



**THE CIRCLE OF ABUSE IN DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS:
READING MEENAKANDASWAMY**

Rufus Ruth Livingston Jakki* & Dr. Diksha Dhar**

* Ph.D Scholar, Department of English, School of Humanities & Sciences, KL
(Deemed to be University), Hyderabad, Telangana

** Assistant Professor, Department of English, School of Humanities & Sciences, KL (Deemed to be
University), Hyderabad, Telangana

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The present paper tries to identify the theme of Abuse in Meenakandaswamy's "When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife." Abuse can be misuse, exploitation, mishandling, manipulation and misapplication. Abuse is often misunderstood as a religious practice, a tradition, societal framework, family custom and upbringing etc. My writing is related to women abuse in the domestic space of marriage. As citizens we are worried about women being at threat outside the house and we caution them to be careful. This aspect of cautioning takes a contrary voice when a woman gets married. Instead of cautioning, women are asked to get adjusted and this is how abuse gets into picture. Women usually understand the word adjustment as a virtue and most of the marriages are successful because women in the domestic space are either silent or adjusting. This idea of woman being silent and adjusting is an added advantage for most of the men who in the pretext of marriage create a havoc in women mental and physical status.

Abuse by default exists in many marriages. In a recent movie the mother in law tell her daughter in law "Toda Bardaash Karna Seekhlena Chahiyeh Auraton ko" – Thappad -Tanvi Azmi to Tapsee Pannu. It is regular phenomenon that a girl is mentally prepared for abuse in marriage. We keep on listening to certain phrases like 'Shadikebaad yeh sab naichelga.' 'shaadihonedoiskaalkatikhanepayega' these phrases hint woman but she would get a clear picture when she gets into the institution of marriage. She understands her choices, likes and dislikes, identity, body, sexuality is abused and all she does is to be silent. Her silence is often taken as a yardstick to increase the severity of abuse. Silence can be a reaction to save her marriage, escape from societal pressure, maternal family crisis, financial instability etc.

Abuse which is given to women is the concern here. Women are abused because men learn and observe certain reactions from father in their own family's atmosphere. Society would never accept a man obeying to his wife, they call him names. At least outwardly he is bound to act as though he controls the family. Patriarchal set up considers man as the supreme power. The abuse given by the husband to his wife is also an acquired trait from the societal environment, and is accepted. Sometimes the reactions from spouse to abuse also makes him cruel like after the wedlock a woman cannot stay for a longer time in mother's house for various reasons like societal pressure, family prestige, younger girl siblings. So abuse become a part and parcel for her life due to lack of support.

Abuse can take any form it can be mental (emotional), verbal, physical, intellectual, career. Religion plays a very important role in encouraging abuse. Religious books clearly encourage violence against women, gender differences, politics of gender, polygamy, suppressing women, doubting wife, and adultery. Men are elevated and are given freedom. Religion gained importance from the insecurities of man. Hence religion is always used as a weapon to condemn women's identity.

"For Jews, Mohamedans and Christians, among others, men is master by divine right; The fear of God will therefore repress any impulse towards revolt in downtrodden female" Simone de Beauvoir – 'Second Sex

Marriage is the ultimate resort for most of the girls. The advantages in wedlock are less when compared to disadvantages particularly to a woman or a girl. On the contrary everyone recommends marriage to an individual and most of the women fall as a prey to the rigid societal norm. The institution of marriage is projected as a conduct certificate to have children specifically for women.

Dreams are not always fulfilled in marriages. Marriages are not always successful. The fairy tale wedding in a romantic setting appears to be an illusion when a woman faces the reality in relationship. When we speak about success in a marriage, women have important roles to play and while playing her role women often get abused. This abuse can be physical, mental and sexual. This harsh reality is presented in Meena Kandasamy's novel "When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife". The unnamed protagonist of the novel is a free spirited girl with many aspirations, falls for a university professor and gets married to him. Meena Kandasamy's portrayal of modern love marriage which perpetuates in violence is factual. Marriage has been an overrated institution where most of the women receive mental agony. Culturally, Indian society views marriage as sacred and ultimate goal for a woman. The patriarchal system demands, woman to uphold the marriage to honor her husband, father, mother and family members. She, most of the time does not enjoy any decision making powers when it comes to her conjugal rights. Everything lies in the hands of her man. In the

same way the protagonist faces problem from the second week of her marriage. Her husband asks her to deactivate all the social networking sites for her own benefit.

“Trouble in second week of Marriage: Husband -Moron Insistent I stay Isolated. Mr Control Freak Blackmailed Me Into Deactivating Account. Writer atRisk! SOS! ”. 2 (WIHY p.53)

Controlling wife’s activities is considered as husband’s right in our society.

