



## ICHSECMICE -2025

11-12<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Sardar Patel Institute of Higher Education, Kurukshetra

### Caste Violence in Meena Kandasamy's Poetry

Anshu Choudhary, Research Scholar, Department of English, Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj University, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India

Leena Chandani, Research Supervisor, Head of the Department of Languages, DRB Sindhu Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India

#### Abstract

Writings concerning Dalits whose main goal is their emancipation are referred to as Dalit literature. Through their poetry, short tales, novels, and memoirs, Dalit authors have offered insightful perspectives on the issue of Dalit identity. They have freed the Dalits from the subhuman position that the Hindu social system had placed upon them and granted them a respectable standing. With their piercing expressions, they speak in the language of the underprivileged and outcasts in Indian society. Education is a problem for women everywhere, but it is particularly difficult for Dalit women in rural India. The few women who pursued education and writing produced primarily personal writings, leaned towards feminism, and were primarily viewed as a struggle by women to break free from repressive conventions. Meena Kandasamy, a renowned Dalit woman writer, is one of them. She focuses on caste and gender problems and how society assigns people to conventional positions based on these classifications.

**Keywords:** -Dalit literature, caste system, violence, gender inequality, and feminism.

**Introduction:** -Ilavenil Based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, Meena Kandasamy is a well-known poet, fiction writer, translator, and activist. The majority of her writings focus on feminism and the modern Indian context's anti-caste Caste Annihilation Movement. Touch and Ms. Militancy are the two poetry books that Meena has released. In all-India poetry competitions, two of her poems have received recognition. In addition to her literary works, she speaks out on several current political concerns, including women's rights, violence, corruption, and caste. She is active on social media and has a significant following. She also occasionally contributes pieces to websites like The Hindu and Outlook India. An embarrassing chapter in Indian history was the 1968 Dalit massacre

Marxist philosophy was becoming more and more popular at the time among Dalits, or untouchables, who were denied rights and forced to work in harsh conditions on rice terraces. The Gypsy Goddess is similarly lively, full of ideas, and driven by righteous rage and dark humor. It defies a lot of stylistic conventions. The story is resolutely non-linear. We get a variety of bustling voices in place of a main character. It appears that this narrow-mindedness existed from the beginning. The account of the killing, which spans five pages in a single, uninterrupted phrase, is one of The Gypsy Goddess's most notable sections.

The author is aware that maintaining control and escalating rather than decreasing is necessary to fully capture the fear. By listing each victim's destiny, particularly that of the children, the author illustrates the severity of violence. A significant cultural issue is the mortality of children. Since children have no opinions and are never considered adversaries, murdering them is a highly specific form of brutality that needs to be discussed. However, Meena Kandasamy's book is more than just a made-up story about a national catastrophe.

The book in our hands is written in elegant writing with a Tamil flavor and an English vocabulary, devoid of any poetry or prosody. This book does a great job of exploring harsh and terrible visuals. Based on historical records and interviews with survivors, the author's fictitious account of this tragedy depicts agricultural laborers going on strike following the death of a well-liked communist leader at the hands of landowners. The landlords attempt to coerce them into returning to their jobs. They brutally attack Dalit women, issue crippling fines, and frighten them with the police. However, Kilvenmani village's starving residents are unwavering in their calls for justice.

*International Advance Journal of Engineering, Science and Management (IAJESM)*

*Multidisciplinary, Multilingual, Indexed, Double-Blind, Open Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed-*

*International Journal, Impact factor (SJIF) = 8.152*



## ICHSECMICE -2025

11-12<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Sardar Patel Institute of Higher Education, Kurukshetra

At last, a goon squad sent by the landowner attacks Kilvenmani, forcing scores of peasants into a single cottage and setting it on fire. Even if they kill many villagers and reduce their bodies to burned, unrecognizable carcasses, the majority of the criminals escape punishment. Exquisite vocabulary and creative word choices are used to describe the terrifying series of events. Dew "begins to diamond the golden fields" rather than just falling to the earth. The book lacks a true protagonist and doesn't explore the inner lives of its characters. However, a more conventionally character-driven narrative may have undercut the author's goal of immortalizing the story of a community's struggle. The author is a highly regarded poet.

The author intersperses moments of irreverent humor throughout this somber book. Many literary allusions and references are employed to depict the violence that the landlord's henchmen or the police force inflict on the impoverished landless laborers. Additionally, they are the target of social boycotts and other forms of oppression. The epilogue puts the reader in the center of the Kilvenmani villagers' experiences by using the compelling rhythm of second-person narrative. However, persuading the reader is seldom necessary. She makes an effort to understand the tragedy as it pertains to related occurrences throughout the book. There is a point at which police records and bullet lists must be used because language breaks down.

Some of the villagers who managed to flee the fire are imprisoned after being charged with killing a landlord's agent. The severity of the caste violence that has long existed in India is demonstrated by all the episodes depicted in the book. This book demonstrates the author's indignation, and she challenges us to engage with deconstructionists. Although there are some difficult moments, the author's inventiveness and brilliant wit make this book unforgettable. This novel stands out as a significant debut of the year because of the range of form experiments that would keep one interested beyond the gripping plot.

