



THE UNCONVENTIONAL WOMAN IN MEENA KANDASAMY'S WHEN I HIT YOU OR, A PORTRAIT OF THE WRITER AS A YOUNG WIFE

Kiruthika. D* Dr. S. Jeyalakshmi**

**Supervisor, Kongunadu Arts and Science College, Coimbatore.*

***Assistant Professor, Department of English (Unaided), Kongunadu Arts and Science College, Mettupalayam Road, GN Mills (PO), Coimbatore.*

The Unconventional people do not behave in the stereotyped way as others behave in society. There are people in this world who know what they want out of life, go for it, and stick with it. Being Unconventional, they are often in crucial situation in understanding others because they go against the cliches. Being Unconventional is highly subjective as it differed from culture to culture and country to country. Conventional expectations are unwritten rules and depend highly on social norms and traditions, which differ regionally and within a region too.

Kandasamy (1984-) is an Indian poet, fiction writer, translator and activist who was born in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Most of her works are concentrated on feminism and the anti-caste Annihilation Movement of the contemporary Indian background. She is a vocal about various contemporary political issues relating to caste, violence and women's rights in more ways than one. She has an influential and regular social media presence, though her Face book and Twitter handles. She also writes columns for platforms like outlook India and The Hindu, occasionally. She has published two collections of Poetry namely, Touch (2006) and Ms. Militancy (2010). Two of her poems have won accolades in all-India poetry competitions. From 2001-2002, she edited The Dalit, a Bi-monthly alternative English magazine of the Dalit Media Network.

Kandasamy's controversial debut speech in 2014, on The Gypsy Goddess explored caste, poverty and violence in southern India. Her second novel, When I Hit You Or, a Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife (2017), tells the story of a recently married woman writer, who is experiencing rapid social isolation and extreme violence at her husband's hands.

Feminist political activism commonly campaign on issues such as reproductive rights, violence within a domestic partnership, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual violence. (Prasad 1).

When I Hit You Or, a Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife, is a story narrated in first person. The unnamed woman talks about the hardships of her marriage life. Few days after their marriage, it is clearly demonstrated that she has been tormented by her husband. He suppresses her in all possible ways. She is forced to uninstall her facebook account as he does not want her in social network with her friends and also even with her parents.

Kandasamy in an Interview, when was asked about the marital rape in the novel, says, If the husband was really raping a woman and we are in the culture is to say no doesn't exist. He is marry to you and he can do it anything to you imagine how the future will look us how my daughter will look us and how my granddaughter will look us. When you marry, you agree to live together, you agree to have a sex and you agree that in love each other but I believe that this agreement is not a perpetual agreement. Next hundred years till they die I'm going to be with you. Yes that is an agreement. But every time you want sex, every place you want sex and every day you want sex I have the rights to say no. If you're a nice person you accept my rights to say no. But if you're a not a nice person if you put your desire into the unwillingness. (Web Kandasamy Interview).

Women are the predominant theme in literature always. In Indian literature also women take an inevitable role. In this story, When I Hit You Or, a Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife, the domestic violence revolves around the life of a woman which spoiled her mentally and physically.

In general, the culture and tradition of India is considered as old and great all over the world, where people used to worship various female goddesses, saints and poets. Women backwardness is also very clear in the society because of the social issues, problems and lots of restrictions against them. Women who belong to the lower and middle



class family suffer more than the women of higher class family. In the Indian society generally, they face problems of sex discrimination, high percentage of illiteracy, infanticide of girl infants, dowry system, rape, etc.

In this novel, *When I Hit You Or, a Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*, the ruthless husband abuses his wife physically at the end of every day and the narrator has gradually sunk into the darker side of life. “Not when she has been trapped for two months in the space of three rooms and a veranda.” (WHY 13) The narrator’s mother tells to the narrator.

The more you try to stake your claim to privacy, the more he will assume that you are hiding things from him and forging a secret life for yourself. That will drive him mad. Stay open, and that dog will leave you in peace when he cannot catch scent of all the shit that he thinks exists (WHY 56).

The narrator’s husband put down his wife in every ways, by inflicting violence on her and emotionally threatens her. When she refuses to obey him, she is beaten up and is violently raped. She feels her expressions as, “Marriage has ruined my romanticism, by teaching me that this thing of beauty can be made crude. Bitch. Whore. Slut and yet, for every insult that has been flung in my face, language retains its charm” (WHY 92). The problem which is undergone by the narrator is the one which most of the Indian women hood face from their birth to death.

