

# Subverting Caste and Gender: Resistance and Voice in Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You* and *The Gypsy Goddess*

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## Abstract

This research article explores the powerful literary interventions of Meena Kandasamy, an Indian writer and activist whose work interrogates the complex intersections of caste, gender, and resistance. Focusing on her novels *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* and *The Gypsy Goddess*, the study analyzes how Kandasamy deploys narrative voice and form to challenge systemic structures of patriarchy and caste-based oppression. Drawing on feminist and postcolonial theoretical frameworks, this paper discusses how her protagonists resist cultural silencing, expose institutional violence, and reclaim agency through writing. The article argues that Kandasamy's writing represents a dynamic form of protest literature that not only critiques dominant power structures but also reclaims the voice of the subaltern woman.

## Keywords

Meena Kandasamy's novels, Dalit feminism, caste oppression in literature, domestic violence narratives, postcolonial resistance, Indian feminist writing, literary activism

## 1. Introduction

Indian literature in English has undergone a profound transformation with the emergence of voices that foreground lived realities shaped by caste, gender, and marginality. Among these, Meena Kandasamy stands out as a radical and unflinching literary voice. Her work draws attention to the intersectional oppression faced by Dalit women and serves as an emblem of resistance literature.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This qualitative research adopts a literary analytical approach, engaging feminist and postcolonial theory to deconstruct Kandasamy's narrative strategies. Primary texts analyzed include *When I Hit You* and *The Gypsy Goddess*. Supplementary secondary sources provide contextual insights on caste, gender, and subaltern resistance in literature.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Rewriting Domestic Violence: *When I Hit You*

In *When I Hit You*, Kandasamy reconstructs the domestic violence narrative through a first-person

perspective. The protagonist uses writing as a medium of survival and defiance. Rather than depicting the woman as a passive victim, Kandasamy reclaims her agency through language, asserting the power of self-narration.

### 3.2 Caste, Memory, and Fictional Historiography: *The Gypsy Goddess*

*The Gypsy Goddess* diverges from conventional narrative form, utilizing metafiction to depict the 1968 Kilvenmani massacre. By breaking the fourth wall and addressing the reader directly, Kandasamy draws attention to the erasure of Dalit histories in mainstream discourse. The fragmented storytelling mirrors the fragmented lives of the oppressed.

### 3.3 Feminist Militancy and Literary Form

Kandasamy's feminism is both thematic and structural. Her rejection of linear, patriarchal forms and embrace of experimental narrative strategies reflects her ideological stance. Her characters are not merely survivors; they are militants of language who fight back using stories as weapons.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You* and *The Gypsy Goddess* represent a vital contribution to Indian protest literature. Her articulation of Dalit and feminist identities provides not only a critique of social structures but also an empowering vision of resistance through storytelling. Her narratives act as counter-discourses, confronting hegemonic power and restoring the dignity of the subaltern voice.

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