Meena Kandasamy's poetry reflects a long-standing struggle against the severe oppression and horrors experienced by the non-dominant caste people. Her poetry mostly exhorts her readers to take action, even while it addresses topics of caste, sexuality, political goals, violence, gender inequality, and language. The central topic of the author's raw and unrestrained poetry, "full of jagged edges," is active resistance or revolutionary activity, the discourse that aims to evaluate what needs to change and make it right (Duarte). Despite being aware of social hierarchies, individuals continue to ask, "Do such systems still exist?" as if they were oblivious to them. Her poetry is a wordless response to such a callous query.

Even after 63 years of independence, India's socioeconomic system still has many inconsistencies. For a culture, state, or country to recognize its errors and imbalances, fifty years is a long time. However, India's state and society have not been able to reconcile these inconsistencies even at the start of the twenty-first century. The long-standing system of inequality has not been destroyed, despite the postcolonial state's constitutional commitment to the goals of equality, liberty, and justice. In Indian reality, social and economic inequality continue to be major issues.

Fundamentally, social democracy and distributive justice are still unattainable goals. Conversely, the great majority of Indians suffer from social, economic, political, and educational injustices. The state only provides social possibilities to affluent segments of society. Meena Kandasamy is one of the new faces of interventionists in India. She is a poet, writer, translator, and activist who has received great recognition from literary networks for her passionate use of her writing to advocate for the underprivileged. The author is well-known for her unreserved stance against the caste system and patriarchy. She expresses her feminist perspective on caste discrimination in anthologies, novels, magazine articles, and social media because she was born into a disadvantaged nomadic tribe. The poem concludes with the woman's "cunningness" emerging as she begins to feign in an effort to appease the

*International Advance Journal of Engineering, Science and Management (IAJESM)*

Multidisciplinary, Multilingual, Indexed, Double-Blind, Open Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed-

International Journal, Impact factor (SJIF) = 8.152



## ICHSECMICE -2025

11-12<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Sardar Patel Institute of Higher Education, Kurukshetra

guy. I'm scared. I get icy. I became a faker. Her sentences have a strong seduction that aims to unnerve the reader and rattle them into an unpleasant reality. Some may find it blasphemous since she frequently employs motifs in situations that are at odds with the original. The spirit of camaraderie among women who reject the stereotype and band together to combat resistance is expressed in the stanza's conclusion. As she delves more into her world of irrelevance, she discovers the desires of self-righteous males who frequently disguise themselves as religious to preserve their sacred status. Like the clinging of sacred cymbals, the priest fidgets in his guilt and cowardice as he penetrates her and makes love to her remnants in the darkest hour before morning.

The author confirms that it is unimaginable yet true that a priest would attend a whorehouse. Humans' seeming sanctity is a lie. As she addresses that "villain" in "Prayers To The Red Slayer," Brahma, who is regarded as one of the divine trinities of Hinduism, is not exempt from their flaws. Even though Brahma is accused of raping his own daughter, she confronts him about his claim to be the creator and a father figure. Put down your pen and stop writing our tale as if it were your own if you have ever been asked to do interviews or appear for the camera. She takes away his right to control people's lives and make decisions about their futures. The majority of the author's poems share a dark sorrow for change, despite the fact that some of them express a sense of familiarity and ease. For those who are aware of her background, these poems are startling. But after reading about her era's history, they are at a loss for words.

Even when individuals are aware of social hierarchies, they nonetheless ask, "Do such systems still exist?" as if they are ignorant. Her poetry is a wordless response to such a callous query. Meena Kandasamy's situation is only one example of how society has always been cruel to those who don't fit in. The heat of the bodies you exile in your Kamasutra and Manusmriti is making my lines feverish. As a Tamil woman, I too don't spare the sexist, ageist, and traditionalist Tholkappiyam. My critique, similar to your codification and my cunt, transcends all cultural boundaries. Her poetry does make an effort to dispel the stereotypes surrounding women's bodies and minds. After doubting her virginity, Sita's husband abandoned her, but he eventually returned to claim her. However, she declines his call and decides never to return with the person who first had doubts about her.

"Random Access Man" is another instance of Sita prioritizing herself. Here, she picks a random man to fulfill her since she is sick of waiting for her spouse to show up. The poem ends by revealing to the reader how she views masculinity. She had learned everything there was to know about love by the time she got off this stranger's lap, from first to last. The book promotes Dalit feminism and the horrors of the caste system, in addition to what it wants. The author exposes the challenges and barriers that women from lower castes frequently face since they are at the crossroads of two disadvantaged identities. Here, one can find Dalit women's helplessness since they are not only ignored due to their gender and caste, but also because they are unable to express themselves in the academy, which is controlled by the higher caste.. A headline and a photo feature are seen by the media. Dhanam witnesses a world split in two. A taste of that touchable water was the price she paid for having her left eye's lid open, but the light swatted away. Varied outfits have varied interpretations of the severe prejudice and repression a young lady experiences.

