



PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STRUGGLE OF A DEVADASI WOMAN SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MEENA KANDASAMY'S POEM "MASCARA"

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Abstract

21 centuries still runs on patriarchal set of values. For years women are suffering due to male dominance, fighting for their survival and identity. They are sidelined for centuries but now women are raising their voices against injustice. They are speaking through their writing about their problems, struggle, suppression, oppression. They are against inequality and unspoken pressure before the society and protesting against women's issues. There have been waves of brave Indian female writer who have protested and are protesting against injustices of women in society through their writing. Meena Kandasamy is one of them. Her work largely explores themes of feminism, caste annihilation and linguistic identity. Her work presents women's desire for social justice and shade light on truth, reality of an Indian women for their struggle for survival, sexual abuse, marital rapes, and untold pressures.



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Introduction

Being a radical feminist Meena Kandasamy has touched women's various problems through her writing and uncovered it before the society. This paper presents themes like sexuality and gender roles, aspirations and dreams are not always fulfilled, marriages are not always successful, fairy tales romantic setting do not always consummate. This is the harsh reality of Meena kandasamy's work and is not a new experience in India but now women are fighting against injustice, mental and physical suffering, frustration, humiliation, suppression, and revolting against male dominance. She is writer, translator and activist from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. As a writer Meena's focus is on caste-annihilation, feminism and linguistic identity,. The present research paper focuses on feminism in through Mascara poem. The present research paper presents the aforesaid issue to look deep into nature of patriarchy and women's problems due to patriarchy. Analytical and interpretive research methodology has been adopted for the present research paper with qualitative techniques

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, Sexual abuse, Violence, Unspoken pressure, Injustice

The last thing she does

before she gets ready to die

once more, of violation,

she applies the mascara

Selling her body is death for her because no woman can bear any man's touch without her permission. If a man touches woman for sexual pleasure without her permission then it is violation. Devadasi woman is helpless because according to their tradition they have to do it and they have to sell their body for the sake of a rich people's satisfaction. A woman is not mentally ready to bear touch of unwanted person and sexual intercourse without her consent is death for her. That's why she applies mascara on face to hide her inner feeling, sorrow, tears on her face and gets ready to die.

Always,

in that last and solemn moment

the call-girl hesitates

Call girl has also feelings but a man cannot understand it before touching her. The call girl also hesitates always in a solemn moment because her fate makes her helpless. Whether it is a call girl or a woman from cultured house but no one can bear the touch of an unwanted man without her permission.

With eye-catching eyes

she stops to shudder.

Maybe, the dyed eyes

Mourn body's sins

Devadasi woman has very attractive eyes and mascara adds double beauty in it but later on she suddenly starts shuddering because she knows people will get attracted by her beautiful eyes. Her dyed eyes mourn on her bodies sins. The tragedy of a Devadasi girl does not have any option. She does not commit sins knowingly but still her eyes expresses sorrow.

Mascara.....

It serves to tell her

that long buried

hazy dreams

of a virgin soul

have dark outlines.

She has a virgin soul but unwanted men touch her and get sexual pleasure. Her dreams are hazy because they are buried. She has to live inside only dark outlines. She can't go beyond that outlines. She can't think of her dreams due to her tradition and situation. Woman with such a pure heart has to surrender before unwanted people and suffer torture due to their customary tradition.

Silently she cries

Her tears are black

Like her.

The biggest tragedy of that woman is she can't cry loudly on her violation of bodies because there is no one to understand her feelings. Her tears are compared with her dark skin colour it means her tears are also black and no one cares for it as no one cares for dark skin people. She is the victim of dark colour and customary traditions. That's why she shades her tears silently.

Somewhere

Long Ago

in an

untraceable

mangled

matrilineal

family tree

of temple prostitutes

her solace was sought

It has the tradition of Devadasi women that they have to earn money by having sex. It is their family tree or matrilineal. A daughter has to do same as mother did. Hence a soul of an innocent girl is also crushed by her tradition. Her emotions are destroyed. Women become prostitute, is the biggest tragedy.

It has happened for centuries

“Empty consolations soothe

violates bodies”

It has been happening for centuries. These women are suffering on the cost of their dead feelings. They are earning money and living any how. Their lifeless, feeling less body consoles and soothes their violated bodies.

Sex clings to her devadasi skin,
assumed superficialities don't wear off,
Deliverance doesn't arrive
Unknown Legacies of
Love made to Gods
haven't been ceremoniously accounted
as karma

A devadasi woman was a female artist who was dedicated to the worship and service of a deity or a temple for the rest of her life after becoming devadasi. The women would spend their lifetime in learning religious rites, rituals and dances. Some became Temple prostitute. Lusty people hold their skin tightly for the sex and don't read their mind, think deeply. These women can't rescue themselves from the clutches of the hands as they are bounded by traditions and they call it as account of Karma.

But still prays.
Her prayer words
desperately provoke Answers.
Fighting her case,
Providence lost his pride.
Her helplessness doesn't
Seduce the Gods
And they too
never learn
the Depth of her Dreams

She is being sexually abused by her birth but still she prays for god for her escape from that injustice, exploitation, sexual abuse. She is fighting her case alone because Gods are also helpless before her tragedy. She can't persuade gods and they can't understand the Depth of her Dreams. That's why she compares herself with the goddess Kali. Kali also wears mascara. She believes—
Cosmetics wear
once.....
were Paints.
She awaits their resurrection.

She believes that cosmetics were once war paints and still awaits for her restoration to life. Cosmetics are used to add beauty but in case of devadasi girl is uses mascara to hide sorrowful , dull face. She wants resurrection or normal life but is helpless.

When she dons the mascara

The Heavens have heard her whisper

Kali you wear this too.....

The heavens or Gods might have heard her wishper because Kali goddess also wears this too.

Conclusion

Devadasi women have to struggle to live life a lot. First of all, they were married to Gods and left to service the Gods but afterwards they become Temple Prostitute. They earn by doing sex. Men use their skin for sex but no one cares for the feeling, Depth of their Dreams. This poem “Mascara” also highlights the struggle of devadasi woman. She has to sell her body to men for their sexual desire without her acceptance. Sex without permission is nothing but a rape. This woman has to suffer everyday from rape. She silently cries because no one is there to understand her. She is helpless and even unable to get out of that exploitation and helplessness. She wears mascara in order to hide her sorrowful, unhappy, dull face and gives reference of God that cannot rescue her but can hear whisper of her and that's why she compare herself with Kali Goddess that Kali to wears a mascara. Being abused in name of customary traditions and just because they are women this poem highlights issues of devadasi women's physical abuse, exploitation, identical loss and helplessness.