the concept of sexism exists not only in rural places but also in public settings that are close to literacy and modernity.

Conversations here follow the same pattern. An endless back -and-forth relay of absolute pointlessness. No question demands an honest answer. A question is asked as an exercise in formal behavior. Whatever its benefits for the rest of humankind, I have now come to look at it as a design flaw in the construct of language.

I do not have anyone I can talk to about what is going on behind these *closed doors*. At the moment, I am not even sure if I want to talk to anyone about what I am going through. I did not know that this was the exemplary life awaiting a newly married woman. (37)

The Wife condemns and laments the trend of Indian people to ignore women in the aforementioned phrase. When the Wife decides to take the initiative to bring her husband lunch while also displaying her injured head, it might be claimed that she is trying to make the public aware of her suffering in the hopes that they will give her the attention she needs.

The aforementioned quotation, however, is a criticism of the mistreatment she endures. The emphasis of the sentence, “I have now come to look at it as a design flaw in the construct of language” (39) can be interpreted as a response to the tendency of the community to inquiry about things that are unimportant and trivial. However, the sentence above can be seen textually as the Wife’s objection. The emphasis on the phrase “I have now come to look at it as a design flaw in the construct of language” (39) shows a new awareness acquired by the wife, that neglect or normalization of violence operates behind a string of questions from a husband's coworkers. So, the particular phrase can be said as a critical point of the text, that the

notion of misogyny in India is not only constructed or actualized through direct verbal contact, but also through interactions that appear to be normal. This is accordance with a research (Sapra and Jubinski, 2014) suggests that normalizing violence against Indian women is part of the violence itself. Both explained that Indian men often neglects violence experienced by women, aiming to build opinions that women are part of the second class who should accept all her husband's treatment as a form of loyalty.

In the subsequent paragraph the wife states:

There's nothing in the structure of language to flash a code-red in the middle of polite verbal back and forth, nothing that can interrupt the staged niceness by being a secret cry for help [...] I do not have anyone I can talk to about what is going on behind these *closed doors*. (39)

This sentence becomes an affirmation of the misogynistic practice experienced by the Wife. The emphasis of the sentence above is an indication that the bitterness experienced by women is not something to be appropriately highlighted by men. Therefore, it can be claimed that Indian men's friendliness and hospitality in public are a cover for their misogynistic worldview.

Kate Millet contends in *Sexual Politics* (1970) that "the patriarchy went on for centuries and is still well-integrated in our society. She propounded the notion that men have institutionalized power over women, and that this power is socially constructed as opposed to biological or innate. Men do not need to practice patriarchy with violence, because it is efficient without it" (43). She believes that patriarchy has a strong hold on our society. Women have been dominated by men since childhood. They have a special way to take advantage of women. The fundamental factor causing women's exploitation and oppression is patriarchy.

Furthermore, the italicized phrase *closed door* (39) is also a point that the text wants to convey regarding the animosity that the wife character endures. The *closed door* phrase can be understood as a metaphor in explaining the various closed parties in Indian public space ranging from family, community and up to the state institutions that possess the authority to uphold the rights of freedom, protection and equality for Indian women. But in contrast, these agencies do not serve their proclamation accordingly for the sake of Indian women.

In the next quote, the Wife expresses her criticism of the misogynistic view passed down through generations and becomes something collectively believed. When the wife fills the vacancy left by the husband to teach in his class, she receives discriminatory treatment for her appearance. Students presume that Indian women still have hairstyles that are similar to those worn by sex workers for the British army during the British era of power. The kids mock the hair and refer to it as a traitor's legacy from the time of British rule.

Two days later, I have thought enough about the incident to formulate a fitting comeback to the student. [...]The post-colonialism – was not entirely disconnected to the way in which I was being read. Hair is a vexed topic in the many subcultures that make up India: in the Kamasutra, a woman standing in the courtyard of her home, combing her untied hair, has been seen as the symbol of a wanton woman; [...] all claims to exercising sexuality. In the six decades since the British left, some perceptions do not seem to have changed. In our post colonialism classes, we speak of the empire writing back. But within these classrooms, we are still products of the same empire – carrying our bags of shame and sin. (42)

In the quote above, the wife's protests by using a post-colonial perspective can be said as a part of the criticism against the student's misogynistic view. The wife emphasizes how hairstyle during the colonial era became a symbol to portray women as an object for sex worker which further passed onto new generation. To illustrate, "in the six decades since British left, some perceptions do not seem to have changed and we are still products of the same carrying our bags of shame and sin" (74) indicates the wife's protests against the sustainability of misogyny. The stress on the phrase *some perceptions* can be interpreted not only as a matter of hairstyle, but also in the view of the misogyny that has existed since the colonial period.