As we proceed toward human facilities, her behavior begins to take the form of an infringement, but the inanimate well of water merely sees a thirsty youngster. As the school works to maintain its image and the media sensationalizes it to generate revenue, this is done out of self-interest. However, this experience serves just as a reminder of the world's intolerance for the girl. The pervasive traces of sorrow and grief that are frequently obscured by the façade of empathy displayed by the prevailing sociopolitical discourse are retrieved by *International Advance Journal of Engineering, Science and Management (IAJESM)*



## ICHSECMICE -2025

11-12<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Sardar Patel Institute of Higher Education, Kurukshetra

Meena Kandasamy's efforts to uncover the inscribed voices from history and reread them. Through her deeply curious poetry, the author attempts to problematize this covert flow of power. In a manner, Meena Kandasamy's poetry embodies her desire to stand up for non-dominant caste women—their aspirations, aspirations, and autonomous opinions—instead of constantly having the patriarchal societal structure and their male counterparts speak for them. In her poem "Aggression," she explores the idea of revolt and resistance to the pervasive injustices in society. The poem "reflects this attitude of defiance. Waiting endlessly... However, there are instances when the external manifestations of internal conflicts reach enormous dimensions. And the revolution takes place. She demonstrates that Dalit women are capable of speaking, and when they do, her work is so potent that it becomes a sophisticated yet obvious form of political protest. By establishing a clearly rebellious standard in the field of feminist poetics, Meena Kandasamy's forceful work upends the world of Indian women's literature. In conclusion: The experiences of Dalit women provide unmistakable proof of pervasive assault, exploitation, and crude, cruel treatment. Dalit women in particular face prejudice due to a variety of different religious practices and distinct social norms.

Dalit women are deprived of their political, civic, economic, and social rights due to several causative factors. They experience the same gender prejudice as non-Dalit women, but they are further deprived by caste and class. Due to their lack of access to resources, their health and educational level are lower than that of non-Dalit women. The idea of cleanliness and impurity ingrained in the caste system also limits their career options and confines them to "unclean" jobs like manual scavenging. In her book "Pazhiyana Kazidalum," author Sivakami paints a complete picture of Dalit women's sexual exploitation by their own caste males, as well as their silence and victimization by Upper Caste Hindus through Thangam. The writer does not glamorize sexuality by sprinkling the book's text with reckless elopements and awkward marriages, even as the body and abuses of sensual pleasures become a major theme. The episode involving Thangam and her body fills up much of the novel's descriptive section. Her body acknowledges the challenges Dalit women endure. The tale begins with her tormented body. Because she is a widow, she becomes a "surplus" woman when her brothers-in-law harass her for refusing to bow to them; her Hindu landlord, Udayar, sexually abuses her; caste Hindu males attack her because of sexual and social wrongdoing; and so on. Kathamuthu takes advantage of her fragility by providing her with food and shelter, forcing her to physically submit to his demands. The same physique that subjected her to oppression and subjugation also allows her to rise in Kathamuthu's household and exert control over his wives.

This leads to a degraded position for the oppressed in the hierarchical social structure. In addition to destroying the psychological tranquility of the women who live there, patriarchy also destroys feminist feelings. For women like Gowri and Thangam, who are marginalized due to patriarchy and its effects, slander turns into a slaughterhouse. Every phrase in any type of research becomes a pitch for contestation when the margin is placed in the middle. As a novelist, Sivakami presents her ideas about the underprivileged with a vivid critique and social analysis. The writer attempts to highlight how Dalit women who are disenfranchised end up as victims of society's patriarchal structure. Both the gramam and Cheri are victims of Thangam, the lady whose pitiful and impoverished circumstances wreak havoc in both spheres of society. The Dalit people are restricted to Cheri, a ghetto on the outskirts of the hamlet. The caste Hindus reside in the village, also known as the gramam.

### Reference: -

Dinesh Singh, Kanwar. *Contemporary Indian English Poetry: Comparing Male and Female Voices*. Atlantic. 2008.



## ICHSECMICE -2025

11-12<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Sardar Patel Institute of Higher Education, Kurukshetra

Jana, Ujjwal. "The Struggle to Annihilate Caste will be Victorious": Meena Kandasamy in Conversation with Ujjwal Jana. *Postcolonial Text*, vol 4, No. 4, 2018.

Kandasamy, Meena. *Touch*. Mumbai: Peacock Books, 2006.

Mohanty, Manoranjan. Ed. Class, Caste, Gender: Readings In Indian Government And Politics. Vol.5. 2004. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd.2008.

Maithri, Malathi, et al. *Wild Words: Four Women Poets*. Translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom, Harper Perennial, 2015.

Pratibha. "Dalit Women Speak Differently: Reading Poetry by Meena Kandasamy." *ENIRJ*, Vol.5, No.2, 2017.

Randhawa, Harbir Singh, ed. *Dalit Literature: Contents, Trends and Concerns*. Sarup Book Publishers, 2010.

Satyanarayana, K., and Susie J. Tharu, eds. *The Exercise of Freedom: An Introduction to Dalit Writing*. 2013.