



## Meena Kandasamy's writings on subjugation of dalit women

Sucheta Adak

Ph D, Research Scholar, Department of Education, Netaji Subhas University, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, India

### Abstract

Though we celebrate Independence Day every year, there are people across the world who remain as slaves till date confined by our own citizenry. Marginalisation is a serious topic that comes in many shapes in which certain members of the society are treated as inferior and often forbidden from equality, and are imposed severe restriction to do even basic day-to-day actions. This paper aims to highlight the discrimination and exclusion of people that occurs in the name of social order. The caste system in India is an invisible leading factor that strongly foothold even today. Though this system originated in ancient times, it still perpetuates resulting in one-half of the people's sufferings caused primarily by prejudice resulting in class violence. Despite having laws that chiefly secure people from violent behaviour, it is lugubrious to withstand that they endure the hardest combat. Meena Kandasamy is a contemporary Indian poet, whose writing principally focuses on the sufferings of downtrodden people and the welfare of women. Her works primarily involve in nurturing the lives of individuals who denied even the vital rights and privileges within the name of caste. Brimmed with rage, she portrays the real scenario of people harassed by the upper-class regime. Accordingly, her book of poetry collection assortment *Touch* covers up most of the aspects of coercion and excruciating tragedies of lower caste people. This paper attempts to forecast the anguished lives of secluded people, their firmness in achieving their purpose and the liberation achieved through unity concerning the poem "We will Rebuild Worlds."

**Keywords:** exclusion, freedom, liberation, marginalization, unity

### Introduction

The Caste system in India is a major threat to devastating serenity and the synchronization of the people. The background of the class structure originated in ancient times, and they were austere followed even by the supreme non-secular convictions and learned personals. It ascends to control and rule people, and was divided into hierarchal social order based on their social ranks, and occupations. According to religious theory, the primary motive of this segregation is to designate tasks to people according to their ability and to organize the variety in a unified manner. Nevertheless, as times passes, the psychological nature of the people changed gradually, and they commenced to treat their fellow people in an inferior manner based on their status and occupation they perform. Accordingly, people in society misconstrue themselves as upper caste people and lower caste people. People with a high economy and social status enjoyed the privileges of being the upper class, while the underprivileged people are classified as lower-class people. These people were called by different deprecatory terms denoting their social order, and they were additionally compelled to do the meanest of works. They are used as scapegoats by the privileged people and were brutally attacked and harassed for trivial reasons.

The predicament and horrible treatment of the marginalized people happen not just in India, but also across the globe in diverse forms. However, it remains invisible, as it is always behind the reality. The only outlet through which common public can understand and experience this kind of alarming treatment is through powerful narratives. Literature, the mirror of our lives, plays a vital role in reflecting the actual sufferings of the world through writing. Several writers like Mahasweta Devi, Urmila Pawar, Bama, Shantabai Kamble, Om Prakash Valmiki, Mulk Raj Anand, Arundhati Roy and

so on came up with the themes of injustice done to marginalized people and their sufferings in the hands of oppressors. Among them, one such writer is Meena Kandasamy, an emerging contemporary fiction writer and activist whose subject matter mainly focuses on feminism and caste issues. Apart from her literary works, she has also translated works of eminent Tamil writers. Overall, her works reflect her spirit and rebellious nature in fighting against the unjust norms of society that happens predominantly to the exploited section of the society. Her poems stem out of rage on toxic subjects like caste supremacy and suppression. Jacob on the article views her work as "Meena Kandasamy and her poetry embody a long withstanding fight against the stringent subjugation and atrocities undergone by the non-dominant caste community. While her poetry revolves around issues of caste, sexuality, political agendas, violence, gender oppression and language, her work mainly urges her readers to act."(Jacob). Accordingly, this paper attempts to bring out the history of the plight of the marginalized people and their determination to emancipate through the poem "We Will Rebuild Worlds."

### Literature review

Some researchers have investigated their research concerning the theme of marginalization in different sectors. Analyzing literature by various people gives scope to a multitude of meanings and new perspectives to the subject matter. Accordingly, the study of Dr. Amita Charan depicts the problems faced by marginalized women and transgender in particular during recruiting progress in working sectors in which higher officials deliberately reject them because of caste-based bias and prejudice. The study also describes the discrimination and suppression endured by them in all

sectors likely private and public and in various spheres such as educational, social, economic and health issues.