Uma Narayan, poet-colonial writer in her book "Dislocating Cultures; Identities, Tradition & Third World Feminism (1997), propounds an argument regarding the necessity of examining ground for subordinating women in third world. According to her, the primary reason for such phenomenon comes from continuing effects of the colonial discourse and influence on society concerning the issue of women.

It becomes quite evident from the Wife character's narration that students in the new generation are persuaded to believe in sexism, which serves as a catalyst for them to identify everything about women with disgrace. Barbara and Antoinette (1994) suggests that women in the British colonial period were seen as an inferior group by Indian men despite the existence of regulations issued by Britain to improve the status of women at that time.

The emphasis of the two sentences above become part of the wife's protests against the sustainability of misogyny. The new generation or students are convinced to believe in misogyny, so generation to associate everything about women with disgrace. In this case, the students associate Wife's curly hair with prostitutes' in the

period of English colonialism. The sentence “we are still products of the same empire – carrying our bags of shame and sin” (74) becomes the point the text wants to convey that students or young generation are trapped by the notion of misogynistic view that tends to be detrimental. The criticism of the wife also includes the focus on the phrase "shame and sin," which asserts that the strong belief held by the majority of Indians on this misogyny is something that should be stopped since it is very harmful.

Misogyny can also be interpreted by scrutinizing the practice of restricting females on several aspects of their life. Limitation or constriction imposed upon female ranging from their certain way of appearance to their performativity can be considered as a misogynist behavior since it is carried out only because of discrimination based on sexes. Restrictions on human rights and freedoms, especially for Indian women, are still a social issue that has not yet found a light. In fact, Indian women are still limited every day in obtaining their rights and freedoms, one of which is the limitation on freedom of expression/dressing. Parents, husbands, and Indians living in rural areas usually limit women’s freedom by demanding women to wear sari, purdah, or scarves (Maharani, 2016). Maharani added that this is done as a “disciplinary” effort to limit the movement of Indian women who are considered potentially damaging to the patriarchal order in one particular area.

In the following quote, the wife character highlights how the character of mother tries to limit her daughter’s freedom to wear clothes. As someone who still believes that women should look as housewives, the mother demands her daughter to wear sari to limit and discipline her. However, as a feminist writer, the wife realizes that the mother’s attempt is to confine and limit her rights and freedoms as a woman. In response to the tendency of the mother do such attempt, below is the wife’s criticism:

I'm sorry, mother dear, by I disagree. Clothes shouldn't be a battleground. To me, they are about the way men undress themselves – always the joy of watching a lover's awkwardness when he hurriedly removes , first the left sleeve and then the rest of it pulled up from the neck. [... From me, you will only hear about clothes as things that we want to shed, clothes that remind us of the time we were lovers. (101)

In the quote above, the text through the Wife's focalization criticizes the misogynistic and conservative view that the mother still believes regarding dress rules. The first two sentences become part of the points of the Wife's rejection against the confinement set by the mother. The emphasis on the word battleground is an indication that the wife realizes that her mother has ambitions and desires to reduce her and put her back as a woman who accepts patriarchal culture. The wife's rejection with the emphasis on battleground is also an indication that she accepts and is willing to be an opponent of the mother to obtain her own rights and freedom as an Indian woman.

The analogy of the freedom to dress to the way men take off their clothes is also part of the textual criticism: "To me, they are about the way men undress themselves – always the joy of watching a lover's awkwardness when he hurriedly removes his shirt" (101). The sentence above implicitly emphasizes that every woman should have the same authority and rights to define herself. This is marked by the emphasis on the sentence – "always the joy of watching a lover's awkwardness when he hurriedly removes his shirt" (101), indicating happiness and freedom of men in dressing as if it was a power that allows women to feel awkward then they see the opposite sex. In other words, women are designed to respect the way men express themselves, which has been completely absent in Indian women themselves.