“Toda merazaatikaamtha” - Bulbul to Thakur Mushair

“Pati se zada koi zaatihkaamhosaktahai” – Thakur Mushair to Bulbul_Bulbul movie

This sort of dominance we find in every marriage when it comes to Indian society. Women change their phone numbers, they don't speak to male friends, they change their display pictures and it is a known fact that all these things are directly or indirectly are being forced by the spouse. Well, people call it possessiveness and security issues towards the counterpart but the fact is it is a kind of dominance and control of the male over female's choices. This is completely accepted by many females without any offense because the responsibility of keeping husband happy in the initial years of the marriage is been taught to every girl in a family, and this initial effort costs her for a life time submission. It is no wonder that the responsibility of saving the marriage is more on a female otherwise she has to face all the awkwardness from society and family.

We are supposed to go to a protest meeting. I'm getting dressed. It's the first time I'm leaving home in two weeks, so I wear Kohl and a touch of lipstick.

'Don't expect that you one day earn the trust of the working class women if u strut around with your lipstick and handbag. They will mistake you for a prostitute.' 'Is the prostitute not a working woman?'. 3 (WIHY) p .132

Verbal Abuse is the most common resort which is adopted by male gender to excise control on a woman. In India, a girl is brought up in an environment where she is not exposed to verbal abuse in comparison to a boy. We find that many women are very hesitant to use abuses openly in the society because of their character being judged at every move and even by words which she utters. So it is understood that verbal abuse is an untouched area for the feminine gender in India. But in a marital relationship we see that when the male understands that he is losing his stand in an argument, he switches to abuses to mute his spouse and the worst thing is he uses the same genre of abuses for every other thing she does. For instance, if you take the words 'slut', 'whore' these words are used in a wider sense for a woman, women's dressing is compared to being a slut, and if she has male friends she is compared to whore. We can go on with this concept of abusing in many situations in women’s life. Basically whore and slut are very common abuses for every unwanted behavior of a woman towards man.

“-he uses makeshift substitutes: my Mac’s power cord, his leather belt, twisted electrical cables.” 4 (WIHY) p. 154

Domestic violence is every woman's unspoken experience in her marriage. Her ego is being crushed by the dominance of strength. We find many women hiding scars and marks of violence when she plays various roles in the family and society, this hiding of marks and scars is because either she wants to make people believe that she is leading a happy life or because she knows the judgmental attitude of the people where she would be targeted and degraded. Sometimes this humiliation can come from her own family, friends and community in which there are also women included. The physical pain in domestic violence may be sustained for a while but the mental agony is very difficult to handle, a woman would never be able to forget the incident and the beastly attitude of the person who excise control or dominance on her.

“When he hits me, the terror follows from the instinct that this will go further, that this does not end easily, that today it is my arms that he is punching, but tomorrow it will be my hair that he will wind around his palm to drag me through the rooms , the next day it will be my backbone that will endure a shattering blow, the day after that it will be my head on which his angry fists will descend.” 5 (WIHY) P. 155

All of a sudden her world seems to be very difficult; the person whom she thinks is right appears to be the ugliest person. As the time passes she tries to make peace with her soul which needs a lot of will power and this treaty of peace with self is because of many reasons like her children, her maternal family status, financial instability, societal norms and prominently because of the great hope she has towards her life. We find men not being physically violent with other men who are of equal stature and fitness. Can a woman become equal to man in terms of physical strength, well it can be ‘yes’ but then she has to learn to respect her instincts. If she listens to her instincts - will the family sustain? We hear women telling incidents which saved their marriages. The question why should woman alone think about saving marriage, why not a man? - Because patriarchy classifies man and woman roles in family and society very partially. Liberal Feminism emphasizes on woman being independent and individualistic. She has to come out of the attitude of being a sensitive and emotional she should learn to be happy without a man because she is a human being first and then a woman.

“I made an effort to change the effects of his conditioning. I do not enter into the complicated domain of rights theory – knowing that the minute I say ' It is my right,' the idea will be shouted down before I have finished the sentence. I opt to talk to him about my sexual moaning as inevitability, as a natural occurrence, as something we are programmed to do as human being.” 6 (WIHY) p.153

"Hearing me, he looks lost. To understand this function of language is beyond my husband. I try listing examples that exist beyond human beings: the mad songs of cuckoos in the mating season. The soft, low notes of a lonely whale, the deathly howl of cat. He does not get it." 7 (WIHY) p 154

Feminism is an ideology. It is not related to gender, we find many men supporting women's views and we find many women opposing. It enhances the woman existence in spite of unwanted vibes and encounters she faces in the society. This ideology should be applied to her desires too. We find many women being dominated physically by men in the pretext of sex. We find in many communities that the concept of intercourse is overrated. We all are aware of the ostentatious agenda, plan, and auspicious time where the couples consummate their marriage. The happiest person in this agenda is undoubtedly the man. The woman gets into this scenario being fearful and apprehensive. The percentage of people (men/women) who think about women's desires are very less. This is where the marital rape gets into picture. Society speaks about rapes and molestations enhanced by candle light marches but what about marital rape. Marital rape is never recognized in a relationship because the word 'consent' is never understood by a male. We sometimes find that after a fight or physical abuse in a relationship man exercises sex as tool to show his domination on the counterpart. Thanks to our movie and soaps which promote women as a device which waits on her husband to get his spirits enhanced to consummate their marriage, giving her desires a second place.