Kamila in her study focuses on the work of Bama's *Karukku* and describes the work as an elegy of the marginalized community. She depicts the oppression and suppression faced by the writer in her life in which her school headmaster insulted her in the name of caste in front of her classmates. The study also portrays how the important aspects that are essential for livelihood such as postal service, water facilities, admissions to educational institutions and so on are denied to them. She even mentions the pathetic condition in which small children of the dominant section humiliates the suppressed community. Though in that place are other subjects relating to the matter, the above two articles present the total description of the predicament of people as they are informed and encountered by the marginalized people themselves. Likewise, the writer of this poem puts herself in the place of the marginalized section in delving into their spirits and the adversities they faced. Accordingly, this paper attempts to comprehend the enslavement of the suppressed people through the visual imagery and ferocious narrative of Meena Kandasamy.

### Methodology

The main intention of this paper is to impart the society the torments of marginalized people. Though many schemes and governmental policies emerge to annihilate the issue, the sufferings still predominate ranking at the top compared to other forms of violence paving the way to delve into the issue more vigilantly. The primary objective of the study is to

- Portray the inequality and humiliation faced by the marginalized people.
- Analyze the exclusion of the marginalized people in all sectors.
- Illustrate the elite class treatment in handling the marginalized people.
- Reflect on the feelings of alienation endured by marginalized individuals.
- Highlight the strong sense of determination and unity seen in the downtrodden people.

As numerous articles are focusing on the issues of marginalization in general, there is only one or two articles explored related to the theme of marginalization specializing Meena Kandasamy's works. There are no works published or researched under this topic of the resurrection of marginalized people concerning the poem "We Will Rebuild Worlds" written by Meena Kandasamy, which gives credit to the novelty of the work. Accordingly, this paper attempts to proceed with the systematic accomplishment of marginalized people's voicing out their voices commencing from the stratification in the antiquity to their gradually liberating state.

### Reflection of caste cognizance in the poem

The poem "We Will Rebuild Worlds" is a literary work under the poetry collection named *Touch*. It has been for worded by the notable writer Kamala Das and has been translated and published in five different languages. This collection of poems is a mixture of catchy verses, gruesome images, word retort, and vivid imagery display the plight of outcasts. In this poem, the poet incorporates voice to the

voiceless and has invoked the image of upheaval. It also aims at the revolting spirit of lower-class people in bringing back their distinctive and to lead a normal life of their choice. This poem mirrors the tormented life of marginalized people from Vedic times to the current emancipated state. The poem is a perfect blend of pain and protest, unheard struggles and anticipated victories, encountered struggle and gained strength, battled fear and gathered hope. The commencement of the poem is very evocative. It indicates the resolution of the gathering of individuals from broken pieces. The words like "shattered glass", "remnants" suggests the brokenness in their lives without any illumination. They are denounced and overlooked by upper-class people. They were asked to do gruesome and sordid jobs that humans from other strata find it repulsive to do, even then, they were detested as the weakest section of the society. The poem encounters how they are humiliated by referring to them in various terms as a deportee, socially outcast, untouchable, and Dalits

*We'll implore/ you to produce the list/  
from hallowed memories/ of our people disgraced/as  
outcastes/degraded/as untouchable at/ at sixty- four feet/  
denied a life/ and livelihood and done to death/  
(Kandasamy)*

### A life full of hardships and tragedies

According to the National Human Rights Commission, it is reported the violence against the scheduled people happen every 18 minutes on the day. The offence and outbreaks of violence against the Dalits amplify day by day. They are mistreated, neglected, viciously attacked, and were considered for the rank of animals. There are also acts of violence that took place for petty reasons like getting educated, raising voice against upper-class people, drawing water from the well, access to the synagogue, denial of justice, deprived of their due pay and shares, shorn off to use public transport, properties, pathways and in some parts, even looking straight at them is considered as polluting. Every minuscule action of the proletarians was observed and harshly punished by the upper strata. Their punishments embody flogging, stripping naked in front of the public, whipping, harassing and sexually exploiting the women of their community, electrocuting, mocking and belittling, massacre, honour killing in the name of inter-caste marriage, and so on. This poem indicates some real massacres and outburst that happened to the lower stratum.