The emphasis on the reference for explaining the wife's stiffness when she sees her husband taking off his clothes is an indication that men are powerful over their clothing. Moreover, women, even mothers and wives, do not have any power over men's clothing. In contrast, the focus placed in the following reference on describing different women's clothing that is simple to open is a sign that women are extremely vulnerable and lack the strength to refuse control over their own clothing. Thus, comparing the differential freedoms and privileges enjoyed by Indian men and women might be seen as an expression of the wife's aspirations for fair treatment. This is also confirmed by the next quote: "From me, you will only hear about clothes, as things that we want to shed" (101), emphasizing that the wife supposedly has the same rights and freedoms to define and express herself as a woman.

Kandasamy puts forth her resentment against modern patriarchal culture postulating the double standard frame of mind of male dominated society. Although the modern Indian society is supposed to have a certain liberty upon women regarding their honor due to their intellectual prowess and economic independency, hatred against women still lies in a very nuanced way. To illustrate, in one specific chapter in the novel, the wife writes a letter dressed to a lover she has never met. In this chapter, the wife expresses her outrage at the way patriarchal society still prevails in areas where modernity and highly educated individuals coexist. The wife highlights how misogynistic views are also very likely to grow in someone who is knowledgeable and trustworthy to be impossible to commit violence against Indian women. In addition, the wife also highlights how modern Indian men keep their misogynistic desires for later channel them to women they consider appropriate.

In the following quote, the wife highlights how her husband as a professor deceives her with positive promises before marriage. As a person who believes in

communism, the husband prior to marriage emphasizes the importance of class equality and the harmful capitalism for ordinary people. The husband also gives his not to the wife's view that considers Lenin's opinions in the book *A Glass of Water* and *Loveless Kisses* sexist. However, after getting married, the wife realizes that her husband's progressive ideals are only a ruse and a way for him to get her attention and look for a reason to use violence against her. The wife objectifies the husband's intentions and his misogynistic beliefs as follows:

I write letters to lovers I have never seen, or heard, to lovers who do not exist, to a file, write a paragraph or a page, erase before lunch.

I wonder how an opportunist like my husband managed to make inroads into a political party that I have always respected; how he succeeded in hoodwinking the leadership at every stage, how he came to be what he is today. [...]. How did these women survive these violent, aggressive men in their ranks? Did they walk out? Did they fight? Did they leave their sexuality behind or did they barter it to make life in the organization easier? (89)

In the quote above, the sentence “Communist ideas are a cover for his own sadism” (89) is a point that the text wants to emphasize about the domestic violence she experiences. The emphasis on the italics cover is a sign of hypocrisy or something being withheld in an effort to accomplish a specific aim. As a victim of assault, the wife in this case attacks her husband's hypocrisy for using communism as a pretext for expressing his misogynistic demands. To put it another way, the husband, who has always maintained his sexist drive, uses his expertise and his beliefs in this case, communism to draw his wife into his trap.

The quotation above makes its points about men's perspectives in modern India by using a sequence of question marks that criticize communism and its

connection to misogyny. The succession of severe question marks shows skepticism, and even the wife's propensity to reject communism as the cause of her husband's misogynistic viewpoint. That is to say, according to the wife, every Indian man, regardless of his social, economic, or educational status, is likely to harbor an intense anti-feminist viewpoint and the urge to act in accordance with it. This is in regard with Lukose's (2005) assertion that men in India's large cities still think they are entitled to more privileges than women. Lokuse noted that when circumstances and conditions let it, Indian men too have a proneness to harass women.

The wife highlights how the husband's use of hypocrisy as a pretext to deceive her in the following comment. The husband portrays himself as someone who significantly aids in the fight against the capitalist system since he claims to be a member of the communist revolution. The husband also emphasizes how communist viewpoints and principles could serve as the foundation of a decent and equitable society that includes women. But when they get married, she notices that her husband is a completely different person from the one she knew before. This is demonstrated in the following quotation:

I fell in love with the man I married because when he spoke about the revolution it seemed more intense than any poetry, more moving than any beauty. I'm no longer convinced. For every genuine revolutionary in the ranks, there is a careerist, a wife-beater, a go-getter, an ass-licker, an alcoholic and a dope head. For every militant fighter who dies on the front-line, a fraud comes and claims the slain man's greatness. For every original thinker, the parrot in the ranks who claims the wisdom as his own. Parties build themselves on the shoulders of real heroes, nurture themselves on their bloodshed, even as the imposters make merry. (51)

