



RESISTANCE TO MISOGYNY IN MEENA KANDASAMY'S *WHEN I HIT YOU: OR THE PORTRAIT OF THE WRITER AS A YOUNG WIFE*

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ABSTRACT:

Women have always confronted the reality of violence in many parts of the world. Women's difficulties are more nuanced in India than the myth of the Goddess would have you believe. According to a startling 2018 study by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, India is the most unsafe nation in the world for women. This study intends to shed light on the ways in which novel critiques misogynistic beliefs in contemporary India. One example of this is a marriage between people of different castes. Husband is a professor of literature. He sees himself as a communist who participates in political and social movements for the sake of social justice. The researcher used feminist literary criticism and Helene Cixous's concept of *gender écriture féminine* to understand the narrator's agency in expressing her female-identified experiences of joy, desire (to push back), and independence.

Also, a qualitative approach is being taken. This research demonstrates that even middle- and upper-class Indian women are still particularly vulnerable to caste and patriarchal dominance. This study also demonstrates that misogyny is widely held, not just among the socially inferior and culturally regressive. That is to say, communities where literacy rates are high also frequently display strong misogynistic attitudes. In India, the men uses the urban places to maintain and reassert their dominance.

Key words: - *Protest, Misogyny, Criticism, Modernization.*

INTRODUCTION :

Truthfully, violence against women is not a recent occurrence or something just some women in the globe have to deal with. India, which is depicted as a nation that reveres and cherishes women in its Goddess myth, has a complex women's issue. The issue can be evident in the culture and uneven treatment of women. The society and the discriminatory treatment of women are symptomatic of the problem. Most Indians have the traditional view that women are inferior and are the property of their male counterparts. Indian Women are stereotyped as a group that belongs nowhere but in the shadow of men. Beliefs or views that have formed over time and are generally believed in Indian culture are one element that keeps women in subjugation in India.

Many Indians believe that their culture makes them more likely to be victims of violence. Men are often viewed as more educated than women are across most of the Indian state. Women's voices are not heard or taken into account because of this cultural norm. This unequal treatment of women appears to be the norm in Indian culture, contributing to their marginalisation. This means that no one, not even close family, gives much thought to the rights and opinions of women. Despite their best efforts, they often meet hostility when fighting for their rights. Heise stated that:

“Violence against women is an extremely complex phenomenon, deeply rooted in gender based power relations, sexuality, self-identity, and social institutions. Any strategy to eliminate gender violence must therefore confront the

cultural and social structure that perpetuate it” (Heise, L. L, Pitanguy, H., & Germain, A.)

In this sense, in order to put an end to acts of violence in a society that has a history of being patriarchy, any individual or organization will need to address the structures that exist there.

As a result of the development of a women's movement as well as legislative modifications designed to protect women from assault, Indian women eventually gained significant positions in public areas, including positions in politics. This study relies heavily on Meena Kandasamy's novel “When I Hit You: Or a Portrait of a Writer as a Young Wife”

This Novel discusses the pervasiveness of classism and misogyny in Indian society, and how they manifest within individual households. The author's actual marriage serves as the inspiration for this story.

In her biographical fiction, "When I Hit You: Or a Portrait of a Writer as a Young Wife," the author tells the story of two anonymous characters from different cultures. The narrator wife is a young writer from a middle-class background. The husband, however, is a guy of superior social standing who teaches college students and has the academic rank of professor. The husband's first attempt at wedlock with a woman from a higher social class failed, therefore this is his second marriage. The husband in this relationship has been subduing and oppressing the wife over time.

Almost immediately after they tie the knot, the husband starts harassing the bride for complete access to her email and all of her social media platforms.

The husband thinks that by being honest with his wife, he may bring more intimacy into their relationship. Once the husband gains access, he deletes all of the contacts the wife had made while working as a writer. Over the course of

their marriage, the husband is quite critical of the wife's word choice.

As a feminist writer, perspective allows her to see that her husband is trying to demean her. Neither one of them regards the other as a living companion, but rather as an adversary who poses a danger to their continued survival. Eventually, this causes conflict at home. As the narrative concludes, the wife runs away and abandons her husband.

Cixous models her *écriture féminine* after Simone de Beauvoir's concepts from *The Second Sex* (1949). Cixous thinks on gender roles and women differently than most people. According to Cixous, the libido is encased in the phallus, making the masculine approach to writing a product of the male genitalia. The masculine style of writing is inwardly focused, with the only important content being that which pertains to the male or father figure. Societally and culturally, men's writing is regarded as more superior to women's. Cixous opposes the binary opposition found in much macho writing, in which women are constantly portrayed as the object, the other, and the subjectivity is solely in the hands of men.

The wife's role as a feminist author allows her to draw attention to and critique contemporary Indian society's inclination to treat women as second-class citizens. The wife's complaints are hard to disentangle from the culture she lives in, which is notoriously lax when it comes to enforcing and preserving gender parity.

