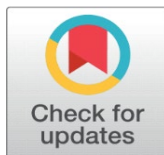
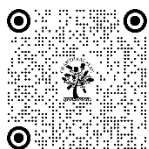


# MEENA KANDASAMY AS FEMALE WRITER OF DALIT LITERATURE

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## ABSTRACT

A country that is steeped in a wide variety of traditional institutions that present a challenge for the nation, India is a country that is rich in diversity. Certain strict rules do not allow time to regulate itself, despite the fact that all societies that have time are open to transitions. All societies, religions, regions, and social classes are constantly striving to emerge, but they fail to recognize the same need for women and girls. That being said, undoubtedly, this class is a component of India's disenfranchised population. Indian women have always been subjected to the oppressions of society in a variety of different ways. Caste, creed, and gender have all contributed to the further division of the community. The article seeks to show the pitiful position of Dalit women in free India, with a particular focus on Meena Kandasamy's literary excellence in *The Touch* and *Ms. Militancy*. This attempt is made in light of the fact that India has recently become a free nation. In dalit society, she has done a good job of acting as a spokesperson for her sexual orientation. In her efforts to bring about positive improvements in the lives of members of society's underprivileged class, she has spared no effort in her pursuit of this goal. This so-called civilized nation is in for a rude awakening as a result of her representation of the lower strata. It is only in the "dreams of our India" that Meena is able to conjure up the possibility of a miraculous shift taking place within the nation. She talks about the predicament that the women are in and the conditions that led to the unfair treatment that they received. In an effort to improve the lives of dalit people, Meena makes use of her literary brilliance to investigate the more negative aspects of society. Attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the universal miseries experienced by the underprivileged group, this paper is an attempt to explore the writings of dalit female writers.

**Keywords:** Underprivileged, Brilliance, Oppressor, Marginalized, Section, Downtrodden, Suffering Etc.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Meena Kandasamy is acknowledged as a prominent figure in contemporary Indian dalit literature. She was born on October 12th, 1984, to parents who were educated in Tamil. Having begun her writing career at a relatively early age, she is a realistic fictional poet, fiction writer, translator, and activist. She has been writing for quite some time. She had only turned seventeen when she decided to take responsibility for accurately portraying truth without any embellishment. Since the beginning, her primary concern has been the portrayal of the underrepresented class, which she has been working to address up to this point. In the beginning, she was a poet, and later on, she began translating works by dalit writers from the region. Her academic background includes a 'Doctorate of Philosophy' in Socio-linguistics, which she earned from Anna University in Chennai. She is the first woman to write about dalits, and she does justice to the task she has embarked on, which is to expose continuous crimes committed against dalits. Since 1972, when a group of young Marathi writers and activists established an organization known as Dalit Panthers, Dalit literature has been gaining momentum. During the middle of the twentieth century, the practice of untouchability posed a threat to the underprivileged class, and the movement was initially a reaction to the discrimination that existed in society. Despite the fact that a large number of social reformers took a stance against it in the latter part of the nineteenth century and were successful in abolishing the practice in 1950 under article 17, the reality on the ground nowadays is that the situation is exactly the opposite.

Women in India have historically been subjected to discrimination on the basis of their gender, and dalits are not an exception to this rule. Women are relegated to the background in every sphere and activity in the society that is considered to be civilized. The downtrodden class known as the Dalits has previously witnessed the brutality of their oppressors, who did not even spare any effort to further exploit their women and their families. The predicament is much more dire for the women of the dalit caste. They have been working hard to ensure their own existence, even within the confines of their own system. It is possible for anyone to experience goose bumps since a great number of dalit writers have written realistic and heartbreaking novels about the lower strata of society. By portraying the social realities of this oppressed class, Meena Kandasamy has done everything in her power to do so. It was Meena Kandasamy who was the first woman to be a dalit poet. She has provided a voice to the class of people in society who previously did not have one. She is a poet that exposes the atrocities and classicism that occurred in India when it was free and independent with her realistic poetry. There is still a culture of chained people among the dalit, despite the fact that they have been free for 77 years.