Out of frustration and dejection, the narrator painfully tells, “I swing on a pendulum of choice. Alive. Dead. Dead. Alive. Alive. Dead. Dead. Dead. I do not know if I’m alive now. This is the kind of alive that feels dead. And then again there are the dead who feel alive” (WHY 93). She wants to escape from her chaotic married life.

The narrator is caught by her husband in a cage like a bird, This battle structural like a chess game. Here, there are only two players. I’m the king, constantly under threat. I’m the king, who can move only one step at any given time. He’s the drama queen. There is no move that he cannot make. He corners me wherever I move. In the end, he always corners me (WHY 149).

Depression is personified as an insect, which flying around in her brain and eating away all the softer parts of her. She is programmed as submissive wife in all spheres.

‘Depression’, is the label that he applies to my state of mind, my sense of life. Depression is the disease that only middle-class women nature and put on display to the world. Depression is a career choice for you. Without that, you are nothing (WHY 151).

In this novel, *When I Hit You Or, a Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*, sex, actually rape, becomes the narrator’s husband weapon to tame her. She states as, “When he takes me, I dream of how I’m going to lose this part of me” (WHY 169). But her body itself learns how to surrender to him. She used to behave as if she is dead while she is forcefully exploited during sex.

The shame of rape is the shame of the unspeakable. Women have found it easier to jump into fire, consume poison, and blow themselves up as suicide bombers, than tell another soul about what happened. A rape is a fight you did not win. You could not win (WHY 169).

The narrative style subtly brings out the Brahmanical and patriarchal values inherent in the institution of marriage; the blame that is always place on women, the need to be submissive for the marriage to ‘work’. The author explores various ways of dealing with issues of violence, and how society normalises abuse a woman faces at the hands of her husband. When narrator recounts her, “She must derive no pleasure from sex. And yet, whenever he takes me against my will, he taunts me for enjoying it. In his ironclad logic: I am a whore, so I can be raped; I let myself be raped, so I am a whore” (WHY 174). He calls his wife as whore and slut.

In some cases, the condition of women becomes more embarrassed when they get tortured by their family members instead of getting help. Sexual harassment is more common at homes as well as in the offices by the



family members, relatives, neighbours, friends, boss, etc. They have to suffer a lot in their daily life to saving their career as well as saving their family relationships.

Kandasamy in an Interview, says, Violence is not something that advertises itself. It is not written on my face – he is too careful for that of course, aiming his first at my body. As long as a woman cannot speak, as long as those to whom she speaks do not listen, the violence is unending. I do not want his baby. I cannot bring a baby into a world in which I have no love. I do not want to bring into the world a son who will watch his mother being beaten up, it is only now, finally, that I realised that if I want to be rescued, will have to do it myself. (Web Kandasamy NDTV Interview).

The narrator is not able to go to police, as her husband pretends to be a dutiful son-in-law to her parents. She is sure not to carry his baby in her womb, as she feels that it would be a sin. Because, she was raped within a marriage, on their bed, where her 'NO' held no meaning. "East is east and West is west. They can never meet." (Bheda 36) He thought that women are only designed for sex, works for the men and their family. He thought that women don't have their own feelings and freedom to think. He thought that women are slave to the men. She did not obey for his words and commends, so he tried to kill her. She fights to go way from the house.

Whenever the narrator's husband got irritated, he used to throw things around the house. Hysterically he behaves and tries to wound himself. "This is plain and simple blackmail. I'm not going to do anything if you blackmail me" (WHY 50). Once, the narrator receives an anonymous call saying, "Your husband acts like Mister Righteous. He is a fraud. He was the biggest fraud in our village. He was married before he married you" (WHY 196). The call leads to her emergent immediately. "Divorce isn't such a tragedy. A tragedy is staying in an unhappy marriage, teaching your children the wrong things about love. Nobody ever died of divorce" (Web Weiner). She is turned to be a woman with wings, the woman who can fly. She got freedom from her lunatic husband.

When I Hit You Or, a Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife, makes everyone think of all the women who have suffered in marriage most of them are silent, many of them with standing emotional violence for instant, women like Nora from A Doll's House, Nora at first appears to be a silly, selfish girl, but then one can he learn that she has made great sacrifices to save her husband's life and pay back the loan. At the end of the play, she has realized her true strength and strikes out as an independent woman. Now-a-days, women are breaking all the barriers of society and problems against them. They are getting ahead and enjoying equality of status in almost all fields because of being financially independent and economically sound.

This, When I Hit You Or, a Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife, is a piece of work which illustrates how gender- oppressive ideology and behaviour can be perpetuated, irrespective of your education, class, political leanings. It warns people how a seemingly 'successful' marriage could be violent, oppressive and abusive without anyone around being aware of its brutality.

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