*in so many ways it would take/ an encyclopedia to  
describe and steven-spielberg/ or some-such-guy to  
produce the special effects for a blockbuster version/  
(Kandasamy)*

The Poet illustrates the prominent Kilvenmeni Massacre that happened between wealthy landlords and economically poor labourers of the marginalized community in the district of Tamil Nadu, India in 1968. The incident escalates once the poor peasants asked for their rightful wages from their property owners. This resulted in a divergence between the two groups and the enraged proprietor's plots against the innocent peasants. The henchmen appointed by the landlords set fire to the innocent being's hut that led to the death of 44 gullible victims consisting mostly of women and children. The incident happened is even being supported and

escorted by the Police, Politicians, Higher Administrative Officials, and Judiciary. The petition and appeal of the victims left unprocessed, and are made to wait for years to deal with their issues. The below lines of the poem by Meena Kandasamy brilliantly envisages the real scenario of the massacre

*not just the stories of how/ you charred to death forty-four  
of our men and women and children/ because they asked  
for handfuls of rice//  
electrocuted children to instant death because they played  
inI your well and other ghastly carnages. (Kandasamy)*

Though this incident happened at the beginning where caste is considered a grave issue, it's a poignant reminder to recall that these outbreaks are occurring even these days. The suicidal case of Rohith Vemula, Dr. Payal Tadvi within the consecutive years of 2016 and 2019 for teasing and mocking in the name of caste by co-workers suggests the barbaric attitude of highly learned literates even in the present state of affairs. It is suggestive of the predominant caste practices that consciously root in the minds of commoners.

### **A journey from enslavement to emancipation**

"They tried to bury us. They didn't know we were seeds.", a Mexican adage coined by Greek literary critic Dinocrates Christian Poulos. It perfectly mirrors the lives of marginalized people. The above saying perfectly coincides with the rebellious transformation of people from meek, docile individuals to strong, liberated personas. Eventually, the lower class people started gathering and arranged movements to voice out their problems, to express their opinions, to get hold of their rights and basic amenities. Great personalities like B.R. Ambedkar, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and so on battled the cause of oppressed people. They restructured standard frameworks and altered constitutional amendments for the betterment of socially backward masses. This result in a vast modification and people stood in unity to defend themselves against the problems imposed upon them. They dared the victimizers who tried to colonize them. Besides, women and children actively participate in fighting against their unjust societal norms. The subsequent verses of the poem envision the firmness, rebellious nature, vigour, and resolute impulse.

*It will begin in our red hot-dreams that surge that/scorch  
that/scald that sizzle like lava/ but never settle down  
never/pungently solidify. (Kandasamy)*

They begin to excel in every sector and introspects that their ignorance is the source of their ordeal state. They realized that education is obligatory to create consciousness to triumph over immorality. Special Reservation Policy and Quota are offered by the government to stabilize their economic condition by providing jobs and placement in various domains. The condition of the secluded people begins to foster, and started to engross themselves in numerous sectors. Their contributions profoundly steadfast and they emerge with a new identity. It indicates their new profound freedom and emancipated state.

*It will begin/ when the song in the sway/ of our hips/ will  
lead us to dance and sing/ and stand up straight/ put up a  
pretty fight/ redeem and reclaim/ the essence of our  
earth. (Kandasamy)*

Academic Institutions that are specially built for training and educating the children of the oppressed class. As a result, they authorized themselves and shined in the majority of the domains. They conjointly contributed to the field of literature by exposing their anguish, long-faced torments faced by the defeated individuals. As a result, a distinctive branch of literary works from the socially secluded class writers emerged, especially to upright the lives of marginalized people, and it is widely known as Dalit Literature. Their works sum up the predicaments and pain they endured from the high-class system. Notable writers like Bama, Shantabai Krushnaji Kamble, Sivakami, Meena Kandasamy, Narendra Jadhav, Urmila Pawar, Namdeo Dhasal are some of the existing paradigms fighting for the upliftment of marginalized entities in their writings. Besides, they occupy the majority of superior positions and surpass in endeavoring their issue. It's high time that they acknowledge their potential and are overcoming their restricted barriers. To sum up, the poetic lines portray the vigorous revolution of activism.

*It will begin/ the way thunder rises in our throats and/ we  
will brandish our slogans with a stormy stress and  
succeed/ to chronicle to/ convey the last stories/  
of our lost and scattered lives. (Kandasamy)*

### **Conclusion**

To achieve equality and oneness among people, its due time obligatory to weed out the caste system. Although it is quite challenging to devastate class conscious social acquisition as it is deep-rooted in the consciousness of the human mind. It has become a powerful weapon within the hands of Politicians, and that they use it as a puppet to distort young minds. To attain solidity, it is the requirement of the hour, to alter the psychological outlook of the people to make them live in solidarity. Regardless of partiality in caste and seclusion, future generations ought to be imparted with the knowledge of integration and diverse unity. For this to take place there should emerge a revolution by creating awareness campaigns, Governmental policies, legal amendments, academics, and media. Humanity has to be renovated to achieve equity and equality amongst people. To conclude, the Government and Common people should have to act as a bridge in refining the so-called unrefined people and should not be a barrier in the reconstruction of their lives.

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