As long as there has been expansion, the class that has been marginalized has been the one that has suffered the most. They will experience a greater degree of exclusion as the population of the society continues to grow. It has not been possible to break the chains of duties that have been imposed on these downtrodden people as a result of the stipulations in the constitution. In spite of the fact that Meena is a poetic interpretation, she is also a defiant individual. It is very evident that she is fully committed to putting an end to the vicious cycle of violence. The collections of poems that Meena has authored are titled *Touch* (2006) and *Ms. Militancy* (2010) respectively. She analyzes the utopian society, the traditions, and the atrocities that have occurred throughout history in both collections. Seven different collections of poems make up *Touch*. These collections are as follows: Bring him up to adore you, Touch and some spice, To that more welcoming location, Touch and some spice, and Touch and some spice. Their Daughters, Slander in a slaughterhouse, and Lines of Control is the title of this article. Within the second half of *Touch*, the challenges that are encountered by communities who are socially oppressed and Dalit in our society are highlighted. Casteism is a technique that is used to oppress the lower strata of society because it is a social evil that has deep roots in the blood. This is for the reason that casteism is a social evil. Obtaining a knowledge of the discriminatory manner in which the elite class interacts with the dalit people is something that Kandasamy is interested in obtaining. Her poetic brilliance acknowledges the caste ideas and illustrates the unfavorable attitude that educated society has toward the lower strata of society. Her work is outstanding in every way. To such an extent that even a single touch from an untouchable can cause members of the upper class to soothe their bodies via the use of prayers and sacred water, the character of "Touch" does a great deal of emphasis on the concept of untouchability. Individuals who are considered to be dalit have their thoughts obliterated by the utmost level of depression, which seizes their minds. The people who are able to make their voices heard in society are not even those who have a liberal point of view.

Over time, they undergo transformations as a result of the impact of their upbringing. Meena illustrates the unfairness that society has inflicted upon the classes that have been marginalized to an extreme degree. She is also a poet and writer who is considered to be of the dalit social realistic genre. A real-life experience of the lives of dalits is conveyed via her poems. Through the use of truthful portrayal, Kandasamy takes a stand against the hypocritical society. "dying and then resurrecting herself again and again in a country that refuses to forget the unkind myths of caste and religion, Meena carries as her twin self, her shadow, the dark cynicism of youth that must help her to survive," Kamla Das writes in the foreword to *Touch*. "Meena carries as her shadow the dark cynicism of youth that must help her to survive."

Meena highlights the class's plight. She expressed herself nicely in English. Her work has always inspired dalit authors. She works selflessly for dalits. Meena's verbal expression is remarkable. She says she wants an English with words from her native language. Kandasamy (2006): English that binds white men's tongues Kandasamy sees society as utterly unjust, with caste, creed, and gender conflicts. She spoke for the victims in vain. She depicts dalit helplessness in her poetry. Despite many laws, the situation remains the same. Kandasamy's writings make readers question the upper class. 'Touch' is a satire on civilized society's culture, ideals, and empathy, which is the contrary. Eyewitnesses can tell others but have no say. Kandasamy inspired other writers to expose free Indian hypocrisy. She manipulates words and purposely challenges class stereotypes. She says:

"My language is dark and dangerous and desperate in its eagerness to slaughter your myths" (Kandasamy, 2010)

The poetess threatens the privileged class that she will expose corruption. She sadly writes of an uncaring society that ignores atrocities against other classes. Commoners care least about traditional unfairness. The way she expresses her disgust for society shocks and disturbs readers. She says a revolution will start in our red hot dreams that scourge,

sear, and blister. That burn like lava but never stop Avoid poignantly solidifying When oppressors wince, it will start. Anytime they hear us . (Kandasamy, 2006)

In India, caste discrimination is common, and 'Touch' reflects her pain. Marginalized people are humiliated, losing self-respect and motivation. As a well-informed writer, the poetess accurately portrays society. She thinks that marginalized class anger and resentment would never subside without social equality. Pain is continuous and mysterious. She struggles to convey the plight of the oppressed. Casteism has long dominated society and helped subjugate the marginalized. Hierarchical societies desire total surrender, which is impossible.

Though caste has always divided the society, yet it is considered as a tool to suppress the other. It is a human nature to make a disadvantage of the other, casteism has further increased the powers of the oppressors. The irony of the situation is that the deeds of a person does not decide his stature in the society but his caste does. It remains the cause of every kind of discrimination. Individuality suffers a lot and gives rise to anger, insecurities, and hate. The untouchables and marginalised class have always been degraded and demoralised. Works are assigned on the basis of the class, creed, and sex. In Touch Meena Kandasamy highlights pitiable condition, frustration, humiliation, oppression, and anger of the oppressed section. Meena's poem 'Another Paradise Lost: The Hindu Way', is a revolutionary one to disseminate the anguish and resentment. The poem is a conversation between a serpent and the poetess. The serpent is the monarch and was held with honour on earth and heaven at the same time. He used to question Gods about the futility of caste system on earth. He wanted to have classless society for its better functioning, but he had to face the wrath and was thrown down to the earth. He was called a rebel, he was not supposed to speak against the wishes of the gods. He was badly cursed as he wanted to have equality on earth that was not taken in a positive way. The system could not be dismantled by anyone on this earth, and hence it flourishes by the grace of god. The serpent reveals:

"I wanted to know why caste was there, why people suffered because of their karmas. I questioned the Gods, and the learned sages there. I asked what would happen if a high born did manual work just like the low-born. I worried about the division of labour, this disparity in dreams and destinies. You could say I was a rebel pleading for liberty-equality-fraternity". (56-63)

The true nature of those individuals who present themselves as liberal and just is revealed by Meena Kandasamy. When it comes to the survival of the marginalized section, she emphasizes the contradicting standards that people have, which are truly destructive. Due to the fact that the social system has been organized in such a way that a single summer cannot ever constitute a summer, the change can be brought about by way of unanimous agreement. Publicly putting their words into action is something that even the most privileged members of society ought to do. The oppressor is referred to be the privileged class, and the oppressed are thought to be the unprivileged class. She is very outspoken and calls the oppressor the latter. We are going to singe the various skins that you wear to the world, she exclaims. The skins that you change while you are at work Skins that are referred to as castes and skins that are referred to as race All of the skins that you repair once a week You thought you could keep your dirty skin in bed, but you can't. (Kandasamy, 2006)

According to Meena Kandasamy, the upper class is responsible for the fact that they are the ones who are blazing the trail for the society. She goes on to make claims against them, stating that their true motivation is to achieve fame and honor at whatever cost, and that in order to achieve this, they oppress the marginalized sector to the greatest extent possible. Given that they have two faces, it is necessary for them to conceal the more repulsive one from society. The truth is that the Indian society makes more allowances for them, and those who are underrepresented are the ones who are forced to carry the weight of societal norms. The notion that all people are equal in the eyes of God and the law is something that she disputes. Meena asserts that non-dualism, atman, self, Brahman, and God are all equivalent and identical. Therefore, I am God, the untouchable outsider. Are you ever going to come to an agreement? Would it ever be possible for my untouchable atman and your Brahmin atman to conjoin? (Kandasamy, 2006)

The portrayal of the civilization that Meena follows is one that is realistic. When it comes to accurately describing the circumstances, she does not like any form of sugar coating. Because she lives in a world that is based on reality, which is full with animals and parasites, she finds it extremely challenging to simply incorporate changes. In addition to being a writer who is of the dalit caste, she is also a socially realistic writer who depicts the problems that exist in society in an effort to improve it. Realist ideology and current ideology both shed light on the fundamental traditional division of social classes. Kandasamy writes in a way that is logical; she begins by discussing the position of a woman in society, and then she focuses specifically on the tragedy of a dalit woman, which appears to be a significant step up from the tragedy of a general caste female. Since the beginning of time, women have been relegated to the background and seen as mere objects.

This mentality is even more exploitative of the female population. The portrayal of women's oppression that Kandasamy presents is supported by historical realities. In each and every conflict, the women were forced to endure humiliation, abuse, and other forms of mistreatment. The revolutionary mindset of Meena is the first step on the path toward genuine equity that is not of a superficially superficial character. A constant need for self-respect and the right to live a dignified life is present in the writer.

When it comes to living conditions, equality is restricted, which is the source of the animosity. Taking permission for their future endeavors, acts, and planning, women behave in a manner similar to that of slaves. The majority of the time, the freedom of speech continues to be a prominent issue. Meena is concerned about the dignity of the lives of women in liberated India, which is something that is beyond the realm of conception in this modern world. Conflicts of ego, feelings of superiority, and masculine chauvinism have caused them to be victims. Despite the fact that they are still alive, they grow emotionally distant as a result of the ongoing torment and degradation. For the most part, they are not heard, and they sometimes choose to keep their mouths shut. Meena was not a fan of the patriarchal concept that was prevalent around. Males are encouraged to continue mistreating females by the system that is currently in place. You pushed her deeper into harems so that you could have her so that she would be yours and yours alone. She was nothing more than a slave, having been domesticated into a form of servitude. (Kandasamy, 2006)

Meena, on the other hand, states unequivocally that she will not be a member of the dissembler society. In every situation, she does not want to be told what to do. She feels that it is important to be open to new ideas and to share them. Unconstructed society is something that she really believes in. She believes that there should be conventions, but there should not be a line drawn eternally from a specific gender or class. Love is the only thing that can transform a person; no order can achieve that. As she expresses herself, she does it with the same perception: When you called me to light up your life, I could never reject... Affection Because I am aware that this is an old lie, I am unable to be a candle. Not for us, the candle is reserved for those who are solemn, for those who seek for a slow and tenderness. (Kandasamy, 2006)

## 2. CONCLUSION

Meena Kandasamy and her poetry are the embodiment of a long-standing struggle against the oppression and injustices that the non-dominant caste community has been subjected to. Despite the fact that her poetry addresses topics like as caste, sexuality, political objectives, violence, gender discrimination, and language, the primary purpose of her writing is to encourage her readers to take action. The fundamental theme of Kandasamy's raw and openly uncontrolled poetry, which is described as "full of jagged edges" by Duarte, is active resistance or revolutionary activism, which is the discourse that strives to evaluate what needs to change and set things right. Due to the fact that she comes from a caste-conscious upbringing, her poetry is reflective of a society that gives inhumane legitimacy to caste discrimination and brutality against Dalits.