In the aforesaid quote, the attention on the last two sentences become part of the criticism the Wife would like to point out. Simply put, the deception and committed by the husband tend to be synonymous with a politician's effort to use certain things to achieve goals. Likewise, the husband, as someone who believes in communism and has been involved in the revolutionary movement, he promises to build a good and just marriage. In addition, during the marriage, the husband also claims many things that are in reality beyond his rights as part of the revolutionary movement of communism. This can be interpreted as the husband's indirect strategy to deceive and build a narrative for the wife that he is a figure with power, an important figure that need to be looked up to. However, the wife who works as a feminist writer sees massive contradictions in her husband and sees such contradictions as an indication of an attempt to trap, oppress, and confine her freedom. Consequently, this double standard demeanor forms a strong resilience in the wife's psyche against her husband.

Furthermore, the wife makes an analogy of her husband with a parrot to make a strong criticism against against the husband's hypocrisy, for which she says, "For every original thinker, the parrot in the ranks who claims the wisdom as his own. Parties build themselves on the shoulders of real heroes, nurture themselves on their bloodshed, even as the imposters make merry" (51).

This becomes a point of emphasis by the wife. The word "parrot" indicates that the wife sees the husband as an animal which masks himself with attractive appearance and voices when viewed from the outside. Identifying the husband with a parrot can also be interpreted that the husband only has instincts without ethical and moral considerations regardless of all the good promises and self-attempts that the husband expresses before marriage.

Feminist idea in regard to intimate partner violence to women considers as a result of male oppression of women within a patriarchal system in which men are the primary perpetrators of violence and women the primary victims (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Walker, 1979). According to the model, male violence within intimate relationships results from historic and current power differentials that keep women subordinate, primarily through the use of control, including physical, sexual, economic and psychological abuse, comprising tactics of intimidation and isolation. Male entitlement, and the violence used to sustain it, is often attributed to male socialization (Miedzian, 1991) with the implicit understanding that what is learned can be unlearned. The feminist model challenges male entitlement and privilege as well as the traditional notion that domestic violence is a private family matter.

The wife character depicts her resentment against domestic abuse she endured. Her experience of physical, psychological exploitation along with rape reflects the oppression from her husband only due to the gender differentiation. The following quotes illustrate her angst against such traumatic experience:

A rape is also punishment. Sometimes, the punishment for saying no. sometimes, the punishment for a long-ago love story. In Tamil culture, menstruation pollutes the body for a period of three days. [...]. A body that is considered polluted can be punished as a man pleases. This is the philosophy of caste, that is the philosophy of my rape. As rape becomes a regular occurrence, [...]. Good women don't have bad things happen to them – in order to be raped, I need first to be made into this caricature of a bad woman. This male psychosexual logic looks at penetration as punishment. [...]. In his ironical logic: I am a whore, so I can be raped; I let myself be raped, so I am a whore. (100)

The aforementioned lines suggest her dissatisfaction or moreover anger towards the inhumane brutality practiced. The wife criticizes the domestic abuse she experienced while she was married. Such acts of aggression included rape, scolding and harsh beating.

She challenges the idea that a woman's body is contaminated after, during and after delivery. She criticizes patriarchal society's purposeful efforts to oppress women in all conceivable ways. Even on natural phenomenon, patriarchal culture has burdened women with its own harmful narrative.

Restriction on women to pursue her passion or goal is not a rare thing. In contrast, this phenomenon prevails widely in Indian society since women are firmly considered to cater her family, especially her husband. The belief of dutiful wife as an ideal role strengthens this tendency which prevents majority of female to follow their dreams throughout her life. As Sara Suleri highlights, that the infeasibility of a comprehensive female recognition in Pakistan by declaring that "There are no women in the third world" (63). This is clearly visible in the novel. The protagonist of the novel is very much desperate to have a partner who can share mutual relationship with her. She wishes for freedom where she can speak and writer of her own. She cherishes her partner to be friendliest who can support throughout her life. But her misfortune, she receives the adverse of it. Her husband times and again condemns her for her desire of writing. He rather blames her that it is because of her feministic zeal of writing their love relation is ruining. She has nobody who can heed her voice, cry and sufferings. That's why she writes: "This is not feminism. I am just a woman in love" (128).