Traditional feminists will discuss economic freedom. A woman is independent if she can sustain herself financially. With a job, she'll gain her footing. If she had a job, all of her issues will be mysteriously resolved. A job will provide her with community. They will surround her in a caring embrace when she walks into the office one day with a bruise over her forehead. She will claim she ran into a wall, but they will know it is her husband's handiwork. Within the scope of a

job, a woman will meet that one female companion who will be there for her in good times and bad. This position will provide her with access to police, lawyers, and judges, as well as a support group. (Kandasamy, *When I Hit You* 34)

The following comment may be an attempt to show that India is still unfriendly to women by juxtaposing feminists' bitterness with the wife's. One of the points the text is trying to make is that despite India's modernisation, economic expansion, and many endeavours to assure gender parity in the recent decades it continues to be a place that is unsafe, and possibly even dangerous, for women. According to Chapman, In addition to rural communities, sexism can be found in urban neighbourhoods, public venues, and organisations that are on the cutting edge of modernity and literacy.

The preceding comment is from the Wife, who critiques the ignorance of Indian males toward women. It may be argued that the Wife is trying to gain sympathy from the general public by voluntarily bringing her husband lunch while also displaying a bruise on her head. But the preceding comment is part of the criticism about the treatment she gets.

This can be interpreted contextually as a reaction to the community's penchant for seeking out answers that are both vague and irrelevant. However, the previous statement could be interpreted as the Wife's complaint against the husband's actions. No matter how many times you say, "I have no one I can talk to about what's happening behind the scenes," the courteous verbal back-and-forth will continue uninterrupted because there is no code-red in the structure of language to stop the stage managed niceness and be a hidden scream for assistance. (Kandasamy, *When I Hit You* 34)

This sentence can be interpreted as a support of the misogynistic practise that the Wife was subjected to. The stress that is placed on the

word "bitter" in the preceding line is an indication that the anguish that is felt by women is not something that should be suitably emphasised by men. Therefore, Indian men's outward displays of friendliness and hospitality can be interpreted as a front for the underlying misogyny that permeates their thinking.

The following passage is a comment from a woman in which she discusses the ways in which her professor husband misleads her with his positive promises before they are married. Before they got married, the husband, who is a communist, was always talking about how important it was for everyone to be on the same class level and how terrible capitalism was for regular people. The husband acknowledges his wife's viewpoint, which is that Lenin's beliefs in the book *A Glass of Water and Loveless Kisses* are sexist. He also provides his approval to the wife's standpoint. However, once they are married, the husband's progressive ideals are revealed to the wife as nothing more than a ploy and a deceit intended merely to grab the wife's attention and provide the husband with an opening to engage in violent behaviour toward the wife. The following are some of the criticisms that the wife has levelled about her husband's actions and the misogynistic ideas that he holds:

"Was respect and love something that the radical only reserved for women who were gun-toting rebels, women who attended and applauded at every party meeting, women who distributed pamphlets and designed placards? 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?" (Kandasamy, *When I Hit You* 89)

Next, the wife points out how her husband uses hypocrisy to mislead her. The spouse presents himself as an active member of the communist

revolution, a key figure in the fight against capitalism. The husband continues by discussing the potential of communist ideas and principles to serve as the foundation for a society that is equal and just for everyone, including women. However, her husband is a completely different person than she knew before they were married. To illustrate this point, consider the following quotation:

I married the man I did because his talk of the revolution was more powerful to me than any poetry or any kind of aesthetic. To be honest, I'm no longer sure. There is a careerist, wife-beater, opportunist, manipulator, infiltrator, go-getter, ass-licker, drunkard, and dopehead in every genuine revolutionary in the ranks. on the front lines, a fake emerges to take credit for the murdered man's achievements. There is always a "parrot" in the group who repeats what the original thinker says as if it were his own. Political movements grow fat on the blood of real heroes even as its pretenders celebrate. (Kandasamy, *When I Hit You* 89)

The prevalence of harmful misogynistic beliefs in India is increasing, causing serious harm to Indian women. In reality, this viewpoint is at home not only in the space associated with traditional values and patriarchal rural communities, but also in the space associated with cutting-edge urban centres.

For misogynists, it is essential and essential to the continuation of their ideology that their misogynistic views remain unchanged. The acceptance of violence in society as the norm is indicative of this.

In many cases, the perpetrators of violence against women would simply ignore their victims and the victims may even be persuaded that they should accept the violence as a sign of loyalty to their husbands. This is done to maintain the belief that women will always be at a disadvantage and to forestall a shift in cultural control by men.

The same goals are pursued in the classroom. Teachers who hold a misogynistic worldview often transfer their views onto their students, encouraging them to ridicule and look down on women who threaten the patriarchal order.

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