Kandasamy employs her poetry as a method of violent resistance against the caste system that is deeply embedded in the culture and is widely practiced. This system allows members of dominant castes to enslave members of non-dominant castes for their own benefit. *Touch*, the title of her debut collection of short stories, is a reiteration of the most inhumane of the stigmas that are associated with Dalits, which is that their very touch is believed to be polluting. In her poem "Touch," Kandasamy expresses her feelings over the predicament that her society finds itself in as a result of the Hindu Brahmanical system, which is characterized by extreme partiality and hypocrisy:

But, you will never have known  
that touch — the taboo  
to your transcendence  
when crystallized in caste  
was a paraphernalia of  
undeserving hate. (36–41)

Kandasamy makes fun of the ancient embedded Brahmanical caste systems that are in opposition to the famed non-dualism of Hinduism. He does this by pointing out the binaries of the "untouchable" and, consequently, the touchable that were produced by Indian culture.

Active resistance or revolutionary activism is the core theme of Kandasamy's raw and outrightly unbridled poetry.



In her highly regarded poem *Eklaivaan*, she makes reference to the beginning of the caste system in Hindu mythology. In this poem, Dronacharya refuses to teach Eklavya. In order to teach the Kshatriyas, Dronacharya does not teach him since he is discriminatory. Through this poem, Kandasamy offers a critical commentary on the casteist system that is rooted in legendary validity.

She states: "You don't need your right thumb, / To pull a trigger or hurl a bomb" (Kandasamy, *Touch* 7–8). Her poetry voices out her resentment against the very core of the caste system which according to Gandhi, was the "genius of the Hindu society". Her scathing rebuke of Gandhi and his ideals is well reflected in her poem *Mohandas Karamchand*.

Ms. Militancy (2010), her second collection of short stories, is infused with the seasoned wisdom of an experienced author regarding the gendered and caste-based challenges that are present in society. These poems depict the "twice Dalit" position that Dalit women find themselves in. They speak out against the prevalent institutions, historic norms, and customs that have been utilized for recurrent subjugation and in some cases continue to be employed for this purpose. The idea of Western Feminism, which seeks to universalize the female experience, is something that Kandasamy makes an effort to debunk.

Kandasamy uses poetry as a means of defying her various cultural and social identities, in addition to expressing her desire to assert those identities. Using images of female characters from previously published works of male literature, she reconstructs these images in order to offer a different view of the characters. "My Maariammas bays for blood," she writes in the introduction that she gives to *Ms. Militancy*. This Kali is lethal. My strips made of Draupadi. My Sita gets onto the lap of a complete stranger. Each of my women is a soldier. They are willing to face bombs and they demean rulers. "They take on the sun, and they follow in my footsteps." (Kandasamy 9).

The poem that serves as the title poem for her collection of poems, *Ms. Militancy*, was titled after the revolutionary female heroine Kannaki, who appears in the traditional Tamil literature *Silapathikaram*. Kandasamy views Kannaki as the embodiment of the uprising she hopes to see in the female Dalit persona. This is despite the fact that Kannaki was initially depicted in the play as a subject of patriarchy. However, towards the end of the play, she symbolizes a female revolution of such intensity that she is portrayed as she is. She expresses her thoughts by saying, "In an act of vengeance, she fashioned a bomb out of her left breast and blew up the city." (Kandasamy, *Ms. Militancy* 21–22).

In the poems *Princess-in-exile* and *Traitress*, written by Kandasamy, the characters Sita and Shurpanakha represent the two extremes of the female existence that have been shown up till this point. Kandasamy deconstructs the concept of the "pure" Sita in his novel *Random Access Man* by depicting her as being constantly deprived of both her bodily and emotional well-being by her beloved husband. "Get me the testicle of a golden deer," requested Sita, who was displeased with the situation. In order for us to raise your level of manhood" (12–13).

The depiction of Shurpanakha by Kandasamy raises the bar for how women are seen in the world. Shurpanakha is reported to have been "Widowed, forsaken, and ordered to exist in erasures" (1). This is not a true statement. Due to the fact that she was a lustful woman who charmed Ram and Lakshman, it was necessary for patriarchy to punish her for her wants. This is evidenced in the fact that they were able to do so.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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