Kandasamy in *When I Hit You* speaks about the dehumanizing effects which every Indian married and unmarried woman wearing the vile veil of marriage. She

criticizes severely this very tradition of marriage in many ways. We have experienced the trace of it in her decision of marrying. But she does not stop there she is showing that even someone marries the favorite one of her choice; the relationship can also be toxic. She speaks about rape which was even not understandable to her before it happens to her. She has only read about it in the theory books of Kate Millett and Susan Brownmiller.

Here, the wife enumerates the experience placing it with other rape causes:

The man who rapes me is not a stranger who runs away. He is not the silhouette in the car park, he is not the masked assaulter, he is not the acquaintance who has spiked my drinks. He is someone who makes up next to me. He is the husband who wakes up next to me. He is the husband for whom I have to make coffee the following morning. (168)

The agonizing experience of every woman or wife is that she has often been subjected to suspicious. She has been thought by her husband that before marriage she had physical relationship with other males. Every night in bed she has become judge questioning her abusively. It gets in her mind so much that she could not think beyond this. She was plagued with plenty of confusions. Her traumatic thoughts were swelling like the passive volcano which has been strengthening throughout the years without knowing when it will get bursts. Similarly, the female protagonist of *When I Hit You* becomes fed up with her husband's daily questions and she criticizes her husband by taunting his asking with the famous dialogue from Bollywood film "Sholay": "Kitney aadmy thay? How many men were there?" (175).

From above mentioned quotes, the wife firmly conveys her resentment against ill behavior from her husband towards her only because she realizes that her gender of being female contributes in experiencing such events. In other words, the tenets of

Indian society allows male to have the privilege to practice any sort of hatred towards women along with universal acceptance by the society. Her emphasis on the dialogue from Bollywood movie becomes a metaphor to represent the glorification of subordination and ill treatment towards female that has become quite a norm. In this regard, she explicitly forwards her animosity for the universalization and practice of misogyny from which she underwent.

In conclusion, Meena Kandasamy depicts the representation of the wife as a pathetic victim of pervasive misogyny that lies within her surroundings. In representing her embodiment through Wife character she explores and discovers her experiences which includes domestic violence, subordination and sexuality through her own words. By writing the body in feminine discourse, she seeks to deconstruct the singular or linear writing that structures the masculine language. Moreover, she has represented herself through her writing to liberate herself from the defining walls of phallogocentric language.

The language used are circular, personal, conversational, self-referential, ephemeral and insistent. These traits of language entitles her with the authentic representation of her experiences. It becomes evident that the phenomenon of subordinating the wife in every way possible with sheer strategy is apparently normal for people around her. In other words, the hatred of women not only limits within rural area restricted from education, but it prevails normally in metropolitan cities where people are entitled with proper education and economic independency where the wife is one of the victim.

Misogynist views in the wife's surrounding continuous to flourish which are very detrimental to woman. She witnessed multiple traits of sexism despite of her education and financial independence in urban space where the majority of people are

highly qualified unlike rural areas where people firmly hold the idea of excessive sexism.

The continuity of a misogynistic view for misogynistic is crucial and is deemed necessary to continue. This can be seen from the neglect and normalization of violence as something normal. Wife who experience violence generally gets ignored and even convinced that what she experience is something that needs to be received as an evidence of loyalty to her husband. This is done solely to build an opinion that women will always be in an inferior position, and also prevent a shift in power that is culturally controlled be men.

The same motives are also applied in educational institutions. The wife gets objectified by students for her hairstyle while she had gone to take class. The norm of passing down the sexist views to subsequent generations acts as a weapon to harass the wife in college. To ensure that women are always in an inferior position, students are projected by teachers who have a misogynistic view to make fun of and even look down on women who have the potential to damage the patriarchal order.

The written manifestation of author in depicting her outrage against the discrimination through the wife character serves as a statement to criticize the sexist ideology which strangely still prevail among sophisticated individuals. She makes a harsh critique upon the practice of brutality against her on the basis of gender bias by being very outspoken about it along with being extremely honest. Her resentment against objectivity, humiliation and exploitation becomes a statement for her husband's inhumanity as well as sexist attitude.

Hence, she makes an essential need to write women's story through their own words in order to present their feelings, desires and experience in an extremely honest way since the first hand representation allows them to be true.

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