In an act of mercy, he allows me three hours a week: rationed, it comes to very brief half an hour a day. The internet access itself is possible only in his presence, for he carries the Huawei USB dongle with him all the times- saying he needs the internet to prepare for his classes and to do his research. (WIHY) p. 59

Career abuse is the most common kind of abuse. It is evident that women needs to break her career for children and sometimes for family. On the contrary we see men's insecurities when a woman is successful than him or capable of earning more than him. We usually find many women who are of good acumen settling as house wives due to family and husband's pressure. If he marries a working women it would be for his financial assistance and for the family's financial support, yet irrespective of being financially independent we find many women being completely dumb and domesticated in the household. If the husband finds her to be talented and skillful than him then he cleverly tries to curb her possibilities with fakeness. The concept of career graph should be equal in a relationship as women lift their husband's ego to pursue their career the same should be from men too.

"All that I need, I carry with me in a shoulder bag. Passport, atm cards, laptop. My phone that he never let me use. All of this is mine." 8 (WIHY) p 213

"I call home. I tell my mother i'm coming to her. Bruised but alive. The moon is on my back. The auto – Rickshaw races into the night. I shed this miserable city like a second skin." 9 (WIHY) p 218

Male hegemony is obvious in every family no one is exempted. When the counterparts understand each other and forgiveness becomes mutual then relationship runs towards fruitfulness. This is not only in marriage but any relationship for the fact friends, parents, siblings have ego problems and misunderstandings, but when it comes to wedlock the receiver is always female, in very few cases we find the male in the receiving end. Sometimes this pressure takes beastly nature and becomes unbearable, this is where the woman feels distressed and wants to escape. The protagonist of the story faces similar insults, from her man. She is submissive and she being deprived from every comfort zone. This is not accepted because we got live and we got live happily. She moves out of the house irrespective of all the societal rigid framework.

"Even after hearing my story, women hide their husbands from me." 10 (WIHY) p 218

The writer projects the society and its treatment towards her fellow women in the society. She treats the concept how few woman demoralize other. When woman doesn't fit into the framework of society which is ironically customized by the fellow beings then her character is being questioned. We should oblige to the fact of our society gives a severe treatment to widows, divorcées especially to the feminine gender and they are treated in a very inconvenient way. We see that society gives all sorts of insults and verdicts which are not in favorable of them. A woman is only complete with her man if not she will definitely have her character, identity at stake, phrases like characterless, dominant, impatient, non-adaptable are often tagged. Irrespective of a woman, feeling happy to come out of an abusive relationship she should pretend that she is not happy and convenient. Let's say she projects being happy then her fellow women would definitely give her the guilt which she doesn't want. This can be done by speaking about morals, intruding into her personal issues, talk about being in a family and its benefits etc. well, the fact is every woman feels at one point or the other that she should come out of bondage called marriage but she can't and that is how her envious nature speaks about morals to her fellow woman. She forgets that marriage; children are just societal norms and it is not necessary for every woman to fulfill it. Now a man enjoys all the privileges of being a divorcée or a widower, he can get married, he can start an affair, he need not pretend awkward and he can do every possible thing. Liberation is not restricted to a specific gender. At the end of the day between that so called moment of 'I am feeling sleepy' and 'I have slept' every human needs to be happy.

Conclusion:

When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife is a tremendous piece of work because woman's survival all interests reader. The book has a pretty simple plot; it's about a young wife leaving her marriage with an abusive leftist man. It is a story of a survivor of sexual violence, rape, mental trauma etc. we study many survival stories and we regard them as the greatest epics but here the torture is from the person whom she loved and married against her parents will. The novel speaks about all the intricate situations like the protagonist's boyfriends, affairs, her parents. Yet she remains alone for her own existence. Gathering confidence from different aspects of women empowerment has been the only source for a woman to feel confident and appraised in the society. These things have mostly motivated the educated lot than the uneducated lot because suppression, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, marital rape are the terms which do not hold good when the woman has awareness or when she is educated and for the ignorant lot it is part and parcel of family-marriage and an obvious thing.

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