

Where Memory Haunts and 'Dreams Explode': Resistance & Renewal in Meena Kandasamy's Select Works

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Abstract:

Winner of the 2022 Hermann Kesten Prize, Meena Kandasamy is an Indian poet, activist, journalist, fiction writer and translator, whose forthright, in-your-face writing exposes the still existing problematic socio-political discourse on women of the non-dominant castes. Herself a Dalit, a caste once looked down upon as 'untouchables', she expresses through her writings the traumatic memories and repercussions of decades of humiliation and torture suffered by these women, and exhorts them to defy and to own their selves. Spivak asserts that the "subaltern" should write about their own stories; Kandasamy gives voice to the oppressed and stifled women of this caste, wearing her own labels of 'womanness, Tamilness and low/outcasteness' with pride. Her works resonate with her anger against the prevailing customs and mores that still refuse to recognize Dalits and Dalit women as beings in their own right. Simultaneously, she subverts classic myths and legends in Indian epics, fighting against patriarchy, and in no uncertain terms at that. This research paper will focus on the major issues in Kandasamy's works, in particular reference to *Ms Militancy* and *When I Hit You*, and attempt to locate her as a significant voice of resistance, countering the dominant castes' denial of the rights, as well as, and more disturbingly, the identity of women and Dalit women in particular.

Keywords:

non-dominant castes, memory, Dalit, resistance, voice.